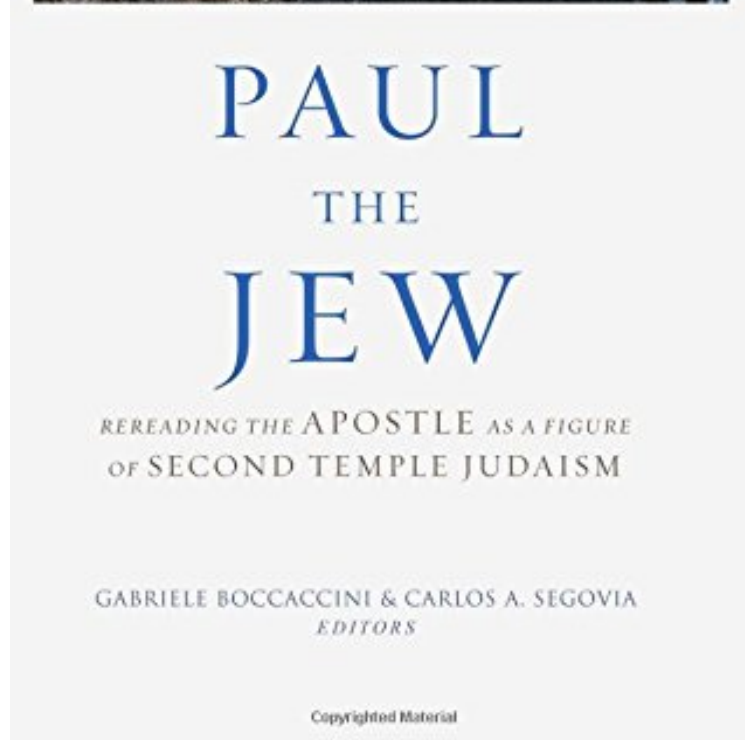


# Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism

*Gabriele Boccaccini*

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**Gabriele Boccaccini : Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Both volumes are excellent, cutting-edge examples of where

scholarship should be and ...By Jerry D. Neal This book and its companion, *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* by Mark Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, both came out of a 2010 symposium on Paul and Judaism by the Society of Biblical Literature. Both books come from the Paul Within Judaism Perspective, also known as the Radical New Perspective. In other words, the position is based on the New Perspective on Paul as represented for example by E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, and N. T. Wright, but it goes farther by placing and reading Paul entirely within first-century Judaism, which means freeing him from the shackles of the traditional denominational confessions and tradition systematic theology. Both volumes are excellent, cutting-edge examples of where scholarship should be and how it ought to be done, so I also thoroughly endorse Nanos' book. However, it has so far gotten all of the attention and all of the reviews. Both are collections of interdisciplinary essays. While I can't say I agree with everything in all of the essays, it is quite noticeable that regardless of the discipline and the author, every effort is made to interpret Paul with great sensitivity and nuance and read him afresh for today. One of my professors said that in his classes only God gets an A. I virtually never give a 5-star rating to any book. This book (and its companion volume) are exceptions. However, if you want to read Paul the way he's always been read, you will not like this book, because it will thoroughly challenge your assumptions. This book is twice the size of Nanos' volume, and in hardback, so it carries a hefty price tag. But it delivers. I would say of all the books on Paul in my collection over many years, these two volumes and *Reading Romans in Context: Paul and Second Temple Judaism* are the ones I most refer to. The book opens with an Introduction by Gabriele Boccaccini concerning the origins of sin in 4 Ezra, 1 Enoch, and the Community Rule and places Paul in the context of Jesus in Synoptic Gospels, James, and Peter, with side glances at the Pharisees and Josephus. Paul shared the pessimism of the Dead Sea Scrolls and 1 Enoch concerning the power of sin. A response by Baumgarten gives a rejoinder by quoting sin coming from Adam by Michael Stone. It is followed by another by Daniel Boyarin on the fallacy of viewing Paul converting from Judaism to Christianity. Shayna Sheinfeld does an essay on the identity of the Righteous Remnant in Romans 9-11, comparing it to 4 Ezra and the Damascus Document. The Elect are the remnant of Israel, the Jews, and the remainder of Israel has been temporarily hardened until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in with the return of Jesus an event Paul expected in his lifetime which doesn't quite fit the picture of Acts. Isaac Oliver then has an essay comparing the Paul of the epistles with the Paul of Acts; both are completely Jewish, but in Acts Paul's Jewishness is more blatant and obvious. This is followed by an essay by James H. Charlesworth on Paul's relationship to Jewish apocalypses and apocalyptic eschatology. You have hit pay dirt. You have found the Mother Lode. This essay alone is worth the price of the book. He compares Paul to 1 Enoch, the Thanksgiving Hymns and the Glorification Hymn from Qumran, and compares 2 Corinthians 12 to a passage from 2 Enoch. This and Boccaccini's essays are the best in the book, but that doesn't mean the others don't represent first-rate, cutting-edge scholarship. Larry Hurtado has an essay on Paul's Christology. Matthew Goff interprets 1 and 2 Corinthians in relation to Jewish apocalypses, comparing 1 Corinthians to the Dead Sea Scrolls, 4 Ezra, the Similitudes of Enoch, and 2 Baruch; 2 Corinthians is compared to the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Apocalypse of Zephaniah, 2 Enoch, 3 Enoch, and the Qumran Self-Glorification Hymn. David Rudolph covers the Jewish food laws in Romans 14, arguing that the weak are not Jews, but former gentile pagan converts to Judaism who are bringing pagan ideas of purity with them, and that Paul deals with the issues as a good Hillelite rabbi would. Kathy Ehrensperger says Paul's idea of Community in his *Ekklesiai* is rooted in the vocabulary, traditions, and concepts of 1 Enoch. Joshua Garroway covers baptism and circumcision and the issue of the conversion of women. There are several more essays, all of them excellent, but this is enough for the reader to get some idea of what is contained in this ground-breaking volume. An example: Paul says in Christ there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, slave nor free. But Paul did not erase these distinctions, as is often held. They are equal in the community, but their individual identities are not erased or submerged. If Paul did not erase all of them, he did not erase any of them.

The decades-long effort to understand the apostle Paul within his Jewish context is now firmly established in scholarship on early Judaism, as well as on Paul. The latest fruit of sustained analysis appears in the essays gathered here, from leading international scholars who take account of the latest investigations into the scope and variety present in Second Temple Judaism. Contributors address broad historical and theological questions Paul's thought and practice in relationship with early Jewish apocalypticism, messianism, attitudes toward life under the Roman Empire, appeal to Scripture, the Law, inclusion of Gentiles, the nature of salvation, and the rise of Gentile-Christian supersessionism as well as questions about interpretation itself, including the extent and direction of a "paradigm shift" in Pauline studies and the evaluation of the Pauline legacy. Paul the Jew goes as far as any effort has gone to restore the apostle to his own historical, cultural, and theological context, and with persuasive results.

About the Author Gabriele Boccaccini is professor of Second Temple Judaism and Christian origins at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the founder of the Enoch Seminar. He received his PhD in Judaic studies from the University of Turin in 1991. He is the author of *Middle Judaism* (1991), *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis* (1998), *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism* (2001), and the editor of numerous volumes including *The Origins of Enochic Judaism* (2002) and *Enoch and Qumran Origins* (2005), as well as the international journal *Henoch*. Carlos A. Segovia is

lecturer in Islamic studies at Saint Louis University and associate professor in religious studies at Camilo Jose Cela University in Madrid. He has written *Re-Imagining Islam in the Late Seventh Century* and *The Quranic Noah and the Making of the Islamic Prophet* (both forthcoming) and helped launch the Early Islamic Studies Seminar.