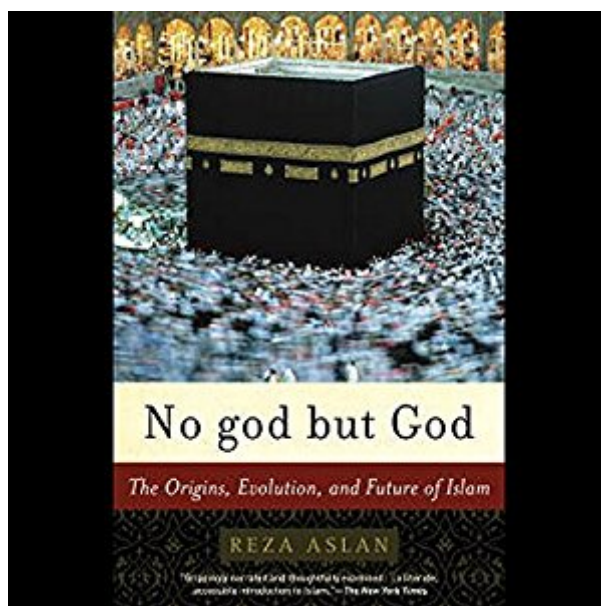


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No God But God: The Origins, Evolution, And Future Of Islam



Synopsis

Though it is the fastest growing religion in the world, Islam remains shrouded by ignorance and fear. What is the essence of this ancient faith? Is it a religion of peace or war? How does Allah differ from the God of Jews and Christians? Can an Islamic state be founded on democratic values such as pluralism and human rights? A writer and scholar of comparative religions, Reza Aslan has earned international acclaim for the passion and clarity he has brought to these questions. In *No god but God*, challenging the "clash of civilizations" mentality that has distorted our view of Islam, Aslan explains this critical faith in all its complexity, beauty, and compassion. Contrary to popular perception in the West, Islam is a religion firmly rooted in the prophetic traditions of the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Aslan begins with a vivid account of the social and religious milieu in which the Prophet Muhammad lived. The revelations that Muhammad received in Mecca and Medina, which were recorded in the Quran, became the foundation for a radically more egalitarian community, the likes of which had never been seen before. Soon after his death, the Prophet's successors set about the overwhelming task of defining and interpreting Muhammad's message for future generations. Their efforts led to the development of a comprehensive code of conduct that was expected to regulate every aspect of the believer's life. But this attempt only widened the chasm between orthodox Islam and its two major sects, Shiism and Sufism, both of which Aslan discusses in rich detail. Finally, *No god but God* examines how, in the shadow of European colonialism, Muslims developed conflicting strategies to reconcile traditional Islamic values with the social and political realities of the modern world. With the emergence of the Islamic state in the twentieth century, this contest over the future of Islam has become a passionate, sometimes violent battle between those who seek to enforce a rigid and archaic legal code and those who struggle to harmonize the teachings of the Prophet with contemporary ideals of democracy and human rights. According to Reza Aslan, we are now living in the era of "the Islamic Reformation." *No god but God* is a persuasive and elegantly written account of the roots of this reformation and the future of Islamic faith. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A few days after I was asked if I'd be willing to review Reza Aslan's new book "No god but God," and before I committed myself to doing so, I happened to catch the author's appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press" where he and four other gentlemen were discussing the role of religion in current affairs. The panel included the author, two Protestant leaders, one Roman Catholic theologian, and an editor from a news magazine, and Aslan was by far the youngest participant. I was so impressed with his discussion of the topic, particularly in reference to the impact of Islam on the world today, its historical antecedents, and what is currently going on, that I immediately consented to read and review his book. I'm glad I did. Reza Aslan is a brilliant young scholar of Islam and also of comparative religion in general, just the sort that we so dearly need today when there is so much confusion surrounding one of the world's great historical religions and its theological beliefs and political intentions. Born in Iran a few years prior to the overthrow of the Shah and the return of the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, the young boy was whisked out of the country and settled in the United States. Later, he studied religions at Santa Clara University, Harvard University, and the University of California at Santa Barbara. At the University of Iowa he received a master's degree in fine arts and served as a visiting assistant professor of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. In my opinion, one of the advantages he has when speaking and writing about Islam for the American audience is that he is not only knowledgeable about his own heritage, but appears to be thoroughly acquainted with the Western religious tradition and the American culture.

The first thing that struck me about this book is how well-written it is. I am a writer with about 5,000 articles in print or online. I'm also an editor, and I am noted for my harsh evaluations of the writing of others--most people simply do not write well. Reza Aslan writes well. Extremely well. By the time I was into the second page of this book, I felt that if Aslan had written a book about navel lint--I would still want to read it. Couple the excellent writing with quality content, and you have a captivating book. When the subject is an authoritative explanation of Islam, the book becomes a must read for

two groups of people: Those who are Muslims, and those who are not. Aslan takes us on a journey through time. We see Muhammad before he becomes the "messenger of God," and we see his struggles along the way. From this, you can understand how Islam got its start. And then we see the various forces that act upon Islam as a blacksmith's hammer acts upon hot metal, and we watch this religion take shape over centuries. Today, Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world. But, it's also a sharply fragmented religion. Aslan explain the origins of the various factions shaping Islam today. There's a strong parallel to what happened in Christianity. And, Aslan draws on this parallel to explain a core concept of the book--that Islam is far from monolithic. You have to remember that Christianity got a 500 year head start on Islam. Read your history of the West, and you can see Islam along the same trajectory. Americans, in the aftershock of September 11, generally felt much of the Islamic world had declared war on the West.

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