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3 Pages ▾ | 1 | 2 | 3 | >

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The Televangelist, unedited original document in it's entirety **Options** ▾

 **sister** Jul 7 2006, 03:44 PM Post #1

500 + posts

BlackSDA Enthusiast

Since I have alluded to "The Televangelist" in a number of my threads, quoted portions of it in some of my posts and it has also been referred to by others; I am now posting it in it's entirety and without comment. It is an interesting read...

Group: Members
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Sister

"The Televangelist"
 By: Jorgen VanBraun
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"The characters and events portray in the following story are fictional. Any resemblance to any real event or person, living or dead, is coincidental."

* * * * *

Introduction

Since the dawn of recorded history megalomaniacal men have identified and fostered the deepest communal fears of their fellow beings, presenting themselves as the one true answer to salvation. These men utilize certain tools that they all have in common to achieve and maintain control over, and the worship of their followers.

They identify their followers as a group, or a family that shares specific beliefs and practices that set them apart as unique. Those factors that are the primary differences between them and others make them superior. Often, the leader purports to have a direct connection to the culture's primary deity that is denied to all others. His words and actions carry the weight of divinity. Mistrust between the followers is encouraged. Questioning of the supreme leader is dealt with in the harshest manner available.

Those people who are not members of the group are portrayed as a threat to the group and to the individuals. Non-members are on the wrong side of the cosmic struggle between good and bad. What they say, what they write, everything about them must be viewed as an attempt to subvert, misdirect, and deceive the true believers. They are to look with suspicion on everyone other than their leader.

Whereas outsiders might taint the purity of the follower's beliefs, the leaders often work to build an isolated society where those aspects of life that might result in interaction with unbelievers are internalized. This sometimes involves conquest of territory, and generally results in the creation of boundaries. The leaders portray these boundaries as being there to keep evil out, but they are most often used to keep the believers in.

Control of, and involvement in the personal lives of the followers is

common between these megalomaniacs. Monitoring and control of what they do and say is important. It is also important to make examples of those who disobey. It tends to bring the believers closer together, and promote fear in those who might think with some measure of independence.

Love and fear often walk hand in hand. The leader is projected as a benevolent father who has placed himself in a position of great personal sacrifice for the good of his followers. He is loved and revered as a true father to his people. Sometimes a father has to punish his children, but it will always be done in love and with deep regret. He must protect his family from the ravenous wolves circling those whom he loves, and from the insidious turncoats who lurk within.

Any criticism of the leader is portrayed as a broader attack on the group. It becomes the first wave of an apocalyptic devastation of the very fundamentals that make them who they are, in the minds of the believers.

Until a dramatic action takes place, the general public does not view most of these leaders as any serious threat. Emperor Napoleon of France brought much needed freedoms to the populace and, had the support of much of Europe until he brought it to its knees.

Adolph Hitler turned the failed German economy around and provided millions of jobs. He built a well disciplined society out of the anarchy resulting from World War One and the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As their savior, Hitler had the full support of the German people, and much of the world until his war of conquest became global, and his true intention shone through. His actions, both good and bad, were taken with the best intentions. He firmly believed that a global Third Reich was the only salvation of the world, yet the world he was trying to save turned on him with a vengeance. In the end, he felt that he had done no wrong.

Pol Pot closed the borders of Cambodia and launched an internal bloodbath almost unequalled in history. Using the "loving father who is cleansing and protecting his children" psychology, he decimated the population of his country. He believed that he was saving the true Cambodia by getting rid of all foreign influence, and eliminating those people who showed any sign of being tainted. He did not consider himself a monster, he was a savior.

Jim Jones was active in local and national politics and had the support of the governor of California, the Mayor of San Francisco, and even President Jimmy Carter. He was revered as a great humanitarian who stuck up for the rights of the underprivileged and campaigned tirelessly for those politicians who supported him. He believed that God was working through him for the salvation of humanity. Then, for their own good, he killed close to one thousand people in a single day.

The Baghwan Shree Rahjneesh built a cult in Oregon that consisted primarily of wealthy and highly educated people. He drove the leadership out of the town of Antelope walking the edge of the law, but using mostly legal means. He renamed the town Rahjneeshee Puram and created a new tightly controlled society. Thousands of people thrilled to the spiritual enlightenment he brought them, and were left destitute and homeless in his wake.

David Koresh was the heavy-handed father of the Branch Davidians. He preached an apocalyptic message in which he was the personification of God on earth. His word was indisputable. In the end, he self-fulfilled his prophecy, and his group went up in an apocalyptic blaze.

These are some of the better known examples of megalomania, and they all had a beginning and an end. They all believed in what they did, and did it with the best of intentions. Are there such characters currently rising in power? Are there well-intentioned, yet evil leaders that we are unwittingly following after?

The Televangelist Prologue: The Inquisition

A long time ago...

The accused cries out in anguish as he is being torn apart. The crowd roars its approval, and the torturer pulls the rack a little tighter. Joints pop and sinews crack, but their sound is drowned by screams of agony. The Inquisition has condemned another soul to death by torture. Some people are upset by today's spectacle, but men of God, men who God called to leadership, men through whom God communicates to the common people have declared they have evidence that this person has committed grievous acts against God and man and is thus deserving of a hideous death.

There are people high in civil and church government who question the methods, and even the veracity of the leaders of the

Inquisition, but those who dare voice their questions soon find themselves shackled to a dungeon wall. No one from the lowliest serf to the Pope on his throne is safe from the tender mercies of the Inquisition.

In the beginning, the Church gave its tenuous blessing to the Inquisition and allowed its propagation. Then the Inquisition grew more powerful than the Church it was meant to support and became a menace. With no one daring to take them on, the Inquisitor's credibility with, and power over the people became absolute.

Now...

Five hundred years later, the world has moved on, and it is now the twenty-first century. Cries of anguish ring out as an accused soul is being ripped apart. The crowd roars its approval and the executioner pulls the rack a little tighter. It has been declared that there is evidence this person has committed grievous crimes against God and man. This time the rack is not a bloodstained wood structure, and the executioner doesn't wear a black hood. This time it is not the victim's body that is ripped apart; it is the soul. This time it is not the Inquisition who accuses, convicts, and executes the victim, but a televangelist. This time there is a different church.

The Televangelist Part 1: The Psychology

A young boy climbs up on a yard table behind the house. With a far way look in his eye, he holds a stick microphone to his mouth. Thousands of spectators packing the imaginary stadium are on their feet. They can't wait to hear the voice of their revered singer. Some forty-five years later, he smiles as the music comes to a close. He steps back as the audience applauds. The cameras continue to roll, sending their signal up to satellites and around the world as he steps up to the microphone and cries out, "Praise God!"

He tells the story of Moses, a lowly shepherd who went on to lead a nation because he followed God's calling. He tells how a humble carpenter (like Jesus) heard God's call and built a global television network even though he only had a high school diploma. He tells how previous to this, he was married to a wonderful singer and

how they ministered in song week after week in churches across the country, and how their marriage ended in her tragic death by car accident. He tells how the television ministry started in a series of miracles that began with a minister of another faith donating thousands of dollars worth of television production equipment. He tells about the many sacrifices he and his family endure to keep this ministry going. He tells about the little old ladies who turn down their thermostats to save up more money to support this great work of God. He says, "You too can do great things for God. How? Well God asks, 'What do you have in your hand?'" The people have their pocket books in their hands.

When the meeting is over, he is whisked away to an airport where his private jet is warming up for the trip home. He strides past a well-stocked galley and settles into a leather recliner. Leaning back, he closes his eyes and smiles as his jet soars into the night sky.

Memory takes the televangelist back over the decades to the events that made the man. As a teen, he learned that people are very susceptible to quiet suggestion; that they tend to obsess. He could spot a young couple who seemed to be hopelessly in love. He would go to the boy and tell him that the girl had been seen in private places with other guys and everyone knew that she was being unfaithful. Then he went to the girl and said that her boyfriend thought she was a floozy. Almost invariably he could break them up and end up a confidant to both. This was power.

He thinks back on his first marriage. This was the foundation to his understanding of what makes people believe in, and financially support a ministry. Weekend after weekend he and his family performed music and spoke in churches across the country. He learned that by telling the people that God spoke to him and he listened and did God's bidding, he could grab the majority. He would then wrap up the fence-sitters with a couple of financial miracle stories demonstrating how he stepped out in faith and God followed through by rewarding him. He learned that by giving a story of a person who was impressed by God to give a specific amount that turned out to be exactly what was needed to keep his electricity on, or make a mortgage payment that he didn't have the money for, other people wanted to be that miracle person and many large checks would land in the offering plate. He learned that music, tears, and stories of personal anguish due to the devil's attacks dramatically increased support. He also learned to publicize

any criticism of himself as criticism of God. If someone disagreed with him in any way, they were portrayed as attacking God's work. Creditors, people who had been left hanging in bad business deals, people whose marriages he had destroyed, and others were thus demonized. He learned that if he had reason to worry that someone knew too much about him, he could preempt anything that person might do by discrediting them. He could concoct a nasty story; usually sex based, and spread it around to their friends, family, church leaders, civic leaders, employers, potential employers, business associates and others. He also applied the label, "pathological liar" to them. Then, if that person ever exposed anything it was said to just be the revenge of an angry liar. Those early days were his real schooling.

The Televangelist Part 2: The Family

The televangelist enjoys reminiscing on the subject of his family. No one can say that his family is boring. Indeed, they are a very colorful group.

Many years ago the televangelist's Grandfather on his father's side suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. Thinking that his rooster had developed an attitude that would negatively affect the egg production of the chickens, he tied the rooster to a tree and beat it with a whip. A young boy was awed. On another occasion, he felt that his wife was out of line and needed to be put in her place, he stuck a fork in her head during a meal. A young boy was proud that his grandpa took charge so aggressively to defend his pride. His favorite grandchild, the one he spent the most time with and felt the closest to, would one day be the televangelist. Suffering from depression, two of his uncles committed suicide.

When his father was thirty-five years old he suffered a heart attack that resulted in serious physical debilitation. One aspect of this was an inability to function sexually. Shortly thereafter, his wife started a long-term relationship with her brother-in-law, the televangelist's uncle. Also on his father's side, an aunt took up with one of her nephews and moved to another state with him. One on his brothers, a pastor in the Church, had an affair with another brother's wife that resulted in that brother and his wife divorcing.

Another close relative has also enjoyed a little variety outside of her marriage. She has had some same-sex fun with other women,

as well as a fling with a male cousin.

One of the televangelist's older brothers left the Church and went through seminary with another denomination. He became a pastor, and built a church and grade school. Within a few years accusations of child molestation began to haunt him. Several young boys from his grade school accused him of sexual abuse. The televangelist's mother begged the parents of these children to not press charges against her son. They agreed that if the pastor left the state, they wouldn't file charges and he left.

Safely in another state, the pastor took on another church. For several years his church thrived and he was considered a model pastor. Then he molested another boy. This time his mother was not there to jump to his defense, so he left that state in a hurry. He called his televangelist brother to ask for help. Given a good job offer, he moved to a location just across the state line from where the televangelist was located (the area from which he first had to flee) and went to work for his brother. He became the Director of the production facilities, and traveled the world with his brother as pianist at meetings, rallies, and other events.

The televangelist recalled the many evenings spent in strip clubs, and availing himself of the services of prostitutes during his first marriage. As he traveled to various cities producing music records for locals who fancied themselves gospel singers, he was able to enjoy the local street walkers. At home, a young girl from a related by marriage was also fair game for a little variety, as is a young girl associated with his second marriage.

The Televangelist Part 3: The Money

With a sigh of contentment, the televangelist makes his way to the galley for a bottle of apple juice and a jar of cashew nuts. Settling back into his seat, he folds a lacquered walnut table out of the wall. He opens his briefcase and takes out six thick envelopes and one packet wrapped up in aluminum foil. On his way out of this evening's meeting, a number of people came up and handed him checks. These he gave to his assistant to deal with. What he placed in his briefcase could be nothing but cash. He is not disappointed. Counting twice, he comes up with the same figure. The next day, his assistant will turn the checks over to the financial department. He asked the people who gave him this cash if they

needed a receipt and they said no. He places the money back in the briefcase.

It is best that the paperwork demonstrate that the televangelist lives on a very low salary. The donors need to believe that their money is going strictly to further God's work. What they don't know won't hurt him. There are many ways other than salary for his ministry to provide for his earthly pleasures. He smiles over at his briefcase. He learned long ago that he could take large cash advances for various reasons and never return cash or receipts. Each day, when the mail comes in, certain people open it, count the donations, and send the money and the totals to his office. He goes over them and sends them on to the accounting department. The amount that arrives in accounting is often much less than the written totals... but then that could be because the people counting the money often make the mistake of counting donations that never happened.

On the televangelist's laptop computer is a half-written book. He has already written and published four. They are all self-published and then he sells them to his ministry at a profit of twelve cents per book. His first book sold more than one million copies in just a few months. Of course as president of the ministry, he has them heavily advertised, many of them given away and the rest sold at a loss. In this manner he is able to control all aspects of the market.

The air pressure in the jet changes and the wall monitor shows that it is beginning its descent. Several years ago it was a relief that he was no longer forced to endure the inconvenience of commercial air travel, with the acquisition of a private jet. No longer does the televangelist have to go through security, and travel on a commercial schedule. He knows that the contributors, and the church that support his ministry, would not appreciate that this convenience is leased at a cost of \$40,000.00 per month, so he has this expense placed in an anonymous account. In addition to the lease, the pilots cost \$700.00 per day, and there are operational costs including gas and maintenance. Well, what the people don't know won't hurt him, and he truly deserves the extra conveniences. Vacations, personal visits, trips to ball games, and medical appointments no longer require a long drive. He now uses the jet for trips that would have required as little as two hours of driving.

Several years ago, a donor who had several jets of his own

provided the funds to purchase a small jet. For several months the televangelist was happy with this, until shoulder rubbing with the jet set brought him to the realization that his jet was small and cheap. He flew people here and there meaning to impress them, and found that many of them had flown in much nicer private jets. His could only go one thousand miles on a tank of gas, which meant that he had to make an embarrassing fuel stop on coast-to-coast trips, and he couldn't fly trans-continental.

After a little research, the televangelist found the jet he now used

In the beginning when his ministry was still just a dream, the televangelist went to the pastor of a local church. This pastor was part of another denomination and had his church set up as a television production facility. The televangelist wanted to confer with him on how he should get started, and what kind of equipment he would need. They sat down and developed a plan whereby the pastor would say that he was donating his television equipment to the televangelist, who could then tell the members of his denomination a miracle story. He would say that a pastor of another faith had been impressed by God to donate all of his own television equipment to start this ministry. Of course the pastor kept his equipment, but the story did its job and the money started rolling in. This pastor's wife now serves as Operations Manager for the televangelist's ministry.

One of the first large donations was in the amount of \$50,000.00 and the televangelist was able to use almost half of that to pay off some personal debts. This was, of course, in the best interest of the ministry because such distractions would only hold him back. Thus began a very profitable portion of his life.

As the years passed, financial directors came and went. One of them went under a dark cloud of scandal. It was discovered that he was diverting funds into his personal accounts, paying his bills with company checks, and walking away with enormous sums of money. To the surprise of those few people who knew what had happened, the televangelist chose to keep this story under wraps. The financial director was terminated, but not prosecuted. Nor was he required to pay anything back. Indeed, he was given a company vehicle as a gift.

Not long after this, The United States Postal Service discovered that a mail carrier was opening letters addressed to the ministry

and taking cash donations. The televangelist went to the federal prosecutors and begged them to drop the case. He did not want it pursued.

In both of these situations, prosecution would have resulted in close scrutiny of the ministry's financial books.

The Televangelist Part 4: The Church

Arriving home, the televangelist starts thinking about his upcoming board meeting. The church that supports his ministry is made up of a World Conference, and various other levels of conferences, each falling under the other. The President of the Local Conference where his ministry is based is on his board of directors. This Conference president's parents both work for the televangelist. His personal assistant, his financial director, his chief legal advisor, and his facilities manager are all board members. Two of the board members, including the chairman, have programs that air on the television network. He has a new board member to whom he has just donated one million dollars, and appointed to head a new ethnic television network. He is comfortable that he owns the board.

Over twenty years ago the president of the World Conference asked the president of an association of lay workers for a recommendation on whether the church should support the televangelist. The recommendation came back that they should not, based on his very shady background. The church decided that they would give him their tenuous blessing in spite of the warnings.

The televangelist's TV network went up on satellite and became a regional service covering North America. His programs appealed primarily to the older, retired members of the church. These were the people who had money and were the most likely to make larger donations. They were also the people whose wills and trusts would soon come to fruition. His director of wills and trusts is very effective and takes in more money than the majority of the Church's organizations combined.

The Church started using the network to air its own events, and the televangelist's power in the Church grew. He interviewed various church leaders, highlighting their programs and projects

and they grew to rely on him for promotion. He acquired key figures in the Church and gave them regular programs on the network. The Church was happy. As the televangelist's network grew to cover the entire world, so grew the Church's ability to reach the entire world through television.

Then a new president was elected to the World Conference. He believed that since the televangelist's network was essentially the face of the Church to the world, the Church should have some input into what was aired. He asked that a joint programming committee be formed, and that a certain Church Conference president be added to the board of directors. The televangelist was enraged. He immediately started calling various people saying that this World Conference president had put out a hit on his life. He said that unmarked black helicopters were hovering over his house performing surveillance. Stories were concocted and quickly spread regarding anyone who agreed with the Church's new position. Donations to the televangelist spiked. How dare anyone persecute the beloved leader? The World Conference president and many of his administration were politically ruined.

When the time came to vote for a new church administration, the televangelist called in favors, made threats, and laid out bribes. The results were pleasing. The new World Conference president and many of his administration made numerous "love fest" appearances on TV with the televangelist. They told him how much they appreciated him and his enormous contribution to the Church.

Everyone was terrified of the televangelist. They knew that with his global television platform he could, and would, destroy anyone who dared disagree with him in any way. The Church decided to launch its own television networks. As they came within one year of launch, the televangelist worked tirelessly to block them from their own churches. He fabricated ugly stories about them, and said that they were nothing but a mimic trying to reinvent the wheel. He was genuinely concerned about them.

When some of the televangelist's employees left and applied for employment with the Church's network, he contacted his attorney (who also did some work with the Church), the people he owned in the World Conference, and other influential personalities, and spread terrible stories about these employees trying to keep them from working for the Church. He called one of these employees who disagreed with him on a fundamental matter and said, "I know

that you are trying to get work with the Church, and I won't let that happen because it will make you look right, and me look wrong."

One of the Church's most prominent evangelists said of the televangelist, "His network is the face of the Church to millions of people, and he is the face of his network."

The Televangelist Part 5: The Compound

The televangelist has a difficult time going to sleep. He is considering how best to utilize a recently acquired piece of property. His ministry now owns two-hundred acres of land. Many years ago he found that more power over his employees could be achieved through consolidating the various aspects of their personal lives and placing them under company control and observation.

At one time, the televangelist and most of his employees attended a local church about ten miles from his ministry headquarters. A problem developed. The pastor knew him too well, and many of the members were local people and family members who also knew too much about him. It occurred to him that if he had his own church, he could control all facets of it. He purchased an empty church building and asked his employees to attend there. Of course it wasn't mandatory, however...

The televangelist appointed the head of his pastoral department as pastor. He carefully handpicked the church board, the elders, and the various other positions, making sure that he was head elder and had a seat on the board. His presence at the meetings was all that was needed to keep control of the church's operation. After all, the entire leadership consisted of his employees.

Now his church needed the legitimacy of affiliation with the denomination. Pressure was applied in the right places and the televangelist's church was made an official church under the denomination's Local Conference. As the years went by, the televangelist had a new church building constructed on his ministry's property. A new pastor was acquired. One who as a singer, had music CDs to sell and appreciated the platform that a worldwide television network gave him. The ministry paid half of his salary, and the Church's Local Conference paid the other half. An associate pastor was hired, and the ministry paid all of his salary.

Now it was time to expand. Many of the televangelist's employees had children and he had grandchildren. A school building was constructed on ministry property. Staff and board members were once again hand selected. The school was placed under the denomination's church school curriculum to give it legitimacy. If a family was a member of the compound church, their children's tuition was free.

Staff housing was built on the ministry compound, and retirees was encouraged to have their own houses constructed on ministry property where they could stay until their death, one requirement being that they provide room and board for ministry guests.

The televangelist now owned the personal lives of his employees: church, school and housing. When church members went to their pastor regarding personal problems, the televangelist was informed. In school, the children were strongly indoctrinated in the idea that the televangelist was the supreme leader of Christianity under God among humanity. When marriages broke up, the televangelist decided who was right, and who was wrong based on how supportive each party was to himself and how useful his decision might be to future support. As personnel resigned and moved on, he decided what would go on their membership record as it was transferred to another church. He learned that knowledge is power. Everyone, from the lowliest employee to the World Conference president can be blackmailed or destroyed. If there are no skeletons in the closet, skeletons can be fabricated. The concept of "divide and conquer" was paramount to his power. Discredit those who might be a threat, and the threat goes away. Make people believe that the only person they can really trust is him, and all threats disappear.

Everyone wants to be a star and many of the performer types would like to produce a CD, but the cost is beyond the average person's budget. The televangelist has built a music production facility. From time to time he offers the incentive of having a free CD produced. For most, he dangles the prospect of a CD, like the proverbial carrot, and retains their loyalty. Close family members and friends are given "love gifts" of money, automobiles, and other things.

The televangelist smiles at the thought of how gullible people can be. Many new employees arrive with stars in their eyes. They are

awed to be standing on holy ground. They look around and see the people who they see on TV. They are led into the studios where they see the sets for the various programs. Invariably they walk slowly up to the chair that the televangelist sits in during his talk show, and reverently touch it. It is almost like a dream that they are actually here, and this is where they will be working for God. A secretary comes out and says, "The boss would like to see you in his office." Their knees weaken. They are about to meet the televangelist face-to-face.

Walking down a blue-carpeted hallway, a new employee is led to a large oak door. The secretary lightly knocks and opens the door on an airy oak-paneled office. From behind a pile of paperwork, the televangelist glances over his reading glasses toward the door. His face lights up in a warm, welcoming smile. He nods a brief dismissal to the secretary and his new employee is now alone with God's messenger for the last days. He graciously asks the new employee to have seat on an overstuffed couch, and starts asking about this person's life. He invites the employee to eat lunch with him at a local restaurant. Over the meal, and for another thirty minutes, the televangelist asks brief questions and listens to the new employee.

Back in his office, the televangelist goes in for what will become his insurance on this employee's fidelity. He has asked the right questions, and listened carefully to everything that was said. He has deduced certain things about the employee's life from the conversation. Now he says, "God has just shown me some things about you." He gives a few generalities regarding some personal weaknesses. "The Holy Spirit is telling me that there are some problems... some secrets that you need to tell me about. You know that I already know what they are, but God is telling me that you need to confess them." Leaning forward, he takes the employee's hands in his own and continues, "What we talk about will stay between us and God." Tears slide down his cheeks as he prays that God's Spirit will fill this new employee with repentance, forgiveness and peace. Dark personal secrets are spilled. Dusty old skeletons rattle as they fall out of their closets. Painful memories are relived. A prayer of thanksgiving is intoned, tears are shed, and the meeting is adjourned.

Information gleaned from friends, relatives, co-workers, former employers, enemies, emails that are being monitored, church, and other sources is added to the file for future use.

This story has played out time and again, its conclusion being that when employees leave, they are told that if they say anything that would be detrimental to the televangelist or his ministry, their testimony will be discredited with the personal knowledge that the televangelist holds over them. The televangelist tells them, "I will be forced to protect God's ministry by revealing to the world your history and what kind of a character you are."

The employee leaves and starts contacting potential employers only to find that the televangelist has already been there warning them not to consider this person. Over the next few weekends the former employee continues going to church, but finds a cold shoulder. When approached, people who were close friends look nervously around and hurry away. The televangelist or his assistant informs these friends, associates, even family members outside the ministry that the former employee is a disgruntled pathological liar. He tells them that it would be best for them if they cut off all communication with this person.

Divide and conquer. The televangelist contacts the former employee and says, "Your friends have been coming to me and telling me everything that you say to them. They tell me that they are disappointed in you and the only reason any of them still speak with you is that they hope to bring you back to the Lord, and they want to keep me informed about what you are doing and saying. I also spoke with your family and they sympathized with me, and said that they are also very disappointed in you." Now the former employee doesn't know whom to trust.

Another method of dealing with an employee who needs to leave is demotion followed by tightened observation and heavy restrictions. Potential employers are contacted and told that this employee has performed badly, exhibited a poor attitude, and has personal problems that have resulted in demotion and possible termination. Following demotion, the employee starts contacting potential employers and finds that the doors are all closed.

The Televangelist Part 6: The Victims

The televangelist gets up and goes to his computer. The monitor casts a bluish glow on the face of the man who just switched on its power. The reflection in the monitor reveals a middle aged face peering intently over a pair of reading glasses. Opening up his

email, the televangelist reads an email accusing him of wrong-doing. Baffled, he goes over it again. He leans back, his brow furrowed in concentration. What makes people think they have any moral standing to say that he has done any wrong? God called him to start this worldwide ministry, not them. Millions of people around the globe are blessed by him, not them. Many people have come into the Church through him, not them. Look how successful he is, as opposed to them. To thousands of people, he is God's vicar on earth, not them.

He writes back to his accuser explaining all of these things to her. He tells her that his conscience is pure; he does no wrong. He tells her that when he stands before God in judgment, it will be clear that everything he has done has a higher purpose. If others have suffered, they deserved it. If they were foolish enough to cross him, they were crossing God and it was inevitable that they should pay a steep price. If their suffering serves to advance or please him, they should be grateful for the privilege. Sometimes people must be sacrificed for the greater good of the greater person chosen by God for the greater cause.

The First Wife

In his late teens, the future televangelist married an older woman with several daughters from a previous marriage. Possessed with the idea that gospel music was his ticket to fame and power, he heard her sing in a church and was entranced with the possibilities that this beautiful voice presented. They were married and soon had a daughter. Within a few years, it became clear to the wife that her function was singer, cook, and housekeeper. Her husband frequented prostitutes and strip clubs. He also engaged in affairs with a variety of married women.

Her husband was a master of emotional abuse. If he hit her, she could show bruises, but how could she demonstrate to anyone the abuse that she suffered from this man? It was time to try getting out of this mess. She started planning her departure. She and her daughters would find a place to live and move out. It would be very difficult as her husband did not allow her access to money, but she could not stay. Then tragedy struck.

One day the wife and her youngest daughter were out for a drive when their vehicle was broadsided by another car. The wife was killed, and the young girl was thrown out of the vehicle and suffered a broken arm. Within a couple of weeks, the televangelist had his daughter on church stages singing. He told about the

recent accident, pointing out her cast, and the money rolled in like never before.

The Bosses

Following a string of business failures that resulted in bankruptcy, the televangelist took his first wife and children to another state. He went to work for a building supply company owned by two men who had been in partnership for many years. Immediately he began planting the seeds of dissent in them. He hinted to each that the other was swindling money. As they grew to distrust each other he fostered this division with continued lies, misleading comments, and doctoring of documentation.

As his plan to split up the partnership progressed, he started an affair with the wife of one of the partners. Finally, with the partnership being dissolved, a marriage on the rocks and the business in disarray, the future televangelist left the state and moved back to his hometown. Upon his departure, the partners found that the televangelist had absconded with the supplies from their company to build a speculation house, sold it, and never paid them.

The Family

In starting the ministry, the televangelist brought several family members into the business. These included his mother, his sister, and a brother. His brother was appointed to the position of Vice President. Once the ministry was on its feet and going, the televangelist's brother and sister launched a television program that they co-hosted. This program's popularity quickly grew. Seeing that his own popularity was dropping, the televangelist took drastic measures to resolve the situation. He fired his brother, and in anger, his sister and mother resigned.

Now came the isolation part. The televangelist wasted no time in spreading rumors and calling his brother, mother, and sister pathological liars. The employees were forbidden from having any contact with them. Everyone was closely watched and people who showed any sympathy for the departed family members, or expressed concern for how they had been treated was dealt with in the harshest manner.

About this time, the televangelist contacted a cousin with whom he had been quite close over the years. This cousin and his wife were operating two very successful businesses that they had built from

scratch. He told the cousin some miracle stories, explained how God was using this ministry to reach the world, and told him that he was needed to be second in command. The cousin and his wife discussed it and decided that God's work was the most important thing. They divested themselves of their businesses, moved to the location of the ministry, bought a house, and started work. Within a short time, the cousin discovered that he had been duped. He saw financial mismanagement on a gross level, illegal activities, abuse of the employees, and much more. He confronted the televangelist with this wrongdoing and was told, "God called me, not you. That is why I am sitting here, and you are on that side of the desk." He was told to repent and submit.

Several days a week, the cousin was attending an afternoon class at a local college. The televangelist had him taking this course for work. Now the televangelist called the cousin's wife and told her that her husband was disappearing from work for hours at a time and no one knew where he was. He suggested that the cousin might be having an affair and asked her not to say anything. He would find out what was going on and protect her. As soon as her husband got home from work, she told him what the televangelist had said. They called and confronted him with his lies. He said that he simply didn't remember that the cousin was taking classes.

Finally, given the ultimatum, quit or be fired, he resigned. Meanwhile, the televangelist began a vicious smear campaign against him. The family was further split by what was said. The televangelist said, "If you want proof that I am right and he is wrong, just look at the fact that I am still here and he is gone. God is blessing me, not him."

The Lady and the Sanctuary

The years went by, and countless lives were broken and destroyed; sacrificed on the alter of the televangelist's ministry. One day an elderly lady contacted the ministry. She had worked diligently to get the televangelist's TV network carried on the local cable companies, and now she had another idea. She wanted the ministry to have a small model of the Old Testament sanctuary.

After several months of trying, she was allowed to speak with the televangelist himself. She was awed to be conversing with this representative of God. She told him her idea and said that she would provide the finances to make it happen. Prior to taking her call, the televangelist asked a few questions and found that her

husband was a very wealthy retired physician. Now he told her that God was impressing him that instead of a miniature model, they were to build a full scale replica of the sanctuary that would be used as a museum, and include a theatre. He assured her that God had spoken to her.

Now the televangelist showed her a piece of property that was across the street from his ministry headquarters and told her that this was the place where God wanted his sanctuary. This was an eighty-acre tract of land that was already for sale. She wrote him a check for the amount of the property and what he estimated it would cost to construct the museum.

Construction of the facility began and then was halted. Funds were diverted to build a school with a large gymnasium adjacent to the museum. A large pond was excavated, a road was built, and apartments were constructed. The museum building sat there, an empty shell.

Several years later, the televangelist decided to redirect plans for the sanctuary building and turn it into a large auditorium and church. The local school district had successfully sued for the ministry to pay property taxes. The court decided that as they were not a church, taxes must be paid.

The elderly lady called repeatedly, but the televangelist would not take, or return her calls. She finally spoke with someone else in the ministry and told her story. She had planned on spending several thousand dollars for a sanctuary model until the televangelist convinced her that God wanted her to fund the much larger project. The check that she wrote to the televangelist was their life savings. Now she was destitute. Her husband got a divorce, and her children scorned her. From time to time they called and told her that all of this was for nothing. A master con artist had swindled her. Where was the sanctuary museum he had promised? Hadn't God told the televangelist to build it? Hadn't God told him that she was to fund it?

Sometimes people must be sacrificed for the greater good of the greater person, and they should feel privileged to suffer thus.

The Wife

After his first wife died, the televangelist married a recently divorced young lady with two children: a girl and a boy. His new wife served as executive vice president of the ministry, and was in

charge of production, programming, publishing, and radio. As her children grew into their teens, her son developed problems with violence and drugs. The televangelist told her that this was her son, not his. He said that he did not want the boy in his house, and that this situation would have to be dealt with by her alone. He would have nothing to do with the boy.

The child's situation worsened until a foreign doctor visited the ministry and said that he would be willing to take the boy back to his country and put him in rehab. The televangelist's wife took a friend of hers and went to visit her son in this overseas rehab for three days. While there, she was also with a very good friend who was retired from a lifetime of work in the Church. The gentleman had served as a pastor and conference official in many parts of the world for fifty years and was now working with the televangelist's ministry. His wife was suffering from cancer, and was undergoing treatment from the same physician who was treating the boy.

Upon returning home, the televangelist's wife walked into a nasty surprise. Her husband greeted her with an accusation of adultery with the doctor. He demanded that she cease all communication with him. Outraged, she at first ignored him. The situation escalated.

Her best friend, who was temporarily staying in one of the ministry's apartments, called the compound church's head pastor one night and told him that her room was infested with demons. She said that these demons had removed her garment bag from the closet and thrown it to the floor, creating a tear in the fabric. The televangelist was summoned and they performed an exorcism. In the process, the televangelist told her that this case of demonic activity was the result of his wife's philandering ways.

Early the next morning, unaware of the night's activities, the televangelist's wife was awakened and ordered down to the living room. There she found her best friend and the pastor. Her friend burst into tears and cried "Please, for your own salvation you have to confess!" They pressed her for several hours. The televangelist told her that if she did not submit and confess, her marriage was over, and her days in ministry were at an end. She protested that there were witnesses, including the friend who was present, that she could not have had an affair with this doctor. She had never been alone with him.

The televangelist suspended his wife, and she was forbidden from going to her office without supervision. Her computer was confiscated and searched for incriminating evidence. Monitoring and tracking devices were placed in her car and in the house. She was placed under constant surveillance. Her friends and closest followers at the ministry turned their backs on her, refusing to even speak with her. The employees were forbidden from speaking about this subject on pain of immediate termination. Day after day the televangelist came home and told his wife of the many church leaders, pastors, and other people he had called and told that she was in an adulterous affair. Night after night he was in her face for hours at a time, interrogating; demanding that she submit and confess. Night after night he was at her former best friend's apartment for hours at a time. Day after day he was on the telephone with this woman for hours at a time.

On the phone and by email the televangelist was telling everyone that he had ironclad proof of his wife's adultery. In fact he had none. All he had was evidence that she had spoken with him on the telephone. As the demands for evidence became stronger, he was forced to change his accusation from adultery to spiritual adultery. One person asked, "Spiritual adultery? What is that? Does this mean that she is having sexual relations with spirits?" The ministry was deluged with telephone calls, emails, and letters offering the televangelist their sympathies as he continued spreading the word. Several employees asked why the televangelist was pushing so hard to publicize the problem. They were placed under surveillance.

Finally, after several months of this, the televangelist's wife moved into a mobile home in a local trailer park. There she lived with her daughter. Night and day her home was watched. Vehicles parked outside and kept open surveillance over her. Early one morning, the phone rang, and it was her husband asking if he could come in and use her restroom. He was very tired from a long night of watching.

The televangelist's board of directors met on the weekend that his ministry held a large campmeeting event in his auditorium. On the first night of this campmeeting, the foreign doctor and the retired pastor who had been with the televangelist's wife when she visited her son in rehab were there. They planned on being available to answer questions of the board when they met. When these two men walked into the auditorium, a security team

immediately surrounded them. The televangelist stood at the podium and said to the world, "There are devils right here in this room." He pointed to the two men. "They are the reason my wife is not here tonight." Tears ran down his cheeks. "They have cost her this ministry."

The televangelist choreographs singing and tears. He tells the audience that despite this terrible loss, his heart is entirely devoted to ministry. He is devastated, yet focused on the vision that God gave him. This campmeeting will bring in more money than any other in the ministry's history. The financial success of this event will prompt the televangelist to hold another campmeeting a few months later, attempting to ride the wave of emotional giving before it dries up.

After the meeting was over, the security team proceeded to escort the two visitors off the premises. A ministry attorney told them that if they set foot on the televangelist's property again, they would be arrested. The televangelist was a close friend and neighbor of the local sheriff, and phone calls had been made. The men said that they had traveled over six thousand miles to speak with the board and defend the televangelist's wife. They were told that this would not be possible, as they would not be allowed on the property.

The Church's foremost evangelist, who was speaking at this campmeeting, asked the doctor if they could speak. The pastor of the compound church grabbed the evangelist's arm and said, "That would not be a good idea. You should not speak with this doctor alone."

Next day, the board met. The televangelist's wife and anyone who might defend her were not allowed to be present. She was summarily fired.

Several days later, she contacted a ministry employee, and asked him to help her move some furniture from her husband's home to the mobile where she now lived. Without hesitation, he volunteered. Two days later he was fired. After forwarding an email to about fifteen people from the televangelist's wife that simply stated that there were some untrue rumors going around about her, he received a letter from the televangelist's attorney threatening civil litigation.

The Chairman of the televangelist's board, and the Church's

foremost evangelist both said that the wife's guilt or innocence was no longer relevant. The network was the face of the Church to much of the world, and the televangelist was the face of the network. For the greater good of the Church, she needed to submit to the televangelist and sacrifice herself. Her reputation and her life had to be secondary to the televangelist's desires. Why couldn't she see this?

The wife moved to another town several hours away. She found a house and settled in with her daughter. Within a short time, her husband had established surveillance on her new home.

The televangelist filed for a "No Fault" divorce from a foreign country, and as soon as it was finalized, he put out the news that his wife had divorced him and that she had most likely married the foreign doctor in secret. Meanwhile, he was dating a young lady whom he had known since she was a child. He moved her in from another state and gave her a job. True, she was several years younger than his daughter, but he was now single and needed some young female company. Soon she was spending a lot of time at his house.

The months went by, and the televangelist tenaciously kept up surveillance and harassment on his ex-wife and those who supported her. He spread stories about the foreign doctor, insinuating that he had murdered his wife who died following a lung transplant not long before the current fiasco began. He spread stories about the foreign pastor who had stood up for his wife. He claimed that this pastor's wife had engaged in many extramarital affairs, and that the pastor was a pathological liar. He called him a "spiritual idiot." He threatened his ex-wife, the pastor, and many others with litigation if they tried to say anything that would expose him. He had vast financial and legal resources that could withstand years of legal battle, whereas they did not. Guilt and innocence aside, in the end he could ruin them financially.

Her reputation in tatters, viewed by the world as a whore, emotionally crushed, the televangelist's ex-wife tries to reestablish some semblance of a life. She knows that she will probably never have privacy again in her life. Every email and phone call is most likely monitored. Friends are afraid to speak openly with her knowing that they will have to face the wrath of the televangelist. Many of them have. They know that the contents of their conversations and emails tend to come back and haunt them. It

happens over and over.

The ex-wife goes to church, where she is active in ministry. She is involved in abused women's issues, and is turning the devastation of the previous years into the foundation for a new life.

The Televangelist

Before shutting down his computer for the night, the televangelist sends out one last email: this one to his ex-wife. He tells her how much he loves and misses her. He tells her that he is sorry she had to go through this nightmare... it hasn't been easy for him either. He tells her that it had to be done. She had to be sacrificed for the greater good of the ministry. Her removal has resulted in an outpouring of sympathy for him that has brought in more money than at any other time in the ministry's history. He tells her that the departments she once managed are flourishing under their new director as they never did under her. "This is not meant to offend you." He tells her, "I am just helping you to understand why you had to go." He goes on to let her know that he has moved on with his personal life. He is happy with the new girlfriend, and he is now working out and building up his physique. "I wish this never had to happen, but I will always love you. Your X"

He shuts off the computer and walks back to bed. Gently raising the covers, he slides in, careful not to wake his new partner.

The Televangelist Part 7: The Conclusion

How does this story end? When does it end? That is largely up to you. The story of the televangelist has repeated itself over and over since the dawn of time. The names are different, the faces change, and the victims fade into the fog of memory. People cannot always choose whether or not they fall victim to the televangelist, but many choose to be bought. Many choose to ignore the crimes against humanity by justifying these problems away. They say, "It is for the greater good." When confronted by the world over his extermination camps, this was Adolph Hitler's response. Others say, "It is none of my business." Over the course of history, the most heinous atrocities have occurred largely because good people refused to act.

How many people have to be sacrificed on the alters of megalomania? How many lives must yet be destroyed? Will the

"televangelists" in your life, in your church, in your community, on your television be allowed to continue their wave of human destruction in the name of good? Only individuals willing to take a stand for human rights and dignity can put a stop to this new inquisition. Only Church and civil leaders who are not willing to be bought or sold, who will stand firmly on principle can clean this stain out of the framework of the community.

Where do you stand?

* * * * *

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 **watchbird**

Jul 7 2006, 07:39 PM

Post #2



1,000 + posts

BlackSDA Faithful

Group: Members
 Posts: 2,015
 Joined: 2-May 06
 Member No.: 1,712
 Gender: f

QUOTE(sister @ Jul 7 2006, 03:44 PM) [snapback]138128[/snapback]

Since I have alluded to "The Televangelist" in a number of my threads, quoted portions of it in some of my posts and it has also been referred to by others; I am now posting it in it's entirety and without comment. It is an interesting read...

Sister

 That's heavy, Sister. Really heavy.

Thank you for posting it, but....

I'm not sure if we were really ready for the whole thing at once. Maybe we needed more portions of it enclosed in some of your delightful packaging first. But.....

Maybe no matter how many more "small portions" of it we saw, maybe it would still be heavy whenever we saw it all at once.

It takes a lot of processing before we are even ready to ask questions.

But.....

Thank you again for posting it. Once again I am stunned with the impact of the whole. And to think, this narrative closed more than a