In *Paul and Rhetoric*, Paul Sampley and Peter Lampe have created a very useful tool for scholars and students who want to better understand the current state of debate over Paul’s use of Greco-Roman rhetoric to compose his letters. The book, a collection of nine essays, accomplishes two things: it surveys where past research has been undertaken in the relationship between Paul’s writings and rhetoric, and it points out new areas for research that could be undertaken in the future. These essays came about from papers presented in the “Paul and Rhetoric” seminar at the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS) from 2002 to 2008. The essays are not meant to be exhaustive, and they are at times a bit patchwork, but they do address a wide swath of issues relating to Paul’s use of rhetoric. In discussing the relationship between Paul and rhetoric, the book tackles only the “unquestioned” letters of Paul (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon).

*Paul and Rhetoric* consists of four sections. The first section contains only Peter Lampe’s “Rhetorical Analysis of Pauline Texts—Quo Vadit? Methodological Reflections,” which is intended as something of an introduction to several of the more important issues. Lampe’s primary goal in this essay is to raise questions about how scholars can address
the many different takes on “rhetorical analysis” that have cropped up in biblical studies in the last half century. His approach is more thoughtful than systematic.

Section 2 contains three essays, the first of which is “The Three Species of Rhetoric and the Study of the Pauline Epistles,” by Duane Watson. Watson accomplishes three things in his essay: he gives a quick explanation of the three major species of Greco-Roman rhetoric; he goes letter-by-letter through the seven “unquestioned” letters to discuss how each of these letters have been classified in past scholarship; and he completes a survey of important factors that one should consider in trying to classify any of Paul’s letters into a certain species of rhetoric. Watson’s essay is concise and informative and could be used as a ready reference in a class on Paul. The second essay, “Invention and Arrangement in Recent Pauline Rhetorical Studies: A Survey of the Practices and the Problems,” by Troy Martin, is the longest, accounting for almost a third of the book. Martin’s goal is to survey the modern history of research in the rhetorical analysis of the seven letters—but only in the areas of arrangement and invention, with the intent of being more exhaustive. In the third essay Duane Watson returns to discuss “The Role of Style in the Pauline Epistles: From Ornamentation to Argumentative Strategies.” As with previous essays, Watson briefly introduces style, then surveys the use of style in the rhetorical analysis of the seven letters in recent research. He also provides a brief big-picture explanation of the way Paul uses style in his letters and suggestions for future research.

In section 3, the first essay is Christopher Forbes’s “Ancient Rhetoric and Ancient Letters: Models for Reading Paul, and Their Limits.” Forbes contrasts ancient epistolary and rhetorical strategies and points to weaknesses of their use by scholars in recent research. Next, starting from a brief survey of letters from the ancient world, he argues that Paul’s letters in the history of texts are “a remarkably isolated phenomenon in their cultural context” (159). As such, they represent much more of a “communal address” than the typical private letters from the ancient world. Forbes argues that the implication of this for the rhetorical analysis of Paul is the need for a new, blended epistolary/rhetorical approach that better nuances Paul’s distinct communication strategies. Forbes’s essay will prove a useful starting note for the next generation of rhetorical approaches to Paul’s letters. In the second essay, “Rhetoric and Theology in the Letters of Paul,” Johan Vos starts out by considering the six different blends of rhetoric and theology that modern scholarship has created in its attempt to reconcile the two features of Paul’s letters. He then discusses the “two antipodal positions” that must be taken to account in this reconciliation, namely, a platonic and a (neo-)sophistic position (172). A brief essay, and a good start, it leaves the reader with a good number of unanswered questions (part of the stated objective of the volume). Finally, Peter Lampe explores Quintilian’s ideas about how the speaker connects with the listener in his essay, “Quintilian’s Psychological Insights in his Institutio Oratoria.” In his dialogue with Quintilian and Paul, Lampe
covers subjects such as the projection of the *vir bonus*, creativity, and the role of memory. Lampe’s essay represents what seems a shift in the book away from summarization and toward future areas for exploration.

The final section of *Paul and Rhetoric* picks two areas for fresh engagement in the rhetorical analysis of the seven letters of Paul. In the first, “Paul as Poet: Death and Life as Metaphors,” Michael Winger evaluates Paul’s use of life and death expressions as metaphors, surveying examples in each letter. He argues that Paul’s use of metaphor was poetic, but poetic as a fitting and necessary aspect of persuasive rhetoric. Peter Lampe’s “Can Words Be Violent or Do They Only Sound That Way? Second Corinthians: Verbal Warfare from Afar as a Complement to a Placid Personal Presence,” rounds out the book with a look at Paul’s aggressive language and its use in rhetorical communication. Lampe argues that Paul would have agreed with Cicero—that there is a time and place to speak harshly to others, especially when this “verbal violence” will result in a greater good for the community (238). The volume omits a conclusion; given the purpose of the book, and all of the ideas introduced, some concluding remarks that pointed the reader toward specific areas for further research would have been a useful addition.

As is often the case, a book’s greatest strength is also its great weakness—or in this particular example, more its greatest limitation. Sampley and Lampe have developed a unique book, one that is in a sense a hybrid. It is a hybrid in that it is neither purely a survey or monograph but a little of both. Instead, it deals with the issues surrounding Paul’s use of rhetoric with greater depth and purpose than a survey, yet it does not (usually) try to draw conclusions as a monograph would do. *Paul and Rhetoric* does, however, draw conclusions about the profitability of future avenues for research and past missteps along the way. As a result, for those looking for arguments for or against aspects of rhetoric in Paul’s writings, look elsewhere—the good news being that there are plenty of suggestions for where to look for these and more in this book. Keeping in mind its unique purpose, however, this book will prove to be an indispensable tool for anyone interested in further research in Paul and rhetoric. Highly recommended for research libraries and Pauline scholars.