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**BENNY HINN'S BOOK "GOOD MORNING, HOLY SPIRIT!"  
IN THE LIGHT OF THE DOGMATIC TEACHING OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH**

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**Abstract.** This article deals with Triadology, Christology, and the ascetical theology of the Charismatic Pentecostals according to Benny Hinn's book "Good Morning, Holy Spirit!" The purpose of this article is not to defame or in any way denigrate the Charismatic movement, but simply to examine the creed of this religious group from the point of view of Orthodox dogmatics. In the Triadology of Benny Hinn, two main theses have been identified. First, the differences between the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity are not limited to the hypostatic properties and what they entail. Second, the author implies that the natural connection between the Son and the Father is not accompanied by direct communication, but that it is the Holy Spirit who carries out the mutual relationship between the Father and the Son. In the Christology of Benny Hinn, three main theses have also been identified. First, his doctrine is characterized by a certain separation of two natures in Jesus, reminiscent of Nestorianism. Second, according to the author's teaching, the Holy Spirit is also "the Father" of Jesus Christ. Third, Jesus Christ was capable of sin. Finally, in Benny Hinn's ascetical theology, two theses were highlighted. First, the victory over sin is not a joint action of man and God but a gift of the Holy Spirit, with no need for human spiritual struggle. Second, to be Christian means not to follow Christ but the Spirit. Undoubtedly, this teaching in no way corresponds to the teaching of the Orthodox Church and may thus be considered heretical from the Orthodox point of view.

**Key words:** Benny Hinn, Charismatic Christianity, Charismatic church, Charismatics, Pentecostals.

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**КНИГА БЕННИ ХИННА «ДОБРОЕ УТРО, СВЯТОЙ ДУХ!»  
В СВЕТЕ ДОГМАТИЧЕСКОГО УЧЕНИЯ ПРАВОСЛАВНОЙ ЦЕРКВИ**

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**Аннотация.** На примере книги Бенни Хинна «Доброе утро, Святой Дух!» были рассмотрены триадология, христология и «аскетическое» учение харизматов-пятидесятников. В статье не ставится задача опорочить или как-то очернить харизматическое движение – только взглянуть на вероучение этой религиозной группы с точки зрения православной догматики. В триадологии Бенни Хинна были выделены два основных тезиса. Во-первых, согласно учению этого автора, различия между Лицами Пресвятой Троицы не ограничиваются ипостасными свойствами. Во-вторых, Сын и Отец не имеют непосредственного общения, но взаимоотношение между Отцом и Сыном осуществляется через Святой Дух. В христологии Бенни Хинна также были выделены

три основных тезиса. Во-первых, его учение о разделении природ во Христе Иисусе образует собой подобие несторианства. Во-вторых, Святой Дух также является «отцом» Иисуса Христа. В-третьих, автор учит, что Иисус Христос был способен на грех. В «аскетике» Бенни Хинна были выделены два основных тезиса. Во-первых, победа над грехом, согласно учению автора, – это не совместное действие человека и Бога, а дар Святого Духа, не требующий духовной борьбы человека. Во-вторых, быть христианином означает следовать не за Христом, а за Духом. Несомненно, это учение никак не соответствует учению православной церкви и с православной точки зрения должно считаться еретическим.

**Ключевые слова:** Бенни Хинн, харизматическое христианство, харизматическая церковь, харизматы, пятидесятники.

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Using Benny Hinn's book "Good Morning, Holy Spirit!" as an example, we will examine the Pentecostal Charismatic teaching on the Most Holy Trinity, on Christ, and on the doctrine of the way of Salvation that precedes them, and we will evaluate it from the point of view of the dogmatic teaching of the Orthodox Church. In this report, we do not set ourselves the task of defaming or in any way denigrating the Charismatic movement, but only of looking at its doctrine from the point of view of Orthodox dogmatics. It should be noted, however, that the doctrine of a single Charismatic author can hardly be taken as the doctrine of the entire Charismatic movement because it is often amorphous. For example, Pavel Serzhantov writes that some of the Pentecostals profess the unity of One God in three Persons, while others deny the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity [Serzhantov 2010, 96]. The author points out that the same applies to the teaching of the Charismatics about the God-manhood of Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, such an analysis can be interesting in order to understand to what extent discrepancies between the Orthodox and Charismatic dogmas result in remarkably different theologies. Note also that Benny Hinn attended a Roman Catholic school as a child and even had a connection with the Orthodox Church [Hinn 1997, 25]. This means that the author had a good opportunity to familiarize himself with the Roman Catholic – and possibly Orthodox – doctrines before joining the Charismatic movement and becoming an Evangelical preacher.

### **I. Benny Hinn's Triadology**

Presenting His views of the distinct personhood of the Spirit, Benny Hinn writes: "First,

the Holy Spirit has a mind of His own. <...> The mind of the Spirit is distinct from that of the Father and the Son" [Hinn 1997, 85]. Although it is not very clear what Hinn means when he speaks of a mind proper to each of the Three, the context seems to suggest that, according to the author, the knowledge, will and self-determination of one Divine Person is qualitatively but not numerically identical to the knowledge, will and self-determination of another. Thus, the Divine attributes ascribed to the whole Godhead appear to be common to the Three only in the weaker sense of the term, indicating equality but not true, essential unity. If this reading is correct, then instead of offering a balanced teaching on Trinitarian unity and distinction, the author places too much emphasis on the metaphysical autonomy of each of the Persons. In this way, the Trinitarian beliefs presented by Hinn come dangerously close to Tritheism, with three equal gods taking the place of one tri-hypostatic God.

Moreover, the author speaks of different quasi-physical forms of the Three, as well as of the Spirit possessing an unspecified body [Hinn 1997, 87-88]. Admittedly, these descriptions go beyond the biblical language of metaphor, but rather suggest a literal attribution of human-like attributes and bodily qualities to the Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity. Oksana Kuropatkina, a researcher of the Neo-Pentecostals, describes it as follows: "...even before his repentance, the evangelist declared that each of the Persons of the Trinity has its own body and soul... however, Hinn later admitted that he was mistaken" [Kuropatkina 2007, 91].

Another interesting detail in this teaching is the lack of direct communication between the Father and His incarnate Son. Benny Hinn

presents the Holy Spirit as responsible for communicating the will of the Father to the Son, explicitly saying of the Third Person of the Trinity: “He’s the channel, the contact between both personalities” [Hinn 1997, 130-131].

All of the above teachings on the Trinity as described by Benny Hinn can easily be contrasted with Orthodox doctrine. First, unlike Benny Hinn, the Orthodox do not distinguish between the three Divine Hypostases in anything other than their unique mode of being and all that this entails [John of Damascus 2002, I.8]. Categories such as mind, knowledge or will are therefore common to the Three by virtue of the absolute unity of Their essence and mutual perichoresis [Gregory Palamas 1988, 112-113]. To say that the incarnate Son did not naturally know the will of the Father, but needed the Spirit to inform him of it, would therefore be tantamount to Arianistic diminution of the significance of Christ as well as separation the Son from the perfect natural communion of the Godhead [Davydenkov 2015, 166].

Reading Benny Hinn in this way may prove difficult, however, because of the many fragments in which Hinn emphasizes the divine dignity of the Son. As he writes: “**Jesus is not lower than the Holy Ghost**, nor is the Holy Ghost lower than Jesus. There is absolute equality in the Trinity” (here and further highlighted by the authors of the article. – *K. S., W. M.*) [Hinn 1997, 133]. The equivalence of the Persons of the Holy Trinity is further confirmed in other fragments of Hinn’s book, another example of which is the following: “...the Holy Spirit... He is God, and He resides in us – equal with the Father and the Son in the Trinity” [Hinn 1997, 88]. Thus, Benny Hinn’s Trinitarianism seems to be strongly supported and therefore not to be rightly doubted, unless some serious inconsistency leads the author to believe that the natural connection between two Divine Persons, the Father and the Son, is not direct but requires the mediation of the Spirit.

## II. Benny Hinn’s Christology

An implicit separation between Christ and His Father in Benny Hinn’s writings may also be interpreted in another, Christological perspective, indicating a position reminiscent of Nestorianism [Davydenkov 2015, 368]. Benny Hinn writes: “On earth Jesus was nothing less than a total man.

He did not have ‘revelation knowledge’ without the voice of the Spirit. And He could not move unless the Holy Spirit moved Him” [Hinn 1997, 131].

Consequently, the dependence of Jesus Christ on the Holy Spirit in the teachings of Benny Hinn should rather be explained by a certain autonomy attributed to the two natures of the Incarnate Word. According to this teaching, in the one Hypostasis of the Son of God, the Divine and human natures are united in an imperfect way, the immediate hypostatic union being replaced by a weaker ontological bond which necessarily involves the mediation of the Spirit.

It may be tempting to see a semblance of Dynamism in the teachings of Benny Hinn, however, it is impossible to agree with such an assessment. According to Fr. Oleg Davydenkov’s portrayal, the heresy of Dynamism was defined by an impersonal view of “the Logos and the Holy Spirit”, where God the Father is the only Divine Person “with perfect self-consciousness”. In this view, then, both the Son and the Spirit are considered nothing more than non-hypostatic forces of God [Davydenkov 2017, 82]. Yet, Benny Hinn is explicit about the personal character of the Holy Spirit, a clear example of which may be the short statement: “You can’t take a part of Him. He’s a person” [Hinn 1997, 122]. As we can see, this description of the ancient heresy of Dynamism does not coincide with the teaching of Benny Hinn, for whom all three Hypostases of the Most Holy Trinity are Persons acting independently in this world, but in harmony with each other.

Of course, the name “Nestorianism” can be applied to the doctrine of Benny Hinn only archetypically – as a similarity, as a continuation of the same ideas, but not in its entirety, which cannot be. Nevertheless, the resemblance to the ancient heresy is clear in that both teachings compare the connection between the Divinity and the humanity of Christ to that between God and ordinary saints.

Moreover, in accordance with this teaching, a peculiar relationship of fatherhood between the Spirit and the Son may be established. According to Benny Hinn, the Holy Spirit was “the Father” of Jesus Christ. At the same time, the Spirit was the father of Christ not in spirit, but in the flesh. The author writes: “The Holy Spirit is not only God; He’s also the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. <...> He is called the Son of God, but it was the

Holy Spirit that came upon the mother of Christ. <...> Christ is a child of the Spirit" [Hinn 1997, 129-130]. To call the Spirit the Father of Jesus seems once again to testify to a strong separation of the two natures in Christ, to the point where Christ qua man can have a father different from the one who has begotten His Divine Hypostasis before the ages.

The next interesting Christological thesis is that the miraculously born man Jesus Christ could have sinned, and was restrained from sin only by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Hinn's words: "Had He not presented Himself through the Holy Ghost, His blood would not have remained pure and spotless. ... He may have likely sinned. <...> ... He was called the Son of man – and as such He was capable of sinning. <...> Without the Holy Ghost Jesus may have never made it" [Hinn 1997, 132]. As we can see, Benny Hinn's Christ as a man needs the help and intercession of the Holy Spirit as he does not have the power in Himself to resist the destructive influence of the devil.

Conversely, according to the teaching of the Orthodox Church, when we consider Christ's impossibility to sin, we do not consider each of His natures separately, but rather point to His perfect Hypostasis. In becoming man, He did not cease to be what He was – the Divine Son of God, who "...is light, and there is no darkness in Him" (1 John 1:5).

The statement by Benny Hinn that the incarnate Son needs the help of the Spirit to know the will of the Father is not unique in presenting an unorthodox view of the theanthropic hypostasis of Jesus. According to Benny Hinn, the implication is that Jesus qua man was merely an ordinary saint, i.e. a human being who participates in Divine grace through the mediation of the Spirit, with the possible caveat that in Jesus this participation and obedience to the Spirit was always perfect. Meanwhile, as the Orthodox confess, Christ is not only true man, but also true God [Definition... 2005], and as such, by His own Hypostasis, possesses all that is proper to God, including perfect knowledge of His Father's will and the power to perform supernatural miracles [Tome of Leo 2005]. In this, as St Gregory Palamas asserts, Christ is different from all the saints, for He alone among all men performed miracles by His own authority rather than by prayer, and His humanity was spiritually anointed by His own hypostatic

presence rather than by the energy of the Spirit [Gregory Palamas 2022, 24]. Obviously, as belonging to the perfect unity of the same Godhead, the Holy Spirit was present in all these Divine acts of Christ, but not as the One who enables Christ to perform them, but rather as the natural Spirit of the Son who accompanies the incarnate Logos in all that He does of His own natural will [Gregory Palamas 2022, 24].

In the same sense, it was not the Holy Spirit who prevented Jesus from sinning. On the contrary, it was the perfect hypostatic union of His Divinity and humanity that made it impossible for Christ to sin as a man, for this would have meant an internal contradiction between His Divine and human wills, distinct in nature but always harmoniously united to one another [Maximus the Confessor 2014, 87].

Finally, the erroneous understanding of Christ's Economy is seen in the strange statement that refers to the Holy Spirit as the Father of Christ. The Orthodox, by contrast, reject such terminology, for to be someone's father or mother means nothing more than to share one's own nature with the offspring by way of begetting [Gregory the Theologian 2002, 261]. Therefore, the only person who can be called the father of Jesus is God Himself, from whom the uncreated Logos has received the Divine nature through generation. Similarly, Theotokos is the only person who can be called the mother of incarnate Christ, having given Her human nature to Jesus at the moment of Annunciation. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, does not relate to Jesus in any of the above ways, and so He cannot be referred to as the Father of Christ. The source of neither the Divine nor the human nature of Jesus, the Spirit is nevertheless rightly seen as responsible for the creation of Christ's human soul and body in the womb of the Virgin [S. Ambrosius Mediolanensis Episcopus, II.43].

### **III. Benny Hinn's ascetic theology**

A distorted Christology is naturally followed by a distortion of the ascetic teaching. Just as the victory over sin in the human Christ depended solely on the action of the Holy Spirit, so must it be in every believer. This victory is not brought about by the mutual action of God and man, intrinsically linked to the effort of the latter, but

by an implicitly unilateral action of the Spirit, as soon as He is acknowledged as a Divine Person. Notably, this victory is also implied to be achievable in this life, with the power of the Spirit lifting one above the need for further spiritual struggle: “The moment the Spirit came into my life I no longer had to battle my adversaries. They were still there, but the **wrestling and the worry seemed to vanish**” [Hinn 1997, 109]. The victory over sin is also accompanied by a subjective awareness of one’s salvation, wrought in the believer’s soul by the Spirit [Hinn 1997, 75].

Moreover, the reason for a Christian’s spiritual defeat is not that a person makes too little effort to cooperate with Divine grace, but that they ignore the Spirit: “The **reason** the church and so many people in it have become so defeated is that **it has ignored** the most powerful person in the universe – **the Holy Spirit**” [Hinn 1997, 124]. Exchanging ascetic cooperation for intellectual recognition, Hinn approaches a Gnostic vision of Christian life, attributing the primary (if not unique) salvific function to a certain kind of spiritual knowledge [Jonas 2001, 32].

It should also be noted that in all these examples we can see that Benny Hinn’s “Nestorianism” is very different from its historical counterpart. Fr. George Florovsky characterizes Nestorianism as follows: “**Theodore’s whole emphasis is focused on the human feat – God only anoints and crowns human freedom**” [Florovsky 2006, 11]. For Theodore of Mopsuestia and Nestorius, Christ, divorced from the Godhead in His human hypostasis, was a great ascetic, and He accomplished the feat of salvation all by Himself, as a man, albeit with the help of God’s grace. For Benny Hinn, however, neither Jesus Christ – nor any Christian – needs spiritual efforts to overcome sin, for this happens easily with the swift help of Divine intervention through the Holy Spirit.

Last but not least, the difference between the works of the Spirit and those of Jesus is emphasized to such an extent that, according to Benny Hinn, we should no longer follow Christ but the Holy Spirit, since it is the Spirit, and not Christ, who is now present on earth and works among the believers.: “Jesus was saying, ‘**Stop following me. I’m leaving, but I’m now sending the Holy Spirit. You must now follow Him**’” [Hinn 1997, 77].

As we have seen above, Benny Hinn’s views on the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, as well as in the mystery of the Incarnation, lead to his views on the Christian life itself. If the Hypostases of the Trinity are somehow separated, then the Christian must develop a distinct relationship with each of the Divine Persons; one must choose whether to follow Christ or the Spirit; one can have a good relationship with Jesus but lack one with the Spirit; finally, one can simply ignore the Person of the Holy Spirit and still identify as a Christian. The Orthodox, on the other hand, see the Three as inseparable, and so to be a follower of Christ is to be a follower of the Holy Spirit, and conversely to ignore the Spirit is to have no access to Christ Himself [Davydenkov 2015, 129].

Furthermore, Benny Hinn’s Reformed theological framework leads him to believe that to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit is simply to acknowledge His presence and Divine authority. As a result, one is immediately offered the gift of complete salvation, including freedom from transgression of God’s commandments, or, to put it simply, from all sin. To love the Holy Spirit is nothing more than to open oneself to Him, as one does to a human friend, and then nothing more is required to fully share in the Spirit’s graces.

In sharp contrast to such a view, Orthodox theology presents us with a Patristic vision in which to fellowship with the Spirit is to follow the crucified Christ, and so it is impossible to speak of sharing in the graces of the Spirit without sharing in Christ’s own death and resurrection [Davydenkov 2015, 397]. This must be done both sacramentally and ascetically, the latter indicating the process of dying to one’s old self and being raised by Christ to live not a fleshly but a spiritual life [Davydenkov 2015, 537]. To approach the Spirit, then, is to set out on the path of purification from all passions, which is not simply brought about by the Spirit in the blink of an eye, in disregard of our own freedom, but which is given to us according to our own cooperation and synergy with God’s grace [Davydenkov 2015, 11]. It is only in this context that one can speak of love, not as a nice, sweet and pleasant emotion, but as the most profound turning of the soul from the vanity of this world to God, which is only perfected when the health of all the soul’s powers is restored with the help of the Spirit [Gregory Palamas 2003, III.3.74, 77].

### Conclusion

As the above analysis demonstrates, Benny Hinn's Triadology, Christology and ascetic teaching are remarkably different from Orthodox doctrine. In Triadology, Hinn portrays each of the Divine Hypostases as distinct in more than just Their hypostatic properties, speaking of different minds and quasi-bodily forms of the Trinity. His works also imply that the direct natural bond between the Father and the Son is necessarily mediated by the activity of the Spirit. Alternatively, the separation between God and the incarnate Logos can be explained in Christological terms, suggesting a Nestorian-like theology. Such a reading of Benny Hinn's book seems even more reasonable when one considers his view of the Spirit as the "Father" of Jesus, responsible for the creation of Christ's human self. Similarly, Christ was capable of sin and did not commit it only thanks to the help of the Spirit. The unique role of the Spirit as the sole cause of sinlessness is further carried into the realm of ascetic teaching, applying the same principle to every believer, with an implicit rejection of any need for spiritual struggle on the part of humans. Finally, Hinn strongly contrasts the salvific work of the Son and the Spirit, to the point that a believer is told to follow the latter rather than the former.

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