

Workgroup "Back to the Bible"

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## Translation Dutch letter nr. 2

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Dear brothers, sisters, pastors and elders,

In our letter dated March 7th we shared with you our concern about the influence the "Faith-teachers" are having on the spiritual climate in our countries. In spite of the fact that the "Toronto Blessing" is getting a lot of attention as part of this teaching, we plan to continue to deal with the teaching of the "faith-teachers" in its totality. However, in this letter we want to write in detail about point nr.12: Falling, laughing, resting, shaking, dancing in the Spirit as new manifestations of the Holy Spirit, generally called "The Toronto-Blessing" .. The work-group is of the opinion that we have a right and even a duty to test such new manifestations occurring in Christian circles. The biblical command for all of us is to stick to the truth." Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist" (Eph.6:14) and "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God"(1 Joh.4:1-6) Since we all, as the Church of Christ, have only one framework for testing the spirits, namely the Word of God, we want to do this in the following paragraphs. To make the letter easier to digest we have divided the contents into several parts as follows:

1. The bible is not a dictionary or encyclopedia but a library consisting of 66 books. The division of the bible into chapters and then of the chapters into verses, was not made by the writers themselves. No, many centuries after the last biblebook was written, which was around the time printing was invented, the present division was made, and this was done only for the convenience of the readers. The writers themselves didn't make such a division while they , led by the Spirit, did their work. For them the book was one undivided whole. More than that, if they had known how we sometimes take one verse without its context and proclaim that as the truth, they would certainly have protested against such a practice." No", they would have said," I have written the whole letter and you must take the whole letter to understand what I meant to say." This, by the way, would be true of any other writer as well. The bible is not one single book, but a collection of books by a variety of writers. Each writer put, inspired by the Holy Spirit, his thoughts down in his book and together these books form the inspired Word of God. This Word of God, as a collection of books, is the more unique when one remembers that these books were not all written in the same period of time. Between the first completed book and the last one we have a period of roughly 1500 years. Through the great variety of the books, the writers and the periods of time, God gave the believers a framework for testing the Truth, that is unique in the whole world. Not a single movement, philosophy or any other religion can boast such a balanced framework for testing its beliefs.

2. Manifestations as laughing, shaking, dancing.: are they the work of the Spirit or are they of human origin? Many of us struggle with this question. Are they from God or do they come from man? Is the Holy Spirit at work or is this the work of another spirit or spirits? Or is it possibly a mixture of the work of the Spirit and the work of the spirit of man? Partly from God and partly of the flesh? This last statement can easily be refuted. In all the books of the Bible God is characterized as a Person, Who does not share His glory with another. He is a jealous God (James 4:1-10); He is the only God. Besides Him there is no other God. All gods that men have made besides God, are not God, but imitations or idols. From these definite biblical statements we can say, that the manifestations mentioned above come either from God or not from God at all, but from man or from other sources. A mixture, that is to say, a work partly from God and partly from man, is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. It diminishes the greatness, the holiness and the glory of the Lord.

- Are these manifestations from the Lord? Brother or sister, you who in your heart are really excited about the "Toronto Blessing", you who are sincere in your opinion as we have noticed in many cases, we urge you to consider the fact that there was no "Toronto Blessing" when Jesus ministered here on earth. There is not the slightest indication that the above mentioned manifestations took place for instance during the Sermon on the Mount or during the occasions when Jesus fed the multitudes. And when the Holy Spirit at Pentecost came down to take the place of Jesus Christ here on earth, He did that with the intention to continue the Saviors work in the hearts of men. And that is what He did. All the New Testament books testify to that, and report on the work the Holy Spirit did in continuing the work that Jesus had begun to do on earth. And this is not at all strange, because Jesus came to do the will of the Father and the Holy Spirit was sent to do the will and the work of Jesus. Father, Son and Holy Spirit together form the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of Jesus. The divine perfection of the Trinity implies, that the Holy Spirit and Jesus work in exactly the same way here on earth.
- From this fact alone we can and must say to you that the above mentioned manifestations are not from God. We don't mind to let you know that we do not lightly write down this conclusion. We can well imagine the surprise and disappointment of brothers and sisters who are sincerely of the opinion that here we have a movement that is a work of refreshing from the Holy Spirit. We sympathize with you, but on the basis of what the Bible teaches we cannot accept, that these manifestations come from God. And yet, many well-known preachers in our country and abroad argue that there are indications that the bible contains verses that support the "Toronto Manifestations". Several booklets have been written on the subject. But they are always verses that have been chosen in the attempt to fit a certain manifestation. Unfortunately, this method is not biblical and the results are also rather poor to say the least. Some writers add, as an apology, that in their opinion it is not necessary for all the manifestations to be mentioned in the bible in order to be considered true. However, we remind you of the warning in the second letter of John: "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son". (v.9) To find verses that support the various animal sounds, is especially difficult. Our work-group has studied all the efforts to prove from the Word that these manifestations are biblical. But this letter would be rather messy if we would list all our arguments refuting their reasoning. We would rather suggest you read a little book that is being written by Rev. J.W.van Petegem, retired pastor of a Pentecostal church, that will be published as soon as possible, via our work-group. In anticipation of that book we can already recommend to you his booklet "Falling in evangelical meetings" (only available in the Dutch language).
- In testing the manifestations we would like to bring forward yet another point of view, namely the divine and human dignity. When Jesus, after the Easter morning manifested Himself for forty days, His behavior did not differ from that before His crucifixion. Luke tells us, that He spoke with His disciples about all the things concerning the Kingdom of God. His final command was: "You will be My witnesses". Therefore, the disciples, and in this era you and we, must give testimony of what we know and have seen of Jesus (that is: be witnesses). And we find in the bible all that we should be witnesses of. To add to this is to add to a testimony and even in the world this is not permitted. And we find no basis in the bible for accepting as spiritual and as coming from God, manifestations, that do not occur in the Word.. Furthermore we see that the manifestations are unworthy of human beings.. Peter, James or John never left a man or woman crowing, grunting or roaring on the floor, after he or she came to them with their need. Nor did Jesus ever, after He had prayed for healing, let someone fall on the floor, not only without being healed, but also behaving as a patient having an epileptic fit. All these scenes, and (we could describe many more) are offensive to man. They diminish him to the status of an animal and because this is done in the Name of Jesus, His Name is diminished and dishonored too. When we also add to this the uncontrollable laughter during the most serious bible teaching and even during the Lord's Supper, we must conclude that this most definitely contradicts the testimony that we ought to give. The New Testament calls the Christians: children of God, temples of the Holy Spirit, followers of Christ, letters of Christ. A man or woman who shows uncontrolled behavior and acts like a drunk, goes right

against these biblical standards. All these "testimonies" are for us reason enough to conclude that the "Toronto manifestations" are not from God and must be rejected.

3. What about similar manifestations during earlier revivals? Do they not confirm what we are seeing now? The workgroup has given a lot of attention to this. We also contacted other people who have studied this subject. Because some of our members in earlier years were among the audience of Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd Jones in the Westminster Chapel in London, we feel justified to speak on the subject. Also, one member studied theology in the Bible College of Wales in Swansea where she had the privilege of meeting brothers and sisters who were in the revival in Wales. Before we continue, we would mention the most well-known revivals:

1730- The Great Awakening in America- Jonathan Edwards

1740- - George Whitfield and the brothers Wesley

1800- The Second Great Awakening in America- Camp meetings

1820- Charles Finney

1870- Moody and Sankey

1904-The revival in Wales- Evan Roberts

What do these revivals teach us?

- They are all well-known because of the large numbers of converts. Thousands of unbelievers repented of their sins and knelt at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. The conversions were so powerful, that many people fell from their seats and crawled over the floor in awe of God and in horror of their own sins. Often many tears were shed and many people were crying out loudly, begging for the grace of God. That hereby other sounds were heard as well is right. These unusual manifestations worried the preachers a lot. Each preacher had his own way to deal with them. None of them stimulated the use of these utterances. They either advised people to accept them, but pay as little attention to them as possible, or they tried to put a brake on them or even resisted them. We do not think it is justified to say that those revivals support the manifestations we are seeing today. It is dangerous to take one pronouncement of a preacher in the past, without knowing the whole background. We notice that this too, is easily done by the people involved in the "Toronto Blessing"- meetings.
- Every past revival was known because of its preachers and not because of the manifestations. Because the bible was opened and the speakers preached from the bible, often for hours, people came under the conviction of sin. These preachers were, and are even today, called Revival-preachers. They didn't touch the audience, they didn't walk through the rows of seats during the meetings, they didn't lay on hands. Their presence in the pulpit and the teaching of the Word of God, gave form to the revival and brought the listeners to their knees. The meetings of the "Toronto Blessing" are in complete contrast with this. During the meetings there is little preaching. If there is preaching from the Word, it is almost always as a preparation for the "ministry" in which the manifestations are expected to occur. Even before the sermon, the songs that are chosen already prepare for this coming ministry. The differences between the meetings today and in the past, are so great that we don't think we can compare them. In the booklet by Rev. J.W.van Petegem, already mentioned above, he writes in detail about the past revivals, and so we just end this part of our subject with referring to this booklet.

4. If the "Toronto Blessing" is not from God and if the past revivals do not support the manifestations, what then are we struggling with? We will need more time to give a clear and well founded answer. We are planning to deal with this in detail in our next letter. But already we would like to say that we are shocked when we hear remarks like: "We ought to get rid of religion", and "We must throw off all the old things in religion" and "We ought to forget all the religious structures" and "We must cast out the religious spirit and tread on it." We also often heard or read that church leaders either have to change their ideas or have to be replaced. All this gives us food for thought. We hope that you are supporting us with your prayers, that we eventually will be able to come to a clear point of view.

5. Reactions to our letter of March.7th. We are very glad that we received many positive reactions and this has encouraged us to continue with our work. Many brothers and sisters promised us their cooperation and support. As a result our rather small team of seven members and supporting members has grown into a net-work of supporters all over Holland and Belgium. We also got into contact with a few leading brothers in Britain and our letters are now available in English. In this time of crisis it is necessary to work together in serving the Lord.

Sincerely yours,  
From the workgroup, Pastor Rien van de Kraats

### Bibliography

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Beyond Seduction - Dave Hunt  
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