



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 20, 2013

Obama, Maybe Catholicism is “Divisive” — and Maybe That’s Good

It isn’t always true that “united we stand.” United in the wrong things we can fall, and sometimes, for some to stand on principle, we must stand divided.

Barack Obama is currently taking some heat for what has been characterized as a shot at Catholic education. While in Northern Ireland for the G8 summit recently, Obama spoke to an audience of approximately 2,000 students at Belfast’s Waterfront hall and said, “If towns remain divided — if Catholics have their schools and buildings and Protestants have theirs, if we can’t see ourselves in one another and fear or resentment are allowed to harden — that too encourages division and discourages cooperation.” Now, it should be mentioned here why this is considered an attack on Catholic education. While there are Protestant schools in NI, the government school system is mainly Protestant while most Catholic children attend schools run by the Catholic Church. And you can bet that if Obama were authoring an end to school segregation in NI, his solution would not be to eliminate the government schools and have everyone attend the Catholic ones.



Yet I won’t criticize Obama here the way some have. After all, there is a [controversy](#) in the U.K. over NI’s school “segregation,” a situation that sees more than 90 percent of children in NI attending separate schools. So, in fairness, Obama’s writers were likely just echoing the politically correct, Kumbaya sentiments of the U.K. press. Instead, I’d like to pose a question that gets at a deeper issue:

What is the real source and nature of division?

Since Catholicism is thought part of some negative division here, perhaps we should start with the words of Christianity’s founder. Jesus said in Luke:

Think ye, that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, no; but separation. For there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided: three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against his father, the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother, the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.



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So is division really a bad thing? Or is it that it's an inevitable thing given man's nature? Or it is that division shouldn't be the main focus at all?

We always hear things such as "So-and-so is very divisive," as if it can be some unilateral phenomenon. But the individual certainly wouldn't be divisive were he the only man on Earth; it takes two to tango. There is division when there is disagreement, and eliminating it would be as simple as one side deciding to agree with the other.

Nonetheless, the blame for division is almost invariably placed on just one side — usually that which is in the minority or lacks clout. Thus, I'm sure Galileo was considered divisive when he advanced Copernican heliocentrism and opposed the long-used and seemingly tried and true Aristotelian system. The abolitionists were considered divisive when they proposed an end to the age-old institution of slavery. I'm sure the early Christians were considered divisive when they opposed the brutality of the Roman arena. And we could cite any number of other examples from history. But would it have been a good thing if these "troublesome" minorities (who are now in the majority) would have gone along to get along and not been "divisive"?

Likewise, if you're a Christian, Jew, or atheist in a Muslim majority nation, would you consider converting to Islam in the name of not being divisive a good thing? If you're a liberal or conservative, would you suppose it wise to simply agree with the other side to avoid division? Or would you think that relinquishing half your beliefs and meeting in the "middle" was a solution?

Obviously, the only reason to embrace a faith, philosophy, ideology, or scientific theory is because you believe it is *true*. And if it is so, watering it down renders it untrue. This brings us to how division should be handled. If scientists disagree on a matter and have integrity, one side won't try to shout down the other and castigate it for divisiveness; they will discuss the facts and try to determine where the Truth lies. For there are only three possibilities when there is disagreement: One side is correct, all sides are wrong, or two or more sides are partially right. In any case, finding and accepting the Truth will not only end the division, it will improve the whole society in general.

So it is in all things. Yet while division is simply a by-product of a lack of acceptance of Truth on the parts of some or all, there are those who behave as if it is a root cause, often due to immaturity or guile. They may be overlooking that they're half of the division equation, they may simply be seeking leverage to gain power, or they may be having a tantrum that amounts to, "Stop disagreeing with us! Can't you see we're right?!" Of course, you may very well be right, but you won't prove this by pouting about divisiveness. You do it by expressing wisdom.

We could have ended divisiveness and avoided WWII if we had all just become Nazis beholden to the German Reich in 1936. And this is the problem with unity at all costs. You can avoid division by going along with irresponsibility, stupidity, or evil, but that will never breed peace. And this brings us back to what the Prince of Peace said about dividing the world. Jesus meant that He would bring man the Truth, but not everyone would accept it.

So where does the blame for division always lie? Not with the minority. Not with the majority. Not with the charming or the boorish. It belongs at the feet of those who reject Truth.

Unity around a lie would only mean that, somehow, not even one person got it right.



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