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Christians within Journalism:
Applications for People of Faith Entering the Field

Jen Slothower

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_____
Clifford W. Kelly, Ph.D.
Chairman of Thesis

_____
Lynnda S. Beavers, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
David Baggett, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
James Nutter, D.A.
Honors Director

_____
Date

Abstract

This thesis seeks to provide practical advice for an evangelical Christian entering the field of journalism. Two ways for Christians to work within journalism were examined throughout the research process: one, Christian publications and two, Christian people working at secular publications, which is given the bulk of the attention. Research included various books and articles on journalism, journalism history, and people of faith in various occupations. Marvin Olasky, a leader in Christian journalism, was interviewed, as was Dr. David Aikman, a Christian who worked within secular journalism. The results of this research provide information for Christians entering secular journalism, from a look at journalism's past, to problems journalism has in the present, to what Christians can do in journalism in the future. Information is presented to encourage Christians who plan to spread Christ by working in secular journalism.

Christians within Journalism:

Applications for People of Faith Entering the Field

Introduction

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18, King James Version).

In the past few decades, the secular world has seen an onslaught of Christians inserting themselves or their beliefs into the professional world again. These Christians assume positions once held by people of the faith hundreds of years ago only to be relinquished in the past century. Men and women have taken their religious beliefs back into politics, academia, and the media. Christian television, books, magazines, and political activist groups are commonplace. In the 2008 presidential race, both *Time* and *Newsweek* devoted columns and sidebars to areas in which religion influences politics, and special features on faith are widely read by the magazines' subscribers in a country that only years before had tried hard to separate religion from current events and faith from living.

On the side of religion supporters, the change has been met with excitement and an ever-increasing push to continue to make religion part of news and everyday life. This is especially true in journalism, which is an obvious vehicle for championing worldviews. David Outten, in a personal interview with George Wallace for a thesis about biblical newspaper journalism, said:

> As a journalist, a Christian has a tremendous opportunity to share God's truth, not only to those he personally comes in contact with, but a large audience hungry for understanding. Furthermore, if Christians stay out of journalism, they leave the

> entire business of explaining of current events to those who do not believe in God. (as cited in Wallace, 1991, p. 117)

While Christians are pleased with the changes within journalism, there are many people who would rather have the predominately secular field of journalism be free of all religious influence. Attacks from the nonreligious can be expected, but even some religious people fear that the world of journalism will somehow be tainted by Christian beliefs. Deborah Krause (2006), the academic dean of the ecumenically-minded Eden Seminary, says, "Not everyone is enamored with the concept of 'Christian journalists' bringing their biblical perspective to the media work that they do. 'I say, welcome to the American Taliban'" (as cited in Corrigan, p. 18). Krause's main fear is that Christians will assert one view over the views of others, which will bring difficulties not only as people of faith see matters differently from the world but also as people of different faith then share their interpretation of issues adamantly. The "chauvinistic" attitudes of Christians within the media will only cause more problems (as cited in Corrigan, 2006, p. 18), whereas regular journalism presumably would not face such concerns.

The criticism of Krause and others can be expected since Christians have often erred in the past. Common are modern-day crusades of evangelicals trying to change the world only to alienate unbelievers through hypocrisy, ignorant thinking, or strident imposition. Still, Christians must pursue the mandate to reach the unsaved world for Christ, and thus they must devise a way to get Christians into secular fields in a way that they can be a help, not a hindrance.

Many schools of thought exist for how Christians should operate within secular fields, and journalism has its own unique wrinkles and dynamics in the discussion. For

example, some think that religion can be covered like any other event – like a stock car race or foreign election, for example. That which is seen by the secular world as merely "religious" events, however, can actually be life-changing matters of conviction and the perceived truth to Christians. Men and women of faith attest that religion is not just another facet of life; rather, it is something that can change lives and perspectives, something that can make this world a better place in a way that no sports team or government program can do.

Christians enter all facets of life with a worldview intact that not only says their God has all the answers, but also that they need to share him. The field of journalism is no exception, although the way Christian journalists share their faith in Christ may be more subtle. Mainstream journalism does not necessarily understand the workings of faith, however. Eric Alterman (2003) wrote that religion is "by definition, a matter of faith. How is a reporter trained in 'who, what, when, where, and why' to treat reports of, say, a miracle or a visitation?" (p. 104). After hearing about objectivity and facts in journalism schools, reporters are right to be skeptical of anything they cannot see, prove, or back up with an authoritative source.

Therefore, Christians entering journalism are likely to find hostilities as their convictions are insinuated in their work. They must not only survive in this field, however, but also thrive if they are to be effective witnesses for Christ. Christians can succeed within journalism, but first they must understand their Biblical convictions (including having a Biblical worldview), then they must understand the vast field of journalism and the many problem areas within, and finally they must be prepared to deal with the hostilities and misunderstandings between religion and the media before forging

a productive future within journalism for other people of the faith. The Christian journalist who does it right will be an asset because he or she will do a job well with utmost regard to people, ethics, and the overall improvement of the world and those within.

A Christian can succeed in the world of journalism as both a strong Christian and a strong journalist. The purpose of this thesis is to give practical application to Christians entering journalism today.

Presuppositions

The following paper, which is devoted to how Christians can thrive within journalism, will examine basic Biblical convictions, journalism as a craft, and the potential problem areas and tensions between the media and religion. Several presuppositions must first be proposed to clarify the foundational terms within the subject of "Christians within journalism." First, although in the minds of Christians there should not be a distinction between Christian and secular worlds (for the whole world is fallen, and Christians are to be in the world and not of it), unfortunately, both the secular world and Christian subcultures have separated Christianity from the rest of the world. Thus, it is necessary to sometimes refer to the "secular world." Second, the journalism examined will predominantly be *American* journalism. Third, the study of Christians *within* journalism will be primarily devoted to an *individual Christian* entering a secular field rather than groups of Christians or Christian organizations and publications. Finally, *Christian* must be explained, since the term is used differently by many people. The Christian in this paper will be an evangelical Christian, though many of the conclusions

will have a wider application to many professing Christians. The Barna Group's (2008) definition for this Christian says:

> 'Evangelicals' meet the born again criteria plus seven other conditions. Those include saying their faith is very important in their life today; believing they have a personal responsibility to share their religious beliefs about Christ with non-Christians; believing that Satan exists; believing that eternal salvation is possible only through grace, not works; believing that Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; asserting that the Bible is accurate in all that it teaches; and describing God as the all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect deity who created the universe and still rules it today. Being classified as an evangelical is not dependent upon church attendance or the denominational affiliation of the church they attend. ("Definition of evangelical Christian," para. 3)

This thesis will attempt to give practical advice to an individual rather than devote attention to every specific code or situation in journalism. For the purposes of this study, "Christianity," "the faith," and "religion" will all be used interchangeably.

Introduction to Biblical Implications

A Christian journalist must first understand the Biblical implications of the faith. Although time cannot be devoted to a comprehensive synopsis of how the Bible instructs a Christian to live, a basic foundation can be identified. Those who follow Christ must realize first that they have distinct responsibilities and second, that there is a need for a God-centered perspective. Once these areas are examined, a Christian can make practical application for the journalistic world.

Responsibilities of Christians

The first Biblical implication is that, as a follower of Christ, the Christian has several responsibilities. Man's creation was for the glorification of God, and although man's sinfulness derailed the human race, the provision of salvation and sanctification through the work of Christ has made a way for man to once again glorify God. Specific responsibilities were given by God as guidelines to help mankind know how God would want people to live. Although Christians may choose to ignore these responsibilities, the teachings God provided were meant for the ultimate goal of God's glorification. Two specific instructions are love and evangelism.

Love, evangelism, and the glorification of God. First, love is an integral part of the Christian life. Not only is it the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-40), but when Jesus Christ spoke to his disciples, he said love was the way the world would know whom the followers of Christ are actually serving (John 13:35). All throughout the New Testament, love is a sign of obedience to Christ. Christians mirror the love of Christ and are to show love to those around them. An attitude of love is shown both personally and through the idea of a community, where many work together for the good of each other. This is in stark contrast to modern society, where community has decreased and individualism instead has been promoted. Ian Barbour (1993) writes:

> The Bible also offers a distinctive view of *persons in community*, which avoids both collectivism and individualism. Industrial society has been dominated by large impersonal organizations, mass advertising, and urban anonymity. In reaction, many people have sought personal meaning in self-actualization as autonomous individuals. (p. 262)

The love of Christ takes individuals and incorporates them into the loving community of the body of Christ, where each growing Christian learns the unconditional love of Christ, which then spreads to loving others, including their audience and their co-workers. For an unsaved person to become part of the body of Christ, however, Christians must engage in their second responsibility: evangelism.

Evangelism is sharing the gospel of Christ (as commanded in Mark 16:15). Although most people connect evangelism with a spoken message, sharing Christ also happens when Christians live in a way that reflects Christ through God-centered living. The Christian's overall goal is to live a life that glorifies God, and while there are many specific commandments, the Christian should always seek to glorify God first and foremost (1 Corinthians 10:31 and 1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and this is what will ultimately satisfy such commandments and influence others to him. The Bible offers many specifics for godly living, such as Leviticus 5:1, which instructs people to speak up when they have information about a situation, or James 5:12, which demands accountability for spoken words. (These instructions and others can apply directly to journalism.) Living a God-centered life also demands an attitude of excellence in all things, whether great or small. The parable of the steward shows that God wants excellence in the little as well as the large (Luke 16:10). Many throughout history have followed this standard of doing one's best, as John Schmalzbauer (2003) notes:

> An enduring tradition in Western Christianity emphasizes the sacredness of a job well done, regardless of its religious content. In the words of Martin Luther, 'the Christian shoemaker does his Christian duty not by putting little crosses on the

> shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship.' (p. 48)

Christians should be more concerned with having lives of excellence that reflect God than spouting religious creeds or wearing religious clothing. Being Christians in both word and deed is how God is glorified and mankind is given a clear picture of him.

The drawback: sin. The responsibilities of Christians would be a simple task if not for the sin that entangles mankind in its quest to glorify God. Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, "All the devils in hell and tempters on earth could do us no injury if there were no corruption in our own natures" (as cited in Olasky, 1988, p. 15). Biblical teaching echoes his sentiment, speaking of man's "darkened" understanding, "ignorance," and "blindness" (Ephesians 4:18), and a "carnal mind" that is "against God" (Romans 8:7). Colossians 2 lists the different ways that man seeks satisfaction other than God, such as different religions or materialism. Barbour (1993) writes that today, "We have turned technology into a religion, seeking meaning and salvation . . ." (p. 262). The lack of satisfaction from this world and the things of this world stems from sin within, a condition that can only be rectified by a relationship with God, who also provides the power to fulfill the responsibilities that will glorify him. Sin nature also complicates man's ability to interpret life. Without acknowledging a background of sin, man is left to guess and wonder as to the cause of the hurtful effects of man's actions. Marvin Olasky (1988) writes:

> Many Washington correspondents, living in a politicized world, see error or plot in politics and economics but will not accept its origin in the original sin within

> individuals. They consciously avoid admission of sin's power, for such power would condemn themselves. (p. 39)

Without accepting the idea of intrinsic sin, man lives without a guideline for the interpretation of life.

Perspective of Christians

The second biblical implication, the necessity of a God-centered perspective, is integral to a Christian's life if he or she wants to fulfill the responsibilities of Christ. With biblical responsibility and man's sinful nature vying for the allegiance of Christians, and, for that matter, truth and sin vying for the hearts of mankind, one must wonder how anyone ever gets it right. Since man is born and raised with such a sinful mindset, it would seem that godliness would be hard to attain, and indeed, Christian theology teaches that apart from God, it is impossible (Luke 18:27). Throughout the history of the world, however, God has required righteousness for those who follow him and seek his ways. Romans 4:3 says that Abraham, one of the earliest recorded men to have an active relationship with God, "believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." So, God requires faith from men – faith in him, as God, and that he being God will provide what fallen man needs, whether it be the way of salvation or help in daily living. The necessary of a relationship of faith between God and man has been a consistent thread all throughout history. Barbour (1993) notes, "The prophets of ancient Israel lived in a world very different from ours, yet they lived, as we do, in times of national crisis and international conflict" (p. 261). Those followers of God still sought to glorify God through their faith, just as Christians do today. As men have faith in God, he provides them with his perspective of life instead of the sinful perspective to which mankind is

already accustomed. Having a God-centered perspective or worldview is not an ideology; it is a lifestyle built on faithful living.

The idea of bringing individual perspectives to journalism is not new. A term more widely accepted than "perspective" is an individual's "worldview," which, according to Charles Marler (1997), amounts to "the values, beliefs, theories of history and life, and the nature of good and evil that drives his or her understanding of how the world works" (p. 50). Marler says that journalists should be aware of their personal worldviews so as to not let assumptions unwittingly work their way into their writing, for assumptions are the certain death of critical thinking and writing. However, for Christians God's perspective provides absolute truth for Christians. Having a worldview based on the perspective of God, and knowing that worldview well, will produce cohesive arguments based on truth rather than faulty conjectures resting on assumptions. Christians should be aware of both their own worldview and that of others so they can compare that to God's perspective and know how to communicate with a widely diversified audience.

Perspective is necessary because just as sin nature and carnal minds steered Christians incorrectly before conversion, the sin nature and wiles of Satan continue to attack throughout the rest of life. There is a need for a godly perspective in life instead of the normal, carnal perspective. While Colossians 2 explains how the ways of man would never satisfy, Colossians 3 takes the argument a step further and tells the Christian what to do, saying to "set your affection on things above, not on the things on the earth" (verse 2). In the Psalms, David also talks about setting his mind on the things of God, and 2 Corinthians 10:5 instructs Christians to bring every thought "captive to Christ." Such

verses instruct Christians to focus their minds on God, viewing life from his perspective rather than the perspective of man, which does not satisfy. This perspective envelops every area of life, looking toward the future day when the fellowship between man and God (once broken by sin) is perfected – as Colossians 3:4 says, "When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (italics added).

If a perspective is to cover every area of life, then naturally it must include the workplace. A Christian's job is always one of the most important places to show the perspective of Christ and glorify God. Olasky (1988) echoes Hebrews 11:8-16 when he writes, "A Christian journalist must know that a news organization is not a home. We are wayfarers and sojourners here on this earth generally, and in newspapers or broadcast stations specifically" (p. 179).

Christian Journalism

With an understanding of the Biblical implications necessary to the Christian life, Christians can then forge a plan with which to enter the field of journalism. Two basic forms of Christian journalism exist. The first is the Christian-organized, Christian-run, Christian-published type that basically employs and reaches Christians. Marvin Olasky is probably the best-known Christian journalist, and he largely supports this type of Christian journalism. In several books on the craft, Olasky promulgates the idea of "Biblical objectivity" – which he says is the concept that all journalism should be approached with a biblical worldview, reporting and interpreting with a God-centered filter in which God's truth is the standard by which everything should be compared. Biblical objectivity as a method would obviously never fly as it is in the secular journalism world (for although Christians find truth knowable, most in the world see it as

subjective and thus would deem this kind of reporting as biased), so Olasky mainly advocates Christian organizations, although he does agree that many individual Christians have been able to make a difference in the secular field (M. Olasky, personal communication, November 2, 2007). Overall, however, Olasky supports Christian publications, and he is currently the driving force behind the widely-read Christian periodical *World*. Olasky (1988) writes:

> In the long run, Christian journalists will need Christian publications. In that long run, it is clear that only news organizations owned and staffed by Christians will be able to practice journalism consistent with strong Biblical faith. Only through independence can Christians make sure that the Bible is taken seriously in journalism. (p. 180)

Essentially, Olasky asserts that secular publications will never allow Biblical objectivity to power their reporting. However, this does not mean that Christian journalists will be confined to Christian publications to promote the principles of Christ.

The second type of Christian journalism involves Christians taking that same basic idea of Biblical objectivity into the secular workplace and spreading the perspective of Christ. Christians can still work in secular publications with their Biblical worldview; they just must be careful not to use jargon and must take an extra measure to be even-handed. That is, they must communicate in the language of the culture but not depart from the truth. Therefore, Christians in secular publications will not look like Christians in Christian publications will, although they both believe the same – context makes a difference. This may be done in many different forms. Although Christians will probably not begin by blatantly noting original sin in their news articles, they may

eventually be able to write editorials, columns, or other pieces with clear Biblical objectivity. Furthermore, Christians within the secular journalism field will create a great witness for Christ as they report the biblical, moral perspective while still respecting traditional journalism. The individual Christian's faithfully modeling his or her belief will be a powerful testimony to the unsaved. It is this second type of Christian journalism – a method that has been attempted in mostly small and isolated instances in the past – that can be the new form of Christian journalism in the modern age.

Journalism's Past

With a foundation laid for Christians, attention can be given to the actual field of journalism, first by examining journalism in the past. Christians once dominated the field in the days of the American partisan press, although journalism is largely secular now. A look at journalism history will unearth key aspects that can be used in today's journalism to aid the Christian journalist's cause.

Origins of Journalism

In examining journalism's past, one must first give attention to the craft's origins. Martin Conboy (2004) notes that "there is not and never has been a single unifying activity to be thought of as journalism" (p. 3). Paul Manning (2001) explains:

> Most commentators agree that at the simplest level, news journalists should have the task of gathering and communicating to the public up-to-date information from home and abroad, in order to sustain political discussion and the democratic process. Yet beyond this, very little is agreed. (p. 2)

With such a wide interpretation of journalism, those who practice the craft have considerable freedom, especially to add personal opinion in the matter. Conboy (2004)

writes that "journalism, even in its earliest stages, was never narrowly focused on the simple reporting of the world but has always contained the potential to express opinion and have a proactive effect on the world it reports" (p. 33).

In its purest form, journalism is the relaying of information from one person to another. Just as a neighbor may run down the street and tell anyone who cared to hear that a house was burning at the other end, journalists today fill their papers with news that will interest others. The journalists are the go-betweens for people who cannot be at all places at all times but still want the information from those places. The predecessor of journalism was relaying information about other people, often in the form of rumor and gossip. New forms of journalism continue to come and add onto the old methods, such as newspapers' taking a bite from the gossip avenues, then radio's taking part of newspaper's shares, then television, then the Internet, and so on.

A Brief Look at Journalism in the Past: 1440-1600

The earliest recorded method of written news was the *Acta Diurna* of ancient Rome, a transmission of public events, deaths, and such that was posted outside public buildings (Olasky, 1991). Johann Gutenberg's printing press revolutionized journalism (eventually changing the world as it was known and leaving effects throughout history at all levels of life, especially when it brought about the Reformation). In the Middle Ages, Henry VII took the craft to a new level when he began to try to spread news formally before rumors could start, thereby controlling the content of news (Conboy, 2004). Politics and journalism would continue to intertwine throughout the years. Conboy (2004) writes, "In feudal times, authority needed to control and if necessary suppress information since knowledge has always constituted an important form of power" (p. 7).

This power of communication increased even more with the worldwide trading in the fifteenth century (Conboy, 2004).

Journalism in America: 1600-present

American journalism flourished as the new country craved press freedom, an attitude that has permeated American journalism from its inception. First, when the founders of the United States of America established their new country in the late eighteenth century, they realized the press was a valuable tool. Scarred by the suppression of many rights under English rule, the Americans sought new freedoms, one of them being a freedom of the press, which the First Amendment of the Constitution established. Along with this freedom was the decision that a license would not be required, a vast change from English laws, which imposed jail time or worse for those attempting to print without a license, whether they be in England or America. The belief in the rights of men that the founders championed was rooted in the writings of John Locke, a seventeenth century English philosopher. William Proctor (2000) said:

> Locke believed that natural law and fundamental human rights could be discovered by reason. But God was the ultimate source of human reason and everything else. So reason could only be exercised in accordance with the will and guidance of God. (p. 155)

The quest for human rights – based on a worldview that gave due glory to God – established the rights that would make the new land so free. Americans quickly took advantage of this freedom. The press eventually was called the "fourth estate," deemed equally as influential as the church, the judiciary, and the commons.

S. Robert Lichter, Stanley Rothman, and Linda S. Lichter (1986) write, "Since the mid-nineteenth century, Americans have generally assumed that order is relatively easy to maintain if the people are properly informed. To them the great danger lies in the possible tyranny of those chosen to govern" (p. 5). American journalism and its freedom put power in the hands of the people. The major trademark of American journalism was that its unabridged freedom meant that virtually anyone could be a journalist. Jay Black, Bob Steele, and Ralph Barney (1999), in their basic journalism handbook, note, "In a society that protects people who speak or write, any person (literate or illiterate, learned or ignorant, socialized or rebellious, passive or outraged) may become a journalist without standards imposed either by government or professional groups" (p. 17). The lack of suppression by outside groups has let journalism in America flourish. Online blogging and other similar forms have recently championed this freedom as anyone can not only be a journalist but also create a following larger than established newsgroups.

Since journalism in its purest form is merely conveying information from one person to another, and since America has much freedom for the field, Christian journalists can take heart. Billy Graham (1997) notes a connection between traditional journalists and traditional evangelists, writing:

> An evangelist, in a sense, is a newspaper man because in the old Greek city-states they did not have television or newspapers, but they would have a town crier that would go up and down the streets announcing the latest news. He was called an evangelist . . . . He's an announcer; he's a writer; he's a crier of news. (as cited in Evensen, pp. 172-173)

As Christians take their godly perspective into every avenue of life, especially the workplace, they can see that their job is not much different from what men have done through the ages as they shared Christ.

The Partisan Press: 1700-1830

The first major era in American journalism was that of the partisan press. Early papers deliberately set out to tell their side of the story. Jim Kuypers (2002) writes:

> Originally . . . the press in America operated quite differently. Early American newspapers were a small, cottage affair that actually began as a sideline for many printers. The largest papers in the country were read by a few thousand people at most, and this was the norm until the rise of the penny press in the 1830s. These early presses did not need to be objective in the sense that we use the term today, for they had a limited, partisan audience of readers: Whigs, Democrats, Republicans, French, German, etc. Even at the onset of the twentieth century the presses were not entirely objective. (p. 13)

Readers selected papers as to what fit their interests and beliefs. In the early years of American journalism, God was a major part of all reporting. Olasky (1988) notes:

> Much of American journalism until the mid-nineteenth century emphasized God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Kings who disobeyed God were exposed as sinful. Duelists were without honor because they thought esteem among men more important than following God's commands. Lightning storms taught spiritual lessons. Lack of repentance had murderous consequences. (p. 31)

Reporting systematically included God when interpreting events, largely because the men writing the news considered God part of everything. "Then, those who ignored the

spiritual were considered subjective atheists, allowing their own feelings to overcome what really was there . . . . Journalists evidently saw that the world could not be understood apart from a Biblical context" (Olasky, 1988, pp. 61-62). Man's using God's perspective in everyday life was common in the partisan press in early American journalism.

Journalism did not necessarily view the partisan press as good, however. Jim Willis (2003) notes that some journalism historians "refer to it as the Dark Ages of American journalism" (p. 4). In the coming years, attention would instead be given to objectivity and presenting facts that readers could interpret themselves, a method journalists believed would be more beneficial. The overwhelming inclusion of spiritual matters in journalism would disappear in the days of the penny press and mass circulation papers. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, no hint of the early American journalism that kept God so prominent could be found. Schmalzbauer (2003) writes, "Religion's marginal presence in journalism and social science is remarkable, given the central role of American Protestantism in the development of both fields" (p. 7). New worldviews swept through America in the nineteenth century and changed journalism's way of thinking.

Changes in Journalism: 1840-present

As the partisan press ebbed away, new forms of journalism emerged in America, such as the increased demand for objectivity and the advent of sensationalism and yellow journalism. Michael Buchholz (1997) says, "By the fourth decade of the nineteenth century, another important shift had occurred: newspapers emerged that were read for the news they contained, not for the political party or philosophy they supported" (p. 10).

Cheap newspapers came through the penny press, but at the same time, social currents were beginning to change the thinking of Americans. As moves were made to try to improve American society apart from religion, the country looked to the emergence of the social gospel and secular academics. Olasky (1996) says, "Increasingly, liberal ministers began to proclaim that man was not inherently sinful, and that if man's environment were changed, man himself could become perfect" (p. 163). With this attitude, the blame for man's problems shifted from the correct origin – man's sinfulness – to outside causes instead. Olasky (1996) talks about a leading journalist of the era, Lincoln Steffens:

> Once, discussing the biblical Fall within the garden of Eden, Steffens said the culprit was not Adam, or Eve, or even the snake: 'It was, it is, the apple.' Good people were corrupted by a bad environment – and the goal of journalists, Steffens believed, was to change the environment . . . ." (p. 217)

As more journalists and the rest of society looked for outward causes and solutions, they increasingly relied on evidence deemed factual and verifiable, and religion was not one of these. Instead, spiritual matters were seen as subjective and unimportant, a relic of the past.

Journalism and Wire Services: 1840-1900

As America moved from the partisan press to an era during which people required objectivity first and foremost (or from the libertarian to the social responsibility era), different factors in society and development led to the changes in American journalism. The quest for objectivity in journalism really picked up with the invention of the nation's first wire services. Stuart Allan (1999) writes, "The introduction of the electric telegraph

in the 1840s is also typically cited by newspaper historians as a crucial contributory factor informing the emergence of journalistic 'objectivity' as a professional ideal, one based on the presentation of 'unvarnished facts'" (p. 17). The wire services were able to provide "objectivity" because, due to desire for fast, complete news, only the straight facts were sent across the valuable new lines. Those facts were then distributed through the wire service, and every paper had the equal opportunity to use the same facts however they pleased instead of relying on reports from many different journalists. As the amount of available information increased, the desire to control that information spawned newspaper giants such as Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, who brought the rise of sensationalism and yellow journalism at the turn of the century.

Desire for Circulation: Sensationalism: 1900-1930

The deviation of journalism into wild stories and hyped headlines was fueled by the desire and drive to sell more papers. Buchholz (1997) outlines Pulitzer's desire for power: "Unable to run for president himself because of his foreign birth, he wanted to do the next best thing, influence the election of a president. For that kind of influence, Pulitzer needed circulation" (p. 14). To increase circulation, both Pulitzer and Hearst printed stories that took misdeeds and magnified them. On one hand, they and their muckraking counterparts did great good for America by exposing wrongs and calling for justice. On the other, their desire for more circulation often caused unnecessary and untruthful character assassination, the effect of which was equal to that of slander. President Theodore Roosevelt commented on the negative effects of yellow journalism:

> The attack is of use only if it is absolutely truthful. The liar is no whit better than the thief, and if his mendacity takes the form of slander, he may be worse than

> most thieves. It puts a premium upon knavery untruthfully to attack an honest man, or even with hysterical exaggeration to assail a bad man with untruth. An epidemic of indiscriminate assault upon character does no good, but very great harm. The soul of every scoundrel is gladdened whenever an honest man is assailed, or even when a scoundrel is untruthfully assailed. (as cited in Olasky, 1996, p. 218)

While the time of yellow journalism did expose some wrongs, the overall effect was often the sacrifice of simple truth to instead satiate the public's cry for crude information. The following years would see a change in journalism as attempts were once again made to use journalism as an avenue of simple, objective truth.

In the 1930s and 1940s, however, another question was slowly added to the journalist's normal list of who, what, when, where, and how: why. Journalists began to ask why things happened the way they did. Without the spiritual influence of early American journalism, however, reporters were once again left to guess and assert, explicitly or otherwise, worldviews at odds with that of Christianity.

Loss of the Spiritual and Journalism and Technology: 1940-present

By the middle of the twentieth century, hardly any evidence of the spiritual influence in American journalism remained. Olasky (1988) says, "There is little evidence of editors explicitly banning God from the front page. Instead, they redefined 'reality' to exclude the spiritual realm" (p. 31). Without spiritual matters being included regularly in journalism, reporters were hard pressed to understand the times or the complexities of faith. Olasky (1988) continues, "By the 1970s, many reporters seemed unable to understand even basic Christian concepts" (p. 38), which he attributes to "sometimes a

lack of understanding of basic Christian concepts; sometimes a refusal to believe that intelligent people actually take those beliefs seriously; and, probably most often, deliberate suppression of truth about God and self" (p. 39). This vast change in American journalism can be seen in Georgie Anne Geyer's (1984) description of journalistic truth, devoid of any real certainty: "Journalism is and must be the search for the little, relative truths that alone keep us sane in the world; it is the relentless search for what can be known, not for what cannot be known" (pp. 72-73). As spiritual matters were relegated more and more to the sphere of the unknown or the subjective, any real attention to truth had to be abandoned within American journalism.

The French philosopher of communication Jacques Ellul called for social change in his book, *Presence of the Kingdom*, published in 1989. He says, "Day after day the wind blows away the pages of our calendars, our newspapers, and our political regimes, and we glide along the stream of time without any spiritual framework, without a memory, without a judgment, carried about by 'all winds of doctrine' on currents of history . . . . Now we ought to react vigorously against this slackness, this tendency to drift. If we are to live in this world, we need to know it far more profoundly; we need to rediscover the meaning of events, and the spiritual framework which our contemporaries have lost" (as cited in Wallace, 1991, pp. 16-17).

The final area and most recent in journalism's past to be examined is the arrival of technology as a major force in the field. Steven R. Knowlton (1997) describes the demands of technology on ethics when he notes, "As technological developments make news delivery more efficient and more immediate, the time to think about a story gets shorter and shorter" (p. 68). With the less time to form stories, less time has been given

to add meaning to the stories (as well as facts). The Internet has especially bolstered the American ideal of the democratization of journalism, and the traditional middleman journalist is increasingly cut out of the news gathering and consumption process. Conboy (2004) notes that recent journalistic debates have wondered "whether people can even now become better informed by going to the Internet, rather than edited, journalistic sources" (p. 225). The real question is whether people trust their own interpretations of stories over that of the usual journalists. Knowlton (1997) says that:

> Because of the Internet, readers and viewers may be able to do without journalists altogether, taking their information directly from Internet sources, unfiltered and unmediated by a reporter . . . . Before the Internet, it was wildly impractical for ordinary citizens to gather, digest, and take meaning from the many sources that provided most of our news. But Internet technology makes some of the gathering part relatively easy, leaving the reporter's essential role that of digesting and interpreting. (p. 70)

As journalism returns to its original form of passing along information from one person to another, many people are choosing to cut the middleman. Their experience with the media has been less than satisfactory in recent years, a problem that will be examined later, but the conclusion can be drawn that technology has put some of the power back into the hands of the individual rather than those who run traditional media outlets.

Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm (1956) categorize the different kinds of the press in *The Four Theories of the Press*. They describe four eras, often with features overlapping, that can explain the relationship between society and the press. In the authoritarian view, which was prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries (the beginning of printing), the press functioned from the top down "with a few men determining the information for all" (p. 2). This view would be the journalism that colonists were experiencing when they decided to move to America. The second view, the libertarian view, puts more emphasis on the individual person and his or her ability to reason; the press helps this person search for truth. The libertarian view fits with the aforementioned change from the partisan press era into the nineteenth century, when people began to search for objectivity.

The third view, social responsibility, branched off the libertarian view and called for fair representation (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). This was when journalists became concerned with the public's "right to know" and began to develop trade standards. Brought into full force in the 1950s, the social responsibility is what mainly drives the press today and is the most prevalent view for what journalism should be toward society today. The final view is the Soviet communist view, which was more influential in the time of Siebert, et. al's work. In this view, the press is not only authoritarian but also completely controlled by the state. These four theories provide a different structure by which to view the press, each giving explanation for why society and the press work together in such a way.

Journalism in the Present

Now that time has been given to examine changes in American journalism in the past, the field in its present state will be observed. Modern journalism will be examined in three major parts: one, individual journalists; two, current problems in journalism; and three, religion in journalism.

Individual Journalists

Individuals entering journalism face different challenges. They must work well with the public and its high expectations as well as fulfilling other responsibilities generally expected of individual journalists.

The Press and the Public

One consideration is that the public has a particular attitude toward the press, and the press has a certain responsibility to the public.

Public's view of the press. First, the public has a distinct view of journalists. Black, et al. (1999) write about a woman who wanted a career in writing but decided against journalism because of its nature, which she perceived to be full of trickery, ethical problems, and questionable practices. However, the writers found that "after ten years of observing government and other social institutions at work, she concluded that if the world is to be saved from selfish self-destruction it would be the journalists, in all their objectionable practices, who would do it" (p. 1). This dichotomy is what makes the relationship between the press and the public so unique. On one hand, the public generally has a low view of the media as all kinds of tactics are used to discover and divulge information, yet they continue to consume information from these sources and accept what they hear. M.L. Stein's (1974) research of the field continues to hold true today: "People may dislike the press, but they're prone to believe what they read and hear" (p. 100).

Press's responsibility to the public. A problem that journalists face when trying to please the public is the gap between profitable journalism and journalistic responsibility. Journalism is as commercial as any trade, a craft that would soon go out

of business if not for subscriptions and advertisers. As a result, most publications look to reach the public in a way that will turn the largest profit while still balancing their desire to supply the public with information. In years past, however, this attitude has often led to journalists' betraying their responsibility of informing the public of what is important and truthful whether or not the public is not ready to hear. If not for journalistic responsibility, the public would never hear about the dirty laundry of their sports heroes, media giants, or favorite organizations, but often journalists appear wary to complete these unpopular tasks. Carl Bernstein, the reporter of Watergate fame, comments on the lack of responsibility in American journalism, saying:

> In this new culture of journalistic titillation, we teach our readers and our viewers that the trivial is significant, that the lurid and the loopy are more important than real news. We do not serve our readers and views, we pander to them. And we condescend to them, giving them what we think they want and what we calculate will sell and boost ratings and readership. Many of them, sadly, seem to justify our condescension, and to kindle at the trash. Still, it is the role of journalists to challenge people, not merely to amuse them. (as cited in Allan, 1999, p. 187)

An integral part of the relationship between the public and the press is the devotion of the press to do what is best for the public no matter how the public responds.

Pundits. One unique pocket of journalism that has affected journalistic responsibility has emerged with pundits, whom Stephen Zeigler describes as "a very influential but controversial class of mass media opinion leaders who enjoy the luxury of sharing their views on the topic of the day" (as cited in Evensen, 1997, p. 54). The prominent American journalist Walter Lippmann was the first of many pundits. Zeigler

notes, "Lippmann saw the pundit as 'doing what every sovereign citizen is supposed to do but has neither the time nor the interest to do for himself,' that is, educate himself and others fully about public affairs" (as cited in Evensen, 1997, p. 54). In a sense, pundits take the "why" question of journalism even further, splicing their own opinion with the news of the day and openly telling people what to think about matters. Pundits have created quite a following, and the public seems prone to take the view of these established journalists rather than do the extra research and thinking themselves. Often, people are willing to pursue with good intentions, but they lack the time or resources to form their own opinions. Punditry, however, often also fails in the eyes of journalistic responsibility. Many pundits are not thoroughly schooled as journalists or even ethical reasoners. Furthermore, pundits often are required not only to offer opinions on the present but also what will happen in the future. Zeigler writes, "Instead of reporting and analyzing current policies and issues, they are expected to predict the future, and usually they do so with all the accuracy of astrologers and bartenders" (as cited in Evensen, 1997, p. 56). As a result, this wing of journalism further corrodes the ability to carry out the responsibility journalists have to provide the public with what is important. Pundits – and the public's embracing of pundits – can often keep people from reasoning and learning for themselves in a fuller way.

Requirements of Individual Journalists

With an idea of the relationship between the public and the press in mind, the second area of current American journalism can be examined: the requirements of individual journalists within the field. First, attention will be given to codes, guidelines,

and standards that are expected of journalists. Second, personal qualities and traits necessary for an American journalist will be observed.

Codes, Guidelines, and Standards

As mentioned before, journalists have the unique privilege of not needing a license to practice their craft. Some regulations have been passed in the United States concerning the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) as well as the country's legal system, but for the most part, the journalists themselves must decide what is right and wrong in the craft. Black, et. al (1999) write:

> Unlike other professionals who have institutionally defined social roles and ethics, journalists have been left to their own devices in working out their social roles and in determining their ethics, and then in justifying those roles and ethics to the public. (p. 16)

Whereas other professions for the greater good, such as medicine or the military, have distinct rules and principles, journalism has no such restrictions, governmental or otherwise. While the freedom provided is a great plus for journalism, the lack of set standards has also created a problem, and attempts have been made to lay down basic guidelines.

The Society of Professional Journalists has devised a code of ethics, and the Hutchins Commission is known for its basic guidelines, both of which will be discussed later. Most journalists agree, however, that the bulk of responsibility in the field rests with individual journalists. Leonard Silk (1984) writes, "While maintaining high professional standards ought certainly to be a major responsibility of publishers and top editors, I think it is up to reporters and other editors to insist on such standards and carry

them out voluntarily and determinedly" (p. 90). He continues to explain that journalists who take the high road will not always benefit: "If you are going to be a tough and honest reporter and a good person, you have to be prepared to pay the price and not necessarily to expect a reward. You do the job for its own sake, because it is the right thing to do" (p. 90). These requirements of journalists are remarkably similar to what is expected of Christians in the secular world. While some fields, such as medicine, may be regulated by a moral code that would be similar to that of a Christian's (such as valuing life), journalistic organizations can often be driven by desires for money or acceptance – goals that are contrary to the basic life of a Christian. Thus, an effectively moral and ethical journalist – whether Christian or not – will face many of the same struggles a Christian will within the field. This journalist must be self-motivated to do what is right.

The most well-known code, the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics (2006), has four basic points: seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable ("Code of Ethics"). The code's preamble reads:

> Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. ("Code of Ethics," para. 1)

Although the code gives a few specifics, most of the responsibility is left to the journalist.

Another influential standard in journalist ethics is that of the Hutchins Commission, which sets forth five basic requirements for the press:

1. The press must give a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context that gives them some meaning.

2. The press must provide a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism.

3. The press must project a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society.

4. The press must present and clarify the goals and values of the society.

5. The press must provide full access to the day's intelligence. (as cited in Mencher, 2006, p. 560)

These guidelines apply more to groups and publications rather than the individual.

Another interesting set of guidelines is that of Walter Williams, who wrote a "Journalist's Creed" about 100 years ago at the Missouri School of Journalism. He gives mention to God as part of the necessities for journalism. The creed (2008) reads:

I believe in the profession of journalism.

I believe that the public journal is a public trust; that all connected with it are, to the full measure of their responsibility, trustees for the public; that acceptance of a lesser service than the public service is betrayal of this trust.

I believe that clear thinking and clear statement, accuracy and fairness are fundamental to good journalism.

I believe that a journalist should write only what he holds in his heart to be true.

I believe that suppression of the news, for any consideration other than the welfare of society, is indefensible. I believe that no one should write as a

> journalist what he would not say as a gentleman; that bribery by one's own pocketbook is as much to be avoided as bribery by the pocketbook of another; that individual responsibility may not be escaped by pleading another's instructions or another's dividends.
>
> I believe that advertising, news and editorial columns should alike serve the best interests of readers; that a single standard of helpful truth and cleanness should prevail for all; that the supreme test of good journalism is the measure of its public service.
>
> I believe that the journalism which succeeds best – and best deserves success – fears God and honors Man; is stoutly independent, unmoved by pride of opinion or greed of power, constructive, tolerant but never careless, self-controlled, patient, always respectful of its readers but always unafraid, is quickly indignant at injustice; is unswayed by the appeal of privilege or the clamor of the mob; seeks to give every man a chance and, as far as law and honest wage and recognition of human brotherhood can make it so, an equal chance; is profoundly patriotic while sincerely promoting international good will and cementing world-comradeship; is a journalism of humanity, of and for today's world. ("Journalist's Creed," para. 2-9)

Personal Qualities and Traits

With a small number of guidelines, the bulk of a journalist's qualifications are personal traits and qualities that are necessary for success. Bruce J. Evensen (1997) writes that it takes a unique person to be a journalist, for the trade does not pay a lot, and it requires many hours and personal sacrifices. However, "Those who remain generally

do so because they cannot imagine anything else quite so satisfying" (p. 2). The love of the work is often the biggest draw for journalism, alongside the individual journalist's drive to change or reform the world and be close to history.

Aside from a passion for the field, several qualities are key. First, an aspiring journalist must be hungry for knowledge and always be willing to read and learn. Marler (1997) says, "Intellectual curiosity, the power of acute observation, and critical thinking characterize many of the best reporters. Students entering the profession should have a love of language, an affection for history, and a passion for truth-finding" (p. 41). Ted Smythe (1997) agrees and attributes problems in the field to a dearth of such knowledge: "The lack of experienced and knowledgeable reporters on many stories is a fundamental problem in journalism, one that has no easy solution" (p. 30). These keys to good journalism come through hard work. Senator Paul Simon, a journalist himself, gives three pieces of advice to those learning the craft. First, journalists need to be skeptical enough to search out the facts, but they should not be cynical. Simon says, "The cynics aren't going to help build a better world; all they do is tear it down" (as cited in Evensen, 1997, p. 5). Second, he encourages journalists to focus on important issues, not just topics that will sell. Finally, he emphasizes the need for hard work and accurate reporting. He writes, "The brilliant journalist who does not work hard will always be surpassed by the average journalist who does" (as cited in Evensen, 1997, p. 6). As well as having these traits, which are necessary in many rigorous professions, Simon encourages journalists to have a high degree of compassion.

Since journalists work primarily with people, they must know how to treat people well while still satisfying the need of getting the information necessary to serve the

public. In a field in which cutthroat competition often trumps compassion, more people are noting that sincerity from journalists could help them not only get along better with the public but also report better. Mark Hatfield (1997) says, "Some of the greatest reporters of our time – Walter Lippmann, Edward Murrow, and others – were never out to get people. They had a sense of history. They were recording events of the day for history; they believed in that purpose, and they let it drive their work" (as cited in Evensen, p. 137). Writer George Orwell thought that sincerity and clear writing went hand in hand (Willis, 2003, p. 122). Willis (2003) notes that often, the public is more receptive to accounts from people who were eyewitnesses to events and who write from a first-person perspective. Although "tradition says journalists must remain detached," he also says that people are increasingly more receptive of human journalists – ones who show emotion, feel pain, react to events, and take part in stories (p. xiv). Certainly, Christian journalists can employ compassion in their reporting as they seek to live godly lives, and the qualities of hard work and optimism also fall in line with biblical principles.

Melvin Mencher, whose journalism textbook is widely used in the training of new journalists, made his own specific checklist of necessary traits and qualities. Some of his suggestions fall into line with character qualities that Christians should have, but some other characteristics do not. First, Mencher outlines some qualities that Christians could find biblical principles to support. Mencher (2006) says that a journalist must have "moderation in life and behavior," "the willingness to admit errors," "a capacity to endure solitude and criticism," "a commitment to work," "resistance to praise – humility," and "avoidance of the desire to please" (pp. 569-570). The final admonition –

not trying to please – is especially important in the field, where the greater good often should usurp heavy public opinion. Benjamin Franklin once noted, "If all printers were determined not to print anything till they were sure it would offend nobody, there would be very little printed" (as cited in Stein, 1974, p. 96).

Mencher (2006) also mentions some characteristics that Christians should take with consideration. He says a journalist must have "responsibility to one's abilities and talent" (p. 569), to develop them and live up to them. Certainly, Christians should use God-given abilities wisely, but they must also remember that the use of talent is not an end in itself; rather, the glorification of God is the chief goal. Mencher (2006) also says that a journalist should "be committed to a value system but be free from ideologies and commitments that limit thought" (p. 571). Mencher follows this thought when he adds that a journalist needs "an open-mindedness that seeks out and tries to comprehend various points of view, including those in conflict with those the reporter holds" (p. 569). This principle presents the necessity of a balancing act for the Christian journalist. On one hand, Christians should never betray the truth and what they know to be right. On the other, Christians must also be willing to show love and understanding to all walks of life and ways of thinking. Christians need to understand that many unbelievers cannot understand the things of God since they have not accepted his truth. Just because journalists agree to listen to and learn other views does not mean they must accept them, though.

However, while Christians may think that the lines they draw leave room for other thought and understanding inside a biblical context, most in the secular world find Christians narrow-minded and constricting. Certainly, some Christians border on

legalism – adhering to rules and standards never commanded by God – simply to be "religious" or because they misinterpret the Bible. The Christian who is rooted in the word of God, however, should be bold, knowing that Biblical standards bring freedom. Mencher warns against belief systems that "limit thought"; while the Christian may know that his or her godly perspective does not limit thought, the world may think that it does.

Finally, Mencher (2006) makes some suggestions that present clear problems for Christians. He says journalists need "a secular, scientific attitude toward the work at hand. Knowledge is allowed to speak for itself. The professional does not believe on the basis of hope but of evidence" (p. 569). He reiterates later that journalists must "believe on the basic of facts, not hope" (p. 571). While on the surface this seems like another basic tenet of journalism, this principle could make a sticky situation in answering the "why" question of journalism. Journalism – and the world – asks a lot of its journalists when it wants to know why things happen by only including what can be seen, touched, or heard. Any conjecture without fact will have difficulty being accepted in journalism, but matters of faith are especially ridiculed. Christians live lives of faith, and often what they see as clear evidence is interpreted as mere hope by the world. As a result, Christians need to be aware of how faith is viewed in journalism, and they should be careful as to what they deem as evidence among many who will not understand their convictions. Being a Christian in journalism is not just applying a Christian worldview to writing but also working with people both inside and outside the journalistic realm. All of this will determine a Christian example.

Current Problems in Journalism

With an idea of what is required of the modern journalist, attention can now be given to some major problem areas in the field for which Christians need to be prepared. The four major areas that will be discussed are tolerance, ethics, bias, and objectivity. Although a study of each area could be lengthy, a brief sketch of each problem area will suffice for Christians looking for practical applications of Christian principles in the journalistic world.

Tolerance

First, tolerance is a major force in modern society, especially in the last half century. As American culture has changed, more emphasis has been accorded to accepting different views, mostly in the area of religion, morals, and beliefs. Those who oppose changes are often seen as opposed to enlightenment or advancement, and in a society that values improvement (an evolution to a higher level), such opposition is not well-received. One example of tolerance in journalism today is how the press handles homosexuality. When AIDS first struck America, the disease was largely portrayed in the media as an epidemic – unstoppable to the human race, able to affect anyone despite most medical findings, according to Kuypers. Years passed before the real truth – that AIDS is primarily carried among homosexuals – was accepted. The press has also supported the idea that homosexuality is genetic, a theory still disputed in science. Much of the press continues to try to place homosexuality on the same tier as heterosexuality, just as blacks are equal with whites and women are equal with men (two undisputed facts); the press often sees this as the next civil rights case in a society that has largely begun to agree.

While the issue of homosexuality and its roots and effects can be disputed, the press has given a definite endorsement to one side. Kuypers (2002) addresses the portrayal of homosexuality in the media. He concludes, "Those that disagree with the press view are at best misinformed and misguided; at worst, they are hateful, intolerant, and bigoted" (p. 226). Homosexuality is just one area in which those that oppose the main view get ostracized as haters. The tolerance promoted with cases such as homosexuality can be expected to expand to other areas that were once viewed as clearly right or wrong. Already, society looks to provide sameness even though people may not work equally, spend equally, or come to the table with equal health, for example. Opposition to tolerance, however, is seen as hatred toward people even though runaway tolerance could have detrimental effects.

An interesting aspect about tolerance is this: to portray an attitude of complete tolerance, tolerance supporters must be intolerant to anyone who is in any way at all "intolerant." For instance, if a Christian group were to be intolerant to something they believe to be very wrong, such as sex outside of marriage, those supporting tolerance would criticize the group for their intolerance. Ironically, however, they would be intolerant themselves. Tolerance no longer includes merely accepting that others have different beliefs; now tolerance encourages all people to accept the beliefs of others. In theory, tolerance seems like a great idea for a world looking for unification and peace, but once a closer look is taken inside the nature of man and the regular problems the world encounters, it can be seen that tolerance, without being adequately principled and rationally constrained, is a largely impractical ideal. Most people who have specific

beliefs (that are prone to be "intolerant" beliefs) believe that way for very specific, strong reasons. Proctor (2000) writes:

> Obviously, such a view of tolerance consigns practically everyone who is serious about his or her faith to the nethermost realm of the intolerant because most serious believers do assume their particular faith is superior. Otherwise, they wouldn't have committed themselves to that particular one and excluded all the others! (p. 95)

This attitude occurs not only with Christians but also with many religious groups, some of the more prominent being Hindus and Muslims.

Christians must remain strong in their convictions but also must be increasingly sensitive to different viewpoints, including the intolerant who do not understand Christians' apparent lack of tolerance. Once again, however, it is important that Christians do not seek to please men rather than God, to whom they owe allegiance. If Christ had tolerated other views in the manner promoted today, his earthly ministry would have been brief or non-existent. Instead, he ate with sinners, loved people, influenced lives, and lovingly but honestly told people when they were wrong while also supplying a message of hope. If Christians are to swim against the tide of modern tolerance, they must do it like Christ.

Ethics

The second major problem area in journalism relates to ethics. This area is especially problematic because, as mentioned before, journalism has no laws to follow, only suggested codes or guidelines. Rather, individuals themselves must do what is right. Knowlton (1997) outlines the difference between ethics and prudence. Prudence is

looking out for self, in a practical way, such as not crossing a street without looking; ethics is employing principles that extend beyond self, such as not speeding because the consequences may affect others. Whereas prudence may suffice in everyday life, a journalist has to appeal to ethics because every decision will affect many in the public.

The philosopher Aristotle was one of the first to examine ethics closely in the western philosophic tradition. Willis (2003) writes, "Aristotle believed that the purpose of ethics in human life was to help make people happy, and that the only way to do this was through a set of intangible laws, called ethics" (p. 120). Aristotle's musings found that most of ethics involved a balance of reasoning and emotions. Throughout the years, journalists have tried to place that balance within a list of codes, procedures, and ideals that help the range of press freedom, but morals often exceed basic legality, making it difficult to balance freedom and correct action. Steven Klaidman and Tom L. Beauchamp (1987) write, "A law-abiding person is not necessarily morally virtuous, and if an act is legally acceptable that fact alone does not make it morally acceptable" (p. 12). Their practical application of such a case was Janet Cooke's invention of a fictional character for her story – a legal method that was by no means morally responsible. This fabrication caused trouble for the *Washington Post*, led to Cooke being fired and returning her Pulitzer Prize, and also stood as an important example to ethics teachers trying to train new journalists. Morality often goes beyond the bounds of freedom of the press.

Ethics in any area of life is a complex topic. Within journalism, the issue is complicated by competing desires to inform the public as well as the desire to do what is

right, protect innocent people, and uphold personal convictions. Black, et. al (1999) write in their journalism handbook:

> Doing ethics in journalism is not just deciding between two choices, right and wrong, when facing an ethical dilemma. The ethical decision is much more difficult and complex. It's about developing a range of acceptable actions and choosing from among them. It's about considering the consequences of those actions. And it's about basic decisions on obligation, on the principles of the journalist's duty to the public. True ethical decision making is also about public justification, the ability to explain clearly and fully the process of how and why decisions are made. (p. 51)

Considering the consequences of ethical decisions on the public is important in journalism, but two different forms of thinking exist as to how to handle ethics. In one form, making ethical decisions based on duty, consideration is given to consequences in a grand scheme as to what is good for all people at all times, even under an intangible set of laws or a God-like figure. In another form, ethical decisions based on consequences – best known as utilitarianism – decisions are made according to calculations of individual consequences.

In the first form, when ethical decisions are made according to principles of duty, no basic laws are made, but an understanding of morality is required so that journalists can work inside a basic framework. With this method, there are what Black, et. al (1999) call "guideposts," or tenets of ethical decision making such as being accountable, showing independence, being informed, seeking to educate, showing all perspectives, and emanating compassion, to name a few (p. 55). To succeed, personal character must be

supreme. Within this ideal are where the codes of journalism stand. These codes are suggested to journalists as basic guidelines to follow when making decisions.

While attempts at laws and codes have helped journalism, strong ethics for individuals are impossible unless those individuals devise a basic framework they can work within. The codes and laws may fall within that framework, but journalists must have an idea of what to do when questions arise outside of the pre-described boundaries. For Christians, the framework is God and Scripture, with which codes and guidelines often agree. The Christian framework also provides an overarching standard by which a Christian can always live even when man-made standards fail.

Utilitarianism. The other method of making ethical decisions, which is according to consequences, is known as utilitarianism. John Stuart Mill, an early advocate of the idea, called it the "greatest happiness principle" (as cited in Evensen, 1997, p. 61). With utilitarianism, a calculation of risk and benefit is assessed to see what is the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Criticism of the theory is wide, however, for several reasons. Black, et al., write, "For one thing, this approach can place a disproportionate weight on justifying actions that serve the greatest good for the greatest number of people" (p. 54). Lee Wilkins and Renita Coleman (2005) add, "The main weakness of utilitarianism is its simplistic calculation of risk and benefit, which is vulnerable to uncertainty and imprecision" (p. 94). Knowlton (1997) remarks, "The most common complaint about Mill's greatest happiness principle is that it specifically denies any sense of right or wrong independent of outcome" (p. 61). All of these reasons have led to a distrust in the utilitarian method, although the principle is still often used in smaller cases.

Specific applications for Christians. For the Christian, the correct method of ethical reasoning is clear. Christian journalists should make decisions based on duty – overarching guidelines – rather than straight consequences, although biblical thoughts do lend themselves to matters of virtue, too. Christians have extra help in the matter since God has provided them with the Bible, which contains a large amount of ethical guidelines. God has already seen the consequences of actions, and the commands he gives take all effects into consideration. Also, when people make decisions based on consequences, they fall prey to the evil of the end justifying the means. A Christian will trust in the sovereignty of God, not his or her sinful self, and allow God to take care of outcomes. If a Christian sticks to clear ethical principles, the sovereignty of God can be trusted in both the validity of principles and in the outcomes. Only when clear ethical guidelines are found to conflict should a Christian make consequences a major part of the decision-making process.

Misuse of ethics. The final area of ethics to examine is the misuse of ethics. Obviously, when most people betray ethical principles they do it to gain something else. A predominant recurrence in these situations, however, is that journalists who ignore ethical principles place themselves in a position of control in doing so. They believe they have the wisdom, both in themselves and of the situations, to make better decisions than ethical considerations would fulfill. Wilkins and Coleman (2005) give one example with how some journalists handle deception:

> For some, deception was part of a strategy to level a perceived power imbalance. Journalists revealed a preconceived notion of who is bad and who is good. Politicians, judges, and executives were deemed to have a smaller claim to truth

> than were the single mother, the blue-collar worker, or the less powerful and less media-savvy segments of society. This notion has been shaped by journalism's social surveillance function and journalists' innate distrust of institutions and officials. (p. 104)

In this instance, the journalists made the decision of who should receive a break and who should not instead of giving equal, ethical treatment to all.

Any Christian who goes against the ethical standards given by God is also trying to place himself or herself in control. Sin began when Satan offered Adam and Eve control in the Garden of Eden, and Satan's demise began when he tried to take control from God. Throughout history, the battle between God and self or between right and wrong has been a battle of control – a quest for power. The Christian who tries to take control instead of trusting God is again repeating the mistakes of the Garden, and the consequences of these quests for control are always dire.

Addressing ethical problems. Some have tried to fix ethical problems in journalism through schooling or training. Wilkins and Coleman (2005) conducted a study that "found no relationship between a journalist's tolerance of deception and whether he or she had received media ethics instruction, taken a college-level journalism class, or had been a journalism major" (p. 112). Ethics cannot merely be taught. The individual must take time to learn, develop, and internalize ethical principles personally, both through experience and study, to learn how to apply it in the journalism field.

Bias

In addition to tolerance and ethics, the third major area journalists must deal with today is that of bias. No matter how hard anyone tries to give "just the facts,"

interpretation can be found in almost any news story. Olasky (1988) notes, "Readers of every news story are receiving information but are also being taught, subtly or explicitly, a particular worldview, whether it is theistic, pantheistic, materialistic, or whatever" (p. 34). These worldviews come across to readers in many different ways, some more obvious than others, and often cause readers to accuse news sources of being biased.

In recent years, the public has lost even more of its trust of the press. David Niven (2002), reacting to a survey of the American public, writes, "Americans ranked the honesty and ethics of newspaper reporters ahead of only car salesmen, insurance salesmen, and the advertising industry . . . . At the foundation of this problem is distrust and a belief that the media are biased" (p. ix). Allegations of bias are not new, however. Kuypers (2002) reports, "That bias exists in news coverage is a rather uncontested assumption; however, the type of bias operating is not generally agreed upon" (p. 16). Although all different sides claim bias is in the press, the consensus is that the news no longer conveys just the facts.

Public opinion. Ted J. Smith, S. Robert Lichter, and Harris, Louis and Associates, Inc. (1997) conducted a survey to see what people wanted from the press and how journalists were viewed by the American public. People gave an overall grade of B-, which fell into what the authors rated as "respectable" (p. 12). One trend that surfaced in the survey was the gulf that the public believed was between themselves and journalists. For instance, six of ten did not think "that journalists share the same beliefs and values as the rest of the public" (p. 13). While they did see journalists as similar in areas concerning ethics, intelligence, and honesty, many saw their media counterparts as "more arrogant, more cynical, and less compassionate than most people" (p. 13). They

also said that journalists are a "powerful, elite group," out of touch with the public as a whole (p. 13). Stemming from these concerns is the public's worry that the media favors one side on most issues, such as the 63 percent who thought one side was favored in the presentation of issues, the 77 percent who found political bias, and the 43 percent (a plurality in the question at hand) who saw the media as liberally biased.

What bias is. Bias is not limited to journalism, however. Other fields face the same accusations. Whenever information is disseminated from one source to another, cries of bias should be expected, and that is why it is important to learn how to handle such accusations of bias. At the heart of the bias problem is forming a workable definition. Defining bias can be tricky, but the use of the word usually refers to a departure from the truth. *Webster* (2008) uses the words "bent" and "tendency," saying bias includes "an inclination of temperament or outlook" (para. 3). Some think it is any departure from straight facts, but that kind of reporting is both dull and nearly impossible.

For one, bias is not partisan reporting. In partisan reporting, journalists make an obvious effort to show they are reporting a distinct side of the story, and readers generally indulge in that information because they want that viewpoint. Buchholz (1997) notes that America does not expect the press to be totally non-partisan: "Printers in England and in the British colonies did not argue that the press should be unbiased. But they did argue that the press should be free, that everyone should be allowed to write and publish whatever he wanted without government restriction and censorship" (p. 8). Thus, the freedom of the press includes the freedom of partisanship.

Finally, a distinction should be made between bias and persuasion. With persuasion, a person uses reasoned arguments to draw a conclusion. The reader,

however, does not have to accept this argument and should have the ability to be able to separate fact from persuasion. Although it would appear foolish to connect bias and persuasion, allegations have been made in that regard.

Distinctly partisan press. Shades of bias remain from the long history of journalism, during which partisan presses throughout the years gave deliberately biased news in line with specific party beliefs, a practice that continues today in a more subversive manner. The mainstream partisan press was a time of blatant bias when readers chose a publication according to the views represented inside. David Niven (2002) believes that the reason this era died out was that many Americans did not want slanted news coverage:

> Long ago the partisan press died because its slanted coverage limited its market appeal to those with contrary views. Despite a long-standing economic imperative to produce neutral news, media outlets today find themselves almost thrust backward in time. For the media now, the central question may not be whether the media are biased, but whether they are perceived to be biased. A motivated, alienated constituency hungry for news is not going to endlessly consume newspapers and news shows that it considers slanted. (p. 49)

However, Niven has also noted that as Americans realize news sources are biased, they have moved away from sources with which they do not agree and sought out new outlets with different reporting. In this case, he writes about the portion of the American public that was leaving liberally-biased news sources, saying that "in an age where technology is constantly opening new paths to news (on the Internet, on an ever expanding roster of cable news channels), the move toward conservative media outlets will likely continue"

(p. 49). Whether or not biased (or blatantly partisan) news is detrimental has yet to be determined. The partisan press once thrived, and as Americans seek out sources that hold similar views to their own, it appears as if the partisan press may be coming back to America through specialized news, such as individual cable channels, blogs, or diverse local publications.

Types of bias. Bias occurs in many different ways. Sometimes the press will slant a story to tell the public what to think, and sometimes it will arrange the facts to merely tell the public what to think about. Sometimes both sides of the story will be included, but one side will be sandwiched in with the opposing views to obscure its content or make it look foolish. The sources may be unbalanced; different groups may be labeled with negative overtones; or opposing information may be excluded. Headlines often receive the most criticism for bias as writers try to cram the gist of the story into one line. Conflicts of interest, personal views, suspect story selection, and information from univocal sources are other neon signs for bias.

Internal censorship: A cause of bias. Although the government is not allowed to censor publications, plenty of censorship goes on within organizations, and that is where bias most often takes place. While journalists put a lot into their stories, much of what happens between turning the copy in and the printed page is a result of how management and editors work with the story. Often, the views of the executives of the organization mandate the bias portrayed. Bernard Goldberg wrote the best-selling book *Bias*, which uncovers insider details about bias within major news corporations, most specifically CBS News, where Goldberg worked. Throughout his book, he shows examples of how bias exists in media organizations. One trend he notes is that while organizations have

made a push to give equal treatment to all types of people, citing the need for diversity, they are not as quick to provide equal treatment of all views. Goldberg (2002) wrote:

> They love diversity in the newsroom. That's what they say, anyway. They love diversity of color, diversity of gender, diversity of sexual orientation. But God forbid someone in their diverse newsroom has a diverse view about how the news ought to be presented. (p. 33)

While the news media has made efforts for diversity of people, they are less receptive to providing a diversity of ideas.

Liberal bias. One type of bias often lamented is the liberal bias of the news media. Goldberg, for one, believes the news media to be liberally biased, and many others agree; however, as mentioned before, charges of bias issue from all areas against all views. Fueling the upswing liberal bias charges was a poll of journalists brought to the public eye by columnist Charles Krauthhammer. David Niven (2002) explains:

> A Roper poll of reporters 'found that in 1992 they had voted 89 percent for Clinton, seven percent for Bush. Regular Americans had voted Clinton over Bush, 43 percent to 38 percent.' The country went marginally for Clinton; the journalists went for him thirteen to one. In other words, for every seven Bush voters, there were eight Clinton voters. But for every seven Bush votes in the Washington media, there were 89 for Clinton. Margins of victory that lopsided are rarely seen this side of Syria. (p. 13)

The results of the poll shocked a public that realized that those giving them the news of politics had their own fairly unified political beliefs. Although the poll dates back to 1992, recent studies have not contradicted this popular calculation. Alterman (2003)

counters that the tendencies of these reporters, however, are due to their trade and education; thus, they should have had drastically different views from the general public:

> The percentage of journalists who voted for Bill Clinton in 1992 was probably consistent with the percentage he received among all well-educated urban elites, which was pretty high. Most people who fit this profile do indeed hold socially 'liberal' views on issues like gun control, abortion, and school prayer . . . . (p. 20)

Nevertheless, although this information may explain the drastic number of liberal supporters, it also causes concern for the general public, who still worry that the news media do not understand the general public. Kuypers (2002) counters this assumption, noting that personal beliefs may not affect reporting: "Of course, just because reporters and editors say they are Democrats, vote for Democrats, and say they are liberal does not mean that they cannot engage in neutral reportorial practices" (p. 17). Reporters should be able to write stories without consciously including personal views; however, bias most often occurs not as a blatant action but rather a byproduct of many subconscious forces that have not been handled correctly.

Reasons for bias. Bias occurs in journalism for many reasons. When journalists understand these reasons, they can either attempt to counter them or weigh them equally with the other forces that determine a story. However, journalists often do not realize the factors that affect the news, and that is when bias is very dangerous. First, bias often creeps into the press when journalists try to be too interpretive, when they try to answer the "why" question when answers are not readily available in the facts. David Gergen said:

> Given the proliferation of news outlets and the many different ways that people can get news, almost everyone in the leading press institutions are trying to be more interpretive, on the assumption that people have already gotten their facts somewhere else. (as cited in Smith, Lichter, & Harris, 1997, p. 8)

Interpretation yields many viewpoints, and often when one viewpoint is not supreme to others, journalists instead choose one that reflects their bias. James Reston notes, "Truth is a scarce and slippery commodity. There are not two sides to every problem but maybe ten, held with genuine conviction by serious people who probably know more about the facts than does the reporter" (as cited in Mencher, 2006, p. 567). In these cases, perhaps it is best that the reporter does not try to answer the "why" question when conclusions are not easy to reach, especially when the journalist cannot know all sides of the issue. People still demand that this question be answered.

Another key reason for bias is the personal beliefs and opinions of journalists, which often find their way into stories whether the journalist realizes it or not. Olasky (1988) writes, "Journalists, under such pressure, tend to make snap choices of emphasis based on their basic ideas of what is important and what is not" (p. 42). With the time crunch of journalism, writers often do what comes naturally and do not give their assumptions a second thought. Often, they do not know that these assumptions may be adverse to the general opinion of the public. Goldberg writes about the 1972 election, when 49 states voted for Richard Nixon. He recalls that Pauline Kael, a film critic, was simply astonished that Nixon had won; she said she did not know anyone who had voted for him. Goldberg (2002) cited this as the reason for so much bias – that those controlling the news have vastly different views than the American public but do not

realize it: "That's one of the biggest problems in big-time journalism: its elites are hopelessly out of touch with everyday Americans" (p. 24). Lichter, et. al (1986) agree, noting, "In 1972, when more than 60 percent of all voters chose Nixon, over 80 percent among the media elite voted for [George] McGovern" (p. 28).

Lichter, et. al's idea of the "media elite" identifies a new generation of journalists armed with college degrees and a gusto for change who arrived around the time of Watergate. In this generation's first landmark event, the civil rights movement, the journalists seemed to have "picked the right side," and as a result, journalists began finding their way into the inner circles of the elite of society. Lichter, et. al (1986) note, "To present this story from a racist's viewpoint, rather than a Martin Luther King's, would have been unthinkable. Good reporting seemed to permit or even require a point of view and a choice of one side against another" (p. 14). Journalists no longer looked from the outside in but instead became connected with the elite. This led to very distinct views – and even bias – in the mainstream media. Lichter, et. al (1986) add:

> We all reconstruct reality for ourselves, but journalists are especially important because they help depict reality for the rest of society . . . . The unavoidable preconceptions journalists bring to such decisions help determine what images of society are available to their audience. (p. 55)

One other reason for bias in today's world is postmodernism. The thoughts and attitudes of people today are drastically different from centuries ago, and some say this is the cause of present-day bias. James Sire (1997) explains that in the past, "Christianity had so penetrated the western world that, whether people believed in Christ or acted as

Christians should, they all lived in a context of ideas influenced and informed by the Christian faith" (p. 22).

Postmodernism stands in stark contrast to Christian thinking. Sire (1997) writes, "Our age, which more and more is coming to be called postmodern, finds itself afloat in pluralism of perspectives, a plethora of philosophical possibilities, but no dominant notion of where to go or how to get there" (p. 174). Gene Veith (1994) says postmodernism looks to get rid of all "frameworks" for knowledge (p. 49). This thinking denounces absolute truth in search of freedom. The way this plays out in culture can be alarming. Veith (1994) says that postmodern thinking leads judges to form new principles instead of relying on precedents and has teachers who look for experience and creation of values rather than established truth. Furthermore, "Journalists, taught that objectivity is impossible, write biased news stories and advance their own ideological agendas" (p. 59). Although such a blanket statement may not be true of current society as a whole, postmodern thinking is affecting the current world and has definite ties to bias in journalism.

To counter these factors in bias, journalists should always test their own assumptions against the views of their audience, the general public, and even people throughout history.

Correcting bias. With some of the reasons for bias understood, steps can be taken to correct it in the media. Although the methods for correcting bias are many and disputed, some things can be done to combat the practice, especially for someone with a specific worldview. When a publication is blatantly partisan, there is no problem as long as both the disseminator and the receiver know the purpose of the publication. Obviously

persuasive writing should not be a problem. Only when publications are biased – without the readers' knowing they are receiving a slanted interpretation of news – is there a real problem. Even when bias is acknowledged, however, it is difficult to eliminate. Even if a publication tries to cover news from a different angle, it may be accused of being biased toward the view of that new angle. Being aware of bias ahead of time and questioning all assumptions with a dose of skepticism is perhaps the best solution. Klaidman and Beauchamp (1987) write:

> The philosopher David Hume considered a 'moderate' species of skepticism an antidote to bias. He maintained that we should check and recheck our basic observations, our data derived from the testimony of others, and our inferences from both observations and testimony. Skepticism on every level, where reason corrects our trustworthy observations and inferences, is the only method, Hume argued, 'by which we can ever hope to reach truth, and attain a proper stability and certainty in our determinations.' (p. 89)

Journalists should always challenge their assumptions and make sure they are not putting their own inferences into stories.

Christians and bias. For the Christian, the issue of bias is complicated. Christian publications are obviously partisan, purposely giving a God-centered view to everything. When Christians enter the secular workplace, however, any personal beliefs included in stories will be considered biased, especially since the majority of the public does not agree with Christian convictions even though many call themselves "religious" or "Christian" in name. Christians must consider the audience of the publication and whether they are serving the needs that the audience expects to be satisfied. That is not to

say that Christians should avoid their convictions; however, when dealing with an audience that is not sympathetic to their beliefs, they should avoid answering the "why" question rather than giving unhearing ears what they may consider is biased information. Reporting "just the facts" for secular publications was what they were hired to do, and Christian journalists should make that their own goal.

Some Christians think that Christian convictions should be placed into all reporting, such as centuries ago when the partisan press included spiritual reasons for all current events. In the modern day, however, such an idea is hardly feasible in such a secular world. While it is nice in theory, Christians need a stronger foothold in the industry before promoting such views. Failure to come to terms with this reality would be unwise. Although Christians can go into their jobs with their worldview, they must avoid Christian jargon and first and foremost work to present all sides of the issues as best they can, just like any journalist. The public opposes bias for the most part; Christians should be respectful of their audience and authority and not be the first group to buck the trend toward eliminating bias. Perhaps, after years of faithfully respecting authority, Christians will be given an opportunity to share more of their convictions in news reporting. Christians who feel strongly about including biblical truths in all reporting should work for a publication that is open to including biblical influences in the content of its reporting. Although bias is a difficult issue for both Christian and non-Christian journalists alike, consideration and careful hunting help curb it in the secular press.

Objectivity

The final major problem area in modern journalism is that of objectivity, a topic that ties in closely to bias. Whereas bias concerns reading a particular view into reporting, objectivity concerns whether news can ever be unbiased – just the facts. *Webster* (2008) defines "objectivity" as "expressing or dealing with facts or conditions as perceived without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices, or interpretations" (para. 3). A study of this topic will show whether a reporter will ever be able to give just the facts or whether some personal views will inevitably come into any news given.

Although bias is generally always discouraged, objectivity is not necessarily given paramount importance, and that is because it is much harder to be objective than not to be biased. With bias, specific motives lead to formulated messages. With objectivity, attention is given to presenting a clear, balanced account free of opinion. From this account, people can draw their own conclusions. Common thinking today says that most find objectivity to be nearly impossible. Instead, journalists push to include as much information and as many views as possible so that readers can make their own interpretations and decisions.

Pursuing objectivity. Pursuing objectivity faces many challenges. On the surface, simply reporting both sides of the story does not seem difficult. In practice, however, issues are much more complicated with many sides and a lot of information. Klaidman and Beauchamp (1987) write:

> Balance entail more than a mechanistic measuring of words so that each partisan position is given an equal number of inches, minutes, or representation.

> Moreover, in most cases issues are susceptible to multiple interpretations; a reporter cannot simply report both sides. (p. 47)

With many sides to an issue and limited space, journalists are tempted to include the most prominent views. This is not acceptable, either. Elie Abel (1984) writes:

> No more than a railroad has the right to refuse to carry any passenger with the price of a ticket should a newspaper refuse space in its new columns for the actions or viewpoints of groups or individuals it may choose to denounce on the editorial page. (p. 42)

Part of the press's responsibility to the public is presenting all essential, relevant information. The press generally believes that it is capable of conveying information, which the public can then interpret. Buchholz (1997) says that reporters usually pride themselves in being able to present information objectively, an attitude with deep roots. He writes, "The theory behind this attitude is older than English-language journalism in the North American continent. It is based on the Enlightenment belief that people are rational and that they can discern the truth from a bedlam of competing voices" (p. 8). He continues, saying that eventually, reporters no longer gave partisan news but trusted their readers to discern. Buchholz (1997) says:

> By the beginning of the twentieth century, the stuff of news stories was not ideas and opinions, but facts, and reporters felt that if they could provide their audiences with all the relevant facts, all the various sides of an issue, readers could then decide for themselves what was true. The job of reporters, then, became one of gathering information and presenting it to their audience. (p. 16)

Objectivity became a goal that ostensibly placed all interpretation into the hands of the public. The survey conducted by Smith, et al. (1997) showed that the public agreed that they should be the ones to interpret information. The researchers, based on the survey results, say:

> The majority of adult Americans believe that the news media should simply report the facts of a story and let the people make up their own minds on issues rather than weighing the facts and offering solutions about how to solve problems. (p. 13)

The public's desire for their own interpretations has fueled the need for objectivity, and for the most part, the press agrees that it is essential, even if it is never perfectly realized.

What objectivity is, and how to be objective. What exactly objectivity is and how to attain it is another matter. For some, objectivity is not allowing the self – emotions – to be involved with the story. Willis (2003) writes:

> The long-held tradition of news reporting dictates that journalists should somehow separate themselves from their emotions while on the job and should detach – if not distance themselves entirely – from the people, issues, and events they are covering. This is seen by many as the essence of objectivity, and objectivity has long been a cornerstone of the journalistic profession. (p. 119)

Supposedly, a person not involved in the story would be able to present the facts correctly. By keeping opinion from stories, journalists' objectivity throughout journalism history became more of an ideal than a distinct method that could be practiced. Manning (2001) writes that objectivity eventually came to be viewed as a set of defendable practices rather than a distinct principle. He says: "'Objectivity' is not something that

journalists can achieve in the sense of producing value-free and comprehensive accounts of 'real' events; rather, the term, in this context, describes a set of practices that journalists can *defend* as objective" (p. 68). As the definition of objectivity morphs, an obvious conclusion is that it is difficult to put into practice.

In his book *Public Opinion*, Walter Lippmann, the famous early twentieth-century journalist, tied the problem of objectivity back to the personal influences involved in the field of journalism, writing, "For the most part we do not see first, then define; we define first and then see . . . . We pick out what our culture has already defined for us" (as cited in Olasky, 1988, p. 63). People face life with minds already full of assumptions and conclusions, which lead to their drawing conclusions on new matters before real observation takes place. Lippman further asserts that everyone has his or her own "stereotypes" – ideas of the world based on biases and prejudices – and for journalists to be objective, they must realize they themselves have these stereotypes and seek out new sources with new points of view. He says, "Reporters cannot observe everything and bring it to their audience. They must instead depend on sources they consider to be reliable and fashion the best picture of reality they can" (as cited in Buchholz, 1997, p. 17). Lippman believes that with enough sources counteracting journalistic stereotypes, objectivity could be achieved to some degree.

Part of the problem with the quest for objectivity, however, is that stories are not always about just facts. For instance, although a journalist should not tell the public how to solve a problem presented within a story, the different solutions to that problem may be an integral part of that story. Even if no qualified source has presented the solution during the time of research, the journalist may find that information is necessary from a

history of familiarity with the subject even though the information could not be qualified at press time. The thinking behind the stories is often vital to gaining understanding, and the divisive "why" question will always demand an answer from journalists. John Corry, a writer for the *New York Times*, once said, "There are fewer rules of pure journalism here than journalists pretend, even to themselves. Journalists, especially big-time journalists, deal in attitudes and ideas as much as events" (Olasky, 1988, p. 42). Simple facts presented in an objective manner do not make sense if they are not placed in context. Willis (2003) notes also that real life is never just facts; elements of human nature and subjective evaluation are present everywhere, and to be reported accurately, feelings must be included. He says:

> Relentless factuality creates stories without conclusions and offers muffled reflections of reality where the hard edges of doubt and disagreement are covered and hidden . . . this approach is born of a diluted myth of objectivity: the notion that the journalist's job is simply to fetch the truth as a dog would fetch a tossed bone. (pp. 53-54)

Willis concludes that facts merely provide knowledge whereas the human element gives the readers wisdom (p. 54) that is necessary for living.

The thrall of objectivity has faded in recent years to the point that it is no longer a part of the Society of Professional Journalist Code of Ethics (Schmalzbauer, 2003, p. 46). As reporters see themselves more as a part of events and read human nature into these events, readers are expected to take reports with consideration although they must continue to accept news from the press since that is the chief outlet available. This bodes

well for Christian journalists who may want to put more of their convictions into their reporting. Schmalzbauer (2003) notes:

> Evangelical reporters have benefitted from a growing disillusionment with the ideology of objectivity among American journalists. There are growing indications that objectivity, once central to American definitions of journalistic professionalism, has lost much of its grip on the newsroom. (p. 46)

As more journalists agree that objectivity is a difficult goal to grasp, the partisan press may make a comeback both in total publications and individual stories, which, despite its drawbacks, is good news for Christians interested in putting a God-centered focus on the events of the world.

Religious Implications in Journalism's Problem Areas

The main problem areas of journalism today are tricky for any journalist, Christian or not. In areas such as ethics, Christians can be encouraged by the journalistic attitude of doing right, but they should still be wary of the industry in which they work, where a predominant attitude is to be first with information and do whatever it takes to succeed. If Christians plan to stick to their convictions, they may find themselves a lonely breed, for questions of bias and objectivity provide similar problems for Christians. Certainly, any blatant trickery is out of the question for Christians, but Christians must also consider the needs of the public before weaving their personal convictions into their stories. That is, the mostly unsaved public will expect facts free of Christian overtones, no matter how much they need real truth. While Christians can do their best to present the stories with a God-centered worldview, they would do well to avoid jargon that the everyday person would not understand, such as Christian cliches or

attributing life to the plan of God through the Holy Spirit – especially when the unsaved will not understand the complexity of such statements. Instead, Christians should try to present the facts and allow the readers to draw conclusions. Most times, Christians should be able to do this without the dilemma of how to insert their faith. As mentioned earlier, once the public knows they can trust Christians to be unbiased and objective by their secular standards, Christians may find open doors to reach faithful readers with personal opinions about their faith.

Religion in Journalism

Thus far, attention has been given to the secular field of journalism – its past, its journalists, and its problem areas – but now, time will be given to religion within this field. Although nearly two centuries have passed since Christian influence largely left the press, Christian beliefs have recently found their way back into mainstream thinking through the political realm. Schmalzbauer (2003) writes:

> Once strangers to Washington think tanks, Catholics and evangelicals are now important voices in debates over religion and public policy. With the downsizing of the welfare state, public-policy experts are increasingly exploring the relevance of religion to social problems such as crime, poverty, and urban decay. More than any other groups, Catholics and evangelicals have advocated faith-based organizations as a solution to the problems of urban America. (p. 39)

As the Christian way of thinking works back into society, there is hope that this thinking will also surface in journalism. Overall, however, study has shown both that the public is wary of religion and that Christians are therefore reluctant to show their true beliefs.

A Christian in the Field

Dr. David Aikman, a professor at Patrick Henry University and the author of six books, spent 23 years as a Christian working for *Time* magazine. He believes that Christians who are willing to put up with "discomforts" of working in secular journalism "have an advantage over non-Christians" for two reasons:

> First of all, they believe in truth. They don't necessarily believe they always have the truth, particularly on a secular story, but they believe that there is such a thing as truth. And that takes a lot of indecision out of the business of reporting, because if you believe the truth is somewhere out there, then you will pursue it with greater alacrity than if you don't think that there's anything there at all. The second thing is Christians have a much more realistic understanding of human nature. Christians understand that human beings are made in the image of God and are therefore capable of acts of nobility and beauty. But they also know that humans are deeply flawed, flawed by sin. And so it doesn't surprise them when Christians sometimes behave – well, not just Christians – why people behave rather badly. (D. Aikman, personal communication, February 18, 2008)

Aikman also said that Christians know that they should be polite and friendly, and this gives them an edge to working with people in a personal way. Working with peers in secular journalism produces other questions to consider for Christians, especially since unbelievers don't understand the intricacies of the Christian faith. Aikman advises:

> A Christian in any walk of life ought to be prepared to laugh at himself and not take himself too seriously. By all means, take his faith seriously, take Jesus Christ obviously with complete seriousness, but be a little bit flexible in how you

> present your walk to non-believers and actually, be a little bit accommodating. I don't mean you should compromise – obviously, don't compromise at all on moral issues. . . . I think you need to be flexible about social circumstances. You don't need to give the impression of being very uptight, sort of legalistic about your own behavior and everybody else's. That's just common sense, I think. (D. Aikman, personal communication, February 18, 2008)

Even while they enter journalism with good intentions to live in a godly way and share Christ with others, Christians need to be ready for the rapids they will encounter.

Christians Sharing Beliefs

Although many Christians may be working in journalism today, their presence is largely unknown due to their fear of revealing their religious beliefs. While studying leading Christians in the professional world, Schmalzbauer (2003) either interviewed or asked many people for an interview. He writes that many denied his request, mostly because they were afraid of being recognized as evangelicals. Women especially were wary since they already had enough problems due to their gender. Cal Thomas, a leading religious syndicated columnist, once said, "In this town you pay a social price for being up-front about your faith. People don't invite you to parties" (as cited in Schmalzbauer, 2003, p. 45). Schmalzbauer (2003) found that most religious journalists either completely privatize their religious beliefs, "refusing to talk about the connections between faith and work or to identify publicly" (p. 47), or they keep all religious talk separated from their work, leaving it to areas such as personal character or personal relationships to bring up individual beliefs. He attributes this lack of open faith to the change that occurred in America when journalists and social scientists broke from the

moorings of religious institutions and when religion eventually was quartered to private life rather than the public spheres of academia and news. He says, "Journalists and social scientists could be religious as long as they kept their beliefs to themselves" (p. 9). Schmalzbauer's research showed a pittance of Christians in the field willing to show their faith; however, he did acknowledge that some were more open, "seeing their religious identities as intimately bound up with their journalistic careers. Building bridges between professional and religious worlds, they have found ways to translate their convictions into the language of their secular colleagues" (p. 46). Although only a few examples are available, aspiring Christian journalists can take heart that some Christians are explicitly showing their faith in the secular field.

Aikman advises that Christians share their faith in "quiet" ways, such as having Bibles on their desks or doing ministry at lunch. Although it may take some time before secular peers realize these things, the time elapsed will create a foundation for sharing Christ later. Aikman says:

> I don't believe Christian journalists should be propagandists for Christianity. I think you earn the right to share your faith when you have demonstrated confidence, trust, and congeniality to a colleague, and really you should be very careful – you shouldn't blurt it out at the first general opportunity – to wait until you're absolutely sure you'll get a good reception for it, or at least an attentive reception, if not a good one. (D. Aikman, personal communication, February 18, 2008)

Christians must make a place in journalism first and develop relationships before sharing their faith. Outten offered a similar view:

> The idea that Christians should do nothing but share the plan of salvation with everyone is ridiculous. The gospel is far more than a single born-again experience. It is good news of both eternal life in Heaven and a reformed life here on earth. (as cited in Wallace, 1991, p. 119)

Foundations must be laid before faith is shared, and sharing faith goes beyond the simple Gospel to projecting a God-centered life.

View of Religion

Much of the reason why religion in the workplace is discouraged is that religion is seen as scientifically inferior in the quest for knowledge. Many secular professionals actively separate religion and science – "values" and "facts" – making it difficult for anyone who believes differently. Schmalzbauer (2003) notes that academia and journalism are not blatantly trying to be secular; rather, their idea of knowledge is different in that it excludes the non-secular: "More significant than any overt secularism is the tendency among many professions to make rigid distinctions between professional and religious forms of knowledge" (p. 6). Spirituality is difficult to measure and thus difficult to use in the search for knowledge. Faith is seen as a separate interest that some people hold: John likes to fish, Wayne is into puzzles, and Gary has religion. To stay afloat, Christians must separate portions of their lives as their secular peers do, according to this secular thinking. Schmalzbauer writes that "the modern professions, including journalism, have been dominated by an ideology that emphasizes detachment, empiricism, and the separation of facts from values. To maintain public credibility, professionals are expected to keep their private political and moral convictions to themselves" (p. 45). In many minds, religion and truth-finding do not mix.

However, some people give arguments that say religion can indeed be helpful in finding knowledge. Historian George Marsden has made a case that religion should be included in scientific reasoning on the grounds that other studies take into consideration the personal convictions of select groups. "Pointing to fields such as women's studies and African American studies, Marsden has argued there is no reason that religious scholars should be prevented from bringing their normative convictions into their work" (as cited in Schmalzbauer, 2003, p. 97). Furthermore, science is not always completely neutral and objective, and religion may be able to aid the quest for finding truth much in the same way that it can help answer the "why" question in journalism. Marsden's argument continues:

> Many prominent scholars have agreed that science typically operates within frameworks of assumptions that are not themselves established on scientific grounds . . . . It is now commonplace among contemporary scholars, including many moderate liberal scholars, to acknowledge that, while empirical investigation should be valued in its place, pre-theoretical influences such as social location substantially shape interpretations in the humanities and social science . . . . One might think, therefore, that it would be relatively easy to gain agreement that, since strongly held religious views are often part of one's social location, religious perspectives should be accepted as playing potentially legitimate roles in academic interpretation. (as cited in Schmalzbauer, 2003, pp. 97-98)

As science studies the lives of humans and tries to find the truth in life, the personal convictions and beliefs of such beings should be considered. While journalists seek to

find truth through objective and scientific methods, they still deal with humans and their emotions, and theories and research findings without practical application to personal beings produce different conclusions than when human experience is added to the formula. Indeed, journalism will report the facts, but at some point people have begun to require more and now want journalism to give them direction in life, something that cannot be done without an element of human experience.

Public's View of Christians Specifically

As for a specific view of how the public views Christians, the evidence is grim. Schmalzbauer (2003) writes that a higher proportion of journalists have less religious affiliation than do average Americans, and a 1999 survey showed that "37 percent of highly educated Americans hold 'intensely antagonistic feelings' toward conservative Christians, and another 19 percent view them negatively" (p. 5). Much of this pessimistic feeling goes back to the view that religion is not an acceptable method in finding truth in the scientific (or journalistic) realm. Barbara Stocker, the spokesperson for the Rationalist Society of St. Louis, expresses her disapproval of Christian journalists:

> A Christian journalist belongs at a Christian newspaper or TV station. And journalism schools should not be in the business of making Christian journalists. They should simply be teaching reporters how to use their intelligence. For example, they're not teaching journalists how to balance a story when they educate them to pit creationism against evolution. The two do not even belong on the same page. Evolution is science. Creationism is superstition. Let's be rational. (as cited in Corrigan, 1994)

Keeping religious beliefs out of mainstream arguments is not a new thing, no matter how scientific or unscientific either side proves these beliefs and theories to be.

Kenneth Rystrom (2004) writes about religion in the letters to the editor section of newspapers, noting the view of the Pennsylvania *York Dispatch*'s Glenn Sheller, who says:

> We don't want to see letters and columns of diverse viewpoint, style, and wit driven out by mailbags full of the familiar type in which every sentence ends with a Scripture citation and whose 'argument' consists of nothing more than an appeal to supernatural authority. (p. 281)

Obviously, some consider religion-based arguments as less credible. Although some Christians may find this offensive, Sheller's comment should also spur others on to write better arguments in their letters to the editor, held up by sound reasoning and buttressed with Scripture rather than using Scripture and clichés as easy fall-backs.

Rystrom (2004) notes, however, that the attitude toward religion in letters to the editor is changing as moral issues plague the government and events occur that rock the country:

> Now, however, editors are finding it more difficult to draw a line against the use of religious citation and religion-based arguments when the public is debating abortion, the death penalty, creationism, use of embryos in research, aid to parochial schools, prayer in schools, posting the Ten Commandments in public places, and the rights of gays. It may be impossible to draw a line now that religious differences, or at least religious perceptions, underlie many important and flammable issues. Letter columns, and editorial pages for that matter, may be

> among those things that will never be the same after September 11, 2001. Religious beliefs and opinions, as well as scriptural citations, have become part of public discourse. No longer can editors try to insulate their pages from them. (p. 287)

As religion is part of the human experience that makes up life, it cannot always be left out of the journalism field, which tries to examine human life in its fullness and draw real conclusions about real people.

Part of the reason religion is so quickly dismissed is that it is not understood by the majority of its attackers (or ignorers). Goldberg (2002) notes that those with conservative beliefs are often looked down on:

> They're seen as odd and viewed with suspicion because their lives are shaped by faith and devotion to God and an adherence to rigid principles – opposition to abortion, for one – that seem archaic and close-minded to a lot of journalists who, survey after survey suggests, are not especially religious themselves. (p. 128)

Many journalists see religion as old-fashioned and have no personal connections themselves, which affects their interaction with Christians. The strict beliefs of the religious also drive fear into those whose views are in opposition to matters traditionally defended by Christians. When Christians try to take a stand against the world's sinful and declining moral standards, they are often stereotyped. Given a label by the press, such as "conservative," "evangelical," or "fundamentalist" (to name a few), Christians find it difficult to explain themselves or escape from the descriptions given to them to categorize religion for the public. The labels often capture only a small slice of their

being – a slice that is better served as a category than a descriptor of who they are as people.

Simplifying Religious Ideas

The simplification of religious ideas is one of the leading causes for the misunderstandings by the public. Reporters try to put vast religious concepts in a tiny box and end up losing a lot of important information. Sports in America gets its own section in many newspapers, but far more Americans go to church on Sundays than attend sporting events, Alterman (2003) notes. He adds that the lack of religious coverage, or the misinterpretation of religion, is not bias but rather ignorance of journalists who do not understand religion. This trend is not unique to religion, however: "One hears much of the same complaint from . . . just about everybody else who sees a complex area of their professional or personal lives oversimplified or misunderstood by a reporter who covers it" (Alterman, 2003, p. 105). Certainly, journalists have oversimplified or misunderstood key areas of farming work or legal procedures, but with so many people professing religious beliefs, the misinterpretation is more alarming. George M. Marsden also attributes the misunderstandings of religion to ignorance of the subject:

> Suppose that a person who reported on music never played a musical instrument, had seldom paid attention to music, and knew next to nothing about the various types of music. That is the equivalent to how religion is often treated in the media. (as cited in Evensen, 1997, p. 170)

To report better, journalists need to educate themselves better, whether it be religion or any other topic. A Christian journalist must not only study issues in general but must

also then look at those issues through a God-centered worldview. With the vast amount of Americans concerned with religion, however, a greater push toward accurate religious reporting should be demanded. Billy Graham recommended that publications find people with a specific interest or knowledge in religion to cover the beat, noting that a publication would never send a reporter to cover football who had not watched a game personally (as cited in Evensen, 1997, pp. 175-176). Another recommendation of his was to focus on reporting the good about religion as well as the bad:

> There are thousands of clergy in America who are doing their job faithfully, and they need your support and your backing – but let one of them crash, and that's the big news. Many people get the idea that that's the church or that's religion, and they turn away. (as cited in Evensen, 1997, pp. 173-174)

When the press only gives a specific slice of religious life, people are bound to think that is all there is to religion.

Of course, a valid reason for why religion is misunderstood in journalism – and much of America – is the actions of Christians themselves. Christianity is full of hypocrisy, as Christians say (or believe) one thing and do another. Worse yet, however, is the large chunk of Christians who do not even know what they themselves believe. They bear the name; they wear the T-shirts; and they may know a verse or two, but a large majority of American Christians use Christianity as a label or religious category, not as a matter of personal conviction and faith. A December 1, 2003 study by the Barna Group found that although all people have a worldview, only nine percent of born again Christians had a distinctly Biblical worldview ("Biblical Worldview"). Christians often do not understand the Bible themselves and run wild with the portions they do understand

and promote. If Christians do not understand Christianity, it is hard to ask journalism or the rest of America to understand.

Perhaps the greatest divide between journalism and religion is that non-Christians often have no real concept of what real Christian belief is like. Although they may know facts and lingo, they do not have the power of the Holy Spirit and thus cannot fully understand a relationship with Jesus Christ. Christians as a whole, no matter how they practice their beliefs, have far different priorities than unbelievers, and they strive to see the world increasingly from the perspective of God, not man. With this godly perspective, they can understand the Bible and its concepts whereas the unsaved are hard pressed to look beyond the specific commands and simple stories. Billy Graham outlines the differences when he says:

> For one thing, much of what happens in religion is not news, by your definition, and I understand that. You are concerned with change, we are concerned with that which we believe to be changeless. You are interested in that which breaks the patterns of normal life – disasters, political upheavals, wars, the cruelties and foibles of human nature, conflicts between people and nations. We are interested in what goes on, often unseen, in the hearts of individuals: hopes reborn, purpose restored, guilt removed, love rekindled. (as cited in Evensen, 1997, p. 173)

Secular journalists obviously see the Christian faith differently than those who are saved. A common reaction to this by Christians is a dislike for the media, a feeling that the media, as a truth-finding group, should be able to see the situation correctly, right the wrongs, and learn to understand religion in a day. The message of 1 Corinthians 1:18 continues to ring true, however. The unsaved cannot be expected to understand the

things of God, at least not without Christians telling them. Instead of reacting harshly to those who do not understand or recoiling from a journalism field that misinterprets religion, Christians should take an active and aggressive stance toward spreading the truth, knowing that the unsaved often cannot understand truth on their own. Through the dissemination of knowledge of all kinds, they can indoctrinate the world in the truth, whether it be of "worldly" things or of matters of faith.

Christians' Reactions to the Media

Overall, however, Christians have responded to the secular media throughout history by running the other way. Olasky (1988) notes, "Some Christians are so disgusted with mainline newspapers and news shows that they refuse to read or watch and merely engage in a general carping condemnation" (p. 119). The attitudes have become such that, "Just as church-bashing is a favorite sport among some reporters, so media-bashing is the pastime of many Christians" (p. xii). Worse than Christians' being hostile toward the media, however, is how many Christians have removed themselves from the field of journalism, and often, they have removed themselves from critical thinking altogether.

Olasky (1988) outlines several factors that led to Christians' leaving the field of journalism, including factors both from the inside and the outside. First, society left Christian principles. As America relied on a changing society and its intellectual musings in science and education to fix the problems of mankind, less attention was given to religion. Revivals came, but they affected individuals rather than the overall thinking of the nation. Second, many – if not most – Christians threw in the towel. Olasky says "many Christians began to believe that the general culture inevitably would

become worse and worse. They thought that little could be done to stay the downward drift" (p. 25). Journalism was not considered as important to Christians. Finally, changes within journalism fueled the move away from Christian principles. One example is the *New York Times*, which, generations after its inception, tolerated the printing of news that would once have been considered "unfit to print" (p. 22). Journalism also tended to justify humans and their actions, esteeming man as a much better and wiser being than the one portrayed in the partisan press era. Christian journalism especially faltered. Olasky writes, "Christian publications refused to meet the communication demands of an increasingly fast-paced marketplace" (p. 23) and "denominational infighting" either split Christian ventures or made it so those ventures had to be abandoned rather than splitting the group (p. 23). All of these factors worked together to make Christian thinking almost extinct in journalism.

Christianity was also leaving the public eye, however. After the Scopes trial of the 1920s, Christians slinked back to their private institutions as much of the nation crowed over the victory of the scientific theory of evolution, which allegedly had trumped the "unscientific" creationism in court. Christians built their own empire, using conferences, radio, and Bible institutes and colleges to forge their own subculture (Schmalzbauer, 2003). Although eventually religion worked its way back into public life, it was a slow process. In 1976, Southern Baptist Jimmy Carter was elected, which began the movement of the religious right in politics. Christian campuses began to have more relaxed rules, revealing their integration with the secular world (Schmalzbauer, 2003). By the 1980s and 1990s, religion was back in public view with political concerns

in moral areas such as abortion, and in current times, continues with new topics like stem cell research.

The effects of the evangelical subculture have lasted, however. Schmalzbauer (2003) writes that "the evangelical subculture helped keep alive a religious approach to higher education and mass communication. At the same time, the isolation of the evangelical subculture prevented its members from fully engaging the academic and cultural mainstream" (p 30). Christians were in the media, but they were speaking to other Christians: "Although the evangelical empire of Christian colleges and universities, campus ministries, publishers, and broadcasters was truly vast, it reached an overwhelmingly evangelical audience" (p. 30). With religion turned completely inward, it is no wonder that the secular realm not only did not understand Christianity but also that it did not respect it or report it.

Journalism in the Future

For Christians looking to enter the field of journalism today, a mighty task lies ahead. These aspiring Christian journalists not only have to deal with the tricks of journalism and its past but also must confront the crippling effect that the lack of Christian journalism in the past years has had. If Christians are serious about working in the secular field and reaching the world for Christ, they are going to have to find a way not only to abide within the field, where their beliefs will be attacked, ridiculed, and called into question for bias, but also to thrive in journalism, spreading the truth without unnecessarily offending traditional journalism. The field of journalism should not fear Christians, however. If Christians follow biblical convictions, the field will find itself

full of hard workers who respect the traditions of journalism, doing their job well with utmost regard to ethics and the improvement of the world and those within.

Several practical conclusions will be drawn to give application to Christians entering the field, and many of these can be pulled from an understanding of what happened in journalism in the past.

Learn from the Past

First, Christians must be willing to learn from the past. The Bible speaks often about learning from elders and the events and attitudes of the past, and the study of history is part of modern secular academia because of the obvious reasons of looking at the past in order to understand the present and live a productive future. Some practical applications of this would be to take personal advice from the generation before. Christians should also respect specific trends and methods on a grand scale, such as the traditions of journalism, which will be discussed next.

The ideals of objectivity and ethics that are so central to journalism were not made on a whim; these tenets of journalism became obvious after years of hard work and study. The codes and guidelines of journalism have been constructed with good reason, and any aspiring journalists must first respect and master the traditions of journalism before moving on to any new forms. Otherwise, these journalists will find themselves relearning lessons or losing important advantages from the past, even if information gained does not appear relevant at the time or may be generally repugnant. The Bible constantly speaks about the importance of wisdom and growing in knowledge. Knowledge of the world leads to a deeper understanding of God for Christians. Once Christians know God better, they know how to glorify him. Even a cursory reading of a

journalism textbook reveals the importance of knowledge of anything and everything. Christians should take this a step further.

For the Christian, respecting ethics and the traits of hard work should be no problem. Pursuing knowledge also lines up with biblical convictions. By knowing both the Bible and journalism inside and out, Christians will be able to make better decisions in the field. Whereas objectivity may seem harder to master, Christians can be encouraged that the trends of journalism have led more toward the partisan press again. For those Christians who feel they must lace their reporting with biblical overtones, plenty of outlets beyond secular journalism exist for the interpretation and evaluation of news as well as reporting.

Above all, however, respecting the traditions of journalism means respecting peers and subjects within the field. One of the reasons Christians are taken lightly in journalism is that of their insistence to promote their views. Instead of insistence, Christians should tread lightly for a while until they as people are accepted and earn respect in the field. When Paul was in Rome, he was a Roman, and when he was in Israel, he was a Jew. Christians should also look to develop meaningful relationships with the love of Christ rather than attempting to evangelize a life they know almost nothing about. The Bible is also clear about obeying authorities, such as following a supervisor's instructions even when it may not be a Christian's natural desire to do so. Christian liberties point toward putting aside personal freedoms for the good of those who may not understand. However, Christians can still act as Daniel and purpose in their hearts to do what is right. What is right, though, must often be preceded by a love for the unsaved, placing their needs before the desire of Christians to share all their beliefs on the

first day on the job. Many conservative Christians write books that show their infuriation with liberals or anyone who disagrees with them, and their negative attacks show neither the love of Christ nor the hope of the Gospel. Christians should withhold from attacks until they both have something worthwhile to say and also until their audience is ready to hear. Otherwise, they will only be preaching in vain.

Be Rooted in the Faith

The second necessity for Christians who are entering journalism is that they be rooted strongly in their faith. Although many examples are available, the example of Harry Luce, the co-founder of *Time* magazine, will suffice. Luce was raised by missionary parents in China and, at a young age, devoted himself to God and grew close in his relationship with him. Luce went to prep school and began to see worldly and wealthy friends, and he soon became distracted. He allowed himself to become engulfed by the draw and detriment of competition for success, power, and money, wherein he sought success against his comrades. Luce once wrote of his time at prep school, "I knew it then, there on the hill, that I was really only a back-row Christian. And something went outside of me" (Wilner, 2006, p. 26). Luce's love for God returned only after his retirement fifty years later. By that time, he had helped build a revolutionary magazine and an empire for news dissemination, an organization that sported several magazines and influenced the thoughts of millions. The eternal effect was minimal, however, as in the process Luce ended up hoarding all the credit for *Time* magazine and its success after its real creative genius, Britton Hadden, died at a young age. While Luce's accomplishments are exemplary, their eternal purpose is only a sad lesson in the destruction of selfishness and the desire for success. His life invites Jesus Christ's

question of Matthew 16:25: What is a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul? Or, if he is saved but fails to use his gain to help other souls?

Christian journalists must not only be fully grounded in their relationships with God but must also keep their godly perspective or worldview, looking to glorify God in all they do. Barbour (1993) asserts that a Christian is accountable both to God and to his purposes:

> The prophetic view of *a created order* that is inclusive in space and time is also relevant today. The whole creation is part of God's purpose. Because all forms of life are within God's plan, we are accountable for the way we treat them. I suggested that stewardship of nature is more typical of the Bible than dominion over nature, though it was often ignored in subsequent Western history. Moreover, the prophets used an extended time scale because they believed that God's purposes extend into the future. We have obligations to posterity and to a God who spans the generations. (p. 261)

Being good stewards of the created order is a vital part of glorifying God, and journalism is a vital field in upholding the created order in the welfare of mankind.

Christians and ethical considerations in their actions have had a unique history in which men and women have often tried to live in the name of God but were not sufficiently rooted and thus blundered terribly. The church has done great things for mankind, but it has also had major problems, such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, witch trials, or oppressive and misguided church-leading governments, to name a few. One of the biggest arguments against Christianity has been that its members do not practice what they preach, and this is certainly a concern for Christians entering journalism. The

purpose of Christian journalism is not to build a Christian empire, to get the media to stop attacking Christianity, or to publish more feel-good stories and make youngsters go to camp. The purpose of Christian journalism should be the same as the purpose of Christians in life – first and foremost to glorify God by obeying his commands and spreading his truth, most obviously by loving others. Having Christians in journalism will be no good if they do not act like Christians. People will more readily listen to their message once they see that their lives measure up. Christians' living as they should is vital everywhere, but it is especially important in a field in which many suspect religion and Christians already.

While Christians should strive to be blameless, what is more important is that they strive to be genuine. Everyone errs. The secular world is more interested in seeing someone like themselves who has found the answers rather than someone freakishly unlike themselves who is trying to be pious. Christians are going to have to take flak for their many brothers and sisters who have erred in the past, continue to err in the present, and will definitely err in the future. An attitude of humility will go far in these situations. Overall, however, a Christian journalist will need to be able to stand alone – to stand for convictions and what is right, no matter where the attacks are coming from.

Stand Alone

As well as learning from the past and being rooted in the faith, a Christian must also learn to stand alone. Perhaps one of the most discouraging aspects of any Christian who is trying to live a godly life is the criticism that comes from those who are supposed to be of common faith. Throughout history, the church has been full of backbiting and criticism that has crumbled the foundation of unity before it could hardly be built. The

Christian journalist will often have to make decisions that are not popular, especially among those of like faith or ideals. What the Christian journalist must remember, however, is that his or her allegiance is primarily to God, and that is the standard by which all must be judged.

Writing about organized religion is one of the hardest areas to handle. While God did ordain the church, the many denominations and factions and their unique traditions and methods are not necessarily God-inspired. Likewise, many Christian organizations and ministries have been founded with good intentions, but that does not mean they will not err. Christian journalists will face times when they will have to rebuke those of like faith just as equally as unbelievers. Just because people share the same convictions – religiously, politically, socially – does not mean these comrades in the faith can be given a blind eye when they do wrong. Olasky (1996) gives some pointers for dealing with this, which he calls "propaganda":

> Overall, Christian publications that wish to practice biblically directed journalism should stand firm against propaganda in five ways: They should not pretend that all is well with Christian organizations that are having problems; they should be willing to criticize political allies; they should be willing to praise opponents who act rightly in particular circumstances; they should not place above criticism even great church leaders; and they should not cover up embarrassments that befall even strong organizations. (p. 236)

By being willing to treat all men impartially (as God does), Christians will build credibility in a journalistic field that hates conflicts of interest and unequal treatment. The Christian's ultimate standard should always be to please and honor God, not men.

Make an Effort

Christian journalism is a rare thing, but rather than lamenting the current state and the few Christians in the field, Christians need to step up and begin to work toward changing the situation. Olasky (1988) warns, "If Christians today spend time complaining instead of doing, Americans may spend more decades wandering in a media wasteland" (p. 143). He gave a few suggestions for Christians who want to change journalism but warns that such a revolution will change modern Christianity: "A Christian journalistic revival, though, would mean that no place would be safe: Christian journalistic organizations would be aggressively reporting on the contrast between man's depravity and God's holiness, and non-Christian organizations would be prime mission fields" (p. 178). Journalism is a great field to start a Christian revolution in culture, however. The secularism of journalism is open and obvious, and Christians know where the battle is, which is in contrast to the public school system, in which secularism is hidden, deeply rooted, and much harder to combat, according to Olasky (1988). For change to take place in America, Christians must find a way to reach out to many, and journalism of all kinds is one of the few avenues that reaches virtually everyone. Olasky (1988) notes, "Parents, church leaders, employers, teachers, and so on are all representatives of different types of governing authority. There must be change in many different spheres for true reform to take root" (p. 158). Journalism is able to touch the different areas of life that have authority, and a positive change in journalism would do great things for America.

Make Use of Technology

Technology is also providing new opportunities that Christians in journalism never had before, and journalism has the unique bonus of not having government restrictions. Olasky says that now is the "golden age for journalism" as many new outlets are surfacing in which people can share their views (M. Olasky, personal communication, November 2, 2007). He adds, "It doesn't take any brilliance to see that the Internet is the future . . . . The beauty of the Web . . . is that it breaks down the divide between Christian and secular publications" (M. Olasky, personal communication, November 2, 2007). Although the Internet is a modern-day Pandora's box, bringing a wealth of problems, the new advantages of the Internet mean that once again, anyone can be a journalist, and even more effectively. Whereas budget concerns were once a main restriction on Christian journalists, the Internet means that now all they need is time and devotion to report on the side, which can significantly reduce funds for reporting full-time.

The Internet and Partisan Reporting

The Internet is obviously the next frontier for all of journalism, not just Christians. As mentioned in the study of bias, more people are going to distinctly partisan news media where they know which view they are receiving. Goldberg (2002) writes that, in the future, "People will get their news from the people they like and believe, which is very bad news for the old guard" (p. 189). The trend Goldberg describes is one that will move away from the large media organizations and more toward individual, specialized reporting.

At *World* magazine, for instance, Olasky has made a distinctly Christian partisan press. Those who subscribe to the periodical know that they will be receiving an obviously Christian view. Olasky says, "We wouldn't expect our journalists to be fair and balanced like you would at a normal newspaper" (M. Olasky, personal communication, November 2, 2007). He adds, however, that this is not bias. Rather, it is what he knows to be the truth – he calls it biblical objectivity. In his reporting, everyone else is biased, but his reporting is true because it is based on the eternal truth of the Bible.

Olasky's thinking – having a distinct set of standards by which to judge news criteria – is not exactly a novel idea; that was what made the partisan press several centuries ago. Now, as news coverage continues to diverge into smaller media such as blogs or cable news channels, people can find sources with which they agree. Knowing that what they hear will support their worldview, they will not cry of bias, but of rationality. While some say this is bad for journalism, it does not mean that all views will become extinct. Instead of trying to jam every imaginable view into one story (leaving some out, misinterpreting others, and confusing the readers all the while), journalists can now focus on writing a story with a worldview they understand. With so many views being presented in many different media – all easy to access through the Internet – people will have a greater chance than ever to hear all sides of the story. Whether or not people will access all of these views, however, will determine the success of such a system.

Establish Your Convictions Early

While Olasky (1988) promotes his own magazine, obviously, and his method of biblical objectivity, he also encourages Christian journalists who want to enter the secular field. He says that one person can make a difference, no matter where he or she is

working, but he also warned that the roads between Christian and atheistic thinking divide early in a journalist's career. Before Christians enter the field, they must know which path they have chosen and be ready to stand for it.

Christians Entering Secular Journalism

Much has been mentioned in this paper to prepare Christians for an entry into secular journalism. Christians who work in secular journalism can reach out to many who are unsaved as well as eventually building platforms from which they can make their views more evident. Even if a Christian is going to work at a Christian publication, Aikman recommends secular journalism first:

> In general, I would say it's much better for Christians to get into the difficult area of secular journalism and work within it – work within the rules. . . . Earn your stripes at a secular outfit, learn the ropes, put up with the guff and the ribbing and the teasing etc., but do a good job. Learn the skills of good journalism. And a bit later, by all means go into a Christian publication. (D. Aikman, personal communication, February 18, 2008)

Aikman adds that many editors are willing to let Christians present their views after these Christians have shown themselves to be hard workers. Aikman himself was able to write an essay with an obvious Biblical viewpoint, but only after 17 years at *Time* magazine.

Conclusion

Journalism is an important field because it reaches so many people. If the Christian's goal in life is to glorify God and bring others to glorify him, that Christian will be looking to spread the truth whenever he or she can. That is why journalism is such a great opportunity. The written word is a powerful way to lead people to the truth.

Showing a biblical perspective in all walks of life also leads people to the truth and shows them how, every day, to "set their minds on things above" (Colossians 1:1). More than anything, however, showing Christ in journalism will take the power out of the hands of those who cannot really answer the "why" question and provide hope for the world, hope that life is worthwhile, and there is real meaning.

A great need exists for Christians in journalism; and, for those who are committed to follow the call, Christianity in journalism is not a dream, but rather a hope. Now is the perfect time for Christians to place themselves within journalism and communicate the glory of God to all mankind.

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