

I now begin to explain why someone might have wanted to (falsely) claim to be James the brother of Jesus when writing the letter attributed to him in the NT. My basic argument is that the letter is being written to oppose the writings of Paul (at least as they were being *interpreted*: whether Paul himself would have agreed with the interpretation of his views that they oppose is a completely different question), and the author needed someone of the stature of James in order to make the refutation convincing, both because James was the head of the Jerusalem church and because it was widely thought that he was at loggerheads with Paul.

I have taken this again from my book Forgery and Counterforgery. It's written for scholars, but I've tried to make it accessible by explaining the terms I use and translating the Greek. This will take a few posts, so here's the start, where I lay the groundwork: the letter of James does seem to be responding to the writings of Paul.

James as a Counter-forgery

Luke Johnson has made a strong argument that there is no hard evidence of real animosity between the historical James and the historical Paul, based in large measure on Paul's neutral references to James in 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12, and possibly 1 Cor. 9:5.^[1] This reading may falter on the Antioch incident of Gal. 2:11-14, as already mentioned (if you're not familiar with the passage - go ahead and read it). If "James" is not to be blamed for the highly controversial stance of Cephas - who acted "out of fear for the circumcision party" - why would Paul bother to specify that it was the representatives of James who created the problem in the first place? Paul's stance, in any event, is clear: these "men from James" represented a completely intolerable view that threatened the essence of his gospel message. Would James have agreed? We have no way, ultimately, of knowing. What we do know is that later traditions portrayed James and Paul at loggerheads.

This can be seen, for example, in the graphic account of the (apocryphal fourth-century book called the Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions), where Paul is said to have tried to murder James for ...

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