



What Paul Meant

Garry Wills

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A brilliant synthesis of the Apostle Paul's thought and influence, written by a "foremost Catholic intellectual" (*Chicago Tribune*)

All through history, Christians have debated Paul's influence on the church. Though revered, Paul has also been a stone on which many stumble. Apocryphal writings by Peter and James charge Paul, in the second century, with being a tool of Satan. In later centuries Paul became a target of ridicule for writers such as Thomas Jefferson ("the first corruptor"), George Bernard Shaw ("a monstrous imposition"), and Nietzsche ("the Dysangelist"). However, as Garry Wills argues eloquently in this masterly analysis, what Paul meant was not something contrary to what Jesus meant. Rather, the best way to know Jesus is to discover Paul. Unlike the Gospel writers, who carefully shaped their narratives many decades after Jesus' life, Paul wrote in the heat of the moment, managing controversy, and sometimes contradicting himself, but at the same time offering the best reflection of those early times.

What Paul Meant is a stellar interpretation of Paul's writing, examining his tremendous influence on the first explosion of Christian belief and chronicling the controversy surrounding Paul through the centuries. Wills's many readers and those interested in the Christian tradition will warmly welcome this penetrating discussion of perhaps the most fascinating church father.

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