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Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2017), pp. xvi + 207. £24.99/\$21.80.

Paul and the Person is a 'boundary-crossing conversation' about what Susan Eastman calls 'the puzzle of Pauline anthropology' (p. 6). Paul's letters are brought into dialogue with ancient and contemporary theories of the self in the double hope that such a conversation will both 'illuminate Paul's thought in new ways' and 'bring Paul's voice into current debates about personhood' (p. 5). In other words, Eastman wants to hear and speak Paul's voice afresh.

The ancient dialogue partner is Epictetus, for whom the self is not 'discrete and autonomous' because the person exists in a cosmos in which 'everything is on a continuum' (p. 60). But for that very reason Epictetus cannot imagine a 'genuine other'. His is not a 'second-person understanding' of the self – that is, an account of the human person in which identity is 'relationally constituted'. This 'second-person understanding', however, is what much contemporary research in developmental psychology and philosophy of mind is suggesting. To oversimplify Eastman's illuminating findings: there is a growing emphasis on the 'self-in-relation-to-others', that each person exists in and as an embodied and embedded social system that can be called a 'we-centric space' (p. 73) that is both identity-constituting and yet remains properly inter-subjective.

It is these voices, together with Paul's, that make up the 'boundary-crossing conversation' (p. xiii) that is *Paul and the Person*. Eastman insists that the goal of such a dialogue is not to 'explain' Paul, but rather to find 'contemporary expressions' of Paul's theology of participation – a Pauline theme that is at once fundamental to Paul's anthropology and a persistent puzzle to Paul's readers. Eastman brings three moments in Paul's theology of participation into the conversation: (1) 'Human involvement in the realm of sin and death' in Romans 7, (2) 'Christ's participation in that realm of human bondage' in Philippians 2, and (3) 'human involvement in a new interpersonal regime inaugurated and indwelt by Christ' in Galatians 2 (p. 10).

According to Eastman, the 'I' of Romans 7 is a 'self-in-relation to sin' – a self constituted by and embedded within a 'relational matrix dominated by sin and death' (p. 117). Sin, in Eastman's description, is an 'oppressive foreign power' that colonises the occupied person and thereby creates an inter-subjective self that is a 'toxic environmental matrix' (p. 114). Philippians 2, by contrast, is not about human participation in the realm of sin, but rather about Christ's gracious participation in the human condition in its most liminal and derelict form: slavery, sin and death, even death on the cross. Employing the model of the theatre, Eastman traces the plotline of God in Christ

taking on the role of Adamic humanity and playing the part of the 'primal sinner' to the point of death. Long before this is about human beings imitating Christ, it is a drama of divine self-donation, the story of enslaved, suffering and sinful humanity 'being imitated by God in Christ'. In Galatians 2, Paul's language of death and life is interpreted realistically but also relationally. In Eastman's words, 'insofar as the self is always a self-in-relationship, when it is embedded in a new relational matrix it becomes a new self' (p. 160). The old relational network is identified by the phrase 'in the flesh', the new by the phrase 'in faith'. What the language of crucifixion with Christ and Christ living in me names, then, is the real death of the self-in-relation to sin and the emergence of 'the self-in-relation to Christ' (p. 116).

This relational reading of Paul's language of participation is among the most significant proposals in a book that models a contextual and conversational approach to Pauline theology that is focused on interpretation and aimed at proclamation. This relational reading also raises a series of questions, some of which Eastman addresses. For instance, does the self-in-relation to sin relate to the self-in-relation to Christ sequentially or simultaneously. Eastman's answer – simultaneously – cuts against some trends in Pauline scholarship (even as it runs with the grain of parts of the Christian tradition, not to mention Christian experience). But it also invites other voices into conversation. Martin Luther, for example, had much to say about the human as *peccator* and the human as *iustus* existing *simul*. Bringing a voice like his into the dialogue would have been natural, especially because he insisted that when naming the salvific union between Christ and the believer, the only valid category is 'the category of relation'. Another question concerns the continuity of the human person across the rupture of relations. Eastman does talk about a 'paradoxical continuity of the person' (p. 174) anchored in God's promise, but much more could be said here about the connection between the human as a creature and the human 'in Christ' as well as the way the gift of Christ that breaks the story of the self into two is also a love that has a way of holding it together.

These questions, however, should indicate rather than qualify the importance of *Paul and the Person*. Not only does it model what exegetical theology can be; it makes a profound and pressing theological argument: a person is a person not because she or he meets any qualifications of personhood – whether mental, moral, biological or social – but because of the 'criteria-less gift' that is 'the self-donation of Christ for all humanity' (p. 14).

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