

Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty

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Written in the intense political and intellectual tumult of the early years of the Weimar Republic, *Political Theology* develops the distinctive theory of sovereignty that made Carl Schmitt one of the most significant and controversial political theorists of the twentieth century.

Focusing on the relationships among political leadership, the norms of the legal order, and the state of political emergency, Schmitt argues in *Political Theology* that legal order ultimately rests upon the decisions of the sovereign. According to Schmitt, only the sovereign can meet the needs of an "exceptional" time and transcend legal order so that order can then be reestablished. Convinced that the state is governed by the ever-present possibility of conflict, Schmitt theorizes that the state exists only to maintain its integrity in order to ensure order and stability. Suggesting that all concepts of modern political thought are secularized theological concepts, Schmitt concludes *Political Theology* with a critique of liberalism and its attempt to depoliticize political thought by avoiding fundamental political decisions.

Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) was a legal theorist, political philosopher, and the author of *Legality and Legitimacy*, *On the Three Types of Juristic Thought*, *Political Romanticism*, *Nomos of the Earth*, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, and *The Concept of the Political*, the last available from the University of Chicago Press. Text: English, German (translation)

Other Books

The Religious Problem with Religious Freedom, Rival understandings of the meaning and practice of the religious and the secular lead to rival public perspectives about religion and religious freedom in North America. This book explores how debates over the American Office of Religious Freedom and its International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA, 1998) and very recent debates over the Canadian Office of Religious Freedom (2013) have pitted at least six basic, but very different meanings of the religious and the secular against each other in often undisclosed and usually unproductive ways. Properly naming this 'religious problem' is a critical first step to acknowledging and conciliating their practically polar political prescriptions. It must be considered how we are to think about religion in political offices, both the Canadian and the American experience, as an essentially contested term, and one which demands better than postmodern paralysis, what the author terms political theology. This is especially critical since both of these cases are not just about how to deal with religion at home, but how to engage with religion abroad, where real peril, and real practical policy must be undertaken to protect increasingly besieged religious minorities. Finally, a principled pluralist approach to the religious and the secular suggests a way to think outside the 'religious problem' and productively enlist and engage the forces of religion resurging around the globe. The book will be of great use to scholars and students in religion and foreign affairs, secularization, political theology, and political theory, as well as professionals and policy makers working in issues relating to religion, religious freedom, and foreign affairs.

□ □ □ □ □ . 11 See for example the introduction in the edited volume *The Future of Political Theology* 15 Paul Kahn, *Political Theology : Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 3."