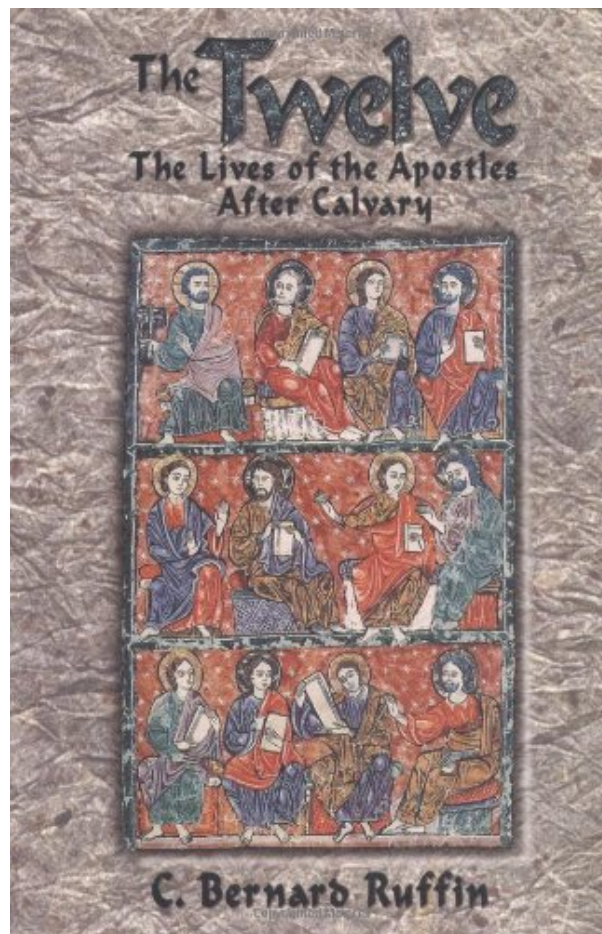
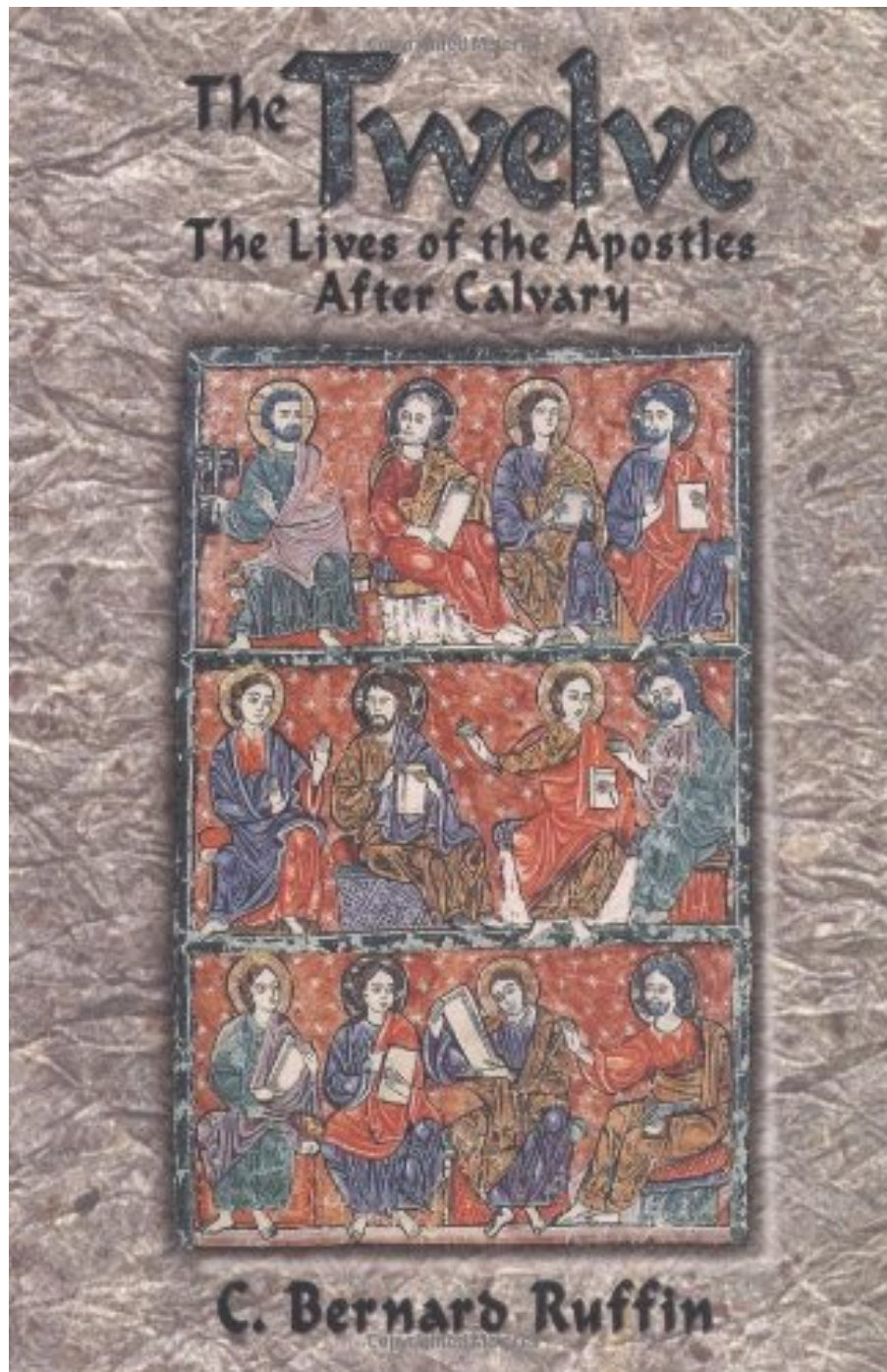


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A motley crew, they were hand-picked to carry on the mission of Christ. The lives of the Twelve Apostles emerge from fact and legend.

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- 191 pages

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4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Wonderful book that needs to be in every church library

By Jeri

This small, charming book, so well written that it will hold the interest of every twelve year old, and every hundred and two year old, should be in every church library. Oh yes, and in your own library.

Ruffin investigates all the information we have about what happened to each of the apostles after Christ ascended. Thomas, the apostle who doubted, "is frequently imagined as a dour, pessimistic man" (p 120), even though there are very few mentions of Thomas in the gospels.

Yet, "We know more about the life of Thomas after Calvary than we do about any of the other apostles except for Peter and John" (p 120). Thomas was instrumental in the conversion of Prince Abgar the Black. But he kept traveling, through Turkey and Armenia and into India.

There is actually a Syrian document that talks about Thomas in India, called "The Acts of Thomas", which dates to about 200 AD. "The inhabitants of the Malabar Coast of India...have many traditions about Thomas (p 131). One such story relates how Thomas raised a dead boy to life.

Lots of fascinating nuggets of information, and an enjoyable book to read.

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

The Twelve Apostles of Christ.

By zonaras

The Twelve: The Lives of the Apostles After Calvary is an interesting book by a Catholic author, C. Bernard Ruffin. It catalogues the lives, travels and evangelical exploits of the twelve apostles from the New Testament, the writings of the Fathers and various apocryphal historical novels. The first problem about

writing about the apostles, as Ruffin explains, is to differentiate between "the disciples," "the apostles" and "the Twelve." Disciple refers to any full-fledged follower of Christ and especially to the seventy (or seventy-two) missionaries sent to the villages of Judea during Christ's lifetime. Apostle refers to a special office within the Church that was instituted by Christ to officially declare the Gospel and later on ordain bishops, deacons and presbyters. "The Twelve" encompasses the twelve men explicitly named in the Gospels as those whom Jesus called and taught during his lifetime in this world. A number of saints in Christian history, notably St. Paul, have attained the status of "apostle" or "equal to the apostles" even though they were obviously not in Christ's original entourage. Ruffin does not address the issue of why twelve were called, but it is obviously an Old Testament metaphor of the Twelve Tribes of Israel who originated from Jacob (Israel) and his twelve sons. A problem exists in identifying exactly who the Twelve were because many of them went by multiple names and many figures in the New Testament shared the same name. Ruffin provides an authoritative list: Peter, Andrew, James the Greater, James the Less, John, Philip, Bartholomew (a.k.a. Nathaniel), Thomas, Matthew, Simon, Jude (a.k.a. Thaddeus), and Judas Iscariot whose place was later filled by Matthias. James the Greater and James the Less are both to be distinguished from James the Righteous who was Bishop of Jerusalem and author of the Epistle of James. Most suffered martyrdom for Christ having lived lengthy lives spreading the Gospel of Christ, except for John who died of an illness in old age. Peter of course founded the episcopacy of Rome and Andrew at Constantinople. Many were active in Judea, Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece and Rome. Some of the apostles are held to have traveled as far as Britain, Iran/Persia, Ethiopia, Armenia, Scythia/southern Russia, Spain, India and even China and Southeast Asia. The most extensive traditions exist regarding "Doubting Thomas." He is reputed to have traveled to the Punjab region of India, southward along the Malabar Coast and onward to what is today Burma and Malaysia. Thomas is considered the founder of the Indian Orthodox Church dating back to the first century. Ruffin examines the status and motives of Judas and what made him a traitor to Christ. More space in this book is devoted to Peter than to the other apostles and in some instances Ruffin argues for an interpretation of the New Testament accounts of Peter in order to justify papal supremacy over the Church. However, this book remains an excellent, easy to read introduction to early traditions regarding the apostles and their mission to the ends of the earth.

38 of 42 people found the following review helpful.

A worthwhile read- FOUR stars

By Paul B.

Unfortunately Amazon won't let me change my preliminary rating of this worthy book to four stars.

I initially had qualms about this book. As others have pointed out, the author, who according to the book jacket writes for *Our Sunday Visitor*, which apparently is a Catholic juvenile newsletter, occasionally peppers the text with Catholic interpretations. But Ruffin gets points for often giving a fair viewing of both sides of controversial ecclesial issues. For instance, regarding the contested familial nature of the "brothers" of Jesus, he concludes his discussion by citing the view that, linguistics aside, these men being brothers germane would not be at issue except for the Catholic doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary.

Early on I came across one bit of sloppy narrative, which did not engender confidence. Ruffin has Peter telling the Sanhedrin about an angel releasing the Twelve from prison and telling them to return preaching in the temple (p 42). But the book of Acts, our only source document on this event, says no such thing. Indeed, it seems a bit whimsical that it's not recorded that the Jewish elders ask the apostles how they got out of prison. One senses that they were afraid to ask! But that's speculation on my part - and that's the point. Where the text is silent we should be also, or we should notify the reader that we've departed the source text.

That said, as I continued reading I found the book interesting and edifying. It gives insight into the chronology of the Gospel accounts, and it gathers an impressive amount of research into extrabiblical

sources, mostly early church fathers, regarding the possible exploits of the original Twelve.

I say "possible" because it is striking how thin a gruel the extrabiblical witness in these matters is. Very often our knowledge of the apostles quickly degenerates into speculation, fanciful tales, and conflicting claims once we leave the sacred text. It's too bad that so much of this information has been lost, considering the dynamic nature of the spread of the early church. We should be thankful that the Scriptures themselves have been preserved so well.

Ironically, I found the most compelling writing in the book to be centered around the fallen apostle Judas. The examination of who he was, what may have motivated his actions, and the depths to which he fell was illuminating. And the contrast made between Ruffin's orthodox insight into this matter and the humanist view of the poet Longfellow was well done.

As I read this book the ecclesiology of the early church was never far from my thoughts. It's a wonderment, and not a pleasant one, how the church migrated from its early dynamic loose nature to one of hardened divisions and indeed cruel internecine bloodletting. My fervent hope is that despite differences on lesser points, we come to the unity of faith for which Jesus prayed and offered Himself. Maybe a better understanding of the acts and motivations of the first apostles will help us recapture the spirit of those glorious early days. For only in unity will the church regain the power to become the true witness it still is intended to be.

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