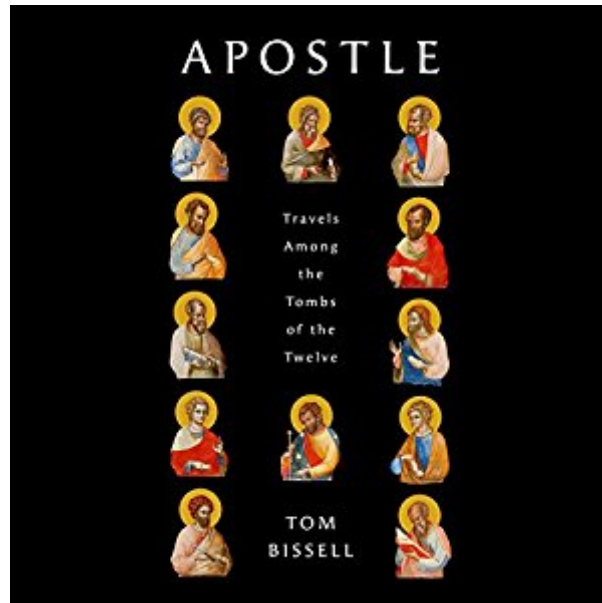


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Apostle: Travels Among The Tombs Of The Twelve



Synopsis

A profound and moving journey into the heart of Christianity that explores the mysterious and often paradoxical lives and legacies of the 12 apostles - a book both for those of the faith and for others who seek to understand Christianity from the outside in. Peter, Matthew, Thomas, John: Who were these men? What was their relationship to Jesus? Tom Bissell provides rich and surprising answers to these ancient, elusive questions. He examines not just who these men were (and weren't) but also how their identities have taken shape over the course of two millennia. Ultimately Bissell finds that the story of the apostles is the story of early Christianity: its competing versions of Jesus' ministry, its countless schisms, and its ultimate evolution from an obscure Jewish sect to the global faith we know today in all its forms and permutations. In his quest to understand the underpinnings of the world's largest religion, Bissell embarks on a years-long pilgrimage to the supposed tombs of the 12 apostles. He travels from Jerusalem and Rome to Turkey, Greece, Spain, France, India, and Kyrgyzstan, vividly capturing the rich diversity of Christianity's worldwide reach. Along the way he engages with a host of characters - priests, paupers, a Vatican archaeologist, a Palestinian taxi driver, a Russian monk - posing sharp questions that range from the religious to the philosophical to the political. Written with warmth, empathy, and rare acumen, *Apostle* is a brilliant synthesis of travel writing, biblical history, and a deep, lifelong relationship with Christianity. The result is an unusual, erudite, and at times hilarious book - a religious, intellectual, and personal adventure fit for believers, scholars, and wanderers alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To most people, Christian and non-Christian alike, the Twelve Apostles are both known and unknown. Most can correctly identify them as the first followers of Jesus Christ, but after that knowledge of the Twelve quickly dwindles into half-remembered stories and legends. Tom Bissell was born and raised a Roman Catholic, but lost his faith as a teenager and now considers himself a non-believer. His journeys to visit the tombs and shrines associated with the Apostles reveal both his early religious training and his present skepticism. The book which is the result of those journeys is a fascinating combination of religious and cultural history with a modern-day traveler's diary, leavened with good humor which is often, not surprisingly in the circumstances, irreverent. Bissell's book is full of fascinating information that often branches into surprising tangents. The first chapter, on Judas Iscariot, includes a lengthy segment detailing Bissell's journey to Jerusalem and his efforts to locate the Hakeldama or Field of Blood, which involves a lot of tense Israeli/Palestinian contacts and confrontations. Similarly, his chapter on Thomas covers Bissell's arduous journey to and through Chennai/Madras while that on Matthew includes a long odyssey through the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union. Every chapter describes what is known about an Apostle and what the legends and traditions surrounding him tell us. Inevitably this means that there is a lot of early Christian history, which Bissell does a good job of explaining so that the differences between Arianism and Athanasianism, for example, are clear even to those without much background in the subject. I have a strong religious background, but I was surprised by so much that I read in Apostle that was new to me.

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