

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

3-23-2008

March 23, 2008: Fundamentalist Religion, Secularism and the Real Thing

Bruce Ledewitz

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



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

Title: Fundamentalist Religion, Secularism and the Real Thing

Date: 2008-03-23T13:33:00.002-04:00

3/23/2008--Friday night, my wife and I watched a Christian movie. The movie is entitled *The Perfect Stranger* (2005)—[not *Perfect Stranger*, the 2007 crime thriller]. The movie stars Pamela Brumley and Jefferson Moore. The movie is based on the novel, 'Dinner With a Perfect Stranger' by David Gregory. It tells the story of Nikki, a troubled attorney who one day receives a mysterious dinner invitation from a man claiming to be Jesus of Nazareth. Throughout their evening of conversation, arguments and spirited debate, Nikki learns things she never knew about life, the universe, and most importantly, herself. [from somebody's plot summary]. It's a great movie. It presents fundamentalist theology, to be sure, but it doesn't shy away from difficult questions—for example the painful death of Nikki's father. My reaction to the movie was simple envy. Nikki is able to get over her doubts and embrace Christ. And I wanted to, also. Three points for reflection. First, in the movie, God is an all-powerful, all-loving being. So, everything really is God's plan. We just don't understand it. Nikki comes very close to telling Jesus that if it was his plan that her Dad die, he could take his religion and shove it. This formulation for God is just impossible. Second, the inerrancy of the Bible is necessary to the movie's perspective. Therefore, scientific accounts of evolutionary theory, and really the age of the earth, must be rejected. For all the power of the movie and the sincerity of its makers, this kind of thinking must eventually go the way of the dinosaurs (which is as close to dinosaurs as humans have ever gotten). Finally, for all that, there is real power in this movie. Nikki is changed. Radical and selfless love becomes a possibility in her life for the first time. I do not see how any alternative can bring this kind of transformation. On this Easter Sunday, let's concede that resurrection is needed, even if it is impossible.