

"FAMILIES THAT PRAY TOGETHER, STAY TOGETHER"

*Religion, Gender, and Family in Postwar
Victoria, British Columbia**

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RHETORIC SURROUNDING THE "IDEAL FAMILY" played a powerful role in Canada's postwar culture. In professional discourse, newspapers, and other cultural media, the ideal family was most often represented as affluent, suburban, heterosexual, and nuclear. According to the dominant picture, families were made up of homemaking wives, bread-winning fathers, and obedient children, all happily living within the bounds of their age- and gender-appropriate roles. In this article I explore the part played by the Pentecostal and United Churches in shaping discourse on family life in postwar British Columbia and Canada. While these Protestant churches often reinforced the dominant ideal, they also helped to articulate new and, at times, unconventional perspectives on the family. I also look beyond the church leadership to examine the spiritual and family practices of church members in Victoria, British Columbia. In their homes, ordinary Protestants alternately affirmed, rejected, and refashioned the meanings of family that they encountered in their churches and the wider culture. From the pulpit and the pew, within their households and churches, Protestants helped to both reproduce and challenge the family ideal in postwar British Columbia and Canada.

Canadian and American historians have begun to demonstrate the extent to which popular images of domestic harmony in the 1950s obscured the actual diversity and complexity of postwar family life.¹

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¹ See, for example, several of the articles in *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); and *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in*

While the existing scholarship has enriched our understanding of the “fifties family,” much of it has remained focused on the secular arena.² I argue that the contradictions and ambiguities of the postwar domestic ideal are to be found on religious as well as on secular terrain. While Protestantism played a central role in shoring up the family ideal, it cannot be fully understood, or simply dismissed, as a bulwark of “traditional” family values. Despite the best efforts of certain church leaders, there was no singular, settled Protestant perspective on what a family was, or should be, in postwar Canada. Following American theorists of “lived religion,” I see religious creations as shifting, unstable, and apt to “subvert the intentions of those who would manipulate them for their own ends.”³ While Protestant ideals were often oppressive and constraining within the realm of the family, religion also enabled ordinary people to redefine, and occasionally transcend, their domestic roles. In exploring religion at the level of everyday domestic life, I bring new insights to the historiography of postwar British Columbia. Perhaps because it has the distinction of being the most secular of Canadian provinces, British Columbia has drawn relatively limited attention from historians of religion.⁴ While there are important studies of British Columbia’s denominational and mission history, we continue to know very little about the spiritual practices and imaginings of ordinary people in this province, particularly in the postwar era.⁵ In an effort to bridge this gap, I examine how church prescriptions, and religion itself, shaped the marital and parenting practices of average British Columbians.

Postwar America, 1945–1960, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

² For an important exception, see the articles on postwar Canada in *Households of Faith: Family, Gender, and Community in Canada, 1760–1969*, ed. Nancy Christie (Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002).

³ Robert Orsi, “Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion,” in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. David Hall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 13.

⁴ The secularity of British Columbia is revealed in figures from the published Census of Canada; throughout the twentieth century, residents of British Columbia have been far more likely than their counterparts in other provinces to claim that they had “no religion.” For example, in 1971 13.1 percent of British Columbians claimed to have “no religion,” as compared to 4.3 percent nationwide. See *Census of Canada*, vol. 1, part 3, table 10. For studies that address British Columbia’s uniquely secular character, see Lynne Marks, “Exploring Regional Diversity in Patterns of Religious Participation: Canada in 1901,” *Historical Methods* 33, 4 (2000): 247–54; Bob Stewart, “That’s the BC Spirit! Religion and Secularity in Lotus Land,” *Canadian Society of Church History Papers* (1983): 22–35; and J.E. Veivers and D.F. Cousineau, “The Heathen Canadians: Demographic Correlates of Nonbelief,” *Pacific Sociological Review* 23, 2 (1980): 199–216.

⁵ See Robert K. Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land: Conservative Protestantism in British Columbia, 1917–1981* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995); Myra Rutherford, *Women and the White Man’s God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission field* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002).

To capture both formal and everyday Protestant views on the family, I draw upon a range of sources. Local, regional, and national denominational records are probed for insights into the meanings of family within official church circles. Like other prominent postwar institutions, the Protestant churches had much to say about the family in the years following the Second World War. Of course, what church leaders said about the family did not necessarily reflect how families behaved at the level of everyday life. To examine how people lived and understood themselves in relation to official Protestant ideals, I draw upon evidence from oral interviews with twenty-four church members in Victoria, British Columbia.⁶ Interviews were conducted with men and women who were members of Glad Tidings Pentecostal Church or First United Church between 1945 and 1960. For this study, individuals were asked a series of open-ended questions about their involvement with the church and religion in the postwar years, including the role (if any) that religion played in their family life. All but two of the people with whom I spoke were married during, or just prior to, the postwar period. The people interviewed were white, heterosexual, and primarily middle class. In many respects, then, these people constructed their identities from the centre rather than the margins of Victoria's dominant postwar culture. Although not representative of all Canadians or even all Victorians, these oral recollections provide an invaluable look at the (much-neglected) inner religious lives of people in the pew.

Although located across the street from one another, Glad Tidings and First United were on far different points of the theological spectrum. Affiliated with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), Glad Tidings reflected the evangelical tradition in its focus on scriptural truths and the individual's relationship with God. Pentecostals were known for holding emotional worship services, rejecting "worldly" pursuits, and speaking in tongues. Pentecostalism was considered far less "peculiar" in the 1950s than it had been in the early years of the twentieth century, but this denomination – and Glad Tidings itself – remained on the margins of the mainline Protestant culture in postwar Canada.⁷ By contrast, First United embodied a liberal, ecumenical,

⁶ The names of all interviewees in this study have been changed; interviewees were located with the assistance of the local church secretaries and pastors. To take part in this study, individuals had to have been members of either the First United Church or Glad Tidings Church at some point between 1945 and 1960, and they had to have reached at least sixteen years of age by 1945. I conducted a total of nineteen interviews, with twenty-four people – a total of six men and six women from First United, and nine women and three men from Glad Tidings.

⁷ Scholars generally agree that Pentecostalism originated in 1906 at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles. For an introduction to Pentecostalism in Canada and British Columbia, see Ronald Kydd, "Canadian Pentecostalism and the Evangelical Impulse," in *Aspects of the*

and socially engaged agenda characteristic of that most mainline of denominations, the United Church of Canada (ucc).⁸ Often criticized by evangelicals for being too relativistic and “of the world,” the United Church generally emphasized social activism over personal salvation.

In this article I suggest that these churches’ views on the family reflected, in part, their rather different theological and social bases. I also argue that, while official church discourse on the family was not a mirror on domestic reality, religion did matter at the level of the household. For the people in this study, religion was not something that was limited only to an hour on Sunday, or to a particular edifice, or to certain ritual events. As Robert Orsi contends, “something called ‘religion’ cannot be neatly separated from the other practices of everyday life,” including the often mundane practices of the household.⁹ To suggest that religion was important at the level of everyday life does not mean that people lived according to a coherent and unwavering theology or that they always did exactly what the church said they should. Church discourse, and religion itself, shaped family roles and relations within Pentecostal and United Church homes – but never in a totalizing way. In their daily decisions about such things as how to discipline their children, whether to work outside of the home, or how to be a “good” husband or wife, Glad Tidings and First United members were influenced not only by religion and the church but also by several competing factors, including secular norms, material conditions, and personal histories.

In the years following the Second World War, more Canadians were getting married and starting families than in previous decades.¹⁰ As several scholars have shown, the domestic ideal that was so central to the cultural media of the late 1940s and 1950s helped to make belonging to a “traditional” family an important marker of normalcy in the postwar world.¹¹ It was not by accident that “the fifties” became

Canadian Evangelical Experience, ed. George A. Rawlyk, 289–300 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997); Donald Klan, “Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Church Growth in BC from Origins until 1953” (MCS thesis, Regent College, 1979); and Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*. For an introduction to evangelical culture more generally, see George A. Rawlyk, “Introduction,” in *Aspects of the Canadian Evangelical Experience*, ed. George A. Rawlyk (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997), xiii–xxv.

⁸ See Roger O’Toole, Douglas F. Campbell, John A. Hannigan, Peter Beyer, and John H. Simpson, “The United Church in Crisis: A Sociological Perspective on the Dilemmas of a Mainstream Denomination,” *Studies in Religion* 20, 2 (1991): 151–63.

⁹ Orsi, “Everyday Miracles,” 6.

¹⁰ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945–1960,” in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History*, 3rd ed., ed. Anita Fellman and Veronica Strong-Boag, 377–8 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997).

¹¹ See, for example, Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Mona Gleason, “Psychology

(and remain) a metaphor for "family values" in the social imaginary. This era calls to mind a shiny, one-dimensional, Cleaver-like image of domestic harmony that belies a deep undercurrent of anxiety about changing gender and family relations. In response to such perceived changes in the postwar years, over and over again professional and popular commentators linked the fate of the nation to the strength of the (heterosexual, nuclear) family. Canada's Protestant churches played a central role in reproducing this family crisis rhetoric. Immediately following the war, the *Pentecostal Testimony* warned:

America and Canada will never crumble because of enemies from without. If our Western civilization goes down, it will be because of decay, degeneracy, and corruption within. Christianity is best tested in the home. It is there Christianity begins. Building Christian homes of character, where families together worship God, pray for the lost and read God's word, is one of the great tasks to which our lives must be dedicated.¹²

The United Church similarly tied the future of the nation to the strength of Canada's Christian family life. The National Evangelistic Mission of the ucc remarked that the "hope of the tomorrows depends in large measure upon what will happen to the family during the decades ahead. The battle between atheism and faith, between secularism and Christianity, will be decided in large measure by the vitality of the spiritual life of the family."¹³ In the postwar years the Pentecostal and United Churches, along with the secular media, helped to make "the family" the chief gauge of the hopes, and fears, of the Canadian nation. Protestant leaders described families without religion as most at risk of breakdown, and Christianity as the cornerstone of domestic stability.

This rhetoric of family decline was not, of course, unique to the postwar years. Scholars have identified the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as times of heightened anxiety around the family, within the Protestant churches and beyond.¹⁴ As in other eras, in the

and the Construction of the 'Normal' Family in Postwar Canada, 1945-1960," *Canadian Historical Review* 78, 3 (1997): 442-7; and many of the articles in Parr, *A Diversity of Women*.

¹² *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 February 1945, 1.

¹³ G. Ernest Thomas, *The Holy Habits of the Spiritual Life* (Toronto: The National Evangelistic Mission of the United Church of Canada, n.d.), 42.

¹⁴ See, for example, Lynne Marks, "'A Fragment of Heaven on Earth'? Religion, Gender, and Family in Turn-of-the-Century Canadian Church Periodicals," *Journal of Family History* 26, 2 (2001): 251-71; Betty DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); and Patricia Dirks, "Reinventing Christian Masculinity and Fatherhood: The Canadian Protestant Experience, 1900-1920," in Christie, *Households of Faith*, 290-316.

years following the war, Protestants reproduced unattainable ideals of Christian motherhood and worried about the demise of family worship. In these years factors such as the baby boom and an increase in the female workforce brought children and the marital relationship to the forefront of Protestant discourse on the family, edging out the earlier preoccupation with the “young man problem.”¹⁵ Historians have begun to show the important role of the Protestant churches in reshaping the meanings of family in postwar Canada, but we continue to know little about how or whether these meanings differed within Protestantism.¹⁶

My research shows that, while Pentecostal and United Church leaders voiced similar family-in-crisis rhetoric, they parted company on many of the finer points around what, in fact, constituted an ideal family. This is particularly apparent in the ongoing discussions within these churches regarding appropriate gender roles within the home. That these two Protestant churches articulated competing ideas of gender and family reflects their rather different relationship with, and perspective on, the wider, secular world. Despite its reputation as a time when everyone knew what “family” was, the postwar era embodied several, often contradictory, ideas about proper family roles and practices. Veronica Strong-Boag ably makes this point in her study of wage-earning wives, in which she demonstrates that new, unconventional ideas about the family co-existed with more “traditional” family values in the dominant culture of postwar Canada.¹⁷ Similarly, Mariana Valverde points to the tensions in the postwar world “between upholding a mythical prewar patriarchy and an effort to expand the wartime slogans of democracy and freedom into the realm of the family.”¹⁸ In the years following the war, champions of the “modern” family argued for greater overlap in domestic

¹⁵ For a discussion of Protestant concerns about the “young man problem” in late nineteenth-century Ontario, see Lynne Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late Nineteenth-Century Small Town Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 36–7. The emphasis on children in the postwar era is reflected in the growth of Sunday Schools through these years. In the PAOC, the mid-1940s marked the beginnings of a focus on Sunday Schools; the first PAOC Sunday School director was appointed in 1944. See Burkinshaw, *Pilgrims in Lotus Land*, 171; Klan, “Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada,” 183.

¹⁶ Nancy Christie, “Sacred Sex: The United Church and the Privatization of the Family in Post-War Canada,” in Christie, *Households of Faith*.

¹⁷ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Canada’s Wage-Earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle Class, 1945–1960,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29, 3 (1994): 5–25. Also see Mariana Valverde, “Building Anti-Delinquent Communities: Morality, Gender, and Generation in the City,” in Parr, *A Diversity of Women*, 19–45. For an American study see, in particular, Joanne Meyerowitz, “Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946–1958,” in Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver*.

¹⁸ Valverde, “Building Anti-Delinquent Communities,” 39.

gender roles, mutuality in marriage, and increased independence for children. Pentecostal officials deliberately challenged these "worldly," modern trends in their discourse on the family, prescribing instead clear gender roles, male authority, and the obedience of children within the home. While Pentecostal leaders reproduced ideas of gender and family that had deep roots in the evangelical past, the United Church was far more ambivalent in its approach, often affirming "traditional" domestic patterns on the one hand, and creating and disseminating new, and occasionally controversial, ideas about family and gender on the other.¹⁹

In 1960, the ucc issued a handbook that contained the following comment on gender roles within the family:

The man, no longer the sole provider and source of authority, is more a participant in home-making, and the couple undertake their responsibilities of child rearing and housekeeping jointly. The distinctive roles of husband and wife are changing, but are not yet clear and distinct. Where either husband or wife is immature, these changes and this new freedom may result in family discord and, if serious, to family breakdown.²⁰

As this passage suggests, United Church officials occasionally expressed unease at the (perceived) changes in the gender roles of husbands and wives. However, the United Church also regularly championed these changes and helped to make gender mutuality central to wider postwar discourse on marriage and the family. As Nancy Christie has demonstrated, the ucc was one of the chief "agents of cultural change" in the postwar years, particularly within the domestic realm.²¹ United Church leaders were far more involved in the broader reproduction of new ideas of gender in postwar Canada, and also far more ambiguous in their views on the family, than were their Pentecostal counterparts. This partly explains why, at the level of the pew, First United members were much less likely than Glad Tidings members to

¹⁹ For studies that illumine evangelical views on gender, see R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Susan Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); and Marguerite Van Die, "A Woman's Awakening": Evangelical Belief and Female Spirituality in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada," in *Canadian Women: A Reader*, eds. Wendy Mitchinson, Paula Bourne, Alison Prentice, Beth Light, Naomi Black, and Gail Cuthbert Brandt (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Canada, 1996), 49-68.

²⁰ United Church of Canada, *Toward a Christian Understanding of Sex, Love, Marriage* (Toronto: ucc Commission on Christian Marriage and Divorce, 1960), 27.

²¹ Nancy Christie, "Sacred Sex," 348.

recall anything about their church's position on gender roles within the family. When asked about her church's views on gender in the fifties, First United member Anne Watson responded: "I don't recall there being any difference made. You mean as in the father being the disciplinarian and the mother being the nurturer, or anything like that? No, I don't recall anything like that, no. The family unit was more the focus."²² Other First United people gave similar responses. Many recalled that the church "encouraged family life" and saw the ideal family as a "cohesive unit."²³ Unlike Pentecostals, however, First United people did not remember specific church teachings on the domestic roles of women and men within the family.

While the United Church contributed to the growing emphasis on gender mutuality in postwar households, Pentecostal officials condemned the apparent "modernization" of family relations. Pentecostal concern centred on shifting gender roles and, more particularly, the apparent decline of male authority in modern homes. In a 1956 sermon American radio evangelist and former Glad Tidings minister C.M. Ward complained that a "wishy-washy, spineless apathy has replaced the time-honored position of head of the house."²⁴ Sharing Ward's concern, Pentecostal leaders in British Columbia and across Canada affirmed a clear gender hierarchy within the family. In Pentecostal discourse, biblical imperatives underscored, and legitimized, the deeply gendered roles of wives and husbands. In 1945 the *Pentecostal Testimony* described the bible as "so complete a system that nothing can be added or taken from it ... It sets the husband as Lord of the household, and the wife as mistress of the table – it tells him how to rule, and her how to manage."²⁵ Women were told that, as wives, they were to sublimate their own opinions and "wholeheartedly" support the decisions of their husbands.²⁶ They were reminded to be "obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God not be blasphemed."²⁷

Unlike their United Church counterparts, Pentecostal officials situated male authority, rather than gender mutuality, at the heart of Christian family relations. In their oral remembrances, ordinary Pentecostals were quick to affirm and defend the divinely ordained

²² Anne and Gordon Watson, personal interview, 3 September 1998.

²³ Anne and Gordon Watson, personal interview, 3 September 1998; William and Diane Brown, personal interview, 29 July 1998.

²⁴ C.M. Ward, *Most Requested Radio Sermons of 1956* (Springfield: Assemblies of God, 1956), 40.

²⁵ *Pentecostal Testimony*, 15 January 1945, 2.

²⁶ Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), District of BC, *Circular Letter 9* (1958), 7.

²⁷ PAOC, District of BC, *Circular Letter 9* (1958), 7.

nature of male power within the home. Glad Tidings members asserted that God had made man the "the head of the house."²⁸ Pentecostal women spoke in particularly favourable terms of male leadership within the home. Glad Tidings women described men as natural leaders and insisted that they "liked" men to rule the home. As June Peterson told me matter-of-factly: "men are just supposed to be the leaders."²⁹ Pentecostal theology framed the stories that these women told about their domestic lives. Despite the wider cultural emphasis on gender partnership within marriage, Glad Tidings women described husbandly authority as both natural and God-ordained.

Religious doctrine shaped, and at times constrained, the experience of Pentecostal wives, but in partial and unpredictable ways. Oral recollections constitute what historian Robert Rutherford refers to as a "meeting ground between the individual and society."³⁰ As a meeting ground, memory reflects not only how the world was but also how it was thought to be. This is certainly the case for memories around religion, which in this study emerge as meeting grounds between formal theological ideals and informal everyday practice – between how "religious" people were expected to behave, think, and feel, and how they actually behaved, thought, and felt. Glad Tidings women told me that they happily accepted the Pentecostal doctrine of wifely obedience, but they also talked about how they regularly contradicted this doctrine in their daily lives. Man might be head of the home, Maureen Graham remarked, but "woman was the neck that turns the head."³¹ Several Glad Tidings women recalled controlling household finances and making daily decisions regarding family matters. Some suggested that, although husbands were the acknowledged heads of homes, wives still got their way. Without hesitation, June Peterson remarked that "the man should be the head of the house." She then implied that women could subtly subvert this male authority: "there's ways [laughs] ... I'm teaching you things here. I think there's ways of,

²⁸ Marilyn Williams, personal interview, 12 August 1998; Lillian Olson, personal interview, 6 July 1998; Mary Smith, personal interview, 27 July, 1998; Doris MacDonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998; Harold and Ruth Jensen, personal interview, 11 August 1998; June Peterson, personal interview, 2 September, 1998; Maureen Graham, personal interview, 7 October 1998.

²⁹ Lillian Olson, personal interview, 6 July 1998; June Peterson, personal interview, 2 September, 1998.

³⁰ Robert Rutherford, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory: Breadwinning and Male Parenting on a Job Frontier," in *Gender and History in Canada*, ed. Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld (Toronto: Copp Clark Ltd., 1996), 355.

³¹ Maureen Graham, personal interview, 7 October 1998.

you know, getting what you want, how you want it to be.”³² Marilyn Williams similarly commented: “I think if you had any, what do I say, psychology at all in your thinking, women kind of could get their own way, but they had to do it quietly.”³³

Pentecostal ideas about male leadership within marriage did not determine, but rather shaped in uneven and incomplete ways the actual domestic lives of Glad Tidings women. While Pentecostal officials emphasized womanly submission, Pentecostalism itself embodied certain tensions and ambiguities with regard to women’s roles. As several scholars have shown, despite the focus on male authority within the church, women played active roles as preachers in the Pentecostal movement, particularly in the first decades of the twentieth century.³⁴ Although the number of women preachers had declined by the postwar era, the idea that anyone, regardless of gender or social position, could be called by the Holy Spirit to preach, remained a central Pentecostal ideal. This ideal, together with a belief in the spiritual equality of all believers, partially attenuated male power in Pentecostal churches. My research suggests that the gender ambiguities of Pentecostalism were also apparent in the private realm at the level of the household. For women, as wives and mothers, Pentecostalism was not merely constraining, nor was it something only to be resisted, subverted, or ignored. To borrow a phrase from Robert Orsi, “religion is not *in* or *of* the world, nor simply *against* but *through* the world.”³⁵ Through the lens of their faith, the women of Glad Tidings fashioned understandings of gender and marriage that, in many cases, contradicted both the clergy and the wider culture. These women moderated the power of their husbands by invoking the doctrine of spiritual equality and by giving primacy to

³² June Peterson, personal interview, 2 September 1998.

³³ Marilyn Williams, personal interview, 12 August 1998.

³⁴ While the American Assemblies of God ordained women from its beginnings, the Canadian PAOC did not ordain women until 1984. Prior to this, Pentecostal women in Canada could obtain a ministerial licence that enabled them to work as lay preachers. As lay preachers, women played an active and prominent role in the development of the PAOC. For studies that reveal women’s prominent, yet often contested role as preachers in Pentecostalism, and in evangelical religions more generally, see Edith Blumhofer, *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody’s Sister* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans’s Co., 1993); Edith Blumhofer, “A Confused Legacy: Reflections on Evangelical Attitudes toward Ministering Women in the Past Century,” *Fides et Historia* 22 (Winter-Spring 1990): 49–61; Elaine Lawless, “Not so Different a Story After All: Pentecostal Women in the Pulpit,” in *Women’s Leadership in Marginal Religions: Explorations Outside the Mainstream*, ed. Catherine Wessinger, 41–52 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Janette Hassey, *No Time for Silence: Evangelical Women in Public Ministry around the Turn of the Century* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1986); Klan, “Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada”; and Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

³⁵ Robert Orsi, “Everyday Miracles,” 8.

their relationship with God.³⁶ As Doris Macdonald remarked on the subject of marriage: "don't look for happiness in your partner. Because happiness comes from the Lord, and how you feel about Him."³⁷ Like Doris, many Glad Tidings women subtly undercut male authority within the home by affirming the importance of spiritual over earthly relationships.

Male power in Pentecostal households was further tempered by the evangelical emphasis on the shared spirituality of husbands and wives. Scholars have shown that, despite the conservative view of woman's place in evangelicalism, evangelical spirituality could "soften gender differences" and bring men and women together.³⁸ With its emphasis on private rather than public religion, and its disapproval of emotional displays of piety, the United Church did not challenge men, in spiritual terms, to transgress the bounds of normative masculinity.³⁹ By contrast, from its beginnings Pentecostalism encouraged men to engage, alongside of women, in the emotional spiritual practices of conversion, submission to God, and the infilling of the Holy Spirit – practices that the world understood as feminine. Such practices were not as publicly prevalent in the 1950s as they had been earlier in the century, but this was still a religion that encouraged the expression of spiritual emotion among both men and women.⁴⁰ Although men in both churches were uncomfortable with public piety, Glad Tidings men were far more likely than their First United counterparts to pray with their wives. As one First United woman commented: "I don't think my husband and I ever did much praying together, because he didn't want ... that wasn't his type of life. He didn't want to share that kind of thing. He was personal."⁴¹ While largely privatized in First United households, prayer was something

³⁶ For further discussion of Pentecostal women's perspectives on the doctrine of spiritual equality and womanly submission, see Tina Block, "Housewifely Prayers' and Manly Visions: Gender, Faith, and Family in Two Victoria Churches, 1945-1966" (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 1999); and Griffith, *God's Daughters*.

³⁷ Doris Macdonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998.

³⁸ Hannah Lane, "Wife, Mother, Sister, Friend: Methodist Women in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, 1861-1881," in *Separate Spheres: Women's Worlds in the Nineteenth Century Maritimes*, ed. Janet Guildford and Suzanne Morton (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1994), 115; Lesley Gill, "Like a Veil to Cover Them': Women and the Pentecostal Movement in La Paz," *American Ethnologist* 17, 4 (1990): 708-21; Salvatore Cucchiari, "Between Shame and Sanctification: Patriarchy and Its Transformation in Sicilian Pentecostalism," *American Ethnologist* 17 (1990): 687-707.

³⁹ Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, *A Full-Orbed Christianity: The Protestant Churches and Social Welfare in Canada, 1900-1940* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 96.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the feminized character of early American Pentecostalism, see Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 158-76.

⁴¹ Barbara Griffith, personal interview, 30 October 1998.

that was regularly shared by many Pentecostal husbands and wives. For Mary Smith, mutual prayer functioned as what sociologist Susan Rose has called a “sacred forum”⁴² through which she and her husband discussed, and resolved, marital conflicts:

if we had problems we would pray about them together. Now that sounds really great. It is great. But it's not always easy to do in daily living. But we always ... we've always been able to do that, we've always prayed together. It's pretty hard if you're upset with somebody, to pray with them, and still be upset. It's a wonderful way to resolve problems, because if people are honest before God, they know if they've been wrong.⁴³

While Mary understood mutual praying as a way to discuss marital problems, Doris Macdonald insisted that sharing spiritual time with her husband made her marriage more “compassionate” and “forgiving.”⁴⁴ In shared prayer, Pentecostal women such as Mary and Doris found a (relatively) neutral space in which they could speak freely and, potentially, contradict their husbands. At the level of the household, Pentecostal spirituality often worked against the clergy's emphasis on male authority and clear gender roles. The stories of Glad Tidings women complicate any easy assumptions about female subservience or gender separation in Pentecostalism. Despite the United Church's official promotion of gender partnership in marriage, in terms of daily, spiritual practice, gender mutuality was far more prevalent in Glad Tidings than in First United homes.

Through the postwar years the Pentecostal and United Churches spent as much time outlining the roles of parents as they did the relationship between husbands and wives. Although their perspectives differed, these churches shared in criticizing postwar parenting and in making terms such as “parent delinquency” and “problem parents” normative to this era's vocabulary on the family.⁴⁵ Protestant concerns about parenting did not suddenly arise after the war, but these baby boom years were a time of heightened anxiety around child-rearing. As in the late nineteenth century, in the postwar years church members were told that, as mothers and fathers, it was they who set the most

⁴² Susan Rose, “Women Warriors: The Negotiation of Gender in a Charismatic Community,” *Sociological Analysis* 48 (1987): 256.

⁴³ Mary Smith, personal interview, 27 July 1998.

⁴⁴ Doris Macdonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998.

⁴⁵ First United Church, *Bulletin*, 11 February 1945; First United Church, *Bulletin*, 15 May 1955. *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 February 1945, 13; *Pentecostal Testimony*, 15 February 1945, 12; *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 June 1945, 2.

important example for their children.⁴⁶ While United Church people were reminded that children are "more powerfully influenced by their parent's example than by their contacts with the church," Pentecostals were told that the bible "places first responsibility with parents in the Christian instruction of their children."⁴⁷ In terms of the spiritual development of children, church involvement could supplement, but it could not replace, family life. In the years following the war, the United and Pentecostal churches initiated family altar campaigns, urged parents to "spiritualize" their homes, and developed programs of worship and religious study for families. Church members were told that "religion truly begins at home" and that "families that pray together, stay together."⁴⁸ Church leaders in many different times and places have bemoaned the neglect of religion in the home, and yet postwar church officials often referred to a mythical, prewar time when spiritual training and worship was central to family life.⁴⁹ The decline of family religion, they argued, was a new and destructive result of the war years.

While both churches pointed to the importance of family worship and the religious education of children, at the level of the household these practices were far more central among Pentecostals. Apart from saying grace at meals, First United members did not recall engaging in family prayer or teaching religion to their children. United Church leaders were far more ambivalent than their Pentecostal counterparts about parental leadership within the home. While United Church parents were reminded of the importance of family religion, they were also told that the home was to be "an atmosphere of 'perfect freedom.'"⁵⁰ Catherine Gidney contends that, in the years following the war, the family was explicitly tied to national stability and was increasingly drawn as the "cradle of democracy."⁵¹ In its discourse on parenting, the ucc drew on, and helped to facilitate, this growing postwar emphasis on democracy and mutuality within the postwar family. In our conversations, First United people told me that children should "find their own way" spiritually and that they "wouldn't pressure" their children to attend

⁴⁶ Marks, "A Fragment of Heaven on Earth," 261-2.

⁴⁷ First United Church, *Bulletin*, 20 April 1958. See also *Pentecostal Testimony*, 15 February 1945, 12; *Pentecostal Testimony*, 15 October 1945, 5; *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 January 1945, 12.

⁴⁸ *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1944, 12; First United Church, *Bulletin*, 21 October 1954; First United Church, *Bulletin*, 26 April 1959.

⁴⁹ See, for example, Marks, *Revivals and Roller Rinks*, 33; Marks, "A Fragment of Heaven on Earth," 261-2; and Dirks, "Reinventing Christian Masculinity and Fatherhood," 290-7.

⁵⁰ ucc, Board of Evangelism and Social Service, *Annual Report* (1946), 88.

⁵¹ Catherine Gidney, "Under the President's Gaze: Sexuality and Morality at a Canadian University during the Second World War," *Canadian Historical Review* 82, 1 (2001): 46.

church.⁵² Many, like Frank Stevens, admitted that they “left it up to the Sunday School to do the best they could with the youngsters.”⁵³ Part of a church that at once encouraged family religion and challenged the absolute authority of parents, First United mothers and fathers chose not to enforce religion within their households.

According to Doug Owram, the surge in church membership after the war belied a deep, secularizing impulse in Canadian culture: the baby-boomers, he argues, became “the first of the truly secular generations.”⁵⁴ While the absence of religious education in First United homes is suggestive of a wider secularizing trend, it would be a mistake to base our understanding of religion in postwar Canada solely on the mainline churches. My research suggests that religious training remained significant to Pentecostal families in the postwar years. For Pentecostals, family religion was an essential part of the ongoing effort to keep separate from the world. Pentecostals were told that their homes should be “impregnable fortresses” against wicked, worldly influences. Public schools were suspect, and secular education could be countered only by spiritual instruction within the home. Pentecostal parents were warned that the “all too evident inadequacy of secular education serves to emphasize that your boys and girls need to be taught something more than reading, writing, and arithmetic.”⁵⁵ Domestic religious education was necessary to prepare children to resist the worldly, modern influences of “progressive educators.”⁵⁶ Unlike the ucc, with its emphasis on freedom within the family, the Pentecostal Church bemoaned the apparent trend in modern homes of promoting the independence of children over the authority of parents. Church leaders argued that the “democratic principle of majority rule does not obtain in the home” and that the “time has come, in the present day and age, when parents, not children, should be the heads and leaders of family life.”⁵⁷ Glad Tidings members were, not surprisingly, far more apt than their First United counterparts to insist on their children’s involvement in family-centred spiritual practices. In our conversations, Pentecostal women and men told me that religious training within

⁵² Anne and Gordon Watson, personal interview, 3 September 1998; Henry Campbell, personal interview, 7 October 1998.

⁵³ Frank and Marion Stevens, personal interview, 10 August 1998.

⁵⁴ Doug Owram, *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby-Boom Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 109.

⁵⁵ *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 September 1949, 7.

⁵⁶ *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 August 1947, 13.

⁵⁷ PAOC, District of BC, *Circular Letter 7* (1958), 1; Arthur Townsend, *Morning Worship in the Cariboo* (Prince George, BC: Wrigley Printing Co., 1947), III.

the home gave their children "stiff backbones against temptation" and strengthened them against the "loose living" secular world.⁵⁸

The people of Glad Tidings accepted their church's insistence on the importance of religious instruction within the home. This does not mean, however, that these people behaved exactly as the church expected them to in the realm of family religion. The messy and mundane happenings of everyday life inevitably intervened at the level of the household, making the practice of family religion far more informal and sporadic than church leaders had hoped. Moreover, despite the emphasis in Pentecostal discourse on the father's role in family worship, the religious education of children fell mainly to mothers in Glad Tidings.⁵⁹ Rather than limiting religion to a particular space or time, these women creatively, and often incompletely, incorporated religion into their busy daily lives. When asked whether or not she had a family altar, Doris MacDonald answered: "Um, you wouldn't call it actually an altar because sometimes I did it in the den and sometimes I did it in the kitchen and sometimes I did it in the living room. But I made sure that I prayed with each of the five children individually before they went to sleep at night."⁶⁰ Maureen Graham and Mary Smith of Glad Tidings also recalled praying with their children often. Sometimes, busy schedules complicated the religious education of children. June Peterson described how she made time to listen to her children's prayers: "Sometimes if I was going to my women's group or something like this, I'd say to the kids 'get ready for bed,' and they'd be ready for bed, and I'm in the bathroom doing my hair or something, and they'd be on the toilet seat, and I'd say 'say your prayers,' so they'd say their prayers on the toilet seat [laughs]."⁶¹

For women like June, family religion meant something quite different from the formal, routinized, and male-led family altar advocated by the clergy. Although not mentioned in official Pentecostal tracts on family worship, "toilet seat" prayers, along with a multitude of other ordinary religious practices, reflect the complicated and often unceremonious ways in which religion was lived by postwar families.

⁵⁸ Edward Maxwell, personal interview, 9 July 1998; Doris MacDonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998; Maureen Graham, personal interview, 7 October 1998; June Peterson, personal interview, 2 September 1998.

⁵⁹ *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 April 1945, 12; *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 December 1947, 12. For a useful discussion of the gendered character of family worship in an earlier time period, see Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 108.

⁶⁰ Doris MacDonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998.

⁶¹ June Peterson, personal interview, 2 September 1998.

While the United Church was more ambivalent than the Pentecostal Church about gender roles within the family, both accepted as self-evident the importance of mothers to the spiritual lives of children. Church writings of this era were filled with poems, articles, and stories on the subject of “godly” mothers. Women were urged to take pride in the fact that they sacrificed public life to stay home and “raise the preachers.”⁶² In the years following the war, religious and secular commentators echoed their nineteenth-century predecessors, urging women to find their greatest fulfillment in motherhood and homemaking.⁶³ The details of domestic duties that filled women’s oral narratives point to the pervasiveness of this feminine ideal. When asked to describe a typical Sunday in their home, many women related stories of dressing their children “properly” for church, preparing a “fancy” dinner, and rushing their children to Sunday School.⁶⁴ Doris MacDonald recalled her appreciation of new time-saving devices in the kitchen: “it was a wonderful day when we got a stove with a timer on it because you could put the roast in the oven and set the timer.”⁶⁵ The women in this study were not unique in emphasizing domestic themes. Like Veronica Strong-Boag’s suburban interviewees, my informants recalled engaging in time-consuming household duties; many also took pride in their domestic accomplishments and understood the role of homemaker as both important and necessary.⁶⁶ Glad Tidings member June Peterson, who recognized her husband as head of the home, recalled: “I think the mother is the crux in the home, or a wheel, you know, everything goes around her. It’s quite often the way, anyway. She’s caring about the home and the husband and the family, I think she’s a very important person.”⁶⁷

While postwar women were told to make sense of their lives with respect to a singular, domestic ideal, many women worked outside of the home in this period. Several scholars have shown that, in the

⁶² *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 October 1947, 3; *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 May 1949, 2; Zelma Argue, *A Vision and A Vow, or The Vision and Vow of a Canadian Maiden: The Story of My Mother’s Life* (Springfield: Gospel Publishing House, 1940), 82; First United Church, *Bulletin*, 11 May 1952; First United Church, *Bulletin*, 10 July 1955.

⁶³ For a discussion of Protestant idealizations of motherhood in nineteenth-century Canada, see Marks, “A Fragment of Heaven on Earth,” 253–7.

⁶⁴ William and Diane Brown, personal interview, 29 July 1998; Anne and Gordon Watson, personal interview, 3 September 1998; Mary Smith, personal interview, 27 July 1998; Doris MacDonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998; June Peterson, personal interview, 2 September 1998; Maureen Graham, personal interview, 7 October 1998.

⁶⁵ Doris MacDonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998.

⁶⁶ Veronica Strong-Boag, “Their Side of the Story”: Women’s Voices from Ontario Suburbs, 1945–60,” in Parr, *A Diversity of Women*, 64; and Strong-Boag, “Home Dreams,” 389.

⁶⁷ June Peterson, personal interview, 2 September 1998.

wider culture of postwar Canada, considerable anxiety centred on the increasing numbers of women entering the paid workforce.⁶⁸ Such anxieties echoed within, and were generated by, the Protestant churches. In the United Church the ongoing tensions between conventional and newer ideas of gender became particularly apparent in discussions around wage-working mothers. In certain instances the United Church championed working mothers: "Many mothers would benefit from fewer hours with their children ... Many fathers would benefit from more. In both cases children would benefit."⁶⁹ And yet, taken-for-granted ideas about woman's "true" place in the home underscored United Church discourse on this issue. As Joy Parr argues, wage-working mothers were made to appear "subtly abnormal," even by their champions.⁷⁰ A United Church handbook outlined the story of a mother whose self-worth was greatly enhanced upon her entrance into the paid workforce. This narrative, meant to be an example, concluded by suggesting that, because of her new experience as a secretary, this mother was "better able to organize her housework."⁷¹ United Church officials told mothers that, while working outside of the home was a positive experience, they should not consider doing so until their youngest child was over the age of six and that, even then, they should engage in only a "few hours" of part-time work.⁷²

Postwar discussions of married women's paid work were shaped by the middle-class assumption that women who worked outside of the home did so because they chose to rather than because they had to. It was the idea that wives and mothers were freely choosing paid work over homemaking that most disturbed postwar observers, both religious and secular.⁷³ The superintendent of the BC District Pentecostals worried that mothers were choosing to work outside of the home for extra, unnecessary income:

Of course it must be that father works away most of the day, but so very often in search of the extra dollar for payments on expensive luxuries, mother has a job on the side. The children come home from school to find the home just an empty house and they soon seek for

⁶⁸ Joan Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs: The Wage-Earning Mother, 1945-70," in Parr, *A Diversity of Women*; Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives."

⁶⁹ ucc, *Sex, Love, Marriage*, 27.

⁷⁰ Joy Parr, "Introduction," in Parr, *A Diversity of Women*, 5.

⁷¹ Marjorie Oliver and Ron Kenyon, eds., *Signals for the Sixties* (Toronto: ucc Board of Information and Stewardship, 1961), 32.

⁷² ucc, *Sex, Love, Marriage*, 26, 27.

⁷³ Strong-Boag, "Canada's Wage-Earning Wives," 6; Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs," 105.

companionship elsewhere. Home is not the centre of life. It is a place to sleep – a place for morning cornflakes and toast. This is not home life as God intended it. The home is an institution of God and should be a fold for the lambs – a fold kept not by a hired baby-sitter, but by a shepherd mother. “To wives and mothers God has committed the power of transforming a mere building into the satisfying warmth of home.”⁷⁴

This passage assumes that mothers worked not because they had to but because they wanted to. It attributes family decline to the willingness of women to sacrifice the home in the pursuit of “expensive luxuries,” and it sees in wage-working mothers evidence of the materialistic character of postwar society.⁷⁵ It also suggests that stay-at-home mothers were essential to Christian family life “as God intended it.” Although more apt than their Pentecostal counterparts to acknowledge that, for some wives and mothers, work outside of the home was necessary, United Church leaders also feared that women were too quick to choose paid work over their families. As one United Church handbook noted:

In a community where families are relatively well-to-do there is not any great problem with working wives. Some wives work (some for charitable organizations) but they are always in a position to give up their work if their families need them at home. In other words, they command their working situation so the problem stays under control. In a community like this, where relatively few wives work, there is no “faddism,” no attitude that working “is the thing to do.”⁷⁶

In these Protestant churches, discussions of wage-working mothers focused on middle-class women’s choice between paid work and full-time homemaking. The churches defined married, middle-class women’s paid work as both “unnecessary” and a “fad”, and they told women that domestic responsibilities came first.

While many of my female informants from both churches worked outside of the home during the postwar years, they tended to talk about this experience in terms of how it affected (or, more precisely, did not affect) their domestic responsibilities. Most women claimed that, when they worked, they did so on a part-time basis and only once their youngest child had reached school age.⁷⁷ Maureen Graham

⁷⁴ PAOC, District of BC, *Circular Letter* (1959), 1.

⁷⁵ Sangster, “Doing Two Jobs,” 105.

⁷⁶ Oliver and Kenyon, *Signals for the Sixties*, 16.

⁷⁷ Joanne Lewis, personal interview, 23 July 1998; Frank and Marion Stevens, personal interview, 10 August 1998; Anne and Gordon Watson, personal interview, 3 September 1998; Barbara

admitted: "I did work, but I was never out when my son came home from school. I went after he went, and I was home before he came home."⁷⁸ Similarly, Barbara Griffith explained: "I went into the workforce when my youngest daughter was six, and I was lucky enough to get hours that I would get home in time to get dinner."⁷⁹ In their oral narratives, women recalled their paid work experience in ways that did not conflict with the deeply entrenched, feminine ideal of homemaker. First United member Anne Watson commented on the increase of working mothers in the postwar years: "I think the home still came first for women. Mostly it was part-time work, or if you worked full time, you know, you worked nine to five and then there was no night working and things like that."⁸⁰ Women refashioned their experiences in the paid workforce to fit the norms of femininity that were so deeply ingrained in Canada's postwar culture.

Like several other studies of the postwar years, my research reveals deep tensions around wage-working wives and mothers in this era. My work adds a new dimension to the existing literature in suggesting that religion mattered not only to the construction of women's paid work but also to how women themselves made sense of that work. Joan Sangster contends that wage-working mothers, who had been subject to blanket condemnations in the 1930s, were finding somewhat greater acceptance in Canadian society by the 1950s.⁸¹ While this was certainly the case in the United Church, Pentecostal officials remained adamantly opposed to the entrance of mothers and wives into the workforce through the fifties. Such opposition had real implications in the lives of Pentecostal women. Although clearly subject to many of the same gender expectations, women in First United experienced less guilt, and experienced less pressure from their families, than did those in Glad Tidings when it came to working outside of the home. The United Church generally approved of wage-working mothers, provided that such work did not interfere with domestic commitments. By contrast, Pentecostal leaders viewed wage-working mothers as further evidence of the "ungodly" modernization of family life and continued to insist on a clear gender division within the home. In First United homes, where some level of overlap in gender roles was accepted, women met little resistance in

Griffith, personal interview, 30 October 1998; Doris MacDonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998; Harold and Ruth Jensen, personal interview, 11 August 1998; June Peterson, personal interview, 2 September 1998; Maureen Graham, personal interview, 7 October 1998.

⁷⁸ Maureen Graham, personal interview, 7 October 1998.

⁷⁹ Barbara Griffith, personal interview, 30 October 1998.

⁸⁰ Anne and Gordon Watson, personal interview, 3 September 1998.

⁸¹ Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs," 106.

their (often part-time and later-in-life) entrance into the workforce. Several Glad Tidings women, on the other hand, admitted that their husbands did not want them to work outside of the home.⁸² As June Peterson recalled:

In fact, I did go out to work once my youngest child was nine, I worked at a department store cashing for awhile, and I worked at another company, and I enjoyed that, I worked there just two days a week. And my husband said, "If you want to do that, that's fine, just don't expect me to be cooking meals and doing all that." He was level with me, and that's fine. So I'd work my butt off and get tomorrow's supper ready tonight, and go to work and tell my kids to put it in the oven. But as long as the house runs smoothly. I wanted to get out a bit, but I didn't want to upset the house, as far as the kids, I wanted it to run smoothly.⁸³

My research, together with studies by Robert Rutherford and Joan Sangster, reveals that women's waged work in the postwar era was seen as a threat to the masculine ideal of provider.⁸⁴ This was especially the case in Pentecostal households, where church directives reinforced clear gender roles and underscored opposition to working mothers.

Pentecostal women described their paid work in terms that fluctuated between guilt for "abandoning" their children and pride in their accomplishments.⁸⁵ Doris MacDonald described herself as a "natural businesswoman" who "had to learn how to be a wife and mother." Doris quit her job when she had children but was glad that, when her children grew up, she was able to re-enter the paid workforce and develop her "mind for business." She expressed pride in her business abilities, but she also expressed guilt that she was neglecting her children: "I'd been concerned, did they suffer emotionally or spiritually from me not being there all the time?"⁸⁶ Mary Smith gave a detailed description of her paid work experience, relating the numerous promotions she had received. Like Doris, however, she worried that she was not being a "good" mother: "I was kind of the early generation of women working. And, oh I guess I had a big guilt complex, maybe. You know, because you're trying to be a good mother, and you're trying to do your job well, but that's just

⁸² Doris MacDonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998; Maureen Graham, personal interview, 7 October 1998.

⁸³ June Peterson, personal interview, 2 September 1998.

⁸⁴ Rutherford, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory," 362; Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs," 121.

⁸⁵ Sangster also found this in her study, "Doing Two Jobs," 121-3.

⁸⁶ Doris MacDonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998.

me. And so, you're trying to be all things to all people." The pervasive, yet often unstated, condemnation of working mothers in the postwar years made Mary feel subtly abnormal: "It was just something you kind of knew, you could feel it. Like, you really weren't doing what was normal."⁸⁷ As they entered the workforce in ever-increasing numbers, postwar wives and mothers were urged to put home and family first. Women in both churches defined their paid work as necessary, part-time, and subordinate to their domestic responsibilities. These women struggled to reconcile the dissonance between their lived experience and what their churches, and the wider secular world, expected of them. This dissonance was particularly striking in the lives of Glad Tidings women, who were regularly reminded, by the clergy as well as by their own families, that woman's place within the home was God-ordained. Women in both of these churches were influenced by, and understood themselves in relation to, the domestic feminine ideal, but their lives were not determined by it. Indeed, despite being subjected to ongoing (subtle and overt) pressures to stay at home, many of these women joined the growing female paid workforce of the postwar decades.

Postwar discussions around gender and parenting, in these churches and beyond, did not focus on mothers alone. Robert Rutherford points to the emerging emphasis on "masculine domesticity" in Canada's postwar culture, as fathers were increasingly urged to take a more active and central role in parenting and family life.⁸⁸ Through these years both the Pentecostal and the United Churches sought to revitalize the role of fathers in the religious and domestic life of the family. Articles, poems, and prayers in denominational literature told fathers that it was they, not mothers, who were the primary sources of strength, security, and wisdom for their children.⁸⁹ Even though "father may weigh two hundred pounds and display bulging biceps," claimed one Pentecostal church leader, "that causes no terror to the wee tot who is sure of unchanging affection. In fact, that great strength is in itself an assurance that all will be well, for it could be and would be directed against any foe that might arise to do injury."⁹⁰ The masculine influence

⁸⁷ Mary Smith, personal interview, 27 July 1998.

⁸⁸ Robert Rutherford, "Fatherhood and Masculine Domesticity During the Baby Boom: Consumption and Leisure in Advertising and Life Stories," in *Family Matters: Papers in Post-Confederation Canadian Family History*, ed. Lori Chambers and Edgar-Andre Montigny (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 1998), 309; and Rutherford, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory," 372. See also several of the articles in Christie, *Households of Faith*.

⁸⁹ PAOC, District of BC, *Circular Letter 2* (1955), 1; PAOC, District of BC, *Circular Letter 5* (1961), 9; First United Church, *Bulletin*, 3 September 1956; First United Church, *Bulletin*, 23 October 1960.

⁹⁰ PAOC, District of BC, *Circular Letter 2* (1955), 1.

of fathers was perceived to be particularly necessary for the normal upbringing of boys. Fathers were encouraged to pay attention to their sons because "a boy loves his mother, but he follows his dad."⁹¹ For the churches, the central problem with postwar fathers was their absence from the religious life of the family. The clergy urged fathers to take an active role in family religion so as not to become "stumbling blocks" to their families.⁹² Church lectures and sermons entitled "Father Is a Parent Too" and "The Failure of Fathers" pointed to a common fear that fathers were becoming "strangers" in their own homes.⁹³ Church officials worried that fathers, who presumably set the most important example for their children, were apt to skip church services and neglect religion at home. Postwar fathers, it was feared, too often claimed: "I let my wife look after the religion of our house."⁹⁴

Within their churches and the wider secular world, Glad Tidings and First United men encountered competing messages about their roles in the family. While they were urged to take a more active part in domestic life, they were also told that it was their duty to provide financially for their families. As Robert Rutherford argues, the masculine breadwinner ideal remained powerful through the postwar years and was regularly reproduced by both secular and religious commentators.⁹⁵ Church members were told in no uncertain terms that fathers were to be the family providers.⁹⁶ In 1960 First United printed the following prayer, especially for fathers: "Give me health, and strength and work to do to earn a living for those who depend on me, and whom I love so much; but help me to remember that love is always more important than money."⁹⁷ Postwar discussions of fatherhood in these churches embodied the contradictory ideals of attentive father and family breadwinner. Responsible fathers, then, were to adeptly balance their time between home and work.

In their recollections many people who belonged to these churches indicated that men were under great pressure in the postwar years to provide for their families.⁹⁸ Glad Tidings member Harold Jensen recalled

⁹¹ First United Church, *Bulletin*, 3 September 1956.

⁹² *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 August 1947, 12.

⁹³ First United Church, *Bulletin*, 6 October 1960; First United Church, *Bulletin*, 23 October 1960; Ward, *Most Requested Radio Sermons*, 37.

⁹⁴ Ward, *Most Requested Radio Sermons*, 88; *Pentecostal Testimony*, 1 April 1945, 9; First United Church, *Bulletin*, 18 February 1951; First United Church, *Bulletin*, 23 October 1960.

⁹⁵ Rutherford, "Fatherhood and Masculine Domesticity During the Baby Boom," 320-2; and Rutherford, "Fatherhood and the Social Construction of Memory," 368.

⁹⁶ First United Church, *Bulletin*, 3 September 1956; PAOC, District of BC, *Circular Letter* (1959), 1.

⁹⁷ First United Church, *Bulletin*, 23 October 1960.

⁹⁸ Marilyn Williams, personal interview, 12 August 1998; Harold and Ruth Jensen, personal interview, 11 August 1998; Thomas Marshall, personal interview, 3 July 1998; Joanne Lewis, personal interview, 23 July 1998; Barbara Griffith, personal interview, 30 October 1998.

that, shortly after he was married, he took a difficult and poorly paid job because "when you've got a little one, and you just got married and you haven't got hardly any money, if you get a job you're going to go for it, aren't you?"⁹⁹ Some men found it difficult to mediate the competing demands of home and work. When asked who was largely responsible for the religious training of children within her home, Doris MacDonald responded: "It was usually me, because in those early years he had restaurants in downtown Victoria, and worked twelve to fifteen hours, so I was in charge of a lot of their spiritual growth."¹⁰⁰ Lillian Olson explained how her husband's long working hours led to the decline of family worship in her home:

Yes, we did [have family worship] at dinnertime, usually. Until my husband got that garage – it's not even there now. We bought a garage, went into business, and we just couldn't afford to have anybody ... [trails off]. Some days, the kids didn't even see him, unless they walked down to see him, because he'd be there first thing in the morning, last thing at night. They didn't see that much of him except on Sunday.¹⁰¹

Such stories suggest that it was not easy for men to fulfill both contemporary masculine ideals of mindful father and family provider. While they were told to take a greater interest in the spiritual life of the home, men were also regularly reminded that "the success of the father indicates the success of the family."¹⁰² My research confirms the findings of other scholars who have shown that the requirements of paid work limited the involvement of fathers in postwar domestic life.¹⁰³ I argue that men were especially detached from religious education within the home, drawn away not only by the demands of bread-winning but also by the assumption that mothers were ultimately responsible for spiritual care-giving. This assumption was grounded in wider, normative ideas about the innate piety of women. As one of my informants matter-of-factly remarked: "women are softer hearted, and the spirit of the Lord can work on them more than it can on men."¹⁰⁴ Family religion remained very much the preserve of women in the postwar world. In their efforts to balance bread-winning and parenting, fathers often felt

⁹⁹ Harold and Ruth Jensen, personal interview, 11 August 1998.

¹⁰⁰ Doris MacDonald, personal interview, 13 August 1998.

¹⁰¹ Lillian Olson, personal interview, 6 July 1998.

¹⁰² First United Church, *Bulletin*, 2 September 1956.

¹⁰³ Rutherford, "Fatherhood and Masculine Domesticity during the Baby Boom," 322.

¹⁰⁴ Edward Maxwell, personal interview, 9 July 1998.

compelled to focus on providing materially, rather than spiritually, for their families.

This article provides new insights into our understanding of religion, gender, and the family in postwar British Columbia and Canada. It contributes to a growing historiography that seeks to disrupt the unrealistic images of postwar domestic bliss. It provides glimpses of family lives that were at once more complicated, and more interesting, than those portrayed in the popular imaginary. My findings also call into question any easy characterization of the postwar world as wholly secular. Throughout this era the Protestant churches powerfully shaped gender and family ideals, and religion itself remained central to everyday relations within many postwar homes. My work sheds new light on Canadian religious life, which has been studied primarily in the public realm, and on postwar British Columbia, which has drawn little attention from historians of religion. I also challenge the assumption that there was a singular, unified Protestant perspective in the years following the war; I reveal that domestic ideals and practices did, in fact, vary across denominations.

The men and women who joined Glad Tidings and First United Church in the late 1940s and 1950s encountered there, and in the wider world, several perspectives on gender and family. While the United Church fashioned new ideas about the family – ideas that centred on freedom and mutuality – the Pentecostal Church reaffirmed clear gender roles and parental authority within the home. Protestant discourse shaped the lives and sensibilities of church members in Victoria but not always in expected ways. Despite the official emphasis on gender partnership in the United Church, it was in Pentecostal homes that men and women most often came together in shared spiritual practice. Leaders of both churches urged families to worship together regularly, men to play a larger role in home religion, and women to give priority to their domestic responsibilities. Within these peoples' ordinary and busy homes, "toilet-seat prayers" were more common than staid family altars, men were often more involved with work than with the spiritual lives of their children, and mothers coped with the guilt, and pleasure, of working outside of the home. At the level of the household, then, people resisted, reshaped, and carried out in uneven and partial ways, the gender and family ideals reproduced in their churches and the wider postwar culture.