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### April 21, 2009: Why Do We Need Religion?

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Title: Why Do We Need Religion?

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4/21/2009--The fundamental claim of Hallowed Secularism is that our rapidly growing secular culture will require continuing contact with religion in order to sustain flourishing human civilization. This claim elicits disdain among some secularists. Why do we need religion, they repeatedly ask. I am slowly working on vocabulary to illustrate the need for religion to secularists who have both a truncated and unrealistic idea of what religion is and a seemingly naïve view of what it takes to sustain culture. It is not easy. In this entry, let me concentrate on the relativism of values. In American Babylon, the late Richard John Neuhaus attacked the thinking of the late American philosopher Richard Rorty who argued that we make up morality and that there is no way to privilege one citizen's first principles over any others (quote from Charles Morris' review in New York Times). Neuhaus argued not so much from scripture as from the natural law tradition that values are real. While the Rorty position extolling irony is defensible in itself, Rorty apparently understood that one could not really raise children with his viewpoint. It would quickly undermine a society's morale. But aside from that problem, genuine relativism is not what we mean when we say something is right or wrong. We don't mean right or wrong from a certain point of view, but really right or wrong. Since we are all going to die and since the universe itself will end and since there is no God to redeem all this, there is a troubling question of why I should bother to do good when doing so does not suit me and does not benefit me. My answer to this is that a good deed enables me to participate in eternity. A single good deed is so true that its truth somehow will outlast the universe itself. It is obvious that I learned to see things this way from my religious upbringing. And it also obvious, at least to me, that it is good for a society that its members have this feeling. Religion instills it. It is called the pull of the absolute.