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A HISTORY OF TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN: 1978-1988

BY

JANET TRAYLOR ADDISON
B.A., Delta State University, 1986

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of
The University of Mississippi
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for the Degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Journalism

The University of Mississippi
May 1989

A HISTORY OF TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN: 1978-1988

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INTRODUCTION

The role of the American woman was defined fairly precisely until recent years. Young girls were trained in social graces, music, and entertaining; homemaking skills such as cooking and sewing were possessed by a good wife, which is what girls were supposed to grow up to be.¹ Females generally were not educated because they were not expected to work. Working women, for the most part, were school teachers or nurses, or they held positions of ill repute.

The flappers of the "Roaring Twenties" managed to break from tradition and plunge into the workplace. During the depression of the late 1920s and 1930s they were asked to relinquish their positions of employment to men who needed to support families. With the advent of World War II, however, women were suddenly plunged back into the workplace to maintain the nation's industrial production while the men fought overseas. Working added new responsibilities to the woman of the 1940s; she became more aware of the politics affecting the world and the economy, she learned to manage money and run her household. She developed contacts and interests outside the home. When the war was over women were expected to return home and keep house for their husbands who had returned, but many women chose not to end their careers and gave up full-time homemaking.² Education for girls eventually increased in importance, and careers for women became fashionable.

¹Barbara J. Berg, The Crisis of the Working Mother (New York: Summit Books, 1986), p. 34-39.

²Elizabeth Janeway, ed., Women: Their Changing Roles (New York: New York Times, Arno Press, 1973), p. x.

This frustrating trend grew slowly through the 1950s until "a belligerent rhetoric of protest and revolution swept the country" in the 1960s.³ The shocking exhibitions of the Hippie rebellion spread throughout college campuses and enticed women to abandon established rules of dress, marriage, conduct, and religion. At the end of this confusing and difficult era, historians optimistically predicted the future decade would be one of transition and change and would bring with it overtones from the 1960s. The 1970s were expected to be a time for a return to group unity, term marriages and more frequent divorces, tremendous knowledge increases, almost double personal incomes, and an emphasis on the quality of human life. Many of these expectations came true.

Nevertheless, an effort to pass the Equal Rights Amendment during the 1970s symbolized the growing restlessness and dissatisfaction of many American women with their expected lifestyles and callings. As the nation's standard of living increased, more women were exposed more to the big world that surrounded their small one. Women grew socially and became more self aware. They saw themselves stagnating in the unfulfilling environment of the home and in the constant company of children. Educated homemakers feared losing their intelligence and creativity.⁴ Marriage became outmoded, an "anachronism,"⁵ as the birth control pill, abortion, and living together allowed more freedom in

³"From the 60's to the 70's: Dissent and Discovery," Time. 19 December 1969, p. 20-26.

⁴Jonah R. Churgin, The New Woman and the Old Academe: Sexism and Higher Education (New York: Libra Publishers, 1978), p. 2.

⁵Janeway, pp. 536-37.

sexual relationships. Women rallied behind various causes, fighting for the privilege of choosing what roles they would play in marriage, the job market, the military, and other institutions.

Child care services increased in demand as divorce rates skyrocketed and women left their children for the workplace. Some commentators even criticized the family for being "home havens, retreats from the rat race." They said children actually needed a sense of community (albeit artificial) that on-site day care centers could provide. Raising children in a sheltered world was considered too difficult a task for mothers to handle alone.⁶

Religion fell in popularity, and church attendance declined. Conservative and traditional trends and philosophies were rejected for modern and less structured lifestyles. In 1979 Time hinted that bad preaching was partly to blame for the decline in church attendance, admitting that "for many American churchgoers, . . . a Sunday sermon is something merely to be endured."⁷ Women began to question their status in the church as non-leaders and continued their demand for more leadership positions that had begun in the 1940s.⁸

Although the press struggled to understand the mood of the nation and offer adapting literature for its changing audience, it didn't always keep up. That women felt misrepresented in magazines was clearly illustrated when the editorial offices of Ladies Home Journal were stormed by 200 women's liberationists in early 1970. Their visit

⁶Ibid., p. 528.

⁷"American Preaching: A Dying Art?" Time, 31 December 1979, p. 64-67.

⁸Janeway, p. 294.

resulted in the Journal's publishing a special eight-page section devoted to the movement's ideas on marriage, housekeeping, education, and career. Other women's periodicals began carrying more radical articles. McCall's supplied articles written by Betty Friedan (founder of the National Organization for Women) that examined the anti-male sentiment of the women's movement.⁹ In the midst of Mademoiselle's health and beauty articles in 1975 could be found bits of attention to the mind as well, from features promoting college and careers to "The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Sex" column. Likewise, Cosmopolitan placed heavy emphasis on the psyche and sex life of its readers during the late 1970s, as was evidenced by the appearance of "Cosmo's Sex Sampler," "How to Meditate," "Psychosurgery," "I Had an Abortion," "Analyst's Couch," and "Do You Love Me?" among other titles in a single issue.¹⁰ New feminist magazines that appealed to working women and other feminist groups appeared on the newsstands.¹¹ The forerunner of these movement-initiated magazines, MS, dealt exclusively with women's issues, including a 1973 report on higher education as an opportunity for women.

HISTORY OF TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN

This was the atmosphere in which Today's Christian Woman (TCW) was created. Her founders believed that not only were women as a whole struggling to find their identity and niche in a changing culture, but

⁹Ibid., p. 406.

¹⁰Cosmopolitan, March 1978.

¹¹"Magazines Targeted at the Working Woman," Business Week, 18 February 1980.

religious women especially were finding it difficult to reconcile Scriptural principles of womanhood with the movement going on around them. "It was obvious to those in religious publishing that there was a gap in the magazine industry, an itch that needed scratching," says Jerry Bruce Jenkins, TCW's first editor.¹² "We were unhappy with the drift of secular women's magazines. They were pro-choice and pro-consumerism. There was nothing overtly Christian."

Surprisingly, this need was recognized by a group of men. William R. Barbour, Jr., who was president of book publishing company Fleming H. Revell, and his brother Hugh Barbour, who was Revell's vice president, launched the plans for the new magazine. Richard Baltzell, another Revell staff member, and David W. Schultz, who joined the staff as marketing and publication director, served in those early days with Jenkins, who was also editor of Moody Monthly magazine at the time.

"Among the most successful periodicals in the secular marketplace were magazines for women," Bruce said. "No counterpart existed in the Christian field."¹³ While the service articles of secular magazines are helpful to most women, Christian women are usually hesitant to accept the values of those magazines, values which emphasize self. Sharon Donohue, Managing Editor of TCW, affirms this fact: "They [secular magazines]

¹²Telephone interview with Jerry Bruce Jenkins, Vice President, Periodicals, Moody Bible Institute, 14 March 1989.

¹³Jerry Bruce Jenkins, "In the Beginning . . ." Today's Christian Woman, July/August 1988, p. 8-10.

hold little relevancy for the woman concerned about the daily practical application of 'Kingdom values.'¹⁴

Dale Hanson Bourke, a marketing consultant at the time, saw TCW promoted at a convention in 1978 and was immediately interested in marketing the magazine.¹⁵ Although the publishers were wary about offering subscriptions, she persistently approached them about marketing what she thought would be an excellent product.¹⁶ "TCW wasn't really perceived as being a woman's magazine. . . . It was an ideal format for a magazine, and they thought it would be fun to compile some articles to sell it through single copies in Christian bookstores. The first trial issue sold well (like a book sale) but there were no plans beyond the first issue. They saw it as one more way to tap the woman's book market."¹⁷ Eventually Revell relinquished editorship of the magazine to Bourke when Jenkins decided to remain with Moody Monthly. Because TCW's budget was so small, Bourke edited TCW part time through her firm, set a regular quarterly schedule for the magazine, and sold advertising. Later when she opened her own firm, Publishing Directions, Bourke kept TCW as one of her company's initial clients. Although Bourke saw great potential for a Christian woman's magazine, she half expected TCW to fail, just as the industry predicted. Jenkins said that "89 out of 100 new magazines

¹⁴Sharon Donohue, Managing Editor, Today's Christian Woman, Personal Notes.

¹⁵Sharon Donohue, "Can A Woman Have It All?" Today's Christian Woman, July/August 1988, p. 36.

¹⁶Bourke, interview.

¹⁷Telephone interview with Dale Hanson Bourke, Senior Editor, Today's Christian Woman, 28 May 1988.

failed back then."¹⁷ To the contrary, however, TCW enjoyed success because of "the needs women had. I've never seen a magazine so overwhelmingly loved and needed by its audience," Bourke remembers.¹⁸

Anita Bryant smiled from the glossy cover of TCW's 144-page premier issue. The welcoming editorial announced that TCW was the "first ever full-sized, Christian feature magazine for women" and promised that its writers had "encountered God through Jesus Christ."¹⁹ Publisher William Barbour, Jr. continued to assure his readers that although every article in his magazine would not be of a clearly religious nature, TCW would not embarrass its readers with questionable features. That first issue offered advice on money management, makeup application, planning wedding receptions, and relating to men at work; highlighted Anita Bryant, writer Ann Kiemel, and Kansas congresswoman Sharon Hess; celebrated children in an award-winning, 12-page photo essay; and encouraged Bible study.

Early editions of the magazine boasted 100+ pages and super glossy covers of heavy paper. Regular features appeared irregularly until the magazine was several years old, but TCW's "Superguide," a multi-page collage of service tips on a single subject, was established early in TCW's life and remained a favorite and standard feature. Beginning circulation figures averaged 30,000. The number of advertising pages steadily rose through the years, while the types of ads--Bibles and

¹⁷Jenkins, interview.

¹⁸Donohue, p. 37.

¹⁹William R. Barbour, Jr., "Welcome to Today's Christian Woman," Today's Christian Woman, Fall 1978, p. 1.

religious books, records, seminars, colleges, and gift ideas--varied little.

Today's Christian Woman remained quarterly until November 1983, when publication increased to bimonthly. Christianity Today, Inc. (CTI) acquired TCW in 1985, but CTI did not take on full editorial responsibilities until 1987. The magazine was produced by an independent publishing firm during that two-year period.²⁰ As of August 1988, Managing Editor Sharon Donohue heads the current editorial staff. Although Bourke still writes editorials and feature interviews, her input is minimal.

When CTI took control of publishing the magazine, several changes within TCW's content were noticeable. Some of the regular features were swapped out for new ones, article design was cleaned up, and the overall appearance of the magazine improved. The size of the magazine has slowly declined to 72 pages, but Donohue attributed this and also the change in quality of paper stock to "increased costs of production, volatile advertising market, and escalating postal rates."²¹

One aspect of publishing a non-denominational, religious magazine that might prove difficult is the establishment of an appropriate editorial policy. CTI's Statement of Faith governs this area.²² Opinion columns written by non-staffers do carry disclaimers, but, Bourke said, the opinion "must have some biblical interpretation." The editors are

²⁰Telephone interview with Sharon Donohue, Managing Editor, Today's Christian Woman, 11 November 1987.

²¹Donohue, notes.

²²Bourke, interview.

"open to people saying something that's an interpretation of a Scripture passage or something many Christians would adhere to." TCW's editors consider their product to be a woman's magazine that has a "values perspective. We affirm certain kinds of values," claimed Bourke. TCW offers coverage on topics of general interest to women that is found in other magazines, as well as on spiritual subjects. "This magazine offers many of the same things that other magazines offer," stressed Bourke, "but it does it from the viewpoint of biblical values. Today's Christian Woman answers many questions that other magazines can't affirmatively answer."

The phrase "new traditional woman," coined by TCW's ad agency, describes TCW's reader philosophy, one that is not denominational or narrow but is as broadly "Christian" as possible.²³ TCW's goal is to relate practical application of godly values, as is defined by its statement of purpose:

TCW is a bi-monthly publication designed for women of all ages, single or married, who identify themselves as Christians and who seek to live out biblical values in their home, their workplace, and their community. To that end, TCW seeks to inform women as they face today's issues, to instruct them as they search for biblical answers, to encourage them as they meet new opportunities or growth, and to challenge them as they determine personal priorities. With sensitivity, humor, and candor, TCW provides depth and balance in lending perspective and insight to the issues that confront today's Christian woman. It affirms that the similar values held among today's Christian women far surpass the differences.²⁴

As Barbour wrote in his first editorial, Christian women share the common denominator of Christ.²⁵ Christian women will have theological

²³Ibid.

²⁴Christianity Today, Inc., "Statement of Purpose," Media Kit, Today's Christian Woman.

²⁵Barbour, p. 1.

clashes, but they also share many more characteristics that are beyond the realm of theology. CTI, by publishing TCW, attempts to minister to women by offering them reading material that is distinctive from secular magazines in philosophy, but competitive enough in format to be an adequate alternative.

Today's Christian Woman enjoys a steadily rising circulation and growing ad sale base and stands as one of CTI's most promising publications. The magazine's directors continue to evaluate TCW's outstanding traits to preserve her success and sustain her growth.²⁶

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

It is the purpose of this study to evaluate the editorial content of this magazine and evaluate any changes that may have occurred since CTI's acquisition. Several research questions have been proposed:

- 1) To analyze editorial and advertising content of the magazine in its ten years of publication.
- 2) To compare and contrast editorial/advertising content before and after the change of ownership.
- 3) To determine if TCW has reflected the women's movement and changes in American women during the study period.
- 4) To determine if TCW is an alternative to secular women's magazines.
- 5) To determine if TCW is #1 in Christian women's magazines in circulation and advertising.
- 6) To suggest further improvement of this magazine.

²⁶Donohue, notes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Women in the 1980s are strongly influenced by the liberated women of the 1960s and 1970s. With the attempted Equal Rights Amendment, changing roles of marriage and motherhood, and the return to school and the work force, modern women are independent and ambitious.

Many women in this decade are not satisfied with being homemakers or mothers--they crave the fast-paced life of a career, even if it means juggling children, home, and husband and not being very effective in any of her many roles. There are now so many choices for women--more than just married or single, and career or homemaker. There is a national trend toward later motherhood: from 1975-1978 there was a 37 percent increase in the number of women from age 30-34 who had their first child; for ages 35-39, the increase was 22 percent.¹

There are more women in college and graduate school than there are men. By 1990 the number of women earning business baccalaureate degrees in business will be eight times greater than that of the 1960s. The percent of women in law school jumped from 6.9 percent in 1969 to 31.4 percent 10 years later. The number of self-employed women increased 43 percent between 1972 and 1979--five times the rate of increase for men. There are more than three million women business owners now in the United States.² Women between the ages of 25 and 50 make up the majority of the labor force; most of these are married, and many have school-age

¹John Naisbitt, Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives (City: Warner Book, 1982), p. 234-35.

²Ibid., p. 234-35.

children.³ Increased economic strains, higher female earning and achievement potentials, lack of comparable reward for housework and mothering, and changing sex-role attitudes are factors that have coaxed this sector of the population into (or back into, as the case may be) the work force.⁴ The homemaker or female who does not work outside the home is, in fact, becoming the exception rather than the rule.⁵

A 1986 Newsweek article described the woman of the 1980s as one who is trapped between her ideal calling of being the kind of mother her Mom was and between her concept of the modern SuperMom who could and should place herself in as many areas of activity as she has energy to do.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Even though the Equal Rights Amendment failed passage as a Constitutional amendment in the early 1980s, the spirit of equality between men and women was achieved through other avenues. The struggle for equality began with the female population's realization of discrimination against them in wages (compared to men's salaries). When women acquired new sexual freedom by the FDA's approval of the Pill in the early sixties and the Supreme Court's allowance of abortion, women forsook their expected roles as mothers and housewives and flooded the workplace. These two "privileges" teased women into a whole revolution

³ Veronica F. Nieva, "The Feminization of the Labor Force: Research for Industrial/Organizational Psychology," in The Changing Composition of the Workforce, ed. Albert S. Glickman (New York: Plenum Press, 1981), p. 77.

⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

⁵ Ibid., p. 89.

in lifestyles.⁶ Major victories for career-minded feminists were realized when Geraldine Ferraro was selected as the Democratic choice for Vice President in the 1984 presidential race and Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed to the Supreme Court.

WORKING MOTHERS

According to a 1987 Ladies Home Journal report⁷ on women in the 1980s, nearly two thirds of all U.S. mothers work outside the home. Only 4 percent of U.S. households have a stay-at-home mother who fulfills the conventional role of caring for husband and school-age children; and one fifth of the nation's homes are headed by women.⁸ Ladies Home Journal reported that 52.9 million women worked outside the home, a number that has grown yearly by 2.4 percent since 1980; in those same seven years, the annual increase in the number of men joining the work force was less than 1 percent.⁹ Women own 25 percent of the nation's companies and have turned to entrepreneurship as one way of coping with the pressures of working outside the home while trying to maintain order inside the home. The number of women-owned businesses jumped nearly 40 percent between 1981 and 1986, from 1.9 to 2.9 million.

⁶Naisbitt, p. 41.

⁷Roberta Anne Grant, "Women: Where We Are Today," Ladies Home Journal, March 1987, p. 165.

⁸Barbara Kantrowitz, Deborah Witherspoon, Barbara Burgower, Diane Weathers, and Janet Huck, "A Mother's Choice," Newsweek, 31 March 1986, p. 46.

⁹Grant, p. 95.

According to a 1986 Newsweek poll, most female clerical and blue-collar workers work because they need the money. Among college graduates and women with professional jobs, however, the reason for working concentrates less on money.¹⁰ Newsweek found that more than half of the working mothers they polled work full-time, and nearly a third worked part time. The majority of women in this study reported that they had altered their work schedule or quit their job to spend more time with family. More than half of these same women considered themselves feminists and felt that the women's movement had done "fairly well" in improving their own lives.

Some psychologists even encourage women to work--to play as many roles as she can--in order to "offset" the stress of being a mother.¹¹ Other researchers have found, however, that guilt consumes many working mothers. "Like a litany, it [guilt] runs through the voices of working mothers. . . regardless of whether a woman was forced to work for financial reasons."¹²

WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

The women's liberation movement not only confused women as to their purpose and direction, but magazines, which have a large influence over female consumers, also found themselves struggling with what role the press should play. In 1982, the editor of Good Housekeeping commented

¹⁰"How Women View Work, Motherhood and Feminism," Newsweek, 31 March 1986, p. 51.

¹¹Grant, p. 165.

¹²Barbara J. Berg, The Crisis of the Working Mother (New York: Summit Books, 1986), p. 24.

that "several magazines are floundering. They don't know what they are supposed to be."¹³ One reason for this uncertainty is partly because new magazines are highly specialized and reflect the separation from traditional interests and lifestyles.¹⁴

Barbara Labine, a California State student, studied Cosmopolitan and MS magazines in 1979 to see if these magazines portrayed the changing role and status of women during the mid 1970s. She found that both magazines stayed true to their editorial philosophies: MS continued to portray women as feminists and career minded, while Cosmopolitan focused on women's concern of family and personal relationships.¹⁵

In 1982 a University of Pennsylvania student reported that Cosmopolitan had a healthy relationship with its readers.¹⁶ That same year a University of Kansas student compared the image of short-story heroines in four women's magazines with the character of their readers during the 1970s.¹⁷ Results showed little difference between the fictional heroines, the readership of the magazines, and the typical 1970s woman. A decade of Redbook, Ladies Home Journal, and Good

¹³"Women's Magazines Lose Pep," Business Week, 30 August 1982, p. 72-73.

¹⁴Samir Husni, "How Publishers Beat the Odds," Marketing & Media Decisions, August 1987, p. 152.

¹⁵Barbara Labine, "A Comparative Analysis of Cosmopolitan and Ms. Magazines on Selected Article Categories From July 1972 to December 1977" (Master's thesis, California State University, 1979).

¹⁶Kathleen M. Rowe, "A Study of the Relationships Between a Woman's Magazine and Its Readers," (Master's thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1982).

¹⁷Judith Catherine Galas, "The Image of Women in Magazine Fiction: A Demographic Look at Four Women's Magazines," (Master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1982).

Housekeeping issues were studied the following year,¹⁸ and results showed that these books made no effort to refocus editorial content to reflect the mood of liberation in the 1970s.

In 1984 a West Virginia University student analyzed 20 years of Cosmopolitan, Ladies Home Journal, McCalls, Redbook, and Woman's Day. This research reported that although the types of articles carried by these magazines between 1960 and 1980 had not changed greatly, the editorial focus had varied through the years.¹⁹ Hoffman found that hints for homemaking fell 20 percent during the years, while articles advocating working women increased from 9 to 50 percent. These changes in the number of relevant articles did not parallel actual numbers of women who were working during the study period. Hoffman concluded that despite the efforts of her chosen magazines to update editorial content with relevancy to the times, the predominant female images portrayed by these books reflected either (1) an "eternally young, healthy and glamorous" ideal that was far removed from what readers wanted in a role model, or (2) a woman who filled a traditional but very limited capacity, an end that most women were trying to reach beyond.

A 1985 study by Sandra Bonner of Northern Illinois University reenforced the conclusion that women's magazines had not changed much

¹⁸Avis Jeanette Reynolds Paxson, "Occupational Information in Redbook, Ladies Home Journal, and Good Housekeeping 1970-1980," (Master's thesis, University of Texas, 1983).

¹⁹Phyllis Pfeffer Hoffman, "Women's Magazines: 20 Years of Change in Cosmopolitan, Ladies Home Journal, McCall's, Redbook, and Woman's Day," (Master's thesis, West Virginia University, 1984).

since the 1970s.²⁰ In 1986 a University of Tennessee student looked at MS, Cosmopolitan, Seventeen, Ladies Home Journal, and Working Woman to determine how these magazines portrayed women. The surprising results showed that among the women surveyed for the study, a third of them did not find these magazines to be helpful sources of information, and nearly half of them thought that women were portrayed in a negative light.²¹

New Magazines for the New Woman

The changing attitude of women in the restless ERA days gave rise to the creation of new magazines that would reflect these new attitudes and changes. Working Woman, MS, Self, New Woman, Women Who Work, Savvy, and Enterprising Women are some of the titles of magazines developed specifically to target women who held modern, fresh attitudes. Established magazines such as Cosmopolitan and Mademoiselle revamped their editorial content to include articles of interest to women who work. Circulation figures of other magazines such as Woman's Day, Family Circle, Redbook, and Ladies Home Journal suffered in the later part of the 1970s²²--a reflection that women were choosing their magazines based

²⁰Sandra E. Bonner, "The Woman at the Checkout Counter: An Analysis of the Image of Women in Women's Magazines for April 1984," (Master's thesis, Northern Illinois University, 1985).

²¹Melissa J. Eskridge, "How the Psychology of Women is Presented in Women's Magazines: An Examination of Selected Articles from Ms., Cosmopolitan, Seventeen, Ladies Home Journal, and Working Woman," (Mater's thesis, University of Tennessee, 1986).

²²"Magazines Targeted at the Working Woman," Business Week, 18 February 1980, p. 150.

on how the books met their needs. Women expected the magazines to adapt as the women themselves were adapting.

WOMEN AND RELIGION

"In this era of success consciousness, of mergers and megatrends, of strategizing and goal setting, there is evidence of a powerful swing to life's spiritual side."²³ This swing included women also. All the personal struggles for identity, equality, and recognition embodied by the Equal Rights Amendment sent women on a search for who they were and what they believed life should be like for them. For many women, that meant a return to religion. For women in the 1980s, though, religion is tailored to complement the independent and active modern woman.

A 1979 Glamour report by Gila Berkowitz on religion and women pointed to crumbling families as one factor for bringing people back to churches.²⁴ As the statistics reflect, much of the burden for maintaining families has fallen on women. Religious beliefs reflect the sturdy independence and responsibility that women carry in this era. Berkowitz reported that half of the women surveyed for that report study felt that religion was a "personal experience that need not necessarily involve the church." Seven years later this trend was reemphasized by another Glamour report. "For women today, religion is open to personal choice and adaptation. They are altering and shifting traditions and teachings, picking the ones they can live with, discarding the ones they

²³Lisa Schwarzbaum, "Women and God," Glamour, May 1986, p. 300.

²⁴Gila Berkowitz, "Religion: Does It Have the Answers to the Questions You Are Asking?" Glamour, August 1979, p. 253.

can't, without discarding their religious faith."²⁵ This trend in personalized religion has been found throughout the nation; people are shying away from organized faith. Formal religious participation rose in the last century, although a possible recent proportional decline has been noted recently; but religious belief is losing in orthodoxy and saliency as church organization has become more bureaucratic. Traditional religion is increasingly autonomous but decreasingly relevant.²⁶ "Religion is what motivates living on a daily basis. Everyone has a religion, whether it's identified as such or not," Glamour concluded in 1979.²⁷

Women's Role in the Church

Confusion also existed within churches with regard to the place of women. In 1981 Christianity Today examined the question of where women fit into the church and how the feminist movement had influenced that role. The magazine admitted that women had suffered discrimination and physical abuse and blamed wrong patterns of male dominance as part of the reason.²⁸ The deterioration of family life was viewed as one tragic consequence of the liberation movement's efforts to correct these injustices against women, however,

²⁵Schwarzbaum, p. 300.

²⁶Eleanor Bernert Sheldon and Wilbert E. Moore, eds., Indicators of Social Change: Concepts and Measurements (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1968), p. 500.

²⁷Schwarzbaum, p. 301.

²⁸"Women's Role in Church and Family," Christianity Today, 20 February 1981, p. 10.

One month later Christian Century carried an article that explored other trends in Christianity--the push to feminize God and the creation of feminist religions.²⁹ These new faiths "define[d] women as being in some sense fundamentally different from males" and called the church to reform some of the structures of sexism. This reform centered mainly on the vocabulary of Scripture and the male-dominated leadership roles within the church. Claimed the feminists, women felt excluded from active worship when they could not participate and when they felt they must be subservient to a male Deity.³⁰

Mademoiselle also reported the active involvement of young women in religion during the early 1980s, especially on college campuses. Newman's Clubs of the Catholic Church, Jewish Hillel Foundations, and protestant Christian fellowships enjoyed renewed interest among university students. One Mademoiselle reader attributed the trend to a general lack of commitment and responsibility brought on by sexual freedom. "We're beginning to feel that we've been hurt by that. There is a need to feel responsible, to know that there is something out there bigger than you are."³¹ The director of a Missouri campus Jewish fellowship disagreed, noting that students attended his meetings mainly to socialize, probably because of suffering family relationships and young people's needs to find groups of support and security. This

²⁹Patricia Wilson-Kastner, "Christianity and New Feminist Religions," Christian Century, 9 September 1981, p. 864-68.

³⁰"Women and Religion," Ladies Home Journal, December 1980, p. 28.

³¹Robert Sam Anson, "Yearning for Faith: The New Need," Mademoiselle, January 1981, p. 114.

feeling was echoed by Ladies Home Journal readers, who said that religion strengthened their family ties.³²

And why not? Statistics tell us that "there is no such thing as a typical family, and only a distinct minority (7 percent) of America's population fits the traditional family profile. . . . The basic building block of the society is shifting from the family to the individual."³³

CHURCH GROWTH AND RELIGION

During the rebellious decade of the 1960s and the technology explosion of the 1970s, church attendance began dropping. The 1980s witnessed somewhat of a revival (perhaps stimulated by President Ronald Reagan's efforts to return to conservatism) in both church attendance and the popularity of religion. The interesting difference in the present church-going trend is that the liberal churches are not enjoying this renewed interest, probably because people need stability, rather than ambiguity, during turbulent times of nuclear war threats, world hunger, corrupt government, and kids on drugs. The 1980s boom has affected several denominations and doctrines, with growth concentrated in stricter churches, such as the Southern Baptist Convention and Assemblies of God. Some Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, and similar mainline denominations are losing members while the Mormon, Seventh-Day Adventist, and Charismatic faiths are increasing in number. This reestablishment of religion as a moving force in American society will most likely continue while the nation tries to maintain tradition in the midst of technology--

³²"Women and Religion," Ladies Home Journal, December 1980, p. 26.

³³Naisbitt, p. 233.

people need structure during change today, just as they did in the mid-1700s, Jonathan Edwards' era, and in the 1800s when the country changed from an agricultural to an industrial nation.³⁴

In the 1970s there was a drop in the proportion of people who attended church regularly. Between 1972 and 1978, 10 percent of once-a-week churchgoers fell from 35 to 28 percent, while those who never went increased from 29 to 38 percent. Although these figures indicate that religion is seemingly losing importance and influence, the general public, when surveyed, says otherwise. The percentage of those who thought religion was losing influence in America between 1957 and 1970 grew from 14 to 75 percent; in 1976 only 45 percent of the population agreed. Most people feel that religious influence on American life is increasing, while religious participation is decreasing. Possibly there's a general movement to a more individualized form of worship, as opposed to traditional large group gatherings.³⁵

The early 1980s saw the greatest increase in membership for Southern Baptist, Roman Catholic, Assemblies of God churches, Mormons, and Seventh Day Adventists, with mainline churches--Episcopalians, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans--experiencing slowing growth.³⁶ Independent Christian churches are increasing in size and number, and the 1960s interest in Eastern religions and Hare Krishnas is still growing.³⁷

³⁴Ibid., pp. 239-40.

³⁵U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, and the Center of Demographic Studies, "Social Participation," Social Indicators III: Selected Data on Social Conditions and Trends in the United States (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept of Commerce, 1980), p. 500.

³⁶"Church Statistics," Christian Century, 20 June 1984.

³⁷Naisbitt, pp. 239-40.

Conservative churches seem to be the most popular and fastest growing, but even their growth is slowing.³⁸ One revealing analysis of church growth found that among growing churches, 70 percent of new members are transfers from other churches, and only 13 percent are new converts.³⁹

More women than men feel the importance of religion is on the rise. The same changing female attitudes that question who should be the decision maker in the family, whether the wife should work, and whether the husband should share equally in household chores have also spilled over into church activity.⁴⁰ Within the church, women in the 1980s are wanting to take more active roles in worship and ministerial activities, which may be manifested by serving as deacons or even ministers. This unrest in the church has caused the eyes of many religious bodies to turn away from their main purpose--ministering to the lost and needy--to an inward battle between the sexes. Consequently, churches are not growing as fast as they had in the past. "One common denominator between growing churches is an emphasis on mission, reaching out to the surrounding community's needs."⁴¹

³⁸"Church Statistics," pp. 625.

³⁹Leslie K. Tarr, "Conservative Churches Grow, but not by Witnessing, Canadian Researchers Find," Christianity Today, 12 November 1982, p. 95.

⁴⁰"Social Science and the Citizen," Society, March/April 1980, p. 2.

⁴¹Daniel W. Pawley, "A New Study Predicts Growth and Decline in U.S. Churches," Christianity Today, 6 April 1984, p. 73.

CHRISTIAN PUBLISHING

In 1981 Walter A. Elwell analyzed the previous 25 years of Christian publishing. He reflected that in the mid-1950s, most evangelical literature was dusty, heavy, and irrelevant to modern times. Books on practical Christian living were essentially unwritten. Christian writing exploded, however, in the next two and a half decades, with helpful Bible study tools, commentaries, paraphrases, easier-to-understand theological books, and evangelical and denominational literature flooding the religious presses.⁴² Evangelical publishers now produce one-third of the total domestic commercial book sales; 1,300 of the nation's radio stations and dozens of TV stations are religious.⁴³

A North Texas State University student compared the editorial practices of religious periodicals with those put forth by textbook rules for editing magazines. Hensley found that many of the editors had formal training in journalism and viewed their work on a religious magazine as service to God and man. Editorial procedures such as copy writing, proofreading, layout and design were performed according to formal magazine textbook methodology and techniques.⁴⁴ A less favorable study six years later on the quality of religion news carried by newspapers reported that not only did news of religion hold a low newsroom priority and fill minor blocks of space in most of the dailies that were examined,

⁴²Walter A. Elwell, "Christian Publishing Is Caught Up," Christianity Today, August 1981, p. 76-77.

⁴³Naisbitt, pp. 239-240.

⁴⁴Jeff Hensley, "A Comparison of the Editorial Practices of Religious Magazines with Editorial Practices Described in Magazine Textbooks," Master's thesis, North Texas State University, 1981, p. 51.

the researcher also found that the religion beat was covered by untrained reporters and very often by non-newsroom staffers.⁴⁵

The number of religious periodicals has multiplied as well during the last decade. A December 1978 issue of Writer listed a large number of adult religious and denominational publications for adults, in an effort to encourage Writer subscribers/freelancers to enter into the "rewarding" market of religious publishing. Only two of the magazines in that list were of interest for a general, nondenominational readership of religious women: Marriage and Home Life.⁴⁶ In 1985, Christian Writer's Marketplace listed 17 periodicals for women; Partnership (now Marriage Partnership), Today's Christian Woman, and Virtue were the only magazines with a nondenominational slant.⁴⁷

Although an increase in religious publishing has been evident, marketing experts are just beginning to realize the "huge untapped opportunity" that is represented by the Christian segment of the country's population. Priscilla LaBarbera, associate marketing professor at New York University, found that "only a small proportion of the total born-again population is reached by Christian electronic and print media."⁴⁸ TCW has cornered a unique segment of the Christian market, a feat that warrants inspection and evaluation, criticism, and recommendations for improvement.

⁴⁵Jeffrey Steven Wright, "The Religion Beat Among West Coast Daily Newspapers Exceeding 100,000 Circulation: A Status Report," Master's Thesis, University of Oregon, 1987.

⁴⁶"This Month's Special Market Lists," Writer, December 1978, pp. 32-40.

⁴⁷William H. Gentz, Religious Writer's Marketplace (Philadelphia: Running Press, 1985).

⁴⁸Lenore Skenazy, "Marketing to the Converted," Advertising Age, 2 November 1987, p. 90.

METHODOLOGY

A complete library of the magazine Today's Christian Woman was compiled from a very limited number of available sources: the Resource Room, Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis, Tennessee; the library of Evangelical Christian School, Memphis, Tennessee; personal collection of Jerry Bruce Jenkins, editor of Moody Monthly magazine; Pentecostal Resource Center, Lee College, Cleveland, Tennessee; and the author's personal subscription to the magazine. Forty issues of the magazine were included in this research.

The study period encompassed the first 10 years of TCW's existence, 1978-1988. Fleming H. Revell published the magazine from its conception through the July/August 1985 issue. The next issue was published by Christianity Today, Inc. One objective of this study was to determine the effects, if any, of this change of ownership. All issues including and prior to the July/August 1985 issue are referred to in this study as "pre-CTI," "Revell-published," "before issues," and "early issues." Likewise, those issues published after the July/August 1985 issue are referred to in this study as "post-CTI," "CTI-published," "after issues," and "later issues."

For the purpose of this study, the term "Christian," as defined by a New York University marketing analyst, denotes "born-again. . . who believe in their own spiritual rebirth, the infallibility of the Scriptures, and that only faith in Jesus, not good works, can guarantee a

place in heaven."¹

History of the magazine was gleaned from interviews with editing, management, and advertising staff of TCW; staff research data; and the magazine's 10th anniversary issue.²

Content analysis by subject was the method of investigation for this study. Classification of every article by subject matter was accomplished through the reading of each magazine. Categories that held less than 0.1 percent of the final figures were incorporated with similar groups to form a broad but comprehensive classification.

Departments, or regularly appearing columns,³ were listed and evaluated according to the percentage of total magazine pages invested in each department. Nineteen departments appeared in TCW during the study period and were eligible for analysis. Feature articles, loosely defined for this study as non-department pieces on subjects varying from issue to issue, were tabulated according to (1) percentage of editorial pages dedicated to each subject category, and (2) percentage of total number of articles dedicated to each subject category. Twenty-four genres were used to classify feature articles:

Personality Profiles	Marriage
Divorce	Single Living
Family	Parenting
Child Education	Service/Action
Food	Home Decoration

¹Lenore Skenazy, "Marketing to the Converted," Advertising Age, 2 November 1987, p. 90.

²Today's Christian Woman, July/August 1988.

³Dr. Samir Husni, Head, Service Journalism Program, University of Mississippi, Lecture Notes, 1 October 1986.

Mission Work
Evangelism/Discipleship
Health/Fitness
Judaism
Holiday
Nonreligious Fiction
Reader Questionnaires

Career
Photoessays/Poetry
Doctrine/Theology
Christian Living
Religious Fiction
Aging/Death
Excerpts/Reprints

Each page, department, and article was logged according to the appropriate category on both sides of the ownership change-over point. Total number of pages and articles were tabulated for pre- and post-CTI issues. The number of pages in each category was divided by the total number of pages for both sets of magazines to find the percentage of pages allotted for each category; the same procedure was used to calculate the percentage of articles represented by each category. These figures provided the basis for comparison of the magazine under both Revell's and CTI's direction.

The same method of analysis was applied to magazines in competition with TCW for the same audience, providing a basis of comparison between TCW and rival magazines; two recent issues of each competitor were examined. Magazines were further contrasted according to their circulation figures, readership profiles, and cost of advertising per thousand readers (CPM). A magazine's CPM is ascertained by dividing the advertising rate for one four-color page ("page rate") by the circulation of the magazine and multiplying by 1000.⁴

All figures were used to conclude which subjects Revell and CTI editors considered important according to the percentage of space each category was allocated. Results were also used to determine (1) if TCW

⁴Husni, notes.

was providing her readers with the editorial content they preferred and
(2) if TCW was #1 in the magazine race to fill this need.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis of each study issue was used to determine (1) if and how the editorial content of TCW changed between 1978 and 1988 and (2) if and how editorial content has changed since Christianity Today, Inc. acquired the magazine in 1985. Comparing TCW with its magazine competition was conducted by content analysis, comparison of circulation figures and CPM, and examination of readership profiles.

Forty issues of TCW were included in this study. Magazines were separated into two groups: those published by Fleming H. Revell (designated as "Before") and those published by Christianity Today, Inc. (designated as "After"). Editorial content of each group was examined and classified by subject. The number of articles and the number of pages dedicated to each subject category were counted and divided by the total number of articles and total number of editorial pages, respectively, to determine the percentage of articles and pages allotted to each category. The following tables represent these percentages for Revell-published and CTI-published issues.

	<u>Before</u>	<u>After</u>
Number Issues Studied	23	17
Total Number Articles	343	163
Total Number Editorial Pages	1,842	873
Total Number Advertising Pages	853	599
Total Number Magazine Pages	2,695	1,472

Ratio: Editorial to Ad Pages	68:32	59:41
Average Number Pages/Issue	117	86

Departments

Features or columns that are standard for every issue of a magazine (e.g., editorial, advice column, book reviews) are called departments. Several departments have enjoyed habitual appearance in TCW over the years. Clearly, the change of ownership terminated certain regular columns, while introducing others.

<u>Departments</u>	<u>Before</u> <u>Pages</u>	<u>After</u> <u>Pages</u>
"Inside <u>TCW</u> "	1.2	1.9
"Table of Contents"	2.1	1.9
"Letters to the Editor"	2.4	3.2
"Bible Study"	2.2	1.4
"Book Reviews"	4.1	4.3
"Turning Point"	2.1	2.7
"Women Who Make a Difference"	2.9	2.6
"The Way I See It"	0.4	1.9
"Superguide"	14.3	12.0
"Christian Woman to do?"	0.02	0.3
"Life at the Crossroads"	0.8	
"Every Woman Should Know"	1.2	
"Singlehearted"	1.5	
"Heart and Mind"	0.2	

"Next to the Last Word"	1.1
"Today!"	0.7
"Help!"	0.2
"Choices"	1.3
"Reaching In/Reaching Out"	1.0

"Inside TCW," the editor's column, always appeared in the first few pages of each issue and presented the reader with a practical way to apply Scriptural principles. Topics included dealing with a friend contemplating abortion, life planning, forgiveness, and appreciation.

Today's Christian Woman's "Contents" pages changed in format over the years. In the earlier issues, this department spread over two pages with bold type and flashy color illustrations, creating a sloppy, collage look. Later "Contents" pages were pleasantly organized on a single page with neat typeface and a few well-placed graphics.

Hearing from readers is an editor-welcomed feature of most magazines, including TCW. Under CTI management, more than 3 percent of TCW's pages were filled with letters and comments from subscribers.

An outline for topical Bible study appeared regularly during the study period until the September/October 1986 issue, after which time the feature appeared only twice. The percentage of pages dedicated to this column fell from 2.2 to 1.4 percent after CTI acquired the magazine.

"Book Reviews" highlighted new books of interest to a Christian market, ranging from Bible study guides, novels, biographies, and children's books. This column filled slightly more than 4 percent of the magazines' pages before and after the change of ownership.

"Turning Point," a Guideposts-type feature, appeared regularly throughout the magazine's existence. These subscriber-written articles related circumstances such as the death of a loved one, near-miss accidents, and personal victories that encouraged a stronger Christian life. A similar department, "Women Who Make A Difference," spotlighted women who were actively changing their world through ministry. This column appeared regularly from Fall 1983 to January 1987. Two new columns--"Choices" and "Reaching In/Reaching Out"--picked up when "Women Who Make a Difference" ended and reflected the same theme of women choosing to minister to others.

A guest opinion column, "The Way I See It," featured professionals in the Christian ministry (e.g., church-related work and publishing) and provided a forum for discussing controversial religious issues like the ordination of women, abortion, working mothers, and divorce. This department increased in frequency under CTI's direction.

The readers' favorite column was a multi-page service feature called "Superguide To . . ." a single topic. Hospitality, holiday cooking, job hunting, prayer, money management, and fitness were some of the themes of Superguide. One issue offered a Superguide to practical Christian living in general, but subscribers insisted the format return to a single focus. Superguide filled between 10 and 15 percent of the magazine's pages and appeared in all but three issues.

Today's Christian Woman featured several short-lived advice/question and answer columns. "Heart & Mind: Questions and Answers for Effective Living" and "Life at the Crossroads," two features of TCW under Revell, provided counseling on issues such as coping with unfaithful mates, aging

parents, and divorced children; adjusting to remarriage; and ministering to hurting friends. These departments filled a total of 1 percent of the early issues of TCW. "What's a Christian Woman to Do?" was continued after the change of ownership. In March 1987, the editors introduced a new advice column--"Help!"--that answered readers' questions on nagging, reading romance novels, and abused children.

To minister to unmarried subscribers, the department "Singlehearted" confronted issues of interest to singles, such as dating, marriage and special areas of ministry. This column disappeared after the January 1984 issue.

Another department exclusive to the earlier issues of TCW was the service column "What Every Woman Should Know." This sporadic feature offered helpful hints on car maintenance and repair, choosing a doctor, hiring an attorney, and planning for retirement.

"Next to the Last Word" closed every issue of TCW until July/August 1985. This male-authored essay explored such subjects as why he liked his wife, competition between spouses, immorality, and the male ego.

"Today!" appeared in the May/June 1987 issue and offered an assortment of "ideas, information and innovations" to enhance family living or spiritual growth.

Feature Articles

Today's Christian Woman consistently profiled leading Christian women and couples,¹ with lengthy exchanges between TCW editors and the headline guests receiving central placement in each issue. Focal

¹"Quotable Quotes," Today's Christian Woman, July/August 1988, p. 30.

individuals have included musical artists such as Amy Grant, Debby Boone, and Deniece Williams; businesswoman Ginnie Johansen and Salvation Army General Eva Burrows; TV personalities Denuta Soderman and Susan Howard; and writers Joni Eareckson, Elisabeth Elliot, and Marjorie Holmes. James and Shirley Dobson, Ruth and Norman Vincent Peale, and Stuart and Jill Briscoe were some of the couples who have also been featured.

<u>Features</u>	<u>BEFORE</u>		<u>AFTER</u>	
	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Pages</u>
Profiles (total)	12.8	11.0	9.9	9.7
Feature	7.0	5.4	2.5	1.8
Interviews	5.8	5.6	7.4	7.9

The interview is the main link between readers and these well-known personalities, but occasionally they were introduced through feature articles. Nearly 13 percent of the articles in pre-CTI issues of TCW were celebrity profiles, with feature articles slightly outnumbering interviews. Later editions, however, concentrated more on interviews (7.4 percent) than on features (2.5 percent). TCW's personality profile segment was also a favorite among readers possibly because these spreads always contained several excellent photographs, a design element that TCW does not use liberally.

Family Life

Given the preceding statistics on the prominence of biographical sketches, family life ranked only slightly higher in importance.

Features	BEFORE		AFTER	
	Articles	Pages	Articles	Pages
Marriage	7.6	5.3	6.7	3.6
Divorce	0.6	0.4		
Single Living	0.3	0.3		
Family	1.6	0.7	1.8	0.9
Parenting	8.2	5.0	8.6	4.9
Child Education	0.6	0.2	1.2	1.3
Aging/Death	1.7	1.1		

Before the change of ownership, only 5 percent of TCW's pages pertained to marriage, and less than 0.5 percent discussed divorce. Most of the marriage-related stories centered on juggling family with work, wife abuse, and communication between mates. Items targeted to single readers in particular filled a mere 0.3 percent of TCW's pages. General family life articles filled 0.7 percent of editorial pages, while another full 5 percent offered encouragement and hints to parents, but information on the specific topic of educating children filled less than 1.5 percent.

During the latter portion of this study period, marriage-related articles comprised 3.6 percent of the magazine's pages, while divorce and single living were never the primary subjects of discussion. Less than 1 percent of the magazines were concerned with family life, but 4.9 percent concerned parenting; the amount of education-related articles declined to 1.3 percent.

Parenting, which ranked as high and higher than the other divisions of this category, seemed to be TCW's primary focus in this area of subject matter throughout the entire decade of the magazine's existence.

Service Journalism

Service journalism is factual and personalized information that delivers ideas or advice in an active way and prompts the reader to do.² Content analysis shows that TCW has become more service oriented under CTI's direction. Service articles represented 25.2 percent of total articles and 15.9 percent of the total page count before September 1985; post-CTI calculations showed that the percentage of articles increased to 28.9 percent and the proportion of pages rose to 19.8 percent.

Features	BEFORE		AFTER	
	Articles	Pages	Articles	Pages
Service/Action	15.5	9.2	16.6	11.8
Food	4.7	3.3	8.0	5.7
Home Decoration	1.2	0.8	0.6	0.5
Health & Fitness	2.6	1.9	0.6	0.5
Holiday	1.2	0.7	3.1	1.3

Last-minute menus, dishes for tight budgets, cake decorating, bread recipes, and wholesome snacks are just a few of the nutritional ideas

²Samir Husni, Head, Service Journalism Program, University of Mississippi, Lecture Notes, 29 August 1986.

recommended by TCW food editors. The percentage of food articles nearly doubled under CTI ownership.

Home decorating suggestions did not ever abound in TCW. The small percentage of articles (1.2 percent) and pages (0.8 percent) concerned with readers' tastes in home furnishings was reduced by half after the change of ownership.

In appropriate issues, TCW editors presented hints for celebrating holidays; unexpectedly, these special articles totaled over 3 percent of all post-CTI articles, more than twice the articles in the early period.

Dieting, health, and fitness--the rage of the eighties--were not well-represented subjects in TCW. The number of pages filled with health tips fell from 1.9 percent in the early issues to 0.5 percent in later issues. This gaping hole in subject matter of great interest to modern women is surprising, especially in the light of Barbour's intimation that TCW was destined to be an alternative to secular, "full-orbed" magazines for women.³

General service articles covered craftmaking, correcting bad habits, developing organization, financial planning, ending procrastination, entertaining, and volunteer service. These miscellaneous tips filled 15.5 percent of total pages in Revell issues and 16.6 percent in CTI issues.

³William R. Barbour, Jr., "Welcome to Today's Christian Woman," Today's Christian Woman, Fall 1978, p. 1.

Career

The emphasis TCW gives to career growth probably disappoints working readers. Aside from a Superguide on going back to work (which was not counted with this classification), the appearances of work-related articles were rare. There was a mild increase after the change of ownership in 1985.

<u>Features</u>	<u>BEFORE</u>		<u>AFTER</u>	
	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Pages</u>
Career	0.6	0.3	1.2	0.9

Spiritual Life

As a magazine for Christian women, TCW provided readers with ample encouragement and opportunity to grow in their daily Christian walks. During the entire 10-year study period, one quarter of TCW's articles and 14.25 percent of the pages pertained to the spiritual growth and lifestyle of readers. Topics ranged from studying the Bible creatively and correcting bad habits to witnessing effectively and becoming involved in refugee ministries.

<u>Features</u>	<u>BEFORE</u>		<u>AFTER</u>	
	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Pages</u>
Doctrine/Theology	0.3	0.2	1.2	0.6
Jewish topics	0.3	0.2		
Christian living	20.7	11.0	22.1	13.9
Mission Work	1.6	1.2	0.6	0.2
Evangelism/Discipleship	1.6	0.9	0.6	0.3

Creative Literature

The work of religious and non-religious poets and storytellers alike was welcome in the pages of TCW. Early issues of TCW featured more poets and photographers than fiction writers; later editions reversed the proportion. Aesthetic readers enjoyed the award-winning "Celebration of Children," a multi-spread photographic special in TCW's premiere issue, and poetry by Helen Steiner Rice. For fiction lovers, TCW followed the women's magazine trend of frequently including short stories in its editorial calendars. CTI eased the imbalance between religious and non-religious pieces, but maintained the noticeable percent of reprints from books by writers well known in Christian circles.

<u>Features</u>	<u>BEFORE</u>		<u>AFTER</u>	
	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Pages</u>
Photoessays/Poetry	7.9	3.4	4.9	1.3
Fiction (total)	6.0	3.4	7.4	5.4
Religious	1.6	0.8	3.1	3.6
Non-Religious	4.4	2.6	4.3	1.8
Book Excerpts/Reprints	2.6	2.1	3.7	0.9

Reader Response

Occasionally the editors solicited readers for their impressions of TCW and life in general; statistics show that CTI was more concerned with reader opinion than Revell was. In 1982 TCW also presented a special report on "Christian Women Today: Their Hopes, Fears, Frustrations,"

which was based on interviews with 50 leaders (40 women, 10 men) in Christian service.

<u>Features</u>	<u>BEFORE</u>		<u>AFTER</u>	
	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Articles</u>	<u>Pages</u>
Reader questionnaire	0.6	0.3	1.2	0.8

COMPETITION

Gallup research shows that Christians "buy more home-oriented magazines, including Good Housekeeping, Ladies Home Journal, and McCalls, than the general public, but fewer news magazines."⁴ This fact could be used to widen the definition of the universe of competition for religious periodicals.

The purpose and character of a magazine is defined by its editorial concept, a constant and unchanging philosophy that shapes each issue.⁵ Magazines in competition with TCW for readers and advertisers were partly determined according to editorial concept and audience profile. Dr. Samir Husni, magazine trend analyst, designates two magazines as "major competition" for each other when they share the same editorial concept and attract the same type ads.⁶ Minor competition exists between two magazines when the periodicals devote a portion (such as a regular department) of their editorial content to the same subject.

⁴Lenore Skenazy, "Marketing to the Converted," Advertising Age, 2 November 1987, p. 90.

⁵Samir Husni, Head, Service Journalism Program, University of Mississippi, Lecture Notes, 19 September 1986.

⁶Husni, notes, 19 September 1986.

Competitors were also limited in this study to non-denominational periodicals specifically for Christian (as opposed to Jewish or other religions) women as listed by SRDS, which publishes the magazine industry's annually updated guide to advertising;⁷ 1989 Writer's Market;⁸ inventory of various religious bookstores; Religious Writer's Market-Place (1985);⁹ and TCW advertising staff.¹⁰ Investigation revealed a small number of magazines that met these criteria: Aglow, Moody Monthly, and Virtue.

<u>Aglow</u>	CPM 20.44	Circ = 30,000	bimonthly
<u>Moody Monthly</u>	CPM = 22.53	Circ = 190,000	monthly
<u>TCW</u>	CPM = 27.26	Circ = 180,328	monthly
<u>Virtue</u>	CPM = 26.33	Circ = 110,500	bimonthly

Centering on family and home life and spiritual applicability may explain the similar popularity of Focus on the Family, Charisma, Marriage Partnership, Christian Parenting, and Decision.

⁷Standard Rate and Data Service, Inc. (SRDS), Consumer Magazine and Agri-Media Rates and Data, 27 December 1988.

⁸Glenda Tennant Neff, ed., Writer's Market 1989 (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1988).

⁹William H. Gentz, Religious Writer's MarketPlace (Philadelphia: Running Press, 1985).

¹⁰Telephone interview with KC Carlsen, Sales Representative, Today's Christian Woman, 10 March 1989.

READERSHIP

Today's Christian Woman

"The typical born-again Christian is 35 to 65 years old, with the same educational background and personal income as the general population. The only differences are (1) while 29 percent of all Americans live in the South and Southwest, 41 percent of the born-again Christians live there, and (2) 60 percent are female."¹¹ Religious marketing expert Priscilla LaBerbara chides vendors for neglecting this segment of the nation's consumers, insisting that spiritual principles clearly influence the buying habits of Christians.

Today's Christian Woman has managed to reach more than 445,000 Christian women; 180,328 of these are paying subscribers,¹² with a pass-along readership of 2.14.¹³ The median age of subscribers is 37.2; median annual income is \$33,749. Fifty-six percent of TCW's readers work outside the home and 35 percent are college graduates. Average household size is 3.2, and almost 60 percent of TCW subscribers are mothers with children under 18 living at home; the vast majority of these children are older than six. More than half of TCW readers own a VCR; 30 percent own a personal computer. Ninety-one percent of TCW subscribers attend church regularly; average Sunday attendance in readers' churches is 385. One quarter of TCW readers are Baptist, with another 23 percent as "other." Non-denominational readers make up 12 percent of the

¹¹Ibid.

¹²SRDS

¹³Media Kit, Today's Christian Woman, May 1988.

readership, with Methodists, Pentecostal, and Presbyterians comprising another 27 percent.

More than one-third of TCW's readership lives in the northern part of the nation, 21 percent in the South. More than 20 percent of TCW's audience live in the Midwest, with just under 20 percent living in the western half of the nation.

More than half of TCW subscribers do not read any other leading religious magazines on a regular basis. Other magazines read by TCW subscribers include Guideposts (39 percent), Reader's Digest (30 percent), Good Housekeeping (24 percent), and Virtue (19 percent). Other religious magazines include Focus on the Family, a James Dobson ministry publication that centers on Christian family life; Moody Monthly, a Christian news and service magazine; Decision, Billy Graham's magazine of testimonies and evangelism; and Christianity Today, an intellectual magazine primarily of interest to church leaders. Secular magazines familiar to a few TCW readers are National Geographic and four leading, service-oriented, women's periodicals--Better Homes & Gardens, Woman's Day, Redbook, and Ladies Home Journal.

Competition Audience Profiles

Virtue

Demographics. Virtue's current Media Kit describes Virtue readers with a median age of 39; 64 percent of subscribers are between 25 and 44. Almost 90 percent are married, more than 62 percent have children younger than age 12, and the typical reader has at least two children at home.

Psychographics. Sixty-five percent of Virtue subscribers hold out-of-the-house jobs, and the average income per household is \$37,153 (33 percent have household incomes over \$40,000). Nearly one fourth of the readership owns a personal computer, and more than half owns a VCR; 88 percent shop at Christian bookstores.

Data on church affiliation of Virtue readers were not available.

Aglow

Demographics. Circulation in 1988 was 30,000; a 2.12 pass-along readership, however, increases exposure of this magazine to a total of 63,600. The typical Aglow reader is between 35 and 54 years old; 29 percent are 35 to 44 years old, and 14 percent are between 25 and 34 years old. Eighty-two percent are married. Average number of children living at home is 1.6, 67.5 percent of which are between 12 and 17 years of age. Thirty percent of Aglow readers' children attend Christian schools.

Psychographics. The majority of Aglow readers are members of an international organization, Women's Aglow Fellowship, which is "committed to group and personal ministry to both the saved and the unsaved."¹⁴ Nearly a third of Aglow readers are non-denominational, and 15.2 belong to the Assemblies of God. Seventy-five percent belong to the Women's Aglow Fellowship, half to Bible study groups.

More than half the subscribers attended college and work outside the home. More than 60 percent of the families of Aglow readers earn more than \$25,000 per year.

¹⁴Media Kit, Aglow Magazine, December 1988.

The products advertised in the pages of TCW are very familiar to most religious magazines: Bibles and Christian books, records, seminars, Bible study guides, colleges, and greeting cards. Harold Myra, president of Christianity Today, Inc., says that religious publishers have a difficult time attracting secular advertisers, mainly because circulation figures are low in comparison with the rest of the industry.¹⁷ Carlsen agrees that TCW has a higher CPM than its secular competition, but she says that Christian women prefer the type ads that TCW does carry. "There are a million magazines out there with ads for makeup, clothes, and food, but Today's Christian Woman is the only magazine that offers these women the Christian products that are out."¹⁸

¹⁷Interview with Harold Myra, President and CEO, Christianity Today, Inc., 26 February 1987.

¹⁸Carlsen, interview.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The following questions served as the springboard and objectives for this research:

- 1) To analyze editorial content of the magazine in its 10 years of publication,
- 2) To compare and contrast editorial/advertising content before and after the change of ownership,
- 3) To determine if TCW has reflected the women's movement and changes in American women during the study period,
- 4) To determine if TCW is an alternate to secular women's magazines,
- 5) To determine if TCW is #1 in Christian women's magazines in circulation and advertising, and
- 6) To suggest further improvement of this magazine.

EDITORIAL CONTENT

Editorial content was evaluated through the method of content analysis. Subject matter was counted with respect to total number of articles and total number of pages before and after CTI acquired the magazine. Statistics clearly show that TCW is a service-oriented consumer magazine for women interested in personal spiritual development, church activity, parenting, and religious personalities.

Content analysis shows that the editors of TCW are concerned with encouraging their readers to act, whether it be making Christmas gifts, organizing closets, or cooking on a budget. CTI increased TCW's amount of service content from 25 percent to nearly 33 percent.

TCW: A REFLECTION OF MODERN WOMEN?

America is continuing in the confusion that began 40 to 50 years ago, trying to understand how values, sex, money, justice, race and God comfortably fit into every individual's life. Values have rapidly changed during the last few decades, from prohibiting alcohol to rampant drug abuse, from chaperoning dates to "free love" to homosexuality, from paying the bills to snatching every new gadget that comes along, from faithful church attendance to disallowing prayer in schools.¹

Trend Report 1980 noted that public schools throughout the nation were "debating" the incorporation of several issues of religious and value emphasis, including posting of the Ten Commandments, silent meditation, the breaking of sexual stereotypes, positive thinking, and argumentative writing courses based on moral questions. John Naisbitt, author of Megatrends, concludes that as the responsibility of teaching the fundamentals of education fall to computers, values, motivation, and maybe even religion may enjoy a resurgence in popularity among educators to add human nature back into the picture once again.²

The common pattern of female participation in the work force has been one of spurts: women work during the early years of marriage, return home to mother their children, and then usually return when the children are in school, the husband dies, or boredom and confusion of the mid-life crisis hits.³

¹Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 268-69.

²John Naisbitt, Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives (City: Warner Books, 1982), p. 47.

³Toffler, p. 276.

According to Social Indicators of Change, the increase in the number of working women has (1) not too destructively influenced children; (2) raised the resources women have at their command; (3) allowed them to pay for child care; (4) changed their self-image; (5) allowed them independence from their husbands; and (6) altered the meaning of having children.⁵

Going back to school is as big a trend for women today as working is. Some look to college as a way out of the blue-collar labor force, while others secure high-paying professional jobs by chasing graduate degrees. There are more women than men in college and graduate schools and many of these females are older than 35. More than half of the students attending the finest law schools are women, and by 1990 the number of females earning business administration degrees will have surpassed the number in 1960 eight times.⁶

In 1982, more than three million women owned their own businesses. The number of self-employed women jumped 43 percent between 1972 and 1979, five times more than the rate of increase for men.⁷

The modern obsession of American women to madly pursue glamorous and successful careers takes precedence in many cases over marriage itself. Women are marrying older or not at all. Consequently, there's a national trend toward later motherhood;⁸ as a rule, dual-career couples do not

⁵Eleanor Bernert Sheldon and Wilbert E. Moore, eds., Indicators of Social Change: Concepts and Measurements (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1968), p. 500.

⁶Naisbitt, p. 234-35.

⁷Ibid., p. 235.

⁸Ibid., p. 235.

rush into parenting. The desire of money-minded spouses to own a nice suburb house, drive sporty cars, wear designer clothes, vacation in summer resorts, and establish social status is often stronger than the wish for children. In addition, highly educated women are reluctant to trade in their clients and upward mobility for grocery shopping and dirty diapers.

Rising divorce rates, the ability of homosexual couples to adopt a child, and children living flextime with each parent mocks the traditional reality of family. In the late 1980s, it is not an abnormal thing to question what comprises the typical family. Only seven percent of American families fit the traditional mold of father-mother-children. Single parents, divorced parents, remarried parents, and even homosexual parents are more of an integral part of a family in this era than they have ever been. More than a third of men and women wed in the 1970s will have divorced by 1990 and just as large a proportion of children will have lived with only one of their parents during their childhood.⁹

These startling facts portray the evolution of American society over the last decade, which was the study period. Statistics show that the editors of TCW were selective in the topics presented in the magazine. Although the percentage of articles dealing with family life topics (including marriage) has been a solid 18 percent during the entire study period, the percentage of pages that covered these issues fell from 13 percent to under 11 percent. More importantly, however, post-CTI issues neglected the matters of divorce and single living, which included single parenting. With so many forces working against the family and secular

⁹Ibid., p. 232-233.

women's magazines offering the world's marriage and divorce tactics, TCW should be a leader in edifying marriage and healthy families, while ministering to those struggling through and after divorce.

Other less controversial subjects, such as dieting and fitness, were not mentioned frequently, especially in light of the fact that jazzercise, aerobics, and fitness consciousness exploded during the era of TCW.

TCW: AN ALTERNATIVE TO SECULAR MAGAZINES?

Research does not support Barbour's promise that TCW would be an alternative to secular women's magazines. (1) TCW did not distinctly attempt to parallel all aspects of a woman's life during the turbulent liberation age, as more aggressive secular magazines did. (2) TCW readers cannot find advertisements on a variety of consumer products that are available in secular magazines. (3) TCW does not offer specific service information on ordinary subjects such as home decoration and fashion, which secular magazines comprehensively cover. Based on these realizations, TCW cannot be considered the Christian woman's alternative to secular women's magazines unless the average Christian woman is not interested in new cars, chic fashion tips, or anti-wrinkle cream.

More importantly than copying non-religious publications, however, is the fact that TCW has decreased certain characteristics that make its nature distinctively Christian, such as regular Bible study guides and articles on evangelism and missions.

TCW: STATUS IN THE RELIGIOUS PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

Although research did reveal magazines that compete for TCW's audience and advertising space, only one magazine can by definition be considered major competition--Virtue. The significance of Virtue's position is inconsequential, however, because TCW's sales staff denies that Virtue offers any real competition.¹⁰

Despite the interest some TCW subscribers (and religious readers in general) and advertisers invest in other periodicals--Moody Monthly, Aglow, Focus on the Family, Charisma, and Decision--these rivals differ so much in editorial philosophy and purpose that they can hardly be considered anything more than minor competition for TCW.

Today's Christian Woman's circulation figures indicate that the magazine maintains a healthy rate base in comparison with other leading religious periodicals. Jenkins said that approximately 200,000 subscribers is the current standard among Christian magazines.¹¹

TCW: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

More pictures and clean graphics could enhance the magazine's pages, which tend to look sloppy and drab because they lack color. TCW poorly used (and reused) graphics, and the photography often bordered on terrible--quite blurry and dark. Poor design keeps TCW from adequately competing with secular, slick women's magazines.

¹⁰Carlsen, interview.

¹¹Telephone interview with Jerry Bruce Jenkins, Vice President, Periodicals, Moody Bible Institute, 14 March 1989.

Add a regular fashion section--where else should Christian women get creative hints for dressing stylishly without compromising God's standards?

Adopt an editorial policy of how the magazine will stand on certain controversial subjects, then deal with them using Scripture, not with the opinion of unknown writers. Readers should not be forced to turn to other sources for pertinent information on things that concern them.

If readers are satisfied with the nature of TCW's advertising, modify the types of products offered. For example, the magazine carries too many ads for Christian colleges if the typical reader is only 37 and has elementary school age kids.

Nearly 4 percent of TCW's articles are reprints from books by leading Christian authors. Editors should attract more original manuscripts; the magazine has too many reprints for its size and frequency without giving readers the impression that certain authors have convenient appearance privileges.

This research concludes with a comment on the age-old problem of the numerous connotations of the terms "religious" and, more specifically, "Christian"--a fence that TCW seems to be straddling. People will always hold onto their own moral and theological beliefs, and most people are fairly adamant about such personal principles. Furthermore, controversial topics, no matter how religious or popular, will invariably continue to stimulate disagreements and cause multiple division. Unrest in the religious community today (i.e., the Southern Baptist Convention, Vatican II) and within the political spectrum also, are reflected in TCW

through as many flavorful viewpoints as there are coming from Congress and the pulpit.

The violent plunge of women into the career force forty years ago birthed a generation of social-, political-, and spiritual-minded women who are choosing for themselves which philosophies will govern their lives. "Christian" women are no different: they are as active and intelligent as any other segment of the female population.

Jenkins believes that readers want to know where their magazines stand on controversial issues. "The more definite you can be [on those subjects], the easier it is to publish."¹² Magazines have a difficult time succeeding in the religious market when they either ignore all gray areas or they cover both sides of the issues.

Owen Lipstein, publisher of American Health, says that one of the keys to successful magazine management is the realization that "magazines are not just businesses, they're relationships."¹³ This sentiment should be of particular importance to religious publishers, whose magazines sometimes succeed solely because of the relationship- friend-trust factor.

The editors of TCW should tackle this overwhelming task of building a bridge to readers by separating the chaff from the wheat and taking a stand on hard issues. Even the masthead for the company's stationery reads "for today's traditional woman." Perhaps the title of the magazine should be Today's Good Woman, Today's Religious Woman, or Today's

¹²Ibid.

¹³Owen Lipstein, "Magazines Aren't Just Businesses; They're Relationships," Folio, May 1985, pp. 94-95.

Traditional Woman if the target audience is not in reality today's "Christian" woman.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Maintain a high percentage of service articles.
- 2) More accurately reflect the real issues that modern women, especially Christian women, are facing--divorce and remarriage, home schooling for children, church growth, and single parenting.
- 3) Promote happy and healthy family life, suggesting activities and Bible study opportunities for families to share together.
- 4) Pursue more varied advertising, including secular products.
- 5) Follow the lead of secular women's magazines in finding fresh editorial topics and departments.
- 6) Continue to improve the quality of photography and typography, layout and design, and use of color throughout the magazine.
- 7) Either take sides on controversial issues or thoroughly present both sides.

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A Service Journalism major at Ole Miss, Janet studied magazine production, writing, and design. Her magazine prototype was "Chritine," the magazine for young Christian women.

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