

a history of god by karen armstrong

****A History of God by Karen Armstrong: Exploring the Evolution of the Divine****

a history of god by karen armstrong opens a fascinating window into the changing perceptions and understandings of God throughout human history. This book isn't just a dry recitation of theological facts; it's a compelling narrative that traces how the idea of God has evolved from ancient times to the modern era. Karen Armstrong, a former nun and an esteemed religious scholar, brings both deep knowledge and a unique empathy to her exploration of one of humanity's most enduring questions: what is God?

If you've ever wondered how concepts of the divine have shifted across cultures and epochs, or why different religions conceive of God in such varied ways, Armstrong's work provides thoughtful insights. Let's dive into the key themes, historical developments, and the broader implications highlighted in **A History of God by Karen Armstrong**.

The Premise of **A History of God by Karen Armstrong**

At its core, Armstrong's book is a historical and theological investigation into the concept of God as understood by Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—the three major monotheistic religions—as well as earlier polytheistic traditions. She doesn't just recount religious doctrines; instead, she traces the human journey to comprehend the divine, showing how this quest has shaped civilizations and cultures.

What makes this book stand out is Armstrong's ability to blend scholarly rigor with accessible writing. She makes complex religious ideas understandable and relevant, inviting readers of all backgrounds to reflect on how the divine has been perceived through different lenses.

The Evolution of God in Ancient Civilizations

One of the fascinating sections in **A History of God by Karen Armstrong** delves into ancient religious beliefs before monotheism took hold. Armstrong discusses how early human societies worshipped multiple gods tied closely to natural elements and human experiences. These polytheistic systems were rich and diverse, with gods personifying aspects like fertility, war, and the harvest.

Armstrong points out that the transition to monotheism was neither straightforward nor immediate. It was a gradual process influenced by social, political, and philosophical changes. For example, the shift in ancient Israel from worshipping many gods to the belief in a singular, all-powerful God was revolutionary and set the stage for Judaism's development.

Monotheism and the Birth of the Idea of One God

The heart of **A History of God by Karen Armstrong** examines the rise of monotheism and how it

transformed religious thought. Armstrong carefully outlines how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam each developed unique understandings of God, yet share a common heritage.

Judaism's Concept of a Single, Transcendent God

In the Jewish tradition, God evolved from a tribal deity to a universal, transcendent being who demanded ethical behavior and justice. Armstrong emphasizes the profound shift that this represented: God was no longer a distant figure tied to nature but an intimate presence who entered into a covenant with humanity.

This concept of a moral, singular God had immense influence on Western thought and laid the foundation for later religious developments. Armstrong's exploration helps readers appreciate the significance of this transformation and its lasting legacy.

Christianity's Interpretation: God as Trinity and Savior

A History of God by Karen Armstrong also explores Christianity's unique theological innovations, most notably the doctrine of the Trinity—the idea that God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This complex concept was developed to reconcile Jesus's divinity with monotheistic belief.

Armstrong articulates how Christianity introduced the notion of God's incarnation and salvation through Jesus Christ, which added a new dimension to understanding the divine. She discusses how these beliefs impacted Christian worship, art, and culture throughout history.

Islam's Emphasis on God's Unity and Compassion

Islam, as Armstrong presents it, reaffirms the strict monotheism of Judaism but with a renewed emphasis on God's absolute unity (tawhid) and mercy. The Quran's portrayal of God is both majestic and intimate, highlighting attributes like compassion, justice, and omnipotence.

By tracing Islam's development, Armstrong shows how this faith fits into the broader narrative of monotheism while also addressing its unique contributions to theology and spirituality.

Philosophical and Mystical Perspectives on God

Beyond the historical and doctrinal, *A History of God by Karen Armstrong* delves into the philosophical and mystical dimensions of the divine. Armstrong discusses how thinkers from Augustine and Aquinas to Islamic philosophers like Al-Ghazali grappled with abstract ideas about God's nature.

The Challenge of Defining God

One of the enduring questions Armstrong highlights is how difficult it is to define God in human terms. Philosophers have debated whether God is a personal being, an impersonal force, or something beyond human comprehension. This exploration reveals the deep tensions and creative thinking that have animated religious philosophy for centuries.

Mysticism: Experiencing God Beyond Words

Armstrong also explores mysticism—experiences of the divine that transcend language and doctrine. She shows how mystics across cultures have sought direct union with God, emphasizing love, compassion, and inner transformation. These mystical traditions, she argues, offer a powerful counterpoint to rigid dogmas and remind us of the personal and experiential side of faith.

The Modern Relevance of *A History of God by Karen Armstrong*

In today's world, where religious conflict and secularism often dominate headlines, Armstrong's *A History of God* provides a much-needed perspective. By understanding how ideas about God have evolved, readers can better appreciate the diversity of beliefs and the common quest for meaning that unites humanity.

Bridging Understanding Across Faiths

One of the strengths of Armstrong's book is its ability to foster empathy. By tracing the shared origins and mutual influences among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, she encourages readers to see beyond stereotypes and appreciate the complexity of each tradition.

Insights for Spiritual Seekers

For those on a personal spiritual journey, *A History of God by Karen Armstrong* offers rich insights into how human beings have sought connection with the divine. It encourages readers to ponder their own beliefs and to recognize that the divine is a concept shaped by culture, history, and personal experience.

Why This Book Matters for Religious Literacy

In an age when religious literacy is crucial for global understanding, Armstrong's work stands out as an accessible resource. It equips readers with historical context and theological nuance, helping to combat ignorance and fear related to religion.

Exploring *'A History of God'* by Karen Armstrong* is like embarking on a journey through humanity's spiritual heritage. It invites us to reflect on how the idea of God has inspired art, ethics, conflict, and compassion across millennia. Whether you are a believer, a skeptic, or simply curious, Armstrong's narrative offers a profound and enriching perspective on one of the most enduring aspects of human culture.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main theme of 'A History of God' by Karen Armstrong?

The main theme of 'A History of God' is the exploration of how the concept of God has evolved throughout history across different religions and cultures.

Who is Karen Armstrong, the author of 'A History of God'?

Karen Armstrong is a British author and commentator known for her books on comparative religion, including 'A History of God,' which examines the development of religious ideas about God.

Which religions are covered in 'A History of God' by Karen Armstrong?

'A History of God' covers the three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as touches on other belief systems and their concepts of the divine.

How does Karen Armstrong approach the subject of God in her book?

Karen Armstrong approaches the subject of God from a historical and scholarly perspective, tracing the changing nature of God's concept and how human understanding and interpretations have varied over time.

What impact has 'A History of God' had on readers and scholars?

'A History of God' has been widely praised for its insightful and comprehensive treatment of the evolution of religious thought, making complex theological ideas accessible to a broad audience and fostering interfaith understanding.

Does 'A History of God' discuss the origins of monotheism?

Yes, the book discusses the origins and development of monotheism, exploring how early human societies transitioned from polytheistic beliefs to the worship of a single, all-powerful deity.

What is a key takeaway from 'A History of God' by Karen Armstrong?

A key takeaway is that the concept of God is not static but has continually changed in response to cultural, social, and historical contexts, reflecting humanity's evolving spiritual and philosophical needs.

Additional Resources

****A History of God by Karen Armstrong: An Exploration of Divine Evolution****

a history of god by karen armstrong offers a profound and meticulously researched journey into the evolving concept of God across various cultures and epochs. This seminal work delves into the origins, transformations, and interpretations of the divine, tracing how humanity's understanding of God has shifted from ancient polytheism to contemporary spiritual philosophies. As a renowned scholar of religion, Karen Armstrong brings an investigative lens to this complex subject, combining historical analysis with theological insight to create a compelling narrative that appeals to both academic and general audiences.

Exploring the Foundations of Divinity

Karen Armstrong's **A History of God** stands out for its comprehensive scope, covering three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, while also addressing earlier polytheistic traditions and Eastern religious philosophies. Armstrong's treatment of the subject is neither dogmatic nor dismissive; instead, she examines the historical context that shaped each conception of God, highlighting the fluidity and diversity inherent in human spirituality.

One of the book's key strengths lies in its ability to contextualize the development of God within the socio-political and cultural milieus of different periods. For instance, Armstrong illustrates how the Hebrew God evolved from a tribal deity into a universal, transcendent being—mirroring the Israelites' own journey from nomadic tribes to nationhood. This transformation is pivotal in understanding the foundational narratives of monotheism and their enduring influence on Western thought.

The Evolution of God: From Polytheism to Monotheism

The transition from polytheistic systems to monotheistic belief structures is a central theme in **A History of God by Karen Armstrong**. Armstrong carefully dissects ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Canaanite religions to show how early human societies understood divinity as a pantheon of gods embodying natural and social forces. This pluralistic worldview gradually gave way to the exclusive worship of one God, a shift that Armstrong attributes to both theological innovation and historical necessity.

Armstrong's exploration of this pivotal change is enriched by her discussion of philosophical developments in the Hellenistic period, where ideas about a singular, abstract deity gained traction. The influence of Greek philosophy on early Christian and Jewish thinkers helped shape a conception of

God as immutable, eternal, and all-powerful. This intellectual backdrop is crucial for readers seeking to comprehend the complexities of divine attributes as portrayed in religious texts.

Key Themes and Analytical Insights

Understanding Divine Attributes and Human Experience

Throughout *A History of God* by Karen Armstrong*, the interplay between divine attributes—such as omnipotence, omniscience, and benevolence—and human suffering emerges as a recurring motif. Armstrong does not shy away from addressing the “problem of evil” and how religious traditions have wrestled with reconciling a just and loving God with the existence of pain and injustice.

The Problem of Evil and Theodicy

Armstrong’s analysis reveals that various religious traditions have responded differently to the problem of evil. In Judaism, the narrative of Job exemplifies faith amid suffering without clear answers, whereas Christian theology introduces the concept of original sin and redemption. Islamic perspectives often emphasize submission to the divine will and the inscrutability of God’s plan. By presenting these diverse approaches, Armstrong encourages readers to appreciate the nuanced ways in which faith communities grapple with existential questions.

God in Modernity and Secular Thought

An important aspect of Armstrong’s work is her examination of how the notion of God has adapted—or been challenged—in the modern era. The rise of scientific rationalism, secular humanism, and atheism has profoundly influenced contemporary religious discourse. Armstrong acknowledges the critiques posed by modern thinkers but also highlights a resurgence of spiritual seeking that transcends traditional religious boundaries.

The Book’s Methodology and Style

Karen Armstrong’s writing in *A History of God** is characterized by clarity and accessibility, which makes a complex subject approachable without sacrificing scholarly rigor. The book is well-structured, moving chronologically and thematically to guide readers through millennia of religious thought. Armstrong’s background as a former nun and a historian of religion lends authenticity and depth to her analysis, allowing her to balance empathy and critical inquiry.

This historiographical approach is complemented by Armstrong’s use of primary sources, including sacred texts, philosophical writings, and historical documents. Her interpretative commentary brings these sources to life, providing context and highlighting their significance within the broader narrative

of divine evolution.

Comparative Perspectives and Religious Pluralism

A notable feature of **A History of God by Karen Armstrong** is its comparative lens. Rather than privileging one religious tradition over another, Armstrong adopts a pluralistic perspective that respects the diversity of religious experiences. This approach resonates with readers in an increasingly globalized world where interfaith dialogue is crucial for social cohesion.

- Armstrong compares the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic conceptions of God, revealing both shared origins and distinctive developments.
- She explores Eastern traditions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, to illustrate alternative understandings of the divine and the sacred.
- The book also touches on contemporary spiritual movements that challenge conventional religious frameworks.

By fostering an inclusive understanding of God's history, Armstrong invites readers to consider how religious beliefs shape identity, morality, and community.

Critical Reception and Impact

Since its publication, **A History of God by Karen Armstrong** has been widely acclaimed for its ambitious scope and balanced scholarship. Reviewers have praised Armstrong's ability to synthesize vast amounts of information into a coherent and engaging narrative. Some critics note that the book's broad approach may sacrifice in-depth analysis of specific traditions, but this is often regarded as a necessary trade-off to achieve its panoramic vision.

The book's impact extends beyond academic circles; it has become a valuable resource for educators, clergy, and lay readers interested in the history of religion. Its thoughtful examination of God's evolving image contributes to ongoing conversations about faith, spirituality, and the role of religion in contemporary society.

Navigating the Complexities of Divine History

In conclusion, **A History of God by Karen Armstrong** serves as a crucial text for anyone seeking to understand the multifaceted nature of divinity across human history. Armstrong's methodical research, combined with her empathetic narrative style, allows readers to appreciate the richness and complexity of religious traditions. By tracing the development of God from ancient polytheism to modern spiritual expressions, this work not only illuminates the past but also encourages reflection on the meaning of the divine today.

[A History Of God By Karen Armstrong](#)

a history of god by karen armstrong: A History of God Karen Armstrong, 2011-08-10 Why does God exist? How have the three dominant monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—shaped and altered the conception of God? How have these religions influenced each other? In this stunningly intelligent book, Karen Armstrong, one of Britain's foremost commentators on religious affairs, traces the history of how men and women have perceived and experienced God, from the time of Abraham to the present. The epic story begins with the Jews' gradual transformation of pagan idol worship in Babylon into true monotheism—a concept previously unknown in the world. Christianity and Islam both rose on the foundation of this revolutionary idea, but these religions refashioned 'the One God' to suit the social and political needs of their followers. From classical philosophy and medieval mysticism to the Reformation, Karen Armstrong performs the near miracle of distilling the intellectual history of monotheism into one superbly readable volume, destined to take its place as a classic. Praise for *History of God* “An admirable and impressive work of synthesis that will give insight and satisfaction to thousands of lay readers.”—The Washington Post Book World “A brilliantly lucid, spendidly readable book. [Karen] Armstrong has a dazzling ability: she can take a long and complex subject and reduce it to the fundamentals, without oversimplifying.”—The Sunday Times (London) “Absorbing . . . A lode of learning.”—Time “The most fascinating and learned study of the biggest wild goose chase in history—the quest for God. Karen Armstrong is a genius.”—A.N. Wilson, author of *Jesus: A Life*

a history of god by karen armstrong: A History of God Karen Armstrong, 1994 Explores the ways in which the idea and experience of God evolved among monotheists--Jews, Christians and Muslims.

a history of god by karen armstrong: *The case for God*. Karen Armstrong, 2009 Moving from the Paleolithic age to the present, Karen Armstrong details the great lengths to which humankind has gone in order to experience a sacred reality that it called by many names, such as God, Brahman, Nirvana, Allah, or Dao. Focusing especially on Christianity but including Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Chinese spiritualities, Armstrong examines the diminished impulse toward religion in 21st century, when a significant number of people either want nothing to do with God or question the efficacy of faith. Why has God become unbelievable? Why is it that atheists and theists alike think and speak about God in a way that veers so profoundly from the thinking of our ancestors? Answering these questions, Armstrong makes clear how the changing face of the world has necessarily changed the importance of religion at both the societal and the individual level. And she makes an argument for drawing on the insights of the past in order to build a faith that speaks to the needs of our dangerously polarized age. Yet she cautions readers that religion was never supposed to provide answers that lie within the competence of human reason; that, she says, is the role of logos.

a history of god by karen armstrong: A History of God Karen Armstrong, 1999 In this extensive and original account of the evolution of belief, Karen Armstrong examines Western society's unerring fidelity to the idea of One God and the many conflicting convictions it engenders.

a history of god by karen armstrong: A History of God Karen Armstrong, 1997-04-22 An admirable and impressive work of synthesis that will give insight and satisfaction to thousands of lay readers. THE WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD In this stunningly intelligent book, Karen Armstrong, one of Britain's foremost commentators on religious affairs, traces the history of how men and women have perceived and experienced God, from the time of Abraham to the present. From classical philosophy and medieval mysticism to the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the modern age of skepticism, Karen Armstrong performs the near miracle of distilling the intellectual history of monotheism into one superbly readable volume, destined to take its place as a classic.

a history of god by karen armstrong: *The Battle for God* Karen Armstrong, 2001-01-30 In the late twentieth century, fundamentalism has emerged as one of the most powerful forces at work in

the world, contesting the dominance of modern secular values and threatening peace and harmony around the globe. Yet it remains incomprehensible to a large number of people. In *The Battle for God*, Karen Armstrong brilliantly and sympathetically shows us how and why fundamentalist groups came into existence and what they yearn to accomplish. We see the West in the sixteenth century beginning to create an entirely new kind of civilization, which brought in its wake change in every aspect of life -- often painful and violent, even if liberating. Armstrong argues that one of the things that changed most was religion. People could no longer think about or experience the divine in the same way; they had to develop new forms of faith to fit their new circumstances. Armstrong characterizes fundamentalism as one of these new ways of being religious that have emerged in every major faith tradition. Focusing on Protestant fundamentalism in the United States, Jewish fundamentalism in Israel, and Muslim fundamentalism in Egypt and Iran, she examines the ways in which these movements, while not monolithic, have each sprung from a dread of modernity -- often in response to assault (sometimes unwitting, sometimes intentional) by the mainstream society. Armstrong sees fundamentalist groups as complex, innovative, and modern -- rather than as throwbacks to the past -- but contends that they have failed in religious terms. Maintaining that fundamentalism often exists in symbiotic relationship with an aggressive modernity, each impelling the other on to greater excess, she suggests compassion as a way to defuse what is now an intensifying conflict. **BONUS:** This edition contains an excerpt from Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*.

a history of god by karen armstrong: Summary and Analysis of A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam Worth Books, 2017-02-14 So much to read, so little time? This brief overview of *A History of God* tells you what you need to know—before or after you read Karen Armstrong's book. Crafted and edited with care, Worth Books set the standard for quality and give you the tools you need to be a well-informed reader. This short summary and analysis of *A History of God* by Karen Armstrong includes: Historical context Chapter-by-chapter summaries Detailed timeline of important events Important quotes Fascinating trivia Supporting material to enhance your understanding of the original work About *A History of God* by Karen Armstrong: *A History of God* is a rich and comprehensive account of the concept of God across thousands of years of human history. Karen Armstrong, a former nun, focuses on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, with insights into the work of Western history's great theologians and philosophers. Can humanity persist without some idea of God? Far from moving into an era of pure atheism, Armstrong believes that God as a construct is more crucial now than ever. God is not dead, God has not abandoned us, God merely shape-shifts to adapt to new contexts, whether that context is medieval agrarianism, nineteenth-century romanticism, or twenty-first-century post-modern techno-urbanism. Armstrong's in-depth examination of monotheism provides a foundation for the curious novice while not holding back on academic concepts and obscure but fascinating historical accounts. The summary and analysis in this ebook are intended to complement your reading experience and bring you closer to a great work of nonfiction.

a history of god by karen armstrong: Fields of Blood Karen Armstrong, 2014-10-28 A sweeping exploration of religion and the history of human violence—from the New York Times bestselling author of *The History of God* • “Elegant and powerful.... Both erudite and accurate, dazzling in its breadth of knowledge and historical detail.” —The Washington Post In these times of rising geopolitical chaos, the need for mutual understanding between cultures has never been more urgent. Religious differences are seen as fuel for violence and warfare. In these pages, one of our greatest writers on religion, Karen Armstrong, amasses a sweeping history of humankind to explore the perceived connection between war and the world's great creeds—and to issue a passionate defense of the peaceful nature of faith. With unprecedented scope, Armstrong looks at the whole history of each tradition—not only Christianity and Islam, but also Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Judaism. Religions, in their earliest days, endowed every aspect of life with meaning, and warfare became bound up with observances of the sacred. Modernity has ushered in an epoch of spectacular violence, although, as Armstrong shows, little of it can be ascribed

directly to religion. Nevertheless, she shows us how and in what measure religions came to absorb modern belligerence—and what hope there might be for peace among believers of different faiths in our time.

a history of god by karen armstrong: *The Great Transformation* Karen Armstrong, 2009-02-24 From one of the world's leading writers on religion and the highly acclaimed author of the bestselling *A History of God*, *The Battle for God* and *The Spiral Staircase*, comes a major new work: a chronicle of one of the most important intellectual revolutions in world history and its relevance to our own time. In one astonishing, short period – the ninth century BCE – the peoples of four distinct regions of the civilized world created the religious and philosophical traditions that have continued to nourish humanity into the present day: Confucianism and Daoism in China; Hinduism and Buddhism in India; monotheism in Israel; and philosophical rationalism in Greece. Historians call this the Axial Age because of its central importance to humanity's spiritual development. Now, Karen Armstrong traces the rise and development of this transformative moment in history, examining the brilliant contributions to these traditions made by such figures as the Buddha, Socrates, Confucius and Ezekiel. Armstrong makes clear that despite some differences of emphasis, there was remarkable consensus among these religions and philosophies: each insisted on the primacy of compassion over hatred and violence. She illuminates what this "family" resemblance reveals about the religious impulse and quest of humankind. And she goes beyond spiritual archaeology, delving into the ways in which these Axial Age beliefs can present an instructive and thought-provoking challenge to the ways we think about and practice religion today. A revelation of humankind's early shared imperatives, yearnings and inspired solutions – as salutary as it is fascinating. Excerpt from *The Great Transformation*: In our global world, we can no longer afford a parochial or exclusive vision. We must learn to live and behave as though people in remote parts of the globe were as important as ourselves. The sages of the Axial Age did not create their compassionate ethic in idyllic circumstances. Each tradition developed in societies like our own that were torn apart by violence and warfare as never before; indeed, the first catalyst of religious change was usually a visceral rejection of the aggression that the sages witnessed all around them. . . . All the great traditions that were created at this time are in agreement about the supreme importance of charity and benevolence, and this tells us something important about our humanity.

a history of god by karen armstrong: In the Beginning Karen Armstrong, 1997-10-07 "Karen Armstrong is a genius."—A. N. Wilson As the foundation stone of the Jewish and Christian scriptures, *The Book of Genesis* unfolds some of the most arresting stories of world literature—the Creation; Adam and Eve; Cain and Abel; the sacrifice of Isaac. Yet the meaning of *Genesis* remains enigmatic. In this fascinating volume, Karen Armstrong, author of the highly acclaimed bestseller *A History of God*, brilliantly illuminates the mysteries and profundities of this mystifying work. "A lyrical chronicle of one woman's wrestling with *Genesis* that can serve as a guide to others . . . As notable for its scholarship as it is for its honesty and vulnerability."—Publishers Weekly "Armstrong can simplify complex ideas, but she is never simplistic."—The New York Times Book Review

a history of god by karen armstrong: The Bible Karen Armstrong, 2009-04-01 The Bible is the most widely distributed book in the world. Translated into over two thousand languages, it is estimated that more than six billion copies have been sold in the last two hundred years alone. In this seminal account, Karen Armstrong traces the gestation of the Bible to reveal a complex and contradictory document created by scores of people over hundreds of years. Karen Armstrong begins her analysis with the origins of the very earliest books of the Hebrew Bible, in which God was called both 'Yahweh' and 'Elohim'. She then traces the development of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament to reveal the disparate influences that helped to form these sacred texts. From the Jewish practice of Midrash and the Christian cult of Jesus; to the influence of Paul's letters on the Reformation and the manipulation of Revelations by Christian fundamentalism, Armstrong explores the contexts in which these sixty-six books were understood and explains the social needs they answered. In the process she reveals an unfamiliar and paradoxical work that will permanently alter our understanding of the Bible.

a history of god by karen armstrong: Jerusalem Karen Armstrong, 2011-08-10 Venerated for millennia by three faiths, torn by irreconcilable conflict, conquered, rebuilt, and mourned for again and again, Jerusalem is a sacred city whose very sacredness has engendered terrible tragedy. In this fascinating volume, Karen Armstrong, author of the highly praised *A History of God*, traces the history of how Jews, Christians, and Muslims have all laid claim to Jerusalem as their holy place, and how three radically different concepts of holiness have shaped and scarred the city for thousands of years. Armstrong unfolds a complex story of spiritual upheaval and political transformation--from King David's capital to an administrative outpost of the Roman Empire, from the cosmopolitan city sanctified by Christ to the spiritual center conquered and glorified by Muslims, from the gleaming prize of European Crusaders to the bullet-ridden symbol of the present-day Arab-Israeli conflict. Written with grace and clarity, the product of years of meticulous research, *Jerusalem* combines the pageant of history with the profundity of searching spiritual analysis. Like Karen Armstrong's *A History of God*, *Jerusalem* is a book for the ages. **BONUS:** This edition contains an excerpt from Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*.

a history of god by karen armstrong: Buddha Karen Armstrong, 2004-09-28 With such bestsellers as *A History of God* and *Islam*, Karen Armstrong has consistently delivered penetrating, readable, and prescient (The New York Times) works that have lucidly engaged a wide range of religions and religious issues. In *Buddha* she turns to a figure whose thought is still reverberating throughout the world 2,500 years after his death. Many know the Buddha only from seeing countless serene, iconic images. But what of the man himself and the world he lived in? What did he actually do in his roughly eighty years on earth that spawned one of the greatest religions in world history? Armstrong tackles these questions and more by examining the life and times of the Buddha in this engrossing philosophical biography. Against the tumultuous cultural background of his world, she blends history, philosophy, mythology, and biography to create a compelling and illuminating portrait of a man whose awakening continues to inspire millions.

a history of god by karen armstrong: The Battle for God Karen Armstrong, 2011-08-10 In the late twentieth century, fundamentalism has emerged as one of the most powerful forces at work in the world, contesting the dominance of modern secular values and threatening peace and harmony around the globe. Yet it remains incomprehensible to a large number of people. In *The Battle for God*, Karen Armstrong brilliantly and sympathetically shows us how and why fundamentalist groups came into existence and what they yearn to accomplish. We see the West in the sixteenth century beginning to create an entirely new kind of civilization, which brought in its wake change in every aspect of life -- often painful and violent, even if liberating. Armstrong argues that one of the things that changed most was religion. People could no longer think about or experience the divine in the same way; they had to develop new forms of faith to fit their new circumstances. Armstrong characterizes fundamentalism as one of these new ways of being religious that have emerged in every major faith tradition. Focusing on Protestant fundamentalism in the United States, Jewish fundamentalism in Israel, and Muslim fundamentalism in Egypt and Iran, she examines the ways in which these movements, while not monolithic, have each sprung from a dread of modernity -- often in response to assault (sometimes unwitting, sometimes intentional) by the mainstream society. Armstrong sees fundamentalist groups as complex, innovative, and modern -- rather than as throwbacks to the past -- but contends that they have failed in religious terms. Maintaining that fundamentalism often exists in symbiotic relationship with an aggressive modernity, each impelling the other on to greater excess, she suggests compassion as a way to defuse what is now an intensifying conflict. **BONUS:** This edition contains an excerpt from Karen Armstrong's *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*.

a history of god by karen armstrong: A Short History of Myth (Myths series) Karen Armstrong, 2010-10-29 What are myths? How have they evolved? And why do we still so desperately need them? A history of myth is a history of humanity, Karen Armstrong argues in this insightful and eloquent book: our stories and beliefs, our curiosity and attempts to understand the world, link us to our ancestors and each other. This is a brilliant and thought-provoking introduction to myth in the

broadest sense—from Palaeolithic times to the “Great Western Transformation” of the last 500 years—and why we dismiss it only at our peril.

a history of god by karen armstrong: Islam Karen Armstrong, 2007-12-18 No religion in the modern world is as feared and misunderstood as Islam. It haunts the popular Western imagination as an extreme faith that promotes authoritarian government, female oppression, civil war, and terrorism. Karen Armstrong's short history offers a vital corrective to this narrow view. The distillation of years of thinking and writing about Islam, it demonstrates that the world's fastest-growing faith is a much richer and more complex phenomenon than its modern fundamentalist strain might suggest. *Islam: A Short History* begins with the flight of Muhammad and his family from Medina in the seventh century and the subsequent founding of the first mosques. It recounts the origins of the split between Shii and Sunni Muslims, and the emergence of Sufi mysticism; the spread of Islam throughout North Africa, the Levant, and Asia; the shattering effect on the Muslim world of the Crusades; the flowering of imperial Islam in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries into the world's greatest and most sophisticated power; and the origins and impact of revolutionary Islam. It concludes with an assessment of Islam today and its challenges. With this brilliant book, Karen Armstrong issues a forceful challenge to those who hold the view that the West and Islam are civilizations set on a collision course. It is also a model of authority, elegance, and economy.

a history of god by karen armstrong: The Spiral Staircase Karen Armstrong, 2007-12-18 NATIONAL BESTSELLER • The New York Times bestselling author of *A History of God* delivers the gripping, inspirational story about her own search for God. “A story about becoming human, being recognized, finally recognizing oneself... It fills the reader with hope.” —The Washington Post Book World In 1962, at age seventeen, Karen Armstrong entered a convent, eager to meet God. After seven brutally unhappy years as a nun, she left her order to pursue English literature at Oxford. But convent life had profoundly altered her, and coping with the outside world and her expiring faith proved to be excruciating. Her deep solitude and a terrifying illness—diagnosed only years later as epilepsy—marked her forever as an outsider. In her own mind she was a complete failure: as a nun, as an academic, and as a normal woman capable of intimacy. Her future seemed very much in question until she stumbled into comparative theology. What she found, in learning, thinking, and writing about other religions, was the ecstasy and transcendence she had never felt as a nun.

a history of god by karen armstrong: Visions Of God Karen Armstrong, 1994-11-01 The mystics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were, writes Karen Armstrong, like the astronauts of our own day. They broke into a new religion, blazed a new trail to God and to the depths of the self, a trail far from the beaten pilgrimage paths of Chaucer and Langland. Mysticism is a spiritual mystery shared in some form by all faiths; it has a supernatural quality that extends beyond the given boundaries of religious creed and may be experienced by any lay person. The thrilling intensity of a mystical experience, as represented in this volume by the writings of four mystics of the Middle Ages, can inspire other spiritual seekers with its insight into the limitless wonder of both human and divine experience. Dissatisfied by the strictures of dogma and a religion that failed to quench the human thirst for knowledge of a mystical order, these four mystics—Richard Rolle of Hampole, Walter Hilton, Dame Julian of Norwich, and the unknown author of *The Cloud Of Unknowing*—communicate an intense and passionate experience of faith rare in any time. Because of their unique beliefs and spiritual strength, their knowledge and writings have proved timeless, and in this beautiful volume show contemporary seekers important new insights into the nature of divine love.

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