

One more post on the Proto-Gospel of James. As it turns out, this Gospel was very popular in Eastern, Greek-speaking Christianity throughout the Ages, down to modern times; and a version of it was produced - with serious additions and changes - in Latin, that was even more influential in Western Christianity (a book now known as the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew). In some times and places, these books were the main source of "information" that people had for knowing about Jesus' birth and family - more so than the NT Gospels.

The idea that Joseph was an old man and Mary was a young girl? Comes from the Proto-Gospel (not the NT!). The view that Jesus was born in a cave? Proto-Gospel. The notion that at the nativity there was an ox and a donkey? Pseudo-Matthew. And there were lots of other stories familiar to Christians in the Middle Ages not so familiar to people today, all from these books - for example, a spectacular account (in Pseudo-Matthew) of Jesus as an infant, en route to Egypt, helping out his very-hungry mother Mary who was eyeing with longing some fruit at the top of a palm tree, by ordering the tree to bend down and yield its produce to her. It does, and Jesus blesses the tree and guarantees that one of its branches will be taken to Paradise.

The Proto-Gospel was also responsible for the popularity of one particular view of Jesus' brothers.

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