

a history of god karen armstrong

****A History of God Karen Armstrong: Exploring Faith Through the Eyes of a Renowned Scholar****

a history of god karen armstrong is not just a phrase but a doorway into the profound world of one of the most influential religious scholars and writers of our time. Karen Armstrong has spent decades unraveling the intricate tapestries of faith, spirituality, and the divine, offering readers a compassionate and insightful perspective on religion's role in human history. Her work bridges gaps between different beliefs, helping people understand the essence and evolution of faith beyond dogma and conflict.

If you've ever wondered about the nature of God and the historical journey of religious thought, Karen Armstrong's life and writings provide a compelling narrative. In this article, we will delve into her background, major works, and the unique contributions she has made to religious studies, all while weaving in a history of god Karen Armstrong style—thoughtful, engaging, and deeply human.

Who Is Karen Armstrong? A Brief Biography

Karen Armstrong was born in 1944 in England and initially embarked on a path far removed from religious scholarship. She joined a convent as a Roman Catholic nun in her late teens, an experience that profoundly shaped her future work. However, after several years, Armstrong left the convent and pursued academic studies, eventually becoming a respected voice in the study of religion.

Her journey from nun to scholar is essential in understanding her approach to faith. Rather than viewing religion from a purely academic or detached perspective, Armstrong connects from personal experience, empathy, and a desire to promote interfaith understanding. This background allows her to explore the concept of God and spirituality with both intellectual rigor and heartfelt compassion.

A History of God Karen Armstrong Explores: Major Themes and Works

At the core of Karen Armstrong's scholarship is the exploration of how the idea of God has evolved through history. One of her most celebrated books, **A History of God**, published in 1993, is a seminal work that traces the development of monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—and how their understanding of God transformed over millennia.

Tracing the Evolution of Monotheism

In *A History of God*, Armstrong explains how the concept of God was not static but changed dramatically with social, political, and philosophical shifts. For example, she discusses how early Israelites conceived of Yahweh as a tribal deity, which over time became a universal, omnipotent God in Judaism. Christianity introduced the idea of a personal God incarnated in Jesus Christ, while Islam presented Allah as the singular, unifying divine presence.

Her analysis goes beyond theology, considering how historical events like the Babylonian exile or the rise of the Roman Empire influenced religious thought. This approach helps readers understand that religion is deeply intertwined with humanity's broader cultural and historical context.

Compassion and the "Golden Rule" Across Religions

Another recurring theme in Armstrong's work is the emphasis on compassion as a core element across religious traditions. She often highlights the "Golden Rule" — treating others as one wishes to be treated — as a universal ethical principle found in Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and many other faiths.

By focusing on these shared values, Armstrong encourages dialogue and understanding between different religious communities, which is particularly relevant in today's world of religious tensions and misunderstandings.

The Impact of Karen Armstrong's Scholarship on Modern Religious Thought

Karen Armstrong's work has had a significant influence on how people think about God and religion today. She challenges readers to move beyond simplistic or dogmatic views and embrace a more nuanced, historically informed understanding of faith.

Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding

One of Armstrong's most important contributions is her advocacy for interfaith dialogue. She founded the Charter for Compassion, a global movement inspired by the teachings of all major religions to foster kindness and understanding across cultural and religious divides.

Her emphasis on compassion and shared spiritual values has made her a key figure in efforts to promote peace and mutual respect in a world often divided by religious conflict.

Reinterpreting Religious Texts

Armstrong also encourages a re-examination of sacred texts with a historical and metaphorical lens rather than a literalist approach. This method allows for a more flexible and meaningful interpretation that can adapt to modern contexts without losing the spiritual essence of the texts.

This approach appeals to many religious individuals who seek to reconcile their faith with contemporary values such as human rights, gender equality, and scientific understanding.

Lessons from Karen Armstrong's Understanding of God

Reading Karen Armstrong's work offers several valuable insights that can enrich anyone's spiritual or intellectual journey.

- **Faith is dynamic:** Understanding that religious beliefs evolve can help people embrace change and diversity within their faith traditions.
- **Compassion is central:** Prioritizing kindness and empathy over rigid dogma fosters harmony within and between communities.
- **Historical context matters:** Knowing the historical circumstances in which religious ideas developed prevents misinterpretations and promotes tolerance.
- **Dialogue is vital:** Engaging with different perspectives deepens understanding and reduces conflict.

Whether you are a scholar, a believer, or simply curious about the concept of God, Karen Armstrong's exploration of divine history offers a rich, accessible, and inspiring roadmap.

Why a History of God Karen Armstrong Style Matters Today

In a world where religion can often be a source of division and misunderstanding, Karen Armstrong's work invites us to reconsider faith as a powerful force for unity and wisdom. Her balanced, compassionate approach reminds us that God, as an idea, has been shaped by humanity's collective search for meaning, justice, and connection.

By engaging with her writings, we not only learn about religious history but also gain tools to navigate

contemporary challenges related to spirituality and coexistence. Her scholarship encourages us to look beyond superficial differences and appreciate the profound spiritual impulses that bind people together.

Karen Armstrong's journey and her landmark book **A History of God** continue to inspire millions to think deeply about the divine and the human quest for meaning. Through historical insight, empathy, and a commitment to compassion, she opens a window into the rich and complex narrative of God as understood across cultures and eras. Exploring her work is a reminder that the story of God is, in many ways, the story of humanity itself.

Frequently Asked Questions

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. She wrote 'A History of God' to explore the development of the concept of God in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

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

'A History of God' examines the evolution of the idea of God across three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, tracing how the concept has changed over time.

When was 'A History of God' by Karen Armstrong first published?

'A History of God' was first published in 1993.

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

Karen Armstrong approaches the subject from a historical and scholarly perspective, analyzing religious texts, cultural contexts, and philosophical developments to understand how the notion of God has transformed.

What religions are primarily discussed in 'A History of God'?

The book primarily discusses Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, focusing on their respective understandings and interpretations of God.

Why is 'A History of God' considered an important book in religious studies?

'A History of God' is considered important because it offers a comprehensive and accessible overview of the complex history of monotheism and the evolving concept of God, fostering interfaith understanding.

Does Karen Armstrong discuss the differences between the concepts of God in various religions?

Yes, Armstrong highlights both the similarities and differences in how God is perceived in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as how these views have changed over centuries.

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

'A History of God' has been influential in both academic and popular circles for promoting a nuanced understanding of God's concept, encouraging dialogue between faiths, and challenging simplistic views about religion.

Additional Resources

****A History of God Karen Armstrong: Tracing the Evolution of Faith and Scholarship****

a history of god karen armstrong reveals one of the most profound intellectual journeys through religion and spirituality in modern times. Karen Armstrong, a former nun turned acclaimed writer and commentator on religious affairs, has significantly influenced contemporary understandings of faith, myth, and the human quest for meaning. Her work bridges the gap between academic rigor and accessible narrative, providing readers with nuanced perspectives on the divine, interfaith dialogue, and the historical roots of world religions.

Armstrong's approach to religion is neither dogmatic nor dismissive; rather, it is investigative and empathetic, emphasizing the evolving nature of faith and the shared motifs underlying diverse spiritual traditions. In exploring the history of God through her writings, one uncovers a layered conversation about belief systems, cultural contexts, and the complex interplay between religion and society.

The Intellectual Journey of Karen Armstrong

Karen Armstrong's path to becoming a leading voice in religious studies began with her personal experiences within the Catholic Church. Entering a convent at the age of 17, Armstrong spent several years as a nun before leaving religious life to pursue academic interests. This background gave her a

unique vantage point: an insider's familiarity with religious devotion combined with the critical distance of a scholar.

Her early works, such as **Through the Narrow Gate** and **Beginning the World**, reflect a deep engagement with Christian theology and personal memoir. However, it was in books like **A History of God** (1993) that Armstrong gained international recognition. This seminal work is a sweeping historical analysis of the concept of God in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It traces how the idea of God has transformed from ancient polytheistic origins to the monotheistic traditions that dominate today.

Exploring the Evolution of the Divine

In **A History of God**, Armstrong meticulously charts the development of theological thought across millennia. She examines how God's nature has been interpreted and reinterpreted in response to changing philosophical, social, and political landscapes. For example, she discusses the transition from anthropomorphic depictions of deities in early Hebrew scriptures to more abstract, transcendent conceptions during later periods.

Armstrong also highlights the impact of historical events on religious beliefs. The Babylonian exile, the rise of Greek philosophy, and the spread of Islam all contributed to evolving understandings of the divine. Her analysis underscores the dynamic relationship between human culture and theological ideas, suggesting that the history of God is inseparable from the history of humanity itself.

Interfaith Dialogue and the Modern Relevance of God

Beyond historical analysis, Karen Armstrong is a passionate advocate for interfaith dialogue. She argues that many contemporary conflicts labeled as "religious" often stem from political, ethnic, or economic tensions rather than genuine theological disputes. By promoting a deeper understanding of different faith traditions, Armstrong encourages respect and cooperation among diverse communities.

Her concept of "compassion" as a central tenet across religions is a recurring theme in her later works, including **The Case for God** and **Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life**. This framework offers a practical and ethical dimension to the study of religion, moving beyond abstract theological debates to address real-world applications.

Comparative Features of Armstrong's Religious Scholarship

Karen Armstrong's scholarship stands out for several reasons:

- **Historical breadth:** She covers vast time periods and multiple religious traditions, revealing patterns and divergences in the idea of God.
- **Accessibility:** Armstrong writes for a general audience without sacrificing academic depth, making complex theological concepts understandable.
- **Empathy and neutrality:** Her tone is investigative rather than polemical, avoiding bias while engaging critically with religious doctrines.
- **Interdisciplinary approach:** Combining history, theology, sociology, and philosophy, Armstrong provides a holistic view of religion's role in human life.

These features contribute to her reputation as a balanced and insightful commentator on faith, earning praise from scholars and readers alike.

Pros and Cons of Armstrong's Approach

While Armstrong's contributions are widely respected, her work has elicited some critique:

1. Pros:

- Bridges gaps between academic and popular audiences.
- Encourages interreligious understanding and peace-building.
- Provides historical context that deepens comprehension of modern religious phenomena.

2. Cons:

- Some critics argue her sympathetic tone may underplay doctrinal differences.
- Her focus on monotheistic religions sometimes overlooks indigenous or Eastern spiritualities.
- Occasionally, her interpretations may reflect modern sensibilities more than traditional beliefs.

Despite these critiques, Armstrong's work remains a foundational resource for anyone interested in the history and philosophy of religion.

The Legacy and Continuing Influence of Karen Armstrong

Karen Armstrong's influence extends beyond her publications. She has participated in numerous conferences, lectures, and interfaith initiatives worldwide. Her efforts contribute to a broader cultural shift toward recognizing religion's complex role in shaping ethics, identity, and global affairs.

Moreover, Armstrong's emphasis on compassion and shared human values resonates powerfully in the contemporary climate of religious polarization. Through her historical lens, the concept of God emerges not as a fixed entity but as a living, evolving idea that reflects humanity's deepest hopes and fears.

In examining a history of god Karen Armstrong offers, one gains more than a chronological account; one encounters a profound meditation on faith's enduring mysteries and its capacity to unite rather than divide. As global societies continue to grapple with questions of spirituality and coexistence, Armstrong's scholarship invites ongoing reflection and dialogue.

[A History Of God Karen Armstrong](#)

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a history of god 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 karen armstrong: *A History of God* Karen Armstrong, 1993 We look first at the gradual move away from the pagan gods to the full-fledged monotheism of the Jews during the exile in Babylon. Next considered is the development of parallel, yet different, perceptions and beliefs among Christians and Muslims.

a history of god 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 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 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 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 karen armstrong: A History of God Karen Armstrong, As soon as they became recognizably human, men and women--in their hunger to understand their own presence on earth and the mysteries within and around them--began to worship gods. Karen Armstrong's masterly and illuminating book explores the ways in which the idea and experience of God evolved among the monotheists--Jews, Christians and Muslims. Weaving a multicolored fabric of historical, philosophical, intellectual and social developments and insights, Armstrong shows how, at various times through the centuries, each of the monotheistic religions has held a subtly different concept of God. At the same time she draws our attention to the basic and profound similarities among them, making it clear that in all of them God has been and is experienced intensely, passionately and often--especially in the West--traumatically. Some monotheists have seen darkness, desolation and terror, where others have seen light and transfiguration; the reasons for these inherent differences are examined, and the people behind them are brought to life. We look first at the gradual move away from the pagan gods to the full-fledged monotheism of the Jews during the exile in Babylon. Next considered is the development of parallel, yet different, perceptions and beliefs among Christians and Muslims. The book then moves generationally through time to examine the God of the philosophers and mystics in all three traditions, the God of the Reformation, the God of the Enlightenment and finally the nineteenth- and twentieth-century challenges of skeptics and atheists, as well as the fiercely reductive faith of the fundamentalists of our own day. Armstrong suggests that any particular idea of God must--if it is to survive--work for the people who develop it, and that ideas of God change when they cease to be effective. She argues that the concept of a personal God who behaves like a larger version of ourselves was suited to mankind at a certain stage but no longer works for an increasing number of people. Understanding the ever-changing ideas of God in the past and their relevance and usefulness in their time, she says, is a way to begin the search for a new concept for the twenty-first century. Her book shows that such a development is virtually inevitable, in spite of the despair of our increasingly Godless world, because it is a natural aspect of our humanity to seek a symbol for the ineffable reality that is universally perceived.--Publisher's description.

a history of god 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 karen armstrong: *Jerusalem* Karen Armstrong, 1997-04-29 **SPLENDID . . .** Eminently sane and patient . . . Essential reading for Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike. --The Washington Post 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. THE BEST SERIOUS, ACCESSIBLE HISTORY OF THE MOST SPIRITUALLY IMPORTANT CITY IN THE WORLD. --The Baltimore Sun A WORK OF IMPRESSIVE SWEEP AND GRANDEUR. --Los Angeles Times Book Review

a history of god karen armstrong: A History of Spirituality in Santa Fe: The City of Holy Faith Ana Pacheco, 2016-02-22 Shaped by early volcanic activity, the Sangre De Cristo and Jemez Mountain ranges surrounding Santa Fe create a uniquely spiritual landscape. Centuries ago, the Anasazi and their Pueblo Indian descendants believed the land was sacred and established communities in the area. In the early seventeenth century, the Spanish brought Catholicism to Santa Fe and christened it the City of Holy Faith. Other European faiths arrived in the mid-nineteenth century. By the twentieth century, religions from the East, along with New Thought and New Age practitioners, had established a foothold in the capital city. Sikhism, the fifth-largest religion in the world, was introduced to the western hemisphere from Santa Fe. The nature-based UDV religion of Brazil founded its first center in the United States in Santa Fe, which also includes the four major lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. Santa Fe city historian Ana Pacheco documents the rich religious and spiritual history of this high-mountain metaphysical community.

a history of god 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.

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