



**We're going to look at a class of people with an unbroken history of doing absolutely anything they want, and getting away with it.**

## SCANDALS IN EDEN Religious Misbehavior part 1: Billy James E by Kevin Lambert

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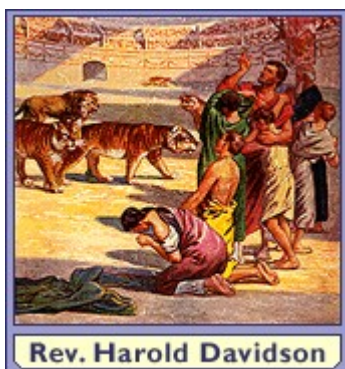
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SCANDALS IN EDEN, Selected Tales Of Religious Misbehavior, part 2



**But no matter how frantically he behaved, heartier villains like Hitler and Mussolini were nudging him out of the headlines. He took another job, appearing in a cage with two (Geriatric) lions, billing himself, ever religious, as a "Modern Daniel in the Lion's Den."**

**SCANDALS IN EDEN, Selected Tales Of Religious Misbehavior,**  
**part 2: The Reverend Harold Davidson**  
by Kevin Lambert

**THE REVEREND HAROLD DAVIDSON**

IF THE REVEREND HAROLD DAVIDSON, Victorian religious leader and British idiot, had lived today, he would be described as one of Monty Python's clergyman jokes. A bothersome, scurrying, caricature of a man, he was one of those tedious people who are not quite certifiable enough to be locked up, and not quite sane enough for anything else. Mingled with his personal madness was a generous dose of the bad qualities one finds in regular folks. He was sneaky, self-important, humourless, religious, and utterly incapable of accepting anybody else's opinions. His own lawyer called him a troublesome busybody, and his oldest son pronounced him "Mad, quite mad."

Besides that, he had the tenderest dick in the British Empire. Probably no figure in history has chased so many women with

such heedless abandon, and certainly no one has ever made himself look so foolish in the process.

Ordained in 1902, he made himself a name with some genuine good works, and indeed half of his character was the sort of fussy, decent churchman from the BBC dramas. But he used that as a foundation to pester people who could advance his career. He bombarded the entire British upper class with letters, letters that bitched about his personal problems, lack of recognition, and ended up begging for donations. In a way he was the first direct mail hustler, an unpleasant man starting an unpleasant profession. In the evenings he pestered teenage girls. He would officiously push his way backstage at the theater and lurk around the dressing rooms, leering at the half-naked actresses. He was eventually banned from coming backstage. He was also banned from most of London's tea shops, a considerable achievement, for his practice of sniffing after the waitresses. He would tell them that they looked like one actress or another and invite them home. An astonishing number of these young "Nippies" (His phrase) fell for this and went off with him. In fact, with his formal, fatherly countenance, he managed to pick up a new girl almost every other day for the next two decades. He set them up in furnished rooms, gave them money, found them work, even brought them home to his wife (Who put them to work in the scullery). Then he tried out his hapless, pathetic manner of seduction on them. It was a bumbling, ludicrous performance, a bunny rabbit in heat, and as far as anybody knows, he never got over. Not once.

By 1931, a faction of his parishioners were losing patience with Reverend Davidson. They were sick of him stumbling in late to deliver his sermons, and they were really confused by the overflowing stable of strange young girls in the vicarage. Some of the girls seemed to be mating with the local lads, and respectable people were forever stumbling over strange couples groping in dark gardens. Word of this finally reached the District Bishop, who reacted in a singular manner. He engaged a private inquiry agent.

Oh, what a spin-off for a detective movie.

A young nippie named Rose Ellis was located, and after a couple of free drinks and a dash of 40 shillings, she signed a statement against her former benefactor. Then came one Barbara Harris, who, although barely 16, was already a character out of the dark side of a soap opera. Vain, vacuous, infected with gonorrhoea, she spent her days laying about in bed reading fan magazines and her evenings screwing anyone who passed by her window. She testified that the reverend had supported her life style and that he had made numerous advances upon her. She had resisted them all, more out of cruelty than virtue, and he finally tried to rape her. He botched this, too. She testified that he could only "Relieve himself" upon the bedclothes.

That sort of thing was prime meat for the British Tabloids. Early in 1932, The Reverend Harold Davidson, in a blaze of penny press publicity, stood an

ecclesiastical trial.

It was a long, painful, farcical affair, during which he made an ass out of himself on the witness stand and got caught, over the weekend, with a nude 15 year old. For years afterward, the gutter press scribes looked back on those days as their finest hour. On July 8, 1932, the verdict was an unsurprising guilty, and shortly afterwards the Reverend Harold Davidson was defrocked.

By then all of England knew him, and he proceeded, like Spiro Agnew, to cash in on it. And showing even less taste than the Grafting Greek, he hired out to exhibit himself in a barrel at the Blackpool sideshow. He gave the crowds a tedious harangue about his injured innocence, which had occupied his wooden head since the trial. Nobody believed him, but the folks enjoyed laughing at his pretensions, and the act ran for five years. He raked in between five and twenty thousand pounds, a huge sum in the thirties. (As a vicar, he had been comfortable on 400 pounds a year)

He didn't let up with his self-advertising, either. He went from a purely ecclesiastical nuisance to a national pain in the ass. He interrupted church proceedings, instigated lawsuits, and undertook a 35 day fast. He was also arrested in 1936 for accosting two teenaged girls in Victoria Station. (He had told them that he was a theatrical producer.)

But no matter how frantically he behaved, heartier villains like Hitler and Mussolini were nudging him out of the headlines. He took another job, appearing



in a cage with two (Geriatric) lions, billing himself, ever religious, as a "Modern Daniel in the Lion's Den."

The years and scandals hadn't taken away his sense of self-importance and idiot righteousness, and in fact he was the same pompous ass that had gone through his trial insisting that he didn't know what "Buttock" meant. When Freddy, the male lion, wouldn't move fast enough, the Reverend snapped the whip, snarling "Get a move on!", in what he imagined to be a commanding kind of voice. Freddy, however, wasn't impressed.

Freddy, it must be said, didn't like humans in the best of times. They had already yanked him out of his savannah, cooped him up in a cage, Anglicized his name, mated him with Leona (Whom he secretly hated) and made him perform for his food. Now they were sending in some smartass ecclesiastic telling him how to spend his spare time. It was pretty much the same situation that produced Nat Turner.

With a mighty, atavistic roar, Freddy bounded over to the reverend and beamed him. Then he scooped him up and carried him around, a triumphant kitty bringing home a mouse, mangling the reverend not a little. The crowd gasped, petrified with fear. Then, 16 year old Irene Somner jumped in, yanked Freddy's mane, and dragged the mortally wounded Davidson out of the cage. After chasing and groping and earning the contempt of so many little nippies, he finally found the one he was looking

for. Alas, he died two days later.

Against the backdrop of the cold-blooded grifters and widow-bilkers that constitute religious hustlers, the Reverend Harold Davidson is a comic interlude, a bit of English humour. But he has this distinction in the annals of religious hypocrites. Instead of conning his flock out of their life savings, he gave them a good laugh.

It's a miracle.

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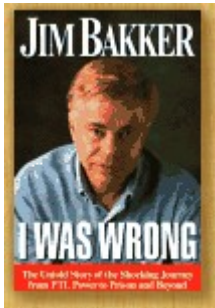
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Even when they held a wedding for Tammy Faye's dogs (who wore matching gold collars) and gave them an air conditioned doghouse - the Bakkers still managed to coax something like a billion dollars out of a nation too stingy to pay for school lunches.



## SCANDALS IN EDEN, Selected Tales Of Religious Misbehavior,

### part 3: A Quick Romp through Gospelgate

by Kevin Lambert

A QUICK ROMP THROUGH GOSPELGATE No discussion of religious scandals would be complete without at least a quick look at Jim Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, and all of the other lovable characters of the Gospelgate Holy Wars. You could say the same about a discussion of humanity, for that matter. Gospelgate may be the definitive example of the believer's eternal need to be suckered. Even when the characters started getting really weird - when they held a wedding for Tammy Faye's dogs (who wore matching gold collars) and gave them an air conditioned doghouse; or when Jim put on black lace underpants and tried to seduce his male executives - the Bakkers still managed to coax something like a billion dollars out of a nation too stingy to pay for school lunches. As the bible tells us, "The tabernacles of the robbers prosper..."(Old Testament, Job, vii, 6)

## JESSICA HAHN'S FIRST RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Jessica Hahn, first bimbo in a bimbo-rich year, did not, as many people think, get the Word from Jim Bakker. Indeed, she hardly got any word from him at all, beyond things like "Roll over, Honey." Her first brush with true religion came at 15 when she encountered the Reverend Gene Profeta. Rev. Profeta was a big, flamboyant fellow, and when it came to squeezing money out of his faithful flock, he was a veritable one-man olive press. Presiding over a congregation that rarely exceeded 2000 members, he managed to extract a private plane, several oversize cars and a mink coat. He also earned the nickname "Pistol Packing Preacher", reputedly carrying a couple of six-guns.

Jessica joined his church and eventually attracted the attention of John Wesley Fletcher, an alcoholic faith healer who worked as one of Jim Bakker's thugs. He was the one who introduced Jessica to her fateful "blind date" in the Miami hotel room.

When Jessica told her story and became notorious, she also seemed to have discovered a facility for whistle blowing. She then testified against old Two Gun Profeta in his own grand jury indictment for fraud, an aspect of American Evangelism that seems to be as unavoidable as Bible College.

#### JIMMY MACK

Jimmy Swaggart seems to have been the most visibly neurotic player in the Gospelgate melodrama. Jimmy had deep, dark problems; threatening, frightening, and downright creepy. Of all the mental disorders swirling around the Holy Wars, Jimmy's seem to have been the most sincere.

Jimmy Swaggart was a throwback to the fire and brimstone school of preaching. The kind who warned you that God was an angry, fire-spitting hanging judge; the kind who delighted in describing the torments of Hell, right down to the last gouged-out eyeball. He was also the doppelganger of his cousin Jerry Lee Lewis, playing gospel-based piano and cavorting around onstage. One of them took the wrong road, and for almost 3 decades everybody thought that it was Jerry Lee.

Jimmy's angle was sex-bashing. He raved and snarled against sex with such a vicious hatred that you might have thought that it was Louis Farrakkhan talking about mini-skirts. To hear Jimmy tell it, a stiff dick was worse than a cancerous liver. Sex became his cash crop, a subject so potent that he ended up making eleven million dollars a month

dissing it. And when he wrote his sermons, all he had to do was follow the first rule of scribes everywhere. Write about what you know.

But there was business in the real world too. Jimmy, a nasty infighter and dangerous enemy, had virtually ruined a rival evangelist named Marvin Gorman, getting him to admit to an "Immoral Act" of adultery in 1986. Marvin was defrocked, went bankrupt, and is now limited to preaching in desanctified churches. He also, apparently, vowed revenge. When Marvin got a tip that Jimmy was fooling around himself, he didn't hesitate to strike back.

And not just fooling around, that's for regular guys like you and me and Marvin Gorman. Jimmy was going well beyond that. In fact, Jimmy was riding to Hell on a pair of rollerblades. He was laying with a paid harlot, one Debbie Murphree, and paying other whores to stand around and watch. He wanted Murphree's 9 year old daughter to do the same thing. He once asked her to jump out of the car, stark naked, so he could enjoy the shocked expressions on people's faces. This wasn't just sin, this was the kind of stuff people use to get out of the army.

Some photos of Jimmy, a motel room and a prostitute were taken and sent to the church elders, and all signs pointed to Marv. Jimmy had to go crawling before his congregation and beg forgiveness, while Marvin carefully refrained from cackling in public. In fact, desanctified but unable to keep his mouth shut, Marvin proclaimed that he would "pray" for Jimmy's soul. Gospel guys do this a lot. It's an all purpose retort, and it can be a great euphemism for "Get even with" or "Laugh at" or even "Fuck over". And it's hard to picture Marvin Gorman

kneeling in prayer, beseeching the Lord to smile upon the man who sent him to the Christian equivalent of a Siberian Power station. More likely, he was rolling on the floor, laughing hysterically, thanking the Lord for smiting his enemies.

Nor did he stop there. He brought his lawyers into it, and the result of that was a \$10 million slander suit which Jimmy has been ordered to pay. After that, Jimmy got busted again, riding with a hooker heading through a concentration of trick motels that Indio, California calls "Love Street". It was the kind of a one-two punch that would have sent another man into a different kind of work.

Jimmy, however, like a South Bronx crack dealer, doesn't know any different kind of work. The minute he got out on bail he was back fighting for his turf. He reported that he fell asleep with the bible, asking the Lord what to do. "When I awoke", he reported, "The Holy Spirit was rolling all over me." He also said that he would "Pray" for Marvin Gorman. We can only hope that Marvin keeps his desanctified intruder alarms in good repair.

These days, Jimmy is also preaching in an independent, desanctified church. Jimmy and Marv, in their titanic struggle, dragged each other from Carnegie Hall to a shopping mall in Kansas. People still come to hear him, but you could say the same about Fabian, and the word is that Jimmy's days in the main ring are over. Grass is growing through the entrance of his bible school, and the folks that used to stand in line after a sermon to hug him and stuff fifty dollar bills into his pockets have taken their affection to other saintly fellows. As the bible tells us, and should have told them, "Let not oil of sinners

make fat my head." (New testament, Apocalypse, 1)

## CONCLUSION

There may have been some laughs in this story, but Religious hustlers aren't really funny. Quite apart from their merciless milking of simpleminded folk who can ill afford it, they are embarked upon a campaign of mind manipulation unseen since Dr. Goebbels. Their aim is to turn the United States, and then the world, into a Christian planet, with a new world order dreamed up by guys like Billy James Hargis.

Every time one of them falls, 90 replacements pop up like gophers. Each one of them is well-scrubbed, solemn and ambitious, with the principles of a Hollywood starlet. They are the spiritual advisors of America's right wing. Over the years they have outlawed adultery, alcohol, most of the enjoyable drugs, pornography and abortion, and now they have their beady little eyes on art itself. We have only a handful of weapons against them, and exposing their sexual peccadillos is practically the only one that still works.

And after that, I think that we should - ah - pray for them.

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