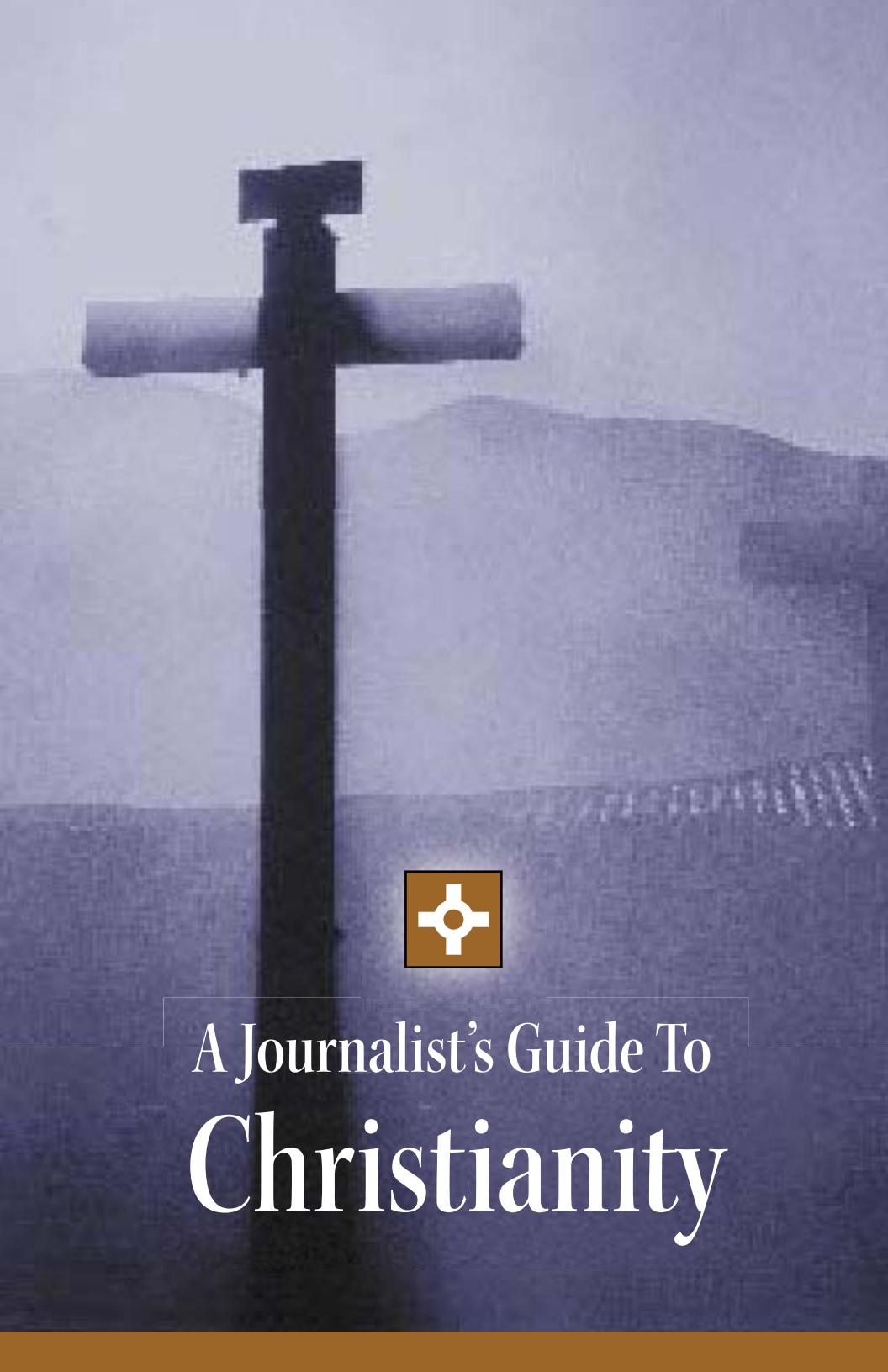

A Journalist's Guide To Christianity

Foreword

Canadians, by an overwhelming majority, are people with spiritual values and religious beliefs. According to the 2001 Canadian census, eighty-four percent of Canadians indicated they had religious affiliations.

Yet there are only a handful of full time religion news reporters in Canada. With an increase in immigration and changing world events, stories involving religious communities and spiritual issues at home as well as around the world are dramatically increasing. General assignment reporters who must find accurate information about highly complex, sensitive concerns most often cover these stories.

The Centre for Faith and the Media exists in part to help journalists have access to quick and accurate information, and the right contacts for Canada's diverse religious community. On our Web site, contacts in major centres for religious communities and traditions are available, as well as a growing body of background information.

With these printed guides on major world faiths, we hope to help busy journalists to cover stories involving faith. We hope these resources are both helpful and informative.

Richelle Wiseman
Managing Director
The Centre for Faith and the Media

Introduction

Like many other pursuits, religion writing is more challenging, but also more fun than it used to be. When I first entered journalism at the Edmonton Journal in 1966, the weekend assignment we junior reporters tried hardest to avoid was finding two Sunday sermons worthy of publishing in Monday's Journal. One had to be from a Catholic priest, and the other from a Protestant minister, and that meant reading the church ads, picking up the texts, and doing a little judicious editing. Before long, I was also assigned to writing features for the weekend religion page, and religion writing, including a stint in Catholic television in the U.S., has been an on and off part of my career ever since.

When I joined the Ottawa Citizen in 1988 and took over as editor of the religion page, the only regular local content was weekly columns by a Catholic priest, and a United Church minister. There was a brief backlash from readers when those columns were eliminated in 1990, but Canada was becoming a truly multi-faith culture, and for the first time, I began writing about not only Christianity and Judaism, but also about local branches of Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and the Sikh faith as well as paganism and New Age spirituality.

By 1998, the Citizen's religion page had been eliminated and religion stories were moved to where I believe they belong: in the news pages, and often on the front page. The one advantage of a dedicated religion page is that it provides guaranteed space for in-depth analysis of religious topics. The disadvantage is that it tends to attract only those readers with a keen interest in religion.

In the early 1990s, the few Canadian newspaper reporters who regularly covered religion would often cross paths at the annual meetings of the governing bodies of the major Christians groups: the Catholic bishops' plenary, the Anglican national synod, and the United and Presbyterian general assemblies. That, too, has changed. Those annual meetings generally merit substantial coverage now only if there is to be a debate on a truly controversial topic like the blessing of same-sex unions.

Religion gets more coverage in the United States, where almost one in two Americans still show up at church on Sundays and religion has an important influence on national and state politics. The U.S. includes 224 million Christians, 85 per cent of its population and the largest Christian population of any nation in the world. All the major American newspapers have at least one religion writer, and sometimes as many as five. The Religion Newswriters Association in the U.S. has also become a strong organization which offers lucrative cash prizes

for the best work of the year, and promotes both professional learning, and the sharing of information and story ideas, even with its Canadian members.

Canadian newspapers show less interest in religion, because we Canadians are less involved in organized religion, and less likely than Americans to discuss our faith in public forums. One of the reasons for that is the difference in our cultures. Evangelical Christians, with their fervour for sharing their faith, have created a nation in which President George W. Bush can go on television and call on God without blushing. In Canada's public square, the Catholicism of its founders, and the ongoing tension between francophone Catholics and Anglophone Protestants have shaped culture.

Church attendance has also been declining since 1946, when two out of three Canadians reported attending religious services weekly; now roughly one in five Canadians attend weekly, and there is less reader appetite for news about in-house church affairs than there once was. Yet Canadian religiosity stacks up well against countries like France, where about nine per cent of the population say they attend regularly, and Britain, where weekly attendance is now around 10 per cent.

A 1996 Angus Reid poll of 3,000 Canadians suggests regular church attendance is only part of the religion picture. According to that poll, another one in five Canadians are occasional Christians who turn up on occasions like Christmas and Easter, and there are another 20 per cent who pray regularly, but rarely attend services.

A 2003 poll by the Centre for Faith and Media suggests that those who do regularly attend religious services continue to look to religion-based media for comprehensive coverage of events and trends in their denominations.

Daily newspapers, radio and television will still continue to cover religion, at least periodically, because it reflects controversial cultural changes, whether it be the conflict between liberal and conservative Catholics over such issues as celibacy, or Protestants' struggle to reconcile Scripture with changing societal approaches to homosexuality.

However, the Centre for Faith and the Media poll found that 63 per cent of those who attend religious services at least weekly feel the mass media do a poor job of covering spirituality, and there is some truth to that. Few journalists know the difference between a priest and a pastor, or want to cover religion rather than politics or sports, and it is a rare newspaper that makes religion coverage a top priority. On the other hand, church leaders often do not really understand the media, or make it a priority to get their message out to the public. Both church and the media have their own agendas.

As Stewart Hoover, a professor of both religious studies and journalism at the University of Colorado, puts it: "The media reserve the right symbolically to construct the stories they convey and any institution, be it the church, the state (or the university) must submit to their construction and interpretation."

That was not always so. When the churches were more dominant in the culture, newspapers were their virtual servants. A local Anglican recently pointed out to me how different the Citizen's coverage of the1921 governing synod of the Ottawa diocese had been from what I had written about the diocese's 2003 financial deficit, declining demographics, and an upcoming debate about the blessing of same-sex unions. Instead, the 1921 Citizen had printed a verbatim copy of the bishop's long opening speech to that year's synod meeting. The report even included all 90-plus quotations of Scripture verses.

Today's media are unlikely to quote Scripture or give in-depth coverage to theological or organizational questions within the churches. What does catch their attention is criminal or sexual scandal, issues of sexual conduct such as clerical celibacy, birth control, homosexuality, or abortion, or crossfire between politicians and religious leaders on topics like same-sex marriage, or the morality of war. Those are the stories most likely to hit the front page.

Church leaders would like to see more coverage of their good works, and of visiting theologians, while journalists are keenly aware that most readers are more interested in sex and scandal. The Catholic Church's code of canon law tacitly recognizes the inevitable tension and goes so far as to say that no member of the clergy may write in newspapers which clearly are accustomed to attack the Catholic religion or good morals.

Religion coverage is improving in Canada, because of such organizations as the Centre for the Faith and Media, and the churches' employment of skilled communications professionals with a knowledge of the churches and a commitment to them.

This booklet about covering Christianity in Canada is intended primarily for journalists new to covering religion, whether they are doing a one-time only article, or taking on the subject as an occasional or regular assignment.

Fortunately, there are more easily available resources than ever before, on the Web, and in print. Canada's churches are also becoming more media-savvy, and working harder to put their stories and their points of view before the public and their own members.

Hopefully, this pamphlet will help journalists steer around at least some of the potential pitfalls in covering religion.

Bob Harvey
Ottawa Citizen

Quick Facts about Religion in Canada

The Roman Catholics' share of the Canadian population has declined from its peak of 46 per cent in 1971 to 43.2 per cent in the 2001 census, yet they still remain the single largest religious group in Canada. Between 1991 and 2001, the actual number of Roman Catholics grew by 4.8 per cent to just under 12.8 million, thanks partly to the immigration of Roman Catholics from other parts of the world.

The number of Orthodox Christians also grew between 1991 and 2001, by 25 per cent to a total of 479,600 or 1.6 per cent of the total population. However, the numbers of Greek and Ukrainian Orthodox declined, while the numbers of Serbian and Russian Orthodox more than doubled, again largely due to immigration.

The number of members of non-Christian religions also grew between 1991 and 2001. The Muslims more than doubled from 253,000 in 1991 to 579,600 or two per cent of the population in 2001. Hindus increased by 89 per cent to 297,200; Sikhs also increased 89 per cent to 278,400, and Buddhists increased 84% to about 300,300. Each of those faiths now makes up about one per cent of the population.

One in five of the 1.8 million immigrants who came to Canada between 1991 and 2001 reported "no religion". Many of these came from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The number of people reporting "no religion" grew from 1.78 million in 1981 to 3.3 million in 1991 and 4.8 million in 2001, when 40 per cent of them were aged 24 and under, and more likely to be male than female.

The percentage of Canadians reporting affiliation with Protestant groups has been falling steadily since it peaked at 56 per cent in 1921. The number of Protestants fell from 9.4 million or 34.9 per cent of the population to almost 8.7 million, or 29 per cent of the total population, between 1991 and 2001. Protestants still remain the second largest religious group in the nation.

Most Protestant denominations showed a decline in numbers from the 1991 census to the 2001 census. (Statistics courtesy of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada)

Denomination	Percent	Decline
Anglican	7%	2,035,500
Christian Reformed Church	9.5%	76,665
Lutheran	5%	606,590
Mennonite	7.9%	191,465
Pentecostal	15%	369,475
Presbyterian	36%	409,830
Salvation Army	21.9%	87,785
United Church	8%	2,839,125

A few Protestant denominations, showed an increase in numbers between 1991 and 2001.

Denomination	Increase	Number
Adventists	20%	62,875
Baptists	10%	729,470
Christian and Missionary Alliance	12%	66,280
Christians not included elsewhere*	121%	780,450
Evangelical Missionary Church	48%	66,705
Hutterite	22%	26,300

** includes those who indicated simply "Christian," "born again Christian," "apostolic" and "evangelical"*

Who Attends and Who Does Not

In 1946, a Gallup poll reported that 67 per cent of adults attended religious services during a typical week; in 1998, only 22 per cent did. Attendance is also highly influenced by age.

A Statistics Canada article in its Social Trends publication in 2000 reported that its General Social Survey found a steep decline in religious activity between Canadians' mid-teens and their mid- to late-20s, when they are establishing their independence and families of their own. But attendance rates tend to rise again among adults in their early 30s and reach their highest level among seniors aged 75 and older.

Marriage and children also make a difference. Young marrieds between 15 and 24 are almost twice as likely as their unmarried

counterparts to attend religious services. Married couples aged 25 to 44 were also more likely to attend than childless couples. Common-law couples are also less likely to attend, as are divorced or separated men, when compared to divorced or separated women. Canadian-born adults are also less likely to attend than immigrants.

Why the Decline?

Reg Bibby, the University of Lethbridge sociologist of religion, has probably spent more time and pages on this topic than anyone else in Canada. In his 1993 book, Unknown Gods, he said spiritual needs have not changed, and blamed the organizational problems in the churches for the decline of attendance. He cited four main difficulties:

STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS. According to Bibby, the churches were slow to adapt to change, were plagued by sexual and other scandals, had not learned how to communicate with the media, and projected a joyless image of "rules, rigidity and righteousness."

PRODUCT PROBLEMS. He said the churches were out of touch with people's needs, didn't know how to talk to non-Christians, and have lost the ability to teach a religion that will bring sanity and order to life, and sometimes even miracles.

PROMOTION PROBLEMS. Bibby said the churches needed better strategies for making their product better known, particularly among the 14.7 million Canadians who attended occasionally, but left services discouraged.

DISTRIBUTION PROBLEMS. He said too many churches were operating like religious clubs, and failing to venture outside their buildings to attract new members.

By 2002, however, Bibby had adopted a more positive tone. In Restless Gods, his third book on Canadian religious trends, he proclaimed that he and other sociologists are finding signs of a renaissance of religion around the world, and have abandoned the idea that as societies industrialize, they inevitably abandon faith.

Bibby has been surveying Canadian teens and adults regularly since 1975, and the signs he cited as evidence of this renaissance in Canada, included the stabilization of attendance at mainline Anglican, Presbyterian, Lutheran and United churches, and an increase in attendance by teens from 17 per cent in 1984 to 23 per cent in 2000. However, he admitted that the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec is still the one truly bleak area in Canada. Only seven per cent of Catholic teens there attend worship services, and overall

attendance has continued to drop, from 26 per cent in 1990 to 14 per cent in 2002.

Putting Canadian Christianity in a Historical Context

Unlike the United States, where Massachusetts' 17th century Puritan settlers set a pious Protestant vision that Americans have been reacting to ever since, Canada's founders were shaped by Catholicism.

Samuel de Champlain's own strong convictions led him to encourage missions to the Indians and to promote the faith among French colonists as well. French Jesuit priests were his leading partners in that endeavour. These Jesuits were also Canada's first religion writers. For 40 years, from 1625, when they first arrived in New France, they sent detailed annual reports back to their superiors in France. These Jesuit Relations provide a vivid picture of their own hardships in the forests of 17th century Canada and of the beliefs and day-to-day life of the native peoples they lived with.

After one of the Jesuits went off on a winter expedition with a band of Montagnais, he appeared back in camp sick, famished and half dead with exhaustion. His superior, Father Paul Le Jeune, wrote in that year's report that "Not ten priests in a hundred could bear this winter life with the savages."

The 19th century was Canada's Protestant century, as Anglicans, Methodists, and Presbyterians became the dominant influence in fast-growing Ontario. That Protestant growth also created a Catholic-Protestant tension that still defines Canada, just as evangelicalism influences American politics.

The 1925 merger of Methodists, Congregationalists and the majority of Presbyterian congregations created Canada's largest Protestant body, the United Church of Canada. It and the Anglicans and Presbyterians, and the Lutherans, who are based primarily in the Western provinces, make up Canada's "mainline" denominations. Beginning in the 1980s, evangelicals also began to make an impact on Canadian consciousness, particularly as the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada brought together groups that included Baptists, the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Mennonites, Christian Reformed and Pentecostals. Together, they were able to create a strong lobby against government action to legalize abortion and legalize same-sex unions. On many issues, the Evangelical Fellowship and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops now take a common stand. Interfaith

coalitions are also becoming increasingly common as Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and other faiths find they all have common interests on such issues as tax credits for private religious schools in Ontario.

A Brief World History of Christianity

Christianity is the most widespread and the most influential of the world's religions. But it began with a humble man from an obscure village. Fishermen and other simple people gathered around Jesus, because they believed that he was the Christ, the Lord's Anointed, and had opened the doors to eternal life and given them the power to live out the standards he set for love, joy, peace, and self-control. Yet the leaders of his own Jewish people accused him of blasphemy, and of fomenting a revolt; they turned him over to Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator for the region. Pilate had Christ tried as a criminal and crucified.

To the Romans, Christianity at first appeared to be just another religious sect, but as it spread through the Greco-Roman world, the Emperor Nero began to perceive it as a threat. In 64 A.D., after a fire burned much of Rome, he blamed the Christians, and they were tortured and burned in and around Rome. That persecution became Empire-wide, but the movement continued to grow, partly because the faith and courage of the martyrs drew many new converts.

By 313 A.D., the Emperor Constantine had made the faith a religion recognized throughout the Empire. He himself converted to Christianity.

Over the following centuries, the church became more organized, developed more standardized forms of worship, and put more emphasis on sacraments. By the fifth and sixth centuries, barbarians were invading the Western part of the Roman Empire, and by the seventh century, Islam had conquered what were once the great churches of Africa. Christianity was then centred in two main cities: Rome under its bishop or pope, and Constantinople, under its patriarch, and its Emperor, who ran both church and state.

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches divided over the pope's claim to complete authority over all Christians, and what is known as the filioque clause, the papacy's decision to amend the Nicene Creed, which was recited in both Orthodox and Catholic churches. It speaks of "the Holy Spirit. Who proceeds from the Father". But in 1014, despite Eastern opposition, the papacy added "and the son" (filioque in Latin) after that phrase. In 1054, the division was formalized in what became known as the Great Schism.

That was the first of many divisions to come, and the theological difference that prompted it is one of many differences that Christians are still trying to resolve in ecumenical discussions.

By 1453, the Ottoman Turks had conquered Constantinople, and divisions between rival popes and corruption among the clergy had weakened the Western church. Then came Martin Luther, and, after 1517, the Protestant Reformation (see Protestantism). In time there would be a new awakening not only among the new Protestants, but also in the Catholic Church.

According to the World Christian Encyclopaedia, there are now 33,830 Christian denominations, and Christianity has a presence in virtually every one of the world's 238 nations and territories. Although the differences in theology and practice are many, these denominations may be grouped into a few main movements, starting with the three great branches of the Christian Church: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism. At the very simplest level, what divides them are their differing approaches on how individual believers must go about shaping their consciences to follow the will of God.

Roman Catholics believe that an individual must conform his conscience and his actions to the teachings of the Pope, the bishop of Rome, whom they consider infallible when he pronounces on matters of faith and morals for the whole church. The Eastern Orthodox do not have a Pope but hold that God's truth is revealed through the "conscience of the church," or the consensus of its members, and strive to find salvation with and through the whole church. Protestants rejected the authority of the Pope in the 16th century, and emphasize the individual's obligation to conform his actions to God's teaching with the help of the Bible and the traditions of the church.

It is an exaggeration, but one could say that Roman Catholics rely on the Pope; Orthodox rely on the Church; and Protestants rely on the Bible to shape their consciences. In reality, their leaders, their churches and their Scriptures influence all Christians. All the churches would agree that the Holy Spirit also plays a part in the lives of believers.

Catholicism

"Catholic" comes from a Greek word meaning "universal," and the Catholic Church is by far the largest and most widespread of the world's Christian groups. The Roman Catholics make up the single largest Catholic Church, with about a billion members. But the wider Catholic Church includes 23 other self-governing Catholic churches,

including Ukrainian, Syrian, Armenian and other Eastern Catholics who accept the Pope's teaching authority but maintain their own liturgies, and their own disciplines. Eastern Catholic churches also allow married priests, as long as the marriage takes place before ordination. However, only celibate priests are eligible to become bishops.

What distinguishes the larger Catholic Church is the belief that the bishop of Rome, the Pope, is the successor of Saint Peter, and Christ's representative on earth. Among his followers, he has an authority shared by no other major religious leader on earth.

The Roman Catholic Church, along with the Eastern Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, all recognize the seven historic sacraments: baptism, confirmation, marriage, ordination, penance (sacrament of reconciliation), extreme unction (anointing the sick) and the Mass. The sacraments are considered aids to living out the lives of service and holiness that Christ taught his followers. It is believed that baptism washes away the taint of original sin, marriage joins a man and a woman together, and that when the Mass is celebrated, the substance of the wine and bread are transformed to become Christ's body and blood in order to spiritually nourish the believers who partake.

Eastern Orthodoxy

The Eastern Orthodox churches include more than 214 million believers, and have a greater tolerance of differences of opinion than the Roman Church they broke ties with in 1054 A.D. The only issues on which they require unanimity are those mentioned in the Bible, and the Orthodox have convened ecumenical councils to resolve differences of interpretation on those issues on only seven occasions, all of them before 787 A.D. The Orthodox believes that at those councils, it was the Holy Spirit that saved the church from error, as the bishops merely reported what their followers believed.

Any developments in Christian approaches since 787, like the Catholic pronouncements on such issues as purgatory and the Immaculate Conception of Mary, are considered by the Orthodox to be simply new approaches that Christians are free to dispute.

The largest of the Orthodox churches are that of Greece, and of Russia, despite decades of persecution of its priests and followers under the Soviet regime. There are many Orthodox churches throughout the world in Poland, Bulgaria, North America, and even China and Japan. Some are in communion with the patriarch of

Constantinople, historically the leading centre of Orthodoxy; others are independent of the patriarch.

Their churches are organized along regional and national lines, and are suspicious of any theological innovation that smells like it differs from that which the Apostles learned from Christ and passed on to the early Church Fathers. Thus, great early minds of the Western church, like Augustine and Tertullian, have had little influence on the Orthodox.

The first Russian Orthodox missionaries in North America came to Alaska in the 18thcentury. Today there are many different branches of Orthodoxy in both Canada and the U.S.

Protestantism

The Protestant Reformation began in 1517 when Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk and professor of biblical studies at the University of Wittenberg in Germany, objected to the (Catholic) church's sale of indulgences, the remission of part or all of the punishment that the church taught they would suffer in purgatory. He set out his objection and. nailed his 95 Theses on the door of a church. But it was 1529, before the movement became known as Protestantism at the Diet of Speyer, when princes of a group of German states signed a "protest" opposing the plans of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, to use force to forbid Luther's teachings throughout the Empire.

The new movement soon took four major forms. Lutheranism dominated northern Germany and Scandinavia, and attracted some followers in the Netherlands and Hungary. The Reformed and Presbyterian churches adopted John Calvin's 1536 Institutes of the Christian Religion as their statement of Protestant theology. The Church of England was also influenced by the Protestant Reformation, and broke with Rome, but preserved many aspects of its Catholic past.

The Anabaptists were the most radical of the new Protestants. They advocated the baptism and church membership only of adult believers and preached non-resistance to force, and the separation of church and state.

According to the World Christian Encyclopaedia, there were 342 million Protestants in the world in 2001. It includes the world's 80 million Anglicans as a separate category, and cites Independent indigenous churches in developing countries as the Christian church's fastest growing segment. The Independent churches regard themselves as "post-denominational."

Definitions of Major Movements within Modern Protestantism

Born-again: Those Protestants who claim their lives have radically changed after they have had a personal experience of Christ.

Evangelical: The word comes from the word "evangel" which means "good news" or "gospel." The word evangelical was originally used and still is used in Europe and such churches as the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada as simply a description of the teachings and culture of the Reformation. Today, however, it is generally used to describe conservative Protestants who not only recognize the unique authority of Scripture, and the need to be born-again, but also emphasize their obligation to "save" others by sharing their faith with them.

Fundamentalists: The fundamentalist movement arose early in the 20th century in reaction to liberal critiques of the Bible. So, while fundamentalists share many of the evangelicals' beliefs, they put their main emphasis on the literal truth of the Bible, including the account in Genesis of the creation of all life in six days. Fundamentalists also are generally cultural conservatives who are particularly critical of what they would call the influence of "Hollywood" values on modern morals and culture. They practice separation from other religions and also from other Christians whom they deem to be "liberal."

Pentecostals: They share most evangelical beliefs but emphasize the importance of an immediate encounter with the Holy Spirit in an exuberant style of worship that might include what they label the gifts of the Spirit, including speaking in tongues and prophecy. A Canadian, Aimee Semple McPherson, was the first Pentecostal preacher to achieve celebrity status in the U.S.

Charismatics: Catholics and Protestants, who remain in their own churches, but who, like the Pentecostals, believe in gifts of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues that generally bear little resemblance to any known languages. The root of the word charismatic is "charism," which means "gift of grace."

Glossary of Christian Terms

Advent: The beginning of the church year. It starts on the Sunday nearest Nov. 30 and lasts until Christmas. Advent is from the Latin meaning coming or arrival.

Amen: The final word of a prayer. It means "so be it."

Annunciation: When the angel Gabriel told Mary she was pregnant with Jesus.

Apocrypha: The word is taken from the Greek word for "hidden" and used to describe additions to books of the Hebrew Bible, or complete books proposed for the Hebrew Bible, but never accepted as such. Twelve of these works, including Tobit, Sirach, and the 1st and 2nd

books of Maccabees, were accepted as part of the Old Testament by the Roman Catholic church in the 16th century, but are treated by Protestants only as works meant for private edification.

Apostles' Creed: The oldest statement of belief in the church, based on the teachings of the Apostles, the twelve followers of Jesus who were sent to preach the Gospel.

Aramaic: The language that Jesus and the disciples would have spoken to each other.

Ash Wednesday: The first day of Lent. The day after Shrove Tuesday.

Ascension: When Jesus went back to Heaven, 40 days after the resurrection.

Beatitudes: A section of Matthew 5, known as Christ's "Sermon on the Mount," in which Jesus begins each sentence with "Blessed are the..."

Creed: A statement of beliefs agreed by the church to be true. The two main creeds are the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed.

Day of Judgement: The day at the end of the world when all will be judged on their behaviour and relationship to God while on earth.

Diocese: A sub-section of the church governed by a bishop, and including a number of parishes.

Easter: The major festival in the Christian church, celebrating the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Epistle: A letter. Several from Saint Paul addressed to churches in Asia Minor are preserved in the New Testament.

Eucharist: Comes from the Greek word for "Thanksgiving," and is used to describe the Christian service which is based on the sharing of wine and bread at the Last Supper. Catholics normally refer to this service as the "Mass," while other Christians may describe it as the Last Supper, or communion.

Free Church: A church which has no higher authority than the leaders of that church.

Font: The place in the church where babies are baptized.

Gethsemane: The garden where Jesus prayed before being arrested.

Golden Rule: Quoted by Jesus in Mark 12.31 as "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Good Friday: The day on which Jesus was crucified.

Gospel: Means "good news" and is that part of the New Testament which tells the story of Jesus' life.

Grace: The loving help that God gives to all human beings, an undeserved gift.

Holy Spirit: One of the three Persons of the Trinity or Triune God, often shown as a dove. The Holy Spirit came down to the disciples at Pentecost, and to Jesus at his baptism.

Incarnation: When Jesus became human by being born to Mary.

Kingdom of God: The new kingdom to be ruled over by God.

Lent: The 40 days, from Ash Wednesday to Holy Week, which represents the 40 days that Jesus spent in the wilderness.

Messiah: Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah, a word meaning "King" or "Saviour" or "Anointed One."

Pentecost: The festival celebrating the day when Jesus' disciples received the Holy Spirit. It is often described as the birth of the church.

Pharisees: Religious leaders at the time of Jesus who taught a rigorous interpretation of the Jewish law.

Pope: A title most often used to describe the Bishop of Rome, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, but it is also the title of the head of the patriarchs of the Eastern Orthodox and Coptic Churches in Alexandria, Egypt.

Purgatory: A temporary state of suffering after death where, according to Roman Catholic doctrine, the souls of those who die in God's grace may make restitution for past sins and become ready for heaven.

Sabbath: The Jewish holy day, which begins at sunset on Friday, and lasts until sundown on Saturday. Some Christian groups use the word to describe Sunday.

Sacrament: An outward sign of something special and holy. Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Anglicans believe in seven sacraments; Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, holy orders, forgiveness of sins, anointing of the sick, and marriage.

Samaritans: A group of people who lived in Samaria, the name of the Northern Israelite capital and the territory around it. By the time of Jesus, Samaria had declined in importance, and there was contention between Samaritans and the Jews of the southern Israelite capital of Jerusalem.

Saviour: One of Jesus' titles, signifying the Christian belief that he saved people from their sins by dying on a cross.

Shrove Tuesday: The day immediately preceding Ash Wednesday, so named from the *shriving*, i.e. confession and absolution of the faithful on that day. Shrove Tuesday heralds the beginning of fasting in Lent. On this day (so the historians say) there were feasts of pancakes to use up the supplies of fat, butter and eggs…foods that were forbidden during austere Lent. Shrove Tuesday, the eve of Lent, also known as Mardi Gras (literally "fat Tuesday" in French), Carnival (from the Latin for "farewell to the flesh"), and Fasnacht (the Germanic "night of the fast"), is celebrated across the world with feasting.

Sin: A transgression of God's law, which separates an individual from God.

Synoptic: A Greek word which means "to look at together." The synoptic gospels are Matthew, Mark and Luke, because each other wrote the events of Christ's life with a different approach.

Transubstantiation: The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox belief that the wine and bread at the Eucharist actually turn into the body and blood of Jesus. "Consubstantiation," on the other hand, is the view that Christ is present with but not has not become the bread and wine.

Trinity: The one God in three Persons: God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is equal.

Yahweh: A Hebraic word for God, used primarily by Roman Catholics.

Resources in Print

The annual directory of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. It includes names, phone numbers and email addresses of the bishops, as well as a table of statistics.

The annual Canadian Catholic Church directory, published by Novalis Press. It includes a directory of all Canadian parishes, priests, and religious orders, including contact numbers and addresses.

The annual Catholic Almanac, published in the U.S. by Our Sunday Visitor. It includes biographies of cardinals around the world, up to date information on the canonization of saints, analysis of recent Vatican documents, as well as phone numbers and web site addresses.

The best-selling Catechism of the Catholic Church, a comprehensive reference book of the church's teachings, published by Doubleday.

Concise Dictionary of Religion, by University of Calgary professor Irving Hexham, published by InterVarsity Press.

Restless Gods, an invaluable summary of Canadian church trends and statistics by Reg Bibby, the University of Lethbridge sociologist of religion. It is published by Stoddart and includes a summary of trends, as well as numbers on attendance by age groups and denominations.

The Anglican Directory, available from the Anglican Book Centre, which can be reached by email at: abc@national.anglican.ca

United Church of Canada yearbook, available from head office.

Publications

The Anglican Journal
Presbyterian Record
United Church Observer
Catholic Register, a national perspective published by the archdiocese of Toronto
Catholic New Times, a more liberal, social-justice, independent publication
Faith Today, the Evangelical Fellowship's bimonthly magazine
Christian Week Newspaper

Church Contacts

Roman Catholic

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) in Ottawa. Rev. Bill Kokesch, a permanent deacon and former CBC hand at the CCCB, (613)241-9461.

Religious Conference, Montreal. Christina Parsons, Communications Coordinator, (514)259-0856; cell(514) 821-1378.

Protestant

Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. in Toronto suburb of Markham. Represents over 40 evangelical denominations. Gail Reid, Director of Communications, (905)479-5885.

United Church of Canada. Headquarters, Toronto. Mary Frances Denys, (416)231-7680, extension 2016.

Anglican Church of Canada. Headquarters, Toronto. Sam Carriere, (416)924-9199, extension 206. For Anglican facts, contact librarian Karen Evans, (416)924-9199, extension 291.

Presbyterian Church of Canada, headquarters, Toronto. Stephen Kendall, principal clerk, (416)441-1111.

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, headquarters, Winnipeg. Rhonda Lorch, Director of Administration, (204)984-9165.

Eastern Orthodox

Ukrainian Orthodox Church. (Elderly) Metropolitan, His Beatitude, the Most Rev. Metropolitan Wasyly (in Winnipeg). Phone: (204) 339-4656. A better contact number, the consistory office. Phone: (204) 586-3093, Fax: (204) 582-5241. Email: consistory@uocc.ca, website: www.uocc.ca.

Ukrainian Orthodox bishop for Ontario and Quebec, (in Toronto). The Most Rev. Archbishop Yurij. Phone: (905) 206-9372. Fax: (905) 206-0373.

Ukrainian Orthodox bishop for Alberta and B.C., (in Edmonton). Archbishop the Most Rev. John. Phone: (780) 455-1938. Fax: (780) 454-5287.

Greek Orthodox Church. Greek Orthodox Metropolitan. Archbishop Sotirios. Phone: (416) 429-5757. Fax: (416) 429-4588. Email: greekomt@on.aibn.com.

Serbian Orthodox Church. Bishop Rt. Rev. Bishop Georgije. Phone: (905) 878-3438. Email: vladika@istocnik.com.

Orthodox Church in America. Bishop Seraphim, (in Spencerville, Ontario, south of Ottawa). Phone: (613) 925-5226.

An all-round good interpreter of Orthodoxy, Father Maxym Lysack, with the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church in Ottawa. Church. Phone: (613) 723-7790. Fax: (613) 723-7611. Email: frmaxym@sympatico.ca.

Bob Harvey, Religion Editor, Ottawa Citizen. Phone: (613) 596-3689, Toll-free Canada & U.S.A.: 1-800-267-6100 extension 3689.

A Sample of Helpful Websites

Christianity topics on Librarians' Index to the Internet
www.lii.org/search/file/christianity

Live Catholic headlines from the last seven days
www.ewtn.com/vnews/headlines.asp

Catholic World News Service
www.cwnews.com/news/viewstory

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
www.cccb.ca

Vatican News Service (sends out daily email summaries upon request)
www.vatican.a/news_services/press/vis/vis_en.html

United Church of Canada
www.united-church.ca/home.shtm

Presbyterian Church in Canada
www.presbycan.ca

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
www.elcic.ca

Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
www.evangelicalfellowship.ca

Christian Week Newspaper
www.christianweek.org

Adherents.com
www.adherents.com
A growing collection of over 41,000 adherent statistics and religious geography citations.

Religion Link
www.religionwriters.com/public/tips/main.shtml
A resource from the (U.S.) Religion Newswriters Association and its foundation. Each free, biweekly edition contains story ideas about religion and public life, including sources, background and web links.

Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance
www.religioustolerance.org
An even-handed guide to world religions, controversial subjects and much else.

Religion Source, the Journalist's Guide to 5,000 religion scholars.
www.religionsource.org/Contents/JournalistHome.aspx

A Journalist's Guide To Christianity

P.O. Box 5694, Station "A"
Calgary, Alberta T2H 1Y1
Telephone: 1.877.210.0077
Fax: 403.278.7354
Email: faithandmedia@telus.net
Web: www.faithandmedia.org

Centre for Faith & the Media