

The Case for God – What Religion Really Means by Karen Armstrong.  
Bodley Head 2009.

Like a fine wine, Karen Armstrong's writing just gets better and better, and more powerful and authoritative. The Case for God, a companion volume in many ways to her ante-penultimate book, The Great Transformation: The Beginning of our Religious Traditions is her contribution to the so-called 'God debate' begun, rather hysterically, by Richard Dawkins' The God Delusion and Christopher Hitchens' God is not Great.

The Case for God is divided into two sections, each with six chapters, entitled The Unknown God (From 30,000 BCE to 1500 CE) and The Modern God (From 1500 CE to the Present). Armstrong combines archaeology and history, anthropology and sociology together with theology as she details the rich and ancient tapestry that is human belief in a higher power.

She also considers the collision between faith and the enlightenment and religion and science and why the debate over religion has become so polarised, and the adherents of some religions have become so fanatical. She also discusses the development of certain key religious doctrines, some of which are not nearly as ancient as might be expected.

Karen Armstrong concludes this excellent and thought-provoking survey with the view that the faiths need to be more open to silence and unknowing and less dogmatic and assertive, the latter often flying in the face of the attitudes of earlier times, a sentiment to which open-minded people, of faith or none, should enthusiastically answer 'Amen'.

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