

New York Times new President/CEO says Christianity is based on objective truth.



Tomorrow, Mark Thompson takes over as the new President and CEO of *The New York Times*. Thompson is a practicing Catholic who believes "that the truths of the Christian faith are objective truths, rather than being entirely subjective."

The position is primarily focused on running the business aspects of the *Times*. Thompson turned the British Broadcasting Company into a global online media powerhouse, and the *Times* management feels that he could do the same here.

The New York Times Company announced on August 14th that Thompson would become its new President and CEO. Thompson left the position as director-general of the British Broadcasting Corporation on Friday, September 14th. Times Company's chairman, Arthur Sulzberger Jr., told analysts last month that Mr. Thompson "possesses high ethical standards, and is the ideal person to lead our company." However, questions about Thompson's ethics arose in October.

Soon after, Thompson left the BBC, a scandal broke out over how the British media enterprise had handled charges of pedophilia made against Jimmy Savile, one of its most famous show hosts in an earlier era. Thompson says that he did not know specifically how BBC news was handling the Savile scandal, though he was told that a program exposing Savile was shelved shortly before his media enterprise ran a celebratory program about Savile. At the *Times* journalists say that they will ask Thompson if he did all he could to get to the bottom of the Savile affair. Did he live up to his Catholic ethics to protect the vulnerable? Or did he stick his head in the sand?

Thompson has also faced questions about his editorial sensibility in regard to religion reporting. In 2005 BBC aired a controversial program "Jerry Springer: the Opera" which contains some satire against Christianity. Last spring, Thompson talked with

Oxford University professor Timothy Garton Ash about the role of his Catholic faith in journalism. Below are some of the most interesting points and the full interview in the video provided by Ash's organization freespeechdebate.com.

Religious believers are realists.

“Almost all people who have religious belief are realists about the belief...They believe their faith refers to things that have an objective reality.”

Mark Thompson is in the realist camp.

“I am a practicing Catholic, and I would probably describe myself as a critical realist in religious matters but I’m a realist and I believe, as it were, that the truths of the Christian faith are objective truths, rather than being entirely subjective.”

Secularism is on the decline.

“Around the world, it would appear that, if anything, secularism is rather in a decline actually.

Because secularists privilege their beliefs on the public square, they often don’t understand the deep offensiveness of their ridicule of religious belief.

“One of the mistakes of secularists is not to understand the character of what blasphemy feels to some one who is a realist in their religious beliefs...For a Muslim a comic or demeaning depiction of the Prophet Mohammed might have the force, be the emotional force, of a piece of grotesque child pornography...Religion as it is lived is not simply about a kind of interplay of propositions , two plus two equals four versus two plus two equals five. It is a felt experience with a big emotional charge.”

How does a publisher, producer or editor decide whether to run an offensive characterization of someone else’s religion?

The decision is based upon “whether the level of offense that it is likely to cause is justified by the intended artistic expression involved...”

Would you treat Christian beliefs and Muslim beliefs the same way? BBC broadcast "Jerry Springer: the Opera" which contained several sideswipes

against Christianity.

Muslims in a majority Christian country "may already feel in other ways isolated, prejudiced against, and...they may well regard an attack on their religion as racism by other means". Thompson agreed with the statement that he "wouldn't dream of broadcasting something comparably satirical if it had been the Prophet Mohammed rather than Jesus."

*Here is the whole interview
which covers quite a bit more than we have summarized:*

Tony Carnes - A Journey Throug NYC Religions