

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

---

7-9-2008

### July 9, 2008: Gender and Religion

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: Gender and Religion

Date: 2008-07-09T15:04:00.002-04:00

7/9/2008--I was at an orthodox Jewish wedding last Sunday and I was very impressed. The community and especially the young men in the synagogue attended even though as far as I could tell they did not have especially close ties to the couple getting married. After the ceremony, the men and women danced separately to what sounded like Polish and Russian folk music in traditional style. There were even juggling and acrobatics among the men. It was a lot of fun. The women were having a lot of fun also. The two dancing groups were separated only by a thin wall. And, I must say, I did not see the boorish behavior by men around their wives that I see commonly at other weddings. (There was also an open bar and no one was drunk). Obviously gender roles were more or less traditional among the members of the synagogue, but again I saw more young men taking care of their children than I usually see among young men. Basically I was seeing healthy, young male models. At the same time, Megan Baham was asking in World Magazine (July 12/19, 2008) why so many young men are drawn to a movie like Wanted? She asks, "How little opportunity does our culture offer them to feel deserving of respect?" Of course this healthy male role model in synagogue is purchased by discriminatory gender practices within Orthodox Judaism. These practices may not bother the women involved, but they are jarring to the outsider. Women were not allowed to offer any prayers during the marriage ceremony or even to speak (or at least no woman did speak). And the bride was handed over to the husband by her parents. And on and on. So, no one is suggesting that Orthodoxy is a healthy new model for religious life. Yet, all the same, those young men were happy, or so it seemed to me. They seemed to know who they are. And their wives and families seemed to benefit from their confidence and grounded identities. One thing for sure: our culture offers basically one role model to young men—economic success (aside from the military--another male dominated, conservative subculture). Since most of us do not attain that, there is not much of a place for young men. Hallowed Secularism might learn a thing or two from Orthodox Judaism.