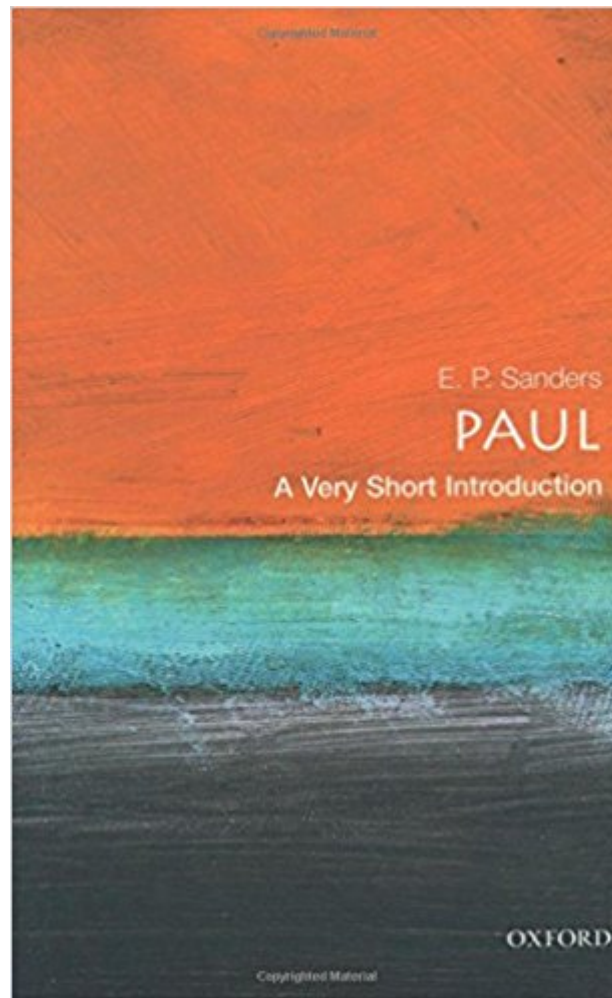


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Paul: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Missionary, theologian, and religious genius, Paul is one of the most powerful human personalities in the history of the Church. E.P. Sanders, an influential Pauline scholar, analyzes the fundamental beliefs and vigorous contradictions in Paul's thought, discovering a philosophy that is less of a monolithic system than the apostle's convictions would seem to suggest. This volume offers an incisive summation of Paul's career, as well as his role in the development of early Christianity. Both lucid and judicious, it is the most compelling short introduction to Paul now available. About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

Book Information

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 5.8.2001 edition (June 7, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0192854518

ISBN-13: 978-0192854513

Product Dimensions: 6.8 x 0.4 x 4.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

Great Scholar, Easy Read do not always go hand in hand. It is difficult to recommend some books to people, because you are not sure if they will be able to stay with it due to the heavy technical language, but E P Sanders has written a great book that will familiarize someone with the gist of Paul's thought, and he has done so in a very readable style. I cannot say that you will agree with every conclusion that he comes to, especially if you are hyper conservative when it comes to Scripture, but you will leave the book with the right questions that one should be asking about some of the difficult issues in Paul's writing. Sanders deals with Paul's working out living in the Spirit and

being in Christ against keeping the Law. The strength of Sanders is that he has such a thorough knowledge of the Judaism of Paul's day. He brings out many of the challenges that Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles had to deal in light of his thorough Jewishness. What I found most interesting in this book was Sanders view on Romans 7, and Paul's views on sexuality. Sanders allows that Paul wrote Galatians earlier than Romans and by so he sees Romans as being more fully developed than Galatians. Sanders allows that Paul's theology developed and was modified over time as Paul had to deal with various issues about what it meant to be in Christ and be a Gentile and how the Law of the Jews relate to this new position. This book deals with being "righteoused by faith" in Romans and Galatians. It deals with the resurrection of the dead which is very interesting chapter that many folks would benefit from reading. The section on behavior deals with the Greco-Roman worlds view of sexuality versus the Jewish view of sexuality.

'Paul, A Very Short Introduction' by the leading American Pauline scholar, E. P. Sanders is a revelation to me it will also probably be a surprise to anyone not familiar with this Oxford University Press series. My first surprise is that an author of such great academic distinction should be doing this kind of treatment which looks, on the surface, to be a popular gloss, evoking images of 'Cliff Notes' and 'Paul for Dummies'. My reading of Pauline theology and exegesis is still a bit shallow; but I know enough already to see that while Sanders may just be covering the peaks, he is giving us a good enough look deep into some of the valleys to appreciate his stating that Paul is a difficult writer for modern readers. Not only was Paul not as polished a writer as his contemporary Philo in Alexandria, he used some Greek terms which simply do not easily translate into English. And, many important modern such as the RSV (Revised Standard Version) Bible translations don't help much when they mangle some of Paul's more important statements. Since practically nothing is known about Paul's life with any certainty, Sanders takes little space for biography and no space on speculation on what Paul may have done, for example, during his early years in the Nabatean desert. Oddly, he does add to the question of where Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans. Some writers say he wrote in Miletus and others say he wrote it in Corinth. Sanders opts for Corinth. Sanders is probably one of the very best writers from which to get the 'non-Lutheran' interpretation of Paul, as he concentrates much more on seeing Paul concentrate on the membership of Christians in the body of Christ instead of Righteousness by faith. At the very least, he gives the two points of view equal importance.

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