

Counterfeit "Revival"

Introduction. Some people in the religious world often have standards more in common with *The National Enquirer* than the New Testament. When selling and sensationalism become more tantalizing than truth, the very foundation of our faith is compromised.

Back in 1994, a new "revival" which was supposed to be a "great awakening" and led by the likes of Rodney Howard-Browne, John Wimber, John Arnott, Paul Cain, James Ryle, and Benny Hinn have ensnared thousands in a great deception.

Some of the following quotes may help us better understand the mentality behind this "revival." Robert Coleman said, "We may be the generation that will see the greatest revival since the beginning of time." Rick Joyner said, "No one will look back at the early church as a standard; all will be saying that the Lord has certainly saved His best wine for last. The early church was a firstfruits offering, truly this will be a harvest!" Rodney Howard-Browne stated, "Creative miracles will happen; eyeballs will form, legs and arms will grow out, people will leap out of wheelchairs." Paul Cain declared that in the fullness of endtime restorationism, "all the sick are gonna be healed, the dead are gonna be raised, and nations are gonna turn to God in a day." John Wimber stated, "Calvaryites are sometimes a little too heavily oriented to the written Word. I know that sounds a little dangerous, but frankly they're very pharisaical in their allegiance to the Bible. They have very little life and growth and spontaneity in their innards. Sometimes they're very rigid and can't receive much of the things of the Lord."

God never intended us to take everything related to religion at face value (1 John 4:1-6). He declared in Deuteronomy 18:15-20 that a false prophet would be known if his prophecies did not come true. The characteristics of this movement and how these men manipulate their followers into believing in lying signs and false wonders needs desperately to be studied.

I. ***The Holy Spirit's Party***

- A. This whole "revival" has been referred to as the "Holy Spirit's party." John Arnott claims that Christians get "thoroughly blasted" while "Jesus picks up the tab" at his "Holy Spirit parties." He claims that he "marinates" people in the Holy Spirit. He said that at one party, one man "got blasted, just totally blasted -- there's no other word -- by the Spirit. He fell; he shook; he yelled; he thrashed; he did it all."
- B. Some of the mannerisms of people involved in these "revivals" include jumping up and down furiously, chopping their hands frantically through the air, flapping their hands in the air, violently throwing their heads backward and forward and bending wildly at the waist. Other manifestations have included people falling out of their pews without

anyone touching them, people being pinned to the floor for hours by the "Holy Ghost glue," speaking in tongues and, of course, claims of miraculous healing. Through it all, scornful laughter and animal noises rise eerily from bodies writhing on the ground.

- C. The above statements border on blasphemy. Furthermore, these practices or "experiences" are conspicuously absent in the ministry of Jesus Christ and the apostles. Conversely, they are commonplace in the world of the occult. In fact, Peter warned them to be wary of such pagan practices, telling us to be "self-controlled and sober-minded" (1 Peter 4:7, ESV).

II. ***The "Prooftexts" Of Counterfeit "Revival"***

- A. Perhaps more bizarre than the physical manifestations themselves are the biblical "prooftexts" that are used to validate them.
1. 1 Samuel 19:20-24.
 - a) The fact that Saul stripped off his clothes, prophesied before Samuel, and laid down naked all day and night provides no validation for the peculiar manifestations mentioned earlier.
 - b) This passage clearly reveals God's judgment against Saul, not his blessing. In the context, Saul is seeking to destroy David but is instead humiliated by God.
 2. Ezekiel 4:4-5, 12; 5:1-2, 4.
 - a) Proponents claim that Ezekiel displayed more bizarre behavior than Saul. They argue that the precedent is set for them to push beyond the limits of nakedness.
 - b) What they consider "bizarre behavior" is actually extraordinarily meaningful. God's explanation for the symbolism of the behavior is easy to see in the context.
 3. Isaiah 20:2-3.
 - a) In this passage, men have tried to "prove" these outlandish experiences by using the fact that God told Isaiah to walk naked through Jerusalem for three years.
 - b) Isaiah was not completely naked. He had simply removed his outer garment; therefore, what he did was opposed to common custom, not moral decency.
- B. Tragically, this reasoning is the norm rather than the exception for these men who hoist these deceptions on people who are looking for God in all the wrong places.

III. ***Four Methods Of Manipulation***

- A. The altered state of consciousness.
1. Dr. Charles Tart first coined the term, "altered states of consciousness." Tart says that during deep hypnosis, "a transition to a new

state of consciousness" takes place, a state in which the hypnotized subject's identity "is potentiality, he's aware of everything and nothing, his mind is absolutely quiet, he's out of time, out of space."

2. One of the most disarming methods used is to sing one song over and over until participants finally lose touch with reality.
 - a) Rick Joyner once confessed that at one of his conferences participants sang one song "for over three hours." As a result, he said, "The gulf between heaven and earth had somehow been bridged."
 - b) Joyner said, "When that one song finally ended, some of the musicians were lying on the floor." Joyner claims that "experience is a much better teacher than words."
 3. Whether in cults or churches, the purpose of an altered state of consciousness is the same: to dull the critical thinking process because the mind is seen as the obstacle to enlightenment. Rodney Howard-Browne said, "You can't understand what God is doing in these meetings with an analytical mind. The only way you're going to understand what God is doing is with your heart" (cf. Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 3:3-4).
 4. When followers of these men have these bizarre experiences, they are seduced into believing that they have simply overdosed on the Holy Ghost. They are told that they are "drunk in the spirit" or "marinated in the Holy Spirit." Rodney Howard-Browne relates that one woman became so "drunk" listening to him on the radio that she was pulled over by a police officer. When she blew into the breathalyzer bag, the policeman fell to the ground laughing!
- B. The psychology of peer pressure.
1. A well-known charismatic leader once participated in a Benny Hinn television extravaganza. Hinn was "slaying" his subjects "in the Spirit" when suddenly he moved in this man's direction. He stretched forth his hand and shouted, "In the mighty name of Jesus!" Immediately the man fell backward into the hands of a designated "catcher." Later he confessed that his experience had nothing to do with the power of God. Peer pressure had caused him to fake his fall. He said, "It's like, I didn't know if he slammed me on the head or if the ushers pulled me back, or if I actually fell down, or if I just cooperated, or if there was so much psychological pressure in front of that many people that I just simple went with it."
 2. These meetings often begin with testimonies of those who allegedly once feared deception but now embrace these odd experiences as a genuine movement of God. John Arnott tells his prospects that the

- greatest deception is not false doctrine but being among those who fail to recognize a movement from God!
3. These men know that people in crowds believe that the behavior of their peers is an unquestionable standard. Resisting these manifestations is seen as resisting the Holy Spirit. One speaker said, "The neutral ground is dissipating by the hour. You can't stand in the middle anymore and say, 'Well, I don't know. Maybe it's God; maybe it's not.' You're going to get rolled over" (cf. Exodus 23:2; Galatians 2:11-13).
- C. The exploitation of expectations.
1. Subjects are systematically subjected to the belief that they are poised to take over the sociopolitical systems of society. According to John Arnott, God is about to exact vengeance upon His adversaries and restore the church to its proper place. He said, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Lord would start to move in power and restore the church to its proper place and make us the head and not the tail?"
 2. One man suggested that the star status of the leaders of this end-time church will be even greater than that of the apostle Paul. Despite the fact that Paul, under inspiration, penned two-thirds of the New Testament, he told his devotees, "Paul will be more anxious to talk to the endtime apostles and prophets than the endtime apostles and prophets will be to talk to Paul, because what the prophets of this generation will do will be far greater than what he had done. The saints in the New Testament will wait in line to greet the apostles of this generation." Paul Cain said, "No prophet or apostle who ever lived equaled the power of these individuals in this great army of the Lord in these last days. No one ever had it; not even Elijah or Peter or Paul or anyone else enjoyed the power that is going to rest upon this great army" (cf. Ephesians 2:20).
 3. Paul Cain elevates expectations by telling devotees that they will be "invincible"; that God is offering them a "greater privilege than was ever offered to any people of any generation at any time from Adam clear down through the end of the millennium"; and that they are "gonna have more than just a little omnipotent surge -- you're gonna behold that glory and become that glory" (cf. Matthew 10:22; Luke 14:26-28).
 4. These leaders also concoct "miracles" which raise expectations among the "faithful." Experiences such as a "cloud of the Lord" in one of Rick Joyner's assemblies, "miracle water" from bottled water which supposedly could cure cancer, tumors, and heart disease, and "resurrections" of the Virgin Mary in 1945 in the Bronx push

people to create their own "miracles" in their mind, and thereby becoming incapable to resisting hypnotic suggestion.

D. The subtle power of suggestion.

1. Some people are far more suggestible than others. This is called "hypersuggestibility." Statistically, one out of twelve Americans is susceptible to creating a memory out of thin air, then believing it.
2. There are several characteristics to people who are highly susceptible to suggestion.
 - a) They are very trusting.
 - b) They have a desire to please (particularly an authority figure).
 - c) They have the capacity to accept contradictory experiences.
 - d) They have a marked propensity for affiliation with new or unusual events.
 - e) They are apt to relate everything they experience to their own self-perception.
3. Exposers of this "revival" have analyzed these meetings with performance professionals, including stage hypnotists and experts on sleight of hand and mind. They were readily able to identify numerous instances of indirect suggestion techniques.
4. People in crowds are more easily influenced than people taken singly. This fact has been capitalized on by stage hypnotists as well as preachers, politicians, and dictators. Robert Marks observes, "The effect of suggestion on crowds seems virtually without limit. It can make black appear white. It can obscure realities, enshrine absurdities and impel men pitilessly to cleave the skulls of their brothers."
5. Charles Baudouin said, "In the sphere of movement, suggestion by imitation is common. Immoderate laughter readily spreads through a crowd; yawning is contagious." Once epidemic suggestion contaminates a crowd, human beings can "behave like beasts or idiots and be proud of it." Virtually no one is immune to the fact of mass suggestion. Rodney Howard-Browne dupes devotees into visualizing that his fingertips come off and anointing flows from his hands and John Wimber conditions constituents to believe a spiritual power emanates from his hands like electricity.
6. Many "faith healers" use the power of suggestion to create placebos for psychosomatic symptoms and sickness. In truth, however, there is nothing supernatural about this kind of "healing." In August 2005 in New Jersey, Benny Hinn claimed to "heal" arthritis, degenerative disks, and told people to get rid of their canes. In the end, this creates only disillusionment. The difference between the "magic" of mental manipulation and genuine miracles is dramatic. When Jesus and the apostles healed people, the miracles were 100% successful, immediate, and there were no relapses (Mark 5:29, 42; 7:35).

Conclusion. The problem in all of this is that millions of unbelievers are looking on in amazement and dismissing the Bible and the gospel as little more than a hoax. They say, "These people are gullible fools."

Not only does all of this violate the truth and cast Christ in a bad light, but it has dangerous effects for the people involved including wild swings of emotion, depression, anxiety, anger, irrational outbursts, feelings of alienation, confusion, disillusionment, and other equally serious disorders. It is easy to make someone believe a lie and it is hard to undo that work again (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). All these men have spoken visions out of their own heart (Jeremiah 23:16-32). Never forget that the essentials of the Christian faith are the very doctrines for which the martyrs spilled their blood. Some may be cavalier about this today but they were not.