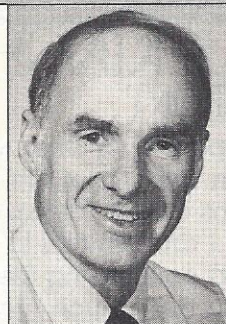


BUCKINGHAM

REPORT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITIQUE OF THE ISSUES, PEOPLE & EVENTS AFFECTING TODAY'S CHRISTIAN LEADERS



Jamie Buckingham

THE UNHOLY WAR

First it was Watergate, then Irangate, now the press has gleefully labeled "our" scandal *Pearlygate*.

It broke on us like a great drama unfolding on the stage of the secular press. The cast of characters was the television heroes of the decade. The stars were Jim and Tammy Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Jerry Falwell. Supporting actors were Richard Dortch, John Ankerberg, John Wesley Fletcher, Robert Schuller and introducing Jessica Hahn. Starring in his own subplot was Oral Roberts; and putting as much distance as possible between himself and his former associate was not-yet presidential candidate Pat Robertson.

The tragedy, of course, is we know all these people. With the exception of Miss Hahn, who contends that all she intended was to give Jim a backrub at the request of his former friend, Fletcher. These people are not only known to us—they are part of us.

The secular press had a heyday. "In God we trust," joshed *U.S. News and World Report*. One columnist said Jim Bakker had set at least one unbeatable record: No other preacher has ever paid \$265,000 for a 20-minute sexual encounter. Until Bakker's confession, the columnist said, the record was held by a Mormon bishop who had paid a young woman \$250 an hour for her services.

Chronology of Events

I was drawn into the fray when—one day after the scandal hit the press—Jim Bakker asked me to fly from Florida to California where he was exiled in his Palm Springs home. I went because he asked me to come. He was hurting and he needed a friend—one who would one day tell the story as it actually happened. I am not free, at this time, to relate the conversations that transpired between me and the Bakkers during that three-day period, nor am I at liberty to talk about Jim and Tammy's family nor their personal lives. They are ordinary people caught in an extraordinary pinch. Jim hurts, as any man hurts when he is under attack by

powerful forces designed to crush him. Tammy hurts, as any wife hurts when her husband confesses infidelity. This is confused with the struggle to protect her man against the onslaughts of friend and foe alike. They need—and deserve—our prayers.

Last year, when Bakker and Richard Dortch asked me to come to Charlotte and evaluate objectively the running battle between PTL and *The Charlotte Observer*, I went. What I wrote was not altogether flattering of PTL. But Bakker knew it was fair. My conclusion at that time was that the newspaper had a personal vendetta against Bakker and PTL, and while I could not endorse the lavish life-style at PTL, I found no dishonesty. Not only that, I was forced to admit there is, indeed, a place for a "Christian" theme park. My struggle came in trying to equate waterslides with spiritual ministry and in justifying a lavish life-style. Yet that same life-style is lived by all of the big-time televangelists in America. (Note: In the midst of all the charges and counter charges being slung by the big guys, not a single one of them has criticized the other's lavishness.)

A Visit With Oral Roberts

On the way home from Palm Springs I stopped by Tulsa to join Oral Roberts in his prayer tower for his TV program. I had earlier struggled with the invitation. In my last *Buckingham Report* I said I believed Oral had heard from God. But it is one thing to say Oral could have heard from God—quite another to appear with him on TV. That, I knew, would be viewed as an endorsement.

As I prayed over the invitation, the Bakker/Swaggart scandal broke. Suddenly I knew I had no choice. It was time to circle the wagons—not to flee into our safe caves. Fellow Christians were under fire. Some, such as Roberts, because he was misunderstood. Others, such as Bakker, because he had made a mistake. I had been guilty of both in my past. Only in this case there was more at stake than the lives of Oral Roberts and Jim Bakker. The kingdom of God was under siege. I agreed to

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appear with Oral, to take communion with him, and to let the world know that all Christians do not attack one another in public.

I am grateful to Oral for some insights he had concerning the situation. I was struggling with how much to write, when to write it, how much to say. He indicated he had felt compelled to say what he had said the day before on Richard's TV show—calling for a halt to the mud-slinging in public and rebuking the mud-slingers (although not by name). But he and his associates had refused to appear on the secular TV shows. "The boil is being lanced," he told me. "Let it seethe. God will bring to the surface all that which is to be skimmed off."

His word confirmed something the Lord had showed me. "I have loosed the press on all ministries," God said, "just as I once loosed the locusts on the Israelites." The prophet Joel described that destruction.

Another vision I had was of a great tower, like the one in Genesis 11, which had been built toward the heavens but now had cracks in its base. It was going to topple and the wise men would stay out of the way.

Unanswered Questions

I came home and tried to piece together what had actually taken place. But there were too many unanswered questions.

How did the legal charges sent by Miss Hahn's representatives get out of Richard Dortch's briefcase and into the hands of Jimmy Swaggart and later *The Charlotte Observer*?

Is it true that Bakker really didn't know the arrangements set forth by his attorney who paid the "hush" money to Miss Hahn after she made numerous demands?

Had Swaggart contacted Jerry Falwell and TV host John Ankerberg and tried to form an alliance—an alliance which Falwell thwarted by going to Bakker? I saw a copy of a letter from Swaggart to Ankerberg which indicated something like that had been planned.

Was it true that Falwell insisted on taking over PTL and Bakker turned it over to him as an only option?

Why was Tommy Barnett, who had been nominated by Dortch as a new board member, not approved? Why was the board stacked with non-Pentecostal men—some of whom had never even been on the campus of PTL until the first board meeting?

Was Swaggart's only motive to purify his denomination of Bakker and Dortch? Is he really that powerful?

Why did not the Assemblies of God officials go to Bakker directly when they were conducting their investigation? Why did they not involve Charles Cookman, their North Carolina district superintendent and a PTL board member?

Then there are the bigger questions: Why would Falwell want a charismatic ministry except to broaden his own fundamentalist base and raise additional money for his Liberty ministries? It was interesting to watch Rex Humbard and Richard Dortch eating out of Falwell's hand, proclaiming the greatness of Liberty Baptist College which forbids the operation of the gifts of the Spirit. On the other hand, Liberty supporters have always been welcome at Heritage USA. Will charismatics support PTL if Falwell remains at the helm? Is it possible for PTL to remain solvent without Jim Bakker there to raise money? Was there a deal struck between Falwell, Bakker and Dortch that Bakker would return? Is there a possibility of a betrayal?

Finally the real question: Does God want PTL to exist?

This is certain—God is in control. He is purifying His church. And since judgment begins in the house of God, it will eventually work its way down to Baton Rouge, up to Lynchburg and into every one of our churches. We need to welcome this fresh breath—remembering the Spirit is not just power, He is holy.

I was impressed with Jim Bakker's steadfast refusal to hurl charges, although he had—in documented form—enough dirt to bury his accusers. Likewise Jerry Falwell has called for peace.

The vicarious ministry many have enjoyed—giving to PTL, Falwell, Swaggart, and letting them do our ministry for us—may have to come to an end. Once again the local church emerges as the only true base for ministry.

So what do we do? In asking myself the question I remembered a classic line in Marc Connley's play, "The Green Pastures." The play is set, ironically, in lower Louisiana and is written in dialect. In Scene VIII God is attempting to enlist Noah as captain of the ark. Noah replies: "I'm jes' ol' preacher Noah, Lawd, an' I'm yo' servant. I ain' very much, but I'se all I got."

That seems to sum it up. We ain't much, but we's all we got. Those who cry for judgment will receive it. I, for one, opt for mercy.

IDENTIFYING YOUR MISSION

Peter Drucker, noted management consultant, constantly reminded the leaders of industry of the importance of knowing what the "mission" of the firm was. In *The Practice of Management* he wrote: "It is...the first respon-

sibility of top management to ask the question "What is our business?"...That the question is so rarely asked—at least in a clear and sharp form—and so rarely given adequate study and thought, is perhaps the most important single cause of business failure."

When was the last time you sat down with your church or organization and drafted an "organizational mission statement?" Have you ever had a mission statement?

A church's mission statement should define the needs of your membership (or constituency) that the church seeks to fulfill. In addition to outlining what the church is or intends to be, it also suggests the activities the church ought to perform. Remember, this is a mission statement and does not deal with policies or strategies. However, you cannot establish appropriate policies, objectives and strategies without a clear statement of organizational purpose. Finally, your mission statement should be reviewed periodically to determine where it needs revision.

John Naisbitt, in *Megatrends*, expands on Drucker's "Law of the Situation" and explains that "when the business environment changes, a company or organization must reconceptualize its purpose in light of the changing world." He goes on to point to the American railroads as typifying an industry that was "transfixed by its own lore" and, hence, unable to abandon exclusive railroading in favor of a broader based transportation business. Thus when Pennsylvania Railroad had a chance to get into the airline business at the grass roots, they turned it down. Their business was railroads—not transportation. Only Southern Railway Company was able to survive the shift from rail to air—and that was because they redefined their corporate purpose to include transportation services.

A mission statement will not only help you increase your vision, it will establish boundaries. When Avis Rent-a-Car drew up their first mission statement they quickly realized that they were doing unprofitable things—such as providing chauffeurs—when they should do one thing only, rent vehicles. In the world of ministry I have long been impressed with Wycliffe Bible Translators who have stuck to their mission of translating the Bible into the unknown languages of Bibleless tribes, rather than getting pulled aside by the criticism of other mission organizations who feel they should be planting churches, building orphanages and conducting classes in evangelism. Their mission statement helps them fulfill their task by setting limits.

Although the initial mission statement should be drafted with care, it may be modified later

to reflect changes in church leadership, changes in the community or changes in ministry techniques. However, apart from additional revelation as to God's purpose, the basic mission statement should remain unaltered. Thomas J. Watson Jr., former chairman of IBM, outlines his organization's philosophy in his 1963 book, *A Business and Its Belief*: "I firmly believe that any organization, in order to survive and achieve success, must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all its policies and actions.

"Next I believe that the most important single factor in corporate success is faithful adherence to those beliefs.

"And finally, I believe that if an organization is to meet the challenges of a changing world, it must be prepared to change everything about those beliefs as it moves through corporate life."

Watson then explained what IBM's philosophy entails:

1. "Respect for the individual. This is a simple concept, but at IBM it occupies a major portion of management time. We devote more effort to it than anything else.

2. "We want to give the best customer service of any company in the world.

3. "We believe that an organization should pursue all tasks with the idea that they can be accomplished in a superior fashion."

Frank Cary, one of Watson's successors, said in 1981, "We've changed our technology, changed our organization, changed our marketing and manufacturing techniques many times, and we expect to go on changing. But through all this change, those three basic beliefs remain. We steer our course by those stars."

Remember: the purpose of the mission statement is to specify what business your church is in. Until that is determined no amount of strategies, policies or rules to cover operating procedures will suffice.

VIVA LA DIFFERENCE

As the church moves into the last years of this century a growing number of women are finding their place in ministry. A few of these are emerging as senior pastors (or co-pastors with their husbands). A far larger number are being ordained into staff positions—working under a male senior pastor or ministry head.

Charles Trombley's new book, *Who Said Women Can't Teach* (Bridge Publishing Inc.), touches on a number of sticky problems which face the church today. While I do not agree with some of his conclusions (maybe because I don't understand what God really wants), I

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appreciate his scriptural rather than cultural approach. To that degree I agree with Judson Cornwall that Trombley has covered the subject of women in ministry "thoroughly and quite scholarly." His book, which draws from the Talmud, the Bible and early Christian writings, may be the best thing yet written on the subject.

However, while Paul does say that before God we are neither "male or female," when it comes to earthly matters, there is much difference. Unfortunately, most male leaders have never studied these differences beyond the physical ones. Most feel women are competent as long as they remain "in their place." (Compare this with the old racist attitude of last generation which stated blacks were nice enough if they stayed "in their place," that is, under the domination of whites.) That "place" for women, many men have now recognized, is in church and spiritual leadership. The wise male leader will not only admit this but will study the differences between male and female in order to work together effectively.

Here is a brief checklist (things Trombley did not cover) of the basic differences between male and female leaders.

1. Most psychologists accept the results of research that males are more competitive than females. Some of this difference is caused by socialization and role models but much is simply the effect of the hormone testosterone.
2. Females are also more sensitive to relationships than males. This is almost certainly cultural, for males who have been raised to participate in warm, feeling relationships tend to develop their own sensitivities in this area also. However, since most males have been raised to fulfill the macho image, and females have been raised to care for children, the differences definitely exist. Evidence: how many men volunteer as nursery workers when an emergency arises on a Sunday morning and a plea is made from the pulpit?
3. Females usually resolve their identification rivalry (oedipal) more easily than males. Girls are allowed a tomboy stage, but boys are seldom allowed to work through their natural "girlishness." Especially is this true in today's society with its fear of homosexuality. Boys then must consolidate their identification with their fathers at a far less mature stage. The result is often an unresolved anger and frustration in men which becomes a driving force. (Most shouting preachers have unresolved anger. The

same is seen in the macho image which forbids women to occupy any place of leadership in church or a ministry organization not under HIS direct control.) Women seldom experience these strong, driving forces.

4. Most women are far more discerning than men. They are able to spot fakes and phonies. They sense budding moral problems. They can spot another woman who is "on the make"—meaning they are often able to nip a crisis in the bud. As a result women often make better managers and/or pastors, although this same trait may prevent them from being effective in the number one authority role.

It is foolish for a woman to try to imitate a man—but each should strive for flexibility and should respect each other's differences.

THE MISSION: TAKE A SECOND LOOK

Four-page color ads in nearly all Christian magazines say Fernando Ghia and David Puttnam's movie "The Mission" is even greater than "Chariots of Fire." Set in the 18th century jungles of Paraguay, it is touted as "one of those rare motion pictures with a powerful and lasting spiritual impact."

But does the film convey another message also?

The ads carry the endorsement of men we love and respect. Could it be that Donn Moomaw, Pat Robertson, Bill Bright and Jack Hayford (who says the movie is "...the most dramatic visual presentation of the power of forgiveness I have ever seen") might have overlooked the subtle political message the movie also gives?

The story is true. The photography is the finest to hit the screen in years. The message of forgiveness is, indeed, dramatically shown. I had to fight to hold back the tears when the struggling Mendoza, after dragging his entire suit of armor up the spectacular Iguaza Falls as an act of penance, is freed from his sin as the Guarani Indians he once persecuted forgive him and cut the burden loose. It is one of the most powerful scenes in filmdom.

Yet as I sat, watching, I sensed another message coming through at the subliminal level—a message only those of us who have spent time with these Indians—with the foreign presence among them—would understand.

Although the overt message of the film is to portray the horrible cost of Christian discipleship across the ages, the postlude at the end of the film—giving veiled praise to those who espouse "liberation theology" as the way to free the Indians—is disturbing. Liberation theology, in a nutshell, is the theory that it is proper for the Roman Catholic Church to combat the "sin" of

suffering in poor nations by encouraging the establishment of socialist regimes, even through revolution. Liberation theologians teach that class struggle is the basic dynamic of social life, that Latin Americans have been kept deliberately impoverished by the capitalist Norte Americanos, and that revolutionary violence is of less moral concern than the "first violence" of "sinful social structures." As such, they claim that politics takes priority over doctrine.

The real challenge of liberation theology is found in the rise of Latin American democracy—which is one of the reasons most of them are so violently opposed to the Reagan doctrine. An even greater challenge is the spread of the gospel—primarily through Bible translation—in the most remote areas of the jungle. It is this latter factor, made possible by democracy, which will eventually set all men free.

While the film itself does not endorse liberation theology, it does—in the role of Mendoza—indicate that the way of the sword is a viable alternative to the way of love as portrayed by the Christlike priest Gabriel. The problem comes into focus with the postlude as we watch what began as a marvelous portrait of faith sadly degenerate into what one former Jesuit scholar calls "pure socialist agitprop."

Daniel Berrigan, Jesuit priest and champion of civil disobedience, plays the role of the priest Sebastian in the film. Despite my disagreements with the Berrigan brothers over their ultra liberal theology, I admire their consistency. Daniel Berrigan's presence in the film should speak volumes to those who question whether the film has political overtones.

"The Mission," apart from its covert leftist message, is a great movie. An excellent guide has been prepared by Mel White to be used with small groups of people who have seen the film. I highly recommend it. You may order samples from The Mission Project, 303 Glenoaks Blvd., Suite 780, Burbank, CA 91502. In all discussions, however, remember to take into account that "The Mission" is more than a historical portrayal, more than a dramatic message of forgiveness. It is also a political messenger giving subtle endorsement to a Marxist system which will bring even greater slavery than the present misery the tribespeople now have.

IN THIS ISSUE I AM SPOTLIGHTING...

DEFINING CHURCH ASSUMPTIONS

The creative young pastor at Eastside Four-square Church in Kirkland, Washington, Doug Murren, has listed certain assumptions that characterize his church. Assumptions, accord-

ing to Murren, are those thoughts and ideas that we take for granted about ourselves, God and others. These assumptions are the basic beginning points in the church's care, interest and concern for people. Murren believes that if his people assume certain basics when they minister, the work of Christ will always be accelerated and accentuated in their lives and the life of their church.

He has drawn up 21 such assumptions which are the basis for ministry at Eastside Church. I suggest you study them, keeping in mind it would be good for every church to draw up its own assumptions on the basis of all ministry.

1. People really want to obey Jesus. The issue of ministry is removing obstacles that keep people from being able to do what they want to. (Keep in mind this is different from the old approach of the fundamentalist, which assumes most people do NOT want God.)

NOTE: Murren also assumes that people in Christ are basically GOOD and desire to know Jesus better, therefore you do not have to club them or persuade them, merely give them the opportunity.

2. The kingdom is the primary mission and issue of church life—not self-preservation and the perpetuation of church life.

NOTE: Eastside Church exemplified this by welcoming into the membership a Pentecostal Holiness pastor who had been sent to their area to plant a number of PH churches. The missionary joined Eastside Church and worked out of it as a base of operations. Some questioned Murren's wisdom in endorsing and supporting this work which will eventually produce churches not of their denomination. However, since the kingdom is the primary mission of the church, not the perpetuation of their own church life, then supporting a man of another denomination is consistent with the church's assumptions.

3. Church life should equip people to manifest the kingdom as Jesus described it.

4. Quality leads to quantity. The quality of faith leads to greatness of faith. The quality of care for people leads to more people. **NOTE:** Eastside Church places great emphasis on pastoral care, believing this is the best means of evangelism.

5. A commitment to excellence produces confidence in ministry and in care. If I am committed to excellence in my personal life spiritually, emotionally, educationally, professionally and socially, then people will have confidence in my interest in and care of them.

NOTE: Murren is a stickler for detail. Although the church is informal in dress, Murren

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insists on tight discipline in the services and neatness concerning buildings and grounds.

6. The primary source of ministry ability comes from personal devotion and prayer and should be prioritized in our own lives and in our sharing with those to whom we minister.

7. The kingdom conflict is a reality that cannot be escaped. There are opposing kingdoms—Christ's and Satan's. This conflict will be manifested regularly for those who take the kingdom of Christ seriously. Major warfare is getting us to believe there IS a war where there is none.

8. The primary foundation for healing in all dimensions is LOVE, as outlined in 1 Corinthians 13 (accepting and forgiving others).

NOTE: Jerry Cook, the former pastor of East Hill Church in Gresham, Oregon, has written the classic book in this field. Recommended reading: *Love, Acceptance, and Forgiveness* (Regal). When it first came out several years ago I made it mandatory reading for our church leadership. Jerry, who defines the church as a force not a field, is now on staff with Murren at Eastside Church in Kirkland, Washington.

9. Placing expectations or preconceived notions about or upon individuals is always injurious and always works against healing. Consequently, an atmosphere freed from expectations or preconceived notions will always bring healing.

10. Suffering is a norm of life. Suffering for the Christian becomes the path of knowing Christ better. Suffering is NOT a manifestation of a lack of faith, sin, etc. We are commanded to rejoice with those who rejoice and to mourn with those who mourn—NOT to find escapes for people from their sufferings, nor accusations for them within their sufferings.

11. The Holy Spirit, along with the church, is able, willing and free to break in and carry on His work in non-spectacular, non-manipulative and surprising ways.

12. Convincing people of values that are consistent with the Scriptures, that lead to chosen behavior consistent with the Bible, is our aim more than the simple changing of behavior.

13. Each church is a new creation and should have differing forms of style and practices suited to that particular group.

14. The primary goal is "good gathering times," rather than special interests. This is based on the fact that the public reading and

teaching of the Word in a certain sense is efficacious. It is imperative, then, that we hold public teaching as our **primary time for equipping and counseling.**

15. Counseling should NOT be the emphasis of church life.

NOTE: Although several of the staff pastors at Eastside Church spend time in counseling, Murren feels the best counseling is done when the body is gathered and being taught or is involved in worship. While he does not object to modern counseling methods, he sees a great danger in people becoming dependent upon pastoral counseling rather than upon the Holy Spirit. Personally he sees very few people in formal counseling.

16. You cannot manufacture the Holy Spirit's genuine working. You can only be in a position to see and enjoy it when it happens.

17. Most of ministry involves focus, pinpointing and ridding ourselves of distractions.

18. Worship accomplishes something no other feature of human existence can.

19. Each individual is responsible for his or her own fellowship needs and follow-up.

20. Our view of God in ministry must be a God who is FOR us, not mad at us (reconciliation), who has forgiven us (justification), who has received us (redemption), and who has changed us and is now helping us to realize it (sanctification).

21. Holiness and righteousness are the process of identity, rather than the process of law.

NOTE: Noticeably welcome in the Eastside assembly are homosexuals, couples living together outside of marriage and people with other divergent life-styles. Murren preaches a gospel which draws people to Christ who in turn changes their behavior after they identify with Him, rather than insisting on behavioral change as a prerequisite for fellowship in the church.

