1

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Canada

The Sins of Omission: Reporting Religion

by

Iain A. G. Barrie

**A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Journalism

School of Journalism and Communications

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

December 1994

© copyright 1994 Iain Barrie

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

**THE AUTHOR HAS GRANTED AN
IRREVOCABLE NON-EXCLUSIVE
LICENCE ALLOWING THE NATIONAL
LIBRARY OF CANADA TO
REPRODUCE, LOAN, DISTRIBUTE OR
SELL COPIES OF HIS/HER THESIS BY
ANY MEANS AND IN ANY FORM OR
FORMAT, MAKING THIS THESIS
AVAILABLE TO INTERESTED
PERSONS.**

**L'AUTEUR A ACCORDE UNE LICENCE
IRREVOCABLE ET NON EXCLUSIVE
PERMETTANT A LA BIBLIOTHEQUE
NATIONALE DU CANADA DE
REPRODUIRE, PRETER, DISTRIBUER
OU VENDRE DES COPIES DE SA
THESE DE QUELQUE MANIERE ET
SOUS QUELQUE FORME QUE CE SOIT
POUR METTRE DES EXEMPLAIRES DE
CETTE THESE A LA DISPOSITION DES
PERSONNE INTERESSEES.**

**THE AUTHOR RETAINS OWNERSHIP
OF THE COPYRIGHT IN HIS/HER
THESIS. NEITHER THE THESIS NOR
SUBSTANTIAL EXTRACTS FROM IT
MAY BE PRINTED OR OTHERWISE
REPRODUCED WITHOUT HIS/HER
PERMISSION.**

**L'AUTEUR CONSERVE LA PROPRIETE
DU DROIT D'AUTEUR QUI PROTEGE
SA THESE. NI LA THESE NI DES
EXTRAITS SUBSTANTIELS DE CELLE-
CI NE DOIVENT ETRE IMPRIMES OU
AUTREMENT REPRODUITS SANS SON
AUTORISATION.**

ISBN 0-315-98615-8

Canada

Name JAIN A.G. BARRIE

Dissertation Abstracts International is arranged by broad, general subject categories. Please select the one subject which most nearly describes the content of your dissertation. Enter the corresponding four-digit code in the spaces provided.

Journalism

SUBJECT TERM

0391

SUBJECT CODE

U·M·I

Subject Categories

THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS

Architecture 0729
Art History 0377
Cinema 0900
Dance 0378
Fine Arts 0357
Information Science 0723
Journalism 0391
Library Science 0399
Mass Communications 0708
Music 0413
Speech Communication 0459
Theater 0465

EDUCATION

General 0515
Administration 0514
Adult and Continuing 0516
Agricultural 0517
Art 0273
Bilingual and Multicultural 0282
Business 0688
Community College 0775
Curriculum and Instruction 0727
Early Childhood 0518
Elementary 0524
Finance 0277
Guidance and Counseling 0519
Health 0680
Higher 0745
History of 0520
Home Economics 0278
Industrial 0521
Language and Literature 0279
Mathematics 0280
Music 0522
Philosophy of 0998
Physical 0523

Psychology 0525

Reading 0535
Religious 0527
Sciences 0714
Secondary 0533
Social Sciences 0534
Sociology of 0340
Special 0529
Teacher Training 0530
Technology 0710
Tests and Measurements 0288
Vocational 0747

LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND LINGUISTICS

Language 0679
General 0289
Ancient 0290
Linguistics 0291
Modern 0401
Literature 0294
General 0295
Classical 0297
Comparative 0298
Medieval 0316
Modern 0591
African 0305
American 0352
Asian 0355
Canadian (English) 0593
Canadian (French) 0311
English 0312
Germanic 0315
Latin American 0313
Middle Eastern 0314
Romance 0370
Slavic and East European 0372

PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND THEOLOGY

Philosophy 0422
Religion 0318
General 0321
Biblical Studies 0319
Clergy 0320
History of 0322
Philosophy of 0469
Theology 0323

SOCIAL SCIENCES

American Studies 0323
Anthropology 0324
Archaeology 0326
Cultural 0327
Physical 0310
Business Administration 0272
General 0770
Accounting 0454
Banking 0338
Management 0385
Marketing 0501
Canadian Studies 0503
Economics 0505
General 0508
Agricultural 0509
Commerce-Business 0510
Finance 0511
History 0358
Labor 0366
Theory 0351
Folklore 0578
Geography 0366
Gerontology 0351
History 0578
General 0578

Ancient 0579
Medieval 0581
Modern 0582
Black 0328
African 0331
Asia, Australia and Oceania 0332
Canadian 0334
European 0335
Latin American 0336
Middle Eastern 0333
United States 0337
History of Science 0585
Law 0398
Political Science 0615
General 0616
International Law and Relations 0617
Public Administration 0814
Recreation 0452
Social Work 0626
Sociology 0627
General 0938
Criminology and Penology 0631
Demography 0628
Ethnic and Racial Studies 0629
Individual and Family Studies 0630
Industrial and Labor Relations 0700
Public and Social Welfare 0344
Social Structure and Development 0709
Theory and Methods 0999
Transportation 0453
Urban and Regional Planning 0453
Women's Studies 0453

THE SCIENCES AND ENGINEERING

BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Agriculture 0473
General 0285
Agronomy 0475
Animal Culture and Nutrition 0476
Animal Pathology 0359
Food Science and Technology 0478
Forestry and Wildlife 0479
Plant Culture 0480
Plant Pathology 0817
Plant Physiology 0777
Range Management 0746
Wood Technology 0306
Biology 0287
General 0308
Anatomy 0309
Biostatistics 0379
Botany 0329
Cell 0353
Ecology 0369
Entomology 0793
Genetics 0410
Limnology 0307
Microbiology 0317
Molecular 0416
Neuroscience 0433
Oceanography 0821
Physiology 0778
Radiation 0472
Veterinary Science 0786
Zoology 0760
Biophysics 0425
General 0996
Medical 0996

Geodesy 0370
Geology 0372
Geophysics 0373
Hydrology 0388
Mineralogy 0411
Paleobotany 0345
Paleoecology 0426
Paleontology 0418
Paleozoology 0985
Palynology 0427
Physical Geography 0368
Physical Oceanography 0415

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Environmental Sciences 0768
Health Sciences 0566
General 0300
Audiology 0992
Chemotherapy 0567
Dentistry 0350
Education 0769
Hospital Management 0758
Human Development 0982
Immunology 0564
Medicine and Surgery 0347
Mental Health 0569
Nursing 0570
Nutrition 0380
Obstetrics and Gynecology 0354
Occupational Health and Therapy 0381
Ophthalmology 0571
Pathology 0419
Pharmacology 0572
Pharmacy 0382
Physical Therapy 0573
Public Health 0574
Radiology 0575
Recreation 0575

Speech Pathology 0460
Toxicology 0383
Home Economics 0386

PHYSICAL SCIENCES

Pure Sciences 0485
Chemistry 0749
General 0486
Agricultural 0487
Analytical 0488
Biochemistry 0738
Inorganic 0490
Nuclear 0491
Organic 0494
Pharmaceutical 0495
Physical 0754
Polymer 0405
Radiation 0605
Mathematics 0986
Physics 0606
General 0608
Acoustics 0748
Astronomy and Astrophysics 0607
Atmospheric Science 0798
Atomic 0759
Electronics and Electricity 0609
Elementary Particles and High Energy 0610
Fluid and Plasma 0752
Molecular 0756
Nuclear 0611
Optics 0463
Radiation 0346
Solid State 0984
Statistics 0984
Applied Sciences 0984
Applied Mechanics 0984
Computer Science 0984

Engineering 0537
General 0538
Aerospace 0539
Agricultural 0540
Automotive 0541
Biomedical 0542
Chemical 0543
Civil 0544
Electronics and Electrical 0348
Heat and Thermodynamics 0545
Hydraulic 0546
Industrial 0547
Marine 0794
Materials Science 0548
Mechanical 0743
Metallurgy 0551
Mining 0552
Nuclear 0549
Packaging 0765
Petroleum 0554
Sanitary and Municipal System Science 0790
Geotechnology 0796
Operations Research 0795
Plastics Technology 0794
Textile Technology 0794

PSYCHOLOGY

General 0621
Behavioral 0384
Clinical 0622
Developmental 0620
Experimental 0623
Industrial 0624
Personality 0625
Physiological 0989
Psychobiology 0349
Psychometrics 0632
Social 0451

The undersigned recommend to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
acceptance of the thesis

The Sins of Omission: Reporting Religion
submitted by Iain A. G. Barrie

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Journalism

Thesis Supervisor

Director, School of Journalism and Communications

Carleton University

Abstract

Christian faith, morality, and even social standards are often seen to be private matters — not the subject of public discussion. Journalists tend to eschew matters of faith for that very reason.

Over the past two decades, there have been several major scandals that have involved both the mainline Roman Catholic Church and some of the principals in the 'upstart' electronic church. These scandals, all involving sex and the misuse and abuse of trust and authority, have attracted a great deal of attention from the secular media.

The scandals erupted at a time when conventional wisdom held that interest in matters of faith in the Western world was in decline. Reporting religion was not generally held in high esteem in most North American newsrooms.

This thesis discusses how the secular media approach reporting on religion, religious personalities, and religious dimensions to stories.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
A Cancer on the Body of Christ — A Scandal Unfolds	3
A Broken Trust	29
The Big Religious Story	51
Religious News — Problems of Definition	75
Reporting Religion — a Neglected Beat	97
Controversies and Conclusions	115
Bibliography	126

A Cancer on the Body of Christ — A Scandal Unfolds

On March 19, 1987 at 2:30 p.m., a besieged Rev. Jim Bakker was on the phone to the Charlotte Observer in Charlotte, N.C. In a trembling voice he announced that he was leaving his scandal-ridden PTL¹ ministry "for the good of my family, the church and all our related ministries."²

That afternoon, Charles E. Shepard, a seasoned reporter with The Observer, who had been researching and reporting on the PTL's activities for years, was about to write the story of his life.

Shepard had been at the newspaper since 1978, about the same time that televangelist Jim Bakker was breaking ground for his Heritage USA complex — a coincidental convergence of two alien worlds that Shepard did not think about until "years later,"³ he recalled in an interview. Shepard is a perfect template of the highly educated, liberal, secular reporter. His first foray into journalism came during elementary school. He later studied at Harvard and was involved with The Harvard Crimson. It was during this time that the Watergate story broke, indelibly influencing Shepard. "Seeing what the press had done to the Nixon administration, I think we all realized the power that institution could have."⁴

He is a "lapsed Christian . . . a very secular person in orientation . . . and [my] wife is Jewish. . . I don't feel like my religious views are the right views, they're just right for me and that was one of the attitudes that was behind [the reporting I do and] the book [Forgiven: The Rise and Fall of Jim Bakker and the PTL Ministry] I wrote."⁵

He did not notice the PTL story until he befriended another reporter who had been assigned to cover it. "It wasn't until the early '80s that I started to think — wow — what a wonderful story and then [I] wanted very much to get involved in it. I wanted to get involved in that story for years before I actually did. I just thought that it was a wonderful and fascinating story."⁶ Not surprisingly, he was not driven by the religious dimensions of the story but by the notion of muckraking. "There was a story that wasn't being told, which I think inspires a lot of the journalism I do . . . Even when I got involved in the story, [I felt] that [the] truth [about PTL] hadn't really been broadcast."⁷ Here, Shepard showed the concern to expose wrongdoing that most reporters share.

That afternoon, Shepard wrote the story that would earn his paper a Pulitzer Prize. Under the front page banner headline: "Jim Bakker Resigns From PTL; Jerry Falwell Assumes Leadership,"⁸ it rocked the evangelical⁹ world, the Pentecostal¹⁰ Church and led to Bakker's 1989 sentencing to 45 years in U.S. federal penitentiary for fraud and conspiracy.

The Observer had been following the Bakkers — Jim and Tammy Faye — since their arrival in Charlotte in 1974. The newspaper and other news media had been covering them, digging into their background, exploring their personal and financial lives and their real estate holdings, and generally having a great time with a great and growing story, *as if it were just another great and growing story*. And for some critics — inside and outside Bakker's ministry — they had been missing the point entirely, or at least significantly. For Bakker and for millions of ordinary Americans and Canadians, this was essentially a story about religion. And the news media which covered it were and are essentially secular and either indifferent or even hostile to the religious dimension in modern life. For the reporter and editor-in-chief at the Charlotte Observer, this was a story like any other, about betrayal of trust, financial dishonesty, human gullibility. But for others it was a story of a fall from grace, a fall perhaps hastened by the very media that were chronicling it. These two points of view indicate a gulf between religion — a significant factor in North American life — and the news media. What follows is an attempt to outline the nature of that gulf and its consequences.

In the 13 plus years of coverage, the Observer's reporters had written extensively about Jim Bakker's questionable dreams, lavish lifestyle, unfulfilled promises, fights with the Federal Communications Commission and the Internal Revenue Service, squabbles with other religious leaders and financial impropriety.

A review of the Observer's PTL coverage between 1974 and 1987 showed that the Knight-Ridder paper regarded Bakker as general interest — not religious — news. The paper had assigned reporters as it would assign them to any multi-dimensional story. This kind of reporting could just as easily have been employed for strictly secular stories about political corruption, civic happenings, welfare fraud or police incompetence. Over the years the stories played from the back pages to the front pages, from the religious section to the business section, depending on the appeal of the piece. Shepard recounted that the newspaper tried to be "scrupulously fair"¹¹ in its treatment of the Bakkers and their organization and it followed "standard journalistic practices"¹² in its coverage.

The media coverage of the Bakkers and their ministry, led in print by the Charlotte Observer and followed on television by Ted Koppel's Nightline, raises questions about how the media cover religious news and religious personalities. Richard A. Oppel, the Observer's editor, a practising Episcopalian and a thoughtful journalist, said in an interview: "Religion was just a colorful backdrop to newsworthy events. It [The Bakkers] was a highly sensitive story. . . . I applied a public affairs lens to the story."¹³ Oppel suggested there were no precedents, in his experience, in covering a story of this magnitude with the underlying religious currents. The Observer's coverage directed international media attention to evangelical ministries and their leaders. The mass media chose mainly to look at the scandal and its dimensions rather than substantive issues of evangelical or conservative Christian faith.

As Robert Abelman, a professor of communication at Cleveland State University, observed: "For a period of several months in early 1987, not a televised newscast, newspaper headline, or magazine cover story went by without mention of the financial, political, and sexual saga unfolding at the PTL television network. Commercial broadcast and narrowcast interview programs exploring the PTL scandal recorded the highest ratings in their history. Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart, and Jessica Hahn became household names as the details of the in-fighting among the PTL hierarchy and the evangelical community became the focus of national attention."¹⁴ Over time, it became evident that these scandals involving the evangelists illustrated a schism between mainline faith groups, their evangelical brothers and the secular community led by the media.

Some journalists, including Frances FitzGerald, a freelancer writing in *The New Yorker*, wondered about the tensions that existed between the fourth estate and the televangelists in general. FitzGerald suggested that the media's coverage "produced a dialogue of the deaf."¹⁵ On one side of the dialogue, the preachers were talking about salvation, faith and God. On the other side, the journalists were talking about financial excesses and public accountability. Evangelicalism was marginalized, practically written off, by mainline journalists who did not understand its tenets and practices. FitzGerald postulated that "by refusing to respond to what [television] preachers were saying, the journalists left the impression that they thought the preachers were hypocrites who had no religion at all."¹⁶

The Bakkers' story had such inordinate appeal to so many media consumers because it was steeped in sleaze. It offended, it amused, it titillated, it was trivial, it was profound, it was sacred — yet it was profane, the stuff that arguably sells newspapers and leads to television viewing. The fact that the principals were born-again Christians¹⁷ selling salvation added a unique dimension for media consumers. Fitzgerald suggests the secular media stereotyped Bakker and his supporters as "poor rural folk . . . dupes, crazies, backwoods exotics . . . [and] most academic discussions of fundamentalist religion or televangelism in the 1980s rested on the premise that fundamentalism was a reaction against modernity on the part of the dispossessed, the uneducated, the minority of Americans left behind by the modern world."¹⁸ In reality, even a casual viewer of the Bakkers' television shows saw an audience composed of a cross-section of middle-America with enough disposable income to support a huge ministry and its many endeavors. It may be suggested that many reporters who followed the Bakker story relied on their stereotypical views of fundamentalists, evangelicals and conservatives rather than developing a healthy understanding of these people, their aspirations and beliefs.

In 1989, Shepard published *Forgiven: The Rise and Fall of Jim Bakker and the PTL Ministry*. Shepard said that writing the book¹⁹ provided him with the opportunity to see the story as a whole, rather than in small segments. He felt it vindicated his reporting. And it provided the opportunity to explore the Bakkers' early lives. He interviewed hundreds of people who had intimate knowledge of the inner

workings of the PTL ministry. The book, along with extensive personal interviews, provide the foundation for a first-hand account of Bakker's life and ministry in this thesis.

The Bakkers started their own television ministry as a major expansion of religious television began in the United States. Cable service penetration was increasing and Christian radio stations were receiving licences. Even gospel music was a growth industry. It would have only seemed logical that television was the best medium for getting messages about the Christian faith out to incalculable numbers of viewers. In 1976, a born-again Christian, Jimmy Carter, was elected to the U.S. presidency but most in the media failed to understand the impact Carter's election would have on evangelicals. "Evangelicals hailed his election as proof that . . . evangelical faith was well on its way to dominating the religious scene. It had one of its kind in the Oval Office; it had access to the most powerful leader of the world."²⁰ "Newsweek magazine called the evangelical movement the most significant and overlooked religious phenomenon of the 1970s. . . . The media's handling of the phenomenon of religious television can now be seen to have been both polarized and exaggerated, lacking historical and empirical perspective and shaped to a large extent by the media's preference for sensation and confrontation. . . ." ²¹

During the 1980 election campaign, Bakker was courted by both Carter and Ronald Reagan. Although non-political, Bakker was flattered by this attention. Both

political candidates validated his views that America was on the wrong road. The government's prohibition of school prayer and countenance of abortion played directly into Bakker's hands. He used his ministry's television programs to elevate fundamentalism and its beliefs to greater heights. The 'endorsement' by presidential candidates helped bolster his sense of power and influence. The evangelist that Shepard found to be "cold, distant . . . unengaged . . . [and] pretty much on remote control . . . generally disinterested in people from what I can tell . . ." ²² had come a long way from his humble beginnings as the son of a laborer at a piston-ring factory.

Despite Bakker's reticence, Shepard was able to piece together the story of his early years and influences. Shepard touched on the basic conflict of values that later may have led to Bakker's ultimate downfall — the clash between traditional 1950s Pentecostalism — "no smoking, no dancing, no drinking, no pool-playing, no movies, no consorting with the world of sin" ²³ — and the newly emerged phenomenon of entertainment television which Bakker ultimately embraced. In uncovering Bakker's past, Shepard was utilizing standard research and reporting skills he had honed at The Observer. One complaint that may be levelled is that there is not enough information in the book about what impact Pentecostalism has on its members and adherents.

Jim Bakker was born in 1940 in Muskegon, Ill. He was brought up by God-fearing parents who regularly attended the small Central Assembly of God. His early years were unremarkable and he certainly was not a scholar. Bakker did not

graduate from high school but was involved extensively in student politics and the school's drama club. After high school, Bakker moved to Minneapolis to attend the small, unaccredited North Central Bible College. There he met Tammy Faye LaValley, the woman he would marry, the woman who would join him in his ministry. The Bakkers dropped out of college together. "In his year and a half in college, Bakker had gotten no formal theological training. . . . Later, when his ministry spread to national television, the shallowness of his preaching did not surprise his former professors."²⁴

Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker became itinerant evangelists. They travelled the eastern seaboard of the United States developing the style and charisma that they would eventually exploit on television. In the early 1960s, they put together a puppet show and used the characters to simplify the complex message of the Gospels. Their early television work quickly brought them to the attention of Pat Robertson²⁵ who in 1964 was establishing the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). The Bakkers were popular with CBN's mainly working class audience. They borrowed liberally from some of the successful formats developed by private television broadcasters. Their children's shows "had a cast full of inanimate supporting actors: Zippy the talking mailbox, a puppet named Charlie the Happy Christian, and Danny who sat on Jim's lap just as Charlie McCarthy had sat on Edgar Bergen's."²⁶ When the Bakkers did talk shows the format was similar to that popularized by the Tonight Show.

Although the viewers liked Jim and Tammy Faye, some of their colleagues at CBN questioned their dedication to Christian broadcasting. The Bakkers were flamboyant. They liked what money could buy. Their lifestyle was a little more opulent than would normally be expected from a pastor and wife serving a community congregation. Bakker liked cars, his wife liked clothes. (Later, on the Jim and Tammy Show on the PTL network, Jim could often be seen in video clips driving a Rolls Royce or Corvette and Tammy Faye would confess to having the "shopping demons" take her over.) They both loved ritzy, upper-middle class homes and to support their lifestyle, they recorded and sold record albums featuring Christian music. They also flogged "Jim and Tammy Faye merchandise — a book of sing-along songs, a coloring book full of their fantasy characters"²⁷ and even dolls.

Bakker excelled at raising money. When he pulled out all the emotional stops, the dollars would roll in from the faithful. Jeffrey Hadden and Charles Swann, in their 1981 book, *Prime Time Preachers*, quote evangelist Pat Robertson's 1972 story about Bakker's money-raising prowess. Early in his tenure at CBN, Bakker rescued a telethon that had fallen \$40,000 short of its \$120,000 goal. Bakker had the uncanny ability to make it seem that the ministry was on the edge of folding. He started to cry. "The cameraman in the studio held steady, his camera focused on Jim's face as the tears rolled down and splattered on the concrete floor . . . immediately the phones in the studio started ringing until all 10 lines were jammed . . . [viewers] called in weeping. . . . By 2:30 a.m. we had raised \$105,000."²⁸ This spirited, conventional

reporting — even though contained in a book — about the personalities of the cathode church and the rising power of televangelism, was largely ignored by the secular media for many years.

By 1972, Bakker was ready to strike out on his own. He left Robertson's CBN and went west. He worked at a couple of Christian television stations in California further developing his skills. He also nurtured his dream of starting his own Christian broadcasting network and a Christian vacation center. By 1975, Bakker was in Charlotte. He launched two major projects. The first was his television ministry which eventually would deliver Christian programs across North America. The second was Heritage USA, located in Fort Mill, S. C. just a few miles south of downtown Charlotte.

Over the subsequent decade the Bakkers' ministry grew and prospered, leaping from one crisis to another. Ministry employees came and went. The reporting staff at the Charlotte Observer watched Bakker's ministrations with growing interest. The television shows, including Jim and Tammy Faye's talkfest known as the PTL Club, were being pumped out daily via satellite to mainly American television stations. By 1986, PTL was big business in the Charlotte area. The 920-hectare Heritage USA complex had more than 2,000 employees and PTL reported \$129 million in revenues. The complex included a state-of-the art broadcast center that doubled as a church, counselling centers, homes for single mothers, an upscale hotel (The Heritage Grand),

time-share condominiums where the faithful could stay if they sent large contributions, Main Street, USA which featured dozens of shops and boutiques, a replica of the Upper Room where Jesus had his Last Supper with the disciples, camping facilities, restaurants, outdoor performing stages, a theme park, a waterpark with a huge waterslide and even little tourist trains that moved visitors around the site. Cynics called Heritage USA a Christian Disneyland. Indeed, Bakker had relied on Disney for inspiration. Main Street, USA at Heritage Village was a direct steal from the Magic Kingdom at Walt Disney World in Orlando.

The ministry's showcase was the PTL Club. The program was taped and broadcast daily and starred Jim and Tammy Faye. It was later renamed the Jim and Tammy Show and was seen in Ottawa on WHEC-TV, the Rochester CBS affiliate. It was a professional production. The music was upbeat. The animation was slick. The voiceover was enthusiastic. The camera work was impeccable, especially off the top of the show when the dissolve to the studio revealed an audience of hundreds cheering the arrival of Jim and Tammy Faye from the back of the auditorium. Each day, the Bakkers made their entrance holding hands, waving and smiling, cute and cuddly. The crowd ate it up.

The Bakkers would amble onto the Carson-like set and it was not too long before a heavily madeup Tammy Faye was belting out a gospel song with the eight PTL singers doing backup and harmonies. A band, larger than the Tonight Show

orchestra, provided a high energy level. Musical guests urged the audience to praise Jesus. The tears flowed. The testimonies were heard. Guests, including Hollywood celebrities such as Love Boat Captain Gavin McLeod, diet guru Richard Simmons and former teenage singing sensation Pat Boone were treated to a snapshot of Bakker's ever-changing plans for the physical development of Heritage Village. The guests marvelled appropriately then shuffled off to the couch to join co-host Henry Harrison, Bakker's own Ed McMahon.

Many fundamentalists feel the media are biased. Bakker was no exception. He sensed the media were out to get him.

On the Jim and Tammy Show broadcast on Jan. 31, 1986, Bakker started haranguing the Charlotte Observer saying that the newspaper was out to ruin him. During the show, Bakker said: "Tammy and I are undergoing the most vicious attacks in the history of this ministry."²⁹ What Bakker would not admit was The Observer had the truth about ministry spending and lack of accountability. Over the next few weeks, the diatribe continued and PTL bought and paid for advertisements in the Observer criticizing the newspaper and alleging it was biased against the ministry. The full page, copy-intensive ads were designed to refute claims that Shepard had made in a series of damning stories about the ministry. In the articles, Shepard reported: "Jim Bakker used PTL funds to buy a Corvette sports car . . . a 43-foot Drifter houseboat . . . a mink coat for Tammy Faye [and] . . . that over the years,

Mr. and Mrs. Bakker, or their agents repeatedly used viewer contributions for personal expenses without properly accounting for them. . . ."³⁰

The ads directly responded — item by item — to the charges raised by Shepard. They also said: "The Charlotte Observer has hammered away at PTL and Heritage USA. It has called into question the integrity of Pastor Jim Bakker, it has sharply criticized PTL's management, and has written derisively of this Christian organization dedicated to a vision of God, family and country. . . . We ask . . . what kind of editors and reporters are we dealing with . . . ?"³¹

In retrospect, the newspaper and its editorial staff were proven right. The newspaper had been meticulous in uncovering evidence of fiscal wrongdoing and regulatory impropriety. Shepard, employing standard journalistic practice, relied extensively on "secret testimony to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) investigators (in 1979) and from the investigators' final report to the FCC. "The documents were released to the Observer — and the public — for the first time in November, [1985], nearly three years after the newspaper began seeking access under the Freedom of Information Act, the (U.S.) federal law that makes government documents available to the public."³²

Even a casual viewer of the Jim and Tammy Show could detect that a scandal of major proportions was brewing. "Inside and outside PTL, Bakker encountered

increasing questions about his conspicuous spending. Evangelists, like politicians, are natural targets for public and press scepticism; nothing stirs mass righteousness like a whiff of hypocrisy from the morally correct."³³

The Jim and Tammy Show was riveting drama. For several days in January 1986, Bakker and his broadcast team would brandish copies of the articles written by Shepard and proclaim they were doing the Lord's work despite the interventions and roadblocks put up by The Observer. Behind the scenes, "Bakker could sense the toll that the increasingly aggressive local coverage was taking on his credibility. He believed that the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain, which owned [both] the Charlotte Observer and the Charlotte News, wanted to destroy religion — a notion that his friend and fellow evangelist Rex Humbard had pressed on Bakker after Humbard's troubles with a Knight-Ridder newspaper in Ohio."³⁴ The Observer, trying to be scrupulously fair, published an interview with Bakker in Nov. 1986.

"It's the sowing of the seed of questioning all the time. . . . Truth is not damaging. I love the truth. But half of the truth is damaging. . . . We have nothing to hide, and that's one of the things I resent from the media. . . . You're always looking for some dark secret, a skeleton in the closet. . . . How would you feel to have many people overlooking your shoulder day after day just waiting for you to make a mistake?. . . I figure if I stay honest and sincere and continue to do the work God called me to do, that time will prove I'm an honest man, and I'm doing an honest

job, and PTL is right. Because I will survive. And I will survive through it. And that's what I have going for me."³⁵

Shepard said he was grateful that the paper supported his reporting efforts. He suggested that the Observer was "an editor's paper"³⁶ and that the paper was cautious, ever conscious of its role and responsibility to the community. He said his editors played a very important role in making sure that all information reported about the Bakkers and their ministry was properly sourced and that he had done impeccable research.

Shepard said he thought there was a lot of suspicion at the reporters' level about the Bakkers. "Some of it was probably instinctive and there may have been some ignorance and prejudice behind some of it."³⁷ He discussed the spectrum of views that reporters hold towards religious matters and how many of his colleagues did not fully understand why the paper was on the Bakker story to such an extent.

There was also a lot of suspicion on the part of Bakker's supporters about the media's agenda when covering evangelical ministries. Dee Oldham questioned the Observer's approach to coverage. Oldham, the daughter of Doug Oldham, PTL's resident gospel singer, was a close friend of the Bakkers and worked for the ministry. She said ". . . as far as what the Observer reported and financial things it didn't alarm me . . . because that kind've goes with the territory. There was always money

trouble [at PTL]. I think that they [the Observer] were pretty obsessed with it. . . . I don't think they're a bunch of jerks, but at the same time . . . they [all media] dog any major ministry. I think [it's] because we're conservatives and the media as a whole is very liberal. I think that they like to find the dirt because we act like we are such goody-two-shoes."³⁸

'Uncle' Henry Harrison, Bakker's TV sidekick, an innocent in the scandals, said he thought the Observer was on a witch hunt. "I guess I really thought Charlie [Shepard] was onto something and he thought he could make a name for himself by blowing it all out of proportion . . . as it came to light later, Charlie Shepard . . . had a lot more truth than I realized."³⁹ Shepard talked extensively with Harrison in the course of writing his book. Months after the book was published, Harrison was "pleasantly surprised [to find] he [Shepard] didn't have horns."⁴⁰

Shepard stated firmly that, despite the accusations from supporters who were urged by Bakker to write critical letters to the newspaper, he didn't think the Observer was running a "vendetta."⁴¹ The Observer "had the structure of professionalism and editors and lawyers and . . . things that restrain you and make sure that what you're doing is substantive and accurate and good journalism. I think in retrospect the Observer really didn't understand Bakker or the religious tradition he came out of . . . but I think [it knew] it was on to an important story."⁴² Rich Oppel reiterated in an interview that in his opinion this "was not a story about religion. I

respect people's rights to practice their faith as they see fit. What seemed to me to be the story was the hucksterism and the misuse of money for temples to Bakker, condominiums, trips, jewellery, and a Rolls Royce . . . the FCC and tax laws were being broken. In the eyes of some . . . the background of religion just added to the hypocrisy."⁴³

The gulf that had been steadily widening between the Bakkers' ministry and the Charlotte Observer couldn't be bridged. The media clearly could smell blood. The story of the scandal, with the sordid revelations that would bring, would break wide open. Bakker's most faithful followers on the other hand felt the media had orchestrated its coverage to arrive at this pre-ordained conclusion — the destruction of the ministry.

Bill Thorn, a journalism professor at Marquette University, in Milwaukee, who teaches one of the few courses in North America on reporting religion said, "media are an institution and therefore they prefer dealing with other like-institutions."⁴⁴ This would support in part what Shepard observed when he said that "Bakker wasn't in the corporate structure but he was head of a corporation [and therefore] he may have gotten the benefit of the doubt [from the newspaper] sometimes more than he deserved, particularly in the later years."⁴⁵

Rolfe Neil, the publisher of the Observer, rarely got involved with day-to-day editorial decisions at his paper. Shepard indicated that Neil was part of the Charlotte establishment, hence: "The Observer is always good at looking at the social problems, but slower to take a look at the individual transgressions of people in[side] the corporate power structure.

"Bakker was . . . a little bit outside the power structure . . . so was a little bit of an easier target, but as he got more established and his outfit got bigger I think Rolfe began to include him and to see the need for him to get the same kind of fairness that he would want extended to . . . friends, like the banking community of Charlotte."⁴⁶

As Bakker's resignation grew closer, the newspaper received very heavy pro-Bakker editorial mail, in part generated by PTL's frequent mentions on its television programs of the Observer's 'campaign' against the ministry. From a reporter's standpoint, the letters indicated that the news stories must have been hitting home. From the editors' and publisher's standpoint, they must have raised some concerns about the tack coverage was taking.

PTL refused to grant any interviews once it realized that Shepard and The Observer were closing in on the Jessica Hahn story. The Observer had it on good

authority that the PTL ministry had arranged to pay hush money so that Hahn would not tell her story.

Larry Martz, in his book *Ministry of Greed: The Inside Story Of The Televangelists & Their Holy Wars*, suggested that The Observer may have been getting a little gun shy about releasing details of Bakker's affair with Hahn. He said that The Observer "was ahead [of the rest of the media] on many of the key details of the story."⁴⁷ He speculated that the paper held back reporting Bakker's affair with Hahn because of community pressure. PTL had mounted a stinging television attack against the Observer that resulted in the earlier mentioned pro-Bakker editorial mail.

Shepard countered that he was cautious about the Hahn story because "she told so many lies that [he couldn't] believe . . . she was the innocent she claimed to be . . . this was a sexually sophisticated woman"⁴⁸ before she spent time with Bakker. The Observer didn't print the lurid details of the Jessica Hahn story until after Jim Bakker, in a calculated move, resigned from his ministry turning it over to Falwell. "Bakker had resigned because he could no longer stifle rumors of the Hahn affair . . . Once the news broke, 10 years' worth of Observer investigations, which many had regarded as vindictive, were reappraised and many former PTL employees came forward with further details of corruption, deceit and fraud on a grand scale."⁴⁹

Rich Oppel is described by Martz as "a conservative old pro [who] explained to his readers later that the sexual peccadilloes of celebrities aren't necessarily [in themselves] news and that he wasn't about to print them without ironclad confirmation."⁵⁰ The paper had known about Tammy Bakker's alleged affairs . . . and even about a local prostitute's story that Jim Bakker had visited her. But even if all that was true, so what? "The story of PTL and the Bakkers is a story of misuse of money and abuse of trust."⁵¹ Oppel added that reporting the religious dimensions of stories can be fraught with difficulty. "These dimensions are subjective and can be judgemental. I was constantly asking myself are we being fair? Is it [the coverage] right? And are we obsessed? Looking back . . . [I have] a lot of scar tissue because it was difficult to make [editorial] decisions when you were on the point."⁵²

Oppel's notion that this wasn't a story about religion may be challenged. Surely the demise of Jim Bakker's ministry had a profound effect on the devout. This aspect of the story has been largely ignored by the secular media. The coverage mounted by The Observer in the late 1980s concentrated on scandalous behavior and this in itself may have offered a distorted portrayal of religious issues including fundamental matters of faith.

Repercussions from the PTL scandal are still being felt. Following the plethora of coverage that portrayed the Bakkers as pathetic, religious clowns — "a cancer on the body of Christ" as evangelists Jerry Falwell and Jimmy Swaggart proclaimed —

some scholars, editors and journalists are now trying to define what religious news is and how to report it. Clearly, treating the Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker story simply as an abuse of power did not do justice to its importance to news consumers. The rise of the electronic church, the downfall of televangelists like the Bakkers and Reverend Jimmy Swaggart and the influence of the Christian right have led some scholars, academics, editors and reporters to question how the media deals with religious matters. "Religion, long ignored by the mass media or considered a second-class beat to be shunned by talented reporters is now news."⁵³

Endnotes

1. PTL stands for Praise The Lord or People That Love. Some cynics said it stood for Pass The Loot.
2. "TV Evangelist Cites Betrayal, 'Blackmail'," *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 March 1987, p. 1A.
3. Personal interview with Charles E. Shepard, June 1989.
4. Interview with Shepard.
5. Interview with Shepard.
6. Interview with Shepard.
7. Interview with Shepard.
8. *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 March 1987, p. 1A.

9. Evangelical relates to the school of theology within the Protestant Church which teaches that men are saved or justified by faith, denies that good works or sacraments are in themselves efficacious for salvation, avoids ritual, and recognizes no authority in religious matters other than the Bible. *English Larousse*, 1968.
10. Sydney A hlstrom, in his *A Religious History of the American People*, says Pentecostalism stemmed from the Wesleyan emphasis on Christian perfection. Traditionally, Pentecostalists have a literal belief in the Bible and they emphasize that Christians may enjoy the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostalists are sometimes called fundamentalists although that term used in isolation may be misleading.
11. Interview with Shepard.
12. Interview with Shepard.
13. Personal interview with Richard Oppel, November 1994.
14. Robert Abelman, "Religious Television," *Critical Studies In Mass Communication*, 5 (September 1988), 255.
15. Frances FitzGerald, "Reflections," *The New Yorker*, 23 April 1990, p. 48.
16. FitzGerald, p. 48.
17. The term "Born Again Christian" refers to those individuals who have had what they call a personal experience with Jesus Christ (a conversion experience) and regard Him as their Lord and Savior.
18. FitzGerald, p. 48.
19. Interview with Shepard.
20. Erling Jorstad, *Evangelicals In The White House*, Studies in American Religion, Vol. 4 (New York: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1981), p. 130.

21. Peter G. Horsfield, *Religious Television* (New York: Longman, 1984), p. xiii - xiv.
22. Interview with Shepard.
23. Charles E. Shepard, *Forgiven* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1989), p. 14.
24. Shepard, p. 33.
25. Details of Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) Ministry may be found in *Pat Robertson* by John B. Donovan (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988).
26. Shepard, p. 37.
27. Shepard, p. 42.
28. Jeffrey K. Hadden and Charles E. Swann, *Prime Time Preachers* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1981), p. 114.
29. "The Jim and Tammy Show," WHEC-TV, Rochester, New York, 31 January 1986.
30. "Bakkers' Personal Use Of Donations Reported," *The Charlotte Observer*, 26 January 1986, p 1A.
31. "PTL And The Observer 'A Look At The Record,'" *The Charlotte Observer*, 2 February 1986, p. 15A. Full page ad paid for by the PTL ministry.
32. "PTL's Bakker Rebuts News Reports Of FCC Allegations," *The Charlotte Observer*, 1 February 1986, p. 1A.
33. Shepard, p. 81.

34. Shepard, p. 115.
35. Shepard, pp. 115 and 116.
36. Interview with Shepard.
37. Interview with Shepard.
38. Personal interview with Dee Oldham, July 1989.
39. Personal interview with Henry Harrison, July 1989.
40. Interview with Harrison.
41. Interview with Shepard.
42. Interview with Shepard.
43. Interview with Oppel.
44. Personal interview with Professor Bill Thorn, Marquette University, Milwaukee, March 1994.
45. Interview with Shepard.
46. Interview with Shepard.
47. Larry Martz, *Ministry of Greed* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988), p. 97.
48. Interview with Shepard.

49. Steve Bruce, *Pray TV* (London, Routledge, 1990), p. 199.
50. Martz, p. 98.
51. Martz, p. 98.
52. Interview with Oppel.
53. Judith M. Buddenbaum, "Religion News Coverage in Commercial Network Newscasts", in *Religious Television*, ed. Robert Abelman and Stewart M. Hoover (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1990), p. 249.

A Broken Trust

Alfred, Ont. sits on the edge of an escarpment 70 kilometres east of Ottawa. This little town, with a population of slightly more than 1,000, is bisected by Highway 17, a two-lane blacktop that parallels the Ottawa River, connecting Montreal and Ottawa. The main landmark if you approach from the west is Alfred's huge, Quebec-style, silver-spined, Roman Catholic Church — St. Victor. It dominates the landscape. Motorists passing through the town cannot miss it or the adjacent rectory. The rest is architecturally nondescript — a small hotel that still features nude dancing, a gas station, a hardware store, a funeral home that also provides an ambulance service, an outdoor hockey rink, the Miss Alfred Motel and a small liquor store. The town's major attraction for travellers is the more than a dozen mom-and-pop snack bars that feature hot dogs, hamburgers and french fries. Some people call it the french fry capital of Eastern Ontario.

Down a side street, a few metres to the south of Highway 17, sits an old, unremarkable, grey, stone-block building currently being used by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture. The building is not hidden, it is just not particularly dominant. What was hidden from public view for decades was the horribly commonplace sexual and physical abuse that went on unchecked behind the closed doors of what was then called St. Joseph's Training School. This tale of emotional

and physical cruelty against young men, wards of the Crown, eventually became known as the Alfred scandal.

Between 1931 and 1974, members of a religious lay order known as the Brothers of the Christian Schools ran St. Joseph's. The province took over the reform school in 1974 and ran it until it was closed in 1981.

On Nov. 28, 1990, 16 years after the lay brothers had left Alfred, the Canadian Press ran an unbylined, 15-paragraph story on its national general news service. The lead paragraph implied this was essentially a police story: "Criminal charges could be laid against Roman Catholic lay brothers who allegedly sexually and physically abused boys at a reform school at Alfred, Ont., police said Wednesday."¹ The story quoted an Ontario Provincial Police detective who said despite a seven-month investigation into allegations of abuse: "there is still lots of work for us to do"² and no charges would be laid until after consultation with the Crown and others.

A review of CP's coverage of this scandal between March 1990 and November 1993 revealed that the news gathering co-operative ran 41 separate stories dealing directly with the unfolding drama and subsequent court actions. These stories were made available to CP subscriber newspapers and its radio news wire, Broadcast News. CP relies heavily on its member newspapers for copy. As *The Canadian Press Stylebook* suggests, the organization is: "the national news-gathering not-for-profit

co-operative owned and operated by the daily newspaper industry. The newspapers . . . are members of the co-operative and . . . [must] contribute news of its area to the common pool."³

An examination of CP's database on this story reveals that CP's editors did not regard the religious dimensions of the scandal as very important. Of the 41 stories analyzed, only two received a religion slug. One story, 13 paragraphs long, dealt with a six-day conference of Roman Catholic bishops held in Ottawa in August 1990. The conference chairman, Robert Lebel, Bishop of Valleyfield and president of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, told reporters that the issue of child sexual abuse would be dealt with. The conference was not open to the public. The other brief story ran in the religion roundup file that CP makes available to subscribers for their weekend sections. That story relied extensively on copy generated for the *Catholic New Times* magazine where an Alfred abuse victim said: "The problems we suffer today are problems that began in the church and they have to get resolved in the church."⁴

CP's attitude probably originated with its major source of copy, the Ottawa Citizen. Sean Upton, the Citizen's lead reporter on the Alfred scandal, recalls, "I saw it as a police story, not a religious story. Religion is what you see on the religion pages of the Citizen."⁵ With this observation, Upton was doing what most reporters

at a secular newspaper would do: he relegated the religious questions and implications raised by this type of scandal to a lesser status.

There were plenty of reasons to report it as a cops and courts story. The abuse of the boys led to more than 180 separate criminal charges being laid against "19 members and former members"⁶ of the order that ran St. Joseph's and a smaller juvenile detention home in Uxbridge, north of Toronto. Eventually, 25 people were charged. "Investigators, who spent more than a year on the case, believe that at least 177 former students — some as young as seven — were victims between 1941 and 1971."⁷ The stiffest sentence handed out in the trials that followed the police investigation went to Lucien Dagenais, 67. Dagenais was convicted of 15 of the 18 charges laid and was sentenced to five years in jail. "Known as 'The Hook' to former students . . . because his left hand only has a middle finger and the stump of a thumb"⁸ an apparently unrepentant Dagenais listened as Judge Hector Soubliere said: "We built walls around that school — not of brick and mortar, but of much stronger material: walls of silence and indifference. I'm even tempted to say walls of ignorance. [The judge said] Dagenais had abused the trust placed in him . . . "⁹ Reporters covering the trial practised conventional court reporting. Upton asked to be assigned to the trials of several of the brothers to see the story through to its logical conclusion. He is totally bilingual and was versed in the lurid background of the case. The Citizen's religion editor, Bob Harvey, said "the story was getting a lot of ink and I saw it as a cop story. Maybe it would have been worth the try to look more

seriously at the religious dimensions."¹⁰ Harvey suggested, with the benefit of hindsight, that "the religious dimension was ignored. I would have liked to sit down with the people involved and talk with them about their struggle with conscience . . . how the abuse affected their spiritual lives."¹¹

If the story had been approached from a religious angle, some of the dimensions that could have been probed include: how religious communities cope with a group of people who violate their ethic of belief, how a religious community — living a vocation with prayerful and financial support from a larger community — could countenance the horrible actions of abusers, and what does this story say about the church? Jim Travers, the editor at the Citizen, said in an interview that "in retrospect we should go back and check [the religious aspects] of this story. The story touched a core value in society . . . it was a story about a breach of trust . . . the religion dimension was implied and ran through the story as a sub-text."¹²

Since the Alfred scandal, the Roman Catholic Church has established a \$16-million fund to compensate victims of abuse who were in its care at Alfred and Uxbridge. The fund in a sense is a secular response by the church to a secular crime and has been reported as such. But the journalists who covered this story have generally ignored the religious dimension, and in doing so have probably failed their readers, readers who will never understand that the horror experienced by children

the Roman Catholic Church was charged with looking after has a spiritual as well as social or psychological dimension.

A spokesperson for the OPP "called the investigation of abuse at St. Joseph's and St. John's [in Uxbridge] the biggest sex-crimes [case] in Canadian history."¹³ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, even a casual newspaper reader could not have been blamed for thinking that Catholicism was riddled with priests and brothers who practised buggery and other severe forms of physical, mental and even spiritual abuse. What was less apparent was why was this happening so often. If the reporting had analyzed the patriarchal structure of the Roman Catholic Church and its deep-rooted powers over people and other institutions, perhaps the media would have served the community better.

What made the crimes at Alfred so appalling was that the church, which sets itself as a moral authority for close to 12 million Canadians, was guilty of duplicity. The public had not only been hearing about Alfred and Uxbridge. Another residential school, this one in Newfoundland, Mount Cashel, had become infamous. For decades, a Roman Catholic lay order, the Irish Christian Brothers, had been charged with looking after boys and teenagers who were wards of the Newfoundland government. These youngsters — some orphans, some from broken families that could not offer proper care — became residents of the Mount Cashel orphanage. The Newfoundland department of child welfare assumed they would get the care needed to make them

healthy, educated and contributing members of society. Instead, as it was later revealed in news reports and at a public inquiry into the management and operation of the Mount Cashel orphanage, many of the boys in the brothers' care would be treated violently, sexually abused, controlled, degraded, exploited, and wounded emotionally.

Dereck O'Brien was just one of Mount Cashel's victims. He arrived at the gloomy institution after a dreadful childhood. His earliest memories of home were of his one-legged grandfather — "drunk all the time. The floor of his room was littered with urine and rum bottles that toppled over when I opened the door . . . I slept with my clothes on and never changed them . . . being dirty was just another part of life for me . . . I begged people for food and money."¹⁴ By 1964, the four-year-old was on the path to Mount Cashel, via a series of foster homes where the abuse and neglect continued. Eight years and countless foster homes later, O'Brien and one of his younger brothers found themselves at Mount Cashel on Torbay Road in St. John's.

Rumors of mistreatment at Mount Cashel had been circulating since the early 1970s. Very late in the story, in 1989, the Newfoundland government set up a Royal Commission, chaired by retired Ontario Supreme Court Justice Samuel H. S. Hughes, which discovered there had been a long-time coverup involving the police, the justice system and the Christian Brothers.¹⁵

As O'Brien recalled it, the lid lifted slightly in 1975 when, "something unexpected happened. It was early Sunday morning and we had just finished breakfast. Brother [Douglas] Kenny [the orphanage superintendent] came into the dining hall and told several of us that we would be going out. He didn't say where. Myself and about six other boys piled into Kenny's station wagon. Kenny explained that we would be going to the police station and that they would be asking us some questions. 'Don't say anything about me or Brother English,' [the brother in charge of dormitories] he said. 'Don't mention our names.' When he said this he squeezed my hand hard."¹⁶ But at this point, despite the stories of abuse, neither the police nor other authorities took any action.

It was later revealed that two of the boys interviewed by the police that day "identified Brother English as a violent pedophile who had tormented them during their stays in Mount Cashel."¹⁷ Another of the boys interviewed was John Pumphrey. His father, "Ron Pumphrey was the host of a popular talk show on radio station VOCM in St. John's."¹⁸ Although the topic of Mount Cashel was raised on the show by several callers, "they were cut off, in keeping with the station's policy of not permitting criminal allegations to be made on the air."¹⁹ At the Hughes inquiry years later, "Ron Pumphrey would . . . say that the police had downplayed the whole affair and that he had no idea of what was really happening [in 1975] at the orphanage."²⁰

The Christian Brothers knew that the allegations and facts, if exposed, would create a crisis, so they quickly posted Kenny and English to other parts of the province. Michael Harris, in his book *Unholy Orders*, published in 1990, was able to show clearly that police, senior bureaucrats in various government agencies, the hierarchy of the church in Newfoundland and the brothers' international administration all knew about the gravity of the suspicions — yet they chose damage control over revelation and action, a tawdry coverup at the expense of innocent children. The church's tentacles reached as far as the media. In 1975, the St. John's Evening Telegram had a couple of reporters who knew about the instances of sexual abuse at the orphanage. The stories "were suppressed by the paper."²¹

The actions that the government, police and brothers had taken held for three years. In 1978, as a result of the separate Soper Inquiry into allegations of police coverups, word of the abuse at Mount Cashel slowly surfaced to again be suppressed. "The first public reference to the 1975 Mount Cashel investigation . . . ever . . . made, [happened] on May 17, 1978 when The Daily News"²² reported a few sketchy details about ". . . the case of three Christian Brothers alleged to have sexually assaulted two children CBC Radio gave the same coverage as The Daily News, broadcasting the bare fact of an alleged 1975 cover-up of a sex scandal at Mount Cashel. The Evening Telegram . . . took a different approach, perfectly in keeping with the paper's 1975 decision to suppress the story that two of its own reporters had unearthed. All references to the Brothers were expunged from the copy, an editorial

decision whose impact the Christian Brothers themselves quickly realized was to their advantage. The Telegram story was conveniently vague."²³

The decision to play down the story was taken by the paper's publisher, Stephen Herder, who died in 1993. Bernie Bennett, a 26-year veteran of the Telegram's police and court beat, who covered all the Mount Cashel trials, said, "the reason was never given but I guess it was because the clergy [in Newfoundland] were seen to be so Almighty. The publisher took the reason to his grave and the newspaper has never released the reason."²⁴

In the late 1970s and into the following decade, there were several instances of child sexual abuse by priests in other parts of the island province. Most of these were quickly settled by the Roman Catholic Church co-opting the police and criminal justice system, playing down the problem, and reassigning the guilty priests to other church jurisdictions — often off the island. The Newfoundland media were reporting details of these cases but the full impact of Mount Cashel and the cover-up of the scandal would not be felt until early 1989.

Several forces involving the media coincided that year to guarantee that the Mount Cashel story would blow wide open. "A television documentary about the spate of Roman Catholic priests and Brothers who had been charged with sexual offenses"²⁵ led to calls to radio station "VOCM's morning talk show, Open

Line."²⁶ Those calls prompted certain listeners, including the wife of a judge, to action. Phone calls to the province's justice department asking about Mount Cashel could not go unheeded. The investigation that had been hidden from public view for so many years was re-opened. Shane Earle, 23, a victim of Mount Cashel, took his story to the media. The unravelling began in earnest.

There is some confusion as to what media outlet really broke the story first. Michael Harris was editing the St. John's Sunday Express and he interviewed Earle extensively. His first story ran "on Easter Sunday 1989 [sending] shock waves across the country."²⁷ Some media observers including CBC commentator Rex Murphy claimed that the "corporation's [CBC] local radio morning show and supper hour television show were instrumental in getting the story of abuse out before the Express hit the newsstands."²⁸ Bernie Bennett of the Telegram suggested that both media took credit for breaking the story. "One thing for sure is that, around the same time, Shane Earle called the Telegram — and I don't know why — but the interview didn't materialize."²⁹

In the spring of 1989 the floodgates were open. Bennett, a practising Roman Catholic, schooled by the Irish Brothers from Grade 1 through 11, watched the story unfold and was assigned to cover the court cases. Eight Christian Brothers were charged, convicted and sentenced. "We approached the entire story as a coverup. We

didn't get into the religious dimensions. It was simply a story of men who abused children. It didn't matter if they wore a backwards collar."³⁰

O'Brien, one of the Mount Cashel boys who had signed a police statement back in 1975, said watching the media in 1989 was like "watching a feeding frenzy — they went in feet first. What broke this story wide open was Shane Earle came [to the media] and then I came. Michael [Harris] can't take the credit for blowing this up."³¹ O'Brien felt the Mount Cashel story was about "crime and abuse with a big helping of the church in there somewheres [sic]."³² O'Brien shared the common Newfoundland attitude that the church was omniscient, omnipresent and untouchable. He did not blame the media for his fate or for not uncovering the scandals earlier. "I can tell you sure as I'll die that the media . . . the government couldn't have stopped the abuse before it stopped. The Catholic Church could put the squeeze on the media and even the social workers couldn't do anything. How can you fight more than 100 years of good work"³³ by the church in Newfoundland?

Rex Murphy, a Newfoundlander, Rhodes Scholar and now an acerbic columnist for CBC TV's Prime Time news show, also hosts Cross Country Checkup on CBC Radio. In 1989, he was in Newfoundland and the Maritimes doing commentaries for the St. John's CBC stations. In his commentaries on the scandal, he analyzed how Mount Cashel might affect the cultural and spiritual fabric of the province and in doing so covered an aspect of the story neglected by most reporters.

He suggested Mount Cashel "posed questions that were absolutely fundamental to Newfoundland's self-image . . . we have such shocking politics and economics — I think we clung on to the idea that we had a bit of decent domestic or personal virtue and this thing just blasted that all to hell. . . . So it was yes, at the core, a story with a religious dimension, but it had an awful lot more wings . . . than just religious."³⁴

Murphy said the reporting contained "a tremendous amount of relish . . . because it was [done by] the kind of people who grew up in the '60s, who fell off church more or less, and went the kind of high secular route giving them a chance to get back at what they regarded as their petty miseries in the classrooms with the nuns and the brothers."³⁵ O'Brien's view that the media were on a feeding frenzy when the story really took off was echoed by Murphy, who questioned a coverage that was "so relentless and so particularized that the overly specific, continuous, unremittent reporting of who was dangling penises"³⁶ turned off many news consumers. The point that Murphy was making was that the media were playing catch up with a story many realized they had missed. Murphy also says there were "certain reporters [who] . . . had a chance to take a smack at the bishop and at the church. There should have been more of a clean take here What is the equally glaring story of this era that isn't being touched now that we are so busily congratulating ourselves on moving out these fiendish priests?"³⁷

In 1984, Jason Berry, a freelance writer from New Orleans began an epic journey that revealed a frightening side of the North American Roman Catholic Church. The product of his research into sexual misconduct by priests and brothers was a 1992 book, *Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Catholic Priests And The Sexual Abuse of Children*. In his foreword to the book, Father Andrew Greeley, an author, sociology professor and parish priest, said Berry "dug into what may be the biggest scandal in the history of religion in America and perhaps the most serious crisis Catholicism has faced since the reformation."³⁸ Berry discovered: "In the decade of 1982-1992, approximately 400 priests were reported to church or civil authorities for molesting youths, and the vast majority of these men had multiple victims. By 1992, the church's financial losses — in victims' settlements, legal expenses, and medical treatment of clergy — has reached an estimated \$400 million."³⁹

Berry met with several of the boys who had been abused at Mount Cashel and devoted a chapter to their story. Two observations Berry makes about the Canadian experience are valuable. First, televising the Hughes Commission inquiry helped to alert Canadians to the depth of the problem in the church and it may have made people think about how to prevent more of the same. He alludes to comments made by Canadian Archbishop James M. Hayes saying: "first in our compassion must be those who have been sexually abused."⁴⁰ Second, Berry feels the Canadian church may be leading the way in North America in dealing with such scandals: "No such candor has emanated from the U.S. [church] hierarchy."⁴¹

Before his book was published, Berry tried to sell a number of articles on sexual abuse by priests to U.S. news magazines. "I would say that on the whole, newspapers have a strong secular bent and they just don't like stories like this. It was depressing material to deal with . . . people didn't want to go near it." He took advance payments from magazines who failed to publish the resulting articles because "they just didn't want to tangle with the Church. You know when you get paid \$4,000 or \$5,000 from the Los Angeles Times Magazine . . . and they sit on it and finally the assignment chief says: 'we are asking ourselves why should we publish this' . . . do I have to lobby the guy to tell him, you know, the public has a right to know."⁴²

Berry's experience illustrates that mainstream media have trouble dealing with society's central institutions like the churches. There was the perception that these organizations should be treated with the same kind of deference that other elite organizations get from the media. The special religious dimension that makes this kind of scandal even more vivid is ignored. Book publishers shied away from Berry's text even though it had been rigorously checked by lawyers. He approached more than 30 publishers. "I wanted to understand how corrupt the church was. Probably I never thought of the church in those terms, but when you have bishops proclaiming the sanctity of life in the womb and being so cavalier in their dismissal of the rights of children . . . I came to see the bishops as a bunch of politicians."⁴³

When considering the media's seeming preoccupation with sin, sex and sleaze, it seems unfathomable that Berry could have faced so many problems getting his stories published. The same sort of question may be asked about Mount Cashel. How did the story stay hidden for so long? As Howard Kurtz, the press critic for the Washington Post, notes: "Nothing in the media business spreads faster than a hot rumor. And nothing creates more headaches for editors and reporters. The line between news and thirdhand gossip has become badly blurred in recent years, and our moral compass increasingly erratic. The most titillating rumors often involve sex and public officials, which only add to the growing sense of unease in the nation's newsrooms."⁴⁴

One of the reasons these stories were not dealt with when they first arose was alluded to earlier — the media just did not want to tangle with the ecclesiastical power structure. As well, both the church and the media keep their distance from each other. Few reporters have ever learned about the intricacies of the Christian church — the complexities of its structure, its absolute moral stands, its internal politics and its 20 centuries of mystique. It would be difficult to find a general assignment reporter who understands the doctrine of papal infallibility, the rule of celibacy, or the power of a bishop. As Right Reverend Bruce Stavert, the Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Quebec, said in an interview: "We in the church often get cynical about the lack of knowledge in the media about our business. There's an obsession with scandal. Yet,

overall there seems to be very little interest in the secular media about what we do."⁴⁵

In her book *Scandal: The Culture of Mistrust in American Politics*, Suzanne Garment says "today's scandals have devastating effects on the people involved in them."⁴⁶ Writing about current American political scandals, Garment asserts: "if we want to learn about political scandal we must look beyond the malefactors themselves, for their evil deeds alone do not constitute scandal. A scandal is created not only by the individual who scandalizes his community, but just as important, by the community that is scandalized when it learns what the miscreant has done."⁴⁷

The secular media, although providing a massive public service by reporting directly on the scandals, does a great disservice to the community of faithful when it ignores the implications of these stories. Newfoundland, with its large Roman Catholic population, will never be the same. There has been a crisis of confidence in the church and many are disillusioned with the people they trusted to help them with their most precious attribute — their faith. Earnie Bennett, the Telegram reporter who listened to every word spoken in court during eight trials, will never be the same. "My faith has been shaken . . . the only time I now go to church is for weddings and funerals . . . it has brought an element of doubt . . . suspicion is there. When the priest stands at the altar I wonder what's going on in his mind and I wonder what he's done. I can't help it."⁴⁸

If Bennett is relying on his paper to cover those issues and questions he may be out of luck. The Telegram, with only a part-time religion editor, has few resources to devote to developing the religion beat. Megan Johnston, the reporter responsible for religion, said in an interview that "we basically rely on wire copy . . . we have one page a week when we have the space . . . [the beat] is not given high priority."⁴⁹ Johnston said she could not remember when religion or its impact on the larger community were reported in an analytical way.

So, the spiritual story remains untold. Dereck O'Brien sounds tired and disillusioned. "Brothers have received counselling, legal fees and even their pensions from the church — that should be reported. I've left the church, the priests and brothers — they make me sick, sick to my stomach when I see one of the bastards. The Roman Catholic Church is so corrupt it looks after its pedophiles . . . the hell with them."⁵⁰

Endnotes

1. "Abuse," CP database, Nov. 28, 1990.
2. CP database, Nov. 28, 1990.
3. Peter Buckley, ed. *CP Stylebook* (Toronto, Ont.: The Canadian Press, 1993), p. 3.

4. CP Database, Oct. 15, 1990.
5. Interview with Sean Upton, November 1994.
6. CP Database, June 4, 1992.
7. CP Database, Jan. 23, 1993.
8. CP Database, March 19, 1993.
9. CP Database, March 19, 1993.
10. Personal interview with Bob Harvey, November 1994.
11. Interview with Harvey.
12. Personal interview with Jim Travers, November 1994.
13. CP Database, April 18, 1991.
14. Dereck O'Brien, *Suffer Little Children* (St. John's, Nfld.: Breakwater, 1991), pp. 19-22.
15. For further information see *The Hughes Inquiry Report* and *Unholy Orders* by Michael Harris.
16. O'Brien, p. 143.
17. Michael Harris, *Unholy Orders* (Markham, Ont.: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 95.
18. Harris, p. 96.

19. Harris, p. 96.
20. Harris, p. 96.
21. Harris, p. 96.
22. Harris, p. 180.
23. Harris, p. 180.
24. Personal interview with Bernie Bennett, September 1994.
25. Harris, p. 260.
26. Harris, p. 260.
27. Harris, flyleaf.
28. Personal interview with Rex Murphy, August 1994.
29. Interview with Bennett.
30. Interview with Bennett.
31. Personal interview with Dereck O'Brien, November 1994.
32. Interview with O'Brien.
33. Interview with O'Brien.

34. Interview with Murphy.
35. Interview with Murphy.
36. Interview with Murphy.
37. Interview with Murphy.
38. Jason Berry, *Lead Us Not Into Temptation* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), p. xiii.
39. Berry, p. xix.
40. Berry, p. 305.
41. Berry, p. 305.
42. Personal interview with Jason Berry, August 1994.
43. Interview with Berry.
44. Howard Kurtz, *Media Circus* (New York: Random House, 1994) p. 151.
45. Personal interview with Right Reverend Bruce Stavert, Anglican Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Quebec, November 1994.
46. Suzanne Garment, *Scandal* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 14.
47. Garment, p. 14.
48. Interview with Bennett.

49. Personal interview with Megan Johnston, November 1994.
50. Interview with O'Brien.

The Big Religious Story

The biggest religious story in Canada is perhaps one of the most confusing. In 1993, The Religion Poll taken by the Angus Reid Group "found an abiding commitment to the . . . tenets and teachings of Christianity"¹ yet the major churches in Canada have seen their memberships decline, particularly in recent decades. This apparent contradiction is not only difficult for pollsters to understand, but it may confuse the news media too — even as they are being asked to do more about religion. If people evidence a thirst for spiritual, ethical, and moral information, and if their churches are not quenching that thirst, they may be forced to turn to the media for information and guidance traditionally offered from the pulpit.

In 1992, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark published *The Churching of America*. In their work, they quoted from the 1988 edition of the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*. It revealed that the "market shares of Catholic, Mainline and Evangelicals per 1,000 Church Members, 1940 - 1985"² were in flux. The mainline churches were in serious decline while the evangelical churches and the Roman Catholic Church were growing. The following table illustrates the trends in church membership in the United States.

Mainline

<u>Denomination</u>	<u>Percentage loss or gain</u>
United Methodists	- 48%
Presbyterian (U.S.A.)	- 49%
Episcopal	- 38%
Christian (Disciples)	- 70%
United Church of Christ (Congregationalists)	- 56%

Evangelicals

Southern Baptists	+ 32%
Assemblies of God	+ 371%
Church of the Nazarene	+ 42%
Church of God	+ 260%
<u>Roman Catholics</u>	+ 12% ³

According to the 1991 Census Report, the most recent data on religious belief, the same trends are evident in Canada. In 1991, 12.3 million Canadians said they were Roman Catholic, up from 11.4 million in 1981. Over the same period, the United Church of Canada lost 700,000 members and adherents, partly due to the divisive debate that raged in the church over the ordination of homosexuals. The Anglican communion lost 300,000 — down to 2.1 million and the Presbyterians lost 150,000 — down to 600,000 members. During the same period, churches that demand

a higher level of personal faith and commitment — including the Pentecostal Church, Christian and Missionary Alliance and Brethren in Christ — all saw significant gains.⁴

Though, as will be seen below, this is a trend story of great interest to millions of citizens, historian Dr. George Rawlyk of Queen's University notes, "it has been virtually ignored by the news media."⁵ The statistics that showed massive declines in mainline denominations cannot be viewed in isolation. "A U.S. News poll suggests, in fact, that at the end of the 20th century, the wealthiest, most powerful and best educated country on Earth [the United States] is still one of the most religious."⁶

"The poll paints a picture of a modern people who are uncertain how to 'walk the walk' in a pluralistic and secular society . . . 95 per cent of Americans say they believe in God or a universal spirit . . . 60 per cent . . . attend religious services regularly . . . more than 80 per cent, including 71 per cent of college graduates believe the Bible is the inspired word of God . . . voluntary giving to churches and synagogues and other houses of worship — an amount in the range of \$38 billion annually — exceeds the gross national product of many countries . . . 61 per cent [of respondents] think churches should 'take a more active and outspoken role' in solving the nation's difficulties."⁷

This recent poll and related polls and magazine articles point to a resurgence of interest in matters religious. Prayer was dealt with by Life magazine in its March 1994 issue and the death of Jesus was dealt with by Newsweek in its April 1994 issue. Maclean's, in its April 12, 1993 issue, featured a cover story on religious faith in Canada with the headline: "GOD IS ALIVE — Canada is a nation of believers."⁸ This, the largest survey (4,510 respondents) on Canadian religious beliefs, was done by the Angus Reid Group. Reid vice president Andrew Grenville said "the Maclean's people were surprised by the results — so was Angus Reid and from now on, we'll be asking religious questions in many of our polls. [Religion] is flourishing outside the elites and without attention from the elites [and] I'm surprised that it isn't getting more attention from the mainstream media."⁹

Grenville's almost off-hand remark about the mainstream media is reinforced elsewhere. University of Lethbridge sociologist Reginald Bibby noted: "It's not just that people in the media, along with politicians and economists, fail to show deference to religious groups; they typically live out life without much reference to religion. Maclean's writer Mary Nemeth recently wrote that in 'an overwhelmingly Christian populace, there is a near-total absence of religious discourse in Canadian politics, the media and advertising.'¹⁰ The U.S. News poll suggested that there is an "open hostility between the religious heartbeat of the country and the nation's cultural institutions. [There is] a growing inclination in the nation's elite institutions [including

media] to treat religious belief as a hobby and to regard those who take religion seriously as part of a 'lunatic fringe.'"¹¹

I will explore how the media report religion in an uneven manner in a following chapter. This chapter is intended to underline the centrality of religion in the lives of millions of ordinary Canadians and Americans, and how the nature of "religion" has changed since mid-century. Interest in religion and religious matters is certainly flourishing in Canada. As Nemeth wrote in *Maclean's*: "Despite a steady decline in church attendance since the Second World War — and widespread assumptions about the erosion of religion in modern society — The Religion Poll portrays Canada as an overwhelmingly Christian nation, not only in name but in belief. The poll illustrates that Christianity in Canada has undergone a profound metamorphosis outside — and sometimes alienated from — the mainstream churches."¹²

"Even in a secular age, 78 per cent of Canadians still define themselves as Christian. Another one per cent are Jews; roughly 0.5 per cent each are Hindus, Muslims or Buddhists. [Only] two in 10 Canadians say that they have no religion at all — and about half of those are out-and-out atheists."¹³ The poll reveals that few Canadians are members of cults or adherents of New Age philosophies.

Dr. George Rawlyk, the Queen's University historian who worked on the Angus Reid poll, said Maclean's discovered "God sells . . . the issue featuring the poll data was the fourth largest selling edition in Maclean's history."¹⁴ The magazine received about 400 letters to the editor (more than double its normal weekly average) indicating substantial reader interest on matters of faith.

Statistical data and current social survey methods can be confusing and even misleading. In 1992, two American sociologists challenged the conventional wisdom in the academic establishment when they published *The Churching of America*. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark discovered that statistical errors relating to church membership were made years ago and have been repeated over the decades. In the last century, when church records were sketchy, it was assumed that immigrants coming from a "Catholic" country were Catholic, a false assumption which skewed much statistical data. Also, many church authorities inflated their membership figures. If the authors' contention is accepted, academics and reporters who used these statistics have unwittingly allowed serious statistical problems to cloud the reporting of church membership and denominational differences.

This recent work suggests there has been — contrary to journalistic orthodoxy — an enormous and continuing growth in fundamentalist church membership in the United States, particularly in recent years, "accomplished by aggressive churches committed to otherworldliness."¹⁵ Finke and Stark defended the proposition that

"religious organizations are stronger to the degree that they impose significant costs in terms of sacrifice and even stigma upon their members."¹⁶ This directly suggests that the more mainline a church is, "the lower the value of belonging to it, and this eventually results in widespread defection."¹⁷ It also maintains that evangelical/fundamentalist churches that demand more from their members have seen substantial increases in membership while mainline churches have slipped.

One of the most influential North American churches is the Roman Catholic. Despite census data that suggests growth over the past decade, it has simultaneously experienced a serious decline in *active* participation by its members and adherents. Immediately following the Second World War, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States was still growing. Finke and Stark point out, between 1950 and 1960, Church population jumped from "190 per 1,000 . . . to 235.9 per 1,000"¹⁸ driven largely by immigration and the baby boom. This phenomenal growth quickly turned around in the 1960s. There was a huge exodus of members and adherents, clergy and religious. These complex patterns of membership versus actual continuing participation are generally not understood by the secular media.

Between 1962 and 1966, Pope John XXIII convened his Vatican Council. Vatican II and societal changes in the turbulent 1960s dealt the Roman Catholic Church a huge blow and led many out of the Church. The Latin mass all but disappeared; Roman Catholics could eat meat on Fridays and ecumenism was being

discussed openly. Other factors that the North American Church had to deal with in that decade included the secularization of Roman Catholic education the student movement, the black movement, the women's movement, a liberalization of sexual mores propelled by the pill, violence, the growth of the mass media, the freedoms suggested by rock 'n' roll, the challenges to institutional authority and sanctions, and here in Canada, the Quiet Revolution in Roman Catholic Quebec.

Sociologist Helen Rose Ebaugh, a former nun, argued that Vatican II and the aforementioned changes in society "caused an extraordinary shift away from a churchly faith based on clear doctrines and rules, backed by a strong, hierarchical institution, to a highly personalized faith . . . the autonomy of individual conscience has led to a 'selective Catholicism' in which people pick and choose. . . . Catholics have lost their fears concerning excommunication — [it used to be seen as] a guaranteed ticket to hell."¹⁹

The changes that overtook the Roman Catholic Church led directly to a loss of priestly power. The priest was no longer seen as "set apart"²⁰ by his flock. And if some rules could change, why could not others, particularly those dealing with sex and birth control. Andrew Greeley, writing in 1986 from the perspective of a parish priest in Chicago, argued that the male-dominated Church is hung-up on sex. There is much "distrust of the sexual . . . based on a hatred of women which persists in the ecclesiastical leadership . . . women are evil because they deprive men of their

spiritual freedom . . . they would deprive celibate men [priests and brothers] of their virtue . . . [but] the greatest threat to celibacy comes from . . . the increase in the number of pedophiliacs and practitioners of the 'gay life-style' in the priesthood — men who make a mockery of the celibate commitment."²¹

Priestly power and the abuse of that power — revealed in recent scandals — have raised questions about the role of the priest, the patriarchal hierarchy of the church, its very authority, the ordination of women, and celibacy. Many of the laity have come to realize that their priests are as prone to sin as they are. But their sins are more injurious because of the long-time trust and status they have been accorded. There have also been questions about papal infallibility. Few Catholics think infallibility has much direct impact on their lives. Some simply do not buy it. They leave that issue and the questions it raises to the theologians. The Pope has joined the Queen, another head of a church, as a symbol of another age.

Evidence of just how turbulent life has been recently in the Roman Catholic Church has slowly crept into the public's consciousness. It could be argued that the Mount Cashel and Alfred scandals in Canada and the litany of child sex abuse stories that appear regularly in the North American media were but one aspect of the larger story of a church suffering its own brand of purgatory. One of the more devastating indications that this is an institution in serious trouble is illustrated by the decline in seminary enrolments. In 1965, there were "10.6 enrolments in seminary per 10,000

U.S. Catholics. . . in 1990 that had dwindled to 1.1 per 10,000."²² This reduction has struck at the heart of the Church and led to a loss of vitality and leadership. The current projections indicate that the loss of priests in North America will continue unabated until the 21st century. "Reduced attendance . . . the frequency of going to confession, participation in church activities, even daily prayer fell sharply"²³ in the 1960s and 1970s and continues to this day.

At one time, "the pulpit was both the lectern and press . . . today the church's monopoly on information has been effectively usurped by the mass media."²⁴ In some ways, television has replaced the church and it "is becoming the primary expression of the mores and the meanings [of life] — the real religion — for most of us."²⁵ The growth of religious broadcasting has in many ways paralleled the growth of broadcasting itself. Religious broadcasters have long recognized the importance of the media in getting across messages of faith and hope.

But mainline religious denominations, including the Roman Catholics, have rarely shown much media savvy. A notable early exception was Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, whose television program made its debut in 1952. For several years, until 1957, he dispensed messages about life and values to a devoted audience just beginning to savor television. "Sheen's success in television probably was the single most important factor in persuading evangelicals that television — far more than radio — was the medium best suited to their purposes. TV could bring back the evangelistic

face-to-face meeting in which a powerful and charismatic preacher could sway audiences and enlist followers."²⁶

Billy Graham, perhaps the best known televangelist, first appeared on television in 1951. Graham's evangelistic organization bought and continues to buy time on television stations to get the Gospel message across. Graham's ministry received a real boost from the media when William Randolph Hearst, an avowed anti-communist and a supporter of basic American values, sent a message to his reporters to "*Puff C'raham*. And with no more than that, he happened. His genesis took place. He combusted forth."²⁷ Graham is a modest man who wants to save souls by having people surrender their lives to Jesus. He preaches to more people in one night than Christ did in his entire ministry. He has befriended paupers and presidents. He has led a circumspect life untainted by scandal. The major criticism of Graham — levelled from time-to-time by the media — has been that he has perhaps been too close to the rich, famous and powerful. He has been a confidant of and spiritual counselor to several presidents. But this is mild criticism. He is as close to perfection as a televangelist can get and this is reflected in the largely sympathetic — if not spiritually analytical — coverage he has received. Now in his 70s, Graham is suffering from Parkinson's disease, slowing down and admits he would like to rest in heaven with Jesus.

William Fore, a United Methodist minister and the assistant general secretary for communications of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S., has observed religious broadcasters for over three decades. In *Television and Religion*, published in 1987, Fore presents a neatly packaged overview of religious broadcasting. He feels that "Billy Graham represented the first generation [of televangelists]. By the 1950s he had brought television cameras and sophisticated advertising techniques to his mass meetings and, with the help of Hearst newspapers, became an overnight success. His technique was relatively simple. It depended primarily on generating massive rallies, and the TV cameras were brought in to *cover* the rallies as they might cover a football game or a political assembly."²⁸

Graham, instead of establishing his own television network, purchased commercial television time paid for by viewer donations. His crusades paid for themselves and eventually were held worldwide. Graham has honed his preaching and television styles. His sermons deal with practical real-life situations such as alcoholism and the breakdown of the family. Each service ends with the altar call where people come forward and profess a personal faith in Jesus. The newly converted are then pointed in the direction of local, fundamentalist churches — that hold the Bible to be the inspired and infallible word of God — for continuing Christian involvement and growth.

"The second generation, in terms of style and technique, was Oral Roberts."²⁹ Roberts began his career in Oklahoma as a tent evangelist. He was involved with radio in the 1950s and soon moved to television. Initially, Roberts brought "the cameras right into the tent so that the cameras [and the audience] began to *participate* in his preaching and healing sessions."³⁰ Perhaps the most contentious aspect of Oral Roberts' ministry was his healing services. Oral became most famous for telling people that they could receive healing by putting their hands on their television sets. But even critical journalists were disarmed when they met with a smiling Roberts who always said: "Ask whatever you like. I'll do my best to answer."³¹ Unlike the mainstream church spokesmen, this hillbilly knew how to handle the media, even if they on their side did not see much past the caricature.

Roberts is no stranger to controversy. In recent years he again became the object of some ridicule in the mass media when he insisted that God would call him home if he did not raise a substantial amount of cash for his ministry's projects within a certain period of time. Roberts, ensconced in his Prayer Tower, waited for the inevitable. The cash came before God took him home. This criticism was reminiscent of earlier controversies faced by the ministry when it undertook building a university with medical, dental and law schools. Roberts' expansionary plans were often questioned by the Tulsa-area media.

"The third generation [of televangelists] developed in the 1960s . . . when Rex Humbard . . . built the first church designed expressly for television. The Cathedral of Tomorrow in Akron, Ohio, came complete with a 360-degree rotating stage with [hydraulic] risers, like a huge revolving birthday cake, on which the entire Humbard family could stand and sing 'God Is Love.'"³² The Humbard ministry bought a lot of time on local television across North America and its leaders were consummate, high profile marketers. The Humbards paid close attention to the media, cultivating new and maintaining old contacts, by hosting secular events such as breakfasts at Broadcast Promotion Association conventions. They always sold their 'God Is Love' message by bringing together their family — the kids and the grandkids.

The development of the fourth generation came about when Pat Robertson produced *The 700 Club* based on the format of late-night television popularized by Johnny Carson. Robertson, who prefers being called a religious broadcaster as opposed to televangelist, features topical news, information, prayer, interviews, and musical guests on the network's daily, 90-minute magazine show. He shares the hosting duties with longtime friend Ben Kinchlow and Terry Meeuwsen, a former Miss America. The guests sit on sofas and chat about Christian life and the religious implications of world news. The music is upbeat and the production values rival those found on most secular television shows. Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker cloned much of the Robertson format and other televangelists have since borrowed liberally from that style of programming.

The fifth generation of televangelistic endeavor was the establishment of a "genuine TV network feeding some 5,500 cable systems . . . via satellite on a 24-hour-a-day basis."³³ The Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), run by Pat Robertson, features lots of reruns of family-oriented shows from the 1960s (such as *Father Knows Best*, *The Flying Nun* and even old game shows like *Name That Tune*) interspersed with Christian programming including its flagship show, *The 700 Club*. "By the mid-'80s he [Robertson] had turned CBN into a \$230-million-a-year operation that beamed it's [sic] version of Christianity around the world."³⁴

Robertson, like most televangelists, has shouldered his share of criticism. His world view, based on his own interpretation of the Bible coupled with his presidential aspirations, led Gerard Straub, a former producer at CBN, to call Robertson "a pompous pope of the video Vatican of Christian broadcasting . . . he rules his empire with absolute authority. He does not tolerate debate, discussions, or dissent, because they are considered stepping-stones to doubt. His television followers never get to see the tough-minded, hard-driving, cut-throat leader."³⁵

Canada's premiere televangelist is David Mainse. He is the pioneer of Christian television in Canada. A son of the manse, he was born in Campbell's Bay, Que. in 1936. He attended high school in Renfrew, Ont. and studied theology at Eastern Pentecostal Bible College in Peterborough, Ont. Mainse prides himself on being accountable to God. He runs an organization that is squeaky clean and there has

been no hint of scandal at Crossroads Christian Communications (CCC), headquartered in Hamilton. Mainse has borrowed freely from the American models of televangelism. His message of salvation has remained constant and he is a savvy communicator who understands the medium and his message.

CCC is the umbrella organization that sponsors several different ministries — the best known is 100 Huntley Street, a daily Carson-like interview show, named after the ministry's former address in downtown Toronto. The ministry, located just a few blocks from the Yonge Street strip during the years 1977-1992, shared the neighborhood with vagrants and prostitutes. The ministry was housed in an unimposing sterile building that was crammed with broadcast equipment, a counselling center and tiny offices. Satellite dishes and antennae fought for space on the roof. Despite a move from Toronto to a new, low-slung, modern facility in Hamilton, Mainse's television show has retained the Huntley Street name.

The ministry, though sharing the American evangelists' objectives of saving souls and promulgating the Christian faith, operates with what Mainse termed a Canadian conservatism. "We [pay close attention] to the Canadian laws that govern broadcasting and non-profit charitable corporations. We have a board which is interdenominational in its composition . . . and we encourage them not to be rubber stamps in any way. I always believe that it is important to be accountable. You know, for years, we've had Peat Marwick as our auditors and you know . . . it would have

been cheaper to have somebody round the corner in a little one-horse firm. We felt that it's important to have the credibility, if you will, [of] a major firm of auditors."³⁶

One of the important reasons that Mainse has escaped the scrutiny of the Canadian media is that they do not see any hint of scandal in his operation. No wonder. CCC publishes its yearly, audited financial statement. The budget for 1994 is "\$15 million and Mainse's salary is \$72,000. He drives a six-year-old station wagon that the ministry owns."³⁷ But with no scandal, there is no story in conventional journalistic thinking. The fact that Mainse and his ministry are a major factor in the spiritual life of many Canadians is simply not important. As recently as June 1994, Mainse made a whistle-stop appearance at an Ottawa Pentecostal church. No media were on hand for Canada's foremost televangelist.

Mainse suggested that serious cultural differences between Canadians and Americans are reflected in the media's coverage of his ministry and other evangelical matters in Canada. Money is one of the big differences "in how we approach life. In the States [some congregations] want their pastors to have the best. Up here the attitude has been the Lord will keep them humble and we will keep them poor. And that's kind of where it's at . . . there's a line you have to draw . . . at some point."³⁸

Underneath the saccharin and teary-eyed exterior that is sometimes seen on television, Mainse has a sophisticated understanding of the media and the ways they can be used, misused and manipulated. Before an interview, his communications people want to know about the reporter's background and the topics to be discussed. Interviews are recorded by his staff so there can be no misunderstandings. Just before the interview began, Mainse was overheard asking his staff — "tell me again who is this guy and what's he about?"³⁹ When questioned about his caution, he said that with the negative publicity televangelists were getting he just wanted to make sure what would be done with the material.

Mainse also questions some of the actions and attitudes of the mass media. Although he was hard to pin down on specifics, he alluded to the speed with which the media have to work in covering complex stories, particularly stories with a religious bent or stories about the courts, law and justice. He cited the media coverage that Bakker and Swaggart received, Watergate and the case of Canada's former defence minister, Bob Coates, who was found in a German strip bar in the mid-'80s. Mainse said "the media jumped on it [the Coates story], and held up a standard which is kind of hypocritical."⁴⁰ He suggested the secular media can be manipulative and downright cruel. In a rambling, difficult-to-follow story about a critic of his ministry, he suggested that some talk shows "on both radio and on television, [like CTV's Shirley] act like the National Enquirer having not done any research."⁴¹

Part of Mainse's reticence about the media could have stemmed from his experiences in Charlotte with the PTL Club about the time of the Bakkers' downfall. PTL boasted 20,000 Canadian supporters, many of them "snowbirds," who winter in Florida. Each year during "Canadian week" people from Canada were invited to participate in the services and enjoy a Christian-oriented retreat at Heritage Village. Just about the time when the Charlotte Observer was breaking the story about Bakker's affair with Jessica Hahn, Mainse was asked to host the Jim and Tammy Show. Mainse had often been invited to host these Canadian week celebrations but had always said no. "I was up in James Bay with the native people up there and I prayed for bad weather because I didn't want to go . . . Well, I got there and it was the very week when the thing [the scandal] broke. And I had said that I wouldn't come unless I was in charge of the program because there was no way I was going to be on the air with some of the hype."⁴² Mainse obviously wanted to protect his integrity. He did not want to be dragged in to the PTL scandal with its attendant negative publicity.

Mainse's ministry has undergone some recent financial stress and staff cutbacks. It received a setback when the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) did not "fully consider its application to establish a national specialty service."⁴³ Lise Plouffe, a communications officer with the CRTC, said that CCC's application to expand its ministry by setting up a service like Vision, the Sports Network or MuchMusic was received too late for the 1994

round of decisions. It can re-apply in June 1995. If the Crossroads application is successful, it will change the landscape of religious broadcasting in Canada.

The last major change in the Canadian religious broadcast environment came in September 1988 when Cable TV operators started to provide programming from Vision TV. Vision is an interfaith network with an eclectic range of programming including televangelists, British comedies, and feature films with moral and ethical themes. Vision can be seen in more than 5.5 million homes and the network boasts that more than "three million Canadians a week, of all ages, and backgrounds"⁴⁴ watch some of its programming.

As we approach the next millennium, a large number of baby boomers are entering middle age. "If developmental psychologists are correct about these years being a crucial time of reflection and reassessment, it should follow that [Canada and the United States] will continue to experience considerable religious and spiritual ferment."⁴⁵ The face of religion is constantly changing. The unanswerable question is how these changes will play out over the coming decades in North American society. It is easy for the secular media to ignore or scoff at religious people who are on a serious quest for answers to the questions of life. "Clearly media, religion, and popular culture are converging to form a new sort of trinity . . . like many aspects of popular concern, this union has often been ignored by the elite. Most historians,

media critics and theologians have ignored this new beast, shuffling [sic] towards Bethlehem to be born."⁴⁶

Endnotes

1. D'Arcy Jenish, "Empty Pews, Angry Members," *Maclean's*, 12 April 1993, p. 48.
2. Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), p. 248.
3. Finke and Stark, p. 248.
4. Statistics Canada, *Religions in Canada* (Ottawa, 1993) p. 102 -104.
5. Personal interview with Dr. George Rawlyk, July 1994.
6. Jeffrey L. Sheler, "Spiritual America", *U.S. News*, 4 April 1994, p. 48.
7. Sheler, p. 49.
8. Mary Nemeth, "GOD IS ALIVE," *Maclean's*, 12 April 1993, cover.
9. Personal interview with Andrew Grenville, May 1994.
10. Reginald W. Bibby, *Fragmented Gods* (Toronto, Ont.: Irwin Publishing, 1987), p. 64.
11. Sheler, p. 57.

12. Nemeth, p. 37.
13. Nemeth, p. 33.
14. Personal interview with Dr. George Rawlyk, July 1994.
15. Finke and Stark, p. 1.
16. Finke and Stark, p. 238.
17. Finke and Stark, p. 238.
18. Finke and Stark, p. 256.
19. Finke and Stark, p. 267.
20. Finke and Stark, p. 269.
21. Andrew M. Greeley, *Confessions of a Parish Priest* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1986), p. 113, 128.
22. Finke and Stark, p. 260.
23. Finke and Stark, p. 260.
24. William F. Fore, *Television and Religion* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), p. 24.
25. Fore, p. 25.
26. Hadden and Swann, p. 83.

27. Marshall Frady, *Billy Graham* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979, p. 201.
28. Fore, p. 82.
29. Fore, p. 82.
30. Fore, p. 82.
31. David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *Oral Roberts* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985) p. 176.
32. Fore, p. 83.
33. Fore, p. 83.
34. Gerard Thomas Straub, *Salvation For Sale* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1986) p. 345.
35. Straub, p. 19.
36. Personal interview with David Mainse, January 1990.
37. Personal interview with Doug Burke, Director of Communications, Crossroads Christian Communications, July 1994.
38. Interview with Mainse.
39. Interview with Mainse.
40. Interview with Mainse.
41. Interview with Mainse.

42. Interview with Mainse.
43. Personal interview with Lise Plouffe, July 1994.
44. *A Vision Fulfilled A Vision Unfolding*, pamphlet (Vision TV, Toronto, Ontario, undated).
45. Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), p. 248.
46. Marshall W. Fishwick and Ray B. Browne, eds., *The God Pumpers* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987) p. 3.

Religious News — Problems of Definition

Dart and Allen, in their recent study of religious news, say "faith draws heavily on revelation and intuition; news reporting strives for verifiable information. Churches bring the 'good news'; the press bears the bad news . . . in the press one turns over a rock to expose the dirt; in the pulpit one turns over the dirt to expose the Rock."¹ Like many clever quotes, this one rings partially true. Over the past few decades, many in the church may have been forgiven for thinking that the media were using bulldozers to uncover the dirt. It would seem at every juncture rocks were being overturned to reveal sordid stories of the worst sort — unchecked abuse and exploitation, gross financial impropriety and breach of personal and institutional trust. Such stories have undeniably affected the entire church and its image with the faithful and the faithless.

Most of the time, secular news editors and reporters perform the kind of balancing acts that require them to exercise conventional news judgment. This means selecting stories of interest to their readers and viewers that ultimately lead to higher circulation and better ratings, as well as stories that are simply important but perhaps without much power to rivet the attention of the customer. Scandals sell. And the news media are simply doing their job when they report on scandals and related controversies involving religious leaders or organizations. The media can, however, be accused of not doing their job when they downplay, segregate or relegate other

religious-oriented news to a lesser status. As the editors at Maclean's discovered last year, religion sells. Even this fact seems to be lost on some editors and journalists who rarely try to come to grips with a definition of religious news. As Dart and Allen say, "Religion is not compelling hard news."² So religion is covered when it is fraught with controversy or "blended with other segments of society . . . religion and politics, faith and medicine, church and state."³

The notion of blended coverage may be clearly illustrated by examining coverage of the President of the United States and his family. In many cases, this coverage comes from political reporters who lack a background in religious study and appreciation of the nuances, subtleties and profound differences that exist even within faith communities. In late October 1994, Hillary Rodham Clinton agreed to be interviewed about her Christian faith by Kenneth Woodward, the religion editor of Newsweek. That decision was a difficult one for America's First Lady, so she had been ducking the encounter for three months. Her difficulties were both political and personal. Her husband, the President, was again facing allegations, made by tabloid television shows including *Hard Copy*, that he had been unfaithful to his wife while he occupied the governor's office some years earlier in Arkansas. The Republicans were poised to steamroller the Clinton Democrats in the 1994 mid-term U.S. elections. Mrs. Clinton had seen her star fall. As the administration's point-person on the health-care reform package proposed by her husband, she took the political heat when the program died.

Bill and Hillary Clinton are products of the baby boom. The President and his wife grew up in the era when many of their peers fought for massive social change or at least to stay out of uniform and use recreational drugs. It is a generation that challenged the status quo, questioned authority, institutions and morality, saw drug experimentation rise dramatically and invented rock 'n' roll. When Clinton was running for office, this generation could identify with a man who jogged and was the father of a teenager, who drove a blue 1967 Mustang convertible, loved junk food and could play saxophone with the Posse on Arsenio Hall's late night television show. Clinton is different from his predecessor George Bush and Hillary Clinton is different from Barbara Bush — not just politically but spiritually.

Many boomers regarded George and Barbara Bush as parental figures — older, staid and perhaps even elite. They attend the establishment Episcopalian Church and appeared to be masters at upholding a tradition of public faith that Woodward in his Newsweek article identifies: "Americans want their First Family to be religious, but not strongly so. As Ronald Reagan understood — and Jimmy Carter painfully learned — vague belief firmly held is the most appropriate White House religion."⁴

If Woodward's assertion that homogenized faith or belief is what is acceptable to Americans, then that country may be in for a great surprise as they discover more about America's First Family. Why should the Clintons' Christian faith be an important news story? Like many of this generation they have been strongly

influenced by societal changes, their upbringing and church background. In this age that many people call secular: "The Clintons are perhaps the most openly religious First Couple this century has seen. The president is a hymn-humming, sermon-loving liberal Southern Baptist who studied under the Jesuits . . . and feels at home in any kind of pew."⁵ "The First Lady is a Methodist by choice as well as by chance . . . [and] Methodists are still imbued with the turn-of-the-century social gospel, which holds that Christians have been commissioned to build the Kingdom of God on earth."⁶

If faith is so important to the holder of the most powerful office in the world and his immediate family, then this faith will affect many of his decisions. Yet, "with the passing of time fewer editors seem ostensibly to know or think very much about religion, a commentary perhaps on the rise of biblical and theological illiteracy."⁷ And if newspapers and television neglect this dimension of life in their reportage, they then deliver an unbalanced portrait. "Any accurate reading of a society [or its leaders] entails a comprehension of its religious character."⁸ If history repeats itself, some in the secular media, charged with analysing the Clinton presidency, may discover that the Clintons' religious background has not only played a role in the couple's life together but it helped form America's public policy and legislation.

Hillary Clinton was cautious about discussing matters of faith with Newsweek. As she explained to Woodward: "The secular press doesn't know how to talk about

religion except in stereotypes. I feel that they have done a great disservice to many people who are in what is loosely called the religious right . . . I think it is unfair to the great number of people who identify themselves in such ways — either evangelicals or fundamentalists — to stereotype them."⁹ Mrs. Clinton's political and media advisers may have suspected that this interview with a leading news magazine — one that partially sets the agenda for other U.S. publications — could create public relations problems. Anything connected with matters of personal faith and its impact could be misunderstood or misinterpreted by the media. Clinton was already laboring under the perception that to "the religious right [she was scorned] as a Mary Magdalene, while the political pundits in the secular press ridicule her spirituality as flaky New Age blather."¹⁰

U.S. presidents and their families have come to realize that the media take an inordinate interest in all aspects of their lives — public and private. Jimmy Carter learned that his 'born-again' religious conviction "befuddled national political reporters unfamiliar with the term, and Carter's comment — made quietly in a North Carolina backyard in 1976 — made news: Virtually every daily paper and television station carried the wire service accounts of the candidate's acknowledgement of his religious faith."¹¹

Questions about Carter's faith certainly made headlines but few reporters seemed to understand how his religious beliefs would affect his domestic and foreign

policies. In a 1983 interview, Carter "spoke of 'the irresponsibility of the press' in failing to explain how his religious views affected his actions on controversial issues such as the Iranian hostage crisis . . . his defence of former budget director Bert Lance, and his widely publicized remarks to Playboy Magazine about having 'committed adultery in my heart many times. The press had no desire to explain my faith or understand it,' Carter said, despite his having made clear early in his presidential campaign that 'there is no way to understand me and my political philosophy without understanding my faith.'"¹²

Ronald Reagan's presidency was indelibly influenced by the support he received from the New Christian Right. The movie star-president with the dysfunctional family stressed pride in America, a return to basic values, the reintroduction of school prayer and was vehemently opposed to abortion. "Political writers have correctly analyzed his position as stemming from his conservative political philosophy and indirectly from his personal religious convictions. But the press didn't take seriously the impact of the apocalyptic writings of the Bible on his thinking about war and peace."¹³ Reagan was an avowed anti-communist and "few editorialists or columnists seem to have taken [his background] as significant for the nation's foreign policy."¹⁴

Since the early 1960s, it can be suggested that American print journalism has been benignly neglectful of the religious influences, both internal and external, that

have had an impact on presidents and presidential contenders. It would have taken more than a surface knowledge of religion and religious issues to analyze how John F. Kennedy's Roman Catholicism may have influenced his presidency or Barry Goldwater's belief that evangelical Christianity with its moral framework could help America on its path to righteousness. Religious faith also had a huge impact on the articulation of public policy by Jesse Jackson and Pat Robertson.

There are substantial differences between the United States and Canada when it comes to the blending of politics and religion. On the surface, it appears that the religious lives of prime ministers are publicly irrelevant. Jean Chretien, Brian Mulroney, John Turner and Joe Clark are all Roman Catholic. Lester Pearson was Methodist and John Diefenbaker was Baptist. As Natalie Rawlings, a spokesperson for the Liberal Party of Canada, said in an interview: "The alliances that had to be created between WASP Toronto and Roman Catholic Quebec were developed for reasons of political expediency. We define ourselves differently in Canada. It is a linguistic game rather than a religious thing."¹⁵ Since 1952, Canada's governors general — all Canadians — have represented a mixed religious bag. Vincent Massey was Anglican, as was Roland Michener. Michener converted to Anglicanism from the Methodist Church when he married. Georges Vanier, Jules Leger and Jeanne Sauve were all Roman Catholics; Ed Schreyer and Ray Hnatyshyn are both Eastern Rite Orthodox.

The issue of religion creeps into the political life of the country when contentious issues such as abortion, gay rights and euthanasia are debated in the public arena. Hélène Ouellet, the director of communication for the Conservative Party of Canada, said in an interview: "Not too many people make reference to religion in this country when dealing with politics."¹⁶

In the United States, in the late 1970s and into the 1980s, the fundamentalist churches, with their huge voting block, have injected religion into the political environment. Abortion, school curricula and capital punishment are all important areas of public discourse, and many in the media do not understand the genesis of the arguments that support the evangelical positions.

Benjamin J. Hubbard, in his recent book on the reporting of religion, argues that: "There is curious irony about the juxtaposition of the guarantee of the freedom of the press and the separation of the church and state in the first amendment"¹⁷ of the Constitution of the United States. Hubbard says "one has the feeling that the press considers itself liberated from religion . . . and free to report on the business of the nation without bothering about irrelevant religion business."¹⁸

To this day, religious news receives short shrift in many newsrooms. Although "the generalization is less true now than it was 20 years ago, the journalistic community is not very comfortable with religion. Editors view religion stories as soft,

irrelevant, and non-objective. Benjamin C. Bradlee, executive editor of the Washington Post, acknowledged in a [1983] Los Angeles Times interview that religion didn't interest him as much as most other journalistic beats and said he has 'never sat down and thought about religion coverage. The verities involved in religion are eternal and unchanging,' Bradlee commented. 'Why should we cover the president going to church . . . what's so big about that?'"¹⁹

Jim Travers, the editor of the Ottawa Citizen, holds a dramatically different point of view from Bradlee's. Travers said in an interview that newspapers should be asking: "What does religion mean in people's lives? How does it affect people's lives?"²⁰ He suggested that religion today should not be ghettoized like so-called 'women's news' was in the past. With 75 beat reporters and one religion specialist, Travers acknowledges that the religious dimensions to stories are sometimes neglected. "We haven't made the progress we should have."²¹

CTV's principal news anchor, Lloyd Robertson, was critical about both newspaper and television coverage of religion. Robertson said in an interview that he would like to see "more stories of the human spirit"²² but he qualified his remarks by mentioning the time constraints on television journalists. CJOH's Max Keeping suggested that television has a long way to go to cover religion stories properly. He added that CJOH and CTV are both using polling data on religious issues gathered by Angus Reid.

Recent polls, cited in Chapter 3 (The Big Religious Story), confirm that countless millions of people in North America view life as a spiritual quest. Paupers and presidents alike often seek the deeper meaning of life and hunger for spiritual direction and answers. Even those with simply a cultural faith often rely on organized religion to provide moral guidance and to assist in life's major passages — baptisms, confirmations, marriages and funerals — with echoes of a kind of life beyond the secular. The Judaeo-Christian faith has been the backbone of North American society. It has influenced almost every aspect of life from the schools, to the courts, to the health care system.

The media and religion, each arguably here to serve society, are, according to Dart and Allen, "two alien cultures — one rooted largely in a search for facts and the other grounded in a discovery of faith beyond fact. Each side . . . misunderstands the mission of the other . . . and it is easier, perhaps safer, for the media to ignore the ongoing story of religion, despite the fact that a large majority of newspaper readers and television viewers are people of faith. And so, too often, [as noted in Chapter 2 (A Broken Trust)] only when notability or notoriety or controversy require, invite or incite coverage, does the media respond."²³ And when the media respond to religious issues and questions, many in the religious communities question the level of reporting skills. As Bishop Bruce Stavert of Quebec says: "Better to have silence than inaccuracy."²⁴

Ari Goldman, a former religion editor at the New York Times, suggested in an interview that there is a gap between religion and the media because of the level of scepticism that exists in today's newsrooms. ". . . I can't prove the existence of God, I can't prove this emotion, I can't prove this belief, I can't prove this feeling so I've always thought that is why editors don't get it."²⁵

Journalists are trained to go after facts. They are trained to observe phenomena happening around them. They are trained to deal with fast-breaking news. In most newsroom environments the pressure is on getting page one bylines. Religion, for the longest time, has been seen as softer and more ethereal: the stuff of the religion page. Belief systems, theology, dogma and religious philosophies are more difficult to grasp and report. Individual matters of faith are often seen as matters best left between the religious practitioner and his/her God. Many reporters do not understand the peculiar and particular terminology associated with religion and if publishers and editors do not accord religious news a higher status, chances are reporters will not either. Goldman believes that some cynicism and scepticism are necessary in newsrooms, but it is important to have a precise definition of religious news. "It is the way that religion moves in people's lives. [Religion] influences people, changes their lives, enriches their lives, frustrates their lives and in each case I emphasize people, rather than ideas. News is about people and the way we show how religion impacts [on] people is what religion news is. [It is not solely] about

theological debates, . . . that may make news but it is more about how religion moves people's lives." ²⁶

Goldman, now teaching reporting religion at Columbia University, says too often editors neglect the religious dimension of stories out of ignorance of what is important to their readers. His opinion that religious news is about how faith affects the human condition is not generally discussed in many contemporary newsrooms. He also says many editors do not know how to deal properly with developing religious news issues such as the coming millennium. He senses society may see more end-of-the world predictions and the rise of fringe groups with a religious dimension like the Branch Dividians of Waco, Texas or the Order of the Solar Temple of Quebec and Switzerland. Religious news issues that Goldman sees breaking in the next decade include "women in religion . . . especially in the Roman Catholic Church. The current Pope's days are numbered and what the Cardinals do in terms of choosing the next Pope is going to be really pivotal in how the Catholic Church deals with issues with women. The other big one is homosexuality and to ordain or not to ordain . . . this debate will get more and more fiery and most reporters don't understand the theological or canonical background. [The Christian Right] is planning to make a splash around the 1996 election and my gut [feeling] is that they'll try and fail. There also could be a backlash against the Right because of the Pensacola, Fla. [abortion clinic] killings." ²⁷

Jason Berry, the New Orleans based freelance writer who had trouble finding a publisher for his reports on priestly sexual abuse in Louisiana between 1984 and 1992, has agonized over his definition of what is religious news. In an interview he pondered the question for some time and offered: "I wouldn't say any issue or conflict that touches on primary nerves of the spiritual imagination. People who have a spiritual sensibility and who try to order their lives through religious belief and ritual are going to respond to world events, certain events, certain developments in ways that other people will not . . . I think that there has to be a form of journalism that tries to see the world or see events — key events — as these people do."²⁸

Berry suggested that the media seem to re-discover religion from time to time. He feels that there is extensive debate underway in North America about virtue and values. Much has been made recently about the ethics 'craze' sweeping North America that has led to more courses in this field being offered at the university level. In December 1994, CTV News featured an in-depth report on the increased enrolment in ethics courses at Canadian universities. There was no mention of the religious basis for offering these programs. Berry questions how reporters in the secular media can illuminate the debate "without examining the religious underpinnings."²⁹ Berry quoted from a magazine piece he was developing on the absence of a political center in the United States. "I was talking with Rev. Jesse Jackson and he said: 'Politics asks the question will it work? . . . Morality asks, is it right? Somehow if it's morally right then the politics and popularity have to adjust.' These are the kind of small

epiphanies that have to work their way into . . . news . . . what bothers me about newsrooms is the . . . paucity of analytical writing about religious and spiritual themes and trends." ³⁰

The Swaggart ministry is located in Baton Rouge, La. Ed Pratt, a 16-year veteran of Baton Rouge newspapers, now edits the religious coverage and Saturday edition at the Baton Rouge Advocate. He puts together a three- to eight-page religious news section each weekend relying on freelance reporters plus the wire services. Pratt has an inclusive view of religious news: "Religion now involves every facet of life to some degree It's just a part of life I think we are very serious [in our approach to religious news] in south Louisiana. We're in this gumbo We have Southern Baptists, Baptists, a large Roman Catholic population, Methodists — we have so much here that is important. We sort of have a feel for how religion affects every walk of life everyday of our lives." ³¹ Pratt has covered the Swaggart ministry since the mid-1980s. He has watched how the ministry, obviously a continuing religious news story, has succeeded in closing the doors to the media. Pratt feels that at his paper the editors have rightly shifted away from scandal coverage to how the religious community feels about "the explosion of river boat gambling, video poker, school issues, the religious community's position on abortion" ³² and about how the religious Right may move to control local school boards, community and neighborhood politics.

Bob Harvey, who edits the religious pages at the Ottawa Citizen, has been a journalist for close to three decades. Harvey said, "Usually religious news . . . tends to be institutional, having to do with groups, organized groups, but certainly not always."³³ Harvey indicated that one of the problems associated with defining religious news is that many journalists are uneasy with the topic. "Most journalists are secular and don't like [or understand] the atmosphere and language of religion. Some of it is fear because religion is an extremely complicated field and in Canada there are so many religions now — so many beliefs — everything from Hinduism to New Age spirituality . . . it's a whole field of knowledge that they just don't get any training in or have any dealings with."³⁴

Harvey and the editorial staff at the Ottawa Citizen have been re-focusing their attentions on the Saturday religion section. It could be suggested that the Citizen's religion section is taking a 'trendier' direction. The Citizen is less and less interested in traditional denominational news and Harvey says, "we're more and more interested in New Age spirituality."³⁵ Harvey's readers may not be as interested in this subject as he or his editors are. In the 1991 census report, Religion in Canada, only 1,200 people said they are members of a New Age group.³⁶ Harvey believes that the mainline denominations are losing their impact on Canadian society and so unless something controversial arises from within the denominations they will receive less and less coverage.

Bill Thorn, a practising Roman Catholic and chair of the Department of Journalism at Marquette University, has been teaching reporting religion since the late 1970s. He has a three-point definition of religious news:

- "1. Those ideas and issues and trends which give the readership, listenership or viewers insight and understanding into . . . a religious body, congregation or denomination.
2. Religion as a motivational force to humankind.
3. The general area that we refer to as spiritual or of the spirit that is feeding the spiritual dimension of people."³⁷

Thorn is convinced that journalists prefer covering scandal to developing thoughtful analyses because of reporters' religious stereotypes. Thorn feels that to bolster religious news coverage, newspaper editors and publishers have to adjust their perceptions of what is encompassed by the term religious news. He does not just blame newspapers for this gap in understanding but places the fault on church leaders as well. Thorn advocates a dialogue between the media and religious leaders, an idea to be examined in the final chapter.

Thorn echoed the view of other observers when he pointed out the religion beat was given low priority and was staffed with incompetent people. "I think that one of the problems in good religion coverage is that the religious dimension of stories like candidates for public office [and their faith] is virtually never brought up. There was no understanding raised on the part of the people covering politics about how the themes that [politicians] were raising really came from the prophetic passages of the Old Testament and that they really represented a kind of Christian social justice view. If you understand that, the whole thing made a lot more sense but these reporters couldn't handle it. They couldn't figure it You've got to show how the religious dimension to news fits in."³⁸

Over the next year, Thorn thinks that the important religious news issues will include "the growth of eastern religions and how immigrants of Muslim, Buddhist and Shinto traditions are fitting in to North American society and how their children are faring. Another story that I think will be ongoing is the child sexual abuse scandal. These stories raise a larger issue and that is how do people in the community view their own religious leaders and their faith given that particular problem. What impact will it have on young clerics or those thinking of becoming ministers? How will people relate to the super-churches that draw 3,000 to 5,000 worshippers on a Sunday morning and . . . I'd be probing how the mainline denominations have lost their ability to explain faith in a meaningful way to a younger generation. I'd look at how teenagers, young adults and others view religion to find out what religion means to

them, where they develop their religious sensibilities and where those sensibilities lead."³⁹

The late George W. Cornell, a long time religion writer for the Associated Press, suggested that the major problem with defining religious news goes back to the 1950s when most editors did not regard religion as worthy of extensive coverage. Editors left religious news "in the shadows, potent, lurking, an underlying drive, yet generally disregarded, sidelined, considered a personal, overly touchy and controversial zone, a private matter, a separate, ecclesiastically-feuding turf, unfit for socially informative journalism."⁴⁰

Cornell's damning perspective would certainly suggest that publishers and editors should encourage a deeper examination of the issues of faith and their impact on society. Scholars and academics studying North American newspapers say it is obvious that religion coverage has increased⁴¹ but certainly not in lockstep with people's interest in matters of faith. Yet, to this day, in many major papers, that coverage is still restricted to the religious pages. Old perceptions, coupled with a largely secular approach to news, have minimized the coverage of faith issues.

One of the classic comparisons that may be made is between the resources North American dailies invest in sports coverage as compared to religious coverage. "Sports attendance [in the United States] in 1980 totalled 356 million . . . yet

PM-1 3½"x4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

PRECISIONSM RESOLUTION TARGETS

attendance at churches and synagogues for the year was 13 times greater, totaling 4.7 billion. Gate receipts of professional football, baseball and basketball totalled \$423 million. In contrast religious contributions totalled \$22.1 billion, 51 times more than people put into the three biggest sports . . . but the news media gave religion only a tiny sliver of the coverage lavished on sports."⁴²

Rich Oppel, editor of the Charlotte Observer, the paper that broke the story of the PTL scandal, said religion is "what our readers want. They care about religion, so religion sells newspapers. [It's] the stuff of Page One, day by day."⁴³

And as the baby boom generation ages, religion and religious issues — problems and definitions — become more and more a part of life. "Maybe we have a spiritual clock as well as a biological clock."⁴⁴

Endnotes

1. John Dart and Jimmy Allen, *Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1994), p. 8.
2. Dart and Allen, p. 8.
3. Dart and Allen, p. 8.

4. Kenneth L. Woodward, "Soulful Matters," *Newsweek*, 31 October 1994, p. 23.
5. Woodward, p. 23.
6. Woodward, p. 23.
7. Kenneth A. Briggs, "Why Editors Miss Important Religion Stories," in *Reporting Religion*, ed. Benjamin J. Hubbard (Sonoma, California: Polebridge Press, 1990), p. 49.
8. Briggs, p. 50.
9. Woodward, p. 25.
10. Woodward, p. 23.
11. Dart and Allen, p. 3.
12. Benjamin J. Hubbard, "The Importance of the Religion Angle in Reporting on Current Events," in *Reporting Religion*, ed. Benjamin J. Hubbard (Sonoma, California: Polebridge Press, 1990), p. 4.
13. Hubbard, p. 6.
14. Hubbard, p. 6.
15. Personal interview with Natalie Rawlings, December 1994.
16. Personal interview with Helene Ouellet, December 1994.
17. Hubbard, p. 1.

18. Hubbard, p. 1.
19. Hubbard, p. 1.
20. Interview with Travers.
21. Interview with Travers.
22. Personal interview with Lloyd Robertson, August 1994.
23. Dart and Allen, p. 3.
24. Interview with Stavert.
25. Personal interview with Ari Goldman, August 1994.
26. Interview with Goldman.
27. Interview with Goldman.
28. Personal interview with Jason Berry, September 1994.
29. Interview with Berry.
30. Interview with Berry
31. Interview with Pratt.
32. Interview with Pratt

33. Interview with Harvey, July 1994.
34. Interview with Harvey.
35. Interview with Harvey.
36. Statistics Canada, p. 2.
37. Personal interview with Dr. Bill Thorn, August 1994.
38. Interview with Thorn.
39. Interview with Thorn.
40. George W. Cornell, "The Evolution of the Religion Beat," in *Reporting Religion*, ed. Benjamin J. Hubbard (Sonoma, California: Polebridge Press, 1990), p. 21.
41. More information see Dart and Allen, Hubbard et al.
42. Cornell, p. 31.
43. Cornell, p. 35.
44. John Parikhal, *The Baby Boom* (Mississauga: Joint Communications Corporation, 1993), p. 174.

Reporting Religion — a Neglected Beat

In January 1988, Rev. Foy Valentine, the executive officer for development of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, an evangelical church in the United States, echoed a commonly held view when he said: "If it isn't a major theater event it isn't worth reporting . . . there are stories that are of interest to millions of people and they [the media] simply ignore them."¹

Most North Americans say they are interested in spiritual matters. This fact is driven home by a plethora of recent articles, particularly in magazines quoted in Chapter 3 (The Big Religious Story), that would lead even a casual observer in 1994 to share the conclusion that Dart and Allen summarized: "For most people, faith is a spiritual melody that gives meaning and definition to life. Yet many journalists are tone deaf. To them, religion in all its complexity is either a disturbing cacophony of sounds or innocuous background music easily tuned out. Reporters and editors are forced to sit up and listen only when aberrant religionists hit strident chords."²

Observations of the news confirm this. There has been coverage of the controversy surrounding the ordination of women and homosexuals, of the Pensacola abortion clinic murder, the carnage at the Branch Dividian commune outside Waco, Texas and the bombing of New York's World Trade Center. The downfall of Rev. Jim Bakker and his PTL ministry and the sexual scandals that hit Rev. Jimmy

Swaggart's ministry received plenty of print and electronic coverage. The New Christian Right and the influences of certain of its leaders, including Jerry Falwell and the Pat Robertson media empire, have been documented. The pedophilia and child abuse scandals within the Roman Catholic Church and revelations of abuse at residential schools for native people in Canada have all been covered.

Tensions that have always existed between the churches and the news media are magnified in today's pluralistic world. The gulf, at times easily bridged, has become difficult to cross. The Dart and Allen study on religion and the news media has suggested that several forces have led to this gulf. They include the secularization and trivialization of culture, and fundamental societal changes including civil and gay rights and the emergence of feminism. The mainline churches have watched their institutional power and authority slip away while the so-called conservative or evangelical churches have grown and gained political power.

Journalists at one time were seen to support the mainline denominations and their agenda that stressed faith and family values. The churches were seen as serving a real need — providing moral leadership and serving as a touchstone for people. In the 1940s and 1950s it was not uncommon for newspapers to cover sermons and to feature special coverage around Holy Days such as Easter and Christmas. Many television stations often opened the broadcast day with a brief sermon by a local clergyman and features such as 'Thoughts for the Inner Man' were broadcast on full-

service radio stations. Some of the leading radio stations in Quebec in the 1950s and 1960s showed their respect for the authority of the Roman Catholic Church by airing The Rosary daily. Most small and some of the larger radio stations across Canada carried a weekly service from a community church.

Traditionally, the media feel comfortable dealing with other elite organizations. Critics often said the media were too close to the institutions they cover, but not any more. Dart and Allen suggest that with the growing secularization of society in the 1950s and 1960s and a lessening of mainline church attendance, the media's attitude towards religion changed. The "distancing between journalism and religion was inevitable as the two [elite] institutions reacted to revolutions around them. The press, once justifiably accused of boosterism or favoritism in relation to other powerful institutions in society, has kept itself at arm's length from government, chambers of commerce, big business, the military — and churches."³ The study suggests that a positive dimension to this distancing is the enhancement of "journalism's overall credibility with the public."⁴

Despite a growing interest in matters religious, the churches are now seen to be of less influence in society than the secular media. Recent polling data by the Times Mirror Center for The People & The Press found "the media, despite all its flaws, remained more credible than other key political and social organizations and individuals.

Percent Rating Each Organization Believable

	Newspapers	TV News	The Church	Nation's Leader
Country:				
Canada	71%	81%	47%	53%
U.S.	68%	73%	60%	49%¹⁵

These poll results would suggest that the media have a unique responsibility in reporting on matters of faith. This idea will be dealt with more thoroughly in the final chapter.

There is continuing debate within the religious news industry (i.e. official church publications like The Presbyterian Record or the United Church Observer and publications or programs aimed generally at a religious interest, like Christianity Today or 100 Huntley Street) about the attitudes in the mass media towards the coverage of religion. In the wake of the Bakker and Swaggart scandals, the Religious News Service of New York — similar to, but much smaller than, the secular wire services — undertook a study in 1989 designed to bolster interest in its journalism products for subscriber papers. RNS decided to seek an endowment to fund the study as "the newspaper industry had not included religion in its national surveys for more than a decade. And not in all of American higher education [up until 1989] had there been a major study on religion reporting and readership in the public press."⁶

The RNS study, funded in part by the Lilly Foundation, sparked some discussion in the journalism community about both religious news and the religion beat itself. Counter to what Dart and Allen have found more recently, an encouraging claim in the Lilly Report said: "Over the past 10 years, religion has increasingly appeared as the subject of major news stories. More and more newspapers seem to be devoting more attention and space to covering it. This takes place against the backdrop of traditional newspaper attitudes and practices surrounding religion, where the beat has not been a very prominent one."⁷

Dr. Judith Buddenbaum, an associate professor of journalism at Colorado State University, who has recently specialized in international religious news coverage, has isolated four limitations in the coverage of religion that may be applied to North America. They are:

- "1. that there still isn't enough of it;
2. that there isn't enough variety in what is covered;
3. that the coverage seems to be too shallow; and
4. that coverage sometimes appears biased, either against religion in general, or against certain particular religious expression."⁸

The RNS study has relied extensively on Buddenbaum's scholarly works from the past decade in which she points out journalism's shortcomings and suggests "that recent apparent improvements in religion coverage have come about as a result of the weight and momentum of religion news itself."⁹

Despite some recent improvements in coverage, led in part by the New York Times with three reporters now assigned full-time to the religion beat, "the majority of media decision-makers do not *personally* consider religion to be very important and therefore have a blind spot as they consider how to cover it. This, along with the perception that religion is a 'soft' beat, leads religion to be almost unique in its needing constantly to defend itself against the suspicion, ignorance, and indifference of editors."¹⁰ This sentiment was echoed by the religion writers interviewed for this thesis and interviewed for several studies on reporting religion. Ari Goldman, a former religion writer at the New York Times and now a professor at the Columbia School of Journalism teaching reporting religion, said: "religion writing is not highly regarded at most newspapers even though the readers care about it. The editors tend to be irreligious or anti-religious."¹¹ Goldman suggested that religion writers faced a scepticism nurtured in journalism schools. "A lot of what journalism is is show me, don't tell me. A lot of what religion is about is tell me because often there isn't a lot of show me."¹²

One important gauge of how reporting religion may be regarded is found in the journalism textbooks used to teach the basics of the trade. A commonly used text in the United States is *Interpretative Reporting* by Curtis D. MacDougall and Robert D. Reid. This seminal work, now in its 9th edition, devotes slightly more than a dozen of its 500 plus pages to the complexities of reporting religion. Medicine, police and the environment all receive more. There are more than 300 universities in the United States with journalism programs and a recent AP news report said only 18 of them offer specialized courses in reporting religion.

Canadian community college and university schools of journalism offer no reporting religion courses. A new (and so far the only) Canadian introductory text on reporting, *The Canadian Reporter* by Carman Cumming and Catherine McKercher, published in 1994, contains no references to reporting religion or the religion beat. McKercher said when the text was put together the authors "start[ed] with the [reporting] basics. We did not get into some of the more specialized beat areas, so we don't have one on . . . social affairs reporting, we don't have one on international, we don't have one on religion . . . it's only the first edition. We can't do everything."¹³ McKercher suggested that if journalism students are taught well and learn the basics — "how to conceive of news, how to structure stories, how to look at story ideas, how to think . . . about issues"¹⁴ they should be able to apply their acquired skills to almost any assignment or beat. McKercher added that her

generation is "kind of secular"¹⁵ and she had not noted any heightened interest in religious questions or issues.

One possible definition of reporting is capturing the significant events and ideas of the time for a defined audience in a defined area. Much of the academic literature about reporting is based on work undertaken by David Manning White and Warren Breed who saw the journalist as a gatekeeper. Bill Thorn at Marquette University, subscribes to this view. "I've never understood myself as a reporter in any role other than that. It's the lesson you learn when you cover the first speech and you cover the first accident. You know what you've left out and you know what you've chosen from among the things that pass before your eyes and ears. You've chosen those things which seem most valuable, important and interesting to the audience that you have in mind when you're writing. You're always a gatekeeper."¹⁶

Thorn supports Dart and Allen's findings that there is a gulf between the media and religion. He suggests, like many of his teaching colleagues, that one of the reasons the religion beat has received short shrift is that too often younger, less-experienced reporters do not recognize the importance of the beat and sense from their newsroom colleagues that it is not an area with much room for advancement or fame. Reporting religion is neglected at many newspapers because the beat "necessitates understanding the religious dimensions of stories like how questions of faith affect the positions taken by candidates for public office."¹⁷ Thorn was alluding

to a recent U.S. presidential election where two of the candidates (Jesse Jackson and Pat Robertson) were ordained ministers. "When an area like religion gets so segregated from the other parts of life and the editors or religion reporters never think about suggesting to people covering economics or politics or education . . . angles that represent significant religious dimensions . . . then you have a serious problem."¹⁸

Thorn suggested that journalism textbooks and schools show students how religion fits in. "That has to be part of the preparation of competent journalism. Then you don't have people surprised that religion is such a powerful and moving force."¹⁹ Ed Pratt, at the Baton Rouge, La. Advocate, pointed out that he had not encountered many journalism school graduates who wanted to write about religion. "Religion doesn't cross their minds and, so, I think when they start looking at stories that are important to their communities they tend to overlook the religion angle and that's a reason why the beat isn't getting the attention it should."²⁰ Pratt speculated that the scandals involving Bakker and Swaggart — and the power the televangelists possessed — were hard for even the most secular newspapers to ignore. He mused that the scandals, controversies, criminal and big-business aspects of these stories may have helped editors to think about bringing religion out of the back pages or weekend sections.

Pratt, Thorn and Goldman all bring strong religious convictions to their reporting. Pratt was born and raised a Southern Baptist, Thorn is a Jesuit-trained Roman Catholic and Ari Goldman is an Orthodox Jew. All felt that their belief systems helped make them better reporters and more understanding in their coverage. Goldman summed it up: "Objectivity is an old stereotype. I have strong opinions and an attitude. What you have to be is fair . . . the challenge is to be fair and I try to do that. I mean — I am a passionate Jew — but I think I can write fairly about the Cardinal of New York and I've tried to do that."²¹ Thorn said that he applied a triad to his reporting: "accuracy, fairness and balance. I don't buy objectivity . . . objectivity deteriorates to a kind of facticity."²² Pratt suggested that "objectivity is crap. You write to the best of your ability and let the chips fall where they may."²³

Bob Harvey at the Ottawa Citizen says his faith helps him as a reporter. "I think the fact that I have a faith myself, because I struggle with God . . . I struggle with things of the spirit myself, I'm more able to, I think, understand the struggles of believers of all faiths, whether it's Christianity or Judaism, or Hinduism or whatever. A lot of journalists just simply don't believe in God . . . so it becomes harder for them to write stories about faith struggles or faith issues. They don't know the vocabulary, they don't know the thinking behind it, they haven't done the reading and they don't identify with it."²⁴

Harvey, since his conversion to Christianity from atheism 15 years ago, now describes himself as a "charismatic evangelical"²⁵ working for a "secular newspaper."²⁶ Harvey said that religion news at the Citizen is moving from the ghetto of the weekend pages and he is being encouraged by his editors to find stories that will be played in other sections of the paper. "We seem to be getting more interest [from editors] in New Age, ethics, spirituality, that sort of thing . . . we're tending to focus less on the traditional denominations."²⁷ Despite being upbeat about his position and religion coverage in general, Harvey still does not think the beat gets the prominence it deserves. Recently, he floated a piece on spiritualism: "I had a terrible time getting that story in the paper, and finally one senior editor told me, 'You know the problem here is that I just don't believe this stuff. It's like little green men. Show me some.'"²⁸ Harvey continued: "the secular media [have] . . . almost entirely screened out questions of belief and when you work in that environment, people are made uneasy . . . and are disturbed when certain language and concepts are used."²⁹

Despite his own ambitions, Harvey recognizes there are few jobs for religion specialists in Canadian journalism. His hunch was borne out in 1989 when Ron Rempel, the editor of the Mennonite Reporter in Waterloo, Ont., then studying at Carleton University, surveyed religion writers and concluded that "in Canadian daily newspapers [they] are a rare and endangered species."³⁰ Five years later, part of Rempel's contention may be questioned. There has been little change at Canadian

newspapers in the numbers of religion reporters. But for those who work the beat, interest in religion is increasing. Rempel's study did not forecast the upsurge in broad interest about religious matters in both Canada and the United States.

In the U.S., however, the RNS-Lilly study quotes the optimistic sounding Hynds study on religious reporting as saying that all the newspapers in that country "with circulation above 100,000 . . . had expanded religion coverage over the previous decade . . . moving out of the ghetto as the stepchild of the newsroom. There was general consensus that the major reason for this improvement was that religion was becoming more *credible* due to the surge in stories where religion is seen to impact other areas such as politics, government, and international relations."³¹

The 1993 Maclean's poll, discussed in an earlier chapter, has led to the Angus Reid Group asking more religious questions in its regular omnibus surveys. Reid has started asking about basic faith issues including "church attendance, belief in prayer, belief in God, Bible reading, acceptance of Christ as Savior, and whether it is important to encourage non-Christians to become Christians."³² The poll is also directly responsible for a planned conference at Queen's University in 1995 to include academics, religious leaders and selected media representatives. The conference will focus on evangelical faith in Canada. This conference, if promoted properly to the media, may help to move faith to the forefront of media considerations.

While there are glimmers of hope for religion reporting at daily newspapers the outlook for television remains bleak. Brian Healy, senior political reporter for CBS News, said "television still does not consider religion legitimate news unless it enters the world of party politics, pageantry or pedophilia."³³ Healy stressed that he is "troubled by the exclusion of the spiritual, religious or moral aspect of stories. I think partisan, personal and political biases of liberal journalists often dominate newsrooms."³⁴

The complexity of religion just does not translate well to television newscasts. Television, even more than newspapers, loves the bizarre, the weird and the scandalous because television newscasts are not structured to deal with difficult concepts. Lloyd Robertson of CTV News said there are fundamental problems with TV as a medium dealing with complicated issues. "Those of us in daily news get to cover the passing parade . . . which means change in any aspect of society or breaking developments in a story which has been continuing for some time. I think it's up to the viewer or listener or the reader to find his or her own sources to background themselves properly on the broader range of material available on any given subject. I don't think we can do that in individual newscasts."³⁵

Robertson, an active Presbyterian and a former columnist for that denomination's church magazine, is sometimes frustrated with the play that uplifting or religious news gets in the secular media. "We should be covering more stories of

the human spirit, . . . I suppose that covers a broad spectrum — but I like stories where we do see positive aspects of the human spirit right in front of us."³⁶

Robertson mused that television stations or networks like CNN and Newsworld should definitely do more coverage of religious news. He indicated that he had not grappled at length with the possibility of establishing a religious beat for television like a social affairs beat. "Until we come up with a definition for such a correspondent I don't know where we'd slap such a person."³⁷ From his unique perspective anchoring Canada's most-watched television newscast and from his travels coast-to-coast Robertson feels "there is an increased interest in things spiritual They know that man doesn't have all the answers. We do our best but we screw up. What is it that guides us? What is our philosophical base? What pulls us together as a people? What makes us think about images larger than ourselves?"³⁸ Robertson commented on the print media's coverage of religion and says he senses that the beat will improve with time "but there are far too few people covering religious matters."³⁹

Much has changed in the past five years since the epic-like scandals of the televangelists played out in the mainstream media like a larger-than-life soap opera. The repercussions from the fallout are still being felt by the fundamentalist and evangelical churches. Bill Thorn said he believes that the televangelists are on the brink of return. There is simply too much money to be made in that arena.

The pedophilia scandals that rocked the North American Roman Catholic Church have had an incalculable effect on both the church and the faithful, and journalists who have developed expertise in this area say there is lots more to come. Here in Canada, recent investigative work by Jack Aubry at the Ottawa Citizen on the residential schools issue is just beginning to be felt. Aubry does not see this as a religious issue but simply another scandal that involves religion.⁴⁰

There is much disagreement on what has happened to the religious right in the United States. Some observers feel there will be a mighty resurgence while others contend that the movement has lost its clout. In the U.S., there is more and more discussion on the separation of church and state and America's "confused relationships with its religions."⁴¹ Abortion, women's rights, education, medicine, political life, morals and ethics are all subjects that have serious religious dimensions.

Many people regard religious faith as the constant in their lives. The polling data is irrefutable. Faith is a reality and that faith needs to be discussed by the mainline media. This will only happen when coverage of religion is no longer neglected by publishers, editors and journalism schools that regard "religion . . . like model airplanes, just another hobby: something quiet, something private, something trivial — and not really a fit activity for intelligent, public-spirited adults."⁴²

Endnotes

1. John Seigenthaler, "Here's How One Minister Views Media Coverage of Televangelism," *The Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors*, January 1988, p.13.
2. John Dart and Jimmy Allen, *Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1994), p. 7.
3. Dart and Allen, p. 11.
4. Dart and Allen, p. 11.
5. "Mixed Message About Press Freedom On Both Sides of Atlantic", *News Release* (Washington, D.C., Times Mirror Center for The People & The Press, March 16, 1994), p. 7.
6. Judy Weidman, "Introduction", in Stewart M. Hoover, *The RNS-Lilly Study of Religion Reporting and Readership in the Daily Press* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University, October 1989).
7. Judy Weidman, "Introduction".
8. Personal interview with Judith Buddenbaum. July 1994.
9. Stewart Hoover, page 14.
10. Stewart Hoover, page 14.
11. Personal interview with Ari Goldman, August 1994.
12. Interview with Goldman.

13. Personal interview with Catherine McKercher, August 1994.
14. Interview with McKercher.
15. Interview with McKercher.
16. Personal interview with Dr. Bill Thorn, August 1994.
17. Interview with Thorn.
18. Interview with Thorn.
19. Interview with Thorn.
20. Personal interview with Ed Pratt, August 1994.
21. Interview with Goldman.
22. Interview with Thorn.
23. Interview with Pratt.
24. Personal interview with Bob Harvey, July 1994.
25. Interview with Harvey.
26. Interview with Harvey.
27. Interview with Harvey.

28. Interview with Harvey.
29. Interview with Harvey.
30. Ron Rempel, "Article based on survey of religion editors/writers in Canadian daily newspapers," Diss. Carleton University 1989, p. 1.
31. Stewart Hoover, p. 15.
32. Personal interview with Andrew Grenville, December 1994.
33. "Religion and the News". A Conference Report. The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center (New York: Columbia University, 1994), p. 3.
34. Religion and the News, p. 3.
35. Personal interview with Lloyd Robertson, August 1994.
36. Interview with Robertson.
37. Interview with Robertson.
38. Interview with Robertson.
39. Interview with Robertson.
40. Personal interview with Jack Aubry, August 1994.
41. Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993) p. 23.
42. Carter, p. 22.

Controversies and Conclusions

Norman Corwin, in *Trivializing America* (1986), wrote, "Of all systems of abstract thought, religion has the widest spread. It overlooks life, death, morality, ethics, justice, divinity, speaks for creation, superintends the cosmos, deals in myths and mysteries, mediates the soul, accommodates hope, fear, power, charity, devotion, mercy."¹ Religion affects everyone, whether they recognize it or not. Christianity has had deep and continuing effects on North American society from the school system to the legal system, from medicine to the arts. Issues of faith and ethics permeate our lives — abortion, genetics, euthanasia, contraception, poverty, homelessness, war, disease, human rights, culture, business ethics.

Religion — unlike the media — deals almost wholly with the momentous and profound. The media deal with such things too, but they also deal with the trivial. Perhaps this goes some distance towards explaining the continuing mismatch between the two institutions, and the inability of the latter ever to deal either comprehensively or sympathetically with the former. Over the centuries, religion has embraced the charlatans and the charitable, the vicars and the victims, the sinners and the saints. For many believers, the church is where they develop their spirituality and define the meaning of their lives. It is their touchstone, a refuge and a gateway to hope. It offers forgiveness and holds out the promise of life eternal.

But for many secular people these concerns or questions are not even real, and as has been repeatedly noted above the secular view is over-represented in the news media. From their perspective, the churches are outmoded institutions, a remnant from the past when people needed religious authority to guide their lives. Organized religion of any stripe is certainly not viewed as an important factor in political, economic or social events and trends of the day in western countries; indeed it demands a long-term attention and a kind of focus that secular people are simply incapable of mustering.

The church, like other elite organizations, attracts attention when scandals arise. The media have every right to report on scandals and controversies and a great deal of experience in doing so. The Charlotte Observer deserved the commendation it received for its reporting of the fiscal and moral improprieties that had been taking place at the PTL ministry. The Telegram in St. John's deserves to be chastised for ignoring the Mount Cashel story and bowing to church and state pressure to quash it when it first arose. And, the Ottawa Citizen and other Ontario newspapers practised conventional journalism when reporting the Alfred and Uxbridge stories sparked by whistle blowers.

What happened in the wake of Jim Bakker's fall? His followers, many of whom had contributed their life savings to supporting the ministry, were left at least shaken in their faith and maybe broke. Their dreams were dashed. They then had to

watch as some of the scandal's major criminals appeared to get away with light treatment. Bakker, although sentenced to more than 40 years in jail, served just five years and was recently released from penitentiary. The media, despite seeing Bakker as yesterday's news — small-time in comparison to the Menendez Brothers and O.J. Simpson — still cover him. Brief news reports marked Bakker's release and mentioned in passing that he may re-establish his ministry. Tammy Faye has divorced her husband and married Roe Messner, the millionaire church-builder who funnelled hush money to Jessica Hahn. In 1993, Tammy Faye and Messner were paid \$100,000 by A Current Affair for TV rights to their wedding. Hahn has capitalized on her 30-minute affair with Bakker, developing a unique niche in television, radio, rock videos and films. She earned more than a \$1 million disrobing for Playboy Magazine. Generally speaking the scandals' principals have been followed by the media — the faithful have not.

The media's obsession with religious scandal gets in the way of dealing intelligently with either the victims or the larger moral and ethical context behind the headlines. In the media's rush to find the next aberrant story, the deep reaching, more abstract and ethereal stories of people and their search for faith are often neglected. There is no arguing that sensation sells and that news consumers want that sort of coverage — but there is more. What the media may learn is, with people leaving the mainline denominations in droves, the press bears a responsibility for developing religious discourse, understanding and tolerance. Although it may be suggested that

no news beat gets enough resources (at least according to those particular reporters), one that deals with a spiritual life central to so many people surely deserves more.

The Bakker and Swaggart scandals demonstrated that flamboyance and an entrepreneurial spirit will almost inevitably attract media scrutiny. Reporters will try to uncover dirt on such organizations, ignoring the messages about the Gospels and faith being promulgated to the followers of the Bakkers and the Swaggarts. If the media continue to dig dirt ignoring or excluding the real religious dimensions the media will fail to fully inform their audiences. The smell of money is another predictable draw, but evangelical, television-based ministries can avoid unwelcome media attention by emulating the squeaky clean, above board accounting practices employed by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association or the 100 Huntley Street ministry in Canada — neither of which gets into the papers in a bad way, ever. An old public relations adage — the more an organization welcomes the media, the more likely it is to receive fair and favorable coverage — should become the norm rather than the exception for the churches. As for the media, they might then at least look at what the churches themselves consider their agenda to be and report on it. In the meantime, secretive organizations, such as the Bakkers' and the Swaggarts', will continue to have their policies, practices and activities — including their theology — investigated and reported in a secular and conventional way, and will continue to feel their real mission in the world is being ignored.

On the other hand, secular journalists need to put aside their prejudices when dealing with television ministries. No longer can people that claim to have a direct relationship with Jesus Christ simply be written off as kooks. Secular reporters and editors have to realize that religion is a vital and thriving force in millions of people's lives and consequently should be dealt with seriously. As the Dart and Allen study reminds us, there is an unwritten tradition (in journalism) that "keeps us out of the deep waters of faith, doctrine and spirituality We look on religion as we look on love and hate — too much a part of us and the world to ignore but too elusive to explore."²

When the Bakker scandal broke followed by the Swaggart scandal, the international media were all over the stories. News is preoccupied with power and authority and it found the abuse of power and misuse of authority in both these stories. The Canadian religious scandals were different and the Canadian media were asleep at the switch for over a decade. The boys of Mount Cashel, the boys of Uxbridge, the boys of Alfred and the countless children that have been victims of physical and mental abuse in residential schools and orphanages were certainly overlooked. Realistically, the media may only be partially blamed. In the late 1950s and through to the 1980s, when the scandals were unfolding, the Roman Catholic Church wielded extreme power and the media understandably backed off. But the result was these helpless children were let down by the governments and church that were supposed to protect them. The Washington Post code of ethics has one tenet that

stands out — to listen to the voiceless. It speaks volumes about the role the media should have played.

These boys were voiceless. Rumors had been circulating for years, particularly in Newfoundland, about priestly and institutional sexual abuse. The cover-up, undertaken by the Newfoundland government and the Roman Catholic Church, held for years until the crisis at Mount Cashel could not be ignored. Interviews with reporters and commentators who covered the scandals and the subsequent trials revealed that the media, at their highest levels, had been steered away from the developing story by church and state complicity. Part of the explanation lies in the fact that Newfoundland is an insular community with a large Catholic population. The Roman Catholic Church had generations of good works to its credit. Cosiness between the church and the media made conservative reporters, editors and publishers hesitant to probe deeply into ugly rumors about the church.

Media silence rested on an apprehension of resistance or public disbelief — the public appetite for scandal drew the line at the Roman Catholic Church. When respect for the church weakened enough to allow coverage, most of it focused on the secular story — sex, greed, avarice, power, abuse, exploitation and/or tragedy. There was little on the religious dimension, the story of a trust broken and loss of virtue, loss of innocence and loss of simple dignity, so valued by the Newfoundland community.

The church's slow response to help the healing process has damaged its position irrevocably. The victims of abuse at Mount Cashel have not received compensation, and the church, despite its vast financial resources, is dragging its heels in court. The stories of lost faith, pain and suffering, angst and anger, have been let lie in a community that just wishes the story would go away. There has been no retrospective analytical reporting to help reconciliation. The church in Newfoundland will not be going away. It is difficult to comprehend that the religious dimensions of life and the impact of the church have not been taken more seriously by the Newfoundland media. Faith is as much a part of the Newfoundland community as the fishery, and as abundant as the fish once were. As the memories of Mount Cashel fade, the story that remains is the future of the faithful, the priests and the church hierarchy. It looks as if this story will not be covered.

In Ontario, justice officials knew as early as the late 1950s that there were rumors of abuse at St. Joseph's Training School in Alfred. It is reasonable to conclude that Ontario, in that period, was no more open to tackling the Roman Catholic Church than was Newfoundland 20 years later. And most Ontario media simply would not have known of any such rumors, given the isolation of Alfred, a francophone backwater in Eastern Ontario.

When the Alfred story broke in the late 1980s, CP used Ottawa Citizen copy extensively. The wire service ran the story as general news and only slugged the story

with a religious designation twice. The Ottawa Citizen regarded the story as essentially one of abuse and violence and the religious pages stayed away from any in-depth treatment of the religious issues that swirled around the main story. It again may be suggested that a secular paper chose to ignore or downplay aspects of the story that would have required comprehensive analysis by someone skilled at understanding religious matters. Recent interviews with several Citizen editors suggest that the paper is looking again at its coverage of religious news and issues. Editor Jim Travers said he regarded interviews for this study as a wake-up call. This is some proof that this newspaper is certainly not anti-religious.

In many papers, even so-called good news stories about religion are ignored or downplayed. Interest in religion and religious matters is flourishing in Canada. The polls suggest that Canadians think that religion and matters of faith are important. That implies that coverage of religion should be enhanced, not relegated to the obligatory weekend section next to the church ads. Despite Maclean's Magazine's discovery that 78 per cent of Canadians call themselves Christians, the notion of rethinking coverage seems to be lost on many publishers and editors. It is easier to look at controversies in churches over issues such as the ordination of women and homosexuals, gay rights, the emergence of the New Christian Right, and abortion — all stories that can be handled from a civic rather than a religious dimension — rather than looking in depth at how baby boomers are relating to questions of theology, faith and morality.

More than one million baby boomers will turn 40 each year for the next several years, normally a time for reflection and re-assessment, so publishers and editors might re-examine their approaches to reporting religion. Those who work the religion beat rightly complain that it receives short shrift, so, journalism school graduates head to other specialities. Those who remain have raised several important concerns which have been echoed by recent studies on reporting religion.

First, there is an ignorance about religion in North America's predominantly secular newsrooms. Several people interviewed claimed that journalists in general have not been exposed to the great books curriculum, hence even their general education is not sufficiently rounded. Also, they do not understand the basic beliefs central to Christianity. There are no courses taught in Canada on reporting religion. In the U S., only 18 journalism schools offer courses in reporting religion.

Second, journalists do not fully understand the importance of religion. Despite the statistical evidence that religion is of concern to a majority of people, the media pay more attention to sports than to religion, perhaps because sports has filled an emotional void that has traditionally been the province of the churches. A recent major study of baseball stadia was, not accidentally, entitled *Green Cathedrals*. Although there have been some increases noted in the actual number of religion reporters, at least in the U.S., in recent years, it is generally one of the first areas to be considered for cuts in tough economic times. The Religion Newswriters

Association, with a membership of 200, says fewer than 70 of its members work the beat full time. Both national and local electronic media have few religion reporters. A notable exception is ABC, which hired its first full-time religion reporter this past summer. Neither CBC nor CTV has religion reporters. News directors and executive producers often suggest, with some justification, that religion is too abstract an area to translate well to television.

Third, the religion beat is complex, requiring a complete new vocabulary that reporters seem unwilling to learn or understand. Common terms such as fundamentalist, born-again and evangelical are misused and even interchanged. Religious leaders often point out that journalists do not take the time to look up basic information in a Bible dictionary. More precise terms such as charismatic, liberation theology, glossolalia, pentecostals, and spiritual warfare, are either unknown or misunderstood. Journalists are often accused of not recognizing or even caring about denominational differences and practices.

Fourth, there is distrust and fear between religionists and journalists. As Dart and Allen say: "Religious figures fear being misunderstood and misrepresented; journalists fear making mistakes and incurring religious wrath. The resulting apprehensions inhibit the free flow of information and often add to misunderstanding."³

Fifth, there is much misunderstanding about the churches and the apparent political directions they advocate. Reporters must realize that the churches have a stake in political, sexual, economic, medical and even entertainment issues. Reporters have to understand how politicians' programs, plans and priorities may emanate from or be influenced by their religious faith.

The relationship between the media and the churches is a two-way street. It is important for church leaders to understand how the media work, their needs and constraints, what is considered worthy of coverage, and how to develop strategic communications plans. The chasm that exists between religion and the media will only be bridged if earnest dialogue happens between the two sometime opposing camps. If that dialogue takes place, the reporting of religion will improve and may be accorded the level of importance that it deserves.

Endnotes

1. Norman Corwin, *Trivializing America* (Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stewart Inc., 1986), p. 117.
2. John Dart and Jimmy Allen, *Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1994), p. 13.
3. Dart and Allen, p. 5.

Bibliography

A Vision Fulfilled. A Vision Unfolding. Pamphlet. Toronto: Vision TV: n.d.

Abelman, Robert. "Religious Television." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 5 (September 1988), 255.

Ahlstrom, Sydney E. *A Religious History of the American People*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975.

Assembly of First Nations. *Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact and Healing as Illustrated by the Stories of First Nations Individuals*. Ottawa, Ont.: First Nations Health Commission, 1994.

Atwan, Robert, Barry Orton and William Vesterman. *American Mass Media: Industries and Issues*. 3rd ed. New York: Random House, 1986.

"Bakkers' Personal Use of Donations Reported." *The Charlotte Observer*, 26 January 1986, p. 1A.

Barrie, Iain. "The Great Commission in the Age of Television." Paper. Carleton University, 1988.

Bennett, William J. *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.

Bennett, Bernie. Police and court reporter, The Evening Telegram, St. John's, Nfld. Personal interview. September 1994.

Berry, Jason. *Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Catholic Priests and the Sexual Abuse of Children*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.

----- . Freelance journalist, New Orleans. Personal interview. August 1994.

Bibby, Reginald W. *Mosaic Madness: The Poverty and Potential of Life in Canada*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co., 1990.

----- . *Unknown Gods: The Ongoing Story of Religion in Canada*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing, 1993.

----- . *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*. Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 1987.

- Briggs, Kenneth A. "Why Editors Miss Important Religion Stories." In *Reporting Religion: Facts and Faith*. Ed. Benjamin J. Hubbard. Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1990.
- Bruce, Steve. *Pray TV: Televangelism in America*. London, England: Routledge, 1990.
- Buddenbaum, Judith M. "Religion News Coverage in Commercial Network Newscasts." In *Religious Television: Controversies and Conclusions*. Ed. Robert Abelman and Stewart M. Hoover. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1990.
- Burke, Douglas. Director of Public Relations, Crossroads Christian Communications. Personal interview. July 1994.
- Canadian Press. *The Canadian Press Stylebook*. Toronto: The Canadian Press, 1993.
- Carter, Stephen L. *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.
- Cornell, George W. "The Evolution of the Religion Beat." In *Reporting Religion: Facts and Faith*. Ed. Benjamin J. Hubbard. Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1990.
- Corwin, Norman. *Trivializing America*. Secaucus, N.J.: Lyle Stewart Inc., 1986.
- CP Database. November 28, 1990. October 15, 1990. June 4, 1992. January 23, 1993. March 19, 1993. April 18, 1991.
- Cumming, Carman and Catherine McKercher. *The Canadian Reporter: News Writing and Reporting*. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1994.
- Dart, John and Jimmy Allen. *Bridging the Gap: Religion and the News Media*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1994.
- Diamond, Sara. *Spiritual Warfare: The Politics of the Christian Right*. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990.
- Donovan, John B. *Pat Robertson: The Authorized Biography*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988.
- Epstein, Edward J. *News From Nowhere: Television and the News*. New York: Random House, 1974.

Finke, Roger and Rodney Stark. *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

Fishwick, Marshall W. and Ray B. Browne, eds. *The God Pumpers: Religion in the Electronic Age*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987.

FitzGerald, Frances. "Reflections." *The New Yorker*, 23 (April 1990), p. 48.

-----, Freelance journalist, New York. Personal interview. December 1994.

Fore, William F. *Television and Religion: The Shaping of Faith, Values, and Culture*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987.

Fraday, Marshall. *Billy Graham: A Parable of American Righteousness*. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1979.

Gans, Herbert J. *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time*. New York: Random House, 1979.

Garment, Suzanne. *Scandal: The Culture of Mistrust in American Politics*. New York: Doubleday, 1992.

Goldman, Ari. Professor of Journalism, Columbia University, New York. Personal interview. August 1994.

-----, *The Search for God at Harvard*. New York: Random House, 1991.

Greeley, Andrew M. *Confessions of a Parish Priest: An Autobiography*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1986.

Grenville, Andrew. Vice-president, Angus Reid Group, Toronto. Personal interview. May 1994.

Hadden, Jeffrey K. and Charles E. Swann. *Prime Time Preachers: The Rising Power of Televangelism*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1981.

Harrell, David Edwin Jr. *Varieties of Southern Evangelism*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1981.

-----, *Oral Roberts: An American Life*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985.

- Harris, Michael. *Unholy Orders: Tragedy at Mount Cashel*. Markham, Ont.: Penguin Books, 1990.
- Harrison, Henry. Former co-host, PTL Club television program. Personal interview. July 1989.
- Harvey, Bob. Religion editor, Ottawa Citizen. Personal interview. November 1994.
- Hoover, Stewart M. *Mass Media Religion: The Social Sources of the Electronic Church*. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1988.
- , *The RNS-Lilly Study of Religion Reporting and Readership in the Daily Press*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 1989.
- Horsfield, Peter G. *Religious Television: The American Experience*. New York: Longman, 1984.
- Hubbard, Benjamin J. "The Importance of the Religion Angle in Reporting on Current Events." In *Reporting Religion: Facts and Faith*. Ed. Benjamin J. Hubbard. Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1990.
- Jenish, D'Arcy. "Empty Pews, Angry Members." *Maclean's*, 12 April 1993, pp. 48-50.
- Johnston, Megan. Reporter/religion editor, Evening Telegram, St. John's, Nfld. Personal interview. November 1994.
- Jorstad, Erling. *Evangelicals in the White House: The Cultural Maturation of Born Again Christianity 1960-1981*. Studies in American Religion, Vol. 4. New York: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1981.
- Keeping, Max. Vice President of News, CJOH-TV. Personal interview. December 1994.
- Kurtz, Howard. *Media Circus: The Trouble with America's Newspapers*. New York: Random House, 1994.
- Light, Paul C. *Baby Boomers*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988.
- MacDougall, Curtis D. and Robert Reid. *Interpretative Reporting*. 9th ed. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987.
- Mainse, David. President, Crossroads Christian Communications. Personal interview. January 1990.

Mainse, David with David Manuel. *Past, Present and Promise*. Toronto: Crossroads Christian Communications Inc., 1986.

Maltese, John Anthony. *Spin Control: The White House Office of Communications and the Management of Presidential News*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

Martz, Larry. *Ministry of Greed: The Inside Story of the Televangelists and Their Holy Wars*. New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988.

McKercher, Catherine. Professor of Journalism, Carleton University, Ottawa. Personal interview. August 1994.

"Mixed Message About Press Freedom on Both Sides of Atlantic." *Times Mirror Center for The People & The Press*. Washington, D.C.: n.p. March 16, 1994.

Murphy, Rex. Freelance broadcaster, St. John's, Nfld. and Toronto, Ont. Personal interview. August 1994.

Nemeth, Mary. "God Is Alive." *Maclean's*, 12 April 1993.

O'Brien, Dereck. Author, St. John's, Nfld. Personal interview. November 1994.

-----, *Suffer Little Children: An Autobiography of a Foster Child*. St. John's, Nfld.: Breakwater, 1991.

Oldham, Dee. Former employee, PTL, Charlotte, N.C. Personal interview. July 1989.

Oppel, Richard. Editor, Charlotte Observer, Charlotte, N.C. and Washington, D.C. Personal interview. November 1994.

Ouellet, Hélène. Director of Communications, Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, Ottawa, Ont. Personal interview. December 1994.

Parikhal, John. *The Baby Boom: Making Sense of a Generation at 40*. Mississauga, Ont.: Joint Communications Corporation, 1993.

Plouffe, Lise. Information Officer, The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, Hull, Que. Personal interview. July 1994.

Pratt, Ed. Religion Editor, Baton Rouge Advocate, Baton Rouge, La. Personal interview. August 1994.

"PTL and the Observer 'A Look at the Record'." *The Charlotte Observer*, 2 February 1986, p. 15A.

"PTL's Bakker Rebuts News Reports of FCC Allegations." *The Charlotte Observer*, 1 February 1986, p. 1A.

Rawlings, Natalie. Information Officer, Liberal Party of Canada, Ottawa, Ont. Personal interview. December 1994.

Rawlyk, George. Professor of History, Queen's University, Kingston, Ont. Personal interview. July 1994.

"Religion and the News." A Conference Report. The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, New York: Columbia University 1994.

Rempel, Ron. "Article Based on Survey of Religion Editors/Writers in Canadian Daily Newspapers. Carleton University. 1989.

Riley, Patrick and Russell Shaw, eds. *Anti-Catholicism in the Media: An examination of whether elite news organizations are biased against the Church*. Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1993.

Robertson, Lloyd. News anchor, CTV News, Toronto, Ont. Personal interview. August 1994.

-----". "Reporting Religion." *Presbyterian Record*, September 1990, p. 11.

Roof, Wade Clark. *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation*. San Francisco: Harper, 1993.

Seigenthaler, John. "Here's How One Minister Views Media Coverage of Televangelism." *The Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Editors*. January 1988.

Sheler, Jeffrey L. "Spiritual America." *U.S. News & World Report*, 4 April 1994, pp. 48-59.

Shepard, Charles E. *Forgiven: The Rise and Fall of Jim Bakker and the PTL Ministry*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1989.

-----". Journalist and author, Charlotte, N.C. and Washington, D.C. Personal interview. June 1989.

Statistics Canada. *Religions in Canada*. Ottawa: Industry, Science and Technology Canada, 1993. 1991 Census of Canada. Catalogue number 93-319.

Stavert, Bruce. Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Quebec, Quebec City, Que. Personal interview. November 1994.

Straub, Gerard Thomas. *Salvation for Sale: An Insider's View of Pat Robertson*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1986.

"The Jim and Tammy Show." WHEC-TV, Rochester, N.Y., 31 January 1986.

Thorn, William. Director of the School of Journalism, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wis. Personal interview. March 1994.

Travers, Jim. Editor, Ottawa Citizen, Ottawa, Ont. Personal interview. November 1994.

"TV Evangelist Cites Betrayal, 'Blackmail'." *The Charlotte Observer*, 20 March 1987, p. 1A.

Upton, Sean. Former reporter, Ottawa Citizen, Ottawa, Ont. Personal interview. November 1994.

Woodward, Kenneth L. "Soulful Matters." *Newsweek*, 31 October 1994.

END

3 1 - 0 5 - 9 5

FIN