

THE TELEVISION EVANGELISTS--
WHAT ARE OUR PEOPLE HEARING?

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THE TELEVISION EVANGELISTS - -

WHAT ARE OUR PEOPLE

HEARING ?

Many of us pastors have had a conversation like this one:

Mr. D.Linquent: "Pastor, what do you think about Ernest Angley?"

Rev. Wels: "Ernest who?"

Mr. D.Linquent: "Ernest Angely, the TV evangelist."

Rev. Wels: "I have never heard of him. When is he on?"

Mr. D.Linquent: "You're a minister? and you never heard of Ernest Angley? He's on on Sunday mornings. You ought to watch him some time."

On Sunday mornings, when our pastors (and organists and teachers) are at work, so are a host of "television evangelists." While the pastor is looking at a church that is only half full, the TV evangelist enters the homes of the faithful and the unfaithful throughout our nation, offering a potpourri of truth and error.

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According to Mort Grimm (substituting for Paul Harvey on July 21, 1983), "two out of three 'religious persons' go to church on TV because the sermons and the singing are better."

The members of our WELS congregations are also familiar with these men. A thoroughly unscientific survey, involving 168 individuals from 7 congregations of the Manitowoc Conference, offered these results:

48% had heard the name of Jimmy Swagert;

59% had heard the name of Rex Humbard;

48% had heard the name of Dr. Robert Schuller;

97% had heard the name of Billy Graham;

70% had heard the name of Jerry Falwell.

I wonder how many of our people could identify the Praesidium of our District.

The same survey showed that

23% had seen Jimmy Swagert on TV;

31% had seen Rex Humbard on TV;

29% had seen Dr. Schuller on TV;

90% had seen Billy Graham on TV;

42% had seen Jerry Falwell on TV.

A smaller number, 15%, watch one of these men at least once a month on TV.

A still smaller number, 8%, claimed that they had ever written to (or sent money to) one of these men.

Responses to the questionnaire came mostly from church-goers. Some of our shut-ins are also faithful viewers. Even a certain type of delinquent watches TV instead of coming to church.

Our own members are not only watching these programs; they are also being influenced by them. Within the last two years

-church member A tried to convince me that I and Evangelist Z have much in common because we both oppose homosexuality;

-church member B (who comes to church regularly every Christmas Eve) assured me that my preaching was about the same as the Reformed theology of Evangelist Y;

-church member C grades my preaching using Billy Graham as the standard of excellence;

-church member D (a subscriber to "Decision" magazine) ended up in the psychiatric ward (after attempting suicide) because he was unsure of his salvation;

-church member E remains in a state of utter confusion with regard to the ceremonial laws ever since he began watching Garner Ted Armstrong.

Last May I agreed with your steering committee that a paper on the TV evangelists would be a valuable item. After your steering committee (Steve Kehl) applied pressure to my right arm, I also agreed to prepare the paper.

This paper is NOT intended to be the final answer to anything. Some of you, I am sure, know more about the individual TV evangelists than I do. This paper is intended only to give a brief answer to the member who asks, "Pastor, what do you think about Rev. So-and-so?" With this paper I am saying, "Okay, I will watch Rev. So-and-so several times and will give you my reaction."

I have divided the material into several topics. And I will let the TV evangelists speak for themselves as much as possible.

PART I - How does he view the Bible?

When I was at the seminary, the professors warned us about the liberalism of Lutherans and others who dismiss much of the Bible as

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myths and fables. That is not a problem with the programs I viewed. The TV evangelists accept the Bible as God's word and claim to interpret it literally.

Jimmy Swaggart, for example, ridicules churches that reject the stories of Jesus' miracles:

"If you are going to some old cold, dry, dead, formal church, that's ripped 'holy' off the Bible, (applause) that doesn't believe in Genesis, (Hallelujah!), feels that the Hebrew children were little more than a myth, that Daniel in the lions' den is just a little child's story, whenever the children of Israel walked through the Red Sea the water was just ankle deep (that's the reason they could do it); that Jesus was a good Man, but He was just a little deceived, He wasn't really God; then you'll never know this power I'm talking about." (11/20/83)



D. James Kennedy, Ph.D.

Dr. D. James Kennedy, pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, reads a portion from the Bible at the beginning of his program. He introduces the reading by saying, "We are hearing the inspired word of the living God, His instruction to each one of us." (11/20/83)

The words of Scripture are then printed out on the TV screen so that viewers at home can follow.

(Interestingly enough Dr. Kennedy, who is noted for his evangelism outreach and is the author of "Evangelism Explosion," uses the King James Version. Evidently he feels he can work successfully with an older translation.)

The PTL Club is heard daily on channel 26 from Green Bay.

(The letters "PTL" stand for "praise the Lord," an expression that is heard frequently during the program.) It is hosted by Jimmy and Tammy Bakker and, according to Tammy, is aired on more stations than Johnny Carson.

I heard several fine comments about the Bible. Tammy explained, "If we think things of God other than what the Word describes Him to be, we become idolaters." (10/18/83) That statement could have appeared in the Northwestern Lutheran.

The TV evangelists generally encourage people to use the Bible. Study Bibles are offered regularly (usually in connection with a specific "contribution" that is requested). The PTL Club had a program to send Bibles to prisons. Tammy Bakker stated, "I cannot tell you how much the Bible has meant to my own life. I really feel you cannot be a successful Christian and not read the Bible." (10/20/83)

One of the guests on her program stated that since he became a Christian he and his wife and his four children spend an hour a day with the Bible. The children now know much of the Bible by memory and can recite an hour's worth of quotations.

Billy Graham and others are well-known for having an open Bible in front of them.

Unfortunately, however, the rule of "sola Scriptura" (Scripture alone) is not always observed. That is, doctrines are frequently promoted which are not in agreement with the entire Scripture.

PART II - Is he Christian?

Wherever the Bible is proclaimed, wherever the Triune God is worshiped, wherever Jesus is presented as the Son of God and as the Savior from sin, there the Holy Ghost is at work creating and strengthening saving faith.

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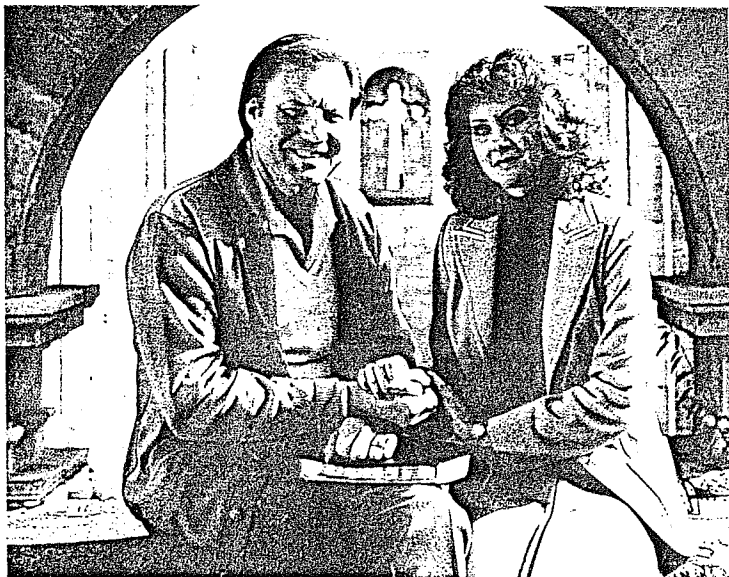
Are the TV evangelists "Christian"? That is, could a viewer learn the way to eternal salvation by listening to them?

The answer is "yes."

The program introductions ordinarily state something about how the evangelist's goal is to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all people.

Jimmy Swaggart is a specific example. Mr. Swagert you claim to have the largest audience of any TV evangelist. How large is your following?

"I preached to more people than any human being on the face of



the entire earth has ever preached to." (11/20/83)

Those are some powerful credentials. What sort of church should I join?

"That believes Jesus saves, Jesus heals, Jesus baptizes in the Holy Ghost, that believes Jesus went to the cross, went to the grave, and came forth from the

grave, up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph o'er His foes, He arose forever! He arose forever to reign! And He is seated tonight by the right hand of the Father, making intercession for the saints, that whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely." (applause) (11/20/83)

In a pre-Christmas broadcast Rex Humbard quoted John 3:16 as the heart of the Gospel and commented, "He proved He was God manifest in the flesh, that He had no earthly father and was Virgin-born, He was God manifest in the flesh and He proved that great

power in His ministry. Then He carried a cross to Calvary, and He died for your sin and my sin. He was buried and the third day He arose again from the grave. He ascended to the Father, and we look for His soon return." (12/11/83)

Richard Roberts is another example. Mr. Roberts what would you say Christmas is all about? "It's Jesus going to the cross. Yes, we celebrate His birth. But if we leave Him in the manger, He'll never get in our hearts. He went to the cross. He suffered death, took on our sins that we might be saved. His back was bloodied and striped that you and I might be healed. He was crucified, dead, and buried; but on the third day He rose again. That's what Christmas means to me." (12/18/83)

The kernal of the Gospel is present. Notice, however, the subjectivism that creeps into his words: "He'll never GET INTO OUR HEARTS." "That's what Christmas MEANS TO ME."

"Liberal" theologians of today do not believe that the Old Testament prophets actually foretold, directly foretold, the coming of Jesus Christ. I was pleasantly surprised to hear a couple references to Christ from the Old Testament. Rex Humbard stated, "All through the Old Testament they gave sacrifices of lambs and turtle-doves. But now Jesus said, 'I am that sacrifice for sin and uncleanness. I am going to die as that Lamb slain from the foundation of the world that you might be reconciled back to God.'" (12/11/83)

Ernest Angley, preaching from John 6:32ff, sees Jesus as the Bread of Life who was foretold by the Old Testament manna. "But now the true Bread has come. Not a type. Not a shadow of the greatness. But the greatness is here. And we are enjoying the greatness. Jesus is that Bread. He declared, 'I am that Bread.'" (1/8/84)

We cannot deny that Jerry Falwell and Billy Graham preach sin and grace and forgiveness. No doubt people have come to faith through their efforts.

Dr. Robert Schuller, unfortunately, does not present the Gospel so clearly. I am not the only one who received that impression. However in correspondence with David Becker (a reporter for Christian News) Schuller claims to accept wholeheartedly the three ecumenical creeds.

Here is an interesting note for us. Jimmy Swaggart spends much of his mission money establishing Christian schools throughout the world. He has built over 40 of them and claims to have the "most comprehensive children's ministry in the world today." (12/11/83) Over 75,000 children are fed spiritually and physically each day.

PART III - How does he define the word "faith"?

The good things we have said about the TV evangelists do not mean that we endorse them. The first area of doctrinal concern is "faith." Exactly what is it?

According to the Scripture our faith is

1) Knowledge of the Scripture. ("How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" Romans 10:14)

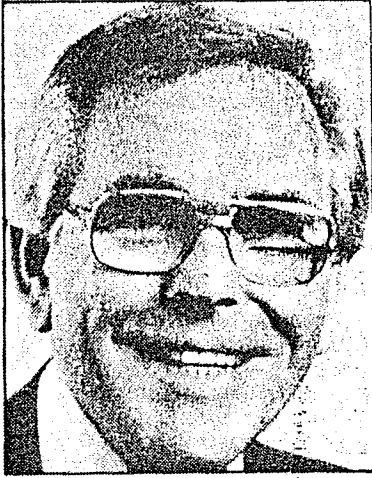
2) Assent. ("Receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls." James 1:21)

3) Confidence ("I trusted in Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art MY God." Psalm 31:14)

Dr. Schuller, however, insists that faith is a verb. He advertised a "1984 Possibility Calendar" called "A Walk in Faith." Each month has a theme. For example, "May declares that 'Faith is

exercising enthusiasm always.' June pictures a high diver, with the words, 'Faith is escalating your expectations.'"

As for the other months, "July, 'Faith is shooting for the moon.' August, 'Faith is unraveling the tangle.' In September, 'Faith is adventuring into new territories.' In October, 'Faith is saving the broken pieces.' It is the most inspiring, positive thinking calendar that you can find anywhere." (12/11/83)



Dr. Robert Schuller

And for Dr. Schuller, that's what faith becomes: Positive thinking, or possibility thinking.

During a pre-Christmas "Hour of Power" telecast the Dr. commented, "Mary inspires me because she is a great example of possibility thinking."

(12/11/83)

During that same sermon Rev. Schuller related this anecdote about a certain woman who was told she had only a month or two at the most to live. "We prayed for her. She lived, a year, 2 years, 3 years. I finally said, 'What has kept you alive?' 'Oh,' she said, 'the dreams.' I said, 'What do you mean?' She said, 'Well, when I first heard I had cancer, I said, "I don't want to die. I'm gonna live to see my daughter graduate from high school." And then, "I'm gonna live to go to my daughter's wedding." And then, "I'm gonna live to see at least one grandchild get born."' And then she said, 'I'm gonna live to see that dream of yours, Dr. Schuller, the Crystal Cathedral built. I'm gonna live for this. I'm gonna live for that. I'm gonna live to see this.' Of course, the DREAM keeps you going! The dream now begins to support you. You supported the dream, and now the dream is giving you support." (12/11/83)

The conclusion, according to Dr. Schuller, is this: "Believe!

Take the walk of faith! And your dreams will come true." (12/11/83)

Apparently his viewers are getting the point. During one of his appeals for money Dr. Schuller aired the testimony of individuals who want the Hour of Power to stay on the air. A disc jockey named Lou Simon had this to say: "I've been watching Dr. Schuller since I was a teenager. And he's inspired me through his 'possibility thinking' to believe in myself, to have faith in myself, and through that, having faith in God, that anything can happen. I can achieve anything I want to if I just believe I can." (1/15/84)

Some of the evangelists frequently become very emotional. Tammy Bakker (PTL), for example, often speaks in a quavering voice with tears coming to her eyes. I fear that in those cases an emotional high can become a substitute for faith. Listen to Tammy's words:

"You know, some people think that God is sitting there with a great big club, waiting to hit us over the head or beat us to a pulp if we don't do everything perfect. But that's not the God I serve. The God I serve is the God that no matter how many times we fall, He picks you back up, puts His arms around you, and says, 'Come on, you can make it! I know you can!'" (10/18/83)

"You can do it!" is one of PTL's themes. And so Tammy's "faith" becomes a "self-confidence," much like Schuller's possibility thinking.

Oral Roberts also presented an unusual view of faith. In a prayer near the end of his broadcast he presented his own faith as a kind of connecting rod between God and the viewer, a rod through which God would convey His divine blessings. "And friend, I reach out to connect you with a miracle. I, just a human being, but who is saved by the blood of Christ, filled with His Spirit, and called

to take God's healing power to my generation. I reach out by that faith to connect you to your Heavenly Father, to connect you to the Great Physician, to connect you to a healing, to a miracle, to a new life." (12/18/83)

According to Scripture we should put our trust in Christ, or in God's word. (The two are identical.) Some in the modern Protestant camp, however, suggest that we put our faith in our faith. -That would be devastating when someone's faith grows weak.

Oral Roberts, for example, mentions troubles like the bomb, the broken-down peace talks, loneliness, trouble with an employer or employee. He concludes that we can lie down at night "and can know that we know that we know (sic) that Jesus Christ is in our hearts. That He's first in our lives. And that we have the sweetness of life in the midst of the hurt of life. And that somehow we're going to make it." (12/18/83)

Does that sound again like "possibility thinking"?

According to the Scripture our faith is not a work we do to earn salvation or to complete our salvation; it is not a condition we must fulfill in order to be justified; it is not the move which triggers God's forgiveness. It is rather a HAND in which I RECEIVE the blessing of forgiveness which Christ won for all people 2000 years ago.

But many in the Protestant camp are presenting faith as the condition for salvation. We might hear people saying something like this: "IF you believe, IF you REALLY believe, IF you have received Christ into your heart, IF you have dedicated your life to Him, THEN God will forgive you your sins!" That is some dangerous stuff. That kind of synergism is going to drive the sincere Christian to a psychiatrist.

PART IV - What does he say about faith/conversion/original sin?

These three terms go together. The Scripture teaches that human beings are born with the stain of original sin. They are spiritually dead. Therefore they cannot bring themselves to faith in Christ and cannot even assist with their conversion. It teaches what we call "monergism." That is, God "works alone" to bring about a sinner's conversion.

The Roman Catholic Church rejects monergism and teaches that sinful human beings still have a free will. (Council of Trent, Session VI, Canons 4 and 5)

Arminians also reject monergism. They teach that "There are two causes of faith and conversion: one is the ... grace of God, the second is the will of man." (Pieper's Dogmatics, Vol.1, p.543)

The Methodists, Mennonites, and Pentecostals are Arminian in their theology. We are not surprised to find a false teaching on faith, conversion, and original sin also among the TV evangelists.



Billy Graham's "Hour of Decision" is the classic example: God's word is presented to you; now YOU make the decision to follow Christ. That is impossible. Lazarus did not decide to be raised from the dead. Similarly the spiritually dead sinner, whose mind is enmity against God, cannot make a decision to become spiritually alive.

According to Scripture we teach that conversion takes place when the sinner, who has been struck in his conscience by the threats of the Law, comes to faith in Christ by the working of the Holy Spirit through the Means of Grace. According to many of today's evangelicals conversion takes place after you pray this little prayer: "Lord

Jesus, come into my heart and take possession of my life. Forgive me my sins. I dedicate my life to you today. Amen."

The Christian will pray daily for God's forgiveness. But no unregenerate person can pray the prayer quoted above; nor does my dedication to God trigger His love for me.

The preacher who asks the people to "pray this little prayer with me" will not teach the thorough corruption and total depravity of natural human beings.

Among the modern evangelicals (and traditional Reformed groups) we will also find a denial of the Means of Grace, especially Baptism.

Peter writes that "Baptism doth also now save us." (1 Peter 3:21) Our Nicene Creed states, "I acknowledge one baptism *for the remission of sins*." The modern evangelicals deny baptism to infants and practice a "dedication" instead. Jimmy Swaggart believes that no babies will go to hell. Jerry Falwell (and many others) will actually ridicule infant baptism. He (and many others) claim that being "born of water and of the Spirit" (John 3:5) are two different things. Being "born of water" happened, he says, when your mother's water broke in the hospital. Being "born of the Spirit" happens much later, not through water baptism, but when the Holy Ghost fills you in a measure deemed satisfactory. According to these preachers the Baptism instituted by the Savior in Matthew 28 does not give forgiveness, life, or salvation.

Although they speak highly of God's written word, they leave plenty of room for direct revelations from the Spirit apart from God's word. (More on this later.)

Prayer itself becomes a Means of Grace, a channel through which God blesses us apart from the word and sacrament. A guest on PTL stated, "In that minute I learned that prayer is not a monologue.

It is two-way communication. Because everything I would say, there was an answer to it. Jesus would say, 'Yes, Henry, I forgive you. I love you any way.'" (10/18/83)

I heard no mention at all of Holy Communion on the TV programs I viewed.

Ernest Angley (who apparently is so well-known that his mail will reach him at "Akron, Ohio 44309") believes another Pentecostal idea, namely, perfectionism, the teaching that a Christian can reach a point where he no longer sins, no longer needs to pray the Fifth Petition. In his sermon about Jesus as the Bread of Life Mr. Angley stated, "This Bread will separate you from all sin, from all iniquity." (1/8/84)

That is not correct. God does not *separate* us from sin. Nor does He *make* us righteous (as Rome teaches). God JUSTIFIES us, that is, *He declares the sinner to be free from the guilt of sin.*

But Mr. Angley defends his position and continues, "Ah, they'll be preaching on television saying, 'You can't be free from sin.' Well if we can't be free from sin, then we're all in sin, the devil's going to get us all. But he's not going to get me. Because I've left out of sin. I've already left Egypt. Amen. I've left it all behind. And I decided if you can live one day without sinning, you can live two or two thousand or two million days. You can live for all time without sinning. And this Bread separates you from sin. If you are going to dine with this Bread and enjoy this Bread, you can't commit sin."

Pardon me, Ernest, but don't you think that the Apostle Paul was a sinner until his dying day? What do you think he meant, when he wrote, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing"? (Romans 7:18) And when he added, "The good that I would I

do not; and the evil that I would not that I do"? (Romans 7:19) Paul was a *forgiven* sinner, not a *sinless* sinner.

Ernest, if you deny the presence and the power of our sinful nature, the next thing you are going to tell me is that a person can cooperate in his conversion. Is it true, Mr. Angley, that YOU must do something before you can have Christ or the forgiveness of sins?

"I had to be separated from sin to have this Bread. I had to leave sin behind to have this Bread. This Bread was not served to me until I said, 'Take the whole world. I want this Bread.' I want this priceless Bread. I want this. This is what I want. Not the cares, not the pleasures of sin. I've come out of that, Lord. Here I am. Here I am. To be all washed and made clean."

Mr. Angley, at this point I am afraid you are drifting into Roman Catholicism. Are you saying that God will not forgive me until or unless I fulfill a certain condition?

"Why should the Lord wash me, if I am going to run right back into the pig pen of sin? God is a sensible God. And He's not going to wash me every day. No sir. Me run right back into the pits of sin? No! He has put my feet on the solid Rock, which is Christ Jesus. The Bread dwells in me, and the Bread is under my feet. If you can understand that, then you are God's child. If you can't understand that, you're not." (1/8/84)

That is the kind of talk we can expect from those who deny total depravity.

PART V - What does he teach about the Spirit and His gifts?

The Holy Ghost teaches God's people through God's written word. If we wish to learn something, we (like the brothers of the rich man) ought to search Moses and the Prophets. The Holy Ghost comes

to God's people through God's word and sacrament. We have no reason at all to believe that the Holy Spirit will work apart from God's word and sacrament.

Although the TV evangelists have a high regard for the Bible, we will hear repeated references to "receiving the Holy Spirit" or being "baptized in the Holy Spirit." These are ordinarily references to a Holy Spirit who works immediately or directly, that is, apart from the Means of Grace. These TV personalities become like the prophets of Zwickau in Luther's day who had seemingly "swallowed the Holy Ghost feathers and all."

On the PTL Club especially many of the participants claim to have received direct communications from the Holy Ghost. Hostess Tammy Bakker explains, "These people, when Jim and I were in counseling, told me something that no body in the world knew except me and God. That NO one knew. And when I realized that the Holy Spirit cared enough about me to tell them about something no one else knew, and when they told me (I mean, I'm used to the Holy Spirit, and I'm used to communicating with God) -- but still its always exciting, its always wonderful when you see that Jesus cares enough about you to tell someone else to come up and whisper in your ear, 'I know your problem. I know what it is. The Lord has spoken to me and I understand it.' You know. And they told me some stuff that no one in the world knew, but me and God. And because of that I was totally set free. Because I knew that God had told them. No body else in the world could have told them. (applause) That's the wonderful thing about the Holy Spirit working with you." (10/19/83)

I don't understand either who she means by "they" and "them", but the Holy Spirit was supposedly giving a lot of personal information to the counselors on Tammy Bakker's staff.

At other times the Holy Ghost supposedly works in a miraculous way, seizing people just as He seized Philip when the eunuch "saw him no more." (Acts 8:39) A portly gentleman, who is now connected with the Full Gospel Businessman's Fellowship, gave this testimonial on PTL:

"I was at Colton High School [San Bernadino, CA], and I was being pulled a little bit by some of these [modern] areas of entertainment. I got up before the band on a Friday afternoon, and started singing, 'I'd love to get you on a slow boat to China,' So anyway the Holy Ghost fell on me and conviction came on my heart and I dropped the microphone and run(sic) out of the McIntosh gymnasium & I wept my way through to full dedication to the Lord. But I want you to know it was a great crisis of decision." (10/18/83)

If it really works that way, I'd insist that we include "Slow Boat to China" in our new hymnal.

Another guest on PTL claims he had an experience like that of Paul. He testifies, "That morning in Jail, at 5 in the morning, I saw a light, a white light like snow, and I saw a face of Jesus with His hand like this, And He was telling me, 'Jim, I want to be the first in your life.' And I want to say this because I know it is true. And in that moment I received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Two hours later I was preaching in the jail. I was repeating verses by memory that never in my life I saw."

(Tammy:) "The Holy Spirit gave you that power!" (10/20/83)

If we would record all the messages that the Holy Spirit is supposedly giving directly today, we would soon have another Bible very different from the original 66 Books. (We would also need to include the communication received by a crippled young man from Manitowoc who has been in and out of psychiatric wards for the past

25 years. On January 9, he confided to me, "Reverend, the good Lord told me that if I did not become the manager of a major league baseball team, my soul would be eternally damned.")

Some of the TV evangelists deal with speaking in tongues. Oral Roberts conducts a program entitled, "Expect a Miracle." (He is also well-known. Just address him at "Tulsa, Oklahoma".) As he was preaching on John 7:37ff, he was suddenly "seized by the Holy Spirit." Here is what happened:

"When you really believe on Jesus, believe on Him, and you repent, and I mean you are dead sorry for the things you've done, for the life you've lived, and the person you are, and you believe on Jesus, He immediately causes the Spirit to erupt in your belly. And the Spirit of God begins to flood (*Ochi hama she mama. o nana*) ... It's coming up in me now! ... and this language starts coming up. ...When you believe on Jesus, repenting of your sins, it is the Holy Spirit that takes over." (1/15/84)

Are these miraculous signs genuine? I've got my doubts. -But we'll leave this matter for another paper.

PART VI - Does he pray for or promise or perform miracles?

Many of the guests on the 700 Club and on PTL claim to have experienced miracles in their lives, either 1) A miraculous deliverance from some sinful habit; or 2) A miraculous deliverance from sickness.

An alcoholic testified that alcoholism is not necessarily a sin or a sickness but is demonic possession. He was healed from that condition after Satan left him.

Another guest on PTL was a heroin addict who spent up to \$600 a day, up to \$2000 a month to support his habit. He testifies, "I cried out to God and I had a miracle right there. Instantaneously



Jim Bakker emcees PTL.

He healed me and I never had withdrawals. It was unbelievable. I was driving my truck and He reached down and touched me and said, 'Here it is, a blessing for you.' And since then I have been going to a doctor^{to} deal with emotional hurt.

"Leroy, can God cure other people who are hooked on these terrible drugs without after effects?"

"Yes, He can."

"He did it for you and He can do it for other people." (10/18/83)

(NOTE: PTL's emphasis is generally not on deliverance from sin, but rather on de-

liverance from the scars of sin, i.e., alcohol, drugs, and sickness. A preoccupation with the scars of sin detracts from a presentation of sin and grace.)

Thirty years ago Oral Roberts was noted for performing miracles on his show. I did not witness any of that recently. He does, however, operate a large hospital and prays for miraculous deliverance: "In the name of Jesus, be healed. The presence of God take hold of your heart and make it strong. The presence of God touch your blood and adjust it to be purified. The presence of God touch your ears and open them if they need healing, touch your eyes so that you may see; your shoulders, your chest, your bronchial tubes, your throat, your being and even your limbs - wherever you're suffering, God heal you and deliver you; because He sent me to pray this healing prayer for you. And I know that God is hearing us. And together let's expect a miracle. Let's expect a miracle! Through Jesus Christ, Amen,

and Amen." (1/15/84)

Part of the problem with the TV healers involves a misunderstanding of Isaiah 53:5, "And with His stripes we are healed." Is the prophet speaking of healing from sickness? or about a healing from sin? The context indicates a healing from sin. But modern Pentecostals see in Isaiah 53 forgiveness AND healing. They see forgiveness and healing locked hand in hand. The pastor should offer both. The believer should receive both.

This connection becomes clear in the testimony of James Robison, a TV evangelist from Dallas. This man claims one million have been born again through his ministry. (I was hoping someone would nominate him as WELS Director of Evangelism.) Through a misinterpretation of Ephesians 1:19 he concludes that the power of God which creates and preserves faith in the heart of the Christian will also create and preserve good health in the Christian.

He stated on the 700 Club, "I went into service, and heard the preacher say (Jim Walker, a Baptist preacher), that the power that raised Jesus' dead body from the grave lives in you. And he began to cry. And he said, 'And you are willing to live sick, defeated, depressed. Unnecessarily so.' And I heard JESUS say that, not that preacher. I heard the Spirit of God by revelation say, that 'the power that raised My dead body from the grave lives in you.' And that power is over all sicknesses. Right there I received and released the healing power of God in my life and I was healed."

(10/20/83)

Did you notice how he claims a direct revelation from God? Did you notice also the subjectivism? (I released the healing power of God.)

Others in Robison's family were also affected. "I went home

to my wife and to my daughter who had suffered from asthma 17 years. I saw asthma leave my daughter instantly as we prayed on my sofa. She has had one attack since, and preachers made fun of her when she got sick, and said, 'I thought you got well.' How sad. That's a symptom of sickness in the body of Christ, that we can't even go and say, 'Well God healed me, but now I'm having a struggle, pray for me.'" (10/20/83)

Notice how the *physical* sickness came back (supposedly) because of a *spiritual* problem. I think Mr. Robison comes dangerously close to agreeing with Job's friends who were convinced that Job's physical plight had spiritual causes.

Mr. Robison, is it not true that God Himself permitted physical troubles to enter Job's life? Is it not true that God Himself refused to give Paul good health, even after he had prayed three times? How would you answer that?

"Many of us Christians have been just taught to accept what comes our way. Some Christians believe it is even just wonderful to be sick for Jesus. And so I was just living wonderful sick for Jesus. We say, 'God makes us sick.' Then we pay the doctor hundreds of dollars and thousands of dollars to get well. We are asking the doctor to work against God. God makes us sick and we say, 'Doctor, get God off my back and make me well.' There's no rhyme or reason." (10/20/83)

Others seem to believe that a sickness or a sinful habit is caused by a demon who must be driven out. Here we must place the great miracle workers of our day, Ernest Angley of Akron, Ohio, and Rev. W.J. Grant of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Both perform miracles on their shows.

Angley claims that he is not a healer but that his hand is in

the hand of the Healer. Before healing someone (the patient often suffers from some kind of back problem or addiction to nicotine) Angley asks two questions: 1) Have you been born again? and 2) Do you use tobacco?

A "typical" miracle goes like this:

Angley: "Born again?"

Patient: "Uh huh."

A: "You don't smoke?"

P: "No. I chew a little."

A: "You're not going to chew a little any more! Have you got any with you?"

P: "I got a little bit in my pocket."

A: "Well get that little bit out. Since you're dealing in little bits lets get that little bit out."

P: "I've been one of your partners for a good while. I've been sheddin' tears because I'm just glad to see people healed. And I've got a bad back and I've exercised every day."

A: "Say, 'O God, // save my soul. // Forgive me my sins. // Deliver me from the tobacco habit. // I'll never use it again. // So help me God! // Heal my body! // Come in, Jesus! // Come in, Jesus!"

"Whoooo! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Pick up that foot. Slam it down. Do it again. Stand on that one and throw that one down hard. Now put it ~~down~~ there, put it down there. Now twist, turn, do anything and see what God has done for you."

P: "I'm fine. I feel fine."

A: "God bless you." (1/8/84)

Other times Angley adds, "Let me know when he (the patient) comes out of the spirit." One wonders if the patients have been put

into some kind of trance.

I also wondered about Angley's two key questions. Does an affirmative answer to "being born again" mean that the patient is "psyched up" enough to cooperate in the miracle? Does a negative answer regarding the use of tobacco mean that there is at least some hope for a healthier body?

Angley strikes some of the patients on the head as he "heals" them. (Perhaps he is indeed aiming at the right place.)

Do Angley and Grant really heal diseased, rotting tissues, just as Jesus healed leprosy? Again I have got my doubts. Rather than debate the validity of Angley's miracles I would point to his false teachings we have already cited.

PART VII - What does he teach about the "last things"?

Many of today's evangelicals teach a millennium - that Christ will return and reign for a thousand years here on earth. Many teach a rapture - that the Christians will (soon) be plucked from this world while the unbelievers endure the tribulation described in Revelation. These false teachings are based on a misinterpretation of Revelation 20 and I Thessalonians 4.

The host of the 700 Club denied the rapture.

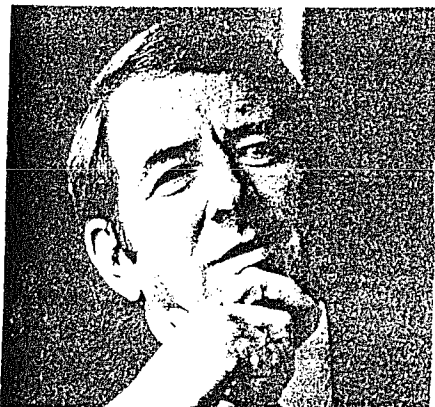
On the other hand Oral Roberts claims a moment is coming "when the Father is going to decide that the witness of Christ has been made to all nations. And at that split second I Thessalonians 4:16 and 17 is going to take place. There's going to be a miraculous translation. The dead in Christ will rise from their graves. The living saints shall defy gravitation. And if we are alive at that time, we are going to leave this earth! We are going to leave this earth! (applause) for a little while." (1/15/84)

Rex Humbard sees nuclear war coming after the rapture. "If you were writing 2600 years ago, and you were going to describe an atomic warfare and a soldier on the field, I want you to listen to this and I ask you to describe it better. Ezekiel ((he means Zechariah)) chapter 14:12 - 'And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet.' While they're standing, suddenly their flesh will all be gone. There'll be nothing but a skeleton. 'Their eyes will melt in the sockets,' before that corpse can hit the ground." (1/15/84)

Rex continues to describe the atomic warfare from a Bible reference I was not able to find. "The Bible goes on and says, 'And when someone comes by, and sees this corpse, they dare not go near; but they call the special carriers of the dead, who remove that body to a graveyard beyond the Dead Sea (over in Jordan) where no man dare go that way.' How can you describe radiation any more than that?" (1/15/84)

PART VIII - Does he mix politics with religion?

A radio ad for the 700 Club claimed that the program is "TV journalism with a different spirit; it relates world events to your events." The program offers world news with a religious commentary.



Jerry Falwell

Jerry Falwell heads the famous "Moral Majority." He claims, however, that the Moral Majority is purely political and has no connection with his religion or with his TV program, "The Old Time Gospel Hour."

Dr. Kennedy is a fluent anti-Communist speaker. He sees Communism as a religion. And I believe he is right. Personally I am happy that such a loyal

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American is on national TV. It happens, however, that as he condemns Communism and praises Capitalism the personal message of sin and grace sometimes receives little mention.

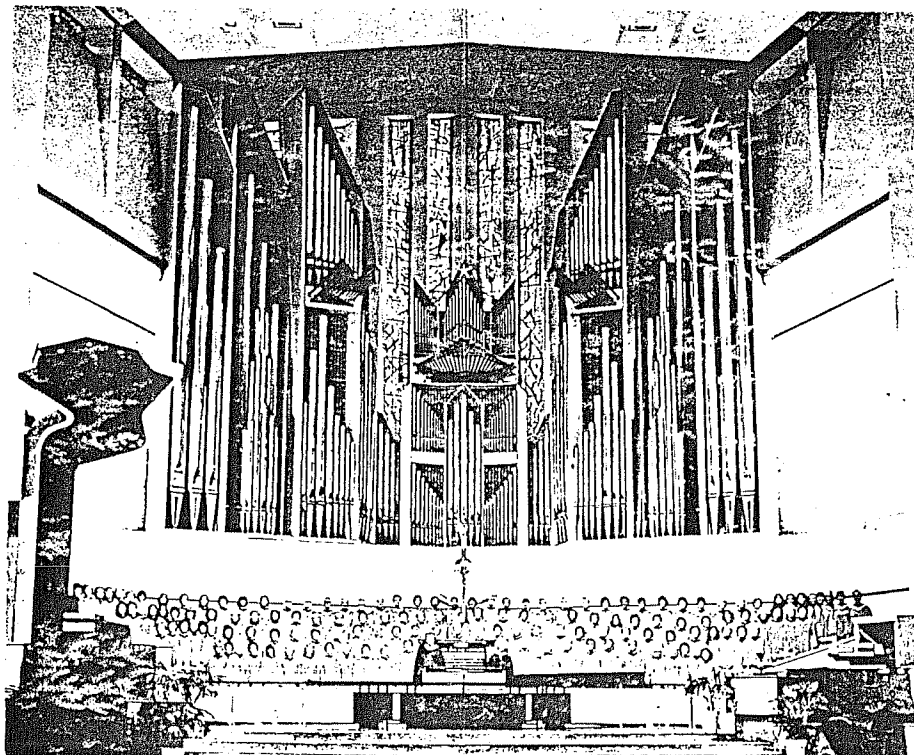
PART IX - How about his music?

It is apparent that the religious programs on TV have professional producers and directors. No doubt much of the music is "better" than what we hear in our own congregations on Sunday morning. No doubt the music helps to attract an audience.

Much of the music has a subjective, Baptist flavor. Specifically I heard children's music. from Rex Humbard. (1/15/84)

I heard music that would be a little too lively for most of our congregations from Ernest Angley. (1/8/84)

In my opinion Dr. Kennedy and his five-keyboard pipe organ (pictured below) get the "A". (11/20/83)



PART X - Some concluding questions and answers

Many of these evangelists repeat and repeat and repeat pleas for money during long segments of their program. If these men are indeed "belly-servers", hypocrites who are preaching only to enrich themselves, their behavior would be nothing new. Paul also contended with such individuals. (Philippians 1) Jesus tells us also that some who preached and performed miracles in His name will be rejected on Judgment Day. (Matthew 7:22f) In this particular paper I have chosen to focus attention, in an objective way, on the teachings of these men rather than on their fund raising, their fancy homes, and their expensive cars.

Why are these men so popular? Perhaps it is because they use (or at least claim to use) the Bible. Perhaps in this way they attract people whose churches no longer say, "Thus saith the Lord." Perhaps the popularity is because the evangelist is a slick performer or a gifted orator. Perhaps it is because many show a concern for individuals and their problems. Many of the programs have 24-hour hotlines. People are invited to call and talk to a "friend" who will listen to the problem and will then pray with the caller.

Should a WELS Lutheran watch any of these programs? I would not make it a regular habit. If we have identified someone as a false teacher, we can, through our regular watching, lead ourselves into temptation.

What can we pastors and teachers learn from the TV evangelists? We can learn that we are indeed living in the last days when, Jesus says, there will be many false prophets and many false Christs. We can learn that there are still many people out there in the world who are wandering as sheep who have no shepherd. We can learn the value of *textual* preaching. (Many in the REformed camp preach on a

topic and then look for a text which tends to prove the point they want to make. Our Lutheran pastors generally preach on a particular text from the Scripture. This is a good practice. The text does the talking. Examples are added by the preacher to illustrate what the text clearly states.)

May God continue to give us pastors and teachers who love the truth and hate the lie; pastors and teachers who are enthusiastic about the Gospel and are eager to share it; pastors and teachers who are filled with a genuine concern for Christ's sheep and lambs. And may the Holy Spirit fill us and guide us and bless our work to the glory of His name!

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