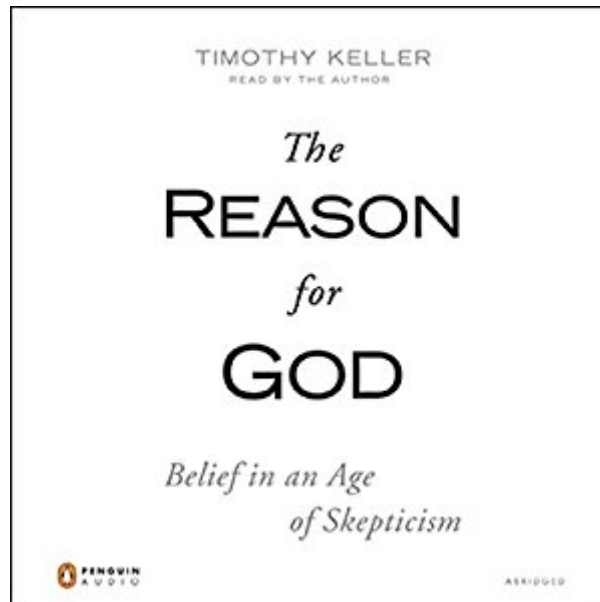


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The Reason For God



Synopsis

The End of Faith. The God Delusion. God Is Not Great. Letter to a Christian Nation. Bestseller lists are filled with doubters. But what happens when you actually doubt your doubts? --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There are many people I "know" primarily through their books. I read constantly and find that books allow me to understand the people who write them, especially when the author has written several books. As I read through the corpus of his writings I learn to understand how he thinks and learn to understand what he believes. Even if I have never met an author face-to-face, I often feel like I have met him in his books. Because Tim Keller has written so little, I do not know him in the way I feel I know many of his peers--pastors and theologians who have written extensively. So it was with great interest that I read *The Reason for God*, only his second book (besides edited volumes to which he has contributed a chapter) and certainly his most significant. Published by Penguin and with a positive review by *Publishers Weekly*, it has all the makings of a bestseller. *The Reason for God* is written for skeptics and believers alike. It is a response to or perhaps an antidote to the writings of popular authors like Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris. And it is a fine one, at that. While the skeptic has several volumes he can hand to a believing friend (many of them written by the aforementioned authors), the believer has fewer to choose from. So many introductions to Christian beliefs were written many years ago and simply do not resonate with today's skeptics. They assume too much and deliver too little. Keller's volume seeks to fill that void,

and it does so well. The Reason for God arrives at a unique time, for we are at a point when both belief and skepticism are on the rise. "Skepticism, fear, and anger toward traditional religion are growing in power and influence," says Keller.

Let's consider issues generally not developed by previous reviewers. Also, it's incorrect to fault Keller for providing answers instead of raising more profound questions, as Jesus sometimes did. Note that, when the Sadducees asked Him which of seven successive husbands would be married to the woman after death, Christ didn't ask any deeper question. He plainly told them that they were wrong, and why they were wrong, in their conception of the afterlife. "Ironically, the insistence that doctrines do not matter is really a doctrine itself. It holds a specific view of God, which is touted as superior and more enlightened than the beliefs of most major religions." (p. 8) A common theme throughout Keller's book is how cultural expectations shape out attitudes. For instance, we find God's unilateral forgiveness attractive and hell offensive. In other cultures, it's the exact opposite. (p. 72) The anti-abolitionists who cited Ephesians 6:5 as justification for 19th-century chattel slavery didn't realize that it was incomparably more severe than the indentured servanthood which Paul had in mind. (pp. 109-111, 266-267) We learn that magic was uncommon in the middle ages; it didn't peak until the 16th-17th centuries--at the same time that modern science got started (p. 70) The early-church-made-everything-up assertion is contrary to reality. The New Testament mentions unflattering things such as Peter's denials, the disciples' jealousies, etc.--the exact opposite of writings designed to promote and popularize a new religion. (pp. 104-105) Furthermore, we now realize that the ancients were very careful to separate fictional and factual writings (p. 204). Also, Jewish thinking anticipated a final resurrection of many people, not just One (p. 207).

I'm a certified member of the Tim Keller fan club. I listen to his sermons. I read everything he writes. I even belong to the Facebook fan club. Few thinkers or practitioners have influenced me more than he has. I am not the biggest fan out there, but I'm certainly a member of the club. This is dangerous, because nobody can live up to all that. But Keller isn't the first to face the challenges of a growing profile and unrealistic expectations, and thankfully, he continues to use his influence wisely. The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism, now on the New York Times bestseller list, is likely to multiply his influence even more, not only within the church but also within a culture with serious doubts about Christianity. In a sense, there's nothing new in this book. It's all out there in other places, just like all the ingredients of a meal prepared by a chef are there in the grocery store. In The Reason for God, you have presuppositional apologetics in the tradition of Van Til, as well as

generous doses of C.S. Lewis, the subtle but strong influence of Jonathan Edwards, as well as engagement with contemporary thinkers and writers. What is unique is how Keller brings all together; in other words, the way these ingredients are mixed. Keller aptly deals with common doubts and objections to Christianity, such as "There can't be just one true religion" and "How can a loving God send people to hell?" Behind every doubt is an alternate set of beliefs. "The only way to doubt Christianity rightly and fairly," Keller writes, "is to discern the alternate belief under each of your doubts and then to ask yourself what reasons you have for believing it."

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