Paul and the Politics of Diaspora (Paul in Critical Contexts)

Ronald Charles

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It is a commonplace today that Paul was a Jew of the Hellenistic Diaspora, but how does that observation help us to understand his thinking, his self-identification, and his practice? Ronald Charles applies the insights of contemporary diaspora studies to address much-debated questions about Paul's identity as a diaspora Jew, his complicated relationship with a highly symbolized "homeland," the motives of his daily work, and the ambivalence of his rhetoric. Charles argues for understanding a number of important aspects of Paul's identity and work, including the ways his interactions with others were conditioned, by his diaspora space, his self-understanding, and his experience "among the nations." Diaspora space is a key concept that allows Charles to show how Paul's travels and the collection project in particular can be read as a transcultural narrative. Understanding the dynamics of diaspora also allows Charles to bring new light to the conflict at Antioch (Galatians 1–2), Paul's relationships with the Gentiles in Galatia, and the fraught relationship with leaders in Jerusalem.

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