

Truth – Or Media?

Should The Church Pursue Christian Truth – Or Shape Its Message With An Eye To Media Reports?

Have you seen the press reports, recently, suggesting that Pope Francis is going soft on abortion? Coming round to accepting homosexuality? If so, you've obviously been attending to the main-stream media that is ubiquitous, and powerful, in the West.

Such media – it is reasonable to say – is firmly biased against Christianity and its leaders, and would certainly never present the Roman Catholic church in anything other than a bad light; personally, I never believe such reports or their implications, and prefer to go directly to the church leader's own words, or an independent or sympathetic account (Anglican archbishops are reported, and probably distorted, in similar ways: Rowan Williams advocated sharia law ... oh really?).

The truth of the Pope's words regarding homosexuality and abortion seem to have been that he thought maybe the Church spoke *too much* of those matters (in relation, perhaps, to other things). Now it may be that the RCC's pronouncements have contained an unbalanced overemphasis on those issues, or been perceived to have done – or been represented by the media as having so done. Perhaps – the Pope may be suggesting – the Church should carefully tailor its message to take into consideration how it might be perceived, or mis-represented by the press.

But should the Church shape its message simply to appease a hostile media? Should it refrain from "banging on" about evil things and ideas for fear of being criticised by the likes of *The Guardian* and the BBC? I would argue that, ultimately, it should not. Its job is to proclaim truth, whatever the consequences.

But who, that followed accounts of Rowan Williams's various public statements, can honestly doubt the fact that he often spoke very unguardedly, with seemingly no thought whatever as to how the media would report and re-cast his words and supposed convictions? Perhaps church leaders should indeed be conscious of the media and its awful effects – or at least, write their speeches very carefully, telling the full truth, but with an eye to the times we live in, and the rulership of this age.

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