



Profaning Paul

Cavan W. Concannon

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Cavan W. Concannon's *Profaning Paul* is likely the first work of biblical criticism that begins in an outhouse and ends in a garbage heap. Its references to waste offer laugh-out-loud moments throughout its provocative work, which concentrates on modern interpretations of the Pauline epistles. This wouldn't be the best choice for fundamentalist friends, but it's a fascinating, entertaining book for spiritual seekers who are willing to get their hands dirty.

Paul's letters are central to much of Christianity; verses like I Corinthians 13 are iconic. But the letters are also littered with passages that tolerate slavery, subjugate women, fantasize violence and control, devalue the fleshy body and the physical world, and implicitly condone white male power. Thus, Concannon's book contends that leading Pauline scholars are like garbage pickers, trying to salvage the power in Paul while explaining away the rest.

Brilliant at exploring the fine line between rotten garbage and life-giving compost, the book claims that Paul "can be explained, but he can't be saved. He's just too dangerous." *Profaning Paul* reveals him as "no longer the family patriarch but the weird uncle we occasionally invite to Thanksgiving." Who knew that studying the muck of a first-century toilet could be so inspiring?

KRISTEN RABE (January / February 2022)

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