

[Free read ebook] The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries

# The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries

Rodney Stark

ePub | \*DOC | audiobook | ebooks | Download PDF


"A fresh, blunt and highly persuasive account of how the West was won—for Jesus."  
—Newsweek


## THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY



How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries

RODNEY STARK

 Download

 Read Online

#24844 in Books Rodney Stark 1997-05-09 1997-05-09 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.00 x .61 x 5.311, .47 #File Name: 0060677015272 pages The Rise of Christianity How the Obscure Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries | File size: 78.Mb

Rodney Stark : The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries

before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great introduction to Rodney Stark  
By stlfan74  
This was the first Rodney Stark book I read and I was really impressed. His insights into the conversion process are fantastic and really make perfect sense. The statistics that he gives about the spread of Christianity make the idea that the religion spread largely due to individual and family conversions as opposed to mass conversions seem plausible - at the very least it makes one reconsider assumptions on the topic. I do have two complaints about the book - 1) he cites himself a lot - doesn't really add the appearance of credibility (although I think Stark is very credible) and 2) he repeats himself a lot - the end of the book is largely a rehash of the first chapter. All-in-all a very readable, thought provoking look at how Christianity spread. If you enjoyed this book I'd definitely recommend Stark's *God's Battalions*, as it is one of the finest books I've read.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Remarkable Insight  
By Erin J  
The Rise of Christianity by Rodney Stark is revolutionary for those who study the history of Christianity. He gets at the question of how a new religious movement grew so big so fast. How did this obscure, marginal little Jesus movement become the dominant force in the World in just a few centuries? Stark writes from the vantage point of a sociologist, but his conclusions are based on historical research. In other words, even though his discipline is sociology, he is no slouch as a historian. His sociological approach follows the line of reasoning that we should look at how conversions happen and what is involved sociologically for someone changing from one religion to another. This kind of questioning and probing is interesting, but is at times speculative never the less, but when Stark projects anything, he does so conservatively. His estimates for the growth of Christianity are less than one who is reading the book of Acts might expect. This is not to deny the book of Acts, but his attempt is to communicate to the skeptic about how this thing might have happened. There is much that is interesting in this book, but let me point out a few of things that need to be pursued even further. There are more than these three items that could be brought up, but certainly not less. First, Stark, examines how Christians reacted during times of plague and how that these actions caused church growth. One thing that caused church growth was that Christians at least gave the appearance to the world that they did not fear death and they were willing to show love and compassion in the face of the deadly plague. This alone is remarkable and should call Christians back to this great conviction that the early Christians had. It is oddly curious how that modern day so called church growth experts never mention this. They tell us to be friendly, but nothing about not fearing death or losing our life in order to find it. The other way this fearless mentality plays out shows in that they were tortured for their faith and did not recant. This speaks volumes to non-believing spectators. Second, Stark shows that the early Christians saw themselves as the real or true Israel movement. This is not remarkable in itself, but how he argues his point is remarkable. He shows that Jews (biological descendants from Abraham) were being converted heavily to Christianity all the way up to at least 500 AD. This goes against what is normally accepted, especially by dispensationalists and modern day Christian Zionists. Christianity was never a Gentile movement, but very much a Jewish one that included the Gentiles into one family, the family of God or the Church. Third, Stark shows that Christians did not believe in abortion. The rest of the world outside of Israel and Christians practiced abortions and exposing unwanted babies to the elements. This pro-life stance of the Christians helped with Church growth because they had bigger families than the pagan world around them. I strongly recommend this book for scholars, teachers of history, theologians, and anybody else who might be interested in the subject.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An excellent look into early Christian history.  
By Ye Shall Be As Gods  
I would say one certainly does not have to be a Christian to get a lot of information out of this book, although I did read it as a seminary textbook. If you have ever found yourself asking how Christianity became a thing in light of intense persecution and the culture of philosophical wisdom that the Greco-Roman world was at the time, this book aims to answer exactly that question. It was a fantastic read.

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).

"Stark finds that Christians prospered the old-fashioned way: by providing a better, happier and more secure way of life . . . In the end, Stark concludes, Christians 'revitalized' the Roman Empire." -- Kenneth Woodward, "Newsweek"

"Stark uses contemporary social-scientific data about why people join new religious movements and how religions recruit members to investigate the formative history of Christianity . . . ["The Rise of Christianity" will] generate spirited argument." -- "Publishers Weekly"

"Compelling reading . . . highly recommended." -- "Library Journal"

"This book raises, simply and brilliantly, just the kinds of questions anyone concerned with early Christianity should ask." -- "The Christian Century"

"Anyone who has puzzled over Christianity's rise to dominance in the Roman Empire . . . must read [this book]. Here is theoretical brashness combined with disarming common sense, a capacious curiosity, and a most uncommon ability to tell a complicated story in simple prose." -- Wayne Meeks, Yale University

"A provocative, insightful, challenging account of the rise of Christianity." -- Andrew M. Greeley, National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago

From the Publisher "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 already 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).

From the Inside Flap

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.