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EDITOR: KEITH A. MORSE

To Judge or Not to Judge

The Rights and Wrongs of Biblical Discernment

by G. Richard Fisher

It seems clear, since Jesus Himself said, "Judge not," (Matthew 7:1), that we cannot "judge." At first glance it appears that Jesus not only forbids judging others, but that He catches Himself in a glaring contradiction.

Verse 1 seems obvious, "Judge not," yet in verses 6, 15-16, we are to judge "swine," "dogs," and the "fruit" of false apostles. How do we reconcile this apparent contradiction? Do we judge or not?

Churches have split along lines of those who wish to make judgments and those who say we cannot. One side accuses the other of being legalistic and loveless while the other side is called liberal and spineless.

Rooting out the truth on this subject is essential and a thorough search will reveal that there are different kinds of judgment taught in Scripture. One form we are com-

manded to do; the other we are forbidden to do. Both sides could be right *and* wrong depending on what they are talking about. One could not read Matthew 18:16-18 seriously and conclude that we never judge anything. In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul takes the people of God to task for not judging the right things the right way.



One of the biggest issues in the Church is how we arrive at truth. We have churches that think frenzied laughter is a way to worship God, while other churches conduct services that sound like a barnyard. Our land is dotted with Word-Faith proponents that see God as the great vending machine in the sky. All of the groups in this confusing mix say they are preaching the truth and being led by the Spirit.

It is also obvious that some arrive at truth in the same fashion as the poem, "Why Are Fire Engines Red?"

*They have four wheels and eight men
four plus eight is twelve
twelve inches make a ruler
a ruler is Queen Elizabeth
Queen Elizabeth sails the seven seas
the seven seas have fish
the fish have fins
The Finns hate the Russians
the Russians are red
Fire engines are always rushin'
So they're red.*

Some groups handle the Bible in much the same way.

Let's consider four major points to help us unravel the question: When to judge and when not to judge?

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Editorials

THE HURT OF HEALING

Faith healing is big business. Oral Roberts in the 40s and 50s, Kathryn Kuhlman in the 60s and 70s, and Benny Hinn in the 90s are but a few of the key players in a half-century of jam-packed meetings and crusades. Today, the healing business is not only marketed through books and tapes, but with modern technology, unashamedly merchandised on television. But is it really all that it appears to be?

Those who view telecasts such as Benny Hinn's *This Is Your Day* see spectacular displays of apparent miracle after miracle without being aware that the programs have been carefully edited. What they see is Hinn running back and forth upon the stage, counting empty wheelchairs, roaring, "This is your night for a miracle. Look at someone next to you and say it!" What they don't see is the number of victims leaving the crusade in the same wheelchair in which they arrived or with the same physical affliction.

Several months ago, Hinn brought his traveling "healing" road show to an Assembly of God "Signs and Wonders Conference" in Springfield, Mo. At the conclusion of the service, this writer, along with a colleague, waited at the church auditorium's two exits, watching to see how many empty wheelchairs left the building. Although dozens of occupied wheelchairs made their way from the crusade, not a single empty one passed through either of the two exits.

Not only is what the television audience sees edited, what the live audience sees is carefully staged. Those who are terribly deformed, children with Down's syndrome, amputees and the like are kept from the stage and out of sight of TV cameras.

Carol McGraw, of the *Orange County (California) Register*, discovered this painful reality when she reported on Jordan Sheehan. Jordan, at the time of her report, was a 2-year-old who suffered severe brain damage as a result of a fire. He was in a coma for two months. He cannot swallow, talk or move. Jordan's parents and grandparents thought that if they could get the child to Hinn's healing crusade and have him prayed over, the miraculous would surely come upon the child. But, according to McGraw's report, Jordan never experienced the miraculous touch from Hinn, and he and his family were cautiously kept from the stage. (See further, "Faith in His Hands," *Orange County Register*, Dec. 5, 1995, Accent, pp. 1,6.)

This restricted perspective is not unique to the contemporary faith healing scene. According to Wade H. Boggs, "Mrs. Aimee Semple McPherson's practices also left much to be desired. Before the sick were entitled to stand in her healing line, she required them to apply for a card from her mother, Mrs. Kennedy, who permitted only those who appear to be good healing risks to present themselves on stage for anointing and prayer" (*Faith Healing and the Christian*

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PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

PFO Offices:

Missouri
P.O. Box 26062
St. Louis, MO 63136
(314) 388-2648

New Jersey
P.O. Box 514
Bricktown, NJ 08723
(908) 477-6577

Pennsylvania
Route 3 - Box 127
Kunkletown, PA 18058
(610) 381-3661

Ohio
P.O. Box 493
Niles, OH 44446
(330) 652-3713

Arizona
P.O. Box 2384
Peoria, AZ 85380
(602) 878-3370

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News Updates

GRANT RECEIVES PRISON TERM

Televangelist W.V. Grant was ordered to federal prison by a U.S. district judge for tax fraud. He was sentenced to 16 months in prison and fined \$30,000. He could be released in 13 months for good behavior. Upon discharge, he will be required to serve one year's probation and do 100 hours of community service.

His conviction resulted from voluntarily filing an inaccurate income tax report. An investigation found that the faith healer and his third wife, Brenda, had used \$100,000 of church resources for payment on their \$1.2 million, nine-bathroom mansion, which overlooks a south Dallas suburb country club in DeSoto, Texas. According to an Associated Press report, Grant "admitted using church-related funds to make payments in 1990 on his home and another house he bought as an investment." None of these properties had been listed as assessment revenue.

In April, the Grants admitted tax fraud. Grant had acknowledged that in the years leading up to 1990 he had failed to disclose over \$375,000 of income. He was penalized and owes between \$70,000 and \$120,000 in back taxes.

On July 22, the Grants tried to withdraw their earlier guilty plea. The Fort Worth *Star-Telegram* quoted Grant as saying, "I teach in my ministry that a mistake is not a sin. I could not honestly plead guilty if we did not intentionally defraud anyone."

Judge Joe Kendall criticized Grant for trying to change his previous plea, which had been submitted under oath. The judge refused to allow him to withdraw the plea. Grant's wife, however, was permitted to withdraw her plea and will be tried later. Grant was turned over to U.S. marshals for incarceration.

Grant's life and ministry appear to have been enveloped in dishonesty. Early in his career, in what was viewed as an effort to enhance his reputation and validate his prophetic claims, he claimed to be a direct prophetic successor to William Branham. However, when factual inconsistencies in Grant's claims were disclosed, the Grant family acknowledged that the passing of Branham's prophetic mantle did not occur and that "the story reflects a spiritual truth drawn from a vision" (see *The Healer-Prophet, William Marrion Branham* by Douglas Weaver, pp. 148-149).

Grant also had recently claimed that a tornado had damaged his home, sending out a "Disaster-Gram," pleading with those on his mailing list to help him and his family during the tragic time. According to city officials, no tornado hit the televangelist's home or, for that matter, any house on the street.

The 50-year-old Grant has been pastor of the Eagle's Nest Family Church in DeSoto for 13 years. He recently directed the church to change its name to Church of Compassion and transferred its property to charismatic evangelist Bishop T.D. Jakes. The April 14 edition of *The Dallas Morning News* indicated that Dallas County deed records revealed that on Feb. 14, 1996, Grant had sold three properties to T.D. Jakes Ministries. Their value, for tax purposes, was in excess of \$4 million.

Much of Grant's distress was sparked by an investigative report in 1991 by ABC-TV's *PrimeTime Live*, that included segments on Robert Tilton and Larry Lea. Evangelist watchdog Ole Anthony of the Trinity Foundation helped spearhead the report.

—AMG

HINN'S MINISTRY ACCUSED OF WIELDING MORE THAN HOLY SPIRIT POWER

A series of investigative reports by a Florida television station has uncovered that televangelist Benny Hinn's perceived powers extend beyond the supernatural and into the Orange County (Florida) sheriff's office.

During the past several months, members of a small Volusia County church have been demonstrating in front of Hinn's World Outreach Center in Orange County and near his plush home in a gated community in Seminole County. These protesters are expressing a number of concerns, including their conviction that Hinn's prosperity gospel is greed.

However, according to the television news report, "Apparently some paid security workers at Hinn's church don't like this display of freedom of speech. Workers who just happen to be Orange County sheriff's deputies." As a result of the Orlando-based ABC affiliate's exposé that included allegations of civil rights violations, the sheriff's department has taken immediate action and says it has begun an investigation of its own.

One deputy under investigation for harassment of the protesters is Christopher Hinn, 42, Hinn's younger brother, who is a part-time Orange County reserve deputy. As a reserve deputy, he is an unpaid volunteer who can act only under a superior's direction. However, in early June, Christopher Hinn presented himself

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All in the Family

THE VISIONS AND VANITIES OF SAM HINN

by G. Richard Fisher

Televangelist/faith healer Benny Hinn's claims of supernatural visions and personal encounters with God are widely known. Now come the claims of Benny's brother Sam.

Sam Hinn, who operates Sam Hinn Ministries, has written a book, *Changed in His Presence* (Creation House), in which he recounts what he claims are his personal encounters with God.

If one believes all the claims by him and his brother, one might conclude that members of this family enjoy special access to God. However, a closer look at these claims will reveal them to be more likely the product of an overactive imagination than heightened spiritual awareness.

The back dust jacket of *Changed in His Presence* says:

"Sam Hinn has served as associate pastor of Orlando Christian Center for eleven years with his brother, Benny Hinn. God has placed a great burden in his heart for pastors and the local church. He has ministered across the United States and in many foreign nations."

Conspicuously absent from the jacket are any of this associate pastor's ministerial training credentials.

While the book is advertised as a book on worship, much of it focuses on Sam's personal experiences: visions, hearing voices and the like.

On page 32, he says he spends hours in worship. Some of what the book says about worship is right on and some is not, but the good gets lost in a sea of self-congratulatory prose.

Let Me Entertain You

Confusion abounds in the modern Church as it becomes more entertainment-centered and man-centered. John MacArthur Jr. says we are "swarming" with "churches that might aptly be named The Church of What's Happenin' Now" (*The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, pg. 175). Perhaps we could call some modern churches "The Church Of Felt Needs."

The New 20th Century Encyclopedia Of Religious Knowledge says, "The 20th century became a watershed for myriad theologies of worship, mirroring the confusion of theology in general" (pg. 880).

We now have churches that promote wild frenzied laughter, barking, growling and howling and churches that are no more than group therapy sessions. Certainly, the emphasis is more on man than on God and His Word in many of these assemblies. Many ask of worship, "What did I get out of it?" rather than "What did God get out of it?"

It is one thing to say a few right things about worship — as Sam does

— but it is another thing to then lead people into practices that are man-centered. Sam and Benny Hinn have shown that they do not believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. And their followers look to them for that something extra.

Whom Are We Worshipping?

The English word "worship" comes from the idea of "worthship." Sam at least has that fact right (pg. 28) but negates it by dwelling on his self-proclaimed deep spirituality, repeatedly slipping into self-congratulation and self-aggrandizement.

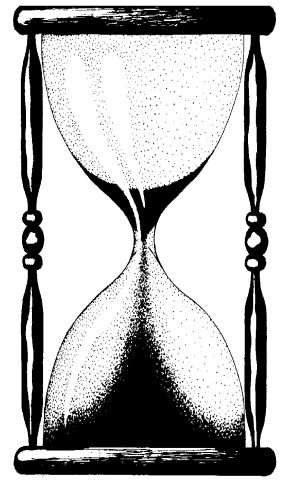
God is always to be the object of our worship. He is worthy and of inestimable worth. We are to give Him our praise, love, adoration and thanks. We do this in prayer, in song, in confession of sin, in attention to His preached Word and in our acknowledgment of His greatness.

The Hebrew word *sahab* (worship) means to prostrate oneself and bow down (Genesis 18:2, Exodus 34:8).

The Greek New Testament uses the word *proskeneo* for "worship" and means "reverence," "obeisance" and "homage." Vine captures the essence of this word (*Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary Of Old And New Testament Words*, pg. 686).

Worship is a God-centered, God-directed, God-oriented, God-honoring
(continues on page 9)

Prophecy OR Presumption?



Time is Running Out on the Spurious Oracles of Benny Hinn

The late PFO director Bill Cetnar repeatedly declared, "Time is the enemy of a false prophet."

False prophets are plentiful today just as they were in the time of Jeremiah, whose words in Jeremiah 23:16 address those who "speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord." False prophets of today, as in times past, elevate their own spirituality, seduce the undiscerning with a false sense of hope, and draw disciples to themselves rather than Christ.

Yet, when the predictions of modern seers do not even come close to fulfillment they offer a number of excuses or rationalizations for the failures, leaving their prognostications nothing more than retractable doublespeak.

Many contemporary prophets simply go on to a new scheme or revelation, forgetting or ignoring the previous ones as though they never uttered them. Few of these prophets offer a trace of repentance or apology following the failure of these "words from the Lord."

When these modern false prophets do acknowledge their past predictions, they often reinterpret the prophecy to make it seem to fit current events or spiritualize it to

by G. Richard Fisher
and M. Kurt Goedelman

some completely new meaning or understanding. Or the "prophet" may attempt to distance himself from his alleged divine utterance by claiming "I am no prophet, I am a mere man and I do make mistakes."

William Branham tried to sidestep the issue of his failed prophecies by saying he "predicted" rather than "prophesied" (*The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 8, No., 4, pg. 9). Semantic games abound in the world of failed prophets.

False prophets who find themselves cornered and unable to ignore, redefine or spiritualize their predictions, sometimes will resort to the "Touch not the Lord's anointed" line, calling their detractors quenchers of the Holy Spirit.

Christians need to take a long hard look at Jeremiah's words, "For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams that you cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name: I have not sent them, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 29:8-9).

Jeremiah's edict is very clear: If anyone claims to prophesy and then gives false prophecies, believers are to reject the prophet. If "prophecies" are found to be false, we know that God is not the author of the revelation.

God also, through Moses, gave a test to determine the source of a prophecy: "If the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing that the Lord has not spoken: the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:22).

God's standard for prophets is "one strike and you're out."

Faith healer and televangelist Benny Hinn has also tried his hand at prophecy and proved to be a showman and a master manipulator of emotions, but not a prophet of God.

PFO has obtained a cassette tape from a late-evening service on Dec. 31, 1989, at Hinn's church, the Orlando Christian Center (now known as World Outreach Center). On this tape, Hinn presents a dramatic sequence of "prophecies" concerning events that were to occur in the 1990s.

During the New Year's Eve service, Hinn, supposedly under direct

divine influence and in a trance-like state, gave his audience a whimsical look into what he said would occur in the upcoming decade.

Hinn tried to heighten the dramatic effect of his performance by interspersing speaking in tongues throughout the presentation — all of which was done without an interpreter. “*Ta-Kaa-Pa Kaa-Paa Daa*,” he intoned, in violation of 1 Corinthians 14, which says tongues are forbidden without interpretation. If Hinn was trying to both speak in tongues and supply his own interpretation, he still was on questionable scriptural ground.

He began his prophetic discourse by declaring:

“Our Lord says this year in Orlando, you’re gonna see new ministries arrive. Some are gonna move into Orlando and start new ministries but I am not in it. I am not in it. They will come here because of the growth and the Lord says to tell you that ... what I do not begin will fall.”

Hinn went on to say God would send three ministries that will come from Orlando. One would “spark the fires of evangelism,” another would “spark the great commitment” in the Church that God has been waiting for, and the third one, which has “just been birthed,” would “reach the young people of America from Orlando.”

To get even more specific — thereby digging himself deeper into his error — Hinn proclaimed this latter ministry-church would “expose Satan’s last hidden secrets” and would “even go into the high schools of America and bring God back into the classrooms.” This “new breed of fighters,” Hinn said, “will even affect the minds in Washington, D.C., concerning Me.”

As the late 90s approach, there is nothing that could be construed as reaching the youth of America from Orlando either when the prophecy was given or any year subsequent. In fact, national statistics report increasing drug use and suicide among young Americans. Cocaine and even LSD use are at an all-time high. Orlando itself is not immune from

these problems. A front-page story in the July 14, 1996 edition of *The Orlando Sentinel* said heroin is proving deadlier than ever, causing more teen-age deaths there than in all other Florida cities and towns combined. Other recent reports listed Florida as the third most dangerous state in the nation.

Furthermore, Washington, D.C. is still Washington, D.C., and secular education continues in a downward spiral. The only thing from Orlando that could be said to be reaching out with nationwide impact to the young is the Walt Disney Co., with its theme parks, movies, and other entertainment and consumer entities. Recall that Hinn declared: “This year in Orlando” it was going to begin. What Happened? Who is wrong, God or Hinn?

Surely, if anything so dramatic and revolutionary would have happened in the early 90s the Church at large would have heard of it. At the very least, we would have read an enhanced version of the occurrence in an issue of *Charisma* magazine.

Then, further into his message, Hinn predicted two notable deaths within Christian circles would occur within the next few years. “The Lord also says that two of his great giants will die in the mid-nineties. They have held the torch of revival for the last forty years — these two,” Hinn purported.

This is a good example of a “shot-gun prophecy,” especially since a number of the Christian “leaders” are up in age. It is akin to announcing that in the next few years there will be two major airline disasters or earthquakes. Although Hinn does give some details of these deaths, he was, on an identification level, careful to keep the pronouncement vague. He said:

“One will die suddenly while asleep and the other will die with sickness. And as both giants die, which will be in the mid-nineties, I will shake this world with the last revival. Their deaths will be the closing pages of this move and the new move of God will begin which I have promised.”

While it is agreed that it would be

troublesome to give the names of the “giants,” nonetheless, if the message truly had been from the Lord, one wonders why Hinn could not have provided more precise details, such as a more exact time frame, cause of death, or other such specifics.

With time running out for this particular segment of Hinn’s prophecy, evidently he has had to widen the perimeters of the meaning of “giant.” He tried to establish the validity of this revelation by telling viewers of the *Praise The Lord Show*:

“The Lord said this to me. He said in the mid-nineties two of my giants will go home. And right after that, the greatest revival in the history of man would begin. Well just recently one mighty giant went home, that’s Dr. Sumrall. ... My very precious friend. Now I don’t know who’s next. I’m not going to predict anyone to go home now. ... But we are now in the mid-nineties. This is — this is — this — this is the time. Saints, put your seat belts on. Something is about to happen” (June 11, 1996).

Surely, the definition of “giant” is in the eye of the beholder. Pentecostal minister Lester F. Sumrall died of meningitis on April 28, 1996, at age 83. While the former Assembly of God minister was a notable personality in Pentecostal circles, Sumrall did not possess the distinction gained by some of Hinn’s other “precious friends” such as Oral Roberts, Paul Crouch, Kathryn Kuhlman or Aimee Semple McPherson. Nor could it be argued that Sumrall was one who could be said to have “held the torch of revival for the last forty years.”

In a pinch, one could equally consider the late Roman Catholic Cardinal Leon-Joseph Suenens. Suenens, who died May 6, 1996, at age 91, was an initiator and leader who helped to shape and extend the ecumenism introduced at Vatican Council II. He also had a large part in the early Catholic Charismatic movement. But, perhaps, his passing missed Hinn’s attention.

Moreover, based upon the age (and in some cases the failing health)

of those prominent in the religious scene, such as evangelist Billy Graham, Oral Roberts, Robert Schuller and several others, it would not be surprising to see a few more aging leaders pass off the scene before 2000. This is a safe prediction for anyone to make and the end of the decade may see other "leaders" dying as well.

Back at the New Year's Eve service, Hinn's claims continued and grew more incredible:

"There will be many raised from the dead in that day. Many visitations of angels that will come as young men knocking at your door. You will not recognize them as angels at first, but then you will be burned within your hearts."

Resurrections have yet to become commonplace or even occasional. Every cemetery in America is intact. Even the isolated claims of alleged resurrections by the likes of Oral Roberts and others are quickly silenced by a scrutinizing media and requests for documentation.

While Hinn himself has repeatedly claimed angelic appearances and could easily turn up someone who claims to have had an angelic visitation, "many visitations" would be somewhat harder to document. Even if Hinn were to appeal to the books and TV programs that have promulgated the angelic phenomenon, he would have to answer for the unscriptural theology and questionable motives of those productions.

It was then that Hinn moved into the most damaging segment of his prophecy. He said:

"The Lord also tells me to tell you in the mid-nineties, about '94 or '95, *no later than that*, God will destroy the homosexual community of America" (emphasis added).

Hinn's declaration was greeted with a loud applause from his congregation. Perhaps the enthusiastic response caused Hinn to further bury himself:

"But He will not destroy it with what many minds have thought Him to be. But He will destroy it

with fire. And many will turn and be saved, and many will rebel and be destroyed."

The first sentence probably refers to AIDS. Hinn has been confronted over undocumented claims of healing from AIDS, from which he has retreated quickly.

Given that the homosexual population has become more overt and militant during the decade, it is obvious that Hinn has spoken with great presumption.

The irony is that the Disney Corp., also based in Orlando, has given the homosexual community a great boost. This has led to a call by the leadership of the Southern Baptist Convention for people to boycott Disney products, a move endorsed by publisher Stephen Strang, Hinn's good friend (see *Charisma*, August 1996, pg. 88). There has been no nationwide destruction of homosexuals and evidently Hinn did not know that the mid-nineties would have a previously family-oriented organization lending its weight to a group and lifestyle that militates against the family. Can any good thing come out of Orlando? Probably so, but not accurate prophecy by Hinn.

In his quest to be a prophet, Hinn left nothing to personal interpretation with these statements. Remember his claim that the Lord told him as he repeatedly emphasized the source of his edict, and was exact in what would happen and to whom, and even provided a date by which the event would occur. Those who still consider Hinn anointed of God need to contemplate what the Lord has said concerning would-be prophets in Deuteronomy 18:21-22.

With the 1995 "no later" deadline come and gone and with the homosexual community alive, militant and continuing to make substantial progress in pursuit of its goals, Hinn is shown to be a false prophet. There was no mass, fiery annihilation of homosexuals. Neither could one argue that because of mass conversions or repentance among the homosexual populace, God's judgment has been restrained. It is also sad to think that Hinn's congregation would cheer with applause the destruction of the homosexual people.

This proves the adage, "When truth disappears, the vacuum is filled by power."

This type of mindset also provides added motivation for the homosexual agenda. It polarizes and does nothing to show to the needy the love or forgiveness of God, nor does it convey to them the power He can provide to change their lives. If the militant homosexual community ever gets hold of Hinn's prophecy, it might really "fire" them up — in ways Hinn never envisioned.

Hinn next predicted that:

"The economy of the United States of America is going to fall. ... And what will bring America to its knees, says the Spirit, is the economic collapse. The allies she has depended upon will turn their backs."

With the rising national debt, the financial collapse of America has become a staple in the prognostications of many a doomsday prophet. It is not hard to imagine the source of this part of Hinn's prophecy. Yet, any serious economist would disagree that Hinn's flight of fancy has been an accurate depiction of the nineties, especially with the stock market reaching new highs. Moreover, Hinn implies that this financial collapse will occur because America has depended upon her allies and they "will turn their backs." America's economic strength is not dependent upon her foreign allies. Rather, it could be said, that throughout the last century quite the opposite has been true.

Despite the warnings of financial ruin, Hinn promises that America will again be exalted: "I've heard the voice of my saints ... I will look again on this nation — even as I've looked on Israel long ago — and I will restore its greatness. In that greatness, I will be magnified."

The error of "manifest doctrine", the idea that America is the exact parallel of Israel in terms of God's dealings, is a myth and does not have one scintilla of evidence in Scripture. God's primary dealings are with individuals of "all nations" and the Church, the body of Christ. America has been blessed, but it is not Israel in any sense.

Hinn's predictions went on to focus on the spiritual:

"Canada will be visited with a mighty revival that will start in the west coast of British Columbia. It will sweep across the west. It will sweep across even Alaska and will come east. But the great move of God that I've planned for America will not begin on the west coast but on the east coast. It will break loose in the next three years, and sweep across the west."

Hinn's specifics have again narrowed and all but negated the possibility of variety of purported fulfillments of his words. He has prophesied himself into the proverbial corner. For example, he cannot claim the so-called "Toronto Blessing" as the fruition of his spiritual-awakening forecast. Toronto is in south-central Canada. Moreover, the roots of this movement are traced not to British Columbia, but to the United States by way of Rodney Howard-Browne and a St. Louis Vineyard pastor named Randy Clark. Additionally, there has been no major revival occurring in western Canada between 1990 through 1993 that would accommodate Hinn's pronouncement in any way. Again, he has seriously missed the standard for a biblical prophet.

Earthquakes are usually a dramatic theme and an attention getter. Hinn picked up on and addressed this theme as he warned his congregation: "The Spirit of God tells me an earthquake will hit the east coast of America and destroy much in the nineties." While Hinn's time frame allows him a few more years on this one, if his accuracy rating continues at his current standard, those living on the east coast have little to worry about.

Hinn even went so far to claim that, "Not one place will be safe from earthquakes in the nineties. These who have not known earthquakes will know it."

Hinn then turns his efforts to the political scene. And just in case his audience has forgotten the supposed source of his message, he asserted: "People, I feel the Spirit all over

me." In his discourse on world politics, he maintained: "There will be a woman that will arise as a leader in the west. ... Following the rapture [of the Church], a woman president will be in the White House. And that woman president will destroy this nation." We also learn "that Europe ... will rule the nations and influence the world" and that Cuban leader "Fidel Castro will die in the nineties."

And as the grand finale to his worldview vision, he said:

"A world dictator is coming on the scene — my! He's a short man. He's a short man! I see a short man! Who's a perfect incarnation of Satan. ... Never in my life have I had anything happen like what's happening to me now. This man will rule the world. The next few years you will see him. But not long after that you will see Me."

A "few years" from Dec. 31, 1989, have already passed. There is no short man ruling the world and we haven't seen God. Thus, it is painfully obvious that all of the above has to be, at best, human deception and stage antics from the mind of Benny Hinn, or at worst, satanic deception. False prophecies need to be called just that. Graves have not opened, homosexuals have not gone up in flames and the short man never showed up.

As a teen-ager, Hinn traveled with a drama group. He was known as a showman (see *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*, pg. 49). He learned his skill well. His prophecies on Dec. 31, 1989 were all a stage play. It is, as we've seen, false prophecy and a diversion from what is important. Yet Hinn evidently knows that his kind of a show feeds the sensational and fuels his followers' emotions. As in his "healing crusades," he has taken them on yet another adrenalin and endorphin high. These kind of highs become addictive and make one less able to discern. Judging from his congregation's response (heard on the cassette tape) they loved every second of it.

Jesus did not titillate emotions and we can trust what He taught about

the future. At times he totally downplayed speculative pursuits about future knowledge.

David Hagopian and Douglas Wilson point this out:

"When our Lord stood on the mount, about to ascend to the right hand of the Father, His disciples, sensing His imminent departure, anxiously asked Him when He would restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). Instead of indulging their end-times inquiry, He told them that it was of no concern to them *when* God had ordained such things to take place, only *that* they would take place. Far more important than probing the secret will of the Father was the obedience they were to render to His revealed will (v. 7). In particular, He told them to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth (v. 8)" (*Beyond Promises*, pg. 245).

Hinn then closed his "revelation" in dramatic fashion, asserting that he was so caught up in the Spirit that he was totally unaware of what he'd said:

"I wish somebody would make sure to tell me what I said. Did you tape that brother? Did you tape that? Ooh! I was totally drunk. I'm still drunk. Lord, if You spoke through me, if what You said is of You, then as I stretch my finger towards the people let Your power fall on every one of them. If what I've said, Master, is of You, let the power flow now. Here it goes in the name of Jesus."

Some shrieked, some fell as "proof" of the divine nature of it all. Hinn was in total control as he led his people into altered states of consciousness.

Hinn acted more like a shaman than a Christian minister. In occultic and pagan societies a shaman enters a trance-like state and presumes to act as a mediator with the gods or spirits. The shaman may declare cures or tell the future. Postmodern religious practices have now entered the world of the occult.

Noted German theologian and author Kurt Koch writes:

“Speaking in a trance is a practice of mediums. It only takes place when a medium is present who has mastered this form of spiritism. The medium puts himself into a trance, a kind of deep sleep, and the spirits are then said to be able to speak through the medium to the people present” (*Occult ABC*, pg. 219).

What Hinn purported to do belongs in the realm of black magic or a gypsy tea room. Divination or divining and predicting the future is soundly condemned in Deuteronomy 18:10, Jeremiah 14:14 and Acts 16:16 (in context). Apart from God’s ordained prophets in the Scriptures there are only false prophets. Even if one engages in the realm of “prophecy” simply as a product of the flesh, doing it is a dangerous practice.

It seems almost ironic that in recent months Hinn has loudly assaulted mediums by declaring that he was going to go head-to-head with the psychic hot lines. He asked for the support of his followers so that his daily program would telecast over the same secular television stations that broadcast the psychic’s advertisements and infomercials. In reality, what he has done and is doing appears to be a “Christian-

ized” version of the psychic hot lines. His demonstrations of the supernatural, such as healings, future telling, words of knowledge, trances, and other antics are stock-in-trade in the occult world.


Hinn also, by virtue of his trance, gives to his faithful a skewed and unbiblical concept of inspiration. Divine inspiration is not robotic or mechanical. God did not use his prophets as mindless robots or mere drunken scribes. Those who spoke for Him were intellectually involved and knowledgeable in terms of what was being communicated. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth that “The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of the prophets” (1 Corinthians 14:32).

People need to wake up and apply the Scriptures to Hinn’s false statements and to all false prophets. The Church need not be afraid of speaking out against false prophets who deliver false prophecies. Either God is wrong and has made a mistake or the “prophet” is speaking presumptuously from his own mind. Going with God and His written Word is always the safest route. Theatrics and tabloid teasers do not belong in God’s house.

Christians need to take seriously the words of H.M. Wolf as he points us to the Scripture:

“In the N.T. false prophets were plentiful (I John 4:1) and were compared with wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15) and false teachers (II Pet. 2:1). ... Christ warned of false teachers whose miracles would deceive many in the end (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22)” (*The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 2, pg. 496).

This time Hinn cannot blame his mistakes on an editor or say it was a joke or he is just a human as he has in the past. Throughout his delivery Hinn repeatedly claims a divine origin for his message by alleging: “the Spirit of God tells me,” or the “Lord says.” This was supposed to be right from the throne room of God and he is pretending to be God’s conduit. This was claimed to be a bona fide prophetic utterance. It was supposed to be no less than “the real thing.” It is really time for people to wake up!

Hinn’s claim of divine inspiration has succumbed to the mortal enemy of a false prophet: Time. By now you would have thought he would have learned that all his documented falsehoods have a way of catching up. Jeremiah and Moses said we are to judge self-professing prophets on the basis of their accuracy. Paul instructed the Church to “weigh carefully” what the prophets have said. That is all that we’ve done. 

All in the Family

(continued from page 4)

ing focus on our Creator. It should be so overwhelming that we would only be able to plead for forgiveness as in Isaiah 6.

Take Me In Your Arms and Hold Me Tight

One story in Sam’s book has Jesus coming to him in a glorified body and pleading with Sam to minister to Him:

“I said to Him, ‘Lord, I am so glad You have a glorified body, because I want to give You the best hug You have ever had, and I don’t want to bruise You.’ I stretched my arms to embrace

Him and heard Him say, ‘Sam, minister to Me.’ As I hugged Him I could feel tears hit my shoulder. Each tear fell with such force that it seemed to weigh a few pounds. I said to Him, ‘Lord, who has hurt you?’ Again He replied, ‘Sam, just minister to Me’” (pg. 20).

Sam’s description of Jesus hardly sounds like the powerful, triumphant, reigning Christ of Ephesians 1. Ephesians 1:21 says Jesus “is far above principalities, power, might and dominion not only in this age but in the age to come.”

The letter to the Hebrews reminds us that we have a strong sufficient Mediator, which we need desperately, not the other way around.

Certainly Jesus sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15) but He is not weak like us.

The very name Yahweh, which applies to Jesus, is a name of self-sufficiency. Biblical examples abound of those who, when in the presence of the risen Christ, knelt or fell in awe (John 20:24-29; Revelation 1:17).

Herman Witsius explains:

“Hence such an High-priest became us, as, after having offered up himself, ‘is made higher than the heavens.’ There, in fine, he was to take possession of the Throne of the *kingdom*, that he might hear the Angels around the throne, shouting with a loud

voice: 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;' — that, looking down from on high, he might laugh at the impotent rage of his enemies; — and finally, that from the impregnable fortress he might afford the most effectual succours for the protection of his people, and liberally supply them with the richest gifts" (*The Apostles Creed*, Vol., 2, pp. 228-229).

Psalm 145:1-3 says, "I will extol you, my God, O King. And I will bless Your name forever and ever. Everyday will I bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable."

Verse 14 says, "The Lord upholds all who fall, and raises up all those who are bowed down." He raises us up not the other way around.

In Matthew 28:18 we are reminded that Jesus has supreme power, authority and might. In bold words He affirms; "All power (Greek, *exousia*, which is power of rule or government) is given to Me in heaven and on earth."

We know that Christ's deity has no need or lack. We know also that His humanity is glorified. To radically separate Christ's humanity and see Jesus needing human sympathy and ministry — as Sam appears to — is at least a move toward Christological heresy.

This is not splitting hairs. When we move away from the accurate biblical portrait of Jesus, human imagination takes over and we can construct a false Christ. Cults inevitably do this.

The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) rightly said:

"We then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead **and also perfect in manhood**" (*The History of Christian Doctrines*, Louis Berkhof, pg. 107, emphasis added).

John Walvoord reminds us that after the resurrection and ascension, the state of Jesus "was more than simply a return to preincarnate glory of Deity, but also constituted a glorification of humanity" (*Jesus Christ Our Lord*, pg. 224).

Context and Pretext

Sam's response to those who question why he would or should have these divine visions and visitations is classic Scripture-twisting.

Sam cites John 14:21, "I will love him and manifest Myself to him" — and tries to convince the reader that in this context, the word "manifest" means to "exhibit in person, appear or declare plainly" (*Changed*, pg. 21).

Since John 14:21 is addressed to all who love and obey Jesus, anyone following Sam's interpretation must conclude that all who meet the conditions of love and obedience could expect repeated and simultaneous personal audiences with the risen Christ. This violates His words to the disciples in John 16:13, 28, which say He is present with us in His omnipresence and the Holy Spirit. He has not promised to be localized except in heaven as our mediator.

There are three main Greek words translated "manifested" (see *Vine*, op. cit., pg. 390). These can be used in literal ways or in metaphorical ways depending on the context.

The context of John 14-16 is clear. Jesus' plan was and is to manifest Himself through the Holy Spirit, (John 14:16-18 and 16:14-15). That manifestation, that is the Spirit's teaching, comes through the Word of God to every believer (John 14:23-24). The verse quoted by Sam gives no basis for private visions but, in fact, says the opposite. Jesus presently makes Himself "known" in the Word and through the Holy Spirit, as we learn of His grandeur, glory and grace. This is a progressive knowing which all believers are to constantly cultivate.

Vine states it clearly:

"*emphanizō* ... metaphorically, of 'the manifestation of Christ' by the Holy Spirit in the spiritual experience of believers who

abide in His love" (*ibid.*, pg. 32).

Spiritual Labor

Perhaps the book's most sensational claim comes in a story in which God's power is said to have knocked Sam to the floor during a meeting. Sam said he felt excruciating pain in his midsection and could hardly breathe (*Changed*, pp. 157-158). Then God "spoke" and explained the stomach pain: "I have just birthed holiness inside of you. ... Because everything that you have desired for Me to do in you is now done."

This so-called "birthing" did not come from God but more likely from emotionalism gone riot. "Holy" means "set apart." Inanimate objects were holy and set apart as in the Tabernacle furniture and vessels of the Temple (cf. Exodus 28). The Pentateuch speaks of holy vestments, articles and more.

Christians are set apart in salvation and are holy positionally (Hebrews 10:14). They are holy in Christ and called saints (which has as its root the word "holy"). If holiness is birthed, it is birthed in the new birth. Peter calls us a "holy priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5), as God's children.

There is also a practical and progressive holiness as we serve righteousness (Romans 6), depart from uncleanness (1 Thessalonians 4:7), and follow peace (Hebrews 12:14). Practical holiness is a lifelong pursuit. (Recommended reading on this topic would be *Holiness, The False And The True* by H.A. Ironside and *The Pursuit Of Holiness* by Jerry Bridges.)

Hit Me, Beat Me, Hurt Me

Charismatic hero worshipers need to be aware that Sam might be delivering them back into the Dark Ages and the reign of the idea that pain and suffering were visible signs of favor with God. Many tried to speed the process with self-mutilation, scourgings, and brutal self-denials (see *Counterfeit Miracles*, by B.B. Warfield, pp. 87-89).

Suffering may teach us patience and other lessons but the key to growth is our proper response. Hebrews 12:12 warns that we can

respond wrongly to our difficulties and lose the lessons and benefits God intends to impart.

Bible verses on birth refer either to natural birth, the birth of Israel as a nation or the believer's spiritual rebirth in Christ. Sam's suggestion is foreign to the Scriptures since true holiness in the life of a believer is an ongoing struggle carried out on the basis of biblical principles.

Getting Roped in With False Visions

On pages 158-159, Sam recounts as a vision a Jewish and Christian myth in which God shows him the high priest entering the Holy of Holies with a rope around his ankle. Sam tries to buttress his claim by quoting Exodus 28:31-35, which carries no reference to a rope.

Sam says the rope was for the people to pull the high priest's body out if he died in ministry. Sam says God told him He would use the rope to draw His people into the Holy of Holies for worship.

Both a Rabbi and a Doctor of Jewish studies who were consulted said that the "rope on the ankle" story is probably another Jewish and Christian legend. It is not in the

Bible and cannot be found in any extrabiblical Jewish sources. Preachers have repeated it over the years and no doubt Sam picked it up.

Dr. W.E. Nunnally, a professor of Hebrew and early Judaism, said:

"The rope on the high priest legend is just that: a legend. It has obscure beginnings in the Middle Ages and keeps getting repeated. It cannot be found anywhere in the Bible, the Apocrypha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, the Pseudepigrapha, the Talmud, Mishna, or any other Jewish source. It just is not there."

In fact, the text seems to suggest the opposite of what Sam claims. Exodus 28 mentions the priest's garments and bells that are associated with his not dying in the Holy of Holies. What is the relationship of death and bells in this text?

Commentators admit this is a difficult verse to render accurately and most proceed with caution as far as the bells and their relationship to the life of the high priest.

If a high priest could die in ministry, he would not be a fit type of Jesus. The text may indicate that

God providentially would keep that from happening and that the reminder and token of that special preservation was the noise of the bells on the hem of his garment (Exodus 28:35).

It was as if the priest was respectfully "announcing" his approach to God and God was "announcing" His pleasure back to the people for their offering. The indication of the context is that if the priest was faithful and obedient in totally dressing as he was commanded there was never anything to fear. Safety in the Tabernacle was guaranteed to the priest by his obedience to the sacred and prescribed dress code. Beyond that we are just speculating.

In all, Sam's book is deficient and defective. Extravagant claims, self-promotion, mythology, exaggeration and unproven hype seem to run in the Hinn family. (See *The Confusing World of Benny Hinn*, available from PFO.)

Whatever Sam's motivation, we must reject his book as unfounded and unscriptural. The Bible must be the final word. Whatever runs in the Hinn family, it is not biblical accuracy.



To Judge or Not to Judge

(continued from page 1)

The Lack of Discernment

Discernment is largely missing from the Church, partly for the following reasons:

A. We have become man-centered and experience-driven. Some think Christianity has to emulate Disney World to capture and hold larger audiences. Entertainment becomes more man-centered than God-centered. Postmodernism and the death of reason permeate not only secular culture, but many of our churches.

B. We have lost the knowledge of proper hermeneutics. Televangelists make up their own subjective meanings of Scripture as they go along saying only that they have "revelation knowledge" or "God told them."

In that way they hope to put themselves beyond scrutiny or evaluation.

C. The Church largely accepts the philosophy that truth is relative. Books are published today that try to stem the tide and argue for moral absolutes. Fifty years ago that would not have been necessary.

Jay Adams in almost prophetic fashion sounded an alarm 10 years ago that few listened to. In his book, *A Call to Discernment*, he noted the departure from antithetical thinking. For thousands of years, both with the Hebrew prophets and the Christian Church people believed that there was right and wrong, black and white.

Adams observes:

"According to continuum thinking, the mode of thinking taught outside the church (and largely within), every idea is a shade of

gray. There is no right and wrong or true and false, but only shades of right and wrong or true and false spread along a continuum. The poles of this continuum are extended so far out toward the wings that for all practical purposes they are unattainable and therefore worthless. Nothing, then, is wholly right or wrong. All is relative; most of it is subjective."

Continuing he says:

"That is one reason why biblical preaching, with its sharp antithesis, rubs many people the wrong way: It is hard for modern minds to accept. For a long time now educational institutions, newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, etc. have inculcated continuum thinking. Antithetical thinking is dismissed as fanatical or worse. Consequently, when Christians

(all of whom have been affected by this environment) hear anti-theological views expressed, they sound discordant. And indeed they are! Because anything goes, discernment is not placed at a premium" (pg. 30).

Adams points out that the clean-unclean distinctions in the Old Testament were given by God to create a totally antithetical view of life.

The Daily Bread devotional for Nov. 13, 1995, notes that false teachers worm their way in by zeroing in on our emotions:

"A false teacher knows what appeals to our desires (2 Pet. 2). He doesn't wear a lapel pin to warn of his lies, but he comes disguised as a representative of the truth. He claims he will enrich lives, but those who follow him learn at a high cost that they have been deceived."

The lack of discernment in the Church today is costing dearly. The Church is like a tree with every kind of bird (clean, unclean, wild, mild) nesting in it.

The Liberty of Discernment

Judge — don't judge — what do we do? Matthew 7:15 is clear that we can judge the message and fruit of false apostles. However, Jesus is saying in Matthew 7:1 that we should be careful in nitpicking and judging people's motives or eternal destiny. Ultimately only God is the judge of those things. We can, after all, be too hard on people in minor matters.

The mystery clears up when we realize that the word "judge" can be used in different ways in different contexts. Understanding the context is the key to interpreting what kind of judging we are speaking about.

Ralph Walter in his small book, *Tortured Texts*, notes the differences:

"Consider first the Greek word *Krino*, translated *judge* in our text. If you look at a concordance of the King James Version, you will find the word has been translated: *conclude, condemn, damn, decree, determine, esteem, ordain, think* and then *judge* 87 times. Other Greek scholars say that *Krino* means *to call in*

question, conclude, decree, esteem, determine, think and sentence. From all of this I think it would be safe to say that the word our Lord used means *to condemn or to pass judgment upon someone maliciously*; while the context shows that we have the responsibility to properly evaluate a thing or an act" (pp. 28-30).

An illustration might be a house in poor maintenance. We can see the paint peeling and the broken windows but would we condemn the owner as lazy? Suppose that the owner was an invalid or just too poor to have it fixed? We must be careful about judging without facts or beyond the obvious. Such judgments are condemnations and these are what Jesus condemned in Matthew 7:1. The Pharisees were notorious for judging based on silly rules and traditions and not the Scriptures.

Peter, Paul and John did a lot of judging the right way. Every second epistle is a judgment on apostasy. In 2 Timothy 4:10, Paul judges and warns about a man named Demas. In the same epistle (2:17) he warns of the heresies of two others by name. Paul did a lot of judging and evaluating when it came to false teachers. We are mandated to judge false doctrine.

Jesus in John 7:24 says: "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Jesus is saying "judge without maliciousness and by all means have the facts." To find a balance between legalism and mysticism we must judge righteous judgment.

First Corinthians 6:3-5 demands that we judge certain matters. We can judge the overt and gross sins mentioned later in verse 9. However our judgment must always be tempered with a desire to restore, not punish. The goal is restoration.

On a larger note, we can judge qualifications for ministry. We are given in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 a number of qualifications for eldership. Qualifications are external and we can judge certain externals. Is an elder hospitable, a good teacher, the husband of one wife and so on? Negatively, is he argumentative, or does he have a bad reputation or is he

easily angered? These things are easy to see and evaluate.

We can judge qualifications, however we cannot judge qualities. Qualities are internal motivations known only by God Himself.

In John 21:16-17, Jesus said, "Peter, feed my sheep." The feeding of sheep has to do with external qualifications. We can evaluate a man's sermons, appraise if he has studied and researched. Lack of preparation will become obvious in time. Poor doctrine or overtly false doctrine is obvious.

But Jesus also said in John 21:15-17, "Peter, do you love me?" This has to do with qualities and internal motivation. Does a man feed the sheep for power? For prestige? For money? Only God knows the motivation. Or is he doing it out of love for Christ? Again, only God knows. If the person is living an ostentatious and lavish lifestyle, those externals all say something and may be an obvious outworking of the inner motivation.

The book of Titus deals with external qualifications for ministry while 1 Timothy 4:16 tells the pastor to judge himself, to take heed to himself, that is, be aware of his inner motivation, his inner qualities.

It does help us to see and understand the difference between the unseen inner qualities and motivations and the external qualifications which can be judged.

Krino, as pointed out by Campbell Morgan, changes according to the context. Sometimes you judge, sometimes you do not. We must not be censorious but we cannot give up our right to a careful discrimination when that is required. As Morgan puts it: "The first five verses forbid censoriousness; and the sixth verse insists upon a careful discrimination" (*The Gospel According to Matthew*, pg. 71).

So it is always right to judge false teachers and false teaching using the Word of God as the standard. Nitpicking is one thing. Removing rotten fruit is another. We must be discerning in our discernment and always proceed on the basis of truth and facts leaving the unknown areas of motivation to God.

The Labor of Discernment

It seems that people have forgotten the word “discernment” and forgotten that encouragements to do the same are found in the Bible (see *Young’s Analytical Concordance to The Bible*, pg. 257). There are two main Greek words translated as “discernment.” One is *anakrino*, meaning to examine or judge closely; the other *diakrino*, to separate out, to investigate, to examine.

This is work. We must put in the work of discernment. We must study to show ourselves approved workmen (2 Timothy 3:16).

D.A. Carson rightly observes:

“We will not go far astray if we approach the Bible with a humble mind and then resolve to focus on central truths. Gradually we will build up our exegetical skills by evenhanded study and a reverent prayerful determination to become like the workman ‘who correctly handles the word of truth’” (*Exegetical Fallacies*, pg. 144).

We must know the rules. We must dust off the hermeneutics textbooks. We must insist on one of the basic rules and that is the rule of context.

The following quotes from Edwin Hartill’s *Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics* show us the extreme importance of the context rule:

“Torrey — ‘Too much importance cannot be laid upon a close study of the context.’”

“Todd — ‘Consideration of the context in examining any verse or passage is of the utmost importance. Failure to do this is one of the causes of misinterpretation of scripture.’”

“Moyer — ‘Too many preachers prepare a message and then hunt a text to fit it. That is not a text, it is a pretext.’”

“Lockhart — ‘The context is the key to the meaning.’” (pg. 80).

Hartill himself says:

“The Bible can be made to prove anything, but NOT when studied in the light of the context” (*ibid.*, pg. 79).

In his classic, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, M.S. Terry insists:

“Many a passage of Scripture will not be understood at all without the help afforded by the context; for many a sentence derives all its point and force from the connexion [sic] in which it stands” (pg. 219).

Benny Hinn can stand up in front of a national audience via television and tell them that the Egyptians were not drowned in the Red Sea but rather were crushed by falling ice (*Praise The Lord Show* 7/14/94). Flying by the seat of his pants he ignores the context of Exodus 14 that talks of the waters coming back over the Egyptians (verse 26) and the waters covering the chariots (verse 28). His followers “ooh” and “aah” over this “new truth.”

By ripping verses out of context, the Word-Faith teachers have created a “Daddy Warbucks” God who is false. All cults trick their followers by wresting verses from their context. In doing so, they twist the Scriptures to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16).

Another rule is Contextual Proximity, which broadens the context rule. Thomas Schmidt writes:

“The further distant from the immediate context we travel in search of meaning, the more variables enter in and the more complicated the process becomes. For example, an Old Testament book might illuminate Paul’s meaning, even though it is written in another language and hundreds of years earlier, because we can be confident that Paul knew it and considered it authoritative. On the other hand, a moral philosopher writing in Greek near the time of Paul might use similar words in entirely different ways” (*Straight and Narrow*, pg. 70).

It is also important that we try to understand the biblical world. Background studies in Edershiems’ works are helpful in this. How were the words being used and understood by the people in their world and in their culture?

In Dr. Edwin W. Rice’s book, *Orientalisms in Bible Lands* he lays out the disparities in Eastern and Western mind sets:

“For Western people reverse, upset, and completely turn around the customs and habits of Oriental nations. How different must be the thought and expression of the East, growing necessarily out of these opposite ways of life and manners. ... No study of the Bible, therefore, can be satisfactory that does not include some knowledge of life and thought in the East” (pp. 11-12).

A good exegesis will interpret the text and draw out the meaning. Knowing the rules aids us in being good exegetes.

Those that handle the Word of God need to know something about metaphors and similes. They need to be acquainted with Hebrew poetry and parallelisms. Good hermeneutics may be hard work but is an absolute must for anyone who wants to handle the Scriptures with integrity.

Living in Discernment

Paul spoke of having transformed minds (Romans 12:1). We can best read and understand Scripture when our minds are in the right place and we are in tune with the Savior. Living in discernment is more than just knowing the rules as important as that is. However without the last two considerations we can become, arrogant, and harsh, with a know-it-all attitude. Peter tells us (1 Peter 3:15) that we are to defend our faith with meekness and fear. This indicates a humble attitude in reliance on God. Earlier in that same verse Peter says, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” Two things make that possible:

A. Love the Savior. Walk with Christ, commune often with Christ, obey Him, keep your eyes on Him (Hebrews 12:1-2). Fellowship with the author of the Book is vital.

B. Live with the end in view. Holding eternity as a present reality gives us God’s perspective of life and the Scriptures.

Proper discernment is our privilege and right. The work is worth the effort and the reward will be not only the favor and blessing of God but our ability to truly enrich the lives of others.

Faith, pg. 21).

And then there are other maneuvers that make the healer appear more competent than he is. Hinn and his ilk are skilled in working their followers into a pinnacle of mental, physical and spiritual frenzy. Yet these periods of pandemonium in emotion-packed auditoriums are never the time or place to pronounce terminal diseases cured. In many cases, the complicated diagnosis of these illnesses required days, weeks and even months by trained and skilled medical personnel with the latest in equipment. To claim a healing without the benefit of the same procedures and care is nothing less than foolish and misleading. Boggs says of this gimmick:

"It is extremely easy for the layman to be misled regarding the exact nature of a disease. No layman is qualified either to diagnose his own sickness, or to determine whether he is completely healed. Public testimonials of healing at moments of great excitement and emotional stress are worthless. ... Most often, the improvement lasted only as long as the spell of excitement lasted" (ibid., pp. 22, 30).

Although written 40 years ago, Boggs' words are just as, if not more so, applicable today. The heightened emotional level created among the crowds of people attending such crusades places the faith healer in a win/win situation. In what can be regarded as sheer acts of desperation, the sick take that "leap of faith," hoping the miraculous will materialize, thereby allowing the faith healer to parade them as a trophy back and forth across the stage. The 20,000-plus faithful in the arena, in addition to the potential millions viewing by telecast or videotape, believe a healing really has occurred.

However, when the victim returns home and the reality of the affliction remains, no one is the wiser. And even if the truth leaks out, it is easy to shift blame back to the afflicted one's unconfessed sin or lack of faith or, if all else fails, Satan himself.

Less than a year before her own death, Kathryn Kuhlman brought one of her healing services to St. Louis. One driver from a fleet of chartered buses that brought people to the meeting from a near 200-mile radius of the city, noted:

"'She doesn't always succeed,' said a driver from Chester. 'My bus was pretty quiet on the way home last year [after her service]. But for some of those people a little inspiration does wonders, if only for a little while. I had a guy last year who was dying of cancer. He got up on the stage and said he was healed. He died a week later'" (*St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 5/4/75, "Praying, Hoping, Waiting...", pg. G11).

To the thousands packed in the auditorium, this man with terminal cancer was just one of many who

supposedly walked from the service healed of his infirmity. In reality he was not, despite Kuhlman's declaration: "God ... has more than enough healing power for everyone in this great auditorium" (ibid.). This same scenario can be applied to untold thousands, perhaps millions.

Apologist Robert M. Bowman, in a brief, yet powerful, article, presents a biblical exegesis of James 5 that rebuts the more prominent expressions of the healing proponents. His examination of twelve faulty concepts commonly presented within the faith healing camp shows there is no support from this epistle for modern faith-healing crusades. The most salient points are:

"(1) There are no **itinerant healing ministries**, since in James elders are called to come to the sick (v. 14); the sick are not called to come to the tents of the healer. (2) There are no **gifted healers in the congregation**, since again it is 'the elders' without distinction that are to be called; evidently people with gifts of healing (I Cor. 12:9) were not common. (3) There are no **healing services**, since again the elders are called to the sick. Scheduling the Holy Spirit to come to one's church at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday nights to perform healings is alien to the Bible" (*The ApoLog*, May 1996, pg. 1, emphasis in original).

Christians can and should look to God for healing. And yes, sometimes our petition for physical deliverance may come through the miraculous. God is not restricted by the limitations and inabilities of the medical profession. However, other times it may not be His will to intervene supernaturally. For God has also provided gradual healings through doctors and medicine. And then there's the tenable reality that perhaps it is not God's will to heal at all. Ephesians 4 contains no office of "healer." Healers are, in reality, a 20th century mania for mysticism and media. Healers thrive in that artificial environment.

Faith healers purport to *pray for* the afflicted, but their conduct demonstrates that they *prey upon* the afflicted. As the smoke clears and the dust settles on the healing crusades, the disappointment left behind has, in so many cases, resulted in tragic consequences. False hope is no hope at all. Expectations that are based upon promises from the seducing minds of faith healers and not upon the sure Word of God, will eventually lead one into the depths of despair and depression.

It is cruel to impart the physically impaired with yet another affliction. Those who leave these crusades without healing now face not only physical infirmity but doubts about their spiritual well-being. This can be debilitating to their faith if they come to believe that God does not love them as much as the others who left the crusade apparently healed.

The theology of the "health gospel" is itself unhealthy and will inevitably lead to a sick Church. Richard Mayhue, vice president and dean of The Master's

Seminary, considers the Church's lack of discernment and naiveté:

"Tragically, our world offers very convincing counterfeits of the real thing. Even more tragic, in our eagerness to see God work, we as Christians sometimes flock to anyone who claims a miraculous healing. In doing so, we trivialize genuine divine healing — we accept man's deceitful illusions in place of God's divine intervention" (*The Healing Promise*, pg. 39).

Christians should not disparage claims of supernatural healing when the people of God sincerely pray. Churches should regularly seek God on behalf of the bruised and hurting. These things should not be abandoned because of the deluge of counterfeits and charlatans targeting the gullible. We must avoid the hurt of healing and avoid the "superstars" who perpetuate that hurt.

—MKG

News Updates

(continued from page 3)

to the demonstrators as one with more authority than he had. During one confrontation, captured on video, he told the group, "I'm an undercover cop, I want you to take that camera off." When one of the demonstrators asked, "Are you a county deputy?", Christopher said, "I'm telling you, I'm a law enforcement officer. Take the camera off." Then, when asked, "Are you an employee of Benny Hinn?", he retorted, "No sir, I am a sheriff."

Responding to the incident, Christopher told WFTV reporter Jane Watrel, "I was not acting as law enforcement officer, nor was I on duty. I was in my own personal time. I asked them kindly not to videotape us while we're having a discussion since I was with another offic— uh, deputy." When Watrel asked who authorized his actions, Christopher answered, "I was acting alone."

However, that TV station said Christopher Hinn overstepped his authority a week later when he used an unmarked sheriff's car to pull over protesters who had used a video camera at his brother's church. Accompanying Christopher at the scene was "[Benny] Hinn follower," Robin Johnson, a full-time Orange County deputy. Christopher told them to erase the videotape and watched as the demonstrators did so.

When challenged, Christopher told Watrel: "First of all, I did not — uh, force them off the road. They voluntarily pulled themselves [over], when they see me approaching." When asked if these people had broken a law, Christopher responded, "No. The problem as far as I had, uh I had spoke to the same gentleman, a week before, not to photograph us as law enforcement officers."

Further compounding the case is the fact that the incident took place in Seminole County, where Christopher Hinn has no jurisdiction as an Orange County reserve deputy.

Civil rights attorney Keith Mitnick told the television news program, "Law enforcement can cross county lines when they're in hot pursuit of a felon or something along that line. But in a circumstance like this it'd be hard to justify crossing county lines in using a badge as a position of authority."

While Orange County sheriff Kevin Berry apparently knew nothing of the event, the news report indicated that "at least two high-ranking members of his administration did." An interoffice memo, cited by Watrel, said, "Reserve I Corporal Christopher Hinn, Deputy Robin Johnson, Commander II Roger Clark, Commander I Rusty Smallwood and possibly others" will be the subject of an internal inquiry in the department. Clark and Smallwood were said to be members of the sheriff's "inner circle." Watrel further reported that her "sources say Smallwood, Clark and Johnson are not only followers of [Benny] Hinn, but knew about the harassment and intimidation of protesters and didn't brief Sheriff Berry about the possible civil rights violations."

As a result of the report, Christopher Hinn has been suspended as a reserve deputy and has been ordered to turn in his gun and badge until the investigation is complete. Also, the sheriff has temporarily prohibited any off-duty deputy work at Benny Hinn's church. The church was reportedly employing 2-20 off-duty Orange County deputies each week. Smallwood, Clark and Johnson all remain in their current positions.

Benny Hinn's organization asserts that the intensified security is necessary because of "serious death threats" made against the faith healer. The news report said that "Investigators are considering the demonstrators as suspects." However, members of the group claimed no knowledge of the death threats, nor any part in such menacing activities. They said their only desire is to exercise their right to protest against spiritual abuses manifested by Hinn and others.

—MKG

Books in Review

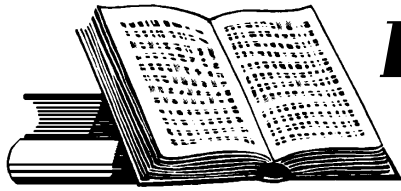
(continued from page 16)

that the organization approves and distributes. Some of the book's examples are appalling.

Readers should be aware that the book's orientation in spots is decidedly Calvinistic. Some readers might want to skip those areas.

Beyond Promises has been endorsed by John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul and Don Matzat. We hope that many more will read it and prayerfully consider its contents.

—GRF



Books in Review

THE DEATH OF TRUTH

by Dennis McCallum

Bethany House Publishers, 288 pages, \$10.99

This look at the postmodern world view is a book no student of cults or times should pass up. The author, Dennis McCallum, dissects postmodernism and shows its infectious and insidious impact on health care, literature, education, history, psychotherapy, law, science and religion. McCallum deals with technical subjects in nontechnical language.

He describes postmodernism on page 12: "Postmodernism isn't a distinct set of doctrines or truth claims. It's a *mood*—a view of the world characterized by a deep distrust of reason, not to mention a disdain for the knowledge Christians believe the Bible provides. It's a *methodology*—a completely new way of analyzing ideas. For all its diverse ideas and advocates, postmodernism is also a *movement*—a fresh onslaught on truth that brings a more or less cohesive approach to literature, history, politics, education, law, sociology, linguistics, and virtually every other discipline, including science. And it is ushering in a cultural *metamorphosis*—transforming every area of everyday life as it spreads through education, movies, television, and other media."

Postmodernism is the underlying reason our culture is susceptible to New Age teachings, experience-driven churches and televangelistic scammers. In a society with churches and professing Christians forsaking reason and the Scriptures, this volume makes an attempt to equip us to know what to do and how to do it.

—GRF

ANSWERING JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES SUBJECT BY SUBJECT

by David A. Reed

Baker Book House, 247 pages, \$9.99

After devoting his last few efforts for Baker Book House to an examination of Mormonism, David Reed has returned to the subject for which he was initially known: Jehovah's Witnesses. Reed was a full-time minister, elder and presiding overseer for the Watchtower Society during the 1970s and early 1980s.

His latest volume, *Answering Jehovah's Witnesses Subject by Subject*, is a thorough analysis of major and minor beliefs of past and current Jehovah's Witnesses. The book contains "new and different material" from his previous offerings, covering more than 80 subjects. A few, such as AIDS and prayer, may have readers at first wondering about their relevance. While others, including birthdays, blood transfusions and voting, are more obvious.

Even longtime students of Watchtower teachings will be enlightened by some of the subjects covered. For example: What are Alcyone and Pleiades and what do they have to do with Jehovah's Witnesses? See pages 30 and 180 for the answers.

The book comes with Scripture and subject indexes, the latter of which is helpful in finding information on topics supplementing the major entries.

One minor problem is that the book does not deliver on all the promises made on the back cover. A few subjects mentioned there (the New Covenant, spiritism and taxes) are not specifically dealt with in the book, while disfellowshipping gets only a brief mention under a different heading. Perhaps these were condensed or edited out by the publisher.

Despite this problem, the book is yet another excellent resource from one of the more productive commentators on Watchtower history and theology.

—MKG

BEYOND PROMISES

A Biblical Challenge To Promise Keepers

by David Hagopian and Douglas Wilson

Canon Press, 268 pages, \$13.99

Amid all the excitement about Promise Keepers, the popular men's movement sweeping churches across the nation, comes a balanced, fair and biblical critique of all its phases.

Because of the enthusiasm generated at Promise Keepers rallies, followers often suspend judgment and discernment regarding the organization and its teachings. This book, however, takes the time to put the organization under the scrutiny of God's Word.

While the Promise Keepers leadership speaks about integrity, the authors of this book document that they have not always acted with integrity, nor have they handled the Word of God with solid hermeneutical principles.

Chapter 5, "The Tower of Psychobabble," along with Chapter 6, "A Journey To Nowhere," expose the Promise Keepers leadership's lack of discernment in terms of the shallow and misleading written material

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Editor's Note: The publications featured in our **Books in Review** section are available from Personal Freedom Outreach (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$1.50 to the price listed to cover postal costs. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.