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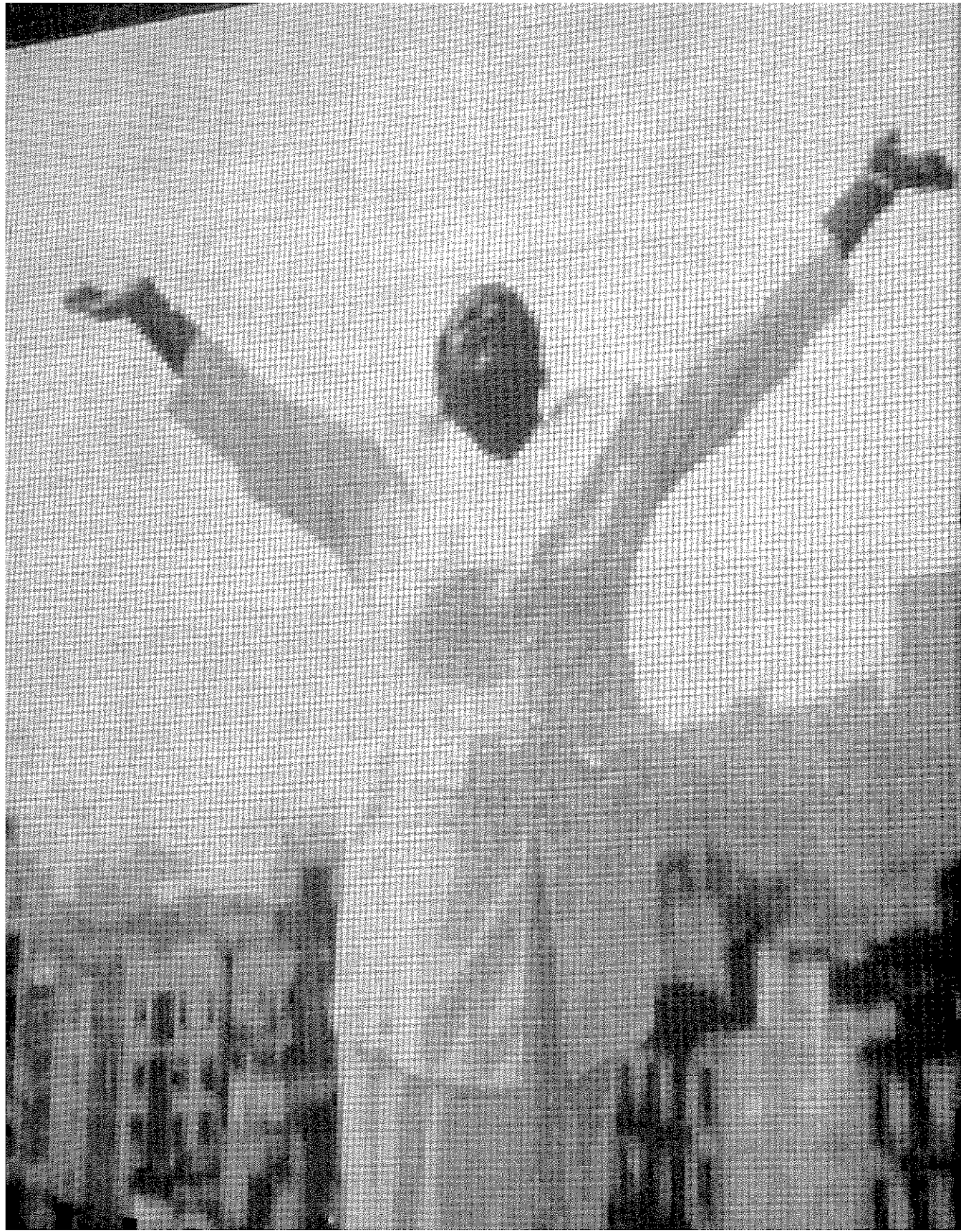
Political Theologies

PUBLIC RELIGIONS IN A POST-SECULAR WORLD

Edited by HENT DE VRIES

and LAWRENCE E. SULLIVAN

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS NEW YORK 2006



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"On the Prepolitical Moral Foundations of a Free Republic," by Pope Benedict XVI ©
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Political theories : public religions in a post-secular world / edited by Hent de Vries
and Lawrence E. Sullivan.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8232-2644-3 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8232-2644-1 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-8232-2645-0 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8232-2645-X (pbk. : alk. paper)

I. Political theology. I. Vries, Hent de. II. Sullivan, Lawrence Eugene, 1949–

BT83.59.P65 2006

201'.72—dc22

2006032059

Printed in the United States of America

08 07 5 4 3 2

First edition

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Preface

Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan

The age of globalization, as we seem destined to regard it, confronts us with more ironies than sources of clarity. The apparent triumph of Enlightenment secularization, manifest in the global spread of political and economic structures that pretended to relegate the sacred to a strictly circumscribed private sphere, seems to have foundered on an unexpected realization of its own parochialism and a belated acknowledgment of the continuing presence and force of “public religions” (the term is José Casanova’s).

As Nobel laureate for economics Joseph Stiglitz notes, “A particular view of the role of government and markets has come to prevail—a view which is not universally accepted within the developed countries, but which is being forced upon the developing countries and the economies in transition.”¹ Even in the Western world, the prevailing model for the organization of political and economic life, representative or parliamentary democracy, and the capitalist enterprise have come under increasing pressure from a variety of social and cultural movements whose religious origins and overtones are more and more difficult to ignore. Both the model of limited governance in political liberalism, with its corollary conception of civil society (implying religious freedom and tolerance), and the unstoppable engine of globalization find their match in spreading expressions of discontentment and resistance, which are often articulated in *theologico-political* terms. But does this make them necessarily “religious”? Or were the pillars of sovereign power not from the outset *theologico-political*, if not *mythico-religious*, at core, just as the engines that continue to drive the forces and interests of economic exchange, their real and virtual monetary flows, have, as Max Weber was the first to realize, affinities with mental dispositions fostered by certain conceptions of faith and belief? Should we (still or again) study current tendencies in society and politics with reference to the