Paul and the Politics of Diaspora
Ronald Charles
PCC, Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014, 978-1-4514-8802-9, $39.00, xii + 305 hb

This is a readable volume, which pursues an important thesis, namely, that accounts of Pauline theology and epistemology are incomplete without due attention to Paul’s diasporic identity. The ‘Introduction’ (pp. 1-41) sets out some of the key terms and debates in the field, including a helpful summary of various types of diaspora (p. 12) and a useful exploration of the important notion ‘hybridity’ (pp. 19-21). This is followed by chapters on Jewish diasporic identities (pp. 43-86), on Paul as a Diaspora Jew (pp. 87-123), on how Paul’s interacts with other Jewish diasporic voices (pp. 125-62), and with the Gentiles (pp. 163-200). The final chapter considers the role that diasporic concerns with ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ shape Paul’s concern for the collection in his epistles (pp. 201-46). These follows a brief, but effective, conclusion (pp. 247-60), and a personal epilogue (pp. 261-64).

Charles presents a cogent and sophisticated argument. He presents Paul as engaged in a project common to the quotidian existence of diaspora communities everywhere, namely articulating and living out an identity that is necessarily negotiated, intersectional and contestable. Paul inhabits what Bhabha describes as a ‘Third Space’ (p. 51). As such, he is both fully and never quite at home. This analysis is a positive sign for the discipline, in that it suggests that the collapse of the Judaism–Hellenism dichotomy some two decades ago is, at last, beginning to work its way through into more nuanced sociopolitical analyses. Accordingly, Charles tenaciously resists valorizing Paul, either as a hero or as a villain. Rather, he is presented here neither as a political subversive, constantly re-signifying imperial discourse in plucky resistance, nor as straightforwardly compliant or quietist. Of course, part of the challenge of this Paul is, as the author notes in his epilogue, to know what to do with him in the present!

Michael J. Lakey

Paul and the Trinity: Person, Relations, and the Pauline Letters
Wesley Hill
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015, 978-0-8028-6964-7, $20.00, xiv + 210 pb

Obviously, the technical usage of late Trinitarian debate (homoousios, etc.) is not deployed by Paul or any other canonical author, creating problems later, of course, for those drawn to such language. But ‘relational’ language is used of God, and in particular ‘Father’. ‘Father’ entails an offspring, ‘Son’ a Father, ‘Spirit–breath’ a breather, and so on: usages which clearly were crucial later. Hill complains that this ‘relationality’ is widely ignored in current New Testament and especially Pauline interpretation, which concentrates on ‘high’ or ‘low’ Christology, as though (Jewish) monotheism were a given against which Christ-talk is to be assessed on its own. Working with a few exegetes (such as Francis Watson and R.W.L. Moberly) happy with relationality, it is by contrast here emphasized that in Paul God is regularly defined in terms of Jesus, as Father-of, deliverer-of, raiser-of Jesus; and Jesus is identified in terms of prior closeness to, likeness with God his Father. So too, ‘the Spirit derives “his” character from God and Jesus; and, by

the same token, God and Jesus are disclosed in their self-identification by—and not apart from—the activity of the Spirit’ (p. 137).

So far, so good. Sadly, formal relationality (as I am great-great grandson to my great-great grandfather) is very impersonal. There is and has been no interaction. What is missing is an awareness of the place of ‘friendship motifs in the classical debates—and their presence in Paul (and even more, in John). Friends are ‘persons-in-relationships’ and only so, significantly.

F. Gerald Downing

Booklist 9. Paul

Paul: An Outline of his Theology
Michael Wolter, trans. Robert L. Brawley
Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015, 978-1-4813-0416-0, $79.95, xv + 476 hb

It always seems like an (over) ambitious task when Pauline scholars attempt to articulate a coherent systematization of the apostle’s thought. Each epistle, prompted by its own occasion and developing its unique argumentative trajectory, has its own theology. As Wolter explains, the commentator’s task is to establish how these individual moments in Paul’s experience cohere to form a comprehensive core—moments which, Wolter emphasizes, include Paul’s pre-conversion life, the Damascus Christophany itself and the events immediately predating the Antioch debate (Gal. 2.1-10, 11-14).

Wolter takes a patently narrative approach, allowing perspectives derived from the (undisputed) letters to unfold in what may seem like haphazard fashion to those relatively unacquainted with the complexities in Paul’s arguments. With sufficient background knowledge, Wolter’s methodology will feel inventive and novel. A case in point is the substantial chapter on πίστις—broadly defined as the conceptualization of a hitherto unknown, divinely doctored reality, which stands over and against the man-made reality of σαρξ (p. 93). This observation Wolter sees reaffirmed in key texts regarding soteriology and baptism, which consequently are the subject of the next two respective chapters.

Conversely, readers for whom the landscape of studying Paul has an ostensibly predictability about it may be disoriented by such a pathway. It results in, for example, there being no sustained treatment of ‘justification by faith’ until some 250 pages after the ‘faith’ section. In this reviewer’s estimations, however, having familiar ground shaken up somewhat, as Wolter’s modus undoubtedly does, is to be welcomed.

Andrew Boakye

Paul, Apostle of Liberty, 2nd edn.
Richard N. Longenecker
Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015 (1964), 978-0-8028-4302-9, $34.00, xxxviii + 407 pb

This new edition of a book published originally in 1964 is basically the original book, only lightly edited, plus a foreword by Douglas Campbell and a major essay (112 pages long) by Longenecker himself on ‘Understanding Paul and his Letters during the Past Twenty Centuries, with Particular Attention to his Letter to the Christians at Rome’. The