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August 13, 2020: How Can the Sacred be Regained?

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Title: How Can the Sacred be Regained?

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8/13/2020--The quotes below are from an op-ed by Thomas Friedman: [Beirut's Blast Is a Warning for America](#). The subhead was, In this country, as in Lebanon, everything is now politics.

Friedman was quoting Moshe Halbertal:

“For a healthy politics to flourish it needs reference points outside itself — reference points of truth and a conception of the common good,” explained the Hebrew University religious philosopher Moshe Halbertal. “When everything becomes political, that is the end of politics.”

“When you lose the realm of the sacred, that realm of the common good outside of politics, that is when societies collapse,” said Halbertal. That is what happened to Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq. And that is what is slowly happening to Israel and America.

One thing about the column is odd—all these countries mentioned are among the most religious in the world. So, one question Friedman is not interested in is how is it the religions of the book—Islam, Judaism and Christianity—lost the sacred?

I believe this happened because of the Death of God, which has absolutely penetrated everywhere. Religion loses its capacity for creativity because it fears the universe instead of having faith in it. Do you hear the Orthodox in any religion say, we shall have peace because with God all things are possible?

If these religions had not lost God, there would be much more serious cross boundary worship, as there was with Martin Buber. The Rebbe would have been capable of this. Pope Francis is. It is rare. God is Dead.

But, in rapidly secularizing America, we have to ask another question—how does secularism recover the sacred?

You don't get the answer for a year, which is when my new book will be published. It is all about how to recover the sacred. It is called *The Universe Is On Our Side: Restoring Faith in American Public Life*.

Here is the abstract: *There has been a breakdown in American public life that no election can fix. Americans cannot even converse about politics. All the usual explanations for our condition have failed to make things better. Bruce Ledewitz shows that America is living with the consequences of the Death of God, which Friedrich Nietzsche knew would be momentous and irreversible. God was this culture's story of the meaning of our lives. Even atheists had substitutes for God, like inevitable progress. Now we have no story and do not even think about the nature of reality. That is why we are angry and despairing. America's future requires that we begin a new story by each of us asking a question posed by theologian Bernard Lonergan: Is*

the universe on our side? When we commit to live honestly and fully by our answer to that question, even if our immediate answer is no, America will begin to heal. Beyond that, pondering the question of the universe will allow us to see that there is more to the universe than blind forces and dead matter. Guided by the naturalism of Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy, and the historical faith of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we can learn to trust that the universe bends toward justice and our welfare. That conclusion will complete our healing and restore faith in American public life. We can live without God, but not without thinking about holiness in the universe.