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# DISCERNMENT NEWSLETTER

“...how is it that ye do not discern this time?” Luke 12:56

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## World/Church

*The World says “New Age” “New Era” “New Sign”*  
*The Church says “New Thing” “New Breed” “New Wine”*

*The World says “One World” “One Order” “One Plight”*  
*The Church says “Join Forces” “Network” “Unite”*

*The World says “Mystic Powers” “Metaphysics” “Open Mind”*

*The Church says “Experience the Supernatural”*  
*“Leave Faith Behind”*

*The World says “Symbols” “Idols” “Spiritual Ties”*  
*The Church says “Close your eyes and visualize”*

*The World says “Transcendental Meditation”*  
*“The Church says “Further Revelation”*

*The World says “Revive the Age Old Tradition”*  
*The Church says “Prophecy, Dream, Have Vision”*

*The World says “Astrology- your future intent”*  
*The Church says “The Spirit-filled Temperament”*

*While the World chants their mantra faithfully*  
*The Church laughs out hysterically*

*The World says “Bad Karma-Reincarnate”*  
*The Church says “Psychology Determines your Fate”*

*The World says “Man is God and God is Man”*  
*The Church says “How Great I Am, How Great I am”*

*The World says “Maitreya is soon to Appear”*  
*While the Church turns a blind eye and a deaf ear*

*The World says “The Man of Peace is here now”*  
*While the Church in bending did finally bow*

—By Julie Leo

## Looking Back

By Jewel Grewe

The above poem was penned in 2006 and appeared in a newsletter at that time. When we look back and realize how the spiritual “climate” of the church has changed in the last fifty years beyond comprehension. In my lifetime I can recall the “beginnings” of what has become

commonplace today broadcasted throughout the world on so-called “Christian” television. The place was South St. Paul, Minnesota. Daddy was an Assemblies of God pastor.

The Minneapolis/St. Paul area was a favorite ministry venue as The Evangelistic Auditorium had been started in an old theatre downtown Minneapolis. The first evangelist to hold meetings was William Branham, followed by Oral Roberts, A.A. Allen, Morris Cerullo, etc. A woman evangelist by the name of Fern Hufstutler arrived and was much admired by a little girl who always sat on the front row with her brother. I daydreamed that when I grew up I would also be able to sing like her and swing my arms with the long sleeves blowing. Fern actually stayed in Minneapolis as she married the head of the Evangelistic Auditorium, Russell Olson, a widower.

Besides the Auditorium, there were many tent revival meetings held in the Twin Cities area. One night particularly stands out in my mind as our family walked towards a huge white tent where Loren Fox was holding a Crusade. The air was throbbing with excitement as the organ was playing the rousing evangelistic songs of the day. In the middle of the service dark clouds gathered and sirens started wailing. The ushers ran to the pole tents and hung on as the tent swayed wildly. Soon the entire tent went into the air and bedlam ensued as the poles came crashing around. The panic stricken crowd waded through the mud in the pouring rain to nearby homes that had turned on their porch lights and welcomed the water soaked congregants until the storm died down.

The evangelists were young and enthusiastic during those days and many of them preached a very clear Gospel message. Sadly, once their “ministries” started to grow, so did their ego expand. Before long, sensationalism replaced the simplicity of the Gospel. The finances for running

their operations demanded more sensationalism and extremes. One evangelist in particular was busy “calling out diseases” in the audience, and as a young girl I sat there critically watching him and thinking, “this is ESP” (Extra-Sensory Perception). He looked straight at me and said, “This is not ESP, it is HG” (Holy Ghost). At that moment I knew there was something wrong and wasn’t too surprised when later I heard he was in prison. Sadly, many of those evangelists were a disgrace to the cause of Christ and used the “ministry” as a means for temporal gains and personal glory.

We moved to Zion, Illinois when I was 12 years of age and my father became involved with the Full Gospel Businessmen. Soon the Catholic Charismatic movement started. Fortunately our “home” place of worship was focused on Jesus and the simplicity of the Gospel. It was the “other things” that started to make me confused. Eventually I left for the mission field in Africa, met my late husband Travers van der Merwe there, and we ministered in that environment which was Biblically based and focused entirely on the Authority of the Word of God.

In 1981 we came to live and pastor in the United States. I found that things had changed! So-called “Christian television” had arrived. My husband, Travers, would question the strange new “doctrines” that we were hearing. For instance, at that time Jimmy Carter was President and his sister was making the rounds of many churches. She was teaching “inner healing.” Other “Faith Teachers” were making inroads on Christian television teaching “health and wealth.” Travers would always be a Berean. He would spend days in the Word trying to figure out if the source of this teaching was Biblical. He finally came to the conclusion that many were being duped by something that was contrary to sound doctrine.

Firstly, if the teaching did not line up, he would not only reject it, but take a strong stand. Secondly, if the teaching did not come from the literal interpretation of Scripture, there must be a serious offense to the Word of God being

committed. As he delved into the sources of the teachings he was convinced that not only was the Word of God being manipulated but used to promote the “doctrine of demons.” This did not make him popular with his peers.

About this time Constance Cumbey’s book, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow*, came out. Constance was interviewed on a television program. Travers immediately made the connection with what she said and what he had observed with Ruth Carter Stapleton. Something very subtle was slowly creeping into the Church of Jesus Christ.

Soon after this we moved across the state to the Detroit area. At that church there was a group of believers who were hungry for the Word of God. They would have “extra” times of Bible Study as their passion grew. Together they listened to tapes they had purchased from a TV ministry and then together check out the Word to see if they lined up with Scripture. The more they studied, the more the questions came. Wednesday night Bible Studies became a time of great excitement. After an opening prayer, we would immediately get into the Word of God. In the midst of this, Dave Hunt published his book, *Seduction of Christianity*. The level of excitement reached its peak! Finally! His book was a confirmation of what we earnest “Bereans” in Holly, Michigan had been earnestly studying.

Looking back, and realizing that our lives are ordered by the Lord, is humbling indeed. Step by step we can sing, *“He Leadeth Me, He Leadeth Me, by His own Hand He leadeth me.”* We were witnessing firsthand the “paradigm shift” that was about to take place in the Church worldwide. This shift was away from the simplicity of the Gospel. *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:”* (Gal. 1:5).

Some of the things my husband Travers was discovering in his studies I found hard to accept. I had many wonderful “spiritual experiences” that I thought somehow gave me a “deep” relationship with God. I thought he was trying to take those

away from me, as he would tell me that we could not build on “experience” but only on the Word. Finally, one day it hit me. He wasn’t taking away my experiences. They were mine . . . but that is what they were. . . only experiences. What was *real* was the Word of God. Though heaven and earth pass away, His Word abides forever.

We were invited at this time to Springfield, Missouri to speak at a Prophecy Conference. Friends had recently left their church to live in Kansas City to join the latest “revival” that had come on the scene. So, on the way we stopped at Kansas City to learn what was happening. People were come from around the country to be part of the “new thing.” The “Kansas City prophets” were given great honor. On our arrival we heard that “Joel’s Army” was arising, and that it was soon to sweep the country and the world. Being interested, I obtained large quantities of tapes from the ministry there. Upon our return home, my friend and I transcribed many of these tapes which we printed into a booklet form to warn others. These transcriptions were then incorporated into what is known as the “Ernie Gruen Report.”

<http://www.banner.org.uk/kcp/Abberent%20Practiseses.pdf>

After a workshop at the Prophecy Conference in Springfield, my phone was ringing incessantly requesting more information. Out of that incident I wrote the first newsletter in 1990. At the time it was to simply answer the questions that I did not have time to discuss over the telephone. Being a full time mother, pastor’s wife and legal secretary did not give much free time for research, let alone long telephone calls. I thought I could just simply mail out the newsletter. So the plan was to just write one. Twenty-four years later there are still questions and still newsletters, as that was just the beginning of the “paradigm shift” that has taken place in the church.

Before his death in 1995, during one of his sermons, Travers turned to me and said, “*Never give up contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*” (Jude 3,4). Obviously, already in Biblical times the Faith had to be guarded carefully and not taken for granted. There

were already those who wanted to pervert the truth and bring in another gospel.

## The True Origins of the Prosperity Gospel

By Pastor Anton Bosch

The prosperity gospel has to be one of the grandest deceptions of all time. A *Time* poll conducted in the USA in 2006, produced the following statistics:

“17% of Christians surveyed said they considered themselves part of such a movement, while a full 61% believed that God wants people to be prosperous. And 31% – a far higher percentage than there are Pentecostals in America – agreed that if you give your money to God, God will bless you with more money” (*Time*, Sept. 10, 2006).

From America the message has permeated the whole world, most notably Nigeria where two of the biggest promoters are David Oyedepo, whose Canaanland church seats 55,000, and Enoch Adeboye, whose Redeemed Christian Church of God claims branches in over one hundred countries, 14,000 branches in Nigeria, and 5 million members in Nigeria alone. In 2008 *Newsweek* magazine listed him as one of the 50 most powerful people in the world.

The prosperity message has mutated into many variants that all share certain common traits and roots. A closely related teaching to the prosperity message is the “word-of-faith” teaching with its erroneous views on faith. Many regard these errors as the same thing and while they are related and claim to produce the same fruit, their doctrinal and historical roots differ. The word-of-faith message developed simultaneously and parallel to the prosperity message, but its roots trace back through EW Kenyon to Christian Science, while prosperity’s roots trace back through Oral Roberts to Napoleon Hill. This article therefore only deals with the roots of the prosperity gospel which can be summed up as “give to God and He will give

back to you” or “sowing and reaping”. (Word of faith is summed up in “name it and claim it” aka “blab it and grab it.”)

### **Fruits from Roots**

Even to the casual student of Scripture it is clear that the prosperity gospel is another gospel which preaches another Jesus (2Corinthians 11:4). This message preys on people’s greed and lust for money and lures the greedy into a religion which worships Mammon rather than the true God. The fruit clearly defines this as a doctrine of devils. “*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*” (1 Timothy 4:1). But what are the roots of this teaching? The conclusion of this brief article will shock you, but should not come as a surprise.

### **Roots**

Most of the modern proponents are second or even third generation prosperity preachers. Most of them will have been influenced, either directly or indirectly by one of three men: Kenneth Hagin (1917-2003); Kenneth Copeland (1936-); or Fred Price (1932-). These three in turn were influenced by Oral Roberts (1918 – 2009), who has to be dubbed the father of the prosperity Gospel.

### **Hagin, Copeland, Price**

In 1967 Kenneth Copeland attended Oral Roberts University (ORU) where he also worked as one of Roberts’ pilots. This afforded Copeland the opportunity to see Roberts in action at his healing crusades and to learn first-hand from Roberts. But during his first year at ORU he heard a tape of Hagin and he and his wife, instantly became disciples of Hagin.

Like the Copelands, Fred Price also credits Hagin as the greatest influence in his life and ministry. Thus almost all prosperity preachers trace their roots back to Kenneth Hagin. But where did Hagin get the teaching from?

In his book *How God Taught Me About Prosperity* (1985), Hagin says: “The Lord Himself taught me about prosperity. I never read about it in a book. *I got it directly from heaven*” [Emphasis his]. According to Hagin, he received this revelation in 1959.

But by the time Hagin received his “revelation”, both Oral Roberts and AA Allan had already been preaching the message for about ten years. (Hagin and Roberts were based in the same city – Tulsa, Oklahoma.) Allan published quite a few books promoting prosperity, while Roberts was using his radio ministry and campaigns to spread the message. Allan was the first to refer to poverty as a “spirit.” But in the long run Allan’s influence on modern prosperity teaching was relatively minor and short-lived in comparison to that of Roberts. For this reason we will not pursue the AA Allan thread even though his legacy of greed, lust and drunkenness confirms the source of the teaching. In the light of the fact that both Roberts and Allan were promoting this doctrine long before Hagin, Hagin’s claim that he had not been influenced by any man is therefore not true.

### **Oral Roberts**

This brings us to Oral Roberts. During 1947 Oral Roberts had come to a crisis in his life and ministry. One morning he opened the Bible and was struck by 3John 2 (“*I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers*”). This was a kind of epiphany for Roberts. Roberts and his wife would look back at that moment as “the point of embarkation.” Soon after this revelation, Roberts would receive what he believed to be practical confirmation of the fact that God wanted him to prosper materially. Through the agency of Roberts’ neighbor who owned a Buick dealership, Roberts was able to acquire a brand new Buick. The neighbor, Mr Gustavus, managed to get a very good price for Robert’s old car and helped him to get a new Buick at “dealer’s cost,” which was not much more

than they got for the old car. This was in the postwar months when new cars were practically unobtainable. According to Roberts the “new car became a symbol to me of what a man can do if he would believe God” (David Edwin Harrell. *Oral Roberts: An American Life*).

Roberts immediately began to preach the prosperity message. By 1954 he was promising refunds to people who gave him money and who did not receive the amount of their gift returned to them, from an unexpected source, within a short period. In 1955 he published his first book on the topic entitled “*God’s Formula for Success and Prosperity*.” Note that this was four years before Hagin received his “revelation.” This was followed by a number of other books on the topic.

It was only in 1970 that he published the book “*Miracle of Seed-Faith*,” which became the book that had the biggest impact in terms of spreading the message across the world.<sup>[1]</sup> The idea of “seed faith” was based on the principle of sowing and reaping, and it taught that anything you sow into God’s Kingdom will result in an abundant return. This applied especially to money, but also to things like time, energy, love etc. Elements of Seed-Faith are still present in the theology of all modern prosperity preachers.

But there was one major influence that resulted in Roberts coming to these beliefs, which we must examine if we are to discover the true roots of this teaching. That man was none other than Napoleon Hill (1883-1970).<sup>[2]</sup> Roberts was inspired by Hill’s 1937 book *Think and Grow Rich* and had established a close and longstanding relationship with Hill.

### **Napoleon Hill**

*Your Magic Power to Be Rich* is a 2007 compendium of several of Hill’s books. On page 207, in the foreword to *The Magic Ladder to Success*, the editor, Patricia G. Horan says: “The likes of Dale Carnegie,

Norman Vincent Peale, and Oral Roberts became devotees and sometimes shared speaking platforms with Hill.”

It is abundantly clear that Hill had an enormous influence on Roberts, and that Robert’s views on prosperity were largely shaped by Napoleon Hill. Hill had a “Law of Compensation” which operated the same as Roberts’ principles of Seed-Faith. (Robert Tilton, amongst others, unashamedly uses the Law of Compensation – a blatant copy of Hill’s formula). We would need to devote several more chapters to examine Hill’s sources and influences, which will open more cans of worms. But for now the most significant source will have to suffice.

In Hill’s book *Think and Grow Rich* he speaks of a “cabinet of Invisible Counselors” made up of nine men, most of whom were deceased at the time when Hill had “meetings” with them:

“These nine men were Emerson, Paine, Edison, Darwin, Lincoln, Burbank, Napoleon, Ford and Carnegie. Every night, over a long period of years, I held an imaginary council meeting with this group whom I called my “Invisible Counselors.” The procedure was this. Just before going to sleep at night, I would shut my eyes, and see, in my imagination, this group of men seated with me around my council table... I had a very definite purpose in indulging my imagination through these nightly meetings. My purpose was to rebuild my own character so it would represent a composite of the characters of my imaginary councilors... I deliberately assigned myself the task of voluntary rebirth through the method I have described above... After some months of this nightly procedure, I was astounded by the discovery that these imaginary figures became apparently *real*... These meetings became so realistic that I became fearful of their consequences, and discontinued them for several months... These facts are mentioned preliminary to a statement of fact which I shall now make, namely, that during my meetings with the “Invisible Counselors” I find my mind

most receptive to ideas, thoughts, and knowledge which reach me through the sixth sense. On scores of occasions, when I faced emergencies, some of them so grave that my life was in jeopardy, I have been miraculously guided past these difficulties through my "Invisible Counselors". (Napoleon Hill. *Think and Grow Rich*. 1938. pp220ff)

In *Think and Grow Rich* Hill tries very hard to convince his readers that these figures were simply in his imagination but his own testimony (above) makes it clear that these influences were not imaginary but were actually spirit guides. In fact, in his book *You Can Work Your Own Miracles*, Hill refers to them as "guides" or "talismans." These are just other names for demons who impersonate any character they wish in order to deceive the living into believing that they are in touch with the dead.

The Bible clearly forbids contact with demons: "*There shall not be found among you anyone who... practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, "or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. "For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord"* (Deuteronomy 18:10-12).

### Conclusion

So, let's recap. Every form of prosperity teaching can be traced back through Copeland, then Hagin, then Roberts. Roberts mixed some Bible verses with what he was taught by Hill, and Hill was taught by demons. The facts are undeniable – this is a doctrine designed, not by greedy men, but conceived in hell itself!

As with the prosperity gospel, every doctrine must be examined against the Bible and in some cases the source needs to be examined.

The first thing we need to do with any teaching is check it against the plumbline of the Scriptures. The fact that people quote

verses to support their teaching does not mean that it is sound doctrine. We must search the Scriptures and ask the hard questions to make sure that the teaching is based on a correct interpretation of the Bible. "*These (Bereans) were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so*" (Acts 17:11).

2Timothy 3:13 says: "*But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them*". Because there are so many false teachers, we need to be sure whom we are learning from. Paul says to Timothy that he can have confidence because of the source of the teaching. The one who taught Timothy was Paul, and Paul could clearly show that he had received his doctrine from the Lord (Galatians 1:12).

Like Hagin and Roberts, every false teacher claims to have received his doctrine from the Lord, but a bit of digging will often reveal the true source.

### Endnotes:

1. Roberts claims in his autobiography that more than eight million copies were in circulation worldwide.
2. Napoleon Hill (October 26, 1883 – November 8, 1970) was an American author in the area of the new thought movement who was one of the earliest producers of the modern genre of personal-success literature. He is widely considered to be one of the great writers on success. His most famous work, *Think and Grow Rich* (1937), is one of the best-selling books of all time (at the time of Hill's death in 1970, *Think and Grow Rich* had sold 20 million copies). Hill's works examined the power of personal beliefs, and the role they play in personal success. He became an advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1933 to 1936. "What the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve" is one of Hill's hallmark expressions. (Wikipedia).

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