



Just Because It's Legal Doesn't Mean It's Right

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The discussion over the proposed Manhattan mosque are interesting to say the least. Conservative Republicans who traditionally denounce government regulations with regard to building permits are the most vociferous in opposition. They usually advocate for local control and against the long reach of the federal government. Now they are urging federal action to stop a local building project. What happened to free enterprise and small government?

On the other hand, many of the supporters of the rights of the Moslem community to build the mosque at Ground Zero call the opponents Islamophobic and unAmerican. They also argue that the attacks on Sept. 11 were done by radicals and do not represent Moslem theology.

They ignore the rise of Islamic fundamentalism at our peril. Sept. 11 was not the only act of terrorism committed in the name of Islam: subway bombings in London; train bombing in Spain, hotel bombing in Bali; embassy bombing in Kenya, etc.

They also ignore how minorities are treated in nations with a Moslem majority such as with the Armenians in Turkey, the Bahais in Iran and the Coptic Christians in Egypt to give a few examples. They brush off the discrimination of gays and women in those nations.

All sides should recognize that this dispute is over emotions and not law. Unless the city of New York determines that under its building and zoning laws the mosque should be built elsewhere, there is not much that can be done legally to stop it. The opponents of the mosque should recognize that they may have the moral high ground, but circumventing the Constitution may not be worth the price.

Supporters of the mosque should also appreciate the sensitivity of having a symbol of Islam so close to the spot where 3,000 Americans were killed in the name of Islam.

The bottom line is that our Constitution allows religious institutions to build without favoring one denomination over another. The same Constitution gives others the right to speak out against what they perceive as an outrage. Just because it is legal doesn't mean it's right.

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