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Knowing Christianity

J.I. Packer
InterVarsity Press (August 1999)
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The author's concept of the Christianity he wants the reader to "know" is clear from the beginning. Titled to draw those who know the author from his bestseller, Knowing God, he capitalizes on language that is conservative and evangelical. Packer sets the stage with the following statement of purpose: "The book centers on fundamentals of faith and action on which, as I see it, all believers need to be very clear and strong at the present time…It is not a technical work, but a plain and practical one no footnotes, therefore, no academic arguments and no denomination sidetracks."

Though he had earlier stated that this work would not provoke or encourage academic arguments of denominational sidetracks, he begins chapter one with the controversial figure of John Calvin and his writings. Packer presents a partial explanation of Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion.

Though not new in its viewpoint of conservative evangelical Christianity, for those who are looking for a concise presentation of how this specific body of Christianity views its theology, this book will be a treasure.

For anyone seeking to understand a Calvinist theology of God, revelation and authority (literal, verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, final and only authority for faith and practice), prayer, cristology, redemption, worship, spiritual growth, heaven and hell, the church: its place and authority, and the Charismatic Renewal, they will find it described in this book.

Packer argues against universalism and defends Christianity as the "only saving religion" out of all the religions in the world. His chapter on Christian Citizenship is less controversial and has good suggestions for political and social action.

The great value of this book is that it has the arguments and literal Scriptural explanations of conservative evangelical thought from one of their beloved and respected authors in a concise, well laid-out format, easy to use and clear in its presentation. As such it is representative of the whole, and will be especially useful to those seeking this information.
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