



# The Neighbor: Three Inquiries in Political Theology (Religion and Postmodernism)

*Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner, Kenneth Reinhard*

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In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud made abundantly clear what he thought about the biblical injunction, first articulated in Leviticus 19:18 and then elaborated in Christian teachings, to love one's neighbor as oneself. "Let us adopt a naive attitude towards it," he proposed, "as though we were hearing it for the first time; we shall be unable then to suppress a feeling of surprise and bewilderment." After the horrors of World War II, the Holocaust, Stalinism, and Yugoslavia, Leviticus 19:18 seems even less conceivable—but all the more urgent now—than Freud imagined.

In *The Neighbor*, three of the most significant intellectuals working in psychoanalysis and critical theory collaborate to show how this problem of neighbor-love opens questions that are fundamental to ethical inquiry and that suggest a new theological configuration of political theory. Their three extended essays explore today's central historical problem: the persistence of the theological in the political. In "Towards a Political Theology of the Neighbor," Kenneth Reinhard supplements Carl Schmitt's political theology of the enemy and friend with a political theology of the neighbor based in psychoanalysis. In "Miracles Happen," Eric L. Santner extends the book's exploration of neighbor-love through a bracing reassessment of Benjamin and Rosenzweig. And in an impassioned plea for ethical violence, Slavoj Žižek's "Neighbors and Other Monsters" reconsiders the idea of excess to rehabilitate a positive sense of the inhuman and challenge the influence of Levinas on contemporary ethical thought.

A rich and suggestive account of the interplay between love and hate, self and other, personal and political, *The Neighbor* will prove to be a touchstone across the humanities and a crucial text for understanding the persistence of political theology in secular modernity.

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