

How a tweet turned Eric Metaxas into my brother

## **It's all fun and games until your political enemy calls you "dear sister in Christ."**

by [Elizabeth Palmer](#)

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I have to admit that when I realized I'd learned a theological lesson from the foreword Eric Metaxas wrote to a book about the faith of Donald Trump, I was annoyed. Not by the lesson, [which was spot-on](#), but by the identity of its messenger.

I'm a mainline Protestant pastor with progressive political views. It's not like I spend every day thinking about Metaxas, but when I do, I feel something between lament and anger. He's a person of faith who knows how to write compellingly for a popular audience about things that really matter. That's why I sent his [biography of Martin Luther](#) to a Famous Luther Scholar, who agreed to review it for our magazine in time for the 2017 Fall Books issue, which would coincide with the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the

Reformation. But in my view, using your moral authority and media access to promulgate faith-related arguments telling Christians they should support President Trump is unconscionable, a capitulation to culture wars fabricated decades ago by people whose greed for power overwhelmed their ability to distinguish between Caesar and God.

As I awaited the review of Metaxas's book (and heard him make repeated public statements about why Christians should support Trump), I secretly hoped that Famous Luther Scholar would write a critical review—as a scholar had done in our pages for [Metaxas's biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#). But the deadline passed, and the review never materialized. When I reached out to Famous Luther Scholar, I learned that the book had never arrived. It had been lost by the U.S. Postal Service. (Insert joke here about liberal being foiled by Big Government, who can't even be trusted to ensure delivery of a small package.) I hypothesized with Famous Luther Scholar that maybe the package was [locked up somewhere in a storage unit](#), adding that some days I wished Metaxas were locked up in a storage unit (“with food and water, of course,” I added charitably). Ha ha ha. Don't forget to slap your knee. Famous Luther Scholar wisely ignored my wisecrack.

It's so easy to dehumanize the people we regard as our enemies. And it's so destructive. When famous people like [Trump](#), [Roseanne](#), and [Samantha Bee](#) dehumanize others, we rightly call them out. People on both sides of the political spectrum oppose policies that they believe dehumanize others, from anti-abortion activists to anti-death-penalty activists. But when it comes to the tribal divisions that characterize the United States these days, it has become entirely acceptable to speak of our opponents as less than human. I'm as guilty of this as anyone.

So I have to admit that when Metaxas addressed me as “[dear sister in Christ](#)” on his Twitter feed, my first response was to feel irritated. My second response was guilt over feeling that way. My third response was annoyance, because I realized that once again, Metaxas had shown me the beam in my eye. My fourth response was guilt over the pettiness of my annoyance. My fifth response was a sense of *gravitas* as the theological reality set in: this person who I'd relished regarding as an enemy all these months is, in fact, my brother in Christ.

Eric Metaxas is my brother. Full stop. He's not just human, which—bad jokes aside—I've known all along. He's my sibling, bound to me by our mutual faith in the one in whom “there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor

female” (Gal. 3:28). If God’s grace is irresistible (which I’d like to believe it is), so too is my relationship with my brother in Christ, Eric Metaxas. And this is good news. It’s beautiful, even. A foretaste of the feast to come.

But it’s also painful, because it means shifting how I think of all sorts of people in the world. It’s one thing to say that *God* loves my enemies the way I love my own children. It’s another thing entirely to realize that God calls *me* to love my enemies as brothers and sisters. It means I don’t get to be as tribal as I’d like, as judgmental as I’d like, as self-righteous as I’d like. But love covers a multitude of sins, and so I’m trying to live into that calling the best I can.

To Eric, my brother in Christ, I have three things to say. (1) The two of us will never agree about Trump or a whole host of other issues, theological and political. But you already know that. (2) I pray that you will have a Flannery O’Connor-like revelation, the kind that slowly but effectively burns away our most grotesque qualities as the capaciousness of God’s grace settles upon us. I pray the same for myself. (3) Thank you for giving me a glimpse—even if transient—of the ways partisan divisions are transcended by the one whose life, death, and resurrection gives us our life.