

Rodney Stark The Rise Of Christianity

Jan N. Bremmer

The Rise of Christianity Rodney Stark, 1996-06-02 Rodney Stark, a sociologist by training, has written a book that should end much of the Christian-bashing occurring in academia. Stark demonstrates that Christianity became popular very quickly because it offered its adherents a better faith than competing religions and treated those believers better both physically and spiritually.

The Rise of Christianity Rodney Stark, 2020-06-16 A landmark reinterpretation of why Christianity became the dominant faith of the West The idea that Christianity started as a clandestine movement among the poor is a widely accepted notion. Yet it is one of many myths that must be discarded if we are to understand just how a tiny messianic movement on the edge of the Roman Empire became the dominant faith of Western civilization. In a fast-paced, highly readable book that addresses beliefs as well as historical facts, Rodney Stark brings a sociologist's perspective to bear on the puzzle behind the success of early Christianity. He comes equipped not only with the logic and methods of social science but also with insights gathered firsthand into why people convert and how new religious groups recruit members. He digs deep into the historical evidence on many issues—such as the social background of converts, the mission to the Jews, the status of women in the church, the role of martyrdom—to provide a vivid and unconventional account of early Christianity. The author plots the most plausible curve of Christian growth from the year 40 to 300. By the time of Constantine, Christianity had become a considerable force, with growth patterns very similar to those of modern-day successful religious movements. An unusual number of Christian converts, for example, came from the educated, cosmopolitan classes. Because it offered a new perspective on familiar concepts and was not linked to ethnicity, Christianity had a large following among persons seeking to assimilate into the dominant culture, mainly Hellenized Jews. The oversupply of women in Christian communities—due partly to the respect and protection they received—led to intermarriages with pagans, hence more conversions, and to a high fertility rate. Stark points out, too, the role played by selflessness and faith. Amidst the epidemics, fires, and other disasters that beleaguered Greco-Roman cities, Christian communities were a stronghold of mutual aid, which resulted in a survival rate far greater than that of the pagans. In the meantime, voluntary martyrdom, especially a generation after the death of Christ, reinforced the commitment of the Christian rank and file. What Stark ultimately offers is a multifaceted portrait of early Christianity, one that appeals to practical reasoning, historical curiosity, and personal reflection.

The Rise of Christianity Rodney Stark, 1997-05-09 This fresh, blunt, and highly persuasive account of how the West was won—for Jesus (Newsweek) is now available in paperback. Stark's provocative report challenges conventional wisdom and finds that Christianity's astounding dominance of the Western world arose from its offer of a better, more secure way of life. Compelling reading (Library Journal) that is sure to generate spirited argument (Publishers Weekly), this account of Christianity's remarkable growth within the Roman Empire is the subject of much fanfare. Anyone who has puzzled over Christianity's rise to dominance...must read it. says Yale University's Wayne A. Meeks, for The Rise of Christianity makes a compelling case for startling conclusions. Combining his expertise in social science with historical evidence, and his insight into contemporary religion's appeal, Stark finds that early Christianity attracted the privileged rather than the poor, that most early converts were women or marginalized Jews—and ultimately that Christianity was a success because it proved those who joined it with a more appealing, more assuring, happier, and perhaps longer life (Andrew M. Greeley, University of Chicago).

The Triumph of Christianity Rodney Stark, 2011-10-25 The religious historian and author of God's Battalions delivers an accessible and illuminating account of Christianity's rise in the West. In The Triumph of Christianity, celebrated sociologist and religious historian Rodney Stark traces the extraordinary rise of Christianity through its most pivotal and controversial moments to offer fresh perspective on the history of the world's largest religion. Stark gathers and distills decades of authoritative research into a concise and highly readable volume that explores Christianity's most crucial episodes. Stark begins with an overview of the pre-Christian religious landscape before examining how Christianity spread among the Roman Empire's elite—especially women—and then expanded throughout Europe. Eschewing dense chronologies, Stark delivers a fascinating and often surprising narrative, bringing readers right to the heart of Christian history's most vital controversies and enduring lessons.

Cities of God Rodney Stark, 2006-10-31 A leading expert on early Christianity presents new, authentic, and sometimes startling facts and statistics about the rise of early Christianity, and reveals how it grew to become the world's greatest religion.

A Star in the East Rodney Stark, Xiuhua Wang, 2015-05-02 What is the state of Christianity in China? Some scholars say that China is invulnerable to religion. In contrast, others say that past efforts of missionaries have failed, writing off those converted as nothing more than “rice Christians” or cynical souls who had frequented the missions for the benefits they provided. Some wonder if the Cultural Revolution extinguished any chances of Christianity in China. Rodney Stark and Xiuhua Wang offer a different perspective, arguing that Christianity is alive, well, and on the rise. Stark approaches the topic from an extensive research background in Christianity and Chinese history, and Wang provides an inside look at Christianity and its place in her home country of China. Both authors cover the history of religion in China, disproving older theories

concerning the number of Christians and the kinds of Christians that have emerged in the past 155 years. Stark and Wang claim that when just considering the visible Christians—those not part of underground churches—thousands of Chinese are still converted to Christianity daily, and forty new churches are opening each week. A Star in the East draws on two major national surveys to sketch a close-up of religion in China. A reliable estimate is that by 2007 there were approximately 60 million Christians in China. If the current growth rate were to hold until 2030, there would be more Christians in China—about 295 million—than in any other nation. This trend has significant implications, not just for China but for the greater world order. It is probable that Chinese Christianity will splinter into denominations, likely leading to the same political, social, and economic ramifications seen in the West today. Whether you're new to studying Christianity in China or whether this has been your area of interest for years, A Star in the East provides a reliable, thought-provoking, and engaging account of the resilience of the Christian faith in China and the implications it has for the future.

Discovering God Rodney Stark, 2007-10-02 Discovering God is a monumental history of the origins of the great religions from the Stone Age to the Modern Age. Sociologist Rodney Stark surveys the birth and growth of religions around the world—from the prehistoric era of primal beliefs; the history of the pyramids found in Iraq, Egypt, Mexico, and Cambodia; and the great Axial Age of Plato, Zoroaster, Confucius, and the Buddha, to the modern Christian missions and the global spread of Islam. He argues for a free-market theory of religion and for the controversial thesis that under the best, unimpeded conditions, the true, most authentic religions will survive and thrive. Among his many conclusions: Despite decades of faulty reports that early religions were crude muddles of superstition, it turns out that primitive humans had surprisingly sophisticated notions about God and Creation. The idea of sin appeared suddenly in the sixth century BCE and quickly reshaped religious ideas from Europe to China. Some major world religions seem to lack any plausible traces of divine inspiration. Ironically, some famous figures who attempted to found Godless religions ended up being worshiped as Gods. Most people believe in the existence of God (or Gods), and this has apparently been so throughout human history. Many modern biologists and psychologists reject these spiritual ideas, especially those about the existence of God, as delusional. They claim that religion is a primitive survival mechanism that should have been discarded as humans evolved beyond the stage where belief in God served any useful purpose—that in modern societies, faith is a misleading crutch and an impediment to reason. In Discovering God, award-winning sociologist Rodney Stark responds to this position, arguing that it is our capacity to understand God that has evolved—that humans now know much more about God than they did in ancient times.

The Rise of Christianity Through the Eyes of Gibbon, Harnack and Rodney Stark Jan N. Bremmer, 2010 The rise of Christianity up to the victory of Constantine has often been studied and remains a puzzling phenomenon. In this valedictory lecture Jan N. Bremmer concentrates on the explanations adduced, focusing in particular on the works of three

iconic figures from the last two hundred and fifty years: The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire of Edward Gibbon, the most famous ancient historian of all time, at the end of the eighteenth century; Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums of Adolf von Harnack, the greatest historian of early Christianity of all time, around 1900, and The Rise of Christianity of Rodney Stark, the most adventurous sociologist of religion of our times, at the end of the twentieth century. Bremmer locates their concerns and explanations within their own times, but also takes them seriously as scholars, discussing their analyses and approaches. In this way he shows both the continuities and the innovations in the evolving view which scholarship presents of early Christianity. Bremmer's exceptional knowledge of the huge range of scholarship and his humane and balanced judgment make this lecture the ideal introduction to the many problems raised by Christianity's displacement of paganism

The Triumph of Faith Rodney Stark, 2023-08-22 God is not dead. —Wall Street Journal Believe it or not, the world is more religious than ever before. Everyone seems to take it for granted that the world is getting more secular—that faith is doomed by modernity. Scientists, secularists, and atheists applaud the change; religious believers lament it. But here's the thing: they're all wrong—and the bestselling author and influential scholar of religion Rodney Stark has the numbers to prove it. The Triumph of Faith explodes the myth that people around the world are abandoning religion. Stark marshals an unprecedented body of data—surveys of more than a million people in 163 nations—to paint the full picture that both scholars and popular commentators have missed. And he explains why the astonishing growth of religion is happening and what it means for our future. Stark's bracing book is full of insights that defy the conventional wisdom. With vigorous prose he reveals: •Why claims about Millennials' lack of religion are overblown and historically ignorant •Why Islam is NOT overtaking Christianity •How 4 out of 5 people worldwide now belong to an organized religion •How 50 percent have attended a worship service in the past week •Why much-ballyhooed studies from the Pew Research Center and others get the religious landscape wrong •Why atheists remain few, anywhere—despite all the talk of the New Atheism As Stark shows, secularists have been predicting the imminent demise of religion for centuries. It is their unshakable faith in secularization that may be the most irrational of all beliefs. As the author of How the West Won, The Victory of Reason, and many other bestselling works, Rodney Stark has a richly deserved reputation for writing page-turning, myth-busting books. He is also a groundbreaking scholar who has so reshaped the social scientific study of religion that his work has become the basis of a new paradigm. Stark puts all those talents on full display in The Triumph of Faith. This book will change how you see both religion and the forces of secularization.

The Victory of Reason Rodney Stark, 2007-12-18 Many books have been written about the success of the West, analyzing why Europe was able to pull ahead of the rest of the world by the end of the Middle Ages. The most common explanations cite the West's superior geography, commerce, and technology. Completely overlooked is the fact that faith in reason, rooted

in Christianity's commitment to rational theology, made all these developments possible. Simply put, the conventional wisdom that Western success depended upon overcoming religious barriers to progress is utter nonsense. In *The Victory of Reason*, Rodney Stark advances a revolutionary, controversial, and long overdue idea: that Christianity and its related institutions are, in fact, directly responsible for the most significant intellectual, political, scientific, and economic breakthroughs of the past millennium. In Stark's view, what has propelled the West is not the tension between secular and nonsecular society, nor the pitting of science and the humanities against religious belief. Christian theology, Stark asserts, is the very font of reason: While the world's other great belief systems emphasized mystery, obedience, or introspection, Christianity alone embraced logic and reason as the path toward enlightenment, freedom, and progress. That is what made all the difference. In explaining the West's dominance, Stark convincingly debunks long-accepted "truths." For instance, by contending that capitalism thrived centuries before there was a Protestant work ethic—or even Protestants—he counters the notion that the Protestant work ethic was responsible for kicking capitalism into overdrive. In the fifth century, Stark notes, Saint Augustine celebrated theological and material progress and the institution of "exuberant invention." By contrast, long before Augustine, Aristotle had condemned commercial trade as "inconsistent with human virtue"—which helps further underscore that Augustine's times were not the Dark Ages but the incubator for the West's future glories. This is a sweeping, multifaceted survey that takes readers from the Old World to the New, from the past to the present, overturning along the way not only centuries of prejudiced scholarship but the antireligious bias of our own time. *The Victory of Reason* proves that what we most admire about our world—scientific progress, democratic rule, free commerce—is largely due to Christianity, through which we are all inheritors of this grand tradition.

How the West Won Rodney Stark, 2014-03-17 Finally the Truth about the Rise of the West Modernity developed only in the West—in Europe and North America. Nowhere else did science and democracy arise; nowhere else was slavery outlawed. Only Westerners invented chimneys, musical scores, telescopes, eyeglasses, pianos, electric lights, aspirin, and soap. The question is, Why? Unfortunately, that question has become so politically incorrect that most scholars avoid it. But acclaimed author Rodney Stark provides the answers in this sweeping new look at Western civilization. *How the West Won* demonstrates the primacy of uniquely Western ideas—among them the belief in free will, the commitment to the pursuit of knowledge, the notion that the universe functions according to rational rules that can be discovered, and the emphasis on human freedom and secure property rights. Taking readers on a thrilling journey from ancient Greece to the present, Stark challenges much of the received wisdom about Western history. *How the West Won* shows, for example: · Why the fall of Rome was the single most beneficial event in the rise of Western civilization · Why the "Dark Ages" never happened · Why the Crusades had nothing to do with grabbing loot or attacking the Muslim world unprovoked · Why there was no "Scientific Revolution" · Why scholars' recent efforts to dismiss the importance of battles are ridiculous: had the Greeks lost at the

Battle of Marathon, we probably would never have heard of Plato or Aristotle Stark also debunks absurd fabrications that have flourished in the past few decades: that the Greeks stole their culture from Africa; that the West's "discoveries" were copied from the Chinese and Muslims; that Europe became rich by plundering the non-Western world. At the same time, he reveals the woeful inadequacy of recent attempts to attribute the rise of the West to purely material causes—favorable climates, abundant natural resources, guns and steel. How the West Won displays Rodney Stark's gifts for lively narrative history and making the latest scholarship accessible to all readers. This bold, insightful book will force you to rethink your understanding of the West and the birth of modernity—and to recognize that Western civilization really has set itself apart from other cultures.

Cities of God Rodney Stark, 2007-10-30 How did the preaching of a peasant carpenter from Galilee spark a movement that would grow to include over two billion followers? Who listened to this good news, and who ignored it? Where did Christianity spread, and how? Based on quantitative data and the latest scholarship, preeminent scholar and journalist Rodney Stark presents new and startling information about the rise of the early church, overturning many prevailing views of how Christianity grew through time to become the largest religion in the world. Drawing on both archaeological and historical evidence, Stark is able to provide hard statistical evidence on the religious life of the Roman Empire to discover the following facts that set conventional history on its head: Contrary to fictions such as The Da Vinci Code and the claims of some prominent scholars, Gnosticism was not a more sophisticated, more authentic form of Christianity, but really an unsuccessful effort to paganize Christianity. Paul was called the apostle to the Gentiles, but mostly he converted Jews. Paganism was not rapidly stamped out by state repression following the vision and conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine in 312 AD, but gradually disappeared as people abandoned the temples in response to the superior appeal of Christianity. The oriental faiths—such as those devoted to Isis, the Egyptian goddess of love and magic, and to Cybele, the fertility goddess of Asia Minor—actually prepared the way for the rapid spread of Christianity across the Roman Empire. Contrary to generations of historians, the Roman mystery cult of Mithraism posed no challenge to Christianity to become the new faith of the empire—it allowed no female members and attracted only soldiers. By analyzing concrete data, Stark is able to challenge the conventional wisdom about early Christianity offering the clearest picture ever of how this religion grew from its humble beginnings into the faith of more than one-third of the earth's population.

Summary: The Victory of Reason BusinessNews Publishing, 2017-01-30 The must-read summary of Rodney Stark's book: The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success. This complete summary of The Victory of Reason by Rodney Stark, a prominent American sociologist of religion, presents his argument that Christianity and its institutions are responsible for the most significant breakthroughs of the past millennium. In his book, the author explains how Christianity is what led to the success of the West. Added-value of this summary: • Save time • Understand how

Christianity contributed to the founding of Western civilization • Expand your knowledge of politics and religion To learn more, read *The Victory of Reason* and discover why the West owes all of its successes to Christianity.

Bearing False Witness Rodney Stark, 2016-04-26 As we all know and as many of our well-established textbooks have argued for decades, the Inquisition was one of the most frightening and bloody chapters in Western history; Pope Pius XII was anti-Semitic and rightfully called “Hitler’s Pope,” the Dark Ages were stunting the progress of knowledge to be redeemed only by the secular spirit of the Enlightenment. The religious Crusades were an early example of the rapacious Western thirst for riches and power. But what if these long held beliefs were all wrong? In this stunning, powerful, and ultimately persuasive book, Rodney Stark, one of the most highly regarded sociologists of religion and bestselling author of *The Rise of Christianity* (HarperSanFrancisco 1997), argues that some of our most firmly held ideas about history, ideas that paint the Catholic Church in the least favorable light are, in fact, fiction. Why have we held these wrongheaded ideas so firmly and for so long? And if our beliefs are wrong, what is the truth? In each chapter, Stark takes on a well-established anti-Catholic myth, gives a fascinating history of how each myth became conventional wisdom and presents a startling picture of the real truth. For example, instead of the Spanish Inquisition being an anomaly of torture and murder of innocent people persecuted for “imaginary” crimes such as witchcraft and blasphemy, Stark argues that not only did the Spanish Inquisition spill very little blood, but it was a major force in support of moderation and justice. Stark dispels the myth of Pope Pius XII being apathetic or even helpful to the Nazi movement, such as to merit the title “Hitler’s Pope,” and instead shows that the campaign to link Pope Pius XII to Hitler was initiated by the Soviet Union, presumably in hopes of neutralizing the Vatican in post-World War II affairs. Many praised Pope Pius XII’s vigorous and devoted efforts to saving Jewish lives during the war. Instead of understanding the Dark Ages as a millennium of ignorance and backwardness inspired by the Catholic Church’s power, Stark argues that the whole notion of the “Dark Ages” was an act of pride perpetuated by anti-religious intellectuals who were determined to claim that theirs was the era of “Enlightenment.” In the end, readers of *Bearing False Witness* will have a more accurate history of the Catholic Church and will also understand why it became unfairly maligned for so long. *Bearing False Witness* is a compelling and sobering account of how egotism and ideology often work together to give us a false truth.

For the Glory of God Rodney Stark, 2015-01-27 Rodney Stark’s provocative new book argues that, whether we like it or not, people acting for the glory of God have formed our modern culture. Continuing his project of identifying the widespread consequences of monotheism, Stark shows that the Christian conception of God resulted--almost inevitably and for the same reasons--in the Protestant Reformation, the rise of modern science, the European witch-hunts, and the Western abolition of slavery. In the process, he explains why Christian and Islamic images of God yielded such different cultural results, leading Christians but not Muslims to foster science, burn witches, and denounce slavery. With his usual clarity and skepticism

toward the received wisdom, Stark finds the origins of these disparate phenomena within monotheistic religious organizations. Endemic in such organizations are pressures to maintain religious intensity, which lead to intense conflicts and schisms that have far-reaching social results. Along the way, Stark debunks many commonly accepted ideas. He interprets the sixteenth-century flowering of science not as a sudden revolution that burst religious barriers, but as the normal, gradual, and direct outgrowth of medieval theology. He also shows that the very ideas about God that sustained the rise of science led also to intense witch-hunting by otherwise clear-headed Europeans, including some celebrated scientists. This conception of God likewise yielded the Christian denunciation of slavery as an abomination--and some of the fiercest witch-hunters were devoted participants in successful abolitionist movements on both sides of the Atlantic. For the Glory of God is an engrossing narrative that accounts for the very different histories of the Christian and Muslim worlds. It fundamentally changes our understanding of religion's role in history and the forces behind much of what we point to as secular progress.

God's Battalions Rodney Stark, 2009-09-29 In *God's Battalions*, award-winning author Rodney Stark takes on the long-held view that the Crusades were the first round of European colonialism, conducted for land, loot, and converts by barbarian Christians who victimized the cultivated Muslims. To the contrary, Stark argues that the Crusades were the first military response to unwarranted Muslim terrorist aggression. Stark reviews the history of the seven major Crusades from 1095 to 1291, demonstrating that the Crusades were precipitated by Islamic provocations, centuries of bloody attempts to colonize the West, and sudden attacks on Christian pilgrims and holy places. Although the Crusades were initiated by a plea from the pope, Stark argues that this had nothing to do with any elaborate design of the Christian world to convert all Muslims to Christianity by force of arms. Given current tensions in the Middle East and terrorist attacks around the world, Stark's views are a thought-provoking contribution to our understanding and are sure to spark debate.

Summary of Rodney Stark's *The Triumph of Christianity* Everest Media, 2022-05-28T22:59:00Z Please note: This is a companion version & not the original book. Sample Book Insights: #1 The Romans were not the only ones to adopt a polytheistic religion. The Jews in the West and the Zoroastrians in the East rejected these ideas about the gods, and instead adopted a morally demanding monotheism. #2 Despite worshiping many gods, societies were not religiously diverse. The primary mission of pagan temples was to ensure that the gods favored the state and its ruling elite, and they served a clientele rather than a membership. #3 The Jews and the Zoroastrians were the first major groups of monotheists. They both faced the challenge of explaining the existence of evil. Judaism postulated the existence of Satan, while Zoroastrianism taught that Ahura Mazdā was engaged in a battle with the inferior Angra Mianyu. #4 The Romans were far more religious than the Greeks, Persians, Egyptians, or other pagans of their era. The Romans had a very free marketplace, and no state religion. Instead, they had many different faiths that were supported by voluntary contributions.

The Deliverance of God Douglas A. Campbell, 2009-08-07 This book breaks a significant impasse in much Pauline interpretation, pushing beyond both Lutheran and New perspectives on Paul to a non-contractual, apocalyptic reading of many of the apostle's most famous, and most troublesome, texts. His strongly antithetical vision identifies participation in Christ as the sole core of Pauline theology and produces the most radical rereading of Romans 1-4 for more than a generation. Even those who disagree will be forced to clarify their views as never before.

America's Blessings Rodney Stark, 2012-11-15 A few years ago, a debate between atheists and religious believers spilled out from the halls of academia and the pews of America's churches and into the public spotlight. A crop of atheist manifestos led the charge, surmounting and holding the tops of the nonfiction bestseller lists. This debate brought on an outpouring of religious rebuttals as both sides exchanged spirited volleys, accusations were leveled; myths, stereotypes, and strawmen arguments were perpetuated; and bitter hostility filled the air. Today many of these misconceptions and myths linger on, along with the generally acrimonious spirit of the debate. In *America's Blessings*, distinguished researcher Rodney Stark seeks to clear the air of this hostility and debunk many of the debate's most widely perpetuated misconceptions by drawing from an expansive pool of sociological findings. Stark rises above the fray and focuses exclusively on facts by examining the measurable effects of religious faith and practice on American society. His results may surprise many atheists and believers alike. Starting with a historical overview, Stark traces America's religious roots from the country's founding to the present day, showing that religiosity in America has never been consistent, static, or monolithic. Interestingly, he finds that religious practice is now more prevalent than ever in America, despite any claims to the contrary. From here, Stark devotes whole chapters to unpacking the latest research on how religion affects the different facets of modern American life, including crime, family life, sexuality, mental and physical health, sophistication, charity, and overall prosperity. The cumulative effect is that when translated into comparisons with western European nations, the United States comes out on top again and again. Thanks in no small part to America's rich religious culture, the nation has far lower crime rates, much higher levels of charitable giving, better health, stronger marriages, and less suicide, to note only a few of the benefits. In the final chapter, Stark assesses the financial impact of these religious realities. It turns out that belief benefits the American economy—and all 300 million citizens, believers, and nonbelievers alike—by a conservative estimate of \$2.6 trillion a year. Despite the atheist outcry against religion, the remarkable conclusion is clear: all Americans, from the most religious among us to our secular neighbors, really ought to count our blessings.

Who Were the First Christians? Thomas A. Robinson, 2016-11-01 Thomas Robinson argues that popular views of early Christian growth—one concentrated in urban environments—would nearly saturate every urban area of the entire Roman Empire with Christians, leaving no room for Jews or pagans. It is a scenario that simply does not work. But where does the solution lie? Robinson argues that the urban thesis is defective, and the neglected countryside must now be considered in any

reconstruction of early Christian growth.

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Rodney Stark The Rise Of Christianity Introduction

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