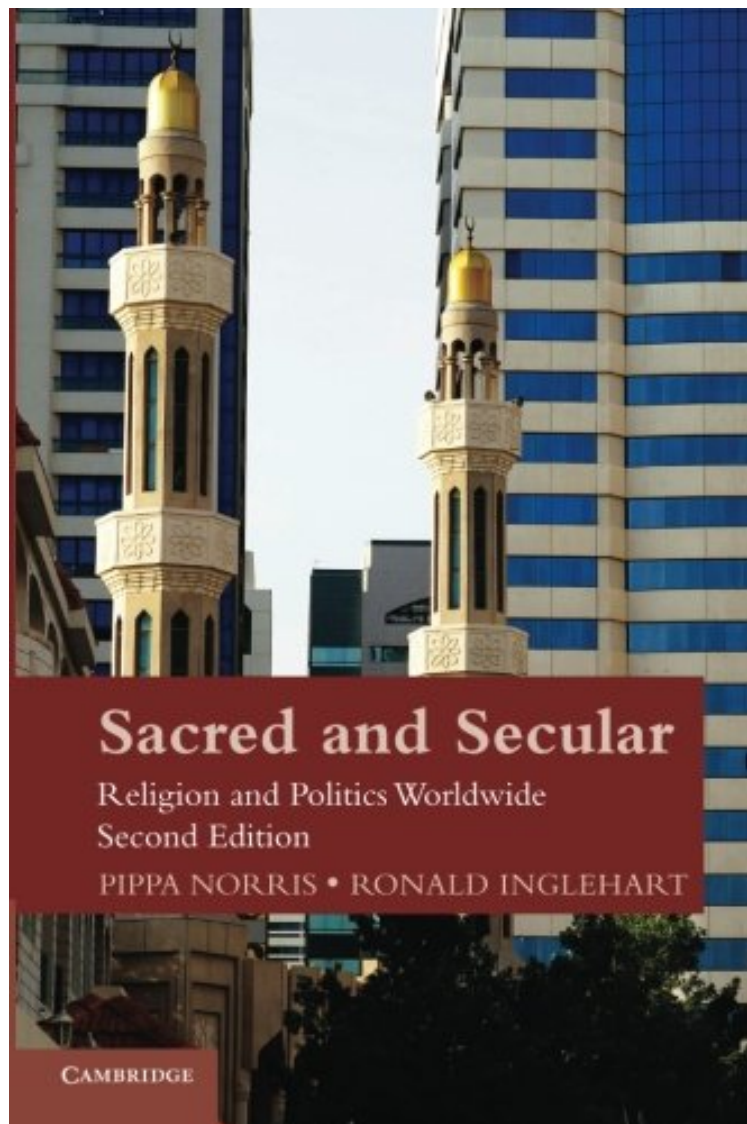


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## Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide (Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics)

*Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart*

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**Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart : Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide (Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide (Cambridge Studies in Social Theory, Religion and Politics):

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great read!By N. CreelThis is possibly the best religion and comparative politics book out there. It ties into Inglehart's "Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy" book very well. Read both back to back if you can. (Read this second if you do)31 of 44 people found the following review helpful. Important but Significantly FlawedBy Christian SmithThis book presents a significant re-statement of secularization theory, framing religion as declining with the advance of "existential security" through modernization and human development. Along the way, the argument interestingly contradicts with strong empirical findings Stark and Finke's "religious economies theory," in a way that will demand a response from them. The book's strengths (and perhaps weakness, in some ways) are its cross-national perspective and survey data, which are all too rare in sociology of religion (although some are skeptical of the reliability of the World Values Survey) and its attempt to seriously empirically test hypotheses deduced from significant theories. This is an important book in many ways, but note that it is also compromised by a number of apparent flaws: 1. It uses mostly cross-sectional data to make claims about historical changes. 2. It perhaps wrongly assumes cohort rather than age effects in its generational analyses. 3. It does not actually even directly measure its key variable of existential security, but relies instead on indirect measures and inferences. 4. It does not well develop theoretically the social psychological and cognitive mechanisms that would lead increased existential security to secularize, leaving the reader to imagine the connections that would make that happen. 5. The major types of societies analyzed are also strongly correlated with different kinds of religions (post-industrial are heavily Protestant, agrarian heavily non-Christian), which the analysis does not always control for well. 6. It focuses on the "mass publics" of various nations, relying on calculated national means, with little attention to potentially important diversity and complexity within cases that matter for the overall argument. 7. We have very good reason to doubt that the survey measures used really work well across all religious traditions analyzed--e.g., can one survey question about church attendance or prayer really facilitate comparison across, say, Alabama fundamentalism, Japanese Shintoism, and Indian Hinduism?--very blunt instruments, indeed. 8. The book theoretically recognizes the importance of culture, but hardly touches on culture in its own analysis, other than creating regression dummy variables for different religious types, which is hardly attending to cultural analysis well--one supposes these are the limits of conducting research from a computer lab. 9. Some of the writing reflects a lack of genuine familiarity with religion as a human phenomenon per se (e.g., pg. 241 talks about "fundamentalist Evangelical churches," which anyone who knows American religious history ought to know doesn't make sense). 10. The strong linking of religion to existential insecurity seems reductionistic and two-dimensional, at least to this reader. The authors do recognize some of these problems, but recognizing them does not fix them. Thus, the book has significant potential flaws, but I think still is an important voice in an ongoing debate and is thus still worth a reading. Despite its flaws, many of the empirical correlations presented are truly impressive and need to be explained one way or another. And the empirical evidence on post-Soviet societies and on Islam and democracy is very interesting. One looks forward to Stark and Finke's reply to this book's attack on their paradigm/theory.39 of 70 people found the following review helpful. The bottom line: poverty breeds religious faith...By DolomiteThe single strongest argument to be found in this book -- shown through extensive data analysis, rich evidence, and clear thinking -- is that societies where people have enough to eat, housing, healthcare, good education, and jobs are societies marked by LOW religiosity: few go to church and few believe in God or that the Bible is divine. Conversely, societies where life is precarious, marked by poverty, corruption, sickness, low education and unemployment, are societies marked by high degrees of religiosity. Makes perfect sense. And this book spells it all out, with lots of reliable data. The funny thing is that all the social scientists of Europe from the 1800s who predicted the death of religion WERE RIGHT -- for their own societies. Their predictions obviously didn't hold for the rest of the world, but heck, no prediction is perfect. Religion in most of Europe is dying -- as was predicted. See the work of Steve Bruce for even more solid contemporary evidence. or Grace Davie. Greeley, Stark, and Finke are simply wrong. This book proves much of their theories wrong. Shame on Greeley for calling secularization theory "dogma" without data. Shame on Stark for mocking sound sociological evidence. Rife with clear data and clear theoretical articulation, this is a solid look at religion the world over. Religious faith is indeed flourishing throughout much of the world, but that is only because poverty is also flourishing throughout much of the world. And why is religion so strong in the US? Hm...let's see...could it maybe be that we have the highest percentage of people below poverty of any advanced industrial democracy, and we have the greatest gap between rich and poor, and no national health coverage? Well heck, at least Bush is big on prayer....

Seminal nineteenth-century thinkers predicted that religion would gradually fade in importance with the emergence of industrial society. The belief that religion was dying became the conventional wisdom in the social sciences during most of the twentieth century. The traditional secularization thesis needs updating, however, religion has not disappeared and is unlikely to do so. Nevertheless, the concept of secularization captures an important part of what is going on. This book develops a theory of existential security. It demonstrates that the publics of virtually all advanced industrial societies have been moving toward more secular orientations during the past half century, but also that the world as a whole now has more people with traditional religious views than ever before. This second edition expands the theory and provides new and updated evidence from a broad perspective and in a wide range of countries. This

confirms that religiosity persists most strongly among vulnerable populations, especially in poorer nations and in failed states. Conversely, a systematic erosion of religious practices, values, and beliefs has occurred among the more prosperous strata in rich nations.

"This second edition is an outstanding contribution to the new thought among social scientists about the process of secularization... Norris and Inglehart present convincing arguments soundly anchored in extensive systematic research from around the globe...[They] provide a brilliant, well-written, and thoroughly convincing second edition of what will surely become a classic in the field. This is an indispensable work for any college-level class concerned with the role of religion in the contemporary world. Summing Up: Essential." -J.J. Preston, Sonoma State University, CHOICE Magazine

About the Author Pippa Norris is the McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and a visiting professor at Sydney University. Her work analyzes comparative elections and public opinion, gender politics, and political communications. Companion volumes by this author and Ronald Inglehart, also published by Cambridge University Press, include *Rising Tide* (2003) and *Cosmopolitan Communications* (2009). Ronald Inglehart is Professor of Political Science and program director at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. His research deals with changing belief systems and their impact on social and political change. He helped found the Euro-Barometer surveys and directs the World Values Surveys. Related books include *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic and Political Change in Forty-Three Societies* and *Development, Cultural Change and Democracy* (with Christian Welzel).