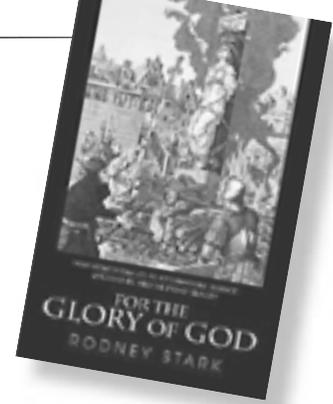


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## Book Review

*For the Glory of God* by Rodney Stark  
Princeton University Press, 2003, Princeton, NJ, 200 pages, \$20



I imagine that most scientists share my first reactions to sociologists writing about science — grated teeth, tense muscles, elevated blood pressure, and a compelling desire for a refund. But an exception to the rule can be found in Stark's *For the Glory of God*, subtitled, *How Monotheism led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the end of Slavery*. The second chapter, "God's Handiwork: the Religious Origins of Science," makes the book well worth the attention of any CRSQ reader. Although Professor Stark pointedly states early on that his religious beliefs are his own business, he treats the beliefs of others with a professional seriousness and respect seldom found in academia. This book stands as another marker on a path of scholarly discovery that has crept out of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a path that leads to the knowledge that Christianity was indispensable to the formulation of science as we enjoy it today.

In debunking the professional debunkers from Voltaire to Richard Dawkins, Stark punctures almost every balloon of the modern mythology of religious history that has been foisted on an unsuspecting public for more decades than should have been allowed. The Dark Ages was a period of technological innovation that shamed the Greeks and Romans. The Renaissance included a bunch of pedantic elite linguists who had little to do with the scientific revolution. The "Scientific Revolution" was an ongoing series of discoveries closely tied to the university system that started in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. The Church vs. Science? Who do you think started, enriched, encouraged, and protected the universities? Science and Islam? Science and China? Both lacked the theology to advance beyond alchemy. And what about all those religious "flat Earthers"? They were all busy trying to tell Columbus the true circumference of the globe. And on it goes as myth after modern myth is corrected.

Stark treats Darwinian evolution as an aberration in the

history of science, noting that the conflict between science and religion presented by the Enlightenment intelligentsia was actually a crusade against religion by those who wished to be rid of it. Thus he states, "When Julian Huxley claimed that 'Darwin's theory is no longer a theory, but a fact,' he surely knew better. But just like his grandfather, Thomas Henry Huxley, he knew that his lie served the greater good of 'enlightenment'" (p. 185). This method of leaving the truth in the dust in service of emancipation from religion has a long lineage. Stark notes the popular story of Thomas Huxley's confrontation with Bishop Wilberforce, and remarks, "Trouble is, it didn't happen" (p. 188). As a sociologist, Stark declines to enter the subject he is discussing and does not provide any concrete views of his own about evolution, although my subjective reading between the lines finds evidence of sympathy for the views of the Intelligent Design proponents.

As more and more people understand the irremediable religious roots of the argument about origins and Earth history, their perspective changes, and many of the "truths" that we learned (and that are unfortunately still being taught) can be seen for the propaganda that they are. Stark has done a great service in demythologizing secular versions of the past and his insights are worth the time and effort of any informed person. Stark states "It is, of course, easy to find fault. Sad to say, in today's intellectual climate, it takes much greater courage to praise. I hope that I measured up." You did, Dr. Stark. Purchase, peruse, ponder!

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