



Media Spotlight

A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR MEDIA

SPECIAL REPORT

BENNY HINN

PROS & CONS

by Albert James Dager

Benny Hinn, pastor of Orlando Christian Center in Orlando, Florida, is one of the most prolific voices in the Christian media today. His book, *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*, has remained on the bestseller list since its release in October, 1990, having sold approximately one-quarter million copies within the first few months. As of this writing (May, 1992), it is still number one among paperback books according to *Christian Retailing*, one of the major trade publications for Christian bookstores, distributors and publishers.

Due to some rather startling statements in the original edition of *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*, Hinn came under fire from a few organizations that perceived serious doctrinal discrepancies in Hinn's theology.

The most public criticism of Hinn's teachings came from the Christian Research Institute which took Hinn and his publisher, Thomas Nelson Company, to task for what CRI perceived as heretical statements. This resulted in Nelson revising the questionable material in its later releases and Hinn apologizing and promising not to promote in the future the teachings under question. However, Thomas Nelson Company spokesmen Bruce Barbour (publisher) and Bill Watkins (senior editor) as well as Hinn, say that the theology expressed in the original edition has not been changed but merely "clarified."

Yet Hinn does claim to have changed his mind about other teachings not dealt with in *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*, most notably the "Jesus-died-spiritually" heresy that has characterized the theology of the word-faith teachers from E.W. Kenyon through Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland and others.

In spite of these developments, many Christians are still questioning where Benny Hinn is coming from. And in view of his continued popularity within the

Christian marketplace, we felt that an analysis of Hinn's teachings is in order. We also feel that much of the criticism leveled against Hinn has been based not on scriptural truth, but upon orthodoxy—traditionally accepted understanding of issues not necessarily addressed in clear terms by Scripture. It is our hope to set these differences apart.



THE MAN

Benny Hinn was born in 1953 in Israel to a Greek father and an Armenian mother. He was raised in the Greek Orthodox religion. Hinn claims that while he was a young boy of 11 years-of-age in Israel, God first appeared to him, and has been appearing to him ever since.¹ At the age of 14, Hinn moved to Canada with his parents. While attending high school there he says he had visions of himself preaching before huge crowds. He also claims that God healed him of a stuttering problem so that he could become a preacher.

Yet in spite of the visions and God's appearing to him for several years, Hinn marks the year of his being born again as 1972 when he was about 20 years old. It was at a Kathryn Kuhlman service the following year that he says he had a "profound spiritual experience."²

Hinn readily admits that much of the misunderstanding that has arisen from his teachings is the result of his lack of formal Bible training. In fact, almost immediately after his having been "born again," Hinn says, "The Lord launched me into ministry almost overnight."³

In spite of these circumstances, Hinn founded his present church, Orlando Christian Center, in 1983. Beginning with just a few hundred members, that church now boasts an average weekly attendance of over 7,000. In addition, Hinn conducts worldwide crusades and has a daily television program that airs over the Trinity Broadcasting Network, headed by Jan and Paul Crouch.

Although Hinn states that his ministry throughout the 1970s was shaped by the writings of men like D.L. Moody and R.A. Torrey, he was a strong proponent of "revelation knowledge"—new truths revealed to him by God directly—that were not contained within Scripture. Only recently has he stated that he will no longer claim revelation knowledge as the authority for his teachings.⁴

More than this, Hinn claims to actually be a channel for God—that God enters him and takes over his mind and tongue to the point where he is unaware of what he has said. After his sermon on December 31, 1989, at Orlando Christian Center, during which he gave several future prophecies, Hinn expressed that he was drunk—presumably on the Holy Spirit—and asked someone to tell him what he had just said:

I wish somebody would make sure to tell me what I said. Did you tape that brother? Did you tape that? Oh! I was totally drunk; still drunk!⁵

It became evident in the early 1980s that the word-faith teachings of Kenyon, Hagin, Copeland and others began to have an enormous impact on Hinn. But shortly after his encounter with critics of his book, Hinn announced that he no longer holds to the word-faith teachings.

I really no longer believe the faith message. I don't think it adds up.⁶

This admission appears to be a mixed blessing. While it's good news that Hinn has recognized the error of the word-faith message (at least some of its elements), his rationale is faulty. Whether or not the word-faith message adds up isn't the issue. This implies that it doesn't work. But even if it did work it's not biblical. And that's the problem with all false teachings.

THE GREAT CONTROVERSY

As Hinn's popularity increased due to his television program and the runaway sales of *Good Morning, Holy Spirit*, his teachings came under close scrutiny by several apologetics ministries. The Christian Research Institute became especially alarmed by Hinn's references to the Godhead that seemed at best unorthodox and at worst heretical. On both his television program and in his book, Hinn asserted that all three persons of the Triune Godhead have their own independent bodies, souls and spirits as well as wills.

God the Father is a person, God the Son is a person, God the Holy Ghost is a person, but each of them is a triune being by himself. If I can shock you and maybe I should, there are nine of them.... God the Father is a person with his own personal spirit, with his own personal soul and his own personal spirit body.

You say, "I never heard of that." Well, do you think you're in this church to hear things you've heard for the last 50 years? You can't argue with the Word can you? It's all in the Word.

Please understand, when God says "My Spirit," He means the Holy Spirit. But when He says, "I say," that's Him—his own personal being speaking.... This is all in the Word. God the Father is a person separate from the Holy Ghost—totally separate. When we say "the Holy Spirit," we do not mean the personal spirit being of the Father. He's a separate personality.

Do you know the Holy Spirit has a soul and a body separate from that of Jesus and the Father? The Holy Spirit is the name of a person who has—hear this now, this could shock you, but it will be okay for you—how many are ready to handle anything this morning? The Holy Spirit—here it goes, and you go check me out in the Bible if you want, but that's alright. Is the Holy Spirit a person? Then He is a person isn't He? And a person has a spirit. See, the Holy Spirit is a person. He's God the Spirit of God who proceeds from the Father and from the Son. But when the Holy Ghost left Heaven the Father did not lose His personal Spirit man, if I may call it that.

God the Father has a soul. He said to Israel, "My soul is weary of you. God the Father has His own spirit body. He walks. He walked in the cool of the day. He said to Moses, "I wrote the law with my finger." A finger that's not flesh, bone and blood—it's a spirit body. He said to Moses, "You can't see my face"—He has a face—"but you can see my back. He has a back. A spirit body. Do you understand?

When Jesus was on earth on the cross, the Holy Ghost left Him, and when the Holy Ghost left Him He said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"... He said, "Into thy hands I commit my spirit"—a separate person....

When He was in the garden He said, "My soul [is] exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." And He hung on the cross in His physical body. The Holy Ghost went back to Heaven. The spirit of Jesus Himself went to the underworld. His body laid in the grave [sic]....

God the Father then is a triune being within Himself. He's a person; He has His own spirit, He has a soul, He wills, He thinks, He feels, He wants....

God thinks ... separate from the Son and separate from the Holy Ghost. The same with Jesus and the same with the Holy Ghost. Isn't that clear?

God the Father is a separate individual from the Son and the Holy Ghost is a triune being who walks in a spirit body, and He has hair, He has eyes, He has a mouth, He has hands, He has a being that looks like a flame of fire.

Jesus the Son has His own spirit that He committed to the Father that went to the underworld and defeated the devil, and the Holy Ghost wasn't there....

He rose from the dead with a physical, glorified body. Before Jesus came to the earth He walked in a spirit body.

Please understand, saints, God the Father is not some ball that floats around space in a shapeless form. And Jesus Christ, before He became a man, was not a little, misty, shapeless nothing in Heaven. And the Holy Ghost is not some dripping oil from the throne of glory.

Now three persons with three separate spirit bodies, but Jesus Christ is the only one in Glory today that is walking around with a glorified body of flesh, because He rose from the dead.⁷

Shocked by such "unorthodox" statements voiced on television and in his book, the Christian Research Institute requested a meeting with Hinn. Robert M. Bowman, Jr., at the time a researcher for CRI, wrote about that meeting in the Spring, 1991 issue of *Christian Research Journal*.

I met with Benny Hinn on December 5, 1990, along with Hank Hanegraaff and Bob Lyle of the Christian Research Institute (CRI), to discuss CRI's concerns about this book. After that meeting, and in consultation with Hinn, Thomas Nelson Publishers made several changes in the eighth printing of the book (January 1991). (Thomas Nelson is a generally reputable Christian publishing house carrying a number of fine books which CRI continues to endorse and even distribute to the public.) There is no ac-

nowledgement in the book that changes have been made. That is, there is no way of knowing, other than carefully comparing select pages, whether one is holding in one's hands the original or the revised version. Although representatives of Thomas Nelson have stated publicly that changes were made to clarify Hinn's intended meaning, I shall argue that the changes constitute a revision and not merely a clarification.⁸

Bowman is correct in asserting that the changes constitute more than a clarification, but this is a minor issue; what is of importance is whether or not Hinn's teachings can legitimately be classified as heretical in the sense that they are unbiblical. Or is CRI's bone of contention based more on orthodoxy than on biblical truth?

Bowman began by addressing areas in which Hinn and CRI found agreement:

There is much about what Benny Hinn says concerning the Trinity with which orthodox Christians can agree. Hinn affirms that God is a "triune being" and that the three persons "are really one in Being" (70, 71, 74). He states clearly that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each fully God, emphasizing that the Holy Spirit is just as much God as the Father and the Son (69-71, 87, 90, 131). He also insists that the Holy Spirit is just as real and personal as the Father and Son (2, 51, 71). As God, third person of the Trinity (49, 73), the Holy Spirit is omnipresent (73, 87-88), unlike the angels or the Devil (88), and He is also omnipotent and omniscient (88-89). The Holy Spirit is a personal friend, companion, and counselor to the Christian (52).

Unfortunately, these biblically sound assertions are mixed with statements which express notions that are unbiblical and unorthodox. That Hinn is presenting a novel view of the Trinity is implied when he informs us that "what I am about to share with you regarding the Godhead gave me an *entirely new picture* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (81, emphasis added). In context this "entirely new picture" is evidently new to most Christians, and not something that was merely new at one time to Hinn. Thus he complains that "even dedicated ministers of the gospel" and "clergy" have misled the church in this matter....

Although this teaching is not absolutely new (it has been taught by F.J. Dake, Jimmy Swaggart, and others), it is new enough in most circles to account for Hinn's repeated claim that most Christians and even most ministers have ignored it.⁹

It is true that this concept of the Trinity is not new. So why get upset that Benny Hinn has espoused it at this late date? More

importantly, is this teaching really unbiblical? Bowman offers his view of it:

The notion that the three divine persons have three separate constitutions of spirit, soul, and body is inconsistent with orthodoxy because it implies that they are really three separate beings rather than (as Hinn also does say in passing) one divine being in three persons. This implication is underscored by Hinn's assertion later that "the Trinity, as we see, is comprised of three distinct and unique entities" (140, 1st ed.). Hinn pictures the Trinity as "a *team* working together in complete accord and eternal harmony" (144, 1st ed.; emphasis added).¹⁰

Arguments based on orthodoxy are questionable themselves. Orthodoxy, though a legitimate term when referring to Scriptural truth, is often applied to traditional interpretations of Scripture. In the latter sense, it is certainly no measure of truth. Scripture alone is the measure of truth. Otherwise orthodoxy—or traditional understanding of the early Church, including the Roman Catholic Church—is de facto the true magisterium, or teaching authority, for all believers.

What alarmed most critics of Hinn is his statement that "there are nine of them." Some took this to mean that there are nine persons, which is not what Hinn was saying. "Nine of them" referred to the separate elements of the Trinity: three bodies, souls and spirits." While this may boggle the minds of those enamored of orthodoxy, there is nothing in Scripture that actually defines the nature of the Triune Godhead.

No one can define the Trinity beyond a certain amount of conjecture. The mystery of God remains with God, as it should. Because someone's theory doesn't coincide with "orthodox" theory doesn't negate or support either theory.

But there is a problem with Hinn's approach. He is as dogmatic about his conjecture as those who oppose him from the position of orthodoxy are about theirs. Hinn is clearly guilty of teaching as "revelation knowledge" (God's Truth imparted to him personally) something that is not clearly supported by Scripture. As such, he has established in the minds of those who trust him a personal belief as if it were authoritative truth, which it is not.

Bowman points out some other unorthodox positions taken by Hinn, but offers no Scriptural rebuttal:

Finally, Hinn compromises the deity of Christ when he argues that "had the Holy

Spirit not been with Jesus, He would have ["may have likely," 2d ed.] sinned.... Without the Holy Ghost Jesus would ["may," 2d ed.] have never made it" (135). This implies that Jesus overcame sin as a mere man empowered by the Spirit, and that he could have failed. While Jesus was filled and anointed by the Spirit, and while the Spirit was involved in Jesus' overcoming of temptation, Jesus was no mere man indwelt by the Spirit—he was the divine Son of God incarnate. There are orthodox theologians who have held that Jesus was able to sin. I can agree or disagree with this assertion, depending on what is meant by it. But the real question here is not whether and in what sense Jesus might have sinned, but Hinn's assertion that Jesus *would* or *might* have sinned had it not been for the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Such a statement is by all accounts inconsistent with Hinn's confession that Jesus was God.¹¹

As much as I would identify more with CRI's position, Hinn nowhere implies that Jesus was a mere man indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In fact, Hinn didn't say anything that Bowman admits some "orthodox theologians" would say. This is one of those controversies that amounts to nothing. To say that Hinn's statement is by all accounts inconsistent with his confession that Jesus was God is not entirely true, because even the most orthodox theologian says that Jesus was fully God and fully man. Thus, those who hold that Jesus could have sinned without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit are alluding to His willingly subjecting Himself to the limitations of humanity and placing Himself at the mercy of the world and all its temptations. But they would also say that the Father proved Himself able to preserve His Son from sin by giving Him the Holy Spirit in full measure as a means to overcome those temptations.

Now, whether or not one agrees with this hypothesis, the point is that Hinn cannot be faulted for his position merely because he stated it in "unorthodox" terms.

What Hinn did bring out is the fact that Jesus has a separate will that He surrendered to the will of the Father. This is stated many times in Scripture. But it took an act of His own will to do so. Had He not done so, He would surely have sinned, and God's plan of redemption would have been thwarted.

This is all very well to argue in theory, but the truth is that Jesus did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth (1 Peter 2:22). Now, the fact that there was no guile found in Jesus' mouth is not a valid basis for the argument

that He could not have sinned. Because Jesus Himself gave that same testimony of Nathanael in John 1:42, and Nathanael was a mere man subject to sin.

So, setting all theories aside, Hinn's and those of "orthodoxy," it must be stated that the only thing that can be known for sure about the nature of God is what Scripture reveals; and Scripture reveals very little when we consider the magnitude of His being. Yet in spite of his not offering any biblical refutation of Hinn's position, Bowman accuses Hinn of teaching an "implicit tritheism":

In short, in the original version of this book Hinn taught (no doubt unwittingly) a form of implicit tritheism (belief in three Gods or three divine beings). Certainly in no version of the book does Hinn teach *explicit* tritheism, since Hinn affirms that God is one being and never says they are three Gods. But his referring to the three persons as separate "entities," his insistence that they are markedly different in personality traits, and his teaching that each possesses a separate spirit, soul, and body, contradict the few passing references in the book to the Trinity as one triune being (70, 71, 74). Hinn's doctrine of the Trinity, then, at least in this version, may be classified as "aberrational"—neither soundly orthodox nor thoroughly heretical, but a mixture of orthodox and unorthodox elements.¹²

This statement is confusing at best. In the first place it again pits orthodoxy against heresy rather than biblical truth against heresy. In the second place it implies that orthodoxy mixed with heresy is not heresy, which it is. Most heresies contain elements of truth; it is the heretical aspect of the overall belief system that places it in the class of heresy. In the third place, since even "orthodox theologians" wrestle with the elements with which Hinn deals here, it seems incorrect to say that Hinn is teaching an "implicit tritheism." It might just as well be argued that Bowman teaches an implicit oneness doctrine, since he has a problem with Hinn's calling the three persons "entities." What is a person but an entity?

In fact, those who hold the Oneness doctrine of God's nature see the orthodox explanation of the Trinity as espousing three gods. The point is that, at best, all attempts to define the Godhead prove futile.

If I appear to be agreeing with Hinn in this issue, I'm not. But if one is going to be an apologist for the Faith, he must learn to distinguish between unorthodox and un-biblical teachings. Bowman accused Hinn

of both in his understanding of the Trinity; yet he offered no sound biblical refutation of Hinn's position. I have found no one who can state the Trinitarian position with absolute terms that once and for all define the exact makeup of the Godhead.

Still, in the final analysis, I must agree with Bowman's assessment that Hinn's position is "incoherent." Hinn rambles off his beliefs without offering solid Scripture to back them up.

All in all, we owe much to Bowman and CRI for challenging Hinn's teachings, especially as they appeared in the first edition. As a result of that challenge, for example, Hinn did change his assertion that Jesus "would" have sinned to "may" have sinned, as a result of his dialogue with CRI. Also, Hinn appears to have come away from the meeting with a greater respect for accuracy in stating one's beliefs, as well as for those ministries on the front line of confronting error. Prior to this Hinn had made statements ridiculing apologist ministries, even avowing his desire to destroy them if God would only allow it. One such statement caused no small stir, as it should have:

You wonderful people of God, quit attacking men of God by name! Somebody's attacking me because of something I'm teaching! Let me tell you something brother, you watch it!...I don't mind if they attack Benny and the way he is and the way he walks, but don't attack the anointing on my life; don't attack this man of God [Paul Crouch]. There is a group here in California that thinks they are the judgment seat of Christ! They judge everything you do. Listen here, fella, let me tell you something: you're not my judge; Jesus is my judge! You walk around with your stiff lip and collar on your neck—dear God in Heaven I wish I could just—ooh!

They call it a ministry, my foot! You know, I've looked for one verse in the Bible—I just can't seem to find it—one verse that says, "If you don't like 'em, kill 'em!" I really wish I could find it! But there's nowhere in the Bible where it says it!...

Sometimes I wish God would give me a Holy Ghost machine gun! I'd blow your head off!¹³

Strong words that echo the frustration that comes to one who leaves himself open to criticism by espousing erroneous teachings and practices. After his meeting with CRI, however, Hinn stated that he was sorry for making such a statement. Yet if the statement itself was bad, what was

worse was the reaction of Paul and Jan Crouch, and the TBN audience: an attitude of mirth and vigorous applause. And these are the people whose tearful pleas for unity of the Body of Christ convince millions that doctrine is of little or no importance.

Among all the apologist ministries, I know of none who would advocate such an approach toward those whose teachings they scrutinize. On the contrary, in meetings with various other ministries, the affirmation of love for those with whom we find disagreement is always prevalent.

THE SERIOUS ISSUES

While Hinn's teachings on the Trinity have captured the forefront of the debate between himself and the apologist ministries, there are other serious issues that have taken a back seat to the questionable Trinitarian controversy—issues that truly do lean toward heresy. We'll look at these issues briefly and attempt to deal with them in as honest a fashion as possible.

A God-Man

Hinn teaches that when one is born again by faith in Jesus, he is given a new spirit man that wasn't there before—a spirit man that is divine in nature and God-like.

When you were born again God gave you this brand new being, this brand new being was created before the foundation of the World. Ephesians 1 declares that God literally chose us before the foundation of the world and there it talks about our spirit-man....

Your spirit, ladies and gentlemen, is God-like; he's God-like in every way.... The second this spirit-man comes into our being—pops into our bodies—we're born again. He's spirit; what's born of spirit is spirit.

Say after me, within me is a God-man. Say it again, within me is a God-man.

Now let's say even better than that, let's say, I am a God-man. When you say I am a God-man you're not talking about your flesh or your soul; you're talking about your spirit-man.¹⁴

Now, remember, everything Jesus did, He did so we can receive the opposite! What He gave up, He was saying, "You are to receive what I gave up!" Now it's like this: I have His name on earth! Isn't that right? He said, "Go ye in my name." Isn't that right? What is it to have the name of Jesus? It means to have His office!...

Paul the apostle said that Jesus is standing before the throne as the Son of Man. He called Him the "Man-Christ!" Now, you ready for some real revelation knowledge? Okay, now watch this.

He laid aside His divine form. Now these are the seven steps from the glory to the cross. He laid aside His divine form! Why? so one day I would be clothed on with the divine form!

Kenneth Hagin has a teaching—a lot of people have problems with it, yet it is absolute truth. Kenneth Copeland has a teaching—many Christians have put holes in it, but it's divine truth. Hagin and Copeland say, "You are God; ye are God!"

"Hooo! I can't be God!" Hold it; let's bring balance to this teaching. The balance, sir, is being taught by Hagin; it's those that repeat him that mess it up! The balance is being taught by Copeland—who is my dear friend—but it's those that repeat what he says that are messing it up! You see, dear brother, when Jesus was on earth, the Bible says that first He disrobed Himself of the divine form! He, the limitless God, became a man that we men may become as He is! This is what we miss!

Now, when He took off His divine form, He also told me that the day will come when I will put on His form that He gave up. Everything Jesus did was so I could receive what He gave up! So when Kenneth Hagin says, "You are God on earth," he's not exactly off! What he's saying is, "As He is, so are we in this world!"

No, he's not saying we've replaced Him! He's saying we have become, we have taken His office on planet earth!"

No sir! God is God and there's only one God! But the Bible does teach, and the Bible does say, and the Bible does state that He took off His divine Form! And the Bible says we put on Christ!"

Hey! Is it in the Bible—yes or no? [crowd says, "Yes!"]¹⁵

Throughout his dissertations Hinn avows that the Bible says what he says. But his ploy is the same as that of false teachers, which is to pull a proof text out of context and apply it to their personal interpretation which they claim has been given by direct revelation from God. Where in Scripture is it found that some "spirit-man" distinct from us, comes into us? The Holy Spirit comes into us, but Hinn isn't speaking of the Holy Spirit, because he says this spirit-man was "created before the foundation of the world."

To cite Ephesians 1 as a proof text is a gross error. It does speak of *our* being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; nowhere does it mention a God-like "spirit-man," let alone one distinct from us.

And what does Scripture mean when it says, "put on Christ?"

Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. (Romans 13:13-14)

What is the obvious context of Paul's statement to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ?" First of all, it's a command—it isn't a statement of a completed fact; he does not say that we have put on Christ as if that is the result of the new birth. And nowhere is there a hint that we have become a "God-man" or that we have taken Christ's office.

There is only one Christ—Jesus. And while we may be ambassadors of Heaven, so to speak, it doesn't mean we have power of attorney to act as God on earth. That is the historical position of the pope of Rome, not the true believer in Christ.

Nor, for that matter, does Scripture say that Jesus put off his divine form, whatever that means. When He became a man and put on human flesh, the spirit of Jesus remained that of the Word of God. Only in the sense that He willingly limited himself by human flesh and, possibly, the human brain, was there any diminishing of His powers. But Scripture doesn't indicate anywhere that He left some part of Himself in Heaven when He came to earth. (What does this do to Hinn's "three bodies" theory?)

While asserting that we are not Almighty God Himself (big whoop!), Hinn insists that we are now divine:

And God looked, and said, "You know, that thing down there don't think like I think; don't do what I do; don't live like I live—everything about it is different! But I'm willing to be one of you so I can make it to be one of me." God came to earth and touched a piece of dust and turned it into a god!

"Say, what did you say?"

Are you a child of God? Then you're not dust no more. Are you child of God? Then you're divine! Are you a child of God? Then you're not human; the only human part of you is this face—the one that will go back to the dust it came from. But inside this being is a new creation in Christ Jesus. That is divine and God-like in every way!¹⁶

Hinn continues by denying that he is saying we are God but affirming that we are children of God (elsewhere he asserts that we are gods), and not to make the mistake of putting words in his mouth. But no words need be put in his mouth. Where are the words of Scripture to back him up?

And God's poor English aside, I don't think He told Hinn to say those things. If one is divine, that means He is of the same nature and essence as God. That can only be said of the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit. There are no other divine persons except in the false spiritual hierarchy of Mormonism and New Age philosophy.

Jesus is the Son of God by generation; He came forth from the Father. We are children of God by adoption. That does not make us of the same nature as God. We will always retain our human nature.

Jesus Took On Satan's Nature

One of the popular word-faith teachings is that Jesus took on the nature of Satan and had to be born again. This doctrine is intrinsically linked to the "Jesus-died-spiritually" heresy which postulates that Jesus' shed blood was insufficient for the redemption of man; He had to suffer at Satan's hands in Hell and be born again as the first man to conquer death. Hinn also teaches this heresy:

He [Jesus] who is righteousness by choice said, "The only way I can stop sin is by Me becoming it. I can't just stop it by letting it touch Me; I and it must become one." Hear this! He who is the nature of God became the nature of Satan when He became sin!¹⁷

In this one statement, Hinn manages to convey three distinct errors concerning Jesus, to which we must answer the following: 1) Jesus is not righteousness by choice, but by nature; 2) Jesus never said these words, either in Scripture or to Benny Hinn personally, because they are unbiblical; 3) Jesus' nature is constant; even God cannot change His nature from God to something else. When He became a man, the Word of God co-mingled His divine nature with the flesh of man, not angels; but that is the limit of His approaching anything like assuming Satan's nature. This idea is a first-rate heresy which, drawn to its conclusion in the supposed spiritual death of Jesus denies the blood of Christ and damns those who teach and believe it unless they repent. It is a different gospel from that given through Scripture.

This isn't the only time and place that Hinn has taught this heresy. It has been part of his baggage for years and is still propagated through the sale of tapes.

In spite of Hinn's professed rejection of the word-faith message, he hasn't given up on it entirely. The word-faith message encompasses far more than the "name-it-and-claim it" foolishness. It is intrinsically linked to the God-man-believer and Jesus-died-

spiritually heresies, which Hinn continues to espouse. It exalts man and denigrates Christ, as most false teachings do.

The problem with these and other teachings of Hinn is that he exhibits the mindset of someone who "learned as he earned," strewn spiritual wreckage in his path. Whatever comes to mind must be God's voice; after all, Hinn believes himself a prophet of God. And woe to those who dare challenge him.

Man, I remember when God would give me words of knowledge back when I began in this ministry. I missed nine out of ten. Nobody knew it except me.

"Well, Benny Hinn, I thought when the Holy Ghost"—saints, the Holy Ghost is using an imperfect vessel. Are you listening? We're not infallible. Or when you give a prophecy sometimes you can be way off; you have to be open enough to say I blew it.

"Hooo! He blew it; he's a false prophet!"

No, he just blew it.

Just because you blow it—men of God blow it all the time. Paul blew it; Moses blew it; even Elijah blew it; even Elisha blew it! They all blew it. Maybe not with prophecies, but they blew it in all kinds of things. Like Elijah goes and says, "Lemme die! I wanna die! I wanna die!" That's a bad blow!

Peter decides to withdraw himself from the Gentiles; he blew it bad!

We all blow it, and if you don't you're not human. Don't forget, the man who does not use the eraser is no good! The man with clean eraser—untouched—don't touch him. The man who does not know how to say, "I blew it," [you] can't trust him.

Did you hear that? So—but you see, when the gift begins—is this helping you?—when the gift begins it begins rough, but then as you keep going with it you just get better and better and cleaner and purer with it. So today with the word of knowledge—I'm just being open with you—I rarely miss anymore. Why? Because I recognize how to operate in it. [Hinn snaps his fingers.]¹⁸

Hinn continues by recounting times when he's known things by the Spirit of God that he could not have known otherwise.

Notice Hinn's irrational comparing of personal sin with error in prophecy, as if false prophecy is not acceptable evidence of a false prophet. This claim of acceptable errancy in prophecy is held by virtually all who claim to be prophets today. Obviously either they must claim it or acknowledge that they are false prophets. But rather than do that, they attack those who

challenge them by cursing them and warning of God's judgment for "touching God's anointed." Hinn is no exception.

All of us make mistakes; all of us are bound to error. But woe to the man, and woe to the [TV] station, and woe to the group that will expose the nakedness of the man of God to the world.

You know, I'll tell you something. I'm not supposed to, but the Holy Ghost is upon me, and I think I need to. The day is coming when those that attack us will drop dead.

You say, "What did you say?"

I speak this under the anointing of the Spirit. Can I tell you something? Don't touch God's servants—it's deadly. You'd think we should do whatever we want with someone who's failed God? "Touch not my anointing."

I'm not afraid to tell you what I think. I owe nothing to no man; and don't touch Morris Cerullo; don't touch Rex Humbard; don't touch Billy Graham; don't touch Larry Lea; Oral Roberts, Richard Roberts—don't touch them!

Pray for them. Pray, pray, pray. I speak it under the anointing, woe to you that touch God's servants; you're going to pay. "And the day will come"—the Lord said that to me, He said, "the day will come when I will punish instantly. Woe to those who touch my chosen."

They will fear us. Hear this! Today they mock us; tomorrow they will fear us....

When you deal in the supernatural, as I do, God allows your eyes to see things that most you don't see; and maybe you should not see.¹⁹

Hinn has missed something vitally important to the Body of Christ. There will always be those who test the words of self-proclaimed apostles and prophets, which Scripture exhorts us to do (I John 4:1). The greater damnation is upon those who speak false prophecies than upon those who put prophecies to the test. If anyone should be in fear it is those who claim the office of apostle or prophet and wreak havoc under the mistaken idea that God's saints are expendable while the false teachers learn their trade.

Blowing It

One of the characteristics of Hinn's services has been his claim to impart the Holy Spirit at will by blowing on people. He has been known to wave his coat in the air, or to toss the Holy Spirit like a baseball at the audience, causing entire sections to ostensibly swoon under the power of God. Obviously God is at Hinn's disposal. And He doesn't mind being made a spectacle in the process.

The phenomenon known as being "slain in the Spirit" is a trademark of modern charismatic. And while I would not say that God will not or cannot come upon someone with such a power, it becomes obvious that, coupled with false teachings, the power transmitted by Hinn (if there is any power at all) is not of God. In fact, it appears more a case of mass hysteria entered into by people predisposed to fall for several reasons: 1) they want the power of God no matter what; 2) they would be embarrassed not to fall when everyone else around them is falling; 3) many have testified that the person imparting the Holy Spirit pushed them down; 4) God might allow and even grant such a "blessing" to entrench error in people's minds who don't care about truth as much as they do about some supernatural experience; 5) Satan and demons may duplicate such a phenomenon to validate as truth the error of one's teachings.

Hinn's errors are compounded by his continual extolling of the virtues of the pope and Roman Catholicism, as if the errors of that church are to be ignored in the interest of unity. In 1989, Hinn was a participant in the move to grant to Pope John Paul II the "Prince of Peace" award, instigated by Harold Bradesen. Receiving much flack for his part in that award, Hinn recanted and withdrew his participation. In a letter to Mick Oxley of In His Grip Ministries in Crescent City, Florida, Hinn stated that he did not, after all, agree with the award:

...I would like to state that I do not agree with the presentation of this award. I do not believe it would be appropriate and would like to hereby retract the statement that I initially made on TBN. I have also written a letter to Harold Bradesen stating that I do not want to be a part of this award presentation.

We recognize and teach that only Jesus Christ is the true PRINCE OF PEACE.²⁰

Hinn does continue to extoll the perceived virtues of Roman Catholicism. Yet there may be hope for him yet. In fact, I perceive that Hinn is a victim of his own lack of spiritual growth prior to entering into ministry as a novice (contrary to God's Word). This is the problem with many who have a zeal without knowledge; they don't realize that God does not break His Word. And His Word says that an elder should not be a novice. Along the way such people pick up error from other men because they haven't

learned to discern truth by testing all things by God's Word. This, I perceive, is one of Hinn's problems. And many of those errors have stuck to him. But he has also renounced some of the errors. It is up to u. who love God's truth to love this man enough to pray that he will repent totally from the errors to which he still clings. There will be a great price for him to pay; he is well entrenched in the Christian media circuit. Should he renounce that elitist club he will lose many of his cherished associations.

In the process, let's not forget to pray for others whom we perceive to be in error as well. While they count us their enemies, we must count them as worthy of our love. Christ died for them, too. ■■■

NOTES

1. Mike Thomas, "The Power and the Glory," *Florida Magazine*, November 24, 1991.
2. News item, "Best-selling Author Admits Mistakes, Vows Changes," *Christianity Today*, October 28, 1991, p. 44.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*
5. Benny Hinn, Audio tape of sermon, Orlando Christian Center, December 31, 1989.
6. *Christianity Today*, October 28, 1991.
7. Benny Hinn, Tape of Sermon, Trinity Broadcasting Network, October 13, 1990.
8. Robert M. Bowman, Jr., "A Summary Critique: Good Morning, Holy Spirit," *Christian Research Journal*, Spring 1991 (San Juan Capistrano, CA: Christian Research Institute), p. 36.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. Benny Hinn, guesting on "Praise The Lord" program, Trinity Broadcasting Network, November 9, 1990.
14. Benny Hinn, "God's Super Being," sermon, Trinity Broadcasting Network, October 20, 1990.
15. Benny Hinn, "Our Position In Christ," sermon, audio tape.
16. Benny Hinn, sermon, Orlando Christian Center, aired on TBN, December 1, 1990
17. Benny Hinn, sermon, Orlando Christian Center, aired on TBN, December 1, 1990.
18. Benny Hinn, "Word of Wisdom," sermon Orlando Christian Center, aired on TBN, February 23, 1991.
19. Benny Hinn, anointing service, sermon at Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, California, September 22, 1991.
20. Benny Hinn, letter to Mick Oxley, July 11, 1989.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Bud Press of Watchman Fellowship, Mick Oxley of In His Grip Ministries and Bill and Jackie Alnor for supplying documentation and transcripts of Benny Hinn's sermons.



Media Spotlight

A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS & SECULAR MEDIA

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