

WORKGROUP



BACK TO THE BIBLE

Kampen, translation Dutch letter nr.34 dd. 29 February 2008

Dear brothers, sisters, pastors and elders,

During the past time we received several questions and answered these as carefully as possible. It seems a good idea to involve the other readers in what is going on amongst Christians and non-Christians. Here follows the content of this letter.

- 1. Questions of a non-Christian**
- 2. The Healing Ministry of Henry Wright**
- 3. I am confronted with the phenomenon Refocussing**
- 4. "TV-ministers" composed and sung by Rikkert Zuiderveld**

1...QUESTIONS OF A NON-CHRISTIAN

Dear Charles,

Thank you for your e-mail. You have a lot of questions, thank you for it. It means you give attention to different matters in life. That is important because our time on earth is comparatively short. When you just let go and just live your life, you are missing a lot. Because – and now I am getting down to your questions – there really is a God, who is interested in your life. He is the creator of heaven and earth and also our creator. I understand from your mail you do not believe in a god. Or perhaps not any longer? You write about your experience with the Roman-Catholic faith of your upbringing. You know Charles, there are so many people on this earth who had such an experience and as a result stopped believing in God. But this does not help to be justified before God. Because you are created by God and God calls you to take your responsibility. All this is disconnected from your upbringing, that happened in the past. God looks at you and sees what you are doing now with your life. Turning your back to Him now, is a personal deed.

Now we go back to the questions in your e-mail. I gave them a number:

1.1... *"What do you mean with demons and the devil?"* Demons are fallen angels who together with the devil caused a revolt and because of that were thrown out of heaven. They form an army of malevolent creatures who try to seduce God's creatures to sin. The devil even tried to incite Jesus the Son of God to disobedience to God. (See the story in Luke4:1-13)

1.2... *"If a god exists, why then is there not one god for everybody?"* The answer is not difficult, you are close to it with your question. You see there is only one God in heaven and on earth. There is no other next to Him. He is the maker of all and everything. When other gods are spoken of, these gods are man made or made up. Also all philosophies on earth are

just made by men themselves. Either eastern or western religions, in the end they all are fantasies of one or more people. But to the one God, the creator of heaven and earth, all people will have to give an explanation about their lives on earth.

1.3... *"You write that the Roman-Catholic faith is not the right one, on what grounds do you base that?"* answer: We spent a lot of time on this matter and published five letters about it. (nrs. 12,13,14,15,16) If you want to, the best way is to download these five from our site on the internet. www.backtothebible.nl If for some reason you cannot do that we will send them to you. Now maybe you are under the impression that our aim is to attack and to reject other religions. That is not right, we try to make it very clear in which field and why we do not agree with their teachings. The Bible is our guide line. We did spend much time to study the teachings of the Roman-Catholic church, because during the years many Protestants seek approach to this church. Based on our studies, this seems illogical to us. The teaching of the Protestants stands diametrical against the teaching of the Roman-Catholic church. That is why approach between the two is not possible. They are not our enemies, we live together in every day life, but as far as the teaching goes, we have to keep our distance.

1.4... *"Have the well known feasts like Christmas and Sinterklaas (in the Netherlands) etc .not their origin in times before the birth of Jesus?"* answer: Yes, some of them are copies of feasts from ancient times. Part of them have their origin in the Christian faith.

1.5... *"Since that time I became a heathen."* You respect all religions. We think that is a good attitude. But that attitude will not help you to find peace in your life. Because as I wrote before, there is only one God and He is your and mine creator. From experience in our personal life and from the Bible we know, He is interested in each of us personally. There are about six billion people on the earth but God is so miraculously great, He knows and watches every person, also you, separately.

1.6... *"The human brain, a marvellous system"* answer: We do agree with you, here the creator has created one of the most beautiful things belonging to man. But do not forget the heart. The heart also is an ingenious organ. This heart, the motor of every person, has a double function. Besides being the motor, the heart is also the centre of the emotions of man. We talk about pain in the heart, when somebody is insulted. We speak about a heartless person, if somebody is merciless and is not bothered about anybody. All emotions come out of the heart and touch the heart. You tell us you have been depressed, that also has connections with the heart. Actually everything in our life turns around the heart.

Then comes the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the Bible puts it forward to us. It says: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."* Matt.11:28-30 He came down to earth to renew the human heart and give man peace. Therefore Jesus Christ first had to come to earth and die on the cross. Because the problem of every person is his sin against his creator. This sin stands in between God and man. But Jesus Christ has carried the guilt and the penalty. Now God looks freely at man in Christ. Every person, you included, has to acknowledge his/her guilt and bow down before God. Now we go back to the heart, being the centre of our emotions. If you acknowledge your guilt against God the above written text will also become reality for you. If you want to know more about this mail us and ask your questions. Do you have a Bible yourself? Get one in your possession, and start reading in it.

1.7... *"What is the name of your religion?"* answer: We left this question nearly for last, because this one may overtake the others and they are important too. Well, we are a little group of ordinary Christians with a Protestant faith based on the Bible. Each of us is a member of a so-called "free" church. We have a number of about 200 of such churches in the Netherlands. Free means a less strict structure of the liturgy in the services. Also people are

more involved in the service. I will mention a few names: Evangelical church, full Evangelical church, Pentecostal church, free Baptist church.

1.8... *"Is not everybody a bit god, are not we all created after God's image?"* answer: The Bible does not teach that. Yes, we are created after God's image. *"Then God said: Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."* Gen.1:26 But as you read in the text, it is man's task to rule over the earth. Here we see a clear difference with the other creatures, as there are cattle, birds and creeping animals. Man is the only creature looking like God, but he is not created as god or partly god. The Bible tells us that just because the devil wanted to rise himself to be God he was thrown out of the heavens. Charles, I will finish now, I hope you have enough to think about. Kind greetings.

2....THE HEALING MINISTRY OF HENRY WRIGHT

Dear Evelien,

It has taken more time than I expected to get a survey of the teachings of Henry Wright Since at first we did not have his book: "A More Excellent Way" we had to relay on the information of the internet. Before we come to the teachings of the man, we want to say something about the persons who invited Henry Wright to the Netherlands. According to the internet facts, the invitation went out from the foundations: Philadelphia Health Insurer, Healing Rooms Netherlands and Healing Rooms for the Health Insurance Company. (www.healingrooms.nl) Because Healing Rooms are mentioned twice we will first have a look on this phenomenon.

2.1... Healing Rooms

According to the description on internet: www.healingrooms-gezondheidzorg.nl we find the following:

"The movement started ample hundred years ago with the famous prayer ministry of the revival preacher John G.Lake. In the so-called Healing Rooms from Spokane (USA) thousands of people found supernatural healing of their diseases and of their need. Some years ago Call Pierce in America answered Gods call to reopen the "spiritual" sources of the ministry of John G.Lake. From that moment on healing rooms sprang up in America, but also in other parts of the world and also in the Netherlands.

A key of the Healing Rooms is the fact that we do not direct the focus on ourselves as people who pray or should have authority. No, actually the power is just: God and you! Everything that stands between you and Him has to be solved, than his power shall do its work in you. For this reason talking in the waiting room is not allowed. We have peaceful worship music in the background, wherewith people can soak while waiting in the presence of God. There they can bring their spirit at rest to let God fill them with his presence.

The persons who are responsible for the ministry of the visitors of the Healing Rooms can be of different denominations. The movement is therefore interdenominational. This stimulates the Christian unity according to what the internetsite tells us. This also releases the way for faith-miracles in the Netherlands."

2.2.... Conclusion workgroup on Healing Rooms

Healing Rooms are the umpteenth attempt from Christian humanity to receive healing from her diseases and problems. Although there is made a link with the early Healing Rooms of John G. Lake, the contemporary rooms do come from the own conviction of John Pierce, who claims that God has asked him to do so. There is no biblical foundation given. According to our opinion the next objections cling to working of Healing Rooms:

...Prayer for the sick should be taking place in the local church. (James 5:12-20)
 ...The persons who pray should be elders of that church.
 ...There is no indication in the part of scripture from James or elders in the bible, that assistants of other denominations further the healing.
 ...The use of "soaking" before the prayer in the waiting room, by which the sick gets a state of emptiness of himself, ready to be filled of God, smells of a kind of eastern meditation. (see also our letter nr.30 dd.24-08-06)
 ...The prayer for healing is mixed with prayer for other problems. In this way there is a kind of pastoral ministry employed, which again needs to be done in the local church of the sick person.
 ...On the website a big number of evidences are given to proof Healing Rooms are working. The testimonies are very simple and meagre. The list of testimonies of the healing are put into alphabetical order according to the list of diseases and problems. We just mention here a few: abuse, accidents, addictions,.....tumours, veins, wrists (carpal tunnel syndrome). A view at the website will give you more insight in what we mean. www.healingrooms.com
 This is what we want to say about Healing Rooms.

2.3... The teachings and practise of Henry Wright

We have searched carefully on the internet for information from and about Henry Wright. We succeeded partly and got indirect information, because he does not have his own website. But the small church in Thomaston, where he ministers as senior pastor, has a website. We also found two relevant sites, at which we will look separately later on. First we will go to the website of the church: www.pleasantvalleychurch.net

The creed of the church, consisting of ten articles looks good. The only dissonant is article 10 which reads as follows:

"We believe that healing and miracles are part of the Atonement and are valid for today; Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever.Ps.103:3; 1Thes.5:23; 3John.2; 1Cor.12 "

With article nr.10 Henry Wright exposes where in his teaching the shoe wrings. We as workgroup dare to call his teaching false, because he affects herewith the deepest significance of the reconciliation of Jesus Christ. Simply said this article 10 of his creed can be explained as if: Jesus Christ died at the cross so that we can believe miracles. He died at the cross to heal our headache, our flu, our allergy, our high blood pressure, our heart attack, our Crohn disease, our asthma, our cancer, our addiction, our sleeplessness, etc. In his book Henry Wright gives a even more extensive list.

He mixes the holy events on Calvary, that is carrying-away of the burden of sin and the burden of human guilt by Jesus Christ, with the pure human desire to get rid of their diseases. He also brings the human longing to experience miracles in connection with Jesus' death at the cross. The latter is also almost blasphemy and certainly not in accordance with the Bible.

It is true Henry Wright puts a few texts down to defend his point of view biblically, but these texts are completely ripped out of context and do not point to his teachings. Nowhere in the Bible one can find his teachings or anything that looks like his teachings. In our letter nr.27 dd.15-03-05 we published an article with the title: "The Blood of Jesus". This article gives a very broad picture of the significance of his death on the cross. We also mentioned there some false doctrines about this significance. We advice you to look at this publication especially in connection with the above mentioned teachings.

2.4..."The Herbs Place"

The website of this Place astonished us because it led us to Henry Wright. This site offers all different kinds of herbs, essential oils, skin care products, weight loss products, etc. But the

Besides the above mentioned backcover of the book the site of the "Herbs Place" also gives three complete pages with the content of the book and with all kind of illnesses mankind struggles with. One can also find a section of testimonies of people who are cured through reading the book. This comprehends five pages of stories in which the teachings of Henry Wright were the solution. These were cures for: fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue, mcs/eI/many health issues, broken/ankle/foot, asthma/ estrogen/ depression, back pain, getting of the drugs, osteoporosis, mcs with roots of the father, chronic illness/emotional problems, stomach and headache problems, thick blood/ cells turning to stone. It goes to far to enter these cures extensively, but all testimonies are full of self misery and self pity about the health. While reading one does not become cheerful and the reader stays behind with many question marks. On the website from the " Herbs Place" one also finds a list of 33 reasons which can blockade the healing of the people. To one reason for blockading the healing, we want to pay your special attention. It is reason nr.29 which says:

"Rejecting Healing in the Atonement as Part of the Covenant for Today." This blockade corresponds with art.10 from the Creed from the Pleasant Valley Church in Thomaston. Henry Wright has developed this article to the proposition, that by not believing this art.10 you can become sick or can stay sick. As we wrote before we consider this pronouncement on the edge of blasphemy and we call these teachings false.

2.5...www.bible.org what another site says about the teachings of Henry Wright

The book "A More Excellent Way" with his teachings has not been unnoticed in America. In 2000 Hampton Keathly IV from the above mentioned site got engrossed into the content. He has been in the church of Thomaston and he followed a two-days conference / seminar. His findings cover about 12 pages and are placed on the internet site of bible.org.

It is not easy to put in short what Hampton Heathly IV discovered. The book of Henry Wright is rather chaotic and also during his seminar the speaker jumps quickly from one subject to another. The listeners do not get time to recuperate from one saying and have to listen already to another new matter. They do not get enough time to judge if it is right what the speaker proclaims.

Many readers though are convinced that Henry Wright is biblically sound because he uses many bible texts during his explanation. When one studies these texts closer however one must come to the conclusion, that practically all of these texts are drawn out of context according to Hampton Heathly IV. We as workgroup came to a similar conclusion when we focused on art.10 of the creed of Pleasant Valley Church in Thomaston.

The bible.org by means of Hampton Heathly IV ends with a part with the heading: Is Henry right? We put down here only the last sentences, advising you to read the complete dissertation on the site of bible.org yourself.

Part conclusion Hampton Heathly IV:

"So, even if there may be some truth to his teaching (some sickness is indeed caused by sin), there is so much that is false that I think it would be extremely dangerous to listen to him at all. Constant exposure to his teaching could only have ill effects. (pun intended)"

2.6...Conclusion of the workgroup about the teachings of Henry Wright

This man proclaims teachings which do not agree with the general Christian teachings of the Bible. He thinks he has done an invention concerning the problem of sickness in the world. Sickness according to Henry Wright is caused by sins. Jesus Christ died at the cross on Golgotha just for these sins and so is the root of the sickness also crucified. Therefore this root of sin needs to be dealt with in everyone's life before one can get healing for his diseases.

This looks a reasonable argumentation and looks biblical. But when we go deeper into this argumentation it appears seriously false. In the first place most illnesses are not caused by sin, but finds its cause in the degeneration of the human body since the fall. The last disease a man experiences is his death. Sickness is not the most joyful part of life on this earth. Every man, believer or unbeliever has to undergo in some way or another the experience of illness.

In the second place it is not at all right to mingle the Reconciliation of Jesus Christ for sin with the problems of sickness of mankind. Reconciliation is a spiritual, godly matter. Sickness is a physical, human matter. Without acceptance Reconciliation the spiritual man is lost. With a sick body man can still be saved and be with God. When Jesus in Math.18:8,9 speaks about leaving sin He says it very vigorously and clear:

"If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell." Jesus makes it very clear that the spiritual matters mount far above the bodily matters.

Putting all together what we have searched and read about the teachings of Henry Wright we are convinced that no Christian should follow him. The foundations that invited Henry Wright to speak, should have done better in inviting good bible teachers to their conferences. Their fellow workers can learn only false things about the bible and about sickness. They come in danger of confused emotions by hearing this man. Even the danger of getting stressed by the idea that their own sin might been the cause of sickness among whom they work. We consider it a dangerous and unhealthy situation.

3.... I AM CONFRONTED WITH THE PHENOMENON REFOCUSSING

Dear Maria,

With reference to your question about "refocussing" we looked for information on the internet. We landed in New-Zealand, where "refocussing has its origin. Dr. Diane Divett, a teacher with several titles behind her name developed this counselling course. The course covers theory as well as the practise of counselling. The course, including several sub-courses is promoted for personal use as well as training other counsellors. What now is so special in "refocusing" and why is this bothering the workgroup?

3.1... Basis Refocussing

The website of dr. Diane Divett (www.refocussing.com) speaks about "empowering tools to make positive changes in your life" Meant are the divers dvd's of dr. Diana Divett, the reference book, the workbook for participants, video's for therapy training. With the tools the Bible is not mentioned. One would expect that, when a person is teaching about changes in somebody's life. There is reference to God, but indirectly via the concept "God Spaces". The official site in New-Zealand offers the following definition: *"God Spaces is a spiritual, metaphysical "space" that all people have in their contact with God"*. According to the site this has been a social-scientific discovery between 1994 and 2004. In the courses the "God Spaces" is used as base to work changes in the character of a person. So it is very important to find out if this discovery of dr. Diane Divett really is based on the Bible and if this discovery is true.

Romans chapter 1 is brought along as basis in the Bible for their assumption. Meant is probably Rom1:19: *...since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them."* It looks like dr.Divett is right. The next text starts with the word for, it gives an explanation. *"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has*

been made, so that men are without excuse.” So the Bible does not say that to know God is a supernatural quality of man, but very commonly, an intellectual quality of man. Here Paul the writer of Romans is just using his common sense. He tells us in this chapter that nobody has an excuse for not knowing God. From the him surrounding creation man cannot but recognise and acknowledge the eternal power and the divinity of the Creator. This has nothing to do with supernatural space, but with common sense.

Also dr. Divett has fallen into the well known trap of taking a text out of context.

The central theme of the first chapter of Romans is that man is only justified by faith. We read this in Rom.1:16,17: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.”* As you see there is no relation with the proposition about “God Spaces” and dr. Diane Divett certainly should not use this chapter as biblical base for this proposition.

On the site still another bible part is mentioned to defend her proposition. Jer.29:11: *“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* This is a wonderful text that certainly will help the counselee during a pastoral conversation. Nevertheless dr. Diane Divett here again makes the mistake of taking this text completely out of context. This prophetic message of Jeremiah is meant specifically for the Jews in exile in Babylonia. In a special letter they are advised by the prophet to just stay in Babylonia and wait for their future return after a period of 70 years. Their exile in Babylonia came over them as a punishment for serious idolatry they committed in Jerusalem. The beautiful text of Jer. 29:11 quoted on the site is a word of comfort for the people in exile and cannot be used as a biblical foundation for the method of Refocussing.

3.2...Content course Refocussing

Because we have no book or another written manual in our possession, we will make use off rough descriptions for promoting the course. We took a number of literal quotes from the original New-Zealand website (www.refocussing.com) and the Dutch website (www.refocussing.nl). There we read:

“ What is unique about God Spaces is that dr. Divett, after discovering and then further researching what God Spaces are and hoe they can be used, went on to develop a “methodology” that empowers people to use their own God Spaces to: locate (find), access (experience) and develop (describe) what they as individuals uniquely know and experience of God as He reveals himself to them.”

In turn her own research and that of a team of other post-graduate researchers has gone on to verify that as people are taught to use their God Spaces to locate, access and develop their “revelations” and experiences of God, remarkable healings result. These healings verified by the above mentioned team of post-university researchers contain physical and emotional healings of relations. They even contain liberation of demonic and evil influences. “ (New-Zealand’s website).

“Training courses are used to teach people hoe to go about God Spaces and how to use ‘the God Spaces methodology’ to

...Find and encounter God and discover His purpose for your life

...Pray effectively and with great confidence

... Refocus and gain God’s perspective about your future

...To prophesy the mind of God with respect to other people and their situations” (New Zealand’s website)

“This is a 3 day course that is highly interactive, which provides a comprehensive view of what Refocussing is and especially how pivotal “God spaces” are to connecting to God’s empowering presence to facilitate change. (New-Zealand's website)

“This is a 3 day course which although still highly interactive is also designed to take a much closer look at the theory of Refocussing; especially the way in which the “seven foci system” is designed to integrate psychological and theological theories to “focus” on “unmet” needs (using theological theories); but then to refocus (using theological theories) to empower people with God’s empowering Presence to find healing, deliverance, resources or resolution for the otherwise unmet “needs”. (New-Zealand's website)

“Self-consciousness and Personal Growth is insufficiently understood by many people in the Christian world and so chances are missed to understand God better in daily life. Pauline Skeates from New-Zealand has already been active for many years in the Christian assistance. From that experience she came to the conclusion that self-consciousness has a key position in the change to a positive and healthy life with God. People who are “blind”, “deaf” and have “fallen asleep”, can receive new life.

What is treated and experienced during this seminar will be founded from the Bible. It is a call to the participants to “wake up” and to become aware of the truth in their life so that renewal can break through. “ (Dutch website Refocussing)

“Why self-consciousness?” Ask yourselves the following questions:

..Are you really awake?

..Are you alive to your senses, yourselves, others and God?

..Do you hear music and the voices of children?

..Are you able to see the beauty, the tragedy and the colour of the detail?

..Are you prepared to feel your emotions and to listen to what they want to tell you?

..Do you really taste and appreciate the coffee or the tea you drink with your breakfast?

If your answer to all these questions is “no”, you do not make use of a potential of superfluous life.

The Bible encourages us to:

...”Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” Eph.5:14

...”In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see.” Isa.29:18 (Dutch website Refocussing)

3.3... Conclusion workgroup concerning Refocussing

The word Refocussing is a new English word, the meaning of it is not yet to be found in the dictionaries. It means: refocus the centerpoint of your life. In itself this is all right. But it is incorrect because it is done without the help of the Holy Spirit, who should be living in us. Searching through the websites the work of God the Father, the saving work of Jesus Christ, nor the necessity of receiving the Holy Spirit is mentioned. It is just the presence of the Holy Spirit that can work change of focus in the life of the Christian.

When you study the New-Zealand' site as well as the Dutch site, you will find a mixture of psychology and theology. Also we consider the biblical foundation very weak. All mentioned texts are taken out of context. Especially in the quotes of Dutch site this is the case.

In our publications of last year 2007 we explained that it is dangerous to end up in the hands of psychologists and philosophers, when you are a Christian in need. We advised to stay away from them as much as possible. In the case of Refocussing it is the same thing. Better is

to read more in the Bible and try to find reliable pastoral workers, when there are problems. The best solution is to do this via your own meeting or church.

4... "TV- MINISTERS" COMPOSED AND SUNG BY RIKKERT ZUIDERVELD

In the springtime of 2008 Pastor Joseph Prince from Singapore is having a prosperity conference in The Netherlands. We wrote an extensive dissertation about his ministry on our website dd.01-04-07. We give you this song of Rikkert Zuiderveld as an addition. The CD came out in December 2006 and is available in the shops. (dutch spoken)

"TV-ministers

*They come from America flown through the air
They look really thriving, it just is not fair
Also their happy ladies are thriving and well fed
Oh how I love the TV-ministers*

*Their smiles are shining white like frozen on their countenance
And what's with their teeth, they look like born again
They look so self-assured with their Bibles and foundations
Oh how I love these TV-ministers*

*They play their performances in newly build cathedrals
Money of the common man is used to beautify their halls
Gifts for the work of the Lord are used to lift their faces
Oh how I love these TV-ministers*

*With power they preach the prosperity gospel
And all they shout is appreciated by their middle-class audience
They go for their handkerchiefs and their purses
Oh how I love the TV-ministers*

*Their God is like a ticket machine, you can put in a euro
Then your health and your family's will be all right
All is for sale for a few slogans and cliché's
Oh how I love TV-ministers*

*What I like best is when they start to sing
So very holy, the tears start to flow
Their sales are much better than mine with my CD's
Oh how jealous I am of these TV-ministers.*

Foundation: Workgroup "Back to the Bible"

Mailadress: Populierenstraat 51, 8266 BK Kampen, The Netherlands, tel. 038-3328234

e-mail: byblos@solcon.nl

website: www.backtothebible.nl

local board: president-pastor R.v.d.Kraats
secretary/treasurer A.A.Doorn.