

THE RELIGION WRITERS AND
THE SECULAR PRESS:
AN ANALYTICAL AND INTERACTIONAL
STUDY OF THE RELIGION WRITER'S ROLE
AS PERCEIVED BY THE WRITERS,
THEIR SUPERIORS, AND
RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
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ELIZABETH E. BRENNER
1970

THESIS



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ABSTRACT

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by Elizabeth E. Brenner

This study examines the gatekeepers role of the religion news writers of the secular press as perceived by the writers themselves, their superiors, and religious leaders. The data were obtained through in-depth interviews with those who were found to be the representatives of these groups in Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, and Milwaukee. The interviews were conducted with (1) four religion writers who were all present or past presidents of the Religious Newswriters Association, (2) four superiors of these writers, one for each, and (3) sixteen religious leaders, selected to represent various racial, theological, and social backgrounds.

The study provides evidence of a cleavage between the three groups insofar as the religion news writers' role is concerned. However, this cleavage is not as wide as was expected. The views of religion writers and their superiors on the role were similar. They see the

religion writer's role primarily as one of informing readers and interpreting and explaining to them what is happening in the world of religion. Bald announcements of past or forthcoming events were generally considered less important. Such suggested roles as inspiration, promotion of organized religion, and newspaper circulation increase were rejected by both groups. Other roles such as teaching basic beliefs, forecasting future trends in the churches, and criticizing the churches were endorsed by most of the writers, but were received with less enthusiasm by their superiors.

Religious leaders generally divided themselves into two groups. The view of the socially and theologically liberal on the religion writer's role was much more closely allied to that of the journalists than was the view of theological and social conservatives. The liberals tended to want interpretation and in-depth reporting, with articles centered on issues. The conservatives tended to fear that such interpretative writing would not accurately present their views and sought more announcements of religious events. Although neither group wanted the activities and beliefs of a specific church promoted, some conservatives did want religion as a whole to be advocated.

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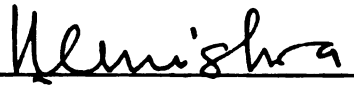
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Director of Thesis

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

News can be considered as an account of a current idea, event, or problem that interests people. Those that control its flow are sometimes termed "gatekeepers," because they "keep the gate" through which news must pass if it is to continue along the channel to consumption in the mass media.

Kurt Lewin, originator of the gatekeepers concept, considered the gatekeepers as the influential factors in channels of group relationships.¹ David Manning White extends the Lewinian concept to the media of mass communication² and suggests that communication of information moves through various gates. Among those manning gates are the originators of the news, the sources of the news, those in the media who decide whether the news

¹Kurt Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics II: Channels of Group Life; Social Planning and Action Research," Human Relations, I (1947), 143-153.

²David Manning White, "The 'Gatekeeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News," Journalism Quarterly, XXVII (Fall, 1950), 383-390.

will be printed, those who are responsible for seeing that it is printed, and the readers.

The communication of news of religion through the secular press--which in this paper will mean newspapers--poses certain problems common to gatekeepers. Between the origination of events, ideas, or information and their consumption in a newspaper stand several gates and gatekeepers. Among them are the religion writer and his superiors, who set policy. Others are the leaders of religion. Thus, the religion writer, his superiors, and the leaders of religion become gatekeepers insofar as the flow of news of religion through the print media is concerned. This observation is based partially on the experience of this writer as a media practitioner in the field of news of religion for fifteen years.

On the basis of this experience and of the writings of other practitioners in the field, certain well-defined roles of persons designated to write news of religion can be delineated. Although in years past the newest staff member usually wrote news of religion, newspapers with large circulation now employ religion writers to handle the beat full time. Some travel worldwide. More than 90 per cent of American newspapers have a weekly church page or section.³ In the past, religion

³"Press Is Keeping Pace With Religious Interest," Editor & Publisher, July 5, 1958, p. 43.

news was likely to be bland and trivial, but in recent years it has become more discerning and has more depth. These latter assertions find support from writers for the two American newsgathering agencies which supply news to practically every daily newspaper in the country. George Cornell, religion writer for the Associated Press, wrote: "The swing is toward more thorough, discerning coverage, and this will continue."⁴ Louis Cassels, senior editor for United Press International, suggests that newspapers have improved their coverage of religion greatly during the past twenty years: "Prior to 1950, religious news was confined to the journalistic ghetto of the weekly 'church page'. . . . Religion now rates run of the paper treatment in most dailies."⁵

The religion writer advises his superiors on choice of press service reports, usually decides what local religion news will be printed, writes it, and often decides how it will be placed on a newspaper page.

Religion writers as gatekeepers must consider what values are important in judging news. On this matter Cornell said: "As I see it, the newsiest aspect of religion is its inner core of convictions, the

⁴George Cornell, "Religion's New Entree to the City Room," Christianity Today, Oct. 14, 1966, p. 9.

⁵Louis Cassels, "Covering Religion News," Bulletin (American Society of Newspaper Editors), September-October, 1969, p. 7.

reasoning behind them, and their implications for men."⁶ Adon C. Taft, religion writer of the Miami Herald,⁷ and Cassels⁸ concur with Cornell. Yet trivia and blandness remain. As Harold Fey, former editor of the Christian Century, interdenominational weekly magazine with a theologically and socially liberal slant, has written, there "is too much reporting of religiosity instead of religion and too many journalists who don't know the difference between the two."⁹

Another determination that must be made by religion writers is the amount of space or prominence various denominations or faith groups will receive. A study by David Kucharsky, news editor of Christianity Today, conservative Protestant fortnightly magazine, suggests that religion writers compromise news value in order to maintain a balance between the groups.¹⁰

Another decision that must be made by religion writers is their attitude toward the churches. Religion

⁶Cornell, "Religion's New Entree to the City Room," p. 10.

⁷Adon C. Taft, "Lively Churches are Headline Prospects," Christianity Today, Sept. 25, 1963, p. 7.

⁸Cassels, "Covering Religion News," p. 7.

⁹Harold E. Fey, "The Press Dodges Hard Question in Reporting of Religion," Quill, July, 1959, p. 12.

¹⁰David E. Kucharsky, "Religious News Reporting as a Journalistic Specialty," (unpublished M.A. thesis, American University, 1962), p. 65.

writers reject suggestions that they should "sell" religion in general or any one religious view in particular. They call this "wicked" and "sinful"¹¹ and stress the primary need to be a competent reporter.¹²

Other factors to be considered by the religion writer are whether the news of religion shall be made to conform to the typical criteria of the public press, such as universal interest, emotional impact, timeliness, and accuracy in how it reflects the community, and for whom the religion writer is writing: church members, those with a peripheral interest in religion, those who do not go to church, or the entire community.

The religion writer's gatekeeper function is influenced by his superiors, who provide the policy by which he operates. There are sacred cows to be watched, good taste to be maintained, and commercialism to be avoided. The suggestion has been made that superiors discourage the publication of material that could offend anyone. Cornell, for instance, comments that editors have been "reluctant to carry anything about serious doctrinal concepts or problems lest they bring on a wave of complaints."¹³ And Curtis MacDougall,

¹¹Cassels, "Covering Religion News," p. 7.

¹²George Dugan, "Religion Is News," in Roland Wolseley, ed., Writing for the Religious Market (New York: Association Press, 1956), p. 81.

¹³Cornell, "Religion's New Entree to the City Room," p. 10.

professor of journalism at Northwestern University, has blamed editors fearful of stirring up religious strife for the lack of controversy.¹⁴ On the other hand, Cassels writes that there has been a tendency among some newspapers to give much attention to religious controversy¹⁵ and Kucharsky credits newspapers with taking an increasingly courageous attitude. "Actually, unfavorable stories do appear from time to time."¹⁶

A leader of religion, too, influences the religion writer in his role as gatekeeper. He can discourage release of some news by his subordinates, attempt to persuade the religion writers of their point of view, suggest the religion writer be informed of certain news, and register disapproval with him or his superiors if material is published with which he disagrees. If a public relations director is employed by his office, he can attempt to dictate the information issuing from that office. Whether efforts to control the religion writer succeed is partly dependent on the ingenuity, perseverance, and insight of the religion writer; partly on the ingenuity, perseverance, and insight of the

¹⁴Curtis D. MacDougall, Interpretative Reporting (5th ed.: New York: Macmillan, 1968), p. 453.

¹⁵Cassels, "Covering Religion News," p. 8.

¹⁶Kucharsky, "Religious News Reporting," p. 69.

leader of religion, and partly on the degree to which the religion writer and leaders of religion agree on news values.

The review of literature indicates that some religious leaders would shut the gate on news that is not favorable to organized religion, that is not what they consider the "proper" view on an issue, or is not what they consider uplifting to the readers. They would put government controls on the press when it does not live up to these goals. One example of these observations is the Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication promulgated by the Second Vatican Council. The decree suggests that man has a right to information about affairs which affect him, but stresses the need for an "upright conscience on the use of these instruments, particularly with respect to certain issues which are rather sharply debated in our times."¹⁷ The "norms of morality" must "be held sacred," the decree says.¹⁸ Additionally, it asserts that public authority "has the duty of seeing to it in a just and vigilant manner" that public morals and social progress are not endangered by "perverted" use of the mass media.¹⁹ Sister M. Augustine

¹⁷"Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication," in The Documents of Vatican II, ed. by Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: Guild Press, 1966), p. 322.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 329.

Maher, in studying twelve addresses to journalists made by Pope John XXIII, found that the Pope advocated man's right to know, yet wanted to restrict man's right to know evil.²⁰ John B. Sheerin, editor of the Catholic World, reflected the views of journalists toward the Vatican Council decree when he wrote: "We do get the impression that all the emphasis is on restriction rather than right and that the right to inform is being choked to death by ifs and buts."²¹

Another view toward the press is evident in this comment by theologian George H. Tavard: "I hate to think what would have happened to the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas, had he been obliged to wonder what distortions his thought would undergo and to what approximations it would be reduced by the journalists of his day."²²

Howard V. Fogel suggests that the church has tried to control the secular press but has failed. The failure is proved, he said, because religious denominations have found it necessary to establish their own publications and publishing houses.²³

²⁰Sister M. Augustine Maher, "An Analysis of Pope John's Considerations on the Press," (unpublished M.A. thesis, Marquette University, 1967), p. 24.

²¹John B. Sheerin, C.S.P., "The Communication Decree: Why the Dissent?" Catholic World, February, 1964, p. 267.

²²George H. Tavard, "The Council, the Press, and Theology," Ibid., September 1964, p. 339.

²³Howard V. Fogel, "Colonial Theocracy and a Secular Press," Journalism Quarterly, XXXVII (Autumn, 1960), p. 532.

It is also indicated that some leaders of religion are not trying to influence the press. Cornell, for instance, suggests: "The evangelical wing pays scant attention to mass media."²⁴ Why this is true he does not discuss.

An Overview

The religion writer plays an important gatekeeper role in deciding what news of religion will be communicated through the secular press. This role is influenced by his superiors, who set the policy under which he operates, and by leaders of religion, who can ignore the press, intentionally try to keep items from it, or urge publication of certain articles.

The discussion also suggests that religion writers and leaders of religion look on the public press and its relationship to the church in differing lights. This difference is perhaps best delineated in a forum discussion in Christianity Today in 1967.²⁵ Members of the forum included several religion writers; the panel was moderated by Carl F. H. Henry, then editor of the magazine. Henry asked the writers: "Is it our duty to force a critical examination of accepted

²⁴Cornell, "Religion's New Entree to the City Room," p. 10.

²⁵"Christians at Mass Media Frontiers," Christianity Today, Sept. 15, 1967, pp. 8-12.

values and unconscious assumptions?" Reporter after reporter answered no. As William Willoughby, Washington correspondent for Religious News Service, phrased it, "A news writer on religion needs to be careful that he does not carry his own bias on religion into his stories."²⁶

The Problem and Methodological Considerations

The Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the religion writer's gatekeeper role as perceived by the writers themselves, their superiors, and their immediate sources--the leaders of religion.

The Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are the following:

1. To examine the roles that religion writers define for themselves through the interactive processes of constraints from their immediate superiors and from their immediate sources.²⁷

2. To study the digression from the composite role situation on the part of three elements of the interactive processes.

²⁶Ibid., p. 12.

²⁷Readers are not being taken into consideration because of the limitations of finances and time.

3. To suggest ways through which gaps between various elements of these interactive processes could be bridged.

The Assumptions

Specifically, the study would attempt to examine the following assumptions which are central to the study:

1. A wide gap exists between the three elements in the interactive processes in their perception of the desirable role for religion writers.

2. This gap tends to make leaders of religion criticize the work of the religion writer in their own community.

3. Leaders of religion believe the goal of religion writers should be to aid the cause of religion, rather than to be part of an independent process of news communication.

4. Religion writers are more willing to write of controversy in the churches than are either their superiors or the leaders of religion to have news of such controversy printed.

5. Religion writers' superiors see them as one of many specialists, with functions much like those of other specialists.

Methods of the Study

The methods used in the study are informal survey research techniques and in-depth personal interview.

The questionnaire used in the interviews was designed to elicit information about roles of the religion writer and specific problems encountered in discharge of those roles.

Because of limitations of time and funds, the sample of the study includes four religion writers, four superiors (one for each of the writers), and four leaders of religion in each community served by the writers. The four religion writers were selected because all are (or were at the time of the interviews) responsible for the news of religion on metropolitan newspapers in the Midwest, and because they are president or past president of the Religious Newswriters Association and are thus somewhat representative of the field.

The managing editor of each newspaper--the Chicago Tribune, the Cleveland Press, the Detroit News, and the Milwaukee Journal--was asked for an interview, but he sometimes handed the request to another editor. Thus, the term immediate superior as used here is intended to refer to whichever manager was acting as the superior.

The religion writers were asked to supply names in their own communities of those who fill specific positions, with a view to a cross-section of the major

religious groupings in a community--racially, numerically, and in social and theological outlook. In each community an effort was made to talk to a Roman Catholic, a United Methodist, a fundamental white Protestant, and a black.

The limitation in the sample means that the generalizations of the study will be valid only for those included in the study.

Definitions

The following have been especially defined for the study:

1. Role--A patterned sequence of learned actions performed by a person in an interactive situation.²⁸

2. Interaction--The reciprocal influencing of the acts of persons and groups, usually mediated through communication.²⁹

Organization of the Remainder of the Thesis

The thesis will be organized in the following way:

Chapter two will be devoted to a look at other research and at the setting in which the study was conducted--the cities, the newspapers, the religion writers. In chapter three, the data will be presented. In chapter

²⁸Julius Gould and William L. Kolb, eds., A Dictionary of the Social Sciences, (New York: The Free Press, 1964), p. 609.

²⁹Ibid., p. 657.

four, the data will be analyzed. In chapter five, conclusions and suggestions for future research will be presented.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THE SETTING OF THE STUDY

A Review of Literature

Several studies relate to the problem under examination in the study. Many are concerned with the gatekeeper role of other groups of communicators. Among these groups are agricultural workers, reporters on civil liberties issues, education reporters, and city editors.

Specifically, three studies reveal that perceived community opinion has little effect in the news channel. Breed found that newsmen gain more rewards from their colleagues and superiors than from their readers and that they shape their work to collect these rewards.³⁰ They define their values according "to the more pragmatic level" of those in the newsroom, he suggested. Donohew found that the news coverage in Kentucky on the issue of federal health insurance for the elderly was shaped more

³⁰Warren Breed, "Social Control in the News Room: A Functional Analysis," Social Forces, XXXIII (May, 1955), 326-7.

by the publisher's attitude than by any other single factor.³¹ He, too, found little evidence that community opinion was a significant factor in the news channel. Gieber's study revealed that reporters covering civil liberties in four California cities were more concerned with craft conditions and with "writing a good story" than with the reader.³² In addition, he found that what a source considered news differed greatly from what the reporter considered news. Most sources, he found acknowledged that one of their major goals is to rally their followers.

Two studies examined the most effective means of exercising an influence on the press. Johnson found that the most effective means is to win the respect and understanding of the newsmen.³³ Tichenor found that among agricultural writers in Minnesota face-to-face contact did not improve the editor's opinion of the source of the material, or increase agreement on news judgment or amount of space devoted to the agricultural

³¹Lewis Donohew, "Newspaper Gatekeepers and Forces in the News Channel," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXXI (Spring, 1967), 61-8.

³²Walter Gieber, "How the 'Gatekeepers' View Local Civil Liberties News," Journalism Quarterly, XXXVII (Spring, 1960), 199-205.

³³L. Z. Johnson, "Christian Science Committee on Publicity: A Study of Group and Press Interaction," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Syracuse, 1963).

agent's material.³⁴ He also found that the agricultural agents' news judgment in reality was closer to that of the agricultural editor than was his perception of what he thought the editor would think was newsworthy.

Ward studied what news element was considered most valuable by ten city editors.³⁵ He found that the most highly valued element was its high impact. Following that, in order, were its oddity, the known principals involved, conflict, and magnitude.

Fewer studies are helpful in the religious field. Brod found the coverage generally accurate and honest on four church-state issues.³⁶ Hormel studied the development of the communications system in the United Presbyterian Church and found it was more decisively influenced by the varying degrees of conflict within the church than between the church and its environment.³⁷

³⁴Philip J. Tichenor, Clarice N. Olien and George A. Donohue, "Predicting a Source's Success in Placing News in the Media," Journalism Quarterly, XLIV (Spring, 1967), 32-42.

³⁵Walter James Ward, "News Values, News Situations, and News Selection: An Intensive Study of Ten City Editors," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1967).

³⁶Donald F. Brod, "Church, State and Press: Twentieth-Century Episodes in the United States," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1969).

³⁷Sidney J. Hormel, "The Presbyterian Communication System," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1966).

Millard found that the readers of the denominational magazine, Presbyterian Survey, were likely to be regular churchgoers and that readership decreased as education and income increased. The news stories most read were those that dealt with important events in the life of almost any adult, such as marriage.³⁸ As Presbyterian Survey is distributed to all homes in any church ordering it, it may bear more relationship to religion news in a secular newspaper than most religious journals, which are assumed to be distributed only to those who want it.

This review of literature would strengthen the expectation of a gap in news judgment between religious leaders and communicators. If religious leaders are like sources of civil liberties news in California, they are concerned with rallying their supporters and with internal tensions. On the other hand, religion writers can be expected to be concerned with receiving acceptance from co-workers and editors. The religion writers could be expected to favor articles they believe will have the most impact on the reader, rather than what will help any group within the community, such as the churches. Respect for religious leaders, not necessarily

³⁸William J. Millard, Jr., "Reader Characteristics and Content Preferences for a Denominational Magazine," Journalism Quarterly, XLI (Summer, 1964) 433-436.

personal contact, would be expected to most influence the religion writers as gatekeepers, the studies would suggest. News of institutional religion could be expected to be of less interest than articles on subjects more directly related to each person's life.

The Setting

A description of the four religion writers who are the focus of this study, their newspapers, and their cities is pertinent at this point, because the role they play is dependent in part on their cities, their newspapers, and their own background.

1. Richard Philbrick, religion editor of the Chicago Tribune, is forty-nine. He has held his present position fifteen years and asked for the post four years after joining the Tribune staff. Before joining the Tribune, he had worked for the City News Bureau in Chicago. He also has covered police and the courts, handled neighborhood news, and worked on rewrite. He was a copy editor before moving to the religion beat. He is an active member of the United Church of Christ, a liberal Protestant denomination, and for six years was a member of the board of directors of the Office of Communication of the denomination. He was educated at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, the University of Chicago, and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy. His college major was English.

The Tribune in 1946 was, in terms of circulation, the largest standard-sized daily in the country³⁹ and its circulation stood at 1,075,000. That had slipped to 805,924 by September 30, 1968, but the Tribune was still the fourth largest standard-sized daily in the country.⁴⁰ It is owned by the Chicago Tribune Company, a large, prosperous firm (with two newspapers, a radio station, news-print firm, the landmark Tribune Tower, Great Lakes freighters and broadcasting stations among its assets) in a large, prosperous city.

Chicago, a commercial, rail, livestock, and mail order distributing center, is third in the country in average income per family--\$15,360--and third in the country in metropolitan population--an estimated 7,055,877.⁴¹

The Tribune is still known, fifteen years after his death, as Col. Robert H. McCormick's newspaper, so strong was his imprint. Critics, among them Edwin Emery,⁴² journalism historian, and Time magazine, attacked the Tribune because isolationist, anti-British,

³⁹Edwin Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretative History of Journalism (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 725.

⁴⁰Editor & Publisher, Inc., Yearbook (New York: Editor & Publisher, Inc., 1969), p. 78.

⁴¹Ibid., Market Guide (New York: Editor & Publisher, Inc., 1969), p. 13.

⁴²Emery, The Press and America, p. 724.

ultra-conservative McCormick distorted the news to match his biases, but they praised it for its blanket news coverage and excellent writing and typography.⁴³

Although the Tribune's circulation has slipped, it still far exceeds that of its competitors. The other morning daily, the Sun-Times, reported a circulation of 545,570 in September, 1968.⁴⁴ The afternoon competitor, the Daily News, reported a circulation of 461,357.

2. Jack Hume, religion editor for the Cleveland Press, was fifty-two years old when he died in November, 1969. He, too, had been active in the United Church of Christ. He had been chairman of the deacons of his suburban church and a member of one of the commissions of the Council of Churches of Greater Cleveland. He was a graduate of Oberlin College, where he majored in history and political science. He had been on the staff of the Press since 1941, as general assignment reporter, automotive editor, state editor, and copy editor. He took over the religion beat in 1961.

The Cleveland Press is one of the parent newspapers of the Scripps-Howard group and remains, in some eyes, the best in a chain that has been known for its support of the workingman and for its sprightly writing.

⁴³"Moon Is Green," Time, Nov. 1, 1948, pp. 58-9.

⁴⁴Editor & Publisher, Inc., Yearbook, p. 78.

The Press has also been known as a civic leader.⁴⁵ Its zeal at reporting the trial of Dr. Samuel H. Sheppard, a Cleveland osteopathic physician, a zeal which "all but convicted" him in 1955 of slaying his wife,⁴⁶ was cited by Sheppard for its biased reportage in his successful appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court to have the conviction set aside. The Press has been fighting a circulation battle with its opposition, the morning Plain Dealer. Although for years it led in circulation, the Press by 1968 had dropped behind the Plain Dealer--393,191 to 409,414.⁴⁷

The Cleveland metropolitan area has an estimated population of more than two million--eleventh largest in the country--and is fourteenth in the country in average family income--\$14,148.⁴⁸ A port and rail city, it is dominated by no special industry, although it is basically a hard-goods manufacturing city. With an estimated 305,000 Negroes in the area,⁴⁹ it elected a Negro mayor in 1967.

⁴⁵ Emery, The Press and America, p. 750.

⁴⁶ "Something Missing Here," Newsweek, Jan. 17, 1966, p. 84.

⁴⁷ Editor & Publisher, Inc., Yearbook, p. 194.

⁴⁸ Standard Rate & Data Service, Inc., Newspaper Rates & Data, (Skokie, Ill.: Standard Rate & Data Service, Inc., Sept. 12, 1969), p. 713.

⁴⁹ Editor & Publisher, Inc., Market Guide, p. 3.

3. Harold Schachern, religion editor of the Detroit News for thirteen years, was fifty-six years old when he died May 6, 1969, a few days after he was interviewed. A Roman Catholic, he had attended parochial schools and a Catholic college and both he and his wife were active in the Catholic church. Before joining the News staff in 1951, he had been a general assignment reporter and financial editor for four other newspapers and had worked in public relations.

The News was founded in 1873 by James E. Scripps, brother of E. W. Scripps, founder of a newspaper chain, but is not part of the Scripps-Howard newspaper group. Although Emery called it one of the early champions of the working man,⁵⁰ the Detroit News has become, according to at least one observer, thorough and sober, the "respected and towering Gray Lady of Lafayette Street, Michigan's most influential daily."⁵¹ The newspaper reflects a conservative political, social, and economic editorial policy; until threatened by Negro leaders with a boycott, it had put special emphasis on racial identification in news of crime and anti-sociability. The afternoon News and its competitor, the morning Free Press, have been hard hit by labor strikes in a nine-year period and were closed 267 days by a strike that

⁵⁰ Emery, The Press and America, p. 464.

⁵¹ "Shady Lady," Newsweek, Sept. 8, 1969, p. 79.

ended August 9, 1968. The strike cut sharply into News circulation, which fell to 592,612⁵² after the strike from 702,591 before it.⁵³ The Free Press stands somewhat behind in circulation--530,264 in September, 1968.⁵⁴

A port city, Detroit is best known as the capital of the automobile industry. The metropolitan area is fifth largest in the country, with an estimated 4,237,000 population. The area has the tenth highest average personal income per household--\$14,358.⁵⁵ Race riots in 1967 severely damaged large portions of the city.

4. David Runge, religion writer of the Milwaukee Journal, is fifty-seven years old and has been religion writer for the Journal since 1954. He is not a churchgoer or church member. He has been in journalism about forty years, having entered the field immediately after his graduation from high school. He did not attend college. He worked on an Oshkosh, Wisconsin, newspaper before joining the Journal staff twenty-one years ago. He had covered almost every news department beat and was assistant state editor for the Journal when he was moved to religion.

⁵²Editor & Publisher, Inc., Yearbook, p. 127.

⁵³N. W. Ayer & Son, Inc., Directory, Newspapers & Periodicals, (Philadelphia, Pa.: N. W. Ayer & Son, Inc., 1969), p. 515.

⁵⁴Editor & Publisher, Inc., Yearbook, p. 127.

⁵⁵Editor & Publisher, Market Guide, p. 3.

The Milwaukee Journal was founded in 1882 by Lucius Nieman, whose widow endowed the Nieman Fellowships at Harvard University as a memorial to the publisher. Blessed with a large volume of advertising lineage, it has been known as a conscientiously edited, well-written, community-conscious daily.⁵⁶ It has been a progressive, responsible, outspoken voice.⁵⁷ It editorialized against Senator Joseph McCarthy during his witch-hunting in the 1950s. In 1962, when the city's only other newspaper, the morning Sentinel, a Hearst-owned publication, was shut by a strike, the Journal bought it and now operates both from its own building. The two editorial staffs compete sharply⁵⁸ although the circulation of the Journal--363,795--is more than twice that of the Sentinel--169,011. Eighty per cent of the Journal stock is owned by the employees.⁵⁹

The population of the Milwaukee metropolitan area is an estimated 1,425,800--and the average income per household is \$13,852⁶⁰ to put it in eighteenth place in the country. Sustained efforts to obtain open housing

⁵⁶Emery, The Press and America, p. 752.

⁵⁷"Monopoly in Milwaukee?" Newsweek, May 19, 1969, p. 95.

⁵⁸"Competition in Milwaukee," Time, Feb. 12, 1965, p. 71.

⁵⁹"Monopoly?" p. 95.

⁶⁰Editor & Publisher, Inc., Market Guide, p. 3.

for Negroes have put the city in the spotlight, although it has relatively few Negroes.⁶¹

An Overview

As the data reveal, the four religion writers in the study were men of middle age or older, each with more than two decades of journalism experience, much of it in fields other than religion. But each had spent at least eight years writing religion news. Most were educated in the Midwest. All but one had a college education, but their college work was not in journalism. Three were active churchmen: two in a liberal Protestant denomination, the third in the Roman Catholic Church. The fourth was not a churchgoer. They all had worked for large, historically prosperous, influential newspapers in prosperous port cities in the Midwest, typically considered a conservative portion of the country. Two of the newspapers were considered conservative and two progressive, relative to economic, social, and political positions as reflected on their editorial pages.

⁶¹Standard Rate & Data Service, Inc., Newspaper Rates & Data, p. 713.

CHAPTER III

THE FINDINGS OF THE FIELD STUDY

The findings will be divided into three major sections dealing with the three elements in the interactive processes. Within these sections, the material will be divided according to the various roles of a religion writer as perceived by the elements of the process.

Religion Writers

Communicating the News

In general, the religion writers said they see themselves as reporters who are assigned to cover one area of news--religion. Professionally, they are only interested when religion makes news and are not concerned with being apologists, they said.

Only Philbrick, of the Chicago Tribune, volunteered an amplified view of his role. He said his most important function is to know the news of religion in Chicago and elsewhere so he can evaluate it and advise superiors. He rated as second in importance the function of communicating the news and, third, making sure

organized religion is not ridiculed. In England, he said, the church has suffered because the communications media have carried on a war against it. "I don't think it is good citizenship to allow this to happen," he said.

Despite this last comment, Philbrick--along with the others--rejected suggestions that the religion writers ought to try to promote a sympathetic attitude toward religion in general or boost a specific church or its activities. They said they want to help others understand religion, but that advocating it is not their role. One comment by Schachern, however, contradicted this general view. He admitted he attempted to improve the image of the Negro churches. On the other hand, even though he was a Roman Catholic, he said he had not hesitated to report verbal attacks on the cardinal of Detroit.

In line with this viewpoint, the four agreed that in theory church news should be required to fit the same criteria used for determining the value of other news--such as its timeliness, proximity, appeal, and its future effect on lives of readers. But Schachern admitted that this does not always happen and that some items used on the church page would not be used elsewhere in the paper. In addition, Hume said the Cleveland Press is not as "hard on the churches as on politicians."

Their view that it is not the religion writer's role to boost religion correlates with their view that inspiration is not a criterion they use. (They added that they do not object if news stories about inspiring people inspire others.) Neither do they encourage publication of prayers or such columns as the Lenten series by Norman Vincent Peale, a prominent New York Protestant clergyman.

Their view about helping others to understand religion correlates with their agreement that they should report religion news not only fairly and objectively, but also completely and beyond bare facts to an explanation of their meaning. Coverage should extend, they said, into such subjects of depth as changes in theology.

However, the interviews revealed that by being fair and objective, the religion writers do not intend to try to seek a space balance between differing denominational groups or between theological or social "liberals" and "conservatives." This is impossible, they said, because some groups are newsworthy and others are not. Schachern added, however, that he was aware that the fundamentalists get less space than other segments of the religious community so he consciously seeks them out.

Their view means, they agreed, that almost any subject that is newsworthy about religion should be

published, including some that many persons might not like to see in print. Among them are conflicts within congregations or denominations, conflicts between those in the denominational hierarchy and their subordinates or councils of subordinates, conflicts in meetings of such bodies as national bishops' conferences, and finances. Hume suggested writing of conflicts will benefit the churches: "Controversy is what man thrives on."

There was one area into which they were reluctant to step, however--moral shortcomings of clergymen. They noted that if laws are broken and the information appears in a public record, the news should be published in the same way it would be if clergymen were not involved, but they said they regret the use of this news.

On the news value of announcement of forthcoming events, the four disagreed. Philbrick and Runge of Milwaukee said these announcements are important. Schachern and Hume indicated they believe they should be limited. Hume put his opposition this way: "If the churches want to advertise, let them do so."

There was also no agreement on the breadth of the word "religion" in the phrase, "religion news," as a limit to the area of coverage of the religion writer. Schachern, Runge, and Hume said a religion writer should be able to write about almost any activity carried on because of a religious outlook or conscience, whether

or not sponsored in the name of a religious institution. (Hume added that other writers would handle war protests or voter registration drives.) Philbrick, on the other hand, said newsroom efficiency and operation make it necessary to limit a religion writer's work to institutional activities.

Helping Increase Readership of the Newspaper

Three of the religion writers suggested there is some merit to the idea that they should write articles that will interest the reader, so that this will be an incentive for readers to buy the newspaper. While concurring, Philbrick warned that no one has yet been able, by surveys or other studies, to determine in advance which stories will be of interest to readers. And he added: "There is nothing so debilitating as a newspaper that prints only news that people will enjoy." Runge said he hopes that what he writes is interesting but that the press must inform, even when informing does not make reading popular.

Commenting on the Church and Predicting Its Future

The four disagreed on whether the religion writer should comment on activities of the churches, giving either praise or disapproval where they consider it merited. Philbrick said he believes this is permissible, so long as the material is clearly marked as personal

opinion. This can become a provocative portion of a newspaper, he said. Schachern and Hume said they comment on the church, but not in their own name. They preferred, they said, to interview and quote someone else making the same point. Runge said he believes an opinion column is objectionable, for it can make readers question the religion writer's objectivity on straight news.

They also disagreed on whether the religion writer has a right to point out trends among the churches and predict where the churches may be moving. Schachern and Philbrick approved, Runge said he tended to reject the suggestion, and Hume said he did this only by quoting others.

Educating Through the News Columns

The four agreed that one important role is to educate on basic religious beliefs. Schachern was the least interested: "I try to be a little educative in stories." On the other hand, Philbrick said he thinks education is "definitely" important. He said he finds theologians willing to expound or he himself attends a class to learn more and thus be able to write about what he has learned. Runge commented, "It is surprising how many people don't understand basic beliefs. At times I deliberately get into this field." Hume noted, "There are lots of things Christians think they know but they

don't." But he added he carried out his role as educator with the methods of a reporter, not with those of an educator.

Determining Who the Readers Are

There was no agreement on the reader for whom the religion writer writes. Schachern and Hume said they wrote for all, churchgoer and non-churchgoer. However, Schachern admitted that sometimes he questioned whether anyone but the churchgoer read what he wrote. Hume expressed no such doubt. He said the mail received in response to his articles is from both church member and non-church member. Runge said he believes his readers are likely to be intelligent and widely read and are not determined by whether they attend church. Philbrick said only that he writes to please himself--what he thinks is "good" news.

Determining the Value of a Church Page and of Church News

Runge, Schachern, and Philbrick oppose church pages, believing they have a tendency to become a "ghetto" of poor news poorly read. The Chicago Tribune editors agree and do not have a religion page for news. Related advertising is grouped together, however. Hume agreed that church pages often are weak, but added: "They ensure religion two pages a week."

The four said they believe religion news in the secular press helps a community. Their comments:

Schachern: "It's the only way interest in religion is kept alive in some people."

Philbrick: "The secular press is one of the few places where there is a disinterested viewpoint. You can gather information from all sources and put the problems before the public."

Hume: "The worst thing you can do to somebody is to ignore him. The churches ought to be warned if something is going wrong, such as young people leaving."

Runge: "As much as any news helps a community, I suppose religion news does, too, in the sense of telling what's going on."

Defining a Religion Writer's Need to Be Religious

The four agreed that a religion news writer need not be religious--at least in a traditional sense, such as attending church--to be a capable religion writer. Being a competent reporter is more important, they said. However, Schachern stressed the need for sensitivity toward organized religion, and Philbrick said a religion writer must respect it.

Being active in a church can hurt a religion writer, because it can bias his viewpoint, Philbrick, Schachern, and Runge agreed. On the other hand, Hume suggested it

is impossible not to be biased about religion to some degree, even if one is not active in a church. No one can stand completely outside society, he suggested. Since the church is part of society, no one can be completely unaware of the church and not have his opinions about it shaped to some degree. Additionally, it was suggested that at times membership in a body that is making decisions in secret can hinder the religion writer's freedom to print news. Yet it can also increase his understanding, Philbrick said.

Immediate Superiors

In general, the comments of the superiors were the shortest of any of the three groups interviewed. Why this is true was not determined by the study, but on most questions they did not feel called upon to talk as long as those in the other groups did. Their major interest appeared to lie in such practical matters as whether there should be church pages and these they answered in more detail than the questions dealing with theoretical goals.

Religion Writers as Specialists

Interviews revealed that the religion writers' superiors, who are in policy-making positions, see the religion writers as specialists in their own field--much like a science writer, an education writer, an aviation

writer--and believe they should follow the same rules and patterns in their gatekeeper roles.

William F. Anderson, city editor of the Chicago Tribune, phrased this position the most directly. He stressed that the specialist differs from a general assignment reporter because he is responsible for evaluating news in his specialty and for alerting his superiors to future news. A religion writer's primary task "is to be conversant with all that is newsworthy in the field of religion," he said.

Others did not use the word specialist, but used comments such as, "We report religion as we report other fields of endeavor."

Like other specialists, religion writers do not have the right to boost their specialty, the superiors agreed. This is true for news of the activities and beliefs of a specific church as well as for religion in general terms. John O'Brien, managing editor of the Detroit News, said flatly, "I don't think we should have attitudes." And he added, "We can't care less if they go to church." The exception to this was Herbert Kamm, associate editor of the Cleveland Press, who called promoting a "sympathetic outlook" toward the churches "entirely acceptable."

Religion Writers as News Communicators

All superiors agreed that the religion writer's function is to report what the churches have accomplished, to announce what events the churches plan to sponsor, to explain why they have moved in a specific direction, and to delve into such difficult matters as theology. Only O'Brien was hesitant on any of these; he noted that a qualified writer is essential for reporting changes in theology and doubted the value of announcements. On the other hand, Joseph Shoquist, managing editor of the Milwaukee Journal, said writing on changes in the thinking of the churches "is true reporting on religion."

In reporting the activities of the religious world, the writer should keep in mind, Anderson suggested, stories "that will really touch thousands of readers," those that reveal religion is not "a sterile mental diversion."

Coverage should not avoid the unpleasant and controversial in religion, they said, but all showed some hesitancy on reporting immorality of clergymen. The consensus was that if a clergyman is named in a court record that record has to be treated the same as any other person's crime. O'Brien said he doubted that conflicts about doctrine could be adequately reported. ("We can't sort them out.") Of the four, Kamm was the most hesitant on the whole subject. He suggested that in much controversy--within congregations, between

clergymen and superiors, between fellow clergymen, between bishop and priests' senate--a disservice can be done by bringing a controversy to the public's attention at the wrong stage. He said, "Handle it with care," but he added, "Don't duck it."

All other types of conflict were considered usable by the other superiors, so long as the items are newsworthy.

Criteria for determining what news is printed should be the same for religion news as for all other news, they suggested. They agreed that because bigger and more socially prominent church bodies or congregations are likely to do more newsworthy things, they are in the news more often, but said that size and prominence should not, in themselves, be the determining news criteria. They also opposed any differentiation between black and white churches.

Space balance between denominations or those with varying viewpoints on issues is not important, they agreed, although Kamm suggested the writer ought to be aware of how his coverage adds up, and all stressed the importance of being fair to both sides.

The superiors also stressed the need for local coverage, although two volunteered comments on the necessity to relate the local scene to national trends.

The superiors disagreed on how broad a definition of religion the religion writer should use. Kamm suggested that the limit is the writer's ingenuity. The others were more interested in institutional religion. Protests and voter registration are in the province of the religion writer, they seemed to think.

Religion Writers as Commentators

O'Brien suggested that comment is permissible in a clearly marked column, when the church is involved in social issues. Shoquist said he would permit it, although it is not the religion writer's principal role. Kamm disagreed. Comment should be on the editorial page and should be written by an editorial writer, although ideas could be submitted by the religion writer, he said. This would be more likely to ensure fairness and restraint, he suggested.

On the other hand, the superiors approved any move by religion writers to look at trends and predict where the church may be moving. From the interviews, however, it appeared that the idea had not occurred to them previously.

Religion Writers as Educators

Three of the four gave reluctant assent to the suggestion that the religion writer should intentionally educate the readers in basic religious beliefs. Writers

have to do this in a routine backgrounding way, they agreed. Only Kamm was enthusiastic about it as an intended role.

Religion Writers and the Definition of the Reader

All said the religion writer should be attempting to write for all the readers--whether or not they are churchgoers. Shoquist added that he believes those who are more knowledgeable are more likely to read the material, however.

The Value of Religion Pages

The question that interested the superiors most (and divided them most) was the value of religion pages.

Anderson said: "A story that can compete with all others and win space is likely to be better than one that is given space to fill a page."

O'Brien said: "The church page is a kind of wastebasket."

Kamm and Shoquist disagreed. Kamm said: "People and advertisers look there. It's a good idea if we don't make it a dumping ground." Shoquist said: "I think it's sensible to have religion collected together."

A Religion Writer's Religion As It Affects His Role

None of the superiors said they think a religion writer needs to be religious, at least in the traditional sense, as long as he is interested in his field. In fact, they agreed that being too active in a religious group might make him biased.

Effects of Religion News

The superiors agreed that religion news helps a community, although most were not emphatic about this comment. Then Kamm continued: "I'd hate like hell to think of a community without churches. The newspaper is an excellent conduit for the church. Communications between the church and the public is not served any other way." Shoquist added: "The more the people know about the church, the better off they are."

Religion Writers and Inspiration

The superiors said they believe it is not the role of a religion writer to try to inspire readers. Kamm gave a limited approval to inspiration as a goal, but even he considered it a lesser goal, primarily achieved through feature articles on inspiring people. "Don't go out of your way on this," he warned, "because much of religion news is inspirational."

Religion News as a Device to Increase Circulation

The superiors disagreed on whether religion writers should try to increase circulation through the news that they decide to print. O'Brien said, "I don't think church news ever sold one copy of the paper." On the other hand, Kamm's answer was a simple yes.

Leaders of Religion

Four primary suggestions for the role of a religion writer become evident in interviews with leaders of religion:

1. The religion writer should tell the facts and no more. Those making this suggestion tended to be Roman Catholics or conservative Protestants.
2. The religion writer should interpret and educate. The United Methodists and blacks generally fell into this category.
3. The religion writer should promote religion outright or a sympathetic understanding of it. This view was held by the smallest number, but drew support from some in the above two groups.
4. Religion writers should reflect what is typical of the religious community, not what is unusual. By reading the secular press, one should be able to gain an

accurate picture of the religious scene. Those in this group also belong to one of the above.

To consider the primary suggestions for the role of a religion writer one at a time:

1. Religion writers should tell just the facts.

Perhaps the most outspoken in this group was William J. Coughlin, director of information of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit and a long-time newspaper employee. Coughlin said: "The prime responsibility of any reporter is to report on the area to which he is assigned. Harold Schachern and Bill McKay in Washington are the only ones who do and Harold is dead. The others interpret."

One who concurred was the Right Reverend Monsignor A. James Quinn, chancellor of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, who said: "We have too much editorializing and too little reporting."

A third, the Most Reverend William E. Cousins, Roman Catholic archbishop of Milwaukee, added that he fears interpretation (he called it editorializing) on incidents with community impact because it is easy to draw conclusions that the facts do not justify.

Some in this group, primarily conservative Protestants, wanted emphasis placed on announcements of forthcoming events. However, only the Reverend George Sweeting, pastor of the historic Moody Memorial Church,

of Chicago, said he believes a religion writer should avoid writing of changes in such "deeper" areas as theology. He opposes this, he said, because this means that the churches more liberal than those like his receive more space. "Our message is constant, but our methods change," said Mr. Sweeting, a conservative. Caution was also expressed by others, who questioned the ability of the writer to know his subject well enough to do a competent job.

2. Religion writers should interpret.

Three United Methodists were the primary advocates of this point of view. One of them, Bishop Thomas W. Pryor of Chicago, said: "In this day and age someone who knows what the issues are has to explain them, and especially in religion." The world needs people who can see the religious overtones in the day's news, he continued. The newspaper must play much the same role for the entire community as the college class on religion, now increasing in state-operated institutions, does for the campus, he said. Bishop Pryor is also concerned with what he sees as increasing polarization between activists and those concerned with a spiritual interpretation of religion. This, he believes, an insensitive writer can heighten and a sensitive writer can lessen.

Bishop Dwight E. Loder of Detroit stressed the need for a religion writer to be educated in theology, church history, psychology, and sociology, as well as in journalism, so that he can interpret church actions accurately in the light of the world around it.

The Reverend David G. Owen, executive director of the United Methodist Strategy Council of Greater Milwaukee, said he believes the religion writer should report and interpret developments, national or global, that will have implications on the local scene. The writer should look at the "cutting edge" rather than at the traditional and at current and future trends, not only specific actions, he said.

The Reverend Louis Beauchamp, president of the General Baptist State Convention of Wisconsin, said he sees religion news as shaped mostly around issues.

Some in this group opposed stress on announcements of a forthcoming event. For instance, Bishop Loder said: "In a metropolitan area, this becomes absurd. That is the responsibility of the religious community." Four others agreed.

3. Religion writers should promote institutional religion and inspiration.

Five of the religious leaders said the newspaper should try to create support for religion in general, although not one wanted a specific church's activities or beliefs promoted. The Reverend Jack Rollings, pastor

of the independent Metropolitan Baptist Church in Detroit, was the most outspoken clergyman in favor of promoting religion. "To sell religion should be the first goal of a religion writer," he said. "If we could get people back in church, society would benefit."

Three conservative Protestants and two black ministers fell into this group. This view aroused some firm opposition, however. Typical of the opposition was Archbishop Cousins, who said: "You're not called to sell in the church page. The fact of having it shows sympathy." Some indicated, in fact, that they believe religion cannot win converts through the public press.

On "selling" inspiration, religious leaders were divided just about evenly. Bishop Pryor suggested: "The newspaper can't take the place of the church and the inspiration people should get there in a larger and more complete way." Others suggested inspiration is good if carried in a news format but disapproved of it elsewhere.

4. Religion writers should reflect the total community.

Archbishop Cousins put the views on this point most succinctly: "Objectivity should find newsworthiness not in the unusual but against a true background." He said he believes that too often the press seeks out the unusual--the demonstrator, for instance--to write

about, rather than being concerned with how most in a community act or believe.

Mr. Beauchamp concurred, complaining that newspaper accounts tend to emphasize those churchmen who oppose the United States participation in the war in Vietnam, although, in his opinion, most in the churches do not favor immediate withdrawal from Vietnam.

To reflect an accurate picture the press should keep in mind, for instance, if there are more Catholics in a community, Archbishop Cousins said. If so, he believes, the Catholics should be given more space than other groups, because of the number of church members.

Mr. Owen and the Reverend Gladstone L. Brown, district superintendent for the Methodist Union of Cleveland, suggested that the important criterion in selecting news is whether an item will help give an accurate picture of the world of religion and that other criteria might have to be held in abeyance to do that. For instance, news might be too old to meet the press's criterion of timeliness, but still have something important to say about religion, they suggested.

One group--the conservative Protestants--tended to complain that a true reflection of the community is missing because its side does not often get told--that the emphasis tends toward the liberals.

All agreed, however, than an actual counting of inches is not necessary. And Coughlin rebelled at the entire idea: "It's idiotic to say, 'Give equal time to all groups.'"

Additionally, the findings indicate the following:

1. Seven of the sixteen leaders of religion agreed that one of the roles of the religion writer is to pick news that the public will read, so that readers will buy the newspaper.

2. Only four of the leaders of religion opposed giving the religion writer the right to comment. There was some doubt, however, that most religion writers are qualified.

3. About half the leaders of religion supported the proposition that religion writers should try to predict where the church is going. The division of opinion on this point did not fall along denominational lines.

4. Most leaders of religion said it is helpful when a religion writer educates his readers on basic beliefs. However, Mr. Owen called the value "slight," and part of the Sunday school's function; Bishop Loder called it a secondary function, and Coughlin said no religion writer should do it consciously.

5. Most religious leaders said they favor airing of unpleasant subjects and supported the public's right to know. They indicated a reluctance, however, to report

fully on clergymen's immorality and on conflicts within congregations. However, some would limit news in other ways. The Reverend Oscar J. Naumann, president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, said he does not approve of controversy in the press. Bishop Loder said, "If reporting will destroy a congregation or a man, you have no right to report it." Mr. Owen suggested there are "things I have the right not to tell" reporters, because it might destroy a project. Archbishop Cousins said he could see no reason why meetings of bishops should be open to the press when the General Motors Corporation, for instance, is not expected to open its board meetings to the public.

6. Two leaders of religion said black churches should get better treatment than white churches. Two others said the black church does, in fact, get less. Others said they should get equal treatment.

7. Only Coughlin said that wealth and social position should make a difference in coverage of church news. "You can hardly ignore personalities," he said. "And influential people are often wealthy."

8. Leaders of religion were divided evenly on whether "religion" as used by religion writers should extend beyond the limits of the institutional church.

9. Most of the leaders of religion said they like to read the church page and would keep it. The

reason seemed to be that they like to know where to look for the news that interests them. Only Bishop Pryor said he does not approve of the idea of a church page: "It compartmentalizes news and becomes a blank spot for the non-churchgoer," he said. One other religious leader, Mr. Brown, admitted that he feared that church news would not meet the test if it were made to compete with other news.

10. Nine of the leaders of religion said they think religion news should be aimed at everyone, whether or not he attends church. Five doubted that the non-religious read church news. Two--Mr. Rollings and the Reverend John Weeden, president of the Ohio Baptist State Convention--said that news of religion should be aimed at the person who does not attend church, because he needs it most.

11. Most leaders of religion said a religion writer must be religious, because then he himself will be more sensitive to religion. There was some dissent, however. Coughlin, Mr. Naumann, and Mr. Rollings said they think it is not necessary. Mr. Owen said he would rather a non-religious person wrote the religion news than a person who is so narrow in his religion he "will frown on that of all others." The Reverend James P. Roache, secretary of communications for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, noted that a religion

writer must be fair and that this is in itself a religious quality.

12. Most leaders of religion said they think their local religion writer is doing a good job. Again, there were some objections. Archbishop Cousins said he preferred not to answer that question and indicated he had some kind of complaint about Runge's work. Mr. Owen and Mr. Beauchamp, both of Milwaukee, complained that there is not enough local news published in their community. Mr. Rollings protested that the "vocal minority" gets all the attention in Detroit.

13. All leaders of religion said they think religion news helps the community. Comments included these:

Bishop Pryor: "Religion is part of community life and newspapers are chronicling all of life."

The Reverend Louis Johnson, a member of the board of managers of the Detroit Association of American Baptist Churches: "The faith that cannot stand to be scrutinized is perhaps not even faith. I don't want a newspaper to be protective of religion."

An Overview

From the foregoing, it would appear that the religion writers see themselves primarily as reporters. Their major role, they said, is to describe in depth

events and movements within the religious world and to help the reader to understand the churches and religion, now and in the future. They agree that inspiration and promotion are not their job, but that education is. Most set few limits other than newsworthiness to what they write and say religion news should meet the same criteria for publication that are used to evaluate other news.

Their superiors generally rejected suggestions that religion should be promoted. They saw religion as a legitimate news beat, with its own specialist, as other areas have specialists. They were enthusiastic about reporting the news of religion accurately and in depth, but other proposed purposes were either accepted reluctantly or rejected. The practical day-to-day problems--such as the validity of church pages--interested them more than theoretical talk about objectives.

The leaders of religion rejected the premise that a specific church should be promoted. About a third believes the press should support religion in general, however. About half see the religion writer as a fact-teller, using little or no interpretation. The other half believes interpretation is vital. Perhaps a third suggested that the item that should be considered newsworthy is not the unusual, but that which reflects the typical churchman and accurately

pictures the religious community. The leaders of religion showed a great variety in outlook. In fact, about the only views on which almost all agreed was the publication of a church page, which they like; the necessity for a religion writer to be religious; the value of religion news to a community; and opposition to promotion of a specific church.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In this chapter the five assumptions which are central to the study will be examined.

Examination of Assumptions

1. The first assumption is that there is a wide gap between religion writers, their superiors, and religious leaders in their perception of the desirable role for religion writers.

An analysis of the data would indicate that there is indeed a gap between those studied, but that the division is not as sharp as the literature referred to earlier might have led one to expect.

Additionally, the analysis indicates that the religion writers and their superiors are more likely to be in agreement than are the communicators and the religious leaders. The study also indicates there may be a greater division of opinion among the churchmen themselves than between the communicators and the more liberal, activist churchmen. (This is intended to mean primarily the United Methodists and two of the blacks,

Mr. Johnson and Mr. Beauchamp.) This study is not devised to determine why this is so.

It became apparent that, despite predictable individual differences, the superiors and the religion writers tended to be more homogeneous in their outlook than were the religious leaders.

This division complicates discussion of a gap between the three elements of the interactive process through which the role is defined. For on a number of questions a definite division appears between communicators and some religious leaders, although not between communicators and other religious leaders.

Direction of Concern

Perhaps the largest difference between the three groups is the focus of their concern.

The superiors appeared to be most concerned with the newspaper itself and the practicalities of publishing one. They said they believe the community is better off for having churches, but all except Kamm stressed their intention not to lean toward or away from the churches, and their comments reflected little thought about the churches. Although they appeared to treat the religion writer with the respect due a professional and called religion an important news beat, they did not seem to think good coverage of religion news increased

circulation, and accordingly did not stress writing as a device for increasing circulation.

The religion writers appeared to be concerned with the newspaper, the churches, and the readers. Comments of at least three--Schachern, Hume and Philbrick--indicated they strongly support organized religion, although they do not intend that this will color their writing. Whether their support affects their writing--and they assert it does not--was not determined by this study. But it is to be assumed that, at the least, they try not to let it color their writing, because they spoke often in such terms as "That's not good journalism," and noted that trying to avoid bias is one of the basic laws of good journalism. The religion writers were also concerned for the newspaper in another sense. They hoped that what they wrote would be one factor that would aid circulation of the newspaper. In addition, the religion writers showed a concern for their readers, although their relationship to the readers was mentioned to a lesser degree. For example, they said they believe educating readers about religious beliefs is important because the reader knows little about them.

The concern of the religious leaders appeared to be primarily the good of the church. Although most said it is not the role of the religion writer to create support for religion, their replies included such remarks

as, "That would hurt the church," or similar language. Some religious leaders also revealed an understanding of a role for the public press as an entity all its own. These were primarily those of the more liberal segment, who tended to be more interested in what the church and the press could do for all of society than in what either could do for the church.

Another primary focus of the religious leaders' concern was conflicting movements within the world of religion. Some who are members of groups in the ecumenical movement urged that it be supported, while one leader, whose church is in the American Council of Churches, complained that the council is slighted. United Methodist bishops concerned with the church's role in society wanted the church to be shown in the light of its relationship to society, and the fundamentalists wanted their side of the activist-spiritual conflict to be published.

Consensus

On some issues all three segments of the interactive processes generally agreed. These included rejection of any suggestion that individual churches should be promoted and an agreement that religion writers have the right to write clearly marked critical comment, favorable or unfavorable, about the churches.

Division of Opinion

On some issues opinion was divided primarily along lines of the three elements of the interactive process:

i) Religion writers and religious leaders showed more concern with educating on basic beliefs than the superiors, who tended to think this would occur in the general backgrounding of news.

ii) Religious leaders tended to like the church page concept, but religion writers and their superiors tended to dislike it.

iii) Religious leaders generally believe writers must be religious to be sensitive to their news; neither religion writers nor their superiors agree.

Cleavage Among Religious Leaders

On some issues there was a greater division among the religious leaders themselves than there was between the more liberal religious leaders and the communicators.

For example, liberal religious leaders were more likely to believe that the religion writer should predict where religion is going than were the conservatives. The superiors generally thought this a commendable objective and three of the religion writers approved of it.

Religious leaders also divided over the value of inspirational material in the public press. The liberals tended to reject it, the conservatives to approve

it, although this generalization, too, is highly untenable. Most of the journalists joined with the liberals in rejecting it.

The religious leaders were also divided on whether the religion writer should promote religion. Conservative Protestants generally, but not always, gave their assent to this position. Liberal Protestants and Catholics opposed it. All communicators opposed it.

Both Consensus and Division

The issue of telling the news is lifted out because answers about it reveal both agreement and disagreement.

i) As expected, superiors, religion writers, and almost all religious leaders say that the principal role of a religion writer is to describe what is going on in the world of religion.

ii) But differences appear on how to implement this principle.

Religion writers and their superiors believe the religious world cannot be accurately, intelligently pictured without some explanation or interpretation by the writer. Most religious leaders agreed in principle with the need for interpretation, but a number--mostly Catholic or conservative Protestant--stressed the dangers inherent in such an approach. All stressed the need for a religion writer to be not only unbiased but also

sensitive and widely informed, so that he can reach accurate conclusions.

Even most of those religious leaders who spoke of the need for interpretation looked with favor on announcements of forthcoming church activities. Neither group of communicators stressed the importance of this news to the same degree.

The religion writers and their superiors agreed that religion news should be judged by the same standards used to evaluate news published elsewhere in the newspaper. Generally, religious leaders said they agreed, but some suggested that some news that did not seem important in the light of the usual criteria would be important in terms of reflecting a complete picture of the world of religion.

Neither religion writers nor their superiors said they think it is important to measure space--even in loose terms--so that there is a balance given to varying viewpoints and denominations. Religious leaders, on the other hand, believe that a concern for balance is important.

Apparently religion writers, their superiors, and most religious leaders expect that honest coverage will include controversial and unpleasant news and that most news of this type should be printed in the public press so long as it is newsworthy and unbiased. (One

objected to all conflict.) On the whole, however, religion writers were more willing to print more news on more subjects than the religious leaders and, to a lesser degree, their superiors. But on one specific issue--immorality among clergymen--all hesitated. The religious leaders tended also to show some concern about printing news of controversy within an individual congregation.

From this analysis it appears that there is indeed a perceptible gap between the three elements in the interactive processes. For the largest portion of the three elements, the cleavage is not sharp and there is agreement on basic items.

The gap appears to be widest between the superiors and the conservative Protestants. The superiors tend to say that the press should have no attitudes, to judge religion news as they do other news, and to express confidence in their employees' ability. On the other hand, the conservative Protestants tend to believe that the press should have an attitude of trying to get people into church, and should try to inspire readers. In addition, they tend to want facts, not interpretation.

The religion writers tend to be sympathetic to the churches, although they do not intend to do promotion work for them. They tend to see their role in a broader light than their superiors do and appear confident of their ability to handle material in depth.

The religious leaders showed more concern with the effects on the churches than the communicators did. But relatively few appeared to believe seriously that the press's role is to indoctrinate its readers. The religious leaders were, on the whole, more cautious about the areas on which they thought the religion writers should write.

2. The second assumption is that the gap between the elements of the interactive processes examined here would make religious leaders disapprove of the work of the religion writers and therefore of the religion coverage in that newspaper. This assumption appears to be untenable.

Twelve of the sixteen religious leaders praised the religion writers here under examination. All four groups of religious leaders--United Methodists, Roman Catholics, fundamentalist white Protestants, and blacks--were equally complimentary. That is, only one in each group objected.

In the analysis of viewpoints on the desired role for a religion writer, it was pointed out that the religion writers appeared to be closer in outlook to the liberal, activist churchmen than to the others. Therefore, it would seem logical to expect that the activists would be the most appreciative of the work of

religion writers and of their newspaper's handling of religion. This does not appear to be tenable.

Activist churchmen

The activist churchmen appeared to include all four United Methodists and Mr. Beauchamp and Mr. Johnson, both blacks.

They commented as follows:

Mr. Beauchamp: He objected to lack of space for news of religion in the Milwaukee Journal and suggested that the views of the entire religious community are not heard, only those of a vocal few.

Mr. Owen, a United Methodist and also from Milwaukee: He voiced the same complaint--that not enough space is allotted to religion. In what space there is, national news gets priority, he complained. He said he believes there should be more emphasis on local news.

Bishop Pryor, United Methodist in Chicago: He praised Philbrick but indicated he and the Tribune had had differences. He declined to elaborate.

Bishop Loder in Detroit: He called Schachern "as good a religion writer as I know," but added, "No man is as good as I would like him to be."

Thus, only two of the six in this group--Mr. Brown, United Methodist in Cleveland, and Mr. Johnson, Negro Baptist in Detroit--gave their unqualified support.

The fact that there were so many hesitations, despite agreement on ideals, may indicate this group had done more thinking on the subject of religion writers than the other clergymen.

Conservative Protestants

It would also seem logical to expect that this group, which in this instance is intended to include whites in fundamentalist groups and the other two blacks, would be the least appreciative of the work of the religion writer. This also does not appear to be tenable. Four of the six in this group, Mr. Weeden and Mr. Robinson (blacks), Mr. Myers (Bible Presbyterian), and Mr. Naumann (Wisconsin Synod Lutheran) praised the religion writer in their town. Mr. Myers's biggest concern was that the fundamentalists' side be told--and he indicated he believes Hume tries to be fair. Mr. Naumann called Runge "a true Christian gentleman."

One, Mr. Sweeting, Chicago independent, said he thinks Philbrick is capable and showed sympathy with the problems a religion writer faces. But he said he wished Philbrick would use more announcements of church events.

Mr. Rollings, Detroit Baptist, was the most disapproving of all the religious leaders. He said church news is directed too much to the clergy and to those readers who already are members of churches, rather than to those outside the churches. At the same time,

he said he found himself uninterested in the church news because it emphasizes too many movements he doesn't agree with--the ecumenical movement and opposition to the Vietnam War, for instance--and says too little about large-scale revivals and other successful efforts to win converts. He asked for more "how-to" advice.

Catholics

The only Catholic to object to the religion writer in his city was Archbishop Cousins of Milwaukee, who said he hesitated to answer and thus indicated there has been some disagreement between himself and Runge of the Milwaukee Journal.

Coughlin in Detroit called Schachern one of the two best religion writers in the country. Monsignor Quinn and Father Roache spoke of the fairness of the writers in their cities. (At the same time, Monsignor Quinn complained he had never seen Hume in the chancery.)

Thus, it appears not only that the religious leaders generally appreciate the work of the religion writers but also that it is unsafe to make generalizations on groups which will be the most favorable.

3. The third assumption was that religious leaders would see the religion writer's goal in terms of how it aids religion, rather than as a part of a separate communications process of its own--that is,

the attempt to transmit a true picture of the world, in all of its aspects to a geographic community. This does not appear to be tenable.

Most of the religious leaders appeared to differentiate between the church and the communications process. Coughlin, a former newsman, appeared to see the difference most sharply: "Your job is for the newspaper, not for the church. If you do what's good for the paper, you will do what is good for everybody else."

At the other extreme was Mr. Rollings, who said, "Your purpose is to be helpful to religion."

Most appeared to believe that the religion writer should serve both the newspaper--and thus the total community--and the religious community. They varied as to which was the more important.

Mr. Brown, for instance, said: "You are serving the newspaper as well as the church community." He continued: "The religion writer has a responsibility to report religion news for the entire community first, but with a specific responsibility to the church community."

Mr. Owen said a religion writer's purpose "is to inform the community of those activities of religious groups which would have implications for the community at large," yet he also ought to be speaking to the churches and telling them of those religious concerns

"which symbolize current and future trends." He suggested that the main benefit of printing religion news is that it gives the religious community a broader picture of itself.

Throughout the interviews there were comments such as: "The reporter has no right to destroy a congregation" (from Bishop Loder) and "If the religion editor is committed to the religious way of life, comment on the church will be for the good of the church" and therefore acceptable (Mr. Weeden).

Some would deny there is any difference between a concern for the total community and a concern for the religious community. Bishop Pryor, for instance, sees religion as part of the community. "Religion is part of community life and the newspaper is chronicling all of life."

Most apparently do not see the press as a device to protect the church. Most of them appeared to expect that news of the churches that some might see as unpleasant--finances, conflict, immorality--will become public news. As Mr. Naumann said, "The Lord doesn't expect us to live without being watched."

In sum, it would appear that the evidence will not support the assumption.

4. The fourth assumption, that religion writers are more willing to write of controversial matters in the

churches than are either their superiors or the religious leaders to have them do so, appears to be tenable.

The religion writers agreed that almost any subject in the field of religion is fit for the public press. They drew the line only on immorality not in a public record.

Most religious leaders would allow a great deal of latitude to the religion writers. However, like the religion writers, they hesitated on the immorality question. Additionally, several indicated that conflicts within congregations are usually family matters and not for public airing. And several said they doubt that finances are newsworthy. A few indicated hesitancy on other subjects.

The religion writer's superiors also showed somewhat more caution than the writers themselves. Kamm, for instance, would treat the whole area with great care. And O'Brien doubted if the religion writers are versed enough in doctrine to write of disputes there. But Shoquist suggested, "Anything that is in the public interest should be printed. We are, after all, the public."

Thus, although the assumption is tenable, the difference between the three elements of the interactive processes is not as sharp as might have been expected. The clergy was not as protective as some might expect and the

superiors not as hard-nosed as their lack of overt sympathy for the church might have led one to expect.

5. The fifth assumption, that superiors see the religion writers as one of many specialists, with the same freedoms and limitations as others, appears to be tenable.

One city editor, Anderson, used the term "specialist" and said that being a specialist is the major role of a religion writer. He compared a religion specialist to such other specialists as an aviation writer and science writer.

The others, although they did not use the word specialist, referred to religion as "a legitimate news beat" and said they want religion reported as other fields of endeavor are reported.

Overview

Thus, it would appear that three of the five assumptions on which the study was based are tenable, and two were untenable.

The study shows there is indeed a gap between the three elements of the interactive processes in their view of the desired role of a religion writer in the public press. Their superiors tend to see them as specialists, with another beat much like others on the newspaper, and to be basically unconcerned with its influence on the

churches. The religion writers have a concern for churches, newspaper, and reader. The religious leaders, although concerned for the newspaper and the public, are more concerned with religion and with specific points of view within the religious world.

As the analysis indicates, however, this gap is not so wide as might have been expected. Most religious leaders, apparently, are primarily interested in seeing that an accurate interpretative picture of the religion world be drawn. This, too, is the goal of the religion writers and their superiors. And because the gap is not so wide, the other assumptions do not appear to be as sharply tenable as might have been expected.

The religious leaders, for instance, are not generally critical of the religion writers, although some are.

There is some indication that many religious leaders do assign to the public press a role of its own--a role that they agree, even on news of religion, is not an extension of the church, whether to convert others or carry out other projects. Whether they see clearly the nature of a specific role for the public press is not clear.

The small size of the gap between the three elements is also evidenced by the fact that religion writers

are, as anticipated, willing to tackle more subjects than are their superiors or the religious leaders to have them do so. But the religion writers themselves have some hesitation and the other groups, with exceptions, have few hesitations.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This study was undertaken to examine the role of the religion writer in the secular press. It was assumed that this role would be a function of three elements of an interactive process--the religion writers themselves, their immediate superiors, and religious leaders, who are among their immediate sources.

The methods selected for the study were in-depth interviews and informal survey research techniques. Because of the lack of time and funds, the study was limited to four large Midwestern cities--Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, and Milwaukee. These four cities were selected because a daily newspaper in each had at the time of the interviews a religion writer who had been president of the Religious Newswriters Association. This was assumed to provide data that would be representative of the writers under study. One superior of each writer and four religious leaders in the same metropolitan area were interviewed also. The religious leaders were

selected to represent a variety of sociological and theological positions.

The findings reveal that there is indeed a cleavage between the three groups in their view of a religion writer's role, but that the cleavage is greater among religious leaders themselves than between some religious leaders and the other two elements of the interactive process, who appear to be very similar in their outlook.

Conclusions

Consensus on Role of Religion Writers

Although three of the four religion writers are personally active in a church and want to see the churches succeed, not one said he thought it is his role to promote religion, the churches, or any cause within them. All agreed that their primary role is to make religion, its institutions, and the changes in them understandable and to keep readers informed on the field. They believe that to do this, they must write interpretive pieces, articles educating the public on beliefs of religious groups, and news stories about controversy. Most favor articles pointing to trends with meaning for the future, whether in their own name or by quoting others, and pieces criticizing the churches, whether in their own name or in the name of others such as the newspaper's editorial writers. Most would include in this coverage of religion news almost any activity that is done with

religious intent, even if not by a religious institution. They believe the job is more than printing announcements of forthcoming events or bald descriptions of actions taken.

Their superiors and most of the leaders of religion agreed on basic purposes.

Divergence on Role Among Leaders of Religion

Some religious leaders believe the religion writer should, while having no favorites among churches, encourage the populace to support religion and attend church. They were a minority.

Some leaders of religion said they thought the religion writers should stress announcements of forthcoming events or publish only uninterpretive accounts of actions taken. These, too, were a minority.

Several religious leaders were concerned that the religion writer show a specific cause--the ecumenical movement or the American Council of Churches, for instance--in a favorable light.

Several leaders of religion expressed their belief that the religion writer should keep in mind how much space he has devoted to each theological or denominational group and try to balance them.

A smaller percentage of religious leaders was enthusiastic about articles beyond the confines of the institutional church than were religion writers.

Only about half of the religious leaders supported the proposition that religion writers should try to predict where the church is moving.

Divergence on Role Among Superiors

There was little divergence among superiors and what there was was mostly in degree. The superiors were less concerned than the religion writers with educating the public on basic beliefs, tended to be slightly more cautious on controversial matters, and would be more likely to limit the religion writer's coverage to the institutional church.

Gap Between Elements of the Interactive Process

A gap between the three elements of the interactive process was in evidence but it was not as large as some might have expected.

Cleavage Among Churchmen

A bigger split was apparent between the churchmen than between the three elements in the interactive process.

Segments Which Understand Each Other

The activist, liberal churchmen appeared to have a better understanding of the way religion writers view their role than did the other churchmen.

Suggestions for Ending the Gap

Several suggestions are offered here in an attempt to end what gap there is between views of the three elements in the interactive process. However, they are offered with the comment that some of the gap between press and religious leaders appears destined to remain, for the split seems to be along lines of basic viewpoints toward life and society. As long as this is true, the three elements may respect each other but are likely to remain apart in their view of the role of a religion writer. In addition, those who differ the most with the religion writer may be the ones least likely to accept offers aimed at closing the gap.

Suggestions are:

1. Readership surveys, to determine which items about religion interest readers. Results could lead to a greater correlation of news efforts.

2. Studies to determine what kind of influence religion news has on people. Is it likely, for instance, that any news would send non-churchgoers to church? Also, does religion news really make religion more understandable?

3. Encouragement by press managers for religion writers to take courses, perhaps in seminaries, to gain insight into those portions of the religious spectrum about which they know little, or in other types of

institutions to learn more about the humanities and the world to which the churches are seeking to relate.

4. Preparation of a booklet, explaining why the press decides as it does, to be sent to leaders of religion.

5. Seminars, to which leaders of religion and superiors would be invited. In this way, perhaps the three elements of the interactive process would hear and might come at least to understand each other better.

Suggestions for Further Study

These are assumptions that might be tested:

1. That news of religion has any such concrete effect on readers as to make them attend church or contribute more money to churches, but that, on the other hand, it may have such negative effects as lowering contributions.

2. That seminars, such as suggested above, would change viewpoints of a sizable number of members of the three elements in the interactive process.

3. That the liberal, activist churchman is more likely to understand the aims of a religion writer because his concern is apt to be broader and he is less isolated within institutional walls than is the typical clergyman who is theologically conservative.

4. That the role of the religion writer is defined more by his superiors than by himself.

5. That the religious leaders are a relatively weak force in determining the religion writer's role.

APPENDIX I

SUBJECTS INTERVIEWED

Religion Writers:

Richard Philbrick, religion editor, Chicago Tribune

Jack Hume, religion editor, Cleveland Press

Harold Schachern, religion editor, Detroit News

David Runge, religion writer, Milwaukee Journal

Immediate Superiors:

William F. Anderson, city editor, Chicago Tribune

Herbert Kamm, associate editor, Cleveland Press

John O'Brien, managing editor, Detroit News

Joseph W. Shoquist, managing editor, Milwaukee Journal

Leaders of Religion:

Bishop Thomas W. Pryor, United Methodist Church, Chicago

The Reverend Gladstone L. Brown, district superintendent
of the Methodist Union of Cleveland

Bishop Dwight E. Loder, United Methodist Church, Detroit

The Reverend David G. Owen, executive director of the
United Methodist Strategy Council of Greater
Milwaukee

The Right Reverend Monsignor A. James Quinn, chancellor
of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Cleveland

The Reverend James P. Roache, secretary of communications
for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago

- William J. Coughlin, director of information of the
Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit
- The Most Reverend William E. Cousins, Roman Catholic
archbishop of Milwaukee
- The Reverend U. W. Robinson, presiding elder of the
African Methodist Episcopal Church, Chicago
- The Reverend John T. Weeden, president of the Baptist
Ministers' Conference of Cleveland and Vicinity
and president of the Ohio Baptist State Conven-
tion, Inc.
- The Reverend Louis Johnson, pastor of the Friendship
Baptist Church of Detroit and a member of the
board of managers of the Detroit Association
of American Baptist Churches
- The Reverend Louis Beauchamp, president of the General
Baptist State Convention of Wisconsin
- The Reverend George Sweeting, pastor of the Moody Mem-
orial Church of Chicago
- The Reverend David K. Myers, pastor of the Bible Pres-
byterian Church of North Olmsted, Ohio
- The Reverend Jack Rollings, pastor of the Metropolitan
Baptist Church of Detroit
- The Reverend Oscar J. Naumann, president of the Wis-
consin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, with offices
in Milwaukee

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONS ASKED

- I. What do you see as the role of a religion writer?
- II. After the above open-ended question, these suggestions for possible roles were made:
 1. To be a device for increasing circulation
 2. To promote activity in a specific church or belief in a specific way
 3. To announce forthcoming events
 4. To inspire--with prayers, Lenten columns, articles on good things people or groups have done
 5. To promote a sympathetic outlook toward churches in general
 6. To interpret how religious groups or individuals look at life and issues
 7. To keep readers up to date on activities in religious circles
 8. To describe changes, not only in activities, but in thinking, in areas such as theology
 9. To comment--both praising and criticizing--on the church
 10. To educate on basic religious beliefs
 11. To try to look at the trends and predict where the church is moving
- III. Is the religion staff in your city doing the kind of job you think it should do?
- IV. For whom should the religion writer write? The dedicated churchgoer? The non-churchgoer? Everybody? Can he do the latter?
- V. How broad a definition of religion should the religion writer use? Activities of organized religious bodies in the traditional sense or any effort to seek an answer to the deeper questions of life? Such as voter registration drive in the South or the war protests?

- VI. Should the criteria for evaluating religion news differ from the standard news criteria?
- VII. Is balance in space and prominence of play between groups with differing theological stances or different faith groups important?
- VIII. How much should be aired?
Conflicts within congregations? Between clergymen and superiors? Between fellow clergymen? Between bishop and such bodies as a senate of priests? Within deliberative bodies, such as the Catholic bishops? Church finances? Immorality among church leaders? Questioning of doctrines?
- IX. Is a Saturday church page a good idea or should religion news be made to compete with other news? Why?
- X. Does religion news help a community or hurt it? Why?
- XI. Should a religion writer be religious?

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