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Hallowed Secularism

The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian  
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2-14-2008

### February 14, 2008: New Thinking about Religion

Bruce Ledewitz

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Title: New Thinking about Religion

Date: 2008-02-14T10:06:00.002-05:00

2/14/2008--There are many conferences about religion and public life these days. I just received one from Seattle University School of Law for this coming March. The title is Pluralism, Religion and the Law. The conference looks very good. It seems to be asking questions about the relationship of religion to liberal political theory, normative human rights and the practice of law. From what perspective, for example, can one criticize the cultural practices of others—and their religious practices—if we live in a pluralistic world with many perspectives? How can religion ground morality, or even just contribute to it, if there are many religions? And how does all this relate to the practice of law? This is important work. But I wonder if it is really the key to public life in the West. That life is increasingly secular. When I am at conferences like these, the speakers seem basically secular, even when they are “experts” in religion (whatever that might mean). The pluralism of the future will not just be many religions and also many secularists, but rather many secularisms. And the real question, that is the question for living, is how those secularisms will manifest themselves in realms we now consider “religious”. Is there room in our pluralism for a religious secularism, or as I call it, hallowed secularism? And if so, how will that challenge the easygoing atheist assumptions of most non-religious people, including law professors? These topics are difficult for conferences, because there are no experts in living a religiously secular life. We must become our own experts.