

# Watch This!: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism (Religion, Race, and Ethnicity)

Jonathan L. Walton



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Through their constant television broadcasts, mass video distributions, and printed publications, African American religious broadcasters have a seemingly ubiquitous presence in popular culture. They are on par with popular entertainers and athletes in the African American community as cultural icons even as they are criticized by others for taking advantage of the devout in order to subsidize their lavish lifestyles. For these reasons questions abound. Do televangelists proclaim the message of the gospel or a message of greed? Do they represent the "authentic" voice of the black church or the Christian Right in blackface? Does the phenomenon reflect orthodox "Christianity" or ethnocentric "Americaninity" wrapped in religious language? Watch This! seeks to move beyond such polarizing debates by critically delving into the dominant messages and aesthetic styles of African American televangelists and evaluating their ethical implications.

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