

THE ONE: IN DEFENSE OF GOD – By J. Dan Gill

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A Review by Cheryl Macy Ross

Summary of Review: This reviewer recommends getting this book as a thoughtful devotional for oneself and then sharing it with a seeking friend or college student. One can read a chapter or a few pages and then reflect on it the rest of the day. Reading more of the Psalms after reading Gill's book brought alive the preciousness of the many words about giving God the glory due to him alone! Even the book's notes are interesting and helpfully positioned at the end of each chapter to answer questions that may have arisen during the reading of the previous pages.

This is a book about seeking God, exactly who He is and what that means for each one of us.

The author asks “Why is it important to *know* God?” It seems to be “His” desire that we know Him. It is of consequence to us to seek and to know God because only by knowing our Creator can we understand who we are and his purposes for us. But do we matter to Him? Does He care? Yes!

With no apology Gill directs us to learn of the God of the Bible from the Bible. “Who can write a book about God? The definitive book about him has already been written. It is the Bible,” he writes.

With a refreshing, conversational tone he considers the plaint of skeptics and atheists, the struggle of pain and suffering. He points out that these issues do not actually address the existence of God but rather the very nature of God. He asks does it have to be faith *or* reason – God *or* science? He proposes that the right answer is “both.”

As a young college student, the author attended a presentation by Madalyn Murray O’Hair, the self-declared atheist best known for her successful lawsuit to exclude official Bible readings from public schools. He came away on an open-minded quest to research the writings of other skeptics and atheists. He concluded that these doubters were not clear-thinking, great minds of the century, but rather anti-religious, often angry, troubled persons using questionable logic.

Is knowing about God and believing in God the same thing? Why is it important to actually *believe* in God? Gill surprises us with assurance that people believed in God for millennia before science was around to prove it one way or the other. When atheists complain that it is empirically not possible to *disprove* the existence of God, Gill points out that “In the light of scientific method, atheism is an unproven theory.”

He proposes that faith, after all, is an informed, optimistic choice. “To believe, to have faith, is more than to assent that God is. It is the decision to trust in, adhere to and rely on him. . . It is amazing that the God of the Bible made himself known to people in ancient times. To know God did not require

waiting on scientific advances. Trusting in him was possible for Abram who lived centuries before Christ and millennia before us.”

That same Abrahamic faith in God is available today and leads the way for us directly all the way through the New Testament, especially in Galatians 3, to the end. Gill uses many Bible instances of God’s wisdom and his plan for his people. “It is God who calls us to something greater than ourselves.”

There are many who are off track, fearful of “faith,” still looking for God, but in all the wrong places: Handmade idols are worshipped, many gods are adored, an imagined creator god uninvolved with his creation is believed in, pantheism or everything is nature is revered, and New Age propositions of “many realities,” “all are one,” “a life force” and the “cosmic unknown” are accepted today. But, the author tells us, all roads do not lead to the one true God.

And then God whispers in Jeremiah 29:13, “You will seek me and find me *if* you seek me with all of your heart.”

And this is some of what Gill finds about God throughout the Bible:

- The God of the universe is the Shepherd of men – Psalm 23:1-3

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside still waters,
He restores me.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for the sake of his name.*

- The “he” in the above verses shows God as an individual, not an “it” or a “they” or a “cosmic unknown.” He is our Father and he cares for us.
- His name is YHWH and appears as LORD (all caps) 6,823+- times in the Hebrew Bible – Psalm 83:18 – “Let them know that you, whose name is the LORD— that you alone are the Most High over all the earth.”
- He is a God who seeks relationships, our love, our obedience, our praise, our fear and awe. Isaiah 63:16 - “For surely you are our Father.” Galatians 3:26, 29 - “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. . . If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”
- The Bible book of Psalms sings of His love, His faithfulness, His righteousness, His mercy and compassion, and He is the God of truth. Psalm 31:5 – “I entrust my spirit into your hand; you have redeemed me, O LORD, God of truth.”
- There is no need for any other God – Isaiah 40:28, 29

*Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.
He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.*

- He makes covenants to seal relationships – with Abraham, Noah, King David, the Messiah, us!
- He is The One – the only one true God – Isaiah 46:9

*For I am God, and there is no one else;
I am God, and there is no one like me.*

- Gill writes with feeling about “Why I am a Christian Monotarian”— Deut. 6:4. And that God is not a Trinitarian:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

I heard the author speak persuasively on this subject in person. In this book, he explores the Christian dilemma of attempting to know and love God through the difficulties of “a hard-to-understand, multi-person theology” which he tells us was “developed among Gentile Christians after the Bible was written.” Gill says that many Christians today love God “not because of the complicated and confusing Doctrine of the Trinity, but rather in spite of it.” He encourages Christians to return to the simplicity of the Bible, the pre-Gentile “first faith” of Jesus and his early followers, and to embrace his creed which declares God as only one person. This is good reading for any Christian.

Gill tells us that “Today, many Trinitarian scholars acknowledge that the Trinity is a post-biblical concept”, and he freely shares quotes from such scholars. By this he means that the Trinity is not found in the Bible, but rather that it crept into the church through Greek philosophy and particularly 3rd-4th century church councils. An extensive bibliography is included for further study on this and other topics at the end of the book.

With winsome words, the author discusses how God works in the world: through His spirit, through His word, and through His agents such as angel messengers, prophets of old, deliverers of His people – all of which embrace God’s “wisdom and strength, His counsel and understanding” (Job 12:13).

Gill treats the personification of God’s powerful spirit, His influential word, His mighty wisdom in the scriptures, and prompts a summary discussion ranging throughout the Bible on the impact of all these things. He tells us that these wonderful characteristics of God emanate from Him and actually are him – not separate persons from the Father himself. With this, Gill encourages a fresh look at the “logos” in John chapter 1.

The author goes on to address the problem of what to think about so many people believing errors about God. Or, as he says it, how sad it is for people to believe that “God’s spirit and/or His Messiah are to be worshipped as divine persons in addition to the Father. Yet God himself insists that he is only one individual! Has God misled us?” If he is NOT the only one who is God, then he is found to be untrue. Gill suggests that we need to put God in the witness stand to hear his testimony and to resolve this matter. Only the reader can evaluate the four questions to his own satisfaction in the “God on Trial” chapter of the book.

If Jesus is not God, then exactly who is Jesus? *John 4:25,26* – “The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I, the one speaking to you – I am he.’” And again, *John 20:31* – “These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

The author clearly makes what he calls “the Jewish connection” and reminds us that in the New Testament language of Greek, *Christos* is the equivalent of the Hebrew for Messiah – the “anointed one” or “chosen one.” And this chosen one is the very Son of God.

But, according to scripture, there is *more* to the broad, sweeping authority and work of Jesus. He is also the LORD's king. He will be a covenant for the people and a light to the nations, he will be a prophet like Moses, he will be God's shepherd, he will bear the sins of many, he will be second only to God and the author carefully walks through the many scriptures in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament where Jesus' relationship to God is set out.

And let us be perfectly clear: "The One God speaks! He tells of his glory as sovereign God. . . Let us give him *all* of the glory due God Almighty. He has given glory to his angels. He has given glory to men. From the beginning, he had a great glory in store to give his Messiah after he is born. However, the glory of actually being the God of the universe he shares with no one." *Isaiah 48:11* – "*For my own sake, I will do this. How can I let my name be dishonored? I will not yield my glory to another.*"

Gill's shining conclusion reminds us that Christians today often recite creeds which were devised by post-biblical Gentile Christians centuries after Christ. Jesus himself, however, had a very different teaching. When asked by a Jewish man about which was the most important of all the commandments, Jesus responded with these great words which declare God to be only one individual:

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one." – Mark 12:29

The author proposes to us that those words which were spoken by Jesus himself represent the ultimate creed about God! Gill believes that we should abandon all others, and embrace the Jesus' creed about God as our creed today! It is Jesus who declares his Father to be "the only true God" and that he, Jesus, is not God, but rather the Christ (John 17:3).