

# NYT SPINS 9/11 CLERGY GAG RULE

It is no secret that the New York Times is the most secular major newspaper in the United States, nor is it a secret that Mayor Bloomberg is a thoroughgoing secularist, so it was hardly surprising that the Times would find a secularist to explain Bloomberg's 9/11 clergy gag rule.

Alan Wolfe is an atheist who directs the Center for Religion and Public Life at Boston College, a Jesuit-run institution, and it is his belief that America has changed drastically—almost unrecognizably—over the past ten years. We went from a unified culture to “complete Balkanization” he recently argued. This allowed the Times to conclude, “Ten years later, any consensus that existed about the appropriate role of religion in public ceremonies marking a monumental American trauma has fallen apart.”

If this tale was to be believed, then there should have been plenty of evidence showing how the American people no longer want a role for religious expression at public events. But, of course, there wasn't. So why make it up? To convince the reader that Bloomberg's censorial act is a better index of our culture today than the sentiments of his critics.

To understand what has changed, all we had to do was look at who is in charge. After the Twin Towers were hit, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani called New York Archbishop Edward Egan for assistance, sending a police car to get him. The next day, Giuliani said, “The only thing we can do now is remain calm and focus on the rescue efforts...and pray.”

Bloomberg would have none of it. Indeed, even when he speaks about prayer, he sounds foolish. During the week before the 9/11 anniversary, Bloomberg appeared on “The View,” and said

we need to remember that “there are people who don’t want us to say what we want to say, and, uh, pray the way we want to pray and all that sort of stuff.” [Our emphasis.]

The big change is not our culture—it’s the mayor.