

Workgroup "Back to the Bible"

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Dear brothers, sisters, pastors and elders,

Many greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. A little while ago, someone sent us a letter, from which we would like to quote the following: "I know quite a bit about the "Toronto-Blessing" and "Extreme Healings", but I have never heard about the "Prosperity Teaching". What is it? I would also like to know how you are planning to reach your goal of "Back to the Bible". I am very interested." We are very grateful for such questions, because they show that people are thinking about and studying certain problems. We try through our letters to help you in this. The workgroup has no desire to lord it over you, but wants to limit itself, in a humble way, to giving you some help. Questions about church- life or differences between the various denominations come within the responsibility of the churches and we refer these inquirers to their own church and/or give them information about the available study materials. In this way we together go "Back to the Bible", as is our purpose.

The teaching of false prophets.

This letter will mainly deal with false prophets. We believe that there are men and women in the Christian world today, who call themselves prophets or behave themselves like prophets, but who utter false prophecies. Since these false prophecies are publicly given, we also want to warn against them publicly. The magazine "De Oogst" of the organization "Tot Heil des Volks" has, in the past few years, already published several articles about these false prophets. Most of them belong to the so-called "Faith-teachers" in America, Canada, South-Africa and South-Korea. These "Faith-teachers", also called "Prosperity teachers", have in many cases powerful TV-empires behind them. They have begun to look at Europe. Via broadcasts on satellite they are already, on a small scale, invading the living rooms. Their goal is, to offer their programmes many hours a day and many days a week. In a broadcast of Media land, on February 2; 96, Prof. Dr.A.van der Meiden warned, by using a clip of such a programme, that these broadcasts were on the way. As a workgroup we share his concern, be it for another reason. The TV- medium has a very large influence on people in general. In America the "Faith teachers" reach a high percentage of non-churchgoers. The expectation is that it will be the same in Europe. Church members, elders and pastors will get reactions and questions from these viewers. By the way, for a few years now, the teachings of the various "Faith-teachers" are being propagated in Belgium and Holland by means of their books. The video-trade too regularly advertises services on video by these Faith-teachers The charismatic magazine "Power Magazine" (first published in January 1996) is full of this teaching. In Math.7:13-23 Jesus says, among other things: "Watch out for fake prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. "We believe that this warning from the Lord is also valid in our time. Without going into detail, we mention the following prophets, as they call themselves: Benny Hinn, Morris Cerullo, Rodney Howard-Browne, Ashley McGuicken, William Branham, Paul Cain. In choosing these examples we have limited ourselves, not to make this letter too long.

The prophet Ashley McGuicken.

Ashley teaches regular study courses about prophesy. Here is a quotation from a report written by a concerned eye-witness, who took part in such a course: " Three people, who have prophesied at least five times and therefore are "experienced", are invited to come to the front. They are taken outside the meeting hall. Tension

increases...Even more so when blindfolds are produced and their purpose explained. "We will call the first one to come in, put him blindfolded on a chair and put another person opposite him." Ashley is very confident. "But we are not going to act silly if he says "my daughter", while the person sitting opposite him is a man." How silly that I didn't think of this possibility myself... The first man is brought in, seated, blindfolded, and then a young woman sits down in the other chair. "Go on, prophecy," Ashley says. Dead silence. What will happen now? Are things going wrong? After some hesitation there comes a word:" I see a plane..." Again silence. And that is all. "Alright", Ashley says and asks the woman if she can confirm this word." No," she says, "I work in a business office and have no plans to make a plane trip." But fortunately the experiment was not a failure, because Ashley too got a picture! "I too saw a plane, you will serve the Lord and travel!" A relieved applause follows. So it does work after all! Now a second man is brought in. Opposite him Jan Sjoerd Pasterkamp sits down. "Go ahead, prophesy." Ashley says. The man gets a vision and sees barriers across a road behind which there is darkness. The word that goes with it, is:" I will make the barriers to open and lead you into new ways." Jan Sjoerd confirms this word and says that he is about to break through something. Again applause and also a word from Ashley: "Holland is not your last country; there are other countries that you have not touched yet." Now a third man. The imagination of brother Ashley is really impressive. For it is agreed that Nobody will sit down opposite him. What imagination! What will he say? Does the Holy Spirit speak to an empty chair? There comes a word"Know that you are my instrument, I have made you, I have formed you and tuned you. I am ready to play you as my instrument." Now I sit up straight. Is this word meant for the piano that stands opposite the man? No, Ashley does not say that; the word is not meant for a real instrument. Is the word wrong? Fortunately Ashley again knows what to do. He is not for nothing our teacher "For whom did he prophesy you think? Someone who plays. Do you know who that is? That is this congregation here. This is exactly a word for this congregation! In this church there is a good balance of praise and worship . ! !"

Of course, that is it! You certainly need a revelation for a word like that! I haven't heard such applause all evening. Who can think up something like this. Amazement all around. Except for the self-confident Ashley. "I knew for sure that this would succeed. I have done it this way many times already and it has never failed." Everyone is stunned, perhaps I even more than all the others . ". { I }

Prophecy in the Toronto Airport Church.

On the video "Go for the Kingdom" John Arnott invites a prophetess to come forward and encourages her to prophesy. {2} After uttering a few sentences she starts to move her head forwards and backwards. It moves faster and faster till her hair swings wildly in front of her eyes. Her voice too gets faster and higher, till finally she screeches out a rambling message. In the meantime Carol Arnott has joined her and, as co-prophetess, calls out to the audience the same names over and over again. On another video, " Invitation to the wedding", Carol Amott gives a testimony about prophesying. { 31 During this testimony she suddenly begins to prophesy. Her body jerks and it looks as if she is having stomach cramps. Her husband comes up and stands behind her, just in case, and finally takes the microphone from her. Next, he leads the whole congregation in prayer to God, asking for them to receive words of prophesy. The congregation then can be described as a mob of people who, bowing and shaking their heads, produce a mixture of words and noises.

The prophet Morris Cerullo.

In his letter October 1995, Morris calls himself God's prophet. To him has been revealed by the Lord that he is going to reach a billion people with the Gospel in the next four years. Morris calls this the most unlikely prophesy he has ever received. But God then also revealed to him how this prophesy can be fulfilled. If the people who read his circular letter now send him sufficient funds, this prophecy can be fulfilled. Finally the prophet gives yet another revelation from God, concerning the one billion message. All the people who send Morris Cerullo money, will be blessed in their material and financial transactions. "An immense financial anointing will come down on them, a miracle of multiplication will take place in their financial world". { 4 } (This last bit is part of the Prosperity Teaching.)

The prophet Benny Hinn.

In a meeting in his church in 1990, Benny Hinn prophesied, under loud applause from the audience, the theological statement that God is not a triune God. To him is revealed, while standing there on the stage, that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are three separate Persons. Not only that, both each of the three Persons again has His own Trinity. Thanks to this direct revelation (so-called revelation knowledge) prophet Hinn declares, that there is no Triune God, both a "nine-une" God. Later, as he says himself, the Holy Spirit made clear to him that this was a mistake. "It was stupid of me to prophecy this", Benny Hinn says. {5}

Prophet Rodney Howard-Browne.

"In July 1991, during a meeting in San Diego in California, the Lord gave through me the following prophesy: "The great men and women of God whom I am using on earth today, I do not use because they are something special. I use them for one reason only: because they have touched Me and I have touched them". We are inclined to think that they who are used by God, are His favorites. But many do not realize that they who are being used, pushed the button and found a place in God that is special. Everyone who wants to, can push that button and touch the hem of His garment". Thus Rodney Howard-Browne. { 61

The prophet William Branham.

Paul Cain called Branham the greatest prophet of this century. In 1933 he had a vision in which America was destroyed. This would take place around 1977 and then the millennium would begin. The followers of Branham took this date very seriously. { 71 When he died an untimely death, they didn't bury his body immediately, but kept it frozen for a while, because they believed he would rise from the dead.

The prophets of Kansas City Fellowship.

The fellowship came into being in the eighties and became part of John Wimbers Vineyard movement in 1987. They caused a lot of controversy by their prophetic pronouncements, of which a number were unscriptural. In spite of the fact that John Wimber tried to go against this, one prophesy of Paul Cain was taken very seriously. He prophesied that a great revival would begin in Britain, in October 1990. Because of this prophesy, the Dockland Conference was organized in London. Expectations were so high that John Wimber brought his whole family with him from America, to be part of it. Great was the disappointment when nothing happened. Since then John Wimber has distanced himself from the ministry of prophet Paul Cain. { 8 }

Conclusion and Sequence.

Ought we to worry about all this ? Isn't it better to just forget about it? We as work-group feel that we cannot do that. These prophets do harm to the scriptural idea of a prophet. They discredit what God has intended prophesy to be. This letter does not give the complete picture; there is much more to say about the fake prophets and the true, scriptural prophets. Prophesy is a big subject, because an important number of bible books is written by or deals with prophets. That is why we want to come back to this subject in our next letter, which will again deal with prophesy.

As from the work-group, Rien van de Kraats.

{ 1 }Page 1 of a report December 1993 by P.Glim, pastor of V.E.Gemeente Hippolytushoef. { 2 } Church service of January 23, 1995 (after 55 min. on video) { 3 } Church service of April 28,1995 (after 120 Min.on video) { 4 }Page 4 of a letter from Morris Cerullo October 6,1995 { 5 }Cassette, side 3, by Hank Hanegraaff. { 6 }Page 9 of the book "The Touch of God", by Rodney Howard-Browne. { 7 }Page 69 of the book "Blessing the Church?" by David Forbes. (8)Page 96 of the book mentioned above.

The present state of affairs concerning the "Toronto-Blessing."

-From Belfast in Northern Ireland Cecil Andrews sent us a video , about 45 minutes long, of a meeting held by Rodney Howard-Browne in America, in January/February 1996. He starts by making two pastors of the church fall on the stage by his usual method. Before the first pastor goes down, this man says that he is going to go "nighty, nighty." Rodney sings, just before the second pastor goes down, a line from a song by the Beatles (Yesterday). While both pastors are lying on the stage, he speaks about the anointing. While reading from Ezechiel 8, it gets too much for him and he bursts out laughing. For about five minutes he cannot get a word out and he keeps laughing and stuttering. Suddenly he gets his voice back and reads, one after another, verses from Scripture with the theme "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." As a work group we think that this is awful and we see no change in his teaching and behavior.

-The Airport Vineyard Church in Toronto is, as of February 1996, no longer permitted to bear the name Vineyard. The leader of the Vineyard movement, John Wimber, has, after a few months of discussion, asked John Arnott to leave the movement. It is not clear why this separation had to take place. John Arnott has now invited several important leaders from all over the world to start an International Renewal Network. They will also put together a team, that will temporarily have the task to protect the Airport Church (From: "Take Heed" Ministries, Belfast March 1996) -On February 1996 Tineke de Nooy had a programme on RTL4, titled "Tineke and the Paranormal World". Four people took part. One who explained the occult teaching Tsi Qigong, a magnetizer, an Austrian who could diagnose sickness just by looking at the patient, and Bert Panhuise. Using a fragment of a movie of Rodney Howard-Browne in Amsterdam in September last year, the leader of Eurospirit explained how the Toronto-Blessing works. Tineke, who herself has paranormal gifts, asked some penetrating questions. At the end her conclusion was, that she did not think that these powers came from God, as Bert Panhuise believes, but from "something else". But Tineke was all the same enthused that all this is happening in the Pentecostal churches. As a work group we understand her enthusiasm, but feel very sad about it. This broadcast was very poor publicity for the Pentecostal Churches. Are the Pentecostal churches also involved in the paranormal, many viewers must have thought. - The Brotherhood of Pentecostal Churches have published a statement about the "Toronto-Blessing" in the magazine "The Paraclete". From other sources we know that many Pentecostal churches are against the Toronto-Blessing. The published statement indicates this, but it also gives room to the people who support the movement. It clearly is a statement that leaves room for compromise, which also can be seen from the fact that, among others, Teun de Ruiter has signed it. Teun is very much in favor of the Toronto-Blessing. (We have had a lot of correspondence with him on the subject.) As a work-group we understand that a compromise has been sought in order to keep the bond of peace. If the above mentioned statement is helpful in making the matter clear to the church members, we don't know. But when we reflect on the already mentioned broadcast by Tineke de Nooy, we have our doubts.

Some corrections our letter November 30.1995.

On page 3 we wrote, re the circular letter from Teun de Ruiter, that we doubt if all 800 churches of the Assemblies of God in Australia are really behind the "Toronto-Blessing." Teun de Ruiter tells us, that he didn't say this.

We stand corrected.

- The Union of Flemish Pentecostal Churches inform us, that their meeting on November 11,1995, was not especially about the "Toronto-Blessing" (page 3). The day was meant as a day for bible study, to build the believers up in the faith. The difference between our forum-day of October 14, 1995 in Nijkerk and their day was, that the Flemish day did not have the "Toronto-Blessing" as their main theme and ours did. Our apologies for the wrong information. - Our conclusion that most of the Flemish Pentecostal Churches keep their distance from the "Toronto-Blessing" was not completely correct.(page 3). Someone sent us a copy of the magazine "De Vlaanders" of the Union of Flemish Pentecostal Churches(September 1995). This has a detailed and very positive article about a church that is very much in favor of the "Toronto-Blessing" and also "practices" it. The person who sent us the article had the impression, that the attitude of the Flemish Pentecostals concerning "Toronto", is one of " warm and cold at the same time", in other words: of compromise, or uncertainty.