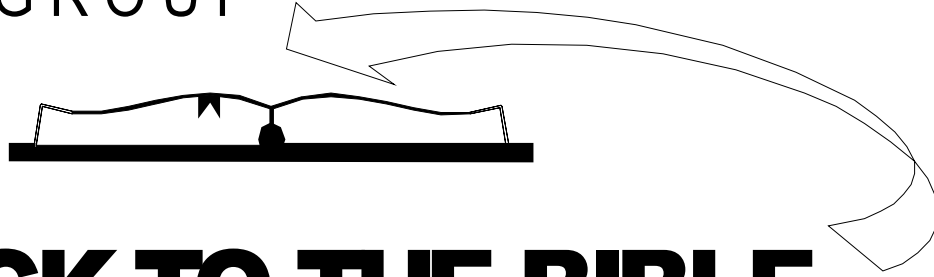


WORKGROUP



BACK TO THE BIBLE

Kampen, letter 38, 15 September 2010

(in addition to letter 31 on Joseph Prince in Singapore)

Dear readers,

The teachings of Joseph Prince from Singapore do have more influence than we, as a workgroup, assessed. In our letter 31 from 1 April 2007 we thought these teachings were primarily focussed on the prosperity gospel as we showed in this letter. However, we have paid too little attention to his position with regard to Grace. An anonymous reader of our letters independently studied the complete teaching of Joseph Prince and committed his findings into writing. This study is so complete and well-founded that we decided to put the results of his study on our website in addition to our study of 1 April 2007. Somewhere in the article the anonymous writer gives us the advice not to swallow everything, but to examine things for ourselves. We agree with him, for we believe that you, as a Christian with the Holy Spirit as resident Spirit, are able to judge for yourself. Below you will find the complete study of the anonymous researcher. We did not change anything of its content. Only on page 18 we made a remark on the writer's explanation of the idea of original sin. But we made a few small language corrections. With a lot of thanks to the writer we now give you the opportunity to go deeply in his or her findings.

Joseph Prince

Theology of the New Creation Church in Singapore

Translation mrs. Silvia van Dijk

Only a consideration!

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Introduction

It is not the basic principle of this document to present a comprehensive picture of the so-called Singapore Theology, but it comes up with some special points of view which are up to the reader to judge. Most texts have been taken from lectures of the New Creation Church or their Dutch translations. Other texts have been taken from websites which have directly quoted texts from this church or their interpretations. But by far the most information is obtained from the booklets *Health and Wholeness Through the Holy communion, Your Miracle is in Your Mouth* and *A Life Worth Living*, all publications by Joseph Prince.

The so-called “Just Grace Theology” caused quite a lot of commotion. For many Christians it leads to confusion because most of the terms correspond with the usage in evangelical congregations so it is hard to interpret where it differs with this theology. Moreover, a lot of evangelical Christians from their backgrounds prove to have stuck to the picture in which the Law still carries judgment and punishment. That it is precisely the Singapore Theology which causes such a discussion and makes so many people feel set free and others become confused, might be caused by the fact that in the full gospel we apparently could not adequately indicate the purposes of the Law and of Grace and that they are not at odds with each other. If we had been able to put this as a solid foundation in the evangelical movement, the discussion with the Singapore Theology would not have started and so many people within the full gospel would not have struggled with the Law.

Criticism against the theology of Joseph Prince, which you can read here and there on the internet, is often shameful superficial and particularly very subjective. Generally it is especially Joseph Prince’s way of speech and his demagogical qualities that are criticized. In the same way you could denounce most American preachers, while, of course, many ways of speech are judged within the frame of reference of the local culture. Joseph Prince is a skilled speaker and one can like or dislike, but that is not determining. It is striking that most opponents pass much, but at the same time very superficial criticism. The same is the case with the proponents and thus you see all kind of comments are flying without pursuing the contents in greater depth. Giving comments is something you cannot do frivolously. After all, it is not about criticizing someone but about judging the message and compare it with the Bible. But both the proponents and the opponents take the view that they use the Bible as the guideline on which they build their theory. When refuting theories it is unavoidable to carefully

interpret scriptural passages in the context of the Bible. Proponents, on the other hand, often tend to use the argument that "Jesus Christ" is proclaimed, so it is alright, at least good enough. Besides, someone who proclaims Jesus Christ can't be approached really critically. Proponents too, are well-advised to not superficially judge the person and his message, but to objectively investigate the final results of the doctrines.

It is essential that we keep our judgment clear. In this case, clear means "free" of the things we ourselves find acceptable, relieved or pleasant or that fit in with our style of living. But also free from persons and, as much as possible, free from our backgrounds. That is quite a job and can only be done when our heart is focused on finding the truth, no matter the outcome. Let's try below:

It is October 2007 when Stichting Opwekking (*Revival Foundation*) breaks off with its youth group HQ, which wants too overemphasize the theology of Joseph Prince. Many groups that have problems with Prince's theology are primarily against it, because Prince would adhere to "prosperity teachings". Below we will see this might not be the main reason to not approve of this theology.

Some take the view that this theory will pass. This might be true, but in the meantime it has deeply rooted and to many evangelical youth movements it is the basis of their school for life. Here the evangelical leaders of tomorrow are being formed. Even on the website of the Evangelische Omroep (evangelical broadcasting company) you find a lot of discussions and columns, obviously influenced by these theories. An evangelical once mentioned he had read the doctrines of Joseph Prince. After a couple of pages he concluded he could not agree and he had closed the book. That's a pity, because in the evangelical world we sometimes see a lot of mental images coming from this Singapore Theology, but which of course not always explicitly bear the stamp of Joseph Prince. Yet we need to be able to clearly distinguish.

We do not really mean to oppose the Singapore Theology right here. It is highly important to recognize why some people at first are favourable to these teachings and are insufficiently able to put into words why these teachings contrast sharply with the prevailing evangelical bible teachings. We can only get to know by investigating these teachings one or two levels deeper and look especially where their theses finally end in. Many readers are amazed that somewhat hidden messages are sent with the Singapore Theology and that it takes positions that suddenly not even look like the evangelical view anymore. It would be great if followers of this theology could at least largely identify with

the theses of Faith as expressed below. It is not necessary for the proponents of this theology to then agree with the opinion on these theses of faith too. Although it sometimes is unavoidable to give an opinion on certain standpoints – often because they have a wrong base of reasoning – it further is up to the reader to determine what he thinks of particular religious convictions. It is rather the intention to gather facts and standpoints of Joseph Prince, so Christians can determine for themselves whether these standpoints fit in their own perception of faith and if they really have a biblical foundation. Honesty compels to say that light needs to be thrown on the subjects below in order to get the standpoints of Joseph Prince clear. Only listening to his lectures or glance through his books incur the danger that you simply read past it or think too soon that it sounds good and reasonable.

To the reader it is important to know in advance that the message as it is brought by this church in Singapore, will not be labelled as 100% right or 100% wrong in this document. A part is in line with our Dutch evangelical opinions. But on some – on further consideration rather crucial – points, the views of this Singaporean Church dissent considerably and sometimes shocking. This document records a number of differences, but it is nothing more than a sketch and therefore not exhaustive. Though it is getting easier to eventually – on the basis of one's own Bible study – judge whether you can agree with these standpoints. But these issues can not only be put to the test based on individual texts and our feelings. It takes a deep will to understand as well.

While investigating into the basic assumptions of faith of this Singaporean church I somewhat adjusted my view. In advance I was of the opinion that the essence strongly corresponded with the evangelical view on the Bible. The points of difference would lie in areas that did not touch the essence of the Gospel. In such cases we must be very careful not too quickly and sharply pass judgment on deviating ideas, because in our own domination there is quite some variety on themes and differences in interpretation. Besides we must well realize that even the evangelical view is strongly influenced by the Calvinistic – and before that the Roman Catholic way of thinking. That is why we too are not always able to – separated from these backgrounds - see through the proper Hebrew context of the Bible and take it with us in our frame of reference. It is the object of this document to come apart as much as possible from these backgrounds and to judge the theory as it is brought up in the New Creation Church on the basis of the Bible itself. With that it is not done to put a bible verse opposed a different bible verse, because this will lead to deadlocks. We will simply try, based on the teachings, to look what the result of this stream of thoughts will be. By keeping the basic assumption in mind and seeing how the theory is gathered around it, very essential

differences come to light. Differences that are up to the reader to judge. If, on the website, you become acquainted with the “Statement of Faith” of the New Creation Church where Joseph Prince is senior pastor, on first thoughts you see nothing strange. I think we can fully agree with its theses of Faith as they are mentioned there. Point is that it does not cover what they really believe. After studying the deeper levels of their conviction of Faith we cannot insist that they think equally on crucial points and we must come to the conclusion that they not only have a different view on side issues.

In this document we use a number of words interchangeable, all the time as synonyms. Where we write about the Singaporean Church, the Singaporean Theology, Just Grace Theology, Joseph Prince and the New Creation Church or NCC, we mean the theology brought out by Pastor Prince and his people in the New Creation Church and by means of books and lectures. This is a theology that, by the way, is not accepted all over Singapore. So the expression “Singapore Theology” is only used to make things easier.

Some Faith Theses of Joseph Prince

If you go through the Faith theses of the New Creation Church on their website, as a Christian you will probably nod in approval. It seems so well in line with the evangelical view.

Statement:

We believe in one God, who exists in three Persons — the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is loving, holy and just.

We believe that the Bible is God's Word. It is inspired and accurate. It is our perfect guide in all matters of life.

We believe that sin has separated us all from God, and that only through Jesus Christ can we be reconciled to God.

We believe that Jesus Christ is both God and Man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He led a sinless life, took all our sins upon Himself, died and rose again. Today, He is seated at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest and Mediator.

We believe that salvation is the gift of God to man. This gift is effected by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and it produces works pleasing to God.

We believe that water baptism is a symbol of the cleansing power of God and a testimony of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe that the Holy Spirit is our Comforter. He guides us in all areas of our lives. He also blesses us with spiritual gifts and empowers us to yield the fruit of the Spirit.

We believe that the Holy Communion is a celebration of Jesus' death and our remembrance of Him.

We believe that God wants to transform, heal and prosper us, so that we can live blessed and victorious lives that will impact and help others.

We believe that we are called to preach the gospel to all nations.

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is coming back again just as He promised.

But if we get to the very bottom of the contents of this theology, we can list another 10 statements.

To prevent readers in the next chapters will think that the theory is possible described too vaguely, we will mention a number of statements (not limitative) which are discussed in the memo and form the pillars underneath the statements of Joseph Prince:

1. Many Christians believe that it is the law that saves them.
2. The more we sin, the more grace we are granted.
3. It is useless to feel guilty about sin.
4. Our future sins as well are forgiven in advance.
5. We were predestined before the foundation of the World (predestination).
6. A Christian can never lose his salvation because of this.
7. People who backslide haven't been Christians in the first place.
8. Illness is always demonic.
9. People are healed through the Holy Communion (this is a mechanism).
10. If we want to be healed a lot, we should celebrate Holy Communion as often as possible.
11. If we are ill it proves we are still living under the curse of the law.

Some statements will perhaps make the reader to frown his brows. Therefore we will first describe the theory somewhat broader and then zoom in on subthemes. Point is that we first understand the theory in its entirety.

Differences in background

A great difference in interpretation certainly comes from the background of the founders of this movement and the region in which this theology has its foundation. In the Netherlands the Calvinistic way of thinking (1) has strongly influenced the view on the Bible, and even on social relations and patterns of thought. Although Calvinism focuses attention on God's grace as well

1 And previous to that persuasions as Catholicism and the Greek way of thinking

you must consider this from the fact that we as human beings are only able to do little and need that grace to just reach the finishing line. God pulls us, as it were, out of the well we continuously dig for ourselves. This is not necessarily what the Bible tells, but it certainly is our own way of seeing the Bible and the message of grace for ages. Even the slogan "Keep yourself pure from this world" takes an important position. There is no space to study this in dept here, but a deeper analysis of the effects of Calvinism on our way of looking at the Hebrew context of the Bible sure is worthwhile. Even we look at the Bible with "coloured" filters, which means that - unless we dig deeper - we have a distorted view of reality.

Which is not different in the Singaporean approach. They are being less – probably not at all – influenced by Calvinism and see only the results in the western church. It is obvious that the thoughts that come up in the Singaporean theology can be easily related to thoughts that play an important role in the oriental religions. The quick judge will say that if this really is the case the Singaporean theology should be rejected immediately. But that is taking turns on two wheels. For, though we are not proponents of oriental religions, it is possible, of course, that some elements are universally applicable and could have positive impact on our thoughts (for example thinking positively).

In this memo we put a few of these oriental thoughts to the table. In the end the conclusion of this document is that Joseph Prince on a number of crucial points pursues a complete different line which does not fit in the western evangelical way of thinking. Besides, it is true that his way of drawing conclusions is considerably deficient. Below we will return to that in particular. Moreover, the listener to his sermons and the reader of his books will notice that almost every statement is grounded by an example from practice in which miracle healing and mechanisms of faith play their parts. Although an example can certainly give a statement a scientific underpinning we even know from the Bible that an example, even a miracle healing, does not have to confirm a statement. Even the sorcerers in Egypt knew a number of tricks and could make a snake out of a stick or the other way around. Even in the western world we hear that people with occult backgrounds are able to heal people up to a certain extent. So we know that irrespective of the source healing could take place, although it is the ultimate question if people really get "well". So healing does not prove a statement or certain theory of faith is right. Moreover there is man's psyche, which could influence certain healings. One of these examples is the power of thinking positively or forgiveness. Remember: we do not say that the examples quoted by Pastor Prince are not right, only that they cannot form proof by themselves and absolutely no proof that the whole theory is wrong. It does not mean either that everything that Joseph Prince says is not in line.

with the bible. The alterations he makes, however, are much more than nuances and could lead to very different conclusions in important areas of faith.

Law and Grace – putting something straight

Before studying Joseph Prince's theology in depth we must go back to the essence of the Gospel as we find it in evangelical churches, and in many protestant churches as well. That basis is important since preachers like Prince keep pretending that we all too often keep holding to the law and thus put grace out of action. They state law and grace are at odds with each other and it is in fact sin to keep holding to the Law, although the law itself is good. Precisely at this point we can be clear: in the full gospel it is not believed at all, that the Law is our salvation and that keeping the law brings about our salvation. We are very well aware that grace delivers us from the requirements of the law so we do not have to submit to the yoke of the thought that it was the law that delivered us. So, if Joseph Prince states that we still keep holding to that law, he is wrong. The crucial point is in another field; the Singapore Theology states that the law once had the function of delivering us and that grace took its place, after which the law was rescinded because it had become superfluous. So law and grace had the same function and grace managed to do what law couldn't, according to this Theology. But that is a flaw in the reasoning; law never aimed at redeeming us and never meant to redeem or justify humanity. That is why law cannot be replaced by grace, because they have different functions. Law was meant as God's guideline to live in His will and, besides, in the Old Testament it gave a number of practical and hygienic functions, though it is not limited to that. It is a workbook, which was first given to Israel (both Jews as the house of Israel²) as guide amongst many people who were living barbarically. If someone did not keep it there was a possibility to receive forgiveness (covering) by making a sin offering to come to terms with God. But even in those days God's grace was badly needed. A beautiful and poignant example is the story of David who appropriated a soldier's wife and had him killed by deliberately placing him in the frontline. David knew he was wrong and God made him experience the consequences. But at the end of his life David was a man after God's heart and Bathsheba gave birth to a son who later was to become the wisest man on earth and through whom the progeny was carried on (Salomo). If that

²That the law was once given to both the Jews (the house of Juda) as to the house of Israel is a study in itself and shows that the law was not only meant for the Jews. The law kept applying to the house of Israel which later during the Diaspora got completely mixed up with the peoples,

In contrast with the house of Juda. People who state the law was meant for the Jews, should ask themselves if they do not belong to the house of Israel themselves (which is a difficult search, by the way).

was not grace! So the question is how we look at the Old Testament and whether this view might have been coloured. The period of the Old Testament was a period in which God's grace was the central point and the Law was applicable.

The statement of the Singapore Theology that we should keep to the function of the law to be justified is really definitely wrong, but Joseph Prince keeps reminding us of it. The statement that grace replaced the law is not only wrong, but even impossible, because the functions are completely different. If we keep that in mind we can clearly understand where the Singapore theology goes astray and puts us really on the wrong track.

Some people wonder why there are so many parishioners in their church that feel set free by this Singapore Message of grace. It must be real, it cannot be but right. Exactly that is where the shoe pinches. If people feel set free by the Joseph Prince's message that does not necessarily mean the message is right. Too often you see that people think it is a pleasant message because every weight is taken off their shoulder and suddenly they do not have to do all kind of things. Too often people do not take the trouble to study in depth what is really told. Only the packing seems to be enough, there is no need to open the box, it sounds very credible. On the other hand it shows that still a lot of people in the full gospel insufficiently understood and fathomed the part of the Law and grace. I'm convinced that evangelical Christians with a good foundation do not really have a feeling of salvation when Joseph Prince speaks about grace. For we already believe that our justification comes only through God's grace and not by keeping the law. Below we will see that Joseph Prince's theology , however, goes far beyond.

Reasoning from a predetermined image of God

Most theologians think in terms of a predetermined image of God which is understandable. On the basis of their teachings they develop a certain image of God, after which everything in the Bible is interpreted from that image and further strengthens that image of God. In Calvinism too, there is no getting round a foregone (and sometimes one-sided) image of God: God is God and lifted high above everything. He is sovereign and determines what He will do with a human being. We may hope for His grace, but that grace is more like a destiny, it does not say anything about the way God will influence our present situation. We were never promised a calm journey, but a safe arrival. Evangelical Christians think somewhat more positive about this, though this is a sort of anti-reaction against the Calvinistic period before.

In general one could say the Singapore Theology thinks in terms of an image of God in which Jesus Christ is being sketched as a deity who means well with us and is willing to do everything to realize it. God created us after His image and we must not all the time start talking about our shortcomings, because God put everything at our disposal. We just have to understand. God addresses to us personally and through negative or inferior thoughts we could harm this, but we could also appropriate it by our way of adopting an attitude, believing and confessing. God does not want us to be ill, or that we know poverty or misfortune. You very strongly see that a certain image of God has been created and the whole theology is created around it, so finally that image is confirmed again. There is very little room for nuance and mystery. By mystery we mean that some things simply cannot be understood from our human mind and that we cannot always find a closing answer for everything, for example illness. The Singapore Theology knows very little doubt. If it finally should go wrong you could at worst say that it was caused by our faith or our doubt or our endeavour to do it by ourselves. The Singapore Theology says Calvinism is particularly expecting it from hanging on to and accomplishing the law, and the Roman Catholic faith sees especially their "own good deeds" as key. But the Singapore Theology says we just have to leave it to Jesus and the Holy Spirit will do the work in us and His grace is already written in our heart. Later in this document we will see that pastor Prince passes the responsibility unto us, in the end it is to say it is all about our faith and our way of proclamation.

Joseph Prince and room for nuance

In nearly every message a situation is created in which it is first put that all kind of Christians think they still fail in keeping God's laws and that they try to live righteous out of their own strength. If that image is set, the Theology of Grace is put against it. Just like black stands against white. There is little room for nuances, there is no grey and there is no question mark. Because in preaching one is chiefly speaking himself, the game of questions and answers is created by oneself too. So for example you see a question with two possible answers being asked to people.

God loves you if you do not sin?
God loves you when you still sin?

Another example:

- We are freed from the curse of the law, except when we sin?
- We are freed from the curse of the law, even when we sin?

The attentive reader will consider that the nuance is between these two answers, of course. But the inattentive hearer will think that one of the two answers is right and one has to choose. This is a technique often used and certainly coming back in preaching. If an answer is given one automatically finds himself on a certain road. After another number of such multiple choice questions one ends up in a strange situation. On the one hand one must honestly draw the conclusion that in view of these answers one has really ended up here, but on the other hand one observes one cannot agree with the final result.

Scholars very soon put an end to this imperfect methodology. The phrasing of the question is completely wrong and there is no room for nuance.

Application of Logic

On crucial points Joseph Prince does not apply the generally accepted logic. That demands an explanation. Joseph Prince tends to give a lot of examples. The reader thinks these examples prove that the theory is correct, which is not always the case, of course. In fact he uses so many examples that they set almost his whole theology. Someone was healed at one stage during a certain event, so the same goes for everyone in such a situation. We must be very careful with this reasoning. For example we all know that many ways lead to Rome. All those roads finally end on the great square of Rome. But Joseph Prince reaches the conclusion that if you walk all those ways back you end in the same point. Which is not true, of course.

Let's try to find an example. Joseph Prince states Jesus went around "healing everyone who was demon-possessed"³. Subsequently, he literally states:

*"Be careful, that illness was caused by satanic possession. So, illness is caused by satanic possession"*⁴.

It does not call for much further comment to conclude that common logic is strongly violated here and people are being misled. Jesus healed demon-possessed people, but not everyone who is ill is demon-possessed as well. Besides, not everyone was healed. That is explicitly mentioned

³Acts 10: 38

⁴Booklet *Health and Wholeness through the Holy Communion* by Joseph Prince, pp 27

in Acts, but Joseph Prince uses this one example – and with that very easily an improper technique – to convince people.

Being Misled by the Phrasing of the Question

Joseph Prince states that people will be healed through the practice of the Holy Communion. To support his theory that people are healed through the Holy Communion and that His body, broken for us grants us healing, Prince states that Jesus wanted to share His body because it would give life, health and wholeness. Prince states:

“The disciples never saw Jesus being ill. Not once they saw Him having a cold, flu or stomach ache⁵. The Lord never was ill. What is more, He was full of life and health and His body was so filled with life that even His clothes were saturated with health.”

The Bible does not at all reach these conclusions, but if you want to further build up the theory you have to reach these conclusions, because otherwise the foundation of this theory is lost. The Bible tells us Jesus was acquainted with illness and He even was someone not worth the sight(6)

.....
And the Bible tells us too that Jesus was tempted in the same way as we (7). Although these text does not yet form solid evidence that Jesus had to do with illness, it goes more without saying than the statement that Jesus never experienced stomach ache. For He came as a human being not as God. What it is all about, however, is the fact that constantly a statement is advanced which is insufficiently grounded and which simply ignores certain texts in the Bible completely.

Law

Calvinism focuses quite some attention on the law, something from which we still suffer. I am convinced that our way of reading the Bible (and certainly the way of our parents) was strongly influenced by this Calvinistic way of thinking. But against this Joseph Prince handles the same methodology. It states that still many Christians see the law as a means to be justified. Then the question is being asked whether God will judge us based on the extent we kept the law. Then another two choices question emerges. These are questions for which you can only chose between two answers, or the question must be answered with “yes” or “no”. The answer from the group is negative and with that answer Joseph Prince continues his story;

⁵Health and Wholeness Through the Holy Communion pp28

⁶ Isaiah 53:3

⁷ Hebr. 4:15

so the function of the law was done⁸ and the question is whether something that is done still has to be continued. The hearer again may chose between “yes” or “no”. But the answer “yes” no longer speaks for itself for than the first answer is no longer correct. So there is no other choice but answering to the second question: No, there is no need to follow the law anymore. But exactly here the problem is to be found; the first question was improperly phrased and what’s more without possibility for nuance. The fact is that it suggests that the law was once instituted for only one purpose, namely to give people the opportunity to justify themselves for God. But Joseph Prince does not further examine the real function God had in mind for the Torah. From the beginning the law was not a tool for people to justify themselves and the Bible never told us so. For in the same law it speaks of a sin offering, so God knew much earlier that man could not justify himself by keeping the law, it was aiming too high. God had already considered the possibility of the sin offering in His complete plan. Still Prince keeps on holding to his principle to represent things very simplistically. The law does not serve its purpose anymore, so the law is no longer necessary, so it is almost revolting against God if you try to keep it. In the Netherlands we came across a study for the young that even stated that reading out loud the ten commandments in a meeting was in fact sin and blasphemy in depth.

Bringing Sin to Light, Have Sin increased

Yet Joseph Prince says that the law had one other function: bringing sin to light. In that case one cannot say that Jesus Christ’s death made that function redundant. But Joseph Prince says as well that this function is no longer necessary and in that he is in any case very consequent, but it gives us a lot of clarity at the same time. He states that sin does not have to be brought to light anymore. The law is no longer valid, so sin does not come to light and we do not commit sin anymore⁹, because the stamp “sin” does no longer exist. At any rate, it might be possible that we still do bad things, but we should not call these sin, because then we would fall back on the law. As far as we still do things that God does not appreciate the Holy Spirit will convince us. Sin is “missing your mark” and Christians cannot miss there mark, so they do not commit sin anymore, but ordinary bad things.

⁸ It is interesting that the hearer can only answer that God does not judge us based on the extent in which we kept the law. With that answer Prince reaches a conclusion he is not allowed to draw based on that answer: so the law is done.

⁹ The proponent of Joseph Prince who has not examined this theory, will here perhaps think: I bet Joseph did not mean it that way. Mind my words: Because this reasoning will come up in detail later and Joseph Prince actually applies this thought .

According to pastor Prince it is even the object of the law to let sin **increase**. Although we cannot deny that people have a natural tendency to do what is not allowed, there is no foundation at all to state that THE OBJECT of the law (and thus of God) was to let sin increase, as if God wanted a lot of sin offerings. If you would suppose it, you will end up in one of those unsolvable circles. Do we have a picture that God in the Old Testament was a different God? Why would God have thought that He needed a law to let sin increase? As if He needed that. Why does the Singapore Theology preach a very loving God who addresses himself to us as 100% Father, while that God is unchanged too and earlier wanted to let us stumble or through strict rules drive us in the corner? If you simply read attentively you reach the conclusion that Paul only writes that it is a side effect of the law that sin is brought to light.

Law Stimulates Carnal Desire

In order to enforce the statement “that the law stimulates carnal desire” we are dish up an example: a faithful minister speaks fanatically about adultery. In that way he wants to hold out an image of holiness and obedience to Gods laws, while his own heart is yearning for another woman than his own wife. The more he places himself under the law (ed. crux 1), in this case “Thou shalt not commit adultery” and the more he speaks about this (ed. crux 2), the more his own desires are stimulated. You could consider the flesh as gunpowder and the law as fire, according to this study.⁽¹⁰⁾

This Singapore Theology states hat there is a connection between the law and the stimulation of carnal desires. In other places one takes the view that God in fact wrote the law in our heart and that the Holy Spirit realizes it in us so we want to gladly keep it. But obviously that does not work in this example.

If we test this example it should work in other areas. Let us try; do not say to other that they are not allowed to lie or steal according to God’s law, for then you suddenly start lying and stealing yourself. Anyway there should be no difference in mechanisms between the Torah and the profane legislation. Both would lead to more offences, or rather incite worse behaviour. In fact it should be preferable to repeal all legislation because it goads into undesirable behaviour. Although this reasoning is not correct according to logic,

¹⁰ Page 3 of the study “Law versus Grace” on www.gracebase.nl which is a translation of a study as given by the New Creation Church in Singapore.

it seems obvious to everyone that you do not have to be a scholar to refute this.

Next is another reasoning which cannot bear the laws of logic; law brings sin to light. The law is no longer valid so we do not commit sin anymore. At any rate, it might be possible that we still do bad things, but we should not call this sin, because then we would fall back on the law, because the law names sin and the law is no longer valid. One will see that followers of Joseph Prince do not like to talk about sin anymore. Sin has a relation with the law and talking about sin is in proportion with talking about the law. In a later section we will ascertain that Joseph Prince really thinks that we do not commit sin anymore; since Jesus died for us nothing can come between us and God. We are justified forever, no matter what kind of good and bad things we are going to do in the future and no matter the degree of it. In fact God has predestined a certain group of people before the foundation of the World to be identical with the image of His Son. Those people He justified through Jesus Christ. In the later sections it will become much clearer to the reader why sin cannot have a place anymore in Joseph Prince's Theology.

Status of Sin

Although Joseph Prince wants to restrict the use of the word "sin" as much as possible, it is of great importance to examine how they think of sin within this theology. This takes us to a remarkable conclusion.

Even the Singapore Theology says we can still do things that God actually not wants. But in fact these are no longer sins in the sense as we are used to call them. For this would mean that it could come between God and us. They bring forward the following text:

Romans 5:20

"But the law entered so that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

Then the explanation follows: This means that the more we sin, the more God will grant us His grace. We do not forfeit God's grace. That only happens when we find ourselves in the system of the law and try to obtain God's favour instead of being completely dependent on God's grace¹¹.

¹¹ Page 11 of the study "Law versus Grace" of www.gracebase.nl which is a literal translation of a study by the New Creation Church in Singapore Joseph Prince

Let's once more take a close look at Joseph Prince's statement: "If we sin God's grace comes into action. The more we sin, the more God grants us His grace.

If you read this carefully, you must reach the conclusion that it is indeed true that God's grace comes into action as we sin. In general there will be no evangelical objection about that. But from Romans 5:20 he takes the statement that when we personally commit more sin, the grace of God increases too. This is not what Romans writes. In his epistle to the Romans Paul describes a general situation in which sin does become more visible through the law, but what eventually caused the offer of Christ to bring more grace. Elsewhere in the Bible is written that he who commits great sins, will receive grace more abundantly. That is logical, because the distance between old and new is very big for these people, in the perception of the man who repents as well. But it does not activate a mechanism through which people receive more grace when they sin more and more after their conversion. The Farmer looks for the appearance of fruit and He is very patient, but it does not mean that grace increases every time sin increases. That mechanism is not correct. We did not ask Joseph Prince, but the parable of the farmer who has the tree cut down because it does not bear fruit certainly does not fit in Joseph Prince's theory. Within his theory you never would have been a tree (not shaped after His image from the foundation of the world) or you never would have been cut down (from the foundation of the world shaped after His image).

Another example proves that the "100% Grace Theology" has a different view on sin.

"When he sins, he knows he is silly when he tries to fulfil the law once again by trying to regain God through his deeds. He knows it is useless to condemn himself, or feel guilty about his sins." ¹²

Once again the writer directs us in a certain direction. I do not believe at all that evangelical Christians think that – if they have committed sin – they try to regain God through their actions. Many Christians are aware they did not please God and ask for forgiveness. People are aware they need God's grace. It is not impossible that you still try to live in line with God's guidelines. But the writer states as well that it is useless to feel guilty over your sins. This is striking for even if a law was out of the question you could still feel guilty if you had lied or stolen because you know God does not like this. If God has written this law in our heart a certain form of guilt would suit it. God demands that we will please Him. Feeling guilty is a healthy mechanism just like feeling pain when you step on a nail. Hopefully it has a learning function.

¹² Page 9 of the study as described in the former footnote.

But exactly here it gradually becomes clear that Prince and his people have a different view of sin. It is believed that Christians are saved forever and cannot lose their salvation. More than that, if you are chosen from the foundation of the World, you are shaped after the image of God's Son and sin cannot hurt you ever again. In the next sections we will delve deeper into this.

Sin is a very interesting subject in the preaching of the New Creation Church in Singapore. It is a subject that is hard to place and if you read carefully they do not know how to cope with it. They constantly emphasize the justification through the Lord Jesus. By that they seem to be on the good side, for if you focus attention on Jesus Christ you are right. But they have a special way to do so. First of all, Prince literally says:

"You are a sinner! but not because you sin, but because Adam sinned."

Again it seems partly true. The Bible clearly says that sin came into the world through a man (the first man). In other words: before Adam no one sinned, so he was the first to open the door and allow sin to enter (in fact it was Eve). Remark from the workgroup: Although we can almost completely agree with the anonymous author, we think that in the point mentioned below, when it comes to original sin, his explanation is too simple. In the evangelical and religious world there are too many different views on the theological concept of original sin to put it this "simple". That is why the workgroup gave this short comment.

However, something interesting is going on. Explicitly no emphasis is laid on our own sins, but on Adam's sins. Of course it is true that Adam was the first to sin and thus "introduced" sin. This means that we all are born in a sinful world. But it is not correct that we are sinful because (1) Adam sinned and for no other reason. If Adam had not sinned somebody else would, but in the end we have all sinned ourselves too. Right here Prince does not place any emphasis because it does not fit in the overall picture and exactly that is what it is all about here. Adam sinned so the world and everyone after him were sinful. When Jesus Christ died we were all justified (at least those who were predestined) and so we should acknowledge that we ourselves **never** were in a sinful state.

With that we sometimes do things that God does not like, but since we are already "once and for all" justified, this does not correspond anymore with the definition of sinners. Actually, for the chosen ones sin stopped in retroaction when Jesus rose from the dead. If you consider it from this theory it is safe to say that Prince is able to make the circle round. But then you must agree with the fact that Christians before the foundation of the world were already personally destined to be shaped after the image of His Son (as opposed to not-chosen ones) and it cannot be but we all were actually always justified. Since we live in that state (and cannot change anything about it) we can also state that

Christians never backslide or sin. In that protected position God actually does not see our sins anymore, because chosen ones do not end up in sin anymore since the resurrection of Jesus. And if we do something wrong we immediately receive His grace. It is up to the reader to decide what he thinks of this.

The English text will appeal even more to some

*“Man is a sinner because of what Adam had done, not because he sins — he sins because he has inherited Adam's sinful nature.
Likewise, a Christian is righteous because of what Jesus Christ had done on the cross, not because he does good -- he does good because Christ is in him.
When we were sinners, our good deeds could not undo what Adam had done and make us righteous. Similarly, now that we are righteous, our bad deeds or sins cannot undo what Christ had done and make us unrighteous!”*

If you do not sharply analyse what is said, as reader you are inclined to think the above is a nice parallel. If you still doubt how we interpret this here, wait with you judgment until you have read all. For we will not skate on thin ice, before we really state anything.

Asking for Forgiveness

If sin actually does not exist for a Christian any longer, because the law does not apply any longer, than it is quite useless to ask for forgiveness for bad things. That is right according to the Singapore Theology. Prince states: *“Exactly through grace you are dead for sin and you can stop sinning.”*

If you go and ask for forgiveness, you actually immediately deny grace. You see it is like this; instead of receiving undeserved favour, we earn our forgiveness by asking for it. Here again Prince draws a very special conclusion: he states that if we ask for forgiveness, we want to earn it ourselves. Of course this is a very strange conclusion, as if God in the Bible did not say Himself that He wants to forgive us if we confess our sin. And now Prince says we earn it ourselves by asking for it. But this statement by Prince does not stand alone, it marks a way of thinking that is way beyond, “the doctrine of predestination”.

The essence being Prince stating that we have actually already reached a situation of predestination and that nothing can alter that. Every time we think we have done something wrong and worry or feel guilty about it, we act like Christ's offering was in vain. God has forgiven us once and for all. That is not consistent at all with the fact that Jesus Himself teaches us to pray that God will forgive our sins, just like we will

forgive those who have sinned against us. So there is a connection between these two issues. If God had forgiven us once and for all and from the very start, why shouldn't we have forgiven those who have sinned against us right from the start. That question remains unanswered.

A Christian Can Never Lose His Salvation

An aspect that keeps on coming up – and fits in the “once saved, forever saved” – theology is that forgiveness is not necessary time and again. The text quoted herewith is that Christ has died once and for all. (Hebr.10:12-13) Only Prince translates it completely different, though with the same words. He states that our sins are forgiven once and for all. So everyone who accepts Christ (and God new beforehand which people this would be) has been forgiven from all his historical but especially coming sins as well. For according to Prince Christ died once and for all for our sins. But an attentive reader will see that this is not written at all. It says that Christ only had to die once for the sins of humanity and not time and again. We can still appeal to the offering of 2000 years ago and it is still powerful. Even if we have committed sin and seek forgiveness we can still appeal to this and that grace does not lose strength at all. But Prince goes a bit further by pretending that the Bible at that spot says that our **coming** sins as well are beforehand forgiven once and for all and we should not keep on reminding God. Asking forgiveness would be wrong in itself and shows that we do not understand at all, according to Prince. He states that if we keep on asking for forgiveness we actually say to Jesus: You did not forgive my (coming) sins once and for all so every time I do something wrong I keep on asking for it. Thus we ignore the offering on the cross. The Bible teaches something different than Prince, because the Bible says that if we continue to sin we ignore the offering which is opposite to the thought of Prince. Here too is question of a minor change in explanation that has major consequences, but fits to get the circle round within this theory.

The “once and for all” refers to the death of Jesus Christ, so He did not have to die again every few hundred years as the heap of rubbish of humanity had towered again. The “once and for all” does not beforehand refer to personal coming sins which actually were forgiven 2000 years ago, regardless of the way we turn in and regardless whether we are sorry or not. There is forgiveness while awareness of sin is no longer necessary. Awareness of sin seems a sin in itself according to Prince's view.

If we do not apply a deeper analysis here it will easily happen that we take over Prince's reasoning and end up in a very different

place than where the Bible wants us. Although the Bible tells us we should test this all the time, there are still a lot of people who take for granted what they are being told. Testing is absolutely necessary and it is what the Bible teaches.

In its study "a Christian cannot lose his salvation" the New Creation Church gives an example which will not stand up.

"A caterpillar turns into a butterfly and the butterfly is predestined to fly to flowers. But even if it ends up in a pile of trash it does not change back to a caterpillar. Finally it will go to the flowers, because that is its nature. That too is the case with Christians; even if they do wrong things, they cannot continue sinning, because it simply is not their nature."

It proves not to be very hard to demonstrate that the analogy with the caterpillar and the butterfly does not hold good with Christians.

For readers who doubt whether the New Creation Church really believes in predestination, we quote a piece of literally text from the study "a Christian cannot lose this salvation"¹⁵. In this study reference is made to Ephesians 1: 4-6 and Romans 8: 29

"Predestination simply says that God, in His foreknowledge, knew who would accept His Son and who would not. He then predestinated those who would believe in Jesus Christ to be saved and glorified.

Predestination is beautiful because it says that it was God's wil, love and pleasure to save us. He did not do it reluctantly. Neither was God's salvation plan a "last-minute" thing or afterthought. No, God predestinated us to be saved even before the creation of the world! The very idea of predestination implies that God knows all things beforehand. He is, after all, omniscient and not bound by time. So, why would God predestinate someone "to be conformed to the image of his Son" when He knows beforehand that this person would eventually renounce Christ and "lose his salvation" (assuming that that is possible)? The very purpose of predestination and God's perfect foreknowledge contradict this."

Should there be readers who manage to find an example of a Christian who was really on the right path and nevertheless has completely turned away from that path, that is impossible according to the view of the New Creation Church. That means, it is possible that someone has gone astray, but in that case he actually has never been on the right path. More than that, he has never been a Christian and he was never predestined too. Because if he had been predestined, this could never have happened. Although the Bible a few times refers to believers who went astray and for whom it becomes impossible to turn back, the New Creation Church wrote a study "once saved, always saved" for this purpose, in short

¹⁵ From the study "a Christian cannot lose his salvation" which can be downloaded on www.gracebase.nl

it comes down to the fact that this kind of text either refer to Jews or refer to people who have never been predestined Christians.

The New Creation Church emphasizes that God sent His Son to die for the sins of ALL people. It remains unclear whether there is question of a kind of all reconciliation teachings. In fact this would not be possible because the last teaching assumes that unbelievers will eventually bow their knees and will be reconciled with God regardless the sins they have committed and the Offering they did not acknowledge. That does not tally with the doctrine of predestination that assumes that we as Christians are predestined. There is not enough literature of the New Creation Church available on this subject. For the time being it is impossible to determine whether this Theology places itself behind the all reconciliation teachings, in any case it places itself behind the doctrine of predestination.

It is unclear what the place of evangelism could be if you believe that Christians are predestined and non-Christians are not. Joseph Prince does not say anything about this, at least not in the lectures and studies of which I dispose of.

Our Conscience

Haven't we always learned that the Holy Spirit can convince us of sins but also sharpens our conscience. This can easily be tested in practice. People who live close to God generally have a rather conservative conscience. They rather stay close to the core than to walk on the edge. As soon as we allow a certain sin in our life our conscience will speak to us. But there is another voice as well that says it is not too bad at all. We chose to which voice we will listen. If we go on we will not feel comfortable, but gradually we put forward arguments for ourselves in order to justify what we do wrong. If we consistently maintain these sins there comes a time when we do not hear the voice of our conscience anymore. Our conscience does not press charges against us anymore. The Singapore Theology states that the Holy Spirit writes the law in your heart but does not tackle you about your sins. This is an almost inexplicable combination. So there is no role left for your conscience. The Holy Spirit causes you to live a pure life all the time, but it leaves you yourself totally out.

The Lord's Prayer

If sins does not play a role anymore, how should we henceforth pray The Lord's Prayer? This was a prayer that Jesus taught us Himself, didn't He?

For the NCC this is not an easy part in the Bible, since Jesus teaches us to pray: Forgive us our trespasses.....

The reaction to that part is quite logical. The NCC states that The Lord's Prayer is not a prayer but you should pray it otherwise:

"Of course You will not lead us in temptation, of course You give us our daily bread, of course You have forgiven our trespasses.

For this interpretation there is no foundation at all in the Bible.

Healing Through Holy Communion

The New Creation Church has very unusual ideas about the Holy Communion. Joseph Prince brought out a booklet called: *"Health and Wholeness through the Holy Communion."* To prevent misunderstandings we quote a part of the English text from Prince's book below, in which he puts the Holy Communion in a certain light.

"As long as we are here on earth, our bodies are subject to the ageing process, which is part of the divine sentence. All our bodies are decaying every day. Our brain cells are dying daily.

The Holy Communion is God's solution for us to stop the decay. And even your friends will see the results. They will begin to ask you, "Hey, why do you seem to look younger and younger? You never seem to age!"

One day, when we get to heaven, we will have brand new bodies that never grow old, never tire and never look bad. Meanwhile, the Lord's Supper is how God helps us offset this process of ageing and walk in divine health. Every time you partake, you are reversing the effects of the curse or divine judgment in your body..."

Prince states that the Holy Communion is meant to bring divine healing to our body and even prevent the process of ageing of the body. Each time you take Holy Communion you reverse the process of ageing in your body. Perhaps we could quickly undergo this test and test it with Joseph Prince too.

Prince states that there is actually only one reason why many people are weak and many pass away (1 Co 11: 30 ff) and this is because Christians do not acknowledge the "body and blood of Christ". If we would acknowledge the body of Christ while taking Holy Communion we would not be weak and sickly and not experience untimely death. Prince declares that acknowledging the body means that we must acknowledge the healing power of the body of Christ. If we do so we will be healed ourselves by taking Holy Communion. The point is that we acknowledge and confess the healing power of the bread (read body) of the Holy Communion. Except for the fact that Prince does not found this thesis at all, the Bible clearly says that the Holy Communion was instituted to His memory and the proclamation of His death until He comes. That there is healing in the Name

of the Lord Jesus and that we have to acknowledge His body is directly interrelated with the Holy Communion by Joseph Prince. Here he even connects things directly together. Prince states:

Every time you partake, you are reversing the effects of the curse or divine judgment in your body...".....As you partake, you will get better over time. The more you partake, the better you get."

Prince states too that Jesus says we "often" should celebrate Holy Communion;

"do as Jesus said - have it often." ...How often? ... It depends on how much you want His health and wholeness."

Only this is not completely what He says: "whenever" you do this, which has a completely different meaning. Although Prince probably thinks that if something is good for man it is best to do it more often, the Bible does not give any suggestion of "how often" it should be done and it does not give any connection between the number of times we take Holy Communion and the extent in which we will feel better. So as often as you do something means "whenever you do something".

The Bible says: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church" (Jam. 5: 14). It says nowhere that he should take Holy Communion. If that had been better, the Bible would have said so. Does that mean it is not good to take Holy Communion when you are ill? No, certainly not, but with Prince it seems you must be wakeful all the time for that circle reasoning. That Holy Communion is good and you want to be healed does not mean that you will be healed when you take Holy Communion.

In Luke 22 and 1 Co. 11 it says nothing but Holy Communion was meant to "remember Him"!

In Acts 2:42 it says the new believers "persisted in the teachings of the apostles and community, breaking bread and praying". Prince states that the believers thought those things were important which God thought were important:

"They made a big deal out of what God made a big deal"

If God thought breaking bread was important (a big deal) the believers too thought that was important (here again comes the circle reasoning) and Prince states that Holy Communion was a channel of God's healing and wholeness. Prince applies very strange circles in his reasoning. He might as well say that we should all go to Gethsemane to be with God, because Jesus went to Gethsemane to be with His Father.

"Holy Communion as a key channel of health of wholeness for His people"

In his book “Health and Wholeness through the Holy Communion” Prince gives another nice example: He knows people who are so radical that they take Holy Communion as a medicine, three times a day. And they see radical results through this.

It is not our intention to make in any way fun of the statements, that is exactly why we constantly refer to the booklets written by Joseph Prince himself, so the reader can go back and look for it in its context. We do not intent to take issues out of their context and we invite everyone to read the texts in the books of Prince for themselves.

It certainly says in the Bible that the believers occupied themselves with breaking the bread because that is what we have just read in Acts 2. But they thought it was important because it was Jesus’ command to keep on doing this to remember Him until He would return. They thought this was going to happen real soon. But it actually says nowhere in the Bible that the believers thought there was healing power in taking Holy Communion. Probably Prince implicitly refers to the fact that the Bible says that we are healed by His stripes¹⁵ and that the bread must be compared with His body. The connection does exist but in that case there is no relation with Holy Communion itself. The canonization of Holy Communion is rather done by, among others, the Roman Catholic Church, but has no biblical foundation neither.

The Word Faith Theology

Prince states in his booklet *The Law Does, Faith Speaks* that we are nor saved by the Law nor by good deeds. With both statements we can agree. He does not state that we are saved by “obedience to the faith”. He explains this by stating that one is not saved by what one does or does not do, but by what one believes and declares. This “declaring” has an important function. In itself quite alright, as the reader might say, because confessing your Faith puts something into action in the spiritual realm. But here this declaring has a strong similarity with the “Word Faith Theology” which had great success in Asia but also in the USA. About 20 years ago there was a pastor in South Korea, Yonggi Cho, who published a booklet which caused a great deal of controversy: *The Power of Positive Thinking*. If you read this booklet you cannot avoid a very positive feeling. It is about believing in something and starting to declare that it will happen. This pastor of course

¹⁴ Page 45 of the booklet mentioned above.

¹⁵ Is 53:5 and 1Pe 2:24

associates that with spiritual issues and even his whole church was built by the power of positive thinking. Generating positive thoughts to put things into action has a strong connection with Buddhism, and this kind of theologies do not coincidentally find breeding ground in this kind of regions because they are familiar with it from childhood. Note, again this does not say that the Bible does not teach us to think positively. But we see that this pastor made this to methodology which, by the way, laid a burden just like that on man as keeping the law. Because there where the attempts to reach health and prosperity fail, people are stirred once again to confess positively and really believe in it this time. In the end it seems positive but the burden is at least as heavy. It only sounds friendlier than keeping a law, because we do not like that by nature and we never really seem to succeed. Yonggi Cho lead a church of over 850.000 people in Seoul and introduced "the fourth dimension" and envisioning. Every human being is literally able to let something incubate in the physical realm and let it happen by creating a vivid image of it in his spirit and concentrate on this. Read God's word, than think positively, speak positively, envision positively and then it will happen. Man lives in the physical realm (the third dimension), but Cho mentioned that God had personally showed him that all humans are spiritual as well as carnal beings. So they have the fourth dimension in their hearts and through the skill to concentrate on images in their imagination they can influence the third dimension. Cho links to what the Holy Spirit did when he moved upon the waters. God told Cho that Buddhists as well influence the third dimension in the fourth dimension, but that in fact all human beings are able to and we should do it too¹⁶. He admits that this is a christened version of what Buddhists do. The difference is that Cho is helped by the Holy Spirit. The only thing we must do is keeping our thoughts clean. Here is a difference with the thoughts of Joseph Prince, for he states that we should not try on our own to keep our thoughts clean, because then we try by ourselves again. Visualizing is the key to health and financial prosperity and that is what God wants for us in the end. Lack of ability to imagine is our own case, but you must constantly put this into practice. The point is that there must be focus on the subconscious thought¹⁷. Cho has developed a methodology which we can apply. Popularly said this theory is called the "name it and claim it"-approach. To enforce his theory he drags in the Bible. This is not the same as getting to the same theory from the Bible.

This is called mentalism

¹⁷ Possibility thinking, positive confession and affirmations, self-esteem, imaging, "inner healing" and visualization all branch from the family tree of reprogramming the invisible subconscious mind. True believing does not take place in the conscious mind but rather in the subconscious. Similarly, positive confession, affirmations, and visualization "create reality" for the subconscious mind. "Inner healing" works on the basis that healing takes place through reprogramming the subconscious mind with a "positive" experience

.Here too we see that this kind of theologies originate in countries and regions where a number of this kind of ideas have found breeding ground in the culture of the people. That does not say that it is therefore wrong by definition and from the very start. There are definitely points where this kind of theories have an interface with our evangelical view. We can definitely state that we, as Christians in the western world probably are too little aware of our role in the spiritual realm and we leave something behind there. But apart from our backgrounds we have only God's Word as basis and quite often we cannot match these theories with it, although they seem positive and nice at first sight. The number of followers and even the number of wonders in such a church are no arguments; the Bible is clear about that.

Let's follow up on that "Word Faith Theology" on which many American preachers have build their emporium. As a rule in these theologies the "wealth and health" aspect comes forward strongly. In view of texts and studies of Prince you could conclude that "wealth and health", "Word Faith" and "visualizing" are not unimportant aspects in his preaching. By this I do not rank him for 100 % with the prosperity teachers, but you can't avoid stating that there is quite a number of interfaces. Though the prosperity teachers focus attention on Jesus Christ as well in their preaching. They think that grace through Jesus plays a part in much more fields than justification only and that we should highlight all these aspects. But attention is focussed on Jesus in such a way that it is constantly emphasized that Jesus wishes for nothing better than making us happy, healthy and prosperous. Not we becoming smaller so God can do His work, but we becoming bigger and Jesus being focussed on us. The question is whether Jesus comes forward as central point and goal in our lives or as a person focused on us who focuses his attention on us? Prosperity Teaching has negative connotation and supporters of the Joseph Prince Theology will want to offer resistance. It would be better not to use the idea "prosperity teaching" and especially go into its contents. It is just hard to find another term, because with respect to content a lot corresponds with this theory.

Should there arise a discussion on this visualizing or positive thinking or the "wealth and prosperity" teaching then the Bible is shortly dragged into. Although it is not possible to build the theory from the Bible it is true that you can find some scriptural passages to found a theory for nearly every theory. Followers of the theories mentioned above drag in the passage that God has purposes for you, purposes of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope (Jer. 29:11), because Jesus has come to give us life abundantly. The majority of listeners will think: There is something to it, I have indeed heard that scriptural passage before. It sounds good to me as well.

Is it true that the theories mentioned above have common ground with New Age? That would be a quite heavy allegation. Yet we should not pass it by just like that. In the West we have been quite heavily indoctrinated by Roman Catholicism and Calvinism. We can with difficulty forget this and we must find that for ages we have been taught things that find not enough basis in the Bible. New Age seems a scary term, but in fact New Age is nothing more than an accumulation of all kind of methods, doctrines and elements from various oriental religions, among which Buddhism.

Oriental Influences

Assuming that Prince often says very good things about the place grace should have. That is exactly the point: Sometimes he is right, but often only on one side of the story and referring to only one part.

Some accuse him of prosperity teaching and others of New Age influences. Of course, that does not mean that he preaches New Age, absolutely not, but the backgrounds of faith in Asia apparently do have influence, just like Calvinism has had a strong hold on our way of thinking. The “Power of positive thinking” is uplifted to an almost divine mechanisms, even above God’s sovereignty. Another aspect which can be heard is “visualization”, which is explained in the chapter above. This in itself is no prove that Prince's message is wrong and neither that nothing of his preaching is right. But even good preachers must be alert for the influences which play a role.

It is interesting to see how strongly it is advised against to trust in one’s own and comply with the law on one’s own, while proclaiming in faith, visualizing and spiritually claiming positions, is overemphasized. If this eventually fails, the same feeling of guilt is with the believer because he did not exercise enough faith and imagined spiritually.

Visualising is one of the most prominent techniques used in Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), a method to get in control over situation and to change situation through mental imagination. NLP is a method originating in New Age and often used in management training. Some kind of (sometimes transcendental) meditation is useful for NLP, because you will get better and better in visualizing.

So although positive thinking definitely has a better result than thinking negatively and the Bible teaches us to think positively (believe that you have already received it..) this form of visualisation is really very close to

people heal their own body of cancer or improve their immune system. Anyway, NLP to a lot of Dutch people is in the alternative circuit, while it is a much more accepted method in Asia, just like a lot of employees take part in yoga before they start working.

The Singapore Theology states that Peter and Paul do not teach us that illness and accidents can be part of our suffering on earth and it is stated that suffering through illness or accidents is by definition something brought to us by Satan. And then it says.....illness is a part of the curse of the law. So when we are ill, it means we are still under the curse of the Law, because it says that he who is under the law is under the curse.

This reasoning is completely wrong for a couple of reasons.

If Paul and Peter do not say that illnesses and accidents can be part of a Christian's suffering this does not mean you can – simply for the fact they do not mention it – draw the conclusion that it is therefore true. It would have been different if they DID have mentioned that it could NOT be part of a Christian's suffering. If I do not mention something it does not mean that I do mean it. An academic completely wrong conclusion drawn by Prince. Paul did not mention the World to be round either, let alone Peter and yet the world was round anyway.

Moreover ever person who honestly thinks, draws the conclusion that there are a lot of illnesses which can simply not be reasoned nor explained and that is why we earthly creatures have to do with an imperfect world and a world with many influences against which we are not always guarded, though we are sometimes protected against them.

Prince states that there is actually one true reason why Christians are ill and weak and die prematurely and that is because they do not acknowledge the healing power of the Body. He states that possession (by a demon spirit) and illness are treated the same way in the Bible because they both stem from the devil¹⁸. In Acts 10:38 it says that Jesus went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. Now Joseph Prince is going to give an explanation that should to no one be hard to refute, yet is revealing. Prince says that Jesus went about healing all that were oppressed of the devil. From this he draws the conclusion that Jesus healed only people who were oppressed by the devil and that therefore all people he healed were oppressed by the devil. In all Prince's books you see the same way of reasoning over and over again

¹⁸ Booklet "Health and Wholeness Through the Holy Communion", page 37

and he draws conclusions which cannot be drawn at all based on what is written in that verse. Jesus healed people who were oppressed by the devil, but it was not true that all people who were ill were oppressed by the devil. So you cannot state that everyone who is ill is oppressed by the devil. A raven is a bird but that does not make all birds ravens. It does not involve the fact that people who are oppressed cannot be ill and it does not involve that they can be instantly healed the moment they are set free either. In other words: connections cannot be linked up indiscriminately. Being ill is not always because of demon possession. However in his books Joseph Prince is very firm about this. Just like forgiveness “being healthy” is not only a promise but a God-given right for every Christian. If you are ill, you must conclude that you are under the curse. ¹⁹

If we - as Joseph Prince says - have come from under the law, we are away from the curse and we will become financially prosperous and healthy because of His grace. The other way round it is true that we must ascribe illness and poverty to being under the law and the curse with which it is connected. If people in a congregation are ill, it means that they are under the curse as well, which is the direct result of being under the law. So, you can believe in the offer of the Lord Jesus and you can only receive justification through that (what we expect within the evangelical teaching), but as soon as you try to live by the law only a little, it seems as if you dispute that that people speak about the law in any case because it involves danger. At the same time this theology says that the law is holy, righteous and good. That is bound to be because Romans 7 speaks about it, but Prince immediately adds that the law is strict, unbendable and unrelentingly. This does not leave much of holy and good, because who can find something like that good. But that is not too bad because in the end the good things (not the commandments and interdictions) of the law will be written in your heart anyway. And thus the circle seems round again.

conclusion

The theology preached by Joseph Prince does not stand alone. Speakers in the United States as well handle this basis for their preaching. It is striking, however, that to many Christians it is not even so easy to make the distinction at first sight. The many one-liners seems to sound nice and they are even partly true. That is because these speakers connect their use of word to the use of word as we know it from within the evangelical movement. Moreover, a number of issues is wrapped in such a way that it does not

¹⁹ Same booklet, page 36

predominate and you have to dig deep to reach the roots of the theology, but if you do so, you really will see a big difference. For example, you hear Prince rarely utter explicitly that they actually preach the predestination teaching and other precarious subject are avoided during lectures. When we once deeper study the points of departure of this movement, we will discover the big differences in the lectures and books, and we will understand the language they use and especially the undertone given to it. Due to this the thought behind this theology seems to be able to enter the congregation very easily. Closer examination shows that on common Christian websites as well (even the EO, the Dutch Evangelical Broadcast) speakers of this range of thought are given a clear field to pass these thoughts over. They choose not to discuss the most extreme thoughts but proponents of the theology can bring the basic ideas in the open.

Anyway we take the view that most speakers preach the message from a sincerity and some have not yet searched very deep into the roots and backgrounds. Perhaps this study can add to it. Finally we hope that Jesus will be central for who He really is.

As listeners we are obliged to investigate for ourselves. Research into the principles of every stream of thoughts but also the fruit. A theory which is strongly aimed at man as centre and which feels good because there are hardly any obligations, does not necessarily carry good fruit because of this, of course. In fact it could lay a very brittle basis for young Christians and we gather all kind of teachers because our ears are spoilt.

Although this document is not meant to map the whole range of ideas of Joseph Prince, it gradually became clear that the theology of the New Creation Church is of a different calibre than we know within the Dutch Full Evangelical Church. It is difficult that the investigation requires sharpness to reject the circular reasoning.

Lord, if we do not see Your Word clear anymore, how light will our path be? Have Your Holy Spirit opening our spirit to the real clearness of Your Word and grant us Wisdom. Lead us along your ways so we do not rely on our own understanding.

This text is only meant for private use, it is only a rough copy and a pamphlet. According to the anonymous writer.

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