

'A Statement About Livets Ord' (Word of Life) - a Swedish cult

Written by Bertil Werkström (Archbishop of Sweden)
Thursday, 30 September 2010 08:57

(Ed. Note how what the archbishop said in the 1980's coincides exactly with what happened in the late 1990's with the emergence of the Toronto Blessing - same spirit, same evil, from the same source!)

Dated March 1986

“There are many signs that we are living in a time of greater openness for spiritual things. This is a gratifying development which at the same time is a challenge to the Church to provide clear guidance to those that are seeking. We hope and pray for a sound and Biblical renewal and a trust in the power of God's Holy Spirit in the life of the church and the people.

At the same time it is evident that the positive spiritual situation has created openings for a number of new movements, often inspired from the USA or the East. Since these movements were born in foreign cultures they are often foreign to our own Christian interpretation and tradition. Of all these movements there is one, which in many ways is closer to our own church than others. I am referring to the movement which is often called the prosperity movement and which calls itself ***Livets Ord*** (*The Word of Life*), or the (*Word of*) ***Faith Movement***.

The experiences of this movement and their activities in our country and within our church, give me reason to urge clergy, congregations, Christians and seekers, to sharpen their attention to its message and its consequences. Wherever it has gained entry into our congregations, it has more or less, without exception, created division, confusion and opposition.

A closer look at the theological interpretations of the Faith Movement demonstrate worrying deviations from tested Christian theology and preaching. Just the idea, which has given the movement the name '*prosperity movement*' i.e. that the right faith will always be rewarded with financial prosperity, physical health and earthly happiness ***(Ed. As preached by Rodney Howard Browne today)***, may certainly seem attractive - but it cannot be derived from the Bible without misinterpretations.

The idea of prosperity is therefore maintained on the basis of often gratuitous interpretations of

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Bible quotations which are taken out of context. Consequently, their preaching of fundamental Christian principles, such as reconciliation and righteousness and sanctification, does not agree with Lutheran and general church tradition.

In a similar way, the separation of the human spirit from (its) soul and body, which the movement expresses in various ways, means that the Christian view of the person as one unit of body, soul and spirit, is altered in an important aspect. The tendency to call for direct revelations of the Holy Spirit apart from the scriptures (*so-called 'word of knowledge'*) is becoming what is usually called *'fanaticism'* in the Christian tradition.

If faith is not regarded as the gift of God and God working in people but as a human achievement, which is physically evident in a person's health and prosperity, people will be tempted to a merciless attitude towards the poor, the weak, the sick and the disabled, as well as having a superior attitude towards other Christians. Such a legalistic interpretation of faith will create pride and hardness in the healthy, prosperous person... while the person failing in these respects will fall victim to anxiety and depression. The Christian gospel has quite a different message about God and man in their relationship to one another.

It is the responsibility of the Church in the world, among other things, to be vigilant towards delusions, which obscure the message of the gospel about man's circumstances in time, and about the way to salvation and sanctification. This is not an encroachment on the freedom of religion, but a natural pursuit of the responsibility for a truly Biblical faith according to the confession of our church, which not only applies to bishops and clergy, but to every Christian individual.

This is where it is important, through studies and discussions, to help one another to *'have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ.'* (Col. 2:2).

At the same time as it is important not to put out the Spirit's fire and not treat prophecies with contempt, it is equally important to test everything and to hold on to the good (1 Thess. 5:19-21) and to stick to the *'sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ'* (1 Tim. 6:3).

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Dated July 1987

Livets Ord (*The Word of Life*) and similar groups manifest a tendency in society to despise the weak, the sick, the disabled, those who cannot cope, those who are not always successful. This tendency is present both in Sweden and in other countries. The ideal seems to be some kind of super-human. Tribute is paid to the person who is always healthy and strong, who is rich and successful.

I have personally been listening to drop-outs from *Livets Ord*, who have told me that they have been close to committing suicide in despair that they have not been able to live up to this ideal. It is extremely serious when leaders threaten those who begin to question one or two things in the movement, or those who want to leave the movement. I especially consider threats serious of the nature: *"If you do such and such God will remove you."*

What has now happened - that some people have begun to leave this movement - does not come as a surprise. One cannot deny reality indefinitely.

Many people have been seriously hurt and I hope that we in the Swedish State Church and the Free Denominations, will be able to help these people. I hope for instance that diocesan places and retreat places can provide a healing atmosphere, and that those who are now leaving *Livets Ord* will find alternative fellowship, in living congregations which are based on the gospel, and not on legalistic doctrine. I also hope that they will find their way back to the God Who cares about us, and loves us just like we are."

(Ed. BTM does not agree with the existence of a state church, ecclesiastical hierarchies, etc. Nevertheless, the archbishop voices legitimate concerns. How many in the UK are driven either to, or close to, suicide by Word of Faith churches, or by charismatic churches that have introduced the Toronto Blessing?)

We think in particular of the young man who killed himself in Poole Harbour, UK, after 'receiving

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the Spirit' in a Toronto Blessing meeting. The Word of Faith movement preceded the Toronto Blessing, laying the ground. The hatred and division seen by the archbishop in the 1980's is now seen in abundance in Toronto Blessing churches. It can only increase).

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