

The couple first met in June 1994 at faith healer Benny Hinn's Philadelphia Miracle Crusade. Two months earlier, Holyfield had lost his championship belt and had retired from boxing after receiving what later was learned to be an erroneous medical diagnosis. Holyfield traveled from his home in Georgia to Hinn's meetings "to get closer to the Lord." He said that while there, he "got anointed and I got closer to the Lord and got healed as well."

While at the Philadelphia meetings, Holyfield agreed to foot the \$265,000 bill for Hinn's two-day crusade. As Hinn prayed for the then ex-boxing champion, he asked that God would "Give him a wife, because he's got five children that need a mother." Hinn then proclaimed that his future wife would be found among those attending the Friday morning service of the Philadelphia crusade. Attending that service was a Chicago-based physician and licensed minister, Janice Itson. Itson did volunteer work at Hinn's crusades. Holyfield met her there and soon afterward began calling her on the phone. The couple were married Oct. 4, 1996, in a private courtroom ceremony in Atlanta.

Apparently the marriage had as many twists and turns as the divorce case itself. While the union produced one child, Elijah Jedidiah Holyfield, two other children were born out of wedlock to Holyfield during his brief marriage to Janice. Holyfield has a history of marital infidelity. Of the nine children Holyfield has fathered, three were born to his first wife Paulette, one to second wife Janice, and the five other children were born out of wedlock. His first child with Paulette was born a year before their marriage in 1985.

Before the births of Holyfield's two children in late 1997, he told his wife of his infidelity, suggesting they divorce quietly. She declined. Ultimately, Holyfield filed for divorce in March 1999, citing irreconcilable differences. Charges and countercharges mounted.

According to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, Holyfield claimed "that a prenuptial agreement existed, an allegation denied by Janice Holyfield." The issue was never settled, the newspaper reported. In May 1999, Mrs. Holyfield sought that the divorce case be dismissed claiming that she and her husband had marital relations after he had filed for divorce, thereby constituting a reconciliation. Holyfield "said he couldn't remember when they had sex," the newspaper further reported. Fayette County Superior Court Judge Ben Miller, who presided over the divorce, denied Mrs. Holyfield's request, saying that Holyfield would only re-file his petition for divorce.

Holyfield also sought a paternity test on Elijah, the couple's child. John Mayoue, lawyer for Mrs. Holyfield, said he was "appalled" at the boxer's request given his "track record of fidelity." The *Journal-Constitution* reported that, "The tests showed the boxer was the father."

The divorce proceedings caught even more of the news media's attention when Mayoue alleged that Holyfield gave \$7 million to his pastor, the Rev. Creflo Dollar and his World Changers Ministries. *Charisma* magazine

quoted the Atlanta newspaper as stating, "The boxer reportedly gave more than half the sum to the church in the 60 days before his filing for divorce in March 1999." Mrs. Holyfield's attorneys wanted Dollar to account for the millions of dollars Holyfield gave to the church and to Dollar personally.

Dollar promised he would go to jail before he would respond to questions in a court deposition. He cited constitutional provisions for the separation of church and state, pastor-parishioner privilege, and his personal opposition to divorce as the reasons for his refusal. Judge Miller found the minister in contempt of court. Dollar appealed the judge's ruling. On March 9, the Georgia Supreme Court dismissed Dollar's appeals. However, the oral agreement between the Holyfields the following day put to rest the possibility of arresting Dollar.

Critics of the 38-year-old "prosperity gospel" preacher label him "Cash-Flow Dollar." His World Changers Ministry's property holdings include the World Changers Dome (built in 1996 at a cost of \$6.5 million), two homes (one valued at \$1 million, the other at \$1.25 million) and a pair of private jets (a Gulfstream Jet valued at \$5.3 million and a Gates LearJet valued at nearly \$1 million). According to a report in the *Christian News*, "Members are required to tithe and show church leaders their personal financial information."

Dollar's connection to the Holyfield divorce caused other unfavorable information to be published about the minister. The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* further reported that last December, "100 Fulton County police officers were admonished for accepting \$1,000 apiece from Dollar." According to the newspaper, "Dollar sent the money to recognize the officers' service to the community. But the gesture was criticized because it came a month after two traffic tickets Dollar had received were downgraded to warnings."

Mrs. Holyfield's attorney said during the announcement of the initial oral settlement last March, "The parties have resolved the issues between them, and we fully expect to take a final settlement to Judge Miller within the next week or so." Mayoue further said the terms of the Holyfield settlement will remain confidential.

—MKG

EVANGELIST HILL LEAVES BROWNSVILLE REVIVAL

In March, Evangelist Stephen Hill announced to the congregation of the Brownsville Assembly of God that he will be leaving their church's "revival." The purported revival is said to have first begun on Father's Day, June 1995, when Hill was a guest evangelist at the Pensacola, Fla.-based church. Brownsville leaders, following the announcement, stated that the revival meetings will continue despite Hill's absence, *Charisma* magazine reported in its May issue.

“Revival is going to go on. People are still coming in from all over the world, and it would be wrong of us to sever that,” the magazine quoted the church’s pastor, the Rev. John Kilpatrick, as saying. Kilpatrick also dispelled rumors that there had arisen a division between Hill and other revival leaders. Dr. Michael Brown, who is regarded as the revival’s theologian, in addition to staff pastors and guest speakers, will continue to lead the revival services.

“The time has come for the Hill family to relocate their ministry,” Hill told *Charisma* magazine. “Pensacola is a difficult place to fly into, and sometimes I am away from my family for a whole day because it is impossible to get home to Pensacola,” Hill said. Initial plans will possibly move the evangelist and his ministry to the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Hill’s departure is just one of the many changes the revival has experienced recently. As the numbers attending the meetings began to diminish, the leadership sought to take the revival on the road with its “Awake America” crusades. (See *The Quarterly Journal*, “The Wandering River of Brownsville,” Vol. 19, No. 2.) These traveling crusade meetings, which started in 1997 and were held in 12 major cities in the U.S., are currently being replaced by citywide prayer crusades led by Kilpatrick and scheduled for only six U.S. cities this year.

Music minister Lindell Cooley also appears to want to curtail his involvement with the revival — at least its road-show version. “I decided to no longer be a part of ‘Awake America’ because when I looked at all the time I would have been traveling, I just became overwhelmed,” Cooley told *Charisma*. “I am going to travel very little next year so I can spend a lot of time with the Lord and write music. Being a part of the prayer crusades with pastor Kilpatrick requires a lot less travel than Awake America,” Cooley added.

The magazine report tried to discount declining attendance at the Pensacola meetings by saying the revival “continues to draw hundreds of first-time visitors from around the world each week, although weeknight attendance has been down slightly during the slower winter season.” The magazine also said that the revival meetings have “won 147,000 souls” to the Lord during the five-year effort. PFO has disputed this claim and proved it to be an exaggeration.

—MKG

WAY PRESIDENT RESIGNS

L. Craig Martindale has resigned as president of The Way International according to WayDale, a web site that looks “into the behind the scenes activities of The Way International and its Board of Trustees.” The Internet document said, “News announced in a meeting of the elite Way Corps on 04/25/00 is that Craig Martindale, president of TWI has resigned from the board of trustees.”

The article further revealed that “vice president Rosalie Rivenbark will become TWI’s new president. John Reynolds will continue as secretary treasurer and Harve Platig will take on the vice president position.”

Martindale was installed as the second president of the controversial sect in 1982, three years before the death of its founder and first president, Victor Paul Wierwille. Under Martindale’s tenure, ex-members and critics contended that he led the group into becoming an even more authoritarian and spiritually abusive sect than his predecessor.

The WayDale material also said “It is believed that Martindale will continue to live in his exclusive log cabin at TWI HQ and continue to have all the resources (office facilities, servants, finances, etc.) of TWI available to him.”

—MKG

TBN REGAINS MIAMI STATION

An April 1999 ruling by the Federal Communications Commission denying the Trinity Broadcasting Network has been overturned by a federal court. A decision by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for District of Columbia Circuit will allow TBN to regain the license to operate its Miami television.

In 1995, the FCC refused to renew TBN’s license for the Florida station, stating “that TBN attempted to circumvent federal limits on TV station ownership by creating a sham minority-controlled company to hold the license.” According to an *Orange County Register* report, the FCC contended that “Phil Aguilar, then pastor of Set Free Christian Fellowship in Anaheim was a mere figurehead serving TBN on the NMTV [National Minority Television] board.”

On May 5, a three-judge panel ruled that “Although we defer to the Commission’s interpretation of its regulation as requiring actual minority control, we find that neither the regulation nor the Commission’s related statements gave fair notice of that requirement. We therefore vacate the Commission’s denial of appellants’ license renewal application.” The court also admonished the FCC, saying it was stricter in its judgments of TBN than with other licensees.

TBN founder and president Paul Crouch said in a statement: “For nearly a decade this proceeding has hung like a dark cloud over Trinity, and I thank the Lord that this ordeal has ended with this exoneration. At no time did Trinity or NMTV ever attempt to violate the Commission’s rules, and it’s good to have the court confirm that.” Crouch also is a director of NMTV.

—MKG