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Hallowed Secularism

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12-28-2007

### December 28, 2007: The Neocons and Religion

Bruce Ledewitz

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Title: The Neocons and Religion

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12/28/2007--Craig Unger, whose previous book, *House of Bush, House of Saud* (2004), exposed the links between the Bush family and the Saudi Royal family, has a new book that purports to show the role of true believers in the Bush Administration: *The Fall of the House of Bush: The Untold Story of How a Band of True Believers Seized the Executive Branch, Started the Iraq War, and Still Imperils America's Future* (2007). The secular left is trumpeting the book because it links two favorite themes: the evil of the neocon architects of the war in Iraq and the evil of the Christian Right. Both are true believers. Here is one such blurb—from the magazine *Radar*—"Unger's subject is the war that really matters: the one between Islamic, Jewish, and Christian fundamentalists on one side, and the scientific (reality-based!) post-Enlightenment world that some of us still prefer to inhabit." Now, I have not read Unger's book, but the excerpts in *Salon* suggests that there are three main themes: that President Bush's father opposed the war; that Bush's religious conversion experience was not sincere and that Dick Cheney took over the Administration's foreign policy. Those items are not much of a story of the influence of the religious right. In fact, Unger suggests that President Bush's commitment to Christianity might be politically manipulative, a suggestion that is consonant with the experience of David Kuo in the Administration Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (*Tempting Faith: An Inside Story of Political Seduction*). The neocons are simply not religious people. Think of Dick Cheney or Donald Rumsfeld. These are secular people, not warriors for Christ. Their vision of the Middle East is one of secular democracy and market capitalism. They are not envisioning the Kingdom of God. Some of the neocons are Jewish: Paul Wolfowitz, for example, and Richard Perle. These men may be committed to the interests of the State of Israel and certainly they believe that those interests and the interests of America are consonant. But you would hardly call them spiritual. The failed neocon vision was from the start secular and economic. I don't mean it was evil. There is nothing wrong with the desire to bring democracy to millions of people who live under dictatorship. But its failure should in no way be blamed on religion. Indeed, it should be remembered that the same Christopher Hitchens who attacks religion, supported the Iraq War. If you want to see persons of genuine piety grapple with the violent realities of the world, in their different ways, look to the proposals of Barak Obama and Mike Huckabee.