



The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus

By Amy-Jill Levine

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In the *The Misunderstood Jew*, scholar Amy-Jill Levine helps Christians and Jews understand the "Jewishness" of Jesus so that their appreciation of him deepens and a greater interfaith dialogue can take place. Levine's humor and informed truth-telling provokes honest conversation and debate about how Christians and Jews should understand Jesus, the New Testament, and each other.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. It is a simple truth that Jews and Christians should be close friends, since they share common roots and a basic ethical system. But the gulf between the groups seems vast. Levine, professor of New Testament studies at Vanderbilt, presents a strong and convincing case for understanding Jesus as "a Jew speaking to Jews," and for viewing Christianity as a Jewish movement that ultimately swept the world in its influence and authority. But with this expansion came an insidious anti-Jewish sentiment, fed by some New Testament texts (wrongly understood, the author urges) and the emerging political power of the Christian church. Levine does a masterful job of describing the subtleties of anti-Semitism, across the years and across the religious spectrum, from the conservative evangelical mission to convert the Jews to the liberation theologians who picture Jews as adherents to an older, less merciful religion. In the end, Levine offers a prescription for healing and mutual understanding; a chapter titled "Quo Vadis?" outlines steps that can be taken by Jews and Christians alike to bridge the divide that has caused so much suffering over the centuries. Written for the general public, this is an outstanding addition to the literature of interfaith dialogue. (Jan.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Levine, a professor of New Testament studies at Vanderbilt, joins the ranks of Bart Ehrman, John Dominic Crossan, and others in the search for the historical Jesus. In the first several chapters, Levine treads familiar ground, discussing Jesus within the context of Judaism and examining how Christianity evolved from a Jewish sect to a gentile church. This information can be found in other, more clearly written sources, but what Levine does very well is discuss Jewish-Christian relations throughout the millennia, even as she provides a context for discussion. Though Levine clearly shows how Judaism has become a scapegoat of Christianity and offers many examples of Judaism's tenets taken out of context by church writers, she is not writing to stir up trouble. What she wants readers to understand is that lifting Jesus from Judaism is not helpful to either group and that there are plenty of ways to focus on similarities. As Levine concludes, "As different as they are, church and synagogue have . . . the same destination whether called . . . the kingdom of heaven or the messianic age." *Ilene Cooper*

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Review

Written for the general reading public, this is an outstanding addition to the literature of interfaith dialogue. (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

Shows how frequently and disastrously inaccurate beliefs about Jesus and early Judaism produce distorted relationships in the present. (New York Times)

"Passionate, witty, and compelling . . . Levine's depth of knowledge and understanding are evident on every page. . . . There is much food for thought in this wonderful book." (Biblical Interpretation)

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