

V. George Shillington. *James and Paul. The Politics of Identity at the Turn of the Ages*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015.

This book centers on the tension between Paul and James, the brother of Jesus. Paul dominates the imaginations of many people when they reflect upon Christian origins, because some of his letters were included in the canon, and a good deal of the Acts of the Apostles focuses upon his activities. James, however, has no extant writings and is only indirectly accessible through some references in Acts and mentions in Paul's letters, as well as the possibility that the pseudonymous Letter of James reflects aspects of his message. Building upon prior studies of the historical figure of James, V. George Shillington stresses the significance of James to the Jesus movement and seeks to understand the conflict between James and Paul as evident in Paul's description of his confrontation with Peter in Antioch. The author argues that the clash between James and Paul was the result of a differing politics of identity, despite the two men sharing many things in common.

The first part of the book explores sources of information about the historical James. Shillington begins by gleaning what he can from the undisputed letters of Paul, concluding that James was the biological brother of Jesus, likely married, and had such significant authority over the Jewish believers in Jerusalem that he could commission representatives from their community to visit Antioch "to assess the identity of the non-Jewish converts to Jesus Messiah" (31). The author thinks that the writer of Acts, although aware of James' import, says little about him in order to highlight the hero of the story, namely Paul.

In the next chapter, Shillington deems the Letter of James to be pseudonymous and written to honor James. Produced significantly later than the time of James and Paul, it provides glimpses of James's teachings, especially his emphasis on wisdom as a gift from God, the importance of the law, and caring for the poor. Shillington dismisses attempts to find parallels between the letter and sayings of Jesus—a surprising move, given all the careful source critical and rhetorical work done on this topic. Next, he suggests that the "beloved disciple" of the Gospel of John could possibly be James, while in a subsequent chapter he examines a range of other sources, including Eusebius, Hegesippus, Josephus, and a variety of

Christian apocryphal literature. Together, these traditions are clear evidence of the ongoing influence of the historical James despite the relative paucity of information about him in the New Testament.

The second part of the volume turns to a comparison of James and Paul, reminding the reader that James knew Jesus personally while Paul did not. Both, however, had received a revelation of the risen Jesus, and Shillington thinks that they shared many of the same theological commitments. James and Paul were not forming two different Christianities, and they remained committed to their Jewish identities, but in different ways. While Paul envisioned a community that included Jewish and uncircumcised Gentile believers (Paul's collection represents this coming together of different ethnocultural groups) and in which Jews had priority but not superiority, James remained within "the best tradition of Second Temple Judaism, and called the new Jesus-community in Jerusalem to follow the same path" (324). James did welcome Gentiles, but he likely expected the uncircumcised to be circumcised. Paul failed to fully appreciate James's position when he received the "right hand of fellowship" from James, Cephas, and John.

These different understandings led to a conflict which, in turn, contributed to a political battle over the full inclusion of the Gentiles, a battle that Paul lost. Later on, Jewish Christianity disappeared, the church became primarily Gentile and "regrettably anti-Jewish" (328).

This book is clear and accessible to a relatively broad audience (scholars, clergy, graduate students, and interested lay people). Given the centrality of identity and politics to the argument, I was disappointed to see little discussion of the meaning of social identity and how it functions with regard to "Jewish Christianity" in light of the larger political context of the Roman Empire. However, the study further contributes to the knowledge that James was a central and not peripheral leader in the first decades after the crucifixion. There is an important reminder, as well, that politics was as significant to nascent Christianity as it is to religious groups today.

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