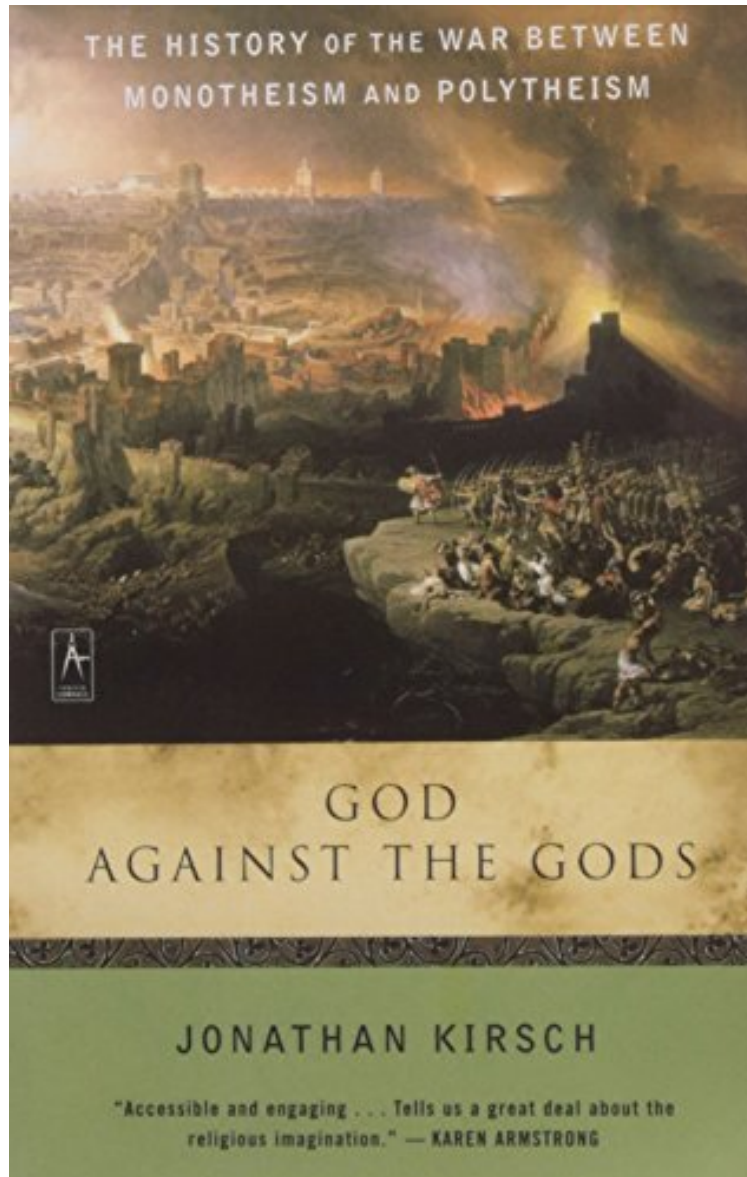


[Download pdf] God Against The Gods: The History of the War Between Monotheism and Polytheism

God Against The Gods: The History of the War Between Monotheism and Polytheism

Jonathan Kirsch

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Jonathan Kirsch : God Against The Gods: The History of the War Between Monotheism and Polytheism before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised God Against The Gods: The History of the War Between Monotheism and Polytheism:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A Short History of Spiritual Intolerance By ImmerGod Against the Gods Jonathan Kirsch has provided a short, but powerful historical look at the rise of monotheism and the fall of polytheism, that depending on one's perspective, might lead one to believe we would be better off with a tolerant form of polytheism versus the forms of monotheism that are the movers and shakers of continued unrest in the world. His book spans the time of the ancient Hebrews and Egyptians, the classical world of the Greeks, and through the immediate heirs of Constantine. Kirsch makes it clear that both forms of worship have held their periods of persecution, which continue to this day. Most of these persecutions are/were perpetrated by extremes, yet polytheism has tended to be the most tolerant of any of the forms of worship of the God(s). An interesting fact from Kirsch is that the Christians were the first accused as being atheists. The Romans appeared to be excepting of the Christian God, and were willing to accept the Christian God into their legion of gods, but could not understand why the Christians would not accept the existence of the Roman gods, thus, the derivation of the term atheists. The Emperor Nero capitalized on this as an excuse for the first of the Christian persecutions. Much time is spent on the schisms and heresies within the Christian philosophies, in particular the Arian controversy. Were God and Jesus of the same stuff, or were they of different stuff. It is a bitter irony that Christians persecuted each other because of this, and other dogmatic differences in worshipping their one God. My summary will include a few quotes from the book. Begin now to cast aside the causes of that disunity which has existed among you, for by so doing, you will with one stroke be acting in the manner most pleasing to the Supreme God, and confer an extraordinary favor upon me. - Constantine to the bishops at the council of Nicaea. No wild beasts are so hostile to mankind, Ammianus famously remarked, as are most of the Christians in their savagery to one another. From Kirsch: Indeed, all the excesses of religious extremism in the modern world can be seen as the latest manifestation of a dangerous tradition that began in the distant past. Kirsch's book is well documented, relying on an extensive bibliography, that includes many Biblical quotations. Perhaps someone more experienced with Biblical interpretations may find ground for disagreement with Kirsch, but this is the crux of the problem with Christian monotheism. Which interpretation, if any, is correct? Would we not all be better served with toleration for how one, if they chose, to worship (a) particular deity or deities? If Kirsch's book can serve one productive purpose, it can serve as a foot in the door, to promote tolerance among those who choose to worship. One wonders if humanity will exit existence with a whimper, or will our ultimate demise be upon one another's swords as we declare God is on our side. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must read for anyone interested in Theology. The ... By Gregulus A must read for anyone interested in Theology. The perspective seems to be highly objective. This is refreshing compared to the mostly whitewashed, slandered, changed and/or completely falsified information coming from the perspective of either of the 3 Abrahamic (monotheistic) religious perspectives. 7 stars out of 5 if I could... 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A new view of paganism By Sharon Robideaux Paganism is a misunderstood and much-maligned belief system. In antiquity, it was the pagans who tolerantly allowed worship of any and all gods. Monotheists, in contrast, have engaged in intolerance and persecution of even other Monotheists. This is the premise of this book, one which the author successfully presents and argues.

"Lively points out that the conflict between the worship of many gods and the worship of one true god never disappeared." Publishers Weekly "Jonathan Kirsch has written another blockbuster about the Bible and its world." David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief of the Anchor Bible Project "Kirsch tackles the central issue bedeviling the world today - religious intolerance. A timely book, well-written and researched." Leonard Shlain, author of *The Alphabet and the Goddess and Sex, Time and Power* "An intriguing read." The Jerusalem Report "A timely tale about the importance of religious tolerance in today's world." San Francisco Chronicle "Kirsch is a fine storyteller with a flair for rendering ancient tales relevant and appealing." The Washington Post

From Publishers Weekly The story of the suppression of polytheistic religions in the ancient world by the ever more powerful monotheistic religions is well known. Kirsch (*The Harlot by the Side of the Road*) offers his own version of this oft-told tale in a lively and engaging chronicle. Although many scholars point to Israel as the fount of monotheism, Kirsch shows that the earliest impulses toward monotheism can be found in Egypt with pharaoh Akhenaton's attempt to move the nation to the worship of one god. This Egyptian likely influenced Moses, according to Kirsch, and much of the history of early Israel is the history of the worship of one god emerging out of the worship of many gods. Monotheism gained momentum with the development of Christianity and was codified under Constantine. His son Julian strove to return polytheism to the scene by issuing edicts of toleration concerning polytheistic religious customs, but Julian's successor Theodosius I restored monotheism as the official practice of the Empire. Kirsch helpfully points out that the conflict between the worship of many gods and the worship of one true god never disappeared from the lives of Israelites, Jews, or Christians, in spite of many historians' claims to the contrary. In addition, Kirsch observes that monotheistic religions have too often used the worship of one god as a way to persecute those who do not share similar beliefs. While Kirsch breaks no new ground, he demonstrates clearly the ways in which this conflict gave rise to the tensions that exist even within monotheistic religions today. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist This book may generate

heat as well as light, for it maintains that sectarian conflicts and religious wars are inevitable results of monotheism. If there is one god and one good, as monotheism claims, then differing religions must be devilish or evil. Polytheism, however, being essentially pluralistic, grants that god--or goddess--can take different forms; hence the deity worshiped by a neighbor could be as powerful as one's own. Not that polytheism has no blood on its hands; there have been persecutions led by polytheistic people. But most early Christians, Kirsch says, weren't martyred for God but were put to death for breaking laws, rather as a religiously motivated abortion-clinic bomber might be condemned for murder. Monotheism has realized jihads, crusades, and inquisitions as the results of believing that one truth overshadows all others. More than half of the book examines the point at which monotheism prevailed over polytheism in the West; namely, the end of the Roman Empire. Representing the two opposed camps were Constantine, a shrewd politician whose embrace of Christianity was calculated to advance his ambitions, and Julian the Apostate, who converted to paganism after his entire family was killed by Christian emperors. Kirsch's sympathies are clearly with Julian, whose death in battle ended the last best hope of polytheism in the West. A brilliant and controversial book. Patricia Monaghan

Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Accessible and engaging... Tells us a great deal about the religious imagination. (Karen Armstrong) Lively? points out that the conflict between the worship of many gods and the worship of one true god never disappeared. ("Publishers Weekly") Jonathan Kirsch has written another blockbuster about the Bible and its world. (David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief of the Anchor Bible Project) Kirsch tackles the central issue bedeviling the world today - religious intolerance? A timely book, well-written and researched. (Leonard Shlain, author of "The Alphabet and the Goddess" and "Sex, Time and Power") An intriguing read. ("The Jerusalem Report") A timely tale about the importance of religious tolerance in today's world. ("San Francisco Chronicle") Kirsch is a fine storyteller with a flair for rendering ancient tales relevant and appealing. ("The Washington Post")