



The Secret Gospels (Oxford Critical Studies in Religion Series)

R. Joseph Hoffman

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This book brings together, for the first time in a consecutive narrative, the major apocryphal sources of the Jesus tradition. Composed between the 2nd and 7th centuries, these "secret gospels" were influential in shaping Christian belief and doctrine for well over 1,000 years. They include stories of the birth of Jesus, his "lost" years as a boy in Nazareth, the wanderings of the holy family, the death of Joseph, and the ascension of the Virgin Mary into heaven. Translated and harmonized by R. Joseph Hoffmann, a specialist in early church history, these sources offer an unparalleled view of the devotional life and legend-making skills of the Christian Church. They also provide important insight into the making of the New Testament canon and raise significant questions about the way in which belief in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth developed.

This comprehensive introduction to the apocryphal tradition is essential reading for anyone interested in the life and thought of the formative period of Christian belief. Enhanced by Hoffmann's running notes and commentary, this impressive work includes a supplement on the apocryphal Jesus tradition in Islam as well as long-unavailable sources from the Eastern Coptic-Egyptian and Arab-Christian traditions.

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