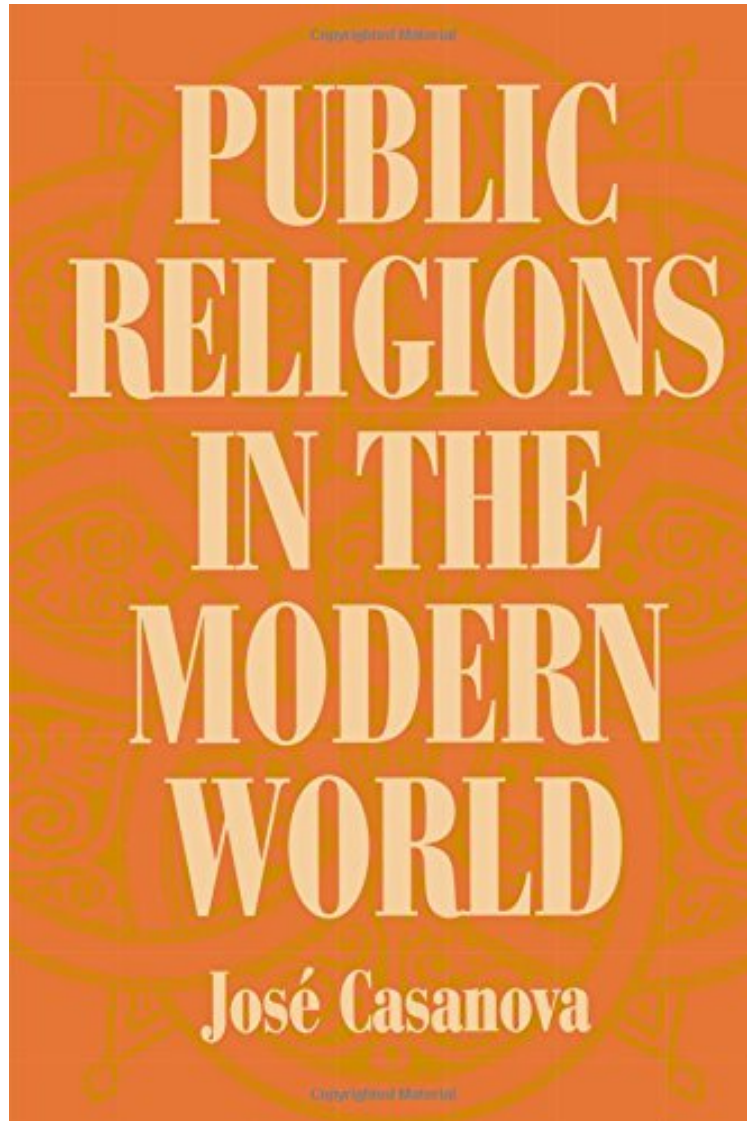


## Public Religions in the Modern World

*Jos Casanova*

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#425600 in Books Jose Casanova 1994-06-15 1994-06-15Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .90 x 6.00l, 1.03 #File Name: 0226095355330 pagesPublic Religions in the Modern World | File size: 72.Mb

**Jos Casanova : Public Religions in the Modern World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Public Religions in the Modern World:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. A classic in the sociology of religionBy MimicriThis book, nearly twenty years old now, soon became a classic in the sociology of religion. Its concluding chapter until today is unsurpassed in the analytical clarity with which the concept of secularization is taken apart and distinguished in its three main usages in the relevant literature. Casanova shows persuasively that secularization as differentiation and emancipation of the political, economic, cultural, administrative and legal spheres from the influence of religious

norms and authority is the core of the secularization thesis, and the part of the thesis that best holds up to empirical scrutiny. By contrast, the notion of secularization as decline (of religious belief and practice) proves really only accurate in Western Europe, and not the rest of the world. Grace Davie later called this phenomenon "European exceptionalism." While several generations of sociologists expected societies on other continents, including North America, to follow the European trend of decline, by the 1980s it became clear that it was not the rest of the world, but Western Europe that was exceptional. Finally, Casanova sets out throughout all case studies to show that the (third) notion of secularization as privatization is the one most wrong-headed. Even though religion and politics are somewhat differentiated in most societies by the end of the 20th century, religion is anything but private, or privatized. By contrast, religion occupies the space of civil society (religious associations), political society (religious political parties), and economic society (e.g. welfare provision through religious organizations). The beauty of Casanova's book is that he can show through his case studies how certain trends in secularization transcend political and cultural boundaries. At the same time, the effect of authoritarianism on religion (here Catholicism) is not always the same. Whether the state is socialist (Poland), corporatist (Brazil) or proto-fascist (Spain), all pre-1990, plays out in various, often counter-intuitive ways. A work of great empirical breadth that rewards the reader if he/she makes the effort of following the dense empirical analyses. Let's hope that future generations can continue Casanova's work with even greater comparative scope, including also various non-Christian religions in the study of secularization.

22 of 25 people found the following review helpful. An invaluable contribution

By Tezcur In his widely acclaimed and cited book, Casanova provides a fruitful understanding of the continuing role of religion in modern societies. He develops a three dimensional definition of secularization that is quite innovative and clarifies many of the misconceptions associated with the concept. His main argument is that despite the fact that religion remains a vibrant and visible factor in modern public life, it no longer regulates the different aspects of social relationships such as economy, politics, sex, and ethics as it used to be before the Protestant Reformation, the rise of capitalism and Enlightenment. He argues the notion of "public religion" best describes the contemporary importance of religion to societies. The book is very well written and reflects the substantial erudition of the author. Apart from its theoretical chapters, it is built on the case studies of five countries in Europe and American continent. In a time when most of the discussions on religious revivalism, religious fundamentalism, and religious terrorism lack coherent analytical frameworks, Casanova's rearticulation of the relationship between religion and modernity is an invaluable contribution.

8 of 20 people found the following review helpful. A labyrinth of a book with poorly chosen case studies

By Avery In the conclusion of *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Jose Casanova states his thesis concisely: "It is my contention that the rejection ... of the privatized role [of religions] to which they were being relegated by secularist modernization theories ... can no longer be viewed as simply antimodern critiques of modernity." (221) In other words, "theories" are being imposed on religions from without; the "rejection" comes from within, and is therefore more relevant to the worldview of the religious community; in fact, they need not deny the secular idea of modernity. There's nothing wrong with this thesis. It's just executed badly, with heavy helpings of unacceptably obscure writing and blindness to important aspects of the topic at hand. First, compare the conclusion to the way the question is initially posed by quoting Wolfgang Schluchter, which Casanova seems to consider an equivalent statement of the hypothesis he affirms even though the resemblance is only superficial: "Is there a legitimate religious resistance to secular world views that is more than a refusal to accept the consequences of the Enlightenment?" (38) The way Schluchter words this question, a secular modernity is being taken for granted before religion has a chance to reject it! The word "consequences" implies necessary effects, and the phrase "refusal to accept" implies stubbornness and willful ignorance of the facts. Even when Schluchter attempts to suggest some alternative to refusal, his use of the word "resistance" instead of "rejection" is a passive acceptance of secularization. Consider a parallel situation where a musician is told that "music is meaningless in modern society." If he laughs off this statement as absurd, he is rejecting it. It is only if the statement is true and he sees that as a problem that he finds a need to resist it. When Casanova meekly says "My answer to [this question] is an unconditional yes" without challenging the very language by which the question is posed it betrays a flaw in the way he is looking at his question, despite his careful reading of various critics. Notice also Schluchter's use of the Enlightenment as the primary instrument of secularization. This is the second notable problem with the framework Casanova uses for his thesis: an assumption that one is discussing either Europe or the United States. Throughout most of the world, the primary force of secularization is either colonialism (e.g., India) or globalization (e.g., the Middle East). These are very good examples for talking about public religions in the modern world because the external nature of the secularizing force is far more clear. Yet not only does Casanova focus on Christianity, he proclaims that were he to study other religions, "such an immense task would have required a modification and expansion of my typology ... of the theory of ... differentiation, and of the general analytical framework employed in this study." (10) Such a disclaimer does not really reassure me about the stability of his thesis. Furthermore, his brief mentions of religions other than Christianity betray a lack of knowledge about non-Christian religions. One of his examples of other cases for further study is "the deprivatization of Hinduism in India" (10), but Hinduism is a category invented by India's British visitors, so that deprivatization may be more like an invention. One of his examples of the public role of religion is Brazil, one of the most fascinating examples of religious diversity and non-secular society in modern times,

but his chapter is devoted almost entirely to the Catholic Church, with other religions dismissed only as a "problem" for church development. (129) More telling, he cites Japan as an example of a nation where religion shows no decline (27) due to widespread enrollment in temples, whereas in reality (according to a 2008 study) only 10 percent of Japanese think religion is important to their lives, compared to 59 percent of Americans. In a footnote to this statement he displays little recognition that official membership in a Buddhist temple in Japan, unlike membership in a Christian church, is a formality with no religious aspect. (242-3) It appears that his working definition of "religion" is simply a mapping of the world's various and complicated relationships between religious society and secular society onto the framework of Christianity. Thirdly, his insistence on using sociology's traditional dichotomies of religious organizations limits his view of even the issues he discusses. The idea of resistance to secularization that goes beyond mere denial of religious pluralism is exemplified by the debate within Catholicism over the language of the liturgy. The key players of Casanova's chapter on Catholicism in America are here: the current Pope Benedict and his lay supporters, who wanted a "Catholic Restoration", and the liberal pastors with their supporters. Casanova is probably talking about this when he mentions "restorationist policies" (187), but it is interesting what exactly the conservatives wish to restore. Vatican II introduced a vulgar mass, that is, a mass delivered in the language of the laity, with room for liturgical variation according to local practices. Cardinal Ratzinger (in his more political role before he became Pope) and the traditionalists wished to restore the Tridentine Latin Mass, which was delivered in the same language and manner throughout the world before Vatican II. Both sides would claim their mass is truly "universal", but for different reasons. Liberals feel a universal mass is the one that is intelligible to the greatest number of people; to use the words of Berger, a mass that delivers "relevance" and "results" to its participants. For conservatives, the universal mass is more simply the mass that is performed in the same manner and with the same words throughout the world. Clearly the traditionalists reject Berger's "relevant", result-bringing, and psychology-focused religion, and for reasons that (without getting too involved here) are unrelated to anything secular. But Casanova does not get into this debate. Why not? It could simply be an oversight on his part; perhaps the liturgy debate was not as prominent in the 1990s. Or maybe it would have been too hard to fit into his predetermined categories of religious organizations. For in this particular example, the traditionalists are clearly on the side of the "church type" with their definition of universality, and the liberals lean towards the "sect type" or "denomination type" with their Bergeresque acceptance of secularization, but the roles one would expect to be naturally issued from these types are not present here. The church type is meant to be an obligatory faith that belongs to the masses, no matter their level of education, but the traditionalists want a liturgy that only the most educated or religiously involved of the laity will be able to understand in its intended form. The sect type is supposed to be the community of "saints", to use Casanova's term, who have a special devotion, but the liberals want the liturgy to be (to put it bluntly) dumbed down from the unintelligible Latin so that anyone, no matter their level of devotion, can take it in somehow. Even if the liberals are aiming more towards the denomination type, they ought to have a focus on specific, institutionalized rituals. This debate just doesn't fit into the paradigm Casanova sets up for Christianity in the public world, and his argument is weaker for his insistence on these restrictions.

In a sweeping reconsideration of the relation between religion and modernity, Jose Casanova surveys the roles that religions may play in the public sphere of modern societies. During the 1980s, religious traditions around the world, from Islamic fundamentalism to Catholic liberation theology, began making their way, often forcefully, out of the private sphere and into public life, causing the "deprivatization" of religion in contemporary life. No longer content merely to administer pastoral care to individual souls, religious institutions are challenging dominant political and social forces, raising questions about the claims of entities such as nations and markets to be "value neutral", and straining the traditional connections of private and public morality. Casanova looks at five cases from two religious traditions (Catholicism and Protestantism) in four countries (Spain, Poland, Brazil, and the United States). These cases challenge postwar and indeed post-Enlightenment assumptions about the role of modernity and secularization in religious movements throughout the world. This book expands our understanding of the increasingly significant role religion plays in the ongoing construction of the modern world.