

Workgroup "Back to the Bible"

Translation Dutch letter nr. 1

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Dear brothers, sisters, pastors and elders,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most of you will not have heard of us, but we are writing to you on behalf of a newly started workgroup called "Back to the Bible". As of January 1994 this workgroup has been studying the teaching of the so-called "Faith-teachers", by means of books written by authors who are in favor of this teaching as well as others who are against. The workgroup also read magazines, listened to cassettes, looked at videos and visited meetings and conferences (see list below). From all this we became very concerned, so that we decided to send this letter to about 520 charismatic congregations in the Netherlands and in Belgium. We would like you to seriously study this "new" and "different" movement that at this time is stirring up the charismatic churches. We specially refer to the "Faith-teachers", who, from America, Canada, South-Africa, South Korea and England, are trying to change the religious climate in the Netherlands as well as in Belgium and in many other countries.

The conclusion of the workgroup is that the charismatic movement, ranging from Charismatic-Catholics to Full Gospel Churches, from Evangelical Churches to all varieties of Pentecostal Churches, is in serious danger. And this not only were theology is concerned but also the way services are conducted. Below we are giving a short summary of 13 points where false teaching is involved.

1. Satan was only defeated when Jesus, after His Physical death on the cross, fought a battle with Satan in hell. The workgroup: By His death on the cross Jesus made a public display of the rulers and authorities and so triumphed over them.

2. Concerning sin: Satan is the real evil-doer, man is only the deceived victim. The workgroup: Sin is the result of Satan's deceit, but morally depraved man himself makes the wrong choices, sins and therefore stands guilty before God.

3. On the cross Jesus overcame Satan, and therefore the power of sin over man has been destroyed. The workgroup: By His death on the cross Jesus brought about redemption and forgiveness of sins and for this reason the devil can no longer accuse those who believe in Jesus and have confessed their sins.

4. Man is not burdened by original sin (in Adam all sinned) and therefore, if point 2 and 3 are valid, evil has no more power over man. The workgroup: Man can at all times be tempted to sin ; only on the basis of Christ's Sacrifice on the cross and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit is he able to overcome his sinful thoughts and deeds ("not I, but Christ lives in me").

5. Man is almost equal with God. ("You don't have a God, Who lives in you ; you yourself are a God" - Kenneth Copeland, cited in The Seduction of Christianity" - D. Hunt page 94). The workgroup: The Eternal, Almighty, and Holy God loves us and gives us His grace, but we remain human beings and here on earth we cannot rise higher than that level.

6. It is noticeable that in the way services are conducted, there is almost no expression of awe towards God ; one gets the impression sometimes that the speaker or the members of the congregation are talking about their best buddy. The workgroup: On the basis of our argument in point 5, every Christian ought to speak about the Lord with respect and awe

7. The Holy Spirit is a power, an electric current, an energy or a prophetic anointing. The workgroup: The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity and ought to be approached with the same respect and awe as we stated in point 6.

8. By His death on the cross Jesus put a faith-law in operation, which is valid up to this day and can be compared with the law of gravity on earth ; even God has to keep this law. The workgroup: Faith, in the biblical sense, always includes complete confidence in and dependence on the Lord and is not a law operating in our universe. This faith also involves a humble and trusting relationship with the Lord.

9. Healing is one of the results of the atonement, so that, when one becomes a Christian, one receives the assurance of physical healing together with deliverance from the power of sin. The workgroup: The Bible teaches that we receive healing as a gift of grace, but that it is not a gift included in salvation as forgiveness of sins is. God, in His sovereign will, decides to heal or not to heal.

10. Prosperity is also the logical consequence of becoming a Christian. The workgroup: On the contrary, in the New Testament to Christians it was sufficient to have food and clothing, and a roof over their heads, but they were expected to gather treasures in heaven. Riches had no place at all in the teaching of the apostles.

11. Much attention has to be given to the prophets these days, because in these last days the churches have to know the "now-will" of God. The workgroup: Just like healing, prophecy has its place in the Bible, but is kept in balance ; there is a very real danger that knowledge revealed outside the Bible starts to live a life of its own. The Bible keeps prophecy in the right proportion and is the touchstone.

12. Manifestations like falling, laughing, resting, shaking, dancing in the spirit are new manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The workgroup: The Bible lists all the manifestations of the Holy Spirit ; the above mentioned manifestations are not mentioned and must therefore be rejected.

13. It is noticeable that in the services the Bible is used little or not at all. Verses are used out of context to prove experiences. The workgroup: The Bible must be read, explained, and taught in the services. Homiletic principles do not permit us to use scripture verses out of context.

By listing these 13 points we do not claim to have given the complete picture or to have stated them all in the right theological terms. Nor do we desire to lord it over you. It is very possible that in your church this kind of teaching has not come up. Or perhaps only a few of these points are raising questions in your church. As a group of fellow brothers and sisters we have studied these subjects and will continue to do so. We have decided to take the time to do this and to serve the Lord in this manner. Please consider this letter as a guide, in all humility given to you in case you have need of it. We hope and pray that you use it, if necessary, to serve the sheep for whom you have been given responsibility.

If you have any questions after reading this letter, we are prepared to answer them by letter or in a personal talk with you. It is also possible that you have material on this subject, that we as a workgroup haven't seen. In that case we would be grateful if you could let us know.

Other letters will follow after this one. In those letters we will deal with every point in more detail. The next letter will discuss point 12: falling, laughing, resting, shaking, dancing in the spirit as "new manifestations of the Holy Spirit". May you have God's strength and wisdom in your work for Him in the church. We greet you with a firm, brotherly handshake !

Sincerely,

For the workgroup,

Pastor Rien van de Kraats

PS The workgroup consists of seven members plus helpers, with an average experience in church leadership (charismatic) of about 20 years ; the theological training varies from 2 to 4 years Bible-school while one person attended seminary for 5 years ; the ages vary from 35 to 68 years.

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