



Connecting Christ: How to Discuss Jesus in a World of Diverse Paths

Paul Louis Metzger

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We live in a multifaith society: an ever-growing, diverse cultural climate, where no religion is viewed as having a monopoly on truth. It is important when that Christ-followers not only share the Word of God but also listen and learn how to interact meaningfully with those of diverse perspectives as we engage in life's most important conversations.

Connecting Christ encourages believers to be not only better communicators and witnesses but also listeners to people of other worldviews and traditions—skills that are crucial in defending against today's negative connotations and ineffective approaches associated with Christian evangelism.

With extensive commentary from leaders of various walks of faith and life — from Judaism to Islam and Buddhism to atheism —theologian and author Dr. Paul Louis Metzger offers a spiritual compass to help navigate the intimidating yet critical dialogue of conveying our faith in Christ. Filled with practical guidance and insight into controversial topics, such as hell, fascism, and homosexuality, *Connecting Christ* reveals that there is a way of evangelizing that is neither disengaging monologue nor silent, lifestyle ministry but is, instead, an approach for evangelism and dialogue to go hand-in-hand.

We must remove ourselves as the stumbling block to salvation for others and embrace a way to proclaim the uncommon, compassionate God revealed in Jesus Christ—the Savior this world is dying to know.

Connecting Christ: How to Discuss Jesus in a World of Diverse Paths Details

Date : Published May 8th 2012 by Thomas Nelson

ISBN :

Author : Paul Louis Metzger

Format : Kindle Edition 353 pages

Genre : Religion, Christianity, Theology, Spirituality, Evangelism, Discipleship

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Nadya says

This book is a more than decent introduction of how to conceptualise Christianity's place in the midst of a religiously pluralistic world. I particularly enjoyed that the author opened the discussion up to religious specialists and or religious practitioners of the different traditions he was discussing (they are given a "short chapter" response to his chapter on the tradition.)

I respect the author's convictions that Christian teaching is singularly correct in terms of making absolute truth claims on the nature of God and humankind. I particularly appreciate his respectful approach toward the discussion of "Truth", clearly evidenced by his respect for (and, indeed, friendship with!) people who hold to a different if not entirely opposite viewpoint. More follow up discussion with his respondent's claims would have made for a more interesting and stimulating read, but the author acknowledges that his book as an introduction to the conversation, not a debate itself.

To someone interested in this topic I would recommend the author Leslie Newbigin ("Gospel in a Pluralist Society; The Open Secret; Gospel as Public Truth) who adopts a slightly more pluralistic view while retaining longstanding Christian doctrine.

Matt says

I tore through most of this book, then got bogged down in the final sections of this book that address "contemporary issues." Maybe I've just read too much of that kind of thing... At any rate, the heart of this book is fantastic, focusing on moving away from the Christianity that so enjoyed declaring itself intellectually superior to everyone and everything, and wanted to have a full on shootout with anyone who had questions (the brand of Christianity I grew up with). The format is so good-Metzger addresses historical arguments and contemporary changes, then goes on to speak to the ways Christianity compares with other religions and worldviews. Here's the biggest surprise: Metzger then offers leading figures from each critiqued belief system the chance to give a rebuttal, and afterword he leaves it at that, allowing the reader to weigh both well-articulated arguments. Metzger did so many things right here: he showed that Christians shouldn't abandon argument altogether, just because we might be embarrassed about the way our predecessors handled it. But on the other hand, Christians should acknowledge that a Buddhist can be just as satisfied intellectually as a Christian, because the core differences in the systems are not intellectual anyway-something early Christians in the Roman context new but later Christians forgot as they gained political power.

Most nobly, Metzger chose opponents that are just as educated and just as eloquent as he, is instead of picking on easy targets, and the book is stronger and more useful because of it. Metzger models the confidence mixed with genuine humility that could actually cause people to refer to Christians as "Christlike" again.

Cornelia Seigneur says

A dear friend and colleague whose thoughts and reflections about God and Christ and theology challenge

and motivate and get you -

Lisa says

I have mixed feelings about this book. I didn't really like the first section at all, and the third section, about controversial topics, didn't really connect with me either. I LOVED the middle section, where he writes a chapter on each of the world's major religions, where they intersect with Christianity and where the divisions are, and how we as Christians can talk to them with respect and love for their traditions without being coy or ashamed about ours.

Andrew Kruse says

I really enjoyed this book...check out my review of it here: <http://wp.me/p1oVBU-q4>

Luke says

An interesting book this one. At first it seemed like just another book about apologetics, but it has two interesting twists:

- 1) It describes a relational and dialogical approach to apologetics, rather than one based just around winning arguments. The opening few chapters outline a Trinitarian framework for apologetics.
- 2) It models the approach it is describing. Eight chapters of the book describe how Christians can commend Jesus to different groups (such as Jews, Hindus, neo-pagans, atheists, etc) and then - later in the book - representatives of those religions/worldviews write responses to the chapter about them. This is pretty unusual (I'm venturing to say unique?) in a book about Christian evangelism; to actually have the people you are evangelising respond to your material on the topic. Metzger intentionally ends the book with the eight chapters of non-Christian responses and offers no rebuttal, leaving the reader with lots to think about. It's helpful because it reproduces the dynamic of evangelism (person communicates about Jesus, other person responds with their set of questions and criticisms), and would be a helpful book to include in curriculums for teaching or training others in how to communicate Jesus in a pluralistic world.

In the middle of the book are five chapters on various hot topics. Two of these (on science and the way capitalism shapes the human imagination) are very helpful, the other three (on hell, fascism(?) and homosexuality respectively) probably could have been done better. In fact, I would have been OK without those five chapters all together. But this is altogether a thought-provoking book with eight chapters and eight responses which would be brilliant to discuss in a group setting. It's less a how-to guide than a thought and discussion starter.

Melanie says

Great book but at times too deep for my pea brain!

Gea says

Metzger, Paul Louis, "Connecting Christ, How to Discuss Jesus in a World of Diverse Paths," Thomas Nelson, 2012.

In Isaiah 28 and 30 we read: "they refused to listen. So the Lord's word to them will sound like meaningless gibberish, senseless babbling"... "Don't relate messages to us about what is right! Tell us nice things, relate deceptive messages." Isaiah brought the truth to his people but they rejected him and the message from the Lord God Almighty. Mr. Metzger is a like a present day Isaiah to various ones who are lost (the Jews, the Unitarians, the homosexuals, the Buddhists, etc) who listen but in the end refuse to acknowledge the truth. The reader is easily transported into his dialog with them and sees his agape love to them and yet in the end as they reply to each of his essays about their chosen belief system, we see their true heart of denial. As you follow his explanation of each "faith," and I put that in quotes because their faith is indeed a blind faith, you see his love for them and his desire that they come to know the truth which leads to everlasting life. Mr. Metzger is the first author to show us how we are to love and respond to others who are walking in error. His writing is tender and yet profoundly challenging to us as believers in how we should speak, act, and love them to show them the agape love of Jesus.

The chapters are touching and yet revealing to us as he first presents their case and then relates the truth of the Messiah. Throughout, Mr. Metzger does not hammer but instead showers each person he has interviewed with the love of God and shows them their error. He also shares from his heart where he has erred in not loving them in the ways of Christ and thus he is humbled by their sincerity. As we read their rebuttal at the end of the book we recall Jesus words to the Sadducees who challenged Jesus. They erred because they did not know the truth and they were blind guides and thus in their blindness leading another who is also blind, and thus both will fall into a pit. Unlike the Pharisees who asked "we are not blind too are we?" these like the Israelites in Isaiah's day, remain in their blindness because they choose to ignore and refuse to listen to the one who said "I am the Way, The Truth, and The Life and no man cometh to the Father but by Me."

In reading this book, I recalled the words of Paul: "the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe so that they would not see the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God."

Mr. Metzger's heart yearns for those he has befriended to come to know His Lord and Savior but in the end they have chosen as Gus diZerega wrote: "I place experience ahead of written texts." One wonders what experiences he trusts. Austin Dacey wrote "One of the worst things about being an atheist is not knowing whom to thank." It is sad that Mr. Dacey continues on in his human ignorance rather than bowing his knee to the Messiah whom he could truly thank for His sacrificial gift on the cross so he might have eternal life.

Ironically, Mr. Millet takes bits and pieces of scripture along with the Book of Mormon to state his case as he writes "Joseph Smith revealed a God who is approachable, knowable, and even comprehensible; a God with body, parts, and passions;" yet denies what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman: Joh 4:24 God is spirit, and the people who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

This book is a must read for anyone who seriously desires to understand others and their beliefs, how to respond in love to them practically and also to help one discern the error of their thinking and beliefs.

Derrick says

Phenomenal writing and scholarship. Heartfelt. Thorough, with response essays from leaders of the faiths he

discusses. Truly the best book for interacting with others on "Diverse Paths."

Lee Bertsch says

The best part of this book is the fact that the author has friendships with people in all the various religious traditions that he discusses. So there is a gentleness and respect in his discussion of ideas that illustrates the instruction of I Peter 3:15. He also focused on a couple of key themes where the Christian faith diverges from each religion which avoids the problem of many books of this sort that cover too many points and thus rather superficially. There were times when I found his arguments a bit difficult to follow but I put that on myself - I read this too often at the end of the day rather than the beginning.
