

February 12, 2015

Mark Steyn starts today's look at the poor excuse for leadership in DC.

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President Obama's response was to go to the National Prayer Breakfast and condescendingly advise us - as if it's some dazzlingly original observation rather than the lamest faculty-lounge relativist bromide - to "remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ".

Gee, thanks. If you're watching on ISIS premium cable, I'm sure that's a great consolation when they're reaching for the scimitar and readying you for your close-up. ...

... civilization is a fragile and unnatural state of affairs. Droning on about the Crusades and Jim Crow, Obama offers the foreign policy of Oscar Wilde's cynic: He knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. ...

Roger Simon posts on obama's biggest lie.

Unlike Nixon and Clinton, who lied in self-defense, Obama lies proactively, which is decidedly more dangerous. He will say practically anything to achieve his goals without regard to the truth. The repeated assertion about keeping your doctor and your health insurance under the Affordable Care Act is just one famous example. But only a few days ago on Fareed Zakaria's show the president made a statement that dwarfed his claims about Obamacare. When asked if we were in a war with radical Islam, the president replied:

....I reject a notion that somehow that creates a religious war because the overwhelming majority of Muslims reject that interpretation of Islam. They don't even recognize it as being Islam, and I think that for us to be successful in fighting this scourge, it's very important for us to align ourselves with the 99.9 percent of Muslims who are looking for the same thing we're looking for — order, peace, prosperity.

99.9 percent?! I will bypass for the moment Obama's rather self-serving definition of Islam and focus on that outrageous number, which is absurd on the face of it and not remotely supported by any of the numerous polls on the subject. ...

Jonathan Tobin on the prez's anti-Semitism blind spot.

There has been a great deal of justified criticism about President Obama's unwillingness to respond to terrorist outrages with the sort of moral leadership that can rally the West to fight back. His comments at last week's National Prayer Breakfast in which he sought to create a false moral

equivalency between ISIS's horrific burning alive of a captured Jordanian pilot and the Christian West's past sins during the Inquisition and even the Crusades have been rightly blasted for his tone-deaf approach to terrorism. The president seems so mired in his deep ambivalence about the West's role in world history that he is unable to play his part as leader of the free world in what is, like it or not, a life-and-death struggle against truly evil forces. It is also revealed in his administration's refusal to call Islamist terrorism by that name. But just as troubling is his unwillingness to address one of the primary characteristics of this brand of terror: anti-Semitism. In an interview with Vox's Matthew Yglesias, he described the terror attack on a Paris kosher market as a "random" event rather than an act of murder motivated by Jew hatred. Though it won't get the same attention as his outrageous speech last week, it gives us just as much insight into the president's foreign-policy mindset.

It should be recalled that in the immediate aftermath of the shootings at the Hyper Cacher market by killers associated with those who perpetrated the Charlie Hebdo massacre days earlier, President Obama also refused to call it an act of anti-Semitism. That was, in its own way, as shocking as the president's decision to not send any high-ranking U.S. official to the Paris unity march that took place to protest the murders or to go himself as did many other Western leaders.

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Peter Wehner says someone ought to get off his "high horse."

Part of the problem with President Obama's recent National Prayer Breakfast speech, as Michael Rubin has pointed out, is that it provides a simplistic and incomplete understanding of the Crusades. (You might also read this First Things review, "Inventing the Crusades," by Thomas F. Madden.)

But the president's remarks also demonstrate a simplistic and incomplete understanding of Christianity. By that I mean when Mr. Obama, in warning Christians not to get on their "high horse" when talking about the problems in Islam, said, "In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ."

True enough—but it's also true that slavery and segregation were overthrown by those who justified their actions in the name of Christ. And if the president insists on making comparisons between Christianity and Islam, then it needs to be said that while Christianity has struggled with religious intolerance in its past, it has almost everywhere made its inner peace with religious tolerance and pluralism. On the other hand, true religious freedom has been quite rare in Muslim-majority communities throughout history. ...

Jennifer Rubin says we're left with a president who will not defend western civilization.

The confluence of events is striking. The president is capitulating in slow motion to the demands of Iran at the P5+1 talks. With regard to the Islamic State, which just this week burned alive a Jordanian pilot (a Muslim, remember), the president has empty words. Yemen, which was held up as a great success story, is now being taken over by Iranian-supported rebels with nary a peep from the president. Iran is effectively absorbing Iraq's army. Iran continues to back terrorist groups throughout the region, including Hezbollah, which is increasingly more aggressive in attacking Israel.

All that is happening while President Obama throws a fit when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gets an invite to speak to Congress. And he lectures the country that Christianity is rotten, too — don't you remember the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition?

His remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast may be the most memorable of his presidency for they so completely express his moral vacuity and personal arrogance: "Lest we get on our high horse and think this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ. In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ." Never miss an opportunity to indict the West, to ignore the current threat to Western civilization or to smear Americans who rightly see themselves as the defenders of decency and humanity against the barbarism of Islamic fundamentalists. The egregious comments and the thinking behind them was denounced not only by right-wing critics but also by thinking liberals, a variety of Christian leaders and centrists such as Joe Scarborough. ...

... This is not trivial matter. It is the central dilemma of time: How do we defend Western civilization when the leader of the free world won't, and doesn't even like it all that much?

Liz Peek at Fiscal Times says the Crusade remarks will bolster ISIS propaganda campaigns."

President Obama has given ISIS a propaganda clip of incalculable value, and they don't even have to edit it. As he stood at the Prayer Breakfast last week and likened the barbarity of current-day Islamic extremists to atrocities committed during the Crusades and the Inquisition, Obama seemingly validated the terrorists' centuries-old calls for vengeance.

Moreover, his references to slavery and Jim Crow channeled Islamic recruiters who warn of coming Islamophobia in the U.S. by calling out black-white tensions. Given that our battle with ISIS is in large part a war for hearts and minds, Mr. Obama's comments are symptomatic of profound ignorance, at best and were extremely reckless.

The al-Qaeda hijackers brought down the World Trade Towers on September 11 because unbeknownst to most in the West, the date is an important one in Islamic history. It was in 1683 "that the conquering armies of Islam were met, held, and thrown back at the gates of Vienna," as Christopher Hitchens wrote. This was, he explained, a "hinge" event, in that "the Ottoman Empire never recovered from the defeat. From then on it was more likely that Christian or western powers would dominate the Muslim world than the other way around."

Hitchens notes, "In the Islamic world, and especially among the extremists, it is remembered as a humiliation in itself and a prelude to later ones," and thus the perfect date to inflict on the West an equally humiliating injury.

History matters to Islamic terrorists; avenging past defeats suffered by Muslims is central to their cause. ...

David Harsanyi posts on Axelrod's revelations about presidential lying.

... In "Believer: My Forty Years in Politics," David Axelrod claims that he knew Obama supported gay marriage back when he first ran for president in 2008. "I'm just not very good at bullshitting," a

far-too-modest Barack Obama supposedly told his advisor after a campaign stop. “There’s no doubt that his sympathies were on the side of allowing gay couples to marry,” Axelrod says. “He also recognized that the country wasn’t there yet—that we needed to bring the country along.”

*Bullshit, according to unreliable sources across the interwebs, means “nonsense” or a rebuke of something misleading, disingenuous or false. The Urban Dictionary definition of “bullshitting” is “When someone has no f****ng clue what they are talking about, yet insists on trying to get others to believe him/her.” So, contra the president’s self-criticism, he excels at it. ...*

It is a terrible thing to end the week with lots of items on President Trainwreck. We'll make up for that a little with late night humor from **Andrew Malcolm**.

Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell at the Alfalfa Dinner: I can work with the president. We're honest with each other. I told him once that I thought he was aloof and condescending. He said, 'I am not condescending. I am just too busy thinking about far more important things than you would understand.'

Gates: Washington is the only place where you can see someone walking down Lovers Lane, holding his own hand.

Conan: An NFL player was arrested in Florida on gun charges. The news was shocking to anyone who knows nothing about the NFL or Florida.

Jewish World Review

The Glamor of Evil

by Mark Steyn



On Tuesday the Islamic State released a 22-minute video showing Flight Lieutenant Muath al-Kasasbeh of the Royal Jordanian Air Force being doused in petrol and burned to death. It is an horrific way to die, and Flt Lt al-Kasasbeh showed uncommon bravery, standing stiff and dignified

as the flames consumed him. And then he toppled, and the ISIS cameras rolled on, until what was left was charred and shapeless and unrecognizable as human.

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Gee, thanks. If you're watching on ISIS premium cable, I'm sure that's a great consolation when they're reaching for the scimitar and readying you for your close-up. Oh, and, even by the standards of his usual rote cookie-cutter [shoulder-to-shoulder shtick](#) that follows every ISIS beheading of western captives, the President could barely [conceal his boredom at having to discuss the immolation of Flt Lt al-Kasasbeh](#):

Aaand it, I think, will redouble [pause] the vigilance aaand determination on the part of our global coalition to, uh, make sure that they are degraded and ultimately defeated. Ummmm. [Adopting a whimsical look] It also just indicates the degree to which whatever ideology they're operating off of, it's bankrupt. [Suppressing a smirk, pivoting to a much more important subject.] We're here to talk about how to make people healthier and make their lives better.

The lack of passion - the *bloodlessness* - of Obama's reaction to atrocity is always striking. He can't even be bothered pretending that he means it.

I am not a great fan of the Hashemites, and there is great peril for Jordan in getting sucked deeper into a spiral that could quickly consume one of the weakest polities in the region and turn the least-worst Sunni monarchy into merely the latest Obama-era failed-state - after Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, etc. The UAE took advantage of Flt Lt al-Kasasbeh's capture to cease participation in sorties entirely, and, given the general halfheartedness of Obama's "coalition", King Abdullah could have been forgiven for also deciding to head for the exit.

Yet he understood the necessity of action. Obama, by contrast, declares action, and then does nothing. His war against ISIS was supposed to be one in which the US would not put "boots on the ground", but instead leave that to our allies. The allies have the boots, but they could use some weapons, too. Obama has failed to supply the Kurds or anybody else with what they need to defeat our enemies. It's becoming what they call a pattern of behavior. Elliott Abrams draws attention to [this passage in a New York Times story about Ukraine](#):

The Russians have sent modern T-80 tanks, whose armor cannot be penetrated by Ukraine's aging and largely inoperative antitank weapons, along with Grad rockets and other heavy weapons. Russian forces have also used electronic jamming equipment to interfere with the Ukrainians' communications....

Ukraine has requested arms and equipment, including ammunition, sniper rifles, mortars, grenade launchers, antitank missiles, armored personnel carriers, mobile field hospitals, counterbattery radars and reconnaissance drones.

Hmm. So how much of that shopping list have we responded to? Obama won't write Ukraine a blank check, but he will write them [a blanket check](#):

The \$16.4 million in aid that Mr. Kerry will announce in Kiev is intended to help people trapped by the fighting in Donetsk and Luhansk. The aid will be used to buy basic items like blankets and clothing, along with counseling for traumatized civilians.

Could be worse. He might have thrown in another James Taylor singalong. Then they really would need trauma counselors.

With at least another two years of civilizational retreat to go, we're gonna need a lot more security blankets, which is good news for whichever Chinese factory makes them.

~As Kyle Smith [points out](#), the video of Flt Lt al-Kasasbeh's death is an extremely sophisticated and professional production. US news media have declined to run it, because it's too disturbing, as opposed to, say, Brian Williams' ripping yarns of derring-do about being shot out of the sky by an RPG. There are really two parallel media structures now: Consumers of Brian Williams-delivered "news" aren't even aware of the metastasizing of evil. Meanwhile, out there on Twitter and Facebook it's the hottest recruiting tool on the planet. You'll recall Hannah Arendt's tired and misleading coinage "the banality of evil", derived from her observation of Adolf Eichmann at his trial in Jerusalem. As I wrote last August:

Hitler felt obliged to be somewhat coy about just how final the final solution was. As Eichmann testified at his trial, when typing up the minutes of the Wannsee conference, "How shall I put it? Certain over-plain talk and jargon expressions had to be rendered into office language by me." Even the Nazis were reluctant to spell it out.

The Germans didn't have social media, but they had newsreels, and Hitler knew enough not to make genocide available to Pathé or "The March of Time". He had considerations both domestic and foreign. Pre-Wannsee, in Poland and elsewhere, German troops had been ordered to shoot Jewish prisoners in cold blood, and their commanders reported back to Berlin that too many soldiers had found it sickening and demoralizing. So the purpose of "the final solution" was to make mass murder painless, at least for the perpetrators - more bureaucratic, removed, *bloodless*.

As for foreign considerations, Germany expected to be treated as a civilized power by its enemies, and that would not have been possible had they been boasting about genocide.

Seventy years on, the Islamic State has slipped free of even these minimal constraints. They advertize their barbarism to the world, because what's the downside? Let's say the guys who burned Flt Lt al-Kasasbeh are one day captured by Americans. They can look forward to a decade or two of a soft, pampering sojourn in the US justice system, represented by an A-list dream-team that'll string things along until the administration figures it'll cut its losses and ship them to Qatar in exchange for some worthless deserter.

As for the upside, "the banality of evil" may have its appeal for lower-middle-class Teuton bureaucrats, but the glamor of evil is a far more potent and universal brand. The Islamic State has come up with the ultimate social-media campaign: evil goes viral! At some level German conscripts needed to believe they were honorable soldiers in an honorable cause, no different from the British or Americans. But ISIS volunteers are signing up explicitly for the war crimes. The Islamic State burned Flt Lt al-Kasasbeh alive not only to kill him but to inspire the thousands of ISIS fanbois around the globe, like Moussa Coulibaly, the guy who [stabbed three French policemen](#) outside a Jewish school in Nice this week.

For many of its beneficiaries, modern western life is bland, undemanding and vaguely unsatisfying. Some seek a greater cause, and turn to climate change or LGBTQWERTY rights. But others want

something with a little more red meat to it. Jihad is primal in a way that the stodgy multiculti relativist mush peddled by Obama isn't. And what the Islamic State is offering is Jihad 2.0, cranking up the blood-lust and rape and sex slavery and head-chopping and depravity in ways that make Osama-era al-Qaeda look like a bunch of pantywaists.

Success breeds success. The success of evil breeds darker evil. And the glamorization of evil breeds ever more of those "recent Muslim converts" and "lone wolves" and "self-radicalized extremists" in the news. That's a Big Idea - a bigger idea, indeed, than Communism or Nazism. Islam, as we know, means "submission". But Xtreme-Sports Hyper-Islam, blood-soaked and baying, is also wonderfully liberating, offering the chance for dull-witted, repressed young men to slip free of even the most basic societal restraints. And, when the charms of the open road in Headchoppistan wear thin, your British and Canadian and Australian and European welfare checks will still be waiting for you on the doormat back home.

By contrast, civilization is a fragile and unnatural state of affairs. Droning on about the Crusades and Jim Crow, Obama offers the foreign policy of Oscar Wilde's cynic: He knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. And so, as the world burns, he, uh, redoubles his, uh, vigilance, uh uh uh... Whatever. That and \$16.4 million will buy you coffee and some trauma counseling in Kiev.

Roger L. Simon

Obama's Biggest Lie and What It Means

Unlike Nixon and Clinton, who lied in self-defense, Obama lies proactively, which is decidedly more dangerous. He will say practically anything to achieve his goals without regard to the truth. The repeated assertion about keeping your doctor and your health insurance under the Affordable Care Act is just one famous example. But only a few days ago on [Fareed Zakaria's show](#) the president made a statement that dwarfed his claims about Obamacare. When asked if we were in a war with radical Islam, the president replied:

....I reject a notion that somehow that creates a religious war because the overwhelming majority of Muslims reject that interpretation of Islam. They don't even recognize it as being Islam, and I think that for us to be successful in fighting this scourge, it's very important for us to align ourselves with the 99.9 percent of Muslims who are looking for the same thing we're looking for — order, peace, prosperity.

99.9 percent?! I will bypass for the moment Obama's rather self-serving definition of Islam and focus on that outrageous number, which is absurd on the face of it and not remotely supported by any of the [numerous polls](#) on the subject. Although the data is somewhat fluid, we can assume that out of 1.7 billion Muslims world wide, at least 200 million are sympathetic to the goals and means of the Islamists, many of them, undoubtedly many millions, willing to put their scimitars where their mouths are. By way of comparison, of the approximately 66 million Germans at the beginning of World War II, some [850,000 were card-carrying Nazis](#). [Daniel Pipes](#) points out the Islamist numbers are diminishing, but the raw totals are still huge and nowhere remotely in the vicinity of Obama's risible point 01 percent. No matter how you count it, we've got a problem that is not going away anytime soon, possibly not before everyone reading this article has passed from the scene, I'm sorry to say.

So why did Obama lie and what does that mean? To begin with, he is a moral narcissist. That means because he knows he's right and knows what we should do, he's free to say anything he wishes that he believes will achieve those goals, especially if he thinks he can get away with it. And Fareed Zakaria would be the last person to question him. ([The CNN commentator](#) has problems of his own.) If all this reminds you of the ends justify the means, it's not accidental. Marx was a moral narcissist too — one of the greatest.

Now let's get back to Obama and Islam. Is he a Muslim? Not really. He's not religious, but he does have an Islamic childhood with which he identifies, undoubtedly on a more profound level than he does with Christianity, which he joined for expedient reasons. Therefore, he can't acknowledge to himself and others that Islam is severely sick and in need of serious reformation. No talk from Obama ever about all the extreme misogyny and homophobia that pervades Islam, nor of Shariah law. Nothing like this ever passes his lips — at least I've never heard it. To do so would be to say there is something wrong with *him*. So he says that 99.9% of Muslims reject the Islamists, which is literally impossible because if it were so, the Islamists wouldn't be wreaking havoc everywhere from Sydney to Sanaa.

Complicating this psychological disturbance on the part of our president is his overweening desire to make a deal with Iran, almost at all costs. Bizarre as it sounds, a deal with Iran would prove to Obama that Islam — at least in its Iranian shiite form — is capable of modernity. To the rest of us, it means they're capable of nuclear war. (I guess that's sort of modernity.) In any case, Obama's greatest lie is designed to include Iran and its leaders in the *good* 99.9%. I can't imagine a scarier thought.

Contentions

[Obama's Blind Spot About Anti-Semitism](#)

by Jonathan S. Tobin

There has been a great deal of justified criticism about President Obama's unwillingness to respond to terrorist outrages with the sort of moral leadership that can rally the West to fight back. His comments at last week's National Prayer Breakfast in which he sought to create a false moral equivalency between ISIS's horrific burning alive of a captured Jordanian pilot and the Christian West's past sins during the Inquisition and even the Crusades have been rightly blasted for his tone-deaf approach to terrorism. The president seems so mired in his deep ambivalence about the West's role in world history that he is unable to play his part as leader of the free world in what is, like it or not, a life-and-death struggle against truly evil forces. It is also revealed in his administration's refusal to call Islamist terrorism by that name. But just as troubling is his unwillingness to address one of the primary characteristics of this brand of terror: anti-Semitism. [In an interview with Vox's Matthew Yglesias](#), he described the terror attack on a Paris kosher market as a "random" event rather than an act of murder motivated by Jew hatred. Though it won't get the same attention as his outrageous speech last week, it gives us just as much insight into the president's foreign-policy mindset.

It should be recalled that in the immediate aftermath of the shootings at the Hyper Cacher market by killers associated with those who perpetrated the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre days earlier, [President Obama also refused to call it an act of anti-Semitism](#). That was, in its own way, as shocking as the president's decision to not send any high-ranking U.S. official to the Paris unity march that took place to protest the murders or to go himself as did many other Western leaders.

But official American statements that did mention anti-Semitism and the subsequent rally boycott overtook this controversy. The kerfuffle over that initial comment was soon forgotten. But the president's return to this topic has brought that statement back to mind.

His Vox comments are, in fact, far worse than his initial reaction which was more a matter of omission than a conscious twisting of events. Here's what the president said in response to a question about whether the media is blowing terrorist incidents out of proportion:

It is entirely legitimate for the American people to be deeply concerned when you've got a bunch of violent, vicious zealots who behead people or randomly shoot a bunch of folks in a deli in Paris.

Let's first note that his characterization of the assailants again omits their Islamist loyalties and the fact that religion was the motivating factor for their crime. This is consistent with administration policy that seeks to cleanse ISIS, al-Qaeda, or other Islamists of any connection with the Muslim faith. This is absurd not just because it is wrong. It also puts Obama in the position of trying to play the pope of Islam who can decide who is or is not a real Muslim, a responsibility that no American president should try to usurp.

But it is also significant that once again the president chooses to treat a deliberate targeting of a Jewish business filled with Jewish customers as something that is random rather than an overt act of anti-Semitism. Doing so once might be excused as an oversight. The second time makes it a pattern that can't be ignored.

This is a peculiar talking point especially since the increase of anti-Semitism in Europe with violent incidents going up every year is something that even the Obama State Department has dubbed a "rising tide" of hate.

Why does the president have such a blind spot when it comes to anti-Semitism? His critics will jump to conclusions that will tell us more about their views of Obama than about his thinking. But suffice it to say that this is a president who finds it hard to focus on the siege of Jews in Europe or of the State of Israel in the Middle East. Nor can it be entirely coincidental that a president who treats Israeli self-defense and concerns for its security as a bothersome irritant to his foreign policy or seeks to blame the Jewish state's leaders for obstructing a peace process that was actually blown up by the Palestinians would have a blind spot about anti-Semitism.

To address the spread of violent anti-Semitism in Europe would require the administration to connect the dots between slaughters such as the ones that took place at *Charlie Hebdo* and Hyper Cacher and the hate spread by the Islamists of Iran with whom Obama is so keen on negotiating a new détente. To put these awful events in a context that properly labels them an outbreak of violent Muslim Jew-hatred would require the administration to rethink its policies toward Israel as well as Iran. And that is something this president has no intention of doing.

You can't defeat an enemy that you refuse to call by his right name. That's why ignoring Islamism and calling ISIS and the Paris killers mere "zealots" or "extremists" not only misses the point but also hampers the West's ability to resist them. By the same token, the omission of any discussion of anti-Semitism about an event that was an unambiguous act of Jew hatred similarly undermines the effort to strike back at such atrocities. When a president calls one of the more egregious acts of anti-Semitism in recent years a mere "random" shooting, it trivializes the victims and places the U.S. on the wrong side of the moral divide. In doing so, Obama does the nation and the cause of freedom a grave disservice.

Contentions

[Get Off Your High Horse, Mr. Obama](#)

by Peter Wehner

Part of the problem with President Obama's recent [National Prayer Breakfast speech](#), as Michael Rubin has [pointed out](#), is that it provides a simplistic and incomplete understanding of the Crusades. (You might also read [this First Things review](#), "Inventing the Crusades," by Thomas F. Madden.)

But the president's remarks also demonstrate a simplistic and incomplete understanding of Christianity. By that I mean when Mr. Obama, in warning Christians not to get on their "high horse" when talking about the problems in Islam, said, "In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ."

True enough—but it's also true that slavery and segregation were *overthrown* by those who justified their actions in the name of Christ. And if the president insists on making comparisons between Christianity and Islam, then it needs to be said that while Christianity has struggled with religious intolerance in its past, it has almost everywhere made its inner peace with religious tolerance and pluralism. On the other hand, true religious freedom has been quite rare in Muslim-majority communities throughout history. That doesn't mean it can't happen. It doesn't mean that most Muslims embrace the version of Islam being practiced by ISIS. And it certainly doesn't mean that individual Muslims can't assimilate themselves in America. Millions do, and they are wonderful contributors to our nation.

But it *does* mean that in the here and now, the problems we see are emanating not from within Christianity but from within Islam. Even Islamic leaders, like Egypt's General Sisi, admit as much. Yet the president of the United States, alas, does not. He continues to act as if he's an Islamic scholar, declaring what is and what is not "true" Islam. Mr. Obama is clearly no theologian, so it's best he drop the pretense. His core argument—that Islamism has nothing at all to do with Islam—is utterly detached from reality. Let's just say it's not happenstance that the Islamic State is not called the Reformed Presbyterian State. "Allahu Akbar" isn't Yiddish.

Then there's the matter of timing. The president went to the National Prayer Breakfast to call attention to the long-ago sins of Christianity in the aftermath of a particularly savage and brutal killing by the Islamic State, in which they doused a Jordanian pilot in flammable liquid and put him in a cage before burning him to death. Beheadings, it appears, are passé for jihadists. Decapitation isn't vivid enough for them. Yet Barack Obama, being Barack Obama, decided it's his job to insist on moral equivalence—or, to be more precise, to insist on *immoral* equivalence.

I do believe that if President Obama and his administration weren't so clueless in his understanding of Islamism—remember that the Ft. Hood massacre was referred to as "workplace violence" and jihadist attacks were examples of "man-caused disasters"—and if he wasn't so reticent in his fight against it, Mr. Obama's slipshod detours into the history of the Crusades and the Inquisition might have been more tolerable. As it is, the president was clearly using his speech to the National Prayer Breakfast not only to justify his own imaginary world, but to try to put those who are speaking the truth about militant Islam on the defensive. If that's what Mr. Obama was hoping to achieve—well, he achieved the opposite. For goodness's sake, even NBC's Andrea Mitchell is [criticizing him](#). Memo to Barack Obama: When you've lost Andrea Mitchell, you're losing the debate.

One final observation: President Obama likes to portray himself as a man who is unusually self-reflective and self-critical. The contrary is the case. As Ross Douthat [points out](#), Mr. Obama is a partisan and a progressive who takes to “highlighting crimes that he doesn’t feel particularly implicated in (how much theological guilt does our liberal Protestant president really feel about the Inquisition?) and the sins of groups he disagrees with anyway (Republican Cold Warriors, the religious right, white conservative Southerners).” That is to say, Obama is engaging in a dishonest and cynical game in which he relishes putting himself above his country or his professed faith and then likes to peddle that as humility.

A friend wrote me and said that if Mr. Obama wanted to have performed a real act of humility and self-criticism during his National Prayer Breakfast speech, he could have said something like this:

Lest we get on our high horse, let’s be more honest about where we have allowed ourselves to be misled in the name of religion. I myself worshipped for years in a church that distorted the Gospel of Christ in the name of a racist message of hatred and intolerance towards my brothers and sisters of other races. It was not until I started campaigning for President that I realized just how misguided Reverent Wright was, and how far he had distorted religion to serve his political purposes.

That statement would have been far more honest, far more self-reflective, and far less cynical. Which may explain why there was no chance Mr. Obama would utter these words.

It’s long past time Mr. Obama get off his high horse. Vanity is difficult to take in anyone—but it’s especially difficult to take in a person of such staggering incompetence and intellectual shallowness.

Right Turn

[Obama won’t defend Western civilization](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

The confluence of events is striking. The president is [capitulating in slow motion to the demands of Iran at the P5+1 talks](#). With regard to the Islamic State, which just this week burned alive a Jordanian pilot (a Muslim, remember), the president has empty words. Yemen, which was held up as a great success story, is now being [taken over by Iranian-supported rebels](#) with nary a peep from the president. Iran is effectively [absorbing Iraq’s army](#). Iran continues to back terrorist groups throughout the region, [including Hezbollah](#), which is increasingly more aggressive in attacking Israel.

All that is happening while President Obama throws a fit when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gets an invite to speak to Congress. And he [lectures the country](#) that Christianity is rotten, too — don’t you remember the Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition?

His remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast may be the most memorable of his presidency for they so completely express his moral vacuity and personal arrogance: “Lest we get on our high horse and think this is unique to some other place, remember that during the Crusades and the Inquisition, people committed terrible deeds in the name of Christ. In our home country, slavery and Jim Crow all too often was justified in the name of Christ.” Never miss an opportunity to indict the West, to ignore the current threat to Western civilization or to smear Americans who rightly see themselves as the defenders of decency and humanity against the barbarism of Islamic

fundamentalists. The egregious comments and the thinking behind them was denounced not only by right-wing critics but also by [thinking liberals](#), a variety of [Christian](#) leaders and centrists such as [Joe Scarborough](#).

No, he is not a Manchurian candidate nor a Muslim. He is, however, entirely in over his head in a world fraught with jihadist violence and completely blinded by the left-wing dogma that declares the West to be not so civilized at all and the United States in particular to be the cause of many of the world's problems. This is not an academic oddity or a harmless quirk. It is of grave consequence when the leader of the free world is unable and unwilling to defend it rhetorically, diplomatically or militarily.

The president's thinking manifests itself in the desperation for a deal with the Islamic fundamentalist Iranian state, the biggest supporter of terrorism in the region. Convinced that he can make some accord with the mullahs, Obama is choosing not to confront, not to oppose Iran's ambitions as a regional power. (Really, who are we to say the Shiite terrorists aided by Iran should not rule the roost, right?) Iran, as we noted above, is on the march throughout the region and is on the brink, if we are to believe news reports, of a deal that will leave it with thousands of centrifuges, its Arak heavy-water reactor in place, its missile program intact and its aggressive actions throughout the region the accepted norm. [The Post editorial board warns](#), "It's hard to escape the conclusion that Mr. Obama wishes to avoid congressional review because he suspects a bipartisan majority would oppose the deal he is prepared to make." And given the potential for such a terrible *fait accompli*, it is hard to understand the refusal by Democrat opponents of such a deal to take up sanctions *now*, before it is too late. While true that "a deal with Iran could be reversed, within months of its completion, by the next president," a deal of the type we are anticipating would leave the international sanctions regimen in ruins and leave war as the only alternative to a nuclear-armed Iran.

On Twitter the mild-mannered [David Gergen pleaded](#): "How much longer will the world permit the brutality of ISIS? Why can't we go after them harder?" Why? Because we have a president who thinks the West is morally flawed and not entitled to distinguish between civilized countries with imperfect histories and jihadist terrorists and their patrons. Because we have a president who refuses to use sufficient hard power to defend the West, for it is his role to "end wars" and reach accord with our enemies (i.e. appease them). Because we have Democrats in Congress and the party's likely presidential nominee who refuse to recognize the urgency of the situation, speak out directly against him and demand a dramatic shift in foreign policy – *now*, not some time to be determined. Because, quite simply, the president does not want to.

This is not trivial matter. It is the central dilemma of time: *How do we defend Western civilization when the leader of the free world won't, and doesn't even like it all that much?*

Fiscal Times

[Obama's 'Crusade' Video Bolsters ISIS Propaganda Campaign](#)

by Liz Peek

President Obama has given ISIS a propaganda clip of incalculable value, and they don't even have to edit it. As he stood at the Prayer Breakfast last week and likened the barbarity of current-day Islamic extremists to atrocities committed during the Crusades and the Inquisition, Obama seemingly validated the terrorists' centuries-old calls for vengeance.

Moreover, his references to slavery and Jim Crow channeled Islamic recruiters who warn of coming Islamophobia in the U.S. by calling out black-white tensions. Given that our battle with ISIS is in large part a war for hearts and minds, Mr. Obama's comments are symptomatic of profound ignorance, at best and were extremely reckless.

The al-Qaeda hijackers brought down the World Trade Towers on September 11 because unbeknownst to most in the West, the date is an important one in Islamic history. It was in 1683 "that the conquering armies of Islam were met, held, and thrown back at the gates of Vienna," as Christopher Hitchens wrote. This was, he explained, a "hinge" event, in that "the Ottoman Empire never recovered from the defeat. From then on it was more likely that Christian or western powers would dominate the Muslim world than the other way around."

Hitchens notes, "In the Islamic world, and especially among the extremists, it is remembered as a humiliation in itself and a prelude to later ones," and thus the perfect date to inflict on the West an [equally humiliating injury](#).

History matters to Islamic terrorists; avenging past defeats suffered by Muslims is central to their cause. And no chapter of history is more painful than the battles fought for the Holy Lands between Christians and Muslims during the Middle Ages. Thomas Asbridge, director of the Center for the Study of Islam and the West at the University of London, [told The New York Times](#), "Any use of the word 'Crusade' has to be made with great caution. It is the most highly charged word you can use in the context of the Middle East."

The propaganda materials produced by ISIS and its savage brethren buttress this claim. One publication, "*Dabiq*," shows President Obama and "Sen. John McCain as 'crusaders' who will 'bring about the complete collapse of the modern American empire,'" [according to CNN](#). The magazine is named for the town of Dabiq, site of an Ottoman victory in 1516 that led to the last Islamic Caliphate.

The first two editions of the magazine quote Al-Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi: "The spark has been lit here in Iraq, and its heart will continue to intensify — by Allah's permission — until it burns the crusader armies in Dabiq." Another edition shows the ISIS flag photo-shopped and flying over the Vatican under the title: [The Failed Crusade](#).

Any confusion about whether or not we are engaged in a religious war is squashed by [Flames of War](#), a 55-minute propaganda film released by ISIS last year that describes their capture of a Syrian Army's base near Raqqa. In it, the head of ISIS refers to the U.S. as the "defender of the cross."

Surely, President Obama and his speechwriters know this background. They must be aware of the propaganda efforts of the jihadist organizations. After all, these ventures are not new. Al-Qaeda "increased its media production in the years following 9/11 to compensate for the loss of its training camp infrastructure and its corresponding centrality among jihadist groups," write terrorism experts Bill Braniff and Assaf Moghadam, both formerly associated with West Point.

In an article tracing the maturation of al-Qaeda after the World Trade Tower attacks, the authors note, "Ayman al-Zawahiri's assertion that at least half of the overall battle against the Crusader-Zionist foe takes place in the media." To indicate the extent of al-Qaeda's media effort they point to the growth in [the terrorist group's propaganda releases](#) — from 6 in 2002 to 97 in 2007.

Not only do the jihadists rely upon historical antagonisms to motivate their followers, they also exploit racial discord in the U.S. The first edition of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's English-

language *Inspire* magazine contained an article titled, “Message to the American People and Muslims in the West,” which predicts growing discrimination against Muslims, citing our country’s history of racism to prove their point.

Malcolm X is identified as a Muslim martyr who died fighting against racial injustice (no matter that he was assassinated by Nation of Islam rivals), al-Zawahiri describes African-American politicians as “house-slaves” and others try to incite blacks to strike back at their “oppressors.” In its publications, al-Qaeda openly calls for not only Muslim soldiers but also African-Americans to attack their fellow GIs; the Fort Hood shootings followed.

So President Obama not only appeared to buttress the historical argument made by Islamic terrorists, he also supported the parallels they draw between racial tensions in the U.S. and probable bigotry against Muslims. To what end would he feed these narratives that ISIS and others have found so effective in recruiting young fighters from all over the world? Is he so desperate to prove his even-handedness that he is consciously providing support to their campaign? Or are he and his team so impossibly ignorant that he was unaware of the impact his speech might have?

It is hard to know, but a few weeks or months from now, when ISIS predictably releases their new video starring President Obama confirming their talking points, the damage will have been done.

The Federalist

Obama Is A Good BSer, But He’s A Bad Liar

What Obama's Gay-Marriage Lie Tells Us About Contemporary Politics

by David Harsanyi

It’s pretty simple. If you lie, lie about the right things.

It’s not difficult to imagine a pro-choice candidate winning the presidency. But imagine, if you can, a president whose position on abortion “evolves” after the election. Imagine this president advocating that all innocent human life is worth protecting. Imagine that she appoints judges to solidify her new pro-life attitude. And then imagine the president’s top advisor informs us that the president was a pro-lifer all along. I imagine that would be a pretty big story.

Politicians break their promises and modify their positions all the time, of course. They BS us about their opinions and carefully craft identities that are palatable to the average voter. When a person enters this political universe, we need accept that most of the things we hear are, at best, poetic truths. But, yet, there is still a big difference between BSing and lying— though the latter is, [as Mollie pointed out](#), pardonable if you happen to be lying for the cause.

In “[Believer: My Forty Years in Politics](#),” David Axelrod [claims that he knew](#) Obama supported gay marriage back when he first ran for president in 2008. “I’m just not very good at bullshitting,” a far-too-modest Barack Obama supposedly told his advisor after a campaign stop. “There’s no doubt that his sympathies were on the side of allowing gay couples to marry,” Axelrod says. “He also recognized that the country wasn’t there yet—that we needed to bring the country along.”

Bullshit, according to unreliable sources across the interwebs, means “nonsense” or a rebuke of something misleading, disingenuous or false. The Urban Dictionary [definition](#) of “bullshitting” is

“When someone has no f****ng clue what they are talking about, yet insists on trying to get others to believe him/her.” So, contra the president’s self-criticism, he excels at it.

Lying, on the other hand, not so much. Obama is given a free pass as the media uses every euphemism in existence to avoid using the word “lie.” A lie that Obama covered up using his faith and family. A lie that reflects the corruption of politics in general and this president in particular. It’s the sort of lying that one imagines all good government types would be concerned about.

Jonathan Chait [puts it well](#):

To be sure, the voters’ right to know what the candidates believe is not absolute, and it’s routinely violated by a political-media complex that does a horrendous job of informing them. But this process of industrialized spin is a bad thing. When a candidate contributes to public misinformation, regardless of his good intentions, he has done something morally questionable.

The candidate didn’t merely contribute to public misinformation, he claimed that *God* had cemented his views on the issue. “I believe that marriage is the union between a man and a woman,” said Obama, when defending traditional marriage in 2008. “Now, for me as a Christian — for me — for me as a Christian, it is also a sacred union. God’s in the mix.”

Obama pulled a variation of Mario Cuomo’s [famous cop-out](#) on social issues. The former New York governor argued that he, as a Catholic, might believe abortion was tantamount to killing, but he, as a politician, would not seek “to force” his beliefs regarding murder on others in the same way he might force people to do more important stuff like recycle. Cuomo was able to embrace liberal orthodoxy while, at the same time, preserving a bond with his faith. Or so he thought.

Obama, on the other hand, claimed that his faith was so strong he *couldn’t* give into progressive orthodoxy. Whether Jesus and/or public polling informed Obama’s decision, for me, at least, his awkward stance on same-sex marriage always sounded more like an apology – something akin to: “Listen, voters believe all this crap so I’m sort of required to take this callous, antiquated position on “marriage” that, as we all know, I don’t really believe in.” Axelrod’s story, then, is completely plausible.

The first clue, was his use of Christianity itself. Of all the people I’ve debated in public or private about gay marriage, and there have been many, I can’t recall a single instance when the defense was predicated on “as a Christian.” As an atheist, I find that traditional marriage proponents are far more likely to argue about social goods and societal benefits than offer declarations of moral certitude meant to shut down a conversation. I can’t say the same for the other side.

In an interview [with BuzzFeed](#) retroactively corrects himself:

“I think David is mixing up my personal feelings with my position on the issue,” Obama said. “I always felt that same-sex couples should be able to enjoy the same rights, legally, as anybody else, and so it was frustrating to me not to, I think, be able to square that with what were a whole bunch of religious sensitivities out there.”

No one with access thought it worthwhile to dig any further back then? Why doesn’t someone ask Obama what’s changed about his Christianity that brought about this evolution? Squaring your opinion with “a whole bunch of religious sensitivities” is not the same as contending that you’re opposed to gay marriage “as a Christian — for me — for me as a Christian, it is also a sacred union.” It makes no sense.

Who am I kidding? No one cares. What's clear is that Obama isn't shy about pulling in religion when it suits his political needs. Christianity is a means of bolstering progressive ideals. For years, I've been hearing how twisting faith for political purposes corrodes American democracy. It was a selective concern. And if David Axelrod is telling the truth – and it seems to me, the purpose of this story is to let us know that the president was always enlightened – what are we to make of the [long-winded fairy tale about how his daughters helped him see the light](#) to ABC's Robin Roberts in 2012? What we learn is that president is pretty big BSer, but not a very good liar. Not that anyone seems to be too concerned.

IBD

Late Night

by Andrew Malcolm

Robert Gates, former Defense Secretary and president of the Alfalfa Club: When it comes to drones, I do think we need to reduce their number. The 435 we have in the House are enough.

Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell at the Alfalfa Dinner: I can work with the president. We're honest with each other. I told him once that I thought he was aloof and condescending. He said, 'I am not condescending. I am just too busy thinking about far more important things than you would understand.'

Gates: Washington is the only place where you can see someone walking down Lovers Lane, holding his own hand.

Conan: The author of 'To Kill A Mockingbird' is publishing her second novel 55 years after the first. This one's entitled: 'Mockingbird 2: Mock Harder.'

Conan: Due to a slowing of the Earth's rotation, scientists are adding an extra second to the year 2015. Here's the bad news— you just wasted it listening to this joke.

Conan: An NFL player was arrested in Florida on gun charges. The news was shocking to anyone who knows nothing about the NFL or Florida.

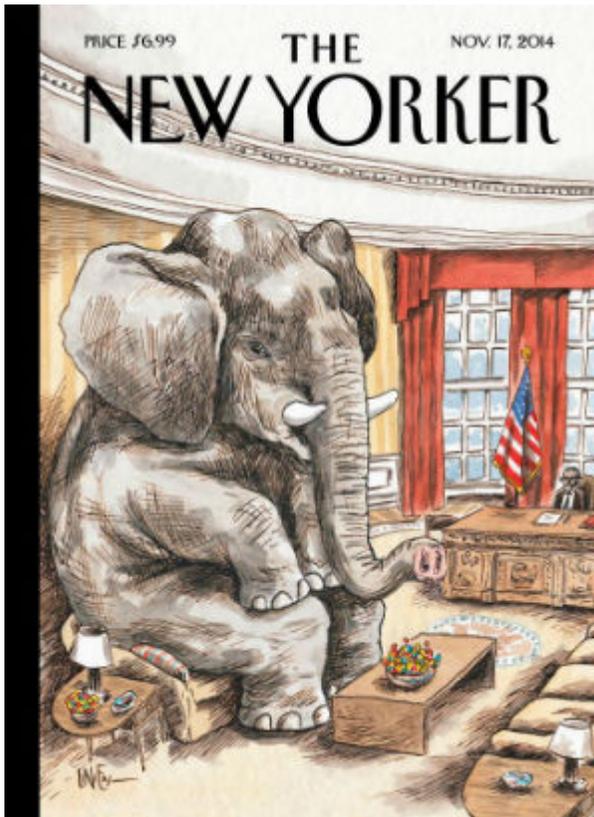
Meyers: Green Bay Packers defensive tackle Letroy Guion was arrested during a traffic stop recently with 357 grams of marijuana, an unloaded gun and nearly \$200,000 in cash in his car. And you know what that means, the NFL off-season has officially begun.

Fallon: A new survey finds 12% of Americans say it's OK to cheat a little on their taxes. The other 88% know not to talk to a guy with a clipboard asking if they cheat on taxes.

Conan: Scientists have discovered a 5,000 year-old mummy covered with at least 60 tattoos. They're calling him the earliest known member of the NBA.

Meyers: Italy's new president calls for a stronger fight against mafia corruption. That story again: The new president of Italy is missing.

Conan: Comedy Central plans to roast Justin Bieber on March 7th. The Bieber roast will start that day and end sometime in late June.



"What elephant?" -- Barack Obama.

Meyers: At the recent National Prayer Breakfast, President Obama and the Dalai Lama avoided a direct meeting. Sounds like there may be some Obama-Lama drama.

Conan: The 'Fifty Shades of Grey' movie contains 20 minutes of sex scenes. That's six more than the SpongeBob Movie.

Conan: An old pair of shoes once owned by Justin Bieber has sold on eBay for \$50,000. And I'll be honest— they're a little tight on me.

Conan: The left shark who completely forgot its dance routine in Katy Perry's halftime Super Bowl show has become a star on social media. The right shark has begun a slow descent into heroin addiction.

Conan: The inventor of the soy sauce dispenser has passed away. Well, he actually died months ago, but was just found in the back of the fridge.

Meyers: Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll has admitted that he's cried and lost sleep thinking about his controversial pass call at the Super Bowl. He just keeps running it over and over in his head — well, actually, he keeps passing it over and over.

Meyers: Wasn't that an amazing Super Bowl? The New England Patriots and the Seattle Seahawks *BOTH* defeated the Seattle Seahawks.

Conan: Over 100 Native American tribes are interested in growing marijuana. This according to Native American spokesman, "Chillaxing Eagle."

Conan: Staples has agreed to buy Office Depot for \$6 billion. Funny thing is they just popped in there to buy envelopes. And then just got carried away.

Fallon: The CDC has announced 102 measles cases in the U.S. You can tell things are getting bad because today, Disneyland opened a new ride called "It's a Small Pox World." (*Scroll down for video.*)

Conan: Super Bowl MVP Tom Brady is giving his new truck to a guy who won the game for the Patriots. So Brady's truck is going to Seahawks Coach Pete Carroll.



RHATIVE
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ISIL?,, NOT ISLAMIC.



CRUSADERS?,, CHRISTIAN.



HOBBY LOBBY?,, NOT CHRISTIAN.



JIM CROW?,, CHRISTIAN.



LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR?,, UH/UM/UM.



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