

with his (or her) new and improved “signs and wonders,” “creative miracles,” “anointing” or “last days revival” from God.

Whom do I view as the Christian “superstars?” Perhaps, if you’re looking for names associated with well-known ministries, I most likely would be able to compete name for name, pitting those whom I view as prominent, yet credible, ministers of the Gospel with those of dubious, yet illustrious, standing. However, this is not a child’s card game of “war” where my ten beats your eight or your ace beats my king. How then did I respond to the caller?

“God’s superstars,” if there were such a designation, would be the local pastor who works long, hard and diligently (as Scripture commands) in an effort to rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15). He does so to feed and protect the flock of God that has been entrusted to his care. He desires to see them mature in their faith and to grow in the process of biblical sanctification. He’s never the one who ensnares his people with heretofore unknown revelation or esoteric insights of Scripture — and then labels “immature” those who would question such teaching.

He’s the one who labors overtime to pray for and work with the couple whose marriage has gone sour. Realizing the divine origin and lifetime commitment of marriage, he counsels the couple to biblically confront and solve each problem. And then rejoices as God, through His Word, wonderfully guides the couple, to establish (or reestablish) discipline and patterns which cultivate and nurture love. He’s never the one who offers a quick fix to a marriage in trouble by “binding the spirit of divorce in the name of Jesus” or holds his hands to a television camera as a “point of contact” and offers a glib prayer.

He’s the one who consoles the parents whose son or daughter has just been shot to death by a deranged schoolmate. As they struggle with the pain and grief of such a senseless tragedy, crying to God for answers, he helps the couple face the paralyzing feelings of loss. He, through God’s Word and grace, provides solace to an otherwise crippling circumstance. He’s never the one who uses the tragedy to employ it as a “photo-opportunity” or other media conduit to bring even more prominence to his “ministry.”

Nor is he the one who shipwrecks the faith of the young couple who bring their severely brain damaged child to his jam-packed healing service. After he titillates the multitudes for hours and brazenly promises, “Everyone can be healed tonight!” he retreats back to his excessively plush hotel suite as the couple agonizingly leaves the crusade with their child in the same helpless condition.

Or just maybe “God’s superstar” is that saintly mother or grandmother who has persistently and steadfastly prayed for that lost family member, friend or neighbor and years later watches God answer those prayers as the

lost soul comes to faith in Christ. Perhaps she is the one who has, for decades, served God and His Church faithfully by employing the gifts and talents which He has entrusted to her (Ephesians 2:10, 1 Peter 4:10). She is never the one who flaunts her gifts or exercises them in order to draw attention to herself to establish an aura of spiritual elitism or superiority.

In fact, when you find one of “God’s superstars,” you’ll be hard-pressed to bestow just such a designation on him or her. For another crucial characteristic exhibited by “God’s superstars” will be their imitating the humility of Jesus Christ:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

—MKG

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## NEWS UPDATES

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distributing its books and magazines.

The court’s current ruling and any forthcoming decision, affects only Watchtower activity in Moscow. However, observers from other religious groups fear that a final ruling against the Watchtower could affect their missionary efforts as well. It could also prompt other Russian cities to follow the lead of the Moscow court and impose similar restrictions.

—MKG

## O’HAIR MYSTERY THICKENS

Officials are for the first time saying that noted atheist Madilyn Murray O’Hair is dead. O’Hair vanished in August 1995 from her home in Austin, Texas, along with her son Jon Garth Murray, and granddaughter Robin Murray — whom she had adopted. Also missing was \$500,000 in gold coins. There is suspicion that the three were murdered by several men, including David Waters, O’Hair’s former office manager, in an effort to steal more than a half million dollars from an organization headed by O’Hair.

The Internal Revenue Service announced its findings based upon several pieces of circumstantial evidence and from information from confidential sources. Officials believe the bodies of O’Hair and her two family members were placed in barrels and buried on a ranch near San Antonio. However, two searches of the property by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents

yielded neither the barrels nor the remains. Waters has not been formally charged with murder in connection with the disappearances.

Waters, a murder convict, is on probation for embezzling over \$50,000 from O'Hair's atheist organizations for which he worked in 1993 and 1994. The IRS also named Danny Fry in the conspiracy. Fry's dismembered body was found in Texas two days after the O'Hair family's disappearance.

A third man, Gary Karr, a former cellmate of Waters, who is currently in a Detroit prison, is said to have confessed to his participation in the murders of O'Hair and her family. However, a news article in the *Dallas Observer* disputes that claim. "Karr's lawyer attacked this and other FBI statements about Karr implicating himself in four Texas homicides as exaggerations of the record," the Dallas newspaper reported. A fourth person also was named, but his suspected involvement in the murders was not detailed.

Waters, in an affidavit, also challenges the conclusions of the government authorities. "One fact that seems to have gotten lost in all this is that the O'Hairs have been sighted dozens of times since 1995. Considering the number of sightings involved and the odds against them all being cases of mistaken identity, I think it is more likely that the O'Hairs are alive and well and enjoying this immensely," Waters wrote in his declaration.

—MKG

## TBN DENIED MIAMI TV STATION LICENSE

A ruling last spring by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was a moral setback for Paul Crouch and his Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN). According to an Evangelical News report, "the FCC found that TBN attempted to circumvent federal limits on TV station ownership by creating a sham minority-controlled company to hold the license."

The debate concerning WHFT, Channel 45, in Miami, Fla., had been raging for a number of years. In August 1994, a legal document before the FCC charged that, "Trinity Broadcasting Network abused the Commission's processes by using NMTV [National Minority Television, Inc.] as a vehicle to claim unwarranted minority and diversification preferences. The record clearly established that Trinity Broadcasting Network created NMTV for the purposes of seeking an anticipated low power minority preference as part of a plan for a network of stations designed to further Trinity Broadcasting Network's religious mission."

In the judgment, handed down April 15, the FCC determined that "TBN founder Paul Crouch was principally to blame for the creation of National Minority

Television as part of a plan to control more full-power stations than he was allowed under federal law."

Crouch is the president of TBN, which he founded in Southern California in 1973. It has grown to become the largest religious broadcaster with a worldwide network of more than 800 broadcast and cable outlets.

The FCC ruling will not affect any of the other stations under the ownership of TBN. An attorney for the religious broadcaster said that TBN "would continue to litigate and to vindicate itself, and eventually win the renewal of its Miami station."

—MKG

## NO NEAR MISS FOR NOSTRADAMUS

The 16th century prophet, Michel de Nostredame, more commonly known as Nostradamus, has now unquestionably confirmed what critics have known for a long time: His claimed calling as a visionary of future events was not ordained of God. Yet there are some Christian doomsday-watchers, like Jack Van Impe, who give credence to this false prophet.

Most of the purported success of Nostradamus' predictions lies in the mind of the interpreter, as his revelations were written in ambiguous four-line verse forms known as quatrains. With his broad and sweeping statements, devoid of specifics, it is easy for the Nostradamus enthusiast to assign any number of successful meanings to his prophecies. This can be clearly seen in the way one of his predictions is now asserted to have foretold the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers. Prior to the murders of John and Robert Kennedy in the 1960s, this same exact prophecy was said to be a fulfillment of World War II events, including the "taking over of Czechoslovakia by [Adolph] Hitler."

Other of his predictions, said to be telling of coming events, are circumvented by being pushed further into the future when they do not come to pass as expected. Nearly all of Nostradamus' prophecies contain no specific month and date — and those with a timeframe are done so with astrological configurations. When the oracle does not come to fruition, it can be pushed to the next such astrological configuration, which may be centuries into the future.

However, July 1999 was for Nostradamus (and his modern-day devotees) a month and year with no equal. In a prediction known as Quatrain X:72, the prophet makes his only prediction that includes an exact date. The passage reads: "In the year 1999, and seven months, From the skies shall come an alarmingly powerful king, To raise again the great King of the Jacquerie, Before and after, Mars shall reign at will."