

Ignorance Is Not an Option

Scripture: Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11; Titus 1:9

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One of the common criticisms of the Strange Fire conference held this past October was that the speakers (this writer included) painted all charismatic Christians with the same broad brush by lumping them in with the extremes of the Word-Faith/N.A.R./Dominion movement. Charismatic theologian, author, and radio host Dr. Michael Brown on the eve of the conference posted an open letter to Dr. John MacArthur stating that he “attributes the extreme errors of a tiny minority to countless hundreds of thousands of godly leaders worldwide.”[1]

From this statement it is apparent that Brown does indeed recognize that there are “extreme errors” in the charismatic movement. Not to worry, however, because those who propagate such error constitute only a “tiny minority” of the mighty charismatic army.

I’m not a social media guy but a few of my more technologically astute friends alerted me to a tweet from Brown dated January 2, 2014 in which he stated that he “just recorded five wonderful TV shows with Benny Hinn.”

Benny Hinn? Really?

With this tweet, Brown unwittingly proved two of the basic points of the Strange Fire conference: 1) False teachers and charlatans are not the “tiny minority” in the charismatic movement but rather the norm and 2) There is a shocking and rampant lack of discernment within the charismatic ranks.

Brown is considered by many to be one of the “clear thinking” charismatics. He is one of the movement’s leading theologians and intellectuals. He is one of the heavyweights of charismaticism.

Benny Hinn is one of, if not the most widely recognized personalities of the charismatic/Word-Faith movement. He is the world’s most famous (or infamous depending upon your point of view) faith healer. He attracts large crowds domestically, but the crowds at his international crusades are staggering, often numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Hinn has been doing “ministry” for some 35 years and in that time has taught some of the most jaw-dropping heresies, offered dozens of demonstrably false prophecies and has made some of the most outlandish claims imaginable:

- Claims he healed every patient at a hospital in Sault Sainte Marie, Ontario, Canada[2]
- Claims his father was the mayor of Jaffa, Israel. He wasn’t.
- Of his critics said, “Sometimes I wish God would give me a Holy Ghost machine gun, I’d blow your head off.”
- Has threatened even the innocent children of his critics.
- Claims Kathryn Kuhlman visits him from the dead and claims to get an anointing from the tomb of Aimee Semple McPherson.

- Claimed to have video of Jesus walking around in one of his meetings. When asked to show the video his staff said that it had been “misplaced.”
- On Dec. 31, 1989, Hinn went into a “trance” and said that God was giving him (in real time) prophecies about major events in the then upcoming decade of the 1990s. “God” said these events would include the collapse of the American economy, the East coast being ravaged by earthquakes, a female elected as president, Fidel Castro’s death in office, the rise of a “short man dictator,” the Rapture of the church, and the destruction of the homosexual community in America “in ’94 or ’95, no later than that” – with fire. This is by no means exhaustive of Hinn’s false prophecies, it is just all he managed on this particular night.
- Claimed that God told him by divine revelation knowledge that there are actually 9 members in the Godhead.
- Claimed the Holy Spirit told him that women were originally intended to give birth out of their sides.
- Claimed that when the Red Sea parted the water froze and it was actually ice that crushed the Egyptian soldiers.
- Claimed that as a young man he was in his room talking to the Holy Spirit. When called to supper by the “woman of the house,” he said, “...as I was about to leave, I felt someone take my hand and say, ‘Five more minutes. Just five more minutes.’ The Holy Spirit longed for my fellowship.”[3]
- Lives in a \$10 million parsonage[4] and is known to stay in hotel rooms costing upwards of \$10k per night. He flies in a private jet and is well known for his lavish spending and opulent lifestyle – all funded by donations to his ministry.
- Teaches all of the standard Word-Faith doctrines such as Positive Confession, the Little gods doctrine, the Spiritual Death of Jesus (SDJ) doctrine, and guaranteed health and wealth for the believer.
- Seed-Faith theology is a staple in Hinn’s teaching. He promises people that if they “sow a seed” (translated, give him money) that God will give them a “harvest.”
- Claims to have a department that verifies all of his healings. I have spoken with a former employee of Hinn’s who says that not only are the healings not verified but that such a department does not even exist.

This just scratches the surface with Hinn. Benny Hinn literally meets each and every biblical criterion as to how to discern a false teacher. If Benny Hinn is not a false teacher then someone needs to explain to me what one is because I do not know. If he is not a false teacher then the term truly has no meaning.

When Dr. Brown tweeted that he had recorded five television programs with Hinn, many called him out on this and rightly so. Once the critical tweets began to mount, Brown realized he had to address the burgeoning controversy and said:

We’ve traveled in different circles over the years. Simple. And I don’t watch Christian TV.

This is stunning. Absolutely stunning.

Undoubtedly realizing that he had created quite the theological dust-up he attempted to defend

himself by claiming ignorance of Benny Hinn. Ignorance? Of *Benny Hinn*? A man in Brown's position claiming ignorance of Benny Hinn would be tantamount to an Olympic swimmer claiming ignorance of Michael Phelps or for a high level employee of Microsoft claiming ignorance of Bill Gates. Hinn is one of if not the most widely recognized individuals in all of "Christianity." He is a charismatic rock star and with a ministerial track record spanning over three decades Hinn is a well known commodity. There have been numerous exposés done on Hinn (leave it to the secular media to police the charismatic movement because it will not police itself) documenting his repeated lies, financial improprieties and fallacious healings. I cannot get inside the mind of Dr. Brown, but this claim stretches credulity in the extreme.

More tweets came in questioning his discernment. He then muddied the waters even further by tweeting:

Perhaps I did exercise discernment? Perhaps I know things others don't and have reasons for what I do? Is that possible?

Well, yes, that is certainly possible but it seems to be hopelessly incongruent with his tweet shortly before in which he claimed ignorance. Additionally, Brown's book *Authentic Fire* was written as a response to MacArthur's book *Strange Fire*. If Brown by his own admission does not watch Christian television, how is it that he can refute *Strange Fire* which deals in large part with the content of Christian television? Further complicating matters is that within the pages of *Strange Fire*, which Brown presumably would have read in order to offer a critique—or should have, is considerable information documenting Hinn's lavish lifestyle, blatant heresies, and bogus claims of healings. If he did indeed read the book which was released in late October 2013, then from it alone he would have had more than enough information to be well informed before his taping with Hinn on January 2, 2014.

Not only have I studied Benny Hinn and the Word-Faith movement at an academic level, but I have also personally attended numerous meetings and conferences of prominent Word-Faith leaders such as Kenneth Copeland, Creflo Dollar, Jesse Duplantis, Rod Parsley, Jerry Savelle, John Hagee, Joel Osteen and Joyce Meyer. I have attended 15 of Benny Hinn's "Miracle Crusades" and have seen first-hand the devastation that Hinn leaves in his wake. What the television cameras won't show you is that in the back are dozens and dozens of sick, crippled and dying people. Parents bring in their sick and dying children in vain hopes of them being restored. At one of these crusades I spoke with a young couple whose 6 month old baby girl was dying (she was hooked up to a portable oxygen tank and had a feeding tube inserted into her stomach). At another I spoke with a mother who told me that her 5 year old boy who she had in a little stroller was born without a brain; he had only a brain stem which kept him breathing and his heart beating. These are not outlying cases. Tragic scenes such as this can be found at every one of his meetings. Hinn confidently asserts that it is always God's will to be healed and that healing will come to everyone present as long as they have enough faith.



And give enough money.

At every single crusade which I have had to endure, Hinn takes up the “love offering” just before the “healing” begins. “If you sow sparingly, you will reap sparingly. If you sow bountifully, you will reap bountifully,” says Hinn. The not-so-subtle insinuation is that if you have cancer, or if you have a sick or dying child, then you had best dig deeply. The bigger miracle you need, the bigger seed you had better sow. And so the poor, the desperate, the sick, and the elderly sow their seeds. Pictured is a woman I met at the most recent Hinn crusade I attended in 2011. She is with her son who, a few years prior, skied into a pole. She sowed her seed. But the only one who reaped a harvest was Benny Hinn.

This is the man with whom Michael Brown just had fellowship. This is the man with whom he just broke metaphorical bread. This is the man to whom he just gave credibility. This is the man to whom he just gave his implicit endorsement. This is the reason the Strange Fire conference was so needed.

The stark reality, contrary to the hue and cry from Michael Brown and so many others in the charismatic movement, is that the “extreme errors” are not just coming from a “tiny minority” fringe within its ranks. The errors are extreme to be sure, but they are coming from and they represent the majority within the charismatic movement. I have been to countries in Europe, South America and Africa and can state with tragic confidence that Word-Faith theology (along with Roman Catholicism) is the face of Christianity in most of the world today. Word-Faith theology was born in the United States of America and networks such as TBN, Daystar, INSP, The Word Network, etc., etc. have exported this theological poison to the rest of the world. And now, indigenous prosperity preachers who have learned the tricks of the trade from watching these networks are fleecing their own flocks even in the poorest of countries.

We regularly hear on the news that the Islamic terrorists are not true Muslims. They represent only a tiny minority of an otherwise peaceful Muslim population. Some commentators have rightly pointed out that if this were the case then there should be a legion of “moderate” Muslims vociferously speaking out against the radical fringe denouncing them as not true Muslims who have hijacked Islam and distorted the message of its prophet. And yet, with very rare exception, the only thing heard from this supposed vast majority of peace-loving Muslims and their imams is silence. Similarly, if the Word-Faith/N.A.R. proponents are but a fringe of the charismatic movement, then there should be a legion of charismatic leaders vociferously calling out Hinn and others of his ilk as the charlatans for which they are. Charismatic leaders should be shouting from the rooftops that such false teachers

have hijacked Christianity and distorted the message of its King. And yet, with rare exception, the silence from charismatic leaders is deafening. No, it is not a fringe. It is mainstream. It is reasoned and thoughtful charismatics like John Piper and Wayne Grudem who are, sadly, the charismatic fringe.

I tell people that if they want to get an idea of the state of “Christianity” today, all one has to do is turn on Christian television. All Christian television is a function of the basic law of Supply and Demand. Whatever the demand is, that is what Christian television will supply. So, when we turn on Christian television what do we see? Solid expositors who study to show themselves approved rightly dividing the Word of Truth? Hardly. We see an endless parade of prosperity preachers who do nothing but tickle people’s itching ears. We hear a cacophony of prosperity preaching emanating from charlatans who exploit the poor, the sick, the desperate, and the widows for personal financial gain. And the most egregious error and what should be of gravest concern to us is that the Gospel is distorted and God’s Name is blasphemed.

I called in to Dr. Brown’s radio program, Line of Fire, on Friday, January 3 to express my concerns regarding his appearance with Benny Hinn. He said that he was aware of some controversy over Hinn but that he had never investigated it and that, if true, he would discuss it with him. It is my hope that he does investigate who this man is and what he teaches. It is my prayer (literally) that God would grant Benny Hinn and the myriad of Word-Faith preachers genuine repentance. I, along with the other speakers at the Strange Fire conference, would love nothing more than to wake up one day and see that the Word-Faith preachers have renounced their teachings and practices thereby rendering future conferences such as it completely unnecessary.

In closing, I want to state unequivocally that I am not at all lumping Michael Brown in with false teachers like Benny Hinn. However, when he, in violation of clear biblical instruction not to do so (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11; Titus 1:9), fellowships with false teachers he gives them a level of credibility that they do not deserve, enlarges their following, and exposes even more unsuspecting and undiscerning people to these wolves.

For more from Justin Peters, go to www.justinpeters.org.

[1] <http://www.christianpost.com/news/a-final-appeal-to-john-macarthur-on-the-eve-of-the-strange-fire-conference-106681/>

[2] Hinn made this claim in his book *Welcome Holy Spirit* on page 233. His claim was roundly refuted by hospital staff.

[3] Hinn, *Good Morning Holy Spirit*, pg. 56.

[4] This was in 2003 dollars according to a documentary done by the Canadian Broadcasting Company entitled “Do You Believe in Miracles?”

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