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Benjamin H. Dunning. *Specters of Paul: Sexual Difference in Early Christian Thought.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. 272 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8122-4307-9.

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Do Opposites Attract?

There is an innate human tendency to order reality in opposites: day and night, sun and moon, liberal and conservative, and of course, male and female. Paul logged in on one of the major dichotomies pondered by inhabitants of the ancient Mediterranean, but in fact there were many ways to see gender, not only in binary terms. The androgyne is a very ancient figure, for example, and much platonizing Judaism and Christianity moves in the direction of idealized reabsorption into the original human unity in which sexual difference disappears. Yet as Jewish scholar Daniel Boyarin points out (noted on p. 7), somehow in the ancient world, the androgyne always turns out to be a male androgyne, or as Stephen Moore remarks (noted on p. 18), the world seemed divided into men and unmen.

In Pauline terms, how do we reconcile the seeming proclamation of sexual equality in Gal 3:28 ("There is neither male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus") with 1 Cor 11:3-16, where man is the head of woman and woman was created for man? The platonic model had no room for the female as self-legitimated principle, but plenty of room for the resolution of the female into the male. Philo's exegesis of the Genesis creation stories becomes a narrative of seduction of reason (the man) by sensory perception (the woman, inspired by the serpent) and the struggle to restore reason (male) as dominant over perception (female). No ancient Mediterranean philosophical discussion of gender issues is willing to grant legitimacy, much less equality, to the feminine principle and thereby to real women. Even Stoics prepared to affirm the same capacity for virtue in men and women see character formation in (elite) men for public service, in women for raising sons who will succeed their fathers.

Do Christian writers do any better? The Gnostic *Gospel of Philip* has a sacrament of the bridal chamber, whose content is unknown but seems to be figurative rather than literal: the ideal woman is the virgin; the bridal chamber is for free men and virgins. Clement of Alexandria works with the Pauline pair of first Adam and second Adam (Christ; cf. 1 Cor 15:20-22), yet when he seeks a female parallel, the figure of Eve is replaced by *epithymia* (desire) in *Protrepticus* 11. The extraction of Adam's rib in Gen 2:21 removes from him any smoothness and leaves him hairy and rough ("man" and not "unman"), so that from then on, there is no excuse for smoothness in men. Women's bodies are made for childbearing, housekeeping, and the inside life.

The Gnostic treatise *On the Origin of the World* offers something a little different. Taking off from the image and likeness of God in the first human being(s) in Gen 1:27, the image becomes the body of the demiurge Ialdabaoth, a kind of half-god in whose power you don't want to get, while the likeness is transformed into the Adam of light, independent and pre-existent to the historical Adam. Similarly, the heavenly female being Sophia creates her own human being, at first androgynous, but this luminous androgyne gets a female body and becomes the Eve of light, whereupon the cosmic powers conspire to rape her to prevent her ascent to the light. But she eludes them by leaving behind her double for them to attack. Lots of nasty things going on up there, but here is one instance where the female escapes whole.

Back in orthodox circles, Irenaeus with his theory of the recapitulation of everything in Christ plays on Christ as second Adam and adds the recapitulation of Eve in Mary. The spousal parallel works oddly, but this ambiguity will continue for quite a few centuries, even into medieval liturgy. The Latin speakers loved the pun on Eva (Eve)/Ave (Gabriel's greeting to Mary in Luke 1:28), but this did not work in Greek. Eve was disobedient, Mary was obedient. Virgin earth births Adam, Mary births Christ. Again, Eve is left on the sidelines. Meanwhile Tertullian in Carthage declares that intact virgin-

ity, which is of course superior to any other human mode of being, belongs only to Christ. By implication, the gender hierarchy is maintained: only the male is truly virgin. As with Clement, virgin earth gives birth to virgin Adam, while virgin Mary gives birth to virgin Christ (and does not remain virginal afterwards). In his treatise *De carne Christi*, the serpent penetrates Eve through the ear by speaking to her, just as the word of God penetrates Mary by ear through the announcement of Gabriel.

We are left with the conclusion that neither the ancient pre-Christian philosophy nor the earliest Christian writers were able to resolve the conflicted history of thinking about sexual difference. There is always a residue–which turns out to be female.

Outside the scope of this study, however, the story goes on, into the narratives of the earliest martyrs, many contemporary to the Christian philosophers discussed above, where women like the noble Perpetua and the slaves Felicitas and Blandina show "manly" courage and seem not at all troubled by the legacy of Eve, the claims about Mary, or the conundrums of sexual difference. Where philosophy did not create obstacles, women held their own quite nicely.

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