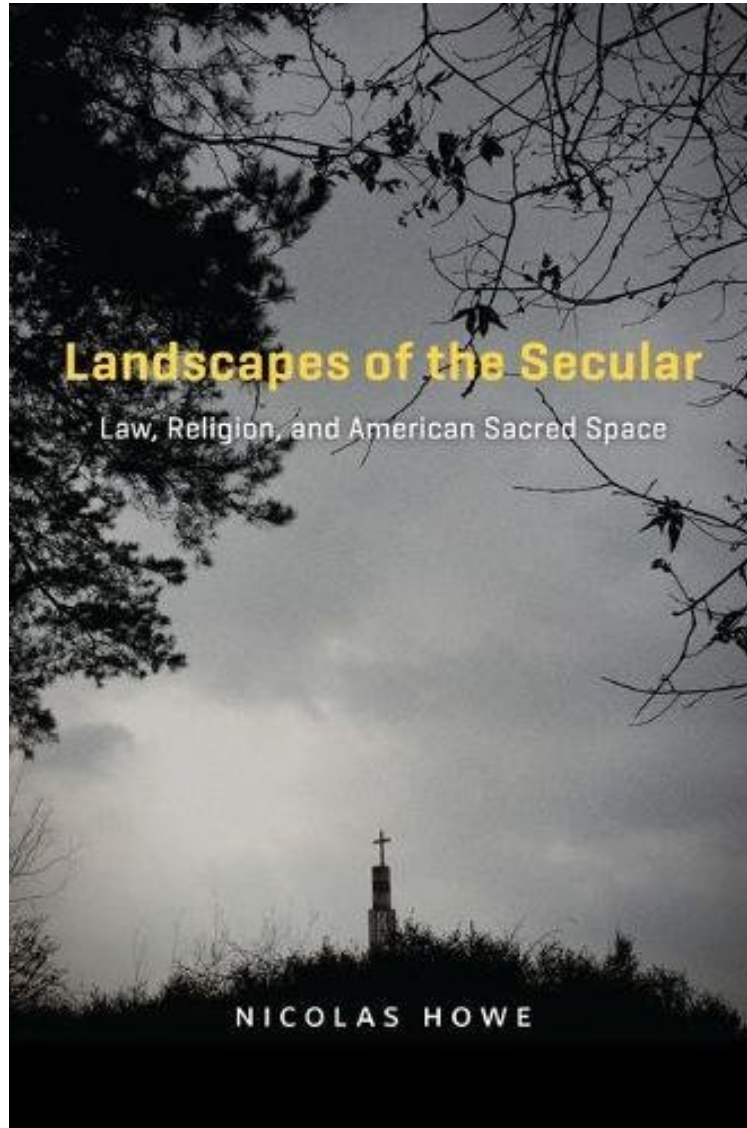


[Free] Landscapes of the Secular: Law, Religion, and American Sacred Space

# Landscapes of the Secular: Law, Religion, and American Sacred Space

*Nicolas Howe*

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**Nicolas Howe : Landscapes of the Secular: Law, Religion, and American Sacred Space** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Landscapes of the Secular: Law, Religion, and American Sacred Space:

What does it mean to see the American landscape in a secular way? asks Nicolas Howe at the outset of this innovative, ambitious, and wide-ranging book. It's a surprising question because of what it implies: we usually aren't seeing American landscapes through a non-religious lens, but rather as inflected by complicated, little-examined concepts of the sacred. Fusing geography, legal scholarship, and religion in a potent analysis, Howe shows how seemingly routine questions about how to look at a sunrise or a plateau or how to assess what a mountain is both physically and ideologically, lead to complex arguments about the nature of religious experience and its implications for our lives as citizens. In American society nominally secular but committed to permitting a diversity of religious beliefs and expressions such questions become all the more fraught and can lead to difficult, often unsatisfying compromises regarding how to interpret and inhabit our public lands and spaces. A serious commitment to secularism, Howe shows, forces us to confront the profound challenges of true religious diversity in ways that often will have their ultimate expression in our built environment. This provocative exploration of some of the fundamental aspects of American life will help us see the land, law, and society anew.

A brilliant book thoughtful, and evocative, with compelling insights into the formations of secular landscapes that might at first glance be surprising but almost immediately become recognizable as capturing how things, places, and people are actually working in producing sacred space in America. Many of us aspire to being interdisciplinary, but Howe fully inhabits the disciplines of cultural geography, environmental studies, religious studies, and critical legal studies in advancing his analysis. Dwelling in detailed case studies of Christian displays, Native American traditions, and wilderness preservation, Howe illuminates how the US legal system shapes American landscapes by staging crises of interpretation of profound emotional, religious, and political significance. *Landscapes of the Secular* is an expansive and rigorously focused entry into the changing terrain of the sacred in America.