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# Editorials

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## AND EVERYWHERE THAT BENNY WENT, CONTROVERSY WAS SURE TO GO

Some things never change. Like the fact that wherever Benny Hinn takes one of his healing crusades, controversies follow. Case in point: the faith healer's campaign last May in Namboole, Uganda.

Pastor Robert Kayanja, the local host for the Uganda crusade, along with other evangelists from that country were put under the control of Hinn's powerful spiritual anointing, repeatedly falling unconscious to the ground. Such is standard fare for Hinn, but this time his actions caused reports to circulate among Ugandans that Hinn had cast demons from Kayanja, rumors which Hinn supporters deny.

Adding to the comic turmoil of Hinn's stage escapade is the report being circulated that the demons exorcised from Kayanja traveled 20 miles northeast of Nelson Mandela National Stadium and seized a herd of 32 pigs owned by an elderly woman named Maria (called Jajja Hornsleth by her neighbors).

"Maria's neighbourhood is now pure mayhem. The monsters have been tearing up and devouring anything they can get their snouts on. The mud walls of the sty are

down. Clothes are ripped from their lines. Potato gardens have been dug up. A neighbour's ducks have been mauled and partly eaten. The pigs dragged the mutilated corpses to the sty and trampled over them just for the *ffujjo*, the hell of it," Alan Tacca reported in *The Monitor* (Kampala). Where's the Sea of Galilee when you need it?

According to Tacca, "A witchdoctor has offered to cleanse the pigs, if Maria will pay with a black goat and a piece of bark-cloth."

Elsewhere, Hinn displayed another type of power: the power to have someone physically removed from his meetings in New Zealand. During his healing crusade at Auckland's Vector Arena in June, a woman apparently suffering from Tourette's syndrome began making verbal outbursts and was "rudely ushered" out of the meetings. *The New Zealand Herald* reported that Hinn yelled, "Shut up. You cannot be speaking when I am preaching. Nobody can do that here. We cannot allow people to be speaking back to me when I am ministering the word."

Somehow Hinn's anointing lacked discernment and did not allow him to understand the woman's true situation or to heal her from her condition.

Back at home in the U.S., Hinn raised the ire of some government officials in Trinidad when he said the country's Prime Minister Patrick Manning was a "foolish man." Hinn's comments were made on the May 15 installment of his *This Is Your Day* program.

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On the broadcast, Hinn related how Manning had come to visit him during his May 2006 crusade in Trinidad. Manning told Hinn, "I have a gift for you," and brought to Hinn a woman who claimed to be a "prophetess" and who supposedly had a "word" for the American faith healer. Manning told Hinn, "God speaks to me through her. She has been a great blessing to the Government." As Manning told Hinn these things, Hinn told his audience he was thinking, "You foolish man."

Hinn also identified the "prophetess" as a "foolish woman" and described to his audience, "This woman, who reaches out to touch me, and I grabbed her hand in mid-air, 'Don't touch me!,' I said." He instructed his viewers that, "I didn't care if it was the prime minister or the president. Nobody lays hands on me. I didn't know what spirit is in her," a practice he said he learned from the late faith healer Kathryn Kuhlman.

For many of Hinn's followers, the fact that will be sadly missed is that Hinn claims for himself a spiritual elitism and a walk in the supernatural in a way few others have experienced. Yet he is unable to employ the spiritual gift of discerning of spirits.

In July, Hinn moved from an on-stage performance to playing to the media — and perhaps bidding for a Nobel Peace Prize. Hinn gathered what one news report called "Top U.S. evangelical Christian leaders" to meet with a variety of Arab ambassadors. Several on Hinn's roster of "evangelicals" at the meeting were the progeny of more well-known fathers. They included Paul Crouch Jr., son of Trinity Broadcasting Network president Paul Crouch; the Rev. Jonathan Falwell, son of the late Jerry Falwell; Gordon Robertson, son of Pat Robertson; and the Rev. Joshua Youssef, son of Michael Youssef. Other notables were Christian lobbyist Ralph E. Reed Jr., faith healer Reinhardt Bonnke, and Richard Cizik of the National Association of Evangelicals. Those attending on behalf of the Arab countries included representatives from Lebanon, Morocco, Kuwait, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, and several other countries. The meeting took place at the Egyptian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

In a press release, Hinn's organization touted the gathering as "the beginning of productive and positive dialogue between Arab and Christian leaders" and said the assembly "will represent the beginning meeting of other private, confidential meetings to be hosted by Pastor Hinn and Arab ambassadors."

Falwell hailed the two-hour event as an "historic meeting," and took the opportunity to promote Liberty University by marketing its Distance Learning Program. "Any student in their countries could receive a fully accredited American university degree online," Falwell said. However, not everyone shares Falwell's enthusiasm. Ingrid Schlueter of Slice of Laodicea ministry wrote:

"With the powerful political overtones of such a meeting, I am wondering what the State Department thinks of this kind of diplomacy by private citizens. Richard Cizik from the National Association of Evangelicals and long a bridge-builder to those who despise the Gospel, claims that the Muslims are sizing up the 'next generation'. I'm sure they liked what they saw: publicity happy, pandering, compromising evangelicals who are eager to be thought of as movers and shakers on the international scene."

Amidst the fanfare from Hinn and his entourage, what many Christians will fail to grasp is that those who truly take the uncompromised and unadulterated Gospel to the lost within Arab nations must do so in secrecy. It should also be questioned as to whether the "Christian leaders" may be unwittingly used by radical Arabs to make Islam appear benign. Hinn, being an Arab himself, ought to know better, but as he has demonstrated time and again, it is press and image that he is after. His "historic meeting" in July is yet another example of the attention-seeking facades employed by the controversial faith healer.

—MKG

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## NEWS UPDATES

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theater. Patrick Marsh, the scenic designer for Universal Studio's Jaws and King Kong rides, joined the project in 2001 and helped to design the museum.

The \$27 million construction cost was a mere fraction of the museum's actual value. "If you were to build it just by contracting everything out, it probably would have cost you around \$100 million," Ham told the Baptist Press. "People wanted to be part of this. Someone would sell us equipment that would have cost us \$2 million for \$1.5," he added. In addition, hundreds of volunteers provided labor and some companies donated materials.

Less than 10 percent of the funding to build the museum came from single donors; three families donated \$1 million each. About three-quarters of the donations averaged around \$100.

The museum is not without its critics, who call it "anti-science." "Everything science has taught us over the course of the last 200 years teaches us that this [museum's] kind of literal, biblical, creationist notion is misguided at best, and just plain false at worst," Alan Leshner, chief executive officer of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, told *The Cincinnati Enquirer*. During the opening day, the Campaign to Defend the Constitution group hired a plane to circle overhead with a banner that read, "DEFCON Says Thou Shalt Not Lie." Atheists and some scientific groups have signed and circulated a petition