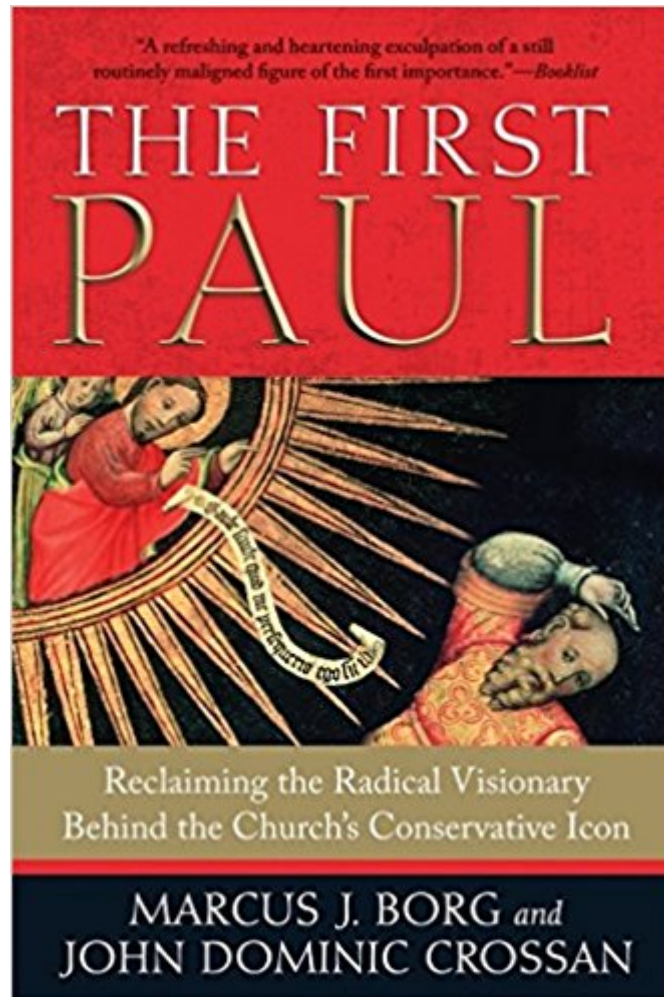


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# The First Paul: Reclaiming The Radical Visionary Behind The Church's Conservative Icon



## Synopsis

Meet Paul Again . . . for the First Time Continuing in the tradition of *The Last Week* and *The First Christmas*, world-renowned New Testament scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan use the best of biblical and historical scholarship to expose the church's conspiracy to silence Jesus's most faithful disciple, the apostle Paul.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: HarperOne; 1 edition (March 2, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061430730

ISBN-13: 978-0061430732

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (128 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

After reading Garry Wills' book *What Paul Meant* along with a couple of works by Bart Ehrman, I was really anxious to read *The First Paul*. I am very glad that I purchased the book for it has given me a detailed look at an apostle that I really did not understand. As stated in the book, half of the New Testament concerns Paul or was written by Paul. Paul matters. As a believer who engages in critical thinking, I appreciated the authors doing all of the heavy lifting for me. As a "thinker" I could never reconcile the views that Paul held regarding slavery, women, etc. The authors explained this in a very straight-forward way and the `scales' have now fallen off my eyes. Explained from the perspective of historical context, it was very easy for me to see that, yes, there were three Pauls. One real - two pretenders. The radical (and real) Paul wrote: \* Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians and Philemon (which the authors break down verse by verse) A person or persons calling themselves Paul wrote the pastoral letters: \* 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. A majority of scholars "dispute" the authorship of: \* Ephesians, Colossians and 2 Thessalonians The detailed analysis of who, where, why and what certainly provides a

non-contradictory view of the apostle Paul compared to the chaotic mess I have struggled with in the past. I also greatly appreciated the mind picture of the set of concentric contextual circles. It was very helpful in providing context for the writing of Paul.

Whenever Borg and Crossan get together, it is worth paying attention. These two scholars are best known for their work on Jesus, but this new venture into Pauline scholarship is very good. The build on the premise that, in the New Testament, we have the Radical Paul (of the Corinthian letters, Thessalonians, Galatians, Philippians and Philemon). Then there is the Reactionary Paul (letters written by others--basically the Pastorals) and the Conservative Paul (Ephesians, Colossians). This distinction helps a great deal in understanding the movement in how Paul is read in the New Testament. They present Paul as a Jewish Christ mystic who lived with a profound sense of oneness with God. They go through the writings of Paul and show how his message changes on various specific themes (from radical to reactionary and Conservative) like slavery, crucifixion, justification. Jesus is Lord (ch. 4) is especially helpful, where they develop Roman Imperial theology of "Religion-War-Victory-Peace" and show how Paul responds to this in his own theology of Jesus. But my favorite in this book is ch 5 "Christ Crucified". This treatment of Paul's theology is some of the best available for the lay person who cares about how we talk about salvation. They deal carefully with several popular explanations of the death of Jesus, demonstrating difficulties in how these themes deal with the theology, then offering a more positive, comprehensive understanding (that makes good sense). In my judgment, these two chapters are worth the price of the book. These two men develop an excellent theology of Paul in language that can be understood, with an affirmation of faith that is very helpful.

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