



Sovereignty: God, State, and Self (Gifford Lectures)

Jean Bethke Elshtain

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Throughout the history of human intellectual endeavor, sovereignty has cut across the diverse realms of theology, political thought, and psychology. From earliest Christian worship to the revolutionary ideas of Thomas Jefferson and Karl Marx, the debates about sovereignty—complete independence and self-government—have dominated our history.

In this seminal work of political history and political theory, leading scholar and public intellectual Jean Bethke Elshtain examines the origins and meanings of “sovereignty” as it relates to all the ways we attempt to explain our world: God, state, and self. Examining the early modern ideas of God which formed the basis for the modern sovereign state, Elshtain carries her research from theology and philosophy into psychology, showing that political theories of state sovereignty fuel contemporary understandings of sovereignty of the self. As the basis of sovereign power shifts from God, to the state, to the self, Elshtain uncovers startling realities often hidden from view. Her thesis consists in nothing less than a thorough-going rethinking of our intellectual history through its keystone concept.

The culmination of over thirty years of critically applauded work in feminism, international relations, political thought, and religion, *Sovereignty* opens new ground for our understanding of our own culture, its past, present, and future.

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