

Radical Democracy and Political Theology (Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture)

By Jeffrey W. Robbins

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Alexis de Tocqueville once wrote that "the people reign over the American political world like God over the universe," unwittingly casting democracy as the political instantiation of the death of God. According to Jeffrey W. Robbins, Tocqueville's assessment remains an apt observation of modern democratic power, which does not rest with a sovereign authority but operates as a diffuse social force. By linking radical democratic theory to a contemporary fascination with political theology, Robbins envisions the modern experience of democracy as a social, cultural, and political force transforming the nature of sovereign power and political authority.

Robbins joins his work with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's radical conception of "network power," as well as Sheldon Wolin's notion of "fugitive democracy," to fashion a political theology that captures modern democracy's social and cultural torment. This approach has profound implications not only for the nature of contemporary religious belief and practice but also for the reconceptualization of the proper relationship between religion and politics. Challenging the modern, liberal, and secular assumption of a neutral public space, Robbins conceives of a postsecular politics for contemporary society that inextricably links religion to the political.

While effectively recasting the tradition of radical theology as a political theology, this book also develops a comprehensive critique of the political theology bequeathed by Carl Schmitt. It marks an original and visionary achievement by the scholar the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* hailed "one of the best commentators on religion and postmodernism."

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Editorial Review

Review

The work is an extremely interesting synthesis of current scholarship on political theology and radical democracy,

(David McKenzie *Journal of Church and State*)

Review

A topical and original book strongly encouraging contemporary theology to engage issues of politics and political thinking. A significant contribution not only to contemporary academic theology but also to religious thought more generally and even to political theory.

(James DiCenso, University of Toronto)

Jeffrey W. Robbins has his finger on the pulse of current events. *Radical Democracy and Political Theology* comes as a welcome contribution to a very lively, very fresh conversation in (and surprisingly between) the fields of political philosophy and theology. It refuses the conservatism of most theologians who have weighed in on these matters, the neo-liberalism of their progressive counterparts, and the obstinate secularism of many political philosophers.

(Mary-Jane Rubenstein, author of *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe*)

Jeffrey W. Robbins seeks to renew political theology by pulling it away from its conservative roots and giving it a democratic foundation. In the process, he shows democracy itself has to be rethought and radicalized. A fascinating and timely project.

(Michael Hardt, coauthor of *Empire*, *Multitude: War and Democracay in the Age of Empire*, and *Commonwealth*)

Jeffrey W. Robbins here develops a supplement to radical theology it has otherwise lacked, namely, a correspondingly radical politics. In sparkling, clear prose, he suggests this is to be found in a radicalized form of democracy, one freed from the shackles of modern liberalism and the last traces of transcendent sovereignty. A timely, distinctive, and provocative contribution to the ongoing debate on the role and nature of political theology today.

(Gavin Hyman, University of Lancaster)

About the Author

is professor and chair of religion and philosophy at Lebanon Valley College. He is the author of *Between Faith and Thought: An Essay on the Ontotheological Condition* and *In Search of a Non-Dogmatic Theology*, the editor of *After the Death of God*, coeditor of *The Sleeping Giant Has Awoken*, and associate editor of the

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