

Flamboyant Evangelical Personalities

What about Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Rex Humbard, Kathryn Kuhlman, Bill Bright, T. L. Osborne, Jerry Falwell, Bob Harrington, Etc.?

These are some of the more flamboyant evangelical personalities that we are often asked to categorize. It is not always easy to do a cut and dried job of it, and I doubt that it is as necessary as we may suppose. Both the Old and New Testaments are constantly crying out their warnings against false prophets, false teachers, and hirelings. The scriptures are too numerous to list and too obvious to ignore. A false teacher can readily be identified by his false doctrine; but these persons cannot be dispatched or vindicated so easily. Their deviations from fundamental Bible truth are little more than can be found in most men. A more likely test is found in Matt. 7:16. You shall know them by their fruits. But even this is troublesome because it takes time for fruit to come forth and mature. This week's report of last week or last year's success means *nothing*. The counterfeit does not always show up that quickly, nor does the true grain. Carey labored 7 years in India without a convert. Some of these have been around long enough that some sort of fruit ought to be showing up. What is the effect of their ministries? Does it cause men to become holy? Does it turn the tide of wickedness in the areas in which they serve? Are strong spiritual men coming forth from them? Do their ministries cause men to see a mighty and Holy God? Are the fear and love of God struck upon men's hearts through them?

At the least we can say this. None of these can be called, in any sense (as many of them are ballyhooped), great men of God. When the fruits are measured, they cannot stand in the shadow of an Edwards, Whitfield, Spurgeon, Welsey, Calvin, Luther, or even a Finney. This is not to say that their ministries are all counterfeit or useless. We are not required to say *either* unless we *know*. John 21:20-22, What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.

Paul rejoices in the preaching of Christ even though many were doing it for the wrong motives (Phil. 1:15-18). Who are we to judge another man's servant (Rom. 14:14)? We are not responsible to analyze everything that comes along, only that which as to do with *our own personal ministry*. If I am faced with a decision of working with these men or supporting or endorsing a particular thing they are doing, then I must find the mind of God in the matter; but then, only in relation to what God wants *me to do*. *Let them alone*. You have enough to do without embittering yourself fighting against flesh and blood. It will only swell you with pride over your own self-righteousness. Get on with your own personal work and refuse to be distracted by catcalls, taunts, and questions from the sidelines. These men's apparent successes mean nothing. God is keeping the records. The laurels or censures of men do not influence Him. And there will be many surprises at the judgment seat. A man's results may be great or it may be zero, but it makes not one whit of difference about your responsibility to God. In all likelihood, if you follow God, your ministry will never cross the path of the man in question. Gamaliel wisely suggests that time will either vindicate or condemn all men.

-C.M.