

# Religion

## Truth in the Media

By R.C. SPROUL

EDITOR'S NOTE - R.C. Sproul is chairman of Ligonier Ministries and author of twenty-three books including his newest, *The Mystery of the Holy Spirit*. There is a video series featuring Sproul's lectures on "Themes of Genesis" every Tuesday at 7:00 pm at Christ Anglican Chapel in Black Mountain.

I remember my first experience of disillusionment with the news media. As a graduate student at the Free University of Amsterdam I longed for news from my homeland. I subscribed to the international edition of *time* magazine, reading each section or department carefully. I always paid close attention to the *Religious* page. I became more and more disturbed as I noticed glaring inaccuracies in reports of what was going on in the theological world. It was not simply a matter of differing theological positions but rather a question of accuracy in reporting. After a while I began to wonder - "Are the reports in the fields of art and science as inaccurate as in the field of theology?" I did not know the answer. But the reports in theology were so sloppy that I finally lost confidence in the credibility of the magazine and finally canceled my subscription.

I also remember the first time I saw my name in a newspaper. It was heady stuff. It proved the maxim that everybody is famous for at least fifteen minutes in their life. Together with two friends, Bowden Anderson and Eddie MacIlvane. Eddie's next door neighbor was a reporter for the local newspaper. She thought our crayfish escapade was cute, so she wrote it up in the paper. There, for the first time, I saw my name in print.

When I grew up and became involved in speaking in various cities, I was often invited to be interviewed by the religion editor of various newspapers. After several such interviews I finally adopted a policy born of despair of declining interviews whenever possible. The reason was a sense of frustration that emerged after countless misrepresentations and misquotations in the press. It wasn't a question of whether or not the reporter agreed or disagreed with me; it was a matter of sheer accuracy in reporting. I remember specifically one such interview in Phoenix. The reporter had a Ph.D. in religion and was well-versed in the field. He was cordial throughout the two-hour interview. I was comfortable with his manner of questioning and impressed by his ability to grasp crisp and important distinctions. Then I read his article in which he articulated the concepts I had carefully set forth to him. I could hardly recognize the interview. The man quoted me as saying things I wouldn't say with a gun to my head. I don't know if that reporter was malicious or simply grossly muddled or incompetent. In either case I found the results so distorted that I despaired of most interviews.

Newspapers are businesses. Businesses seek to make a profit. Sometimes controversy sells. Sadly it seems the zeal for sales creates controversy by the distortion of views. When that happens, truth is sacrificed upon the altar of profitability.

The current climate of media reporting sometimes reveals a commitment to a form of philosophical

relativism that is agnostic with respect to objective truth. We live in an age of neo-sophism. Like the sophists of antiquity who awakened Socrates to action, we are besieged by a kind of skepticism that inevitably follows in the wake of relativism.

The ancient sophists, who with their *sophistry*, were both *sophisticated* and *sophomoric*. They excelled in the science of rhetoric. What began as a science of training in debate and forensics with the noble goal of teaching students sound reasoning and skills of clarity in communication degenerated under the

sophists to a science dedicated to the goal of learning how to persuade or win arguments whether or not the proposition argued were true. Persuasion became the all-consuming pragmatic expedient at the loss of any concern for truth. This was the practice the could not, nay, would not live on Madison Avenue.

Freedom of the press is a vital national interest. It is rightly defended by the Constitution of the United States. What we need today is a corresponding commitment to the responsibility of the press. Freedom demands

responsibility. A man may be legally free in certain societies to distort the truth. But no man is ever morally free to corrupt the truth. A good press is a press with a conscience, a press that holds truth in the highest regard.

There are few news agencies that say they are opposed to the truth. Even the leading news agency of the Soviet Union is named "Truth" in Russian. But to claim to tell the truth and to tell the truth are two different things. We need news agencies that are as zealous for the deed as the are for the claim. - Reprinted by permission, P.4, *Tabletalk*, Feb. 1990

### Christian Corner

By HEATHER EDWARDS  
Contributing Writer  
Roman's 8:14-17

"... Those who are led by the spirit of God are the sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry 'Abba, Father'. The spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if heirs, heirs of God, then joint-heirs with Christ, if we suffer with him, we will be

### In the Eyes ...

By STEVEN HOLLADAY

You're hidden from the world behind your shades of glass.  
Staying alive for the future, while living in the past.  
Hidden from your true self, defenses made of steel.  
Open your eyes to Jesus, the mist will become clear.  
And you're making eye contact, look God in the eye. . . contact.

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glorified together."

Think about these verses for a minute. Do you realize what this is saying? The first time I ever read this, I really freaked out. As a Christian, I've always been told that we are children of a king.

Reality finally hit. We are not just children of A king, but instead, we are children of THE king! Do you realize how awesome this is? God Almighty, creator and ruler of everything is our Dad.

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R.C. Sproul

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