



# How the West Won: The Neglected Story of the Triumph of Modernity

By Rodney Stark

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**How the West Won: The Neglected Story of the Triumph of Modernity** By Rodney Stark

## 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” in the seventeenth century
- 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.

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### Editorial Review

Review

#### Praise for *How the West Won*

“Fortunately, a few unapologetic defenders of Western civilization can still be found. In *How the West Won*, Rodney Stark details how and why the vital aspects of modernity—defined here as a combination of sensible economic arrangements, political freedoms and scientific knowledge—developed in the West rather than elsewhere. In the process he adds considerably to the content of the old Western Civ courses, which would often discreetly ignore the contribution of Christianity and neglect practical matters such as advances in technology and banking.” —*Wall Street Journal*

“Stark’s lively and absorbing new work beheads the academy’s dictatorship of relativism and enthrones in its place concrete and fact-based understanding in order here to give Western civilization the credit it richly deserves. . . . Along the way he upsets one politically correct apple cart after another. . . . Stark’s book should have as wide an audience as possible.” —*Catholic World Report*

“Exposes gaping holes in the prevailing narrative . . . Stark sets out to critique, and, in some instances, demolish several widespread mythologies about the West’s development. . . . In making these points, Stark is happy to engage in the deeply politically incorrect exercise of comparing developments in the West to that of other civilizations.” —*Crisis*

“What sets *How the West Won* apart from similar histories, and what makes it a sheer delight to read, is Stark’s wit, his elegant writing and, most especially, his reinterpretation of various historical events. . . . Nearly every chapter of *How the West Won* breaks some widely held opinion. . . . If you are looking for lively, erudite history, you’ll find *How the West Won* a splendid companion.” —*Smoky Mountain News*

#### Praise for Rodney Stark

“Stark has a vigorous prose style and a gift for clear explanation. The pace is swift, and the narrative thrilling.” —*New York Times*

“Fun to read, full of anecdote and incident . . . Mr. Stark is especially adept at challenging received ideas.” —*Wall Street Journal*

“Stark proves himself once again as a historical myth-buster.” —*CBN.com*

“Rodney Stark turns what we ‘know’ about history on its head.” —*Relevant Magazine*

“Stimulating and provocative . . . Deftly researched.” —*Publishers Weekly*

“Fresh, blunt, and highly persuasive.” —*Newsweek*

“Gripping, with tales of courage and desperation, outsized characters, and fate of cultures hanging in the balance . . . Masterful . . . Sets the record straight.” —*National Catholic Register*

“Wonderfully readable prose and politically incorrect conclusions.” —*World Magazine*

“[Stark’s] works are an encouraging corrective to the anti-Western history routinely taught in our schools.” —*New Oxford Review*

“Compelling reading, adding depth and coherence to the often nebulous hyperbole of historical hypotheses. Highly recommended.” —*Library Journal*

#### About the Author

**Rodney Stark** is the award-winning author of *How the West Won*, *The Victory of Reason*, *The Rise of Christianity*, *God’s Battalions*, and many other books. He serves as Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University, where he is codirector of the Institute for Studies of Religion. Stark is past president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and of the Association for the Sociology of Religion. Before earning his PhD at the University of California, Berkeley, he was a staff writer for several major publications. Stark’s books have been translated into Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, and Turkish.

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