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Circumcision, Allegory, and Universal "Man"

THE LANGUAGE OF "MAN"

> *Behold Israel according to the flesh* [1 Corinthians 10:18]. This we know to be the carnal Israel; but the Jews do not grasp this meaning and as a result they prove themselves indisputably carnal.
>
> Augustine

When Augustine condemns the Jews to eternal carnality, he draws a direct connection between anthropology and hermeneutics. Because the Jews reject reading "in the spirit," therefore they are condemned to remain "Israel in the flesh." Allegory is thus, in his theory, a mode of relating to the body. In another part of the Christian world, Origen also attributed the failure of the Jews to a literalist hermeneutic, one which is unwilling to go beyond or behind the material language and discover its immaterial spirit (Crouzel 1989, 107–12). This way of thinking about language had been initially stimulated in the Fathers by Paul's usage of *in the flesh* and *in the spirit* to mean, respectively, literal and figurative. Romans 7:5–6 is a powerful example of this hermeneutic structure: "For when we were still in the flesh, our sinful passions, stirred up by the law, were at work on our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are fully freed from the law, dead to that in which we lay captive. We can thus serve in the new being of the Spirit and not the old one of the letter."[1] In fact, the same metaphor is used independently of Paul by Philo, who writes that his interest is in "the hidden meaning which appeals to the few who study soul characteristics, rather than bodily forms" (*Abr.* 147).[2] For both Paul and Philo, hermeneutics becomes anthropology.

Pauline religion should itself be understood as a religio-cultural formation contiguous with other Hellenistic Judaisms. Among the major supports for such a construction are the similarities between Paul and Philo—similarities which cannot be accounted for by influence, since both were

active at the same time in widely separated places (Borgen 1980). The affinities between Philo and such texts as the fourth gospel or the Letter to the Hebrews are only slightly less compelling evidence, because of the possibility that these texts already know Philo (Borgen 1965; Williamson 1970). I take these affinities as prima facie evidence for a Hellenistic Jewish cultural koine, undoubtedly varied in many respects but having some common elements throughout the eastern Mediterranean.

Moreover, as Meeks and others have pointed out, in the first century it is, in fact, impossible to draw hard and fast lines between Hellenistic and rabbinic Jews (Meeks 1983, 33). On the one hand, the rabbinic movement per se does not yet exist, and on the other, Greek-speaking Jews such as Paul and Josephus refer to themselves as Pharisees. I am going to suggest, however, that there were tendencies which, while not sharply defined, already in the first century distinguished Greek-speakers, who were relatively more acculturated to Hellenism, and Hebrew- and Aramaic-speakers, who were less acculturated. These tendencies, on my hypothesis, became polarized as time went on, leading in the end to a sharp division between Hellenizers, who became absorbed into Christian groups, and anti-Hellenizers, who formed the nascent rabbinic movement. The adoption of Philo exclusively in the Church and the fact that he was ignored by the Rabbis is a sort of allegory of this relationship, by which the Christian movement became widely characterized by its connection with middle- and neo-platonism. In fact, this connection (between philonic Judaism and Christianity) was realized in antiquity as well, for popular Christian legend had Philo convert to Christianity, and even some fairly recent scholarship attributed some of his works to Christians (Bruns 1973; Williamson 1981, 313–14).

The congruence of Paul and Philo suggests a common background to their thought in the thought-world of the eclectic middle-platonism of Greek-speaking Judaism in the first century.[3] Their allegorical reading practice and that of their intellectual descendants is founded on a binary opposition in which the meaning as a disembodied substance exists prior to its incarnation in language—that is, in a dualistic system in which spirit precedes and is primary over body.[4] Midrash, as a hermeneutic system, seems precisely to refuse that dualism, eschewing the inner-outer, visible-invisible, body-soul dichotomies of allegorical reading (Boyarin 1990b). Midrash and platonic allegory are alternate techniques of the body.

In the hermeneutics of a culture which operates in the platonic mode

of external and internal realities, language itself is understood as an outer, physical shell, and meaning is construed as the invisible, ideal, and spiritual reality that lies behind or is trapped within the body of the language. When this philosophy is combined with certain modes of interpretation current in the ancient East, such as dream-reading in which one thing is taken for another similar thing, then allegory is born—allegory in the most strict sense of the interpretation of the concrete elements of a narrative as signs of a changeless, wholly immaterial ontological being. Although there had been related techniques of Homeric interpretation, such as those of the Stoics who interpreted the gods as natural forces, it is really only with Philo's "allegory of the soul" that the specific western tradition of allegorical interpretation comes into being (Tobin 1983, 34–35). The drive toward allegoresis is the platonic valorization of unity and immovability over difference and change. In this tradition, language is a representation in two senses; in its "content" it represents the higher world, while in its form it represents the structure of world as outer form and inner actuality. As Sallust wrote, "The universe itself can be called a myth, revealing material things and keeping concealed souls and intellects," (Wedderburn 1987, 127). Origen expressed himself similarly, explicitly comparing the structure of the Bible as outer form and inner meaning to the ontological structure of the world (Boyarin 1990b). The human being is also a representation of world in exactly the same way; in her dual structure of outer body and inner spirit is reproduced the very dual structure of being.

My thesis in this book is that Paul also belongs, at least in part, to this tradition. It is for this reason that the "literal" can be referred to by Paul as the interpretation which is "according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα), while the figurative is referred to by him as "according to the spirit" (κατὰ πνεῦμα). Literal interpretation and its consequences, observances in the flesh such as circumcision, commitment to the history of Israel, and insistence on procreation are all linked together in Paul's thinking, as are their corresponding binaries: allegorical interpretation, per se, and specifically of circumcision as baptism, of Israel as a signifier of the faithful Christians, and of procreation as spiritual propagation.

In order to keep a focus on Paul's dualism, *which does not radically devalue the body but nevertheless presupposes a hierarchy of spirit and body,* we do best by considering that the dual nature of Christ was so central in Paul's thought. Whether his christology is to be understood ontologically

or temporally, it involves in either case the positing of a Christ according to the flesh and a Christ according to the spirit. It both inscribes a dualism of spirit and body and valorizes the body, at least insofar as God became flesh.[5] For Paul, certainly, just as the historical Jesus, while subordinate to the risen Christ, is not thereby deprived of value, so also the individual human body is not deprived of value vis-à-vis the soul, and as Romans 11 shows, neither is the historical Israel—Israel according to the flesh—vis-à-vis "Israel according to the promise," the Christian believers.[6]

HERMENEUTICS AS POLITICS

Allegoresis finds its origin, on most current accounts, in the need to "update" mythological texts no longer culturally applicable. The hypothesis to be advanced in this chapter is that the attractions of allegory as a mode of reading derive not from a need to apply ancient texts which are problematic but rather from a profound yearning for univocity, a univocity which is only guaranteed by the positing of a spiritual meaning for language prior to its expression in embodied speech. In this sense, allegorical interpretation is only a species of general European phallogocentric notions of meaning, including even Saussure's dualism of the signifier and the signified; any notion of interpretation which depends on a prior and privileged pairing of signifiers and signifieds is allegorical.[7] It follows from this that the opposite of allegorical interpretation is not literal interpretation but rather midrashic reading as the very refusal of both univocity and the very existence of a signified which subsists above, beyond, or behind the signifier.[8]

Common to the phallos and the logos in the formation of phallogocentrism and thus of allegoresis is the desire for the One, for univocity in interpretation as well as in ontology. A recent book by Arlene Saxonhouse has documented the origins and development of this cultural motif in Greece (Saxonhouse 1992). Saxonhouse also documents the contestation of this "fear of diversity" within Greek culture, even, for instance, within Plato himself.[9] In the Athenian tragedians, according to her, female characters are represented as a site of resistance to this drive for unity, just as in the philosophers, the female is a disturbance in the One (Saxonhouse 1992, 51). It seems nevertheless the case that in the early centuries of our era it is the One rather than the many that attracts thinkers. In any case, Paul should be seen on my view as but one instance in the working out of a cultural problematic set by the Greeks, not as the

representative of a positive Greek idea. Paul is, of course, a particularly interesting case both because of his synthesis of Greek and Hebrew cultures and because of his decisive influence on the later history of Europe.

The same cultural motives that produce allegoresis—logocentrism—as the primary mode of interpretation in Europe produce the Universal Subject as a Christian male. In both cases the passion for univocity seeks to suppress a difference, whether that difference be the signifier, women, or the Jews. Elizabeth Castelli has well formulated this cultural theme: "Sameness is valued above difference, and this valuing undergirds the entire mimetic relationship. . . . This treatment of difference has profound implications for processes of social formation, because it suggests that difference must be subversive of unity, harmony, and order" (Castelli 1991a, 86). As Jeremy Cohen has remarked of Origen, for that consummate allegorist, "Differentiation within the human species subverted primal perfection" (Cohen 1989, 236). The quintessentially "different" people for Paul were Jews and women. It is no accident, then, that the discourses of misogyny and anti-Judaism are profoundly implicated in projects of allegorical reading of the Bible.

The extraordinary alliance between hatred of Jews and hatred of women has been much remarked. Throughout the history of Christian Europe Jews and women have been vilified in many of the same terms. The (male) Jewish body has been feminized: male Jews menstruate in the folklore of much of Europe, and circumcision has been repeatedly blamed for the femaleness (weakness, passivity) of the Jew (Garber 1992, 224–31).[10] In this chapter I seek to explain the origins of western anti-Judaism and misogyny in the realm of a metalinguistic practice, the practice of allegorical interpretation, which I take to be not a local intervention in the meaning of texts but a global discourse on the meaning of language and the human body and especially on human difference. The desire for univocity manifested by allegoresis and frustrated by the material, embodied signifier is the same Hellenic search for univocity which the Universal Subject disembodies forth and which is frustrated by women and Jews as the embodied signifiers of difference.

WOMEN AS DIFFERENCE

The Greek desire for univocity motivates the canonical account of the origin of gender, the eighth-century B.C. poems of Hesiod. As Froma Zeitlin has stated:

> The particularities too of Hesiod's extreme negativity towards woman, while open to compromise and mitigation in other texts and other spheres of interest, still remain the touchstone of an underlying attitude concerning this intrusive and ambivalent "other" who is brought into another man's household and forever remains under suspicion as introducing a dangerous mixture into the *desired purity and univocity of male identity*, whether in sexual relations or in the production of children. (Zeitlin 1990)[11]

This desire for univocity of male identity which Zeitlin marks in the archaic Greek text becomes inscribed as a philosophical principle in Greek philosophy, and male becomes univocity as female becomes difference. As a long line of feminist thinkers beginning with Beauvoir has shown, western thought is dependent on the identification of the putative universal spirit with the male and the body of difference with the female (Lloyd 1984, 26). This dichotomy or opposition inscribes the opposition man ~ woman in a whole series of culturally charged binary oppositions, already in Pythagoras, although the actual list has changed (Lloyd 1984, 3). Thus man is to woman as

active:	passive
substance:	accident
form:	matter
soul:	body
univocity:	division and difference
meaning:	language
signified:	signifier[12]

These analogical sets of oppositions often seem to be so deeply grounded in western culture that they elude accounts of origins as well as attempts at transcendence. They seem to just be there. Even Jacques Derrida seems to imagine often enough that we can only "deconstruct" these oppositions from within them and never truly escape them (Derrida 1976, 24).

My hypothesis is that the discourse of gender in much of European culture has its sources in a particular metatextual combination of platonic philosophy and Hebrew myth, produced in the biblical hermeneutics of the first century, and that perhaps only this particular cultural combination could have produced the precise set of pernicious practices which mark western gender theory.[13] In other words, the same desire for univocity that Zeitlin has claimed for the Greek (Hesiodic) reign of the phallus

is that which produces the reign of the logos as well. A series of very specific exegetical moves on the Genesis story proved to be the genesis as well of a certain type of allegory in western discourse, and that same allegory, in turn, thematized the supplementarity of woman in the culture.

PHILO, FEMALENESS, AND ALLEGORY

To establish the background for the interpretation of Paul, I would like first to briefly consider the writings of Philo (see also Boyarin 1993). I should make it clear that I am *not* claiming that Philo is the background for Paul, but only that he provides a background for my *reading* of Paul, that is, that certain themes which are explicit in Philo seem to me to be useful for understanding inexplicit moments in Paul's texts. The myth of a primal androgyny, a pre-lapsarian state before difference, was very widespread in late antiquity, particularly among platonists in the Jewish (and then Christian) traditions (Meeks 1973 and Crouzel 1989, 94).

As is well known now—largely through the efforts of feminist biblical critics—the Bible tells the story of the creation of humanity twice. In chapter 1 of Genesis, male and female are apparently created simultaneously, while in the second chapter, man comes first and woman is a secondary creation out of his body (Trible 1978; Bal 1987; Pardes 1989). In the interpretation of Philo, the first Adam is an entirely spiritual being, of whose non-corporeal existence it can be said that he is male and female, while the second chapter introduces a carnal Adam, who is male and from whom the female is then constructed.[14] Bodily gender—structurally dependent, of course, on there being two—is thus twice displaced from the origins of "Man":

> "It is not good that *any* man should be alone." For there are *two* races of men, the one made after the (Divine) Image, and the one molded out of the earth. . . . With the second man a helper is associated. To begin with, the helper is a created one, for it says "Let us make a helper for him": and in the next place, is subsequent to him who is to be helped, for He had formed the mind before and is about to form its helper.

Philo here regards the two stories as referring to two entirely different creative acts on the part of God and accordingly to the production of two different races of "Man."[15]

Philo here interprets Adam as the mind and Eve as the senses, the

supplement, the "helper of the soul." The hermeneutic substance of the interpretation thematizes its own method, therefore, for the interpretation that distinguishes between primary substance and secondary form makes itself possible as an interpretation of the relation between Adam and Eve. Put perhaps in simpler language, the interpretation of Adam as spirit and Eve as sense-experience is what makes possible the interpretation of the *story,* the language of the Adam-and-Eve narrative, as matter to be interpreted by reference to the spirit of its true meaning. Or once more, to reverse the relation, the idea of meaning as pure unity and language as difference is what makes possible the interpretation of Adam as meaning and Eve as language. The nexus of allegoresis and contempt for the senses is tight. In both, a secondary carnal entity, respectively material signs, woman, the senses is contrasted to a primary, spiritual entity: allegorical meaning, man, mind. Significant in this context is the remark of Walter Burkert, that "In post-Platonic thought one can scarcely speak of imitation without assuming that it implies a gradation of kinds of Being, especially since Plato often characterizes the relation of sensible object and idea as *mimêsis*" (Burkert 1972, 45).

Philo explicitly marks the ontological implications of his interpretative practice: "Now these are no mythical fictions, such as poets and sophists delight in, but modes of making ideas visible, bidding us resort to allegorical interpretation" (Philo 1929b, 125).[16] The biblical story is not mimesis of the visible but representation of the invisible. Given this privileging of the invisible, it is not surprising that for Philo the story of Adam and Eve is one of the creation of sense-perception and its effects on Adam, who was formerly pure mind:

> For it was requisite that the creation of mind should be followed immediately by that of sense-perception, to be a helper and ally to it. Having then finished the creation of the mind He fashions the product of creative skill that comes next to it alike in order and in power, namely active sense-perception. . . . How is it, then produced? As the prophet himself again says, it is when the mind has fallen asleep. As a matter of fact it is when the mind has gone to sleep that perception begins, for conversely when the mind wakes up perception is quenched. (Philo 1929b, 241)

The creation of sense-perception in the state of sleep, while recognized by Philo as a necessity, is profoundly and explicitly unwelcome to him: "But as it is, the change is actually repugnant to me, and many a time

when wishing to entertain some fitting thought, I am drenched by a flood of unfitting matters pouring over me" (Philo 1929b, 245–46). And then:

> "He built it into a woman" [Gen. 2:22], proving by this that the most proper and exact name for sense-perception is "woman." For just as the man shows himself in activity and the woman in passivity, so the province of the mind is activity, and that of the perceptive sense passivity, as in woman.

And finally, the verse which in the Bible is one of the clearest statements of the non-supplementarity of gender becomes for Philo something else entirely:

> "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and the twain shall be one flesh" [Gen. 2:24]. For the sake of sense-perception the Mind, when it has become her slave, abandons both God the Father of the universe, and God's excellence and wisdom, the Mother of all things, and cleaves to and becomes one with sense-perception and is resolved into sense-perception so that the two become one flesh and one experience. Observe that it is not the woman that cleaves to the man, but conversely the man to the woman, Mind to Sense-perception. For when that which is superior, namely Mind, becomes one with that which is inferior, namely Sense-perception, it resolves itself into the order of flesh which is inferior, into sense-perception, the moving cause of the passions. (Philo 1929b, 255–57)

It is easy to see here how for Philo the theory of the body and the theory of language coincide (Boyarin 1993, 37–42 and 57–60). His allegorical method, which privileges the spiritual sense ("the soul"), is exactly parallel to his anthropological doctrine, which privileges mind over the corporeal. The very necessity for humans to have senses is that which also generates the necessity "to make ideas visible" through the production of myth-like allegories. Both necessities are enacted in the story of the creation of woman, and together they resolve themselves into the "order of flesh." I am suggesting, therefore, that the western discourse of gender that finds its most specific point of origin in Philo owes its existence to the particular synergy of platonistic philosophy and the myths of Genesis. That is, on the one hand, the peculiar configuration of the biblical story which first describes a male-and-female creature, then gives it the name "man," and then reinscribes that very "man" as male, when combined with two peculiarly Greek cultural themes, the devaluation of the belated and the obsession with unity, produced the universal male.[17]

We thus see that the coordination of an allegorical perspective to language and a deep suspicion of human difference whether gendered or enculturated is not accidental at all. The two, in fact, seem on this analysis to be correlates of one another. The central thesis of this book is that the allegorization of the sign "Israel" in Paul is part and parcel of the very conception of difference within which Paul was to found his discourse on gender as well. As R. Howard Bloch has claimed, "We cannot separate the concept of woman as it was formed in the early centuries of Christianity from a metaphysics that abhorred embodiment; and that woman's supervenient nature is, according to such a mode of thought, indistinguishable from the acute suspicion of embodied signs—of representations" (Bloch 1991, 37). One such embodied sign was the sign "Israel," and its own most embodied sign, the seal of circumcision. Not so paradoxically then, Jewishness came to be a gender in much of the discourse of western Christianity, with all Jews (male and female) lumped together with women as the "same" Other. Paul, no less than Philo, sought to overcome that embodiment of the Jewish sign system.[18]

JEWS

The passage which begins with the last verses of Galatians 3 and continues through chapter 4 is the key text for reading this letter, and I read it as the hermeneutical key to Paul altogether. It is here that Paul makes most explicitly and passionately clear his stake in Christ, namely the erasure of human difference, primarily the difference between Jew and gentile but also that between man and woman, freeman and slave. In this section Paul also exposes the interpretative means by which erasure of difference is to be accomplished, in the famous allegory of Galatians 4:21–31. Making this the moral center of Paul's entire corpus is a hermeneutical choice, one which while not, of course, ineluctable generates a strong, (nearly) coherent, and important meaning for his work. Other choices can be made to center one's reading of Paul, and other results will obtain from them, including the moral monstrosity of reading all of Paul as generated by the vicious anti-Semitism of the possibly spurious 1 Thessalonians 2:14, engaged in by a recent writer (Hamerton-Kelly 1992).[19]

"There is neither Jew nor Greek"

> For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ [saying]:

> "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is no male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus." If, however, you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise. (3:26–29)

In Deuteronomy 14:1 (and quite a few other places) we find the Jews referred to as the "children of God." Paul's theme in Galatians is his dissent from the notion that one particular people could ever be the children of God to the exclusion of other peoples, while other Christians sought to persuade his Galatian converts to become Jews as a condition of salvation. To disprove that claim and convince the Galatians of the rightness of his approach to Christianity, Paul cites the baptismal formula which the Galatians themselves had recited or heard recited at the time of their baptism. Paul's citation of a traditional baptismal liturgy here is thus very much to the point and cannot be adduced as evidence that this statement is not central and vitally important to him.[20] Moreover, he interprets the text. In the baptism there was a new birth (or a new creation), which is understood as substituting an allegorical genealogy for a literal one. In Christ, that is, in baptism, all the differences that mark off one body from another as Jew or Greek (circumcision considered a "natural" mark of the Jew!–Romans 2:27), male or female, slave or free, are effaced, for in the Spirit such marks do not exist. Thus, in this passage of Galatians that I have chosen as my key for unlocking Paul, Paul marks the analogous statuses of gender and ethnicity and the transcendence of both in the spirit: "For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

Accordingly, if one belongs to Christ, then one participates in the allegorical meaning of the promise to the "seed," an allegorical meaning of genealogy already hinted at in the biblical text itself, when it said that in "Abraham all nations would be blessed," and even more when it interpreted his name as "Father to many nations." The individual body itself is replaced by its allegorical reference, the body of Christ of which all the baptized are part. This is what the "putting on" of Christ means, which is certainly a reference to the topos of the body as a garment, as in the Dominical saying Macdonald identifies plausibly as the source of (or if Macdonald is not accepted, certainly a reflex or analog of) the baptismal formula itself, to wit "when ye trample on the garment of shame, when the Two become One, and Male with Female neither male nor female." Alan Segal's comparisons with Second Enoch also seem apposite here, *if the text can be seen as pre-Pauline* (or if not, perhaps still significant as an early *reflex* or *interpretation* of the phenomenon):

> [Enoch's] transformation is effected through a change of clothing. The clothing functions as or symbolizes Enoch's new, immortal flesh, as they are immortal clothes emanating from the throne room, not from the earth. This parallels Paul's future [?] glorification of the mortal body in 2 Cor. 5:1–10. Enoch has been put *in* the body of an angel, or he is *in* the manlike figure in 1 Enoch 71. This could explain Paul's use of the peculiar terminology in Christ. (Segal 1990, 48–49, 62)

By entering into the body of Christ in the spirit, people become one with the seed to which the promise was made and thus themselves heirs of Abraham and children of God according to the promise. The garment of shame having been put off in the baptism and the spiritual body of Christ having been put on, the Galatians now propose by agreeing to circumcision, to return and put on again the garment of shame. They will thus show themselves precisely to be *outside of the covenantal promise and not within it as Paul's Jerusalem opponents would have it.* 4:19 should also be understood in this light. Christ taking shape "in you" means both within each individual in the ecstatic experience and through that their putting off of the body and entering into the spiritual body of Christ.[21] Scholars have recognized that Paul is citing here a traditional formula, one that refers back, moreover, to Genesis 1:27—"Male and female created he them"—as well as to the "myth of the primal androgyne" (Meeks 1973; Macdonald 1987). For Paul male-and-female means neither male nor female in the non-corporeal body of the risen Christ. The individual body itself is replaced by its allegorical referent, the body of Christ of which all the baptized are part. The parallel citation of the formula in 1 Corinthians 12:13 makes this even more explicit: "For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body."

Paul, however, adds to this traditional expression of the erasure of gender in the spirit the further erasure of ethnicity.[22] Both of these impulses are motivated, I argue, by the same desire for univocity—"when the two become one." In the process of baptism in the spirit the marks of ethnos, gender, and class are all erased in the ascension to a univocity and universality of human essence which is beyond and outside of the body.[23] Here allegoresis, the ultimate hermeneutical mode of logocentric discourse, unites both gender and ethnic identity as the secondary and devalued terms of the same binary opposition. This attitude toward ethnicity was, of course, not unique to Paul but once more part of a general Hellenistic longing for the univocal and the universal. Unique to Paul is the hermeneutic shift by which the allegorized particular Israel yields the uni-

versal "in Christ Jesus." The notion, however, that the body is the site of the particular and the spirit of the universal has deep roots in Greek culture.[24]

CIRCUMCISION, CASTRATION, CRUCIFIXION; OR, THE BODY AND DIFFERENCE

As Jewish culture, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, came into contact with other cultures in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, it was faced with the issue of how the biblical religion fit in a world in which Jews live among other peoples. The dualism of Hellenized Judaism provides one answer to this question by allegorizing such signifiers as "Israel," "history," and the practices of Judaism. Thus Philo interprets these signifiers as having meanings of universal applicability. The Bible, its prescriptions, and the history it relates are universal in that they teach everyone important truths. Philo was working within and from a cultural tradition which, as Gager has shown, was widely attested among *pagan* as well as Jewish writers of the period "that regarded Judaism as a divinely revealed philosophy with Moses as its founder and spokesman" (Gager 1983, 69).

This "positive" and liberal perception of Judaism had negative consequences as well, however. As loyal a Jew as Philo was, he could not entirely escape the consequences of his allegorizing in a devaluing of the physical practices and genealogy of Israel. Where physical history and physical ritual exist only to point to spiritual meanings, the possibility of transcending both is always there. As Ronald Williamson has put it:

> It seems that for Philo, alongside traditional, orthodox Judaism, there was a philosophical outlook on life, involving the recognition of the purely spiritual nature of the Transcendent, in which one day, Philo believed, all mankind would share. In *that* Judaism the idealized Augustus, Julia Augusta and Petronius—among, no doubt, many others—had already participated. (Williamson 1989, 13)

For Philo, such a spiritualized and philosophical Judaism, one in which a faith is substituted for works, remains only a theoretical possibility.[25] For Paul it becomes the actuality of a new religious formation which deprives Jewish ethnicity and concrete historical memory of value by replacing these embodied signs with spiritual signifiers. These elements of embodiment are thus inextricable one from the other. If the body of language is its meaning and essence and the body of the person is his or her "self,"

then the history of Israel and the practices of that Israel are the physical history and practices of the body Israel.[26] Post-Pauline Christianity, with its spiritualizing allegorization of these signifiers, was universalizable but paid the enormous price of the suppression of cultural difference.

Philo indicates his disquietude with circumcision in his tract *On the Special Laws*, a tract whose name reveals what I take to be a common concern of such personalities as Philo himself, the author of *Wisdom of Solomon*, and Paul, that is, the specialness of Jewish rites and the ways that these mark off the Jews from others. Circumcision is in a sense the chiefest of these and, by Philo's own testimony, ridiculed in his environment (Philo 1937, 101; Hecht 1984). Philo offers four standard explanations and defenses of the practice, all of which promote rational and universal reasons for being circumcised. In fact, Philo emphasizes the fact that the Egyptians are also circumcised.[27] Finally, Philo offers in his own name two "symbolic" (*συμβολον*) readings of circumcision. The more interesting of these is the second:

> The other reason is that a man should know himself and banish from the soul the grievous malady of conceit. For there are some who have prided themselves on their power of fashioning as with a sculptor's cunning the fairest of creatures, man, and in their braggart pride assumed godship, closing their eyes to the Cause of all that comes into being, though they might find in their familiars a corrective for their delusion. For in their midst are many men incapable of begetting and many women barren, whose matings are ineffective and who grow old childless. *The evil belief, therefore, needs to be excised from the mind with any others that are not loyal to God.* (Philo 1937, 104)

The excision of the foreskin from the body is allegorically interpreted as the excision from the mind of an evil belief, indeed one that is intimately connected with the foreskin, as it has to do with generation. What we see, then, in Philo is a typical middle-platonist interpretation of the meaning of circumcision. Philo, however, typically berates those who, having a proper understanding of the meaning of circumcision, ignore the physical observance of the rite (Borgen 1980, 86; Collins 1985). The logic of his mode of interpretation is rather that others—not only Jews—should also be circumcised, a point which is supported by his aforementioned notice that the Egyptians follow the practice also.

In spite of his generally less extreme devaluation of the body, Paul goes further than Philo in a radical reinterpretation of circumcision. Where

Philo argues that circumcision both symbolizes and effects the excision of the passions, "symbolizes the reduction of all passion by effecting in the flesh of the penis a reduction of sexual passion," Paul "ties the removal of the fleshly desires exclusively to the believer's crucifixion with Christ" (Borgen 1980, 99). Baptism is also figured in Pauline language as putting off of the garment, namely the physical body, which is replaced by the corporate (resurrection) body of Christ. Baptism is a re-enactment for every Christian of the crucifixion of Christ, a putting off of the body of flesh and a recladding in the spiritual body of the risen Christ.[28]

"Circumcision" in its true meaning *κατὰ πνεῦμα* also means this. This is "the circumcision not made with hands." Since he allegorically interpreted circumcision as the outer sign performed in the flesh of an inner circumcision of the spirit, therefore, I would claim, circumcision was for Paul replaced by its allegorical signified and the embodied signifier "Jew" by its allegorical referent "believer in Christ." Paul returns over and over to this theme, most clearly in such passages as the following: Galatians 6:11–17; and Colossians 2:11, "In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ." As Wedderburn has put it:

> Instead of the physical circumcision which was perhaps demanded of the Colossian Christians they are reminded of the circumcision that they have already received in their union with Christ, namely the far more drastic "putting away of the fleshly body" which comes from union with him in his death and burial; they have been raised with him in his resurrection. (Wedderburn 1987, 84)

PAUL AND MIDDLE-PLATONISM

> Gentiles entering the new movement brought their culture with them, and Hellenism had already significantly affected Jewish culture both at home and abroad. Paul's Gospel . . . was at home in this milieu; and his universe, despite the foreshortened perspective he sees it in, is still very much the universe of late Hellenistic science. (Fredriksen 1988, 63)

What was the substance of this late Hellenistic science to which Fredriksen alludes? While it had different varieties, one of its signal characteristics was a capacity to absorb and synthesize ideas from originally distinct philosophical traditions. Thus, for example among the philosophers

known as the middle-platonists, both Aristotelian and Stoic logic were combined and considered platonist. It is not inconsistent, moreover, to find in one person elements of Cynic style combined with elements of platonistic thought.[29] The general outlines of the type of platonistic thinking which I ascribe to Paul have been delineated by John Dillon, one of the leading scholars of middle-platonism:

> We shall see throughout our period the philosophers of Middle Platonism oscillating between the two poles of attraction constituted by Peripateticism and Stoicism, but adding to the mixture of these influences *a strong commitment . . . to a transcendent supreme principle, and a non-material, intelligible world above and beyond this one, which stands as a paradigm for it.* The influence of Pythagoras and what was believed to be his doctrine was also dominant throughout our period. . . . Despite all the variations in doctrine that emerge, we can observe in this period the growth of a consistent body of thought, constituting a Platonic heritage that could be handed on, first to Plotinus and his followers, and thence to later ages. (Dillon 1977, 51 [emphasis added])

This philosophical tradition was widespread throughout the entire Mediterranean cultural area. There were prominent middle-platonists in Ascalon in Palestine, in Southern Anatolia, and in Syria. Thus, whether Paul got his education in Jerusalem, Tarsus, or even Damascus, the likelihood of his exposure to the central ideas of the platonistic philosophy current in his day is not at all implausible. Currently there is great resistance to the concept of a Paul nurtured by these philosophical traditions, resistance which Abraham Malherbe has described as belonging to an apologetic tradition (going back to Tertullian) for the absolute distinctiveness of Christianity. As Malherbe pithily remarks, "Why the New Testament, on *a priori* theological grounds, should have been kept safe from the taint of Hellenism requires a more cogent explanation than has been offered since early Christianity has become the object of modern historical research" (Malherbe 1989, 2). Indeed, the question is why should Hellenistic philosophy be considered a taint if it be found in Paul?[30] Malherbe himself documents the extent to which Paul was attuned to the style and methods of the popular philosophers of his day. The influence of this central platonistic notion of a higher world which stands as paradigm for this one and the importance of this conception for the reading of Paul will constitute a major claim of this book. The uniqueness of Paul—and I do think that he is unique—is not established by the lack of cultural in-

put into his religious thought and experience but rather in the sui generis way that the different elements—Pharisaism, Hellenism, and belief in Christ—are combined to produce something absolutely new.[31]

JESUS ACCORDING TO THE FLESH: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF CHRISTOLOGY

According to my understanding, ontology, hermeneutics, anthropology, and christology are so intimately related in Pauline thought that they cannot be separated from one another.[32] The coming of Christ is, in fact, the perfect model for Paul's ontology, for just as Christ had a physical nature and a spiritual nature (Romans 9:5), and both are valuable, though the former is subordinate to the latter, so also the physical observances of the Torah and the people of Israel.[33] On the present reading, the fundamental insight of Paul's apocalypse was the realization that the dual nature of Jesus provided a hermeneutic key to the resolution of that enormous tension that he experienced between the universalism of the Torah's content and the particular ethnicity of its form. Paul understood both the dual nature of Christ's person as well as the crucifixion in the light of the familiar platonic dichotomy of the outer and the inner, the material and the spiritual, or in Paul's own terminology, the flesh and the spirit. Jesus was explicitly of a dual ontology, having an outer aspect of the flesh and an inner aspect of the spirit, or in more properly hermeneutic terms: There was a Christ according to the flesh (*ὁ Χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα* [Romans 9:5])—which corresponds to the literal, historical Jesus—and a Christ according to the spirit—the allegorical, risen Christ:

> Concerning His son who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the son of God in power, according to the spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:3–4).
>
> *περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν*

Jesus is the son of David according to the flesh but the son of God according to the spirit. This duality—if not dualism—is both ontological and hermeneutical or epistemological.

In the same category, it seems to me, is "So then, from now we know no man according to the flesh, and if we did know Christ according to the

flesh, we will no longer [so] know him," Ὥστε ἡμεῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν οὐδένα οἴδαμεν κατὰ σάρκα εἰ καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν κατὰ σάρκα Χριστόν, ἀλλὰ νῦν οὐκέτι γινώσκομεν (2 Corinthians 5:16), in a context discussing the death and resurrection of Christ. There are two ways of construing this verse.[34] Most commentators nowadays understand that the κατὰ σάρκα here modifies the verb, ἐγνώκαμεν, and not the Χριστόν, while Bultmann held that it indeed referred to the Christ, who in his aspect of according to the flesh represented the historical Jesus, "Christ in his worldly accessibility, before his death and resurrection." Since we know for certain from Romans 9:5 that "Christ according to the Flesh" is a real entity in Pauline thought, I am inclined strongly to accept Bultmann's formulation.[35] It is not, however, crucial for my argument. If "according to the flesh" refers to the Christ, then it explicitly marks the site of Christ's dual ontology; however, the usage of κατὰ and not another preposition will, in any case, mark that ontological difference as an epistemological one as well, as a mode of knowing, experiencing, or interpreting Christ. On the other hand, if it is the knowing which is according to the flesh, the *hermeneutical* moment is explicit, even though the *ontological* point is muted. Once more, as Bultmann remarked, "A Christ known κατὰ σάρκα is precisely what a Christ κατὰ σάρκα is" (Bultmann 1951, 1, 231).

In 1 Corinthians 10:18, Paul interprets a verse having to do with the offering of sacrifices and remarks that the verse deals with Israel according to the flesh, which means both Israel in its corporeal aspect, the "historical Israel," as well as Israel interpreted literally.[36] Here, too, Paul contrasts two ways of knowing and interpreting Christ: The inferior (from his perspective) Christians focus on, know, Christ according to his human, outer, according-to-the-flesh aspect—which, while clearly lower, is *not* "without reference to God"—while Paul and his followers know the crucified and risen Christ, who is known according to the spirit. However, very significantly, Paul does not entirely deny, of course, the importance of "Christ according to the flesh" either.[37] The two Christs, or two ways of knowing Christ's dual nature, stand in the same axiological relationship one to the other as do the two Israels and, indeed, the two meanings (literal and spiritual) of the text as well.

Paul's entire thought and expression are generated by a very powerful set of analogical ratios. Among these sets of oppositions which can be gleaned from various places in his writings are

flesh	spirit
body	soul
humans	God
Jesus (before Easter)	risen Christ
literal	figurative
Israel	Church
works	faith
circumcision	baptism
traditional teaching	revelation
James	Paul
earthly Jerusalem	heavenly Jerusalem
(Jewish church)	(gentile church)
genealogy	"Promise"

Sets of binary relations like this are a prominent feature of Pythagorean thought and expression. We know that Paul thought in such terms, as at one point he even uses the Pythagorean terminology for it (Galatians 4:25), *συστοιχεῖ*. I suggest that in his thinking and writing, the analogies among the relations generated by these lists of related ratios provide much of the heuristic energy which makes possible Paul's religious critique and innovation.[38] Throughout this book I will be suggesting that the homologies of these ratios provide the force for Paul's thought and argumentation.[39]

Paul describes historical Israel's existence as carnal, physical, material, and literal, and therefore it follows that the hermeneutical practices by which that historical Israel constitutes itself are also carnal; the Jews read only according to the flesh. They do not see beyond the fleshly literal meaning to the spirit behind the language. This brings us to the question of supersession. Richard Hays denies that Pauline theology is supersessionist (Hays 1989, 98–102). For Paul the Christian community stands in continuity with and not against the historical Israel. There has been, moreover, no rejection of Israel owing to their faults or flaws, as in some other New Testament theologies, nor, finally are the Christian believers free of either ethical or moral requirements or unsusceptible to sin (as the Corinthians apparently thought). Hays's reading then defangs Paul of his "anti-Semitism" without, however, as in the case of some modern liberal

apologists for Paul, removing the teeth of Paul's critique.[40] I would argue, however (and here, I think, the different hermeneutical perspectives of a self-identified Jew and a self-identified Christian show up): If there has been no rejection of Israel, there has indeed been a supersession of the historical Israel's hermeneutic of self-understanding as a community constituted by physical genealogy and observances and the covenantal exclusiveness that such a self-understanding entails. This is a perfect example of cultural reading, the existence of at once irreconcilable readings generated by different subject positions. What will appear from the Christian perspective as tolerance, namely Paul's willingness—indeed insistence—that within the Christian community all cultural practice is equally to be tolerated, from the rabbinic Jewish perspective is simply an eradication of the entire value system which insists that our cultural practice is our task and calling in the world and must not be abandoned or reduced to a matter of taste. The call to human Oneness, at the same time that it is a stirring call to equality, constitutes a threat as well to Jewish (or any other) difference. While it is not anti-Semitic (or even anti-Judaic) in intent, it nevertheless has had the effect of depriving continued Jewish existence of any reality or significance in the Christian economies of history.

"NOW HAGAR IS MT. SINAI IN ARABIA": THE ALLEGORICAL KEY TO PAUL

It is in the famous allegory of the two wives of Abraham (Galatians 4:21–31) that Paul explicitly develops the *theoretical* moment of his theological and political program, for it is here that he first (and solely) uses the actual term "allegory," which I am reading as the key to his discourse.[41] This is the climax of the entire argument and preaching of the letter, in which all of its themes are brought together and shown to cohere. Those interpreters who regard this passage as out of place or an afterthought are, I think, quite mising the point of Paul's discourse.[42] Paul has just in the previous section railed once again against his Jewish Christian opponents for insisting that the Galatians must become Jews in order to be Christians. He has used the language of inclusion and exclusion. There is no story more inherently exclusionary, and no text which more explicitly refers to both circumcision and conversion, than the text of Abraham, his wives Sarah and Hagar, and their respective children, the one included and the one excluded. For Paul's theology to work he must reverse the

terms of that constitutive biblical text and uproot the genealogical significance of the Promise. He must contrast, indeed, the Promise to the genealogy. Allegory is the perfect hermeneutic vehicle for this transformation, because it figures both the status of language and the status of the body. Just as the language of the text is translated by an allegorical reading into a spiritual meaning, so the body of the believer is translated out of its ethnic status and into a spiritual body—again, the very notion that verse 19 has insisted upon, for it is Paul who is going to give birth to the Christians; he is pregnant and in travail with them until "Christ is formed in them."

Paul here brilliantly sets up the terms of his onto-theology. Isaac's very birth was not by natural means but through an angelic promise to his mother.[43] This "promise" corresponds to the promise that was made to Abraham that "his seed will inherit" and that through him all of the peoples will be blessed, as well as to the promise to Sarah that she would bear a son. On the other hand, Ishmael, the child born to Hagar, was born by natural means. Isaac, accordingly, signifies "the spirit," and Ishmael, "the flesh." "The spirit" can thus be replaced here by "the promise," and "according to the promise" becomes a hermeneutical term, a way of understanding Scripture.[44] In a recent paper, Barry Sang (1991) has elegantly described the exact methodology of Paul's allegory here: Paul gives us a vital clue to his hermeneutic system, by using not only the term ἀλλεγορέο (allegory) but also συστοιχέο (analogical ratios), a term related etymologically to the Aristotelian noun συστοιχεῖαι, which refers to the Pythagorean practice. As Gaston had already shown, Paul's method involves the use of the Pythagorean practice of establishing of parallel columns of corresponding dichotomies (Gaston 1982).[45] We have already seen such a Pauline list drawn from Galatians as a whole above. Sang improves considerably on Gaston by demonstrating that it is precisely this method of drawing up pairs of coordinate columns which enables Paul's allegory. The two columns are set as opposites to each other, and accordingly each member of one column stands in an analogical (= equality of ratios) relationship with any other member of the same column. Consequently, "according to the promise" is equivalent to "according to the spirit." Since, as I have argued, "according to the spirit" is equivalent to the allegorical meaning of the physical sign, it follows that being born according to the spirit is the true meaning of descent from Abraham, of which being born according to the flesh is only the signifier. This last fillip

brings Paul's hermeneutical method here even closer to Philo's, I think, than even Sang would have it.

As the commentators sense, this allegorical formation is also supported by the distinction between slave and free which Paul has developed at length in the previous chapter as marking the distinction between Christian freedom and Jewish and pagan slavery to the "elements of the world." It is the very concatenation of these several details that provides the extraordinary richness of the Pauline text here, which can be compared to an ornate tapestry for both its surface detail and depth:

> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one from the slave woman and one from the free woman. The one from the slave woman was born "according to the flesh," however, while the one from the free woman "through the promise." These things have an allegorical meaning. For they are two covenants: one from Mt. Sinai, giving birth into slavery—this is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mt. Sinai in Arabia, but it also corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she lives in slavery together with her children. By contrast, the Jerusalem above is free—this is our mother. For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear: break forth and shout, you who are not in travail; for the children of the desolate one are more than the children of the one who has a husband." But you, my brothers, are children of promise, like Isaac. And just as in those days the one born "according to [the] flesh" persecuted the one "according to [the] spirit," so it is today.[46]

We thus see the political and theological themes of the entire Pauline enterprise in this letter coming together here in one brilliant stroke. All of the antitheses that he has set up until now work together to convince the Galatians that they have but one choice, to remain in the spirit and not recommit themselves to the flesh, to remain in the covenant that was made according to the promise to the one seed of Abraham, the (spiritual) body of the risen Christ, and not return to the slavery of the covenant with Sinai, which is the present Jerusalem—that is, both the symbolic present Jerusalem and the church in Jerusalem—by undertaking to fall back into the fleshly hermeneutic of literal interpretation of circumcision. Furthermore, at least in this passage we see how illusory is the contrast between allegory and typology.[47] Because the present Christian situation is to be interpreted spiritually, allegory is the appropriate mode for understanding it. To be sure, it is the historical event of the coming of the Christ, his crucifixion, and resurrection which has precipitated the reading, but that very historical event is itself not history but an event that

signifies the end—*telos,* both the finish and the revelation of the meaning—of history.[48]

As a mode of reading events, apocalyptic is, accordingly, structurally homologous to allegory. Allegory, typology, and apocalyptic all equally figure an "end to history." The Christ event—Jesus' birth as a Jew and his transformation in the crucifixion—both signifies and effects the transformation/transition from the historical moment to the allegorical one, from the moment of ethnicity to the moment of the universal (spiritual) subject, from natural birth to spiritual rebirth in the Promise. That is, it signifies insofar as the allegorical meaning was always already there, and it effects insofar as only at the apocalypse is that meaning revealed in the world. This interpretation, i.e., that the true meaning always existed and only waited for the Christ event in order to be revealed, is strongly supported by Galatians 3:8: "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand [προευηγγελίσατο] to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all nations be blessed.'" But "Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed" (3:23). The Christ event is thus precisely apocalyptic, in the strictest sense of that term—revelation; it has revealed the universally true meaning, faith, that always subsisted within and above history, works of the Law.

For Paul, allegory is indeed the speaking of the other; it reveals that the particular signifies the universal.[49] We must realize the depth of Paul's understanding of allegory not as a rhetorical device of language but as a revelation of the structure of reality (including historical reality) itself in order to have an appreciation for this passage and his thought in general. It is not that allegory and typology have been mixed here (*pace* Betz, 239), but history itself is transformed through this typology into allegory, and Paul's apocalypse is fully realized. Accordingly, interpretations of Paul which focus on his apocalypticism, understanding it as only a version of the general Palestinian Jewish apocalyptic, have also seriously mistaken the thrust of his gospel; it is not only that the fulfillment of time has come but more to the point that Paul understands it in a certain, specific way, as the revelation of the inner meaning of outward signs, an inner meaning which is always already there, whether the outward signs are the flesh, the Jews, the Law, or the historical Jesus. It seems to me to be a serious hermeneutic error to make one's interpretation of Paul depend on the apocalyptic expectation, which is after all not even mentioned once in Gala-

tians, rather than the apocalyptic fulfillment which has already been realized in the vision of the crucified Christ according to the spirit, Christ's spirit, Paul's, and that of the Galatians.[50] Even J. Christiaan Beker, the most trenchant defender of Paul as apocalyptist, admits that "Galatians threatens to undo what I have posited as the coherent core of Pauline thought, the apocalyptic co-ordinates of the Christ-event that focus on the imminent, cosmic triumph of God" (Beker 1980, 100). This suggests that as central as expectation of the Parousia is for Paul, and Beker's reading is impressive indeed, it is not yet "the coherent core of Pauline thought" but a vitally important element of that thought whose core lies yet elsewhere. The "elsewhere" that I argue for is, of course, the unification of humanity, of which both the realized eschatology of the cross and the expected eschatology of the Parousia are equally vital parts.

WRITING ON THE PHALLUS: MIDRASH AND CIRCUMCISION

Paul, as is well known, was to win the field in Christianity, just as Christianity was to win the field in the western world. The true cultural issue dividing Christians from Jews by the second century was the significance of bodily filiation, membership in a kin-group, for religious life. As long as participation in the religious community is tied to those rites which are special, performed by and marked in the body, the religion remains an affair of a particular tribal group, "Israel in the flesh."[51] The fraughtness of circumcision (almost obsession with it) of all of these people is not to be found in the difficulty of the rite to perform but in the way that it is the most complete sign of the connection of the Torah to the concrete body of Israel. People of late antiquity were willing to do many extreme and painful things for religion. It is absurd to imagine that circumcision would have stood in the way of conversion for people who were willing to undergo fasts, the lives of anchorites, martyrdom, and even occasionally castration for the sake of God. The aversion to circumcision must have a different explanation, a cultural one.[52]

In early Christian writings from Paul on, there is a parallelism between the allegorical form and the content of hermeneutics. Thus, just as the materiality of the language is transcended in the spirituality of its interpretation, so also the materiality of physical, national, gendered human existence is transcended in the spirituality of "universal" faith. In midrashic

interpretations of circumcision as well, there is a perfect homology between form and content of the interpretation. The midrashic interpretations of circumcision focused strongly, of course, on the physical rite itself and the inscription that it made on the body. In their writings, this mark of natural or naturalized membership in a particular people is made the center of salvation. These texts, in their almost crude physicality, register a strong protest, I suggest, against any flight from the body to the spirit with the attendant deracination of historicity, physicality, and carnal filiation which characterizes Christianity. The following text is exemplary. The role of the materiality of language and the significance of the physical body of *σάρξ* are both captured together in one image:

> All Israelites who are circumcised will come into Paradise, for the Holy Blessed One placed His name on Israel, in order that they might come into Paradise, and What is the name and the seal which He placed upon them? It is ShaDaY. The Shin [the first letter of the root], he placed in the nose, The Dalet, He placed in the hand, and the Yod in the circumcision. (Tanhuma Tsav 14; Wolfson 1987a, 78)

In contrast to Paul and his followers, for whom the interpretation of circumcision was a rejection of the body, for the Rabbis of the midrash, it is a sign of the sanctification of that very physical body; the cut in the penis completes the inscription of God's name on the (male, Jewish) body. The midrash speaks of circumcision as a transformation of the body into a holy object. It constitutes, moreover, an insistence (typical of midrash) on the meaning of the actual material form, the shapes of letters and sounds of language. It is this insistence—and not "playfulness," as in some currently fashionable accounts—that leads to midrashic punning and seeking of significance in such very concrete, physical, material features of the Hebrew language. The penis—not phallus—in this text constructs precisely the refusal of logos. The insistence on the literal, the physical, is a stubborn resistance to the universal, a tenacious clinging to difference. At the same time, of course, the very claim that only the male, Jewish body has inscribed on it the full name of God reveals the real and present danger of both the gender and "racial" politics of commitment to difference, a theme to which I will return.

By substituting a spiritual interpretation for a physical ritual, Paul at one stroke was saying that the literal Israel, "according to the flesh," is not the ultimate Israel; there is an allegorical "Israel in the spirit." The

practices of the particular Jewish People are not what the Bible speaks of, but faith, the allegorical meaning of those practices. It was Paul's genius to transcend "Israel in the flesh."

Thus, we see that the very same discursive moment, found in both Philo and Paul, which produced the devaluation of the ethnic body—Jewish—as the corporeal, produced also the devaluation of the gendered body—female—as the corporeal, and this is how the Universal Subject becomes male and Christian. For Paul, the "Jewish Question" and the "Woman Problem" were essentially the same, although the possibilities for "solving" them that he could imagine were substantially different.