

The Impact of the Televangelist Scandals of 1987-88  
on American Religious Beliefs and Behaviors

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In 1987 and 1988 televangelism in particular and American Protestantism in general were rocked by a series of sex and financial scandals and several lesser controversies (Table 1). These troubles involved several of the leading television preachers and received extensive coverage in the media.<sup>1</sup> In the most serious incidents, Jim Bakker of the PTL was caught in sex and hush money improprieties and latter convicted of financial fraud for his mishandling of the PTL empire. Likewise, Jimmy Swaggart was exposed as hiring prostitutes for pornographic purposes and was eventually defrocked by the Assemblies of God. Less serious controversies swirled around Oral Roberts for linking his fund raising efforts to being "called home" by God and Pat Robertson over allegations that he lied about his date of marriage and war record and for various statements made during his unsuccessful presidential campaign.<sup>2</sup>

### Scandal Effects

While these episodes clearly affected the lives and fortunes of the personalities involved, their impact on religion in general and television evangelism in particular is uncertain. On the one hand we believe that the events were sufficiently ignominious<sup>3</sup> and prominent to exercise a negative impact on people's perceptions of religion. On the other hand, both because most people neither watched nor identified with the discredited ministers and because one's religious orientation is usually long-term and deep-seated, one would might expect the impact of the scandals to be minimal.

Taking these counter tendencies into account, we first hypothesized that the impact of the scandals on religion would be greater the more closely religious topics were linked to television evangelists. Thus the largest impact should concern television evangelists themselves and the audience of the electronic church. Next, one might expect that either attitudes toward the clergy and organized religion, or attitudes and behaviors related to Fundamentalism would be affected. Standard (or non-Fundamentalist) religious beliefs and behaviors and other religious matters not closely tied to television evangelists and Fundamentalism are most remote and should be least affected.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Time and Newsweek coverage cited in the references as examples.

<sup>2</sup> On the electronic church in general see Buckser, 1989; Frankl, 1987; Gaddy and Pritchard, 1985, and Horsfield, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> While the negative public appraisal of the scandal events can largely be taken for granted, various surveys asked people to assess the actions of Bakker, Roberts, and Robertson. No surveys on Swaggart were apparently conducted. Disapproval was high in all cases. Details available from author.

Second, we hypothesized that youth populations would be more affected by the scandals. Generation theory argues that people are most affected by events experienced in their teens and early twenties (and that these events influence subsequent attitudinal and behavioral changes) (Mannheim, 1952; Schuman and Scott, 1988). In addition, youth has long been shown to be a period of both religious change and apostasy (Van Rompaey and Suchman, 1989; Hadaway, 1989; Tamney, Powell, and Johnson, 1989). Thus, in the religious arena youth might be particularly susceptible to events critical of religion.

### Methods

To assess the impact on these scandals on the public, we searched for survey time series that measured religious beliefs and behaviors before, during, and after the televangelist scandals. This would of course allow us to estimate the impact of the scandals on these religious topics. Altogether we located 31 adult time series and 13 time series among youths (Table 2). In light of the first hypothesis above, we grouped these time series into topics about television evangelists (A), viewing/contributing to the electronic church (B), evaluations of the clergy (C), organized religion (D), the role of religion in general (E), standard religious beliefs (F), Fundamentalist religious beliefs (G), standard religious behaviors (H), Fundamentalist religious behaviors (I), and religious preference (J).

While these 44 time series cover many important topics, they are less than ideal. First, the series are of variable length and density. Annual measures from the mid-1980s to 1990 exist for only a few of the series and seven have only two time points, one pre and one post scandals. Second, while the time series cover many topics of interest, they were not specifically designed to measure the impact of scandals on religions and therefore do not cover all areas of potential interest. Third, none of the youth and adult items are identical and only a few are reasonably equivalent. This hampers adult/youth comparisons.

As a first step in determining whether the scandals had an impact on religious matters, we fit time series models to each of the trends. First, we tried to fit the constant model that all data points are simple random variations around a stable proportion. An estimate of the pooled (or average) proportion is made and we test to see if the observed data points vary significantly from it. If this model is rejected, the linear model that all data points are random variations around a linear trend is tried. Four outcomes are possible: (1) constant, (2) significant linear component, (3) significant linear trend, and (4) non-constant, non-linear. The constant model is accepted when there is no significant variation around the constant or pooled proportion. The significant linear component model is accepted when (a) the constant model is rejected and (b) the linear model is rejected, but (c) the linear model fit is significantly better than the constant fit. The significant trend model is accepted when (a) the constant model is rejected and

(b) there is no significant variation from the linear model. The non-constant, non-linear model is accepted when (a) the constant model is rejected, (b) the linear model is rejected, and (c) the linear model is not a significant improvement over the constant model (Taylor, 1980).

The above models were applied to data points from 1980 and after. In addition to fitting the best model to the data, we examined whether the trends were in the religious or non-religious direction.<sup>4</sup> From the models and direction of trends we developed the following set of rules for deciding whether or not the scandals affected the trends:

No Scandal Effect:

- 1) Constant model
- 2) Significant Linear Trend (SLT) or Significant Linear Component (SLC) and trend in religious direction
- 3) Non-Constant, Non-Linear (NCNL) and sub-setting the time series into pre- and post-scandal components did not show one of the following shifts towards less religious:
  - a. From SLT or SLC in religious direction to SLT or SLC in non-religious direction
  - b. From SLT or SLC in religious direction to constant
  - c. From constant to SLT or SLC in non-religious direction

Scandal Effect:

- 1) SLT or SLC in non-religious direction and a) drop in 1987 and/or 1988 greater than average annual change or b) only two observations, one pre- and one post-scandals
- 2) NCNL and sub-setting the time series into pre- and post-scandal components showed a shift towards the less religious:
  - a. From SLT or SLC in religious direction to SLT or SLC in non-religious direction

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<sup>4</sup>

Table 1 defines what category was defined as "religious." For our purposes "religious" meant Fundamentalist rather than non-Fundamentalist. Table 1, Section J gives the % with No religious affiliation, but we used the % with a religious identification in our calculations.

b. From SLT or SLC in religious direction to constant

c. From constant to SLT or SLC in non-religious direction<sup>5</sup>

#### General Impacts

Looking at Table 3, we see that among adults 15 time series showed an effect, 3 are uncertain, and 13 did not show an effect. Among youths 5 show an effect, 3 are uncertain, and 5 did not show an effect. As hypothesized, effects were particularly common for questions dealing with television evangelists (5 of 5) and evaluations of the clergy and organized religion (3 or 4 of 5). For example, ratings of television evangelists as trustworthy fell from 41% in 1980 to 23% in 1987 (after the first scandals broke) to 16% in 1989 near the end of the disclosures. Similarly, the per cent with a "great deal" of confidence in the leaders of "organized religion" fell from 30% in early 1987 before the Bakker scandal to 21% in 1988 after the Bakker disclosures and during the Swaggart expose (and those with "hardly any" confidence rose from 19% to 32%). Also, showing a clear scandal effect was the general measures on religious influence. The percent saying that the influence of religion was increasing fell from 48% in 1985 and 1986 to 36% in 1987 and 33% in 1988. Among youths the % saying that religion should have more influence dropped from 38% in 1986 to 32% in 1987.

But unexpectedly standard religious behaviors (e.g. attending church and praying) were also generally affected (5-6 of 7). While more moderate than the swings in the televangelist, clergy, and organized religion areas, standard religious activity seems to have been affected. For example, church membership dipped from 69% in 1986 and 1987 to 65% in 1988 and the % praying daily fell from 58% in 1985 to 53% in 1989.

Conversely, measures of the electronic church audience showed little effect (1 of 4). Unfortunately the scarcity of data points makes it difficult to study closely this apparent lack of impact. Since the scandals drove two major televangelists off-the-air, caused at least short-term declines in the TV ratings of religious shows not even associated with the scandals (Ostling, 1987), and at the start of the scandals led people to indicate that they would view religious shows less because of the scandals,<sup>6</sup> it is possible

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<sup>5</sup> If we had more frequently and consistently spaced observations for many of the trends, we would have been able to conduct more precise tests of the "interruption" effect of the various scandals.

<sup>6</sup> Surveys by CBS, the Los Angeles Times, and Roper in late March 1987 all indicated by people expected to watch or contribute less to the television religion than previously. Details available from the author.

that our measures are inadequate to reveal the true trend.

Standard and Fundamentalist beliefs, fundamentalist behaviors, and religious preference also showed relatively few effects (4-5 of 16) and most effects were small. For example, belief in the inerrancy of the Bible ranged between 35 and 38% in 1984-1987 and fell to 34% in 1988 and 31% in 1989 (an all time low).

As a second measure of the impact of the televangelist scandals, we calculated year-to-year change rates from 1985-1986 to 1989-1990 and summed across items. Only 35 of the 44 items are usable since the other trends lack enough observations to calculate year-to-year changes. For adults there were 7 items with annual changes for each of the five intervals. For another 5 items annual rates existed for all intervals, although one or more year-to-year changes had to be estimated from longer spans (typically two-year intervals). For 14 items year-to-year change rates existed for some, but not all years. For youths there were 8 items with year-to-year changes for each interval and 1 item with changes for all except one interval. Table 4 shows a much larger than typical drop (about 2.5-3 percentage points) for 1987-88 among adults and for 1986-1987 among youths. The decline for youths partly precedes the drop for adults simply because the youth observations tend to occur later in the year, after more of the scandals had broken. However, taking this into account, youths may still have been quicker to respond to the scandals than adults.

Both the adult and youth samples show modest signs of a rebound for religion in 1989 or 1990. Of the 13-16 adult trends that show possible scandal effects and which also have points to allow a test of the rebound effect, 5 and possibly 6 show an upswing (Confidence in Religion-Gallup, Confidence in Religion-GSS, Church Attendance-GSS, Church Members, Born-Again Self-Identification, and possibly Importance of Religion). Typical of this pattern are the Gallup and GSS confidence items. Confidence bottoms out on the Gallup series in 1989 at 28% and rises to 33% in 1990. For the GSS the low point is reached at 21% in 1988 and increases to 22% in 1989 and 24% in 1990. Of the 5-8 youth trends showing possible effects, 2 to 4 show rebound effects (Influence of Religion and Church Attendance [Occasionally +] and possibly Importance of Religion and Honesty).

#### Adult/Youth Comparisons

There is little evidence that youths were more swayed by the religious scandals than adults. In each case about half of the trends showed effects (5-8 of 13 for youths and 13-16 of 31 for adults. Similarly, the maximum average year-to-year change was in the 2.5-3% range for both youths and adults. Looking at

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Rebounds effects occur in time series with possible scandal effects where a point in 1989 or 1990 is significantly higher than the series low point in 1987 or 1988.

approximately matched indicators among youth and adults (No Religious Preference, Church Attendance, Belief in God, Importance of Religion, Honest of Clergy, Belief in Afterlife, and Identification as born-again), also indicated changes of similar frequency and magnitude. Similarly an analysis of six GSS trends (Confidence in Clergy, Attendance, No Religion, Afterlife, Bible Inerrancy, and Fundamentalist Religious Preference) by age groups (18-29, 30-49, 50-64, 65+) did not show young adults to be more prone to change than older adults. Only the possible indication that the impact occurred more quickly among youth than among adults lends any support to the impressionable youth hypothesis.

While surprising given certain expectations about life cycle and cohorts, studies of social change generally find that cohorts tend to move in parallel across time (Davis, 1991).

### Conclusion

The televangelist scandals of the late 1980s did lead to negative reactions to religion. The reputation of televangelists worsened and various evaluations of clergy and organized religion also suffered. Several measures of standard religious behaviors also showed similar, but smaller, negative shifts.

Measures of televangelist audiences and of Fundamentalist beliefs, behaviors, and preferences showed a comparatively small impact from the scandals. While the limited nature of the audience data may prevent the detection of scandal effects, the lack of a widespread impact among the Fundamentalism measures clearly indicates that the scandals did not have an especially strong impact in this theological area. Non-Fundamentalist beliefs, religious preference, and some general religion measures also showed relatively minor impacts.

Even for those items affected by the religious scandals, there is some evidence that the effect was often short-lived rather than permanent. For about a third of the negative effects there was signs of a rebound by 1990.

Little evidence was found for the idea that youths would be more susceptible to scandal effects than adults as a whole. Samples of teenagers, high school seniors, first year college students, and young adults (18-29) showed about the same pattern and magnitude of change as among adults as a whole.



Table 1

**A Summary of Televangelist Scandals and Controversies, 1987-1989**

- 1-4/87 - Roberts "call me home" fund raising controversy
- 3/19/87 - Bakker admits to adultery; resigns from PTL
- 5/4/87 - Bakker dismissed as minister by the Assemblies of God
- 6/12/87 - PTL declares bankruptcy
- 10/5/87 - Robinson admits having lied about his marriage date to cover-up premarital conception of child
- 1-2/88 - Various of Robinson's religious and political positions and claims come under critical attack
- 2/21/88 - Swaggart admits to pornographic activities; resigns ministry
- 3/8/88 - Robinson drops libel suit against Representative McCloskey who had charged Robinson used political influence to avoid combat assignment during Korean War
- 4/8/88 - Swaggart defrocked by the Assemblies of God
- 12/5/88 - Bakker indicted for financial fraud
- 9/13/89 - Roberts announcing closing of City of Faith Hospital and Medical Center and sell of other buildings to met deficit
- 10/5/89 - Bakker convicted of financial fraud

Table 2  
Religious Trends

I. Adults

A. Television Evangelists

Trustworthy with Money (Yes)

1980	41%
4/1987	23%
9/1989	16%

Honest (Yes)

1980	53%
4/1987	34%
9/1989	23%

Sincere (Yes)

1980	56%
4/1987	34%
9/1989	26%

Have Special Relationship with God (Yes)

1980	47%
4/1987	30%
9/1989	23%

Care about People (Yes)

1980	59%
4/1987	48%
9/1989	33%

B. Electronic Church Audience

View Televangelists (Yes)

9/1980	15%
12/88-1/89	15%

Viewing Religious Shows (None)

11/1978	72%
3/1988	71%

Ever View Religious Shows (No)

12/1981	57%
1/1982	55%
1983	58%
4/1987	51%
9/1989	51%

Contribute to, Last 12 Months (Yes)

4/1987	4%
9/1989	5%

C. Evaluations of the Clergy

Honest Clergy (Honest + Very Honest)

7/1977	61%
7/1981	63%
5/1983	64%
5/1985 (NBC)	55%
7/1985	67%
9/1985 (Roper)	61%
9/1988	60% <sup>a</sup>
2/1990	55%

<sup>a</sup> Emerging Trends, 10 (11/1988) lists an earlier 1988 point with 66%, but neither "The Clergy Receives High Ethical Marks," Emerging Trends, 12 (3/1990), 1; Religion in America, 1990; nor the Roper Center's POLL database include this point.

Occupational Prestige of Clergy

1964-65	69
1989	69

D. Organized Religion

Confidence in Religion-Gallup (Great Deal)

5/1973	43%
5/1975	44%
1/1977	38%
4/1978	35%
4/1979	40%
10/1980	44%
11/1981	40%
5/1983	39%
5/1985	42%
7/1986	34%

10/1986	36%
7/1987	35%
9/1988	35%
9/1989	28%
8/1990	33%

Confidence in Religion-GSS (Great Deal)

3/1973	36.1%
3/1974	45.2%
3/1975	26.0%
3/1976	32.7%
3/1977	41.4%
3/1978	31.9%
3/1980	36.7%
3/1982	33.1%
3/1983	29.4%
3/1984	32.2%
3/1986	26.0%
3/1987	29.7%
3/1988	20.6%
3/1989	22.4%
3/1990	23.7%

E. Role of Religion in General

Religion the Answer (Yes)

1957	81.8%
1974	61.0%
1981	64.4%
1981	65%
1982	60%
1984	56%
1985	58%
1985	61%
1986	58%
1986	65%
1990	63%

Influence of Religion (Increasing)

1957	69.2%
1962	44.5%
1965	33.1%
1967	23.5%
1968	18.5%
1969	14.0%
1970	13.8%
1974	31%
1975	39%
1976	44.5%

1977	37%
1978	37%
1980	35.8%
1981	38%
1982	41%
1983	44%
1984	42%
1985	45%
1985	48%
1986	48%
1988	36%
4/1989	33%
6/1990	33%
11/1990	39%

Importance of Religion (Very Important)

1952	75%
1965	70%
1978	52.7%
1980	55%
1980	53%
1980	56%
1980	57%
1981	54%
1981	55%
1981	58%
1982	57%
1982	56%
1982	56%
1983	57%
1983	53%
1983	55%
1983	57%
1984	57.7%
1984	56%
1984	57%
1984	54%
1984	55%
1984	55%
1985	62%
1985	54%
1985	54%
1985	54%
1985	56%
1986	55%
1986	55%
1987	55%
1987	54%
1987	53%
1987	57%
1987	60%

1987	52%
1988	54%
1989	57%
1990	55%
1990	58%

F. Religious Beliefs - Standard

Afterlife (Believe In)

1944*	75.8%
1952*	77%
1957*	74.5%
1960*	73.7%
1961*	74%
1965*	75%
1968*	73.2%
1973	69.9%
1975	67.2%
1975*	69%
1976	71.6%
1978	69.9%
1978*	71.8%
1978*	62%
1980	73.3%
1980*	67%
1981*	71%
1983	68.1%
1984	73.4%
1986	76.1%
1986 (ABCWP)	78%
1986 (LAT)	73%
3/1987	72.2%
1988*	71%
3/1988	73.6%
1988*	68%
3/1989	68.7%
3/1990	70.0%
6/1990*	71%

\*=Gallup

God/Universal Spirit (Believe In)

1977	94%
1978	94%
1986	96%
1988	95%

G. Religious Beliefs - Fundamentalist

Bible Inerrancy-SRC (Yes)

1964	51%
1968	52%
1980	46%
1984**	46%
1984	46%
1985**	48%
1987**	44%
1988	48%

\*\*=GSS

Bible Inerrancy-Gallup (Yes)

1963	65%
1976	37%
1978	37%
1980	39%
1981	37%
1983	37%
3/1984***	38%
1984	37%
1984	40%
1984	38%
3/1985***	36%
1986 (ABC/WP)	35%
3/1987***	37%
1987 (LAT)	37%
3/1988***	34%
3/1989***	31%
3/1990***	32%

\*\*\*=GSS

H. Religious Behaviors - Standard

Church Attendance (Weekly)

1964	16.8%
3/1972	29.1%
3/1973	34.4%
3/1974	34.4%
3/1975	34.2%
3/1976	35.7%
3/1977	35.7%
3/1978	37.7%
3/1980	34.6%
3/1982	36.9%
3/1983	35.2%
3/1984	32.2%
3/1985	35.5%
3/1986	33.7%
3/1987	32.7%

3/1988	26.1%
3/1989	29.6%
3/1990	30.0%

Church Attendance (Last Seven Days)

1972	40%
1979	40%
1981	41%
1982	41%
1983	40%
1985	42%
1987	40%
1988	42%
1989	43%

Church Member (Yes)

1976	71%
1979	68%
1980	69%
1981	68%
1982	67%
1983	69%
1984	68%
1985	71%
1986	69%
1987	69%
1988	65%
1988	61%****
1989	69%
1990	69%

\*\*\*\*=GSS

Praying (Daily)

3/1984	57.4%
3/1985	58.2%
3/1987	56.4%
3/1988	54.3%
3/1989	52.7%
3/1990	52.3%

I. Religious Behaviors - Fundamentalist

Self-Identified Born-Again (Yes)

7/1986	32%
8/1986	38%
10/1986	30%
1/1987	30%



3/1987	36%
4/1987	27%
4/1987	33%
7/1987	26%
5/1988	28%
9/1989	34%
6/1990	38%

Been Born-Again (Yes)

8/1976	35%
4/1978	37%
12/1979	39%
8/1980	39%
8/1980	38%
12/1981	36%
5/1983	33%
9/1984	40%
10/1984	34%
10/1984	38%
11/1984	35%
12/1984	38%
7/1985	36%
7/1986	42%
8/1987	43%
3/1988	37%

Proselytizing (Have Done)

8/1976	47%
8/1980	45%
8/1980	45%
5/1983	47%
9/1984	48%
10/1984	53%
11/1984	46%
7/1986	51%
8/1987	52%
2/1988	46%

J. Religious Preference

Religious Preference-GSS (Fundamentalist)

3/1984	34.1%
3/1985	33.7%
3/1986	35.1%
3/1987	35.8%
3/1988	35.4%
3/1989	33.0%
3/1990	30.3%

Religious Preference-SRC (Fundamentalist)

10/1972	18.8%
10/1974	20.5%
10/1976	18.2%
10/1978	19.1%
10/1980	18.9%
10/1982	20.9%
10/1984	18.0%
10/1986	20.5%
10/1988	22.8%

Religious Preference-GSS (None)

3/1972	5.2%
3/1973	6.4%
3/1974	6.8%
3/1975	7.6%
3/1976	7.6%
3/1977	6.1%
3/1978	7.8%
3/1980	7.2%
3/1982	7.3%
3/1983	7.3%
3/1984	7.3%
3/1985	7.1%
3/1986	6.7%
3/1987	7.1%
3/1988	8.0%
3/1989	7.8%
3/1990	8.0%

Religious Preference-SRC (None)

10/1978	8.7%
10/1980	9.0%
10/1982	8.8%
10/1984	8.2%
10/1986	8.4%
10/1988	8.7%

II. Youths

C. Evaluations of the Clergy

Dishonesty/Immorality of Church Leaders (Not at All + Slight)

1975	51.9%
1976	55.7%
1977	53.1%
1978	52.8%

1979	55.1%
1980	53.1%
1981	54.9%
1982	53.0%
1983	51.2%
1984	43.9%
1985	45.0%
1986	43.8%
1987	36.6%
1988	32.7%
1989	36.8%

#### D. Organized Religion

##### Job Done by Churches (Very Good + Good)

1975	56.0%
1976	55.3%
1977	56.0%
1978	56.4%
1979	57.8%
1980	61.1%
1981	59.6%
1982	57.3%
1983	56.6%
1984	56.3%
1985	55.1%
1986	54.8%
1987	48.4%
1988	47.4%
1989	47.3%
1990	47.0%

#### E. Role of Religion in General

##### Influence of Churches (Much More + More)

1975	49.3%
1976	44.2%
1977	45.0%
1978	44.3%
1979	44.3%
1980	45.4%
1981	44.1%
1982	41.7%
1983	41.2%
1984	42.8%
1985	37.3%
1986	38.0%
1987	32.4%
1988	33.4%
1989	36.3%

1990 36.6%

Importance of Religion in Your Life (Very Important)

1976	28.8%
1977	27.9%
1978	27.8%
1979	30.1%
1980	32.4%
1981	30.5%
1982	28.4%
1983	28.3%
1984	29.7%
1985	27.3%
1986	26.3%
1987	24.9%
1988	26.1%
1989	27.1%
1990	26.4%

F. Religious Beliefs - Standard

Afterlife (Believe In)

8-11/1985	66%
1989	65%

God/Universal Spirit (Believe In)

8-11/1985	96%
1989	95%

Watching/Rewarding God (Believe In)

8-11/1985	75%
1989	77%

H. Religious Behaviors - Standard

Church Attendance (Weekly)

1976	40.7%
1977	39.6%
1978	39.4%
1979	40.7%
1980	43.1%
1981	40.0%
1982	37.3%
1983	39.1%
1984	37.7%
1985	35.3%
1986	34.3%

1987	31.8%
1988	31.9%
1989	31.4%
1990	30.4%

Church Attendance (Frequently + Occasionally)

1968	91.0%
1969	89.2%
1970	87.6%
1971	86.0%
1978	85.5%
1979	84.7%
1981	85.9%
1982	85.9%
1983	85.3%
1984	84.4%
1985	84.9%
1986	83.2%
1987	83.4%
1988	81.7%
1989	82.2%
1990	83.0%

Contributions to Churches (Already Have + Definitely Will)

1975	49.8%
1976	46.9%
1977	48.9%
1978	48.0%
1979	50.4%
1980	49.1%
1981	48.8%
1982	48.2%
1983	47.2%
1984	47.7%
1985	42.4%
1986	44.1%
1987	41.5%
1988	41.1%
1989	41.4%
1990	40.7%

I. Religious Behaviors - Fundamentalist

Born-Again Christian (Yes)

1981	26.3%
1985	23.9%
1988	22.7%
1989	24.7%
1990	29.3%

## J. Religious Preference

### Religious Preference-MTF (None)

1976	11.4%
1977	10.4%
1978	9.7%
1979	8.9%
1980	8.9%
1981	9.3%
1982	9.5%
1983	9.3%
1984	10.3%
1985	11.5%
1986	11.9%
1987	13.3%
1988	12.6%
1989	13.4%
1990	15.2%

### Religious Preference-AF (None)

1966	6.9%
1967	7.9%
1968	9.6%
1969	13.2%
1970	9.8%
1971	14.4%
1972	14.3%
1973	10.1%
1974	10.5%
1975	10.3%
1976	10.0%
1977	8.5%
1978	7.6%
1979	8.0%
1980	8.1%
1981	7.3%
1982	7.3%
1983	7.6%
1984	8.0%
1985	8.4%
1986	10.0%
1987	10.1%
1988	11.6%
1989	11.3%
1990	11.8%

MTF=Monitoring the Future  
AF=American Freshman

Table 2 (Continued)

Question Wordings

I. Adults

A. Television Evangelists

Television Evangelists (Gallup): I am going to read you some pairs of opposite phrases that have been used to describe television evangelists and ministers. From each pair of opposites, would you select the term you feel best describes television evangelists or ministers, in general?

- a. Trustworthy with Money/Not Trustworthy with Money
- b. Honest/Dishonest
- c. Sincere/Insincere
- d. Have Special Relationship with God/No Special Relationship with God
- e. Care about People/Don't Care

B. Electronic Church Audience

View Televangelists (Harris): Do you belong to or attend in person, watch on television, listen on radio, or receive literature from any evangelical church or preacher?

Viewing Religious Shows (Gallup): About how much time per week, in hours and minutes, do you normally spend watching religious shows on television?

Ever View Religious Shows (Gallup): Do you ever watch religious programs on television?

Contribute to, Last 12 Months (Gallup): By any chance have you contributed money to any television evangelists in the last 12 months?

C. Evaluations of the Clergy

Honest Clergy (Gallup): How would you rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields... clergy/clergymen?

Occupational Prestige of Clergy (NORC): Social standing of Clergy (Ministers, Priests, and Rabbis) on NORC's Occupational Prestige Scales see Keiko and Treas, 1990.

D. Organized Religion

Confidence in Religion (Gallup): I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one--a great deal, quite a

lot, some, or very little?  
The Church or Organized Religion

Confidence in Religion (GSS): I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you had a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

Organized Religion

#### E. Role of Religion in General

Religion the Answer (Gallup): Do you believe that religion can answer all or most of today's problems, or that religion is largely old-fashioned and out of date?

Influence of Religion (Gallup): At the present time, do you think religion as a whole is increasing its influence on American life or losing its influence?

Importance of Religion (Gallup): How important would you say religion is in your own life--very important, fairly important, or not very important?

#### F. Religious Beliefs - Standard

Afterlife (GSS) : Do you believe there is a life after death?  
(Non-GSS data points include variant wordings)

God/Universal Spirit (Gallup): Do you believe in God or a Universal Spirit?

#### G. Religious Beliefs - Fundamentalist

Bible Inerrancy (SRC): Here are four statements about the Bible, and I'd like you to tell me which is closest to your own view.

- (1) The Bible is God's Word and all it says is true.
- (2) The Bible was written by men inspired by God, but it contains some human error.
- (3) The Bible is a good book because it was written by wise men, but God had nothing to do with it.
- (4) The Bible was written by men who lived so long ago that it is worth very little today.

Bible Inerrancy (Gallup): Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible?

- (1) The Bible is the actual word of God and it is to be taken literally, word for word.
- (2) The Bible is the inspired word of God, but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word.
- (3) The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by men.



(For variant wordings see Smith, 1991.)

#### H. Religious Behaviors - Standard

Church Attendance (GSS): How often do you attend religious services?

Church Member (Gallup): Do you happen to be a member of a church or synagogue?

(GSS): Are you, yourself, a members of a church or synagogue?

Praying (GSS): About how often do you pray?

#### I. Religious Behaviors - Fundamentalist

Self-Identified Born-Again (Gallup): Would you describe yourself as a born-again or evangelical Christian, or not?

Been Born-again (Gallup): Would you say that you have been "born again" or have had a "born again" experience--that is a turning point in your life when you committed yourself to Christ? (For variant wordings see Smith, 1991.)

Proselytizing (Gallup): Have you ever tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ or to accept Him as his or her Savior? (For variant wordings see Smith, 1991.)

#### J. Religious Preference

Religious Preference (GSS): What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion? None vs. Some and Fundamentalist vs. Not Fundamentalist.

Religious Preference (SRC): Is your religious preference Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, or something else? None vs. Some and Fundamentalist vs. Not Fundamentalist.

#### II. Youths

##### C. Evaluations of the Clergy

Dishonesty/Immorality of Church Leaders (MTF)<sup>8</sup>: Now we'd like you to make some ratings of how honest and moral the people are who run the following organizations. To what extent are there problems of dishonesty and immorality in the leadership of... Churches and religious organizations

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<sup>8</sup> MTF is a sample of high school seniors conducted by the Survey Research Center, University of Michigan (Johnston, Bachman, and O'Malley, 1986.

[Not at All/Slight/Moderate/Considerable/Great/No Opinion]

#### D. Organized Religion

Job Done by Churches (MTF): Now we'd like you to make some ratings of how good or bad a job you feel each of the following organizations is doing for the country as a whole. For each one, mark the circle that best describes how you feel. How good or bad a job is being done for the country as a whole by...

Churches and religious organizations  
[Very Poor/Poor/Fair/Good/Very Good/No Opinion]

#### E. Role of Religion in General

Influence of Churches (MTF): Some people think that there ought to be changes in the amount of influence and power that certain organizations have in our society. Do you think the following organizations should have more influence, less influence, or about the same amount of influence as they have now?

Churches and religious organizations  
[Much Less/Less/Same as Now/More/Much More/No Opinion]

Importance of Religion in Your Life (MTF): How important is religion in your life?  
[Not at All/A Little Important/Pretty Important/Very Important]

#### F. Religious Beliefs - Standard

Afterlife (Gallup-Teens<sup>9</sup>): Do you believe in life after death, or not?

God/Universal Spirit (Gallup-Teens): Do you believe in God or a universal spirit?

Watching/Rewarding God (Gallup-Teens): Do you believe that this God or universal spirit observes your actions and rewards or punishes you for them?

#### H. Religious Behaviors - Standard

Church Attendance - Weekly (MTF): How often do you attend religious services?  
[Never/Rarely/One or Twice a Month/About Once a Week or More]

Church Attendance - Frequently, Occasionally (AF)<sup>10</sup>: For the

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<sup>9</sup> The Gallup Teen Surveys are samples of 13-17 year olds.

<sup>10</sup> AF is a sample of first year college students (Astin, Green, and Korn, 1987).

activities below, indicate which ones you did during the past year. If you engaged in an activity frequently, mark (F). If you engaged in an activity one or more time, but not frequently, mark (O) (occasionally). Mark (N) (not at all) if you have not performed the activity during the last year.

Attended a religious service

Contributions to Churches' (MTF): If you have at least an average income in the future, how likely is it that you will contribute money to the following organizations? If you have already contributed, mark the last circle only. Are you likely to contribute to...

Church or religious organizations

[Definitely Not/Probably Not/Don't Know/Probably Will/Definitely Will/Already Have]

#### I. Religious Behaviors - Fundamentalist

Born-Again Christian (AF): Are you a born-again Christian?

#### J. Religious Preference

Religious Preference (MTF): What is your religious preference?  
None

Religious Preference (AF): [Your] Current religious preference:  
mark one in each column?  
None

Table 3

## Summary of Models and Scandal Effect

	Overall Model <sup>a</sup>	Scandal Effect
I. Adults		
A. Television Evangelists		
Trustworthy With Money	SLT -.027	Yes
Honest	SLC -.032	Yes
Sincere	SLT -.033	Yes
Have Special Rel. God	SLT -.026	Yes
Care about People	SLC -.025	Yes
B. Electronic Church Audience		
View Televangelists	C	No
View Religious Shows	C	No
Ever View Religious Shows	SLT -.009	Yes
Contribute to	C	No
C. Evaluations of Clergy		
Honest Clergy	SLC -.009	Yes
Occ. Prestige of Clergy	C	No
D. Organized Religion		
Confidence in Relig. (Gallup)	SLC -.012	?
Confidence in Relig. (GSS)	SLC -.008	Yes
E. Role of Religion in General		
Religion the Answer	NCNL	No
Influence of Religion	SLC -.004	Yes
Importance of Religion	NCNL	?
F. Religious Beliefs - Standard		
Afterlife	NCNL	Yes
God/Universal Spirit	SLT +.002	No
G. Religious Beliefs - Fundamentalist		
Bible Inerrancy (SRC)	C	No
Bible Inerrancy (Gallup)	SLC -.007	Yes
H. Religious Behaviors - Standard		
Church Attendance (Weekly)	SLC -.008	Yes

Church Attendance (7 Days)	C	No
Church Member	NCNL	Yes
Praying	SLT -.010	Yes
I. Religious Behaviors - Fundamentalist		
Self-Ident. Born-Again	NCNL	Yes
Been Born-Again	NCNL	No
Proselytizing	C	No
J. Religious Preference		
Fundamentalist (GSS)	NCNL	?
Fundamentalist (SRC)	C	No
Not None (GSS)	C	No
Not None (SRC)	C	No
II. Youths		
C. Evaluations of the Clergy		
Dishonesty	SLC -.025	Yes
D. Organized Religion		
Job Done by Churches	SLC -.015	Yes
E. Role of Religion in General		
Influence of Churches	SLC -.012	?
Import. of Relig. Own Life	SLC -.005	?
F. Religious Beliefs - Standard		
Afterlife	C	No
God/Universal Spirit	C	No
Watching/Rewarding God	C	No
H. Religious Behaviors - Standard		
Church Attend. (Weekly)	SLC -.012	Yes
Church Attend. (Occas. +)	SLC -.005	Yes
Contributions to Churches	SLT -.010	?
I. Religious Behaviors - Fundamentalist		
Born-Again Christian	NCNL	No
J. Religious Preference		
Not None (AF)	SLC -.005	No
Not None (MTF)	SLC -.006	Yes

<sup>a</sup>

For models with linear changes (SLT or SLC) the number following is the annual rate of change per annum. A minus indicates movement in the non-religious direction and a plus movement in the religious direction.

Table 4

Average Year-to-Year Changes in Religious Items,  
1985-86 to 1989-90

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
Adults					
12 items	-0.68	-0.48	-2.53	-0.78	+0.63
26 items <sup>a</sup>	-0.20	-0.44	-2.73	-1.64	+0.38
Youths					
8 items	-0.45	-2.5	-0.2	+0.5	-.0.5
9 items	-0.5	-3.0	-0.6	+0.9	-----

<sup>a</sup> While 26 items were used in total, the number for particular intervals were 1985/86 (17), 1986/87 (19), 1987/88 (25), 1988/89 (20), and 1989/90 (13).

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