

President Compares Islam to Christianity

In his National Prayer Breakfast speech last week, President Barack Obama said:

“And lest we get on our high horse and think that this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ. In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ. ... So this is not unique to one group or one religion.”

It is important to analyze these words – because the president of the United States spoke them in a major forum, and because what he said is said by all those who defend Islam against any criticism.

Referring to Islamic violence, the president accuses anyone who implies that such religious violence “is unique to some other place” – meaning outside the Christian West – as getting on a “high horse.”

Is this true? Of course, not. In our time, major religious violence is in fact “unique to some other place,” namely the Islamic world. What other religious group is engaged in mass murder, systematic rape, slavery, beheading innocents, bombing public events, shooting up school children, wiping out whole religious communities and other such atrocities?

The answer is, of course, no other religious group. Therefore massive violence in the name of one’s religion today is indeed “unique to some other place.” To state this is not to “get on a high horse.” It is to tell the most important truth about the world in our time.

Would the president have used the “high horse” argument 30

years ago regarding Western condemnation of South African apartheid?

Of course not. Because contempt for Western evils is noble, while contempt for non-Western, especially Islamic, evils is "to get on a high horse."

The president then defends his statement that religious violence is not "unique to some other place" by providing Christian examples: first the Crusades and the Inquisition and then slavery and Jim Crow.

Before addressing the specific examples, a word about the timing. The Crusades took place a thousand years ago and the Inquisition five hundred years ago. Is it not telling that – even if the examples are valid (which they aren't) – the president had to go back 500 and 1,000 years to find his primary Christian examples?

Doesn't going back so far in the past render the argument a bit absurd? Imagine if the president had said, "When the Jews conquered Canaan in 1,000 B.C., they committed terrible deeds in the name of Judaism." Anyone hearing that argument would have thought that the president had lost his mind. Yet he and almost everyone else who wishes to defend Islam raise the Crusades and the Inquisition. The president also mentioned slavery and Jim Crow, but it's the Crusades and the Inquisition that are almost always used to equate Muslim and Christian evil-doing.

Furthermore, it is difficult to see why comparing Muslim behavior today to Christian behavior a thousand or five hundred years ago provides a defense of Islam. On the contrary, isn't the allegation that Islamic evil at the present time is morally equivalent to Christian evil a thousand years ago a damning indictment of the present state of much of Islam?

And as regards the substance of the charge, this widespread

use of the Crusades and the Inquisition is ignorant of the realities of both. The Crusades were Christian wars to retake territories in the Holy Land that Muslims had forcefully taken from Christians. Unless the question of “who started it?” is morally irrelevant, and therefore all wars are immoral, the Crusaders’ war on Muslims in the Holy Land is a poor example of evil in the name of Christ.

Now, as it happens, there was terrible evil in the name of Christ during the Crusades – the wholesale massacre of Jews in Germany by various Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. For the record, however, in no instance did the Church order these killings and in almost every case Jews sought and received aid and support from local bishops.

In any event, other than Jews, few people know of these massacres. Almost everyone who cites the Crusades as an example of Christian evil is referring to the Crusaders’ wars against Muslims.

As for the Inquisition, suffice it to say that it is now acknowledged among scholars that in its worst years – 1480 to 1530 – the Inquisition killed an average of 40 people a year. Each was unspeakably tragic and evil, but the Inquisition was benign compared to Boko Haram, al-Qaida, Islamic State, the Taliban, Hamas and the other Islamic terror organizations.

We live in an age of moral idiocy. Moral equivalence is the left’s way of resisting fighting evil. It did it during the Cold War when the U.S. and the Soviet Union were morally equated, and it is doing it now when it morally equates all religions and societies. Take, for example, this imbecilic equation by writer Ta-Nehisi Coates in *The Atlantic*, defending the president’s comments on Islam and Christianity by invoking slavery: “Americans have done, on their own soil, in the name of their own God, something similar to what ISIS is doing now.”

There is a major moral crisis in one religion on earth today – Islam. To say so is not to get on a high horse. It is to identify violent Islam as the greatest evil in the world since Nazism and Communism.

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