



For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery

By Rodney Stark

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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.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

For the Glory of God challenges numerous assumptions about how religion affected the course of history. As a professor of Sociology and Comparative Religions at the University of Washington, Rodney Stark (*The Rise of Christianity*) has a unique ability to write like a chatty social Scientist while delving into complicated theories on religion and history. Here he shows how beliefs in God--whether it was through the filter of Christianity, Judaism, or Islam--provoked and fueled human history. Of course many readers won't dicker with his evidence that religious fervor influenced the witch hunts. But readers may be surprised by Stark's assertion that the persecution of witches actually had more to do with the conflicts between the world's major religions than the oppressive beliefs of fanatical clergy or sexist men. He also asserts that the same religious leaders who were the first to persecute witches were also the first to take a stand against slavery. And, contrary to many historical theories, Stark claims that religion may have been the driving force behind the emergence of modern science. Stark's fascinating conclusions may rile conventional historians. Indeed, Stark was dismayed to discover how many historians "dismiss the role of religion in producing 'good' things such as the rise of science or the end of slavery, and the corresponding efforts to blame religion for practically everything 'bad.' " While certainly weighed in defense of religious beliefs, especially Christianity, Stark offers a respectable and intelligent argument for church leaders, theologians, and maybe a few history buffs to ponder. --Gail Hudson

From Publishers Weekly

In *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism*, sociologist of religion Stark examined the nature of God, the wrath of God, the kingdom of God, the grace of God and the "chosen" of God. In this follow-up volume to his ambitious magnum opus, Stark investigates the role of monotheistic religions in reformations, witch-hunts, slavery and science. Such efforts represent an attempt by monotheistic religions to preserve the idea of the One True God against corrupting influences inside and outside the religions themselves. Stark asserts that, contrary to traditional notions, no single religious reformation can be isolated in any monotheistic religion. Thus, Christianity has experienced not simply the Reformation of Luther but many and various reformations that resulted in a diversity of sectarian movements that practice the worship of the One True God in their own ways. Stark also argues that science could have evolved only out of a monotheistic culture that viewed the world as God's handiwork, and that the witch-hunts of Europe could have taken place only in a culture marred by religious conflict and motivated by the desire to displace heretical religious sects. Despite its purported general focus on monotheistic religions, however, the book devotes very little attention to Islam or Judaism, a serious omission in a study that claims to cover so much ground. In addition, Stark's turgid prose and social-scientific style mar what otherwise could have been an engaging study.

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Say good-bye to the old chestnut about how Columbus defied centuries of religious superstition by asserting the roundness of the earth. In this second volume of his study of the global effects of monotheism, sociologist Stark exposes the Columbus story as a mendacious fiction popularized by Enlightenment historians trying to depict Christianity as an obstacle to progress. Because of the remarkable success of these propagandists, Stark must scrape away many layers of antireligious prejudice to identify the true effects of Christian doctrine. To be sure, those effects included horrors: a deadly theological logic sent thousands to fiery deaths for the supposed offense of witchcraft. But Stark lets no reader dismiss the witch-

burners as merely hysterical zealots: he adduces strong evidence linking the hunt for witches to the birth of modern science. He further disquiets readers by emphasizing the prominence of orthodox witch-burners in the earliest attempts to abolish slavery. Why do Americans know so little about the complex ways in which Christian dogmas have shaped our cultural past? Stark blames his own secular-minded colleagues, who have generally ignored the motive power of religious belief. This provocative volume--lucid and tightly reasoned--amply atones for their error. *Bryce Christensen*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Trisha Sherman:

Book is usually written, printed, or outlined for everything. You can realize everything you want by a e-book. Book has a different type. To be sure that book is important thing to bring us around the world. Close to that you can your reading talent was fluently. A book For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery will make you to always be smarter. You can feel considerably more confidence if you can know about everything. But some of you think this open or reading a new book make you bored. It isn't make you fun. Why they are often thought like that? Have you trying to find best book or ideal book with you?

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Reading a publication tends to be new life style with this era globalization. With reading through you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. With book everyone in this world can certainly share their idea. Guides can also inspire a lot of people. A lot of author can inspire their very own reader with their story or maybe their experience. Not only the storyline that share in the guides. But also they write about the ability about something that you need illustration. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your young ones, there are many kinds of book which exist now. The authors on earth always try to improve their skill in writing, they also doing some study before they write with their book. One of them is this For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery.

Susie Vadnais:

The reason? Because this *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap it but latter it will jolt you with the secret this inside. Reading this book beside it was fantastic author who have write the book in such remarkable way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining approach but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book have such as help improving your skill and your critical thinking approach. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I were being you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

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