

TV evangelist scandal humorous hypocrisy

Fifty percent of TV evangelist viewers do not have a favorable view of TV ministers according to a New York Times/CBS News poll released Tuesday.

This comes as no surprise, especially in light of the recent Jim Bakker scandal and of Oral Roberts' plea for \$8 million. TV evangelists always have been the subject of humor and satire, but now they are living up to the comedians' punch lines.

When Roberts announced he had received a message from God to raise \$8 million by April, the entire money-making process of television ministries came into question. Critics had a field day mocking Roberts and other ministers.

Both those who watched Roberts' program and those who did not became skeptical. The idea that God had spoken to this overstated minister and told him to raise money or die seemed presumptuous. It enhanced the critical view that these people were running some sort of scam — not in the name of God but for their own benefit.

Nonetheless, Roberts managed to raise the money, and — thank the Lord — is still with us today.

But just as one TV evangelist starts to fade back into the woodwork, another has jeopardized the profession's reputation. The news of Rev. Jim Bakker's affair seven years ago calls into question the true values of these moral men.

Bakker's tryst with Jessica Hahn, a seemingly fun and free-loving woman, apparently led to his blackmail and eventually his resignation as head of the PTL ministry.

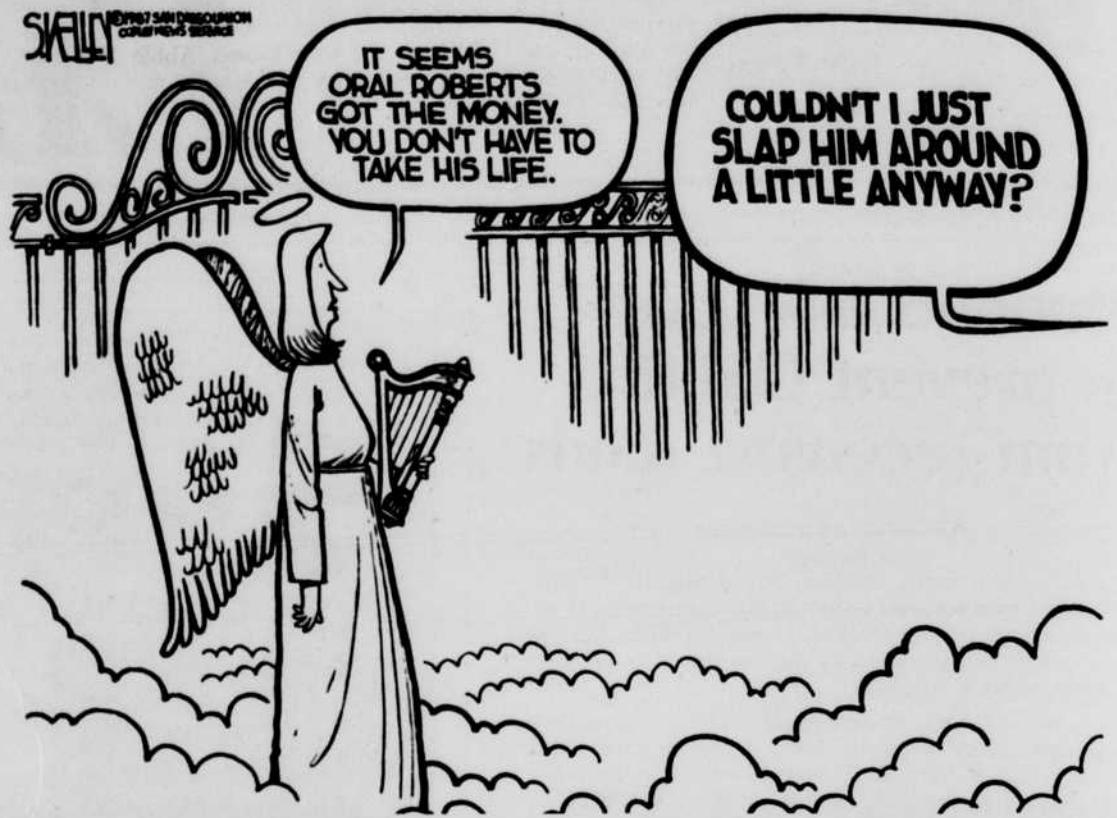
The entire incident reflects the human and sometimes immoral side of the men who preach their views of the Bible to millions of viewers every Sunday morning.

But at the same time, problems of credibility continue to grow. The New York Times / CBS poll mirrors the mounting skepticism among the evangelists' regular followers. Their attempts to brush this nasty business under the rug only have created new problems. Not only are their followers leaving, but they are taking their checkbooks with them.

But maybe there is a positive side to this sticky ball of wax. These TV evangelists claim to speak for God. But if they continue to compromise their values and exploit their positions, where does that leave their viewers? More and more are turning away from their preaching.

The freedom of religion gives people the opportunity to choose and express their own beliefs. This scandal shows that despite stereotypes, the followers of these ministers are not brainwashed. They can determine their own values and, in a sense, have a say over the conduct of evangelists.

Bakker has put the PTL in a state of hypocrisy. The ministers have put themselves above their followers and now must prove that they practice what they preach.



Letters

To live or die

In response to the article and letters concerning the recent suicide of a University student: I have been a crisis intervention counselor for almost 15 years and have talked to hundreds of people who were contemplating suicide or had made an attempt at suicide.

What I learned most of all, without question, is that no one and no thing makes a person decide to kill himself or herself. It is a personal, individual choice. It is entirely the individual's decision.

At the same time, no one makes a person choose to live. I never "lost" any of my callers, and I never saved anyone's life. They made the decision to live. I may have offered them options they weren't aware they had, but they decided to live another day to exercise those options.

I suspect the friend of Mr. Fisher may be feeling a quite natural and expected feeling of guilt over the death of his friend and his "blaming" the University may be his way of dealing with that guilt.

I hope he realizes it's not his fault. It was Mr. Fisher's decision; it was his responsibility. Don't take that right and that

responsibility away from him.

The truth is we all make the decision to live or die every moment of our lives; some choose the latter. It's their decision to make.

Thank you.

Norma Sax
Career Information System

Swindler

This letter is in response to Dan Goulet's letter (ODE, March 13). Oral Roberts is not trying to raise money to send to Third World countries!

Oral Roberts is trying to raise money to pay off his multi-million dollar debt. This debt surrounds the construction of a worthless medical facility. Roberts' medical facility is unable to sustain its self financially.

With regard to the "left-leaning pop-artists" who "raped" the American public of its money; one of those "rapists" (the organizer of Band-Aid) was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts.

Band-Aid and USA for Africa donated the proceeds from concerts and record sales to help Third World countries. However, Roberts claimed that God threatened to kill him if the American public did not help him raise money.

Hey Dan, where is Oral's Nobel Peace Prize for feeding the starving? Oral does not have one! This is because he abuses his position as a religious leader to swindle the American public into paying his bills.

Maura C. Roche
Political science

Categories

It seems to be a fact of human nature that we tend to gather people into categories and label them. Perhaps this is because it is so much easier to deal with an entire group at once rather than taking the time and trouble to understand and respond to individuals.

Whether it is a particular race or color, some social or economic class, adherents of a certain system of belief, those of a different gender or who simply hold values and opinions different from our own — we simply lump together people with some characteristic in common (even if it is something relatively insignificant), and then proceed to treat everyone in the group of widely differing people as if they were all alike.

By finding examples of bizarre beliefs or conduct in people belonging to a particular category (and every category has some), we can label the entire group as being like that.

Using simple association, we can thus effectively pin a charge on these people that is difficult to refute. After all, aren't those extreme examples members of that group, and therefore representatives of what people in that group do and believe?

The ease and effectiveness with which we can persuade others to fear, mistrust and even hate a whole category of people make this method attractive — that is, if we don't mind using a tactic that damages the lives and reputations of innocent people. By using it, we illustrate bigotry in action.

William Moore
Music school

Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, typed, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in. The Emerald reserves the right to edit the letter for length or style. Letters to the editor should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300, EMU.

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