The title, *Paul Unbound*, expresses the editor, Mark D. Given’s conviction that when Paul’s letters are read from a variety of “other” perspectives, Paul is freed from both theological hermeneutics and traditional historical criticism. Students studying Paul’s letters for the first time will find these essays useful for sorting through the most important issues in the dense thicket of Pauline scholarship. For those familiar with that forest, the overlapping topics in this collection provide a fascinating demonstration of the questions that preoccupy the field and those that are asked less frequently or not at all.

In the opening essay, “Paul and the Roman Empire: Recent Perspectives,” Warren Carter summarizes the methods and conclusions of scholarship that reads the letters of Paul in a Roman imperial context. He gives a lively account of the discussion in the three volumes published by the Paul and Politics group of the Society of Biblical Literature whose aim is to challenge the privatized and depoliticized interpretation of biblical texts. He notes the work of Fernando Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah, Neil Elliott, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Peter Oakes, and Davina Lopez. He points out that in *In Search of Paul*, Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed explicitly engage contemporary human community. Carter concludes that future work must address Paul’s own imperialism, the history of interpretation of the Pauline legacy, the politics of interpretation, and Paul and the politics of contemporary churches. Carter’s scholarly agenda could function not only for those working in the area of Paul and the Roman Empire, but also for all of the approaches represented in the collection.

Steven J. Friesen’s essay does address the political question when he draws attention to the neglect of the topic of economic inequality in New Testament scholarship. He shows how “the poor disappear” in reconstructions of the early churches. He describes the ideological orientation of New Testament scholarship as “capitalist criticism.” Comparing the status of named individuals in Paul’s letters and in Acts, he notes that making the poor invisible begins in Acts. Friesen’s insightful critical reflection on the politics of interpretation is followed by a constructive proposal about the collection for the Jerusalem saints. He argues that collection differed from the patronage system in that it was communal, that it involved people of modest resources, and that it promoted occasional economic redistribution.

Jerry Sumney presents the advances made in the identification of Paul’s opponents in the decades since the influential two party scheme of Petrine and Pauline Christianity proposed by F.C. Baur. It has become clear that Paul’s teaching was understood in multiple ways in the communities in which Paul’s authority was widely recognized. Sumney traces the methodological developments that recognize the texts’ polemical character, the distinctive situation of each letter, and the difficulty of identifying the role of culture in the positions of the opponents. Although these factors make the task of identifying Paul’s opponents more difficult, Sumney believes that it can be done. Sumney’s goal is to find out “what kinds of diversity were acceptable in the earliest church and what types of beliefs and practices Paul said were unacceptable” (56).
Charles H. Cosgrove presents a selective and wide-ranging survey of the interpretation of Paul and ethnicity, beginning with the first influential, liberal political reading of Paul as a representative of “transethnic universalism” (72). His survey includes the teaching of Holmes Rolston, whose analysis of Paul in 1942 reflected his own political and theological position as a conservative white Southerner. Cosgrove surveys different scholarly interpretations of Galatians 3:28: African American perspectives in which America is a type of Israel and Gentiles represent black America; the commentary on Romans by Bishop Colenso; the interpretations of Paul by Buber and Boyarin; and the political philosophy of Badiou and Agambé. Cosgrove’s essay illustrates how descriptive accounts of Paul’s views merge with prescriptive arguments for understanding diversity and race. Throughout the history of scholarship, interpreters have constructed a view of Paul and race that aligns with their own.

The essay of A. Andrew Das gives a detailed roadmap for students by identifying several pressure points in the complex debate about Paul and the law. These include critique of E.P. Sanders’ description of Second Temple Judaism; debate over whether Paul is targeting legalism or the law as an ethnic boundary maker; perfect obedience; the meaning of *nomos* and its continuing validity. The positions he outlines overlap with some of the arguments of those interpreters discussed in Cosgrove’s survey.

Mark Nanos critiques the presupposition of scholarship that Paul and Judaism are two different religious systems. He argues that despite its attempt to avoid anti-Judaism, the New Perspective essentializes differences and finds fault with either Paul or Judaism. Rather, Nanos argues, Paul keeps Torah and remains a figure within Judaism who seeks to convert Jews and Gentiles to a Judaism defined by Christ. A thorough reconceptualization of Paul’s relation to Judaism, Nanos’ position challenges the other perspectives of the essays on Paul’s opponents, ethnicity, and the law.

Deborah Krause’s essay on “Paul and Women” observes that the topic as defined is defunct. Rather, the effort of scholars has shifted to “a more comprehensive investigation of relation of Paul’s letters and the churches they represent with the history of women within the Hellenistic world” (161). Her review of the work of Schüssler Fiorenza, Brooten, Kraemer, D’Angelo, Castelli, Wire, Boyarin, and Økland demonstrates the more intense attention to the politics of interpretation within feminist scholarship and the much more critical reading of Paul’s rhetoric. Feminist work does not so strongly seek to construct a position for Paul that is normative for the present. By its presence and position, Krause’s chapter highlights the absence of the issue of women and of gender in many of the other essays.

Mark D. Given’s closing article reviews the history of Paul and rhetoric, as well as the impact of classical rhetoric and the new rhetoric. He traces the increasing attention to the relation between power and rhetoric in the letters of Paul. In his analysis of Paul’s claim to “know nothing among you but Christ crucified,” Mark Given applies a skeptical perspective to Paul’s claim as an accurate characterization of his own preaching activity. Rather, Given points out that Paul’s uses techniques of a sophist or Greco-Roman rhetorician to shame opponents and to persuade his audience of the superior benefits of his own message.