



Pagans & Christians: The Personal Spiritual Experience

Gus diZerega

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Although Christianity is still a major religious force, there are growing numbers of people in other faiths, including the various Pagan traditions. Some Christians have responded to this trend with fear and derision, while some Pagans have reacted to that fear with anger and mistrust.

Much of the problem is due to misunderstandings and lack of communication. This can change with Gus diZerega's "Pagans & Christians." Here you will find a penetrating and illuminating comparison, showing that neither path has the single correct approach to the Divine. Rather, either or both can be authentic and legitimate expressions of the appreciation of the Ultimate Source of All.

"Pagans & Christians" is an ideal way to help bridge what at time seems a wide chasm between Christian and Pagan beliefs. By sharing core ideas of both paths, this book provides a way to give deeper mutual understanding and unity among the religions of the world.

Although "Pagans & Christians" accepts both paths as valid, the book provides a more in-depth explanation of Paganism o the minority religion because in some ways, Paganism demands a greater defense and explanation of its beliefs and ideas to dispel misunderstandings. The author is a Third Degree Gardenerian Elder and in "Pagans & Christians" has presented nothing less than a brilliant defense of Paganism, clearly showing how it should stand beside all of the major religions of the world as an equal. As part of this defense, diZerega gives a listing of biblical contradictions and Christian philosophical difficulties which can help any Pagan responding to a negative attack, and will help any Christian to view his or her religion as a way, not the way.

Winner of the 2001 Coalition of Visionary Resources (COVR) Award for Best Non-fiction Book

Pagans & Christians: The Personal Spiritual Experience Details

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Tatiana (DraCat) says

... "I was looking for a book that would help me understand the differences between Christianity and Paganism, and this book was perfect. It was written from a Pagan perspective, which was exactly what I needed. The author does a great job of explaining the misconceptions that both religions have about each other, and she offers a lot of practical advice on how to live as a Pagan in a Christian world. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in Paganism or who is looking for a better understanding of the differences between the two religions." ...

Ryan M. says

An interesting read that doesn't fit neatly into a genre. Part apologia for paganism, part love letter to the better angels of Christianity's nature, part forward-looking historical meditation, this book was both insightful and far-ranging. I learned a lot from it. The style was easy to read, but the topics were still treated with depth. I've been given a lot to think about by this enjoyable read...

Julie Decker says

A not-too-scholarly, layperson's approach to reconciling differences between Christian and Pagan perspectives. This is written from a Pagan perspective--perhaps with the intention of helping Pagans with Christian friends/relatives learn to make their faith seem less threatening by giving them talking points--and it offers quite a lot of philosophy on why these two faiths are not so different. It discusses the misconception that a religion needs to depend on claims of exclusivity to be authentic, and it urges people of both faiths to coexist. With a lovely explanation of what Paganism embodies, it first defines the overall experience and then reconciles it with the beliefs Christians hold. And finally, it deconstructs a few arguments from both sides (Christian objections to Paganism, Pagan objections to Christianity), helping everyone realize they really CAN "just get along."

I enjoyed the tone and the presentation of the arguments; diZerega does not attempt to pretend he's objective on this issue since he is coming from a Pagan perspective, but he has such a sweet disposition throughout the text (without being dippy!) and encourages spiritual people of all types to celebrate their similarities rather than fighting over their differences. And it really helps point out the divinity in all things--something both Pagans and Christians should devote their lives to acknowledging.

Patricia says

Very informative. Well written. Not a dull read.

Lisa says

I learned that my world view has in fact been formed by a Christian framework and that framework is difficult to see around. The value of understanding what I perceive as otherness in many people's lives has become important to me. Just as some are different to me, I am different to some. One tenet of Christianity that I have clung to intellectually is that we are to love one another. That has been elusive to me not knowing how to love who is different partly because the culture around me tends to criticize and even scorn instead of truly love. This book helped me to see pagans' otherness through my framework. It turns out to be an exercise to help me see my framework and begin to peer around it- to remove it so to speak- and to see otherliness without that framework. If I can do this, then I can learn about otherness as though its not so different. For people who seek to be loving to one another and to practice tolerance and understanding this is a good book to read.

Jack Hartjes says

A helpful description of Paganism from the inside and an honest treatment of the similarities and differences between Paganism and Christianity. I think at the very end of the book DiZerega was insufficiently critical of the stories of Christian wrongdoing in cases like the murder of Hypatia, the Inquisition, and witch hunts -- there was enough evil without the exaggerations and misinterpretations and biased interpretations. For the most part DiZerega is knowledgeable about and sympathetic to Christianity. Christians can learn from this book about their own tradition's often neglected earth-centered spirituality. A new insight for me was DiZerega's critique of making, as in "God made the world." Making implies a world that exists for some purpose other than its own sake. DiZerega prefers emanation or giving birth as descriptions of the relation of deity to the world. I'd say we need all three descriptions and maybe a couple more, like calling forth and letting be. They're all in the Bible, but Christians seem to focus exclusively on making, so DiZerega's criticism is right on.

Joslin says

I am very impressed with this book. DiZerega presents both sides of many of the common debates without anger or spite. In my experience, comparisons between paganism and Christianity typically lead to mud-slinging, spewed hatred and very little understanding or compassion on either side. I find that attitude makes things near impossible to have a reasonable conversation about these views. DiZerega's discussion is very

informative with a refreshingly respectful and calm perspective on a difficult topic. He is able to bring to light many of the similarities in the belief systems often overlooked and make many points of common history lost to supposition, such as the fact that the Inquisition and Burning Times had little to do with religion at all.

Overall, I highly recommend this book to anyone who genuinely wants to better understand and clear up many of the common misunderstandings between paganism and Christianity.

Kellyn Brooks says

I underlined the hell out of this book! Very insightful, intelligent, and fair representation of both faiths. Learned a lot and will revisit. :)

Allison says

I was really quite happy with the first part of the book where he simply describes what Pagan spirituality is. I've been reading a lot of books about it, but never really got a straight answer on the subject. Learning that there are certain similarities to all Pagans, yet it's completely normal for others not to believe everything others do was reassuring.

The two other parts of the book were also very intriguing. The chapter on Christian criticisms of Paganism made me realize just how much my Christian upbringing has affected my spiritual journey. The section on Wiccan/Pagan criticisms of Christianity was very good without completely attacking Christians. And his conclusion of the entire book was very well thought-out.

I'm very happy I picked up this book earlier in the year. It will help me to notice when I'm letting my own upbringing stand in the way of spiritual progress, and also helped me to look at Christians with a gentler, compassionate eye again.

Kharm says

A good modern book about relations between Pagans and Christians today.

Swankivy says

I wanted to see how the different arguments for both philosophies were compared with one another. This offers a Pagan perspective.

Molly says

In light of my recent spiritual explorations, this book is exactly the kind I'd been looking for. I stumbled across it in a used bookstore in St. Louis and noticed that it seemed to be discussing the pagan worldview in

a philosophical/theological way, rather than as a how-to manual for aspiring witches (which most of the books on Paganism I've seen so far have been).

That assessment proved correct. Gus diZerega presents an argument that Christianity can be interpreted alongside pagan traditions (and vice versa) as another valid way of connecting with the Divine. He starts with an explanation of how most Pagans view the world: as a living place full of change and variety, and this change and variety is what makes the world good and beautiful. Because of this infinite variety, we all have differences in what religions resonate best with us.

He goes on to address some common criticisms of Paganism that Christians may present. I found his explanations satisfying, and it helped my budding religious-studies brain see ways to reframe arguments I'd heard from the Christian perspective only. diZerega makes the point that we take many ideas about the universe for granted because the Christian worldview is so integrated into the Western one, and that there are in fact other ways of seeing things.

diZerega also spends a few chapters discussing his own criticisms of common Christian ideas -- not that they are wrong (*per se*), but that they are not the only correct interpretation. I appreciated these chapters, but I do not think they would hold up against a serious apologetics master. And they don't have to; I don't think any devout Christian reading this book would be swayed to deconvert. Nor should they! From the beginning, diZerega's aim has been clear: to promote understanding between two historically contentious religions, and make a case for harmonious coexistence. By the end, I find he's achieved this point happily, with a tenderness for Christian spiritual experiences that was unexpected and touching.

K Kriesel says

I appreciate this book. diZerega works as a mediator between generalized Paganism and generalized Christianity in terms of both philosophy and practice. This isn't the book I had been expecting, and I'm actually glad about that.
