

Untold Wealth of TV Preachers

Wealth of the Cults of Christianity

Name	Wealth
Kenneth & Gloria Copeland ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry Annual revenues at \$70 million True assets: unavailable
Paul & Jan Crouch ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual income excess: \$ 120 million \$ 8 million home \$ 5 million estate in Newport Beach ,CA 8 home-ranch in Dallas
Creflo Dollar ³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$18 million Building in Atlanta Rolls-Royce \$5 million private jet Evander Holyfield donation: +\$7 million True assets: unavailable
Marilyn Hickey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bought 260,000 square foot mall in Denver True assets: unavailable
Benny Hinn ⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual income: +\$120 million \$8.5 home in LA \$80,000 Mercedes-Benz G500
Rodney Howard-Browne ⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$16 million building Luxurious home in Cory Lake, Tampa
T. D. Jakes ⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mansion in Charleston Mansion in W.Va. Mansion in Dallas
Robert Tilton ⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grand mansion in a \$1.39 million lot in Miami Beach 50 foot yacht Annual income: \$24 million
Randy & Paula White ⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$2.1 million home A private jet plane A Cadillac escalade A Mercedes-Benz Sedan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual income: \$150 million in late 90's

Jimmy Swaggart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fine & court settlement: +\$10 million • \$100 million Swaggart's Complex
Jim & Tammy Bakker⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convicted & imprisoned for swindling his members of \$158 million
Joyce Meyer¹⁰	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A \$10 million Jet • A \$107,000 Mercedes-Benz Sedan • A \$2 million home • A 2.3 million home of her children • Annual income: +\$95 million • A \$11,000 French watch • A Crownline boat • A \$20 million building
Pat Robertson¹¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBN resale: \$200 million • Illegal Goldmine in Liberia, Zaire: +\$1 Billion
Morris Cerullo¹²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A \$12 million home • A \$50 million Sky limousine Gulfstream G4
Joel & Victoria Osteen¹³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undisclosed assets +\$100 million
John & Diana Hagee¹⁴	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combined salary +\$4 million • Undisclosed assets
Juanita Bynum¹⁵	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undisclosed assets
Robert Schuller¹⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • +\$20 million building • Total assets: undisclosed
Oral Roberts¹⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2.4 mansion • \$2 million Falcon Fanjet • \$10 million Daughter's estate
Mike Murdock¹⁸	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual income: \$21 million • 2 -\$25,000-35,000 Rolex watch • \$500,000 Cessna Citation • \$4,500 Fountain pen • \$75,000 BMW • \$125,000 Coin collections
James Eugene Ewing¹⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • +\$100 million • Total assets: undisclosed
Rex Humbard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • + \$80 million • Total assets: undisclosed
Max Lucado	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total assets: undisclosed
Jack Hayford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total assets: undisclosed

Stuart Briscoe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total assets: undisclosed
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Joyce Mayer¹⁰ - The building is decorated with religious paintings and sculptures, and quality furniture. Much of it, Meyer says, she selected herself. A Jefferson County assessor's list offers a glimpse into the value of many of the items: a \$19,000 pair of Dresden vases, six French crystal vases bought for \$18,500, \$8,000 Dresden porcelain depicting the Nativity, two \$5,800 curio cabinets, a \$5,700 porcelain of the Crucifixion, a pair of German porcelain vases bought for \$5,200. The decor includes a \$30,000 malachite round table, a \$23,000 marble-topped antique commode, a \$14,000 custom office bookcase, a \$7,000 Stations of the Cross in Dresden porcelain, a \$6,300 eagle sculpture on a pedestal, another eagle made of silver bought for \$5,000, and numerous paintings purchased for \$1,000 to \$4,000 each. Inside Meyer's private office suite sit a conference table and 18 chairs bought for \$49,000.

The woodwork in the offices of Meyer and her husband cost the ministry \$44,000. In all, assessor's records of the ministry's personal property show that nearly \$5.7 million worth of furniture, artwork, glassware, and the latest equipment and machinery fill the 158,000-square-foot building. As of this summer, the ministry also owned a fleet of vehicles with an estimated value of \$440,000. The Jefferson County assessor has been trying to get the complex and its contents added to the tax rolls but have failed. Meyer drives the ministry's 2002 Lexus SC sports car with a retractable top, valued at \$53,000. Her son Dan, 25, drives the ministry's 2001 Lexus sedan, with a value of \$46,000. Meyer's husband drives his Mercedes-Benz S55 AMG sedan. "My husband just likes cars," Meyer said. The Meyers keep the ministry's Canadair CL-600 Challenger jet, which Joyce Meyer says is worth \$10 million, at Spirit of St. Louis Airport in Chesterfield.

Paul Crouch², president of California-based Trinity Christian Center of Santa Ana, received \$403,700. His wife, Janice Crouch, earned \$347,500 as the vice president for the organization, which broadcasts sermons nationally on the Trinity Broadcasting Network". [According to 2001 IRS income tax statements, \(990 forms\) www.rickross.com](http://www.rickross.com)

Crouch's private suite in TNT building. Visitors may stroll the manicured grounds, browse the Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh Gift Shop and relax in a state-of-the-art Virtual Reality Theater to watch high-definition videos of the life of Christ. But what most won't see at Trinity Broadcasting Network's new world headquarters is founder Paul Crouch's 8,000-square-foot executive suite, which occupies half of the top floor of the three-story building and is strictly off-limits to the public. Behind doors kept locked throughout construction are a wet bar and sauna, a personal gym, meticulously handcrafted black walnut woodwork and ornate velvet furniture.

The third-floor quarters will serve as Crouch's executive suite. He broadcasts his "Praise the Lord" program from the second floor of the building, dubbed Trinity Christian

City International. TBN officials described the quarters as "standard executive offices" and declined The Orange County Register's request to view them. Crouch does not grant interviews and would not comment. But others who have been inside or helped build the suite say it is more befitting a mansion than an office building. "This makes Hearst Castle look like a doghouse," said Steve Oliver, a master journeyman carpenter.

Adding substantially to the cost of Crouch's quarters were a variety of expensive, handcrafted woodwork items, including \$825-apiece lions that flank the massive fireplace, and an array of columns priced at \$1,500 each and up. All of the items were crafted from black walnut, said Stephen Enkeboll, president of Raymond Enkeboll Designs Architectural Woodcarvings in Carson, which caters to upscale clients.

Joel Osteen's¹³ flourishing Lakewood enterprise brought in \$55 million in contributions last year, four times the 1999 amount, church officials say". ([Earthly Empires Businessweek.com](#))

Osteen's best-seller, *Your Best Life Now*, has sold 2.5 million copies since its publication last fall.... In his book, Osteen talks about how his wife, Victoria, a striking blonde who dresses fashionably, wanted to buy a fancy house some years ago, before the money rolled in. He thought it wasn't possible. "But Victoria had more faith," he wrote. "She convinced me we could live in an elegant home...and several years later, it did come to pass." ... Early in 2001, when the city of Houston decided to build a new sports/entertainment complex the powers that be placed the Compaq Center (home to the Houston Rockets) on the market. It is extremely unlikely that they dreamed it would be leased by Lakewood church, much less that the church would make a one-time, lump-sum payment of \$12 million to the city for the first 30-year lease period (with an option to renew). Which, as it turns out, is only the beginning. After all one has to make the transition from basketball to god, from run of the mill entertainment complex to a place "unlike any other place in the nation".. a \$70 million project.

"John and Diana Hagee"¹⁴ founded GETV 25 years ago, the organization has gone from a back-room operation broadcasting Sunday sermons to San Antonio area viewers to a 50,000-square-foot multimedia studio broadcasting to 127 television stations and 82 radio stations nationwide...

.... According to the 990 forms for GETV, the organization in 2001 netted \$12.3 million from donations, \$4.8 million in profit from the sales of books and tapes, and an additional \$1.1 million from various other sources, including rental income.

As the nonprofit organization's president, Hagee drew \$540,000 in compensation, as well as an additional \$302,005 in compensation for his position as president of Cornerstone Church, according to GETV's tax statements. He also received \$411,561 in benefits from GETV, including contributions to a retirement package for highly paid executives the IRS calls a "rabbi trust," so named because the first beneficiary of such an irrevocable trust was a rabbi.

The John Hagee Rabbi Trust includes a \$2.1 million 7,969-acre ranch outside Brackettville, with five lodges, including a "main lodge" and a gun locker. It also includes a manager's house, a smokehouse, a skeet range and three barns.

Taken together, his payment package, \$842,005 in compensation and \$414,485 in benefits, was one of the highest, if not the highest, pay package for a nonprofit director in the San Antonio area in 2001."

".. Hagee's compensation was among the highest pay packages for television evangelists in 2001, according to IRS 990 filings" In Addition Hagee's wife "Diana Hagee received compensation of \$67,907 as vice president of GETV and \$58,813 as the special events director for Cornerstone Church". (www.rickross.com)

Pat Robertson¹¹ is a wealthy man... An extremely wealthy man. Some estimates put his net worth at 140 million. He lives on the top of a Virginia mountain, in a huge mansion with a private airstrip. He owns the Ice Capades, a small hotel, diamond mines, and until recently, International Family Entertainment, parent company of the Family Channel.

Diamonds are Robertson's best friend

By Ju-lan Kim

Thirty-five years ago, Pat Robertson founded the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), which laid the foundation for his financial empire. Using CBN resources, Robertson launched numerous other business ventures, including: the Family Channel, designed to distribute "The 700 Club," which became International Family Entertainment in 1990; Northstar Entertainment; Broadcast Equities; CBN Travel; American Sales Corporation; International Charter Jet; Kalo-Vita; and the Founders Inn and Conference Center.

Under International Family Entertainment, a for-profit organization, Chairman Robertson and his son, Tim, received over \$1.1 million in salaries and bonuses in 1993 alone. According to Robertson, his close relationship with God has given him the insider's scoop on successfully using what he calls "God's marvelous system of money management". With so many projects to run, Robertson seems to have his hands full (with cash that is).

Although the financial success of CBN is well-known, one of Robertson's lesser known organizations is his African Development Company (ADC). ADC is a private venture that invests in various land-based operations in Africa, such as mining and agriculture, with the stated goal of redirecting profits toward humanitarian projects. In Zaire, the

ADC operates a diamond-mining project in the center of Zaire's prime diamond mines and forestry concessions.

Zaire is a country with a population of approximately 43 million, most of whom live in poverty. At the same time, Zaire's head of government, Mobutu Sese Seko, a dictator who has plundered the wealth of his nation for over thirty years, is able to live luxuriously surrounded by the comforts of vacation homes, yachts, and champagne. Corruption, health concerns, and human rights abuses in Zaire have long been an international concern, causing many countries, including the U.S., to turn a diplomatic cold shoulder toward Mobutu.

U.S. intelligence agencies have reported that billions of dollars in aid given to Zaire during the Cold War now find a comfortable home in Mobutu's personal bank accounts. Human rights groups around the world have campaigned against the numerous atrocities committed against the Zairians during his thirty-year reign, including the deaths of tens of thousands of citizens. Mobutu has refused to implement any democratic reform that would lessen his power.

President Mobutu continuously campaigns to distance himself from his appalling human-rights record, which has earned him more foes than friends. However, despite the innumerable strikes against him, it seems that Mobutu has attained a new trading partner, Pat Robertson. Mobutu's partnership with Robertson is another of Mobutu's attempts to build ties between his illegitimate regime and the U.S., as a way of gaining international acceptance.

Robertson, the former U.S. presidential candidate, has shown that he is not the least bit uneasy with utilizing Mobutu's personal fleet of planes and yachts, which were purchased off the backs of Zaire's oppressed citizens. Dr. Makau Mutua, projects director of the Human Rights Program at Harvard Law School, in the February 27, 1995 issue of TIME magazine observed that "Robertson is Mobutu's biggest American catch."

When presented with more of the facts surrounding ADC, one is forced question the nature of Robertson's relationship with such a dictator. Should a "good Christian" profit from diamonds and lumber mined by the functional equivalent of slave labor? While other Christian relief programs donate aid to Zaire via private organizations to avoid any connection with Mobutu's corrupt government, Robertson rushes forth with open arms towards Mobutu.

On February 16, 1992, Zairian Protestants and Catholics held a demonstration asking for reform. Mobutu's troops opened fire on the demonstrators. Despite the bloody massacre that followed, coupled with criticism by the U.S. State Department, Pat Robertson was among the first in line to wine and dine with Mobutu in Zaire.

Perhaps Robertson's financial gains are enough for him to ignore any humanitarian pleas for reform in Zaire. Not only does Robertson profit handsomely off of his tidy diamond-mining operation, but Mobutu also makes his own, more than satisfactory

income, through his country's \$300 million-a-year mineral trade. Although Robertson has supported a number of dubious causes, his relationship with a character like Mobutu is one that may lead to more questions than Robertson is willing to answer. The love (of money) relationship between Robertson and Mobutu may leave Robertson's associates feeling a bit more than uncomfortable.

Ju-lan Kim, an IFAS intern, is a student at Simon's Rock College of Bard.

Anonymous. "Zaire Trip Criticized." *The Christian Century*, April 15, 1992, 394.

Lipez, Dick. "Friends of Pat." *Freedom Writer*, September 1995, 9.

Lippman, Thomas W. "A Dictator With Friends in High Places." *Washington Post* national weekly edition, August 14-20, 1995, 20.

Purvis, Andrew. "Jewels for Jesus." *TIME*, February 27, 1995, 30.

Creflo Dollar³ ministry's income is unavailable, but newspaper accounts say the ministry paid \$18 million in cash for his new 8,000-seat World Changers Church International on the southern edge of Atlanta. He flies to speaking engagements across the nation and Europe in a \$5 million private jet and drives a black Rolls-Royce. and travels in a \$5 million private jet. Dollar's ministry became a focus of a court case involving boxer Evander Holyfield in 1999. The lawyer for Holyfield's ex-wife estimated that the fighter gave Dollar's ministry \$7 million. Dollar refused to testify in the case. ([St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#). [STLtoday.com](#) 11/18/2003)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Mar. 5, 2000 says this

Creflo Dollar Jr. has unabashedly embraced his name by building a religious empire on the message that his brand of piety leads to prosperity. He drives a black Rolls-Royce, flies to speaking engagements across the nation and Europe in a \$5 million private jet and lives in a \$1 million home behind iron gates in an upscale Atlanta neighborhood... The World Changers campus sits on a slight hill... Inside the church is a lobby befitting a five-star hotel. Chairs are scattered about on baby blue carpet thick enough to muffle the sound of the stadium-size crowd arriving for a Sunday service... There are no visible traditional Christian symbols - no cross, no image of Jesus, no stained-glass windows...Dollar lives in a \$1 million home owned by the church in the Guilford Forest subdivision in southwe

Juanita Bynum¹⁵ "million-dollar" wedding is extravagant. She is the well-known evangelist and author of the best-selling *Matters of the Heart*, to Bishop Thomas W. Weeks III featured a wedding party of 80, all friends and family, 1,000 guests, a 12-piece orchestra, and a 7.76-carat diamond ring. The black-tie wedding cost "more than a million," the bride said, and included flowers flown in from around the world. "My dress," she says, "took nine months to make. All of the crystals (Swarovski) on the gown were hand-sewn. The headpiece was sterling silver, hand-designed. ([www.marriage-planner.com](#)).

Robert Schuller's¹⁶ "Tower of Power" television ministry makes more than \$50 million a year and is beamed to about 20 million viewers in more than 180 countries. Schuller claims to receive between thirty and forty thousand letters a week and has a mailing list of over one million people. He has authored more than 25 books, several of them national best sellers". (Source: "A Profile of Robert Schuller," by J.P. Gudel, *Forward*, Spring 1985.) (Rapidnet.com)

Made almost entirely of glass (and a spiderweb framework of white steel), the star-shaped "cathedral" is something to behold: over 400 feet long and 200 feet across, rising some 12 stories above the ground, with an angular, mirror-like exterior, its transparent, sun-lit interior features a giant television screen, and an altar of rich marble (bearing a natural image that some think resembles Christ on the cross). The cathedral's pipe organ (with 16,000 pipes, it's among the five largest pipe organs in the world), the 100-plus voices of the Hour of Power Choir, or the electric fountain/stream that runs down the middle of the central aisle. The church seats almost 3,000 worshipers for Sunday services. But giant, sliding glass doors on the side of the church allow even more worshipers to watch the services from their cars in the parking lot.

Boasting over 12,000 panes of glass, and a sparkling, contemporary bell tower, the "cathedral " is an Orange County landmark visible for miles around. The new glass tower was added in 1990, and is a stunning edifice in its own right; at the tower's base you will find a tiny, dome-shaped chapel housing an uncommon, cross-shaped crystal. Instead the usual wooden church pews, the "cathedral." offers soft, theatre-style, individual seats (each bearing a small plaque with the name of a donor). During Sunday services, the church offers a nursery and childcare services. (www.seeing-stars.com)

Rodney Howard Browne⁵ and wife Adonica oversee their \$16 million church, which they founded in 1996. The couple live in a six-bedroom, four-bath lakefront home on CoryLake in northwest Tampa. The home includes a dock, spa, pool and gazebo.

(St.Louis Post-Dispatch. STLtoday.com 11/18/2003)

"T. D. Jakes⁶, who drives a Mercedes, has moved with his wife and their five children to a luxurious seven-bedroom home with swimming pool in the White Rock Lake area of Dallas.

"Flanked by a row of elegant cedars and surrounded by a tall iron gate, the \$2.6 million pink brick house with fluted cream columns and a four-car garage is imposing even in this affluent neighborhood. Next door is the former mansion of oil tycoon H.L. Hunt, once known as the richest man in the world

The Dallas Observer magazine reports: "His conferences draw tens of thousands. His television show, broadcast on both the Trinity Broadcasting Network and Black Entertainment Television, reaches hundreds of thousands. He has spawned his own industry, T.D. Jakes Ministries, which sells his books — 10 in all, with five best-sellers — and videotapes, the income from which allowed him to spend nearly \$1 million last year on a residence in his hometown of Charleston, West Virginia." "He says he is not

embarrassed by this, even though his extravagant lifestyle has caused controversy in his hometown that will likely follow him to Dallas. His suits are tailored. He drives a brand new Mercedes. Both he and his wife Serita are routinely decked out in stunning jewelry. His West Virginia residence — two homes side by side — includes an indoor swimming pool and a bowling alley. These homes particularly caused the ire of the local folks. One paper wrote at length about the purchase and made much of their unusual features. A columnist dubbed Jakes 'a huckster.'" (Kaylois Henry, "Bishop Jakes Is Ready. Are You?,")

The Dallas Observer magazine, June 20-26, 1996, pg. 19 and 22)

Benny Hinn⁴: "William Lobdell, a Times staff, wrote about target-rich environment: the unregulated industry of televangelism is estimated to generate at least \$1 billion through its roughly 2,000 electronic preachers, including 80 nationally syndicated television pastors. He told of the founder of the Dallas-based Trinity Foundation, Ole E Anthony, whose operatives struck dumpster pay dirt five years ago in south Florida when they found a travel itinerary for Benny Hinn, the Trinity Broadcasting Network's superstar faith healer who has filled sports arenas with ailing believers seeking miracles cures. Hinn's itinerary included first-class tickets on the Concorde from New York to London (\$8,850 each) and reservations for presidential suites at pricey European hotels (\$2,200 a night). A news story, including footage of Hinn and his associates boarding the jet, ran on CNN's "Impact." In addition, property records and videos supplied by Trinity investigators led to CNN and Dallas Morning News coverage of another Hinn controversy: fund-raising for a \$30-million healing center in Dallas that has yet to be built.

According to a June article in The Dallas Morning News, shortly after Hinn announced his move to Texas, he said God had told him to build a "World Healing Center," and Hinn appealed for money. As much as \$30 million was collected, but the center was never built. In April 2000, he told Trinity Broadcasting Network's Paul Crouch, "I'm putting all the money we have in the ministry to get out there and preach. The day (to build the healing center) will come. I'm in no hurry; neither is God."

Also about April 2000, Hinn's ministry began building a 58,000 square-foot office building in Irving. A few months after that, in August 2000, a holding company that is a subsidiary of Hinn's ministry began building a "parsonage" -- a \$3 million, 7,200-square foot oceanfront home -- in Dana Point, Calif.

"Nor has Hinn publicly acknowledged his salary, though he told CNN in 1997 that his yearly income including book royalties was somewhere between \$500,000 and \$1 million. A spokesman has said Hinn generates about \$60 million a year in donations". (The Sun Herald. Posted on Fri, May. 17, 2002).

However in a report dated 07/06/2005 the Denton Record Chronicle says this.. (<http://www.dentonrc.com/sharedcontent/APStories/stories/D8B5M18O0.html>)

"According to documents provided to the newspaper by a watchdog group, the inquiry into the ministry began a year ago and the IRS has asked for dozens of detailed

answers. The Trinity Foundation has investigated Hinn for more than a decade. Hinn ministry responses to IRS questions and a purported salary list for ministry officials are among documents that Trinity members said they salvaged from trash bins outside Hinn-related offices. The salary document lists Hinn as CEO and his annual earnings as \$1.325 million."

"Since February of 2001, the Hinn Web site has been soliciting donations for a new orphanage to be built in this little town outside Mexico City saying it would be finished "soon." But when we checked in Mexico, more than a year-and-a-half later, we could find no sign of any construction. But the Hinn web site kept promising that construction would be finished in, "a few short months." That was news to the local official in charge of construction in the town, who told us the Hinn ministry hadn't even been issued a building permit yet. What we did find, however, was this sign — curiously not in Spanish, but English — attached to a house the ministry called it's 'temporary orphanage,' which appeared to be empty. The Hinn Web site continued to solicit donations". ([NBC News, Dec. 27, 2002](#)).

"He lives with his wife and three children in a multimillion-dollar oceanfront mansion near the Ritz-Carlton hotel in Dana Point.... In an attempt to clear up his image, Hinn suggests meeting a Times reporter at the Four Seasons hotel in Newport Beach. Accompanied by bodyguards, Hinn arrives in his new Mercedes-Benz G500, an SUV that retails for about \$80,000. He is dressed casually in black, from designer sunglasses to leather jacket to shoes... Hinn fiddles with his cell phone, which sports a Mercedes logo....(Hinn drives an \$80,000 Mercedes-Benz G500.). First, Hinn declines to divulge his salary. (He told CNN in 1997 that he earns between \$500,000 and \$1 million annually, including book royalties.) "Look, any amount I make, somebody's going to be mad," he says.... Hinn does reveal that the \$89 million taken in by his church in 2002 is a record for his Grapevine, Texas-based ministry, which has experienced double-digit growth during the past three years through direct-mail requests, viewer donations and offerings taken at the Miracle Crusades. By comparison, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Assn. had revenues of \$96.6 million in 2001, the last year available.

Many of Hinn's financial practices go against those set forth by the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability, an organization that gained popularity after the televangelist scandals of the 1980s as Christian groups sought legitimacy in the eyes of donors. The council's standards include maintaining an independent board of directors with at least five members and allowing the public to view its finances" ([Extracted from the Los Angeles Times July 27, 2003](#))

Randy and Paula White⁸: The Tampa Tribune in an article by Michelle Bearden titled Expensive Walls recently reported: TAMPA - When preachers Randy and Paula White bought the \$2.1 million red-brick house on Bayshore Boulevard last month, they were already thinking ahead to November. "We always do a 'Table in the Wilderness' Thanksgiving dinner for the homeless," says Randy White, senior pastor at Without Walls International Church. "Now that we have the space to do it in our own yard, we'd like to find a way to bus them here for the party."

The Whites, who came to Tampa 13 years ago, say they sometimes worried they wouldn't have rent money after they started their church in 1991.

Last year, they claimed a combined income of \$600,000. Of that, \$179,000 is Randy White's annual salary from Without Walls, a church that claims 15,000 members and brings in \$10 million yearly in revenues. Co-pastor Paula White, who is gaining international acclaim as a televangelist and speaker, is paid \$120,000. They also receive an \$80,000 housing allowance from the church. Their ministry owns a jet airplane, a Cadillac Escalade and a Mercedes-Benz sedan.

The Whites did not reveal whether they had borrowed funds from their ministry to purchase their home. ([Comparing Financial Accountability Among Evangelists. Cephas Ministries](#))

"**Oral Roberts**'¹⁷ two California homes, partly for security reasons, were not much discussed by the ministry. Oral also remained sensitive about press criticism of his lifestyle. His house in Palm Springs, purchased for \$285,000 and financed by a Tulsa bank, was his only privately owned home. In 1982 ORU endowment funds were used to purchase a \$2,400,000 house in a high-security development in Beverly Hills. Considered a potentially profitable investment, the house served as Oral's West Coast office and residence." (p. 355)

"Oral's homes in California inevitably kept alive the old questions about his personal wealth and lifestyle. While probably not as probing as the press had been fifteen years earlier, reporters still took a keen interest in Oral's financial affairs. In 1981, the *Associated Press* published Roberts' personal income figures for the preceding five years--ranging from \$70,000 in 1976 to \$178,000 in 1978.

"Here is a portrait of the real Oral Roberts, the man not too many of his admirers know. He dresses in Brioni suits that cost \$500 to \$1000; walks in \$100 shoes; lives in a \$250,000 house in Tulsa and has a million dollar home in Palm Springs; wears diamond rings and solid gold bracelets employees 'airbrush' out of his publicity photos; drives \$25,000 automobiles which are replaced every 6 months; flies around the country in a \$2 million fanjet falcon; has membership, as does his son Richard, in 'the most prestigious and elite country club in Tulsa,' the Southern Hills (the membership fee alone was \$18,000 for each, with \$130 monthly dues) and in 'the ultra-posh Thunderbird Country Club in Rancho Mirage, California' (both father and son joined when memberships were \$20,000 each--they are now \$25,000); and plays games of financial hanky-panky that have made him and his family members independently wealthy (millionaires) for life. (When his daughter and son-in-law were killed, they left a \$10 million estate!)" ([Evangelist R.L. Sumner's review of Give Me that Prime-time Religion by Jerry Sholes](#))

"In addition to his healthy income, derived mostly from book royalties, Oral continued to enjoy generous expense accounts: 'The Robertses wear expensive clothes and jewelry and travel in a company-owned eight-passenger fanjet.'

Oral Roberts: An American Life", by David Edwin Harrell, Jr., Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press 47405.

Jim and Tammy Bakkers⁹ bought mansions and luxury cars and the doghouse was air-conditioned. (The New Straits Times, 6th October 1989 The New Paper, 6th October 1989). "Jim Bakker, who was convicted of wire fraud and served five years in prison, said he plans to start another TV ministry, this time in Branson, Mo".

(Knight Ridder Newspapers, Sep. 19, 2002)

Mike Murdock¹⁸, the president and director of the Mike Murdock Evangelistic Association, has had several luxury vehicles at his disposal. Some belong to him, and some are owned by the ministry. The BMW, worth at least \$69,000, was a gift, Murdock says, while the ministry bought the Jaguar. He says he got an idea that allowed him to buy the Cessna Citation 500, worth \$300,000 to \$500,000. Federal Aviation Administration documents show that the jet belongs to the ministry.

Murdock likes to describe himself as a "Wal-Mart guy." But a \$25,000 Rolex adorns his wrist. And he can shoot hoops on the "NBA-style" basketball court at his estate or take notes with a \$4,500 fountain pen.

Details of Murdock's lifestyle were pieced together from documents obtained by the Trinity Foundation, a televangelist watchdog group in Dallas; Denton County property-appraisal records; a report of a burglary at his home; interviews; and excerpts from his broadcasts and books. They show a man living a Hollywood lifestyle.

Murdock says he drives a BMW 745, which typically sells for \$69,000 to \$75,000. He used to prefer driving a Porsche to the ministry. He has had at his disposal a ministry Corvette, Jaguar and Mercedes, Lincoln Continentals and, since August, a corporate jet valued at \$300,000 to \$500,000.

Murdock lives in a Spanish-style, 3,177-square-foot adobe house that he calls *Hacienda de Paz* – or "House of Peace." He, not the ministry, owns it. Also on the grounds is a 1,660-square-foot building whose use is unclear. The 6.8-acre estate, east of Argyle, was valued at \$482,027 by the Denton Central Appraisal District in 2002, documents show.

Few get a good view of the estate. It is protected by a black wrought-iron fence. The gates are monogrammed with two M's – his initials. On the well-kept grounds, a path winds near a tennis court and two of at least four gazebos on the property. At various times, Murdock has had a camel, an antelope, a donkey, ducks, geese, a lion and dogs. Near one edge of his property, he once kept llamas in a paddock. He has also had koi and catfish at the estate. He had 24 speakers wired in trees so he could hear gospel music everywhere on the grounds, he said during a 1998 broadcast.

Inside his home, Murdock has had several fish tanks, including a large saltwater aquarium. In the gym, Murdock can work out with his personal trainer. He can relax in front of his home theater or in a Jacuzzi. And he can enjoy the fountains in his pool and living room.

Murdock once kept coin and jewelry collections valued at \$125,000. He reported the information to the Denton County Sheriff's Department after a theft. Sheriff's spokesman Kevin Patton said investigators dropped the case because Murdock would not list what had been stolen.

Murdock has a second Rolex watch, besides the \$25,000 one he often wears, he said during an appearance Oct. 19 in Grapevine. He didn't state its value.

Murdock has said he was given the watches, expensive suits, several Chevrolet Corvettes, the BMW and a rare Vetta Ventura sports car – one of 19 made.

From 1993 to 2000, IRS records show his compensation package averaged \$241,685 a year, or about 9 percent of the \$21,040,299 the ministry took in during that period.

James Eugene Ewing¹⁹ built a direct-mail empire from his mansion in Los Angeles that brings millions of dollars flowing into a Tulsa post office box. The approach reaped Ewing and his organization more than \$100 million since 1993, including \$26 million in 1999, the last year Saint Matthew's made its tax records public.

Ewing's computerized mailing operation, Saint Matthew's Churches, mails more than 1 million letters per month, many to poor, uneducated people, while Ewing lives in a mansion and drives luxury cars. The letters contain an alluring promise of "seed faith": send Saint Matthew's your money and God will reward you with cash, a cure to your illness, a new home and other blessings. They often contain items such as prayer cloths, a "Jesus eyes handkerchief," golden coins, communion wafers and "sackcloth billfolds." Recipients are often warned to open the letters in private and not discuss them with others.

The approach reaped Ewing and his organization a gross income of more than \$100 million since 1993, including \$26 million in 1999, the last year Saint Matthew's made its tax records public. And while much of the money is spent on postage and salaries, Ewing's company receives nonprofit status and pays no federal taxes.

Though Ewing claims it is a church, Saint Matthew's Churches, once called St. Matthew Publishing Inc., has no address other than a Tulsa post office box. It has two listed phone numbers in Tulsa and both are answered by a recorded religious message.

"He capitalizes on the isolation of the loneliest and poorest members of our society, promising them magical answers to their fears and needs if only they will demonstrate their faith by sending him money," Anthony said. (Ole Anthony, founder of the Trinity Foundation. a nonprofit religious watchdog group)

"He is, quite literally, the father of the modern-day 'seed-faith' concept that fuels the multibillion-dollar Christian industry known as the 'health-and-wealth gospel.' "The only ones becoming rich are the men like Ewing." (Ole Anthony, founder of the Trinity Foundation. a nonprofit religious watchdog group). Ewing's flair for effective, dramatic

direct-mail appeals won him jobs writing for evangelists including Tilton, Rex Humbard and "Rev. Ike." In many cases, the letters are identical but contain different signatures.

The Trinity Foundation, which obtained copies of the identical letters, has dubbed Ewing "God's Ghostwriter."

"We had nine different televangelists essentially sending out the same letter," Anthony said. "He (Ewing) makes most of his money by selling these packages to televangelists." Anthony said one Ewing letter, written for Humbard, brought in \$64 for each copy mailed. Another mailing by Humbard contains a "sackcloth billfold" and asks recipients to mail a "seed offering" of \$19 to a Boca Raton, Fla., post office box.

A similar letter from Tilton also contained a "sackcloth billfold" but encouraged recipients to return a "seed of faith" of at least \$709.00. Joyce said Ewing has written for many other evangelists.

1997: St. Matthew Publishing Inc., incorporated at Joyce's Tulsa law office, files documents with the Internal Revenue Service reporting \$15.6 million in revenue. Ewing reports receiving \$307,187 in salary and benefits while McElrath reports \$277,000 in salary and benefits.

1999: St. Matthew Publishing Inc. reports \$26.8 million in revenue. Of that, the organization spent \$4 million on salaries, \$989,140 on legal fees, \$817,000 for housing and rent and \$649,000 on travel. (From the Tulsa World . 4/27/2003).

One of Ewing's letters, written for evangelist Rex Humbard, reportedly brought in as much as \$64 per mailing. In 1968, Ewing, an eighth-grade dropout, doubled Oral Roberts' cash flow almost overnight with another mail campaign, sources say. Roberts rewarded him with an airplane, according to former Roberts aide Wayne Robinson.

(<http://www.dallasobserver.com/issues/1997-11-06/feature2.html/page1.html>)

Robert Tilton⁷: "At his peak he purchased 5,000 hours of air time per month and appeared in all 235 U.S. television markets. His daily Success-N-Life show reached nearly every television set in North America. Tilton's mass-market ministry pulled in an estimated \$80 million per year, and his church drew as many as 5,000 worshippers to Sunday service.

Tilton gleaned the donations by pitching a narrow, well-oiled version of the Pentecostal "prosperity gospel." In exchange for \$1,000 "vows" from followers, Tilton promised to lobby God for miraculous improvements in their health and finances. According to one survey, he spent 68 percent of his air time asking for money. "If Jesus Christ were alive today and walking around, he wouldn't want his people driving Volkswagens and living in apartments," explained Tilton, who favored a Jaguar or Mercedes-Benz and lived a lavish private life in mansions in San Diego and Dallas.

Then came November 21, 1991. On that evening, ABC's PrimeTime Live aired the findings of a six-month investigation into the ministries of Tilton and two other local TV preachers, W.V. Grant and Larry Lea.

The segment on Tilton was by far the most damning. At its heart was the accusation that Tilton never saw the vast majority of prayer requests and personal correspondence sent to him by faithful viewers. On the air, Tilton promised to pray over each miracle-request. But on the ground, ABC said it found thousands of those requests and viewers' letters dumped in garbage bins in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Checks, money orders, and in some cases cash, food stamps, and even wedding rings sent by followers had been removed for deposit at a nearby bank.

Lawsuits from outraged followers quickly followed, along with further media exposes concerning dumped prayer requests. (Tilton claimed the trashed prayer requests were part of a plot against the church.) State Attorney General Dan Morales launched a fraud investigation of Tilton's ministry, and the FBI and U.S. Postal Service subpoenaed the church's records the day after the ABC broadcast"

"The problem is that mailing lists grow stale when the TV screen stays dark too long. Now, though, it's bright once more. Tilton's toll-free prayer line is up and running, and his Tulsa, Oklahoma, post office box awaits a hoped-for onslaught from the faithful. Every weekday between 11 a.m. and noon Eastern Standard Time, a fiberoptic telephone line carries the voice and image of Robert Tilton out of a small TV studio in Miami Beach. The signal runs under city streets and across Biscayne Bay until it reaches WPBT-Channel 2, a public television station in North Miami. A for-profit affiliate of the station called Comtel beams Tilton's brand-new Success-N-Life show up through the heavens to a satellite transponder.

What hasn't changed is Tilton's repetitious message. He quotes a bit of Scripture and speaks in tongues, but mostly he pushes emotional buttons: Cancer. Emphysema. Alcoholism. Credit card addiction. Job layoffs. These ailments can be cured through faith. But faith requires proof, a "vow." To make a vow, preferably \$1,000, call the 800 number on the screen. (When a reporter called the hotline to seek solace regarding credit card addiction, a telemarketer took less than a minute recording his name, phone number, address, date of birth, and type of ailment, promising to pass on the information to Pastor Bob.)

Corporate records show that Tilton registered his nonprofit Word of Faith World Outreach Center Church Inc. in Florida more than a decade ago, but the registration is inactive. There are a few titillating hints in the Broward County court files: a trio of traffic tickets handed out over the years (one for doing 93 in a 55 m.p.h. zone on Christmas Eve, another for "failure to use due care," and a third this April for driving without registration documents.) Computer research reveals 12 addresses used by Tilton in the last decade, three of them in Fort Lauderdale. But two of those are commercial mail drops, and the last, a \$500,000 waterfront vacation home in the Rio Vista, Florida,

neighborhood, was sold last year as part of Tilton's divorce settlement with his first wife; ditto for his 38-foot fishing boat.

Federal records show that Tilton bought a 50-foot Carver motor yacht last year in Fort Lauderdale for \$500,000. In July 1996, he told a judge in Dallas that he was living aboard and making \$4,000 monthly payments on the boat, which he named the Liberty Leigh. (He is presently building a two-story home on a \$1.39 million oceanfront lot on an island in Biscayne Bay off Miami Beach, and his ministry owns a 50-foot yacht. His ministry takes in about \$24 million a year)

Cross examination of Leigh Valentine, September 4, 1996, court testimony:

"Bob's mail ministry is a lie and a total deception. He does not write those letters. He did not even proofread them during our marriage. He makes it sound like [he's] writing to you right now, this is what God spoke to me for your life, Jesus will appear to you tonight; if you sleep with this little red cord under your pillow, you will prosper. He doesn't even know what's going out to those people, and he doesn't care, as long as they send their money in. One time he said in one of the letters that was sent, I will be taking these to the East Coast to pray for you by the ocean where Jesus prayed for his people. So we flew to Fort Lauderdale and we checked into a four- or five-star hotel on the beach and got a nice penthouse view... That is stealing from people. Most of those people are on welfare. They're little Hispanics and blacks. And he even said, what I do is I look at a map and we go after the ghettos, we go after those on welfare, we go after those that don't read, those that are lower socioeconomic backgrounds. That's who we send our letters to..."

<http://www.dallasobserver.com/issues/1997-11-06/feature2.html/page1.html>

Morris Cerullo¹² lives in plush comfort in a multi-million dollar mansion behind two security gates on a luxurious estate in the exclusive Ranch Sante Fe neighbourhood, purported to be the richest neighbourhood in the country. MCWE owns and controls numerous business properties, several luxury automobiles and a gold-plated private jet. He is reported to have personally estimated his net worth at 100 million dollars. Does this sound like the lifestyle of a minister of the gospel?" asks Lundy.

Attorneys say trouble seems to be following Cerullo and his MCWE ministry. Numerous former employees have reported possible criminal violations to the Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Customs and the U.S. Postal Inspector. Cerullo has been banned from television in Great Britain unless he can authenticate the miracles he supposedly performs, and the Jewish community has protested what they call his underhanded attempts to convert practising Jews to Christianity. In addition, many established, respected religious organizations have distanced themselves from Cerullo and MCWE. Attorneys in this case are deeply concerned that Cerullo's fundraising practices are harmful, especially to the elderly. Earlier this year, Superior Court Judge Linda B. Quinn denied a motion by Cerullo to dismiss Warren's claims. Cerullo appealed Judge Quinn's ruling. He sought immunity from litigation under the First Amendment to the Constitution. The appeal was to be heard in the Superior Court of Appeals of the State

of California at the San Diego County Courthouse at 9am on November 14.

The Sky Club

- The Tiltons & Whites each own a Hawker-Siddeley Dragon Jet
- The Copelands, Jerry duplantis, Jerry Savelle & Mark Bishop each own a Cessna Citation 500
- Fred Price, Creflo Dollar & Benny Hinn each own a Grumman Gulfstream II's (Tag price: \$4.5 million)
- Paul Crouch owns a Bombardier Challenger 604 (Tag price:\$16.5 million plus interior remodeling:\$1.2 million)Kenneth Hagin (deceased) own a Challenger 601 (\$9.6 million)
- Joyce Meyer owns a Challenger 600
- Kenneth Copeland owns a Cessna Citation 550 Bravo (\$3.5 million), a Grumman Gulfstream II (\$4.5 million), a Cessna Golden Eagle, a Beech E-55, aside from other smaller planes and last year, they ordered 2 units (one for Kenneth, one for Gloria) of Cessna Citation X Super Jet, (+\$20 million each), delivery date is March 2006.
- (<http://elitecxteam.org/update.php>)

Fund-raising Without Shame

By Lewis Willis Arkon, Ohio Posted without editing

Folks, it is evident that much of our society has lost or willfully abandoned the ability to be ashamed. It appears that people will do almost anything these days and never perceive that such is a shame to themselves. Who among us has not been repulsed at the flaunting by gays and lesbians of their shameful godlessness? We cringe in horror when some terrorist organization "takes credit" for a car bomb that kills several people and injures dozens more. We find it incomprehensible that a movie or television star will perform in some of the filth that is offered to the public as entertainment. Thirty years ago these things were a disgrace to all who were involved and we wonder how public attitudes could change so quickly. Instead of being ashamed, these people seem to rejoice in these deeds.

It should not surprise us that religion has been affected by this same shamelessness. Nor should it surprise us that such is not new in religious life. When Paul wrote to the Philippians he said, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:18-19). In Paul's day there were those who found delight as they did things of which they should have been ashamed. They did not know when to blush because of sins they had committed! Well, folks, time has not changed this situation. Religionists still do shameful things but they rejoice over them instead of being ashamed.

There is no better illustration of this than the brazen, shameless, unabashed fund raising techniques of the modern-day television preachers. The purpose of this article is to chronicle some of the schemes these men are using to raise money in hopes that the information might be useful to the reader.

"Crisis Management"

Due to the crunch of these economic times, almost all owners and managers of business have become familiar with the expression "Crisis Management." Basically, this signifies managing a business in the midst of a crisis due to declining sales, while production and labor costs remain high. It is the business of surviving until times get better. The modern television preacher has learned "Crisis Management" but in reverse. It seems they always "Manage To Have A Crisis!" They have learned that contributions come in better if they are beating the airwaves with emotional appeals about how the Devil is trying to destroy them and the "Work of God." This just cannot be allowed to happen and the money must flow in or the listeners will be letting God down. For instance, according to a report in the Akron Beacon Journal (2-8-83), Rex Humbard, told his audience that his ministry was \$3.2 million in debt. He said, "I'm facing a financial lion - bills that are trying to devour this ministry. Like Daniel, I need a miracle of deliverance. I don't have the money to pay these bills." His ploy worked because his listeners responded with \$4 million! And, the whole country has heard about Oral Roberts' recent "crisis." God was going to "take him home" if he failed to raise \$8 million by March, 1987 to prepare medical missionaries to be sent to needy nations. The money flowed in. According to reports in the media Roberts stooped to an all-time low with his emotional appeal that people send in money and help him live a little longer! Some stations, like WFAA-TV in Dallas, became so incensed that they cancelled his program. However, Oral used the cancellation for further appeals for help, charging that this was just the work of the Devil and his listeners had to fight back - by sending in their money, of course! Oral was not the least bit ashamed of his financial promotion.

Apparently, there is no shame left in the hearts of these men. They will use any means they can get by with to promote their enterprises. One of their favorites is to tell their audiences "I that God told me" to proceed in this way to fund the work "that He told me to do." The preacher who is flying high these days is Jimmy Swaggart. Newsweek magazine has dubbed him the "King of Honky-Tonk Heaven" (5-30-83). Newsweek (4&87) reported that he raised \$142 million in 1986 - almost \$3 million per week. But I remember him before he became "King." when his ministry was just "catching on," he needed more space for the operation, so he made an appeal for funds. In a pathetic appeal he told his audience how God was blessing his ministry and how it was growing and souls were being saved by the thousands. He needed more room but his accountants told him he did not have the money to expand. Not knowing how much the expansion would cost, he got an architect to draw up a plan and tell him how much it would cost. It happened that it would cost \$50 per square foot to build the new facility and he didn't have the money. So, he told his audience, he took the matter up with God and God told him to ask his audience to buy 1 square foot and send in a gift of \$50. His

audience responded and the building was built. It is nothing short of amazing how God instructs these men on their fund raising schemes! God always has the answer and the listener is to obey God or blaspheme against Him!

Merchandising The Audience

In an attempt to "help the listener" so that he does not disobey God, these men tell exactly how the audience can do what God wants them to do. It is not uncommon for 25-50 percent of their air time to be used in raising funds. Some might use the entire broadcast for fund raising. Also, when they have manufactured some special crisis, they frequently have telethons which are fashioned after the Jerry Lewis telethons. These often go on for- days. They form "clubs" of their contributors (such as the 700 Club, PTL Club, Ninety and Nine Club) and these are usually for their top contributors. Frequently the names of these club members are prominently inscribed at some special place in their headquarters. There is "pressure" imposed on the audience to be a part of this elite group.

These ministries are almost always selling something (Bibles, tapes of special lectures, albums, books by the evangelist, etc.) Robert I. Ableman and Kimberly A. Neuendorf, Professors at Cleveland State University, conducted a study a few years ago and a part of their work examined the fund raising techniques of TV preachers. They discovered that the average faithful viewer of religious broadcasting watches for two hours per day. During that two hours, counting the promotions to buy some item or join some prayer partners group or the like, these viewers are asked to send in "more than \$138,000 in a year" (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 7/18/84). These are through appeals with a dollar amount stated - not just "send us all the money you can."

All the while, they remind people of how terrible it is to refuse to obey God by not giving as God wants them to. They also promise great and wonderful blessings, spiritual and financial, will come to those who do God's Will and give. Usually, they have some guest tell how he reluctantly gave on some occasion and God doubled or tripled the amount of his contribution in a direct, miraculous and wonderful way. I heard Kenneth Copeland on an Oral Roberts broadcast tell how he had surprised his wife by announcing he had committed to make a "seed offering" to Oral's ministry at a time when they were unable to live with comfort. Copeland pointed out that shortly after making the commitment, to his surprise, someone gave him twice the amount that he had offered to give. It was something like \$10.00 a month and he received \$20.00. His faith must not have been very strong at that time or he might have offered to give \$1 million to Oral and God would have given him \$2 million! That is the implication of this tactic these men use.

Almost all have had some Bible publishing company produce some special memorial or ministry edition which they "give" to their contributors "free of charge." Jimmy Swaggart is currently promoting "the genuine Jimmy Swaggart Study Bible" (The Evangelist, The Voice Of The Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, Vol. 19, No. 2). The Bible is sent after 46 your fifth monthly pledge of \$20.00 or any payments made towards your World Outreach Partner Pledge totaling \$100.00." The Professors mentioned above discovered that "the

average cost of a Bible sold by television evangelists is \$192.00." They sell albums of the songs they've recorded for \$25.00 or so each. These can be bought at a record store for \$5.00 or \$6.00 and a profit is made on them at that price by all who are involved in the enterprise.

Outlandish Promotions And Claims Sometime ago Jim Bakker built a "world-class" hotel at Heritage U.S.A. It is a monstrous thing. He has 11 acres under roof. And, it is a multi-story facility! For a gift of \$1,000 you get a life-time membership which entitles you to stay 4 days and 3 nights free each year. Through such promotions, Bakker has developed the Heritage U.S.A. complex that Oral Roberts called a "Christian Disneyland" (The Richard Roberts Show, 3-24-87), "valued at about \$160 million" (Detroit Free Press, 3-21-87).

Probably the most dramatic fund raiser is Oral Roberts. If the audience is to believe him, God is constantly talking to him. He has seen visions of all kinds of things which have been revealed to him, "by the Lord" of course. One of his better known visions was a 900 foot Jesus standing over his City of Faith Medical Center back in 1980. In 1983 he had a 7-hour talk with Jesus in which the Lord assured him that he was the one selected to find the cure for cancer, and his followers were to send in money to pay for this undertaking. In 1986 he was told by God to raise \$8 million dollars to send medical missionaries from his hospital into needy nations. If he failed to raise the money by March, 1987, he said God would "call him home." Well, he played this successfully and raised the money. After the \$8 million was raised, with several days left in March, he ascended his "Prayer Tower" to work on the "overflow." He then made the startling announcement that he needed that much more every year!

He had said he confidently expected "a miracle from God" which would enable him to live longer. I am certain you have heard that he was able to go over his target amount when Jerry Collins, who owns two greyhound racing tracks, gave him a check for \$1.3 million. I must have missed something somewhere. If this was a miracle from God, I guess God has gone into the gambling business. Interestingly, while Oral was under his death threat from God, his son, Richard, moved into "a new 7,091-square-foot house" (Akron Beacon Journal, 3-14-87). This was done before the money had been raised! If I am ever under such a death threat from God, I hope my son will hold off buying his new house until at least I have my hands on the money! With these types of fund raising techniques Oral has amassed a religious empire in Tulsa, Oklahoma which is said to be worth \$500 million (Ibid.).

Getting Rich At Audience Expense

The shameless part of all of this unending clamor for money by the TV preachers is the way in which they have become rich at the expense of their audiences. Keep in mind that most of their contributors send in gifts of \$5, \$10 or \$15. During the time that Rex Humbard's ministry was in such desperate circumstances, he and his sons were amassing a fortune in real estate. County tax records indicate that Rex owned a house worth \$450,000 and his son owned one that cost \$350,000. An Akron Beacon Journal

article (2-8-83) stated, "While Humbard's Worldwide Outreach Ministry has solicited money from the public to solve financial problems, Humbard and his two sons, Rex, Jr., 39, and Donald, 35, have purchased \$1. 4 million in property in the exclusive Quail Ridge Country Club community, Palm Beach County property records show" (my emp., LW).

The Charlotte (N.C.) Observer (5-29-83) printed a long article about the excesses of Jim Bakker. Since 1981, he and Heritage Village Church and Missionary Fellowship, Inc. have purchased Bakker a condominium in Florida, a new residence, a neighbor's house and a duplex in the neighborhood at a cost of \$1,009,000. There is a wide difference in reports about his real estate holdings. One of the networks said he has five homes. Others say two. They have been variously valued from \$600,000 to over \$1 million. Whatever the exact amount, he has done quite well. They lived so lavishly that "the Bakkers drove matching RollsRoyces" (Detroit Free Press, 3-21-87). Bakker has been able to do these things with salaries paid from funds raised on PTL. In 1986 he raised \$129 million!

It seems that Oral Roberts has had more success in shielding his extravagance from the press than have some of his counterparts. Even so, the Akron Beacon Journal (3-14-87) reported, "Roberts and his wife have homes in Tulsa and Palm Springs, travel in private jets, wear expensive clothes and jewelry." His Palm Springs home was reported by ABC News Nightline (3-26-87) to be valued at \$2.4 million. Most in his audience could not afford the real estate taxes on such a mansion. This is wealth accumulated from his television ministry. His TV broadcast of 5-27-84 discussed the problems they were having in operating their medical center. His solution at that time was to ask his audience to come to Tulsa for a physical examination. Apparently the insurance companies would defray some of his costs. This is the same fellow who gained his fame as a faith healer. His operation costs \$1 million per day, so raising funds is essential.

Jerry Falwell has recently agreed to take over Jim Bakker's operation. In 1986, Falwell brought in \$73.5 million for his religious empire (Newsweek, 4-8-87, p. 19). I have not seen anything on his personal extravagance, but he ought to do quite well if he succeeds in combining these two organizations.

One of the most highly regarded of the TV preachers is Jimmy Swaggart. A Baton Rouge, LA television station, WBRZ, reported on the family corporation which Swaggart has formed for his ministry. He has 14 members of his family drawing a salary totaling \$350,000 a year (Akron Beacon Journal, 10-23-83). He is able to do this because he brought in \$142 million last year. His ministry was scandalized when it was reported that his wife had an \$11,000 desk in her office (Newsweek, 5-30-83). He has subsequently built a school in Baton Rouge which he is supporting from revenues raised through his ministry, so pressure will be on him to keep the money coming in. These men seem unable to resist the temptation to live lives of splendor at the expense, and on the money, of other people. Presently his wife is trying to raise \$3 million for his 52nd birthday gift (The Evangelist, 2-87). This money is to be used for new editing suites for their world-wide television outreach. This is the fellow who will "sell" you a tie bar, lapel

pin or pendant for only \$125.001 His magazine also tells you that they are prepared to help you in drawing up your Will so that his ministry will benefit from it.

If space permitted, more and more information could be presented about these preachers and their shameless escapades. Especially is this true as the media mess is unfolding daily before us. I suspect you are like me - sick and tired of hearing about the whole business. Swaggart was right when he identified this scandal as "soap opera" material.

The Apostle Peter warned of false prophets "by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you" (2 Pet. 2:2-3). Paul spoke of those 44 who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Tit. 1:11). Through the years there have been many examples of men like those the apostles described, but no one can deny that the modern TV preachers fall under the condemnations found in these Scriptures.

And What About Us?

All of this is in vivid contrast to the simple way that the Lord intends money to be raised for the support and proclamation of the truth. The church is taught, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. 16:2). Paul also wrote, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). Following these directives, the church can and must provide the money necessary to discharge the mission God assigned to the church.

Let me say a few words about the passive way in which most congregations deal with this matter. We act as though we are ashamed to tell God's people to give as God has taught. Frequently we seem apologetic when it is necessary to remind them about giving. Perhaps we are afraid some will think we are applying "pressure" like that which is applied by television preachers. I doubt that any of us comes close to applying pressure like they do. But, it appears to me that we are a bit nonchalant regarding giving. Few faithful churches, made up of middle-class members, have contributions that begin to compare with those of the denominations about us. They are endlessly in pursuit of money, while we, with seeming indifference, just get along with whatever the contribution happens to be.

We need to apply more "pressure" to the matter of our giving and get our contributions up to where they ought to be. If we will apply the same pressure to giving that we apply to getting people to be baptized, or to attend the worship, we will not be exceeding the use of a prudent amount of pressure. Let us never be guilty of excess in this matter. Let us never be weak about the God-appointed duty to give as we have been prospered. There are many lost souls who could be reached with more effort and more money. Brethren, we will not be guiltless if we do not use our best abilities to reach them with

the Gospel. This can be done without sinking to the shameless tactics of television evangelists.

Guardian of Truth XXXI: 12, pp. 383-386
June 18, 1987

This page speaks for itself, that these TV preachers are interested only with your money. They are not concerned about your soul since they are preaching distorted and fraud Gospel that cannot save. They are preaching the gospel from hell, manifested by their greed for paper bills. They love, worship, and serve the god called mammon.

Conclusion:

- **Their wealth is not material prosperity of blessing in time** since they lack the maximum Bible doctrine in the soul that makes a believer spiritually mature.
 - **Their wealth is not the will of God** since they capitalize in the name of God in extorting money from their victims, promising something they cannot provide.
 - **Their wealth is not from God** since prosperity theology is rejected by God.
 - **Their wealth is not the plan of God** since they violate numerous principles of the divine establishment.
 - **Wealth is not the issue** in spiritual growth, momentum and spiritual maturity.
 - **Material prosperity** has nothing to do with genuine spirituality.
 - **Satan is making anyone fantastically wealthy** as long as they yield, submit and obey to his policy of good and evil (Matthew 4:9).
-