

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

4-19-2019

April 19, 2019: God: the Bait and Switch

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. (2019). April 19, 2019: God: the Bait and Switch. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/1237>

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: God: the Bait and Switch

Date: 2019-04-19T07:11:00.003-04:00

4/19/2019—When I first voiced frustration over the conception of God prevalent in every synagogue I ever attended, my friend and teacher, Robert Taylor, told me to “translate” this kind of God language into something more believable. But over time I just could not do it. We find today in the Settler movement in Israel exactly the danger of a conception of a God who can do something like give somebody else’s land to me. Many settlers say that God gave Judea and Samaria to the Jewish people and so it is their land and Palestinians who live there have no rights. But this is not just the view of theologically unsophisticated modern people. The great Rashi taught that the Torah begins with the creation of the world to show that God owns the world and can give the land of Israel to anyone he chooses. As Martin Heidegger might say, this is to confuse Being with a Being. This kind of God, who acts in human ways and does things a human being could do if powerful enough and for human sorts of reasons, is exactly the kind of God that Christopher Hitchens made fun of in his book, *God is not Great*. He thought a lot of the conflicts in the world arose from differing views of what that kind of God had actually done. And he was right. But Hitchens was criticized because he was describing an infantile view of God. It was the view of God I was taught and the one that seems to be at work in the Church, he claimed. He called the movement from one kind of God concept to the other, a bait and switch. I am reminded of this because of Easter. C.S. Lewis once said that Christianity was one big miracle. And I agree. The issue for me was always the resurrection, which is why I never became a Christian, though I love Jesus and consider the New Testament to represent the best truth ever written by humans. Of course, Lewis was also not a theologian. And indeed Lewis really did have multiple conceptions of God—he always said that classical philosophy and Christianity were importantly similar. But a real theologian like N.T. Wright makes the point very clearly. The claim of Christianity is that the resurrection actually happened. Not metaphorically. Jesus rose from the dead, his lifeless body reanimated in a new way—and thus physically not in the tomb—and confronted and engaged his followers. But this I cannot accept. Only the kind of God I also cannot accept could do this kind of thing. Even the Gospel of Mark, which is careful not to dwell on the resurrected Christ’s actions, makes absolutely clear that the tomb was empty and that this was the work of God. This is in large part why I left Judaism. The monotheistic tradition insists that God can intervene in physical ways, setting aside the usual laws of the natural world. For many of us, something else, and new is needed. But, to the many millions—billions—of believers, God bless you. And a blessing to you on Easter and Passover.