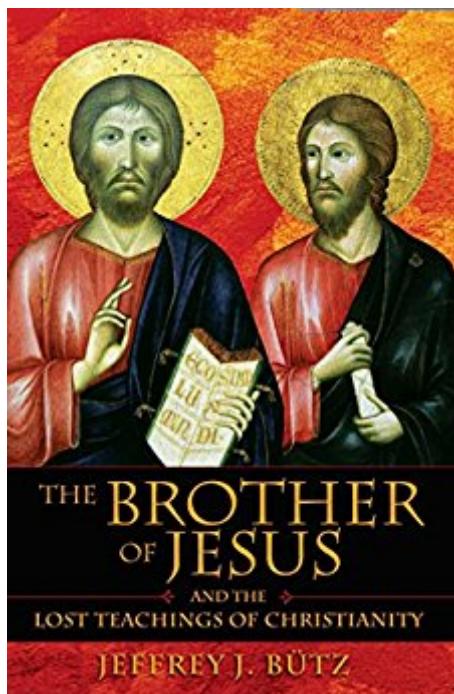


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The Brother Of Jesus And The Lost Teachings Of Christianity



Synopsis

Reveals the true role of James, the brother of Jesus, in early Christianity Uses evidence from the canonical Gospels, apocryphal texts, and the writings of the Church Fathers to reveal the teachings of Jesus as transmitted to his chosen successor: James Demonstrates how the core message in the teachings of Jesus is an expansion not a repudiation of the Jewish religion Shows how James can serve as a bridge between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam

James has been a subject of controversy since the founding of the Church. Evidence that Jesus had siblings contradicts Church dogma on the virgin birth, and James is also a symbol of Christian teachings that have been obscured. While Peter is traditionally thought of as the leader of the apostles and the "rock" on which Jesus built his church, Jeffrey Bafetz shows that it was James who led the disciples after the crucifixion. It was James, not Peter, who guided them through the Church's first major theological crisis--Paul's interpretation of the teachings of Jesus. Using the canonical Gospels, writings of the Church Fathers, and apocryphal texts, Bafetz argues that James is the most overlooked figure in the history of the Church. He shows how the core teachings of Jesus are firmly rooted in Hebraic tradition; reveals the bitter battles between James and Paul for ideological supremacy in the early Church; and explains how Paul's interpretations, which became the foundation of the Church, are in many ways its betrayal. Bafetz reveals a picture of Christianity and the true meaning of Christ's message that are sometimes at odds with established Christian doctrine and concludes that James can serve as a desperately needed missing link between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam to heal the wounds of centuries of enmity.

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Customer Reviews

As other reviewers have rightly noted, this is a well-written and easy-to-read work on a difficult and controversial subject: what did Jesus and his immediate successors really believe and practice as their religion as compared to what we have been led to believe they did over the centuries? Jeffrey Butz steps on plenty of orthodox toes but not without reason and deference for diverse beliefs while reaching a broad enough conclusion based on historical and logical premises. That Butz's Jesus, as carried forward by his brother James, is the divine example rather than the divine exception--the son of God as we are all sons/daughters of God rather than the only Son of God--is a transcendent conclusion that can be parleyed into the unity that Jesus preached so frequently. Highly recommended for anyone still confused about the dramatis personae (Jesus, James, Peter, Paul, the apostles, Jesus' family) of the New Testament and their roles. A caveat: Butz does not venture into certain remaining questions: Who was Mary Magdalene? Did Jesus survive the crucifixion? How did Jewish Christianity merge or not with Gnosticism? Would be curious how he deals with these aspects.

Well written book about a fascinating subject. A worthy addition to the existing books on the topic of early Christianity and the forgotten or suppressed reality of James's importance in the continuation of Yeshua's legacy and mission. The author, though, finds himself in the awkward position of being a practicing Christian minister. This is a bit like being the owner of a mansion on a hill, while at the same time being an excavator of a vast vein of gold in the hill. As a result, while he does good and sincere scholarship on the topic, he also has to realize that as he chips away at the hidden history of the true 'church', he surely undermines the very foundations of his life's calling. You can't uncover the truth behind contemporary, Pauline, Christianity, without arriving at the realization that it is at diametrical variance with the actual ministry of Yeshua, and subsequently James and his "Jewish

Christians."As a result, there is an understated subtext of reconciling today's Christianity, -and even Islam and Judaism, to his credit-, with what he uncovers as the thrust of the actual proto-Christians and Yeshua himself. This is a difficult balancing act, and a gymnastics that another writer would not have had to engage in. Still, a welcome title, and engaging read for those interested in this 'lost' religion.

As I searched the internet for alternative answers to my question of whether Jesus really considered himself God other than the perspectives I received at church, I learned about a claim that James and Paul didn't see eye to eye on things. Intrigued by that information, I bought Robert Eisenman's book about James. While Mr. Eisenman brought up many key points and argued his case quite effectively, I wanted a more neutral evaluation of the evidence. This book provided that evaluation and highlighted just how prominent a figure James was within the first century church. The author explained how diverse the understandings of Jesus had become by the second century and introduced me the concept of an "adoptionist" christology. I learned how the Jewish Christians viewed Jesus' status as the Son of God and how it differed from the divine-human christology that evolved even to the point of eventually contradicting other "orthodox" interpretations. One example was the down playing of Jesus' brothers as the virgin birth idea took hold. By the time of the council of Nicaea, when the divinity of Jesus was decided, his brothers were considered half brothers and even downgraded to either step brothers or cousins, depending on whether a person adhered to the eastern or western orthodoxy. This downgrading was due to the church's need to make a claim to Mary's perpetual virginity and with the case of the cousin designation, early church fathers even put forth the claim to the perpetual virginity of Joseph. This absurd doctrinal evolution sank the credibility of the New Testament scriptures to an all time low for me. From the information in this book, I have come to appreciate the Jewish perspectives and the adoptionist mind set. As Lutheran pastor putting aside his own preconcieved notions about Jesus, the author displayed the integrity that is needed to finally lead Christianity in a more authentic, enlightened direction. That direction points to James, the true successor to the Jesus Movement, to looking into his "perfect law of liberty" and continuing therein. For the non-Jewish world, that involves the Noahide Laws.

It is not easy to find an author who pursues the truth when the subject is religion. The author of this book does just that which shows that he is a true scholar. The church, from its beginning, tried to ignore James, the brother of Jesus, hoping he would not be noticed and that his views would not interfere with the developing church dogma. As this book points out if you want to know what Jesus

was like and what he truly believed, James is the answer to that. James was the one who took over for Jesus, but he lost out to Paul in the battle for what the church would become. Paul's creation (Christianity) was far different than that which James or Jesus would have approved of. Learning about James gets us closer to Jesus and this book succeeds in that. I find this book to be a classic and it is a 5-Star book in all regards.

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