

Excursus 2. Campbell, Douglas A. [associate professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School] (2009). *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; 1218 pp.; cf. also his *Quest for Paul's Gospel: A Suggested Strategy* [London: T&T Clark International (Continuum), 2005]. In section 3.3 **Homosexual Relations (2009:206-07)** Campbell writes (2009:206-207):

“Queer theorists [67] encounter in Romans 1:24-27 perhaps the most explicit articulation and condemnation of homosexual activity in all of Scripture. [68]. Certainly, if this passage is read in the standard fashion dictated by Justification, then the reprehensibility of homosexual sex is unavoidable. Paul must himself be overtly and strongly committed to this stance. Furthermore, it is written into the natural order, within phase one of Justification, prior to any special Christian revelation. And this location generated several rather sinister concomitants.

- First, correct theology at all points now presupposes this stance, so to tamper with it is to risk undermining the later Christian dispensation that unfolds from it. Strong paradigmatic reasons now exist for the stance's maintenance.
- Second, the stance is attributed to all humanity on the basis of innate knowledge and hence independently of special revelation.
- So, third, it is insulated from correction by special revelation (Indeed, as we have already seen, special revelation can now unfold only in these terms).
- Fourth, since everyone can be expected to know that such behavior is deeply offensive to God, everyone so offending is liable entirely justly to punishment. Romans 1:18-32—read in a certain way—tends to describe such punishment rather passively in terms of the divine deliverance of humanity up to the consequences of its twisted and chaotic desires, but Romans 2 will articulate almost immediately a more active and coercive response to sin (i.e., punishment). And it is a short step from divine government and retribution to such action by human governments. Hence, not only is the condemnation of homosexual sex written into the foundation of the Christian gospel, but that condemnation legitimizes coercive state reaction against such apparent wrongdoing [69].

If Romans 1:24-27 is set to one side momentarily, it is still possible that Paul's view of sexual relations was reasonably conventional in terms of ancient Judaism. He seems to endorse heterosexual monogamy as the main alternative to celibacy, and he occasionally condemns homosexual relations in the **context** of vice lists (see perhaps 1 Cor. 6:9). But the setting of that opinion is rather more flexible, as his conditional endorsement of divorce in 1 Corinthians 7 indicates.

Moreover, the *foundational* theological function of sexual relations and their legitimate punishment is displaced by relocations both into the future eschatologically and a present ecclesial frame. So the stakes are fairly high for Queer theorists who find Paul's ostensible position on homosexual relations problematic. But it is the reading of Romans 1:24-27 in the broader context of 1:18-32 if not 1:18-3:20 in terms of justification theory that generates the bulk of these difficulties. If Justification is removed from the situation, such difficulties are not eliminated, but their most severe implications are significantly mitigated. The foundational reprehensibility of homosexual relations and their punishment—if necessary by the state—are eliminated, while the resources of special revelation can rapidly be mobilized in relation to that stance, if Paul is not construed in terms of the theory of Justification. The terms of this significant debate are significantly altered.”

In three notes he adds:

“[67] My colleague Mary McClintock Fulkerson drew my attention to the appropriateness of speaking of “Queer” theory at this point so as to incorporate gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual perspectives: see also Laurel C. Schneider, “Queer Theory,” in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation*, ed. S. K. M. Adam (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000) 206-12.

[68] A classic contribution to this debate is Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 379-80, 391-94; see also Dale Martin, *Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY.: Westminster John Knox, 2006; and Deryn Guest, Robert Goss, Mona West, and Thomas

Bohache, eds., *The Queer Bible Commentary* (London: SCM, 2006). On the broader theological issues, see esp. Eugene Rogers, *Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way into the Triune God* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). For some preliminary remarks on the Pauline interpretative questions, see “The Witness to Paul’s Gospel of Galatians 3:28,” chapter five in *Quest*, 95-111; the specific issue of gay—and by extension Queer—ordination is treated in “A Brief Case Study in the Ethical Aspect of Paul’s Gospel: Gay Ordination” chapter six in *Quest*, 112-31.

[69] So, for example, in the United States, a constitutional amendment forbidding homosexual marriage would be entirely consistent with this theological stance. A corresponding amendment that defined marriage as between a man and a woman (mooted by the GOP in 2004-6) would be similarly consistent, while both would illustrate that such a theological axiom is supposed to apply indiscriminately to Christians and non-Christians alike, and can if necessary be supported coercively by the state.”

My comment: Although in the 936 pp. of text in his *magnus opus* (with notes, bibliography and indices extending to 1218 pp) Campbell dedicates only the above-cited page with its three endnotes to treat explicitly the subject of queer theory and homosexuality, the implications of his conclusions are profound and more devastating to traditional homophobic interpretations than the casual reader might suspect. Few scholars have accepted William Walker’s contention that Romans 1:18-32 represents a non-Pauline interpolation in the letter (1999; republished 2001, cited in Campbell 1026, note 47 and 1051, note 68). However, in recent decades commentators commonly have **recognized** that in Romans 1:18-32 Paul **is laying** a rhetorical trap, which he then springs on the unsuspecting reader in 2:1-16 (see Hanks, “Romans” in the QBC, which Campbell cites indirectly in his note 68; also Hanks, review of Paul Jewett on → Romans). Now in this new work, Campbell takes this kind of analysis a step further, arguing that already in 1:18-32 Paul is *not* setting forth his own viewpoint, but citing the rhetoric of a certain Jewish Christian “Teacher” (see → Galatians) whom the Apostle proceeds to oppose and refute as the letter unfolds. If correct, Campbell’s analysis also would explain why later in the letter Paul systematically deconstructs the four key elements (uncleanness, unnatural, shameful, change) in the homophobic rhetoric of 1:24-27 (as I pointed out in my QBC chapter).

Only careful study of Campbell’s complex and technical work, with continual reference to the original Greek New Testament (often cited without translation), would enable scholarly readers to appreciate the strength of Campbell’s argument. However, since such an effort would be more than many of us could dedicate to the task, I would simply summarize a few key points that enable us to follow and appreciate Campbell’s argument. New Testament and Pauline specialists undoubtedly eventually give the work the careful analysis it deserves, but if the explosion of diverse interpretations in recent Pauline studies are any indication, most of us probably will not live to see any emerging consensus.

1 Basic to Campbell’s interpretation of Romans is the recognition of the role of the false “Teachers” (plural) in → Galatians, who came down from Jerusalem and sought to impose circumcision and the Law on the gentile converts to Paul’s Law-free gospel. Although in Romans Paul seeks to refute a single Teacher (2:17-23/24), Campbell suggests that he may be the leader of a group similar or identical to those who caused such turmoil in Galatia. Thus the switch to the plural “you” in 2:24 in the citation of Isa 52:5 and Ezek 36:22 may indicate that “the Teacher” is the head of a group.

2 Second, Campbell reminds us of the common difficulty in Paul’s letters of distinguishing the Apostle’s own views from those of any opponent/s whose views he cites (without quotation marks in the original Greek) before proceeding to his own qualification or refutation. Above all from 1 Corinthians Campbell provides a lengthy list of texts where commentators commonly affirm (8 cases) or debate (5 cases) possible citations that do not represent Paul’s own views (2009:540-41; see 1:12; 3:4; 6:12-13; 7:1; 8:1, 4, 8; 10:23; cf. 4:6b; 8:5a; 12:3; 15:12; 15:35); in English for the undisputed eight cases the NRSV provides the quotation marks lacking in the original Greek.

3 Third, to the objection that no one properly understood Paul before Campbell, he is able to point out that individually most of his points were anticipated by various commentators throughout church history and that all he is doing is, in the light of recent studies reflecting the New Perspective on Paul, taking the next step: carrying such insights to their logical conclusion, especially regarding in Galatians, 1-2 Corinthians, Philippians and Romans.

4 Fourth, and most important, Campbell shows how many of the affirmations in 1:18-2:16 are contradicted or **deconstructed** as the Romans scroll unrolls. In my QBC Romans chapter and my Jewett review: I cited four examples:

- (1) behavior traditionally categorized as “**unclean**” (Rom 1:24) has now been cleansed (14:14, 20);
- (2) before condemning the “shameful” behavior (1:24, 26-27) we must recall the queer Jesus’ **shameful** crucifixion, God’s decisive instrument of liberating cosmic justice (3:21-26; cf “boasting,” 5:2-3, 11);
- (3) behavior “**against nature**” (1:26-27) was precisely what God himself engaged in when engrafting believing Gentiles into the Olive tree of Israel (Rom 11:24); by referring to Gentiles as *uncircumcised* “by nature” Paul recognized that circumcision itself a human cultural imposition, and thus an act “against nature”; 2:27; see also the Gentiles not having the Law by birth/nature, 2:14);
- (4) even “**ex/change**” (1:23, 25, 26-27—from what to what?), far from always constituting negative apostasy, may...constitute the essence of the sanctification process as we “present our bodies as a living sacrifice” and are “*transformed*” into Christ’s likeness (12:1-2), with love replacing lust (5:5; 13:8-14).

Campbell sees Paul’s own Good News set forth in 1:16-17, with its citation of Hab 2:4, and understands *dikaioyne theou* not as commonly rendered in English (“the righteousness of God”) but in the light of Psalm 98:2 as “the deliverance of God” with apocalyptic and royal overtones, referring to “the act of resurrection, empowerment and heavenly enthronement after [Christ’s] oppression and execution by evil opposing power” (p. 699; see my rendering, “the liberating justice of God,” Hanks 2000:84).

Common current solutions for this diversity of teaching in Rom 1:18-32 compared to Pauline teaching elsewhere, even in the same epistle, may thus be summarized as follows:

- 1 1:18-2:29 represents a non-pauline interpolation (William O. Walker 1999 and 2001);
- 2 In 1:18-32 Paul lays a rhetorical trap to be sprung in 2:1-16 and later deconstructed as letter develops (Hanks 2001);
- 3 Paul is not expounding his own view but cites the (false) Teacher/s (as in Galatians; Campbell 2009); note that the Jewish teacher devastatingly refuted in 2:17-29 is the first clearly identified person referred to in 1:18-2:29. Thus the notion that certain false teachings of this Teacher/s are already echoed in 1:18-32 is not so far-fetched as might first appear when we recognize the trap being laid for him therein.

In his interpretation of Paul’s letters, Campbell, of course prefers the interpretation of *pistou christou* as referring to Christ’s faithfulness (7x), our present life by his faithfulness, not our faith in Christ, for instance in Gal 2:20: “the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith/fulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (2009:200-01; see Rom 3:22, 26; Gal 2:16 [2x], 20; 3:22; Phlp 3:9; cf. Eph 3:12 [of/in him]; 4:13). This is a key element in the new perspective on Paul (see following chart for outline)

Walker, William O. (1999). “Romans 1:18-2:29: A Non-Pauline Interpolation?” *New Testament Studies* 45, 533-52; and also *Interpolations in the Pauline Letters*, JSNTSup213 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001).

Paul: Perspectives (*=Campbell's positions)

Old	and	New
*1 A Christian, <i>converted</i> from Judaism (forgets 1 st -century Christianity = Jewish sect)		Always a Jew, but <i>called</i> to preach to non-Jews Gal 1:15; Acts 9, 22, 26, Phlp 3:4b-6
2 Judaism = caricatured Legalism Salvation by works (merit)		*Judaism = God's covenant people Divine election and grace to <i>get in</i> Good works necessary to <i>stay in</i>
3 Justification by faith = Present: <i>Declared just</i> (law court language)		Context: covenant theology Present: <i>Declared just</i> (law court language) Future: final judgment by works (Rom 2:5-16; Mat 25:31-46)
4 Romans theme: Justification by faith		Rom 1-8, Justification by faith Rom 9-16, Jew-Gentile relations in inclusive house churches
5 Romans problem: How individuals can get to Heaven		*God's cosmic project of liberation, Ch 1-8 House churches inclusive of Jews-Gentiles, 9-16
6 "Works of the Law" (8x: Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16 (3x); 3:2, 5, 10 + "law of works," Rom 3:27) = Good works generally		=Ethnic markers that distinguish Jews from Gentiles: circumcision, food laws, Sabbath observance
7 Faith <i>in</i> Christ (6x: Gal 2:16, 16, 20; 3:22; Rom 3:22, 26; Phlp 3:9; + Eph 3:12 [of/in him])		*Faithfulness of Messiah
8 *Christ's <i>imputed righteousness</i> : affirmed (1 Cor 1:30; Rom 5:17; Phlp 3:9; 2 Cor 5:21)		Denied (N.T. Wright 2009:158-167) = "embody God's covenant faithfulness"
N.T. Wright	vs.	James Dunn
First to <i>introduce</i> phrase of the "new perspective" on Paul (1978) (<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i> 1978:61-88)		<i>Popularized</i> phrase, became identified with it 1983 and 1988
Emphasizes covenant context of justification		Deemphasizes covenant language and concept
Emphasizes Jesus as messiah in Paul		Deemphasizes Jesus as messiah in Paul
For Paul Jews were still in Exile (Dan 9)		Questions this interpretation

Dunn, James D. G. (1998). *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 128-161, 631-669.
Thielman, F. (1993). "Law". *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 529-542.
Schreiner, Thomas R. (1993). "Works of the Law," *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 975-979

For more on "the new perspective on Paul" see especially www.thepaulpage.com/Bibliography.html

Key elements in Romans 1:18-32, according to Campbell's analysis:

1:18 God's wrath is now revealed against all idolatry and oppression (see empire)

1:19-23 God is revealed in creation but original humanity opted for idolatry

1:24-27 Humanity has been given over to idolatrous concupiscence

1:28 Even before the idolatrous concupiscence of 1:24-27, humanity had been given over to 21 vices,
Excursus: Stanley K. Stower's *A Rereading of Romans* (Campbell 460-66).

1:18-32 echoes ancient 'decline of civilization' narratives (both Greco-Roman and Jewish; cf. Hesiod's portrayal of an original golden age). The "ancient discourse of 'self-mastery'...is especially important for Romans" (2009:460).

Difficulties in traditional Justification Theory (JT).

Intrinsic Difficulties (Campbell 2009:36-61):

"1 Epistemology. Justification theory argues in terms of two incompatible epistemologies: a general, atemporal, philosophical, and rational conception of knowledge—"objective" philosophical reasoning; and a particular, historical, revelatory, and interpersonal conception—notably, the witness of Scripture, but also the voice of God....

"2 Natural Revelation. Justification theory builds from the objective discernment and lineage of certain positions within creation—a universal recognition and derivation that, in strictly rational terms, is impossible....theism → monotheism → divine transcendence /unimageability → divine retributive justice → divine concern for human heterosexuality → and monogamy → divine concern for a fuller ethical system....Such attributes and concerns cannot be shown to derive in strictly rational terms from the bland god of the philosophers. How do we deduce, by contemplating the cosmos, that a single transcendent god is offended by homosexuality?....

"3. Law. Justification theory asserts two sets of law within one soteriology committed to a just God and perfect obedience—a dual system that is incoherent in terms of both content and desert....

"4. Anthropology. Justification theory presupposes in humans an inherent ability to deduce and appropriately fulfill the truth of certain axioms and, at the same time, a profound universal sinfulness—that is, fundamental and simultaneous *capacity and incapacity*....[cf. Gaca on the ignorant vs. the rebellious "truth suppressors"]

"5. Theodicy. Justification theory posits a God of strict justice who holds all people accountable to a standard they are intrinsically unable to attain, and this seems unjust....

"6. Christology and Atonement. Justification theory does not explain why Christ must atone as against other people or things, and especially, in place of the established temple cultus....

"7. Faith. Justification theory harbors a cluster of complex problems with respect to faith, in two main variations. The 'Arminian' variant struggles to explain faith fully, and, in particular, how individuals can actually exercise faith in order to be saved. The 'Calvinist' variant can get beyond these difficulties by introducing revelation and election at the point of faith but then runs into further problems in relation to the privileging of faith and its gifting to individuals who have negotiated phase one. Ultimately both variants collapse...."

Campbell gives the following summary of the very different “Soteriology apparent in Rom 5-8” (72-73):

1 “The First phase: **Unconditional Deliverance.** Salvation has arrived for the ‘brothers’ unconditionally, at the behest of the Father, through the Son, bringing a spectrum of blessings—life, peace, hope, glory, dominion, reconciliation, atonement, ethical capacity, and so on....It is a dramatic apocalyptic deliverance, inaugurating certain fundamental changes, and thereby prompting a reevaluation of the human problem in its light....

2 “The Second Phase: **A Retrospective Characterization of the Problem.** The powers of Sin and Death have entered the world by way of the original transgression of God’s commandment by humanity—an Adamic narrative. These hostile powers have taken up residence in human flesh. Humanity, powerless ultimately to resist, is effectively enslaved—ruled and oppressed by way of ‘sinful passions,’ and hence oriented by and toward Sin and Death. The existence of humanity is consequently wretched and its destiny is death. Any ongoing presence of a divine commandment exacerbates the problem, as Sin manipulates such instructions to create more transgressions! Unredeemed humanity now cannot comprehend **either** the problem or the solution.

3 “The Saving Phase [A]: **The Father Sends the Son.** The Father views enslaved humanity with benevolence, desiring to help them [as is proved by the fact that] He sends his only beloved Son into this situation, to assume its distorted Adamic ontology—its flesh. The Son consents to enter this existence, to suffer, and to die, thereby demonstrating his benevolence. In this act, Adamic ontology, or the flesh, as it is presented in him, is also executed—an event that can be described in some senses as ‘atoning.’ The Son is raised from the dead to new life, thereby entering the new age—the age to come—as its firstborn and ‘image.’ The Son is glorified and enthroned on high; his eternal messiahship and inheritance are thereby affirmed.

4 “The Saving Phase [B]: **The Spirit Incorporates Humanity in Christ.** The Spirit now ‘maps’ humanity onto Christ’s trajectory. Humans participate first in his martyrological journey, thereby dying; in so doing, their Adamic ontology is executed. Humans participate also in his messianic and eschatological journey, free from the powers of Sin and Death, and a new inheritance. This salvation is fundamentally liberative (in an instance of negative liberty); it is a deliverance from slavery! The salvific process is best symbolized by immersion, that ritual being interpreted as a dying and rising with Christ. The new situation for Christians is typically summarized by Paul with the phrase ‘in Christ,’ or its close equivalent—a metaphor of location. This new situation is fundamentally communal and interpersonal: Christians join a community rooted in a divine communion. Implicit in this is a new conception of personhood, as precisely relational—within a communion.”

This alternative Pauline Theory of Soteriology that becomes apparent in Romans 5-8 creates tensions (ten points) when juxtaposed with Justification Theory (73-89):

“1. Epistemology. The basic conception of knowledge, especially in terms of its overall direction, is different in Paul....2. Anthropology. The presupposed conception of the person is different elsewhere in Paul.... [as are] 3. Theology...the basic conception of God....4. Christology and Atonement, the role of Jesus Christ in the atonement5. Soteriology, the nature of salvation, including the basis and depth of Christian assurance....6. The nature and role of faith.... 7. the conception of ethics....8. Ecclesiology, the nature of the church9. The depiction of Judaism, including various accounts of the Torah....[and]10. The endorsement of coercive violence for the punishment of wrongdoing is arguably rare elsewhere in Paul....” (72-73).

Commentators have struggled to reconcile the account of the human plight given in 1:18-32 (original humanity as a whole opting for idolatry) with that in 5:12-21 (Adam *sans* Eve introducing disobedience and bringing death on the entire human race → Romans; cf. Eve alone in 1 Tim 2:14). While Campbell proposes that 1:18-32 represents the view of the false Teacher Paul opposes and 5:12-21 the genuine Jewish Paul, most educated modern readers probably would take both narrations as legendary /mythological and suggest that our plight stems rather from insufficient evolution (which assumes another myth—dearly beloved by Darwin’s heirs, that of progress). Disciples of Jacques Ellul and others technologically and ecologically concerned might propose an alternative “excess of evolution,” with a fearful glance at the threat of a nuclear holocaust.