

Translation Dutch letter nr.16

Kampen, June 15th 1999.

Dear brothers, sisters, pastors and elders,

BUSY

Warmest greetings to you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. This letter has, no doubt, landed on your doormat in the midst of a busy life. For a number of us there doesn't seem to be much time to read letters. Our time is fully taken up with work, family, our personal spiritual life and church work. There is often just no more time to read all the extra material that we find in our mail. As workgroup, we understand this, for modern life is hectic. For this reason we only send out a letter three or four times a year. We try to set the facts down as clear as possible, having first done a lot of investigation and study. So you don't need to spend your time on that. The only disadvantage in this is, that you have to take us at our word.

IS IT TRUE?

Somebody wrote us, stating honestly, that he didn't have enough time to check out our findings, to see if what we write is really true. He was wondering if he could believe everything in our letters. We answered him that we too are not perfect but as saved sinners we try to do to the best of our ability our work. We are very much aware that we can make mistakes but our aim is to inform you truthfully and to rectify our mistakes when necessary. We always give a list of references, so that if desired you can check it out for yourself. If you want to know more, you can ask us to send you a copy of the passage in question, so you don't need to buy the actual book or paper. Feel free to ask. Actually there is now a good number of people who keep contact with us via telephone or letter. Our wish for the future is to have our own website so that more people will be able to use our services in their own time.

"Back to the Bible" in this post-modern time.

DON'T MEDDLE WITH THE BIBLE

The bible is for everyone on earth. The translation and distribution of this book is of vital importance to all. We who are born again, have the task to share in this ministry. The contents of the bible need to be carefully protected. When it comes to new translations, the original text must not be tampered with but should be expressed as close to the truth as possible. We also need to be alert that the expounding of God's word is also according to the truth. As workgroup we try to do this and believe that the bible is true from beginning to end. From the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation, the contents are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and written down by believers. Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith, quoted many times during His earthly life the Holy Scriptures. We all know His "it is written" during His temptation by the devil in the wilderness. The period between His resurrection and His ascension was used mainly to explain what the scriptures said concerning His suffering and death and resurrection. The last words given in the prophecy to John in Revelation say:

"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book".(Rev.22:18+19).

EVANGELICALS POST MODERN?

The contemporary post-modernists look at things in rather a different way. Post-modernism is a philosophical and cultural trend which appeared after the trend of modernism. We are acquainted

with modernism and as born again Christians we've resisted it. Now however, there is the danger of

post-modernism penetrating into every aspect of our society. This applies, unfortunately in theology and especially in the reading and interpretation of the bible. There are also signs in the evangelical world that show that post-modernism thinking is creeping in. We see this in the change that has taken place in the way God's word is used and viewed. Up until now one would say with assurance: "it is written", but now some would say: "It can also mean". The "Sola Scriptura" of the Reformation is so becoming superseded by "Scriptura" and the very important word "Sola" (alone) is disappearing. This change has to do with the new trend of thinking, the post-modern thinking, where it's not "in" to have assurance and certainty. Man believes in himself and has his own convictions but leaves the other free to believe what suits him. Everyone is free to hold to his own opinion and to interpret the bible as he wishes.

Coert H.Lindijer, a youth chaplain has written a book on this subject with the title: "Post-modern Existence" (1998). The subtitle is: "Humanity and faith in a post-modern culture". It's not clear from the book if the author is a born again Christian, but it is certainly an eye-opener, where you will get a broader view of today's society and the dangers which threaten us as Christians.

Away with all dogmas in 2000.

BLASPHEMOUS

Herman Verbeek, a Roman Catholic priest and ex-member of the European parliament, is of the opinion that all the dogmas about the work of Jesus Christ should be abolished before next Christmas. According to him Jesus was simply a foolish and independent prophet. The doctrine about His divine nature has to go. The same goes for the doctrine that Jesus Christ brought reconciliation between God and man through His death on the cross. Verbeek describes this, in a Dutch daily newspaper of the 24th February, as a perverse idea. We take it that this is not an acceptable view of the Vatican. We would however, like to see the R.C.Church rectifying this. Up until now this has not happened unless we have missed it.

Kneeling together with Roman Catholics.

EVANGELICAL INITIATIVE

We've explained in our last four letters what the Roman Catholic doctrine involves. Our conclusion was that their teaching deviates completely from Protestant doctrine. Alongside, the worship of Mary, worship of saints, prayer to the dead, canonization, purgatory and new birth through baptism, there is the unbiblical teaching about the transubstantiation. The bread and the wine at communion literally change into the body and blood of Jesus Christ and this is then offered on the altar in the church, to God. Through this it becomes a bloodless sacrifice and replaces the sacrifice of the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary. This is a completely different gospel. Only the Roman Catholic Church can bring salvation. The Protestant belief that there is only salvation by a personal faith in the blood of Christ which flowed at Calvary (Sola Fidei), is rejected strongly by the R.C.Church.

POSSIBLE UNITY?

This coming November has been declared by a group of enthusiastic Christians under the auspices of the Revival Foundation, (interdenominational and charismatic), as the MONTH OF REPENTANCE. Peter Vlug sr. writes in their magazine "Revival", June 1999, extensively about the unity of Christians. Also the TV presenter from the Evangelical Broadcasting Company, Otto de Bruine, has written an article on this subject. He even mentioned the necessity for unity between the Orthodox Eastern Church, Roman Catholic Church, Lutheran Church, Reformed Church, Evangelical Church and charismatics. In November a prayer meeting will be held every Friday confessing guilt for all the things that have gone wrong in the Netherlands in the past

centuries. The plan is to do this together, Christians and Roman Catholics under the motto:
UNITED AT THE CROSS. (*1)

NOT LOGICAL

As you will have gathered we don't agree with this. It's impossible to share such a motto with people who have a completely different point of view regarding the cross. Our previously mentioned concern about the increasing desire of evangelical Christians to work together with the Roman Catholic Church is intensified through this. We are not at all happy with this. On the contrary, we can't understand that unity can be so important, that one is seemingly prepared to go so far, as to accept the unbiblical teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. We would think that because of the above mentioned reasons distance would be kept, for fear of the gospel being watered down.

EA AND ROME

EA Canada closer to the Roman Catholic Church.

This is the heading of an article in the Dutch Daily newspaper of 25 May 1999. The chairman of the EA announced that the Evangelical Alliance in Canada and the Roman Catholic church, in that land, are endeavouring to reach a closer cooperation. The Evangelical Alliances are coordinated by the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF). This organization is in discussion with the Roman Catholic Church in Rome and has set aside a special committee for this. Once again, it's beyond us to understand, why it is found to be so important to work together with the Vatican.

GOLD-FEVER

Toronto update.

The news has reached us from different sources that nowadays, in the Toronto Airport Church, they pray for the teeth of those present. This is not because they are in a bad way but to improve them. The desire is that the fillings and crowns in one's mouth would be replaced by golden fillings and crowns. In some cases they even change to platinum. No matter how unbelievable this may seem it is claimed that this is not a trick but authentic. Photos have been taken to support this. A reliable witness, in Toronto, has told us, that either John Arnott or his wife checks the claims of those who come to the front to witness to this, by looking in their mouths with a torch. On the photos you can see the gold; in one tooth you can even see an engraved cross. This is also now happening in the States, in the places, Swainsboro in the east and Spokane in the west. (*2)

NOT FROM GOD

The "Charisma" magazine (formerly Power magazine) writes enthusiastically in her last edition about the happenings in Toronto with the heading : "It's God's gold". As workgroup, we agree with this statement but not in connection with the golden fillings and crowns in the Toronto church (actually this has taken place before in South America). We can't believe that God would change the fillings and crowns of believers into gold or platinum when this world is so full of poverty, misery, war and persecution. Why should He, when we can reasonably conclude, that these fillings and crowns were doing their job quite nicely. These incidents in the church of Jesus Christ are, to our way of thinking, terrible and are not from God. It is completely contrary to what the bible teaches that earthly riches are not to be valued. We are now acquainted with the phenomenon's of barking as a dog, neighing as a horse, roaring as a lion, shaking, trembling and jerking of the body, lying in trance on the ground, acquiring gold fillings and crowns. According to us, these incidents are often brought about by people who influence those present demagogically with even the possibility of occultism. Maybe this is what we read in the bible: "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all

kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders" (2 Thess.2:9).

ALSO IN THE NETHERLANDS

This phenomenon also occurred in the Berea Fellowship in Amsterdam during a conference with John Arnott from the Toronto Airport church on April 9 and 10 1999. People also received gold fillings and crowns in several Dutch churches during a visit in the spring, from Miguel Escobar from Chili. This also happened in the Bron in Dalftsen on May 5 -8 at a "In Your Presence Festival". Here too, people testified to having gold appear in their mouths and that during the time of worship their hands became covered in gold dust. It is even claimed by some in Toronto that gold dust was found in the tears of several worshippers.

RATHER ORDINARY TEETH

A Dutch daily paper wrote on May 1 an article on this and gave the opinion of six well-known Christian brothers. (*3) Each one of them was very much averse to these happenings. One of them pointed out that this is in keeping with prosperity teaching. We agree with this brother. The "blessings" in Toronto have all got to do with the well-being of the participants. John Arnott describes the occurrences in his church as that of having a party with God. This last occurrence has certainly pepped up the party, for it's quite something to receive so much gold. I'm sure they are very happy. We as workgroup: "Back to the Bible" are not happy with this and wish to stay far away from such parties.

ON TELEVISION

Dr. Robert Schuller and his Hour of Prayer.

Since last April the television services of this American minister are being broadcasted again. Every Sunday morning from 9.00 to 10.00 on RTL5. Seeing that the most of you will be attending your own church service at this time, not many of you will have seen it. It is mainly meant for non-church goers. There will certainly be a number of less mobile Christians who will watch it. There are subtitles in German and Dutch. We promised you in our letter of 18 June 1996 to write about these controversial services. Up until now other subjects have had the priority. Because these services are being regularly sent out again, we have decided to deal now with this subject. The subjects which we announced in our last letter will come another time.

GOOD IMPRESSION

In general.

The general impression of the services is a positive one. They are short and follow a regular pattern. There is always a choir or soloist present and a special guest who Dr. Schuller interviews. The bible passage is read by a special man in a toga. The sermon is almost always given by Dr. Schuller himself and lasts about twenty minutes. The services take place in a church building, the Crystal Cathedral. The walls and the roof are made of reflecting glass where one can see from inside, outside but not from outside, inside. In the Crystal Cathedral there is a huge cross and a very large organ. On top of the church there is a glass tower with a bell, sixty metres high, which rings to call the people to church. The building of the glass cathedral plus the furnishings cost around the forty million guilders. This has all been paid for by gifts and there is no debt on the building. Who is this preacher who can accomplish this and whose services can be seen throughout the whole world?

MINISTER FOR A GOOD FIFTY YEARS

From Dr. Schuller's autobiography.

Dr. Schuller wrote his autobiography in 1993 entitled: "Prayer: An adventure of my soul with God". He was born in September 1926 as fifth and last child of an emigrated Dutch farmers family. At a young age he already had the desire to become a minister.

After his theological studies he became, at the age of twenty, a Dutch Reformed minister in a church somewhere in the States. He is still a member of this church, as is also the ten thousand members of his congregation in the Crystal Cathedral. He is married and has five children and seventeen grandchildren. When he was twenty eight he opened a drive-in church in California. After a while the desire began to grow to build a television church, the Crystal Cathedral. This building was opened in 1968 and is still in use.

IS HIS DOCTRINE RIGHT?

Why objections in the States?

Throughout the whole world millions of viewers tune in every week to the Hour of Power. Isn't this proof that the gospel is working? Shouldn't we therefore support this programme? Is Rev. Schuller not loving in the way he brings the message? On the contrary, in every service we see a very friendly man. The smile he has is probably not necessary for us Europeans but it is part of the American culture. Does Dr. Schuller not know the scriptures? Certainly, his studies at a Calvinistic seminary is proof enough. The bible is always read in his services. Does his personal life then give offence? No, there is nothing wrong there. His marriage is good and his family life is a good example. Is Dr. Schuller then not born-again? Yes, in his autobiography he assures us of this and it's not for us to question it. Why are some Christians then sceptical about the Hour of Power? This scepticism has to do with his doctrine and association with those of a different opinion.

What does Dr. Schuller teach?

THIRTY BOOKS WRITTEN

His thoughts and convictions are expressed fully in the thirty books which he has written. We've read five of his books, including the mentioned autobiography. We'll first mention the titles of four books and then what is written on the back cover. This will give you an idea about the contents.

Book: "Peace of mind through possibility thinking". 1977

Back cover: *"The secret of inner peace. Rid yourself of tension and worry. Tap the hidden powers that will re-energize and revitalize your life. Follow the simple step-by-step plan for joyous, rewarding, and productive daily living."*

Book: "Self-esteem. The new reformation". 1982

Back cover: *"Banish anxiety, guilt, fear and resentment - America's dynamic "Possibility Thinking" pastor shows you how! Stop looking down at yourself and start looking up! In this clear and compelling guide, you will learn how to strip away the blinders that keep you from seeing your own greatness. And you will achieve the happiness and success that are so easily within reach of the person you really are."*

Book: "Success is never ending. Failure is never final". 1988

Back cover: *Failure is just a bend in the road---not a dead end. Success lies right around the corner. Each of us has experienced "down times" - setbacks at work, in relationships, in our inner lives - times where nothing seems to go right. Most of us have also felt as if we've failed at times, as well. But what is the difference between those who succeed and those who fail? The answer is simple: "Attitude".*

Book: "Power Thoughts". 1993

Back cover: *"I AM = I CAN. These are the words of a "power thinker", someone who knows that the human mind is a powerhouse of creative, positive ideas. Charged with infinite possibilities, your own Power Thoughts will enable you to live the life you want to live."*

A LOT OF PSYCHOLOGY

After reading the above one could get the impression that the writer is a psychologist who is trying to give the reader an optimistic philosophy on life. One can be successful in life if you discard the negative, feeling sorry for yourself and thinking that you can't do anything. We sometimes get the idea that the Dutchman Emil Ratelband is speaking instead of Dr. Schuller. He has mixed together psychology and theology and in such a way that psychology has the upper hand. In his book: "Self-esteem. The new reformation" he writes the following: "Theology and psychology need each other"(*4)

Dr. Schuller doesn't teach a philosophy without God. He is convinced that success can only be attained through faith in Jesus Christ. According to him the cause of all man's problems is not so much his sinful state before God, but much more the lack of faith in himself as individual, and lack of belief in his own wonderful personality. By putting his trust in Jesus, everything changes and so he restores himself.

NO RECONCILING BLOOD

That its necessary to be cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ is not however mentioned. Schuller objects to the claim that man is a sinner and therefore needs Christ for his salvation. According to him it is enough to accept Jesus as one's helper and by having faith in Him to perform miracles in one's life, success is guaranteed. Schuller is a disciple of the American preacher Norman Vincent Peale. In his autobiography Schuller writes several times how his own preaching has been changed through him. (*5)

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale.

MANY BOOKS

His book: "The power of positive thinking" is known worldwide. More than fifteen million examples have been sold and it has been translated into 45 languages. What he writes, in his books, agrees very closely to those of Schuller. On the back cover of Peale's book, "The secret of positive thinking" 1986, it says:

"Dr. Peale tells you how you can become successful through positive thinking and he gives interesting tips to help you to transform your doubts into self-confidence and make your dreams come true".

In his book, "The optimist" 1990, he says the following:

"Stay relaxed. Take care that you don't become tense, for that just blocks your creative energy. A relaxed person is a powerful person. Take regularly a moment for yourself to practise the "feeling" that God, your Creator, is regenerating you. Visualize that the Kingdom of God is in you. See yourself as the potential owner of God's gifts. Make an end of the tendency to self-destruction, that is very important."

NO RECONCILING BLOOD

Nowhere in his books does he mention God's plan of salvation to save man from his sins. The blood of Jesus Christ, which flowed at Calvary and took away the sin of the world, is not mentioned. Faith in Jesus is stimulated, but only as an example and a helper to restore the self-respect of the believer. In the Netherlands such a faith would be called liberal.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale and Dr. Schuller liberal.

DON'T MENTION SIN

Schuller never holds the Bible in his hands when preaching, that scares people of. (*6) He also doesn't approve of mentioning the sinful state of man in the service. He says the following about this:

"I don't think that anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and hence, counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise than the often crude, uncouth and unchristian

strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition." (*7)

The following statement is also from him:

"If your pride is rooted in your divine call, your humility is assured. The cross will sanctify your EGO TRIP----For the cross protected our Lord's perfect self-esteem from turning into sinful pride."(*8)

We believe that what we have written should be sufficient to give you enough insight into the doctrine of the Rev. Robert Schuller. To close we'll say something about his association and cooperation with those of a different opinion.

Dr. Schuller and those of a different opinion.

EVERYONE RESPECTED

He has a great respect for pope John Paul 2 and has had two audiences with him.(*9)

He has a good contact with Sun Myung Moon from South Korea. This very rich leader of a sect preaches that mankind fell into disgrace when Eve had sex with satan, Christ failed in His mission and that he, Moon is the true Messiah. Schuller spoke at his convention in Washington D.C. on 8-2-96. (*10)

He has spoken at a prayer meeting of 1 million people, organized by the South Korean David Yonggi Cho. Dr. Cho is a well-known prosperity teacher, who still spreads Buddhistic teaching. (*11)

Dr. Schuller was a great friend of the late John Wimber, the founder of the Vineyard church. He was known for his recognition of experiences not found in the Bible, such as being slain in the Spirit. He prayed for Schuller during an illness whereby his hands shook and trembled above Schuller's body. (*12)

Schuller was very enthusiastic about his visit to Arafat in the Gaza. According to Schuller they had a lot in common. (*13)

Schuller is a keen supporter of cooperation with Muslims. In his office building, one department is occupied by the institute "Christian and Muslim Peace Camp". The director of CAMP was interviewed during the same service in which Schuller recounted about Arafat. He said there, that Islam and Christianity are two marvellous religions. (*14)

Final conclusion from the workgroup about Dr.Schuller's doctrine.

LIBERAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

Apart from the books which we read, we also watched ten church services of the Hour of Power, live or on video, in order to come to a proper conclusion. We also read the opinion of a number of Christians in and outside the Netherlands. (*15) Unfortunately we can only say that he is a liberal preacher. He has also mixed religion with a good amount of psychology, until this has acquired the upper hand. He propagates that man, thanks to his faith in Jesus can be successful. His association and cooperation with those who think differently places his function as a minister in a dubious light and speaks of a lack of spiritual discernment.

Subject of next letter.

In this letter we want to look at both the positive and the negative side of the casting out of evil spirits. This will include possession, bondage, territorial spirits, discernment of spirits and deliverance.

on behalf of the workgroup,

Pastor Rien v.d.Kraats

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- (*3) Hans Frinsel, prof. J.W. Maris, H.P. Medema, M.J. Paul, C.v.d. Laan,
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- (*4) Autobiography: "Prayer, an adventure of my soul with God"
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- (*5) ditto, pages 144, 145, 222, 240-244.
- (*6) ditto, page 194.
- (*7) Article in "CRN Journal" England spring 1999, page 8 from Don Matzat;
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- (*8) ditto. page 8.
- (*9) Book "Prayer, an adventure of my soul with God" page 123, 258, 259.
- (*10) Paper "Berean Call" by David Hunt, Sep. 1996.
- (*11) Book "Prayer, an adventure of my soul with God" page 142.
- (*12) ditto. page 129.
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