

The Romney Question and Why Time Magazine Goofed

How nice that Mitt Romney is willing sacrifice himself so this nation can examine its soul.

The trouble is that isn't what we are doing. Instead, on its front pages, the LA Times is scrutinizing the nature of Jesus and how differing views on Him might influence the votes of many.

There are bright spots, of course. In Time magazine, Pam Wright of Pasadena, CA is quoted: "We can't begin to explore the issue of religious bigotry in this country until we ask, "Would you vote for an agnostic or an atheist." Questions of this sort might bring into focus how far this country has strayed from its ideals of religious freedom, an individual's right to pursue happiness even if that includes the Presidency. Even if that office is pursued by someone outside the religious mainstream—or worse, outside the group of those who believe that our country should be governed by God through a President who believes in Him precisely the same way they do.

It is not news that our country has become radicalized. More and more we can choose what we want to surround ourselves with. We select for our iPods only the music we want to hear (but still complain about what others may be choosing for their iPods). We watch TV news and radio slanted to our tastes. Fox and Clear Channel for the right, and the left tunes to satellite where its interests have largely been relegated. We chat on the internet with people who think as we do and flame those who don't. Many want schools tailored to their belief systems for it is important that our children not learn to discern truth from falsehood but that we feed intravenously the entire population our view of what is right.

In the May 1, 2007, issue of Time magazine, we see a picture of the Mormon Tabernacle complete with its famous organ incorrectly identified as the interior of the Salt Lake City Mormon Temple. That, on its surface, seems a small error. After all, we should be practicing more acceptance with one another's foibles rather than shaking our fists at the other guy on the freeway.

However, this seemingly minor faux pas is an indication that we don't know enough about one another and that much of the media is suffering from this malady. We are better traveled than ever before but we touch down, attend a business meeting, and get back on a plane or, if we lounge at all, do so on foreign beaches. So we tend to forget that this is a nation of cultural pods within states fiercely protective of their own rights and idiosyncrasies.

The publishing industry has suffered other lapses. Many have screamed poor ethics but I maintain that much can be attributed to our narrow focus, so narrow that good old-fashioned research suffers. So does reason. Could not a reporter who had done any measure of shuffling about Salt Lake City figured that if, indeed, those outside the LDS religion are not allowed into a Mormon Temple it would be highly unlikely that this

could be a shot of its interior? Is there not one Mormon on Time's staff who could have done a quick edit on the story?

If we are so confined that our best journalists miss something of this sort, it is no wonder that we're missing much bigger questions. Questions like, how the culture in the state of Utah—the place that Romney calls Zion—might affect a President's decisions. We're asking questions like how could Romney be sincere about his present stance on abortion when only a short time ago he was more lenient. Anyone who understands the Mormon culture knows we might better be asking if his former posture might not have been expedient in a blue-state election.

Journalists ask whether those on the religious right can vote for Romney when they might better explore the likelihood that they will support him—if necessary—in order to further an agenda that infringes on the rights of minorities and the privacy of all eventually feeding the voracious maw of intolerance.

Here is the important question. Is Romney the kind of person who can be influenced by those who are determined to press their morality on the rest of the nation? I tend to think not. If that were so, he might have chosen to change his religion for political purposes long ago. But certainly not to atheism or agnosticism, my dear Ms. Wright. That would never wash with those who want, not a President, but God to govern. And, if a person is so strong in his or her religion that he or she ignores the process of learning to understand (and yes, even sometimes accept!) the viewpoint of others is really the answer to a better administration, well, we can all see where that has gotten us this last time around.

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