

How Christian News is Portrayed

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Executive Summary

CBN News, Christian Post, and Faithwire incorporate news stories about Christianity and world news. I interviewed Dr. Caccamo, the Chair of the Theology Department, to get his take on Christian news. Challenges seemed evident for Christian news and the journalists involved.

CBN News

CBN News shows news all over the world with professional news anchors and the headquarters located in Virginia Beach. There are reporters throughout America, Washington D.C., Jerusalem, and other countries. Therefore, it is a well-known outlet since it has multiple locations and the publicity through the social media and site shows evidence of popularity. An example of a news story is when CBN News wrote a story on how Indiana instituted a prayer bill to welcome God back in schools.

Christian Post

ChristianPost.com is a United States' Christian news website and was instituted in March 2004, and includes reporting on up-to-date news, information, and commentaries relevant to Christians. The company has an organized site and it posts on social media. One example of an article is about a Presbyterian church in Alabama who asked for their own police department.

Faithwire

Faithwire's main goal is to inform, challenge and inspire people to do good. Articles have been posted online through their site and social media, and this company incorporates a strong brand through followers and sponsorships. Faithwire includes a story on Tim Tebow responding to whether his charitable work affects his performance on the field.

Dr. Caccamo

Dr. Caccamo became interested in writing through his music; he says there are many ways of communication including music and writing. Current events in the news are not represented well because of the news stations' agendas. Dr. Caccamo insisted that good versions and bad versions of Christian news exist. There are relatively large news outlets such as CNS (Catholic News Services) and EWTN that deliver the news nationally that deliver the news well, but smaller ones are not well-known due to lack of publicity. He says that Christian writing influences the human experience and loves how this media helps someone see the world in a different way.

Christian News Challenges

According to *Ligonier Ministries*, the blogs, message boards, and other news media make it hard to cover the misdeeds of preachers. Not many journalists educate themselves and others on the details of church life and theology, so they often botch the details. *Ligonier Ministries* shows unnecessary devotion to demagogues predicting when the church dies and the end of civilization.

Introduction

Methods

Choosing Christian News

To choose this idea for a report, I thought about the classes taken here at Saint Joseph's University. Then, journalism became a topic of interest, but it became more specific since there tends to be so many different types of journalism. Therefore, I thought about my faith, and specified my topic to Christian news and how it is portrayed.

Christian News Sources

Researching more about these news outlets requires background information about them and what they report on to increase people's knowledge on Christian news based on their stories and publicity.

Interview Dr. Caccamo

Dr. Caccamo is the Chair of the Theology Department at Saint Joseph's University. He represents a prime example of a media worker who teaches media and journalism that has to do with Christianity. He has taught ethics both in technology and journalism and continues to educate students on what it means to analyze Christian media. Therefore, an interview was conducted to learn more about Christian news and his expertise on it. The interview included his perspective on whether it should be expanded or not. It took place in his office at Saint Joseph's University in Bellarmine in March.

Purpose and Scope

Christianity is the most practiced religion in the United States per Pew Research. In fact, 71 percent of the United States includes Christians. Christian journalists in the United States report on Christian news to inform people about current events from a Christian perspective. The news outlets include articles based on Christian faith and these outlets report on inspiring stories. They also indicate how Christians spread the Gospel throughout the world along with the United States. The purpose of this report is to inform people about Christian news, to explain how it is portrayed, and to show how it could improve.

Challenges

There tend to be challenges within Christian Journalism. Journalists in general tend to discuss certain topics, whether they are ethical or not, to influence their agenda. Reporters should show honesty and integrity with their work.

CBN News

Background

CBN News includes 24/7 news coverage with a Christian perspective via the Internet. The news outlet has millions of loyal viewers each month, and is often the first to report major stories and is a respected voice of truth.

Story Example

An example of a news story is when *CBN News* composed a story on how Indiana instituted a prayer bill to welcome God back in schools. The bill says that students are permitted to wear religious apparel and engage in religious activities in school without discrimination. This story also gives the critics' sides, stating that critics think it was nothing more than politics. They also stated that it is a slippery slope when it comes to teacher's direct involvement. With that said, the bill is to protect students of all faiths and not just Christians.

Faithwire

Background

Faithwire highlights ordinary humans doing extraordinary things (such as the Tim Tebow story), shine light on needs and injustice, and cover the news with an eternal perspective. They incorporate well-known social media accounts and a site pleasing to the eye to populate the brand.

Story Example

Faithwire includes a story on Tim Tebow responding to whether his charitable work affects his performance on the field. He said that it does not and that he celebrates people with special needs and lets them know they are special and loved. Tebow mentioned that handling pressure is crucial to sports and that he wants his life to be more than sports.

Christian Post

Background

ChristianPost.com is the United States' most complete Christian news website, was instituted in March 2004, and includes reporting on up-to-date news, information, and commentaries relevant to Christians.

As the main website of *The Christian Post*, *ChristianPost.com* is an online Christian news publication with constant updates. "Through the website, *The Christian Post* presents national and international coverage of current events affecting and involving Christian leaders, church bodies, ministries, mission agencies, schools, businesses, and the general Christian public" ("About Us").

As a Christian media source, *The Christian Post* views all Christ-centered denominations as equal constituents of the body of Christ and does not demote any Christian denomination.

The news outlet reports worldwide. According to their site, “*The Christian Post* is a member of the Evangelical Press Association, a member of the National Association of Evangelicals, and a global partner of the World Evangelical Alliance” (“About Us”).

Story Example

One example of an article is about a Presbyterian church in Alabama who asked for their own police department and are likely going to get it. A bill passed nine to two to get the police department for the church and school. They got more than 30,000 events and had to hire policemen and women all the time, and the church’s attorney, Eric Johnston, said it would be easier to have police on staff. Connie Rowe, a former police chief, supports the church and thinks other churches should do the same thing.

Interview with Dr. James Caccamo

Inspiration for Media and Journalism

Dr. Caccamo started off as a musician and wanted to play guitar and base. He thinks that writing seems more honest with music now than it was when he performed at a younger age. Dr. Caccamo became interested in writing through his music; he says there are many ways of communication including music and writing. The professor played in church since freshman year and was interested in helping people thinking about things in different ways. To him, it’s all really connected, where he was interested in communication as a musician. He said God is part of our work lives and everything, and he wants people to know what the world looks like as being a human made by God.

Mainstream Media Handling of Current Events

He thinks that the media is not handling current events well; individual places are doing well, however, such as EWTN. Dr. Caccamo mentioned that news outlets want to sell papers and have people tune into their website. News outlets are worried about subscribers, so they want exciting news. They publish whatever will get people reading as well. He also gave the example of the reporting on the inauguration and how it had multiple angles based on the audience.

Qualities News Editors Look For

Editors work to give news to people. “Editors do try to provide information that is important to people,” Caccamo said. He also mentioned that people do things that they think are good ideas but may be wrong about it. Editors want to have stories that fit their readers which narrows their view. For example, the professor argued that people who watch *Fox News* do not necessarily read *The New York Times*. Editors choose stories based on market considerations as well.

Thoughts on Christian News

Dr. Caccamo insisted that good versions and bad versions of Christian news exist. He said national reporting of this type of news is challenging because most Christian news outlets are small and are at a disadvantage because of being small. He said there are some really good Christian news sources that bring things into perspectives; there are better ones tied to larger news stations such as Christianity Today. These outlets also are playing to the audience for sales. He said that part of a reporter's job is to ask hard questions for a good study, and that reporters really want the best for Christians.

Whether There Should be National Christian News Station

There are relatively large news outlets such as CNS (Catholic News Services) and EWTN that deliver the news nationally. He encouraged Christian news organizations to set their websites high to become an effective news agency. The professor also argued that news may be different because the reporters are Christian, in that there are a facts side and an opinion side. Christian news should report on a national level per Caccamo.

Inspiring Millennials for Christian News

"Facts are important and honesty is important," Caccamo said. He argued that we are only going to do well as a nation if we obtain the facts. It is a great service to let people know about important information in the world per the professor. He stated that the idea of bringing what is going on in the world to light is good and that people can make up their mind. Working with people to help them see the world the way it is contains what he thinks is a major part of media in general. He said that we rely on one another and that this contains the common good. It is important to know that one can make the world a better place but that they cannot do that on their own. Millennials today have what he called "ready access to self-expression," and are more in touch with what's happening in the world.

Christian News Outlets Types of Stories

He mentioned that Christian writing influences the human experience. "Christian writing reflects overall human experience and should touch all parts of lives," he said. Local media, arts, and others can be in the news as well as inspiring stories. Helping people understand leaders who show Christian values is important per the professor. Sharing who is important to help get better sense of who is local and national contains significance for the audience as well. Christian media should maintain policy of hope and should be a source of hope for people per the Chair of Theology.

Favorite Aspect of the Media

Dr. Caccamo loves how this media helps someone see the world in a different way; he likes how it helps someone see something they have not seen before. It shows that one knows something but is not able to express it, yet another person may express it to inspire ones who cannot. He

said that trying to touch others with important information has significance for him and others. “It is not a bad way to make a living,” Caccamo said.

Christian News Challenges

Christian News has trouble with accuracy because of news outlets agendas instead of just giving all the facts. They want more good news to display in the media instead of when something goes wrong within the church.

Preachers

The changing media culture allows preachers to hold themselves accountable for their actions and words. The churches, per the *Ligonier Ministries*, must resolve issues within them including quarreling, jealousy, and disorder. There is also mistrust between journalists and preachers where if preachers know that if a journalist is present, then something must be wrong. Journalists and people do not seem to care about how many marriages have been saved, the new people who continue to be baptized, new children catechized, or the church feeding the hungry.

Journalists

Not many journalists educate themselves and others on the details of church life and theology, so when they write about Christianity, they often botch the details. According to *Ligonier Ministries*, “The main challenge for journalists, then, is to resist the powerful pull toward the new, urgent, and controversial. This is how journalism schools teach us to evaluate news priorities. If it bleeds, it leads. Even Christian journalists fall into these patterns” (Collins).

The ministry notices other ministry leaders sabotage honest efforts to discuss their side of the story because of the mistrust of the media. The media reports on controversial ideas and up-to-date information that is urgent to interest people and have their papers read. The news does not resist the controversial topics due to the interest of readers and wanting to sell newspapers and earn profit from the information.

Ways Ligonier Ministries Solves Journalist Challenges

Ligonier Ministries show unnecessary devotion to demagogues predicting when the church dies and the end of civilization. They also show a sympathetic ear to theological innovators who so carelessly dismiss the accountability of church tradition. Journalists that would serve the church will fulfill a catechetical calling. They help other Christians understand a world created by God but corrupted by sin. The investigations reflect the biblical reality where people live.

Conclusion

Journalists need to show honesty and integrity with what they publish. They also should report facts instead of slanting the news stories to fit their agendas. People, like myself, read news

stories and need to trust them. Christian news in particular needs to expand so more Christians know about them and read news from a Christian perspective. If that does not happen, then criticism occurs and less news sells whether it includes print, television, or online.

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