

Actually, I *would* like to know how Reza Aslan's faith informs his book

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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I agree with everyone everywhere: [Fox News's "why would a Muslim write about Jesus???" interview of Reza Aslan](#) was pretty lousy stuff, yet he handled himself quite well, and good for him for [selling more books because of it](#). All correct.

Yet I'm puzzled by what both Aslan's on-air defense and many subsequent commentators imply: that academic/professional credentials inform a person's writing *to the exclusion of* personal convictions. Do we really think this is true, or should be? Yes, honest research and fair analysis are different in kind from ideological hackery, and it's quite clear that Aslan's doing the former. But that doesn't mean it makes no difference whatsoever that he's a Muslim. If postmodernism has taught us anything, it's that we all speak and write and do whatever from a particular location. That location doesn't mean you're biased, but nor does it mean nothing.

I'd actually like to know why Aslan decided to write this book, and what it was like for him as a Muslim. Not because it would in any way damage his credibility in my eyes, but because I would find it fascinating. Muslims, after all, revere Jesus—though in markedly different ways than Christians do. What's it like to write and speak about someone whom most Americans call the son of God but you do not? Must be interesting.

So if I were interviewing Aslan, I might well ask the same question Lauren Green did. I'd ask it in a tone of genuine curiosity, not incredulous disrespect. And I'd ask it once. Probably at the end of an interview that was mostly about the actual ideas in the book he wrote. I don't blame Aslan for declining to interpret Green's question as anything less than a challenge. He was clearly being put on the defensive, and he defended himself ably. But removed from that context, it's still one good question—among many!—to ask him.

Lots of folks have pointed out that Fox never asks Christian guests why they write/talk/bloviate about Islam. It's a good point, but not just rhetorically. Maybe

they *should* ask them. The double standard is a big problem, but people's actual motivations for looking into other faiths—with expertise and fairness or otherwise—are at least as interesting to me.

Also: I'll tip my hat to *BuzzFeed* for its ability to write [a headline we couldn't not click if we tried](#). But I still think [this](#) is Fox at its most embarrassing ever.