

POPE'S VISIT RIPE FOR PROPAGANDA

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Propaganda experts are already out in force and Pope Francis has yet to come to the U.S. Propaganda is the deliberate skewing of information done for the purpose of altering public opinion about a cause, institution, or leader. Proponents seek to manipulate the public by engaging in hyperbole and falsehoods.

The way the media exploit Pope Francis is varied, but there are some common features. Their four favorite propaganda tricks are to (a) take part of what he has said and present it as if it were accurate (b) attribute to him positions he has not taken (c) press Catholic leaders to agree with these misrepresented views, and (d) give legitimacy to groups that claim to be Catholic but are not.

Gay issues, in particular, are fodder for propaganda; look for them to be trotted out frequently before and during the pope's visit. In July, 2013, when the pope was on the papal airplane, on his way back from Brazil, he was asked to comment on a gay priest who had been under investigation for breaking his vow of celibacy.

The pope said that a preliminary probe of the priest had turned up nothing. He then said that there was a difference between being gay, which was not a problem, and belonging to a gay lobby, which was.

The exchange with the reporter ended with the pope's famous quote: **"If someone is gay and is searching for the Lord and has good will, then who am I to judge him?"** Notice the last word (I'll come back to that).

The only difference between what Pope Francis said, and what his predecessors have said, was the use of the term “gay.” To be explicit, no pope has ever condemned someone for being a homosexual, and the Catholic Catechism has never said otherwise.

If what the pope said was nothing new, why did the media, and so-called progressive Catholics, treat it as if it were? Because their agenda is to gin things up, hoping to set in motion a sense that reform is coming soon. Quite frankly, their propaganda is designed to incite the public into demanding that reforms be realized without delay. That’s why every woman who pronounces herself a priest is given high profile by the media—they hope to get Catholics worked up about the need for women priests.

The first propaganda weapon in the media arsenal is to shorten the pope’s remark to, “Who am I to judge?” They conveniently leave out his two conditions: (a) that the person search for the Lord and (b) that he be of good will. By taking his remarks out of context, they intentionally mislead the public. Leaving out the last word, “him,” allows them to play their second trick.

The second propaganda ploy is to say that the pope’s words were invoked to justify homosexuality. That is a lie. The pope was speaking about sexual orientation, not sodomy. But how is the reader to know this when they deliberately delete “him”? Doing so deflects attention from a person, thus enabling them to argue that the pope was speaking about conduct.

The third propaganda tool is to pressure Catholic leaders into falling in line with what the pope allegedly said. This is their “Catch 22” game: either agree with the pope that it is wrong to be judgmental about homosexuality, or explain why the Holy Father is wrong. While this gambit hasn’t worked on me, I’ve seen it work on others.

The fourth propaganda technique is to take groups that are no more Catholic than the Catholic League is Buddhist, and then pass them off as though they were authentically Catholic. These activist groups openly condemn the teachings of the Catholic Church on sexuality, yet pretend to be Catholic. The media manipulate the public by promoting them as loyal sons and daughters of the Church.

Be wary, too, of Catholic spokespersons who represent organizations that might be legitimately Catholic, but are inactive most of the year. They are out to capitalize on the excitement of the papal visit, and nothing more. When the Church is in trouble, they are always missing in action.

Watch out for surveys that report dissatisfaction with Church teachings on a variety of subjects. If non-Catholics are included in the poll, why should we care? If Catholics who do not practice the faith are included, why should we care? Would these same pollsters ask Catholics what they think about the way Orthodox Jews, or Muslims, treat their women? Would Jews or Muslims who do not practice their religion be included in a survey on religious members of their community?

We expect to be very busy in September. We will accept every media interview thrown our way, debunking all the myths. We will also discuss the results of our own scientific survey, using the data to set the record straight on many issues. We will not protest fair criticism of the pope or any aspect of Catholicism, but we will scream to high heaven when propaganda games are being played.