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The Mestizo Augustine: Book Review

I. Introduction

The book "The Mestizo Augustine" was written in 2016 by Justo González and is about Augustine, a young man who was born a mestizo. His father was Roman and his mother was of African descent. Augustine was born and raised in the Roman province of Numidia during the rule of the Roman Empire in Africa. The author takes us readers through Augustine's life, from his search for the right faith to his writings. In his search for the right religion, he deals with different worldviews, uses his cultural background to explore Christianity, and eventually converts to Christianity. The book is important from a theological perspective because Augustine has much to teach the church about multicultural backgrounds. We are subordinate to Jesus Christ, and it does not matter where we come from, as long as we only believe. However, based on this statement, we can ask questions like, "Does faith depend on origin?" According to this, many thoughts and ideas are still valid today and make up a large part of human existence.

II. Summary

First, the author begins the book in the introduction with a lot of room for interpretation, which immediately captivates us as readers. As the book progresses, Gonzales shows us many different religious worldviews and compares them to his final religious image, Christianity.

The book is basically divided into eight chapters. The first two chapters are about the life of Augustine. In the following two chapters, we see Augustine's faith development as he begins to question his own faith image. In chapters five through seven, the author deals with the shepherding of the Donatists, Pelagians and pagans. The goal of these chapters is to show us why Augustine acted the way he did, what religions were all about, and why he advocated Christianity. The last section of the book explains how to approach Augustine's life.

It is an example of how we can find the right faith even in the multicultural world. Augustine used cultural influences to bring Christianity closer to people and to refute other religions. Accordingly, the book was written to make us humans think. The message of Mestizaje is still very relevant today, as Christianity is spreading more and more and origin has no influence on faith.

III. Critique

The book succeeds well in portraying a man's faith journey, which has ups and downs and, in the end, brings Augustine to his destination "When he was finally converted, this was partly a conversion to ... Christianity." (p. 13)

The author has succeeded well in portraying Augustine as a mestizo. In addition, the book is easy for the reader to understand. Gonzales manages to structure the book well, separating Augustine's life and his journey of faith. Augustine's cultural background plays a major role, as he has to carry the heritage of a Roman on the one hand and the heritage of an African on the other. Since Gonzales makes it clear right at the beginning what is at stake, the reader can better empathize: "I began to suspect that Augustine's restlessness was due not only to his remoteness from God, as he tells us in his Confessions, but also to the inner struggles of a

man in whom two cultures, two origins, two worldviews collided and intermingled-in short, of a mestizo" (p. 6).

Another important point is that Gonzales gives us insight into the proper approach to pastoral care for people who are far from God, which takes up a third of the book. It is important to protect one's religion from false or erroneous religions. On page 72, Gonzales gives us a good example of how Augustine tries to do this: "We see Augustine as a shepherd who tries to feed his flock, instructing and correcting them when necessary." The clear pastoral insights make it easy for the reader to gain new insights into multicultural backgrounds.

The author also does a good job of presenting Augustine's religious development. Augustine's religious path crossed Manichaeism, the Donatists, the Pelagians and the Pagans. With the Pelagians, he was confronted with the laws of God and tried to explain things. Instead of focusing on guidelines, Augustine reflected on his African roots and related to the personal: "The virtue and rank of an individual depend on the decision of the head-and if that head no longer has the strength to render obedience to his authority, he is no longer the head" (p. 121). Through passages like this, Gonzales shows the good in Mestizo.

As promised in the introduction, Gonzales fails to contrast Latin American culture "what I intend to explore here is the manner in which the perspectives and insights of Latino theology...may help us to see and rediscover in Augustine." (p. 10) At the beginning of the book, he goes into detail about mestizaje, and the history associated with it, as it is a Latin American term that refers to miscegenation. However, as the book progresses, this is completely lost, and one finds oneself reading a biography of Augustine.

IV. Conclusion

The author manages to understand important questions of the doctrine of cultural diversity with the help of Augustine. It is not a matter of where someone comes from or what their ancestors are. Rather, faith is the main issue and should be viewed as such by people. No one is better or worse than the person next to him. What the book also shows is that in a sense we are all mestizos. Christianity is spreading and getting influence from every region of the world.

Accordingly, I think this book is suitable for everyone. As we live in a time when cultures are mixing in every country, more and more people are also finding themselves in a new life. Thus, this is a sign for us Christians to look out for people like Augustine and help them to walk the right path. We must pass on God's word and help the Mestizians like Augustine.