

THE MOSQUE HAS A MASQUE – What’s This All About?

Stephen L. Bakke – September 11, 2010

It wasn’t long ago that I had virtually completed a commentary on the “mosque issue” near “9/11 Ground Zero”, and within the 9/11 zone of destruction. The early draft was brief and to the point. It was my attempt to deal with and dispense with a topic which I felt was inevitable and without much further interest to me. Then Barack chimed in and made it a major topic of discussion – and it will continue to be at least for a while. Then along came the misguided pastor who was going to burn copies of the Quran in response to the mosque dispute. Both developments were inflammatory, foolish, and certainly threw fuel on the fire! I have given the matter much additional thought, and again have decided to write down my thoughts as briefly as possible.

(By the way, “masque” is an uncommon, archaic spelling of “mask.” Therefore I am saying that the true meaning of the mosque project is hidden behind a “masque.” OK, so it’s silly – live with it!)

What Are the (Mostly) Liberal Supporters of the Mosque Saying About (Those Like) Me?

I support moving the mosque. While there are radical positions on both sides of the issue, those opposing the building plan are lumped into one group for purpose of denigration and political demagoguery. It’s never good to over generalize when describing philosophies or motivations. For example, the opposition to the mosque plan is associated with the following words and phrases: bigoted, demagogic, unconstitutional, fanning hatred, demonizing, Islamophobic, hostile, xenophobic, shameful, intolerant, disgrace, overt prejudice, cynicism and ugliness, false controversy, modern day crusades, hatred, orgy of Muslim-bashing, hysteria, idiocy, ginned-up rage

So do these words and phrases also apply to the Harry Reid and Howard Dean? They are both far left liberals who **oppose building the mosque where proposed**. Uncomfortable ain’t it?

Words to Describe My Opinion of the Mosque Project

Now I get my turn at describing my ideological opponents. I think I am much less vicious than they are. Consider these words as descriptive of my opinion on the mosque project: totally legal, incomprehensible, unfortunate, inappropriate, disrespectful, lacking propriety, lacking basic decency, indefensible, outrageous, anything but altruism, anything but healing, inadvisable, imprudent, publicity stunt, “in your face” Take your pick! **“Git” my drift?**

Words to Describe My Opinion of President Obama’s Leadership on this Issue

I will be brief. Consider adopting the following words to describe Obama on this one: astonishing, divisive, inflammable, humiliating, devastating, inconsistent, unforgivable, sad,

incompetent, disappointing, embarrassing Take your pick or add your own. **Do I make myself clear?**

Obama first seemed to graciously support the mosque project in a speech to U.S. Muslim leaders. Then he tried to have it both ways by stating he was not, and would not, make any statement about the wisdom of proceeding with the project. Once again he tried to have it both ways. Then a few days later he seemed to walk back into generally supporting building the mosque. Rather than showing leadership to the general public by commenting to us generally about this growing issue, he spoke personally and relatively privately to a group of Muslim clerics. That was fine too, but I felt his tone was somewhat apologetic.

At a minimum Obama should have recognized the project's deficiency of wisdom and its poor taste, while at the same time acknowledging its legality under our laws. As President, he should have spoken directly to the citizens, including those who oppose the mosque, about how the developers had the absolute right to build the mosque – AND that citizens had the right to object. He should then have provided wisdom by pointing out that with all rights comes a responsibility about how those rights are exercised. I ask: WHERE DO HIS IDEOLOGICAL REFLEXES POINT? REMEMBER THAT HE WOULDN'T EVEN MEET WITH THE BOY SCOUTS.

This Isn't About Freedom of Religion!

Building the mosque is **most certainly legal, and should be**, under the important concept of "freedom of religion." If most of us can generally agree on this, then what is all the commotion about? It's caused by the fact that some believe the entire plan is sufficiently unwise and believe that we should object vocally and strenuously! Just because one has the right to do something, does not mean you **should** do it. Our system has always recognized that it is relevant how people exercise their rights.

Most supporters of building the mosque at the designated sight insist those of us opposed to it are denying the right of freedom of religion. **Absurd!** That's just all they can come up with quickly. **Opposition to the mosque project is most certainly NOT an issue of religious freedom!**

Why Do This Project in the First Place?

Is there an agenda? Of course! Why else do this in the face of overwhelming negative public opinion. And whatever its expressed original intent, it's doubtful they are now doing it for the purpose of "building bridges." **One thing that is not often mentioned is that the developers of the mosque initially emphasized that the site was chosen precisely because of its location near "9/11 Ground Zero."** Those fighting for continuing the mosque plans are now changing their tune and trying to deemphasize the proximity to the terrorist attack.

Some observers believe the agenda is a sincere defense of religious freedom. Others believe the project is just an "in your face" statement coming from a group with huge "chip on its shoulder." Still others are certain it's an attempt to strategically advance Sharia principles of law in the

United States. I haven't concluded on that issue – and probably won't speculate. I will just wait to see what the future teaches us.

My Conclusion

I think the eventual resolution (or not) of this issue will answer the questions of motives. I certainly don't want to attempt to over analyze it at this point. I've tried but given up. A prominent commentator came up with the right words to describe what's really wrong with both the mosque project and the radical preacher's previous intention to burn several Qurans. (See if you can come with the source of these simple, but descriptive words. They are from a person I seldom pay much attention to – hint, "AC.") The trouble with both "building" and "burning" is not a question of anyone's "rights", They are both **"JUST A NASTY THING TO DO!"**

An Afterthought

Remember that we are only asking that the Muslim community to change the location of this mosque. We are asking them to exercise their unalienable rights more prudently. With all of the push back to my reasonable position, I am tempted to get quite cynical, generalize, and be less forgiving than is my nature. In other words, I understand I must resist the temptation to assume the intolerance of several Muslim nations also applies to the (hopefully) more moderate Muslim citizens in the U.S. So, I've decided to "hang tough". Nevertheless, it is at least worth contemplating a quote I was led to in my reading. Philosopher Karl Popper (I know little about him other than these words) wrote the following decades ago:

Unlimited tolerance must lead to disappearance of tolerance. If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed and tolerance with them We should therefore claim, in the name of tolerance, the right not to tolerate the intolerant.

Since both sides of this issue consider the other side intolerant, it would be good if both sides consider these words. Unfortunately, it may boil down to "what the meaning of 'is' is?"

I am really quite sick of the issue. And I don't think the mosque will ever be built. Nevertheless, a couple of intriguing related questions remain which I may try to sort out in the days to come. Stay tuned.