

SPIRITUAL DEVIATIONS

A Defective Pneumatology

W*elcome, Holy Spirit*, authored by Benny Hinn, contains a defective pneumatology, an unbalanced, incomplete, and inaccurate theology of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the most serious defect concerns an inaccurate understanding of the position of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead. Using language that most Christians would reserve for the Lord Jesus Christ, the author speaks of “the sweetest and most wonderful Person I know on earth: the Holy Spirit” (29). Elsewhere *Welcome* states: “It seems that all of heaven is joined together in their loyalty and unwavering love for the Holy Spirit” (42). After explaining how the Holy Spirit was “so loved” by the Father, by the Son, by Peter, and by Paul, the author says, “In all this I see the Father, the Son, and the Church continually on guard for the One they love” (42-43). This comes dangerously close to making the Holy Spirit the center both of the Godhead and of God’s economy, a view which is contrary to the New Testament revelation regarding the centrality and universality of Christ.

A related defect is the tritheism apparent in *Welcome*. “When Christ returned to heaven,” the book asserts, “He placed the Holy Spirit in charge of the Church. He has a will of His own and has decision-making responsibilities on earth” (33). Here we have at least three errors: the error of separating Christ from the Spirit; the error of claiming, in effect, that the Spirit, who is on earth, replaces Christ, who is in heaven, as the Head of the church, His Body; and the error of suggesting that the Spirit has a will of His own apart from the unique will of God. This is tritheism. Further evidence of tritheistic teaching in *Welcome* is the following:

When the Lord Jesus entered God’s throne room I believe He said, “Father, the work is accomplished. And now it is time to send the Holy Spirit to earth. You allowed Him to come with me. But Father, I promised my Church that the Holy Spirit would come and be with them.” (157)

The Lord Jesus (a separate person) is portrayed as entering God’s throne room and telling the Father (a separate person) that it is time to send the Holy Spirit (a separate person) to earth. If this is not tritheism, an audacious dividing of the Godhead into thirds, then what is it? Such statements are contrary to the truth concerning the oneness of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit both essentially in the Godhead and economically in the outworking of God’s plan.

Welcome is also defective in its teaching about the entering of the Holy Spirit into a believer’s life: “No one will have to tell you when the Holy Spirit enters your life. You will know it. You will sense and feel a sudden surge of power that is unlike anything you have ever known” (218). As a prediction that is meant to apply universally to all believers, this statement is far from accurate. The Holy Spirit enters a person’s life at the time of regeneration, when a believer’s human spirit is born of the divine Spirit. At first, one may not know that the Spirit has entered his life. Since regeneration is a spiritual reality involving the impartation of the divine life to the human spirit, it is not

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necessarily something we “sense and feel.” It is altogether improper to insist that a believer should feel a “sudden surge of power.” Perhaps the author of *Welcome* felt a power surge when he was regenerated, but a great many believers in Christ, perhaps the vast majority, did not. The record in John 20 gives no indication that the disciples felt a surge of power when the Holy Spirit was breathed into them. There is no basis in the New Testament for prescribing what people should experience when the Spirit of life regenerates their spirit, in particular no basis for leading believers to expect a sudden surge of power.

Furthermore, there is no scriptural basis for the claim made in *Welcome* that the goal of the Spirit’s work is to produce “spiritual dynamos” and “spiritual giants.” Regarding “dynamos” the writer says: “The history of the church is filled with all kinds of people...who were changed into spiritual dynamos by the power of the Holy Spirit. I should know: I am one of them” (219). Regarding “giants” the author says: “The Holy Spirit I have come to know is the One who turned ordinary people into

spiritual giants” (269). Contrary to the claims made in *Welcome*, the New Testament reveals (e.g., 1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4) that the goal of the Spirit’s work is to produce not individual “dynamos” and “giants” but living, functioning members of the organic Body of Christ.

Another defect in the book’s pneumatology is the emphasis on physical sensations as concomitants of alleged spiritual experiences. Of his initial encounter with the Holy Spirit (whom *Welcome* claims “is not without form”), the author says, “Suddenly every atom of my body began trembling, and I felt a wonderful warmth envelop my body as though someone had wrapped me in a thick blanket. An incredible sensation of ecstasy flooded my being” (17). He describes what happened whenever he invoked the Holy Spirit: “He would come. My room would fill up with an atmosphere so electric and so beautiful that my entire body would begin to tingle. And as that presence would intensify, a numbness would come on me” (44). Regarding whether we can “physically feel the wind of the Spirit, or His movement today,” the author writes, “If you’re looking for a negative answer, I am

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the wrong person to ask” (129). He then goes on to speak of “a tangible Spirit-produced wind,” recounting occurrences when he, along with hundreds of others, “experienced the manifestation of the breath of the Holy Spirit. It came in the form of an unexplained wind sweeping over us” (130). Such an emphasis on physical sensations in connection with supposed experiences of the Spirit of God is not in keeping with the revelation of the New Testament and its emphasis on normal, even ordinary, spiritual experience. In Romans 8 Paul has much to say concerning the Spirit, speaking of the Spirit of life, the things of the Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead, the indwelling Spirit, the leading of the Spirit, the Spirit witnessing with our spirit, the firstfruits of the Spirit, the interceding of the Spirit with groanings, and the mind of the Spirit. In all this there is no mention of physical sensations. Trembling, tingling, warmth, numbness, unexplained wind—such things have nothing to do with a daily life of walking in the Spirit and may have their source in something other than the Spirit of

God. To say the least, any emphasis on physical sensations in relation to the believers’ experience of the Spirit is a serious departure from biblical norms.

Finally, *Welcome* is defective in its teaching concerning miracles. The book strongly associates the experience of the Spirit with miracles. “Without question,” the author informs us, “the reason so many wonderful miracles take place in these great crusades is because of the work of the Holy Spirit” (19). The God of *Welcome* is “the God of miracles”: “He *is* the God of miracles—not *was* the God of miracles, He still *is*, and because He *is*, miracles still happen” (70). It is further supposed that the result of being in God’s presence is the experience of miracles: “When God’s people come into His presence and see the Lord Jesus, it is then that miracles happen” (262). According to *Welcome* the New Testament “is filled with stories of the miracle-working power of the Holy Spirit” (264). Of course, the New Testament contains accounts of genuine miracles performed by the Lord Jesus and others, but it is an exaggeration to say that it is “filled” with accounts. Many New Testament books (e.g., Romans, Ephesians) include no stories of miracles. Nevertheless, in *Welcome* we are told that God’s people must hunger for miracles: “You must have a starvation in your heart that causes you to search and search until you experience in your own life the miracles recorded in the Bible, the very same miracles that are available today” (14). There is no basis in the Scriptures for this claim. John F. MacArthur, Jr., is correct when he notes, “There is no command in the New Testament to seek miracles....We have no mandate to seek or perform miracles” (117, 126). Then he points out the danger of centering on miracles: “Every movement today that highlights miracles as a central theme is tainted with shoddy theology, confused and inconsistent doctrine, outright heresy, or a combination of these” (127). The preoccupation with miracles in *Welcome* may account in part for its defective pneumatology.

Instead of pursuing miracles, we should follow Paul, our God-appointed pattern (1 Tim. 1:16), and seek the Lord Himself (Phil. 3:7-11) for the building up of the Body of Christ. If this is our goal, then we will pray not for miracles but that the Father would strengthen us with power through His Spirit into our inner man that Christ may make His home in our hearts and that we might be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:14-19).

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Works Cited

- Hinn, Benny. *Welcome, Holy Spirit*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995.
- MacArthur, John F., Jr. *Charismatic Chaos*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992.