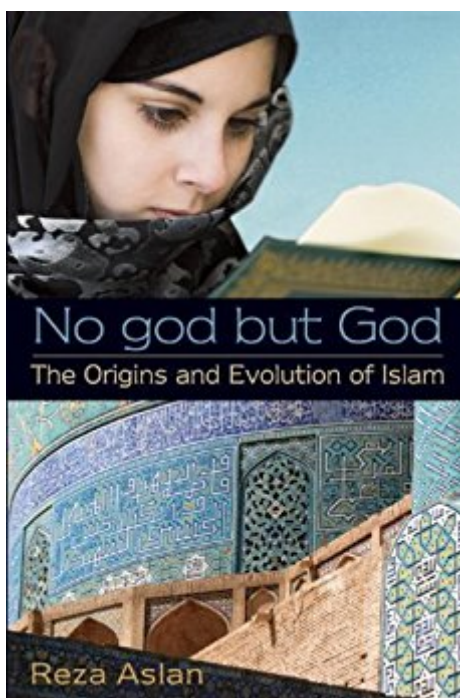


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# No God But God: The Origins And Evolution Of Islam



## Synopsis

An invaluable introduction for young readers to a faith that for much of the West remains shrouded in ignorance and fear. Written by Reza Aslan, an internationally acclaimed scholar of comparative religion, *No god but God* examines Islam: its rituals and traditions, the revelation of Muhammad as Prophet and the subsequent uprising against him, and the emergence of his successors. Engaging, accessible, and thought-provoking, *No god but God* is sure to stimulate discussion and encourage understanding of the Islamic faith and the people who follow it. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

File Size: 486 KB

Print Length: 176 pages

Publisher: Delacorte Books for Young Readers (February 8, 2011)

Publication Date: February 8, 2011

Sold by: Amazon.com Random House LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B004EPZ69M

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #462,234 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #7

in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Children's eBooks > Religions > Islam #14 in Books >

Teens > Religion & Spirituality > Islam #35 in Books > Teens > Education & Reference >

Social Science > Anthropology

## Customer Reviews

Please note that this book, published under Random House's "Ember" imprint, is an abridged version of author Reza Aslan's original book, edited for teen readers. Do not confuse this product with the original edition for adults. The two can be distinguished by looking closely at the title: the adult version contains the phrase "Origins, Evolution, and Future", whereas the teen edition contains only "Origins and Evolution". The updated adult edition can be found here: [No god but God \(Updated Edition\): The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam](#)

An outstanding, clear, dispassionate and short history, by an Islamic scholar, of the social and political origins of Islam and of its development as a global religion. The author explains clearly the historical, secular origins of Islam, of the Shia/Sunni doctrinal schism, of the unfortunate fissiparous consequences of the lack of a central doctrinal religious authority in Islam and the recent perversion of Muhammad's inclusive, ecumenical and morally generous message by such as ISIS and Al Qaeda.

I wanted to get some idea about Islam as a religion to try to understand better the things going on now. The book was enlightening in that respect. The political maneuvering that went on early in the life of Islam seems to have defined the various belief streams in the religion from peacefulness and kindness to violence and from tremendous tolerance to intolerance. Those extremes were present in early Islam and they are still present today. And the struggles between the different belief streams are as present now as they were 14 centuries ago in the early years of the religion.

UPDATE: Just read some of the other reviews and realized this is the abridged version...Well that's just frustrating... I don't think it changes my review, but maybe explains why I didn't like it very much. \*\*\*\*\*I'm not religious, but find religion fascinating. I also find islamic history very interesting, without knowing a whole lot about it.I read Zealot and enjoyed that and was interested in seeing what Aslan brought to a history of Islam.I wanted to understand both the history and beliefs of islam better.A few areas where I wasn't satisfied.1. As in Zealot, Aslan frequently doesn't distinguish when he is talking about what believers believe vs. what historians believe. I had several cases where I couldn't tell if what I was reading was what the koran said or what historians had verified. I know there is a balance (ie it would have been a SLOW book if every sentence was marked as history or koran).. but a chapter or two saying which was which would have been great..2. Almost no time was spent on the basic islamic traditions... Why pray 5 times a day? What about the major holidays? etc... I don't think I really learned much about the religion itself.3. He more or less abruptly stops long before modern times. Very little attention is paid to how modern Islam came about (for example, s\*\*\*e and sunni are mentioned, but not followed through on... seems like these are sort of a big deal in modern islam, right?).4. In the last few chapters, Aslan tries to explain why some of the uglier beliefs of Islam (attitude towards women, jihad, etc) are misinterpretations of the real message.Which is fine. I'm not one to paint an entire religion by the views of it's extremists. But those chapters feel completely

tacked on. Especially when he stops the Islamic history somewhere in the 1100s. It's like he completely changed the subject. Anyways... short summary is I didn't feel like I got the history lesson I was hoping for.

This book is a good basic biography of the life of the prophet Mohammed, clearly written for the non-specialist who wishes to know more about the events of Mohammed's life and the environment in which Islam developed. I enjoyed Aslan's introduction to the religious atmosphere of pre-Islamic Arabia, of which I had no previous knowledge, and found the introduction of concepts like henotheism to be stimulating and informative for a reader like myself who has some degree of formal knowledge of the study of religion but lacking the technical vocabulary employed by scholars in the field. Likewise, I thought the attempt to rescue Mohammed's teachings about the place of women in Islam and the place of the other Peoples of the Book (among other examples) from later deviations and interpretations of the Quran and Hadith was very much worth writing the book, especially for Western readers. Where I was disappointed with the book was the sort of hazy discussion of his military achievements, and would have liked to see more detail about that aspect of his life, but I imagine Aslan did not want to antagonize or provoke Western readers who would be more than willing to discount the value of the Prophet's life and teachings on the basis of his military campaigns. All in all, this is a very good book for an adult reader who is unfamiliar with the life of Mohammed and the structures and content of Islamic scripture and belief.

I am about half-way through it at the moment. I bought it because of Aslan's book on Jesus (Zealot: the Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth). It doesn't appear to be as thorough a study as the Jesus book, but it does cover the early life and endeavors of the prophet Mohammed - a subject that has not been nearly explored enough by historians.

This was a clear concise overview of the origins of Islam and life of Mohammed. It is an excellent start to one's understanding of a faith with deep roots to Judaism and Christianity. It will generate a thoughtful dialogue among our interfaith group which seeks to bring respect and understanding within our faith communities.

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