

Getting Right with God

Joseph C. Way

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The thoughtful religious text Getting Right with God issues reasonable encouragements to Christians to follow the example of Jesus.

In his progressive religious book *Getting Right with God*, Joseph C. Way takes a radical, logical, God-centered approach to Christian faith and practice.

Promising to spark discomfort and controversy, the book takes the stance that God is love and only acts from love and in accordance with the unbreakable laws of the universe. Centuries' worth of religious beliefs and practices are dissected in search of ways that some are contrary to this divine nature. Comparisons to Jesus's teachings are made as well.

Here, Jesus is treated as a down-to-earth human being so in love with God that he became an instrument of healing and grace. Such arguments present a challenge to contemporary Christians, encouraging them to apply logic to their beliefs. Doing so, the book says, will be empowering for those who hope to act as Jesus's followers.

The book contrasts its very human image of Jesus, infused with the love of God and marked by still awe-inspiring acts, with more canonical understandings of Jesus, as with Paul's notion of Jesus as God in the flesh, born to be a blood sacrifice to redeem humanity. And it further challenges other major doctrines as irrational, including the idea of a virgin birth, the need to appease God via sacrifice, and the belief that saying certain words can provide eternal salvation. Indeed, it attributes contemporary declines in church membership to the expected rigidity of belief in such doctrines.

The book also makes an effort to reconstitute words and concepts whose meanings have been dulled by overuse, suggesting its own illuminating redefinitions. Here, the directive to "love" others does not imply the need to work up loving emotions, but rather a much more actionable "wanting others to have what they need to be healthy, happy, and whole" and being willing to give something up for that to happen. Also redefined are terms like "worship" (here, "a way of life in response to a god") and "truth" (here, God's inescapable laws that govern the universe and life itself). The text is marred, though, by some awkward sentences, missing words and letters, and repetitive passages.

Encouraging believers to better adopt Jesus's vision for a God-centered, rational, heart-based, and actionable faith, the thoughtful religious text *Getting Right with God* issues reasonable encouragements to Christians to love God above all else—and to love others as oneself.

KRISTINE MORRIS (November 9, 2023)

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