

# Twelve points of Religious Literacy

---

JOURNALISTS HAVE a special responsibility to report accurately, especially on sensitive issues. The Centre for Religious Literacy in World Affairs exists partly to ensure that this happens in the realm of world affairs journalism.

Religious literacy – which includes ideological literacy – is understanding that all people give meanings to their motivations. Lapidomedia journalists aim to ‘dig deeper, go further, be fairer’ and to help mainstream journalists become religiously literate.

In the pursuit of excellence in our work, we commit to the following:

1. We understand there is a ‘dominant discourse’ in all cultures. The dominant discourse might be said to be ‘the elite’s conversation with itself’. In Europe, and Britain in particular, this discourse is secularist i.e. materialist, and it often marginalises religious voices and views without even knowing it.
2. We understand this discourse is such as to result in a ‘blind spot’ about religious motives and meanings, constituting a worldview in itself, which we commit to make sense of, probing and correcting.
3. We understand that the dominant discourse holds that it doesn’t matter what you believe so long as you are sincere: that beliefs and dreams have no consequences. We believe this also to be wrong.
4. We accept that religious devotion is for the majority the source of the deepest dreams, motivations and allegiances. We believe that unless we understand how religion works on the human soul and psyche, we cannot read the world, or the future.
5. We therefore undertake to acquaint ourselves as diligently as possible with the basic phenomena of meaning-making. This may include religious and ideological histories and origins, organization, leadership, core beliefs, and manifestations such as rituals, and holy texts. This inevitably means committing to study and travel.
6. We aim to keep in our minds the fact that religious motivations and allegiances may – or may not – be a part of any story we are covering. We put ourselves in the shoes of those with other worldviews from our own.
7. We recognize that we as journalists will harbour undisclosed confessional positions when writing news, hence the necessity for double and triple sourcing for our information.

8. Confessional writing is forbidden except in an opinion piece. This does not and cannot obviate a viewpoint, as all discourse has to start somewhere, but we seek a viewpoint that encompasses the fullness of the human predicament.
9. This viewpoint is implicitly Christian. Journalism itself arose out of the Christian worldview, and in the sacrificial struggle for freedom of conscience & expression.
10. We recognize that religious actors may be close to grass-roots opinion, and we aim to include rather than exclude them.
11. We understand that religion is one of the seeds of human cultures and that different cultures produce different 'facts'. To assume that facts are the same to all cultures is itself a form of dogmatism that must be questioned. We all read 'facts' according to the lenses through which we look, including ourselves. Different cultures afford different lenses. We attempt to apply ourselves diligently to a self-reflexive questioning of this 'fact'. We must be self-aware in the assumptions we make.
12. There is no such thing as 'neutrality'; only impartiality about facts. Impartiality means fairness in reportage. Neutrality means giving equal weight to incommensurable positions, whether or not they are based on empirical evidence or not. We aim to practise impartiality, not neutrality. Our own dogmatic viewpoint is that truth, justice and righteousness, particularly for the poor, are possible and worth committing to and from this basis, we report. We pursue truth, justice and righteousness in the belief that they exist, against all who obscure or deny them. By 'truth' we mean faithfulness to what is most fully the case, seen through a lens of dispassionate love.