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Hallowed Secularism

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8-28-2007

### August 28, 2007: Hallowed Secularism and the Future

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Title: Hallowed Secularism and the Future

Date: 2007-08-28T12:24:00.000-04:00

8/28/2007-- The question is, what can we hope for? If I am right about reality, we cannot hope for an end to death or the final establishment of the Kingdom of God. These things are never to be.

It is the lack of this hope, or one like it, that Peter Beinart, the political writer, sensed in an Internet posting he wrote for The New Republic in August 2007. Beinart noticed that the Democratic netroots, as he calls them—the liberal bloggers who have become such a force in the Democratic Party—are without much radical hope. They are not pressing for fundamental change. And neither is anyone else.

Beinart is right about this, but he cannot say why this is. He is himself a moderate and is happy that there is no destructive utopianism around. Things after all, are pretty good, if we just elect Democrats. Universal health insurance and an end to the war in Iraq are all we should be concerned with.

I know why there is no vision on the left. It is because the left is secular. That means there cannot be any real hope in the future. The future will just be like the past.

Instead, Hallowed Secularism says that we can work toward the establishment of the Kingdom of God, with the understanding that, though we work toward it, this Kingdom is never finally established. It is always on the way. We are always helping, only helping, to bring it about. And in doing this work, we must be very careful to try to bring ourselves into alignment with the power in the universe that is at the heart of reality. We must genuinely try to pray Jesus' prayer: not my will but yours. For if we do not, the dangerous forces we unleash can destroy the world.

And what about me, personally? Well, I am going to die and that will be the end of me. So, whatever taste I am going to have of the eternal will have to be here and now.

And that is possible. The psalmist writes in Psalm 27, verse 4, that he would dwell in the house of the Lord all his days:

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

The writer does not ask for God's presence after he dies. The touch and presence of the power of the universe is the highest, most intense good that there is in this life. The rabbis used to call it a taste of the world to come. The rabbis never stated with certainty whether the world to come is like heaven or the future or simply the unsayable. Unlike them, I think the taste of it is all there is. But, we can seek that taste. We can live from it.

I often wonder why religious schools advertise their economic benefits—your child will be successful—or their loyalty benefits—your child will remain a Jew or a Catholic. These schools never advertise what they should be about. Send your child here and perhaps one day your child will know God's presence and will work toward the establishment of the Kingdom. Actually I know why such advertisements do not run. The world is filled with atheists. Some of them are parents. And some of them run religious schools.

The presence of God is not guaranteed. The world was shocked when, in the summer of 2007, the letters of Mother Teresa revealed her spiritual loneliness almost her whole life. It was not given to her to know the presence of the Nameless throughout her life. Yet she was faithful to the Kingdom as well as she knew how to be.

Mother Teresa is a good model for us. I don't mean her particular beliefs. Maybe she was wrong. I don't even mean in her particular methods. Maybe she misread everything. I mean that she sought to bring the Kingdom of God closer and she sought the presence in her own life. Now there is a future.