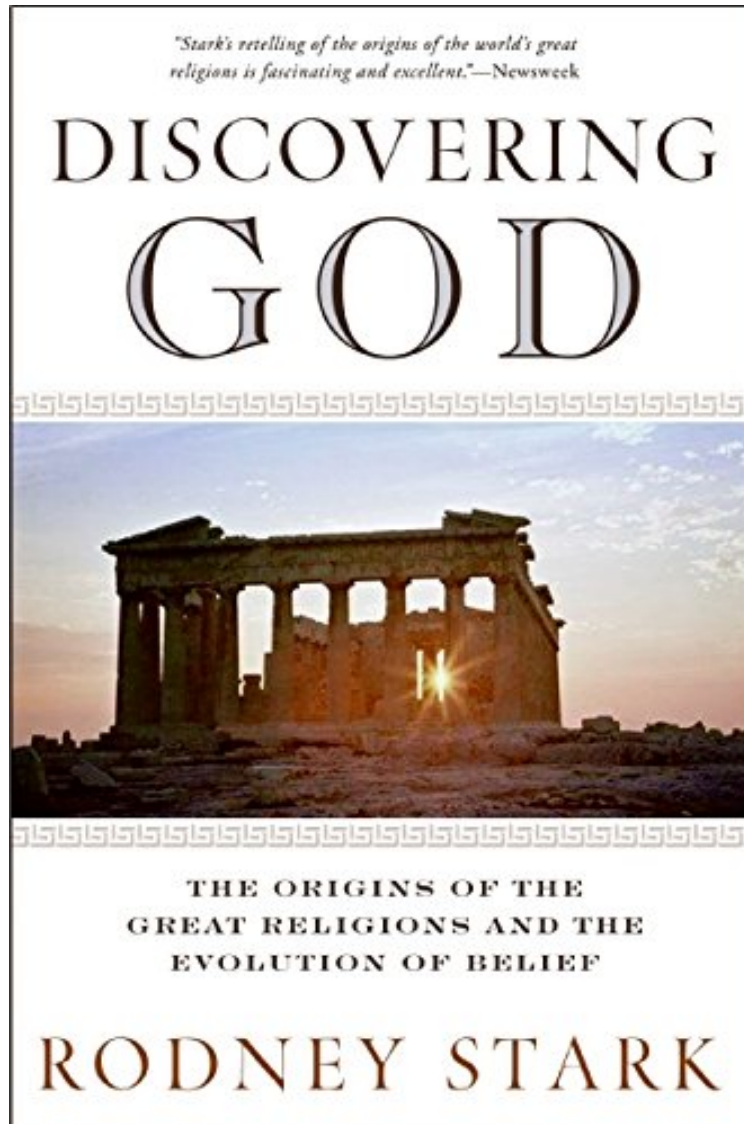


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# Discovering God: The Origins of the Great Religions and the Evolution of Belief

Rodney Stark

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#966474 in Books Rodney Stark 2008-12-02 2008-12-02Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x 1.24 x 6.00l, 1.14 #File Name: 0061626015496 pagesDiscovering God The Origins of the Great Religions and the Evolution of Belief | File size: 69.Mb

**Rodney Stark : Discovering God: The Origins of the Great Religions and the Evolution of Belief** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Discovering God: The Origins of the Great Religions and the Evolution of Belief:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Surprisingly GoodBy D. KingThis is my first Rodney Stark book

and first book in the genre of religious archeology. I was quite taken by it and am determined to try another book from this author. What I especially enjoyed was Stark's "objectivity" (if you can call it that) of applying a business model to the subject of religion and exploring the question, "Why did religion X thrive and religion Y wane?" Stark emphasizes the dynamic and paradoxical nature of human belief -- the logical tenants of monotheism conflicts with emotional needs for love/security/etc. and hence the appeal of polytheism and ascribing human characteristics to the cold, distant monotheist god. Stark asserts people join faiths not strictly for theological reasons but especially for social and economic reasons. While I don't agree with everything he writes, I think his basic ideas make a lot of sense. Stark reviews the historical origins and basic beliefs of all the major religions, which he discusses respectfully. I enjoyed learning more about Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam. His discussion of early Christianity was interesting too. Stark claims to be agnostic but I wonder -- he seemed to favor Christianity/Judaism by concluding it was the only major faith-based culture that could have led to modern science because the theology of Creation implies man can ultimately understand God's handiwork.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Eye Opening  
By M. Morris  
I love this book. It's basically the history of religion. Whether you choose to see Stark's view or not is up to you and for me was irrelevant to my enjoyment of learning about the history of religion. It was fascinating to learn about all the different religions and how they grew out of each other. My personal take-away from this book was very different than the author's, although I was open to considering his points. I was surprised to find that the author also lives in Corrales, It's a small community (only a few square miles) so hopefully I'll meet him at some point. To the author I'd like to suggest he put this on Audible. It's free to do so, and profitable, and the book is very long, so it would reach a whole new crowd. Also I'd like to listen to it.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Rollicking Review of Religious Development  
By R. Kern  
Rodney Stark's dual trademarks of thoroughgoing feistiness and incisive historical analysis are on full display in "Discovering God." Much of the book is a swift-moving and thoroughly interesting history of worldwide religious development. Relevant sociological ideas, data, anecdotes, previous scholarship and scathing criticism of many academic truisms are sprinkled throughout, with the most controversial elements--Stark's opinions on what may count as authentic, revealed religion--coming in the final chapter. Perhaps my greatest "discovery" in the book was his observation (just one of very many well-argued points) that religious plurality in a society actually increases overall religious participation and intensity. In other words, people are more engaged religiously when there are lots of options in the religious marketplace. State-sponsored religions needn't focus on outreach or the needs of the masses; they already have a monopoly. But when churches or other religious groups have to support themselves, only zealous, effective groups will attract enough faithful to survive. This leads to a society (such as the modern United States) filled with many successful denominations that together keep the population engaged--and each other hard at work. Whether or not one agrees with Stark's conclusions (which many other reviewers have focused on, so I won't reiterate here), "Discovering God" is both fun and fascinating. His writing reminds me of sitting in on a provocative university lecture, the kind where the professor's convictions and the truth are passionately presented as one, and where you are enthralled even as you disagree.

Winner of the 2008 Christianity Today Award of Merit in Theology/Ethics  
The History of God In Discovering God, award-winning sociologist Rodney Stark presents a monumental history of the origins of the great religions from the Stone Age to the Modern Age and wrestles with the central questions of religion and belief.

From Booklist \*Starred \* Skeptics such as Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett have just lost their monopoly on the topic of religious evolution. Only a believer, Stark asserts, can fathom the origins and subsequent unfolding of the world's great faiths. In this wide-ranging investigation, Stark detects sacred reality not pious deception at the heart of transcendent beliefs shared by Aborigines and Anglicans. In their myths of the high gods, Stark contends, early tribal peoples glimpsed divine truths obscured in later civilizations when pharaohs and emperors lent government support to temple priesthoods more interested in maintaining a comfortable lifestyle than in serving God. The eventual emergence of a religious marketplace in ancient Rome opened a wide range of metaphysical options. Yet in a culture of religious pluralism, the insistent claims of tightly knit communities of Jews and Christians appeared threatening to Roman leaders, who defended the status quo by persecuting adherents to these unsettlingly intense faiths. Yet it is in these revelatory faiths and not the meditative religions of Eastern Asia that Stark discerns the fullest manifestation of God. Some readers will resist Stark's comparative judgments; others will dispute his religious interpretation of modern science. But serious students of religion will recognize this as an essential sourcebook. Christensen, Bryce  
Stark's retelling of the origins of the world's great religions is fascinating and excellent. (Newsweek) [A] wide-ranging investigation... serious students of religion will recognize this as an essential sourcebook. (Booklist)

About the Author  
Rodney Stark is the Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University. His thirty books on the history and sociology of religion include *The Rise of Christianity*, *Cities of God*, *For the Glory of God*, *Discovering God*, and *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*. Stark received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley.