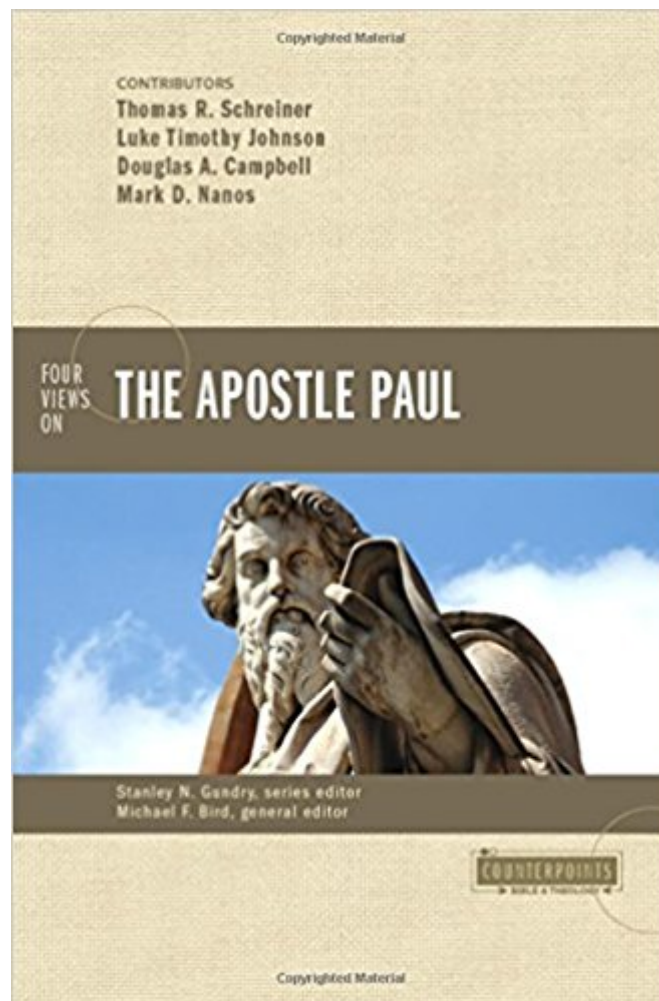




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# **Four Views On The Apostle Paul (Counterpoints: Bible And Theology)**



## Synopsis

The apostle Paul was a vital force in the development of Christianity. Paul's historical and religious context affects the theological interpretation of Paul's writings, no small issue in the whole of Christian theology. Recent years have seen much controversy about the apostle Paul, his religious and social context, and its effects on his theology. In the helpful Counterpoints format, four leading scholars present their views on the best framework for describing Paul's theological perspective, including his view of salvation, the significance of Christ, and his vision for the churches. Contributors and views include: Reformed View: Thomas R. Schreiner Catholic View: Luke Timothy Johnson Post-New Perspective View: Douglas Campbell Jewish View: Mark D. Nanos Like other titles in the Counterpoints: Bible and Theology collection, Four Views on the Apostle Paul gives theology students the tools they need to draw informed conclusions on debated issues. General editor and New Testament scholar Michael F. Bird covers foundational issues and provides helpful summaries in his introduction and conclusion. New Testament scholars, pastors, and students of Christian history and theology will find Four Views on the Apostle Paul an indispensable introduction to ongoing debates on the apostle Paul's life and teaching.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Michael F. Bird (PhD, University of Queensland) is lecturer in theology at Ridley Melbourne College of Mission and Ministry in Melbourne, Australia. He is the author of Jesus and the Origins of the

Gentile Mission; The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification, and the New Perspective; Evangelical Theology; Bourgeois Babes, Bossy Wives, and Bobby Haircuts: A moderate Case for Gender Equality in Ministry and editor of The Apostle Paul: Four Views. He is also a co-blogger of the New Testament blog "Euangelion." Stanley N. Gundry is executive vice president and editor-in-chief for the Zondervan Corporation. He has been an influential figure in the Evangelical Theological Society, serving as president of ETS and on its executive committee, and is adjunct professor of Historical Theology at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. He is the author of seven books and has written many articles appearing in popular and academic periodicals.

Thomas R. Schreiner (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament and associate dean of Scripture and interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. The author of numerous books, he is the preaching pastor of Clifton Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

Luke Timothy Johnson (Ph.D., Yale) is the R.W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. His research concerns the literary, moral, and religious dimensions of the New Testament, including the Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts of early Christianity (particularly moral discourse), Luke-Acts, the Pastoral Letters, and the Letter of James. A prolific author, Dr. Johnson has penned numerous scholarly articles and more than 25 books. His 1986 book *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, now in its second edition, is widely used in seminaries and departments of religion throughout the world. A former Benedictine monk, Dr. Johnson is a highly sought-after lecturer, a member of several editorial and advisory boards, and a senior fellow at Emory University's Center for the Study of Law and Religion. He received the prestigious 2011 Louisville Grawemeyer Award in Religion for his most recent book, *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity* (2009, Yale University Press), which explores the relationship between early Christianity and Greco-Roman paganism.

Douglas Campbell is a New Testament professor at Duke Divinity School. His main research interests comprise the life and thought (i.e. theology and its development) of Paul with particular reference to soteriological models rooted in apocalyptic as against justification or salvation-history. However, he is interested in contributions to Pauline analysis from modern literary theory, from modern theology, from epistolary theory, ancient rhetoric, ancient comparative religion, modern linguistics and semantic theory, and from sociology. His recent publications include *The Rhetoric of Righteousness in Romans 3:21-26*, and he edited *The Call to Serve: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Ministry in Honour of Bishop Penny Jamieson*. Dr. Campbell has also written *The Quest for Paul's Gospel: A Suggested Strategy* (2005), and *The*

Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul (2009). Mark D. Nanos is Soebbing Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence, Rockhurst University. Visit Mark's website at [www.marknanos.com](http://www.marknanos.com).

This is a helpful little book that examines a few different interpretations on Paul. Truthfully, I purchased this book mainly to read the essay and responses by Mark Nanos. (Jewish View) I found myself also enjoying the essay and responses by Luke Timothy Johnson (Catholic View). I was not so impressed with Sheriener's material, but it was what I would expect from a Reformed theologian. I had no previous knowledge of Douglass Campbell (Post New Perspective) before this book. I did not enjoy his contributions. I felt like he wanted to prove the doctrine of the trinity rather than write an essay about the apostle Paul. I'm aware that my review is subjective, and it kind of has to be with this type of book. This book is for everyone interested in Paul, no matter what method you interpret him with. It's very helpful at informing you, the reader, with other views out there and also on what your own view might be. I would recommend this book to anyone who's interested or involved in Pauline studies, as it will most certainly be invaluable to you. It's also at a fantastic and affordable price.

The book follows the pattern of the "Counterpoints" series, whereby each view receives responses from the sparring partners. The Reformed view on Paul is presented by Thomas R. Schreiner. Schreiner summarises Paul's framework of thought in this way: "the apostle teaches that the new exodus, the new covenant, and the new creation have arrived in Christ. But a crucial proviso must immediately be introduced. Even though the new age has been inaugurated in Jesus Christ, it has not been consummated." Also "One of Paul's fundamental frameworks, then, is the already but not yet character of his eschatology." The substitutionary death of Christ on the cross is appropriated by faith in Christ (objective genitive) and repentance. Thus forensic justification plays a key role in salvation. Schreiner surprisingly affirms salvation as a process that awaits consummation in future. Although justification does not mean moral transformation of a Christian and is not based on good works, "the good works constitute necessary evidence that one is justified" (a point very similar to that of J. Dunn and N. T. Wright). Schreiner's supersessionism is evident in his understanding of the church in Paul as the "assembly of God" in the OT and in spiritual circumcision as initiation in Christ's community: "Such

appropriation suggests that it is fitting to say that the church of Jesus Christ is the true Israel for Paul. Also, indeed, ethnic Jews who fail to believe in Jesus are not saved (9:30-10:21, esp. 10:1) and hence do not belong to God's people. The second position is that of a Roman Catholic, Timothy Luke Johnson. He gave a very broad survey of Paul's theology with plenty of textual references. It was interesting to observe how close Reformed and Catholic positions can be when the text of Pauline corpus (and not technical dogmatic formulations) is closely followed. The third perspective is a "Post-New Perspective" account by Douglas A. Campbell. Campbell supports the new approach to Judaism propagated by the NPP, but disagrees that Dunn's understanding of "works of the law" as ethnic boundary markers resolves the problem of "Lutheran" Paul. Campbell suggests the key to unlock Paul's theology is to understand the apostle's gospel as revelation of the triune God and his mission in the world. Romans 5-8 is the key passage to comprehend Pauline theology. It is commendable to see Campbell's claim that Paul works with the view of a triune God, whereby the persons of the Godhead are fully divine and their activities are perichoretic in nature or as Campbell calls it "an inchoate trinitarian grammar." Campbell believes that ethnic, social and gender distinctions will be transcendent: "The brothers are consequently related to one another personally and even narratively, and in bodily terms, but not biologically or ethnically. The community is constituted in some sense beyond gender and race." According to Campbell, Paul works retrospectively from solution (Christ's revelation that enlightens the problem) to plight (the problem of sin). Campbell follows Kämmel, suggesting that Paul in Rom 7 is not describing personal inner torment under the Torah. Thus Rom. 7 should remind the brothers of a constant threat to turn away from freedom of Christ to the demands of Torah that lead to agony and death. Finally, Mark D. Nanos presents a fully-Jewish Torah-observant Paul. Nanos claims that it is misleading interpretations of Paul by Christians that depict a distorted picture of Judaism and cause many Jewish scholars to disregard Paul in general. Both Jews and Christians misunderstood Paul, who was a first century Torah-observant Jew, representing a variant of a first century Judaism with a focus on Jesus Christ. Paul's mission after his Damascus experience was to bring God's Word to the nations so that through the restoration of Israel all the nations would be reconciled with the God of Israel. The application of Torah requirements varies depending on identity of a person: "the dissociation from

Torah fidelity described in Paul's position on Torah for non-Jews does not extend to all of humankind as if it applied equally to Jews, including Christ-following Jews. So-called freedom from Torah only applies specifically to "non-Jews who are Christ-followers." So in Christ Jews remain Jews and gentiles remain gentiles, so that God would be God of the nations and not only the God of Jews or only the God of gentiles. Schreiner correctly contends that Paul continued to keep the Torah faithfully on the evidence of such passages as 1 Cor 9:20-21 (cf. Col 2:16-23). Michael F. Bird presents very helpful summary of these views and their respective critiques. As it is usually the case, it is better to compare the views before contrasting them. If I would choose the best points from all four views, it would be (Campbell's) Paul with Trinitarian framework who taught those who are justified by God experience salvation as transformation and union with Christ (Johnson), demonstrating authenticity of their righteous status by good works until the consummation of time (Schreiner) and accepting each other as Jews and gentiles alike, preserving respective ethnic identities in Christ (Nanos).

The literature on and around Paul is extensive, even if we include only those works published in the past 20 years. This book slips to three stars due to the quality of its competitors in this space. The essays are good and somewhat structured around the editors request. The replies are not so structured. I like the response format and do appreciate the replies; but they tend more to be adornment for the responding author's work than a critical review of the essay being reviewed. Michael Bird's introduction and conclusion are informative and do some framing of the authors and their perspectives. Compared to other books in this series ("views" and/or "counterpoints"), Bird's intro and conclusion should be considered exemplary. On a side note, but one which can impinge on reading pleasure, I find Bird stretches too much to be an expert and his vocabulary sometimes become both verbose and obscure. I would not call this an introduction to Paul. There are better surveys. I would not say that the individual essays do justice to the work and perspectives of the individual authors. There are better options for survey works (such as Zetterholm's "Approaches to Paul" (also a Kindle book) and, certainly, the individual authors have several works each which are better on those specific topics. However, this is a middling ground that does inform, provoke thought, and provides options around which those thoughts can wander.

This is a very interesting and informative book. I had no idea that there were so many schools of thought about Paul's theology (I still fall in line with Schreiner and believe in grace alone through

faith and substitutionary atonement). This is a good companion book to "The Nature of the Atonement," which addresses the center of Christ's work of atonement (Schreiner also contributed to this text). I recommend it for anyone interested in Pauline studies

Gave great insight and depth to the topic at hand. It was well written and a joy to read. I will read it again soon.

I had already read almost all of Mark Nanos' work before I read this book. I consider Prof. Nanos to currently be the best authority on the Apostle Paul. I found his short work here excellent - he summed up a lot of his other works very well and focussed on the most foundational issues to properly understanding who the Apostle Paul was and what he was trying to promote. I strongly recommend getting this book, even if all you do is read Nanos' section and his excellent rebuttals to the other scholars who contributed. I would also recommend a Jewish woman's perspective such as Pamela Eisenbaum's - see

<http://www..com/Paul-Was-Not-Christian-Misunderstood/dp/B005MWR1IU/> I have also written a short book on the Apostle Paul - see [Â](#)

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