

Prosperity Preacher Rev. Ike Dies at 74

✖ The minister known as Reverend Ike, who preached a gospel of prosperity that stretched the limits of biblical orthodoxy, died on Tuesday at age 74.

The Rev. Frederick J. Eikerenkoetter II suffered a stroke in 2007 and never fully recovered, the *New York Times* reported. He died in Los Angeles, where he moved two years ago. ✖

Although he began preaching in his father's Baptist church, the South Carolina native was best known for teaching what he called "positive self-image psychology" to his 5,000-member church, the United Church Science of Living Institute in New York.

In the 1970s, Eikerenkoetter took his message to millions through his television and radio broadcasts, famously preaching that it was not the love of money that was the root of all kinds of evil, as 1 Timothy 6:10 states, but rather the lack of it.

Born in South Carolina, Eikerenkoetter began his ministry at age 14 as an associate minister in his father's Baptist church. He attended the American Bible College in Chicago and served as an Air Force chaplain for two years.

In 1964, he founded Miracle Temple in Boston then moved to New York City two years later and began the United Church Science of Living Institute.

Shortening his name to "Rev. Ike," he taught that believers should look inside for God's power to obtain health and wealth.

"This is the do-it-yourself church," he said, according to the

New York Times. "The only savior in this philosophy is God in you."

Traditional Christian ministers often accused him of preaching heresy, including many Pentecostals despite the fact that he once was a member of a Oneness Pentecostal denomination called the Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which is based in Harlem, N.Y.

Church historian Robert Spellman, Ph.D., said Eikerenkoetter had a disagreement with the denomination's founder, Bishop R.C. Lawson, and the two parted ways in the mid-1950s. "The next thing we knew he was into his own theological focus," Spellman told *Charisma*.

Spellman said Eikerenkoetter's reach was based as much on his message as his marketing ability. "Ike made a contribution to positive thinking with respect to Christian theology," Spellman said. "He was a creative thinker. But if I can quote him, he was a specialist at marketing."

Critics often claimed Eikerenkoetter conned the poor into giving him donations, which he used to fund a lavish lifestyle. Both the IRS and the Postal Service investigated his businesses.

During the civil rights era, black ministers criticized Eikerenkoetter for focusing on self-fulfillment rather than social change. But he never made apologies for his message.

"I'm not a black preacher, I'm a green preacher," he said in 2004. "Because the only color of power in the American economy is green power. That's another reason I never really identified with this thing ... that they called black power. Don't tell me that white people need one thing and black people need something else."

Controversial minister E. Bernard Jordan, who has been accused of selling prophecies through his New York-based Zoe

Ministries, counts Eikerenkoetter among his mentors. Jordan, author of his own version of Eikerenkoetter's teaching called *The Laws of Thinking*, said the minister was "a great spiritual leader in our generation who has left big shoes for all of us to try to fill."

Eikerenkoetter is survived by his wife, Eula May Dent, and his son, Xavier F. Eikerenkoetter, who now leads his father's ministry.