

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

conscience was “robust” in nature. The notion that he suffered from an introspective, guilt-ridden conscience is largely due to Augustine (Krister Stendahl).

The Pauline doctrine of justification by faith is not set in opposition to the law wherein one is “declared” righteous by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law; on the contrary, the doctrine concerns the issue of belonging to the covenant people of God. The “covenant” language of justification promotes a spirit of equality and inclusiveness among Jews and Gentiles (Terence Donaldson, Dunn, Sanders, and Wright). The “works of the law” the apostle opposed are not the good works performed by legalistically inclined human beings with a view of obtaining merit before God; they are rather those works required by the law—circumcision, food laws, and feast days—that Jews boastfully advocated to demarcate themselves as the true people of God; the Jews also insisted Gentile converts must observe such commands. Paul energetically opposed such “works of the law,” for they led to elitist attitudes that erected barriers between Jews and Gentiles (Dunn, Sanders, and Wright). Fundamentally, Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith apart from the works of the law is not related to the notion of how a guilty sinner obtains righteousness from God, but how Gentiles, through faith in Christ without becoming Jews, are incorporated into the people of God. This is “the issue that divides the ‘Lutheran’ Paul from his contemporary critics” (257).

In part 3, Westerholm delineates his own understanding of Paul. He starts by defining the term “righteousness” in the Pauline corpus. The apostle utilized *dikaio-*terminology in numerous ways: “ordinary” righteousness refers to “what one ought to do and what one has if one had done it; it is required of all human beings” (272); “extraordinary” righteousness is the righteousness that is granted to those who are not righteous, i.e., the acquittal of the ungodly; “God’s” righteousness is “the act of divine grace by which, through the sacrificial death of his Son, he declares sinners righteous—thus championing the goodness of his creation” (293). Righteousness should not be understood in a covenantal sense as conveying the inclusion of the Gentiles into the covenant people of God; rather, it indicates what the ungodly lack and need.

While Paul can employ the term “law” (*nomos*) to refer to Israel’s Scriptures and the Pentateuch, his most frequent usage of the term refers to the Sinaitic legislation. This legislation is constituted of laws that need “doing.” Hence the Mosaic code is based on works rather than faith and the phrase “the works of the law” indicates the deeds demanded by such a law code. Romans 3:27 and 9:30-32 disclose this principle that the law is not based on faith, but on works; it is thus appropriate to view the law and gospel in contradistinction to one another. Paradoxically, however, “the *goal of the law* can only be attained *apart from the law*, by faith” (329; emphasis Westerholm). One must not understand Paul’s use of the law, either by itself or in conjunction with works, to mean that he is referring to a perverted use of the law as legalistically misconstrued by Jews (C. E. B. Cranfield); rather, the “notion that the law demands works is a Pauline thesis, not a Jewish misunderstanding” (297). Paul’s usage of *nomos* does not grossly distort the Hebrew word *torah*; quite the opposite. His usage of *nomos* to indicate the obligations imposed upon Israel by the Sinaitic legislation along with the concomitant sanctions is congruous with the understanding of *torah* as found in the Deuteronomistic and later OT literature.

Sanders has argued that the positions of Paul and Palestinian Judaism regarding the relationship between grace and works are essentially indistinguishable. The issue has been put in a pithy and striking manner: “getting in” for the covenant people of God was all of grace and “staying in” was conditioned on obedience to the law. Westerholm argues that a careful reading of the rabbinic literature suggests that the rabbis did *not* construe the relation between grace and faith in such a Sanderian fashion. There are rabbinic statements that indicate that “Israel’s future submission to the commandments is the ‘condition’ God

had in mind *before redeeming them and granting them his covenant*" (350; emphasis Westerholm's). Writing polemically in a post-Holocaust context, Sanders himself has imposed such (Lutheran!) categories upon the Jewish literature. Westerholm's point is well taken: "[W]e do Judaism neither justice nor favor when we claim that it preached 'good' Protestant doctrine on the subject of grace and works" (351).

The revelation of the Son of God compelled Paul to reevaluate and reinterpret Israel's story of divine redemption, particularly the role of the "law in God's scheme." On the one hand, the apostle agrees with his Jewish contemporaries that human beings are dependent upon God and their actions are held accountable by him; that the Mosaic law is God's gift to Israel and expresses the appropriate human response to a life lived in the goodness of God's creation. On the other hand, Paul departs from his Jewish contemporaries when he insists that Adamic humanity cannot submit to God's law nor can they obtain righteousness and life through it. This post-conversion Christian reevaluation of the law was occasioned by the realization that the redemption of humankind required the crucifixion of God's Son. If Jesus' death was a necessity, "then the sinfulness of humankind must be both radical in itself and beyond capacity of existing . . . measures to overcome" (421). Israel's recalcitrance and sinfulness, amply attested in the Deuteronomistic history and prophetic literature, doubtless influenced the apostle's reassessment of the human quandary implicit in the death of Christ.

What, then, is the function of the law? The Christian Paul now recognized that God assigned two purposes to the law: first, he proffers life to those who obey the commands of the law; and second, he utilizes the law to underscore and exacerbate the human bondage to sin so as to magnify the splendor of the salvation which can only be attained in Christ. The arrival of the law "served to *worsen* the human dilemma—partly because it brought definition (as 'transgressions') to wrongs that would have been committed in any case, but partly also because it increased the actual number of sins committed" (426; emphasis Westerholm's). Given that the law emphasizes humanity's sinfulness and is unable to overcome their bondage to sin, the law cannot play any role in the salvation of humankind. Consequently, righteousness can only be obtained by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law; those persons who seek righteousness through the law wrongly believe that their deeds, performed by "unredeemed flesh," are able to be a factor in securing the approval of God. Westerholm recognizes that such a reading of the law's purpose is quite problematic, if not "theologically grotesque," for those who believe in an omniscient Creator and Redeemer. Nevertheless, he maintains Paul's view of God's design for the law is such that "God promises life to those who obey his commands, but has planned from the beginning his remedy for transgressors" (334).

What role does the law play in the Christian life? Paradoxically, Paul states that believers are not "under the law," while simultaneously insisting that they nonetheless "fulfill the law." On the one hand, believers are not under the law in that they are free from its obligations and demands, living a new way of life led by the Spirit. On the other hand, Christians, through love, fulfill the law. Paul's statements of the fulfillment of the law in Rom 8:4, 13:8-10 and Gal 5:14 are *descriptive* not *prescriptive* of Christian behavior and are found in polemical contexts where Paul's opponents are concerned that he is advocating antinomianism. A Spirit-led believer fulfills the law when "the obedience offered *completely satisfies* what is required" (436; emphasis Westerholm's).

The Pauline mission did not require circumcision and other characteristically Jewish laws of Gentile converts; this omission generated the most severe threat to the early church. It was in such a polemical context that Paul formulated the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith apart from the works of the law. The new perspective has rightly emphasized this sociological dimension of the apostle's thought. However,

the requirement for Christians to live as Jews can either be accepted or rejected only on "theological grounds" (emphasis supplied): "[T]he first-century issue for both Paul and his opponents . . . was reducible to the theoretical [i.e., theological] question whether the Sinaitic law provided the framework within which God's people were obligated to live. Those who believed it did not . . . were bound to construe the law's validity and purpose as limited" (441). Paul was among those who did recognize the most significant shortcoming of the law: its inability to cope with the dilemma of humanity's sinfulness. The fundamental problem of Judaism is *not* that its adherents were legalistic, or that they distorted the law's true nature, or were ethnocentric; rather, according to Paul, the problem is that its followers failed to grasp sinful humanity's inability of doing the good demanded by the law.

Westerholm's understanding of Paul, particularly with respect to the law, raises a number of important questions. His construal of the apostle's thought highlights, in a number of ways, the discontinuous features between the Pauline gospel and Israelite religion. Does Paul conceive of Christ's advent as bringing to fulfillment Israel's promises and prophecies, or does the apostle understand Christ's coming to have essentially abrogated the Israelite religion? Does Paul's new-covenant ministry of the Spirit bring to fruition Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's promises (Jer 31:31-34; Ezek 36:26-27) that speak of YHWH fashioning a people whose hearts are predisposed to obedience, or does the apostle believe that his new-covenant ministry of the Spirit abolishes Moses' ineffectual old covenant and its law?

Interestingly, in 2 Cor 3:1-18, a passage employed by Westerholm which draws sharp contrasts between the Old and New covenants, there are elements of *continuity*: both covenants were attended by glory; and both covenants were sourced and instituted by God himself. Paul's clear appropriation of the promises of Jeremiah and Ezekiel in this passage suggests he believed that a new-covenant relationship between God and his people, inaugurated through the death of Christ, was now being realized in his discharge of the new-covenant ministry of the Spirit. One does wonder, therefore, if Westerholm has sufficiently appreciated the covenantal framework of Paul's thought. Such an appreciation would doubtless lead him to pay closer attention to the lines of redemptive continuity that exist between the Pauline gospel and Israelite faith; it might also lead him to formulate significantly different responses to thorny questions such as: Why did God grant to Israel an ineffective Mosaic law? How is it possible for Abraham to have been able to obtain redemptive faith prior to the coming and death of Christ? Is the law truly temporary, playing no role in the life of the Christian? Perhaps Westerholm could reassess his own cogent analysis of one of the quintessential Lutheran expositors of Paul—Calvin, who argued that the gospel does not supplant the "Mosaic Religion," but confirms it; and that there can be no conflict between the law and the gospel as "they have the same divine Source, and God cannot be 'unlike Himself'" (51).

Westerholm's engaging treatment of Pauline theology, written with a view to reappropriate a Lutheran perspective for our day, not only sketches the overall contours of the ongoing debate in a clear and compelling fashion, but also makes its own provocative contribution to the discussion, significantly advancing the study of Paul's thought.

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