

Workgroup "Back to the Bible"

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Dear brothers, sisters, pastors and elders,

In our letter dated March 20, 1996 we started on the subject of false prophets. We want to continue with this in our present letter. We take it for granted that you have read the first letter and will keep the two letters together, because they form a unity. Some people feel that we, in our letters, are sitting in judgement over other people, but we have a different opinion. Our concern is the scriptural truths that in many cases are trampled under foot. That we also name names is, because we are not dealing with impersonal matters or angels, who proclaim false teachings. No, we are dealing with, in most cases well known, spiritual leaders, whose new doctrines have a lot of influence. Also, if their behaviour is not in accordance with scripture, we as a work-group feel that we have to point this out. We realize that we are not making ourselves very popular by doing this. But the Bible does not advocate popularity. In Gal. 1:6-10 Paul says: "If I was still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ". God's Word pays more attention to the way Christians build on the foundation, Jesus Christ. This can be done with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw. Everyone's work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire (1 Cor. 3- 10- 23) May our work not burn up , but survive, on the Day of His Coming.

Present prophets and their behaviour.

In 1989 the British author Malise Ruthven wrote a detailed book about the different religions in America. He called this book "The Divine Supermarket". In this book he also devotes a number of pages to the "faith-teachers" or "prosperity-teachers". At the end of this chapter, in which he also mentions the sexual sins of some of them, he says the following about Jimmy Swaggart: "The true nature of Swaggart's sin- desire for money and power, and above all spiritual pride- remain unnoticed and have not been repented of ".(1 } Malise Ruthven says about himself that he is an agnostic. And to hear from his mouth these sharp remarks should give us evangelical Christians something to think about. Most of us rightly disapprove of sexual sins. But do we see the above mentioned sins for what they are? Do we notice them or have we gotten used to them? - The leader of the Manna Churches in Portugal and in some African countries, Jorge Tadeu, calls himself an apostle. His letters to his pastors he signs with "Saint Jorge Tadeu." Is his behaviour saint like? A Portuguese newspaperman, Nuno Guerreiro, spent five months in 1994 studying "the miracle" of the Manna Churches. From his detailed report we quote the following: "Jorge Tadeu was born in Mozambique in 1949, became a civil engineer and married Mano. Together they went to South-Africa and landed via a Rhema-church in the Rhema Bible school of Kenneth Hagin in Johannesburg. Here they came into contact with the prosperity teaching. Benny Hinn was one of their teachers. In 1982 they went to work in Portugal, where they founded the official Manna-Church in 1986. In 1988 Jorge Tadeu sent his wife away (Mark 10:11) After the divorce he married in 1990 a twenty years younger Dutch woman. His Manna movement which he, since a few years now, leads from Holland, has grown into a large denomination with 250.000 members. For this ministry he has bought a private plane at a cost of F 4.000.000, and his parents-in-law received an expensive Mercedes for their work with Manna. The necessary finance has all been brought together by the members, who, with a hard hand, were forced by their pastors to pay up. St.Jorge Tadeu believes that a Christian does not need to be poor and he practices this for himself, However, the members of the Manna Church are the ones who pay! - Richard Roberts, president of the Oral Roberts University, told in 1994, in front of a camera, that, when he took over the

university from his father Oral, it had a debt of F. 60.000.000- Just before that time he had learned from Rodney Howard-Browne to laugh in the Spirit. { 4 } When he mentioned the amount of the debt, he almost fell off his chair laughing. Richard Robert is obviously not conscious of the fact that we are God's stewards on this earth. This debt must be causing problems for a lot of individuals and businesses and no thought is given to their difficulties and worries. The gigantic debt is proof of mismanagement and that with money that willing and credulous Christians provided. If Richard Roberts had realized this, he would not have fallen off his chair because he laughed so much, but rather because of embarrassment and shame. - In 1994 Rodney Howard-Browne accepted a speakers fee of F 40.000, for his three week stay at Oral Roberts University. {5 } He knew at the time, that the university was deeply in debt. Many a pastor or businessman would have been ashamed to accept such a fee, but Rodney Howard-Browne and Richard Roberts didn't have such scruples. - The "apostles" and "prophets" mentioned above are not noted for their modesty. When one reads the ads of the different campaigns or conferences, one usually sees their names, preferably with pictures, announced in big print. We'll give you some examples: - Miraculous Healings Explosion- July 1996 in Rotterdam with Morris Cerullo himself (with picture) In the leaflets advertizing the campaign, he is called "God's Apostle for the nations in the end-time". - John Avazini, who is known for the methods he uses to persuade his hearers to give money, is announced in the same leaflet as "God's Apostle of Finance in the end- time". - Ashley McGuicken announces his prophetic conference of June 1996 with the theme: "Reigning through revelation". His movement is called: "Apostolic & Prophetic Network". This net-work organized a Prophetic Art Conference in June 1996. - Miracle Crusade with Benny Hinn-April 1996- in the Royal Albert Hall London, with three pictures of the speaker on the leaflet.

The Prophets of the Bible and their behaviour

The Scriptures name many prophets and we now want to compare their behaviour with that of the present so-called "prophets". - Moses was a leader, perhaps the greatest leader and prophet of Israel in the Old Testament. "Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face". (Deut. 34: 1-12). When Miriam and Aaron rebelled against his leadership, the Lord Himself intervened (Num.12:1-16) We read about Moses in verse 3: "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth". -Paul, an apostle and prophet of the New Testament, was a humble man. His education and his background he caps rubbish and he did not boast about it. This because he desired" to gain Christ". (Phil.3:8) - The Lord Jesus Christ was a prophet when He lived on earth. He is no doubt the greatest example to compare our behaviour with. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on the Sunday before Easter, He did not rent a cart pulled by horses. He did not use a caravan of camels for Himself and His disciples. No, Jesus Christ, the Greatest of all prophets, borrowed a donkey and so entered Jerusalem. His disciples, who later would be apostles and prophets, had to walk. "See, your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey" (Matt.12:16) Benny Hinn, himself born in Israel, should have known better: Jesus was not rich, through the gifts of followers. He could not afford an expensive car or a luxurious vehicle and only used a borrowed donkey. Jesus refused to receive publicity when He had done miracles. On the contrary, He forbade people to talk about them with others (Matt.12:16) and He withdrew from the multitude. - John, the disciple Jesus loved most, was not proud because of that fact. No, he is known as the apostle of love. His gospel and letters are full of the love and gentleness which were characteristic of Jesus' own life. Even when John is used as a prophet to write the book of Revelation, we find, not a proud man, but a humble servant. The book starts with: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show His servantsHe made it known by sending his angel to his servant John" (Rev.1:1) -When we compare all this with the already cited pronouncements of the present "prophets", the latter don't come out too well. They would fit in better with the advertisements for a circus or a show of well- known artists. If we then also listen to what they say on the stage of the big meeting halls, some of them could be compared with the one-man shows of certain star- performers. Their sometimes mocking and sometimes yelling tone of voice is in our opinion very different from the way our Lord Jesus Christ spoke. From Him it is said: "He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed He will not break and a smouldering wick He will not snuff out"(Matt.12:15-21) During His time on earth Jesus worked very quietly and tactfully. In

Matt. 11:29 He says the following: "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart". We conclude that these qualities of Jesus and the apostles and prophets in the Bible are very often not found in the prosperity teachers and so-called prophets.

The present "prophets" and their teachings.

In our recent letter we touched on this subject in connection with the revelation that Benny Hinn claims to have received re the "Nine-in-One" instead of the "Trinity". Later he retracted this teaching. Unfortunately, this matter of proclaiming a new teaching received by prophetic revelation, happens regularly. This is called "revelation knowledge". To discourage others from contradicting the new teaching, the "prophets" often explain with much emphasis that they had a visit from Jesus in their home, Who revealed the new teaching to them. We give a few examples: - Rick Joyner, author of, among others, the booklet "The Revival in Wales" (translated in 1994) can be counted among the Kansas City Prophets. He has given many revelations on paper. Using these revelations he preaches new doctrines, which often differ from the Scriptural teaching. "here is going to come such a tremendous change for the body of Christ, that the world will have a new definition for Christianity...They who really submit themselves to Him...will be the most dangerous and most powerful people on earth and will form the greatest threat for the spirit of the antichrist, who is in the church today instead of Christ". { 6 }

Rick Joyner teaches here that the Christians will become a dangerous and powerful people on earth. That they will be the greatest threat for the spirit of the antichrist. That this spirit of the antichrist is now in the church. We, as a work group, do not believe that the Christians will become a dangerous and powerful people on this earth. On the contrary, the only thing the Bible tells us is, that we as Christians will have a hard and difficult life, without respect from unbelievers. "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds" (Joh.12:20- 27) Our persecuted brothers and sisters in our present day immediately realize that this prophetic teaching from Rick Joyner is unscriptural. From the very beginning of the church on the day of Pentecost, her members have been persecuted, despised, and dispersed, and many have been martyred for their faith. "All men will hate you because of Me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matt.10:16-40) The work-group believes that this teaching of Joyner is false and dangerous for the church. We also don't agree with the pronouncement that the spirit of the antichrist is in our churches. Although we must confess that none of our churches is perfect, we try to serve the Lord there. With the Presence of the Holy Spirit we conduct our worship-services. And where the Holy Spirit is present, there is no room for the spirit of the antichrist. The prophet John had many things to say about the antichrist. He writes in 1 Joh. 4:4..."The spirit of the antichrist is already in the world. You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one Who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (see also 1 Joh.2:18-27; 4: 1-6 and 2 Joh.7- 11) John Wimber, head of the Vineyard-churches, says to have received from the Lord the following about the church: "The word came: Tell them, that I need her" This is about property-rights. We do not own the church, Jesus owns her and He wants her back. (When did He lose her?-Ed.) As Jesus entered Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, so He will return, carried by the triumphant church" {71 He too, prophesies and teaches that the churches do not belong to Christ or are governed by Him. The message is, that Jesus wants to have His property back, as a preparation for His Return to this earth. That day, the present church will, as a triumphant, conquering church, bring Him back to Jerusalem. As a work group we consider this prophesy to be false. She can be compared with the teaching of Rick Joyner, that the Christians on this earth will become a dangerous and powerful people. All this in preparation for the Return of Christ. What we said about Rick Joyner in this regard, is also valid for the teaching of John Wimber. Our last example, however, is the pronouncement of John Wimber that the Christians in the west must come to accept a paradigm shift. According to John Wimber God is greater than His Word j 8 } . He means that experiences that are not found in Scripture, may have greater authority than the Bible, if God is in them. This is in accordance with his teaching, that the western Christians must exchange their way of thinking (their paradigm) for an eastern one, a more mystic one. After all, he says, the Bible is an eastern book and has been written by orientals. As a work-group we consider this a false prophecy. This opens the door wide for all kinds of false teachings, as for

instance this paradigm shift, which God, through John Wimber, commands us to accept. There are many other examples of present "prophets" among the prosperity-teachers, but we'll leave it at this. Since the prophets in the Bible, and the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, wrote down the Lord's teaching, in more than 1000 pages in 66 different books, we don't need any addition in our days. Not Benny Hinn, nor Morris Cerullo, nor Branham, nor John Wimber, nor Rick Joyner, nor others have the right to add to or correct scriptural doctrines. In Rev. 22:18-21 we find a few warnings against people who add or take words away from the book. Although we read these verses in Revelation, through the ages it has always been accepted that the Holy Spirit also intends this warning for all the other Bible books.

The present prophets, the Bible and the former prophets

If we, that is you and us, want to handle the subject of prophesy carefully, we must stick to what the Bible teaches. When a prosperity-teacher compares himself with Moses, we must test this by the books of Moses, who was inspired by the Lord and is highly esteemed by us. When Kenneth Copeland thinks that he has a better insight into the story of Job than the Bible does, we must stick to the Bible. The accusation of Copeland that it was Job's own fault that he got into such a hopeless situation, must be completely and openly rejected. When Morris Cerullo calls himself a prophet, he ought to show the same inner attitude as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Paul, Peter and John. He must have the same attitude as Jesus Christ, Who was meek and humble of heart, Whose behaviour was not bombastic, but gentle and peaceful. When one wants to call himself a prophet or wants to be called a prophet, then this is only possible in the way the prophets in the Bible like Micah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and others were prophets. Most of them were poor, despised and were killed, because they told their audiences about their sinful condition and the way to return to God in repentance. The Great Prophet Jesus Christ was crucified for the same reason. He told the scribes and elders about their sins and their wrong way of living. That is the task and also usually the outcome of being a prophet. Paul and Peter were martyred in Rome for the same reason. Present "prophets" ought to seriously think about this before claiming that they are prophets.

Conclusion and some more details

The final word on the subject of prophesy has not been spoken yet. It will be discussed endlessly as long as the church exists on this earth. We would like to talk more with you about this subject, in our next forum- day in Nijkerk. During the afternoon there will be three short lectures, in separate rooms, about three aspects of prophesy. Afterwards the audience will have plenty of opportunity to ask questions. Written questions can be handed in to the work-group at any time beforehand. We close this letter with a few quotes from the book:

"Prophecy Past & Present" by Clifford Hill:

Page 59 "The prophets were not leaders. They had no responsibility for the temple, for the worship, for the religious organization. They had no political power, did not belong to a party, were not an organization, had no priestly or pastoral function. They did not take part in matters of business, and had no position of leadership in any organization. They were only servants of the living God. Their task was to make known to the people what He had to say to them".

Page 51 "In the whole ministry of the prophets there is a real sense of compassion. They knew the Lord as a loving God, full of compassion and abundant in love".

The "Toronto-Blessing" at present .

- In Holland there is still a lot of tension in the churches that are involved in it. Many church members leave their churches, because they cannot agree with it. In the meantime quite a few conferences and meetings have been held, where the "Toronto- Blessing" was practised. As many as forty speakers from abroad have been involved in these meetings. - During the meetings of "Euro Spirit" in May '96 in Amsterdam, there was again a lot of laughing, shaking and falling in the Spirit. There were also some new elements in the meetings, for instance "shouting in the Spirit." Under the leadership of the speaker, the audience was encouraged to shout as loudly as possible to God, for a whole minute. The speaker, Rick Sheldon, who sometimes substitutes for

Rodney Howard-Browne, practised "blowing in the Spirit "through the microphone. Next, people fell backwards when he called out: "Fall". The same speaker also let the audience fall through touching a piece of paper, which he held in his hands. Also, the " multiplying of gifts by God to the givers" was freely exercised. Richard Roberts managed with this method (called "financial seed-sowing") to get a number of people to promise gifts of F 1.000; and F 500,-. In this way the financial shortage of Euro Spirit was taken care of. In our eyes the expectation he raised in the givers, that the F 60.000-, now multiplied by 100, will be given back to them by the Lord, is a false expectation. Jaap Dieleman gave a word of prophecy, that as from Ascension Day there would be no more rain this summer. In the same message he hinted that there will come a curse over Holland, if the country does not repent. This curse is found in the last chapter of the Old Testament. There we also read about the coming of Elijah. There is a connection between the two, the speaker said. The religious part of Holland should have to change itself. Only then the spiritual rain will fall. That rain stands for the great revival , which is coming in Holland this year. It was a dark and confusing message, in our opinion.. Religious Holland was judged and threatened in a rather harsh way. Apart from that, it has rained a lot since Ascension Day. - In Israel the "Toronto-Blessing" is also occurring. Rumours and some facts have reached us, that did not give us any joy. The already few and small charismatic churches of Messiah-confessing Jews, are being shaken and some have split, if what we heard is true. - In England the Christian Channel, the TV station, that daily broadcasts the teaching of the "faith-teachers" all over Europe, has been officially dedicated on April 24,1996. Benny Hinn was the one who dedicated the station. 2200 guests were present in the Westminster Chapel, among whom 500 pastors. The station publishes a TV guide, which they call "The Angel" . Future speakers mentioned in the guide: Benny Hinn, Morris Cerullo, Jesse Duplantis, Ulf Eckman, Fred Price, Paul and Jan Crouch, Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, Marilyn Hickey and others. At the moment these broadcasts can only be received in Holland on TV dishes. But as soon as a cable operator finds it profitable, one will be able to receive them on cable. - Robert Schuller, who is not a "faith-teacher", but is called a Christian humanist, has bought the commercial TV station Euro 7, in April 1996. He broadcasts his Hour of Power every week on cable. Not every cable operator has this station in his TV package. In future we will say more about Schuller and his teaching.

A few final matters.

- We received a book by H.J.A.van Geene, full of prophecies about the end-time. In the year 2001, he figures, Christ will rapture His church. We believe that the author is wrong. None of us know God's time for this event. Mr.van Geene also cannot know, in spite of his detailed figures and prophecies(read for instance Acts !:7) - Many thanks to the people who have sent us materials, articles and other helpful matters. We are not always able to answer you personally. But we'll appreciate it if you would continue to send us materials. We also would encourage other readers to do so.

For the work-group,

Pastor Rien van de Kraats.

{ 1 } -The Divine Supermarket. (2) Reis naar de Manna-wereld van Nuno Guerreiro, editor of Viao, { 3 } Cassette by Hank Hanegraaff,1993. { 4 }Video Campmeeting 1994. { 5 }Video Campmeeting 1994. {6I Weighed and found Wanting:Bill Randles,page 45 { 7 } Weighed and found Wanting: Bill Randles,page 45. { 8 } Weighed and found Wanting; Bill Randles,page 81-84.

Recommended Reading: Weighed and found Wanting-Bill Randles, U.S.A.