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Hallowed Secularism

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11-17-2007

### November 17, 2007: Prayers for Rain in Georgia

Bruce Ledewitz

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Title: Prayers for Rain in Georgia

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11/17/2007--What is the Hallowed Secularist to make of the recent public prayers for rain in Georgia? I am not referring her to the separation of church and state, but to the theology behind the act. For the secularist, there is no God who could end the drought. But, does this mean that public prayers of this sort of are harmful? Not necessarily. Such prayers might be thought of as charming relics of a religious past that no one really expects to work. It did rain in parts of Georgia two days later, but even conservative Christians were hesitant to attribute this to God. Perhaps even believers accept the materialist paradigm for things like rain. A friend of mine suggests that such prayers are beneficial because they remind people that we are not in charge of everything. This is an important point. Hallowed Secularism emphasizes that very point in terms of history. Yet that notion—that man is not in charge—is a double-edged sword. John Bolton, the former UN ambassador and staunch conservative, recently suggested in the New York Times that temperatures go up and down and that man cannot affect that. This is an example of the strange fatalism that conservatives fall into when the subject is global warming. They don't speak this way about dictatorial regimes about to develop nuclear weapons. They would not say about Iran, for example, well, you always have dangerous dictators in the world. There is not much to do about it. They only adopt this comportment about man and nature, and even then not about drugs or other things. So, man not in charge is a complex matter. (I'm sure I could find equally strange examples on the left). I admit that I don't like prayers for rain and similar entreaties. What bothers me is how unbiblical they are. How would a biblical person approach a very bad drought? Like the passengers with Jonah, such a person would doubtless ask not just for help from God, as they did in Georgia, but would ask what he or she had done to anger God and bring this natural harm to pass. But modern believers seem to want the good from God—help in this case—without any notion of sin. Even without any suggestion of global warming being involved, the Atlanta region has known droughts before. Atlanta has done nothing to curb its growth or to bring its growth into line with its resources. In other words, this is not a case of attributing tornadoes to gay rights. One doesn't have to look very far to see greed and an absence of gratitude exacerbating the lack of rain. I am not singling out Atlanta. I am saying that treating God as a mere dispenser of benefits is a typical modern belief. What this represents is not religion, but an unhealthy secularism with a thin cover of religious language. Such prayers for rain have nothing to do with the Bible. Ironically, I hope that Hallowed Secularism will more closely follow biblical belief.