

GOD TELLS HINN TO RELOCATE MINISTRY

The ink had not dried on the last issue of *The Quarterly Journal*, which reported Benny Hinn's announcement that he and his family would be moving from Florida to Southern California but that his ministry would stay in Orlando, when it was announced that he would be moving his operation to the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Hinn's organization made the announcement June 1. Just a few days later, Hinn told members of his congregation of the impending move during a Sunday morning service. Hinn changed his plans because "God has spoken," he told the members of his World Outreach Church. Evidently, God has also spoken with urgency. Details of the relocation called for the leasing of temporary offices in Dallas beginning Sept. 1 with new headquarters to be built and completed by June 1, 2000. The Orlando-based operations employed 370 persons, but initial remarks by ministry officials would not say how many would move to Texas.

A spokesman for Hinn's ministry initially told the *Orlando Sentinel* that Hinn would continue to preach at the church "as his schedule allows." Yet, apparently the news media no longer accepts with certainty such statements. "Whether Hinn will remain in his Central Florida pulpit, or for how long, is uncertain, he told the packed sanctuary," the newspaper reported. Presumably, Hinn's uncertainty is a result of God's reticence in disclosing plans. "When God talks to me about it, I'll let you know," he revealed to his congregation.

The *Sentinel* also reported on the future of the church founded by Hinn in the 1980s, saying that it "will be reconfigured to accommodate children, youth and adult programs," according to a church official. The Orlando congregation members "were uniformly supportive of their pastor." Obviously, when "God speaks" through Hinn, they're quick to listen and accommodate his revelations.

While Hinn claimed "one reason" for the move, information given to the news media indicates other considerations were instrumental. "We have outgrown our limited space in Orlando and for the ministry to accomplish what God has called us to in international evangelism; this is a move we must make," Hinn said in a prepared announcement. A *Dallas Morning News* article cited ministry spokesman David Brokaw as saying, "many of the church's partners and donors live around Dallas." Still others discern additional reasons.

Ole Anthony, a prominent figure in exposing the abuses and corruption of televangelists, offers another scenario. Anthony contends that "Hinn is moving to Dallas to be close to the ministry's law firm, Brewer, Brewer, Anthony & Middlebrook of Irving." This, according to Anthony, will allow Hinn's ministry to engage one of its lawyers as a business manager and invoke an attorney-client privilege to shield ministry business practices from investigators.

Anthony told the *Dallas Morning News* that, "Every purchase order, paycheck and aspect of the ministry's operation is handled through an attorney's office, so they claim privilege for even the smallest detail of the ministry. That provides another shield which keeps investigators from evaluating whether they're doing what they say they're doing."

"That's patently ludicrous. It discloses a complete lack of understanding of Pastor Benny, his ministry and what attorney-client privilege is," Hinn ministry attorney David Middlebrook said in response to Anthony's charge.

—MKG

MOSCOW COURT RULES AGAINST JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

The Watchtower Society suffered a setback from a June decision by a Moscow court, which came just a month after it was officially recognized as a religious denomination by the Russian government.

Late last year, the Moscow city prosecutor's office began trying to end the sect's activity in Russia's capital city. In March, a judge established a panel to review Watchtower literature for illegal content. The group was the third such body studying the organization's material. Two earlier panels reported finding no illegal content. Watchtower leaders had sought to have the current review halted. The petition was rejected by the Moscow court.

As the panel continues its review, the Watchtower Society in Moscow will be unable to rent facilities for worship services or renovate any of its property. If the court ultimately rules that the Watchtower is an illegal religious body, it would mean further restrictions, including the holding of any public services and

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