

CHRIST⁺ WITHOUT AD[♣]M

SUBJECTIVITY & SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

IN THE PHILOSOPHERS' PAUL

BENJAMIN H. DUNNING

CHRIST WITHOUT ADAM

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Benjamin H. Dunning

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For my parents

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Introduction

Some strange texts await us. They give us the choice: to dream or to think.

—STANISLAS BRETON, *A RADICAL PHILOSOPHY OF SAINT PAUL*¹

The Apostle Paul bequeathed to the history of Western thought a set of elaborate reflections on what it means to be a human being, enmeshed in—but never entirely determined by—the complexities of identification: social, ethnic, cultural, sexual. Here there is perhaps no more famous statement than the rallying cry of Galatians 3:28: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (NRSV).² And yet, as the convoluted interpretive history of this and other Pauline texts has shown, more often than not, it is not always entirely clear what precise anthropological point the apostle is trying to make.³ Nor is it clear how a statement such as Galatians 3:28 should be taken together with other Pauline statements about the human condition (with respect to God, Christ, sin, the world, and the exigencies of existence), if indeed it even should be.

One thing is evident, however: whatever anthropological claims Paul made in his letters—whether informed by an underlying systematic vision or simply comprising ad hoc statements responding to specific crises—these claims were deeply aware of (and thus concerned with) the problems posed by the simple fact that human beings have bodies. These are bodies that both grow and decay, that endure in continuity with themselves and yet also undergo radical change, that function as the simultaneous site of limitation and possibility—and that, most fundamentally, are different from one another.

Thus Paul paid substantial attention to issues that attend the differences between bodies—issues ranging from circumcision to gender and desire. While the apostle did sometimes offer seemingly Platonizing formulations contrasting the “earthly tent” of the body to higher heavenly realities (e.g., 2 Corinthians 5:1–10), he did not articulate a stereotypically “Platonic” position on human bodies overall. That is to say, Paul refused simply to write off the body as an incidental or burdensome accessory to the true human self.⁴ Rather, he sought to situate the body as an ambiguous but nonetheless irreducible aspect of what it means to be human.

In recent years, the Pauline corpus has enjoyed a renewal of interest from an unlikely source: continental philosophy and critical theory.⁵ From outside the guilds of theology and biblical studies, thinkers such as Jacob Taubes, Alain Badiou, Giorgio

Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek (to name only the most prominent) have turned to the apostle as a conceptual resource in order to theorize a variety of issues including human subjectivity, universalism, political action, and temporality. This renewal has, in turn, begun to be engaged by scholars in biblical studies, philosophical theology, and the philosophy of religion.⁶ My goal in this book is to add to the discussion by turning to the place of bodily difference—and Paul’s reflections on such difference—in the philosophical conversation. While this is an issue that requires further elaboration and analysis at multiple levels (racial, ethnocultural, religious, sexual), in this study I will focus on one specific aspect of the topic: the relationship between subjectivity and sexual difference, as it figures in selected philosophical readings of the apostle.⁷

Put most simply, given that Paul deals extensively in his authentic letters with a range of embodied issues related to sex, gender, and desire, how are we to understand the tendency of these recent readings to ignore or downplay this aspect of the apostle’s thinking? If Paul is to function as a contemporary intellectual resource for theorizing a “singular universal,” in what ways are the different “theories of the subject” that emerge from this conversation shaped by—or even dependent on—this exclusion? And how might contemporary Christian theological anthropology interact with both the Pauline text and its modern philosophical interpreters in order to offer alternative accounts of an embodied, gendered, Pauline subject?

THINKING THE HUMAN BETWEEN ADAM AND CHRIST

The Adam-Christ Typology: Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15

My starting point for the exploration of these questions is a specifically Pauline theological construct: the Adam-Christ typology, as articulated in Romans 5:12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15. As I have argued at length elsewhere, in these passages Paul lays out a certain kind of anthropological space in which to theorize what the human being is—with an eye not only to humanity’s present situation, but also backward to its creation and forward to its eschatological destiny.⁸ Here the apostle’s reflections unfold with reference to two paradigmatic figures: the first Adam (i.e., the character of Adam from the Genesis creation story) and the second Adam, Jesus Christ. In Romans 5, this relationship is framed primarily in terms of contrast: “For if the many died through the one human’s trespass [*tō tou henos paraptōmati*], much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one human [*en chariti tē tou henos anthrōpou*], Jesus Christ, abounded for the many” (Rom 5:15, NRSV, translation slightly modified). And yet, the contrast is not so sharp as to relegate the figure of Adam to theological irrelevance. Rather, “Adam ... is a type of the one who was to come” (*Adam ... estin typos tou mellontos*; Rom 5:14, NRSV). Thus *both figures* have a representative function in Paul’s thought with respect to other human beings. That is to say, Paul envisions people in a relationship of identification with

Adam and Christ, these figures serving as representative paradigms of, respectively, death/condemnation and life/justification (Rom 5:17–19). Human beings in the present are not entirely or exclusively identified with either one, but instead find themselves situated in the interval between the two figures, participating in some complicated way in both representative domains.

What then of the body? In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul makes clear that his vision of the Adam-Christ typology has irreducibly embodied dimensions:

What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. ... It is sown a psychic body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a psychic body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, “The first human, Adam, became a living being” [*Egeneto ho prōtos anthrōpos Adam eis psychēn zōsan*]; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit [*ho eschatos Adam eis pneuma zōopoion*]. ... The first human was from the earth, a human of dust; the second human is from heaven. As was the human of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the human of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the human of dust, we will also bear the image of the human of heaven. (1 Cor 15:42–49, NRSV, translation slightly modified)

Whatever ancient medical, biological, and philosophical theories may inform Paul's use of the enigmatic phrases “psychic body” (*sōma psychikon*; that is, a body animated by *psyche*, or soul-substance) and “pneumatic body” (*sōma pneumatikon*; a body animated by *pneuma*, or spirit), it is clear that he envisions not the body's sloughing off but its radical transformation.⁹ And to the degree that the apostle (somewhat obscurely) explains this transformation at all, he frames the discussion with respect to his two typological reference points: Adam's body made from “the dust of the ground” (compare Gen 2:7) and Christ's heavenly, imperishable body—metonyms for the spheres of creation and resurrection, origin and eschaton. Thus Paul puts forward a theological economy structured by these representative relationships, one in which—if the terms he articulates are accepted—questions of embodied subjectivity, poised ambiguously *between* creation and eschaton, come to the fore. Yet insofar as the text allows and even encourages such questions to advance, it is with reference to these two paradigmatic figures, Christ and Adam.

In my previous book, *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought* (2011), I argue that the Pauline Adam-Christ typology generated a crucial anthropological aporia that has haunted (and continues to haunt) the history of Christian thought. Insofar as the typological framing of Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15 makes a claim on *all* embodied human beings—seeking to represent the full range of bodily situations without remainder (but always with reference to two paradigmatic *male* bodies)—it fails to work out in any meaningful way where sexual difference might fit within such a typology. Christian thinkers from antiquity on have sought to address this lacuna—articulated most basically in terms of where to locate *Eve* within

an Adam-Christ frame. Accordingly, they have put forward an array of theological proposals, ranging from arguments for the eschatological erasure of bodily sex (generally by means of the collapse of the female into the male) to the elaboration of new and deliberately gendered layers of typology, by way of the representative bodies of Eve and the Virgin Mary.

So for example (with respect to the centuries immediately following Paul), a thinker such as Clement of Alexandria attempts to deal with the problem of feminine difference within a Pauline Adam-Christ typology by substituting a personified “Desire” for the female figure of Eve. This allows him to argue (at least in certain contexts) that the feminine is a kind of aberration, to be resolved at the eschaton by its transformation into the masculine, which is, at the same time, the erasure of desire. Thus the paradigmatic (male) terms of the Adam-Christ typology are preserved, at least apparently. Yet roughly contemporary writers such as Irenaeus of Lyons and Tertullian of Carthage tackle the problem by a different route. Rather than ultimately erasing Eve or feminine difference from the typological frame, they embrace the gendered (i.e., masculine) character of Paul’s original Adam-Christ formulation and then add to it a concomitant feminine typology: just as Christ parallels Adam in some paradigmatic and anthropologically significant way, so too does Mary parallel Eve.

As I seek to show in *Specters of Paul*, none of these “solutions” really works. That is to say, none of them delivers a fully consistent and satisfactory position—satisfactory, that is, in terms internal to what each argument sets out to do—that successfully integrates the differences of sexed bodies. In this way, the space between Adam and Christ proves to be a fraught one in the history of Christian thought, inviting (and indeed inciting) subsequent attempts to work out the place of sexual difference in typological terms, but always failing to achieve the dream of total anthropological coherence. Yet at the very least, the ways in which Christian thinkers have continued to reflect upon and wrestle with the Adam-Christ typology have had the (generally unintended) effect of keeping sexual difference *visible* as an ongoing conundrum for Christian anthropology.

Christ Without Adam

Turning back, then, to the interest in Paul among contemporary continental philosophers, this book explores the intersection of subjectivity and sexual difference in this current conversation by way of examining its treatment of the Adam-Christ typology. Here I do not attempt to be comprehensive, but rather follow a particular line of philosophical engagement with the Pauline text. I begin with the little book entitled *Saint Paul* (1988; English translation: *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul*, 2011) by Stanislas Breton. A lesser-known figure in the “turn to Paul,” Breton (1912–2005) was a Roman Catholic priest and both a philosopher and a thinker with substantial theological interests.¹⁰ He thus occupies a somewhat distinct space in a

discussion otherwise populated by non-Christian philosophers. However, Breton is important to the conversation, especially insofar as Alain Badiou acknowledges him as a key influence on his own (much better-known) contribution, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (1997; English translation, 2003).¹¹ My analysis therefore traces a thematic thread from Breton through Badiou and finally to Slavoj Žižek, whose work on Paul begins as an idiosyncratic gloss on Badiou's book. Here I seek to unpack the various ways that these three thinkers treat (or fail to treat) the Adam-Christ typology in their respective readings of Paul, with an eye to the implications for each one's model of "Pauline" subjectivity and the place of sexual difference within it.

Thus the book argues that the "Paulinisms" of Breton, Badiou, and Žižek all work either to sidestep or to collapse the anthropological interval between Adam and Christ—a move that serves as a crucial play in their various projects of articulating a putatively universal Pauline subject. This shared pursuit of a new universal ends up necessarily minimizing the significance of sexual difference. As such, I argue, these readings repeat in large part a very old gesture (one also employed by late ancient Christians), seeking to domesticate bodily difference by relegating it to a space of ostensible stability or indifference that poses no threat to the terms of the larger anthropological system. But the strategy employed by these contemporary thinkers to get there is distinctive—and it is my contention that we can see this distinctiveness most clearly by scrutinizing the role (or absence) of the figure of Adam as a typological paradigm in each one. Indeed, Adam effectively recedes in all three of these readings—though in each case in a different way and by means of a different set of interpretive or philosophical maneuvers.

So why does this matter? Paul's typology situates Adam as part of an unbreakable pair, Adam and Christ. In this way, the apostle tethers the Christ-event to the Genesis narrative and figures the relationship between the two in terms of Christ's recapitulative significance with regard to the first human being. But because in the respective biblical narratives, Adam is a man just as Christ is a man, the Pauline link between Adam and Christ raises the question of where or how to situate Eve and sexual difference—a problem that was not only clearly visible but indeed pressing to so many ancient readers of Paul. By contrast, in the philosophers' readings, the Adam-Christ typology is refigured such that *Adam plays no anthropologically significant role*. The result is that these readings either cannot see (or simply refuse to see) the force of the problem that so exercised early Christian thinking about Pauline typology. Reading Paul's anthropology in terms of Christ without Adam works to render Eve's difference putatively incidental—and thus effectively ignorable. And this, I argue, is a crucial move in propping up the problematic notion of the Pauline Christ as the paradigmatic "singular universal."

Chapter 1 thus explores the way in which Breton treats Paul's typological thinking as paramount, but simultaneously—and somewhat perplexingly—reads Adam (and, by extension, Eve) almost entirely out of the picture at every turn. That is to say, Breton is interested in foregrounding a relationship of typological significance between the new moment inaugurated by Christ and the biblical past. But in his consideration

of this relationship, the figure of Adam receives no meaningful attention. This erasure of Adam obtains not simply in Breton's treatment of Pauline passages, but even when he offers an interpretation of the Genesis creation story. In this way, Breton delves into a deeply Pauline theological logic that insists upon an interplay between creation and eschaton, but does so in a register that fails to treat the actual human characters of the creation account in any substantive way. The result is a "Pauline" economy in which Adam plays no part, propped up by a truncated typological vision that acknowledges only the primacy of Christ.

In [chapter 2](#), I turn to Badiou, who advances a reading of Paul that keeps Adam in view but minimizes his anthropological relevance. According to Badiou, Adam's only role in Paul's thought is to function as a placeholder for the invention of death, thereby rendering legible (if oddly incidental) Christ's crucifixion, which is figured as nothing more than participation in the human sphere of death. Underscoring the aspect of Paul's thought that really matters to him—Christ's invention of life in the resurrection—Badiou treats the typological link between the two figures in only the weakest of terms. This, I contend, is part of a larger project that animates Badiou's book—one in which he displaces the Pauline play of difference *and continuity* in favor of the putatively total and radical rupture of the event that institutes the new universal subject. And yet, I argue, here Badiou's theory of the subject remains haunted by sexual difference, and this haunting is partially visible in Badiou's (unacknowledged) alignment of mysticism, excess, and the feminine.

[Chapter 3](#) continues this line of inquiry with respect to the work of Slavoj Žižek, paying particular attention to the development of Žižek's thought from his earliest work on Paul in *The Ticklish Subject* (1999) to the more fully articulated position laid out in *The Puppet and the Dwarf* (2003).¹² Here I trace the peculiarly Žižekian set of Hegelian-inspired moves by which the Pauline interval between Adam and Christ is collapsed. Through these elaborate hermeneutical maneuvers, Žižek works his way to the counterintuitive conclusion that "Adam and Christ *are one and the same*."¹³ If Adam "is" Christ in this Hegelian sense, I argue, then while Žižek continues to allow the representative function of these paradigmatic figures, the corporate identification that matters is nevertheless really only with Christ. Accordingly, the figure of Christ emerges as the paradigm of the "singular universal," while any possible anthropological challenge represented by Eve recedes. Unsurprisingly, she is figured only as Adam's inconsequential companion in the primal scene of perversity (perversion, in a specific technical sense, being the central matter at issue in Žižek's reading of Genesis 3).

On the whole, then, my analysis identifies in each of these three philosophical interpretations of Paul a significant (if not necessarily conscious or intentional) alignment between a specific reading strategy with regard to the figure of Adam and the treatment of sexual difference as indifferent or incidental to a theory of the universal Pauline subject. On the one hand, we see the move to expunge, minimize, or otherwise redirect Adam's anthropological particularity and import. On the other hand, and in a structurally related way, sexual difference fails to materialize in all of these

readings as a question with any kind of explicit or acknowledged force—a force, that is, that might trouble the claims to coherence and universality on the part of the subjectivities being propounded.

It thus seems necessary to recall a point made by another contemporary philosophical interpreter of Paul, Giorgio Agamben, in *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (2000; English translation, 2005): Paul's typological formulations articulate not absolute newness but rather *relationship*, an interplay of past time and messianic time, sameness and difference, continuity and transformation. Therefore, the Pauline event cannot be figured as a total and radical break—and concomitantly, Adam's anthropological particularity cannot and should not be effaced. As Agamben rightly argues,

Through the concept of *typos*, Paul establishes a relation, which we may from this point on call a typological relation, between every event from a past time and *ho nyn kairos*, messianic time. [It] follows that in Romans 5:14, Adam, through whom sin has entered the world, is defined as *typos tou mellontos*, the “figure of the future,” meaning, the figure of the Messiah through whom grace will abound for men ... a tension that clasps together and transforms past and future, *typos* and *antitypos*, in an inseparable constellation.¹⁴

For Agamben then (and on this issue, I would argue, he stands in substantial agreement with the typological logic of the Pauline text), there is no antitype without type, no Christ without Adam. The two paradigmatic figures need to be thought together, as an “inseparable constellation.”

This specific point regarding typology proves to be consonant with Agamben's broader treatment of universalism in *The Time That Remains*. Positioning his analysis in large part as a critique of Badiou's universal Pauline subject, Agamben instead maintains that “for Paul, it is not a matter of ‘tolerating’ or getting past differences in order to pinpoint a sameness or a universal lurking beyond. The universal is not a transcendent principle through which differences may be perceived. ... Rather, this ‘transcendental’ involves an operation that divides the divisions of the law themselves and renders them inoperative, without ever reaching any final ground.”¹⁵ For Agamben then, the apostle's intervention does not set aside or move past divisions, but rather multiplies them and radicalizes their force, producing not a principle of identity “above cuts and divisions,” but rather “division of divisions”—and always with it, some remainder.¹⁶ In this way, he argues for a messianic openness to Paul's thought, rooted in the failure of every identity to ever coincide fully with itself (“The messianic vocation separates every *klêsis* from itself, engendering a tension within itself, without ever providing it with some other identity”)¹⁷—thus the inevitable necessity of a messianic remnant that “exceeds the eschatological all, and irremediably so.”¹⁸

With respect to the more focused problem of typology and sexual difference,

Agamben has no more to offer than Breton, Badiou, or Žižek—but, I suggest, for a different set of reasons. Insofar as Agamben's reflections on universalism in *The Time That Remains* are situated primarily with an eye to conclusions not about anthropology or identity politics but rather about messianism and temporality, the relationship between the universal and the body is not really at issue. Furthermore (and along these same lines), because his Paul book is a narrowly focused study of Romans rather than an investigation of Pauline thought more broadly, it never engages the relevant passages from 1 Corinthians 15 that interweave the Adam-Christ typological framework with ruminations on the situation and destiny of the body.

More generally, Agamben has been rightly critiqued by feminist critics for his failure to engage embodiment and bodily difference in substantial ways. Yet at the same time, some have noted that significant aspects of his work may be appropriated in ways that are useful for feminist projects.¹⁹ Following the lead of these critics, I find Agamben's emphasis on Paul's messianic openness with respect to identity to be a helpful one—and indeed a position that bears certain affinities with the constructive anthropological argument that I will advance (*pace* Breton, Badiou, and Žižek) in the final chapter of this book. Thus my analysis there and elsewhere will draw upon certain concepts and theoretical formulations of Agamben's where appropriate, though not primarily from *The Time That Remains*, given the different set of concerns that animate that book.

POLITICAL THEOLOGY, THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, AND THE PAULINE SUBJECT

While twentieth-century continental philosophers and theorists had given attention to Paul's writings prior to the 1980s, Jacob Taubes's Heidelberg lectures from 1987 are often credited with jumpstarting the current resurgence of interest.²⁰ Taubes characterized his interpretation of the apostle as a study in "political theology," positioning it as a critical engagement with the project of the same name undertaken by the conservative German legal theorist Carl Schmitt.²¹ "Political theology" in this sense is primarily concerned with the question of sovereignty, and thus it should be understood as distinct from (if not entirely unrelated to) progressive and radical Christian theological projects with avowedly political dimensions (e.g., liberation theology).²² But as Elizabeth Castelli rightly notes, political theology construed in this way "has emerged as a preeminent theoretical category in the first decade of the twenty-first century." As such, the category has significantly determined the shape of the "massive cottage industry of commentary" that the so-called philosophical turn to Paul has generated.²³

The present book is not primarily an exercise in this mode of political theology. Rather, its goal is to make an intervention in contemporary Christian discussions of theological anthropology. Here I define theological anthropology as speculation on the nature and meaning of what it is to be human, in (often critical) dialogue with the

concepts, terms, and intellectual resources of the Christian tradition.²⁴ And yet my argument proceeds by way of analyzing a philosophical conversation that is decidedly *political* in its concerns, taken up with the project of articulating a Pauline theory of the subject that could prove usable for the contemporary purposes of radical leftist politics. Apropos of this perspective is Agamben's now famous comment (as well as its reuse by Žižek) that "Saint Paul only became readable" in the twentieth century.²⁵ In this view, neoapocalyptic tremors presage what, on Žižek's diagnosis, is "the self-propelling explosive spiral of global capitalism ... [pointing toward] a moment of (social, ecological, even subjective) collapse, in which total dynamism, frantic activity, will coincide with a deeper immobility."²⁶ And in this dire political moment, the Pauline text becomes uniquely legible—precisely because of the resources that it may offer us for a new theory of the subject in the twilight of late capitalism.

However, while I do not in any way want to minimize pressing concerns about the excesses and brutalities of late capitalism and globalization, my contention is that these philosophical attempts to read political subjectivity out of Paul engender claims about the subject that are not only political but also anthropological—and that in fact the two registers are always already implicated in each other and as such cannot be cleanly or easily separated. Thus I want to resist the kind of "shell" and "kernel" thinking (also expressed as a form/essence dichotomy) that informs Žižek's reading of Paul—wherein a theological, religious, or institutional shell (ultimately superfluous) is seen as housing the strictly political, radical kernel of Paul's thought. Indeed, such a distinction especially needs to be refused when it implicitly sets Pauline theological speculations and the materialist political dimensions of Christian thought in an overly rigid relationship of contrast or opposition.²⁷ Rather, I maintain that theological anthropology—as an exercise in theorizing the shape, boundaries, and significance of the human—is precisely the domain in which Paul's thought shows itself to be both speculative (in an overtly theological sense) and irreducibly material (in the sense that attends the materiality of bodies), an interrelation whose political dimensions call for critical interrogation.

Accordingly, I consider the philosophical articulations of Pauline subjectivity examined in this book to be an entirely appropriate and indeed important set of interlocutors for the project of contemporary Christian theological anthropology. [Chapter 4](#) therefore turns to this project, continuing in conversation with Breton, Badiou, and Žižek but in a constructive theological vein—in this case a queer and feminist one that is indebted in philosophical terms primarily to Judith Butler. Here I assert that Christian theological anthropology needs to continue to engage the vexed terms of the Pauline Adam-Christ typology in its theorizing of (sexed) subject positions—Christ *and* Adam, as well as, by extension, the trace of the never quite totally erased figure of Eve. This is not because the typology can ever be an unequivocally positive or unproblematic resource to be reclaimed. Rather, the typology's inevitable failure to resolve its own gendered aporias continually renders visible the crisis of coherence that attends *all* forms of sexual identification, masquerading as stable and natural, in a Pauline theological economy, and so also

troubles the claim to the singular universal made by these putatively “new” political theologies.

Reading Anthropology in Breton's *Saint Paul*

In the prologue to his book-length study of Paul, Alain Badiou offers a passing mention of “Stanislas Breton’s robust little book, *Saint Paul*,” as an important interlocutor for his own project.¹ This “robust little book” has only recently appeared in English (retitled *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul*), and is thus just beginning to have a significant impact within Anglophone scholarship on the continental “turn” to Paul.² As noted in the previous chapter, Breton was a Roman Catholic priest, and therefore had a direct investment in the Christian tradition quite different from Badiou or Žižek. Yet even as his work in many ways troubles the disciplinary boundary between theology and philosophy, in a interview in 1982, he positioned himself as a Christian thinker within the philosophical guild over and against theology: “I would be prepared to consider myself a ‘Christian’ philosopher. But I would insist that philosophy and theology are separate, if equally valid, disciplines of thought. Whereas the theologian can presuppose the Christian tradition as a series of Revealed doctrines, the philosopher—even the Christian philosopher—cannot. The theologian believes truth is given, the philosopher goes in search of it.”³ While one could take issue with this rather wooden and monolithic definition of “theology” (a discipline understood by many of its academic practitioners today as an irreducibly critical intellectual enterprise that does not presuppose truth as “given”), the point is that Breton understood his readings of Christian texts to have decidedly philosophical purchase.

With respect to Paul specifically, Ward Blanton’s important introduction to *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul* argues that Breton “presents us with a figure of Paul, described in relation to Western philosophical, theological, and political history, that helps us to understand the fundamental paradox of recent readings of Paul: that the self-proclaimed apostle of a resurrected Christ would stand in as perhaps the best indication, the shortest pathway, to a theory of subjectivity that is avowedly *materialist*.”⁴ Elaborating on this claim, Blanton draws attention to Breton’s close connections to (and intellectual affinities with) Louis Althusser, and also to the ways in which his “Paulinism” anticipates important aspects of not only Badiou’s but also Agamben’s and Žižek’s arguments. Blanton thereby decisively situates Breton’s work on Paul within the current philosophical discussion.

Yet on Blanton’s reading, Breton’s interpretation of Paul is far more than a mere precursor to later, more fully developed positions. It is rather, on its own terms, a rich, novel, and unpredictable philosophical resource that “invites a necessarily vertiginous form of meditation.” Accordingly, Blanton contends, “At a moment when

variously pre-scripted and readymade identities claim to determine theory or always already to have oriented freedom like so many safely gated neighborhoods, Breton's philosophical encounter with Paul invites us to think otherwise, and in thinking otherwise to find ourselves living 'a more difficult freedom.'"⁵ It is this invitation to think subjectivity "otherwise"—yet in terms that remain resolutely Pauline—that this chapter will analyze and interrogate.

Here I will attend specifically to the set of issues outlined in the introduction: typology, the character of Adam, embodiment, and sexual difference, as they figure (or fail to figure) in Breton's reading of Paul. As we will see, typology broadly construed—that is, as a mode of articulating a meaningful relationship between Paul's messianic present and the biblical past—is central to Breton's interpretation. Also central to his reading is the importance of creation and its interrelation with resurrection and eschatology—a deeply Pauline notion. Yet these points notwithstanding, Breton's typological orientation is characterized by a thoroughgoing Christocentrism that effectively ignores the anthropological significance of Adam. Indeed, to a greater degree than either of the other two philosophers examined in this book, Breton presents a theory of Pauline subjectivity in large part shaped by a Christ entirely without Adam. The result, I argue, is a reading of creation and resurrection as poles of anthropological orientation that refigures *both* in terms of singularity—that is, the singularity of Christ. It is this singularity that gives rise to the possibility of Breton's universal Pauline subject, but that also works to neutralize any force that sexual difference might carry as a central anthropological problematic, relegating it instead (at least apparently) to the sphere of the inconsequential and indifferent.

ALLEGORY AND TYPOLOGY

Breton's reading of Paul places what he terms the Pauline "allegorical method" at its center. In view here is not allegory in its broadest sense, but rather a hermeneutic driven and defined by a concern with questions of time and history. For Breton, this is a method that is irreducibly linked to a "christic" narrative, communicating the "economy of salvation" (65) as it unfolds historically. While allegorical techniques appear frequently in the texts of Hellenistic and Neo-Platonic thinkers, the particularly Pauline mode of allegory that interests Breton here is "deployed along a temporal dimension from a perspective according to which the 'God who is' (or 'the One who is,' which has sometimes been made the divine name par excellence) is also and above all the 'God who comes'" (57). The "necessary reciprocity" (60) of God's eternal being and God's temporal action in history provides the conceptual underpinnings for this apostolic reading strategy.

In what way does this play out? Breton notes that to read and interpret the complex history of the Jewish people (as recorded in their scriptures) is to engage in a project of selection. And he does not begrudge Paul "[making] ample use of his right to choose" (62). Not engaging in a rigorously systematic application of an

allegorical hermeneutic, Paul instead selects and privileges particular figures and events from the Jewish scriptures for rereading according to a relatively simple principle: “These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come” (1 Corinthians 10:11, NRSV). In accordance with this principle, certain “chosen fragments” (62) from the Jewish scriptures work better than others as fodder for generating idealized Christian models (or antimodels). And Paul reads accordingly.

Yet this is not all. There is more to the relationship that Paul works to forge here than just a straightforward exemplarity. In addition, his method forcibly conjures an even more robust, theologically significant, and intimate correlation between different figures and events along a temporal axis. This hermeneutical force that Paul unleashes moves in two directions. First, from the Christ-event into the past: “‘Life in Christ,’ by the intensity of its exultant fervor, is spontaneously converted ... into a perceptual *a priori*. It opens up a horizon, making possible the appearance of a world” (63). Breton aligns this world in a provisional (or perhaps superficial?) sense with the mundane past of the Jewish people, but he sees little here of significant interest for Paul. Rather, the point is the surprising and transformative power of this backward-reading hermeneutical operation: “It is this history whose terrain is covered ‘in reverse’ and which begins to take shape as it is illuminated by that light whose name we know” (63). This is an act of retrospective interpretive force “whose length is not fixed in advance,” and thus it is potentially capricious, but it also preserves a sense of breathless openness to new possibilities for the meaning of the past, now refigured “in Christ.”

The second direction or temporal trajectory of this Pauline hermeneutic is from the past into the future. So Breton argues, “the events and figures are not merely the concern of the past. The gaze that parses their contours enshrouds them in a discreet aura of annunciation. All of them prefigure a future that is inscribed in their being like an inspired scripture or a prophetic word and that exceeds the limits of space-time” (63–64). In this way, meaning reverberates forward, at once already refigured by the long shadow that the “God who comes” casts backward into history and at the same time bearing down relentlessly in the direction of its goal: “en route ‘toward Christ.’ This *being-toward* reflects a restlessness of transit” (64). This restlessness indicates hermeneutical dynamism and movement, but also instability. And here Breton identifies what he terms an “excess”—an overabundance of meaning that cannot quite be contained in the quotidian order of signification, and that thus “makes the identity of these events tremble.” This is an excess to which we will need to return.

Together, these two movements constitute what Breton calls “typology”—a more precise and thus probably more helpful term than “allegory” for the mode of hermeneutics that he seeks to explicate.⁶ Both movements are necessary, according to Breton, to ensure the full integrity of the relationship that Paul’s mode of reading puts into play: “The new, that is to say Christ and his light, needs the shadow that ensures to him, as the horizon of the past, a depth of duration. The old, unfolding in history, only achieves clarity in light of the advent of Jesus” (64). And indeed, Breton

makes clear that even drawing the distinction between the two movements at all—while perhaps helpful at a particular moment for heuristic reasons—is ultimately of limited usefulness: “Where we might distinguish two movements, the allegorical method invites us to discern the correlative aspects of a single process, for the *going back* toward the past is also, and indissolubly, the *moving forward* of the past toward ‘the One who comes’” (67). Thus a doubleness of movement resolves itself (or, rather, reveals itself to have always been) a unity—but not in the sense of “a dreary repetition of the same” (67). While Breton sees clearly the danger of tautology (“If *x* implies *y* and if *y* implies *x*, how to avoid the conclusion that *x* implies *x*?”), insofar as “allegorical hermeneutics proposes a widening of the christic present,” it is never a simple reduplication, but always a more complicated interplay of repetition and difference (67, 68). As envisioned by Paul, Jesus is alive and present in the community through the spirit—and typology enriches the layers of signification by which that presence is known in history.

Specific examples multiply quickly, including Hagar and Sarah in Galatians 4, Adam in Romans 5, and the Exodus in 1 Corinthians 10 (62–63). (Note that this is the first and only mention of Adam in the book—a point I will expand upon below.) With respect to these examples, Breton stresses the need to be attentive to the historical and typological particularities of different moments in Israel’s history: “Each epoch has a singular style of anticipation. Abraham is not Moses. The time of kings, dominated by the figure of David, is not that of the Babylonian exile” (65). In this way, as an interpreter of Jewish scripture, Paul must look to each historical moment for its own specific and original contributions to the dynamism of the larger typological project. Breton figures this dynamism—this play of differences—as additive, each difference augmenting the larger cumulative picture. Yet the ultimate result is not salvation-historical cacophony. Rather, the function of “time, imagined as scriptural space,” is to “[integrate] the differences inscribed within it as it moves along” (65). In this way, typology’s particularities moving through time gradually paint a unified picture: out of shadows and outlines, Christ’s “self-portrait” emerges.

ABRAHAM OVER ADAM

Having established allegory—and, more specifically, typology—as central to Pauline hermeneutics, Breton then turns to the place of Jesus Christ in Paul’s theology: Who does Paul understand Christ to be? How does he conceptualize the relationship between Jesus as Lord and the ongoing movement of history? Breton’s answer, not surprisingly, hinges on the historical implications of the Pauline allegorical register: “The hermeneutics of allegory offers us the basics of a response to this question. Jesus is the one who *had to come* [*Celui qui devait venir*]. ... ‘Lord of history’ therefore signifies a *principle of unity* in the double sense of decisive impulse and regulating orientation. Framed in this way, from downstream and upstream, in multiple figurations, the course of things obeys an order that comes from further away and

higher above” (79). The Lordship of Christ reverberates in both directions along a temporal axis, conclusively regulating and unifying events along that axis with respect to an orienting horizon that transcends history.

Yet whence the sense of necessity or obligation? Why is Jesus the one who *had* to come? At this point, a crucial lacuna in Breton’s reading of Paul—the primary subject of this chapter—begins to come into view. Most straightforwardly, an allusion to the biblical text seems to be in play here. With respect to the gospel tradition, both Matthew and Luke make use of language to describe the Christ that points to a seemingly inevitable future coming. In Matthew 11:3, John the Baptist sends his disciples to inquire of Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come [*ho erchomenos*], or are we to wait for another?” (NRSV; compare Luke 7:18–19). And Paul also makes use of a similar—though not identical—formulation. Note, however, that the apostle sets it within a very specific theological project: the typological explanation of the relationship between Adam and Christ: “Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come [*hos estin typos tou mellontos*]” (Rom 5:14, NRSV).

These biblical formulations imply necessity, and Breton’s allusive gesture to them rhetorically emphasizes and underscores that necessity. Beyond rhetorical presentation, however, such necessity would also seem to be implied by the fundamental logic of Paul’s theological position. For Paul too, Christ had to come, precisely because it is the typological *relationship* between the two figures, Adam and Christ, that functions for the apostle as the matrix in and through which God brings salvation: “if the many died through the one human’s trespass [*tō tou henos paraptōmati*], much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one human [*en chariti tē tou henos anthrōpou*], Jesus Christ, abounded for the many” (Rom 5:15, NRSV, translation slightly modified). While Paul’s emphasis in the Romans passage is on the contrast between the two figures, at the same time, he by no means renders Adam irrelevant. On the contrary, as argued in the introduction, Paul’s notion of the Christian subject is situated between creation and eschaton—looking backward to the representative function of Adam and what it means to bear his image, stamped on the human subject at creation, even as it also looks forward to the redemptive refiguring of that image in Christ (compare 1 Cor 15:49). Thus for Paul himself, Jesus is indeed the one who *had* to come, but the necessity in view is cast in very specific typological terms.

Yet the apostle we discover in Breton’s *A Radical Philosophy of St. Paul* is not interested in the character of Adam. Indeed, Adam is mentioned only once in the entire book. This occurs in a passage already referenced, in which Breton briskly enumerates a few representative examples from the Pauline typological catalog: the Sarah-Hagar allegory of Galatians 4, Adam as “the figure of the one who was to come” in Romans 5, and the treatment of the Exodus in 1 Corinthians 10 (62–63). But within this list, Adam is not marked as being of any particularly unique importance, be it typological, theological, or anthropological. All of these examples, Adam included,

simply illustrate the larger point about exemplarity that Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 10. As Breton mentions rather casually, “We could multiply the citations” (63). Here the particular differences between allegorical examples recede in importance; Adam is given no pride of place in Paul’s typological framework or its relationship to his implicit theory of anthropology.

Similarly in Breton’s discussion of Jesus as the one to come, Adam does not figure, despite the fact that the first human being is crucially important in the Romans text that characterizes Christ in this way (5:14). Instead, Breton turns to questions of covenant and law, and as such, his interest centers on another biblical character—namely, Abraham. Thus he argues, “From the biblical point of view, history is not neutral. It is the history of a Covenant” (79). Given this relentless focus on covenantal history, Breton contends, Paul is not concerned with speculating in the abstract on philosophical problems such as the one and the many. Rather, he engages this perduring philosophical conundrum in a specific form—the universal and the particular—by means of a critique of the Law: “the scandal that irritates [Paul] is instead the conflict between the simplicity of the essential, whose formulation he reiterates, and the aberrant proliferation that ends up concealing the essential” (87). This conflict between “the essential” and its concealment finds specific expression in the fact that the Law is not universal. Insofar as the Gentiles exist outside its purview, it is of no consequence how many individual commands and prescriptions proliferate to constitute the Law in its entirety. Instead, what matters is the necessarily “limited reach of [the Law’s] jurisdiction” (88). And here no biblical personage better illustrates the point than Abraham—at once both belonging to the genealogy of Israel and yet also bearing witness to a “more radical authority” that preceded the Law, “the persistent reality of a ‘pre-nomic’ element” (88), or as Paul puts it in Galatians, “the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal 3:14, NRSV).

Thus within Breton’s reading of the larger Pauline typological schema, Abraham is set in stark contrast to Moses, the paradigmatic lawgiver. The presence of Abraham’s narrative within those traditions of Israel that are represented as prior to the Law “signifies within the history of Israel itself another dimension that the prestige of Moses cannot erase” (90). Or a bit later: “While remaining in solidarity with Israel in the prehistory of its patriarchs, at the outset but also in virtue of its history’s allegorical figuration, faith no longer bears allegiance to the prestige of Moses” (92–93). By means of this contrast between Abraham and Moses—metonymic representatives of all that is signified by “faith” and “Law” respectively—Breton thereby elevates Abraham to the pinnacle of typological significance: “Although many figures within the old Covenant announce the coming of Christ, there is among them one who, for Paul, incarnates the model of an attitude of faith par excellence. The case of Abraham was, for Paul, an inexhaustible subject for thought” (91). In this way, the central importance of Adam to the argument being made in Romans 5 is rendered invisible, and Breton’s allusion to Romans 5:14 (Jesus as “the one who was to come”) proves to be situated within the scope of one and only one theological problematic: not the ambiguous status of human beings caught in the typological interplay between

creation and eschaton, but the apparent conflict between Law on the one hand and the complex of faith, promise, and grace on the other.⁷ And under the terms of the latter, Abraham is indeed a seemingly limitless hermeneutical resource.

Accordingly, Breton contends, Paul does not eliminate such conventionally narrow, localized, and territorial notions as “election” and “promise,” but instead broadens their scope so as to encompass (at least potentially) everyone and everything: “Put differently, he universalizes both of them. Election and promise will, from now on, be the hope of all” (93). This is not a particularly new move in the history of interpreting Paul’s theology. Indeed, Blanton calls attention to “the presence of Rudolf Bultmann” in Breton’s treatment of Paul—a presence also felt in Badiou’s book.⁸ While we will turn to Badiou’s Paul in [chapter 2](#), not that Breton is original here, but rather that the specific way in which he arrives at this version of Paul as “apostle of the universal” needs to be interrogated—and its implications considered. By taking two quite distinct typological arguments—Romans 5 and Galatians 3—and implicitly using the latter argument to delimit and reimagine the former (in a way, I would argue, that does some interpretive violence to the text), Breton effectively displaces Adam from any ongoing theological significance.

Hence Abraham, Breton’s allegorical representative of the “Christian” universal over the “Jewish” particular, emerges as the Pauline typological figure par excellence. This skews the subsequent citation of Galatians 3:28 (“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus,” NRSV) in the direction of the specific issue that Breton’s Abraham represents. In Christ, then, the universal saturates and overflows the particular, but the “ardor of this momentum” finds its significance for Breton primarily along an Abrahamic axis: Law versus faith. Concomitantly, out of the various binaries that Galatians 3:28 enumerates, the one most directly related to the question of the Law’s particularity comes to the fore: Jew versus Greek (93).⁹ In this way, Jewish/Gentile difference stands in synecdochically for *all* difference, with the result that Breton can conclude, “Distinctions therefore no longer have the importance that we have given them. ... With this universality we approach the supreme quality of faith, to which Paul returns again and again, to wit, freedom” (93).

As we will see in the next chapter, this nexus of interpretive moves will be of the utmost importance for Alain Badiou’s reading of Paul—albeit, inherited from Breton in a form that has become assumed rather than argued for exegetically. However, it should not be forgotten that these moves are not inevitable (nor, I maintain, are they politically and theologically innocent). Instead, they represent—at least in Breton’s case—a contingent and highly idiosyncratic reading of the Pauline typological edifice. Unsurprisingly, Breton closes this section of his meditation on Paul with yet another appeal to Abraham: “the true Christian is one who knows how to rediscover the novelty of his faith in the shadow of the ancient patriarch” (94–95). Granted, the shadow of Abraham does loom long in Paul’s argument. But there are other typological shadows in the apostle’s theological universe—most pressingly, of course, the shadow of Adam, the primordial type to Christ’s antitype.

What then becomes of Galatians 3:28 (and specifically the erasure of *male and female* difference) when read in the shadow cast by Adam rather than by Abraham? In terms of theological anthropology, where might such difference fit—whether preserved, resolved, collapsed, or erased—in a typological framework defined around the bodies of Adam and Christ? As discussed in the introduction, this was a problem that haunted many of Paul’s earliest Christian interpreters and has continued to trouble the history of the tradition. But in Breton’s reading, it becomes seemingly invisible or irrelevant. While not necessarily ascribing any conscious intent to Breton here, I would like to suggest nonetheless that the interpretive result fits a certain pattern of thought—one that we will also see operative (if in somewhat different forms) in the “Paulinisms” of Badiou and Žižek. Thus Abraham’s displacement of Adam intensifies the urgency of the distinction between Law and faith, while the aporias of other registers of difference—among them, and most important for my purposes, sexual difference—necessarily recede.

CREATION, COSMOS, RESURRECTION

I do not mean to imply that Breton is uninterested in creation or the interplay of protology and eschatology in his interpretation of Paul. And yet, I will argue, his reading of creation and cosmos—following as it does on the heels of the argument for Abraham’s typological preeminence—is awkward in its avoidance of the creation story’s two central human characters, Adam and Eve. Here Breton shows a marked concern for Paul’s depiction of “the world” (*ho kosmos*), a notion that cannot be understood apart from “the biblical elements that supported this discourse as a kind of inheritance”—that is, the creation story as given in the book of Genesis (99). But in Breton’s hands, the story becomes strangely depopulated. It is a tale whose purpose is to link the being of the world and the meaning of actions in history (101–2), thereby subtending a more specific Christological conclusion: the “LORD of history” and the “Lord of the world” are in fact one and the same Lord, Jesus Christ (96).¹⁰ Creation itself testifies to this state of affairs, the starting point for a vector that will traverse the full length of the cosmic history.

Thus in Breton’s reading of the opening chapters of Genesis, “what clearly emerges in the beginning is, in the first place, the universality of an omnipotence that nothing escapes and which is called ‘being’” (100). Breton conceives of this encompassing totality as “less an object than a sphere of expansion,” one that comes to be differentiated through God’s creative *fiat*. Being, then, is no simple or flat monism, but neither is it a play of differences careening recklessly out of control. Rather, at the idealized primordial moment, “Order, before being the object of speculation and a subject for contestation and argument, has the energy of a commandment. ... [E]ach element in the cosmic ensemble incorporates an imperative that gives it its destination” (101). God’s “let there be,” in other words, embeds a volition within both “being” writ large and individual beings—“an obedient echo” that

points unremittingly toward a divinely ordained teleological conclusion.

In this way, Breton is able to find the basic hermeneutical assumptions of Pauline typology in the opening moments of Genesis: “correlation of being and meaning, of meaning and finality, of finality and mission or vocation” (101). And Paul’s life and work, in response to God’s call, embody these correlations and the dynamic apostolic action that they give rise to. While Breton sees some version of these connections operative not only in Paul’s thought but also in Thomism, the most basic and important payoff that emerges here is the notion that the being of the created world, the actions done within that world (past and future), and the meaning of those actions form an indissoluble nexus. The result, then, is “the universal primacy of a teleology, now inseparable from a ‘theology’” (102)—an appraisal of the cosmos that is, so Breton argues, testified to by the book of Genesis.

But what is at stake in this hermeneutical unity that characterizes “the world”? Breton notes that as articulated thus far, it remains, in the unfolding of Paul’s thought, “relatively abstract” (102). Yet in order to render this unity more concretely immanent, Breton turns not to Paul’s typological uptake of the very tangible story of human creation from Genesis 1–3, but rather to a somewhat unexpected scriptural resource—the Christological hymn found in Colossians 1:15–20:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (NRSV)

Now as is well known, the Pauline provenance of Colossians is dubious—a fact that Breton hurriedly acknowledges (“inspired by Paul if not written with his own hand,” 103) before moving on.¹¹ Colossians 1 would therefore seem to be quite tenuous textual ground for fleshing out “the Pauline cosmos” in concrete terms. So why make this move? I propose that this recourse to a (probably) non-Pauline textual lynchpin proves too tempting to resist within the terms of Breton’s larger project, insofar as it allows him to read the typological interplay of creation and eschaton entirely in terms of the primacy of Christ and only Christ. That is to say, the Colossians passage fuels a redirecting of the Pauline correlation between creation and resurrection. No longer a typological interplay between first Adam and second Adam, the correlation is now defined by Christ alone, “firstborn of all creation” and “firstborn from the dead.”

Let me unpack this claim in further detail. Colossians 1:15–20 is a text saturated with allusions to Genesis 1. The declaration that “He is the image of the invisible God,

the firstborn of all creation” recalls God’s initial creation of humanity: “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion. ... So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:26–27, NRSV). Breton rightly notes that the Colossians text’s reference to a primal human being created in God’s image is mediated through the later Hellenistic Jewish wisdom tradition (he specifically cites a passage from the Wisdom of Solomon: “For she [i.e., Wisdom] is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness,” Wis 7:26, NRSV). But it should not be forgotten that this tradition is itself heavily invested in exegetical speculation on the opening chapters of Genesis. Accordingly, then, Colossians 1:15 rereads the anthropology of Genesis 1:27 as Christological. While making no specific claims to Christ’s *created* nature, the text nonetheless evokes the Genesis 1 tableau, presenting him as the paradigmatic offspring and image of the divine. For Breton, what matters here is that in both Genesis and Colossians, the notion of the image/*eikōn* is a dynamic one. With respect to the creational mandate, “the image is not an inert epiphenomenon. It is in solidarity with a power that extends to the earth as to heaven, incorporating an imperative to dominate.” And similarly, the application of the divine *eikōn* to Christ reflects an equivalent dynamism (104).

This dynamic movement points inexorably forward from creation toward an eschatological fulfillment in the form of resurrection and reconciliation. Here Breton zeroes in on the parallelism between “the firstborn” (*prōtotokos*) in the context of creation and the repetition of this term in Colossians 1:18: “he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.” In contrast to the order of creation, this latter use of the term introduces the order of resurrection, evoking Christ’s headship over the church and primacy and fullness with respect to the entire cosmos. The two senses of *prōtotokos* thereby serve to frame the movement of the cosmic drama, bookending it definitively in terms of creation and resurrection: “In Paul’s language, a transcendent destiny carries the ‘firstborn’ of Creation to the ‘firstborn from among the dead’” (110). But the overlap of these two senses of *prōtotokos* also has a mediatorial function:

the “mediator” brings together the contrary or distant “natures” in his dual unity, in order that he might bring about a possible alliance between them. ... He “participates” in both, to take up the unsatisfactory yet time-honored expression used to name the situation of the median and its difficult equilibrium. ... In this regard, the keyword “firstborn” is the middle term allowing us to connect distinct modes within a single, selfsame excellence. (106, 109–110)

Christ is therefore the beginning, the middle, and the end; or, as Colossians 3:11 puts it (not cited by Breton here), “Christ is all and in all!” (NRSV).

These reflections on Colossians 1, taken together with the previous exploration of

allegory and typology, provide the platform for Breton to articulate his understanding of a Pauline “economy of salvation” or “salvation history.” Having asserted Christ’s lordship over history in the earlier discussion of allegory, Breton subsequently reads Colossians 1 in terms of Christ’s lordship over both the cosmos and the church. He can then offer a pronouncement on how these three modes of lordship cohere: “*nature, history, and Church* are taken together in a single selfsame movement called *salvation history*. ... From the highest point to the lowest on the ontological ladder, a single groaning, transmitted from one level to another, proclaims that the essence of the world is simply freedom” (117; compare Romans 8:19–25). Thus the created cosmos and human history prove to be inextricably linked—a link that begins at creation with human domination and the will to power (119, 124), but that yearns forward toward another order, “a desire that would be the unconscious form of a *hope*” (117). This hope, Breton explains, is the “single impulse that animates the universe” (120). As a result, the will to power is not the last word. Rather, “beyond all will to power, the ‘revelation of the Sons of God’ to a human face and to the ‘face of the world’ is a completely gratuitous work, a celebratory ‘praise’ to his ‘glory and grace.’” What will this “beyond,” this revelation of the Sons of God look like? “It seems impossible to know anything about it” (122). Words would seem to fail in the face of such a mystery, allowing only “a glimpse of the enigma of accomplishment ... which unveils the divine filiation of man and the universe” without being able to capture or explicate it definitively.

And yet there are words, or at least, Paul has some—and these can be found in the celebrated fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. Not surprisingly, then, this is a text Breton cannot ignore. Indeed he rehearses the Pauline notion of hope by citing 1 Corinthians 15:55–57: “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (NRSV). Furthermore, he acknowledges that “Paul resigns himself with difficulty to the *docta ignorantia* with which he is sometimes credited” and does in fact offer words expounding on this mystery, in the form of a reflection on the “spiritual body”: “For our logical practices, this exceptionally strange expression arouses the suspicion of contradiction, or worse yet, of a ‘non-sense’ endorsed by a superstitious imagination” (122). Here Paul’s reflections appear suspect to Breton, delving as the apostle does into apparently irrational or possibly even specious anthropological speculations on the nature of the human body, both created and resurrected (see 1 Corinthians 15:35–44).

Breton makes an uneasy peace with this disagreeable textual moment by suggesting that “we might be permitted to read in this paradoxical formulation the exhortation to go beyond the familiar categories of body and spirit, of thought and extension, toward a more fundamental reality of which these are the human modes of manifestation” (122).¹² But he is clearly uncomfortable with Paul’s discussion in this portion of the passage, preferring to focus on earlier verses of the chapter that are both stirring in their cosmological grandeur and less messily anthropological: “For he [i.e., Christ] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy

to be destroyed is death. ... When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to the one who put all things in subjection under him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:25–26, 28, NRSV). By citing this (highly circumscribed) section of the chapter, Breton keeps the "enigma of cosmic hope" firmly center stage (123). He also keeps the story of creation, resurrection, and their interplay as one in which—following the script of Colossians 1:15–20—Christ is the only theologically and anthropologically significant character.

However—as will be obvious to any reader familiar with the Pauline corpus—this is an extremely selective reading of 1 Corinthians 15. Just as Breton's treatment of creation and cosmos, by turning to Colossians 1, avoids any explicit mention of Adam (or, for that matter, Eve), so too does his reading of 1 Corinthians 15 celebrate the centrality of Christ while passing over the suggestive, if vexed, interplay of Christology and anthropology that characterizes the chapter:

Thus it is written, the first human, Adam, became a living being; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ... The first human was from the earth, a human of dust; the second human is from heaven. As was the human of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the human of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the human of dust, we will also bear the image of the human of heaven." (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47–49, NRSV, translation slightly modified)

While for Paul—at least in this text—there is no Christ without Adam (in the sense that the last Adam's significance is only legible with reference to the first Adam), Breton's reading manages to retain the typological correlation of creation and resurrection or eschaton, while effacing the specific anthropological building blocks on which the correlation rests.

"ADAM-LESS" TYPOLOGY AND THE DILEMMAS OF DIFFERENCE

In this way, Breton's refiguring of Paul's creation/resurrection typology to emphasize only Christ and ignore Adam is of a piece with his earlier displacement of Adam in favor of Abraham (and subsequent interpretation of Galatians 3:28). Both moves work to sideline the salience of sexual difference as a central category for Pauline anthropology. As I noted earlier in the chapter (and have argued extensively elsewhere), the typological correlation of Christ and Adam—not only as abstract representative figures but in the very constitution of their bodies (compare 1 Corinthians 15:44)—foregrounds the urgency of gendered embodiment as a *question*, precisely because both paradigmatic bodies are seemingly male, whereas some of the other human bodies they are meant to represent are not, beginning of course with Eve. Given this, where do sexually differentiated human bodies, both female and

male, fit theologically in the space between creation and resurrection, ambivalently poised between the bodies of Adam and Christ? Though never addressed explicitly by Paul himself, this is a problem that has pressed variably but unrelentingly on the history of Christian thought. However, in Breton's work, the question recedes, even as his readings delve directly into—or, in some cases, graze selectively across—the Pauline texts most relevant to the issue.

This is especially striking, given that when Breton turns to the Pauline “church”—that is, the Christian community as defined and sustained by communion/fellowship (*koinōnia*)—he is intensely interested in the place and function of difference. Thus he argues, the very prominence of *koinōnia* in Paul's vocabulary signals the “essentially relational” condition of the Christian: “the Christian is defined by a system of relations [*rapports*] referring him or her to Christ” (128). The conclusion Breton draws from this primacy of (Christocentric) relations is that the community, while always held together by Christ as “all in all,” is at the same time “an extremely heterogeneous plurality ... a heterogeneity whose members have been freed from any concern to be uniform or identical” (132). Far from a flatly homogenous or woodenly monistic vision, then, oneness in Christ is in some sense *about* differences and the way that those differences find their variable places in an overarching nexus of relations.

And yet, within this “heterogeneous plurality,” the messy and motley differences specific to gendered embodiment do not seem to matter. The explicit gendering of the remark in the previous paragraph regarding the system of relations that refers either the male or the female Christian to Christ (128) is the work of Breton's English translator, emphasizing a gender inclusivity that is allowed—but in no way rhetorically foregrounded—by the French text (*qui le chrétien se définit par un système de rapports qui le réfèrent au Christ*). Thus if the Christian subject position is gendered, it is only in an incidental way, whereas the relations that do the actual work of demarcating that subject position all point back only to (an implicitly male) Christ.

The same minimizing of sexual difference is also evident in the (not entirely surprising) ways that Breton makes use of scripture in this section, either turning to verses that represent a tradition of critically revising Galatians 3:28 or applying the verse itself, but in a truncated form. Accordingly, the scriptural support adduced for Paul's “heterogeneous plurality” is not the famous Galatians verse but its revision in Colossians 3:11, an adaptation that drops any explicit reference to women, while keeping specifically male bodies (i.e., bodies either circumcised or uncircumcised) in view: “In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!” (NRSV).

Or again, in Breton's subsequent discussion of slavery in Pauline communities: “In Christ, we repeat, there is no longer free man or slave” (137). Here Breton is careful not to figure Paul anachronistically as a modern abolitionist, but instead argues that “Christianity, *de jure* if not always *de facto*, instead of shattering the structures, could insinuate the generosity of Christ into human relations of mastery and servitude, where the Stoicism of Epictetus, in the same era, was tempted to harmonize the two

in a philosophical ideal” (137). Be that as it may, my point here is that this selective application of the Galatians verse contributes to a vision of Pauline theology in which the complicating force of sexual difference as an anthropological conundrum is felt only minimally, if at all.

Still gender does trip Breton up to some degree, particularly insofar as he wants to see flexibility and freedom across multiple registers as the hallmarks of Pauline community: “an extremely labile reality,” reflecting “a time when everything was still bathed in the light of an unsupervised [*insurveillé*] horizon” (133). Yet how to explain Paul’s seemingly supervisory—and thus rather inconvenient—reflections on men’s headship and women’s veiling in 1 Corinthians 11? Breton acknowledges an “order of nature” argument at work here, one that relies on “a hierarchy that subordinates woman, as innate ‘reflection of man,’ to a masculine image of God” (136). But he downplays its significance within Paul’s theological anthropology, chalking up the text’s argument to “a last resort,” only necessary for preserving “the good order of the assemblies” (136). As such, Breton exudes an almost palpable sense of relief in leaving 1 Corinthians behind and turning to the issue of slavery in the next paragraph. In this context, as already noted, an allusion to Galatians 3:28 in abbreviated form allows Breton to ignore the apparent tension between the full form of the verse and the Corinthians passage just discussed. Rather, the slave-free distinction becomes the vehicle by which to argue that “[faith] affirms the equality of all across different situations” (137). The result is that the gendered implications of these passages for Breton’s construal of the universal Pauline subject seem to be systematically minimized. As elsewhere, texts that would foreground—or simply raise persistent questions about—those embodied situations inflected by sexual difference have been passed over, cited and analyzed only in part, or read otherwise.

At the same time, gendered language and concepts are operative—and arguably even crucial—in Breton’s overall vision of Paulinism. Yet these concepts are reserved to do the work not of anthropology (insofar as sexual difference has been relegated to just one of many differences, all rendered incidental under the universality of faith; compare 93), but rather as figures available for exploring and illuminating the state of the cosmos and the place of the Pauline “Church” within it. Thus Breton highlights the trope of the groaning cosmos as “a woman in the pains of labor, but also in the expectation of the joy with which the world opens before the gaze of a child” (120; compare Romans 8:22). He also explores Paul’s image of Christian subjects as offspring, here sliding easily between gendered and nongendered registers (“Sons of God” [*Fils de Dieu*], “children of God” [*enfants de Dieu*], 121; compare also 124) precisely because the larger project treats the anthropological stakes of such slippage as ostensibly irrelevant.

Similarly, in his treatment of the analogy between the Church and the human body, Breton draws connections to the gendered bridal imagery of the traditional Pauline corpus: “The ‘mystery of the Church,’ assimilated by a final metaphor to the ‘bride of Christ’ (Eph. 5:21–25), invites us to a deepening that plunges the reader in perplexity” (139). This reference to Ephesians 5:21–25 (“Be subject to one another out of

reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,” NRSV) might reasonably lead the reader to expect the reappearance of actual gendered bodies as in some way significant to the analysis at hand. But Breton passes over the bodies invoked by the biblical text. And because he only cites the Ephesians passage parenthetically, rather than actually quoting any portion of it—that is, “the ‘bride of Christ’ (Eph. 5:21–25)” —the force of this potential expectation is in large part stifled.

Yet insofar as the Church is both a *mystery* and a *body*, this brings together two concepts in an obscure combination that requires unpacking: “The adjective ‘mystical,’ applied to the ‘body,’ is at first glance more puzzling than the spirituality that has gone by that name in the history of Christianity” (139). And strikingly, here Breton comes back to the chapter that is central to Pauline theological anthropology and to the argument of the present book—1 Corinthians 15:35–50, a text that will, he writes, “throw some fragile light on the enigma, without dissipating it” (140). What he finds in this text are dichotomies: earth and heaven, the physical body and the spiritual body. Breton uses these oppositions to draw an analogy to another dichotomy: “particular churches, as spatiotemporal, empirical bodies” that are being integrated into the universal and “the Church, in the singular, the ‘body of Christ’” (my emphasis), construed as a “body-world, extending in every direction without borders, [requiring] a principle of unity proportionate to its scope” (140).

What is this principle of unity? And what relation does it have to Adam—who would seem to be an irreducibly important figure in the theological anthropology being put forward in the Corinthians passage? The principle, Breton tells us, is that “Paul does not separate the passion from the resurrection” (140). And consequently, as I have argued throughout this chapter, Adam remains necessarily absent from the analysis, a narrative superfluity that contributes nothing to the centrality of Christ and Christ alone. Rather, the very phrase “Jesus, the Christ” encodes the conjunction of passion and resurrection. Breton therefore reads this formulation as signifying the death of the first (Jesus) so as to yield the advent of the second (the Christ). In this way, he argues, just as “it is necessary that Jesus dies, so that Christ may come,” so too analogously the “localized attachments” of particularity must give way to “the body of resurrection or ‘spiritual body.’” This movement is what founds the universality of the Church, and with it, the new mode of subjectivity that Pauline Christianity brings into being.

CONCLUSION

So where does this leave us? On the one hand, Breton is absolutely right that Paul does not separate the resurrection from the passion (in contrast to Badiou’s curious

emphasis on the resurrection at the expense of the crucifixion, to be discussed further in [chapter 2](#)). On the other hand, in a somewhat different but no less important theological register, Paul also does not separate the resurrection from the creation. And indeed, as I have argued, much of Breton's own interpretation of Paul both illustrates and makes use of this alternate conjunction—albeit without acknowledging the anthropological particularities (i.e., *Christ and Adam*) upon which Paul's interweaving of creation and eschaton relies. Rather, for Breton, the two poles of creation and resurrection are figured anthropologically in terms of a radical singularity: "Christ is all and in all!" (Colossians 3:11, NRSV). Within this Christological frame, sexual difference recedes into the realm of the incidental—occasionally impinging on minor issues related to "good order" in Christian communities, but in no way a constitutive reference point with respect to the formation of the universal Pauline subject.

Consequently, have the particularities of sexual difference, femininity and masculinity, been truly neutralized in the theory of subjectivity advanced by Breton's reading? Have femininity and masculinity been rendered indifferent in a conclusive and coherent way? Or—as I will suggest in an argument that has begun here but will be elaborated further in the chapters that follow—have their difficult and unstable distinctives been pushed aside and under, a repressed always threatening to return, to bubble up from within? Here my contention is that the exclusion of Adam entails not only the erasure of the primal human character's own anthropological particularity, but also the refusal of a Pauline discourse of identity and sameness always already haunted by a necessary difference that could never be fully assimilated or fully ejected.¹³ Thus submerged deep in the shadows of Pauline anthropology—never mentioned by Paul in his account of the Adam-Christ typology and doubly absent from Breton's "Adam-less" rereading—we might glimpse the haunting specter of Eve.

Articulating an economy of salvation based on the principle of Christ as all in all may manage to deflect (or superficially hide?) the problem, but it does a significant injustice to the anthropological complexity of Paul's thought. Furthermore, Breton himself seems to recognize that on some level, any resolution of anthropology—that is, of the coherent and self-contained Christian subject—within Pauline typology is not *and cannot be* total. As noted above, Breton sees this typology as irreducibly marked by a kind of "excess" that makes the self-identity of events tremble (64). In view are relations defined by a kind of restless movement, the hallmark of an apostle who, "never satisfied that his zeal is sufficient, remains drawn toward *being-toward*, with an excess that death itself would be powerless to abolish" (129). And it is this excess—this surplus of meaning born of movement—that, in turn, protects that "redoubtable, suspect word 'mystical'" from being fully "domesticated," even by Breton's own attempts to elucidate it (140).

So does this mystical excess have anything to do with gender? Or to be more precise, is it fully separable from the stubborn question of sexual difference in relation to Pauline typology? Breton's turn to a sexually specific bodily metaphor to describe this untamed excess might be taken to suggest otherwise: "It [i.e., the mystical]

remains pregnant with ‘hidden design’ and a meaning of the term ‘body’ that puzzles Western understanding” (140). However, this is not a point that receives any development in his analysis. As Breton himself shows so well, Paul’s texts are rich and perplexing ones from which there are “many ways out”;¹⁴ their very strangeness “[gives] us the choice: to dream or to think” (115). Accordingly, this particular line of anthropological speculation remains an unthought thought (or at least an unexplored one) in Breton’s provocative book.

By contrast, as I will argue in the following chapter, Badiou’s reading of Paul—building in significant ways on Breton’s—structurally aligns mysticism, excess, and femininity, even as the mystical is repudiated and the alignment disavowed. However, in Breton, this complex of connections emerges only as a faint and suggestive note, one that is not taken up for the purposes of theological anthropology, but diverted into a “Pauline” cosmos in which Adam does not figure. In this economy without Adam—stamped as it is by the anthropological primacy of Christ and only Christ—Breton’s profound and moving insight that Paul “lives and thinks [faith] as movement and as affirmation” (85) never brings its weight to bear upon the problem of *thinking* the messy particularities of human embodiment, poised between creation and resurrection. Thus those interrelations of bodies and meanings that might otherwise confound the static symmetry of the Adam-Christ typology never enter the frame.

TWO

Mysticism, Femininity, and Difference in Badiou's Theory of Pauline Discourses

In *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, Alain Badiou turns to the figure of the Apostle Paul to polemicize against the political significance of identitarian differences (including sexual difference and sexuality) and to argue instead for a theory of the subject defined in terms of a “universal singularity.”¹ In Badiou's analysis (with reference to the contemporary situation), the proliferating fragmentation of identities in the (post) modern world generates political impotence and only works to feed the all-devouring machine that is global capitalism. So he argues, in a thickly sarcastic vein,

What inexhaustible potential for mercantile investments in this upsurge—taking the form of communities demanding recognition and so-called cultural singularities—of women, homosexuals, the disabled, Arabs! And these infinite combinations of predicative traits, what a god-send! Black homosexuals, disabled Serbs, Catholic pedophiles, moderate Muslims, married priests, ecologist yuppies, the submissive unemployed, prematurely aged youth! Each time, a social image authorizes new products, specialized magazines, improved shopping malls, “free” radio stations, targeted advertising networks, and finally, heady “public debates” at peak viewing times. ... The capitalist logic of the general equivalent and the identitarian and cultural logic of communities or minorities form an articulated whole. This articulation plays a constraining role relative to every truth procedure. It is organically *without truth*. (10–11)

In response to this capitalist proliferation, Badiou seeks to articulate a structural model for a truth procedure from which every form of identity category has been necessarily subtracted. He thus poses the central question of the book: “What are the conditions for a *universal singularity*?” (13).

Badiou's response invokes Paul as “a poet-thinker of the event” who proclaims a singular truth procedure that operates as “diagonal relative to every communitarian subset; it neither claims authority from, nor ... constitutes any identity. It is offered to all, or addressed to everyone, without a condition of belonging being able to limit this offer, or this address” (2, 14). Building in part upon Breton's work, he argues that Paul's gospel announces (and thereby institutes) a new kind of universal subjective figure. It is a discourse that wipes out prevailing differences, and thus produces a

subject who answers to nothing but the radical singularity of the event (58). Fidelity to this event—Christ’s resurrection (which Badiou treats strictly as a fiction)—becomes that on which these new universal subjects depend, subjects characterized by Badiou as “the sons [*les fils*], coworkers in the enterprise of Truth ... under the aegis of the universal son [*du fils universel*]” (60).

But where does this advent of a universal subject-son leave the divisions of sex, gender, and sexual difference in Badiou’s theory of the Pauline subject? On the one hand, Badiou reads Galatians 3:28 as evidence that sexual difference is just one of many differences, falling under the imperative that “Christian militantism must traverse worldly differences indifferently and avoid all casuistry over customs” (100).² On the other hand, however, the filial terminology on which Badiou relies to articulate his Pauline Christian subject position generates an ambiguity regarding the placement and significance of sexual difference.³ As Tracy McNulty notes, Badiou’s work on Paul makes a bold but also highly questionable claim, insofar as it denies any “real” to difference (and especially sexual difference), instead figuring this difference as a problematic internal to particularity.⁴ The result, she worries, “seems to be the neutralization or even elimination of the feminine as such, which disappears under this filial and fraternal egalitarianism.”⁵

Misgivings along these lines need not necessarily be at odds with every aspect of Badiou’s project. Thus Amy Hollywood points out—with respect to both Badiou and Žižek—that one can share these thinkers’ desire for other possibilities that might displace global capitalism, while still sharply critiquing “the formation of a new (how new really?) counter-fantasy to global capitalism’s endlessly desiring, consuming, and producing subject—that of a potent, active, implicitly male subject generated through an encounter with an unprecedented, absolutely singular event.”⁶ It is from this perspective, then, that my analysis in this chapter will build on the work of Hollywood, McNulty, and other feminist philosophers and critics, seeking to explicate further the ways in which Badiou’s treatment of sexual difference in his reading of Paul is deeply problematic.⁷

I will argue, however, that the attempt to neutralize or eliminate “the feminine as such”—one that McNulty rightly identifies as operative in Badiou’s reading—is in fact not nearly so stable or successful as the clean, streamlined conclusions of *Saint Paul* would initially suggest. To this end, my starting point is not, as in the previous chapter, an inquiry into Badiou’s treatment of the Adam-Christ typology. Instead, I will begin by exploring how Badiou situates his putatively universal Pauline subject in relation to four epistemological configurations that he terms “discourses”: the Greek, the Jewish, the Christian, and the mystical. As we will see below, Badiou is most explicitly interested in the first three—and the way in which the radicality of the Christian discourse, born out of the event, overturns the terms of both the Greek and Jewish discourses to make way for (what is claimed to be) an absolutely new form of subjectivity.

But at the same time, Badiou acknowledges that a fourth discourse (mysticism) is necessary, if only to mark the margin of the valorized third discourse. However, he

consistently rejects any endorsement of the fourth discourse that might go beyond this relatively weak acknowledgment of its necessity. What is at stake in this thoroughgoing dismissal of the mystical? As is suggested by Badiou's own analogy between his theory of Pauline discourses and the four discourses of Jacques Lacan, and as I will explore further in connection with Lacan's own elaboration of the mystical, Badiou's fourth discourse retains some relation to the stubborn particularities of sexual difference. Consequently, if these particularities in fact remain operative in an unacknowledged way in Badiou's treatment of the mystical—a discourse that is both always necessary and always refused in relation to the Christian discourse—then this has significant implications for his Pauline Christian subject.

What then of the figure of Adam—and also the Pauline project of thinking the human poised between Adam and Christ? Like Breton, Badiou has no interest in giving Adam a significant typological role in his account of Paul's thought. However, unlike in the former, Adam is not effectively invisible in Badiou's text. Rather, the first human appears, but in a highly circumscribed role: the human inventor of death. What Adam decidedly is not, on this reading, is any sort of typological paradigm—especially not one with an anthropologically meaningful relationship to the figure of Christ. In this way, I argue, Badiou moves Adam to the periphery of Pauline typological speculation, with the result that Adam does not matter very much for his project (and Eve does not matter at all).

Accordingly, it would seem that, as in Breton, the universal Pauline subject can be thought only and entirely in terms of Christ. Furthermore, this subject's universality would seem to be secured without any substantial engagement with the challenges of bodily particularity. (Thus in contrast to the Pauline text, the paradigmatic relationship between Adam's body and Christ's body is not a consideration for Badiou—and, by extension, neither is the problem that Eve's body poses for such a framework.) And yet, I contend, Badiou's circumscription of Adam and ignoring of Eve do not in fact manage to neutralize fully the stubborn trace of difference. Rather, the necessity of the mystical to his Pauline discourses (aligned, I will argue, with excess and femininity) ensures that this trace persists—and does so in a way that potentially imperils the theory of the subject being propounded. Indeed, Badiou's supposedly nongendered universal subject can never be fully viable or secure in the way that he claims, insofar as the specter of the feminine irresolvably and ineluctably haunts its very conditions of possibility.

BADIOU'S THEORY OF DISCOURSES IN TRIPARTITE FORM

The fourth chapter of *Saint Paul*, "Theory of Discourses," lays out what Badiou calls a "mobile schema," wherein Paul's "Christian discourse" is instituted (and therefore must be articulated and understood) in relation to the proximate discourses from which it differs (41). Here the term "discourse" does not carry the wide-ranging

social, political, and institutional connotations associated with Foucault's use of the term, but instead refers in a more limited sense to an epistemological position and the concomitant "subjective disposition" that it generates. Thus two discourses emerge as being of paramount importance in Badiou's reading of Paul: the Jewish and the Greek. He argues that "the Greek" is not a synecdoche for "Gentile" in Paul's thought, and that more generally, the terms "Jew" and "Greek" do not designate nations or ethnocultural formations (40–41).⁸ Rather, what are in view are different kinds of "subjective figures." When Paul appeals to the trope of the Jew and the Greek, he is actually laying out a framework of discourses, the purpose of which will be to situate a third discourse—one that is represented by his own preaching (41).

Greek discourse, then, is the discourse of philosophy, cosmic order, nature, and totality—and the subjective figure that it constitutes is that of the wise man. Jewish discourse, by contrast, is the discourse of the sign, the exception, the notion of election, and the transcendence associated with divine power. It too constitutes a subjective figure, that of the prophet.⁹ As Badiou makes clear, while the two discourses are in some sense discrete and autonomous spheres (and likewise the subjects that they generate distinct figures), at the same time they cannot be entirely separated. On the contrary, insofar as both discourses position themselves in relation to the cosmos, they necessarily exist in an intimate relation that entails both sameness and difference: "Greek discourse bases itself on the cosmic order so as to adjust itself to it, while Jewish discourse bases itself on the exception to this order so as to turn divine transcendence into a sign" (41–42).

Part of Paul's genius, according to Badiou, is to articulate and clarify the co-constitutive nature of this relationship: "Jewish discourse and Greek discourse are the two aspects of the same figure of mastery. For the miraculous exception of the sign is only the 'minus-one,' the point of incoherence, which the cosmic totality requires in order to sustain itself" (42). There can therefore be no discourse that seeks to master the cosmic order in its entirety without (implicitly) positing the exception to that order that renders possible the totality as a coherent and delimited whole. Conversely, the discourse of exception similarly requires the natural totality on which to base itself as "that which lies beyond" (41).

This constitutive interdependence turns out to be the deficiency of both discourses. Badiou argues that this interrelation of totality and exception necessitates that neither discourse can ever be universal insofar as both presuppose the continuation of the other discourse. Furthermore, since the two discourses both unavoidably define themselves in terms of the cosmos or universe as it stands, they "share the presupposition that the key to salvation is given to us within the universe, whether it be through direct mastery of the totality (Greek wisdom), or through mastery of a literal tradition and the deciphering of signs (Jewish ritualism and prophetism)" (42). Either theory of salvation, in Badiou's eyes, amounts to an uncritical capitulation to a law—that is, some form of legal mastery situated within the cosmos as we know it. Both Greek and Jewish discourses are thus "discourses of the Father. That is why they bind communities in a form of obedience (to the Cosmos, the Empire, God, or

the Law)” (42).

In contrast, Badiou’s Paul proclaims a third discourse, that of the Christian, which is a discourse of the Son. Here he rejects both the cosmic totality and the exceptional sign as starting points. Instead, Paul begins from a site of radical rupture that Badiou terms “the event”—in this case, the resurrection of Christ.¹⁰ According to this argument, “One must proceed from the event as such, which is a-cosmic and illegal, refusing integration into any totality and signaling nothing. But proceeding from the event delivers no law, no form of mastery, be it that of the wise man or the prophet. ... Only that which will present itself as a *discourse of the Son* has the potential to be universal, detached from every particularism” (42).

At stake here for Badiou is the form of a discourse whereby one might proclaim a “truth procedure” born out of an absolutely new and singular event—one that generates a universal subject subtracted from all identitarian attributes and differences (11). And for Paul, on Badiou’s reading, this possibility of a universal subject categorically depends on the newness of the situation brought about by the eventual rupture. But such a radical break cannot be articulated in the terms of legality, knowledge, and power available through the Greek and Jewish discourses. Rather it can only be articulated by means of a new (third) discourse—one that is necessarily positioned in relation to the two previous discourses that have come before. This is the Christian discourse, and it is, for Badiou’s Paul, “absolutely *new*,” faithfully demonstrating its filial character by setting forth a “third figure,” halfway between the paternal Jewish and Greek discourses (43).

How does this third figure, avatar of the universal subject, come to be? According to Badiou,

This attempt can only be accomplished through a sort of decline of the figure of the Master. And since there are two figures of the master, the one that legitimates itself on the basis of the cosmos, the master in wisdom, the Greek master, and the one that legitimates itself according to the power of exception, the master of the letter and of signs, the Jewish master, Paul will be neither a prophet nor a philosopher. Accordingly, the triangulation he proposes is: prophet, philosopher, apostle. (43–44)

Here Badiou is adamant that an “apostle” need not be an empirical witness to the event in the sense of being a historical participant in the circumstances surrounding the life, death, and putative resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (and he cites Paul’s credentials in this regard). Stepping even further away from grounding any sort of authority in empiricism, he goes on to claim that the event itself—that is, the resurrection—is not strictly historical, in the sense of being falsifiable or subjective to demonstrative proof. Rather, “It is pure event, opening of an epoch, transformation of the relations between the possible and the impossible. ... In contrast to the fact, the event is measurable only in accordance with the universal multiplicity whose possibility

it prescribes. It is in this sense that it is grace, and not history” (45).

The apostle, then, is the one who identifies this possibility that emerges out of the event—and whose discourse is characterized by “pure fidelity” to that possibility (45). Accordingly, this stance of pure fidelity demands a radically new relation to knowledge—in both its Greek and Jewish forms—on the part of the new subjective figure, the apostle (and, by extension, the Pauline Christian). So Badiou argues, “The apostle, who declares an unheard-of possibility, one dependent on an eventual grace, properly speaking knows nothing” (45). He supports this claim by appeal to Paul’s apparent dismissal of knowledge (“as for knowledge, it will come to an end,” NRSV) in 1 Corinthians 13:8.

As Badiou develops this argument, the central Pauline passage that he turns to is the second half of 1 Corinthians 1, reproduced at length in his text, though here I cite only the most relevant portions:

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. ... For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ... God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. (1 Cor 1:17, 22–24, 27–29, NRSV)

Here Badiou maintains that the event functions phenomenologically like “a point of the real [*point de réel*] that puts language into deadlock. This deadlock is folly (*mōria*) for Greek discourse, which is a discourse of reason, and it is a scandal (*skandalon*) for Jewish discourse, which insists on a sign of divine power” (46). But this linguistic deadlock proves ultimately to be generative, giving rise to both the third discourse and its associated form of new subjectivity. Indeed, the deadlock allows the event to find a place in language through the emergence of the third discourse—the third thereby overcoming what would otherwise be an insurmountable impasse in the terms of the other two discourses.

Badiou’s Paul is thus the antiphilosopher par excellence, one whose stance of radical fidelity to the event engenders a new language or discursive structure “wherein folly, scandal, and weakness supplant knowing reason, order, and power, and wherein non-being is the only legitimizable affirmation of being” (47).¹¹ Accordingly, Badiou maintains that the most radical statement in the 1 Corinthians passage is 1:28: “God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are” (NRSV). Through this nullifying action, “the Christ-event causes nonbeings rather than beings to arise,” and it furthermore brings

about “the abolition of what all previous discourses [i.e., Greek and Jewish] held as existing, or being” (47). Constituted, then, by this operation of “ontological subversion,” the Pauline subject embodies for Badiou the ideal of the militant —“mobilizing a universal singularity both against the prevailing abstractions ... and against communitarian or particularist protest” (47, 14). Accordingly, both Greek and Jewish discourses (and subjectivities) are radically undercut by this third discourse, “the militant discourse of weakness ... that founds the singularity of the [Christian] subject” (53).

THE FOURTH DISCOURSE: MYSTICISM

Yet this tripartite formulation of the theory of discourses is not complete. As Badiou repeatedly notes, there is (and indeed must be) a fourth discourse, which he characterizes as the discourse of mysticism or the miracle (41, 51). However, this fourth discourse never occupies center stage in Badiou’s analysis. Rather, it is presented as the limit or margin of the third (Christian) discourse—a site of temptation that the third discourse must always reject in order to preserve its fidelity to the apostolic declaration of the event. So Badiou adamantly maintains, “Christian discourse must, unwaveringly, refuse to be the discourse of miracle, so as to be the discourse of the conviction that bears a weakness within itself” (51).

Badiou reinforces the marginality of this fourth discourse by introducing his extended discussion of it in the form of a side comment—one that he marks rhetorically as a movement away from the main line of argument: “*Let us note in passing [Notons au passage]* that Paul delineates, as if in shadowy outline, a fourth possible discourse, besides the Greek (wisdom), the Jew (signs), and the Christian (evental declaration)” (51, emphasis added). The elaboration of this fourth, shadowy discourse is as follows:

This discourse, which Pascal tries to bring into the light of classical reason, would be that of the miracle, and Paul gives it a name: subjective discourse of glorification. It is the discourse of the ineffable, the discourse of nondiscourse. It is the subject as silent and mystical intimacy [*intimité mystique et silencieuse*], inhabited by “things that cannot be told” (*arrhēta rhēmata*), which would be better translated as “unutterable utterances” (*dire indigibles*), only experienced by the subject who has been visited by miracle. (51)

In the analysis leading up to this passage, Badiou has been at pains to contrast Pascal to Paul, arguing for a genuine Pauline radicalism from which Pascal recoils in his own (mis)reading of Paul (47–51).¹² Here, then, Pascal is associated to his detriment with this discourse of “silent and mystical intimacy” that must necessarily be limited only to the subject who experiences the miracle. Paul, however, understands

that the authentic declaration needs to be safeguarded from contamination by this fourth position: “It is kept off to one side, and unlike Pascal, Paul is convinced that Christian discourse has nothing to gain by using it to glorify itself.” In this way, Badiou is able to argue that Paul displays a greater rationality than Pascal, insofar as he refuses to justify or ground his discourse in an appeal to the mystical (52).

The conclusion Badiou comes to is that the fourth discourse, while necessary for the limit-function it performs, must nonetheless remain bracketed in silence. It cannot be allowed to influence, impinge on, or otherwise unsettle the clarion call of the apostolic announcement (or, by extension, the militant subject that the announcement calls into being): “For Paul, the fourth discourse will remain a mute supplement [*un supplément muet*], enclosing the Other’s share in the subject. He refuses to let addressed discourse, which is that of the declaration of faith, justify itself through an unaddressed discourse, whose substance consists in unutterable utterances” (52). Thus the fourth discourse marks the boundary of the third, but its unutterable substance must not (and on Badiou’s view does not) attenuate that boundary in any way that might trouble the stability of the valorized third discourse. Rather, “for Paul, the ethics of discourse consists in never suturing the third discourse (the public declaration of the Christ-event) to the fourth (the glorification of the subject personally visited by miracle)” (52–53).

The ethical position in view here is one that Badiou characterizes as “profoundly coherent,” situating the fourth discourse in relation to the other three as follows:

Supposing I invoke (as Pascal does) the fourth discourse (“joy, tears of joy ...”), and hence the private, unutterable utterances, in order to justify the third (that of Christian faith), *I relapse inevitably into the second discourse*, that of the sign, the Jewish discourse. ... By granting to the fourth discourse (mysticism) no more than a marginal and inactive position, Paul keeps the radical novelty of the Christian declaration from relapsing into the logic of signs and proofs. (53)

The crux of the matter seems to be that mysticism, construed as a kind of sign or exception, runs the danger of collapsing back into the second (Jewish) discourse—that is, the original discourse of sign/exception in the tripartite form of the theory. In making this connection, Badiou betrays a disturbingly anti-Jewish orientation, one that appears not only here but throughout his theory of Pauline discourses.¹³ The immediate result is that he must protect his favored third discourse on two opposite but nonetheless related fronts—that of Jewish discourse and mystical discourse (64).

What, ultimately, do these two discourses have in common that Badiou sees as so irredeemably problematic? “The second and fourth discourses must be revoked because they *unify* the subject. Only the third discourse holds to its division as a guarantee of universality” (64). The crucial opposition being deployed is between unity (characterized as fixed and frozen) on the one hand, and division (characterized as

ongoing process) on the other. Badiou calls for the rejection of the second and fourth discourses because they both supposedly produce subjective stasis. By contrast, the event is able to constitute a universal subject only because “irrespective of the particularity of persons, it ceaselessly redivides the two paths, distributing the ‘not ... but,’ which, through an endless process, sets aside the law the better to enter into grace” (64). Thus Badiou maintains that “the subject of the new epoch is a ‘not ... but’” (63). Here he correlates the “not” in question with the negation of all subjective particularities, and the “but” with the always-ongoing task that the new subjects called forth by the event take up (64). The result of this emphasis on continual process is that the universal subject must be construed as “a becoming rather than a state” (63).

As will be clear from the passages just cited, Badiou attempts to ground this polemic against unity, fixity, and stasis in the Pauline text by alluding to Romans 6:14b: “since you are *not* under law *but* under grace” (NRSV, emphasis added). Playing off the scriptural text, he construes the event as “at once the suspension of the path of the flesh through a problematic ‘not,’ and the affirmation of the path of the spirit through a ‘but’ of exception” (63). Note, however, an important shift: throughout the analysis of Greek and Jewish discourses, Badiou has associated this term “exception” with the deficient Jewish sphere, figuring it as the necessary “minus-one” in relation to the Greek cosmic totality. But now, by contrast, he uses the term in a decidedly positive sense: (Christian) grace is affirmed as the site of exception, brought forth through a radical fidelity to the event. Meanwhile, whatever exceptional purchase the mystical might have is repudiated—a disavowal made possible by an implicit metonymic chain that links it to the sign, and by extension to the Jewish discourse, and then finally, to the (abrogated) law.

The result is a uniform dismissal throughout *Saint Paul* of the relevance of the mystical discourse for any theory of the Pauline subject. Some acknowledgment of the fourth term is needed to mark the necessary limit of the third, but the boundary between the two is a firm and stable one, brooking no possibility of ambiguity or ambivalence. Yet Badiou’s insistence on this point requires interrogation. As Eleanor Kaufman insightfully points out, “This refusal of the fourth term is consistent within the context of the book on Paul, but it is strikingly at odds with the larger corpus of Badiou’s oeuvre, which is systematically organized around the four-part breakdown of what Badiou terms ‘generic procedures’ into the domains of politics, art, science, and love.”¹⁴ Given then this “penchant for four-part schemas” in Badiou’s work as a whole, why the consistent repudiation of the fourth discourse in *Saint Paul*?¹⁵ Furthermore, must mysticism necessarily be construed—indeed, can it ever be construed so simply—as that which unifies the subject around a private, unutterable experience? Might Badiou’s mystical discourse itself continue to function, even in light of the event, as a necessary site of exception—one that serves, despite Badiou’s protests, to trouble the third discourse’s claim to be truly universal? And finally, what is the place of sexual difference in relation to this bracketing/dismissal of the mystical in Badiou’s theory of the Pauline subject?

Badiou's Paul-Lacan Analogy

My starting point for an exploration of these questions is an intriguing aside that Badiou makes at the outset of “Theory of Discourses”—one that draws an explicit analogy between Paul and one of Badiou’s own avowed intellectual masters, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan:

Like Lacan, who considers analytical discourse only in order to inscribe it within a mobile schema wherein it is connected to the discourses of the master, the hysteric, and the university, Paul institutes “Christian discourse” only by distinguishing its operations from those of Jewish discourse and Greek discourse. And the analogy is all the more striking in that, as we shall see, Paul accomplishes his objective only by defining a fourth discourse, which could be called mystical, as the margin for his own. As if every schema of discourses had to configure a quadrangle. But is it not Hegel who illuminates this point when, at the end of his *Logic*, he shows that the absolute Knowledge of a ternary dialectic requires a fourth term? (41)

As Badiou rightly asserts, then, the analogy between Paul and Lacan is striking—and, I would argue, in more ways than he acknowledges or perhaps realizes.

Lacan lays out his theory of discourses in Seminar XVII, *L’Envers de la Psychanalyse, 1969–1970* (commonly translated in English as “The Other Side of Psychoanalysis”).¹⁶ As noted in the citation above, Lacan’s discourses are four in number: the discourse of the master, the hysteric, the analyst, and the university. This is not the place to attempt an analysis of the quasi-mathematical terms (“mathemes”) that Lacan uses to represent these four discourses, or their complex (and contested) function within Lacanian theory. Rather, what is important for my argument is to highlight the points of correspondence on which Badiou’s analogy hinges, as well as the points of difference upon which the comparison between Pauline and Lacanian discourses founders.

For Badiou, the focal point of the analogy between Paul and Lacan is the number four. Both thinkers proffer a schema of discourses based on a necessarily quadrilateral model—and here Badiou appeals to the authority of Hegel insofar as the philosopher maintains that any “absolute Knowledge” of a tripartite dialectical structure demands some sort of fourth term. The analogy extends further, however: not only must Paul and Lacan articulate their theories of discourses according to a fourfold schema, but they also both do so in order to valorize the third term (the discourses of the Christian and the analyst, respectively).

Beyond these points of structural commonality, however, the analogy starts to break down. That is to say, the Pauline discourses of the Greek, the Jewish, and the

mystical do not map obviously or cleanly onto the remaining three Lacanian discourses. In Lacan's model, the relation of the four discourses plays out in a fixed and highly specific way. All the discourses are composed of the same four terms and these terms always occur in the same order. The only formal difference, then, between the discourses of master, hysteric, analyst, and university is to be found in the relative functions that each term or *matheme* serves in each particular discourse.¹⁷ Thus Jeanne Lorraine Schroeder notes two important points: "First, each discourse necessarily proceeds from an earlier discourse, and creates a succeeding discourse. Each needs the other three—there can be no isolated discourse. Second, the circle of discourse threatens to be vicious. A means must be found to stop temporarily the vertiginous spinning. ... Creating these means is one of the goals of the analyst's discourse."¹⁸

By contrast, in Badiou's Pauline schema, the radical singularity of the event (as it defines and engenders the Christian discourse) blocks any possibility of this sort of circularity or interdependent "spinning" between the four discourses. Rather, as we have seen, the first and second discourses form an unavoidably interdependent system: that of totality and its necessary exception. The third discourse is that which violently interrupts the system, generating a rupture that refuses the terms of either the first or second discourses. ("No real distinguishes the first two discourses any longer, and their distinction collapses into rhetoric" [57].) It thereby opens up the possibility of a universal through its a-cosmic, illegal, nullifying operation—in a word, its weakness. ("Power is fulfilled in weakness itself. ... Paul firmly holds to the militant discourse of weakness" [52–53].) And the function of the fourth discourse, always shadowy in form, is nothing more than to mark the limit that defines and encloses the valorized third.

Analytic Discourse at Its Limit: Mysticism and Sexual Difference

The figuration of the fourth discourse as limit thus marks a significant difference between the models of Badiou's Paul and Lacan. Yet although in a strict sense the terms of the analogy break down at this point, I would argue that Badiou's analogical appeal to Lacan reverberates through his articulation of Pauline subject positions in another way. For while no one of the four Lacanian discourses correlates precisely with Badiou's mystical fourth discourse, in his later work, Lacan does reflect at length on the limits of what can be articulated by analytic discourse (i.e., the Lacanian discourse analogous, on Badiou's reading, to Christian discourse). And as in Badiou, the theme that Lacan turns to in these reflections is that of mysticism.

In Seminar XX, *Encore*, 1972–1973 (published in English as *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*),¹⁹ Lacan returns to the terms of his four discourses—mastery, hysteria, analysis, and knowing—and he does so, as Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose suggestively note, in an account of the sexual division.²⁰

In this way, sexual difference comes to the fore in Lacan's exploration of the limits of analytic discourse:

The mystical is by no means that which is not political. It is something serious, which a few people teach us about, and most often women or highly gifted people like Saint John of the Cross—since, when you are male, you don't have to put yourself on the side of $\forall X \Phi X$ [the phallic or masculine speaking subject].²¹ You can also put yourself on the side of not-all [*pas-tout*]. There are men who are just as good as women. It does happen. And who therefore feel just as good. Despite, I won't say their phallus, despite what encumbers them on that score, they get the idea, they sense that there must be a *jouissance* which goes beyond. This is what we call a mystic. ... These mystical ejaculations are neither idle gossip nor mere verbiage, in fact they are the best thing you can read—note right at the bottom of the page, *Add the Écrits of Jacques Lacan*, which is of the same order.²²

As Amy Hollywood glosses this dense passage, “Lacan's association of his own linguistic practice with mysticism is related, I think, to his distinction between the goal of analytic discourse, which is capable of being formulated, and an aspect of his teaching that cannot be articulated. ... [Lacan] points here to an aspect of his writing and performing practice that resists the very terms of analytic discourse.”²³ And this inarticulable remainder—this limit or excess of analytic discourse marked by the mystical—is structurally aligned, as we will see, with the difference of the feminine.

How then does Lacan understand this interrelation of the feminine and the mystical? The contrast in the above citation between the side of the masculine speaking subject and the side of the “not-all” refers to Seminar XX's schematization of sexually differentiated subject positions within the order of language (“the symbolic” in Lacanian terms). As Rose explains, “For Lacan, men and women are only ever in language. ... All speaking beings must line themselves up on one side or the other of this division, but anyone can cross over and inscribe themselves on the opposite side from that to which they are anatomically destined.”²⁴ Thus one's gendered position as a subject within language does not depend directly on one's body or genitalia, indicating “not that anatomical difference *is* sexual difference (the one as strictly deducible from the other), but that anatomical difference comes to *figure* sexual difference, that is, it becomes the sole representative of what that difference is allowed to be.”²⁵ The conflation performed in this scenario, though seemingly intractable within the current terms of the symbolic as we know it, is, in fact, of the order of fantasy—and therefore ultimately contingent.²⁶

Turning specifically to the feminine speaking side of this divide (“the side of the woman”), Lacan notoriously maintains, “*The* woman can only be written with *The* crossed through [The]. There is no such thing as *The* woman [*Il n'y a pas La femme*], where the definite article stands for the universal [*l'universel*] ... of her essence, she

is not all.”²⁷ While feminists have critiqued this problematic claim from multiple angles, it remains possible to read Lacan here as undercutting the phallic claims to mastery associated with the symbolic and the side of the masculine speaking subject (i.e., as exposing the fantasy whereby the masculine or phallic subject constructs the category “woman” as an illusory guarantee, the exception that supposedly secures his own claim to universal status) and, with it, the stability of the Other, God, and even meaning itself.

But the Other (*Autre*) is not stable, and Lacan represents this schematically through the symbol of the crossed-through letter A (*A*), a figure characterized by Rose as “[standing] against this knowledge [i.e., masculine/phallic claims to knowledge] as the place of division where meaning falters, where it slips and shifts. It is the place of *signifiance*, Lacan’s term for this very movement in language against, or away from, the positions of coherence which language simultaneously constructs.”²⁸ And it is at this place of *signifiance* that we find the position of woman as “not all,” the site not of phallic mastery, but of what in the passage above Lacan calls “a *jouissance* which goes beyond”—and elsewhere a “feminine *jouissance*,” “a *jouissance* of the body,” or “a *jouissance* beyond the phallus.”²⁹

This appeal to a mystical ecstasy that goes beyond the terms of phallic signification points to a kind of necessary excess that cannot be contained within the terms of analytic discourse, thereby marking its discursive limits. As Hollywood underscores, “Throughout *Seminar XX*, Lacan insists on the inadequacy of analytic discourse in the face of feminine *jouissance* and the *A*. ... Woman, always herself double, relates to this doubled place [i.e., of *signifiance*] that both enables signification and resists it.”³⁰ Furthermore, as she goes on to show, according to Lacan,

The split subject desires an other through which it might become whole, and it conflates that desire with the very operation of language through which subjects are constituted as split and other than themselves. *Mysticism and psychoanalysis are allied discourses* that attempt to speak that desire and strive incessantly after an absolute other through whom it might be fulfilled. Yet this unstinting quest for the absolute exposes the subject’s own lack and the always absent and unattainable other through which it is brought into existence. ... [T]he pretensions of psychoanalysis to scientific status are both an ineluctable movement toward oneness and fixed meaning and an evasion of the real.³¹

For Lacan, then, mysticism and analytic discourse work together in a fraught alliance in which “analytic discourse aims at meaning,” and yet—in exposing its own limits as marked by the site of the mystical and the destabilizing emergence of feminine *jouissance*—“What analytic discourse brings out is precisely the idea that this meaning is mere semblance.”³²

Where does this leave Lacan's "woman," the feminine speaking subject, with respect to both the pretensions of the phallic subject and the complex interrelation between analytic discourse and mystical *jouissance*? On the one hand, "Man believes he creates. ... He creates creates creates woman. In reality, he puts her to work—to the work of the One."³³ But this appropriative masculinist fantasy can never be entirely stable or coherent. For on the other hand, as Hollywood argues, both psychoanalysis and mysticism work to "[expose] the fantasmatic quality of all appeals to unity and wholeness. ... [T]hrough psychoanalytic and mystical practices, the real emerges, 'the mystery of the speaking body, the mystery of the unconscious.'"³⁴ The result, she concludes, is that while Lacan undeniably fails to follow through on the full implications (and thus the potential political promise) of his own project, he nonetheless "gives an account of the aims of psychoanalysis that demands it be feminist in its subversion of the fantasy of masculine plenitude."³⁵

Lacan's Woman and Badiou's Universal Subject

Returning, then, to Badiou and Paul, I would argue that this detour through Lacanian theory can shed light on the placement and function of sexual difference in Badiou's theory of Pauline subject positions. This is not to deny that Badiou and Lacan are engaged in distinct (and not always compatible) projects or to gloss over their different understandings of the relationship between language and subjectivity.³⁶ Rather, the point I wish to make is analogical—one that simultaneously relies on and extends the scope of an analogy introduced by Badiou himself.

More specifically, I want to argue that Badiou's analogy between Paul and Lacan has implications that go beyond a common framework of four discourses in which the third is valorized.³⁷ Indeed, as we have seen, both thinkers situate the mystical at the limits of their favored discourse.³⁸ But whereas Badiou then dismisses the relevance of mysticism (so as to protect his third discourse from its encroachment), Lacan aligns mysticism with femininity as the necessary remainder or excess that unsettles the favored discourse's pretensions to mastery and stable meaning. Thus Lacan does not shy away from exploring the way in which the feminine subject position of "not all" proves necessary to the project of guaranteeing (albeit in a fantasmatic way) the phallic subject's claim to universality or mastery, while simultaneously undercutting that claim through a mystical *jouissance* that offers some sort of alternate relation to the real. And this exploration on Lacan's part, I contend, may help to illuminate a dynamic that is also implicitly operative (though never acknowledged) in the relationship between the mystical and the universal in Badiou's reading of Paul.

In light of Lacan's analysis in Seminar XX, then, we can begin to see more clearly something of what is at stake in the necessity of Badiou's fourth mystical discourse as "a mute supplement" (52). To recap briefly: According to Badiou, Paul establishes the third discourse (and with it the Christian subject) by delineating a fourth discourse

that he terms “mystical.” This fourth discourse performs a necessary function insofar as it marks the limit of the third—but for Badiou, the boundary between the two must remain clear and inviolate. Consequently, the mystical discourse can never justify or uphold—nor conversely, can it undercut or destabilize—the putative universality of the third discourse: “The fourth discourse (miraculous, or mystical) must remain *unaddressed*, which is to say that it cannot enter into the realm of preaching. ... For Paul will not permit the Christian declaration to justify itself through the ineffable. He will not allow the Christian subject to base his speech on the unutterable” (52).

From Badiou’s point of view, this necessary exclusion of the mystical (which is linked to the exclusion of particularity, stasis, sign, and law) works to yield the structural possibility of a universal subject. Furthermore, he argues, this universal subject can bear no necessary relation to sexual difference; rather, Badiou insists, sexual difference is—as Galatians 3:28 attests—one of those incidental differences that must “*carry the universal that happens to them like a grace*” (106). Here Badiou’s Paul envisions “the necessity of traversing and testifying to the difference between the sexes *in order for it* to become indifferent in the universality of the declaration” (105).³⁹ Sexual difference itself may persist, but Badiou attempts to put its subjective significance under erasure, insofar as this difference is subsumed within a universalizing truth procedure activated by the radical singularity of the event.⁴⁰ Thus he would have us accept that the operations of such a procedure render sexual difference effectively invisible in the constitution of the universal Pauline subject—a subject situated between Greek and Jewish discourses on the one side and the necessary limit of the mystical discourse on the other.

And yet, I want to argue that this move is not successful—either as a reading of the Pauline text (to be discussed in more detail below) or, perhaps more importantly, on grounds internal to Badiou’s own argument. Indeed, Lacan’s theory of subjectivity, mysticism, and sexual difference is helpful here for the way in which it foregrounds that the invisibility and indifference claimed by Badiou for his rendition of difference—positioned as it is within a system deeply indebted to Lacan’s own thought—can never be absolute. As for specifically *sexual* difference, when we read Badiou’s universal Pauline subject in light of Lacan’s insight that the (phallic) pretension to a universal subjectivity both requires and is undercut by the subjective figure of the woman as “not all” (a reading that Badiou himself tacitly invites through his analogy between Paul and Lacan), it becomes clear that this “universal” subject finds himself mired in the very dilemma Lacan outlines.

That is to say, Badiou never explicitly genders his mystical subject, because his reading of Paul attempts to relegate sexual difference to being simply one more difference to be traversed by the universal. But his universal subject nonetheless requires the ongoing persistence of the Lacanian woman, figured in her specifically Badiouian form as the always disavowed subject of mystical discourse. Indeed, Badiou shows his hand explicitly on this score when he lapses into androcentric (and arguably sexist) language of passivity to characterize—and then shut down—the fourth discourse (“[an] inactive position,” “ravishment by the unutterable” [53, 54]).

Here passivity may suggest feminization, figured as a threat to the inseminating power of the event.

A suggestive warning toward the end of the book further illuminates the deeply gendered (or, more precisely, phallic and vaginal) connotations that attend this theory of discourses in its quaternary form. With a rhetorical flourish telling in its choice of metaphors, Badiou advises of the urgent need to protect “the subject of a truth”—that is, the universal subject called forth by the proclamation of the third discourse—from “the *enclosure* [*clôture*] of that mystical fourth discourse of illumination, which Paul ... does not want to see monopolizing and *sterilizing* [*stérilise*] the event” (98–99, emphasis added). Here masculinity has become as much of a problem for Badiou as femininity (if not more so), insofar as he defends the third discourse in masculinist terms, while at the same time denying any necessary alignment between masculinity and the subject that the third discourse produces.

Consequently, sexual difference—both femininity *and* masculinity—proves to be not so invisible or indifferent to Badiou’s theory of Pauline discourses as he would have us believe. Rather, its significance persists, remaining stubbornly evident in Badiou’s active attempts to stave off the supposed dangers of the mystical. For in spite of his implicit claims to the contrary, the feminine tenaciously materializes in the figure of the mystical, “ravished” subject. Figured by Badiou in terms of a mute supplement, this mystical subject nonetheless still “speaks,” insofar as she makes more clearly visible the vexed and problematic masculinism that attends the third discourse’s putatively universal subject. Thus Badiou must rhetorically disown the latter subject’s phallic potency (in order to claim the “weakness” that opens up potential for the universal), even as he must simultaneously protect that potency from the fourth discourse’s “sterilizing” power. And as such, the (mystical) woman’s necessity to (and necessary disavowal within) Badiou’s project works to undercut the very stability and coherence of the “universal” that his Paul so passionately proclaims.

SEXUAL DIFFERENCE, CHRIST, AND ADAM

Yet what relevance does the shaky ground on which Badiou stands here have to the broader theme of my analysis in this book: the treatment of Paul’s Adam-Christ typology and its relation to questions of sexual difference and embodiment in contemporary philosophical interpretations of the apostle such as Badiou’s? In light of his emphasis on the radical newness of the event as a kind of absolute rupture, Badiou takes a page from Breton and ignores the Pauline emphasis on the web of relationships (i.e., difference *and* sameness). Instead, he cites 1 Corinthians 15:22 to place the primary emphasis on contrast (in this case between death and life): “for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ” (NRSV).⁴¹ The bottom line here, according to Badiou, is that “death, which is the thought of (= according to) the flesh, cannot be constitutive of the Christ-event. Death is, moreover, an Adamic phenomenon. It was, properly speaking, *invented* by Adam, the first man. ... What

constitutes an event in Christ is exclusively the Resurrection” (68). Thus while Badiou does acknowledge Adam and Jesus in Pauline terms as “the first Adam and the second Adam” (69), his point pushes hard in the direction of discontinuity: death belongs to the sphere of Adam, whereas life/resurrection represents the radical intervention of Christ.

Therefore, to the extent that any continuity or sameness between Adam and Christ is significant, the link is a weak one, amounting to not much more than a loosely shared humanity: “Christ invents life, but can do so only insofar as he, just like the inventor of death, is a man, a thought, an existence. ... Christ dies in order to manifest that, in spite of his also being caught up in the human invention of death, it is from this very point (indexing what humanity is capable of) that he invents life” (68–69). This move on Badiou’s part works to render the figure of Adam largely irrelevant for any theory of the Pauline Christian subject. Adam’s only constructive role is to cement the connection between humanity and death. Thus the militant universal subject can be thought entirely in terms of the radical rupture that is the event/Christ’s resurrection. Adam does not really matter—and by extension, neither does Eve.⁴² And yet, this reading misses the complexity of Paul’s own text, as well as the interpretive problems that that text generates. As I previously laid out in the introduction, Paul does not argue simply that Adam matters only insofar as he invents death. Rather, the apostle situates the human subject in paradigmatic terms defined by both Adam and Christ (“Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come,” Rom 5:14, NRSV), thereby generating—to return to Agamben’s apt formulation—“a tension that clasps together and transforms past and future, *typos* and *antitypos*, in an inseparable constellation.”⁴³

With respect to this “inseparable constellation,” the spectral figure of the paradigmatic woman is not a particularly new or specifically contemporary problem for interpreters of Paul’s thought. As I will discuss more fully in [chapter 4](#), whether figured as Eve, Mary, or simply a faceless “femininity,” she has haunted the attempts of the historical Christian tradition to domesticate Pauline typology in the hopes of rendering it a fully coherent and comprehensive anthropological system. And in a similar vein, the difference of the feminine also continues to haunt Badiou’s theory of the Pauline subject. Indeed, the specific deployment of sexual difference in Badiou’s theory of the Pauline subject repeats in large part an early Christian gesture: one that seeks to domesticate that difference by relegating it to a space of ostensible stability posing no threat to the terms of the larger subjective/anthropological system. As such, Badiou’s project represents the contemporary working through of a desire—ancient in its origins—to close any gap or resolve any excess (here figured as the sexual difference of femininity) that might undermine the dream of a single, universal fullness characterizing both signification and the human subject.

Still the specter persists—though in Badiou’s reading, this persistence does not take one of the forms so familiar to the ancient Christians (such as the problem posed by the character of Eve or Mary), but is rather refigured as the (always-refused) feminized mystical subject. Yet just as the early Christians failed to situate femininity

—or, for that matter, masculinity—within an Adam-Christ typology in an entirely consistent or coherent way, so too does Badiou's theory founder in its attempt to fully relegate sexual difference to a register of indifference traversed by the universal. That is to say, Badiou may mute the ravished subject of his mystical discourse, but he cannot fully erase or neutralize the gendered quality of her subject position—or, by extension, the gendered implications for his Pauline Christian subject. Thus insofar as the universality of the third discourse *requires* the fourth in order to be legible (a point Badiou freely admits), then the interplay between these two subjective figures irreducibly inscribes sexual difference, both masculine and feminine, as a conceptual lynchpin within a project whose fundamental claim is to render incidental this and all other such differences.

CONCLUSION

In the middle of "Theory of Discourses," Badiou poses a question that seems to point to the heart of the matter: "Can there be another subject, a subjective path other than the one we know [?]" (49). As we have seen, Badiou turns to the Apostle Paul to answer this question in the affirmative—and to argue, over against the manifold and increasingly complex field of differences that constitute contemporary identity politics, for the possibility of a universal subject engendered by a radically singular break that he calls "the event." This is a subject inaugurated out of a "Christian" (i.e., evental) discourse erupting in revolutionary newness—a rupture made possible, at least in part, by ignoring the full typological force of the apostle's Adam-Christ parallel and relegating Adam to a relatively unimportant role in the argument.

Here then, we again confront a contemporary philosophical appropriation of Paul whose argument depends, in some fundamental sense, on a version of Christ without Adam. Resting on what amounts to an erasure of the Adam-Christ typology's significance (insofar as both figures are acknowledged but the paradigmatic importance of their conjunction is minimized), the radical newness of Badiou's third discourse refuses the terms of both "Greek" and "Jewish" discourses—that is, totality and sign—and also resists justifying itself on the basis of an ineffable fourth discourse, that of the mystical. Within this schema, sexual difference is ostensibly reduced to nothing more than one more inconsequential difference among many: "Paul demonstrates in detail how a universal thought, proceeding on the basis of the worldly proliferation of alterities (the Jew, the Greek, women, men, slaves, free men, and so on), *produces* a Sameness and an Equality (there is no longer either Jew, or Greek, and so on)" (109).

But Badiou notes that the project is a fragile one—the universality of the third discourse being always at risk insofar as "the treasure is nothing but the event as such, which is to say a completely precarious [*totalement précaire*] having-taken-place. It must be borne humbly, with a precariousness [*précarité*] appropriate to it" (54). Yet while Badiou correctly identifies a certain precariousness that is intrinsic to

his theory of discourses, he locates it in the wrong place. For the source of this precariousness lies most fundamentally not in the fragility of the event, but in Badiou's attempt—ultimately unsuccessful—to firmly stabilize a boundary between a putatively nongendered universal militant subject and a necessarily feminized mystical subject on which the former depends to mark its (or, rather, his) limit.

Thus this is not a precariousness that can be placed fully within the domain of the (third) Christian subject, maintaining himself “in the precarious becoming of the spirit's ‘but’” (68) as he wards off the gendered dangers of the fourth discourse. Nor does the insecurity in question call for some other form of defensive solution, as so many Christian thinkers have pursued historically. Rather, it is a predicament, as Lacan shows, that emerges inevitably on the border between third and fourth discourses—an unstable boundary that is constitutive of the very subjectivity Badiou's project seeks to articulate. As such, Badiou's refusal of the feminine (as mediated through the figure of the mystical) does not, in fact, successfully neutralize or eliminate sexual difference, but rather renders all the more visible its persistence—thereby undermining the coherence, fixity, and finality of his “universal” Pauline subject.

THREE

“Adam Is Christ”

Žižek, Paul, and the Collapse of the Anthropological Interval

Slavoj Žižek's interaction with Paul begins as a reading of Badiou's book on the apostle (“The Politics of Truth, or, Alain Badiou as a Reader of St. Paul”) in *The Ticklish Subject* (1999). Since then, he has proceeded to develop his own quite distinctive reading of both Paul and Christian theology more broadly (see *The Fragile Absolute* [2000], *The Puppet and the Dwarf* [2003], and, with John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ* [2009]).¹ This chapter will treat Žižek's unfolding articulation of his position on Paul as elaborated primarily in *The Ticklish Subject* (hereafter *TS*) and *The Puppet and the Dwarf* (hereafter *PD*).² My analysis will concentrate on the set of interpretive steps (often quite dazzling rhetorically) by which Žižek situates Pauline typology within his larger reading of the apostle as a whole. The result is a frenetic rendition of “Paulinism,” heavily inflected by both Hegel and Lacan (or at least Žižek's readings of them), that handles the Adam-Christ typology both variably and elaborately, but also, so I will argue, with an underlying consistency in perspective.³ Thus sometimes Žižek engages or alludes to biblical passages that invoke the Pauline link between Adam and Christ in ways that ignore the specific typological thrust of Paul's thought, whereas at other times, he takes up the two figures' paradigmatic status in a substantial way. What remains constant, however, is Žižek's rendering of the typology's anthropological force—and, by extension, its implications for sexual difference—effectively insignificant.

READING ŽIŽEK READING BADIOU READING PAUL

While Žižek finds much that is helpful in Badiou's reading of Paul, his analysis in *The Ticklish Subject* is not a slavish recycling or straightforward popularizing of the latter. It is a substantial critique of Badiou—one that proceeds by way of both Hegel and psychoanalysis. In this case, the focus of the discussion is Romans 7, and as Adam Kotsko insightfully points out, the ultimate objective in their respective readings is roughly the same. Thus it is easy to mistake Žižek as nothing more than “an advocate or popularizer of Badiou's philosophy.”⁴ But this is to miss the quite different ways in which each thinker gets to where he is going, as well as the degree to which Žižek reorients his reading of Pauline Christianity with respect to Hegel, Lacan, and the

death drive.

Žižek opens his engagement with Paul in *The Ticklish Subject* by pithily summarizing his critique of Badiou: “When Badiou adamantly opposes the ‘morbid obsession with death,’ when he opposes the Truth-Event to the death drive, and so on, he is at his weakest” (TS, 168). But what is the substance of this critique and how does it work? Žižek notes, as others have, that Badiou “*radically dissociates Death and Resurrection*: they are not the same, they are not even dialectically interconnected. ... For Badiou, Christ’s death on the cross simply signals that ‘God became man,’ that eternal Truth is something immanent to human life, accessible to every human being” (TS, 169). As we saw in the previous chapter, one way that this dissociation plays out is in Badiou’s move to downgrade Adam’s importance in the Pauline typological economy. Adam is the representative of the sphere of death, whereas Christ represents life and resurrection—a relationship of stark contrast. Whatever continuity there might be between the two paradigmatic figures is anthropologically insignificant, amounting to little more than the fact that both are human. Thus humanity and death are yoked together “in Adam,” and Christ dies for no other reason than to manifest that shared humanity. Žižek picks up on this point explicitly (“Christ’s death ... simply signals that ‘God became man’”), but his critique (at least at this stage in his thinking) pays no attention to Adam or the Pauline Adam-Christ typology. Instead, his concern is to question this “radical dissociation” of death and resurrection in dialectical and psychoanalytic terms.

Žižek notes rightly that for Badiou, “The Truth-Event is simply a radically New Beginning; it designates the violent, traumatic and contingent intrusion of another dimension not ‘mediated’ by the domain of terrestrial finitude and corruption” (TS, 169). This is a stance he characterizes—not unfairly—as “openly anti-Hegelian”: the radical and absolute newness of the resurrection as event forecloses the possibility of a more philosophically robust relationship between death and life. Death is only the site where the inbreaking of the event can occur, while (to quote Žižek), “what ultimately matters is only the Resurrection of the dead (i.e. human-mortal) Christ, signalling that each human being can be redeemed and can enter the domain of Eternal Life, that is, participate in the Truth-Event” (TS, 169–70). This then is a critique by Badiou not only of Hegel, but also of Lacan, insofar as on this construal, any notion of the death drive must necessarily be situated on the other side of the definitive and total break that constitutes the truth-event.

Onto this contrastive framework of death versus life, Badiou maps another set of contrasts: law, justice, and cosmic order versus love and divine grace. Žižek notes that this contrast correlates to the question of the universal and the particular in a way that might seem—at least to some—counterintuitive. Whereas law (in the sense of natural law) can be taken as universal, for Badiou, law is the mechanism of particularity, defining distinct communities that include some and exclude others, the fuel that drives the endlessly consuming engine of identity politics. Meanwhile, grace is construed as “truly universal, that is, nonexclusive, addressing all humans independently of their race, sex, social status and so on” (TS, 170).⁵ Žižek

characterizes this move of Badiou's as a reversal of "the standard opposition" (i.e., between law and grace), an assessment on Žižek's part that performs a certain flattening of the Christian theological tradition's historical complexity. But the point, presumably, is to highlight Badiou's divergence from traditional Augustinian and Calvinist theologies that link grace to divine election and thus to particularity.

"Two Lives," "Two Deaths," and the Absence of Adam

In the course of working through this aspect of Badiou's reading—with which thus far Žižek would seem to agree—he has recourse to several anthropological tropes and concepts familiar from the Pauline text. He explains that the nomenclature of life versus death in Paul does not denote a traditional Platonic dualism, but rather two modes of being, two "subjective stances," also designated spirit and flesh (*TS*, 168–69). The larger point is that while human beings experience—and thus need to contend with—biological life and death, Paul's predominant use of these terms has something else in view: the language of life and death "provides the coordinates of the two fundamental 'existential attitudes'"—here Žižek readily admits the indulgence in anachronism (*TS*, 169). This distinction in turn leads to the further clarification that any formulation of Pauline anthropology needs to consider two discrete senses of both terms (i.e., life and death): "We thus have two lives, the finite biological life and the infinite Life of participating in the Truth-Event of Resurrection. Correspondingly, there are also two deaths: the biological death and Death in the sense of succumbing to 'the way of all flesh'" (*TS*, 170). Pauline "life"—the new mode of subjectivity made available by participation in the event—is therefore to be understood with reference (and in contrast) to bare biological life. Likewise, Pauline "death" has biological death as an orienting reference point, but signifies something else: the way of the flesh—that is, the perverse knot of law, desire, sin, and guilt (to be discussed in detail below).⁶

What is relevant here for the purposes of my analysis is that Žižek lays out this "two lives"/"two deaths" Pauline paradigm with no reference to the mode of typological thinking that so deeply animates much of the apostle's reflections on the "twoness" of the human condition. On Žižek's reading (both a restatement of Badiou and, it would seem, the starting point for the eventual development of his own more fully articulated interpretation of Paulinism), what we have here is a simple alignment of contrasting pairs:

biological life

life figured as truth-event/resurrection

spirit

biological death

death figured as law-desire-sin

flesh

The problem with these straightforward pairings is that they efface—or at the very

least ignore—the substantially more elaborate set of relationships, rich in their anthropological and temporal complexities, that Paul sets in motion by means of the Adam-Christ typology.⁷

Indeed Romans 5:12–14 (“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one human being, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come,” NRSV, translation slightly modified) draws a typological connection between Adam’s biological life and Christ’s life in some sense, while also using Adam to complicate any notion of the relationship between death, sin, and law as historically constant, invariable, or atemporal. And a further typological link between the death ushered in by Adam’s disobedience on the one hand and the righteous, obedient death of Christ on the other would seem to be in view if one draws out the consequences of Romans 5:17 (“If, because of the one human’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one,” NRSV, translation slightly modified) and 5:18 (“so one human’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all,” NRSV, translation slightly modified; compare also Rom 5:19b). That is to say, Christ’s death is not specifically identified as such, but seems clearly implied in Paul’s reference to a single “act of righteousness.”

Similarly in 1 Corinthians 15, the claim that “since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ” (15:21–22, NRSV) can be read as invoking death in two different senses, along the lines of Žižek’s “two deaths” (one biological, the other a kind of subject position). But whether explicitly or by implication, the passage situates these mutually imbricated notions of death in a complex web of connections with other anthropologically salient concepts: life, resurrection, sin, and the idea of representative/paradigmatic human beings. The Adam-Christ typology both opens up the temporal space and serves as the theological reference point for these suggestive (if not entirely fully formed) reflections on Paul’s part—and, as such, is hardly incidental to the anthropology being propounded.

So also with the seemingly straightforward opposition of spirit and flesh. Admittedly, the *pneuma/sarx* distinction is operative in multiple places throughout Paul’s writings (see especially the extended discussions in Romans 8 and Galatians 5). But the typological reflections of 1 Corinthians 15 muddy the apparent clarity of these contrasting terms as well. In 15:44–47, the second Adam (i.e., Christ) is aligned with life-giving spirit (*pneuma zōopoion*), the spiritual body (*sōma pneumatikon*), and heaven (*ex ouranou*), while the first Adam is aligned with ordinary animate life (*psychēn zōsan*), the soul-endowed body (*sōma psychikon*), and dust (*choikos*). Thus the first term of the *pneuma/sarx* opposition is well represented (and associated with Christ, the second Adam). But what then of the flesh? Following the logic of 15:39–40, flesh has some (more or less unspecified) affinity with the body/*sōma*: “Not all flesh is alike, but there is one flesh for human beings, another for

animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are both heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one thing, and that of the earthly is another” (NRSV).⁸ Flesh cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50). Yet its place remains ambiguous.

The problem, as Margaret Mitchell astutely explains, is that 1 Corinthians 15:35–49 reduces an anthropological triad (soul, spirit, flesh) to a *different* dyad—not flesh versus spirit but “‘ensouled body’ (*sōma psychikon*) versus ‘spiritual body’ (*sōma pneumatikon*)—a duality that, Paul prophetically promises, will only be resolved eschatologically.”⁹ In a further move that only amplifies the anthropological complexity (or opacity?) of the passage, Paul “adds yet another term to the mix ... the neologism ‘person of clay’ (*choikos*).” The result, Mitchell concludes, is an extraordinarily “insecure pivot” that will nonetheless become “a major building block” for later Christians in their speculations on theological anthropology.¹⁰ And while Mitchell is interested in other issues and does not develop this line of argument, I want to build on her analysis to underscore what may seem by now to be a somewhat obvious point: Paul’s anthropological reduction of triad to dyad does not take place in a hermeneutical vacuum. Rather, this reduction is set within—and relies upon—a typological frame. The first human Adam and the resurrected Christ are the paradigmatic representatives of the soul-endowed and spiritual bodies (1 Cor 15:44–45). Thus the Adam-Christ typology proves to be a central if perplexing mainstay of an “anthropological hermeneutics [left] tantalizingly unresolved.”¹¹

In this way, careful attention to the typological intricacies of Paul’s thought (as seen most especially in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15) calls into question the streamlined simplicity of the “two lives”/“two deaths” correspondence as presented by Žižek in *The Ticklish Subject*. In later work, Žižek will attend to the Adam-Christ typology—and indeed it will become a crucial element in his overall vision of “Paulinism,” one that I will explore in detail below. But in this initial foray into Paul, Adam does not figure—nor do any of Paul’s typological reflections on theological anthropology, the place of the human subject poised precariously between Adam and Christ.

This may be due, at least in part, to Žižek’s single-minded focus in this text on reclaiming Paul for an audience he terms “true Lacanian dialectical materialists.” Accordingly, he passionately exhorts Lacanians to read Romans and Corinthians for themselves, carefully and in their entirety, if they ever want to understand Lacan’s *Écrits* (TS, 172). And here he quips that there does not yet exist a guidebook or commentary that will help Lacanians separate out those parts of the Pauline text that provide “the deepest insight into Lacanian ethics” from those that are merely “theological rubbish” (TS, 173). While it is not entirely clear how Žižek evaluates such dichotomous thinking (given that his exhortation is to read the complete text of the two epistles in detail), it may be that at this stage, the Adam-Christ typology amounts for him to not much more than “theological rubbish,” the chaff to be separated and discarded in the process of pursuing Pauline politico-philosophical wheat. In any event, his thoughts on the typology do not come up here, even though the discussion

is deeply grounded in the tropes of Pauline anthropology. Rather, the argument of *The Ticklish Subject* moves from a discussion of the “two lives” and “two deaths” to the central issue around which Žižek parts ways from Badiou’s reading.

Žižek’s Critique of Badiou

Having articulated these various oppositions as they play out in Badiou’s reading of Paul, Žižek clarifies his critique: Badiou treats the contrast between death and life as functionally equivalent with a further contrast—that between law and love. Here Žižek thinks that the constitution of the subject—both psychoanalytically and as portrayed in the Pauline text—is decidedly more complicated than can be captured by treating these oppositions as identical or fully overlapping. The text that he turns to in order to make this case is Romans 7. As Kotsko explains, “one could say that for Badiou, the problem in Romans 7 is how to escape the law and thereby the death drive.” This makes good sense, insofar as Badiou has identified law with death and placed both definitively and entirely on the other side of the violent break that ushers in the event. But for Žižek, “the question is not that of escaping the law as such, but rather of escaping a particular relationship to the law.”¹² His reading of Romans 7 is grounded by this critique.

To this end, Žižek relies on an earlier psychoanalytic interpretation of the Pauline text put forward by Lacan in Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960*.¹³ Lacan, in an extended discussion of “the Thing”/*das Ding* and its relationship to the Law, paraphrases Romans 7:7–11, substituting “the Thing” for the Pauline language of *hamartia*:

Is the Law the Thing? Certainly not. Yet I can only know of the Thing by means of the Law. In effect, I would not have had the idea to covet it if the Law hadn’t said: “Thou shalt not covet it.” But the Thing finds a way by producing in me all kinds of covetousness thanks to the commandment, for without the Law the Thing is dead. But even without the Law, I was once alive. But when the commandment appeared, the Thing flared up, returned once again, I met my death. And for me, the commandment that was supposed to lead to life turned out to lead to death, for the Thing found a way and thanks to the commandment seduced me; through it I came to desire death.¹⁴

Here “the Thing” functions for Lacan as a kind of impossible object—“unsignified and unsignifiable,” in Bruce Fink’s phrase—that orients the subject’s desire.¹⁵ And while the only alteration of the Romans passage Lacan acknowledges is the *hamartia*/Thing substitution (“with one small change, namely, ‘Thing’ for ‘sin,’ this is the speech of Saint Paul”), in fact his reading ingeniously shifts the sense of the Pauline text by replacing Paul’s *apekteinen* in 7:11 (“it [i.e., *hē hamartia*] killed me) with the

formulation “I came to desire death.” Thus Romans 7, on this reading, explicitly invokes the death drive. So Lacan summarizes: “The dialectical relationship between desire and the Law causes our desire to flare up only in relation to the Law, through which it becomes the desire for death.”¹⁶ In this way, the problem of the relationship between the Law/the symbolic order, desire, and the death drive is reframed in Pauline terms.

Žižek then builds on this reading to explore the questions explicitly posed by Lacan: “Freud’s discovery—the ethics of psychoanalysis—does it leave us clinging to that dialectic?” Or might there be “a way of rediscovering the relationship to *das Ding* somewhere beyond the law”?¹⁷ In taking up this project, however, Žižek’s reading of Romans 7 returns to the traditional Pauline language of sin. As he sees it, what is at issue in the Romans passage is the problem of perversion (meant here in a very specific technical sense): the law by its act of prohibition gives rise to the desire for its own infringement (i.e., sin)—*and necessarily so*, insofar as the transgression shores up and intensifies the force of the law qua law.

For Žižek, this is the preeminent problem of Pauline theology: “St. Paul’s entire effort is to break out of this vicious cycle in which the prohibitive Law and its transgression generate and support each other” (TS, 172). The law splits the subject, bringing muddle and confusion into the distinction between the sphere of life and that of death. Accordingly, he argues, “Because of this split, my (conscious) Self is ultimately experienced as ‘dead,’ as deprived of living impetus; while ‘life,’ ecstatic affirmation of living energy, can appear only in the guise of ‘Sin,’ of a transgression that gives rise to a morbid sense of guilt” (TS, 173). The perverse result is that desire—a force that is, and therefore ought to be considered, constitutive of life—comes to be seen instead as a foreign body (i.e., sin), leading compulsively down its own morbid path in opposition to the obedience of the conscious subject.

How to interrupt, unplug, or otherwise break free from this cycle? How to engender a different relationship to one’s own desire? On the one hand—and this is the heart of Žižek’s critique of Badiou in these pages—where Badiou goes wrong is in aligning the death drive too straightforwardly with this tortured interplay of law and desire.¹⁸ On the other hand, Lacan provides a useful counterpoint insofar as he “implicitly changes the balance between Death and Resurrection in favour of Death: what ‘Death’ stands for at its most radical is not merely the passing of earthly life, but ... the ‘wiping the slate clean’ that opens up the domain of the symbolic ‘New Beginning’” (TS, 179). Whereas, for Badiou, the negativity of the death drive can only be figured as a “betrayal” of the positivity of the event, Žižek’s Lacanian-Hegelian riposte asserts the constitutive centrality of the death drive—“the negative gesture that clears a space for creative sublimation” and thereby provides the very ground of possibility for the event (TS, 186).¹⁹

What then of Paul? Kotsko rightly stresses that the apostle's place remains somewhat ambiguous in *The Ticklish Subject*. Žižek is obviously launching a critique of Badiou by means of Lacan's reading of Romans 7, but it remains unclear exactly what the implications are for Žižek's own reading of the truth-event vis-à-vis Paul.²⁰ What would such a "Žižekian" Pauline truth-event look like? Does it diverge in any substantive way from Badiou's version? And if so, in what ways are the differences philosophically and psychoanalytically (not to mention theologically) significant? Kotsko's study of the issue convincingly argues that we need to look to Žižek's later text, *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, to see the conclusion to the argument begun in *The Ticklish Subject*. Here Kotsko pays special attention to the impact of Eric Santner's *The Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig* (2001) and Agamben's *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (2000; English translation 2005) on Žižek's thought in the time between the two books.

I cannot reproduce the nuanced results of his analysis here. But a number of points are key to my argument: Kotsko shows that in *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Žižek follows Santner in construing Judaism as operating in a relationship to the Law that avoids the perversion of the law-desire-sin cycle described above—here designated variably as the Law's obscene yet necessary supplement (e.g., "superego excess-supplement," "superego supplement," or Kotsko's preferred term, "obscene superego supplement"; see *PD*, 110, 113, 127). Thus Žižek maintains that the Jewish Law "is already a law deprived of its superego supplement, not relying on any obscene support" (*PD*, 113).²¹ Taking the figure of Job as paradigmatic, he argues that what we see in the eponymous biblical book's enigmatic conclusion—in which God pointedly fails to provide an answer to the meaning of Job's suffering—is not a testimony to the all-encompassing and incontestable nature of God's power, but rather to his impotence. And whereas ancient paganism had recourse to a form of the obscene superego supplement in order to shore up the apparent potency of its divine law ("In Ancient Greek and Roman religions, the public text was always supplemented by secret initiatory rituals and orgies" [*PD*, 127]), Judaism is the religion that "in a gesture of silent solidarity" remains stubbornly attached to—and yet always refuses to tell—the secret of the divine impotence (*PD*, 126).

It is only in this light, Žižek argues, that Christianity becomes legible: "it is *this* secret that is 'revealed' in Christianity. This is why Christianity could occur only after Judaism: it reveals the horror first confronted by the Jews. Thus it is only through taking this line of separation between paganism and Judaism into account that we can properly grasp the Christian breakthrough itself" (*PD*, 129). As Christ's cry of abandoned despair on the cross gives way to death, the secret is revealed: "not [God's] hidden power, only His impotence as such" (*PD*, 127). The result, as Kotsko recaps, is that "the public disclosure of what Judaism kept secret makes the Jewish 'unplugged' stance toward the law available to everyone, resulting in a new, universal form of love."²² As exemplified in the "as if not" of 1 Corinthians 7:29–31, Pauline love is structured as a kind of "state of emergency" (note the debt to Agamben and Carl

Schmitt), suspending the investment in the obscene superego supplement whereby the Law necessarily gives rise to its own contravention (*PD*, 113). The political possibility that this opens is that of a new kind of community, grounded in a new order of relationship between law and love—a community that must always maintain its reference to Judaism and the Jewish law, but that does so in order to sustain “the ‘rootless,’ universalist stance of Christianity proper” (*PD*, 119).

A “Hegelian” Apostle

It is within this framework that the Adam-Christ typology—so conspicuously absent from *The Ticklish Subject*—emerges as a crucial component in Žižek’s interpretation of Paul. In order to make sense of this, a few words about the role of Hegel in Žižek’s argument are necessary. In *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Žižek maintains that the movement characterizing the emergence of Christianity in relation to Judaism (or, more precisely, the emergence of that specific and fragile Pauline moment that Christianity as we know it soon betrayed) is a thoroughly Hegelian one. Not surprisingly, then, this is a story about the dialectically inflected progression from the particular to the universal: “Paul more or less totally ignores Jesus’ particular acts, teachings, parables, all that Hegel later referred to as the mythical element of the fairytale narrative. ... What matters to him is not Jesus as a historical figure, only the fact that he died on the Cross and rose from the dead” (*PD*, 9). Žižek aligns this Pauline orientation with Lacan’s equation of the “Holy Spirit” and the nullifying or unplugging operation of the death drive—that is, the cancelation of the particularities of lived experience (*PD*, 9–10). He goes on to conclude, “When we locate ourselves within the Holy Spirit, we are transubstantiated, we enter another life beyond the biological one. And is not this Pauline notion of life grounded in Paul’s other distinctive feature? What enabled him to formulate the basic tenets of Christianity, to elevate Christianity from a Jewish sect into a universal religion (religion of universality), was the very fact that he was not part of Christ’s ‘inner circle’” (*PD*, 10). Indeed, Žižek notes, Paul symbolically replaces Judas the betrayer,²³ and in his own way “also ‘betrayed’ Christ by not caring about his idiosyncrasies, by ruthlessly reducing him to fundamentals, with no patience for his wisdom, miracles, and similar paraphernalia” (*PD*, 10). The interpretive payoff here is that while Paul needs to be read within Judaism (here Žižek aligns himself, albeit loosely, with the so-called New Perspective), the result of such a reading is to render visible Pauline Christianity’s radical undermining (or perhaps more precisely, sublating) of Judaism from within: “Paul did not simply pass from the Jewish position to another position; he did something with, within, and to the Jewish position itself—what?” (*PD*, 10). This is the question that frames the book.

To unpack what Paul and his fragile moment (i.e., “Christianity-in-becoming” [*PD*, 10]) “do” with respect to both Jesus and Judaism, Žižek turns back to the problem of

the obscene superego supplement, explicitly identified in this context as “the hidden perverse core of Christianity” (PD, 15). He offers two biblical examples: (1) God’s own perversity in the Genesis narrative, whereby the divine creation of the prohibition functions as a strategic move—one that necessarily leads human beings to fall in order that God can then save them; (2) Judas’s “betrayal” of Jesus, at one and the same time condemned as the height of transgression and yet absolutely necessary to the fulfillment of the divine plan—thereby rendering Judas heroic in his willingness to accept damnation in order to play a part that both God and Christ seemingly need (PD, 15–16). How to break out of this perverse logic at the core of the Christian narrative? In Žižek’s own language, “is it possible to read the relationship between Judas and Christ in a different way, outside this perverse economy?” (PD, 16). Or in a parallel vein, is it possible to read the seemingly perverse relationship between creation, fall, and redemption differently?

Here Hegel offers Žižek an apparent way out. With an eye to offering a reinterpretation of creation, fall, and redemption, he begins with an analogy to Hegel’s discussion of the penis in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel’s text draws attention to the penis’s simultaneous “lower” and “higher” functions, insofar as it is both the organ of urination and the organ of insemination.²⁴ In elucidating this discussion, Žižek, in turn, argues against a flatfooted reading that would see in the movement of sublation/*Aufhebung* the simple negation of the penis’s lower function, urination (associated with concrete picture-thinking in Hegel’s text), in order to attain the higher function, insemination (associated with speculative/abstract consciousness). Rather, he maintains, “The paradox is that the direct choice of insemination is the sure way to miss it: it is not possible to choose the ‘true meaning’ directly. That is, one has to begin by making the ‘wrong’ choice (of urination)—the true speculative meaning emerges only through repeated reading, as the aftereffect (or byproduct) of the first, ‘wrong,’ reading” (PD, 83). This formulation raises a number of unresolved questions, as Amy Hollywood indicates in her trenchant critique of Žižek’s analysis on this point.²⁵ But as the argument in *The Puppet and the Dwarf* unfolds, the takeaway point appears to be the following: “The inner logic of the movement from one stage to another is not that from one extreme to the opposite extreme, and then to their higher unity; the second passage is, rather, simply the radicalization of the first passage” (PD, 86). By implication then, insemination is the radicalization of urination, the higher possibility that emerges from within the terms of the lower, at once negated and preserved in that negation.

Returning then to the problem of the perversity at the heart of the traditional Christian interpretation of fall and redemption, Žižek offers a rereading based on an analogous logic: “Here we have the properly Hegelian matrix of development: the Fall is *in itself* already its own self-sublation, the wound is *in itself* already its own healing, so that the perception that we are dealing with the Fall is ultimately a misperception, an effect of our distorted perspective” (PD, 85–86).²⁶ The problem, then, is fundamentally about misrecognition, not about humanity’s metaphysical plummet into a discrete and reprehensible place or state, as the spatial metaphor of “fall” might

seem to imply. (“There is no place from which we have fallen” [PD, 86].) What is needed, therefore, is not a radical overcoming of the fall—figured in this sense as the polar opposite of Christ’s redemption—but rather a shift in one’s point of view, or as Žižek puts it, “our subjective position” (PD, 87).

This emphasis on the importance of perspective is not a new one. In *The Ticklish Subject*, as part of the discussion of Romans 7 and the obscene superego supplement, Žižek argued that “St. Paul and Badiou seem fully to endorse Hegel’s point that there is Evil only for the gaze that perceives something as Evil: it is the Law itself that not only opens up and sustains the domain of Sin, of sinful urges to transgress it, but also finds a perverse and morbid satisfaction in making us feel guilty about it” (TS, 174). And now in the *Puppet and the Dwarf*, he draws the circle of intertextual connections tighter, reiterating the same point but with respect to the problem of fall and redemption: “Here again, one should apply Hegel’s dictum that Evil resides in the gaze which perceives Evil: the true Fall is in the very gaze which misperceives the first move as a Fall” (PD, 87). How to avoid the perversity of this misrecognition? In Žižek’s view, there is only one way: “to insist on the absolute *identity* of the two gestures: God does not first push us into Sin in order to create the need for Salvation, and then offer Himself as the Redeemer from the trouble into which he got us in the first place; it is not that the Fall is followed by Redemption: the Fall is *identical* to Redemption, it is ‘in itself’ already Redemption” (PD, 118). It is in this shift in perspective—this construal of *both* fall and redemption as an identical “explosion of freedom” seen from different angles (PD, 118)—that Žižek sees the political possibilities of the Pauline moment, possibilities that are both vulnerable and fleeting, and simultaneously potent and revolutionary. But thus far, he has not yet grounded such a reading concretely in the Pauline text.

“Adam and Christ Are One and the Same”

This is the problem that Žižek uses the Adam-Christ typology to solve. He thus employs a version of the point just examined—the identity of fall and redemption—to frame his reading of Adam and Christ in the same vein: “the properly Christian Redemption is not simply the undoing of the Fall, but *stricto sensu* its repetition. The key to St. Paul’s theology is repetition: Christ as the redemptive repetition of Adam. Adam has fallen, Christ has risen again; Christ is therefore ‘the last Adam’ (1 Corinthians 15:45–49). Through Adam, as sons of Adam, we are lost, condemned to sin and suffering; through Christ, we are redeemed” (PD, 81). Here I want to note a certain slippage in the movement of Žižek’s argument, hinging on the different possible senses of “repetition.” While it is true that Paul presents Christ as “the redemptive repetition of Adam,” this is an exceedingly complex (and in certain ways opaque) undertaking. Furthermore, it is one that, at least in the Pauline text, emphasizes the irreducible interplay of similarity, repetition, and identity on the one

hand and contrast, difference, and rupture on the other. Whereas Badiou, as we have seen, more or less dismisses the significance of the Adam-Christ typology by emphasizing Christ's radical difference from Adam, here Žižek inverts that move, shifting the center of gravity in the direction of identity. That is to say, even though his pithy summation of the Adam-Christ typology lists a series of contrasts, the larger conclusion is one about sameness/repetition. Although 1 Corinthians 15 is cited, the point seems governed by Romans 5, insofar as the concrete concerns with anthropology and embodiment that characterize the Corinthians passage are ignored. What Žižek takes to be most fundamental about the typology is the notion of repetition. But crucially, by situating the Adam-Christ typology as he does within his larger argument, he manages to pull Paul's distinctly *typological* sense of repetition into a new philosophical register—that is, Žižek's Hegelian notion of repetition that we have just examined.

On this reading, then, the Adam-Christ typology comes to support Žižek's contention regarding the identity of fall and redemption. Accordingly, he argues, "It is not that things went wrong, downhill, first with Adam, and were then restored with Christ: Adam and Christ *are one and the same* ('Christ is Adam'—perhaps the ultimate speculative judgment); all that changes in order for us to pass from one to the other is the perspective" (PD, 87). He goes on to elaborate and clarify the same point in technical Hegelian language, thereby tying it more tightly to the broader arc of the foregoing argument: "Adam and Christ also relate as 'negation' and 'negation of negation,' but in the above-mentioned precise meaning—Adam is Christ 'in itself,' and Christ's Redemption is not the 'negation' of the Fall, but its accomplishment, *in exactly the same sense* that, according to Saint Paul, Christ accomplishes the law" (PD, 87–88, emphasis added). Thus, in what would appear to be an interpretive tour de force, Žižek brings together the various (and seemingly disparate) strands of argument he has been developing into a tightly drawn unity: insofar as the apostle's Adam "is" Christ, then both the identity of fall and redemption and the Pauline suspension of the investment in the obscene superego supplement point toward the possibility of imagining Christianity otherwise, "beyond" the perversity of the forms in which we have come to know it.

However, I want to suggest that the elegant Hegelian unity of this reading in fact imposes a stranglehold on the Pauline text—one that stifles and ultimately suppresses its anthropological distinctives in the service of a different project. On the one hand, Žižek recognizes that there is something fundamentally anthropological about the Adam-Christ typology—that is, that it has profound implications for Paul's theology of human beings more broadly: "Adam and Christ are thus, in a way, 'corporate persons' in whom people live: we either live 'in Adam' (under the power of sin and death), or we live 'in Christ' (as children of God, freed from guilt and the dominion of sin)" (PD, 102–103). But on the other hand, what Žižek's reading misses—or, more precisely, collapses—is the opening for anthropological negotiation that the Adam-Christ typology creates: the interval in which the question of what it means to be an embodied human being (or, to be purposely anachronistic, a subject), poised

tenuously between creation and resurrection, presses for an answer—or at least for a serious engagement.²⁷

Why this disregard for the force of an anthropological problematic that has exercised so many of Paul's other readers throughout the history of Christianity? Most straightforwardly, as I have argued, Žižek's Lacanian-Hegelian reading pulls the discussion away from theological anthropology, repurposing Paul's reflections on Adam and Christ in the service of a different problem: perversity and the dilemma of the obscene superego supplement. But I also want to suggest that Žižek is not especially concerned with these anthropological questions because he already has a vision of the subject worked out in another way—one that, despite getting there by a different and more circuitous route, is very much aligned with Badiou's.

Thus the conclusion of his participationist reading of being "in Adam" or "in Christ" is the by now familiar recourse to Galatians 3:26–28 as a founding declaration of universalism: "we *all* become 'sons of God': 'For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, no longer slave or free, no longer male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'" (PD, 103). What this means concretely for the new community of Pauline subjects becomes clear at a later point in the book: "The key dimension of Paul's gesture is thus his break with any form of communitarianism: his universe is no longer that of the multitude of groups that want to 'find their voice,' and assert their particular identity, their 'way of life,' but that of a fighting collective grounded in the reference to an unconditional universalism" (PD, 130). As in Badiou, the radical break brought about by the event renders inoperative the particularistic concerns of identity politics.

And yet, while such a pointed (and here somewhat sinisterly sarcastic) conclusion may have a certain coherence within Žižek's peculiarly Lacanian-Hegelian way of reading Paul, its implications also reverberate backward onto the interpretation of Adam and Christ that supports it. This Žižekian version of "Paul's gesture" thereby works to undermine the significance of these two key characters in the Pauline vision of redemptive history in terms of their distinctive roles as anthropological resources with which to think. With respect to anthropology (or a "theory of the subject"), Christ is figured as "the man without properties ... with no distinctions, no particular features ... a singular universal" (PD, 80)—that is, the paradigm of the universal subject. And Adam's particularity (insofar as in Žižekian-Hegelian perspective he "is" Christ) matters not at all.

Accordingly, it should come as no surprise that in *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Eve appears as no more than Adam's incidental companion in the drama of the obscene superego supplement: "why did God put [the Tree of Knowledge] there in the first place? Is it not that this was a part of His perverse strategy first to seduce Adam and Eve into the Fall, in order then to save them?" (PD, 15; compare also 174n10). By collapsing the interval between the two paradigmatic humans, Adam and Christ, so that it does not function as a "space" (both temporal and conceptual) of anthropological negotiation, Žižek's reading renders the problematic of sexual

difference that haunts that space—as figured in Eve—seemingly indifferent or inoperative. But as I hope to have shown, this involves effacing or recasting the actual anthropological particularities of the Pauline text with respect both to Christ and most especially to Adam. Thus might we not read the Adam-Christ typology as a point of textual resistance to Žižek’s “Paulinism,” a stubborn and not easily erased attestation to what Hollywood sharply describes as “the critical difference that difference (religious, ethnic, and, most pointedly perhaps, sexual) continues to make”?²⁸

CONCLUSION: RETURNING TO (SEXUAL) DIFFERENCE

In his analysis of *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Kotsko puts forward a critique of a basic inconsistency or contradiction in the text’s argument: Žižek follows biblical scholarship in maintaining that Paul uses the term “law” with reference to Torah—the specifically Jewish law, rather than pagan law with its enmeshment in the obscene superego supplement. Thus Paul’s critical comments about the law need to be understood in this light—that is, law as Torah. Yet at the same time, Žižek upholds and valorizes the Jewish law as that which operates without the obscene supplement. The Jewish law therefore provides the indispensable reference point that Paul *needs*, precisely so that by means of his universalizing gesture with respect to that law, the emerging community can participate in a new way of life (i.e., “the specific Christian dimension of Love itself” [PD, 119]) not crippled by the Romans 7 dilemma (whereby the law—presumably, by contrast, the *pagan* law—perversely generates its own infraction).²⁹

While foregrounding this logical problem—which Žižek, to the degree that he acknowledges it, chalks up to paradox (PD, 113)—as well as other shortcomings of the argument (anachronism, a lack of close and careful readings of specific texts), Kotsko sees something of value in the project as a whole: “Žižek’s approach of reading Paul in relation to later Christianity has the benefit of insisting that every philosophical interpretation of Paul and of Christianity must necessarily also be an interpretation of Judaism, not as a dispensable historical preface [compare Badiou], but as that which Christianity constitutively betrays.”³⁰ What I find particularly helpful in Kotsko’s formulation here is his emphasis on the degree to which, within the terms of Žižek’s own argument, the newness of the event—and, with it, the emergence of Pauline Christianity—is only legible in some complex yet constitutive relation to that which goes before.

Indeed Žižek himself posits that “it is only reference to the Jewish Law that sustains the specific Christian notion of Love that needs a distance, that thrives on differences, that has nothing to do with any kind of erasure of borders and immersion in Oneness” (PD, 119–20). Thus in contrast to Badiou’s treatment of Judaism as “superficial and instrumental,”³¹ the argument of *The Puppet and the Dwarf* seems to logically entail some nascent (if most of the time unacknowledged) allowance for what Hollywood calls “the Derridean (and Butlerean) insight that history involves both

similarity and difference, both a connection to the past and an absolute break with that past.”³² (This point notwithstanding, Hollywood correctly diagnoses that the polemics of Žižek and Badiou against “the temporizing impotency of Derridean philosophy ... [suggest] an anti-Judaism in keeping with their appeals to a very Christian reading of Paul.”)³³ Nevertheless, as we have seen, this allowance for the ongoing relevance of difference is a highly circumscribed one in Žižek’s text, operative with respect to certain Pauline texts and registers of analysis but not others.

So what then of the anthropological differences that traverse the Pauline typological frame—not only the complex play of identity and difference that characterizes the relationship of Adam and “second Adam,” but also the spectral (non)presence of Eve as that difference which the typology cannot coherently contain or represent? Transposing Kotsko’s analysis onto this conversation, I want to suggest that insofar as Žižek’s reading of the Adam-Christ typology collapses the space in which these differences ever *could* matter, Eve ends up functioning in his text—to the degree that she functions at all—as a “superficial and instrumental” figure, a narrative accessory forming part of what ultimately amounts to “a dispensable historical preface.”³⁴ Yet in a further move of transposition, might we not use Žižek’s own (muted) appreciation for the irreducible interplay of sameness and difference in the relationship between Judaism and Christianity as a starting point in order to question his reading of the Adam-Christ typology—and with it his leveling of anthropological differences in the name of the universal Pauline subject?

In a study that comes between the two examined here, *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (2000), Žižek notes that “as every true Christian knows, love is the *work* of love—the hard and arduous work of repeated ‘uncoupling’ in which, again and again, we have to disengage ourselves from the inertia that constrains us to identify with the particular order we were born into.” And this unplugging, this vigorous and difficult work of love, “necessarily leads to the creation of an *alternative* community.”³⁵ The alternative community he has in mind, of course, is the same one that we have encountered in the other two books: a new kind of militant collective, cutting across identitarian differences by reference to the Christian/Pauline universal of love beyond the law.

Yet in this particular discussion, Žižek offers the following intriguing comment in passing: “Through the Christian work of compassionate love, we discern in what was hitherto a disturbing foreign body, tolerated and even moderately supported by us so that we were not too bothered by it, a subject, with its crushed dreams and desires.”³⁶ This is a point about recognition—and even, I would suggest, about *anthropological* recognition: that shift wherein an alien and disconcerting otherness might come, in the messiness of its dreams and desires, to figure within (and thereby potentially change) what constitutes “the human” as such. Yet does—indeed, could—this recognition ever arrive by means of a Pauline universal love that causes all anthropological differences to become indifferent, as Žižek speculates? Or does this understanding of universal love presuppose a tacit anthropology, an already-determined concept of what frames “the human,” that renders such recognition

impossible, precisely because it would trouble the closed fixity of the anthropological frame on which the universal depends?³⁷

In a debate with Žižek and Ernesto Laclau, Judith Butler makes the following observation in the context of her own (quite different) reading of Hegel: “Those who are dispossessed or remain radically unrepresented by the general will or the universal do not rise to the level of the recognizably human within its terms.”³⁸ This is a philosophical problem, I would argue, that has haunted Christian theological anthropology from antiquity to the present day. And we can see this problem acutely and urgently foregrounded in the aporias of the Pauline Adam-Christ typology. As I have tried to show here, Žižek’s reading of Paul makes this typology about something else, and in the process wrests it out of the sphere of theological anthropology. If Adam is Christ, then the anthropological interval is collapsed, and its attendant dilemmas of embodied difference are seemingly effaced.

And yet this is not really any kind of answer to the problem posed by Butler. In fact, she makes a pointed observation in the context of debating Žižek that seems equally applicable to his reading of Paulinism: “The problem with [Žižek’s] counterposition, as I understand it, is this: he does not return to the problem of the unrepresented within the field of representation, and so his response produces the appearance that this serious political problem simply does not interest him.”³⁹ And indeed Žižek’s sarcastic polemics against the self-indulgent vagaries (and capitalist complicities) of “identity politics” would seem to confirm this point: he is simply not that interested in the fundamental anthropological problem of the unrepresented and unrepresentable within the field of the human—and consequently, he harnesses the Adam-Christ typology to do other kinds of work.

But as I have endeavored to argue, the “philosophical” readings of Paul put forward not only by Žižek but also by Breton and Badiou all, to varying degrees, have to minimize, pass over, or otherwise redirect the textual complexities of Paul’s speculations on the situation of embodied human beings in between Adam and Christ. In contrast, and indeed opposition, to these readings (while still acknowledging occasional points of affinity), I want to wager that the Adam-Christ typology remains one of the most significant Pauline constructs for thinking through contemporary formulations of theological anthropology, both with and against Paul. To push the Pauline terms further than the apostle no doubt would wish to go—but that, I would argue, the typological construct he unleashed nonetheless allows and may even demand—the space between Adam and Christ is nothing less than the conceptual and temporal interval with respect to which Christian anthropology must pose and repose the ongoing theological dilemmas of embodied difference.⁴⁰ I will now turn to this constructive project—or, more accurately, my own attempt to begin to intervene in such a project already long ongoing.

Pauline Typology, Theological Anthropology, and the Possibilities of Impossible Difference

I would say that my current thinking is that the utopian moment that I fought to keep alive is in the crisis of sexual difference. ... I don't think that I would have thought about the imaginary domain as the space for the contestation and representation of sexual identification without the crisis that calls foreclosed subject positions into question.

—DRUCILLA CORNELL

The unconscious constantly reveals the “failure” of identity. Because there is no continuity of psychic life, so there is no stability of sexual identity, no position for women (or for men) which is ever simply achieved. ... [But this “failure”] is not a moment to be regretted in a process of adaptation, or development into normality, which ideally takes its course. ... Instead “failure” is something endlessly repeated and relived moment by moment throughout our individual histories. ... [T]here is a resistance to identity at the very heart of psychic life.

—JACQUELINE ROSE¹

In this concluding chapter, I offer a constructive theological proposal with respect to the Pauline Adam-Christ typology, the question of sexual difference, and the domain of contemporary theological anthropology. The chapter begins in conversation with Žižek by posing a question about the mode of solidarity entailed in theological identification with Adam and Christ as paradigmatic figures—as well as the vexed question of what role (if any) the sexually specific particularities of embodiment play in that identification. Drawing on some of Judith Butler's recent work, I then go on to consider the typology as a framework—literally, the work the Adam-Christ typology does to *frame* the anthropological possibilities that are legible to the Christian tradition. I argue that this framing work of the typology always inevitably fails to recognize, contain, or resolve coherently the full spectrum of human differences with respect to gendered embodiment. This failure can be seen most clearly in the tradition's historical struggles to situate specifically female bodies (e.g., Eve, Mary) in relation to the male bodies (e.g., Adam, Christ) implied by the typology's terms. Here

I revisit briefly the historical arguments of my previous book, *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought*. Building on Austin Busch's provocative reading of Romans 5–7, I also suggest that a crucial consequence of such a failure—the typological figuration of sexual difference as both absence and spectral presence—can indeed be read not only in the later tradition but in the Pauline text itself.

As a result, I maintain, the inevitable anthropological failures found in both the Pauline typology and the history of its uptake are ones that constructive theology ought to foreground and continue to explore. My contention (to be explored more fully below) is that the tradition's failures to locate the difference of the female/feminine satisfactorily in typological terms point most fundamentally to the constitutive instability that necessarily attends every form of sexual identification within the Pauline anthropological interval, and not simply that of the feminine. Accordingly, I propose that constructive projects in Christian theological anthropology need to continue to engage the typology—and especially to resist those moves (charted throughout this book) that work to erase the particularity of the figure of Adam. Instead, careful attention to both paradigmatic figures—Christ *and* Adam—in the Pauline typological edifice yields evidence of the ongoing inability of Christian theology (broadly construed) to achieve coherent closure as it works to produce seemingly naturalized sexual subject positions.

The Adam-Christ typology thus can and should be harnessed to undercut the potency of positions that efface the typology's gendered particularities in order to characterize Christ and/or Adam in terms of some putative anthropological universal. In the case of political-philosophical projects like those of Breton, Badiou, and Žižek, this position amounts to reading a representative *male* figure (Christ) as a paradigmatic “singular universal,” without engaging in any substantive way the problems this raises from a feminist standpoint. Yet some contemporary Christian theologians and biblical scholars *also* read a kind of universalism into the Adam-Christ typology (with respect to the common condition of all human beings poised between creation and eschaton), but equally sidestep the questions that the typology raises about gendered embodiment.

So for example, in *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II turns to the Pauline text to argue that “by contrasting Adam and (the risen) Christ—or the first Adam and the last Adam—the Apostle in fact shows in some way the two poles in the mystery of creation and redemption between which *man is situated* in the cosmos. One could even say that man is ‘set in tension’ between these two poles.”² Elsewhere he specifies, by way of an allusion to Genesis 1:27, that the universal “man” invoked here is intended to encompass both men and women: “the ‘first Adam’—man, male and female—who was created in the state of original innocence ... was a sign of the eternal Mystery.”³ But no attention is given to the actual difficulties involved in situating the difference of the female body coherently between the representative male bodies of Adam and Christ. Similarly, the Protestant biblical scholar and theologian Richard Hays frames Pauline ethics as at least in part defined by the typological poles of creation and eschaton (or “new creation”)—and accordingly, Hays treats Adam and

Christ as paradigmatic (i.e., having universal implications for theological anthropology).⁴ However, within this framing, sexual difference is nowhere in view.

Therefore, instead of engaging questions of gender and sexuality under the purview of the typology, these Christian thinkers restrict typological reflection on these topics to biblical contexts that pair Adam with Eve rather than with Christ.⁵ Indeed, with a stunning disregard for the way in which the anthropological logic of the Pauline text actually works, John Paul II even redirects the above reference to the “first Adam” as being in some sense both male and female to make a point not primarily about representative inclusivity, but rather about “conjugal union”—that is, the marriage of Adam and Eve at creation. He then uses the primordial couple, in turn, to move the discussion into an entirely different typological orbit, invoking the well-known Ephesians 5 parallel between heterosexual marriage and Christ and the church (“an indissoluble bond analogous to the indissoluble covenant of spouses”).⁶ In this way, the unresolved anthropological conundrums of the Adam-Christ typology are rerouted—by way of the marriage of Adam and Eve—to a thoroughly tidy conclusion about “the sacramentality of the whole heritage of the sacrament of redemption in reference to the entire work of creation and redemption, and all the more so in reference to marriage.”⁷

Accordingly, thinkers such as John Paul II and Hays never wrestle with the vexed question of the typological and anthropological interplay between the three figures—Adam, Eve, Christ—that the Pauline text implicitly sets up. Avoiding the potential “gender trouble” that such a theological endeavor inevitably produces (at least, I would argue, when pursued fully, rigorously, and with intellectual honesty), these positions are therefore able to use the Adam-Eve pair in a seemingly unproblematic way to underwrite binary sexual difference and heteronormativity as the natural, stable, and entirely coherent structural principle of the anthropological order.⁸ Such readings of Pauline typology thus join those of Breton, Badiou, and Žižek in being able to assume, present, and actively reproduce notions of “the human” that are characterized by a counterfeit stability—one that is easily (and too often) harnessed to shut down potential spaces of greater anthropological openness within Christian thought.

In what follows, I aim to explore some of these potential open spaces, spaces that might be called—with as much precision as such a term allows—queer.⁹ But this is not to limit the scope of the discussion to the emerging discipline of queer theology in any tightly circumscribed sense. As Gerard Loughlin argues in his introduction to the polysemy of queer theology as a discipline, all Christian theology, in both its constructive and historical dimensions, “has always been a queer thing.”¹⁰ By this he means multiple things, including (1) “the strangeness of [theology’s] undertaking: to think ‘existence’ in relation to the story of a first century rabbi”; (2) the historical evidence of a tradition in which “queer interests” of one kind or another have proved to be “not marginal ... but oddly central”; and (3) the degree to which rigorous theological reflection, at least in some forms, has always worked “to outwit identity.”¹¹

Building especially on this third point, I want to suggest here that a kind of “queerness” has always attended the anthropological operations of the Adam-Christ typology—an unsettled and unsettling remainder never entirely avoided or excluded from the frame of the Christian tradition.

IDENTIFICATION, SOLIDARITY, AND EMBODIMENT

Throughout this book, I have examined the place (or nonplace, as the case may be) of the Adam-Christ typology in the so-called philosophical readings of Paul put forward by Breton, Badiou, and Žižek. Here I have sought to chart a structural alignment between the treatment of the figure of Adam with respect to Pauline typology and the minimizing of sexual difference as a question whose anthropological force might impinge on the putative universality of the Pauline subject. As we have seen, in Breton’s reading, Adam is virtually invisible. In Badiou’s, he is solely the human inventor of death, exhibiting an anemic and attenuated continuity with the figure of Christ—if indeed there is any continuity at all. And finally in Žižek’s, the interval between Adam and Christ is collapsed, thereby effectively erasing the specificity of the former. These varied but related moves, I have argued, produce in all three cases an equivalent result. Adam’s embodied particularity (i.e., masculinity) accentuates Christ’s own masculinity (rather than neutrality) and also raises the question of how to situate Eve within Paul’s typological logic. Thus with Adam gone, the force of sexual difference as an anthropological problem in the Pauline text necessarily recedes.

However, a more fundamental set of constructive questions has undergirded the foregoing inquiry: within the terms of the typological framework that the apostle has bequeathed not only to Christianity but to the history of Western thought, how exactly do human beings identify with these two paradigmatic figures, Adam and Christ? What impact do the *bodies* of the first and last Adams have on our theological conclusions about what it means to be human, poised between creation and resurrection in irreducibly embodied terms (1 Cor 15:45–49)? How and to what extent is sexual difference represented in the anthropological frame of the Adam-Christ typology? Within this frame, are women—or anyone else whose embodied subjectivity is not straightforwardly “represented” by the male bodies of Adam and Christ—even “human”?

Of the three thinkers examined in this book, only Žižek makes any meaningful space for the notion of both Adam and Christ as representative figures, or as he puts it, “‘corporate persons’ in whom people live.”¹² In contrast to both Breton and Badiou, Žižek recognizes in the Pauline trope the importance of the representative function as it pertains to *both* Adam and Christ. Yet because his reading at this point relies entirely on the stark contrasts of Romans 6 (“We die with Christ ‘in Adam’ (as Adamesque creatures), and then we begin a new life ‘in Christ’”),¹³ it misses Paul’s important if underdeveloped acknowledgment of the embodied “in-betweenness” that characterizes the current human condition: a complex interplay between continuity and

transformation wherein “just as we have borne the image of the human of dust, we will also bear the image of the human of heaven” (1 Cor 15:49, NRSV, translation slightly modified). Instead, as I have argued, Žižek’s idiosyncratic Lacanian-Hegelian reading relentlessly collapses this anthropological interval that the Pauline text leaves open. And insofar as Adam “is” Christ, the corporate identification that really interests Žižek is with Christ alone—Christ, that is, refigured as a paradigmatic “singular universal.”

On the whole, then, Žižek’s turn to the Christian tradition as a conceptual resource is located within a larger political project concerned with a particular kind of identification, one that he terms “solidarity.” Thus in *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Žižek construes Job’s silence before God’s boasting as significant not “because he was crushed by God’s overwhelming presence ... but because, in a gesture of silent solidarity, he perceived the divine impotence.”¹⁴ As he goes on to clarify in later work, this solidarity with God’s powerlessness is also a “solidarity with human misery,” and it can therefore be linked to the “seeds of new ‘socialist’ solidarity” that Žižek sanguinely imagines emerging in the urban slums—one of the few sites left, as he sees it, where a Badiou-style truth-event might still materialize, coming to pass in the space populated by “the systemically generated ‘living dead’ of global capitalism.”¹⁵

In theological terms, this solidarity is engendered by the radical subtracting of the subject from the particularities of private life-worlds so as to enter into a public, universal space in which God is, by definition, dead: “what dies on the Cross is precisely the ‘private’ God, the God of our ‘way of life,’ the God who grounds a particular community. The underlying message of Christ’s death is that a ‘public’ God can no longer be a living God: he has to die as a God. ... The ‘Holy Spirit’ is thus a ‘public’ God, what remains of God in the public universal space: the radically de-substantialized virtual space of the collective of believers.”¹⁶ The God of private identities is and must be dead (or another option, disturbing in its anti-Jewish implications: he may be aligned with Judaism as “a God of the dead Letter”).¹⁷ What emerges as a kind of resurrection out of this death is the solidarity of the new universal community. Defined by the cut of division that sunders identity-based collectives (“concrete universality is the site of struggle—it brings the sword, not love”), the formation of this community of concrete or singular universality definitively separates out those who subscribe to the truth of the universal from those who do not.¹⁸

This radical subtraction is underwritten, according to Žižek, by Paul—not surprisingly, with reference to Galatians 3:28: “When St. Paul says that, from a Christian standpoint, ‘there are no men and women, no Jews and Greeks,’ he thereby claims that ethnic roots, national identity, etc., are *not a category of truth*.”¹⁹ Yet notice the distancing from concepts and questions of embodiment that occurs in this treatment of the Galatians verse. In the portion of the verse as cited, Paul mentions sexual difference and Jewish-Gentile difference. Žižek’s elucidation spectacularly ignores the former. As for the latter, his gloss rewrites it in terms that implicitly incline

toward a register of cultural identification (“ethnic roots,” “national identity”) in which corporeal particularities might appear to be increasingly incidental. This represents a subtle but real shift in the verse’s conceptual center of gravity, one that is completely foreign to Paul’s deep concern in Galatians with embodied ways of being in the world (such as, for example, the literal embodied cut of circumcision). To this point, recall the apostle’s impassioned plea to his audience: “My friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision. ... I wish those who unsettle you would castrate [*apokopsontai*] themselves!” (Gal 5:12, NRSV).

A less viscerally embodied vision of theopolitical solidarity emerges as the mode of identification that Žižek champions—and that ultimately governs his reading of the Adam-Christ typology and its subjective or anthropological significance. Indeed Žižek’s contempt for so-called identity politics is at least on some level about the ways in which he understands such politics as threatening to fracture this more basic solidarity. Thus his reading of key Pauline texts (not only Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 7:29–31, but also Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15) proceeds as if claiming and attending to difference in theologically robust or politically significant ways will inevitably threaten that solidarity.

Yet here we might turn to the Pauline text itself and note that the deployment of the Adam-Christ typology does in fact bring difference and bodily particularity to the fore (by way of the figure of Adam and the differential interval *between* Adam and Christ)—but within a theological project that remains deeply committed to some form of “solidarity” for those “in Christ.” As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has pointed out in a now classic aphorism, “People are different from each other”—a deceptively simple observation, but one that has irreducibly complex embodied dimensions. Sedgwick goes on rightly to note, “It is astonishing how few respectable conceptual tools we have for dealing with this self-evident fact.”²⁰ With respect to the project of Pauline anthropology, then, might there not be a conceptual tool to be gained (or perhaps forged?) by means of thinking through the ways in which human beings across a spectrum of differences (bodily, psychic, sociocultural) are able to find—or, even more importantly, *not* to find—themselves within the terms of the apostle’s Adam-Christ typology? Might such an undertaking point toward possibilities for a solidarity that does not demand the renunciation of embodied difference?

Frames of Recognition and the Pauline Anthropological Interval

In recent work on the precarity, recognizability, and grievability of human life in its various embodied forms, Judith Butler argues that “the ‘frames’ that work to differentiate the lives we can apprehend from those we cannot ... not only organize visual experience but also generate specific ontologies of the subject.”²¹ This image of the “frame” is a multivalent one in her analysis. One important function of the metaphor is to serve as a point of condensation for the complex and diffuse

operations of power in and through the norms that produce recognizable subjects in historically specific ways.²² With respect to this issue, Butler is especially interested in those lives that never quite fit fully or coherently within the normative schemes that give rise to any particular (and always historically contingent) ontology of the subject: “thus, there are ‘subjects’ who are not quite recognizable as subjects, and there are ‘lives’ that are not quite—or, indeed, are never—recognized as lives. In what sense does life, then, always exceed the normative conditions of its recognizability?”²³ Posed in this way, the question calls attention to the structural inevitability of an excess that characterizes the continuum of human life in its relation to any given set of subject-producing norms. Insofar as this excess must necessarily fail to be incorporated smoothly or easily into the normative framework, the result will be “lives” that can never be recognized as fully human in terms internal to the norms themselves. Yet at the same time—and, indeed, because of this failure of recognition—such lives may carry the potential, at least partially, to interrupt the regime of the norm, their very unrecognizability haunting its anthropological operations from outside and within in ways that could, under certain circumstances, cause that regime to stumble.

Thus Butler maintains, “there is no life and no death without a relation to some frame. Even when life and death take place between, outside, or across the frames by which they are for the most part organized, they still *take place*, though in ways that call into question the necessity of the mechanisms through which ontological fields are constituted.”²⁴ Her analysis then goes on to exploit more specific senses of the term “frame.” As she rightly notes, a frame can be a false accusation or “set up” whose purpose is to engineer a particular interpretation of a scene. Or it can be a physical means of situating and implicitly offering commentary on a picture. Or it can signify a kind of context that “seeks to contain, convey, and determine what is seen” when a photograph, or a piece of writing, or a narrative about the meaning of a larger political undertaking (such as a war) is reproduced and circulates.²⁵ Butler points out that this third sense of framing always in some sense breaks with itself, insofar as the very iterability that it depends on to accomplish its purposes (e.g., the broader dissemination of a photograph beyond the original circumstances of its production) necessarily involves the introduction of new contexts.²⁶ Her explicit concerns in the matter are decidedly of the present moment: “the digital image circulates outside the confines of Abu Ghraib, or the poetry in Guantánamo is recovered by constitutional lawyers who arrange for its publication throughout the world. The conditions are set for astonishment, outrage, revulsion, admiration, and discovery, depending on how the content is framed by shifting time and place.”²⁷ Consequently, Butler asserts, the frame allows, invites, and indeed may even demand the possibility of its own subversion.

Keeping in view these reflections on the different but interrelated senses, operations, and potential failures of “the frame,” I want to suggest that we might profitably consider the Pauline Adam-Christ typology as a mode of anthropological

frame—one that works to shape (and also to limit) the possibilities for how embodied, sexed, and sexualized human beings can be recognized within Christian theological anthropology. This work of framing the human proceeds, as we have seen, with reference to specific persons, Adam and Christ, who function simultaneously as paradigmatic representatives of others and as metonyms for the two poles of creation and eschaton that orient the Pauline soteriological drama. Poised between the first and second Adams, creation and resurrection, embodied human beings may find their theological legibility (and thus their recognition) in relationship to both figures/poles, an interplay of sameness and difference, continuity and transformation.

In this way, it is important to note that Paul's typology is not quite like Butler's various examples insofar as it frames not a specific object, event, or discrete phenomenon but rather an *interval*—that is, a conceptual and temporal space of anthropological possibility. With respect to this interval, Christian thinkers from antiquity forward have endeavored to situate coherently the chaotic complexities of human embodiment, sexual subjectivity, and desire. More specifically, the thinking of this problematic has tended to zero in on the obvious lacuna (at least with respect to gender) in an Adam-Christ paradigm: the female body. Christian reflection on the issue has therefore focused on the problem of how to treat representative *female* figures such as Eve or the Virgin Mary, figures who have no straightforward or obvious place in the typology's stubbornly androcentric terms. Accordingly, the difference of the female body has proved, in the history of the tradition, to be the (unacknowledged) point at which the seamless, coherent operation of the Pauline typological/anthropological machine stumbles, thereby calling into question not only the place of feminine difference, but also the theological stability of male bodies, masculinity, and, by extension, the very operation of the machine itself.²⁸

In contrast, then, to our three contemporary philosophers' various attempts to diminish or reinterpret the typology's full anthropological significance, primarily by redirecting its claims about Adam, I want instead to keep the interval live and bring the framing work of Paul's typology to the fore for the purposes of feminist and queer theology. Yet one might reasonably ask, why this direction? Why try to preserve such a problematically androcentric construct as the Adam-Christ typology as an ongoing part of contemporary theological conversation? Why not just retire the trope and seek new resources—scriptural, traditional, experiential—for articulating human embodiment in theological terms? Here I contend that the "Paulinisms" of Breton, Badiou, and Žižek offer a stark object lesson in exactly why the Adam-Christ typology needs to be kept live in all of its particulars within discussions of Christian theological anthropology.

As should by now be clear, these three philosophers' different strategies for minimizing Adam's anthropological import—and, with it, the force of the problem that sexual difference poses—in the name of a new universal Pauline subject end up uncritically importing (if often in understated or barely visible ways) substantial components of the androcentric anthropology that the typology supports in ways that require ongoing critical interrogation. But this is not all. The philosophical projects

examined in this book are, to be sure, very different from those endeavors within feminist and queer theology that seek to discover new anthropological resources (or straightforwardly recover or rehabilitate old ones). But the latter share potentially hazardous ground with the former when they simply repudiate and attempt to leave behind pivotal sources of thought out of which the historical Christian tradition has been forged. Even given the complexity and heterogeneity that characterize that tradition, some ways of thinking run so deep that when putatively abandoned or moved beyond, they merely go underground—a dynamic wherein they may continue to exert force in ways increasingly difficult to see. I would wager that with respect to questions of sexual difference within theological anthropology, the Adam-Christ typology is one such element. And insofar as it is the messy—but thoroughly historical—process by which the Christian tradition has come to be articulated in all its diversity that has created the very space of possibility for feminist and queer theological critique, such critique ought not to pass over or suppress the tradition's most deeply problematic historical elements, but rather attend critically and unremittingly to those elements' internal dynamics and constitutive exclusions.

Butler helpfully articulates a version of this point in a nontheological register: "What happens when a frame breaks with itself is that a taken-for-granted reality is called into question, exposing the orchestrating designs of the authority who sought to control the frame. This suggests that it is not only a question of finding new content, but also of working with received renditions of reality to show how they can and do break with themselves."²⁹ Here I find Butler's formulation especially valuable insofar as she acknowledges *both* the continual need for discovering new material to think with *and* the necessity of working with received renditions of theological and anthropological reality. The latter undertaking needs to be done not in order to recuperate a construct like Pauline typology, but rather both to render visible (and thus to continue to interrogate) our own constitutive relation to this ancient past and also to explore the anthropological possibilities entailed in the typological frame's necessary failure, its "break with itself."

TPOLOGY AND SEXUAL DIFFERENCE: EARLY CHRISTIAN DILEMMAS

I opened this chapter with a set of questions about the basis for theological identification with Adam and Christ as paradigmatic figures and, more specifically, whether or not the sexing of bodies is a crucial factor in the negotiation of that identification. To offer a straightforward answer to the latter: the fact that, in the history of the Christian tradition, the place of Eve in the typology emerges as a persistent question suggests that sexual difference *is* significant in this respect. In contrast to Žižek, whatever identification or "solidarity" with Christ (or with Adam) might have meant to Christian thinkers, many of them found that the problems posed by the sexed body could not be ignored. Even when the answers proffered by these thinkers ultimately downplayed or attempted to eradicate the importance of gendered

embodiment, sexual difference proved salient, insofar as the question exerted a force that had an impact on the formulations of theological anthropology. Bodily difference troubled the Christian typological dream that “perfect representation should represent perfectly.”³⁰

Let me sketch briefly three examples of attempts by Christians in the second and third centuries CE to wrestle with this typological dilemma.³¹ Early Christians made use of two basic strategies in their attempts to situate sexual difference coherently within the Pauline Adam-Christ typology. The first appears in a variety of contexts, including the writings of a proto-orthodox thinker such as Clement of Alexandria and heterodox texts such as the *Tripartite Tractate* and the *Excerpts from Theodotus*. This is an approach rooted in a Platonizing stream of thought in early Christianity that we could broadly characterize as monistic—that is, it envisioned the cosmos in all its messy diversity as yearning for a kind of ultimate oneness or eschatological unity. For these early Christian monists, the female body does not fit very well into this way of thinking, functioning as what Daniel Boyarin has aptly called “a site of difference, and thus a threat to univocity.”³² In response, their strategy for solving the problem involves casting the difference of the feminine as a temporary difficulty.

To focus specifically on Clement: the Alexandrian thinker finds a place for “woman” in a Pauline Adam-Christ framework by figuring her as the site of desire, division, and lack—a problematic aberration or difficulty that will be resolved at the eschaton through a unifying collapse of the female into the male. Accordingly, in his *Protrepticus*, he retells the story of creation in a way that *displaces* Eve from the narrative, figuring her (in unnamed form) as a kind of hypostasis of lustful, irrational, or otherwise inappropriate desire: “The first human being (*ho prōtos*) ... fell before pleasure (the serpent is an allegory for pleasure) ... and was misled by desire (*epithymiais*).”³³ This correlation of desire and the feminine is a fairly common move in the broader Platonic tradition of this period. It allows Clement to render Eve both present and absent in his creation narrative—present in the sense that “desire” is very much a personified character in the story, filling in the place where the reader would expect Eve, but absent in the sense that desire displaces Eve. This displacement is important for Clement because it allows him to tell the rest of the story (i.e., redemption) in terms that preserve the Pauline representative framework: two paradigmatic humans, Adam and Christ, without any legitimate or ongoing place for Eve. Rather, Eve—as a synecdoche for the difference of the feminine—fits in the story as a short-term anomaly, the solution to which is for the female to be eradicated and transformed into the male at the resurrection.

For my purposes, what is most interesting about this androcentric (and arguably misogynistic) project are the problems that Clement runs into in trying to pull it off. On the one hand, his narrative needs to protect the prototypical human Adam from the infecting stain of the feminine, figured as desire. But on the other hand, he is not able to do so in an entirely satisfactory way, because the desire that plagues Adam in Clement’s creation story cannot be fully externalized or displaced onto Eve. Rather, his conception of desire still needs a subject, and Clement’s retelling carefully avoids

any explicit reference to Eve as a subject in her own right. This means that the feminizing desire must in some sense be Adam's desire—located within him, even as it is projected outward by the story to the site of the (simultaneously present and absent) woman. The result is that Clement works himself into a fascinatingly incoherent position, one in which the stand-alone masculinity of Adam that he tries to protect (and that he sees as fulfilled in Christ) ends up necessarily implicated in the feminized desire that he mobilizes to protect Adam in the first place. Thus Clement ends up arguing *both* that at the eschaton the female will be transformed into the male *and* that God will ultimately eradicate both male and female.³⁴ The result, then, is an unavoidable instability in Clement's placement of sexual difference—not only in the register of the feminine but also that of the masculine.

The second strategy that early Christians used in their attempts to articulate the place of sexual difference in relation to Pauline typology proved to be no less problematic or androcentric—just androcentric in a different way. Representatives of this strategy include Christian thinkers such as the author of the *Gospel of Philip*, Irenaeus of Lyons, and Tertullian of Carthage who engaged the problem by adding a second (explicitly gendered) level to the Pauline typological framework, wherein not only Adam and Christ but also Eve and Mary take on a paradigmatic or representative function. In this way, the strategy becomes a means of giving the female body its own proper (if always subordinate) place within typology by adding a new typological layer to the Adam-Christ parallel. Here the feminine emerges not as an irregularity in the cosmic order to be erased or eliminated through transformation, but rather as the masculine's licit and proper (if necessarily subordinate) supplement.

The early Christian thinkers who pursued this strategy did so by turning to the theme of virginity and the different things that it can mean for a body to be virginal. The paradoxical trope of the reproductive female virgin opened possibilities for additional typological connections between Mary as virgin-mother, Eve as virgin in her initial created state, and even the "virgin earth" from which Adam was formed. Turning to Irenaeus as an example, we see that for him, Mary comes to function as something like a co-redemptrix—not in the fully developed sense that some later streams of Christian thinking will posit, but in some nascent way whereby she performs a specific redemptive operation with respect to Eve: "So thus also the knot of Eve's disobedience received its unloosing through the obedience of Mary."³⁵ And while this might easily be (and indeed has been) interpreted as a positive theological resource from the standpoint of feminist theology,³⁶ such constructive projects cannot ignore the disconcerting ways that Irenaeus views the procreative and (sexually) penetrable aspects of the female body to be a serious problem, deeply implicated in a realm of sexuality and desire that he envisions being necessarily eradicated at the eschaton. The result is that Irenaeus turns to the unpenetrated, virginal body of Mary as a way of typologically fulfilling (or, in his language, *recapitulating*) everything that he sees as theologically problematic about the body of Eve, and by extension all female bodies—that is, bodies that are penetrated through sexual intercourse and that procreate, giving birth to children.

Moreover, like Clement, Irenaeus also thinks himself into an analytically awkward corner in which the problem of Pauline typology and sexual difference that he has set out to solve fails to reach a satisfactory and fully coherent resolution. Where the seemingly straightforward and elegant symmetry of Irenaeus's representative anthropology stumbles is in his scriptural grounding of the connection between Adam and Christ due to their shared birth from "virgins": Christ from the virgin Mary and Adam from the untilled, not yet rained upon, and therefore unpenetrated "virgin earth" of Genesis 2 (compare Gen 2:5). So he argues, "From where then was the substance of the first-formed? Out of the will of God and out of virgin earth (*ex virgine terra*): 'for God did not bring about rain,' says Scripture, before man had been created, 'and there was no man to work the earth.' Therefore out of this earth, while it was still virgin (*Igitur ex hac, dum virgo erat adhuc*), 'God took dirt from the earth and formed a man,' the beginning of humanity."³⁷

The result is that Adam's flesh, the flesh that composes all human bodies (male and female), is itself already implicated in the conceptual specifics of the *female* body, insofar as its origin in the primal "virgin earth" relies on a metaphor of penetration—that is, a virginal body that is specifically female (rather than a sexually generic concept of virginity predicated on a purity attainable in the same way by men and women). Thus some trace of the feminine remains intractably encoded in Irenaeus's theology of human flesh, emerging as a kind of excess—one that escapes Mary's typological work in recapitulating and resolving the problematic dimensions of the feminine (i.e., penetrability, procreation) as figured in Eve. In this sense, Irenaeus's gendered intervention in Pauline typology does not succeed, a breakdown that I elsewhere characterize as "the partial yet necessary failure of a theological economy that attempts to retain sexual difference in the flesh while resolving its distinctives without remainder."³⁸

Finally (and very briefly), I want to mention a third kind of attempt at a solution to the dilemma of sexually differentiated bodies and the Adam-Christ typology. This one comes from a now-marginalized trajectory of the early Christian tradition in a little-known text from the Nag Hammadi corpus. The treatise is actually untitled but generally referred to as *On the Origin of the World*. Like the thinkers, texts, and positions just summarized, *On the Origin of the World* makes reference to the Pauline typology and appropriates many of Paul's ideas regarding representative human beings. And like Clement of Alexandria, it does so within a broadly Platonizing conceptual framework. Yet surprisingly, the text does not make anthropological moves similar to those discussed in the first strategy above—that is, positing the difference of the feminine as a provisional difficulty that the eschaton will solve. Instead, *On the Origin of the World* takes another route, retelling Genesis 1–3 in terms of a genealogy of embodiment in which sexual difference is not secondary (as it arguably is, for example, in the Genesis 2 narrative of Eve's creation from Adam's rib). As an alternative, *On the Origin of the World* dismisses the rib story as a lying ruse on the part of demonic powers, and offers a counternarrative in which sexual difference is the site of divine materialization in the world—a materialization that takes

place differently in Adam's and Eve's different bodies. In this way, the character of Eve is not derivative or a figure of lack. Rather, sexual duality is fundamental, grounded in two different creation processes. These are processes that the text values differently, but in a way that grants each one its own ontological integrity.

However, in order to stake this ground, *On the Origin of the World* has to resist the traditional terms of the Pauline typology as they were articulated by Paul himself. Instead, it creatively refigures Paul's typological categories to new ends. Thus the text retains the notion of multiple Adams (in fact positing three Adams, one of which is Eve!), but relegates the figure of Jesus Christ to a minor role in the narrative. In this way, it resists and subverts Paul's framework, breaking apart the singularity that attends the apostle's version of the typological drama of creation and redemption, situated entirely and without remainder between the first and second Adams. Instead, *On the Origin of the World* treats the sexual differentiation of humanity as a marker of an inassimilable difference. This is an anthropology that (perhaps appealingly, from the standpoint of feminist theology) offers the female body its own stand-alone genealogy of embodiment. But it is also one in which (more problematically) theological recognition across embodied human differences threatens to collapse into impossibility, insofar as the text comes close to figuring sexually differentiated bodies as absolutely and entirely incommensurable. (It should also be noted how forcefully the narrative's two distinct genealogies for Adam and Eve work to ontologize sexual difference as strictly and only binary, thereby potentially shutting down any possibility for recognition of bodies and selves that do not straightforwardly fit the male-female binary.)

Out of this reiteration of my previous book's argument, the point I want to make and then expand upon is the following: the ancient tradition points to the conclusion that there has not been—and, indeed, cannot be—a definitive and fully coherent solution to the problem of situating embodied sexual difference within the Pauline Adam-Christ typology. Marcella Althaus-Reid points to a telling alignment when she notes that “decent theologies struggle for coherence, the coherence that sexual systems also struggle for. Yet, we may ask, what is wrong with being incoherent theologically?”³⁹ And indeed, the witness of the early Christian thinkers just summarized suggests that at least with respect to the entanglement of embodied subjectivity, sexual difference, and the Adam-Christ typology, such incoherence cannot be avoided.

Turning back, then, to a constructive theological register, I want to suggest that this failure to fully resolve the gendered aporias of Paul's typology is not the kind of failure that needs to be denounced or moved beyond. Rather, it is a species of failure akin to that which Jacqueline Rose discusses psychoanalytically in the opening epigraph of this chapter: “there is no stability of sexual identity, no position for women (or for men) which is ever simply achieved. ... [This ‘failure’] is not a moment to be regretted in a process of adaptation, or development into normality. ... Instead ‘failure’ is something endlessly repeated and relived moment by moment throughout our individual histories.”⁴⁰ Thus constructive theological anthropology ought not turn

away from this necessary failure, but instead intensify and radicalize its force. This is a project that has implications not only for the placement of feminine/female sexual difference (so often construed in androcentric and misogynistic ways by Christian thinkers in the earlier tradition) but for the theological (in)stability of *all* sexual subject positions.

ROMANS 5–7 AND THE FIGURE OF EVE

What we see in the early history of Christian attempts to situate sexual difference within Pauline typology is that the theological systems proposed never fully domesticate or resolve such difference coherently—but also (and this is the crucial point) that they never render it fully invisible. Accordingly, to maintain the interval between Adam and Christ is to preserve a spatiotemporal opening for theological anthropology that is not characterized solely by Eve’s absence, but always also by her shadowy, unstable *presence*. Whether the typological operation that the system performs has to do with the exclusion of Eve herself or some other aspect of femininity or the female body perceived by the author as problematic, in each case these later theological glosses on the Adam-Christ typology only partially succeed in covering over the trace of what they exclude.

This trace, then, has a destabilizing effect not merely with respect to the question of femininity, but rather with respect to the comprehensive anthropological aspirations of the system as a whole. To return to Butler’s image of the frame, insofar as the trace of what is excluded from the typological frame works “to call the frame into question,” it shows that “the frame never quite contained the scene it was meant to limn, that something was already outside, which made the very sense of the inside possible, recognizable. The frame never quite determined precisely what it is we see, think, recognize, and apprehend.”⁴¹ Thinking analogously with Butler on this point, it seems clear that beginning in early Christianity—and extending to the rest of the historical tradition, by way of the conceptual inheritance these early writers bequeathed to later thinkers—the exclusion is felt (if not acknowledged) and reverberates throughout Christian anthropology.

And yet this is a point that we need not rely only on the history of the typology’s uptake in order to glimpse. Here I would like to extend the analysis at hand back into the Pauline text itself—and, more specifically, into that chapter so central to Žižek’s Lacanian-Hegelian reading of Paul: Romans 7:7–25. Stanley Stowers has compellingly shown that in this passage, Paul resorts to the ancient rhetorical device of *prosōpopoiia*—that is, assuming the identity of either a stock persona or a well-known figure in order to make a speech-in-character.⁴² Yet what persona or identity is being assumed? Commentators have drawn attention to the ways in which the passage may allude to the primal scene of disobedience in Genesis 3, leading to the conclusion (with varying degrees of forcefulness) that Paul is making some reference to the character of Adam.⁴³ However, in an article published in 2004, Austin Busch

offers the intriguing suggestion that the seemingly inscrutable (and much-debated) “I” of Romans 7 is not in fact Adam but rather Eve.⁴⁴ Reading a variety of early Jewish and Christian narrative treatments of Eve, Busch concludes that these texts capitalize on the ancient association of passivity and the feminine in order to emphasize both “the passive nature of Eve’s transgression and her responsibility for that transgression. The result is an ambivalent and ultimately inconsistent portrait of Eve, fraught with unresolved tension.”⁴⁵ On Busch’s reading, Paul appropriates this complex heritage of figuring Eve in terms of both activity and passivity and internalizes it, “transforming it into the subject (quite literally ...) of his discourse.”⁴⁶ Eve, then, becomes the vehicle for Paul to offer a speech-in-character exploring the paradoxical tensions that attend the split-ness of the self in relationship to sin—a self always characterized in terms of both active perpetration of sin (as concrete infraction) and passive victimization by sin (as hypostasized power).

How convincing is this argument? Busch notes a tendency on the part of commentators to acknowledge the affinities of Romans 7 with Genesis 3 and then to jump immediately to the assumption that the character being invoked is the male Adam rather than his female counterpart.⁴⁷ This is in part due to an unwillingness on the part of many interpreters to consider the possibility that the male apostle could assume a female persona.⁴⁸ But the move is also bolstered by the proximity of another crucial passage in which Adam appears (one already much discussed in this book): Romans 5:12–21. In mounting his argument against this position, Busch observes (rightly) that if one reads Romans 7 in light of Genesis 3, then the unnamed character’s plaintive cry in 7:11 (“sin ... deceived me”/*hamartia ... exēpatēsen me*) echoes the words not of Adam but of Eve in Genesis 3:13: “The serpent deceived me (LXX: *Ho ophis ēpatēsen me*), and I ate.” Here Busch argues that “those prone to see ‘Adamic imagery’ in the passage must also come to terms with the fact that Paul *always* associates deception in the context of Genesis 3 with Eve, as opposed to Adam, in the extant writings.”⁴⁹ He therefore rests his case that the character Paul has in mind and appropriates as a mouthpiece in Romans 7 is definitively Eve rather than Adam.

Working from this fascinating and original proposal, I want to take Busch’s argument in a somewhat different direction. He argues forcefully that “ultimately, the only legitimate argument for understanding the ‘I’ of Romans 7 in reference to Adam as opposed to Eve is the superficial similarity between Rom 7:5–25 and Rom 5:12–21.”⁵⁰ Busch’s concern here is with Paul’s authorial intent, and the case he makes—while sophisticated and theoretically informed—is in many ways a classically historical-critical argument, insofar as it seeks to unearth Paul’s original intended meaning in the Romans 7 passage. While recognizing the value of this project, my interests move along a different analytical trajectory. Here my concern is less with Paul’s single intended meaning in Romans 7 than with the suggestively equivocal character of the text that he produced—a passage constituted by internal tensions and ambiguities that may in fact escape or exceed the deliberate intentions of the

apostle who composed it.

Thus rather than underscoring the illegitimacy of using the Adam-Christ typology in Romans 5 as a hermeneutical lens to interpret the unnamed persona of Romans 7 (with respect to Paul's original intention), I want to draw attention to the larger anthropological contours of Romans that have rendered this move so plausible historically. I suggest that more is at play here than only a "superficial similarity" between the two passages. Rather, the climax of the Romans 7 text—in which the subject self-characterizes as "wretched *anthrōpos* that I am" (7:24) and offers this description in the context of an appeal to that other paradigmatic *anthrōpos*, Jesus Christ (7:25)—would seem to render credible the possibility of interpreting the unnamed speaker typologically as Adam or an Adam-like figure. Indeed, the history of scholarly interpretation that Busch cites testifies to the hermeneutical and anthropological force of the Adam-Christ typology to draw the "I" of Romans 7 into its "Adamic" orbit.

However, at the same time, Busch is absolutely right that the passage's allusions to a primal fall narrative, when mapped onto the textual specifics of Genesis 2 and 3, would seem to gesture toward an identification with the figure of Eve. Accordingly, I want to assert a somewhat weaker version of his argument, not claiming definitively that Paul has Eve in view in the passage, but rather treating the "I" of Romans 7 as an anthropologically significant moment of textual undecidability. The ambiguity of this figure—alluding enigmatically to the primal scene and invoking Eve's words rather than Adam's, yet resolving the conflict with resort to the Pauline two-*anthrōpos* paradigm (the one wretched *anthrōpos* rescued by the other "one *anthrōpos*"; compare Rom 5:15)—points suggestively toward the interplay of Eve's presence and absence, a gendered shadow haunting the androcentric self-assurance of the Pauline text.

In this way, the anthropological complexities of Romans cannot be fully neutered, as Žižek would have it. Chapter 7 cannot be reduced to an abstract and oddly disembodied engagement with perversion as a philosophical predicament (i.e., the conundrum of a law that generates its own transgression), one that takes place in a register in which sexual difference does not figure. Rather, as in the texts wrestling with Paul's legacy surveyed above, so too in Romans 5–7, the never-totally-excluded trace of sexual difference troubles the stability of the Pauline typological frame. Eve in her bodily particularity is in no way assimilated as a fully present figure within Romans's Adam-Christ paradigm, and yet she also cannot quite be entirely disregarded or relegated to total absence, given the allusions to the Genesis narrative and other ambiguities that attend the "I" of Romans 7. What this trace calls into question, then, is nothing less than the anthropological coherence of the system as a whole, and by extension that system's pretensions to represent adequately and fully a theological space in which to situate a universal human subject. Sexual difference in Romans 5–7, both absent and hauntingly present, renders impossible any full and seamless embodied identification of a universal "I," forged in the Pauline typological interval, with that typology's paradigmatic representatives, Adam and

Christ.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I return to a comment that Breton makes regarding the Apostle Paul: “let us first ask how Paul himself lives and thinks his faith. He lives and thinks it as movement and affirmation.”⁵¹ While I find myself considerably less optimistic than Breton that such a sentiment does in fact describe the conscious and intentional thrust of the apostle’s thought—especially with respect to the domain of theological anthropology—nonetheless I want to propose that the impossibility that sexual difference poses for Pauline typology opens a space of theological possibility, one that we indeed might characterize in terms of “movement and affirmation.” As Joan Scott has argued in a very different context, gender, understood as “the social and political policing of sexual boundaries,” needs to be read “as an attempt to negotiate the anxieties attached to sexual difference—a difference that is known, but whose meanings and effects are never clear. Gender is the always failed attempt, in particular historical contexts, to fully secure those meanings.”⁵² In this specific sense, then, both the historical Christian tradition’s engagements with the Adam-Christ typology and the contemporary philosophical readings of Paul analyzed in this book can be considered “gendering” projects—insofar as they both attempt (unsuccessfully) to capture, resolve, or put to rest the disruptive signifying potential of the sexually differentiated human body, a potential that always exceeds the tightly scripted boundaries that the typological frame attempts to establish.

The philosophers make this move by proffering readings of Paul and his typology that dispense with or reinterpret Adam, thereby putatively bringing to light—within the space opened up by Christ without Adam—the possibility of a universal subject untroubled by the anxieties of sexual difference. And yet these anxieties endure, even when submerged or hard to see, in ways that throw into question the “universality” of the subjectivities in question. Bringing Adam robustly back into the typological picture reminds us, most basically, that the figure of Christ functions in Paul’s anthropological thought not as a “singular universal” but as an inseparable and organic part of a *frame*—one that works to set the boundaries of the human with reference to two paradigmatic bodies whose maleness is not incidental. Furthermore, attending to the diverse and complicated ways that various iterations of this anthropological machine remain haunted by “Eve”—that is, by a difference that the system can never fully put to rest—points to the irreducible inadequacy of treating Adam and Christ’s masculinity alone (or with the addition of Eve and Mary’s femininity) as the paradigm for a mode of human identification that is stable, coherent, and all-encompassing, while remaining embodied.

So what then of sexual difference and its ongoing place in Christian theological anthropology? To continue in conversation with the Pauline Adam-Christ typology is to work with reference to a system in which the normative status of “the masculine” is

taken for granted and its binary other, “the feminine,” is figured as a problem to be solved—whether that solution entails its refusal, eradication, or subordination. Here Butler’s gloss on Irigaray (and, more specifically, Irigaray’s diagnosis of the phallogocentrism that props up the history of Western thought) seems apt: we could say that with reference specifically to the Pauline typological structure, “sexual difference does not denote a simple opposition, a binary opposition. What it denotes is something like the relationship of a presumed masculine symbolic order to what it must exclude and how that same presumed masculine order requires this excluded feminine to augment and reproduce itself.”⁵³ And yet, to proceed in a way that highlights the system’s own necessary breakdown(s) *on terms internal to itself* is to throw such a notion of sexual difference into crisis—or, rather, to show that it was always already in crisis.⁵⁴

Acknowledgment of this crisis (which is really a crisis of coherence) does not usher in a space of sexual utopia in which the binary logic of masculinity and femininity is discarded wholesale, a gender-queer version of total and radical newness, à la the Badiouian/Žižekian event. But it does suggest—and even demand—that we wrestle with possibilities for thinking subjectivity and bodily difference otherwise. With respect to this question, Adam Phillips helpfully notes (in a psychoanalytic vein) that “it may be more useful to talk about gradations and blurring rather than contours and outlines when we plot our stories about gender ... [keeping] definition on the move, which is where it is anyway.”⁵⁵ My argument here is that contemporary theology’s anthropological formulations need to be imbued with precisely this sense of “definition on the move”—and that the failures of the tradition to resolve the Adam-Christ typology’s aporias coherently can and should function as a persistent theological goad toward that end.⁵⁶ Drucilla Cornell puts well (with respect to feminism more broadly) exactly what I am advocating in the domain of Christian theological anthropology when she points to the need “to symbolize the space in which we keep the future of sexual identifications open, even if through the interpretation of old attachments.”⁵⁷ The gendered subject positions made available (or not available—literally unthinkable and thus unrecognizable) by the terms of the Adam-Christ typology are an inescapable part of the Christian tradition’s historical legacy. But their failures to cohere can be thought through in ways that yield new spaces of anthropological openness.

While the so-called postmodern proliferation of identities both worries and exasperates Badiou and Žižek (and thus they might easily relegate a project seeking the robust validation of gender complexity to just one more exercise in identity politics), I do not see this sort of theological undertaking in these terms. Rather, what is at issue is most fundamentally about the building blocks by which anthropological recognition becomes possible in the first place. And this takes on a special urgency with respect to traditional Christian contexts in which so many are inclined to construe any queer proliferation of sex, gender, and the embodied structures of desire in (at best) self-indulgent or (at worst) sinful and “unnatural” terms. As Butler pointedly notes, such projects as I have in view are driven, at their core, by “a normative

aspiration ... and it has to do with the ability to live and breathe and move and would no doubt belong somewhere in what is called a philosophy of freedom. The thought of a possible life is only an indulgence for those who already know themselves to be possible. For those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity.”⁵⁸ These are concerns that, within the context of Christian theological anthropology, are not distinctly modern (or “postmodern”)—nor are they limited in their scope to considerations that we might deem only and immediately “presentist.”

Rather, the messiness and complexity of sexual identity, gender identification, and bodily difference have always exceeded—and continue to exceed—the frame that the Pauline and post-Pauline paradigms provide, as well as the closed form of (necessarily?) binary thinking that undergirds that frame. Accordingly Butler asserts, “The genders I have in mind have been existing for a long time, but they have not been admitted into the terms that govern reality. ... Because the norms governing reality have not admitted these forms to be real, we will, of necessity, call them new. But I hope we will laugh knowingly when and if we do.”⁵⁹ Here the bodily experiences of intersexed and transgendered persons would seem clearly to be a crucial entry point into the gender complexity in view. As Gayle Salamon argues, “Genders that find no easy home within the binary system are still animated by difference. Sexual undecidability does not condemn the subject to placelessness, but rather locates difference at the heart of both subjectivity and relation.”⁶⁰ And thinkers within the discipline of queer theology have begun to consider the implications of these nonnormative bodily experiences for Christian theological anthropology.

However, it remains the case that certain versions of the broadly heteronormative Christian theological position discussed at the opening of this chapter may be able to acknowledge, to some degree, the empirical realities of this complexity (i.e., intersexuality and transgenderism)—as well as the lived experiences of persons who inhabit such complexity. Yet they nonetheless relegate the failure to embody idealized binary gender norms fully and perfectly to a symptom of humanity’s fallen state, one that will be put right once and for all at the redemptive resolution of the eschaton.⁶¹ Indeed, while not directly engaging intersexual or transgender issues, Richard Hays’s arguments concerning sexuality—and especially conclusions such as the following: “homosexuality is one among many tragic signs that we are a broken people, alienated from God’s loving purpose”—rely most fundamentally on his relentless emphasis on the gap between lived reality and eventual eschatological redemption.⁶²

Sophisticated versions of this theological position might in principle even accept Butler’s argument that nonnormative gender performances illuminate the ways in which *no* gender performance can do more than “seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity,” thereby revealing gender to be “a norm that can never be fully internalized” by anyone.⁶³ Yet such positions would necessarily reject Butler’s attendant conclusion that the structural necessity of this failure exposes the inevitable “tenuousness of gender ‘reality,’” even as that “reality” poses as a timeless and original ideal.⁶⁴ Rather, by appeal to a Christian narrative of fall, sin, and eventual

deliverance, it apparently becomes possible to follow Butler up to a point, while still looking ahead to a notion of redemption that would eschatologically shore up ideal, stable, and mutually exclusive forms of masculinity and femininity.⁶⁵

It is here that my insistence on interrogating the specific terms of the Adam-Christ typology takes on a particular urgency. Unlike the familiar statements in the Pauline corpus that seem to be straightforwardly “about” the ideals of gender at some particular moment in the salvation-historical narrative (whether the primal creation, everyday life in the Greco-Roman world, or the eventual eschaton), the Adam-Christ typology traverses and encompasses the full span of these various moments: creation, fall, *and* redemptive eschaton. My point, then, is that the very terms by which the typological frame (inclusive of redemption) seeks to situate sexual subjectivity are not coherent and never were. Thus a simple appeal to the mysteries of an eventual eschatological resolution *that is somehow imagined to be coherent* fails to produce a theologically viable solution. Rather, this sort of move only ends up short-circuiting or sidestepping the force of the anthropological dilemma posed by Paul’s typology.

The complexity of sexual subjectivity in view (complexity, I argue, that has always attended Christian theological speculations on what it means to be human) is one that the androcentric terms of Paul’s Adam-Christ typology have no capacity or conceptual space to recognize. And such recognition—in the sense of the simple incorporation of difference into the typology—should not be a contemporary theological goal. Rather, following Butler, “the task will be not to assimilate the unspeakable into the domain of speakability in order to house it there, within the existing norms of dominance, but to shatter the confidence of dominance, to show how equivocal its claims to universality are, and, from that equivocation, track the break-up of its regime, an opening towards alternative visions of universality that are wrought from the work of translation itself.”⁶⁶ The Adam-Christ typology (and most especially the particularity of Adam) needs to be kept live in Christian theological anthropology not as a straightforward resource to be reclaimed, but rather as a constant witness to the failure of the typology and its afterlives to resolve embodied difference without remainder. And while the typology cannot itself provide the resources we need to think embodied sexual difference differently, its ongoing critical interrogation contributes to the never entirely finished work of ground-clearing, thereby creating the possibility of—and indeed necessity for—looking to other sites (historical, textual, and conceptual) within the tradition.⁶⁷ By keeping this typological failure in view, then, we glimpse—with a clarity that grows sharper as one delves into both the Pauline text and its later Christian appropriations—that the typology’s implicit vision of stable masculinity and concomitant pretensions to anthropological universality were always a theological counterfeit. Out of this crisis and the projects of critical interrogation it incites, new modes and dimensions of being an embodied subject that have long been present (if often submerged) may become more easily legible to Christian anthropology, engendered in the theological fresh air (still in some complicated sense “Pauline”?) of movement and affirmation.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Stanislas Breton, *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul*, trans. Joseph N. Ballan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 115.

2. Galatians 3:28 is considered by many scholars to be a pre-Pauline early Christian baptismal formula. For a discussion of the issue and its implications for feminist biblical studies, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 149–74.

3. While one trajectory of feminist biblical scholarship has seen in Galatians 3:28 a radically egalitarian impulse with respect to gender and other anthropological differences, another trajectory has read Paul's point in terms of a soteriological return to primal androgyny. Such androgyny, many scholars argue, amounts not to a vision of sexual equality, but rather to a reinscription of the masculine (the ancient androgyne being always already "male" in some fundamental sense). For a brief overview of the discussion, see Benjamin H. Dunning, *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 5–8. On primal androgyny and Galatians 3:28, see the classic article by Wayne A. Meeks, "The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol in Earliest Christianity," *History of Religions* 13 (1974): 165–208; also Lone Fatum, "Image of God and Glory of Man: Women in the Pauline Congregations," in *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Børresen (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 50–133; Daniel Boyarin, "Gender," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 117–28; Dale B. Martin, "The Queer History of Galatians 3:28," in *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 77–90.

4. On this point, see Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self in the Apostle Paul: The Material Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). For an important reading of Paul that moves in the opposite direction, emphasizing the Platonizing dimensions of Paul's thought, see Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). I see no need to adjudicate between these differing scholarly trajectories. Rather, my point is that to whatever degree Paul was informed by Platonic or Stoic categories, his position on the body cannot be reduced to a simple or stereotyped "Platonic" dualism. Indeed, the Platonic tradition itself has proved to be exceedingly complex on this point. For one example of a late ancient Platonizing text that presents a more complicated picture of embodiment, anthropology, and the relationship between human and divine realms than that of a devalued earthly body aligned solely with materiality in contrast to a soul or spirit aligned with the divine, see Benjamin H. Dunning, "What Sort of Thing Is This Luminous Woman? Thinking Sexual Difference in *On the Origin of the World*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17 (2009): 55–84.

5. Note that this renewal is tied in significant ways to earlier philosophical interest in Paul in the early twentieth century—philosophical work that, in turn, significantly impacted early- and mid-twentieth-century theological reflection (e.g., Rudolf Bultmann). See most notably Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 47–111. On Heidegger's engagement with Paul, see Hent de Vries, *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 158–243. For an important analysis of Heidegger on Paul that unpacks the complicated interplay between nineteenth- and twentieth-century continental philosophy and contemporaneous critical biblical scholarship more broadly, see Ward Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity, and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), especially 1–23, 105–27.

6. See as representative David Odell-Scott, ed., *Reading Romans with Contemporary Philosophers and Theologians* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007); John D. Caputo and Linda Martín Alcoff, eds., *St. Paul Among the Philosophers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Douglas Harink, ed., *Paul, Philosophy, and the Theopolitical Vision: Critical Engagements with Agamben, Badiou, Žižek and Others* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2010); Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries, eds., *Paul and the Philosophers* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013). See also the reviews of the conference in 2005 at Syracuse University (on which the Caputo and Alcoff volume is based) in Clayton Crockett, "St. Paul and the Event," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 6 (2005): 84–88; Jeffrey W. Robbins, "The Politics of Paul," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 6 (2005): 89–94.

7. Here I find the psychoanalytic term "sexual difference" to be a helpful one insofar as it opens an analytical space that calls into question the rigidities of a traditional (bodily) sex versus (cultural) gender distinction. On this

view, as I articulate elsewhere, the term is “never identical or reducible to the body but at the same time always somehow implicated in it ... [sliding] fluidly between sexually marked bodies, their psychic representations, and their constitution in historically variable cultural imaginaries. It thereby establishes the exploration of the sexed body ... as a project that must always take place in relation to language and the field of power.” Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 15. Judith Butler helpfully elaborates a related point as follows: “the debates concerning the theoretical priority of sexual difference to gender, of gender to sexuality, of sexuality to gender, are all crosscut by another kind of problem, a problem that sexual difference poses, namely, the permanent difficulty of determining where the biological, the psychic, the discursive, the social begin and end.” Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 185. For a fuller account of my own understanding of the term—both its usefulness and its potential limitations—see Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 13–17. For discussion of recent theoretical issues and debates related to sexual difference, see Arun Saldanha, ed., “Sexual Difference Between Psychoanalysis and Vitalism,” special issue, *Angelaki* 17, no. 2 (2012).

8. Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 8–13.

9. See Martin, *Corinthian Body*, 132.

10. See the overview of Breton’s early biography and intellectual interests in Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage—Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, Herbert Marcuse, Stanislas Breton, Jacques Derrida* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 89–104.

11. On the relationship between Breton’s and Badiou’s respective readings of Paul, see P. Travis Kroeker, “Whither Messianic Ethics? Paul as Political Theorist,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 25 (2005): 44–47.

12. I focus on Žižek’s earlier work because it is where he is most directly and exegetically engaged with the Pauline text—in marked contrast to later work that is equally interested in “Christianity” but less textually engaged or specifically focused on Paul.

13. Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 87, emphasis original.

14. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 74.

15. *Ibid.*, 52.

16. *Ibid.*, 53, 51.

17. *Ibid.*, 53.

18. *Ibid.*, 57.

19. See as representative Penelope Deutscher, “The Inversion of Exceptionality: Foucault, Agamben, and ‘Reproductive Rights,’” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107 (2008): 55–70; Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, “Bare Life on Strike: Notes on the Biopolitics of Race and Gender,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107 (2008): 89–105; Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, “Feminine ‘I Can’: On Possibility and Praxis in Agamben’s Work,” *Theory & Event* 13 (2010).

20. In addition to Martin Heidegger (see note 5), another twentieth-century continental thinker who showed an interest in Paul is Jacques Lacan. Lacan’s interpretation of Romans 7 will be discussed in [chapter 3](#). For Taubes’s lectures as the occasion that launched the recent interest, see as representative Elizabeth A. Castelli, “The Philosophers’ Paul in the Frame of the Global: Some Reflections,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 109 (2010): 653.

21. Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*, trans. Dana Hollander (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004). See also Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

22. For a related point, see Castelli, “Philosophers’ Paul,” 673n4. See as representative Creston Davis, John Milbank, and Slavoj Žižek, eds., *Theology and the Political: The New Debate* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds., *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006); Paul W. Kahn, *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (London: Verso, 2012).

23. Castelli, “Philosophers’ Paul,” 653.

24. Recent representative studies in this theological subdiscipline (from a variety of perspectives and approaches) include Thomas A. Carlson, *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); David H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*, 2 vols. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2009); M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010); Verna E. F. Harrison, *God’s Many-Splendored Image: Theological Anthropology for Christian Formation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2010); Michele Saracino, *Being About Borders: A Christian Anthropology of Difference* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2011); Jeannine Hill-Fletcher, *Motherhood*

as *Metaphor: Engendering Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

25. For Agamben's specific comment, see Ward Blanton, "Disturbing Politics: Neo-Paulinism and the Scrambling of Religious and Secular Identities," *Dialog* 46 (2007): 4, 13n3. Also Žižek, *Puppet and the Dwarf*, 134. Note the similar thrust of Agamben's point in comparing the writings of Paul and Walter Benjamin, "these two fundamental messianic texts of our tradition ... a constellation whose time of legibility has finally come today, for reasons that invite further reflection." Agamben, *Time That Remains*, 145.

26. Žižek, *Puppet and the Dwarf*, 134.

27. Žižek bookends his treatment of Christianity in *The Puppet and the Dwarf* with the kernel/shell contrast: "My claim here is not merely that I am a materialist through and through, and that the subversive kernel of Christianity is accessible also to a materialist approach; my thesis is much stronger: this kernel is accessible *only* to a materialist approach—and vice versa; to become a true dialectical materialist, one should go through the Christian experience"; "The point of this book is that, at the very core of Christianity, there is another dimension. ... [I]t is possible today to redeem this core of Christianity [i.e., its kernel] only in the gesture of abandoning the shell of its institutional organization (and, even more so, of its specific religious experience). The gap here is irreducible: either one drops the religious form, or one maintains the form, but loses the essence. That is the ultimate heroic gesture that awaits Christianity: in order to save its treasure, it has to sacrifice itself—like Christ, who had to die so that Christianity could emerge." *Ibid.*, 6, 171, emphasis original.

1. READING ANTHROPOLOGY IN BRETON'S *SAINT PAUL*

1. Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 3.

2. All citations of Breton's text are taken from Stanislas Breton, *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul*, trans. Joseph N. Ballan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). In addition, I have consulted the French original, *Saint Paul* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988). For the remainder of this chapter, page numbers from this source will be given parenthetically. French terms and phrases are also included parenthetically when included in Ballan's translation or when specifically relevant to my analysis. Italics for emphasis are original to both French text and English translation unless otherwise noted.

3. Richard Kearney, *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers: The Phenomenological Heritage—Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, Herbert Marcuse, Stanislas Breton, Jacques Derrida* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 104.

4. Ward Blanton, "Dispossessed Life: Introduction to Breton's Paul," in *A Radical Philosophy of Saint Paul*, by Stanislas Breton (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 3–4, emphasis original.

5. Blanton, "Dispossessed Life," 29. Here the reference to "a more difficult freedom" comes from Stanislas Breton, *The Word and the Cross*, trans. Jacquelyn Porter (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 80. But see also Emmanuel Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Seán Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

6. Jeffrey Bloechl draws a parallel between the particular interpretive approach that Breton attends to here (more focused and specific than "allegory" broadly construed) and Erich Auerbach's notion of "figural" reading. See Jeffrey Bloechl, "The Philosopher on the Road to Damascus: On Breton's *St. Paul*," *Philosophy & Theology* 16 (2004): 272.

7. It should be noted that while in the discussion in question, Breton only alludes to Romans 5:14 and does not develop a link between the verse and issues of law, faith, and grace in any substantial way, such a move would not be entirely untenable—given especially that the larger context of Romans 5:12–21 discusses law and grace and that 5:14 makes reference to Moses in his role as lawgiver. Thus my point is not that Breton's turn here to covenant and law is an interpretive misstep, but rather that in emphasizing only this strand of Paul's thought, he pulls his allusion to the typological framework of Romans 5:14 entirely into this thematic orbit. As a result, the anthropological dimensions invoked by the verse's clear reference to Adam (and underscored all the more when Romans 5 is read in conjunction with 1 Corinthians 15) never emerge.

On the antithesis between law and faith/grace, recent biblical studies scholarship (commonly termed the "New Perspective" on Paul) suggests that at least with respect to the apostle's own context—as distinct from later interpreters such as Augustine and Luther—the conflict may well be only apparent. For an introductory overview of this ongoing scholarly discussion, see Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student's Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 95–164.

8. Blanton, "Dispossessed Life," 10. Note also in the background the presence of Heidegger. See, e.g., Martin Heidegger, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans. Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 50–51, 90.

9. While Paul's reference to those in Christ being Abraham's offspring in the following verse (3:29) lends some support to this privileging of the Jew/Greek binary, nevertheless the baptismal formula that Galatians 3:28 cites was still interpreted and debated in early Christianity with reference to other registers—and especially issues of sexual difference. Compare, for example, within the Pauline corpus itself the "genderless" version of the formula offered in 1 Corinthians 12:13 (compare also Col 3:11), a variation that points to the status of sexual difference as a prominent question across early Christian communities.

10. Indeed Breton sees the forging of this Christological link between history and the world as a particularly innovative and significant moment in Paul's thought: "This new form of 'Lordship,' [i.e., over the world] as linked as it is to the lordship over history, adds to the latter an original dimension, marking a turn in Pauline theology" (96).

11. Elsewhere Breton justifies this move by making a distinction between Paul as individual author and the authority of the (canonical) Pauline oeuvre (35). On Colossians and its close literary relative, Ephesians, as Deutero-Pauline (the majority position among New Testament scholars), see Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-Historical Study of Institutionalization in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 86–91.

12. Here the ancient cosmological categories that inform the Corinthians passage and other early Christian thinking about the resurrection body stand in significant tension with Breton's desire to redirect this passage away from "superstitious" materialist conceptions of pneumatic bodies and toward some unspecified but "more fundamental" (disembodied?) expression of reality. On the ancient intellectual context, see especially Dale B. Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

13. See the related point (with respect to second- and third-century Christian texts) in Benjamin H. Dunning, *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 155.

14. My thanks to my colleague Larry Welborn for this especially apt formulation.

2. MYSTICISM, FEMININITY, AND DIFFERENCE IN BADIOU'S THEORY OF PAULINE DISCOURSES

1. All citations of Badiou's text are taken from Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). I have also consulted the French original, *Saint Paul: La fondation de l'universalisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997). For the remainder of this chapter, page numbers from this source will be given parenthetically. French terms and phrases are cited parenthetically when included in Brassier's translation or when specifically relevant to my argument. Greek transliterations have been standardized. Italics for emphasis are original to both French text and English translation unless otherwise noted.

2. Here Badiou's interpretation differs markedly from a current majority of biblical scholars who see Galatians 3:28 as pointing to an eschatological return to the primal androgynous condition of Genesis 1:27. For representative references, see the introduction, note 3.

3. See, e.g., Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 59: "The resurrected Son filiates all of humanity [*Le Fils ressuscité filialise l'humanité tout entière*]. ... One must depose the master and found the equality of sons."

4. Tracy McNulty, "Feminine Love and the Pauline Universal," in *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and Its Conditions*, ed. Gabriel Riera (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 197. Here Badiou moves in a somewhat different—though not entirely unrelated—direction from his earlier work, in which "man" and "woman" represent distinct and inassimilable subject positions with their own specific forms of knowledge/*savoir* (though without any fixed biological, social, or objective content). The disjunctive twoness of these positions cannot be known from the standpoint of a third (because there is no third position), but only through the radical singularity of an encounter/event that inaugurates the truth procedure of love—a process that both marks the disjunction retroactively and paradoxically transcends it through the truth of a single humanity. See, e.g., Alain Badiou, "What Is Love?," in *Conditions*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2008; French original, 1992), 179–98. See also "What Is Love?," trans. Justin Clemens *Umbr(a)* 1 (1996): 37–53; the general discussions in Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 185–91; and McNulty, "Feminine Love," 187–94. By contrast, in *Saint Paul*, as McNulty observes, "the discourses of man and woman become nothing more than instances of particularity"

("Feminine Love," 205).

5. McNulty, "Feminine Love," 204. McNulty's analysis focuses on the ways in which the characteristics/function of love specifically associated with the feminine position in "What Is Love?" are refigured as aspects of the valorized Christian discourse (to be discussed at length below) in *Saint Paul*. While not necessarily disagreeing with her comparative conclusions, my argument will move in a different direction, one that is restricted solely to an analysis of *Saint Paul* and the gender dynamics operative in Badiou's theory of Pauline discourses.

6. Amy Hollywood, "Saint Paul and the New Man," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 870.

7. See also Linda Martín Alcoff's comments in "Concluding Roundtable: St. Paul Among the Historians and Systematizers," in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers*, ed. John D. Caputo and Linda Martín Alcoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 165; Eleanor Kaufman, "Why the Family Is Beautiful (Lacan Against Badiou)," *Diacritics* 32 (2002): 148–49.

8. Here again Badiou moves in a different direction from widely accepted conclusions of New Testament scholarship. See the critique in Daniel Boyarin, "Paul Among the Antiphrasists; or, Saul Among the Sophists," in Caputo and Alcoff, *St. Paul Among the Philosophers*, 116–17.

9. Badiou is not alone among contemporary continental thinkers in deploying a "Greek"/"Jew" distinction to philosophical ends. See especially Jacques Derrida's discussion of Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 79–153. On the figure of the Jew in postwar French philosophy more broadly, see Sarah Hammerschlag, *The Figural Jew: Politics and Identity in Postwar French Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

10. Biblical scholars have rightly critiqued Badiou's interpretation of Paul's thought for too thoroughly disjoining the resurrection from the crucifixion. See Boyarin, "Paul Among the Antiphrasists," 113; L. L. Welborn, "'Extraction from the Mortal Site': Badiou on the Resurrection in Paul," *New Testament Studies* 55 (2009): 312–314. On the event as rupture in Badiou in relation to other notions of the event in twentieth-century continental philosophy, see Miguel de Beistegui, "The Ontological Dispute: Badiou, Heidegger, and Deleuze," in *Alain Badiou: Philosophy and Its Conditions*, ed. Gabriel Riera (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005), 45–58.

11. Here Badiou characterizes Paul as an anticipatory critic of ontotheology.

12. This treatment of Pascal is a shift from earlier work in which Badiou regards him as a heroic figure of fidelity to eventual truth: "Pascal's particular genius lies in his attempt to renovate and maintain the eventual kernel of the Christian conviction under the absolutely modern and unheard of conditions created by the advent of the subject of science." Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005; French original, 1988), 214.

13. So Kaufman rightly notes: "The denigration of the Jewish discourse and its equation with a 'logic of signs' is one of the most problematic moments in *Saint Paul*." Kaufman, "Why the Family Is Beautiful," 148n22. A full analysis and critique of the anti-Judaism operative in Badiou's appropriation of Paul is necessary, but unfortunately falls beyond the scope of my argument.

14. Eleanor Kaufman, "The Saturday of Messianic Time (Agamben and Badiou on the Apostle Paul)," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107 (2008): 50.

15. Ibid.

16. See Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007). French original: *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre XVII, L'Envers de la Psychanalyse, 1969–1970* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1991). Other suggestions for rendering the ambiguous connotations of Seminar XVII's title in English include "The Seamy Side of Psychoanalysis" and "Psychoanalysis Inside-Out." See, respectively, Jonathan Scott Lee, *Jacques Lacan* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 197; Jeanne Lorraine Schroeder, *The Four Lacanian Discourses: Or Turning Law Inside-Out* (Abingdon: Birkbeck Law Press, 2008), 1.

17. In this way, when Lacan maps his four discourses graphically, each discourse is only differentiated from the one that precedes it by a quarter turn of the four terms or mathemes. See Lacan, *Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 11–24. The four mathemes in question are the split subject (S), the master signifier (S_1), the signifying chain (S_2), and the object of desire/little object a (a). For a helpful introduction, see Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 129–37. On the complex problem of structural change and the differences between the discourses, see the detailed analysis in Oliver Feltham, "Enjoy Your Stay: Structural Change in Seminar XVII," in *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII*, ed. Justin Clemens and Russell Grigg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 179–94.

18. Schroeder, *Four Lacanian Discourses*, 8.

19. When available, citations of Seminar XX (*Encore*) are taken from the excerpted chapters in Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York: W. W. Norton and Pantheon, 1985). Citations from passages of Seminar XX not included in Rose's translation are taken from Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972–73—Encore: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998). I have also consulted the French original, *Encore: Le séminaire XX, 1972–73*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), and include French terms parenthetically where relevant.

20. Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, 161n6.

21. Here the graphic notation " $\forall X\Phi X$ " and the reference to phallic and non-phallic "sides" on which subjects can place themselves anticipates Seminar XX's infamous diagram of sexuated subject positions in chapter 7, "A Love Letter." See Lacan, *Encore* (Rose, 149; Fink, 73).

22. Lacan, *Encore* (Rose, 146–47, emphasis original).

23. Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 163.

24. Jacqueline Rose, "Introduction—II," in Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, 49.

25. Rose, "Introduction—II," 42, emphasis original.

26. So Rose notes, "It is, we could say, an either/or situation, but one whose fantasmatic nature was endlessly reiterated by Lacan." *Ibid.*, 49. Note, however, Hollywood's pointed critique: "From the standpoint of the theory of the subject, the two positions [i.e., masculine and feminine speaking subjects] are analogous; but whereas the male speaking subject believes he *has* the phallus, female subjects can make this claim only through a kind of masquerade. Although the male claim to have the phallus is also illusory, it is upheld by the culturally sanctioned slide between the phallus and the penis. All of this suggests that within a male-dominant symbolic, men may be able to occupy either side of the divide, but women are relegated to the side of the 'not all,' even if they choose, from that site, to relate to the phallus. Despite Lacan's overt claims, within a symbolic governed by the phallus, women are defined by their bodies in ways that men are not." Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 161, emphasis original.

27. Lacan, *Encore* (Rose, 144, emphasis original).

28. Rose, "Introduction—II," 51.

29. Lacan, *Encore* (Rose, 145, 147).

30. Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 163–64.

31. *Ibid.*, 164, emphasis added.

32. Lacan, *Encore* (Rose, 149–50).

33. Lacan, *Encore* (Fink, 131).

34. Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*, 167, citing Fink, 131.

35. *Ibid.*, 168. Note the following important caveat: "[Lacanian psychoanalysis] strives against *any* fantasy of plenitude, however, and as such is critical of any feminism that replaces the fantasy of phallic wholeness with an account of woman as 'all.'" *Ibid.*, emphasis original.

36. On the latter point (in Badiou's later work), see especially Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2009; French original, 2006), 479–80. Thanks to an anonymous reader for the *Journal of Religion* for drawing my attention to Badiou's discussion of this issue.

37. Eleanor Kaufman aptly compares the two thinkers as follows: "Badiou's project is immensely different from that of Lacan, and that difference resides, among other things, in Lacan's insistence on the messiness of things ... whereas Badiou would seek to delimit forms of experience ... in a perfect system." Kaufman, "Why the Family Is Beautiful," 145. My analysis below will attempt to elucidate one of the ways in which this Lacanian "messiness" to which Kaufman refers continues to impinge on (and threatens to undermine) Badiou's attempt to articulate a "perfect" (and perfectly coherent) Pauline system.

38. Note that for Lacan, mysticism stands in some necessary (if fraught) relationship to analytic discourse, but is not itself a discourse—though see *Encore* VI.3 (Rose, 147) where Lacan associates his own (i.e., analytic) discourse with mysticism in the form of his collected writings, *Écrits*. This is a telling difference from Badiou, for whom mysticism's status as a discourse renders possible the worry—expressed multiple times throughout *Saint Paul*—that the fourth discourse will collapse into the second (i.e., prophecy).

39. On this point, Badiou interprets the gendered injunctions of 1 Corinthians 7 and 11 in terms of what he calls "subsequent symmetrization"—that is, a technique of positing admittedly inegalitarian maxims that are reversible ("For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does," 1 Cor 7:4, NRSV). Ultimately, Badiou sees this as a "progressive innovation" on Paul's part (at least relative to his own cultural moment), one that "consists in *making universalizing*

egalitarianism pass through the reversibility of an inegalitarian rule." Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 104.

40. See esp. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 106: "With regard to what has happened to us, to what we subjectivate through a public declaration (faith), to what we universalize through a fidelity (love), and with which we identify our subjective consistency in time (hope), differences are indifferent, and the universality of the true collapses them. With regard to the world in which truth proceeds, universality must expose itself to all differences and show, through the ordeal of their division, that they are capable of welcoming the truth the traverses them. ... [O]nly by recognizing in differences their capacity for carrying the universal that comes upon them can the universal itself verify its own reality."

41. Compare also Badiou's later citation of 1 Corinthians 15:22 to a different end. In this subsequent citation, he continues to ignore the issues I raise here, and instead focuses on the notion of "all men" dying in Adam but being made alive in Christ to argue that "there is no place here for vengeance and resentment. Hell, the roasting spit of enemies, holds no interest for Paul." Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 96.

42. An anonymous reader helpfully points out that Badiou's desire for a full and radical break engenders a general nervousness about the Hebrew Bible on his part (not unconnected to his negative appraisal of Jewish prophecy), thereby making him sound here like a new Marcion.

43. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 74.

3. "ADAM IS CHRIST": ŽIŽEK, PAUL, AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERVAL

1. See also John Milbank, Slavoj Žižek, Creston Davis with Catherine Pickstock, eds., *Paul's New Moment: Continental Philosophy and the Future of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010). Note, however, that Žižek's main contribution to this volume in terms of actually interpreting the Pauline text is an abridged version of the chapter on Badiou in *The Ticklish Subject*. For summary and critical evaluation of Žižek's thought with respect to religion and theology, see Frederiek Depoortere, *Christ in Postmodern Philosophy: Gianni Vattimo, René Girard, and Slavoj Žižek* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 92–143; Adam Kotsko, *Žižek and Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2008); Marcus Pound, *Žižek: A (Very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008). For an overview of the issues in Žižek's more recent conversation with Milbank, see Carl Raschke, "The Monstrosity of Žižek's Christianity," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 11 (2011): 13–20.

2. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999); Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003). For the remainder of this chapter, page numbers from these two texts will be given parenthetically. Italics for emphasis are original unless otherwise noted.

3. With respect to the frenetic pace referred to here, note that Žižek's freewheeling, unorthodox style and idiosyncratic mode of making academic arguments have not gone uncriticized. For a particularly pointed example, see Jeremy Gilbert, "All the Right Questions, All the Wrong Answers," in *The Truth of Žižek*, ed. Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp (London: Continuum, 2007), 61–81.

4. Adam Kotsko, "Politics and Perversion: Situating Žižek's Paul," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 9 (2008): 47, 43.

5. Note the allusion to Galatians 3:28 interpreted in a universalizing direction.

6. See *TS*, 174, where Žižek explicitly identifies "the entire complex entanglement of Law and desire" with the Pauline designation "the way of the Flesh."

7. Compare Agamben's more exegetically sensitive approach to the Pauline text on this point. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 73–75.

8. Note that *sōma* is in no way a strictly negative term here, but rather an equivalent and multivalent one, given especially Paul's subsequent discussion of the *sōma pneumatikon*.

9. Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians, and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 44–45. For consistency and ease of reading, I have standardized Mitchell's transliterations of the Greek text.

10. *Ibid.*, 45.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Kotsko, "Politics and Perversion," 46.

13. See also, in the background, Martin Heidegger, "The Thing," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 161–184.

14. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959–1960: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York: W. W. Norton, 1992), 83.

15. Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 95. Jonathan Scott Lee glosses the concept (with reference to other portions of Lacan's oeuvre) as follows: "Things of this world are stripped of all their characteristics, their good and their evil, and find a place within ethical theory only as bare existences, as the 'we know not what' that Lacan designates as *das Ding*. In other words, the moral subject relates not to a world of objects but to the real Thing for which all these objects are symbolic or imaginary substitutes or both." Jonathan Scott Lee, *Jacques Lacan* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), 167. With considerably less precision, Žižek elsewhere defines *das Ding* as "the ultimate object of our desires in its unbearable intensity and impenetrability." Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Lacan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 43. For further discussion of "the Thing"/*das Ding* in Žižek's own thought, see Frederiek Depoortere, "The End of God's Transcendence? On Incarnation in the Work of Slavoj Žižek," *Modern Theology* 23 (2007): 506–10.

16. Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 83–84.

17. *Ibid.*, 84.

18. See the helpful discussion in Kotsko, "Politics and Perversion," 45–48.

19. See further discussion of this aspect of Žižek's "Paulinism" in Ward Blanton, "Apocalyptic Materiality: Return(s) of Early Christian Motifs in Slavoj Žižek's Depiction of the Materialist Subject," *Journal of Cultural and Religious Theory* 6 (2004): 13–16.

20. Kotsko, "Politics and Perversion," 48.

21. Note Kotsko's critique of this point ("Politics and Perversion," 51), which I will discuss in more detail below.

22. Kotsko, "Politics and Perversion," 50. See also *PD*, 118–19.

23. *Pace* Acts 1:24–26.

24. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 210.

25. Amy Hollywood, "Saint Paul and the New Man," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 871–76. Note that Hollywood responds to the (essentially identical) version of this argument that appears in *The Ticklish Subject* (compare *TS*, 105–8). In response to Žižek, she asks, "But if thinking must stay at the level of urination, how is the move from picture thinking (urination) to speculative meaning (generation) effected? What does it mean to say that speculative meaning (generation) is the aftereffect or by-product of a misreading (an insistence on urination)? ... [I]f we associate urination with the concrete and insemination with the abstract, wouldn't this imply choosing insemination, precisely what Žižek says we cannot directly do? And, if we extend Hegel's analogy, wouldn't the choice of insemination imply the destruction of the penis's concrete or low content, that of urination? Is a penis that doesn't urinate still a penis?" Hollywood, "Saint Paul and the New Man," 872–73. Here Hollywood's point is not that Žižek completely ignores these questions, but rather that his Hegelian answers (i.e., his analogical claim that just as the penis's urinating function cannot be destroyed without also destroying the function of insemination, so too "the concrete universal ... can never be fully negated if speculative reason is to be attained"), when related to religion and the reading of Paul, seriously compromise the absolute break/newness of the Pauline Event: "Insofar as Christ is the phallus, isn't he merely a further sublation of the penis and its functions, one both linked to and other than past renditions?" *Ibid.*, 873, 874.

26. The context of this quotation is actually a reflection on Colin Wilson's *From Atlantis to the Sphinx: Recovering the Lost Wisdom of the Ancient World* (1996). However, the subsequent paragraphs make clear that Žižek is using this reference to illustrate a dynamic he sees operative in the Christian story of creation, fall, and redemption.

27. Here I find helpful Agamben's notion of the "interval," as articulated in a decidedly different context (his study of the human-animal distinction). Specifically, Agamben turns to Walter Benjamin's model of "dialectic at a standstill" to argue that "what is decisive here is only the 'between,' the interval or, we might say, the play between the two terms, their immediate constellation in a non-coincidence." Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 83. See also discussion in Leland de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 331–32. For a discussion of different senses of the concept of the interval in the history of philosophy (with attention to its inseparably spatial and temporal dimensions), see Rebecca Hill, *The Interval: Relation and Becoming in Irigaray, Aristotle, and Bergson* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

28. Hollywood, "Saint Paul and the New Man," 870–71.

29. Kotsko, "Politics and Perversion," 51.

30. Ibid., 52.
31. Ibid.
32. Hollywood, "Saint Paul and the New Man," 870.
33. Ibid. For further consideration of the treatment of Judaism in Žižek's argument, see the more detailed analysis in Erik Vogt, "Schmittian Traces in Žižek's Political Theology (and Some Derridean Specters)," *Diacritics* 36 (2006): 14–29.
34. Kotsko, "Politics and Perversion," 52.
35. Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For?* (London: Verso, 2000), 128–30.
36. Ibid., 129.
37. On this notion of anthropological framing, see further discussion and engagement with Judith Butler in the following chapter.
38. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000), 23.
39. Ibid., 276.
40. For the notion of posing and reposing, I am indebted to Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 186.

4. PAULINE TYPOLOGY, THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF IMPOSSIBLE DIFFERENCE

1. Epigraphs: Phing Cheah, Elizabeth Grosz, Judith Butler, and Drucilla Cornell, "The Future of Sexual Difference: An Interview with Judith Butler and Drucilla Cornell," *Diacritics* 28 (1998): 24; Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), 90–91; see also the fuller version of the Rose passage cited in Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 97. Both my thinking on the notion of sexual difference as "impossible" and the phrasing in the formulation of this chapter's title are indebted to Penelope Deutscher, *A Politics of Impossible Difference: The Later Work of Luce Irigaray* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 2002.
2. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 406, emphasis original to translation.
3. Ibid., 510.
4. Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1996), 19–27, 31.
5. For Hays on this point, see *ibid.*, 368.
6. John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 510.
7. Ibid.
8. See Hays, *Moral Vision*, 379–406. While only briefly mentioned, note the crucial role that the primordial couple plays in Hays's argument: "From Genesis 1 onward, Scripture affirms repeatedly that God has made man and woman for one another and that our sexual desires rightly find fulfillment within heterosexual marriage" (390).
9. For other examples of theological engagement with the typological significance of Adam and Christ or Eve and Mary from within the emerging discipline of queer theology, see the essays by Tina Beattie, Gavin D'Costa, and Gerard Loughlin in Gerard Loughlin, ed., *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007).
10. Gerard Loughlin, "Introduction: The End of Sex," in Loughlin, *Queer Theology*, 7.
11. Ibid., 7, 9.
12. Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 102.
13. Ibid., 103.
14. Ibid. 126; compare Slavoj Žižek and John Milbank, *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?*, ed. Creston Davis (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2009), 56.

15. Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006), 184, 268–69.
16. Žižek and Milbank, *Monstrosity of Christ*, 295, emphasis original.
17. *Ibid.*, 295.
18. *Ibid.*, 294.
19. *Ibid.*, 294, emphasis original.
20. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 22.
21. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), 3.
22. On metaphor as condensation, see “Lacan and Jakobson: Metaphor and Metonymy,” in Russell Grigg, *Lacan, Language, and Philosophy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008), 151–70.
23. Butler, *Frames of War*, 4.
24. *Ibid.*, 7, emphasis original.
25. *Ibid.*, 10.
26. For the philosophical argument undergirding this point, see Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 307–30.
27. Butler, *Frames of War*, 11.
28. On the concept of an “anthropological machine” as that which produces the human as such, see (in a different context and with respect to a different set of issues) Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).
29. Butler, *Frames of War*, 12.
30. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 297–98.
31. See the more developed discussion of these and other examples in Benjamin H. Dunning, *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).
32. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 207.
33. Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 11 (translation mine).
34. See as representative Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 6.12.100, *Paedagogus* 1.4.10.
35. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.22.2 (translation mine).
36. See, e.g., Tina Beattie, *God’s Mother, Eve’s Advocate: A Marian Narrative of Women’s Salvation* (New York: Continuum, 2002).
37. Irenaeus, *Epideixis* 32 (translation mine, but see discussion of translation issues related to this text in Dunning, *Specters of Paul*, 203–204n33).
38. Benjamin H. Dunning, “Virgin Earth, Virgin Birth: Creation, Sexual Difference, and Recapitulation in Irenaeus of Lyons,” *Journal of Religion* 89 (2009): 88. Compare also *Specters of Paul*, 123.
39. Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 24.
40. Rose, *Sexuality*, 91.
41. Butler, *Frames of War*, 9.
42. Stanley K. Stowers, *A Rereading of Romans: Justice, Jews, and Gentiles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 264–84. Here Stowers sees the character in question as a stereotyped Gentile figure (from a Jewish point of view), aware of (and attracted to) the Jewish law, but simultaneously lacking self-control and enslaved to passions and desires (277–78).
43. See, e.g., Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 191–98; Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*, trans. John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987), 206–11.
44. Austin Busch, “The Figure of Eve in Romans 7:5–25,” *Biblical Interpretation* 12 (2004): 1–36. While Busch relies upon Stowers’s identification of Romans 7 with the rhetorical device of *prosōpopoiia*, his argument moves in a different direction, insofar as Stowers is adamant that “it is not the later Christian focus on Adam and Eve’s moment of disobedience in the garden that stands behind chapters 1 and 7 of Romans, but the story of the gentile peoples as a part of Israel’s story.” Stowers, *Rereading of Romans*, 275. Note that Busch also distances himself from Krister Stendahl’s well-known and somewhat minimalist interpretation of this passage (“The possibility of a distinction between the good Law and the bad Sin is based on the rather trivial observation that every man knows that there is a difference between what he ought to do and what he does”), while heeding Stendahl’s warning that we should not

read a later Lutheran “introspective conscience” back onto the Pauline text. Krister Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” in *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1976), 93. See Busch, “Figure of Eve,” 22n46.

45. Busch, “Figure of Eve,” 9.

46. *Ibid.*, 12.

47. See, as representative, Käsemann, *Romans*, 196; Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 162–64; Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 281–84. Note that Watson allows the possibility that both Adam and Eve are somehow in view here.

48. See Busch, “Figure of Eve,” 14n28—especially the discussion of male students assuming feminine *personae* as one possible use of *prosōpopoiia* in the ancient world.

49. Busch, “Figure of Eve,” 15, emphasis original; compare 2 Corinthians 11:3. Busch also invokes 1 Timothy 2:14 (“and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived,” NRSV) on the theory that the pseudepigraphic letter “was composed by a faithful disciple and contains traditions that go back to the apostle himself.”

50. Busch, “Figure of Eve,” 16.

51. Stanislas Breton, *A Radical Philosophy of St. Paul*, trans. Joseph N. Ballan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 85.

52. Joan Wallach Scott, “Finding Critical History,” in *Becoming Historians*, ed. James M. Banner Jr. and John R. Gillis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 51.

53. Cheah, Grosz, Butler, and Cornell, “Future of Sexual Difference,” 27.

54. *Ibid.*, 30.

55. Adam Phillips, “Keeping It Moving: Commentary on Judith Butler’s ‘Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification,’” in *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, by Judith Butler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 159.

56. While my theological contribution in these pages is focused specifically on the question of sexual difference and the Adam-Christ typology, it should be noted that a number of other scholars within theology and religious studies have begun to advance constructive projects calling for greater anthropological flexibility and/or openness from a variety of different theological and philosophical perspectives. See, e.g., Mary-Jane Rubenstein, “The Unbearable Witness of Being: On the Essentialist Blind Spot of Anti-Ontotheology,” in *Theology and the Political: The New Debate*, ed. Creston Davis, John Milbank, and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 340–49; Thomas A. Carlson, *The Indiscrete Image: Infinitude and Creation of the Human* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); from a self-identified queer perspective, see also various essays in Loughlin, *Queer Theology*; Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love: An Introduction to Queer Theology* (New York: Seabury Books, 2011).

57. Cheah, Grosz, Butler, and Cornell, “Future of Sexual Difference,” 25.

58. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 219; compare also 31.

59. *Ibid.*, 219. See also the notion of “sex(es) to come” in Kelly Oliver, “Sexual Difference, Animal Difference: Derrida and Difference ‘Worthy of Its Name,’” *Hypatia* 24 (2009): 54–75.

60. Gayle Salamon, *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 144.

61. John W. Kennedy, “The Transgender Moment: Evangelicals Hope to Respond with Both Moral Authority and Biblical Compassion to Gender Identity Disorder,” *Christianity Today* 52 (2008): 54–58; John Norton, Catholic News Service, “Vatican Says ‘Sex-Change’ Operation Does Not Change Person’s Gender,” January 14, 2003 (reprinted in *National Catholic Reporter Online*, September 19, 2011, <http://ncronline.org/news/vatican-says-sex-change-operation-does-not-change-persons-gender>); for an overview, see Susannah Cornwall, “‘State of Mind’ Versus ‘Concrete Set of Facts’: The Contrasting of Transgender and Intersex in Church Documents on Sexuality,” *Theology and Sexuality* 15 (2009): 7–28; also Susannah Cornwall, *Sex and Uncertainty in the Body of Christ: Intersex Conditions and Christian Theology* (London: Equinox, 2010).

62. Richard B. Hays, “Awaiting the Redemption of Our Bodies: The Witness of Scripture Concerning Homosexuality,” in *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate*, ed. Jeffrey S. Siker (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 13; also Hays, *Moral Vision*, 379–406. Within the framework set up by these essays, it does not seem unreasonable or unfair to conclude that Hays might well be implicitly placing intersexual and transgender issues under the general rubric of “our culture’s present swirling confusion about gender roles.” Hays, “Redemption of Our Bodies,” 13.

63. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 192.

64. Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xxv.

65. For an ethnographic analysis that highlights the attention paid to the performative dimensions of gender from within a Christian “ex-gay” ministry (though the analysis does not explicitly engage Butler), see Tanya Erzen, *Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversions in the Ex-Gay Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), especially 52–84, 102–109.

66. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000), 179.

67. For three representative theological projects that move in this direction in insightful and provocative ways, see Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Amy Hollywood, “Queering the Beguines: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch of Anvers, Marguerite Porete,” in Loughlin, *Queer Theology*, 163–75; also the reading of Thomas Aquinas in terms of “unactualized possibilities” in Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 156–58. Also relevant are additional essays in Loughlin, *Queer Theology*, and the essays in Margaret D. Kamitsuka, ed., *The Embrace of Eros: Bodies, Desires, and Sexuality in Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

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