

## INTRODUCTION

# ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?

### *Perspective and Approach*

JOSEPH A. MARCHAL

## WHAT AND WHY?

What does one need to know when beginning to study Paul's letters? Typically, I find it annoying when someone asks a question for which they really only want or expect one answer. It is something I try to avoid doing (and not always with great success). Happily, I believe, asking this opening question means I have managed not to repeat this odd pattern of speech. This kind of question is the preoccupation of this book, its various chapters, and its various authors (often because it is also central to our occupations). In short, answering this kind of question is not always as straight-forward as you might think. Even just perusing the table of contents that precede this introduction or skimming the pages that follow it, you, dear reader are likely to realize that there are some very different perspectives and approaches presented in this volume. Certainly, they will be different from each other but quite possibly also different from what you might first expect when learning about Paul's letters.

Perhaps at this point, the more pressing question for you then is: why? Why study Paul's letters at all? In doing so, why think about these approaches and perspectives? For these questions I admit that I most certainly have a first response, but the book itself reflects others besides this and, in engaging these responses,

your encounter with this book might spark still more responses to such why questions. My answer is based upon what people have said about and done with Paul's letters.<sup>1</sup> People have variously argued that Paul's letters tell us what to think about women, slaves, gays and lesbians, Jews, foreigners, "pagans," the poor, children, and even the government (among other things). Perhaps these uses of the letters have conditioned your own impressions of Paul, either positively or negatively. Some of you might be aware of the heightened role Paul's letters played in some historical debate; others might have felt the sting of condemnation or stereotype much more recently while others might be unaware of such impacts; and others still could insist that these are peripheral to what you feel is the main point of those letters. I won't be so foolish to ask you to try to "bracket" these experiences and impressions. However, this book will also ask you to think some more and, at one or several points, in different ways about how to approach these letters. Anything worth thinking, believing, or doing is worth further thought and reflection, particularly when they are related to something with so great an impact personally and publically.

Indeed, it is important to grapple with Paul's letters because they do continue to be used; they are not just epistles from the past, creating arguments with and for others long ago. This also suggests that Paul's letters are not just for Christians, or even for people living in Christian-majority cultures. Because biblical ideas have become central to the most populous religion, and because people from Christian-majority cultures have gone virtually everywhere else on the planet (with otherwise good or bad intentions), it would be inadvisable to ignore the impact of biblical, and especially Pauline, image and argument. Whether you or I see it as legitimate or not (or ourselves practice it or not), people continue to use Pauline arguments and images to found or reinforce a variety of practices and standards, including those that have destructive and dehumanizing effects. With the help of the critical approaches and perspectives to follow, studying Paul's letters can make us savvier about such dynamics, certainly when biblical claims or worlds are being deployed but also more generally when appeals are made to any kind of authority or "foundation" in culture.

This sounds like a good reason "why" to study these letters, particularly with the help of the approaches and perspectives introduced in this book. As I noted above, it may not be your initial #1 "why," but I do think there are good reasons this "why" can otherwise interact with, complement, or comment on other whys, likely including yours. Reflect and test these reasons as you continue reading; think critically and carefully about what perspectives and approaches are useful and relevant in addressing the whys of the world today.

## WHERE TO BEGIN?

So, I return again to the question first posed in this introduction: what does someone studying Paul's letters need to know before beginning? The trick is, though, that we have already begun, in the book, sure, but also in the world. For instance, one thing you might have already noticed, either about this introduction or even the title of the book itself, is that we don't study Paul—we study Paul's letters. Further than this, when someone starts to study these letters, she or he is also starting to study the way people have made meaning in their encounter with these letters. In stressing this, though, you might also notice that I have managed to introduce something about Paul after all: he wrote letters. Furthermore, the above discussion refers to the way many cultures have treated these letters and their author. Describing this author simply as Paul might even strike you as odd, like it is only the second half of the name for someone more commonly called Saint Paul. This Paul becomes a sanctified figure for many reasons, but highest among them are the letters that we attribute to him, letters that are preserved in some variation within the canonical scriptures of most Christian groups and cultures (in the Christian versions of the Bible). Deciding what counts as a central or necessary idea for our beginning is no neutral or objective activity, because these activities and attributions of authority precede us. Already, the "basics" have been colored in particular shades and hues. Simply the fact that these were saved and treated in specific ways suggest to us certain reasons for their worth and relevance. The starting point or initial perspective on Paul's letters conditions what seems important to tell you or anyone, in the beginning or in any time.

Therefore, it is important to recognize how one's starting point or perspective (yours, mine, a particular tradition's, or various authors', included or not in the chapters of this book) affects how one sees Paul's letters. But, for the moment, I can at least begin from what I have already noted: Paul's letters. Of course, almost immediately I will need to tell you that most scholars think that only some of the fourteen letters later attributed to Paul are authentic or "undisputed" in authorship. Very few would consider the pastoral letters of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus as authentically from Paul, but a few more still think that Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians could be, while Hebrews seems completely different from all of the other letters. This leaves us with seven letters: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. Even this process of discerning which letters are Pauline can reflect particular goals or histories. One could note that the assumption driving this process, a process of extracting the work of the "real Paul" from his imitators (or even students), is that it is important to find out which are from this "real Paul," all the better to follow and be instructed by him (as Saint Paul). Even as this might not be yours or my operating assumption for why we are studying these letters, the division has proven to be a convenient one, for

historical, rhetorical, cultural, and theological purposes, so it is one that this book mostly maintains and reflects.

Starting from another angle, I could emphasize that letters of course have audiences, so one then asks about these recipients in places like Galatia, Corinth, Philippi, or Rome. However, what one pursues or notices about these audiences also affects how they look. For example, Paul's letters often describe their intended recipients as the gentiles to whom Paul was sent (see Rom. 1:1-6; or Gal. 1:15-17; 2:7-9). But even the choice of how to translate the Greek term for this group, *ta ethnē*, changes one's perspective on the letters. Should we imagine them as "the gentiles," all the ancient peoples who weren't Jewish? Or should we talk about Paul as the apostle to "the nations," including the Jews and all of the other nations subject to the Romans?<sup>2</sup> From this point of view, it might become clear that Paul himself was Jewish, even a Pharisee (see, for instance, Phil. 3:4-6). However, this apparently obvious scholarly commonplace could be surprising, considering how many Christian traditions depict him as the Christian convert *par excellence*. Is it important then to introduce first an idea like this that conflicts with received traditions or dominant assumptions?

Circling back around to the subject of the letters, though, perhaps it seems more relevant that they were written in an ancient form of Greek. The letters, then, reflect the process called Hellenization, the way Greek rulers encouraged all they conquered in the eastern part of the Mediterranean to adapt to and participate in Greek culture. Of course, the letters reflect not only this linguistic system but also the wider cultural practices of presentation and argumentation, called rhetoric. Perhaps a more responsible introduction to Paul's letters should begin with an introduction to the exercises and figures of a rhetorical education so we can understand how they argue before we beginning pulling out particular ideas or claims. Yet, the relevance of these figures and exercises is also rightly disputed, as scholars wonder if Paul or his audiences would have received such an education, or whether certain ways of speaking or arguing are "in the air" when one goes to markets and squares in the cities of the time.

It should now be apparent that depending upon where you begin, different elements of Paul's letters will end up being stressed or downplayed. Accordingly, the letters present a range of opportunities as well as a set of challenges. Indeed, since they are directed to particular communities at particular times, they present exciting possibilities for what they can tell us about these places and times that were key in the years before something like the earliest Christianities emerged. This is yet another reason why Paul's letters are important to study. However, the letters give and the letters take away. Not only are the letters written from some distance (Paul was not in Corinth, for instance, when he wrote to the Corinthians), but they also do not function like historical records or theological treatises. The letters were written occasionally in at least two senses of the word occasional: not systematically

but every now and then, and for a specific reason or purpose. Often, it is not easy to discern what the occasion was for sending a letter, all the more so because Paul might not have been the most consistent or systematic letter writer. Nevertheless, given their density and their impact, studying Paul's letters provides us with our own occasion to reflect on a range of issues.

Such reflection could make us look at a number of factors in a new light. For instance, it might seem totally justified to introduce certain ideas like Hellenization, rhetoric, Paul's Jewishness, or his audience as gentiles/nations in the discussion thus far. But how strange would it be for me to insist on introducing this letter writer as male? Certainly, some might say that this is an exercise in stating the obvious. Yet, its significance may not always be clear, not the least because often what we mean by maleness and femaleness, or masculinity and femininity, is actually pretty complex in its particularities. Not only were many of the concepts of gender in the ancient world different from our time, they were also themselves complex.<sup>3</sup> This gives us some new perspective on Paul's arguments, even when they seem to be universal, apparently directed to all, regardless of their gender (among other factors). The "packaging" for this universal message is typically directed in androcentric language (focused on, or from the perspective of, males). If I assume that females were present in the audience, what should I think about or even do with the language Paul uses from this androcentric perspective? Women in the audiences are named in several of Paul's letters (see Rom. 16:1-15; 1 Cor. 1:11; 16:19; Phil. 4:2-3; and Philem. 2), and issues about women's participation are discussed in general in several more places. Does this mean I should translate the Greek term *adelphoi* inclusively as "brothers and sisters" or preserve the androcentric sense of this language and translate it only as "brothers"? Does the second option exclude females now or simply raise our awareness of how problematic many language systems are (including ancient Greek)? Without paying attention to the specific issues of women's roles or gendered language, such ideas and questions would likely go unnoticed (as it did for many of Paul's interpreters and users throughout the centuries).

So, what is important enough to introduce when one is first starting to study Paul's letters? Beginning with the seemingly "new" or the apparently "obvious" gives us different results, but results that seem interesting, even compelling. As the above example demonstrates, rethinking factors taken for granted can be illuminating. In fact, one of the more interesting recent trends in Pauline scholarship is to rethink the specifically imperial aspect of living and working in the Roman Empire. One could argue that you cannot get more obvious than who were the rulers, yet it took more recent work to highlight the imperial resonance of many key Pauline terms like "righteousness" or, in the imperial light, the more pointedly political "justice." Yet, it is important to consider how our ideas about these letters change if one introduces another topic, like Paul's "job." "Apostle" isn't exactly a job title, and according to some it doesn't pay very well, so highlighting that Paul and other

members of these communities worked with their hands, likely as tentmakers, throws the letters into new light again. If Paul is primarily talking to people from such lower status groups, not middle or upper class people, then what we imagine we think of an assembly community in Rome will be different from more contemporary images of “church.”

In this introduction I am not going to tell you which of these ideas should be the starting point. However, by starting with this selection of issues, the introduction (and this collection of chapters as a whole) is unlike many previous treatments of Paul's letters. As a result, I am also not going to tell you that something like faithfulness, or grace, or the law, are *the central* concepts for understanding Paul's letters, because frankly I am not convinced that they are. These are traditional and tricky concepts, with their own weighty religious history and theological significance, and you will see that they will be treated at various points in this book. However, if you have encountered them before, the authors in this book are likely to present them to you with fresh eyes. Likewise, some have become accustomed to hearing or using Paul's letters as demonstrating that Paul is for or against women, slaves, LGBTIQ folks, imperial subjects, or the poor. Occasionally, the chapters to follow will argue similarly, but mostly they will complicate any simply pro- vs. anti- claims about Paul's arguments, while making it clear that the responsibility for dealing with these topics is now ours. Learning about and with the critical approaches and perspectives of this book will help take us to a more accountable place than simply attributing certain features to a letter or person from the past.

## WHY AGAIN?

These are some of the reasons this book presents such a variety of critical perspectives and approaches. What one knows and does with Paul's letters depends upon from what perspective you proceed. This is why approach and perspective are one of the most pressing points of divergence as well as importance when it comes to understanding and using biblical texts. In short, this complexity, questioning, and cross-conversations are all part of what biblical studies (or the most interesting part of it) looks like right now. Thus, this book will not be an “everything you ever needed to know about” Paul or Paul's letters, or even how to study them. The chapters in the book do not pretend to be comprehensive, claiming to “cover it all,” quite possibly because such a claim would be pretending, given its impossibility. What these chapters do aim to do, though, is to help you and me comprehend what we are doing. The chapters make important ideas comprehensible, all so that one can become critically reflective about what it is that people do when they use Paul's letters (including ourselves).

The images and arguments in these letters, and the worlds that they reflect and construct, are both like and unlike more contemporary images, arguments, and worlds. On the one hand, studying Paul's letters is like reading someone else's mail. On the other hand, as I have explained above, these letters are part of a crucial heritage religiously and culturally, a heritage that is both ours and not ours at the same time. Thus, we would be wise to engage them carefully and conscientiously. Still, one cannot help to note the resonances between Paul's world and the one many currently occupy. Both ancient and contemporary audiences are living in a context with both multicultural and monocultural impulses. Just like many of those who read (or more likely heard) these letters, many of us today regularly interact with people, ideas, and practices from many different cultures. Yet, just as the Roman Empire promoted one dominant vision for how to live around the Mediterranean (what they called *mare nostrum*, or "our sea"), a larger corporate entertainment and communications network now aims to achieve its own singular kinds of market saturation and import its point of view around the world. Negotiating such contexts provided then and offer now opportunities for connection and disillusion, realizations and misunderstandings, often while exacerbating traditional divides and ongoing inequalities.

Given such conditions, the goals for this book are not simply to pass along information, but to encourage a more critical and creative formation, and even a transformation in how people negotiate their contexts. Certainly, I think it will be useful to develop an understanding of the academic approaches and perspectives presented in this book. This understanding will allow you to interpret these letters in new ways and see how the ideas in the various chapters are useful and relevant for a range of topics. More so, I think that engaging these perspectives and approaches can foster one's own critical abilities for using and evaluating images and arguments, in both approaches and applications.

The model for learning as presented here in *Studying Paul's Letters* is not simply a master-disciple or an information acquisition model. As you read some of these chapters, you might become convinced to interpret Paul's letters more like the authors. Or you might encounter new ideas or concepts, ideas we are happy for people to learn. However, I wouldn't say that either of these are a primary goal of a collection like this. Rather, I hope that this book helps with the development of one's own critical abilities, considering how to use, and also weigh and evaluate what one learns, questioning its utility for a variety of situations. Yes, each chapter presumes you can learn about a particular critical perspective or approach, giving you an idea of how to "do" that kind of reading or interpretation. Just as importantly (or even more so), the book encourages us to question and to construct a more meaningful present and future. Such questioning means evaluating and repositioning, likely so that we start doing things differently.

The book, then, offers the reader an opportunity for reflection, particularly on what conditions the way you or I think and act. What approach or perspective do

you, or I, or another that we encounter take? Discerning and then evaluating these highlight why method matters because it can indicate the mindset from which someone proceeds. Indeed, this helps to explain why so many of the debates about “what the Bible really says” often involve people speaking right past each other: their positions and claims reflect their difference in perspective or approach. This is one of the reasons why it is important to consider one’s starting points, why this book foregrounds approach and perspective. Once people become more explicit and conscious about what theirs are, they become accountable not only for their perspective or approach but also for the results of them. One can imagine how differently some of these debates and discussions might look, if they focused on this level of reflection. This is why we aim to learn more than just how to recount facts or ideas but to be more careful, conscious, critical, and creative users of authoritative traditions or foundational texts, whether they are biblical or otherwise.

Certainly, this could help in any efforts to go someplace other than where people have gone in the history of uses of Paul’s letters. Indeed this is an urgent and ethically compelling task for a number of reasons. For instance, developing such skills can help one address those uses that were part of my initial answer to “why” one should study Paul’s letters in this way. It is important to grapple with how people have used biblical and specifically Pauline argumentation in dominating, destructive, and dehumanizing ways. Given the effects of these uses, feminist biblical scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has famously argued that the contents of biblical texts should be marked with the label: “Caution, could be dangerous to your health and survival.”<sup>55</sup> Schüssler Fiorenza is not alone in making such a determination. As another scholar (and prominent religious leader), Krister Stendahl, wrote years ago: “I would guess that the last racists in this country, if there ever be an end to such, will be the ones with Bible in hand. There never has been an evil cause in the world that has not become more evil if it has been possible to argue it on biblical grounds.”<sup>56</sup> Such an assertion haunts many of our attempts to more responsibly understand and use Paul’s letters or, indeed, any text that is treated as uniquely meaningful or instructive. Yet, as you will also see (or might already know), biblical texts have also been used to argue against such destruction and domination. Indeed, these uses are why I often describe the Bible as part of a “mixed heritage” culturally and religiously.

Because of these historical and contemporary uses of biblical argumentation, then, many have called for changes in how people engage biblical images and arguments. As early as her 1987 public address as the president of the Society of Biblical Literature (the main academic association for biblical scholars), Schüssler Fiorenza has argued for “an ethics of accountability that stands responsible not only for the choice of theoretical interpretive models but also for the ethical consequences of the biblical text and its subsequent interpretations.”<sup>56</sup> This, then, becomes a matter not just of how “the church” lives with the text but also of a responsibility to a wider public. Because all kinds of social, cultural, and political arguments often make



public claims using the Bible and, thus, shape social and political life, responsible and responsive students of biblical scholarship must address a wider audience than just religious and academic institutions.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book aims to address wider audiences and an extensive set of issues and ideas. Indeed, the chapters to follow represent many of the latest and most important trends in biblical studies. Each chapter in this book aims to exemplify what a difference in perspective or approach can make for understanding the use and interpretation of Paul's letters. In doing so the chapters will not be mechanical in form; they are not simply a "how to" instruction manual. Rather, they will be focused upon clearly communicating what this critical approach or perspective is, why it matters, and how it works when engaging an instance of a chapter (or so) of Paul's letters. Each of these can also work on other Pauline texts and typically other biblical texts as well, which is why this book also functions as a good "crash course" on theories and methodologies for biblical studies in general. The overall structure of the book reflects not only the most relevant or recently emergent work in Pauline studies, but it is also organized so that one can engage a new reading every week or so, especially (but not only) if you are using this in a course or with a study group.

Structurally, this *could* mean that one reads the chapters of this book in a sequence going from front to back. In fact, the first full chapter that follows my introduction, on historical approaches, is instructive for the way it foregrounds what are often a series of unspoken assumptions about how to understand and use biblical, and specifically, Pauline, texts. It critically reflects upon the position of historical criticism and qualifies how else one can ask questions about history. Many of the chapters after that exemplify particular ways to pursue different historical questions, or simply begin from the starting point that historical information is crucial in the study of Paul's letters. However, some of these chapters will not strictly, or even particularly, be interested in making historical claims or pursuing historical reconstructions.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it could also be instructive to explore other chapters first and come back around to ones like the "Historical Approaches" chapter. As a result, there is no particular reason why one must read one chapter before any other, including even this introduction. One can start in the middle and work your way outwards, go from back to front, or simply browse the chapter titles and contents and start where you are most excited, confused, enraged, or simply curious.

The nature of this book allows for multiple uses precisely because, as you will notice, there are quite a few overlaps, resonances, and conversations between these chapters and their authors. The "Historical Approaches" chapter, for instance,

contextualizes historical pursuits in terms of recent questions and challenges posed from feminist, Jewish, political, and other communal perspectives, questions and challenges described in chapters like “Feminist Approaches,” “Jewish Perspectives,” and “Postcolonial Approaches” but reflected in virtually all of the other chapters. Many of the chapters address how Pauline letters and interpretation function as arguments, while some even indicate how seemingly neutral or passive parts of culture, like visual images or urban architecture, themselves reflect and construct particular arguments (see the “Visual Perspectives” and “Spatial Perspectives” chapters). Yet, such a topic is most closely treated in a chapter on rhetorical approaches. One might assume, given the history of how Paul’s letters were used to explain or condemn the Atlantic slave trade, that slavery would be an important issue in a chapter on African American approaches, but slave images and contexts are addressed in the “Feminist Approaches” and “Queer Approaches” chapters as well. One might think that the roles of women or gendered language are of interest only to those last two chapters mentioned, nevertheless they play key roles in considering a range of conditions in the “Economic Approaches,” “Rhetorical Approaches,” and “Visual Perspectives” chapters. Paul’s Jewishness is an important element not only for the “Jewish Perspectives chapter” but also for the “Asian American Perspectives” chapter (among others).

A discussion of such overlaps, conversations, and interconnections based upon topics, commitments, concerns, or procedures could go on for much longer. Indeed, this might not be a bad topic of conversation for you and others to consider as you encounter the perspectives and approaches of this book. The resonances between these chapters indicate that these authors (and co-authors) are not just expert scholars and teachers in the particular approaches or perspectives they introduce in this book. In fact, each of them could have just as easily written one of the chapters besides the ones they have done here. This underscores how a lot of the more interesting and important work in biblical studies does not proceed from just one starting point.

While in some ways it is a bit easier at first to learn each of these “on their own,” these interconnections should also encourage you to explore and experiment with how these ideas and procedures can interact with and contribute to each other. Try reading two or more of these approaches or perspectives together, in order to look for things like the economic impact of spatial arrangement (or the spatial impact on one’s economic place). How might this be further complicated if you recall imperial or colonial contexts, then or now? Do these have different impacts for those who have been constructed and treated as racial or ethnic minorities? Do such groups have different perspectives on elements of history, art, or architecture?

Such experimentation and exploration can apply to how one looks at Paul’s letters, and which parts of them. Each of the chapters spends some time showing how one might use or apply the practices and concepts from certain perspectives or approaches

to one particular passage from the letters. However, these are not meant to indicate that one cannot just as easily and constructively apply or use them with many other parts of Paul's letters (or the wider biblical corpus). Several of the chapters offer examples along the way of the relevance of their approaches or perspectives for other passages. Yet, even when they do not, it is both relevant and rewarding to explore and experiment with using these in different ways, at different times, on different passages or topics (and, then, in continued conversation with other chapters). In fact, most of the letters treated in this book are engaged in more than one chapter: Romans (Economic and Feminist), Galatians (Visual, Jewish, Asian American, and Queer), Philippians (Rhetorical and Spatial), 1 Thessalonians (Historical and Postcolonial), and Philemon (African American). (While the Corinthian correspondence is not the primary focus for any of these, key issues for these letters are raised in several of the chapters, including the Economic, Feminist, Postcolonial, and Queer chapters.) Thus, even just comparing how different chapters talk about the same letter can prove illuminating, since each changes the focus and method for engaging the letter.

Each of these chapters aims to be detailed enough to be accurate and illuminating but still focused enough to be accessible and clear. As a result, I cannot pretend to tell you that what is presented in each of the chapters are the only important things to know and do for those approaches or perspectives. The longer you spend and the closer you attend to these chapters, the more you will certainly notice that even more questions can be asked, and still other critical perspectives or approaches could be adopted. Efforts were made to include entries on as many relevant approaches and perspectives as possible, while still keeping the book manageable to read and use. It is certainly my hope that the interested reader, student, or even teacher might "talk back," then, with their own issues and questions for the traditions of interpretation, the letters themselves, and even the chapters of this book. This might also be sparked by the clear ways in which the various authors of these chapters work out of different contexts, including their teaching and learning contexts. Such differences are useful, as you or I can use them as an occasion to reflect upon the particularities of our own contexts, to think about commitments, and to consider how those would differ in still other settings or times (for you, me, or others).

Thus, I would describe each of these chapters as a "good faith" effort (if you'll pardon the expression) to help us focus upon what they see as the most relevant issues, concepts, and practices for these approaches and perspectives. The reader should flip back to the endnotes, particularly when you find the chapter you are reading especially interesting.<sup>8</sup> Because there is always more to know and to read, each chapter also suggests some selections for further reading that would reward your additional exploration, consideration, and evaluation. I hope that such aims and aids help to make this book a resource deserving careful study and re-use.

The perspectives and approaches presented in this collection present not only the state of the issues in Pauline studies, they also reckon with and beckon beyond the

boundaries of such scholarship. This book is reflective *and* suggestive, characterizing the present *and* propelling us users of the book into an anticipatory future that is more consistent in its theoretical nuance and critical reflexivity. I hope that you will find these good, preliminary reasons for how, where, and why to study Paul's letters in the ways offered here.

## ENDNOTES

1. For an engaging overview of the interpretations of Paul's letters over the centuries, see Robert Paul Seesengood, *Paul: A Brief History* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

2. On Paul as the apostle to the nations, see Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008). There has also been some debate about whether and when to translate the Greek term *Ioudaios* as "Jew/Jewish" or "Judean." See, for instance, Denise Kimber Buell and Caroline Johnson Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123, no. 2 (2004): 235–51; Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 2006); and Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), especially 11–15.

3. See, for example, the discussion in Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner, *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla* (London: T & T Clark International, 2009).

4. See Schüssler Fiorenza, *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 14.

5. See Krister Stendahl, "Ancient Scripture in the Modern World," in *Scripture in the Jewish and Christian Traditions: Authority, Interpretation, Relevance*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 201–14, 205. Stendahl was a well-known figure in both Europe and the U. S., as a prominent professor at Harvard Divinity School and as the Bishop of Stockholm, indicating that asking such questions or pursuing these sorts of issues are not strictly only academic or religious.

6. See Schüssler Fiorenza, "Rhetoric and Ethic," 17–30, 28. Reprinted from *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107, no. 1 (1988): 3–17.

7. For example, see also the assertion made by John D. Caputo: "What the later tradition makes of foundationalist texts is both necessary and necessarily anachronistic—it departs from the original text and context. That is to say, later generations are nourished by the foundational texts in ways that meet the needs of their times and reflect their own standpoints as much as, and perhaps more than, the foundational texts themselves. That is as it should be. The tradition is marked by geniuses who give strong misreadings of foundational texts which shape their own times and that of subsequent generations." See Caputo, "Introduction: Postcards from Paul: Subtraction versus Grafting," in *St. Paul Among the Philosophers*, ed. Caputo and Linda Martín Alcoff (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 1–23, 18.

8. Over the years, a number of my students have assured me that students never read footnotes or endnotes. Let the recommendation of this introduction suffice to underscore, though, the potential utility of checking them, if, for nothing else, the possibility that teachers are taking students' input seriously!