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Mark D. Given, *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome*. Emory Studies in Early Christianity 7. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001. pp. xix + 219.

Reviewed by

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I was asked by Duane Watson and the other members of the steering committee of the Rhetoric and the New Testament Section to read and respond to Mark Given's new book, *Paul's True Rhetoric: Ambiguity, Cunning, and Deception in Greece and Rome*. I thank them for this opportunity, for reading this book has been a delight. The book is well written, full of insights, and an important contribution to our understanding of Paul's apostleship and theology.

I begin my response with a brief summary of the argument of the book which cannot touch on all the points made but will be selective in the light of my own response to follow.

Summary

The thesis of the book is presented, not surprisingly, in the first of its five chapters (pp. 1-37). Given begins where all of us in the Rhetoric and the New Testament Section would agree—with Paul's undoubted rhetorical training and ability, thanks to the groundbreaking work of Edwin Judge, Abraham Malherbe, Hans Dieter Betz and many scholars ever since. But where Given begins to go his own way is that, whereas previous scholarship has aligned Paul with philosophical rhetoric, Given proposes that Pauline rhetoric is closer to sophistic rhetoric, by which he means that Paul used strategies that were not always irreproachable when judged by the philosophical ideals of trying to be as unambiguous and truthful as possible. Instead, like the sophists, Paul was willing to use their weapons of ambiguity, cunning, and deception. To be sure, Given blurs the distinction between philosophical and sophistic rhetoric somewhat since Socrates, the pre-eminent philosopher, was himself a sophistic figure, at least in his Platonic characterization, in that he used the most sophistic weapon of ambiguity, in particular ὁμωνυμία,

or the use of a word with more than one meaning. Indeed, multiple meanings, or polyvalence, is, as Given claims, an essential ingredient of rhetorical discourse, so that true rhetoric—whether Gorgianic or Socratic—always has at least two audiences in view—one audience which the ambiguity keeps in the dark and an other which detects what the speaker really means.

With this understanding of rhetoric, the question arises: Was Paul's rhetoric *true* rhetoric? Given answers in the affirmative: "Paul mastered and deployed the sophistic arts in fuller ways than Betz and most other scholars allow" (pp. 23-24). He tries to back up this generalization by analyzing a number of specific passages that show Paul using these sophistic weapons: the use of ambiguity in Athens, of cunning in Corinth, and of deception in Rome.

Chapter 2—Ambiguity in Athens—analyzes Paul's speech to the Areopagus in Athens in Acts 17:16-34 (pp. 39-82). This speech is, of course, Luke's presentation of Paul, but the sophistic-Socratic Paul that emerges in it will find confirmation in the rhetoric of Paul's own letters. Hence the relevance for including this passage as part of the argument for proposing that Paul was a practitioner of true rhetoric. At any rate, Given departs from the conservative view of this speech in which Old Testament theology predominates and from the liberal view in which Stoic theology is held to be the key. Given does not deny Jewish scriptural and Greek philosophical influences on the scene and speech, but he emphasizes a Socratic Paul whose speech is filled with sophistic ambiguity.

The Socratic character of Paul in Athens has long been noted—from Paul's practice of encountering people in the agora to the charge of his introducing strange deities—but Given also sees the awkward, perhaps Hebraistic, phrase τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ, or, literally, "his spirit in him," in v. 16 as a deliberate reference to Socrates' guiding spirit, or his δαιμόνιον. More important, the Socratic resemblance extends to the use of ambiguity. In fact, Given identifies five words in the speech that had one meaning for the Stoics and Epicureans in attendance and another meaning for Theophilus and the other readers of Acts. Thus, when Paul opens his speech with the observation that the Athenians were in every way δεισιδαιμονέστεροι (v. 22), Given suggests that Paul's Athenian audience probably understood the word positively, that is, that they were being praised for being "very pious," whereas Theophilus may have heard it more negatively, namely, that the Athenians were "very superstitious." Other ambiguous words are: ἀγνοοῦντες in v. 23 which would mean "excused of ignorance" to the Athenians but "accused of ignorance" to Theophilus; ἄγνοια in v. 30 as times of "misconception" to the Athenians or as

times of “culpable error” to Theophilus; ὑπεροράω, also in v. 30, as God’s “overlooking” these times of ignorance to the Athenians or as “despising” these times to Theophilus; and, finally, πίστις in v. 31 which could mean “proof” to one audience or “faith” to the other. In other words, these ambiguities before the Areopagus make Luke’s Socratic Paul in Athens appear as “a slippery sophist” (p. 82).

Given also finds a sophistic Paul in the apostle’s own letters to the Corinthians and Romans. In chapter 3—Cunning in Corinth—Given analyzes select passages from both 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians (pp. 83-137). He begins the analysis, however, with some methodological remarks regarding his embracing of deconstruction. These remarks are largely apologetic—deconstruction is *not* arbitrary, it does *not* stop with the text itself, it is *not* contemptuous of the texts it treats, and it is *not* an enemy of historical inquiry. Rather, what deconstruction is for him “is a never-ending process of breeching authoritarian institutional limits and an intense probing of their often unconsciously internalized effects” (pp. 89-90). What that means in Paul’s case is that once the canonical and ecclesiastical veils have been lifted from the two letters to the Corinthians we glimpse a cunning and thus a sophistic Paul.

The first passage Given treats is 1 Corinthians 1-4. This lengthy passage is used first to define the rhetorical *situation*. The largely pagan Corinthian Christians had become impressed, Given says, with Apollos and his polished Greek, allegorical exegesis, and rhetorical skill, and as a result Apollos was presenting Paul with a challenge to his authority among the Corinthians.

Paul’s rhetorical *strategy*, Given argues, was not to confront the challenge head on, but rather to use an indirect—indeed, a cunning—strategy. The clue to this strategy Given finds in 2:2 and specifically in the word ἐκρίνα, or “I decided,” in the clause “I decided not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and crucified to boot.” What’s cunning about this word is that Paul’s decision implies that he *could* have decided to have known much more on his initial visit. And to prove that he did know more—and hence could be as impressive as Apollos—Paul uses this letter to emphasize his spiritual power, as in his speaking in tongues more than anyone else (14:18; cf. 5:5); his spiritual wisdom, as in his advice about the unmarried and widows (7:25-40; cf. 2:13; 7:40); his rhetorical skill, as in his epideictic showpiece on love in chapter 13; and his Scriptural expertise, as in his many quotations and allusions as well as in his typological exegesis and knowledge of rabbinical lore (10:1-13; cf. 1:19; 3:19-20; 10:4). In other words, Paul did not deny that he appeared initially in Corinth as unwise and

unsophisticated, but he subtly shows throughout this letter that he was wiser and more sophisticated than some Corinthians had thought.

Given then turns to another passage in this letter where Paul's sophistic rhetoric is apparent: 9:19-23. Here his analysis reflects his earlier comments on deconstruction as he takes on two recent, but domesticating, interpretations of Paul's missionary strategy of becoming all things to all people. The first interpretation is that by Clarence Glad who understands Paul's strategy as amounting to mere accommodation, and the second is that by E. P. Sanders who understands this passage as largely hyperbole. Glad's interpretation depends on understanding the key phrase—ἐγενόμην...ὡς—as meaning little more than “I associated with,” a strategy like that of Jesus who associated with tax collectors and sinners but without becoming like them. But Given can find no use of ἐγενόμην...ὡς that simply means a psychagogic willingness to associate with someone.

Sanders' hyperbolic interpretation depends on seeing Paul's strategy as impossible in practice, but Given imagines a possible scenario in which Paul, on arriving in a city, adopts a Jewish lifestyle and then, when his controversial views on the Law become known and he is punished, he leaves the synagogue and with no prospects among Jews he stops observing Jewish customs. In other words, Given takes Paul's words literally—for the sake of winning converts Paul was willing to disguise his identity constantly, to leave the world of being for that of seeming, to employ cunning and deception to spread the gospel, and hence to practice what is, in fact, true rhetoric (cf. p. 117).

Yet another passage in the Corinthian correspondence receives attention: 2 Cor 2:14-4:6, in particular 3:4-18 and 4:1-4. Here Paul compares himself with Moses and does the same for Scripture and the Spirit. His comparisons are harsh—Moses had a ministry of death, but Paul a ministry of life; the scripture kills, but the Spirit gives life. These comparisons would have been offensive to the Corinthians who had become increasingly enamored with Scripture. Consequently, Given argues that Paul used ambiguity when presenting his views. For example, this ambiguity is especially apparent in 3:13 where Paul uses the word τέλος in the sentence “Moses put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from comprehending the τέλος of what is being disempowered.” The word τέλος means “end,” but “end” either in the sense of “goal, purpose, outcome” or in the sense of “cessation, termination.” Scholars tend to favor “goal,” usually, says Given, “by a desire to rescue the Script(ure) ... from Paul's deeply

devaluative rhetoric” (p. 122). But Given, ever the deconstructionist, sees *τέλος* in the sense of “goal” as also meaning “termination,” for the goal of Scripture is condemnation and death, as is clear from Paul’s language: “the script kills” in 3:6, “the ministry of death” in 4:7, and “the ministry of condemnation” in 4:9.

Given turns lastly in Chapter 4—Deception in Rome (pp. 139-73)—to the letter to the Romans and analyzes this letter in the light of the rhetorical situation in Rome as Paul prepared to visit this city. This situation involved Paul’s having to introduce himself to a number of house churches in Rome, whose forms of Christianity varied significantly—from Paulinist views, which likely derived from the number of people known to Paul in Rome (cf. Rom 16:1-15), to Judaistic forms of Christianity, largely held by Judaeophiles, or Gentiles who were formerly God-fearers, who might be deceived into accepting more literally this non-Pauline form of Christianity. A mixed, even divided, audience required a carefully crafted self-presentation of his gospel and apostleship, a task made even more difficult by Paul’s reputation for his harsh attitudes toward the Law, Judaism, and unrepentant Jews, as expressed in Galatians, 2 Cor 3, Phil 3:2-10, and 1 Thess 2:15-16. Thus Romans becomes an apologetic letter in which Paul had to express his controversial views of the Law and Judaism in a less offensive, or ambiguous, way, so as not to alienate the Judaeophiles but also not to disappoint the Paulinists.

Three passages from the letter are selected to illustrate Paul’s more ambiguous articulation of his gospel to the Romans. The first passage is Romans 7, which Given must first wrest away from the influential view of Krister Stendahl who read this chapter as “an encomium of the Law.” In a lengthy and brilliant analysis Given deconstructs Stendahl’s reading of Romans 7. For Stendahl’s reading, Given argues, does not, on the one hand, take the rhetorical situation into account since he did not seek to explain why Paul might appear to be defending the Law in this letter. On the other hand, this reading has the larger goal of absolving the New Testament, and Paul in particular, of anti-Semitism. Hence for Stendahl Paul’s gospel cannot be the result of any dissatisfaction with Judaism or the Law (cf. p. 150). Given points to several passages in Paul’s letters which clearly express his dissatisfaction, as in his reference to Judaism as part of his former life (Gal 1:13) and his reevaluation of his accomplishments as a Jew as loss and dung (Phil 3:8). Even Paul’s claim to blamelessness with respect to the Law (Phil 3:6) does not do away with his dissatisfaction. Rather, “Paul’s dissatisfaction with the Law, and hence with

Judaism as he had known it, was with its inability to transform and perfect him” (cf. Phil 3:10-11; Rom 12:2) (p. 153).

Accordingly, Given does not read Romans 7 as an encomium of the Law. This chapter is more ambiguous than that—being both positive and negative. Thus Paul can appear to be defending the Law, beginning with 7:7—Is the Law sin? Of course not!—and going on to say that it is not the Law but Sin using the Law that causes death (7:11) and that the Law is holy, just, and good (7:12) (cf. 7:7-21). But Paul also restates his negative views, especially in 7:6—We have now been released from the Law since we have died to what we had been bound—and again from 7:21-8:8, especially 8:2—with its phrase “the Law of sin and death.” In short, Given argues that “Paul intended to express himself in such a way that some readers would discern Paul’s *real* position on the Law, that it is antithetical to the Spirit, while others could understand him to be saying again, as in 7:14, that the Law is truly Spiritual” (p. 159; italics his).

For the second and third passages from Romans Given provides a detailed “weak” reading of Rom 9:4-5 by a certain Simeon, an unsympathetic Judaistic critic, and an equally detailed “strong” reading of Rom 14:1-15:13 by one Marcion, a Paulinist. Both readers interpret their passage in the light of what Paul says elsewhere in Romans as well as on the basis of what Paul says in his other letters. Rom 9:4-5, what Given calls Paul’s mini-encomium of the Israelites, asserts that they have adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the Law, the worship, the promises, the patriarchs, and the Christ. But, as Simeon reflects on each of the advantages, he realizes that what Paul says elsewhere about them largely empties them of their beneficial qualities so that he ends up quite distrustful of what Paul says in this letter. For example, regarding the patriarchs Simeon says:

But surely the patriarchs are a genuine credit in Paul’s opinion. Not really. It is *the* patriarch Abraham that binds Paul’s discussion of several of the preceding matters. Paul wants to make Abraham the universal father of both the uncircumcised and the circumcised, ‘the father of us all’ [Rom 4:11-12, 16]. Therefore, the promise to Abraham and his descendants is not through the Law but faith [Rom 4:13]. Indeed, Abraham, the first ‘believer’ in the gospel, was ‘justified by faith’ [Rom 4:3-5, 9-13, 20-25]. I have heard that in another of his letters Paul turns the story of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah into an allegory in which Ishmael was born of Hagar ‘according to the flesh’

while Isaac was born of Sarah ‘according to the Spirit.’ Paul has the audacity to say that present day Jerusalem and her children correspond to Hagar the slave who bears children for slavery, while those born ‘according to the Spirit,’ those born ‘through the promise’ are like Isaac, ‘children of promise’ [Gal 4:22-31]. It is hard not to suspect that Paul’s real opinion on Abraham, true descent, promise, and inheritance is that ‘...if you belong to Christ, then you are the offspring of Abraham, heirs according to the promise’ [Gal 3.29].

Similarly, in Rom 14:1-15:13 Marcion’s “strong” reading expresses dismay at what appears to be Paul’s backing away from principle when taking the side of the “weak” regarding diet and the celebration of days, although he also begins to grasp what Paul is doing. At any rate, Marcion says (in part):

While I’m glad to see that our brother Paul still includes himself among ‘us strong’ his injunctions to us not to pass judgment on the ‘weak’ are quite puzzling [Rom 15:1; 14:4, 10]. Has Paul changed his mind about the dangers ‘weak’ practices pose? If Paul really feels that Law observance exposes one to possible deception by Sin through the Law [Rom 7:7-11], can he really be ready to promote a rather Epicurean-sounding moral epistemology in which ‘nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean’ [Rom 14:14]...? ... This is worlds away from his famous argument with Cephas that ‘walking straight with the truth of the gospel’ requires full commensality of Jew and Gentile [Gal 2:14], and his horror when he found out that the Galatians were adopting calendrical observances [Gal 4:10]... But let us not forget the veiled way he often expresses his views, ... being ‘all things to everyone’ [1 Cor 9:22].

In Chapter 5 (pp. 175-81) Given brings his study to a close with marvelously concise summaries of the previous chapters and some further reflections on the apocalyptic world view within which to place and to explain Paul’s true rhetoric.

Response

I hope this brief review of Mark Given’s book has provided at least a hint of the innovative, sophisticated, and insightful analyses he has made of a number of difficult Pauline

passages. I learned a lot from this book. The book is exceptional in its careful, thorough, fair, and insightful engagement with these texts and the scholarship on them, and I think everyone here would benefit from reading it for yourself. Given's analysis of Stendahl's classic argument regarding Paul and the introspective conscience of the West (pp. 146-59) is itself worth the price of the book.

Still, in a book as long and complex as this one it is not surprising that even a most grateful reader will have some quibbles and questions about the persuasiveness of the overall argument. Quibbles range from the very minor, such as the carelessness in the accenting of Greek words, to differences of opinion over specifics in any one argument, such as the interpretation of the verb *διελέγετο* in Acts 17:17. Given understands this verb etymologically in the sense of "Paul is engaged in dialectic," which then leads Given to characterize the Lukan Paul as "the first and foremost Christian dialectician" (p. 60). This characterization then prompts Given to view the Stoics and Epicureans, mentioned in the next verse (v. 18), in a corresponding way, specifically in terms of their differing interests in linguistic theory, with the Stoics having an especially developed one, including their having propounded the earliest surviving definition of ἀμφιβολία, or ambiguity (p. 61). That these philosophers listened to Paul and then supposed that he was the messenger of two deities, Jesus and Anastasis (v. 18), leads Given to characterize their interpretation as a "failure to disambiguate"—his word, not mine!—[the word] "ἀνάστασις" (p. 62).

This interpretation of *διελέγεσθαι* is not persuasive, at least to me. I prefer the more general sense of "to discuss" or, to use today's language, "to discourse" (cf. BAGD s.v. *διελέγομαι* 1). To be sure, this word furthers the Socratic characterization of Paul in this passage, as *διελέγεσθαι* is used five times in Diogenes Laertius' life of Socrates, either as part of a generalization of Socrates' discussions of various topics or for specific conversations he had with individuals (see Diogenes Laertius, 2.20, 21, 29, 42, 45; see also ps.-Socrates, *Epp.* 7.2; 14.2, 5-7; Epictetus, 1.9.23; 2.24.15; 3.23.23; 4.1.164; 4.21; and Dio, *Orat.* 54.3). Moreover, the narrower dialectical interpretation loses force when we note that *διελέγεσθαι* in v. 17 is *not* used with the Stoics and Epicureans, who are not mentioned until v. 18, where the verb used of them is *συμβάλλω*, used here to mean simply "meet, encounter" *vel sim.*

Perhaps, we can get a fuller sense of Paul's activity in the Athenian agora if we look at one of the Cynic epistles. In ps.-Diogenes, *Ep.* 38, we have Diogenes' account of his activities in

the agora at Elis. Diogenes walked from one end of the agora to the other and paid attention at one time to those who were selling and at another to those who were reciting poetry, philosophizing, or prophesying. On occasion he would go up and confront a philosopher talking about the sun or challenge a diviner and his ability to predict the future. People soon began to follow Diogenes, and he in turn discussed—the verb is *διαλέγεσθαι*—a virtue like endurance and was eventually invited to dinner by one of his followers.

The scenario sketched out in this letter might help us to fill out the Lukan account of Paul's time in the Athenian agora. He too discussed—*διελέγετο*—with those he encountered, and some of those were philosophers, Stoics and Epicureans, who probably represent two familiar but also very different, even opposed, philosophies—in a way similar to Lucian's use of Stoics and Epicureans. For example, in the *Jupiter tragoedus* Lucian has a Stoic and an Epicurean discussing—*διαλέγεσθαι* again—the providence, even the existence, of the gods (*J. Trag.* 4), a discussion that takes place at the Stoa Poikile in the Athenian agora (16). The discussion ends with the audience divided over providence but with a decision to continue it the next day (17). In other words, they want to hear more about this subject, as in Acts (v. 32). Stoics and Epicureans likewise appear in Lucian's *Symposium* and are depicted as naturally opposed to one another, and that opposition begins as soon as they arrive at Aristaenetus' house (see *Symp.* 9; cf. 28-33, 43-48). In short, this more general, or stock, depiction of Stoics and Epicureans as opponents seems more likely to have been Luke's use of them in his account of Paul's speech at Athens.

Perhaps I have belabored this one point in citing Epictetus, Dio Chrysostom, Diogenes Laertius, Lucian, and various Cynic epistles, but it points up my principal problem with Given's book. These sources all come from the early imperial period, that is, they are roughly contemporary with the New Testament, whereas this period is largely overlooked by Given. Indeed, his index of classical texts (pp. 213-14) shows that only forty-nine ancient passages from eight authors were used, and forty-four, or ninety per cent, of them are from classical Greece, thirty-two of these from Plato. To be sure, Plato continued to be read in the early imperial period. Indeed, Dio Chrysostom took only two books into exile, one of the being Plato's *Phaedo* (see Philostratus, *VS* 488; cf. M. Trapp, "Plato in Dio," in S. Swain, ed., *Dio Chrysostom: Politics, Letters, and Philosophy* [New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 2000] 213-39).

Nevertheless, while Given emphasizes the Platonic Socrates in his analysis of Paul's rhetoric, it should also be noted that, according to A. A. Long, it was not Plato's Socrates but

Xenophon's, especially the moralizing Socrates of *Memorbilia* 1.1.11-16, that dominated Hellenistic philosophy's characterization of Socrates, a characterization that continued on into the early Empire (see his "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," in *Stoic Studies* [New York: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1996] 1-34). One reason for this preference for the Platonic Socrates is Given's dependence on modern scholars like Gregory Vlastos and Thomas Cole whose focus is on the Socrates of Plato's dialogues.

More important, however, to Given's analysis are other contemporary scholars, two of them who, I think, supply him with his central analytical concepts—ambiguity, cunning, and deception—and those scholars are Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant. Their book, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Eng. trans. 1991), is cited often and quotes from this book contain these very words: ambiguity on pp. 28 (twice), 45, and 80; cunning on pp. 28 (three times), 29, 72, and 90; and deception on pp. 28, 29, and 72—all three words being characteristic of their central term, *μητις*, which is a style of intellectual and social engagement epitomized by Odysseus and later by Cynics. In other words, while Given is certainly correct in his analysis of a Paul whose letters betray a highly sophisticated, complex, and, yes, an often ambiguous and deceptive argumentation, this analysis still remains more of a contemporary than an historical formulation of Paul's rhetoric, more of a style of being in the world than a specifically rhetorical approach.

Let me suggest some ways that such an analysis of Paul's letters might be grounded more fully in the rhetoric of the early empire, which was just beginning to take shape as the Second Sophistic. Given says, at the very beginning of his book, that Paul had "at least a rudimentary rhetorical education" (p. 1), a view with which I agree (see my "Paul and Greco-Roman Education" in *Paul and the Greco-Roman World* [J. P. Sampley, ed.; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, forthcoming]). But this claim is merely supported with a footnote (p. 1 n. 1) and then repeated at the end (p. 176). In between such an education plays virtually no role in the analysis, with only a few rhetorical terms mentioned—for example, 1 Corinthians 13 as an *encomium* (p. 102) and 2 Cor 2:16-3:18 as a *synkrisis* (p. 121)—and these function more as classificatory than as analytical terms.

In any case, I suggest that we position Paul's rhetoric more fully in *his* rhetorical background and culture. For example, to take the key term "homonym" and its related phenomenon "ambiguity" Given cites Aristotle (pp. 24-28), hardly the author read by those with

a rudimentary rhetorical education. Rather, we need to ask: where in the educational curriculum would a student like Paul be exposed to such terms so that we can assume that he knew about them. The answer in this case is: as early as the secondary, or grammatical, stage. The standard grammatical textbook, written in the first century B.C., was that by Dionysius Thrax, whose *Ars grammatica* is largely concerned with the eight parts of speech (see *Ars gramm.* 11-20 [pp. 22-100 Uhlig]). The section on nouns identifies many types and sub-types, and among the sub-types is the ὁμώνυμον (ὄνομα), or homonymous noun, defined as a noun that can be applied to a number of things—in the case of proper nouns Ajax, both Ajax the son of Telamon and Ajax the son of Oileus, and in the case of appellative nouns μῦς, or mouse, both sea mouse and land mouse (*Ars gramm.* 12 [p. 36, 1-4 Uhlig]).

When students moved on to the early stages of rhetorical education and the *Progymnasmata*, they encountered these terms again, but now in the context of style. Theon of Alexandria, writing in the mid- to late first century A.D., introduces ὁμώνυμα (ὀνόματα) in the chapter on narrative and specifically in terms of the proper style for composing a narrative. Among the virtues (ἀρεταί) of good narrative style is σαφήνεια, or clarity, and Theon then discusses this virtue by listing ways that clarity can be lost, one of which is the use of homonymous words. Theon defines such words as those having the same sound and spelling but meaning something different, illustrating with the word παῖς, which can mean son, youth, or slave (*Progymn.* 4 [1.186, 13 – 187, 3 Walz]). Immediately thereafter Theon turns to ἀμφιβολία, or ambiguity, as another way clarity can be lost. This much longer discussion identifies various ways that ambiguity can arise—by differing divisions of words written *scripta continua*, by modifiers that can be related syntactically to different words, by omissions of articles that obscure what the subject is, by using the same case for two characters in a sentence (see 1.87, 4 – 189, 14 Walz). These terms also appear elsewhere in Theon's *Progymnasmata*—for example, one way to refute a fable or a narrative is to point out examples of ambiguity in it (*Progymn.* 3 [p. 179, 9-19] and 6 [p. 217, 5-9]), and one sub-type of chreia is to make deliberate use of ambiguity (κατὰ ἀμφιβολίαν): Isocrates, when a boy who was being enrolled with him and when the one enrolling him asked what the boy needed, said: Πινακιδίου ΚΑΙΝΟΥ καὶ γραφειδίου ΚΑΙΝΟΥ—either a new tablet and a new stylus (if ΚΑΙΝΟΥ is left undivided as καινοῦ) or a tablet and a mind and a stylus and a mind (if ΚΑΙΝΟΥ is divided into two words καὶ νοῦ) (see

R.F. Hock and E.N. O’Neil, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric. Vol. The Progymnasmata* [SBLTT 27; Atlanta: Scholars Press] 92).

In other words, not only was Paul likely to have known about homonymous words and ambiguity, but we also now know more precisely what these terms meant in Paul’s day, not to mention that it was most often treated as a stylistic fault. Indeed, excessive ambiguity by the philosopher Heraclitus made him an example to be avoided, says Theon (*Progymn.* 4 [1.187, 21 – 188, 1 Walz]), and even Socrates, as a result, had difficulty reading him (Diogenes Laertius, 2.22). In Paul’s day occasional ambiguity could be justified, but it was not recommended as a characteristic style.

More generally, familiarity with the progymnasmata provides us with the habits of thought that governed the lives of all educated people, habits that can help us to understand the writings of the New Testament. For example, the ἀγνοια, or ignorance, which appears in Paul’s speech in Athens, appears in Theon’s discussion of as one way in which an action might done ἀκουσίως, or unwillingly; knowing this context might affect our understanding of the phrase “times of ignorance” in Acts 17:30 as more likely a mitigating factor. Similarly, the closing comparison of love with faith and hope in 1 Corinthians 13:13 conforms to the formal role and placement of comparisons in encomia (see Aphthonius, *Progymn.* 8 [p. 22, 9-10 Rabe]); and the very composition of letters is connected to the progymnasma known generally as ἠθοποιία, or characterization (see Theon, *Progymn.* 10 [1.235, 19 – 236, 1 Walz]), an exercise that could be helpful in developing the way Paul characterized himself when writing to the Romans—at the start as a slave of Christ Jesus (1:1) and, of course, as the “I” in Romans 7. At any rate, ἠθοποιία is quite helpful in analyzing Paul’s letter to Philemon, not only in terms of Paul’s characterization of himself as a prisoner and old man, of Onesimus as his son, and of Philemon as his friend and the church’s benefactor, but also in terms of the temporal structure of an ἠθοποιία that Paul followed in this letter: present (vv. 8-10a), past (vv. 10b-15), and future (vv. 16-22) (see my “Paul and Greco-Roman Education”).

In sum, while I applaud Given’s close reading of Paul’s letters, that close reading needs more than an understanding of rhetoric as persuasive strategy; I submit that a close reading also needs to be done within the full context of the educational and rhetorical traditions of Paul’s day.