

ABSTRACT

Modernity marks the rise of science, and accordingly, the decline of religion through secularization. Yet, the evidence is more nuanced. American sociologist Rodney Stark's theory of religion proposes a new paradigm for explaining the origins of religion and its role in society. Rather than a superstitious, irrational vestige of human history, religion embodies the deep-seated needs of human beings to make sense of their lives and their world. Stark contends that religion is a rational activity that profoundly shapes individuals, groups and indeed the human race, and therefore, deserves to be treated as a serious human endeavor. His research corpus not only vindicates the place of religion in modern society and the public sphere, but also garners fresh insights about human behavior that can illuminate and inform theological reflections on the activity of God in the world and the manner in which the Church conducts her mission.

Key Words: Rodney Stark, Social Science, Atheism, Sociology, Rationality, Evolution, Secularization.