

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

2-11-2009

February 11, 2009: A Politician Saves Us

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. (2009). February 11, 2009: A Politician Saves Us. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/249>

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: A Politician Saves Us

Date: 2009-02-11T08:19:00.001-05:00

2/11/2009--No, I am not referring to President Barack Obama, who may or may not save us, but to Abraham Lincoln, who most certainly did save our country in a crisis far worse than a financial meltdown, however severe. William Safire's essay in the New York Time's book review section this last Sunday, celebrating the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, reminds us that Lincoln saved us using the talents and skills of a politician: vision, rhetoric, hope, manipulation, shrewdness and so forth. The whole bag of tricks, noble and otherwise. Americans, especially young Americans, do not seem too enamored of politicians. Even Obama, who is an exception, does not seem to be inspiring people to enter government service—other kinds of public service maybe, but not government. I suspect one reason for this is the cult of the individual. We like to think that we make our own choices. But individualism is mostly bunk. Subject to the forces of heredity, culture and history, you and I are mostly a product. We make our choices only in a very confined context. As Charles Taylor put it in his book, *A Secular Age*, at one point in Western history it was nearly impossible not to believe in God; then at a later time, it became quite difficult. We don't control our context. One way in which I hope Hallowed Secularism differs from other kinds of secularism is a greater sense of organicity and community. We are a people, in fact largely the people Lincoln made us. We are not a collection of individuals. And we are going to deal with our current crisis as a people, or not at all.