
Editorials

GOD'S SUPERSTARS

A few months ago I received a transatlantic phone call from a gentleman in the United Kingdom. This caller was provoked at the investigative research PFO had published about faith healer Benny Hinn. It was an interesting and lively conversation, and being it was his nickel (or more accurately, his *sixpence*) paying for the call, I was more than happy to respond to his complaints.

I reminded the caller of Hinn's false declarations and heretical theology under the guise of "revelation knowledge." It's one thing to issue a doctrinally inaccurate statement (even from a pulpit), it's quite another to maintain that the utterance was based upon divine intervention or inspiration. The latter assertion holds one to a completely different set of standards. Hinn had announced unequivocally during a watch night service on December 31, 1989 that, "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."

I was told that that was only *one* failed prophecy. Despite a litany of other false prophecies by Hinn, I inquired as to how many false prophecies it took to make a false prophet. Surprisingly (or maybe *not so surprisingly*), the transatlantic conversationalist announced that, "We would be in terrible shape if we thought it was one." I then asked him, "How many times would I have to steal before I was a thief?" He replied, "It depended

on whether or not I got caught." (No kidding, he really said that.) With such a senseless philosophy, any argument can be rational. Perhaps with such convoluted logic, another counterbalance to properly defining a thief would be what was done with the stolen goods.

While I finally got him to admit that it only took *one* lie to make a liar or *one* theft to make a thief, when we got back to the issue of failed prophecy, I was told, "Oh, that's different. We all make mistakes." But, again, we're not talking "mistakes," we were talking about claimed God-inspired revelation. The stakes are much higher.

Because I viewed with significant disfavor the doctrine and practice of present-day Charismatic icons (such as Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copeland and others), he asked me who did I think were "God's superstars" on the Earth today. His inquiry was not an unusual question being that we are certainly in a day and age of "superstar worship."

As noted author Tony Evans points out in the Introduction to his volume, *Who Is This King of Glory?:* "We live in a day of celebrity worship. ... Celebrities grab our attention. People want to get close to them, to get an autograph or even a glimpse of the famous person." Within Charismatic camps, and now tragically even within some Evangelical circles, devotees swarm to get close to the superstars, not in an effort to obtain an autograph, but to obtain the "anointing" which is allegedly imparted by these Christian luminaries.

(continues on page 20)

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

MISSOURI

P.O. Box 26062
Saint Louis, MO 63136
(314) 921-9800

NEW JERSEY

P.O. Box 514
Bricktown, NJ 08723
(732) 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 11512
Glendale, AZ 85312
(623) 825-3150

BOARD of DIRECTORS:

M. Kurt Goedelman Saint Louis, MO G. Richard Fisher Bricktown, NJ
Joan C. Cetnar Kunkletown, PA Edgar L. Havaich Niles, OH
Stephen F. Cannon Glendale, AZ Keith A. Morse Denver, CO

BOARD of REFERENCE:

Dr. Jay E. Adams Enoree, SC Dr. James Bjornstad Cedarville, OH
Dr. Norman L. Geisler Charlotte, NC Dr. Edmond C. Gruss Newhall, CA
Dr. John P. Juedes Highland, CA

© 1999-PFO. All rights reserved. These articles may not be stored on BBS or Internet sites without permission. ISSN: 1083-6853. *The Quarterly Journal* is the newsletter publication of PFO. Published by Personal Freedom Outreach, P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, MO 63136. PFO's *Journal* files may also be obtained on floppy diskette for IBM-compatible computers by subscription from PFO-Missouri. Visit PFO's Web Site at: <http://www.pfo.org>.

Church. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1910 (reprinted 1994), Vol. 3, pg. 458.

40. "Rod Parsley's Anointing," op. cit., pg. 2.

41. "The Pentecostal Study Bible — Why Hasn't Anyone Said Anything About the Dangers of the Dake Bible?," *The Quarterly Journal*, October-December 1992, pg. 8.

42. Brad Young, *Jesus The Jewish Theologian*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishing, 1997, pp. 28, 33.

43. *The Backside of Calvary*, op. cit., pg. 19.

44. *Ibid.*, pg. 46.

45. *Ibid.*

46. J.R. Dummelow, *A Commentary on The*

Holy Bible. New York: Macmillan, 1958, pg. 934.

47. *Albert Barnes Notes*, op. cit., pp. 856-857, (emphasis in original).

48. Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke Commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1967, pg. 1138.

49. Everett F. Harrison, editor, *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1973, pg. 100.

50. "The Electric Evangelist," op. cit., pg. 48.

51. Richard Mayhue, *The Healing Promise*. Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1994, pg. 119.

52. *Ibid.*, (emphasis in original).

53. *Ibid.*, pg. 120, (emphasis in original).

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

55. Rod Parsley, *Renamed and Redeemed*. Columbus, Ohio: Results Publishing, 1991, pg. 15.

56. Rod Parsley, *God's Answer to Insufficient Funds*. Columbus, Ohio: Results Publishing, 1992, pp. 46-47.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57, (emphasis in original).

58. *Ibid.*, pg. 45.

59. W.E. Vine, *The Expanded Vines — Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1984, pg. 988.

60. *Ibid.*, pg. 993.



GOD'S SUPERSTARS

(continued from page 2)

Sadly, the Church has lost its will to discern. We accept, without a moment's hesitation, nearly every new fad or craze and become alarmed only by the hoaxes we should be ignoring. We hastily swallow the "signs and wonders" diet fed by the spiritual elite. We're all too eager to trust their extravagant (and even bizarre) declarations. There's no need to check out their claims — after all, they are the champions of the faith who personally dialogue with God Himself. Why would they lie to us?

While the caller classified Hinn and other notable Charismatic favorites as "superstars," others depict them similarly with designations of equal or greater stature. For example, Charismatic biographer Roberts Liardon dignifies many bygone divine healers and miracle workers into a prestigious class known as "God's Generals."

Liardon's roster is filled with scandalous and unsavory personalities — much like the modern-day healing evangelists. His list includes William Branham, Smith Wigglesworth, Kathryn Kuhlman, Aimee Semple McPherson, Charles Parham, A.A. Allen and several others. Liardon claims his research into the lives of these men and women was no less than a divine appointment. "Roberts Liardon was commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to study the lives of God's great 'generals,'" as boasted in his personal resume found on the series' back cover.

But has a new beginning come to the Church and has the world been affected by the lives and ministry of these "extraordinary men and women" as it is so boldly claimed? Robert Liichow, himself a former participant in hyper-Charismatic churches for 15 years, challenges such assertions.

On his Inter-City Christian Discernment Ministry's web site (<http://www.discernment.org>) he painfully points out that for all the hoopla generated by past and present

Charismatic superstars, "It's not working for them either!" In Liichow's insightful article, he reveals "the saddest 'cut' of all is the FACT that the majority of what the Word of Faith/Prophetic Movement charismaniacs teach does not even work in their own sorry lives."

Liichow catalogs the untimely deaths of prominent Charismatics and/or Pentecostals such as Word-Faith publisher Doyle "Buddy" Harrison (son-in-law to Kenneth Hagin), popular author Jamie Buckingham, Vineyard leader John Wimber and his son Chris, and Hobart Freeman. With the exception of Freeman, all these healing vanguards sought the counsel and treatment of medical professionals. This was in despite of all their "signs and wonders" and "positive confession" theology. The legacy of most of Liardon's erstwhile "generals" fares no better.

Liichow further outlines the faith-denying, yet life-saving medical treatment received by other celebrated leaders including Joyce Meyer (breast cancer), R.W. Schambach (heart bypass), Mack Timberlake (throat cancer) and others. Yet the confusion does not stop with these superstars not being able to practice what they preach. A life with high standards of morality and distinct biblical sanctification is in short supply in these superstars when one considers the divorces, lawbreaking and unabashed hustling of donations.

Moreover, while many lead lifestyles that equal or rival those of Hollywood or sport celebrities (like living in palatial mansions, being chauffeured in a limousine, jet-setting around the world and being worshiped by a myriad of fans), such prestige is certainly no indication of the status of "God's superstar." To think otherwise is nothing less than an illusion.

Stature with God is not based upon fame, a following, financial wealth, by way of best-selling books and tapes or in building a massive ministry. As with worldly celebrities, success is fleeting and temporary. Even for "Christian" superstars, fame is equally elusive. On the horizon, there will always be some innovative player who will eclipse one or more of the current superstars

with his (or her) new and improved “signs and wonders,” “creative miracles,” “anointing” or “last days revival” from God.

Whom do I view as the Christian “superstars?” Perhaps, if you’re looking for names associated with well-known ministries, I most likely would be able to compete name for name, pitting those whom I view as prominent, yet credible, ministers of the Gospel with those of dubious, yet illustrious, standing. However, this is not a child’s card game of “war” where my ten beats your eight or your ace beats my king. How then did I respond to the caller?

“God’s superstars,” if there were such a designation, would be the local pastor who works long, hard and diligently (as Scripture commands) in an effort to rightly divide the Word of Truth (2 Timothy 2:15). He does so to feed and protect the flock of God that has been entrusted to his care. He desires to see them mature in their faith and to grow in the process of biblical sanctification. He’s never the one who ensnares his people with heretofore unknown revelation or esoteric insights of Scripture — and then labels “immature” those who would question such teaching.

He’s the one who labors overtime to pray for and work with the couple whose marriage has gone sour. Realizing the divine origin and lifetime commitment of marriage, he counsels the couple to biblically confront and solve each problem. And then rejoices as God, through His Word, wonderfully guides the couple, to establish (or reestablish) discipline and patterns which cultivate and nurture love. He’s never the one who offers a quick fix to a marriage in trouble by “binding the spirit of divorce in the name of Jesus” or holds his hands to a television camera as a “point of contact” and offers a glib prayer.

He’s the one who consoles the parents whose son or daughter has just been shot to death by a deranged schoolmate. As they struggle with the pain and grief of such a senseless tragedy, crying to God for answers, he helps the couple face the paralyzing feelings of loss. He, through God’s Word and grace, provides solace to an otherwise crippling circumstance. He’s never the one who uses the tragedy to employ it as a “photo-opportunity” or other media conduit to bring even more prominence to his “ministry.”

Nor is he the one who shipwrecks the faith of the young couple who bring their severely brain damaged child to his jam-packed healing service. After he titillates the multitudes for hours and brazenly promises, “Everyone can be healed tonight!” he retreats back to his excessively plush hotel suite as the couple agonizingly leaves the crusade with their child in the same helpless condition.

Or just maybe “God’s superstar” is that saintly mother or grandmother who has persistently and steadfastly prayed for that lost family member, friend or neighbor and years later watches God answer those prayers as the

lost soul comes to faith in Christ. Perhaps she is the one who has, for decades, served God and His Church faithfully by employing the gifts and talents which He has entrusted to her (Ephesians 2:10, 1 Peter 4:10). She is never the one who flaunts her gifts or exercises them in order to draw attention to herself to establish an aura of spiritual elitism or superiority.

In fact, when you find one of “God’s superstars,” you’ll be hard-pressed to bestow just such a designation on him or her. For another crucial characteristic exhibited by “God’s superstars” will be their imitating the humility of Jesus Christ:

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

—MKG

NEWS UPDATES

(continued from page 3)

distributing its books and magazines.

The court’s current ruling and any forthcoming decision, affects only Watchtower activity in Moscow. However, observers from other religious groups fear that a final ruling against the Watchtower could affect their missionary efforts as well. It could also prompt other Russian cities to follow the lead of the Moscow court and impose similar restrictions.

—MKG

O’HAIR MYSTERY THICKENS

Officials are for the first time saying that noted atheist Madilyn Murray O’Hair is dead. O’Hair vanished in August 1995 from her home in Austin, Texas, along with her son Jon Garth Murray, and granddaughter Robin Murray — whom she had adopted. Also missing was \$500,000 in gold coins. There is suspicion that the three were murdered by several men, including David Waters, O’Hair’s former office manager, in an effort to steal more than a half million dollars from an organization headed by O’Hair.

The Internal Revenue Service announced its findings based upon several pieces of circumstantial evidence and from information from confidential sources. Officials believe the bodies of O’Hair and her two family members were placed in barrels and buried on a ranch near San Antonio. However, two searches of the property by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents