



A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

By Karen Armstrong

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Over 700,000 copies of the original hardcover and paperback editions of this stunningly popular book have been sold. Karen Armstrong's superbly readable exploration of how the three dominant monotheistic religions of the world—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—have shaped and altered the conception of God is a tour de force. One of Britain's foremost commentators on religious affairs, Armstrong 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, Armstrong performs the near miracle of distilling the intellectual history of monotheism into one compelling volume.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Armstrong, a British journalist and former nun, guides us along one of the most elusive and fascinating quests of all time--the search for God. Like all beloved historians, Armstrong entertains us with deft storytelling, astounding research, and makes us feel a greater appreciation for the present because we better understand our past. Be warned: *A History of God* is not a tidy linear history. Rather, we learn that the definition of God is constantly being repeated, altered, discarded, and resurrected through the ages, responding to its followers' practical concerns rather than to mystical mandates. Armstrong also shows us how Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have overlapped and influenced one another, gently challenging the secularist history of each of these religions. --*Gail Hudson*

From Publishers Weekly

This searching, profound comparative history of the three major monotheistic faiths fearlessly illuminates the sociopolitical ground in which religious ideas take root, blossom and mutate. Armstrong, a British broadcaster, commentator on religious affairs and former Roman Catholic nun, argues that Judaism, Christianity and Islam each developed the idea of a personal God, which has helped believers to mature as full human beings. Yet Armstrong also acknowledges that the idea of a personal God can be dangerous, encouraging us to judge, condemn and marginalize others. Recognizing this, each of the three monotheisms, in their different ways, developed a mystical tradition grounded in a realization that our human idea of God is merely a symbol of an ineffable reality. To Armstrong, modern, aggressively righteous fundamentalists of all three faiths represent "a retreat from God." She views as inevitable a move away from the idea of a personal God who behaves like a larger version of ourselves, and welcomes the grouping of believers toward a notion of God that "works for us in the empirical age." 25,000 first printing; BOMC alternate. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Armstrong (Muhammad , LJ 4/15/92; The Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World , LJ 2/15/91) presents a well-written overview of the changing idea of God as understood by the three great religions of the West. Besides providing a great deal of religious history, she discusses the various philosophers, mystics, and reformers associated with these religions. The author suggests that "God" is primarily a "focus of meaning" created by humanity. If He survives at all, it will be in a much-altered form. Public librarians should be aware that conservative readers may be offended by this book, and even religious scholars may find Armstrong's rather one-sided "death of God" optimism about humanity a bit passe. Otherwise, this is an excellent and informative book. Recommended for academic and public libraries.

- C. Robert Nixon, *MLS, Lafayette, Ind.*

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