



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.

