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WaPo Fact-Checkers, Where Art Thou?

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Distinctly Catholic

The Washington Post's Arts & Style section this weekend had an article about a new exhibit at the Folger Shakespeare Library dealing with Henry VIII. The theater that adjoins the library is producing Shakespeare's play about Henry.

In discussing the dissolution of the monasteries, the author penned this sentence: "And as the exhibition demonstrates, while Henry's motives were amply mixed, he was also intellectually engaged in the formation of a new, more modern Christianity, a faith built upon actual knowledge of scripture rather than obedience to a distant, dogmatic and pedieval church." Huh?

Henry VIII was certainly an engaged humanist, but that engagement preceded his decision to break with Rome and he remained, for the rest of his years, profoundly suspicious of Protestantism. He most definitely did not try to run from, or create a Church of England in opposition to, a "distant, dogmatic" church although, clearly, he lived at a time when the West was transitioning out of the medieval world and into something new. But, that transition happened within the Catholic Church too, and Henry's reasons for breaking with Rome had nothing to do with any quarrel over the Church's dogmas.

This kind of sloppy history is what makes for a dumb culture. The Washington Post should know better than to print a throwaway line that has no resemblance to the historical reality. When I come up for air, I will head down to the Folger to see if the exhibit indulges the same kind of sloppiness.

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