

Susan Eastman. *Recovering Paul's Mother Tongue: Language and Theology in Galatians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007. 206 pages, \$25.00.

Summoning others to imitation of oneself coupled with the claim to know the mind of God is a common tactic for gaining power. Paul of Tarsus has often been accused of such a power play. But does a careful reading of Paul's letters really support the validity of this accusation and of the way they have been used?

In this fine study, Susan Eastman draws us into a conversation with important scholarly interpreters of Paul's Letter to the Galatians. She focuses upon Paul's exhortation, "Become like me," in 4:12, on his image of himself as a woman in labor in 4:19, and on his interpretation of the story of the barren woman in 4:21-5:1.

Recognizing that Eastman's thought is complicated and hard to summarize, we offer an account of Eastman's path to understanding the nature of Paul's appeal, "become like me" (4:12). This appeal does not stand alone, but is complemented by a second clause, "for I also have become like you, brothers and sisters." The second clause bases Paul's appeal on a reciprocal movement on his part. Eastman explores the rich relational context the Galatians shared with Paul both through their experiences together and through the content of his preaching as it became embodied in Paul's personal life (recounted in much of Gal 1-4). The words, "for I also have become like you, brothers and sisters," point us in the direction of that context.

How has Paul become like the Galatians? Most exegetes have taken it to refer to Paul's missionary strategy enunciated in 1 Cor 9:19-23, where Paul says that to those outside the Law he became an outsider to the Law. But Eastman thinks that this is only part of the answer. As one who in his former life before Christ was enslaved to the Law, Paul was also like the Galatians who were enslaved to the powers of this age. Of ultimate importance, however, "Paul became and remains as the Galatians have become, only in and through being identified with Christ." His own life was radically transformed by the gospel in the same way he declares their life to have been transformed by it.

Paul also applies to their relationship numerous metaphors drawn from family life: "brothers and sisters," "children," "labor pains." The metaphors of the Galatians as children and Paul as parent do articulate an inequality in contrast to the equality suggested by the metaphor "brothers and sisters"; but the metaphor of Paul's "labor pains" radically qualifies the nature of the power Paul may be seeking. The transformation hardly results in a relationship of control of the Galatians by Paul. The power Paul sees is not "authoritarian," inflicted on others but not applicable to Paul's own self; rather it is "authoritative," flowing from the power of the message over his own life (183f). The freedom Paul seeks for his listeners, however, runs afoul of the powers of this age. It breaks down barriers between Jew and Greek, male and female, slave and free. To live such a life results in suffering at the hands of the powers of this age that are passing away but that still resist the coming transformation. These powers still have the power to persecute those who defy them.

Chapter 3 explores the connections between the pattern of Paul's leadership and that of the First Testament prophets. The nature of the power Paul sought over the Galatians was no more one of control than was the kind of power the prophets sought over their hearers in Israel. Chapter 4 goes deep into question of the meaning Paul's "labor pains" in 4:19, with its many echoes and references in the prophets, in Paul's

experience and relationship with the Galatians, and in the crucifixion of Jesus and its cosmic significance. In chapter 5 Eastman takes on the sensitive matter of Paul's use of the story of Sarah and Hagar to clarify the difference between submitting to the Law and being free in Christ. She shows how Isa 54:1, which Paul quotes, is the interpretive key to this the story in Genesis and exposes many of the subtleties of his interpretation arising from details from Genesis he does not include in his exposition.

Chapter 6 explores the reconfiguration of relationships among Law and Spirit and kingdom of God as well as modulations among familiar metaphors of mother, father, children, brothers and sisters, and most astonishingly slaves. Consonant with, and perhaps key to, the remixing and modulation is the miracle of birth to the barren woman celebrated in Isa 54:1 and taken up by Paul in Gal 4:27 as the source of the Galatians' freedom from the Law as children of the free woman and as the fruit of Paul's maternal labor named in 4:19. This new life fulfills the Law in loving service as slaves of one another in the imitation and overflowing of Christ's own service to humanity in the form of a slave.

Chapter 7 concludes with a crucial exposition of three different ways of reading Paul's metaphors in today's church that no preacher should miss. (1) We can literalize one of them, as the masculine metaphors have been literalized, so that they exclude all other metaphors, particularly the feminine ones, and focus on their potential for coercion. (2) We can demythologize them, reducing their religious dimensions to ethics and thus eliminate their resonance with the religious experience of people today. (3) Or we can recognize the power to "evoke the most formative of human relationships" (192) that poses both their danger and their power to engage in a collaborative effort to open our unchosen familial, social, and political setting to transformation by God's Spirit of freedom.

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