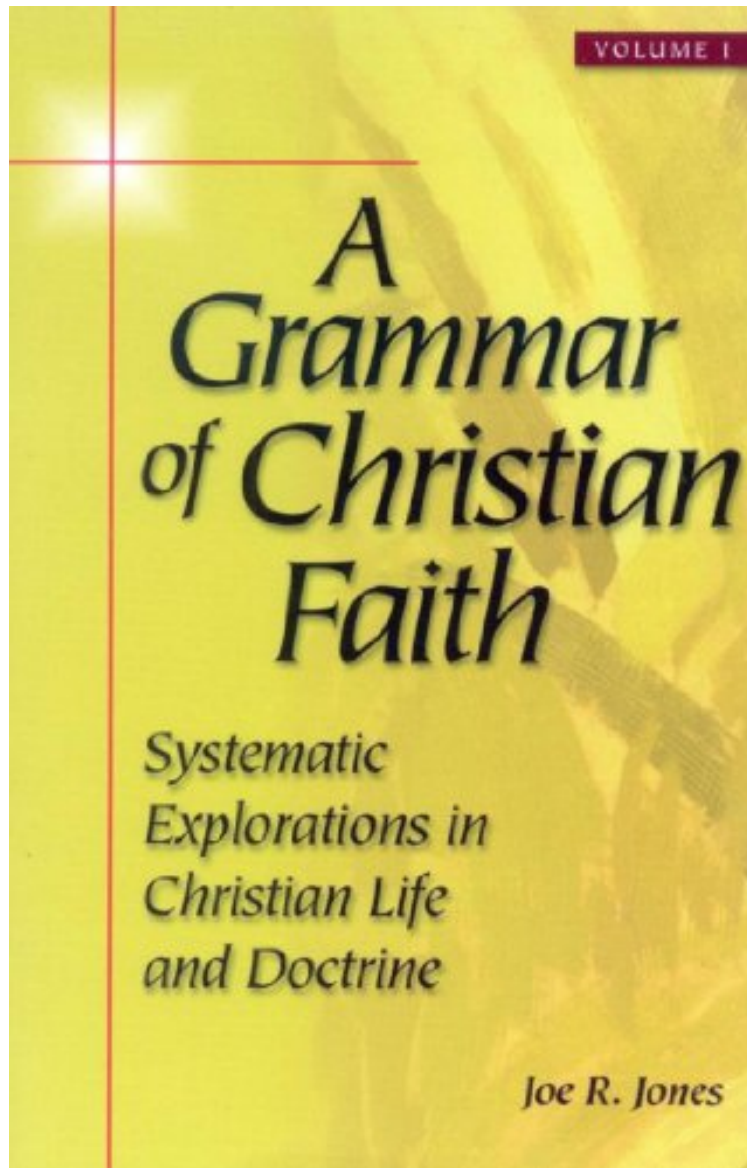


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A Grammar of Christian Faith: Systematic Explorations in Christian Life and Doctrine (Celebrating the Faith: Explorations in Latino Spirituality and Theology)

Von Joe R. Jones

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Von Joe R. Jones : A Grammar of Christian Faith: Systematic Explorations in Christian Life and Doctrine (Celebrating the Faith: Explorations in Latino Spirituality and Theology) before purchasing it in order to gage

whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *A Grammar of Christian Faith: Systematic Explorations in Christian Life and Doctrine* (Celebrating the Faith: Explorations in Latino Spirituality and Theology):

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Meaning what you say... Von FrKurt MessickI have been acquainted with the book 'A Grammar of Christian Faith: Systematic Explorations in Christian Life and Doctrine' by Joe R. Jones, Professor Emeritus of Theology, since long before it was in print. I have seen it in successive stages of outline and narrative construction, and have heard much of the material presented in lecture form, when I had Jones as my systematic theology professor several years ago. Jones devoted his career to administration and teaching, with the greater emphasis on the latter. He is not a widely published author, providing drafts and notes to students in his classes; it was not until his retirement that he found the time to put together the material into the form published here by Rowman Littlefield. This book consists largely of material derived from Jones' tenure as a systematic theology professor at Christian Theological Seminary. This began in outline form in the early 1990s, growing in shape and narrative over the course of ten years as Jones continued to teach the year-long course in systematic theology. There was a brief debate over whether to include the words 'systematic theology' in the title; I was reminded (and think I mentioned to Joe) that Stephen Hawking's publishers informed him that for each equation he put in the text, he would lose half his readers. How much more true would that be for putting the linguistic equivalent of an equation -- a phrase like systematic theology - on the cover? Still, the word 'systematic' did make it into the secondary title, and if one knows Joe Jones, one knows that this is a word that is fitting of his life and work. So, why is this called 'A Grammar of Christian Faith'? Grammar consists of many elements, including syntax, semantics, pragmatics, that form together into locutions. Grammar can be of a superficial kind or a deep kind. Grammar is important in being able to construct meaningful statements or locutions which have coherence and consistency and the kind of luminous meaning that makes something true not just in the intellectual sense, but in the heart-felt faithful sense. Joe Jones states that a true understanding of God cannot come from a dispassionate study of theology, but rather only from a standpoint of *fides quaerens intellectum* -- faith seeking understanding, or, as Daniel Migliore puts it -- inquiry yoked to prayer. Grammar is crucial because without a firm understanding of the way in which language is used, and the limitation of language (and all human language is, by the fact that it is a human construct, limited), and the self-referential nature of language, nothing could be clearly stated. I am reminded of an interchange between the last emperor of China (when he was a boy) upon being introduced to his new Western tutor, who had come from Scotland -- the emperor asked, 'If you are from Scotland, where is your skirt? Don't all the men in your country wear skirts?' 'No, we do not wear skirts in Scotland, we wear kilts. A matter of words, perhaps, but words are important,' was the reply, which prompted the next question -- 'Why are words important, Mr. Johnson?' 'Because, your majesty,' Johnson responded, 'if you cannot say what you mean, you cannot mean what you say.' Understanding requires both the communicator and the reader/listener to understand the how, what and why of the words being used. Applying this grammar to the task of critically reflecting upon the authority of Holy Scripture, there are different issues which arise, including the meaning of authority, the idea and meaning of 'Holy', the use of the word Scripture and that body of work to which it refers (as distinguished from those works excluded from the body of work known as Scripture). Other reflections This book consists of two volumes, 748 pages of fairly heavy reading. This makes perfect sense, as Jones is perhaps most heavily influenced by the German theologian Karl Barth, who was himself (as were most high German theologians) given to producing lengthy volumes of dense text. Jones' book is not for the beginning student of theology. Yet, it is accessible to the disciplined and determined reader. While Barth is the dominant influence on Jones' work, it is not the only influence. Nor is Jones a lock-step Barthian by any means. Jones took to heart the issues of his fellow Disciples theologian Clark Williamson in not permitting his theology to make negative-exclusive claims (making the 'Good News' of Jesus become 'Bad News' for all non-Christians), particularly in the area of supersessionism, the idea the Judaism is somehow a lesser or imperfect or defunct covenant now rendered unnecessary by Christianity. Jones ties in and responds/reacts to ideas from philosophy (perhaps most especially Kierkegaard), church history, biblical studies, ethics and other schools of theology (Tillich figures in here) to round out his concepts, which are presented in logical order. I know that Jones was continually rethinking the order of presentation of the topics in his systematic approach, and arguments could be made that some things could be more useful presented earlier. For example, Jones considered moving the discussion of 'Christian Hope and Eschatology' nearer the beginning of the text, rather than placing it at the end, for while it is a conclusion of sorts, it can also be a beginning. I recommend this book to several particular audiences: students who knew and had Joe Jones as a professor, for this serves as an excellent encapsulation of his theological thought; those who study Karl Barth; Disciples and ecumenically-minded Christians who seek a broadly inclusive theology; and any who seek a logical system to their theological thought. To master this is to keep from falling into disarray.

Kurzbeschreibung *A Grammar of Christian Faith* is a two-volume set that aims to confront the widespread disarray in

the language and practices of Christian faith today. As a 'grammar,' it explains how Christian faith provides special ways of speaking and acting that make sense of human life by giving it meaning, practicality, and hope. It advances the thesis that learning how to speak Christian language in worship and life is crucial to learning how to be a Christian. Rather than supposing that Christian language and theology need continual updating in order to be relevant to the world, Jones urges the church to recover anew how Christian concepts and understanding are intended to form Christian life in all its rich depths. Construing theology as confessional theology in the context of the church, Jones understands the church as that liberative and redemptive community called into being by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to witness in word and deed the triune God for the benefit of the world. The full range of doctrinal themes that are deemed essential to the witness of the church are explored, including clear explanations of why they are essential and how they are to be understood. In pursuit of a truthful and beneficial witness of the church, the work centers on a trinitarian understanding of God, in which God freely and lovingly interacts with the world as Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer. The work throughout affirms the belief that the gracious triune God is the Ultimate Companion who will redeem all creation.

Pressestimmen I believe that *A Grammar of Christian Faith* is destined, along with the work of Jenson and McClendon, to be the book that signals the recovery of the Christian voice in modernity. Deeply schooled by Wittgenstein, the Church Fathers, Barth, and Yoder, Jones' presentation of Christian convictions is as elegant as it is profound. Anyone committed to serious theological reflection must read this book.--Stanley Hauerwas, professor of theological ethics at the Divinity School of Duke University

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