

inclined toward amillennialism will find Storms's work to be a useful handbook and synthesis of many key texts from an amillennial perspective (though not in every case the majority view). This volume would find a nice home in one's library next to a volume like Anthony Hoekema's *The Bible and the Future*. It remains to be seen how many of those with diverging millennial views will pick up this volume, but I do hope many will find their way to Storms's thoughtful discussions in one way or another.

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Valérie Nicolet-Anderson, *Constructing the Self: Thinking With Paul and Michel Foucault*. WUNT 2/324. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012. Pp. x + 288. \$137.50, paper.

Valérie Nicolet-Anderson in *Constructing the Self* has given us a penetrating analysis of an intersection between biblical exegesis and philosophical psychology. More specifically, Nicolet-Anderson brings a narrative reading of the book of Romans into conversation with Michel Foucault's categories for conceiving of "the self." The author's particular task is to bring into conversation Paul and Foucault on the question, "What insight, if any at all, does the book of Romans offer contemporary thought in nuancing postmodern conceptions of personhood?"

The book is composed of five chapters. In chapter 2, Nicolet-Anderson's primary task is to locate the thrust of Romans on a narrative trajectory. In so doing, she self-consciously imports Aristotle's narrative categories for Greek tragedy, *mythos* (the concordance of disparate and seemingly unsystematized events in a narrative) and *ēthos* (the moral capacities of the characters involved in the plot), as a methodological guide in reconstructing Paul's narrative thought.

Nicolet-Anderson perceives two narratives operating at the structural level of the book of Romans. First, "Paul does tell a story in 1:18–8:39, a story focused on how God intervened for the world through Christ" (p. 55). However, "this telling of the story does not account for the very beginning (1:1–17) and the end of the letter (12–16)" (p. 55). Romans 9–11, then, in Nicolet-Anderson's construction, functions as a defense of God's *ēthos* (moral character in the plot of the history of salvation, understood as his covenant faithfulness).

In chapter 3 Nicolet-Anderson claims, "Paul uses the story that he has told in the previous chapters in order to move into the final purpose of the letter: to shape the self of the members of the community so that they can reflect the *ēthos* of Christ central to the story told previously" (p. 102). Paul moves from presenting a misshapen humanity in 1:18–3:20, to describing a community that has put on God's *ēthos* in Christ in 12:1–16:27 (p. 103).

Nicolet-Anderson spends the rest of chapter 3 delineating the narrative categories of Paul Ricoeur that will be necessary to understand the conversation between Foucault and the Apostle Paul that she lays out in chapter 5. The primary Ricoeurian category that must be kept in mind is the *idem/ipse* distinction, which highlights two kinds of personal identity. *Idem* identity, on the one hand, is "understood as sameness . . . the traits of character that allow one to re-identify a person as being the same individual over

time" (p. 127). *Iipse* identity, on the other hand, is *who* one is, distinct from one's actions and "without the support of sameness" (p. 128). These two kinds of identity are the binary opposites that, Ricœur argues, function as the two ends of the dialectic that exist in the enplotment of narratively constructed identity: the swing "between permanence in time in terms of character (continuity of sameness) and [self-maintenance and self-constancy] at the level of *ipse* identity" (p. 127). It is this dialectic that Nicolet-Anderson sees as the driving back-and-forth behind Paul's narrative agenda in the book of Romans.

In chapter 4, Nicolet-Anderson provides Michel Foucault's own postmodern categories for understanding the self. Foucault's method for understanding the self is not scientific, but creative. Each person comes to self-understanding by the task of "perpetual self-creation, which never quite attains its goal" (p. 206). This is why Foucault rejects the notion of *ipse* identity altogether, and insists that "an identity is never given to the self." *Idem* is a socially constructed self, and a veil to any *ipse* that may lie beneath the impenetrably contextually conditioned surface. Therefore, Foucault's most basic orienting principles for understanding the self are (1) oppressive power and (2) lack of selfhood. Thus, "the task of the self is to deconstruct and reconstruct itself, in relationship to the various contingencies it encounters" (p. 215).

In the final chapter Nicolet-Anderson concludes, "The main divergence between Foucault and Paul in their construction of the self resides in their acceptance or not of the notion of a given identity" (pp. 223-24). In her analysis, then, Paul's anthropology synchronizes with Ricœur's *idem/ipse* distinction, which exists in tension with Foucault's rejection of the existence of identity altogether (cf. pp. 236-42). She proposes harmony, however, between Paul and Foucault in their agreement that the wrong use of power should be resisted, but, since power plays are inescapable in human interaction, righteous *ethos* may be used as a righteous power play. Both Paul and Foucault "could be said to rely on imagination when conceiving the task of the ethical subject" (p. 231); "both insist that self-construction necessarily means negotiating complex and multiple relationships of power, for the person herself, and for the community" (p. 243).

Constructing the Self is an exemplary piece of academic rigor and philosophical creativity. It may serve as a valuable resource as a survey of twentieth-century continental philosophies on the topic of selfhood. However, there are several points at which we must take issue with the book.

In the first place, the very nature of Nicolet-Anderson's task precludes a synthesis between Paul and Foucault. She does not attempt to Christianize Foucault, nor does she venture to make Paul agree with Foucault's philosophy of identity. Therefore, critical interaction must take place at the methodological level. The existence of a synthesis would concretize a relationship of power between two texts (Paul and Foucault), and would therefore run against Nicolet-Anderson's approach to scholarship in general, which is that "one also needs to be willing to reconstruct ever-shifting spaces of resistance in one's own life and work, in order to avoid being imprisoned inside immobilizing relationships of power. . . . This willingness to always remain in movement . . . modifies the traditional understanding of the scholar and the intellectual" (p. 258). Furthermore, "the most an intellectual can do is, while she herself uses the tools of others, to provide tools with which others can tinker" (p. 258-59).

A second point of contention is that Nicolet-Anderson does not read Paul as an inspired author. The absence of this theological category in her work manifests itself in her reading Paul and Foucault as two co-equal fields of data in her quest to understand selfhood. And, in the end, after admitting that Paul and Foucault contradict one another on selfhood, she agrees with Foucault, not Paul. We must insist that, in an exploration of the construction of human identity, the categories that Paul offers are the anthropological categories with which we must begin, because Paul's words carry with them the full authority of God himself.

A third critique is that, due to Nicolet-Anderson's truncated notion of inspiration, her interdisciplinary task must be conceived of not as exegetical, but as imaginative. The construction that she proposes is "neither properly New Testament exegesis, nor really postmodern philosophy" (p. 257). Because of this methodological ambiguity, the work is somewhat disparate. There are many surveys of trends of thought in twentieth-century scholarship in both biblical and philosophical studies, but no *point*. That is, Nicolet-Anderson's argument could not be stated in an indicative form. Instead, the driving agenda is to appreciate simultaneously the conflicting anthropologies of Paul and Foucault. It is no surprise, then, that in addressing the constitution of human selfhood, Nicolet-Anderson does not once address man as being in the image of God. She does not need to, because her task resists the notion of interdisciplinary integration. Instead of speaking in terms of the image of God, Nicolet-Anderson speaks in terms of the church in Rome mirroring God's *ēthos* in a "social realization of 'salvation'" (p. 114). This may be because a notion of ontological selfhood with reference to God would not cohere with Nicolet-Anderson's *mythos/ēthos* schema in Romans (or, for that matter, Foucault's rejection of real *ipse* identity).

At the end of *Constructing the Self*, the reader is left asking (and perhaps the writer as well), "How does one construct the self?" It seems that Nicolet-Anderson's answer is that "constructing the self" may not be conceived of as a scientific endeavor, but a daily endeavor that each "self" participates in against the oppressive power relations that encroach upon her identities each day. Nicolet-Anderson concludes, "Foucault . . . presents an image of the intellectual as someone who respects the fact that identity-construction is the task of each individual person" (p. 258). In this sentence, Nicolet-Anderson systematically deconstructs the enterprise of practical theology. The Apostle Paul does not conceive of his task in Romans as imaginative, nor does he impose a mythological construct upon the church in Rome in order to charge them to put on God's *ēthos*. Instead, he exposes the riches of God's righteousness in reality, in order to encourage and exhort them. In other words, *pace* Nicolet-Anderson, Paul does not imaginatively construct an indicative to fit his imperative, but appropriately articulates the indicative *and* the imperative because he believes that they have a foundation in the real truth and righteousness of God himself.

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