



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on May 6, 2016

Does the President Believe All Faiths Are Equal?

Is Nazism the equivalent of libertarianism?
Is conservatism morally equal to communism?

Next question: Is saying all faiths are morally equal really any different from saying all ideologies are so?

"We have to understand that an attack on one faith is an attack on all our faiths," [said](#) Barack Obama at a mosque outside of Baltimore earlier this year. This was mentioned today by *American Thinker* commentator Marion DS Dreyfus. She takes issue with the president's remark, [saying](#) it reflects a destructive and deceptive religious-equivalence philosophy stating, "All faiths are equal."



Now, first note that Obama's mosque statement, aside from being stale boilerplate rhetoric, makes as much sense as if an Allied bombardier had refused to do his duty during the WWII bombing of Dresden and exclaimed, "An attack on one city is an attack on all our cities!" Even more analogous, it's much as if an Obama underling balked at targeting conservative opponents, explaining "Mr. President, we have to understand that an attack on one ideology is an attack on all our ideologies!"

What's the connection? As with different ideologies, different faiths espouse different values. Consequently, as with ideologies, not all faiths can be equal unless all values are. Claiming so would be moral relativism (which, tragically, [a majority of Americans subscribe to](#)). And if morals are relative, then, yes, all religions are what we call "morally" equal.

Then, however, so are all ideologies.

So Islam would be the equivalent of Christianity.

But then Nazism would also be the equivalent of libertarianism.

Moreover, if all values were equal, how could tolerance be better than intolerance? How then could showing a religion respect be better than attacking it?

Obama isn't alone in having an instinct to paint all faiths with the same brush. Not only is it a corollary of the relativism infecting moderns but, wanting to get along and avoid strife, we make an unwritten agreement: "I won't say my faith is better than your faith if you don't say your faith is better than my faith. Deal?" Of course, this solves nothing, and not just because the relativism underlying it informs that getting along can't morally be any better than fighting. It's also for another reason.

We wanted to avoid religious wars, even though, contrary to myth, virtually no wars in history were "religious" (they were generally motivated by a desire for land, power, resources, or glory). So then we had political wars. During WWI, President Woodrow Wilson claimed that the "world must be made safe for democracy"; a WWII rallying cry was "We must fight fascism"; and Marxists waged wars throughout



the world, opposed by the West, and one way or another killed 100 million people during the 20th century. But, hey, at least they didn't die over "religion."

Of course, we could now just agree to proclaim all ideologies equal, but that doesn't really solve anything, does it? Issues need to be discussed and sorted out, social codes and laws developed, and civilization needs to be organized; agree to put "ideology" on the back burner as we have faith and these tasks just transfer to a differently named battleground as we then fight over "world views," "governing philosophies," or "value sets." And that's the point: Not only did we transition from rare religious wars to perhaps the less-rare ideological ones of the 20th century, but all the great issues previously settled in the religious realm have now been transferred to the political one. Marriage is an institution of religious pedigree, and now government issues marriage licenses and its courts hand down decrees on marriage's nature. The Bible states "Male and female He made them," and now government tells us how we must view the sexes (e.g., "transgender"-oriented laws and sensitivity training for schoolchildren). Religion generally had teachings relating to conceiving children, and now the government funds Planned Parenthood and issues contraception mandates. But we can rejoice that the church is no longer imposing values on us.

So we separated church from state — a model not dictated by the Constitution, mind you — and ignored that you can't separate morality (or immorality, as is increasingly the case today) from state. Related to this, Western critics of Islam are fond of pointing out that the faith "isn't just a religion, but a political ideology." Yet political ideologies are imposed on us all the time. So is these critics' real problem that they believe Islam is the wrong one?

Actually, these critics' real problem is they don't realize that as with ideology, "religion" is a category replete with "wrong ones." Years ago I had a discussion with a clergyman who maintained that the 9/11 hijackers weren't really religious (i.e., not truly Islamic) because they spent time prior to their dark deed drinking and pursuing pleasures of the flesh. He made a common mistake: projecting his own Christian norms — his own conception of what it means to be "religious" — onto other faiths. This is dangerous because, just as we'd never have been able to understand the Soviets if we'd convinced ourselves they were "just like us," we won't understand those of other faiths if we sloppily ascribe our sense of virtue to them.

Start by understanding that most "religions" that have ever existed we today would view as bizarre and revolting. The Aztecs sacrificed thousands of innocents a year on bloody altars, ripping their hearts out while they were still alive and hanging their body parts in the marketplace. This was not unusual, as human sacrifice, brutality, and slavery (first rejected by Christian civilization) were common among ancient and medieval pagans. It was the early Christians, for instance, who finally extinguished the carnage of the Roman arena.

As for the seemingly impious behavior of Muslim jihadists, note that Islam offers its male adherents much latitude in behavior. For example, Christianity teaches that polygamy is sinful; Islam allows a man multiple wives. Islamic tradition [endorses](#) the rape of "captive" women. And the largest branch of Shia Islam even allows *Nikāḥ al-mut'ah*, or "pleasure marriage," which allows a man to temporarily "marry" a young girl — for perhaps as little as an hour — so he can "lawfully" have his way with her.

Moreover, just as Christians might ask "What would Jesus do?" Muslims view Muhammad as "the perfect man." Yet Muhammad was a warlord who bought, sold, captured, and owned slaves; and, in case anyone is wondering about the origin of *Nikāḥ al-mut'ah*, well, at one time Muhammad allowed



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that, too.

Of course, none of this was unusual in Muhammad's time and place, and Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan, and other conquerors did the same or worse. If someone said Attila the Hun was his role model, however, it would give us pause for thought. And we certainly wouldn't assume that his "Hunnic religion" was just like any other faith.

In his brilliant little piece "Taliban from Outer Space," Colonel Ralph Peters [wrote](#), "In my years as an intelligence officer, I saw colleagues make the same blunder over and over: They rushed to stress the ways in which the Russians, the Chinese or the Iranians were 'just like us.' It's the differences that kill you, though." He recommends that you break the mental habit of projecting your own mindset onto others by beginning "with the view that *all* opponents are aliens from another cultural planet." The funny thing is that conservatives and liberals naturally view each other this way, often considering the other side alien. Yet some of the very same people find it hard to imagine that those of an alien faith could be more alien still.



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