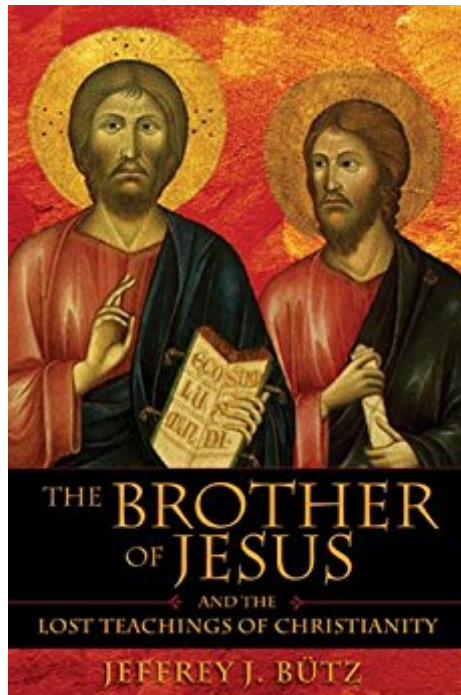


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The Brother Of Jesus And The Lost Teachings Of Christianity



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 Bantz 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, Bantz 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. Bantz 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

Butz's book is so good on so many levels it's hard to know where to begin. Ostensibly it's a book about James the Just, the brother of Jesus. Yet on another level it is a book about the accuracy of the New Testament, not unlike Bart Ehrman's best selling book "Misquoting Jesus" (though Butz is limited to the topic of James). As a bonus, Butz takes us into the rivalries among different sects in the early days of Christianity. Finally, it is a book about rapprochement between Jews and Gentiles, Arabs and Christians. The book is well written and well documented. It progresses in a logical and systematic manner. Though the book is excellent, it is not without issues that can be challenged: "..."the revered Jewish historian Josephus." (p. 16). I'm not sure what texts Butz is reading, but generally speaking, Josephus is regarded in some circles as a coward, a traitor, and a man who made his living by slanting the truth in the direction of his Roman keepers. "..."these positions [that Jesus had no brothers or sisters] were developed early on to uphold the emerging dogma of the perpetual virginity of Mary." (p. 14). Since the positions emerged in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and Mary's perpetual virginity is only proclaimed in 649 AD, this seems like a very loooooong emergence. I suspect that there were other reasons for these positions (e.g., to avoid a dynastic succession through the Joseph/Mary bloodline). He appears to accept as authoritative all the apocryphal letters and books attributed to James, while many other scholars (e.g., Ehrman) question that he was the author of all of them. These are all minor points.

Mr. Butz states in this book that James is one of the most over-looked figures in the history of the church. That is an accurate assessment in my view. James is very important as he was a brother of Jesus, and even a casual reading of Acts 15:13-21 alludes to the fact that he was respected by Peter and Paul in particular. They respected James enough that he settled the dispute that is the subject of that chapter. One of the subjects that the author deals with in detail is the family of Jesus. Mark 6:1-3 lists four brothers by name and sisters "here among us". He also takes the position that Jesus' family was not opposed to his mission. He's in good company in that Richard Bauckham

shares that view. Another idea that is seldom explored is whether or not there were conflicts in early church history. Human logic suggests that there probably were disagreements. (If you think that "religion" is always peaceful and non-confrontational read Foxe's "Book of Martyrs".) The theory that James was more or less a "Bishop of the Jerusalem Church" makes sense. I see Peter as a missionary, not a Bishop or head of the church. Mr. Butz references such early church historians as; Eusebius, Clement, Hegesippus, and Josephus. He also looks at early church-age writings like gnostic writings and those that were used in early churches. While these books are not canonised they provide valuable insight into what early believers thought or believed. Some are way out there and others parallel Scripture very closely. The death of James is controversial. The author gives a few different versions of how he was martyred. If James did reside in Jerusalem after the Crucifixion and until his death that leads to the question..why?

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