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A history of god book review

A history of god karen armstrong book review.

I struggled to fully comprehend the depth of Karen Armstrong's book, which explores humanity's evolving understanding of God over four centuries. The author delves into the works of numerous philosophers and theologians from Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions, tracing the development of our concept of God through specific writings, teachings, and ideas. The book is characterized by its thoroughness, with each chapter providing in-depth examinations of various aspects of God's nature, such as the Trinity, The God of Islam, and The God of the Mystics. These chapters could easily be standalone books, offering a wealth of information on the subject. My own experience with this topic began with a small, unknown author's book that posited an original separation between Grace (above) and Nature (below). Over time, nature consumed grace, leading to humanity's current understanding of God as something within us. This perspective is reflected in the mystics' pursuit of divine unity through meditation and contemplation. The more recent Universe Story also plays a role, suggesting that we are made of stardust and our ultimate origins lie in super nova explosions or black hole implosions. Armstrong's book stands out for its examination of Islamic mystic Muhi al-Din's theology, as well as the Jewish concept of Sabbatai Zevi. Additionally, her discussion of Friedrich Nietzsche's 'heretic atheist' is noteworthy, criticizing Christianity's promotion of morality and encouraging people to fear their bodies. The Western God has been criticized for promoting asceticism that alienates individuals from their humanity and sexual passion. The Protestant Reformation, which emphasized salvation through faith alone, significantly changed the Christian world by reducing the importance of living a virtuous life to achieve salvation. Instead, accepting faith in God was seen as sufficient for salvation. Many long-held traditions, such as the lives of saints, papal authority, intercessional prayer, and devotion to Mary Immaculate, were devalued. Karen Armstrong questions whether there is still room for God in a postmodern world. She argues that human beings cannot endure emptiness and desolation, and therefore seek alternative forms of meaning. Fundamentalist religious groups are not substitutes for God, but rather serve as empty idols. Armstrong suggests that studying the history of monotheistic religions can provide valuable lessons for creating a vibrant new faith in the 21st century. Diana Armstrong's work explores the commonalities among major religions, highlighting the significance of compassion and the Golden Rule. In 2006, she received the \$100,000 TED Prize, using the opportunity to propose the creation of a Charter for Compassion. The book delves into the evolution of God concepts in Christianity and Judaism, as well as the origins of Islam, although its dense prose may pose a challenge for readers without prior knowledge of these subjects. Armstrong's personal perspective offers introspective insights, sparking self-reflection on her lack of involvement with organized religion and encouraging an open-minded approach to diverse conceptions of God. However, some critics note that she displays bias towards Islam and elevates it above other faiths, which may be perceived as unbalanced or biased. Metaphors are an integral part of thought and language, yet misunderstanding them can lead to perpetual confusion. The danger lies not in the metaphor itself but in those who interpret it as a literal truth. Historical examples like the Holy Trinity in Christianity illustrate this point. Despite spending centuries trying to resolve the relationships between God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the enterprise was futile due to an initial misreading of metaphors in the New Testament. Fundamentalists often struggle with grasping metaphorical language or accepting that religious texts are poetry that use metaphors frequently. They might interpret the voice of the Lord God walking in a garden as a factual occurrence or believe Jesus' incarnation and salvation as literal events. In reality, these concepts are metaphors, representing ideas rather than realities. The educated few in religion develop metaphorical philosophical understandings of texts, while the uneducated many adopt credulous, literal readings. This separation often leads to misunderstandings, as seen in the New Testament's parables being incorrectly transformed into miracles. Stories like the stilling of a storm, feeding 5,000 people, turning water into wine, and the fig tree's withering have no meaning until read as parables. Jesus himself rejected miraculous acts during the Temptation story, highlighting that man should not live by bread alone but by every word of God. These misunderstandings were encoded into the canon at a time when oral tradition was being written down, leading to centuries of misinterpretations. The Church struggled to adapt its faith to the growing influence of science, ultimately painting itself into a corner. If it had remained mystical and transcendental, it might have avoided numerous embarrassing setbacks. However, this approach may have led to abandonment by the majority. Karen Armstrong's writing style is criticized for being poor. Some readers found her narrative too verbose and dry, causing them to abandon the book mid-read. Despite enjoying the book initially, one reader struggled to pick it up again due to its dense, omgph-free content. A notable anecdote from page 431 tells the story of a group of Jews in Auschwitz who put God on trial for betrayal and cruelty. The trial was guilty, but the Rabbi then led the evening prayer, signifying the end of the trial. This narrative resonates with some readers, particularly atheists who appreciate its thought-provoking nature. monothetism is widespread beyond judaism christianity and islam. however there was tension between two main views. one side had faith in an objective reality of god such as an all old man with a beard out there somewhere who smites people, another perspective was the subjective individual striving within oneself which can give rise to feelings of the numinous. she approves of this view while disliking the other that is prevalent in western european traditions. according to her this belief is misguided and led to problems. armstrongs book about god is a history of styles and beliefs about god. however she presents too many different viewpoints at once making it hard to follow her ideas. it's intriguing how women like Julian of Norwich, Bridget of Sweden, and Theresa of Avila barely managed to fit into a semingly male-dominated group. There were moments when it seemed the judgments might not be entirely representative or reasonable, but that's often the case with dense surveys. What stands out is Armstrong's perspective on Western European Christianity - she doesn't quite appreciate her own native tradition, viewing other faiths as less anxious and more compassionate. This could be seen as unfair, but in a post-colonial world, it's an interesting observation even if not entirely original. The idea that the grass is always greener elsewhere is a common belief among people who believe in a single God. Armstrong's passion for certain manifestations of faith is clear, and she isn't afraid to express her point of view. Her struggle with her own religious background is palpable, but there's also a sense of relief and comfort that comes from learning about the three major monotheisms. The ideal reader for this book would be someone who feels estranged or distant from their familiar Synagogue, Church, or Mosque. This book offers a broader perspective and might be particularly beneficial to those who feel disconnected from their faith community. Armstrong compares trends in Hinduism and Buddhism with the big three monotheisms, an area she could have explored further. Her description of Buddhist Nirvana is seen as analogous to the experience of God experienced by mystics from the monotheistic religions. The survey provides a wealth of detail and often raises curious questions. The reviewer praises Karen Armstrong's book for its comprehensive history of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Armstrong didn't shy away from exploring the polytheistic aspects of Hebrew practice before the Babylonian captivity. The author effectively showcases how ideas from one tradition influenced others, including the impact of pagan philosophers on Christianity, and the interconnections between developments in Judaism and Islam. While acknowledging that the book's sheer mass of characters can be overwhelming, the reviewer recommends having a solid background knowledge to navigate it smoothly. Without prior knowledge, readers may struggle to follow Armstrong's detailed analysis of figures like Arvensa and Aquinas. The reviewer highly praises the book for its engaging and educational progress through pages and chapters that are dense with detail. It'll be an example from page 270, where Laura gives a new meaning to the original image of the exile of the Shetima. The text is so complex it borders on being like reading a foreign language. To make matters worse, Armstrong's chapters lack headings for subgroups and have long paragraphs that require repeated re-reading to understand. I did like it, but re-reading the entire book isn't too cool in the end. I finished with a sense of accomplishment but not enthusiasm. A year ago, I had a Facebook conversation about religious tendencies that started with an Ambedkar quote criticizing Hindus for not spreading their beliefs to others. One respondent asked what's worse: using force to make others join your faith or keeping them out who want to convert? I added that there's another dimension - excluding people and then discriminating against them based on religion. Professor X disagrees with Ambedkar's views on Hinduism, saying it has hit the nail on the head. He believes Hinduism is the only major religion that focuses on exclusion as its theme, likely due to lack of occupation efforts. In contrast, religions in Southeast Asia, like Buddhism, have incorporated local traditions. Ambedkar argues that early Hinduism was an evangelizing religion, which stopped once the caste system solidified, but Ambedkar's interpretation is disputed. Karen Armstrong's novelistic approach to exploring the concept of God offers a unique lens through which to understand its evolution over 5,000 years. By examining the various forms and symbols associated with God in different cultures, Armstrong delves into how humans have worshipped and put faith in a higher source. She guides readers through a narrative that spans from biblical prophecies like Abraham to modern-day interpretations of God's existence. Armstrong sheds light on the transformation of God's role over time, particularly in relation to male clerics' appropriation of rituals and their exclusion from women. This appropriation led to the suppression of feminine divine inspirations, creating a disconnection between women and the perceived divine forces surrounding them. The author also critiques intolerance in various religions, with Islam being a focus of sympathetic attention. Armstrong's scholarly approach questions the survival of the concept of God, seeking to understand what remains essential or endures. As a Catholic nun turned scholar, she offers a distinct perspective that transcends her personal faith experience, emphasizing that religion is more than four and propagation. This book, "A History of God," presents a comprehensive exploration of comparative theology, covering Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It demands careful consideration, making it less suitable for casual readers. Armstrong's work provides a nuanced understanding of the concept of God across different cultures and faith traditions, many's evolving beliefs on God over 4,000 years span a significant development in understanding the concept of God. Applying historical analysis to the study of God's history is similar to studying any other 4,000-year period. Currently, we are living in an era dominated by rational thinking. Since Kant, philosophers have concluded that God's existence cannot be logically proven. Therefore, where does Ms. Armstrong take us after such influential thoughts? She emphasizes the intolerance inherent in monotheistic religions and highlights the need for compassion to attain spiritual enlightenment. Ms. Armstrong's views on spirituality are not limited to her departure from organized religion; she continues to search for meaning. Her conclusion is that compassion is a universal principle advocated by various faiths, as it helps individuals transcend egoism and foster a sense of connection with others. This idea resonates with Huxley's Perennial Philosophy, which stresses the importance of kindness in spiritual growth. This book offers valuable insights into Ms. Armstrong's thoughts on spirituality, making it an essential read for anyone seeking to understand this complex topic. Despite the limited Arabic translation, I hope that future translations will address the issues faced by her other works, particularly those dealing with deep theological and spiritual themes. The book delves into the religious dynamics between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, presenting an extensive exploration of how these three major monotheistic faiths have shaped humanity's understanding of God. Written by renowned expert Karen Armstrong, it is a comprehensive journey through history, philosophy, and comparative analysis, dumb and an alphabetic! But wot increased concentration, and a few reads, simple reruns of the same, very long paragraphs, I finally get it awl. There are several videos available on YouTube to enlighten the experiences. My problem is that I constantly fall asleep.However, I do think this book is worth reading for those who ar interested in an objeiv approach to the bridges we bld to God. October 23, 2010Karen Armstrong has no background in history nor in the academic study of religion, and it shows. This book's approach to the three Abrahamic religions is overly simplifying, presenting only Armstrong's off-sermoneous views of these three prominent religions with almost no groundings in historical fact. She picks and chooses which verses to cite in accordance wth her own biases and agendas, and it is clear that however much distaste she might put between her self as a nun and her self as an armchair historian, she will never be able to escape her Katolik origin. Book like this ar part of the reason why so many non-academics have such a poor understanding of the history of religion in the world, and do little more than contribute to the cloud of misinformation which surrounds teh field.Kaelan Ratcliffe ■ Kaelan RatcliffeMarch 24, 2019 This was a great book that seriously, seriously bolstered my understanding of the history of God, and has ultimately ignited an interest in me to read further books on the more specific areas of religion practis. As such, I had a number of things I wanted to say in my review, yet, I think a quick bit of advice would suffice as an afterthought: Unless you're moving into teh field of Theology (in which cas I doubt you'll need this essay!) I would advise NOT to try and kill your enjoyment over memorizing evry name, evry sub-baptist and evry believer system held about God that this book. You'll kill your enjoyment, and ultimately the gist of teh book and along wif it. Instead, try and kill what's a curious, open attitude whilst allowing yourself to be guided through teh pages of Karen Armstrong's hard earned endeavor. I find that I enjoyd this text immensely when simply learning about how human beeing tried to understand the ineffable. Teh different peoples who went up against dis question has been up with sum interesting thought trails, and its quite fun to see how sciety throughout tim has tried to understand teh unknowable. The authors conclusion that despite differing doctrines, many people arrive at similar conclusions after a thorough examination of their beliefs. The author advises readers to test themselves while reading the book and re-evaluate their stance on the topic. They believe this will result in a significant change in perspective. In essence, the book is an exploration of humanity's attempt to understand its purpose, which will likely leave readers with a newfound understanding. Penulis oleh penulis yang tidak diketahui. Saya merasakan bahwa buku ini tidak dapat dianggap hanya karena penulis mencoba menangan topik yang luar biasa dan akhirnya mengungkap banyak ide dalam rangkaian tulisan.Meski ada bagian-bagian yang memperlakukan pandangan yang sangat menarik, namun sebagian besar teks tersebut terasa berat dan sulit diajarkan. Selain fokus pada akar pemikiran floods, mistis, religius, dan modern, buku ini juga membahas fenomena lainnya ateisme pada abad 20-21. Potensi salah satu penyebabnya adalah tragedi Holocaust, saat manusia mulai merasa ditanggalkan Tuhan tanpa mengesampingkan perkembangan teknologi dan ilmu pasti yang dirasa lebih rasional daripada memnungi semacam "penanaman wujud Tuhan" dalam mengatasi persoalan manusia. Yang saya kagumi dari penulis adalah upaya memperlakukan Tuhan dan mengungkapkannya pada konsep penanaman yang ada di dunia sejak zaman pagaman hingga saat ini. Rasanya cukup mendalam, serta usaha untuk tetap obyektif dalam menanggapi hal yang sensitif ini. Namun, buku ini dapat menjadi lebih baik jika penulis mengeksplorasi ide-ide tersebut dengan lebih kritis dan mencoba menjelaskan hubungan satu sama lain yang ada. When Alderson emerged, it was indeed fascinating. However, I think the author could have done better by structuring the book around "why" rather than just presenting historical facts. The book covers over 4,000 years of history, focusing on monotheistic faiths and dividing the world into different periods. While this provides a good overview, it's not particularly insightful or original. For instance, the section on Thomas Aquinas and his translations from Arabic to Latin was informative, especially the anecdote about how he felt outsmarted by Aristotle's writings. The book also explores philosophical transformations over time, which is thought-provoking. However, this isn't a comprehensive history of God; it's more focused on Judeo-Christianity in relation to other historical events and cultural developments. This bias is evident in the limited discussion of Islam and the complete omission of Buddhism. While the sheer amount of research that went into writing the book is impressive, the writing style can be painful to read. Therefore, I'd give it a 2 out of 5 stars. If you're researching this subject, you may want to read it, but make sure to grab a strong cup of coffee first. The concept of God is explored in depth by Karen Armstrong, showcasing her humanistic approach to theology. It's not just a history of God; it's a more mystical understanding. The book covers over 4,000 years of history, focusing on monotheistic faiths and dividing the world into different periods. While this provides a good overview, it's not particularly insightful or original. For instance, the section on Thomas Aquinas and his translations from Arabic to Latin was informative, especially the anecdote about how he felt outsmarted by Aristotle's writings. 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