



STATEMENT DP069

## A Summary Critique: Welcome, Holy Spirit

Just a few miles from Pastor Benny Hinn's Orlando Christian Center (now called World Outreach Center) in Florida, at Universal Studios, one can see what, at first glance and from a distance, looks like a New York street. A closer look reveals cleverly built facades with nothing behind them.

Hinn's latest literary offering, *Welcome, Holy Spirit*, is like those facades. He has crafted a book intended to be mainstream and as inoffensive as possible. He has even tried to paper over some old errors. But a closer look reveals the same Benny Hinn who fabricates events to demonstrate his alleged supernatural powers from God.

One example is his backing off the claim that his father once was the mayor of Jaffa, Israel. His new characterization of his father as having "a prominent position... in the political life of Israel" (p. 74) still remains an overstatement.

Another is his story of escaping serious injury in a 1983 plane crash. "I did not have a scratch," he writes on page 254. Newspaper and other reports from the time, however, reveal that he was in a state of shock and was hospitalized for three days. He might not have had a scratch, but the inference one draws from his statement — that he was not harmed — is hardly accurate.

Hinn writes on page 50 that he knows whom God is healing and from what. Yet during a March 1993 interview with *Inside Edition*, when questioned about an actress who pretended to be healed of polio, Hinn told reporter Steve Wilson, "That was one we missed."

The most notable example of Hinn's persistence in fabricating the miraculous begins on page 230, where he claims fulfillment of prophecies by Demos Shakarian and Kathryn Kuhlman. Shakarian prophesied that someone would walk through a hospital and instantaneously heal patients. Kuhlman's prophecy was an aspiration that all would be healed in one of her own services. These "prophecies" caused Hinn to wonder, "Would God raise masses of people from their beds of affliction?" (230).

In 1976, Hinn went to Sault Sainte Marie, Ontario for a crusade at the invitation of Pastor Fred Spring at Elim Pentecostal Tabernacle. Hinn said that "God moved mightily in that city" and that his meetings drew overflow crowds (231).

Hinn continues: "I received a special invitation from the Reverend Mother of a Catholic Hospital in the area. She wanted me to conduct a service for the patients — along with three other Pentecostal preachers and seven Catholic priests. The chapel of the large hospital seated about 150" (231). Hinn describes the chapel as being filled with chronically ill bed and wheelchair patients, with doctors and nurses watching "from the balcony." Some were turned away because of limited space (231).

The hospital under discussion is General Hospital, located at 941 Queen St. E., in Sault Sainte Marie, and has 182 beds. The picture being painted here is that many of the patients from those 182 beds were at the meeting, since the 150-seat chapel was so full "that many could not attend because of the limited space" (231).

Hinn recounts that he took control that day, and with anointing bottles in hand, ministers and priests were told to anoint and pray for everyone present. Hinn says one priest kept knocking down patients as he anointed them. Hinn adds that patients all over the chapel were being healed instantly (233-34).

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At this point even Mother Superior got caught up in the excitement, according to Hinn: “After the service in the chapel, the Reverend Mother asked, ‘Oh this is wonderful. Would you mind coming now and laying hands on all the patients in the rooms?’ ...More than fifty doctors, nurses, Pentecostal preachers, priests and nuns joined this ‘Miracle Invasion’ team as we headed for those hospital rooms” (234).

Hinn recounts that as they walked down the hall “you could feel God’s Spirit all over the building. Within a few minutes the hospital looked like it had been hit by an earthquake. People were under the power of the Holy Spirit up and down the hallways as well as in the rooms” (234).

Even the visitor’s lounge could not escape the power: “We entered the lounge...One by one, they fell under the power. In fact, as we began to pray for one gentleman who was smoking, he fell under the power with a lit cigarette still in his mouth” (235).

The detailed account of the miraculous in *Welcome, Holy Spirit* tops anything in the Book of Acts or in the annals of church history. Something of this magnitude probably never would have been forgotten in Sault Sainte Marie (1977 population: 80,219) or especially at General Hospital. Yet there is neither anyone at the hospital who remembers it as Hinn tells it, nor any records to confirm facts clouded by faulty memories. The real story is neither extraordinary nor miraculous.

Contacting the hospital got us the response, “Benny *who?*” Lois C. Krause, director of community relations for Sault Sainte Marie General Hospital, denied all that Hinn claimed. She said it could not have happened in the way Hinn’s book describes. She laughed after reading a copy of the story. No miracles occurred in the hospital as Hinn claims, she said, adding that “no patients left that day” due to miraculous occurrences.

Some older staff members did recall Hinn’s name, but did not remember anything as extraordinary as his book describes. They did not deny the possibility that the chapel meeting was held, but did not recall the meeting as recounted in *Welcome, Holy Spirit*.

Mother Superior Mary Francis, of the Gray Sisters of the Immaculate Conception order, also disputed Hinn’s account. She said she did not invite Hinn, but reluctantly allowed his chapel service in deference to the pastoral care department, which initiated the service.

The hospital then released a statement, which included the following remarks: “No such events have ever occurred at General Hospital. His pronouncement can neither be verified through the medical records nor by testimony from past or present personnel of this hospital. Mr. Hinn’s claims are Outlandish and unwarranted.”

Equally offensive to Hinn’s myth-making in *Welcome, Holy Spirit* is his appealing to the likes of Charles Ryrie, Lewis Chafer, John Walvoord, D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, and A. J. Gordon to support his teaching on the third person of the Trinity. It is obvious that Hinn is working overtime to make it appear that he is in line with many of the greats in recent church history.

Bearing in mind that Hinn (a Pentecostal) has spent the last year or so with one foot in the Word-Faith camp and the other in the Assemblies of God camp, anyone familiar with the above list of theologians and evangelists is going to see a contradiction akin to Mormons or Jehovah’s Witnesses favorably citing the works of Walter R. Martin. Ryrie, for example, believed the Pentecostal position of tongues “is not valid” (*The Holy Spirit*, 89) and that sign gifts “were also temporary” (92). Lewis Chafer, in volume 7 of his *Systematic Theology*, lists seven errors of professional healers (183-85), calling their teachings cruel and unscriptural.” He says that “many are driven insane” by the treatment and teachings of modern-day healers.

A.J. Gordon was a Baptist minister in Boston during the 19th century, and evangelist heavily involved in foreign and local missions. He was clearly a noncharismatic who lived long before the modern Pentecostal movement. The book *Who Was Who on Church History* (Keats Publishing, 1974) details the sound, sane, scriptural, and practical life (168-69) of this ardent supporter of D. L. Moody.

R. A. Torrey deplored mysticism and emotionalism, writing, “filling with the Spirit that is not maintained by persistent study of the Word of God will soon vanish...Anyone who wishes to obtain and maintain fullness of power in Christian life and service must constantly feed upon the Word of God” (*How to Obtain Fullness o Power*, 18).

The way Hinn uses sources is misleading and wrong. It creates an illusion of credibility, respectability, endorsement, and scholarship. The cults have been doing this for years. Indeed, it is a cultic distinctive to make it appear that there is scholarly support for one's position when there is no such support.

Hinn, like many big-name Christian authors, has editors and ghostwriters who help produce his books. However, the buck still stops with Hinn. His name on the book's cover confers responsibility for its contents. Hinn and the creators of *Welcome, Holy Spirit* have promulgated a scholastic deception.

- *G. Richard Fisher* and *M. Kurt Goedelman*

**G. Richard Fisher** and **M. Kurt Goedelman** serve on the board of directors of Personal Freedom Outreach (PFO). PFO materials on Benny Hinn and other Christian discernment issues are available. Write to Personal Freedom Outreach, P.O. Box 26062, St. Louis, MO 63136.