

# *The Rise and Fall of the Religious Left*

examines the ways in which American liberalism has helped shape cultural conflict since the 1970s through the lens of television writer and producer Norman Lear's iconic sitcoms, published writings, and interfaith activism. L. Benjamin Rolsky argues that Lear's political involvement exemplified religious liberals' commitment to engaging politics on explicitly moral grounds in defense of what they saw as the public interest. An interdisciplinary analysis of the definitive cultural clashes of our fractious times, this book foregrounds the foundational roles played by popular culture, television, and media in America's religious history.

"Although the religious right looms large in histories of the 1970s, the struggle over religion, politics, and culture didn't unfold only on the right. In this lively and engaging study, Rolsky shows how Norman Lear and *People for the American Way* advanced a strong spiritual vision of civic life from the left."

—KEVIN M. KRUSE, author of *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*

"Rolsky demonstrates how Norman Lear, the renowned television producer of classic shows like *All in the Family*, offers a window into the evolution of the religious left in the 1970s and its complex relationship with the moral majority. A fascinating and intriguing history of the intersection between popular culture, religion, and American politics."

—JULIAN E. ZELIZER, coauthor of *Fault Lines: A History of the United States Since 1974*

"Rolsky intends to prod and provoke, and he does so through his sophisticated analysis of the effect of Lear's work. This is a strong, important, and innovative work that should draw attention, discussion, and debate."

—PAUL HARVEY, author of *Christianity and Race in the American South: A History*

"This exceptional, vividly argued book revises the history of religion and politics in the United States. Rolsky pushes us to see politics as mediated spiritual warfare in which the winner is the one who makes the most accessible entertainment from social outrage. Highly recommended."

—KATHRYN LOFTON, author of *Consuming Religion*

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