

When We Ignore the Nexus Between Faith and Bigotry ...

The other day President Obama went to a mosque in Baltimore and said, “And so if we’re serious about freedom of religion – and I’m speaking now to my fellow Christians who remain the majority in this country – we have to understand an attack on one faith is an attack on all our faiths.”

That sounds reasonable enough. No decent person condones “attacks” on Muslims or anyone else based simply on religion. But how about *challenging* a person’s faith? Are we permitted to question the tenets of one’s religion? Or does that constitute an “attack on one’s faith”?

I just read a smart piece in National Review, a column by David Harsanyi, in which he says: “We certainly don’t want people attacking peaceful Muslims, but it’s irresponsible and intellectually obtuse to act as if the pervasive violence, misogyny, homophobia, child abuse, tyranny, anti-Semitism, bigotry against Christians, etc. that exist in large parts of Islamic society abroad has absolutely nothing to do with faith.”

And there’s also this from Harsanyi: “Christian communities, often older than Islam itself, have been devastated by Islamic groups and left unprotected by moderate Muslim governments for decades. These attacks are aimed at Christians. We have done nothing to help them. It is then completely rational for Christians to be apprehensive about Islam.”

But let’s accept that the Mr. Obama’s talk at the Baltimore mosque was a reasonable attempt to reassure American Muslims that they are part of the American family – given that relations clearly have become frayed between Muslims and their fellow citizens in the wake of the mayhem caused by Muslim

terrorists around the world.

“If you’re ever wondering whether you fit in here, let me say it as clearly as I can, as president of the United States: You fit in here – right here,” the president said. “You’re right where you belong. You’re part of America, too.”

Promoting tolerance, of course, is not a bad thing. But promoting the idea that Islamic terrorism has nothing to do with Islam is another matter.

You may recall that Mr. Obama told us that the Islamic State has nothing to do with Islam because ISIS is “a terrorist organization, pure and simple. And it has no vision other than the slaughter of all who stand in its way.” And the other day in Rome, Secretary of State John Kerry joined in, telling the world that Islamic State terrorists are “nothing more than a mixture of killers, of kidnappers, of criminals, of thugs, of adventurers, of smugglers, of thieves.”

You know, just your run of the mill crooks.

But then Kerry added this: “And they are also, above all, apostates – people who have hijacked a great religion and lie about its real meaning and lie about its purpose and deceived people in order to fight for their purposes.”

An apostate is someone who renounces or abandons his religion. And while we can understand that Kerry made the remark in an attempt to distance the Islamic State from mainstream Islam, he should watch what he says, given his limited knowledge of that particular religion.

“Kerry has no more theological authority to brand someone an apostate of Islam than King Salman of Saudi Arabia has to consecrate the Eucharist,” as David Harsanyi puts it. “Not even moderate Sunni clerics make this claim. Yet, over and over, leftists try and detach the branches of Islam they dislike from the trunk so they can call you a bigot for

attacking their idealized conception of Islam.”

Tarring opponents as bigots is not a new thing with many on the left. If you don't like Obamacare, there's a good chance it's because the president is black. If you question Islam, it's probably because you suffer from Islamophobia – the unnatural fear of Muslims and their religion. A lot of liberals like calling out bigots – whether they really exist or not – as a way to show how good they themselves are. And this is why, I think, many on the left see America as a dark place, a place where bigotry lurks in the shadows just waiting to be unleashed on the innocent “other.”

It is these liberals, I think, who are the ones with unnatural fears.