

Duquesne University

Duquesne Scholarship Collection

Hallowed Secularism

The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian
Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly
Excellence and Professor of Law

6-15-2007

June 15, 2007: Hallowed Secularism: No Big Deal?

Bruce Ledewitz

Duquesne University, ledewitz@duq.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism>



Part of the [Constitutional Law Commons](#), and the [Law and Philosophy Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2007). June 15, 2007: Hallowed Secularism: No Big Deal?. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly Excellence and Professor of Law at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Hallowed Secularism by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection. For more information, please contact beharyr@duq.edu.

Title: Hallowed Secularism: No Big Deal?

Date: 2007-06-15T07:46:00.000-04:00

6/15/2007 As part of the publicity blitz around my book American Religious Democracy, Dave Overton of Newman Communications (note to authors, if you need a publicist, Dave is great) placed an op-ed piece this week, first in the Baltimore Sun and then, today, a reprint in Newsday. This was a coup for me. But I am embarrassed by the headline chosen by the Newsday editors: Dem's Finding God: No Big Deal. It's not that they were wrong. The piece makes the valid point that the new God acceptance by the Democratic Presidential candidates, and its later effect on judicial nominees, will not change that much. Supreme Court caselaw requires non-coercion and non-sectarianism as well as non-endorsement of religion, so that even if government endorsement were allowed, most case outcomes would not change. Also, acceptance of God by candidates personally and in the public square does not necessarily mean abandoning support for abortion and gay rights. But I overstated these points. This new openness to God by the Democrats has two important consequences. First, it signals the acceptance of American Religious Democracy, as my book suggests. When that translates into constitutional doctrine, the Wall of Separation per se will be seen to be down. Outcomes of cases may not change much, but the tone of caselaw will change. I'm not sure a world looks like when Government can promote religion openly, albeit without coercion or sectarianism, but it won't look precisely the same as today. Second, the embrace of God by the Democratic Party begins the process through which Hallowed Secularism begins to emerge. The 2008 Presidential campaign will be seen in retrospect as the turning point through which secularism began to modify its hostility to transcendence. The belittling of religion by an author like Kevin Phillips and the embrace of atheism reflected in authors like Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and, recently, Christopher Hitchens, will begin to lose its audience. Openness to God is not embrace of bad religion or bad policy. Instead, it reflects a hunger for hope and beauty. And it is by all means secular, that is, this-worldly. If you don't have religion, in some sense, all you have is advertising. The choice for this culture is God or the market. The fact that you and I don't believe in "God" is irrelevant, the beginning of thinking rather than its conclusion. As Aquinas said, God doesn't exist. God is beyond existence.