

SUPERSALESMEN OF RELIGION

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I am Harold Day from Central Square, Ohio. I am fifty-two years old and have been a diabetic for almost twenty years. Although my physicians tell me that I am incurable, I still have hope of being healthy again. Because of this hope, I am attending a religious campaign led by faith-healers. Since I have a strong belief in God, my only hope is that the faith-healer can give me strength to return to a normal healthy life.

This man's faith brought him not hope but tragedy. For he was one of the thousands each year who are taken in by faith-healers. One of the hundreds who believed so strongly in the miraculous healing power of one man that he neglected sensible medical care. This man, Harold Day, attended this religious campaign and was tricked by his emotions to the belief that he had been cured. Feeling no more

need for his insulin, he threw it away and as a result, died a day later.

Actual cases such as this one are occurring all over the country bringing tragedy to those involved. Faith-healers illustrate the so-called "quackery of religion."

In order to understand the results of faith-healing, we must first turn to the cause, the healing campaigns. The intensifying atmosphere of these campaigns plays a major role in the faith-healer's art. The campaigns are usually held in tents, traveling from city to city. Loud hymn singing opens the evening service. The faith-healer shouts out between verses for the audience to sing louder and louder so God can hear their voices. After a rousing hymn, the faith-healer quotes passages from the Bible -- from which he derives his healing power. "Turn your faith loose," he screams. The emotions of his audience, already at a fever pitch, respond to this challenge wholeheartedly. When the proper degree of frenzy has been reached, those wishing to be cured are invited to come forward and pray with him. He lays his hands on their heads and proceeds to pray with a loud, vibrant voice. The healing power tingles through the healer's arm and travels into the body of the sick person. When the wonderful art of healing occurs, the healed one receives something like an electrical charge -- he knows, in short, that he is healed. He is then progressed to the ultimate climax of the emotional state. His proclamation of being cured is illustrated by his grotesque screaming and dancing around the tent. After the faith-healer prays for all the people who come forth, he exhorts them to give their offerings to the lord. "You can't outgive God", "You must support God's work." He is really saying that you must support him. Thus ending the program.

The question is often asked, "Why do sane, intelligent people attend these healing campaigns" -- the answer is obvious -- Hope, Hope of being cured, Hope of being normal without the burden of sickness and deformity.

These helpless people desperately want to believe they can be cured. After having doctors tell them there is no cure, they turn to whatever means they can find to regain hope. We cannot condemn suffering people for wanting to be healed. But the faith-healer, advocate of healing the sick, should be ostracized, condemned, and degraded for misleading their followers and misusing the power of suggestion.

It is agreed that people who have psychological problems can sometimes be cured by the emotional process of faith-healers. There is even a name for bodily diseases that are caused in the mind, psychosomatic. But even these are best cured by a psychiatrist, not a ranting faith-healer. To the physically ill this power of suggestion can do nothing but harm as is well demonstrated in the case of Harold Day. The "healers" can keep genuinely sick people away from doctors and the treatment they need.

A committee of ministers, doctors, professors, and lawyers painstakingly investigated for months the claims of a British faith-healer. They found no improvement in the 350 people who professed to have been cured. In fact, 139 died six months following the campaigns, another 15 became insane, and so on . . .

Another study by Dr. Charles R. Brown of Oklahoma investigated 100 cases in which it was claimed that there had been cures by faith. It was discovered that over two-thirds of these people died in less than two years from the very disease which physicians had found incurable, and which the faith-healers had, never theless, cured.

What then are the faith-healers "after?"

Money seems to be a determining factor in the activities of the healers. In Rome, a healer is making \$4000 a week. In England, there are now 48,000 faith-healers who outnumber the countries 42,000 licensed physicians. In the United States one faith-healer became a millionaire overnight. His income is derived from several sources. His primary source is his healing campaigns. For every ten-day campaign, he receives about \$20,000. He also has his own business enterprise called the Healing Waters Inc. which produces and sells religious comic books, autobiographies of the faith-healer, and published a magazine which now has about 545,000 subscribers.

When questioned by reporters about his "ill-gotten" wealth, he stated, "I think the millionaires of the world should be the people who are living right." Apparently he is living right. He's found a ready market for his product, religious healing, and the profits just keep rolling in.

This process of selling religion was of deep concern to the United Lutheran Church of America. In 1962, they appointed a committee of doctors and ministers to study the faith-healer's art. They warned the church's members to steer clear of this type of healing. "Faith-healers," the committee stated, "are often less

concerned with the spiritual and physical well-being of people than with the demonstration of their personal power and the attainment of financial gain. This is religious quackery."

These people have awakened a new hope, a false hope, in the suffering of our land, and have not only disregarded that hope totally, but have capitalized to the full extent on the pain and suffering of the helpless, hopeful ones.

The solution of this problem can begin with a combined effort on the part of America's churches to expose these so-called healers. Some progress has been made in this area but only to a small degree. In Phoenix, Arizona, a group of ministers challenged a faith-healer to prove that he could cure. They offered \$1000 to the healer if he could prove his so-called healing powers. The faith-healer left this challenge unanswered and curiously enough he hasn't been in Phoenix since then. But this is just a slight effort and barely makes a dent in this rapidly progressing problem which is going unnoticed by the American people. This problem must be met on an individual basis. Unfortunately, the majority of Americans will realize the tragedy of faith healing only when someone close to them is affected. Harold Day was led to death by a faith-healer. Harold Day could be your father, grandfather, brother, or uncle -- or he could be you!