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Gonzalez' "Knowing our faith: A guide for believers, seekers, and Christian communities" (book review)

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Book Reviews



González, J. L. (2019). *Knowing our faith: A guide for believers, seekers, and Christian communities*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 156pp. \$16.00. ISBN 9780802877062

Justo L. González is a retired United Methodist minister and professor of historical theology. His most recent book, *Knowing Our Faith*, is an introduction to basic Christian theology, he writes, “We will not be dealing with complex matters or abstract speculation. Instead, we will be dealing with what is and has been the faith of the Cristian church through the centuries, and why those doctrines are important for us today” (p. 5). The various doctrines discussed in this book are not meant to be merely theoretical teachings, rather each chapter is intended to affect the way the reader lives in community with others (p. 147). González does provide a particular order in, *Knowing Our Faith*, as it begins with the doctrine of God and creation and finishes with a discussion concerning Christian hope with the doctrine of eschatology (p. 147).

Knowing Our Faith was originally published in Spanish under the auspices of the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico with wide interdenominational support (p. x). The purpose of the book grew from a concern “that there is a need for introductory material to the Christian faith,” which pays special attention to the various denominations and theological positions generally held by “the church catholic” (p. ix). González observes that “in many of the churches that are growing most rapidly – little is said about the significance of the cross, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ” (p. 3).

The agenda of this book is to define and discuss “the main doctrines of Christianity. Its purpose is not to make us all agree on everything. Rather, its goal is to help us to understand the common faith of all these various people who dwell together on this high plateau of faith where God has placed us through the work of the Holy Spirit” (p. 13). In support of this agenda, González draws upon the *Proslogion* written by Anselm of Canterbury. In this work, Anselm writes, “I do not intend, Lord, to reach thy sublime height, for my mind is nothing when compared to it. But I do wish in some way to understand your truth, the truth that my heart believes and loves. I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but rather believe in order to understand” (p. xii) Therefore, González asserts that “I write to you because you share the faith by which I live. I write so that you may share my joy in seeking to understand

better this truth that our hearts believe and love” (p. xiii). In addition, this book is meant to be read in community, because the “Christian faith is always lived in community” (p. xiii). For this reason, at the end of each chapter, González provides a series of discussion questions, so that the reader might engage theologically with others within the church (p. xiv).

Due to the introductory nature of the book, there are no endnotes, footnotes, or bibliography included. This book is clearly written and achieves its ecumenical goal. It would serve as a helpful resource for anyone interested in learning the basics of theology, especially in those contexts where the audience is broadly evangelical as this book represents a helpful irenic tone toward other traditions within Christianity.

Reviewer

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