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Political Theologies

Public Religions in a Post-Secular World

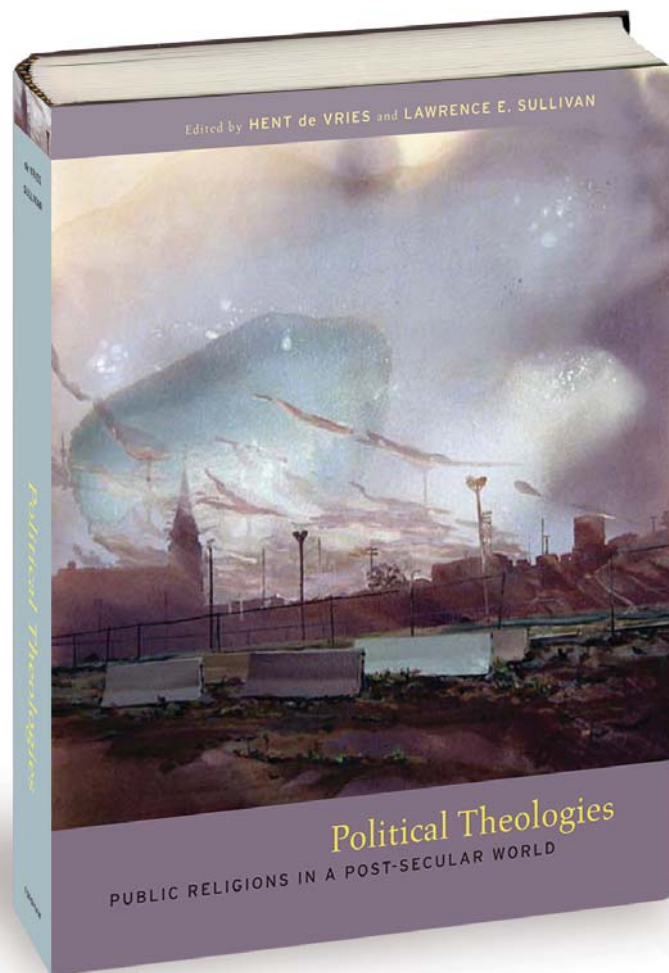
*Edited by **Hent de Vries** and **Lawrence E. Sullivan***

What has happened to religion in its present manifestations? In recent years, Enlightenment secularization, as it appeared in the global spread of political structures that relegate the sacred to a private sphere, seems suddenly to have foundered. Unexpectedly, it has discovered its own parochialism—has discovered, indeed, that secularization may never have taken place at all.

With the “return of the religious,” in all aspects of contemporary social, political, and religious life, the question of political theology—of the relation between “political” and “religious” domains—takes on new meaning and new urgency. In this groundbreaking book, distinguished scholars from many disciplines—philosophy, political theory, anthropology, classics, and religious studies—seek to take the full measure of this question in today’s world.

This book begins with the place of the gods in the Greek polis, then moves through Augustine’s two cities and early modern religious debates, to classic statements about political theology by such thinkers as Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt. Essays also consider the centrality of tolerance to liberal democracy, the recent French controversy over wearing the Muslim headscarf, and “Bush’s God talk.” The volume includes a historic discussion between Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, concerning the prepolitical moral foundations of a republic, and it concludes with explorations of new, more open ways of conceptualizing society.

The contributors: Talal Asad, Pope Benedict XVI, Jane Bennett, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, Job Cohen, William E. Connolly, Veena Das, Marcel Detienne, Thierry de Duve, Stefanos Geroulanos, Jürgen Habermas, Werner Hamacher, Yolande Jansen, Kate Khatib, Ernesto Laclau, Claude Lefort, Bruce Lincoln, Paola Marrati, Stéphane Mosès, Chantal Mouffe, Jean-Luc Nancy, M. B. Pranger, Bettina Prato, Rafael Sanchez, Matthew Scherer, Bhriqupati Singh, Lawrence E. Sullivan, Antonia Szabari, Lars Tønder, Markha Valenta, Peter van der Veer, Hent de Vries, Samuel Weber, and Marc de Wilde.



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Hent de Vries is Professor of Humanities and Philosophy at The Johns Hopkins University and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. He is the author of *Philosophy and the Turn to Religion*; *Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida*; and *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*. Among the volumes he has edited are, with Samuel Weber, *Violence, Identity, and Self-Determination* and *Religion and Media*.

Lawrence E. Sullivan is Professor of World Religions at the University of Notre Dame. The author of *Icanchu's Drum: An Orientation to Meaning in South American Religions*, he was director of Harvard University's Center for the Study of World Religions, and served as President of the American Academy of Religions (AAR).

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“Capacious, adventurous, and thorough, this collection of essays addresses the most significant and recalcitrant issues facing the modern world. . . . One reads it with a sense of desperation, for the urgency of the questions is profound, and one comes away from reading with a sense not of relief or gratitude, but of provocation—and of possibility.”

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