



# American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon

*Stephen Prothero*

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Jesus the Black Messiah; Jesus the Jew; Jesus the Hindu sage; Jesus the Haight-Asbury hippie: these Jesuses join the traditional figure of Jesus Christ in *American Jesus*, which was acclaimed upon publication in hardcover as an altogether fresh exploration of American history--and as the liveliest book about Jesus to appear in English in years.

Our nation's changing images of Jesus, Stephen Prothero contends, are a kind of looking class into the national character. Even as most Christian believers cleave to a traditional faith, other people give Jesus a leading role as folk hero, pitchman, and countercultural icon. And so it has been since the nation's founding--from Thomas Jefferson, who took scissors to his New Testament to sort out true from false Jesus material; to the Jews, Buddhists and Muslims who fit Jesus into their own traditions; to the people who adapt Jesus for stage and screen and the Holy Land theme park. *American Jesus* is "a lively, illuminating and accessible survey that takes us into unexpected corners of our shared religious heritage" (Dan Cryer, *Newsday*).

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