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Evangelist Jimmy Swaggart Threatens To Kill Gays

by Jan Prout
365Gay.com Newscenter

Toronto Bureau

Posted: September 20, 2004 12:02 am ET

(Toronto, Ontario) A Canadian television station has apologized publicly to viewers for a telecast of American evangelist Jimmy Swaggart's television program in which he threatened to kill gays.

The program, aired last week on Omni 1, a Toronto multicultural station, and throughout the US, has also prompted an investigation by the Canadian Radio Television Commission, the government agency which regulates television.

During the program, a rambling sermon by Swaggart who is trying to rehabilitate himself after an arrest for soliciting a prostitute, the televangelist turned to the subject of gay marriage.

According to a transcript of the program, Swaggart said: "I'm trying to find the correct name for it ... this utter absolute, asinine, idiotic stupidity of men marrying men. ... I've never seen a man in my life I wanted to marry. And I'm gonna be blunt and plain; if one ever looks at me like that, I'm gonna kill him and tell God he died."

The remarks were met with applause from his congregation.

The program was taped at Swaggart's ministry in New Orleans where voters Saturday agreed to amend the Louisiana

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The CRTC investigation was prompted by a complaint by a viewer in Ottawa. It is not known if any complaints had been made in the US where the show appears on stations in all 50 states. A spokesperson for the FCC which regulates television in the US did not return calls for comment Sunday.

Toronto station Omni 1 reviewed the tape after a complaint was made. A spokesperson called the remarks "a serious breach" of Canadian broadcast regulations.

Omni 1 is owned by Rogers Communications a conglomerate that controls the largest cable and cell phone companies in Canada and also owns television and radio stations and a publishing company.

Under Canadian law hate speech is a criminal offense. Broadcast lawyers say that both the station and Swaggart could be charged in addition to any penalty imposed by the CRTC.

The FCC has wide powers for imposing fines. Last month the Commission fined 20 CBS television stations more than \$25,000 each over the Janet Jackson bare breast incident at the Super Bowl.

In 1987 Swaggart in a tearful sermon begged forgiveness from his followers after being found with a prostitute.

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