



# The Rise of Mormonism

*Rodney Stark, Reid L. Neilson*

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Will Mormonism be the next world faith, one that will rival Catholicism, Islam, and other major religions in terms of numbers and global appeal? This was the question Rodney Stark addressed in his much-discussed and much-debated article, "The Rise of a New World Faith" (1984), one of several essays on Mormonism included in this new collection. Examining the religion's growing appeal, Rodney Stark concluded that Mormons could number 267 million members by 2080. In what would become known as "the Stark argument," Stark suggested that the Mormon Church offered contemporary sociologists and historians of religion an opportunity to observe a rare event: the birth of a new world religion.

In the years following that article, Stark has become one of the foremost scholars of Mormonism and the sociology of religion. This new work, the first to collect his influential writings on the Mormon Church, includes previously published essays, revised and rewritten for this volume. His work sheds light on both the growth of Mormonism and on how and why certain religions continue to grow while others fade away.

Stark examines the reasons behind the spread of Mormonism, exploring such factors as cultural continuity with the faiths from which it seeks converts, a volunteer missionary force, and birth rates. He explains why a demanding faith like Mormonism has such broad appeal in today's world and considers the importance of social networks in finding new converts. Stark's work also presents groundbreaking perspectives on larger issues in the study of religion, including the nature of revelation and the reasons for religious growth in an age of modernization and secularization.

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