



The Middle Eastern Jesus: Nadim Nassar

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Although Jesus lived his entire life in the culture of the Middle East, the image of Jesus held by Christians in the West may be shaped and influenced by Western culture and assumptions, perhaps even subconsciously, rather than those of the Middle East. Reading the Bible through the lens of Western, even British, social norms and understanding means that we may miss something of the richness of the text and its meaning. This thoughtful book is an engaging corrective to any such tendency.

The author is a Church of England priest who was born and raised in Syria. Drawing on his heritage and his deep and topical knowledge not only of Syria but the wider Middle East culture, he shows how profoundly the life and ministry of Jesus was rooted in and shaped by that culture, whether Jesus was reflecting or opposing it.

In this way, he opens a window on the world that shaped Jesus. This helps the reader to encounter Jesus not only as a figure or focus of faith but as a living presence in a region so desperately and dangerously torn and troubled today

With his native Middle East perspective, Nassar explores stories and parables from the Bible including those featuring themes such as family and kinship, women and children, Jesus' meetings with outsiders, and tensions with religious authorities, to show perspectives and meanings that may otherwise be hidden.

Crucially, Nassar reflects throughout the book on how the Christian narrative still offers the true message of hope for the region, marked as it is still, by violence, political and religious turmoil, instability and profound human suffering.

In places he is frankly critical of the current religious leadership of all the Abrahamic faiths in the region, thus including Christianity, but his keenly felt Christian concern for its people, their families and communities, is clear.

This 152-page paperback is by no means an academic text. It is written in an accessible, down to earth, almost conversational style. Above all, this is a personal, polemical and impassioned book by a priest whose reflections are knowledgeable and deeply felt.

Peter Wright