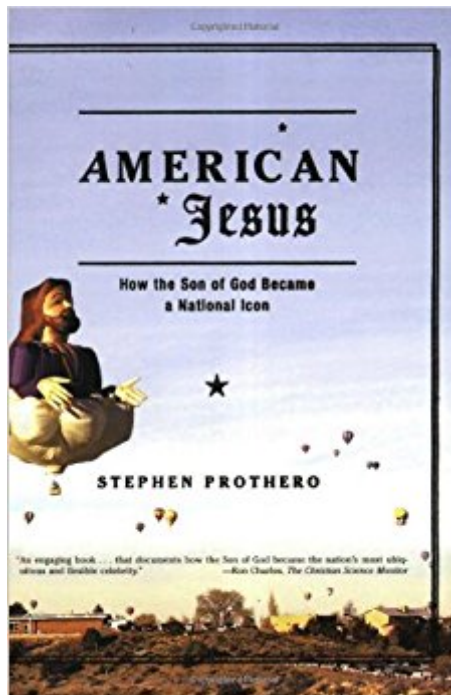


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American Jesus: How The Son Of God Became A National Icon



Synopsis

Jesus the Black Messiah; Jesus the Jew; Jesus the Hindu sage; Jesus the Haight-Asbury hippie: these Jesuses join the traditional figure of Jesus Christ in *American Jesus*, which was acclaimed upon publication in hardcover as an altogether fresh exploration of American history--and as the liveliest book about Jesus to appear in English in years. Our nation's changing images of Jesus, Stephen Prothero contends, are a kind of looking class into the national character. Even as most Christian believers cleave to a traditional faith, other people give Jesus a leading role as folk hero, pitchman, and countercultural icon. And so it has been since the nation's founding--from Thomas Jefferson, who took scissors to his New Testament to sort out true from false Jesus material; to the Jews, Buddhists and Muslims who fit Jesus into their own traditions; to the people who adapt Jesus for stage and screen and the Holy Land theme park. *American Jesus* is "a lively, illuminating and accessible survey that takes us into unexpected corners of our shared religious heritage" (Dan Cryer, *Newsday*).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

No religious personality has captivated so many Americans for so long as Jesus. Indeed, as Boston University historian Prothero demonstrates in this sparkling and engrossing book, Jesus is the one religious figure nearly every American, whether Christian or not, past and present, has embraced. From Thomas Jefferson's cut-and-paste Bible to Jesus Christ Superstar, from the feminized Christ of the Victorians to the "manly redeemer" of Teddy Roosevelt's era, from Buddhist bodhisattva to

Black Moses, Prothero surveys the myriad ways Americans have remade Jesus in their own image. He usefully divides these American Jesuses into "resurrections"-revivals of Jesus within mainstream Christianity-and "reincarnations"-appropriations of Jesus by outsiders. This scheme allows Prothero to range widely, and if he sometimes drifts from his primary focus, the digressions are fascinating in their own right. Nearly every page offers a fresh portrait of some corner of American religious history. A work of this breadth must depend heavily on other writers, but Prothero almost always has a judicious interpretation of his own to add-most of all, his contention that Jesus' enduring appeal confirms America's essentially Christian character even as it also demonstrates America's growing religious diversity. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

To the Puritans who settled the Colonies, Jesus was a marginal figure, and the Old Testament more important than the New. In the four centuries since, however, he has slipped the bonds of Christianity altogether to become icon and brand, as American as Mickey Mouse or the Coca-Cola bottle. This wide-ranging history traces a dual evolution: of American religion (not only Christianity but Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism) in terms of its relationship to Jesus; and of his multiform manifestations in response to changing cultural currents, from Thomas Jefferson's publication of a book of Jesus' life and sayings that excised all mention of the miracles and the resurrection to the Hindu Vedantists' veneration of "Christ the Yogi." Copyright © 2005 The New Yorker --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As those of us who still read should acknowledge in this country, the only subject more difficult to write objectively about than politics, is religion. Mr. Prothero has accomplished this. Actually, I am a Roman Catholic, and my priest loaned me his copy to read! I enjoyed it so much that by the time I'd read the introduction I'd ordered a copy for myself, on here. I would find it difficult to dispute this comprehensive history, regardless of which religion in this country I followed. Certainly, many of the statistics, particularly from the past, were quite fascinating. It is enlightening to realize that our country's founders, and not just the founding fathers, weren't nearly so tied to organized religion as we might want to think. As well-written and researched as this volume is, it is also a peripheral illustration of the value of American media and technology in cementing this country together. It might be interesting to today's Americans that there was very little mention of Islam in the book, considering our present political situation. This is a great read, and I've already purchased another book by Prothero in anticipation of enjoying it also.

This was a fascinating, well written book. Prothero discusses how Jesus has been co-opted and claimed by numerous groups in the United States. He discusses the Jesus Movement's Hippie Jesus, the Black Jesus, the Oriental Jesus, the evolving Jewish understanding of Jesus, and the Sweet Savior Jesus of the 19th century church hymns. Prothero also has a chapter about the movement in the early 20th century to make Jesus more muscular and masculine. He also has an informative discussion about the impact of the classic Sallmann painting "Head of Christ." I also enjoyed the chapter about the Elder Brother Mormon Jesus. I had no idea that there was such a difference of opinion about how to approach Jesus within Mormon circles. The only comment I have by way of criticism is that Prothero tends to be a bit sensationalistic in the way he writes. He speaks of the Second Person of the Trinity breaking free from the control of God the Father, as if there was a heavenly falling out between the two. He also makes unnecessarily sharp bifurcations between Calvinism and evangelicalism, apparently not realizing that many Calvinists were evangelicals (Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield). But this book is so well written and well researched in spite of its flaws, that I have no choice but to give it my highest recommendation. Again, it must be stressed that this is not a book about the biblical Jesus or the historical Jesus, but it is a look at the cultural American Jesus, and how He has been viewed by Americans.

This is very seductive book in pulling the reader into its web looking at what America has done through its history with Jesus. The author, a religious professor, takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of this history, revolving in his opinion around none other than Jefferson himself, who scissored the NT into his own liking and image, thus creating the American way: make Jesus what you want him to be like, probably one that is comfortable to your image. Thus the American variety of Heinz varieties: black, Mormon, Asian, female, white, even Jewish making him more Judaistic leaning. This chronicles all of them in a delightful to read style, at least for this reviewer until he hits the wall (it would seem) at about chapter six where it bogged down and dragged me to the end. This being said, it certainly opens one to the past and present matrix of Jesus' views and the ever changing embrace that this country seems to have with Jesus. Its "sola cultura" at its democratic, capitalistic, now diverse pluralistic melting pot best. The author honestly disclaims before any attacks that his goal is not to theologically judge these American Jesus iconoclasts, but rather to do the excellent and engaging expose on them which this work does enjoyably. Enjoy the read; ponder Matthew 16:13-28; clues are certainly here to be unloaded to identify the real Jesus, whether or not America is ready to confess Him.

Used

Dr. Prothero describes in significant detail how the Jesus of the current Evangelical emphasis is 200 years old - tops - in a religion which is now over 2000 years old. Interesting how this Protestant version of "a personal relationship with Jesus" has come to be revealed truth to thousands of Americans, who apparently don't know it is a relatively new invention for modern Mega Church devotees. As for me and my house, give me that old time religion and let the Evangelicals invent Jesus and church to suit themselves. -Richard Dunn

Excellent value!

A very good history of Christianity in America plus the of of shoot ideas of Mormons, Jews and Buddhist adaptaion to the Jesus culture.

great book

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