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12-24-2008

### December 24, 2008: The HumanLight Holiday

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#### Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2008). December 24, 2008: The HumanLight Holiday. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/229>

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Title: The HumanLight Holiday

Date: 2008-12-24T10:51:00.000-05:00

12/24/2008—Yesterday, Brad Linder of NPR did a story about HumanLight, the secular holiday that coincides with the winter solstice period. According to the story, a number of humanist groups celebrate the holiday in a family-friendly way, with songs, stories and even candle lighting. The story showcased one such celebration, in the Philadelphia area last weekend. According to the story, HumanLight was founded eight years ago to highlight reason and human achievement. Clearly, however, it also is a way for non-religious families to participate in the Christmas season. According to Joe Fox, President of the Humanist Association of Greater Philadelphia, with whom I spoke after listening to the program, there is some controversy about HumanLight within the secular community because it is so religious in tone and feel. HumanLight seems to perfectly represent the struggle in secularism over its connection to religion. My book *Hallowed Secularism* argues that secularism needs religion in order to be healthy and to serve a flourishing humanity. It is not surprising that parents would want their children to have a little magic during the holiday season. HumanLight follows the pattern that *Hallowed Secularism* predicts. On the other hand, secularists here make the same mistake they are always making—over-praising human reason. Reason, after all, gave us Cold War mutually assured destruction and the calculated Vietnam War. Who would think you could separate human beings into two different parts—feeling and reasoning? Reason here really just means no supernatural world and its use that way is misleading. Why celebrate human beings with all our faults? Better to take a leaf from Christianity and celebrate a holiday called “New Beginnings” that would emphasize the capacity of reality to allow for something new. That is the message of Christmas, perfectly captured in President Obama’s title—obviously Church inspired—*The Audacity of Hope*. In the darkness of human power—that of Rome—in a stable among the poor, reality responds with an event wholly unpredictable that brings a new grace to the world. Don’t praise us. Praise reality. In the story, there was one moment that did not serve to overinflate the human. At the celebration, the children watched pictures of galaxies. The wonder of it brought them to silence. More of that. Less of us.