



Fountain of Change: How the Life and Ideas of Jesus Reshaped Our World

Oscar R. Nordstrom

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Thoughtful and well researched, Nordstrom's book is a welcome perspective on Jesus.

Oscar R. Nordstrom's *Fountain of Change* takes a refreshing approach to religious studies. In an endeavor to make the teachings and philosophies of Jesus more accessible, Nordstrom views the subject in a secular manner. He focuses on Jesus's three documented years of public ministry, from the calling of the twelve apostles to his trial, execution, and resurrection.

When religious trappings are dropped, the book argues, real meaning can be gleaned from the historical teachings of Jesus. The book documents a plethora of Jesus's lesson topics, including his progressive stances on the power of language, politics, theology, and women's rights.

Jesus's influence on notable historical figures like Galileo, Charles Dickens, and Mahatma Gandhi is also explored in depth. The text contends that Jesus's teachings were paramount to their greatness.

Attempting to humanize Jesus and focus on the historical significance of his teachings is a smart approach, allowing for intrinsic meaning to be gleaned by any reader. Early in the text, it is established that, despite centuries of religious misappropriation, the core of Jesus's gospel had a great deal of practical wisdom to impart. Nordstrom supports this claim with wisely chosen biblical passages that are followed by in-depth discourses meant to demonstrate the accessibility of Jesus's philosophies.

Nordstrom has a knack for language. Well-crafted, alluring prose succeeds in developing the claims presented without becoming overwhelming. Short, concise chapters keep the text clipping along nicely. The book never lingers on one subject for too long.

All of the book's claims are supported by ample examples from scripture. Despite drawing heavily from biblical mores, language is not preachy, instead focusing on the validity of the ideas that Jesus presented. Helpful footnotes clarify quotations in cases of archaic language, or provide pertinent quotes relevant to the argument.

Split into twenty-one chapters with titles like "Well-Known Passages," "The Sermon on the Mount," and "The Gospel According to Luke," and with smaller subheadings within each chapter, the book stays on task with its topics and always feels approachable. For example, when investigating the teachings presented at the Sermon on the Mount—arguably the crux of the work—Nordstrom breaks the discourse into three distinct chapters made up of twenty-five smaller sections. This approach allows for a nearly line-by-line reading of the scriptural text, making room to explore Jesus's philosophies on a host of topics such as anger, charity, prayer, and self-sacrifice.

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AMANDA ADAMS (June 6, 2017)

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