

assertive and vigorous. Yes, the patriarchal system grew abusive, but that came later in Israel with the monarchy (cf. Nancy Vyhmeister, ed., *Women in Ministry* [Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998]).

Overall, *Discovering Biblical Equality* is a winsome apology for the position of “complementarity without hierarchy” that honors the humanity of both sexes warmly and harmoniously. Empowered by the Spirit, both men and women in the church stand before God as full members of the “body” of Christ to pursue the ministries to which God has called and enabled them.

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Smith, Carl B. II. *No Longer Jews: The Search for Gnostic Origins*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004. 317 pp. Hardcover, \$29.95.

Carl Smith, Associate Professor of History and Religion at Palm Beach Atlantic University, has tackled the knotty problem of Gnostic inception. That Gnosticism existed in the early centuries of the Christian church is not disputed. But what Gnosticism is and where it came from is still a source of much debate. Last century’s discovery of the Nag Hammadi Library texts opened further opportunities to rethink Gnostic origins. Was it a distinctive Christian heresy? Was it a competitor of first-century Christianity? Or was it, perhaps, a pre-Christian folk religion traceable to Oriental roots—a popular modern solution to unanswered questions in religious studies? How should one understand the disparate ideas, writings, and practices that are lumped together under the Gnostic rubric?

As Smith sees it, Gnosticism is an antic cosmic dualism between material and spiritual, between the highest God and the Creator. This spawned from Gnosticism’s close relationship with Judaism and Christianity in the late first and early second centuries. He decides that an early second-century dating for the birth of Gnosticism best ties together the historical details of the period, particularly since Egypt, following the Jewish Revolt under Trajan (115-117 C.E.), supposedly provides a ripe context for Gnosticism’s rejection of the cosmos and of the Creator God of the Hebrews. Using Jewish traditions and Scriptures, along with Greek cosmology, Gnostics devised a hermeneutic that resulted in the transposition of Jewish and Christian traditions. Smith writes:

My contention in this book is that evidence regarding the religious and intellectual milieu, geographical context, and chronological sequence of clearly gnostic teachers and documents points to an early second-century rise of the gnostic religion in the Jewish intellectual centers of North Africa. The crisis out of which Gnosticism arose was not that of the Jewish revolts of Judea; rather, it was the lesser-known revolt that originated in Cyrenaica and Egypt in 115-117 C.E. during the reign of the Roman emperor Trajan (4).

The author gives evidence of a thorough survey of secondary materials and competing theories of Gnosticism’s origins. He provides helpful charts, comparing the teachings of different early Gnostic teachers such as Simon, Menander, Cerinthus, Carpocrates, Saturninus, and Basilides. However, he links the main assertions of his case with a series of “if’s” and “it seems.” Other conjectures of Gnostic origins are merely replaced with Smith’s conjectures. Moreover, some of his various interpretations have strong alternative possibilities that weaken his case, such as where he writes that “In the line of Christian polemical writings, Paul’s letters stand as [the] earliest markers along the trajectory toward Gnosticism. Yet, there is no evidence . . . that Paul was concerned with issues related to Docetism” (155). This conjecture in Smith’s mind seems to prevent him

from seeing various remarks Paul includes in many of his letters regarding the nature of Christ. However, as Edwin Yamauchi suggests, on a back-cover endorsement, "Even those who may not agree with Smith's conclusions will appreciate the lucid manner in which he has expounded the issues and the evidences for emergent Gnosticism." I wholeheartedly agree.

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Westerholm, Stephen. *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. xix + 488 pp. Paper, \$35.00.

Westerholm's book revises and updates his earlier work, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters*. In this revised volume, Westerholm draws four pictures of the "Lutheran" Paul in "Part One: Portraits of the 'Lutheran' Paul," a survey and critical assessment of the scholarly renditions that call into question the Lutheran perspectives of Paul. Then in "Part Two: Twentieth-Century Responses to the 'Lutheran' Paul," Westerholm offers his own construal of Paul that incorporates elements of the so-called "new perspective" with Lutheran ones. His synthesis, "Part Three: The Historical and the 'Lutheran' Paul," strives to reappropriate a Lutheran perspective for our day.

Westerholm begins by examining the Pauline interpretations by Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley. Their readings of the apostle are fundamentally "Lutheran" in that they articulate the centrality of the doctrine of justification by faith. On the topics that are currently and vigorously debated in Pauline studies—"human nature in its 'fallen' condition, the nature and function of the Mosaic law, justification by faith apart from works, the place of works in the lives of believers, the role in believers' lives of both the law and the Spirit, the possibility (or inevitability) of believers' sin, and the 'election' of those who come to faith" (xviii)—these four exegetes posit what we now call Lutheran understandings of Paul that are on the whole in essential agreement. Interestingly, given the significant differences that Wesley had with Augustine, Luther, and Calvin (e.g., his appreciation of Pelagius, his perplexity with Luther's dismissal of good works and the law, his abhorrence and denunciation of the "decree of predestination," his understanding of prevenient grace), it might strike one as odd that Wesley would be added to the proponents of the "Lutheran" Paul. Notwithstanding, Westerholm makes a strong case that Wesley proclaimed with enthusiasm the Lutheran message of justification by faith.

In part 2, Westerholm examines the twentieth-century discussion. His analysis is focused primarily on the scholarship that questions Luther's understanding of Paul. Unlike Luther, who argued that Judaism is a religion of "works-righteousness," the literature of Rabbinic Judaism makes it abundantly clear that Judaism is a religion of grace (James Dunn, Ed Sanders, and N. T. Wright). In regard to what Paul finds wrong with Judaism, scholars have argued that the religion of Judaism is not Christianity, i.e., it refused to accept Jesus as the Christ. The claim that Gentiles had to convert to Judaism in order to be a part of the people of God placed the Gentiles at a disadvantage (Sanders). Further, Judaism is characterized by ethnocentrism, i.e., a nationalistic pride that promotes the exclusivistic laws of circumcision, food, and sacred days, which seek to maintain Israel's separation from the Gentile nations (Dunn, Wright).

Luther's understanding of Paul was deeply influenced by his own struggles of a self-questioning and terrified conscience. However, a careful analysis of Rom 7 demonstrates that the rhetorical understanding of the "I" is not to be interpreted as Paul's angst-ridden preconversion experience, but as the moral powerlessness of human beings under the law (Werner Kümmel). Philippians 3 demonstrates that the apostle's