

KIRKUS REVIEWS

TITLE INFORMATION

GETTING RIGHT WITH GOD

Joseph C. Way

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BOOK REVIEW

A veteran pastor reflects on the tenets of his faith.

Throughout his decades as a chaplain with the Air Force and as a pastor, Way remained unwaveringly “committed to the truth,” unafraid to stand up against members of his own congregation. In 1963, for instance, he joined 27 other United Methodist ministers in Mississippi to denounce segregation, for which he was punished by being denied a pastoral appointment. Now, over a half-century later and in response to the prods of friends to write an extensive description of his theology, Way offers readers an overview of his key doctrinal beliefs. He covers an array of topics central to Christianity—the nature of God, questions regarding the origins and inerrancy of Scripture, and the divinity of Jesus. Intended for lay readers, Way’s guide avoids the esoteric jargon typical of most work in the genre of systematic theology. With rhetorical skills honed through his years in ministry, the author breaks down complicated doctrine with an accessible writing style that is often accompanied by analogies and didactic stories. He is also careful to emphasize that Christianity is as much doing the right thing as believing the right thing, reminding readers, for instance, to avoid turning Jesus into “a Mr. Fix-It to lessen our responsibility.” On idolatry, he notes that “our god is the primary presupposition from which we operate,” and he warns fellow Christians to be aware of anything (including political ideologies) that “controls” their lives. The book isn’t afraid to question Christian orthodoxy, particularly beliefs often held by fundamentalist evangelicals regarding salvation (Way rejects the Baptist trope “once saved, always saved”) and a “Second Coming of Jesus” accompanied by a “cataclysmic” Judgment Day. Though theological scholars will be wary of the book’s lack of citations and bibliographic engagement with relevant literature, and non-mainline Protestants will disagree with some of his positions, Way succeeds in offering readers an approachable introduction to Christian doctrine that refreshingly recenters the Christian duty to love one’s neighbor.

A warm, welcoming introduction to the basics of Christianity.