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September 19, 2011: No Clergy at the 9/11 Ceremony

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9/9/19/2011—Perhaps I did not follow the stories very well, but nothing very much seems to have been said about the absence of clergy at the 9/11 commemoration in New York City. There were some complaints, of course, but I expected a media firestorm. My neutrality discussion partner, Christopher Lund, who will be speaking at the Duquesne Law School Future of the Establishment Clause Symposium on November 3, would no doubt say that the absence of outrage shows that the best thing for social peace is to not have prayers at public events. On the other hand, it turned out that there were scripture readings even though there were no clergy. I don't know why this decision went down so easily. But I have a dark suspicion. I think the people who might otherwise have complained understood that this action was taken to keep representatives of the Muslim community from participating. And I believe that keeping Islam out was the actual reason for the ban. So what we may have here is not greater openness to the plurality of American belief and nonbelief, but maybe just the opposite.