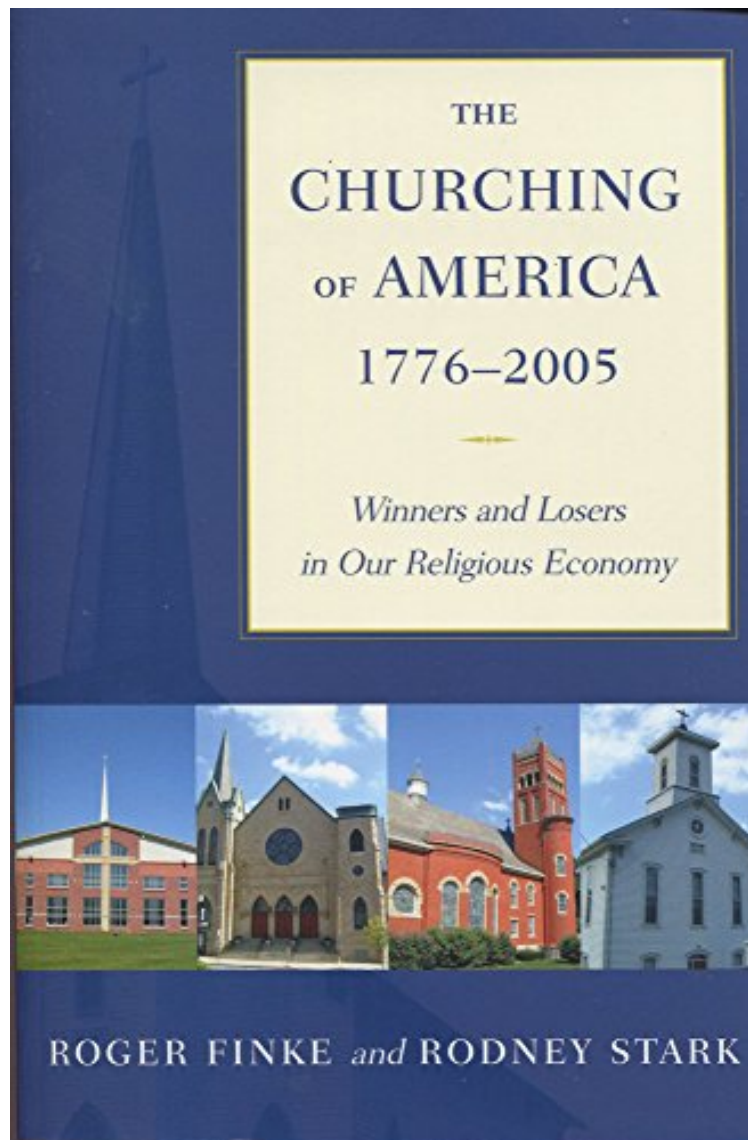


# The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy

*Roger Finke, Rodney Stark*

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**Roger Finke, Rodney Stark : The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Finke writes a winning explanation of ways to reduce church membership. By Dr. Gary R. Sweeten This is an update of later data from his first book on the same topic. I learned a

lot from the first book and the second has not disappointed. Dr. Finke is one of my favorite researchers and authors on church growth, church health and how to assess denominational trends. He jumps over style to substance as the keys to getting and maintaining members. He punctures the self-serving rationalization of Mainline apologists for why they are dead or dying. I also appreciate his economic model for it clarifies and simplifies growth and reduction patterns. Despite a terrible title, the book is a mother lode of useful information for Pastors and Theologians as well as interested Laity. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Had to read it, enjoyed it By Hi Desert Had to read this book for a class. It's actually a fascinating read that delves into American religiosity and explains how America has become more observant over the years, and why some churches are growing while others shrink. Quite readable and interesting for anyone with a broad curiosity about American religion. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good read By Jourdan Bought used, it had highlights. Honestly it was even better than new. The person who highlighted helped me study better. Thank you!

In this provocative book, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark challenge popular perceptions about American religion. They view the religious environment as a free market economy, where churches compete for souls. The story they tell is one of gains for upstart sects and losses for mainline denominations. Although many Americans assume that religious participation has declined in America, Finke and Stark present a different picture. In 1776, fewer than 1 in 5 Americans were active in church affairs. Today, church membership includes about 6 out of 10 people. But, as Finke and Stark show, not all denominations benefited. They explain how and why the early nineteenth-century churches began their descent, while two newcomer sects, the Baptists and the Methodists, gained ground. They also analyze why the Methodists then began a long, downward slide, why the Baptists continued to succeed, how the Catholic Church met the competition of ardent Protestant missionaries, and why the Catholic commitment has declined since Vatican II. The authors also explain why ecumenical movements always fail. In short, Americans are not abandoning religion; they have been moving away from established denominations. A "church-sect process" is always under way, Finke and Stark argue, as successful churches lose their organizational vigor and are replaced by less worldly groups. Some observers assert that the rise in churching rates indicates increased participation, not increased belief. Finke and Stark challenge this as well. They find that those groups that have gained the greatest numbers have demanded that their followers accept traditional doctrines and otherworldliness. They argue that religious organizations can thrive only when they comfort souls and demand sacrifice. When theology becomes too logical, or too secular, it loses people.

About the Author Roger Finke is a professor of sociology and religious studies at the Pennsylvania State University and serves as the director of the American Religion Data Archive. Rodney Stark was for many years professor of sociology and comparative religion at the University of Washington. In 2004 he became University Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University.