

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

7-24-2008

July 24, 2008: Christians Captured by Capitalism

Bruce Ledewitz

Duquesne University, ledewitz@duq.edu

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



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

Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2008). July 24, 2008: Christians Captured by Capitalism. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/166>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Collective Works of Bruce Ledewitz, Adrian Van Kaam C.S.Sp. Endowed Chair in Scholarly Excellence and Professor of Law at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Hallowed Secularism by an authorized administrator of Duquesne Scholarship Collection. For more information, please contact beharyr@duq.edu.

Title: Christians Captured by Capitalism

Date: 2008-07-24T08:09:00.002-04:00

7/24/2008--The most recent issue of World Magazine illustrates a sad tendency—Christians who become ideologically committed to socio-economic doctrines that have nothing to do with the Gospel. One example of this in general is the issue of global warming. Whether human beings are causing an increase in global temperatures is a scientific question, not a religious one. While people may, of course, disagree on the fact of the matter, there would be no reason for a Christian news magazine to have an obvious commitment on the issue, as World Magazine does. The magazine obviously is biased in the direction that planet is not warming or that humans are not causing it.

Now, why would that be? It seems to me it is a part of the capture of some conservative Christians by the ideology of a certain kind of capitalism—small government, little regulation, low taxes. These may be excellent policies, but their connection to the Bible escapes me. At the same time, the magazine lacks much if any criticism of market policies. Again, maybe there aren't any. But Jesus did seem somewhat hostile to the rich.

Here is an example of what I mean. The article in the current issue about our economic problems, Crisis of a Lifetime, by Professor Alex Tokarev, contains only criticism of the government. There is not much there about the greed of lenders that pushed people into mortgages they could not afford and not much about the need for greater regulatory oversight of the lending industry. Why would a Christian perspective not assume that human greed would rear its head? Of course it would.

The article also criticizes the government for sponsoring consumption. But there is not a mention of a greater culprit on that issue—the advertising industry. There is no mention of that because considering the ills of capitalism might raise fundamental issues. Maybe capitalism must expand its markets, as Lenin suggested. Thus, maybe our meltdown was inevitable.

Joe Belz, in an opinion piece entitled “Wrong Doxology,” also in the current issue, made the ideological link between Christian thought and the market explicit in his call for developing a biblical link to justify small government commitments:

“But if I'm right that the 'limited government' cadre is, year in and year out, the most influential segment of this conservative trio, then there's an urgency in developing a clearly biblical rationale for this group's core principles and priorities. We do that partly out of principle: We want, very simply, to be right. And we want to be biblically grounded in everything we do. But we also do it partly out of pragmatism: Even if others don't care about such biblical groundedness, they will be stronger and their efforts more productive because of our joining them in the coalition.”

It's obvious that the commitment to the conservative coalition comes first, and the Bible second. The Bible is then combed to justify the commitment. This is ideology, not theology.

So what? You might say, These people are all committed Republicans, aren't they? Who cares what they think? But you would be wrong.

The point of Hallowed Secularism is a connection between secular thought and religious thought. Conservative or liberal ideology has no place in this dialogue. Secularists already believe that Christianity is a mere front for conservative politics. That is part of the problem.

Just compare World Magazine to the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is just as “conservative” on abortion and gay marriage, but can be startlingly “liberal” on the environment. And the Church has never committed itself to capitalist ideology. That is why secular/Christian dialogue is likely to start, and actually with Habermas has started, there.