

TELEVISION EVANGELISTS: HARDLY ORTHODOX (SOME BRIEF REMARKS ON THESE 'INTERESTING' FOLKS)

by

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Just take your remote and scroll through the vast wasteland's (TV's) channels. Note the shenanigans on several of the religious venues. All that I observed were 'ostensibly Christian' and mostly Protestant. One featured a somewhat somber approach to liturgy with 20 year old looking, clean-shaven 'youngsters' delivering sermons in a dirge like manner. A variety of others catered to praise 'worship' with people hopping forward, sometimes barefoot and with tambourines no less, their hands outstretched above them mumbling something. Then there was singing and playing, groups and individuals emulating the secular world even down to the latest trendy hair styles and clothing cuts. Some of these played frenetically on guitars, keyboards, and drums.

Many of the preachers stressed prosperity which naturally (one guesses) comes to those who jot down their 800 numbers and fire off a substantial donation for their latest "How To Succeed In Faith Without Really Trying!".

Then there are the colourful disseminators of the Word who bounce around the stage [never an Altar – praise the Lord!] shaking one fist at you whilst waving the Holy Scriptures in the other. Also making their presence felt are the lively [to put it mildly!] black pastors where the minister is all bling-blinged up, of course, and gesticulating wildly to the crowd and bounding around the stage (again) like country music superstar Garth Brooks. Some even emulate him by using 'head mikes' so your hands are free and you can run chaotically across the stage, maybe even do a flip or something!

Now, please remember that the bling-bling, fancy watches, luxurious cufflinks, custom-made shirts, designer suits, flowing handkerchiefs, gargantuan gaudy rings and expensive shoes are not confined to any specific racial grouping. Everyone gets to show off. One famous TV evangelist has a custom-made outfit complete with symbol and seems ready to be "beamed up" at any moment. Naturally, he just touches you and you flip back on your back and then completely recover from whatever ails you. The pastor of America's largest church (it is said) publishes volumes of self-serving little ditties on 'living better'. He sports expensive grooming tastes and has Hollywood-style looks. Needless to say, he is highly popular with the *world*. But remember this world is the Evil One's province.

All of these ministers (including the so-called female ones complete with the latest hairdo and flashy earrings) promise salvation, if only (apparently) you will call their numbers and get the new publication that is *just* coming out. Well, fancy that coincidence. The most unused words on these shows appear to be repentance, forgiveness, sacrifices and making a commitment not to sin again

(and, of course, the word sin is very unpopular too except in the cases of a few so-called fundamentalist Protestant ministers).

But, sadly, none is the true Christian Church. All are worlds apart from Christ's Church, the One Holy Catholic & Apostolic Church of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Christ of His True Church never appointed an agent to represent Him on earth. Christ is always with us as He promised. He is never absent so He needs no vicar on earth. Did Jesus wear the latest fashion for His earthly days? Did John the Baptist? Obviously not. Did Jesus preach prosperity? No, He preached struggling, suffering, puts obstacles in our way to teach us, expects asceticism from all of His people:

St. Innocent of Alaska

We must bear crosses because we call ourselves and wish to be Christians, that is, disciples, followers and members of Jesus Christ. Whatever the Master, Leader and Head is like, such ought also His disciples, followers and members to be. Jesus Christ entered into His glory through sufferings; consequently we too can enter there only by the way of sufferings.

Christ continually tests us as we strive for our salvation.. It is *not* a 'sure thing' but a life-long process, not something instantaneous just because one has faith. Faith alone is not enough. After all, the Devil (the Evil One) also believes! Believing is not enough. What if you said you believed in Christ, but you are a murderer and you keep on killing people? Naturally, you are going to hell.

Our faith in Christ must bring forth, must bear the fruits of itself. There must be fruits from our spiritual efforts. St. Seraphim of Sarov, states:

Faith without works is dead (James 2:26), and the works of faith are: love, peace, long-suffering, mercy, humility, rest from all works (as God Himself rested from His works), bearing the Cross, and life in the Spirit. Only such faith can be considered true. True faith *cannot* (emphasis supplied) be without works; one who truly believes will unfailingly have works as well.

How true! Note that these works are spiritually derived. They are not merely rote observances of laws.

Now, don't think that Orthodoxy doesn't have some manifestations of a similar ilk to our Protestant and Roman friends. Those clergy who dote on the world and want to conform to it are not on the Orthodox path. Excessive interest in flashy expensive vestments, Lincoln town cars or chauffeur-driven limousines are not emulations of Christ. He walked and even rode on a lowly donkey. He never 'showed off'.

Nor is the practise Christian many times found in the ‘old countries’ of paying for Church rank (probably can be found here too if one looks into it thoroughly). Eagerly seeking ecumenistic ties or passively accepting them means one seeks what is in this world not Christ’s. Jesus stressed and practised humility. That is our first step which must continue all our lives. Without humility, there can be no salvation, no matter what rank one is or how many jeweled vestments he has.

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.