

Televising Testimony: Kathryn Kuhlman and *Your Faith and Mine* by Dr. Amy Artman

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When I came to the University of Chicago to work on a doctorate in the History of Christianity, I knew I would have archival work in front of me—it's part and parcel of the work of a historian. My colleagues who were studying Christianity from the 1300s or 1600s were the ones who would tell stories of days, months, years spent looking through brittle papers, reading diaries with "s's" that look like "f's", tucked away in libraries or sorting through manuscripts in cavernous archival collections. What I did not understand at the beginning was that I had a somewhat different archival experience ahead of me, namely, learning how to do archival research when the "documents" were video, not text. While friends of mine in other PhD endeavors sat in study carrels and leafed through manuscripts, I sat in a little room right below us, watching hour after hour after hour of video, video of the healing evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman. And what did I discover? The best way to explain is to tell the story of the video stored here at the Archives entitled "Johnny Carson Show-*Tonight Show*, Kathryn Kuhlman segment," (October 15, 1974, VHS, V125, Collection 212, The Kathryn Kuhlman Collection). And it turns out that this video will be playing in the exhibit after the talk, so please go and check it out—it is fascinating.

On October 15, 1974, Johnny Carson welcomed his next guest on *The Tonight Show* with the words, "I imagine there are very few people in this country who are not aware of Kathryn Kuhlman." He continued, "She probably, along with Billy Graham, is one of the best known ministers or preachers in the country." After a few more words of introduction, Carson announced Kuhlman. Doc Severinsen led *The Tonight Show* orchestra as she stepped through the iconic curtains into one of the most famous studios in television history. The applause continued as she greeted Carson, whose attention was then drawn to the enthusiastic studio audience. As the clapping abated, Carson informed the television viewers that Kuhlman had received a standing ovation from the as many as 100 members of the live audience. After he and Kuhlman exchanged pleasantries, Carson paused, looked intently at Kuhlman and stated in a courteous manner, "You have been called hypnotic, charismatic, hypnotizing." Kuhlman smilingly protested that she was "just the most ordinary person in the world." Carson disagreed, replying "You're not quite ordinary. I find you fascinating." Kuhlman smiled.ⁱ

To be dubbed "not quite ordinary" and even "fascinating" by the king of late night television in 1974 represented a triumph for both Kathryn Kuhlman and charismatic Christianity, the brand of Christianity she represented. Since people like Kuhlman had once been caricatured as "holy rollers," "pew jumpers," and more recently "charismaniacs" and "Jesus freaks," Carson's willingness to interview her was nothing short of remarkable, and his wry comment that she was not "quite" ordinary—as if she could be considered even in the proximity of ordinary—was in fact a significant compliment from this governor of popular culture. Charismatic Christianity, known for its emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, operated on the fringes of American religion and culture until the middle of the twentieth century.

Charismatic Christians were believed by American society “to be insanely fanatical, self-righteous, doctrinally mistaken, and emotionally unstable.”ⁱⁱ One reporter described a 1923 Pentecostal service as “a mighty religious intoxication” and ended the somewhat sympathetic article with the gently ironic statement, “And out on the street, these ‘peculiar people’ looked sane and normal—even as you and I.”ⁱⁱⁱ Church leaders of the time expressed their apprehension that “psychopathic cases would result if full bent was given to the rising tide of emotionalism at these services.”^{iv}

Prejudices against charismatic worship, practice, and theology persisted for decades. Pentecostal evangelist Oral Roberts, an historical cohort of Kuhlman, became a lightning rod for national discomfort with the charismatic emphasis on faith healing. David Edwin Harrell noted, “In 1955, the journal *The Christian Century* warned, ‘This Oral Roberts sort of thing . . . can do the cause of vital religion . . . harm.’” The following year, proponents of divine healing were dubbed “racketeers” and “practitioners of religious quackery” by the National Council of Churches.^v These accounts demonstrate that the backdrop for the conversation between Kuhlman and Carson was not just the faux skyline of “lovely downtown Burbank,” but also almost a century of skepticism, uneasiness and even open hostility toward charismatic Christianity. Set against this history, the response to Kuhlman by the *Tonight Show* audience and by Carson himself revealed a significantly positive transformation in the cultural tolerance for charismatic Christianity by late 1974.

The life and ministry of Kathryn Kuhlman provide a much-needed framework for understanding the movement of charismatic Christianity from periphery to center in twentieth-century America. At first, charismatic Christianity was identified primarily with Pentecostalism, and for many years the standard doctrines held by Pentecostals were considered backward and ignorant by contemporary mainstream Christians and American popular culture.^{vi} In the middle of the twentieth century, a new category of Christian emerged on the scene: the charismatic Christian. A charismatic Christian was one who was participating in the “charismatic renewal,” a new movement that combined Pentecostal practice and doctrine with attachment to historic mainline churches.^{vii} The new charismatics practiced a “softened” version of Pentecostal theology. They retained the emphasis on the present reality of the spiritual gifts mentioned in the book of Acts, but did not insist upon the evidence of speaking in tongues to prove the presence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. While many Pentecostal leaders were uncomfortable with the “Pentecostalism Lite” represented by the charismatic renewal movement, some evangelicals were at ease with the dual identity of charismatic evangelical, especially as evangelicalism began to organize around the more open neo-evangelical movement led by Billy Graham. Some Baptists even claimed to be “Holy Ghost Baptists.” But during Kuhlman’s lifetime and under her leadership the designation of charismatic developed into something different from Pentecostal or evangelical or mainstream.

In a chart of sets and subsets, “charismatic” would intersect the sets of mainstream, evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity, creating a new subset in American religious history. Kathryn Kuhlman was a leader in the transformation of charismatic Christianity from a suspect form of religion to a respectable form of religiosity that was accepted and even celebrated by mainstream Christianity and culture by the end of the twentieth century. During the course of her life, 1907-1976, charismatic Christianity began to move from fringe to center, from questionable to

respectable, even desirable, for a growing number of American Christians. I call this transformation “gentrification.” The term “gentrification” is evocative and provocative when used in reference to urban areas, and no less so when applied to the changes charismatic Christianity experienced in the twentieth century. In urban neighborhoods, as interest builds, there is a change in public perception of an area from being uninteresting or even dangerous to being the new “hot spot.” Charismatic Christianity experienced this kind of media-driven metamorphosis; by the latter part of the twentieth century, it was not just tolerable, it was trendy. Popular culture as well as mainstream Christianity began to perceive charismatic Christianity as a valid, if still peculiar, religious choice.

Kathryn Kuhlman’s life provides an orienting narrative, a road map for studying the gentrification of charismatic Christianity. At the time of her death in 1976, Kathryn Kuhlman was at the center of a charismatic ministry known throughout the world. Attracting capacity crowds throughout her 55 years of ministry, Kuhlman preached to hundreds of thousands of people. In just one example of her drawing power, in the last ten years of her life she preached at services every month to capacity crowds in the 7,000 seat Los Angeles Shrine Auditorium. During her career Kuhlman also hosted radio and television shows and headed a successful non-profit corporation, the Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation. In addition to her speaking and preaching, Kuhlman authored several best-selling books such as the collection of healing testimonies entitled *I Believe in Miracles*, which sold over a million copies. In 1975, when she came to Las Vegas to present one of her world-famous “miracle services,” she was greeted at the airport by the mayor, who declared the date Kathryn Kuhlman Day.

And what about the Carson interview? How did it end? Kathryn Kuhlman held her own with Johnny Carson in Studio One. The rest of their conversation, which lasted until the band began to play the closing chords to signal the show’s end, was comfortable and congenial, but Carson never fully relaxed in the presence of his formidable and not-quite-ordinary guest. By the latter part of the twentieth century, the relationship of American popular culture and mainstream religion with charismatic Christianity was much the same as that between Kuhlman and Carson. The journey of charismatic Christianity from religious and cultural contempt to acceptance, albeit somewhat uneasy acceptance, was the narrative of Kuhlman’s life and is the focus of my work.

Despite her successful career and remarkable popularity, Kathryn Kuhlman is largely forgotten by historians of American Christianity. There has not been much written about her. Once I decided that Kuhlman was the subject I was looking for to tell the story of charismatic Christianity’s rise and transformation in twentieth century America, I had to start to find more information about her. I remember very well when I sat down in front of my computer and entered “Kathryn Kuhlman” into the search engine, and up popped some of the most lovely words I have ever read: “the contents of the Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation are stored at the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, Illinois.” Wheaton? Wheaton! I was familiar with Wheaton due to my acquaintance with professor Edith Blumhofer, who had graciously invited graduate students at the University of Chicago to be a part of the important Public Religion Project she coordinated. Since my husband was the pastor of a local church in Chicago at the time, this meant that I did not have to pull up stakes and move in order to do the great majority of my research. It was simply a dream come true for me. I made my first trip out here, taking the

Ravenswood Metra from my apartment on the north side of Chicago into downtown, then settling in to the Metra that would take me right to Wheaton. From the very first, the archivists treated me with kindness and respect, and on many days, when I was tired and sometimes discouraged, their kindness made all the difference.

The collections of the Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation, housed here at the archives of the Billy Graham Center largely comprise the bulk of primary sources available for research on Kuhlman. Five hundred episodes of Kuhlman's television show *I Believe in Miracles* are preserved on VHS tape and are available for viewing at these archives, as well as the twenty-two episodes of *Your Faith and Mine*. A close "reading" of these videos provided a wealth of resources for the exploration of Kuhlman and her presentation of charismatic Christianity. Yes, I said, five hundred and twenty-two. Episodes. And I watched almost all of them—472 to be exact. I had a kind colleague who read my dissertation recently to help me with editing and revisions for publication, and one of his notes was: "Amy, did you actually WATCH 472 episodes?" Yes. Yes, I did.

Having the opportunity to watch Kuhlman in action was invaluable. I had read her books, including her biggest seller, *I Believe in Miracles*, which contains chapters drawn from many of the very people featured on *Your Faith and Mine*. But these books were ghost-written, and do not sound like Kathryn Kuhlman at all. Also, in order to understand Kuhlman's appeal, you have to experience her in all her fullness. She is a very dramatic figure, and much of what is remembered of her is based on her Miracle Service in Las Vegas, which was distributed under the name *Dry Land, Living Water*, and is probably her most well-known video due to its accessibility. Kuhlman in 1975, when the Vegas service was filmed, was extremely ill and weak. She is still a force to be reckoned with, but definitely in her last days. In contrast, the Kathryn Kuhlman of *Your Faith and Mine* is younger, somewhere between 40 and 45 years old, and she is vibrant and filled with energy. Her appearance is dramatic, but compared to her later white pulpit dress, comfortingly conservative. Her presentation of herself was still guarded in the 1950s, for reasons we will explore together. But I found myself enchanted by this younger Kuhlman, and I enjoyed each and every episode of *Your Faith and Mine*. Interestingly, further information about the television show was very difficult to obtain. The Kuhlman Foundation had no additional data. Wayne Warner, Kuhlman's most recent biographer, had no information to add. Reverend David Verzilli, Kuhlman's associate minister who led the weekly Bible studies and assisted with the services at Stambaugh Auditorium from the early 1960s until Kuhlman's death, was also unable to give any details about the show. The episodes are not dated other than "c. 1950s."

The work I did on *Your Faith and Mine* informed all of my dissertation, but I focused exclusively on its role in Kuhlman's life and her contribution to the gentrification of charismatic Christianity in my chapter entitled "Televising Testimony." The show guided me into studying the subject of testimony, and the role televising testimony about miracles, rather than televising miracles themselves, played in Kuhlman's success. It was filmed in Ohio while Kuhlman ministered in Pennsylvania, but let me give you a little background on just how this show came to be.

Kathryn Kuhlman came to Franklin, Pennsylvania in 1946 under less than ideal circumstances. She moved in order to begin a new career far from her mistakes in her ministry in the American

West. Just 11 years earlier, at the age of 28, she was the leader of a thriving congregation at the Denver Revival Tabernacle. Then, she made the acquaintance of Burroughs Waltrip, an evangelist who came to Denver on a preaching junket in 1935. The two began to share preaching in Kuhlman's Denver Revival Tabernacle and Waltrip's shiny new art nouveau Radio Chapel in Mason City, Iowa. The pair began to make the 800 mile trip between the churches a little too often for simply professional reasons and their congregations began to suspect an affair. Such a union would be disastrous for the couple, especially for Kuhlman, due to the fact that Burroughs Waltrip was still married at the time, with a wife and two young sons in Texas.

Despite the danger to his ministry, Waltrip divorced his wife and abandoned his children in order to marry Kuhlman in October of 1938.^{viii} Kuhlman made the staggeringly foolish decision to accept his proposal. The marriage destroyed both evangelists' ministries. The Denver Revival Tabernacle congregation rejected Kuhlman, and the Radio Chapel fell apart soon after due to financial woes. Failure after failure followed the couple's descent into obscurity during the six years that followed. Faced with months of harshly critical reception as a couple, they began leading meetings independently of each other. According to records of the couple's ministerial association at the time, the Evangelical Church Alliance (ECA), Waltrip was still presenting an optimistic public face even as the two were together less and less. In April of 1946, Waltrip wrote from Los Angeles, "God is blessing our ministry in a most gracious way." In passing, he noted Kathryn would be traveling to the East for a meeting.^{ix} This brief reference failed to capture the larger picture: that April, Kathryn Kuhlman left her husband Burroughs Waltrip in Los Angeles, took the train to Pennsylvania, and never came back.

Waltrip petitioned for divorce in 1947, and the marriage was dissolved. On her birthday, May 7, 1946, alone in Franklin, Pennsylvania, Kuhlman was a forty-year-old female evangelist who had just left her husband. It would take a miracle to turn her career around.

One year after her move to Franklin, Kuhlman in fact marked "the beginning of miracles," a re-focusing of her ministry on the practice of divine healing following the testimony of an unnamed woman to a healing she received in a Kuhlman service.^x From 1947 onward Kuhlman was regularly identified as a "faith healer," a label she resolutely rejected. When asked why she didn't like the designation, Kathryn Kuhlman once replied, "I do not put myself in a class with faith healers."^{xi} Kuhlman claimed she was not just different from others who led healing ministries; rather, she was in a different class.

She was especially determined not to be counted among the primarily Pentecostal deliverance evangelists who were seen and heard in towns across America during what developed into a post-World War II healing revival. These Pentecostal faith healers were perceived by the culture as back-hills preachers in perspiration-soaked shirts, grappling sick people's heads in their hands as they bellowed out rebukes to demons and sin-sickness. Kuhlman did not want to be branded with a term that conjured up these kinds of lower-class images. Kuhlman's disdain for faith healers was shared by most of the American public during the first half of the twentieth century. As she led her own healing ministry, Kuhlman worked to present a more refined image of charismatic Christianity and its most public practice, divine healing. Her miracle services were calmer and less emotional than those of her contemporaries, and aided in the gentrification of charismatic Christianity. Between 1946 and 1953, Kuhlman leveraged the increasing popularity

of healing ministries, minimized controversy by refashioning charismatic practices to make them more palatable to the broader culture, and re-established herself as the leader of a well-known and respected ministry. In the course of seven years she revived a career that should have been beyond resuscitation; it was no wonder she was known as “The Miracle Lady.”

At every stage of her career, Kathryn Kuhlman was “on the air.” By the mid-1950s, she had firmly established a highly successful radio ministry alongside her growing congregations in Pittsburgh. But soon, the people of Pittsburgh were rushing to get their hands on the hot new thing for the up-to-date family: a television. Kuhlman, always eager to embrace the next available broadcast medium, quickly expanded her reach to include the cutting-edge technology.^{xii} She began production of her weekly syndicated show, *Your Faith and Mine*, where she merged her evangelism skills with her knowledge of the persuasive power of personal testimony, a combination she knew to be effective from her years on the revival circuit.^{xiii} She took this tried-and-true formula and presented it through the up-to-the-minute medium of television, introducing her brand of Christianity into Pittsburgh homes.

Kathryn Kuhlman was not the only religious leader expanding into television at this time. For example, Billy Graham’s *Hour of Decision* began in 1950 on ABC. But Kuhlman’s television ministry was unique for two reasons: the head of the ministry was a woman, and the presentation of charismatic Christianity found on the program was different from any other.

Kuhlman chose a refined approach to televising divine healing. Although her healing ministry was gaining tremendous attention all over the Pittsburgh area, she deliberately chose not to record on film the miracle services themselves as her male contemporaries had done. The television programs produced by her male colleagues received considerable criticism. Oral Roberts’ first efforts at television were not well-received by those outside Pentecostal circles. A. A. Allen, another leader in the healing revival, also created controversy with his television broadcasts. Roberts chose simply to film and telecast his healing services in his huge tent, with all of their attendant Pentecostal fervor. Television audiences were not used to the kind of charismatic worship found on Roberts’ show, and the program stirred controversy throughout its run.^{xiv}

[At this point in the lecture, an excerpt from an Oral Roberts television program was played] Rather than film the actual events of miraculous healing, Kuhlman featured people who testified to spiritual and physical healings that had taken place previous to the telecast. Her choice to present testimonies to miracles rather than the miracle services themselves was wise on many levels. As Oral Roberts, A. A. Allen and others had discovered, watching a miracle service could be threatening, disconcerting, even frightening for the uninitiated in charismatic worship and theology. But seeing a regular person telling a story about what had happened to them at that same service was less challenging. By exposing the television audience to divine healing gently through the method of personal testimony, Kuhlman offered a mediated experience more palatable to the uninitiated in the signs and wonders of charismatic Christianity.

On one episode of *Your Faith and Mine*, Kuhlman welcomed Harry Stephenson, who had come to tell of his miraculous healing from cancer of the tongue. “Come here, Mr. Stephenson,” Kuhlman said as she waved him on to the stage and into the screen; “You can tell it far better

than I can. It's one thing to read of divine healing, but it's something else to see the person themselves."^{xv} This dual insight formed the foundation for Kuhlman's highly successful television career: one, "You can tell it far better than I can," Kuhlman stated. It was vitally important the healed persons speak for themselves and offer their own subjective authority for the validity of their claim of supernatural healing. Two, as Kuhlman said, "It's one thing to read of divine healing, but it's something else to see the person themselves." Seeing a person on television who claimed to be divinely healed, rather than reading their testimony or even hearing them speak on the radio, was different, and superior. Seeing a person testifying who appeared calm, rational, even appealing and normal, was even more valuable. Kuhlman brought this new and different presentation of divine healing to the airwaves of television, where her show reached a previously unreachable number of people. In the earliest days of the development of charismatic Christianity, Kuhlman's televised testimonies broadcast images of average people speaking freely about divine and spiritual healing into hundreds of homes in the Pittsburgh area. This began the dissemination of a gentrified form of charismatic Christianity into the homes, lives, and minds of people previously unexposed.

Your Faith and Mine was recorded at the site of Kuhlman's Sunday services in Stambaugh Auditorium in Youngstown, a community in southeastern Ohio. The service drew upon Kuhlman's established following in western Pennsylvania and the Pittsburgh area as well as from the Youngstown population. Youngstown was about an hour's drive from the north side of Pittsburgh, and like Pittsburgh was a working-class, steel-oriented town in the Allegheny Plateau. Stambaugh Auditorium was an impressive building with columns inside and out, a large main floor and wraparound balconies that seated 2400 people.

The shows followed a very standardized format, with almost no deviation from episode to episode other than the identities of the featured guests and their testimonies. The stock opening consisted of taped footage of the auditorium filled to capacity, with the music of an organ playing church bells.

NOTE: "Here she is, Kathryn Kuhlman, the young woman whose widespread ministry has brought faith and hope to thousands" (later it would be "millions").

In an unnervingly bad edit, the camera at this point awkwardly shifted from the beatific face of Kuhlman to a shot of the platform. The platform contained a small lectern, but was dominated by the large double microphone on its stand, placed center stage. A giddy Kuhlman lifted her hand to direct the audience in the singing of a chorus, perfectly aware of the position of the cameras, her distance from the microphone, and the placement of each person around her on the platform. From the very first moment of the show, Kuhlman was center-stage, in charge of the service and the clear authority in the ministry.

Kuhlman was aware of her vulnerability to criticism as the female head of her ministry as reflected (literally) in the imagery of the television show. With subtle skill, Kuhlman presented her image very carefully and consistently on the program. Her dress was professional, restrained and refined. In all twenty-two episodes she wore a version of a white suit dress with a demure skirt that hit below the knee. Her flair for style and a little "sass" was shown in her choice of white high-heeled ankle-strap shoes, shoes that showed off her long legs to good advantage. She

wore little to no jewelry, no wedding ring, and occasionally added a simple white corsage to her lapel as decoration. She looked modern, stylish, “normal.” Dressed like most of the women in her audience, Kuhlman presented herself as an average 1950s woman who just happened to be leading a television ministry. As further visual validation of her role as leader, Kuhlman filled the stage with men, all dressed in suits and ties, lined up in ranks behind her. These men provided unequivocal imagery of male support and “covering” for her leadership. Joining her in songs, the men were the early form of Kuhlman’s beloved “Men’s Chorus.” Kuhlman was almost always the only female on the platform until the testimonials began, although a few episodes included women in the chorus behind her. Her organist Charles Beebee and pianist Jimmy Miller were both male, and like many of the great evangelists before her, Kuhlman had her soloist. On *Your Faith and Mine* the featured singer was Lem Stroud, an attractive man who sang the gospel hymns with emotion and restraint. The voice that announced her show was also male. Men were present everywhere in the images and sounds of the show, but always in supporting roles. Surrounding Kuhlman on her television show were visual and aural affirmations of her role as a religious leader by the male adherents in the auditorium. Kuhlman was exhorter, choir director, and presiding pastor all in one as the opening worship sequence continued. She moved back and forth on the platform, gesturing toward the off screen audience while shouting out hymn numbers and encouraging words (due to her distance from the stationery microphone.) At this point in the show, under her direction, organ, piano and audience burst into music, with Kuhlman directing and mincing to and from the large microphone on its stand on the toes of her high-heeled shoes, sometimes singing in a deep alto, sometimes shouting over the hundreds of voices things such as “That’s MAHVELOUS.”

The entire auditorium was under her control as Kuhlman’s skilled musicians followed her every lead. When the people rose to sing, many raised one hand during the choruses, dropping their hands during the verses. Raising hands was a definitive marker of charismatic worship style. In many ways, Kuhlman’s television show featured well-dressed, average people worshipping in a charismatic style that was calm almost to the point of being staid. Obviously trained in revivals and a polished professional at launching a worship service, Kuhlman demonstrated skill in directing the beginning burst of song and praise.^{xvi} Her status as leader was unquestionable, and her ability to fortify that position for the viewing audience through non-threatening visual reassurances was impressive. In the 1950s, charismatic Christianity was still considered eccentric and even aberrant by mainstream America. Combining the professional appearance of Kuhlman with the clean-cut and respectable appearance of her audience, *Your Faith and Mine* brought to the airwaves a new vision of charismatic Christianity.

Kuhlman and her production team demonstrated sophistication in the staging of the opening worship sequence, using “tricks of the trade” to offer the most engaging imagery possible. The presentation of the audience was particularly engineered for best effect. The audience was an important presence throughout the shows as they were heard singing, coughing, responding, and laughing while the camera was focused exclusively on the platform. This mainly unseen company of Kuhlman followers was glimpsed only at the beginning of the show, where in every episode the auditorium appeared to be completely filled. As the cameras switched back and forth from the platform to the audience, every seat was filled on the floor and in the two upper balconies. This was the first impression of her ministry for the television viewer; Kuhlman would not have wanted to show a less than packed auditorium. Empty seats were not her style.

This probably contributed to the occasional use of looped footage on the show. In several episodes, the film of the people singing hymns in the auditorium did not sync up with the soundtrack. On one episode, the hymn that is heard by the television audience is “I’ll Be There.” What the looped footage revealed, however, was an audience mouthing the words to the hymn “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.”^{xvii} This extended even to the occasional looped footage of her organist and pianist playing out of sync with the notes heard on the track. The program opening often combined new footage of the platform with looped stock film of the auditorium or musicians. Through the magic of editing, Kuhlman consistently stood on the platform in front of a full auditorium as her program broadcast images of a packed house each episode. It is impossible to know if the auditorium was truly filled each episode, but in the mediated and manipulated world of television, Kuhlman’s services were always overflowing.

With a revival preacher’s skilled touch, Kuhlman’s opening worship prepared the room for the next attraction: testimony. Presenting stories of divine healing each and every week served not only as proof of God’s reality but proof of the accessibility of God’s power for anyone at any time. As Kuhlman repeatedly asserted, “What God did for this person, he can do for you.” The testimonies were examples of “*Your Faith and Mine*,” faith in the accessibility of God’s miracle-working power as proven by the real-life experiences of everyday people. *Your Faith and Mine* was a thirty minute program, devoid of any advertising. Of those thirty minutes, twenty were dedicated to the testimony of the featured guests. What Kuhlman presented was the whole story, narrated by the one who experienced it, rather than unmediated images of the Holy Spirit at work, available for the interpretation (or more likely, misinterpretation) by the untrained viewer. The “mysteries” of God revealed in the miracle services needed to be interpreted for uninitiated observers, a role Kuhlman took on as the interviewer of those who had been healed.^{xviii}

Each testimonial segment on *Your Faith and Mine* began with Kuhlman’s dramatic summary of “how they got here.” Through this, Kuhlman established her control over the story. She determined the parameters of the testimony and then invited the guest to come and “flesh out” the basic narrative she established. Everything was carefully controlled and followed a set pattern each episode. Often it was obvious Kuhlman knew the people testifying: they were current members of her ministry in Pittsburgh, and their stories were as familiar to her as to themselves. Later in her career Kuhlman would emphasize the “unrehearsed testimony” of her guests. But at this time, most of the guests and testimonials derived from Kuhlman’s own Pittsburgh or Youngstown services. A genuine affection between Kuhlman and her guests was often evident as well. The men and women do not seem to resent Kuhlman’s omnipresence as they tell their stories, but often actually seem reassured and encouraged by her guidance. Many stood rigid and nervous in front of the television cameras as Kuhlman gently and deftly helped them tell their story. Some were given more freedom to speak, but it was quickly apparent the “freedom” was due to the fact they had memorized much of their story in advance. It was likely Kuhlman had heard their testimony before, perhaps in another miracle service, and was therefore able to retreat somewhat from her controlling stance. Whether memorized or free-style testimony, Kuhlman was there, always there, moving and shaping the stories through word and action, pacing the show to fit smoothly into its time slot, skills learned in revivals and radio studios combined.

No guest on *Your Faith and Mine* was allowed to come up on the platform, grab the microphone and just begin talking. Kuhlman kept a close narrative rein on the testimonies presented on her shows by directing the speakers through precise prompting, questions and summaries. Kuhlman was strict in her direction of the men and women who testified on her show. She was guiding her guests in the narrative form she had been trained to understand as reflective of the true path of testimony: from sin to redemption, from sickness to health.

One testimonial segment concerned the story of the redemption or spiritual healing of a man named Johnny Stake. Stake had experienced an awe-inspiring vision of God which brought him to saving faith, and Kuhlman was there to lead him and his family through their testimony. With the organ music following her every emotion, Kuhlman “set up” the testimony of the guest.

[At this point in the lecture, a video clip was played from video V486 in Collection 212]
(Note that she never blinks!!)

Kuhlman skillfully continued the story to its inevitable dramatic climax.

[At this point in the lecture, a video clip was played from video V486 in Collection 212]
At this point, the story of “Johnny” was already filled with pathos and emotion, and he has not even been seen. Enough was known of the typical plot line of the testimony to assume that Johnny will be redeemed, and that he was even in the auditorium as Kuhlman was speaking.

[At this point in the lecture, a video clip was played from video V486 in Collection 212]
The emotional build-up to the testimony of the guests was typical of *Your Faith and Mine* episodes. Kuhlman often shaped the testimonies on *Your Faith and Mine* by controlling who spoke and when, including Johnny’s wife when she starts to tell Johnny’s story for him!

[At this point in the lecture, a video clip was played from video V486 in Collection 212]
In another episode, Kuhlman’s voice can be heard off-screen prompting under her breath a Mrs. Kichline to “Speed it up, speed it up.” This was in part skilled interviewing with a sharp sense of how much time was available in a thirty-minute program for the testimonies. Kuhlman had an excellent sense of momentum and pacing, expertise learned in radio and revivals. She also had a strong will to direct the speakers to the end she desired, and was unafraid to exert her authority in order to keep things moving.

An important type of healing testimony featured in both Pentecostal history and *Your Faith and Mine* was the spiritual autobiography of the recovered “drunkard.” Healing from the disease of alcoholism was a part of the testimony of seven of the twenty-two episodes of the show. Kuhlman featured the story of a man called “Paddy” and his boss, Mr. Wilson.^{xix} Mr. Wilson was a long-suffering employer of “Paddy” during his days of terrible drinking. Kuhlman called them onto the stage, wiggled between them and bent into the microphone to say, “Tell the folk.” The story of Paddy and Mr. Wilson ended happily-

[At this point in the lecture, a video clip was played from video V486 in Collection 212]
Kuhlman wrapped up the testimony by saying, “It’s real, believe me people, it’s real!”

When Kuhlman brought her guests to the microphone to testify to their experiences of God's miracle-working power, she was standing in the long history of Christian testimony and its place in revivalistic worship services. Historical patterns of testimony shaped how the stories were told-how they began and how they inevitably concluded. The construction of her show around the testimonies of those who had been spiritually and physically healed revealed a deep connectedness to the evangelical/Pentecostal understanding of the applicability of personal testimony. As historian Grant Wacker noted, "Like countless Christians before them, early Pentecostals assumed that their personal faith stories bore normative implications for others."^{xx} The guests on *Your Faith and Mine* bore witness to divine healing, the centerpiece of the testimony of charismatic Christianity, with deep roots in its Pentecostal ancestry.^{xxi} Divine healing gave classic Pentecostalism life;^{xxii} it gave charismatic Christianity a center. Divine healing became one of the most important orienting beliefs for charismatic Christianity, although it never reached "evidentiary" status in the way tongues did for Pentecostalism. In charismatic Christianity, the baptism of the Holy Spirit resulted in healing-spiritual, physical or both. This was distinct from Pentecostalism, where the Holy Ghost baptism brought tongues as the first sign, or non-Pentecostal evangelicalism, where the sign of the Holy Ghost was being "born again." This shift in perspective gave early charismatics an important organizing belief. The testimonies of divine healing on *Your Faith and Mine* helped charismatic Christianity develop its own understanding of healing, in continuity with but distinct from its Pentecostal forebears.

[At this point in the lecture, a video clip was played from video V486 in Collection 212]

Each episode of *Your Faith and Mine* ended with a passionate altar call to the viewing audience. Fading from Kuhlman's final prayer, the image of her hands closing a Bible washed over the screen. Closing credits overlay a tree in the sunset as the announcer intoned his good-byes. From worship to testimony to altar call, *Your Faith and Mine* was a unique media presentation of old-time revivals and classic Pentecostalism, with a twist. Early on, Kathryn Kuhlman harnessed the advantages of technological innovation in media with skills learned on the sawdust trail. She was the only female leader of note who made the difficult and expensive transition to television ministry from radio. With her growing healing ministry, radio and television presence, she was a leader in the post-World War II healing revival. She carefully constructed an image, and presented that image effectively on a program dedicated to the tried-and-true power of first-person testimony. Through her combination of Pentecostal traditions in testimony and evangelical optimism about media technology, she made a first leap into the realm of television ministry. *Your Faith and Mine* only exists today in twenty-two episodes. Although there may have been more, it does not seem that the show was a smashing success. It would be almost a decade before Kuhlman again televised her ministry at Stambaugh Auditorium. In 1967, in Technicolor, she reappeared with a new show called *I Believe in Miracles*. But in the early black and white days of *Your Faith and Mine*, she created a unique format of televised testimony that would set the stage for her highly successful sequel.

It is my hope this project will contribute to bringing back to the stage of American religious history the compelling, sometimes difficult, and always intriguing figure of Kathryn Johanna Kuhlman, the "miracle lady."^{xxiii}

ⁱ “Johnny Carson Show-Tonight Show, Kathryn Kuhlman segment,” *I Believe in Miracles*, October 15, 1974, VHS, V125, Collection 212, The Kathryn Kuhlman Collection, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, IL.

ⁱⁱ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 187.

ⁱⁱⁱ Alma Whitaker, “Tell of Cures by Miracles,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 18, 1923.

^{iv} “Straton Defends Healing Services,” *New York Times*, June 24, 1927.

^v David Edwin Harrell, Jr., *All Things Are Possible: The Healing and Charismatic Revivals in Modern America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 99; 100.

^{vi} Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 199.

^{vii} Stanley Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, eds., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 2002), s.v. “Charismatic Movement.”

^{viii} Warner, chapter entitled “Way Off Course With Mr. Waltrip” in Kathryn Kuhlman, 81-9; Buckingham, chapter entitled “The Slaying of the Egyptian,” in *Daughter of Destiny*, 69-78.

^{ix} Warner, *Kathryn Kuhlman*, 102-103.

^x The cassette recording of Kuhlman’s message entitled “The Beginning of Miracles” was one of the most requested by her fans, and was the first essay in a posthumous collection of radio messages entitled “Heart to Heart With Kathryn Kuhlman.” The story was also printed in a booklet entitled *What Is the Key?* which was published in the early 1960s. This pamphlet was offered during broadcasts of *I Believe in Miracles* free of charge by self-addressed stamped envelope to anyone who requested it. The standard narrative Kuhlman recounted regarding the beginning of miracles in her ministry is contained in these two versions. Kathryn Kuhlman, *What is the Key?* Box 1, Collection 212, The Kathryn Kuhlman Collection, Archives of the Billy Graham Center, Wheaton, IL.

^{xi} *Christianity Today* Reprint, Healing in the Spirit.

^{xii} I do not want to overlook the importance of print media in Kuhlman’s career, but in this chapter the focus will be upon her role and work in broadcast media.

^{xiii} *Your Faith and Mine* was syndicated and broadcast in the mid-1950s. Twenty-two episodes remain. Reverend David Verzilli, email message to author, July 30, 2007.

^{xiv} Schultze, *American Evangelicals*, 89.

^{xv} “Harry Stephenson, who was healed from cancer,” *Your Faith and Mine*, c. 1950s, VHS, V496, Episode 2, Collection 212, The Kathryn Kuhlman Collection.

^{xvi} It is educational to note that when Kuhlman finally allowed the filming of one of her miracle services in Las Vegas, the opening worship sequence was in many ways an exact copy of the introduction to *Your Faith and Mine*. It is safe to assume, then, that the Kuhlman miracle services remained basically true to this early form throughout her career. The films of *Your Faith and Mine*, therefore, offer a helpful glimpse of what Kuhlman’s miracle services were like, despite the very limited visual record of the services and the lack of footage of the actual healings themselves.

^{xvii} “Mrs. Fischer, whose daughter had been a water head baby,” *Your Faith and Mine*, c. 1950s, VHS, V490, Episode 2, Collection 212, The Kathryn Kuhlman Collection.

^{xviii} This historical pattern may explain in part why Kuhlman chose to wait so long to film a miracle service.

^{xix} “Mr. Wilson, Mr. Pat ‘Paddy’ Shovlin, and Mr. Nick Harden, all former alcoholics,” *Your Faith and Mine*, c. 1950s, VHS, V486, Episode 2, Collection 212, The Kathryn Kuhlman Collection.

^{xx} 20. Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 58.

^{xxi} Wacker stated concerning the role of the healing testimony, “[F]inally, there was healing, not just the natural mending of the body as acknowledged by all Christian traditions, but Pentecostal healing—the miraculous, inexplicable restoration of bones broken and organs ravaged. From first to last, divine healing remained central to the movement’s self-understanding.” Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 65.

^{xxii} 22. Wacker, *Heaven Below*, 67.

^{xxiii} “Kathryn Kuhlman: A Legacy,” July 24, 1976, VHS, V128, Collection 212, The Kathryn Kuhlman Collection.