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Recognizing the inadequacies of monocritical approaches to Paul and his theology, Smith brings together important disciplines to cast Paul and the construction of “Pauline theology” in a new light. Through the lens of the paradoxical statement in Phil 1:18 (“only that in every way, whether by pretext or by truth, Christ is preached and in this I rejoice”), the book understands Paul’s texts as ancient writings that adhere to and are confined by a specific set of social codes. The author locates these texts within the context of the writing practices of ancient moral philosophers, who on the one hand eschewed rhetorical convention and on the other were bound by it. Contemporary critical theory is used to investigate and critique previous approaches to Paul and to present viable alternatives. In particular, the book advocates that Paul is far more “earthy” than Pauline theology typically allows him to be and that his rhetoric (typically mistaken for theology) is a lateral, “logocentric” expression of his beliefs, rather than a vertical, metaphysical construction. Multidisciplinary and innovative, this volume will interest readers on either side of the debate over the new perspective on Paul.

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