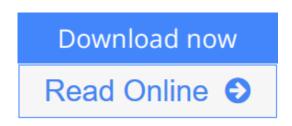


# Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion

By Rodney Stark, Roger Finke



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Finally, social scientists have begun to attempt to understand religious behavior rather than to discredit it as irrational, ignorant, or foolish—and Rodney Stark and Roger Finke have played a major role in this new approach. Acknowledging that science cannot assess the supernatural side of religion (and therefore should not claim to do so), Stark and Finke analyze the observable, human side of faith. In clear and engaging prose, the authors combine explicit theorizing with animated discussions as they move from considering the religiousness of individuals to the dynamics of religious groups and then to the religious workings of entire societies as religious groups contend for support. The result is a comprehensive new paradigm for the social-scientific study of religion.

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#### Review

A "crucial exposition in an increasingly combative dispute about method in the sociology of religion."--"Times Literary Supplement

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"*Acts of Faith* is the single 'big book' in the sociology of religion in the past decade, a monumental effort that both demolishes old theories and creates brilliant new ones. Stark and Finke have mastered the literature in the field, gathered ingenious data analysis to sustain their positions, and presented their work with flair, imagination, and brilliance. Though it is quite impossible to turn around the social science profession completely with a single book, or indeed within a single decade, these two authors have achieved a powerful beginning in this task. This landmark publication marks a turning point."—Andrew M. Greeley, University of Chicago

"This book is a major next step in developing the sociology of religion's 'new paradigm'--an important summary of the evolving 'religious economies' theory. Stark and Finke's spirited deconstruction of antireligious secularization theories and other theories of 'irrational' religion is simply delightful. And its own constructive theory offers a valuable resource for those friendly to the rational choice approach to religion, as well as a continuing challenge to its critics."—Christian Smith, University of North Carolina

#### From the Back Cover

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