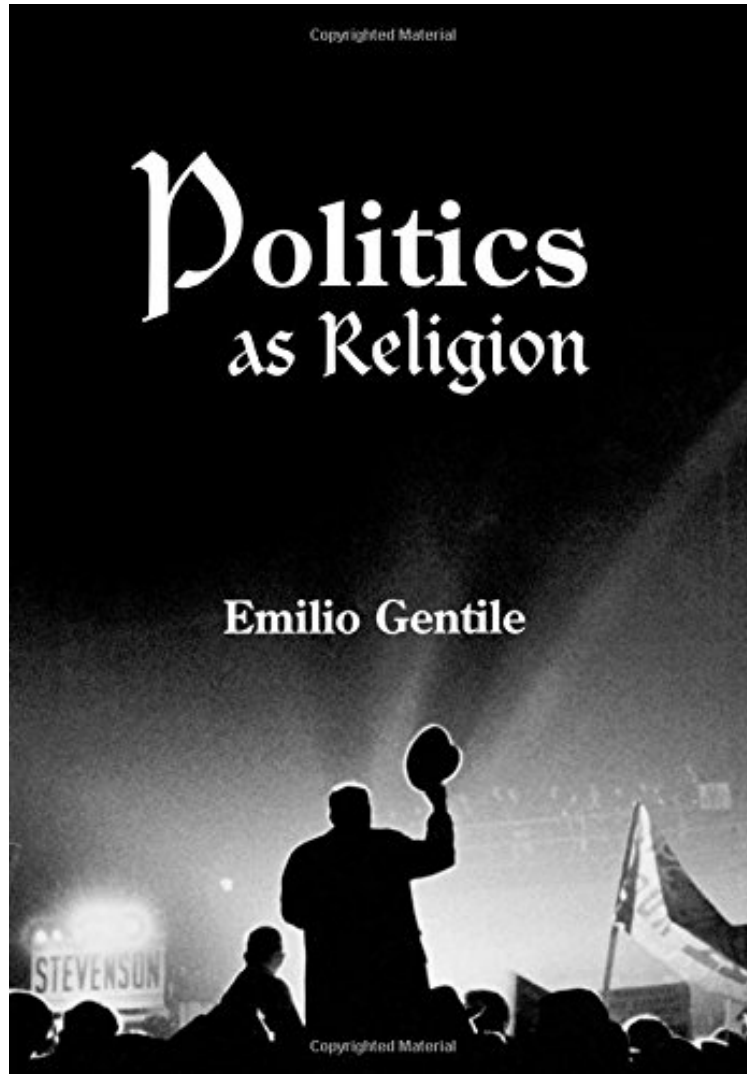


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Politics as Religion

Emilio Gentile

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Emilio Gentile : Politics as Religion before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Politics as Religion:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. An essential work on the psychology of nationalism By Richard Koenigsberg In this important book, Emilio Gentile defines political religion as a "more or less developed system of beliefs, myths, rituals and symbols" that creates an aura of sacredness around an entity belonging to the world and "turns it into a cult or object of worship or devotion." "Gods" are one class of entities that human beings worship. However, other objects become sacred within societies. One such entity worshiped in the modern world---inspiring a cult of devotion---is the Nation-State. The state may appear as an "enthraling and awe-inspiring power that invokes a

feeling of absolute dependency."Contemporary social theory--focusing on the concept of power---demonstrates how forces "from above" impose themselves upon "the subject." Gentile puts forth a more sophisticated---psychological--paradigm based on recognition that human beings possess a desire to attach to and worship objects greater than the self. This is an essential work toward a psychology of nationalism.

Emilio Gentile, an internationally renowned authority on fascism and totalitarianism, argues that politics over the past two centuries has often taken on the features of religion, claiming as its own the prerogative of defining the fundamental purpose and meaning of human life. Secular political entities such as the nation, the state, race, class, and the party became the focus of myths, rituals, and commandments and gradually became objects of faith, loyalty, and reverence. Gentile examines this "sacralization of politics," as he defines it, both historically and theoretically, seeking to identify the different ways in which political regimes as diverse as fascism, communism, and liberal democracy have ultimately depended, like religions, on faith, myths, rites, and symbols. Gentile maintains that the sacralization of politics as a modern phenomenon is distinct from the politicization of religion that has arisen from militant religious fundamentalism. Sacralized politics may be democratic, in the form of a civil religion, or it may be totalitarian, in the form of a political religion. Using this conceptual distinction, and moving from America to Europe, and from Africa to Asia, Gentile presents a unique comparative history of civil and political religions from the American and French Revolutions, through nationalism and socialism, democracy and totalitarianism, fascism and communism, up to the present day. It is also a fascinating book for understanding the sacralization of politics after 9/11.

"The threat of new exclusive, intolerant and fundamentalist nationalism with powerful racist connotations is a danger. This book could make a contribution to analysing these phenomena."--Dr P. J. Dorey, *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* (South Africa)From the Back Cover"This book offers readers a wide and accurate account of various experiences of religions of politics ranging from American democracy (which Emilio Gentile analyzes with remarkable finesse) to Communism. Because of its clarity and the wealth of historical references it provides, it will be particularly useful for courses on politics and religion."--Maurizio Viroli, Princeton UniversityAbout the AuthorEmilio Gentile is Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Rome La Sapienza. His books include *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*; *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism*; *The Origin of Fascist Ideology*; and *The Italian Road to Totalitarianism: The Party and the State in the Fascist Regime* (forthcoming). In 2003 he was awarded the Hans Sigrist Prize by the University of Bern for his studies on political religions.