GOD'S GENERALS IN THE NETHERLANDS

VOLUME 2

Follow Their Faith

Nine Dutch men and women of God, from Da Costa to Nel Benschop

...since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses...

Hebrews 12:1

WIM KAMPHORST

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Follow Their Faith. God's generals in the Netherlands, volume 2

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The sources consulted are listed after each chapter. Stories known only from a person's own testimony or from later tradition, or that cannot be verified, are marked as such in the text and in the overview at the end of each chapter.

This book can be read and downloaded free of charge at whispermagazine.org.

Introduction: a cloud of witnesses

In Zetten, a village in the Betuwe region, a row of gravestones lies on the hill beside the Vluchtheuvelkerk. Under one of them lies Ottho Gerhard Heldring, whom you could read about in volume 1. A few meters away lies the man who took over his work and carried it on for almost forty more years. Hardly anyone knows his name anymore.

That is often how it goes. A few names stay with us. The people around them, who carried the work when the first generation was gone, fade from view. This second volume is about some of them, and about others we actually do know, but mostly from a street name, a poem on the wall or a uniform on the Wallen, the red-light district of Amsterdam.

The letter to the Hebrews first names a long line of heroes of faith: Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Rahab. Then comes the sentence that stands above this book: *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us.* (Hebrews 12:1). Those witnesses are not standing on a pedestal. They stand along the side of the road we are walking now.

Who you will meet in this volume

A Jewish poet in Amsterdam who became a Christian and lost his friends because of it. A minister who took over Heldring's work in Zetten and threw himself into the fight against the trade in women. A missionary who worked for years in Central Celebes before anyone was baptized. A housewife from Winterswijk and a traveling minister who together built a national network for people in hiding. A missionary who survived a Japanese camp and later called the church to reconciliation. A woman of the Leger des Heils (the Salvation Army) who lived and worked on the Wallen for decades. A healing evangelist from The Hague. And a woman poet whose simple verses went through the country in more than a million books, and on calendars and wall tiles.

In this volume too, facts come first. After each chapter you will read what is certain, what is known only from personal testimony and what remains uncertain. The sources are listed with it.

How you can read this book

You do not need to have read volume 1. Each chapter stands on its own, and the order is that of time. Where a life touches someone from the first volume, I say so.

Read it with the same question as in volume 1. What did God ask of them, and what does He ask of you? None of these people knew beforehand how it would turn out. They only knew the next step.

Isaäc da Costa: the poet who stayed a Jew

On Saturday, October 19, 1822, Willem de Clercq of Amsterdam stepped out of the stagecoach in Leiden. The day before, he had received word that his friend Isaäc da Costa would be baptized on Sunday. He found him at the Plaats Royaal. Da Costa was calm, De Clercq wrote in his diary, wonderfully calm. His young wife Hanna was not. She was deeply moved.

The next morning three cushions lay in front of the pulpit of the Pieterskerk, Saint Peter's Church. There was almost no audience, because the service had been kept as quiet as possible on purpose. De Clercq sat early in the elders' pew, next to Dirk van Hogendorp. The old poet Willem Bilderdijk sat in the church and listened. The Reverend Lucas Egeling read from Romans 11 and took the fifth verse as his text: *Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.* (Romans 11:5). He spoke about a remnant of grace among Israel.

Then they knelt. A poet of twenty-four, a doctor of law and a doctor of letters. His wife Hanna. And his friend Abraham Capadose, a physician. All three came from the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam. All three were baptized that morning, in the Name

of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Those words struck De Clercq the deepest.

That evening they sat at table with Bilderdijk. Afterward, in the carriage, Da Costa said, as De Clercq wrote it down: "Yes, today I am happy."

A year later a storm of outrage would break over him, and the mayor of Amsterdam would have his house watched. He became the voice of a revival that history has come to call the Réveil, the Awakening. For more than thirty years he explained the Bible, first in his own living room. And until his death he kept saying that he was a son of Israel.

How does a Jewish boy from an Amsterdam merchant's home end up on his knees in a church in Leiden? He told it himself.

A boy with Hebrew and verses

Isaäc da Costa was born on January 14, 1798, in Amsterdam. He was an only child. His father, Daniel da Costa, was a prominent merchant, an upright man who traded in wine. His mother, Rebecca Ricardo, was related to the English economist David Ricardo and doted on her son. The family belonged to the Sephardic Jews, the descendants of Jews who had come to Amsterdam from Spain and Portugal centuries earlier. According to a later account of his life, the father was strongly influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment.

Isaäc learned Hebrew at a young age. At eight he went to the Latin school, where he stayed from 1806 to 1811 and wrote his first verses. One of his playmates was Abraham Capadose. When he left the school, he recited a Latin poem he had made himself. After that he took classes at the Athenaeum Illustre, the forerunner of the University of Amsterdam.

Years later, in 1845, he looked back on that time in *The Voice of Israel*, an English magazine about Israel. There stands the sentence with which his whole story begins: from his youth, he wrote, he had a kind of religious instinct. He wanted to know and serve God, he says, and he did not know how. At one time he prayed fervently. At another time he threw off all outward ceremonies. He doubted the traditions of the rabbis, and he doubted revelation itself. The mockery of the French philosophers repelled him, and the thinking that allows only matter to exist frightened and angered him. Plato did not help him. Neither did the Jewish philosopher Mendelssohn. He pieced together for himself a faith with a distant God and a few teachings of Moses and the rabbis. Jesus was, at most, a light for the Gentiles in it.

Two things set that in motion. At the Athenaeum he heard Professor Van Lennep, who defended against Voltaire that the books of Moses were genuine. For the first time the thought came to him that God might really have spoken. And he began to read the history of his own ancestors, the Jews of Spain and Portugal. What he found there was a people who had been uniquely favored by God and uniquely disciplined.

He was a boy who searched. What he searched for, he did not yet know.

Lemans takes him to Bilderdijk

In 1813 his Hebrew teacher, Mozes Lemans, brought him into contact with a poet who was living in Amsterdam at the time: Willem Bilderdijk. Bilderdijk lived simply on the Oudezijds Achterburgwal, a canal in the old center. He believed in the God of the Bible and had little patience for the reasoning of the eighteenth century.

Da Costa was fifteen. That same year he wrote a poem, *Lof der dichtkunst* (In Praise of Poetry), that caught Bilderdijk's attention. A year later his first printed work appeared, *De verlossing van Nederland* (The Deliverance of the Netherlands). A bond grew that would shape his whole life. Bilderdijk taught him and became a fatherly friend. The boy became his most important pupil. That friendship lasted eighteen years, until Bilderdijk died in 1831.

In 1816 Da Costa enrolled at the Athenaeum to study law. A year later he left for Leiden, where Bilderdijk settled in 1817, and attended the lectures of his teacher. In 1818 he received his doctorate in law. On June 21, 1821, a second doctorate followed, in letters and philosophy.

Bilderdijk never tried to convert him. Da Costa states this explicitly in 1845. What the old poet did was teach him to read the Old Testament, with the promises God had made to the fathers. In 1819 Bilderdijk wrote in a poem that a sincere Jew who hopes for what God has promised is, in that hope, really already a Christian.

And then came the conversation of 1820. Bilderdijk told him that the ancient Jews themselves had recognized a plurality of persons in the one God. From eternity God had brought forth the Son, and it was this Son whom Christians worshiped in Jesus Christ. Da Costa tells that at that moment the first rays of God's light fell into his eyes.

He opened the New Testament. He started with John, with the Word who was in the beginning with God and who became flesh. After that he read his own prophets again. Isaiah 53, about the Servant who was wounded for our transgressions. Psalm 22. Psalm 110. He now read them as words that had already been fulfilled.

It was not a sudden turning. He himself calls it a faith that grew slowly and that in the meantime also changed his conscience and his ordinary days. He discovered what guilt before God is. And

when he looks back on himself, his wife and his friend, he turns it around: they had not found Christ. He had been seeking them.

A night with Isaiah

His friend Capadose was studying medicine in Leiden in the same years. He too was family, and he too came under Bilderdijk's influence. Capadose later wrote a little book about his own conversion, in French, and in it Da Costa appears in a way you would not expect.

When Bilderdijk expressed in a poem the wish that his pupil would become a Christian, Da Costa was annoyed. He warned Capadose. They had to be on their guard, he said, because there was a plan to seduce them.

Still, he went on reading. The two friends came together as often as they could at Capadose's parental home. They read the Bible together and laid their objections before each other. They began with Matthew. What struck them: this gospel did not tear down the Old Testament. It built on it. Capadose speaks of happy hours in which the God of their fathers was with them.

One night Capadose was reading the prophet Isaiah and came to the fifty-third chapter. The suffering of Christ was set out there so clearly that he thought someone had put another Bible in the place of his own. After that chapter, he writes, an Israelite could no longer doubt who the Messiah was.

A cousin who knew the catechism

In 1820 Da Costa became engaged to his cousin Hanna Belmonte. She came from the same Portuguese Jewish circle. She had been raised at a Christian school, had followed the religion classes there and already knew the Heidelberg Catechism. The name of Jesus was not new to her.

Before the wedding he told her what was going on inside him. Hanna began to cry. The same thoughts, she said, had also risen in her own heart. This is how his friend Koenen tells it in the biographical sketch he wrote shortly after Da Costa's death. From that conversation on, Da Costa himself calls her a dear sister in Christ.

On July 11, 1821, three weeks after his second doctorate, they were married. In the home of the young couple two paths came together. He read the prophets with the eyes of a poet. She had learned as a girl who Jesus was according to the Christians. What happened in their hearts in those months, Da Costa also put down in poems. In 1821 and 1822 his first collections appeared, under the title *Poëzy* (Poetry).

His father did not live to see the baptism. Daniel da Costa died on February 22, 1822. He had had a premonition, Koenen writes, that his only son would leave the faith of his fathers. In the first weeks of the year of mourning, Isaäc went to the synagogue every morning to pray for his father.

In the summer of 1822 he made the decision to become a Christian openly. Capadose followed.

A quiet baptism in a large church

Why Leiden and not Amsterdam? Capadose later said that they did not want to make it harder for the family than it already was. Bilderdijk had advised it and put them in touch with the Reverend Egeling. On September 23, 1822, Da Costa left for Leiden with Hanna. Egeling gave them a short preparation. On October 17 the three of them made their profession of faith.

Egeling was an old, simple man, De Clercq writes, with something childlike about him. He was no friend of Bilderdijk, and he did

not make it easy for the two young Jews either. He held them back and pointed out expressions that did not come from the Bible. The gentlemen spoke too fast for him. He wanted to see it on paper.

The evening before the baptism Da Costa was upset once more. Egeling had let it be known that Bilderdijk, who was not a member of the congregation, might not be allowed to sit in the elders' pew. After that, peace returned.

The rest you already know: the three cushions, Romans 11, the kneeling. After the service Egeling prayed with them. Isaäc and Hanna spent the day with Bilderdijk, who also wanted De Clercq and the others at the table. Nobody could refuse. It is a cheerful religion after all, that of ours, said the old man. At parting he told Da Costa that a glass of wine had not tasted so good to him in a long time.

After the baptism Da Costa and Capadose wrote a letter to the Portuguese congregation. They gave up their membership, and in the same letter they declared their love for the people of Israel.

Willem de Clercq would become one of Da Costa's most faithful friends. Later Hanna's mother was also baptized, at the age of sixty-seven, in the Walloon church in Amsterdam. In that quiet service in Leiden sat people who together would form a movement. Nobody knew that then.

Have you ever chosen something you knew would hurt your family? Da Costa did it at twenty-four, eight months after his father's death, with his wife beside him.

"The nineteenth century certainly does not excel in godliness"

A year later, in 1823, a little book by him appeared in Leiden: *Bezwaren tegen den geest der eeuw* (Objections to the Spirit of the

Age). It had ten chapters. In it Da Costa attacked everything his time was proud of. Religion, morals, science, politics. His contemporaries thought the world was moving forward. He thought it was not.

The chapter on morality opened with a sentence that stung: "The nineteenth century certainly does not excel in godliness." He turned against the ideas of the French Revolution and against trust in reason alone. At the end he called on the governments to acknowledge Christ as their Lord. He himself later called the little book the outpouring of a heart that saw its God not acknowledged in the world.

The storm broke. Those who a year earlier had been enthusiastic about the young poet were now ashamed of him. The Reverend Egeling, who had baptized him, broke with him. His old professor Van Lennep and the man of letters Jeronimo de Vries no longer wanted to see him. The Leiden professor Van der Palm also turned away. The mayor of Amsterdam ordered the secret police to report every week on who visited Da Costa's home. Few people still dared to associate with him.

Bilderdijk defended his pupil with a pamphlet of his own. Willem de Clercq remained his friend, although he was not pleased with the fierce tone. The historian Elisabeth Kluit tells that visitors at De Clercq's door would first ask whether Mr. Da Costa was inside. If he was, they preferred to come back another time.

There are also things in the book that a Christian today would no longer defend. Among other things, Da Costa opposed the abolition of slavery. Later writers who admire him say it honestly: on this point he was a child of his time. I do not want to polish that away here. A man can see sharply where his age is drifting away from God, and be blind himself on another point.

The book has never been forgotten. Two hundred years later, theologians and literary scholars still write articles about it.

Sunday evening on the Rozengracht

After his studies Da Costa did not receive an official post. He returned to Amsterdam and went to live on the Rozengracht, a canal in the city. The doors of the stately houses closed for him. He opened his own door.

From 1826 he held Bible lectures in his home on Sunday evenings. In 1826 and 1827 it went on week after week about the Acts of the Apostles. Later, talks on Fridays were added, mostly about theology, for those who had studied more.

We know what such an evening looked like, because the writer Allard Pierson described it later. Candles lit the room, the chairs stood along the walls, and in the corner stood an organ. Da Costa sat behind a small table. There was a long prayer, then the reading and explanation of a Bible passage, a meditation, singing, room for questions and a closing prayer. When he got fired up, Pierson wrote, his lips tightened and his eyes shone.

One of the regular visitors, Johan Frederik Schimsheimer, came with his blind wife. He wrote the lectures down as they were given, and thanks to him they have been preserved and appeared as a book after Da Costa's death. Schimsheimer tells that Da Costa spoke without notes, that he mastered ten languages and that he himself led the prayer and the singing of the psalms.

Those evenings were not gloomy. Da Costa mixed seriousness with jokes, to the annoyance of some strict visitors. Then he would say that he could not help it: his name was Isaäc, and in Hebrew that has to do with laughing. Luther and the prophets had done it too. Koenen, who knew him up close, portrays him as a man who could

talk for hours, who could lash out fiercely at an opponent and who then quickly forgave. And as someone who lived in prayer, with the trust of a child.

His house was hospitable, certainly in the first years. Later he had to live more frugally. Hanna and he had nine children. Six of them, three sons and three daughters, they buried.

Around 1830 many well-known and gifted people of Amsterdam sat in that room. Van Lennep also came to listen again. The literary historian Jan ten Brink calculated that Da Costa gave lectures for more than thirty years, about the history of the Netherlands, about the Bible, about prophecy. In a series on the prophets he named things that in his view were still to come, among them the conversion of Israel and the new heaven and the new earth.

Here lies the heart of what was later called the Réveil. The word means awakening. It began in living rooms where people read the Bible together, prayed and visited one another. Da Costa and De Clercq were the center of the Amsterdam circle.

Candles, chairs along the walls, an organ in the corner. Nothing more was needed. Jesus said: *For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.* (Matthew 18:20). A movement that later received a name of its own began with an open living room on Sunday evening.

A voice in print and in the Institute

Da Costa kept writing. In 1824 a second polemical work followed, *De Sadduceën* (The Sadducees). From 1834 he published a magazine, the *Nederlandsche Stemmen over Godsdienst, Staat, Geschieden Letterkunde* (Dutch Voices on Religion, State, History and Literature).

The man who was avoided in 1823 slowly came back into view. In 1839 he became a member of the Koninklijk Instituut, the Royal Institute, the distinguished society of scholars and artists. There, in 1840, he read his poem *Vijf en twintig jaren* (Twenty-five Years). Professor Bosscha even wanted to have him nominated as an extraordinary professor of literature. It foundered on an anonymous letter and an alderman who would not agree. The appointment never came.

After 1840 he wrote poems about the events of his time, the so-called tijdzangen, songs of the times. They were collected in 1854.

"From the Jordan to the Amstel"

What set Da Costa apart from many other Christians of his time was his love for the Jewish people. He had become a Christian, and he kept seeing himself as a Jew. Capadose broke with everything Jewish. Da Costa never stopped calling himself a Jew, writes the historian Jaap Colthof. He even believed that the chosen people, as he saw it, had moved from the Jordan to the Amstel, the river of Amsterdam, and that the God of Israel had in this way become the God of the Netherlands too.

In 1846 he and Capadose began public prayer meetings for Israel. After that came monthly meetings in living rooms. Earlier, in 1839, he had become friends with a Scottish minister, Jamieson. They shared a concern for the mission among Israel.

In 1848 and 1849 the second edition of his great book *Israël en de volken* (Israel and the Nations) appeared, about the history of the Jews. In it he fought against the contempt that many Christians had for Jews. The book was translated into English in 1850 and into German in 1855. In the winter of 1848 to 1849 he gave lectures in the Casino in Amsterdam. Five ministers then gave him a gift, and

he thanked them on May 30, 1849, in a letter that still exists. The Scotsman Jamieson also received letters from him.

In 1849 Carl Schwartz came to Amsterdam. Schwartz was himself of Jewish descent, baptized in 1837, and worked as a missionary among the Jews for the Free Church of Scotland. With the support of Da Costa and Capadose he started the magazine *De Heraut* (The Herald) in 1850, with a Hebrew Bible text as its motto.

In 1851 an English translation of a book by Da Costa, *The Four Witnesses*, about the four gospels, appeared in London. He had written it against the German theologian Strauss. In the same year, the year of the world exhibition, he spoke in London at a conference on the mission among the Jews. A year later he wrote a report of that journey.

From 1852 Da Costa led the seminary of the Scottish church in Amsterdam. He was a director and teacher there until his death. In Paris, on August 30, 1855, he set out his convictions in twenty-five theses. One of them says that the Old Testament is full of predictions of a restoration of Israel as a people.

I find this one of the most beautiful things about his life. He chose Jesus, and he kept loving his people. Many Christians of his time saw those two as opposites. He saw them as one story. In that he stood in an old line. Paul too, a Jew who followed Jesus, wrote with sorrow about his brothers, his kinsmen according to the flesh (Romans 9:3).

A knife in the church

One Sunday morning that love was severely tested. On August 1, 1858, Da Costa was leading the service in the church of the Scottish mission in Amsterdam. Carl Schwartz stood in the pulpit and began to pray. Then a boy of fifteen, Samuel Abraham Hirsch, ran up the

stairs with a dagger under his clothes. He could not get the gate of the pulpit open. He stabbed Schwartz three times, in the chest and in the left arm.

Hirsch came from a strictly Orthodox Jewish family. He wanted to put an end to the mission among his people. A churchgoer held him until the police arrived. According to that witness, the boy said that he was an Israelite and that this missionary had to go. The officer then had to protect him from the angry people.

Then it was Da Costa's turn. He went on with the prayer. The words with which he began were the words Jesus prayed on the cross: *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.* (Luke 23:34).

Schwartz recovered and was back in the pulpit on September 26. Hirsch was sentenced to twelve years, but was pardoned in 1862. He later became a respected Jewish scholar in London.

A Jewish Christian who goes on praying after an attack in the church, with the words of Jesus about forgiveness, for a boy of his own people. I would rather let that picture speak for itself.

Bilderdijk to the end

In his last years Da Costa returned to the man who had formed him. From 1856 to 1859 he edited the collected poems of Bilderdijk, fifteen volumes. In 1859 his book *De mensch en de dichter W. Bilderdijk* (The Man and the Poet W. Bilderdijk) appeared.

He kept giving lectures. His last poem was about the Battle of Nieuwpoort, a battle from 1600. It was widely admired. For the winter of 1859 to 1860 he had a series on the Gospel of John ready, the book in which he had begun to read almost forty years earlier. He never gave that series.

He was ill for five months, almost without interruption. It was in his chest and his abdomen, and it gave him severe shortness of breath. Koenen calls his patience in those months an example. He kept believing.

Isaäc da Costa died on Saturday, April 28, 1860, in Amsterdam. He was sixty-two. It was the end of the Jewish Sabbath, and the Christian Sunday was coming.

His last words have been preserved by the friend who had knelt beside him at the baptismal font. Capadose passed them on: "Indescribable love, wisdom and faithfulness of our God in Christ!"

What someone says at the end of his life sometimes shows where his heart lay. Da Costa spoke about the faithfulness of God. About himself he said nothing.

Students carry their teacher

The funeral was on May 3, 1860. Around eleven o'clock the streets around the house where he died and around the church were full of people. The church was packed to the last seat. The organ played the melody of Psalm 42. Students of the seminary of the Free Church of Scotland carried his body inside. It was the Nieuwe Kerk on the Dam, where Vondel and Michiel de Ruyter also lie. Thirty-seven years earlier, the mayor of this city had had it recorded who rang his doorbell.

At the open grave Abraham Capadose spoke. At the baptismal font and at the grave stood the same friend. In between, they started prayer meetings for Israel together and supported the work of Schwartz together. In Proverbs it says: *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* (Proverbs 17:17). Capadose was both.

Hanna was left behind with a son and two daughters. A year after his death his large library was sold at auction.

Da Costa was not an easy man. He could write harshly and he was sometimes wrong. But what he chose in 1822, he kept choosing: for thirty-eight years, in his living room, in his books, in a church where a knife was drawn.

On a Sunday in 1822 he knelt in a quiet church, and a minister read about a remnant of grace among Israel. In the carriage on the way home he said that he was happy. On a Saturday evening in 1860, when the Sabbath was over and Sunday was coming, he spoke about the love of God in Christ. Between the two lay a life. His body was carried by young men he had taught.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on January 14, 1798, in Amsterdam in a Portuguese Jewish family; his parents Daniel da Costa and Rebecca Ricardo; the Latin school (1806-1811) and the Athenaeum; the meeting with Bilderdijk in 1813 through Mozes Lemans; the doctorates in Leiden in 1818 and on June 21, 1821; the marriage to Hanna Belmonte in July 1821; the baptism on Sunday, October 20, 1822, in the Pieterskerk in Leiden, together with Hanna and Abraham Capadose, by the Rev. Egeling, with a sermon on Romans 11:5; *Bezwaren tegen den geest der eeuw* (1823) and the fierce reactions, the break with Egeling and the police surveillance (Koenen's biographical sketch from 1860 and a later biography); the Bible lectures in his home from 1826; membership of the Koninklijk Instituut in 1839; the prayer meetings for Israel from 1846; *Israël en de volken* (1848-1849); his bond with the Scottish mission and his leadership of the seminary from 1852 to 1860; the attack on Schwartz on August 1, 1858; his death on April 28, 1860, in Amsterdam.

From his own testimony (article in *The Voice of Israel*, February 1, 1845, quoted in Dutch translation in a later biography): the religious instinct of his youth, the praying and doubting, his revulsion at the mockery of the philosophers; the lectures on Moses and the history of the Sephardic Jews; that Bilderdijk did not want to convert him; the poem of 1819 and the conversation of 1820; the reading of John 1, Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 and Psalm 110; the faith that grew slowly. Nobody else could tell this. I have not had the article in my own hands, only the extensive quotation.

From the circle of his friends:

- *Abraham Capadose* (his little book about his conversion, quoted in the same biography): Da Costa's warning to be on their guard; the reading together in Capadose's parental home, starting with Matthew; the night with Isaiah 53; the reason for the baptism in Leiden; the letter to the Portuguese congregation; the three cushions; the last words of Da Costa.
- *Willem de Clercq* (diary, published in 1869): his journey to Leiden on October 19, 1822; the mood of Da Costa and Hanna; Egeling's reserve; the question of the elders' pew; the quiet service; Dirk van Hogendorp beside him; the prayer afterward; the evening at Bilderdijk's and his words; Da Costa's sentence in the carriage.
- *H.J. Koenen* (biographical sketch, June 1860): only child; the Latin poem at the farewell from school; Capadose as playmate; the conversation with Hanna and her tears; the wedding date of July 11, 1821; the death of his father on February 22, 1822, his premonition and the praying in the synagogue; the departure for Leiden on September 23 and the profession of faith on October 17, 1822; the baptism of Hanna's mother; the order to the secret police (Koenen names Jonkheer D.W. Elias as the one who received the order); Van Lennep and

Jeronimo de Vries; the play on his name; his character and his life of prayer; the nine children, six of whom died young; the nomination by Bosscha; the five months of illness; the series on John that did not go ahead.

- *J.F. Schimsheimer* (publisher of the Bible lectures): that Da Costa spoke without notes, knew ten languages and himself led in prayer and song.
- *Allard Pierson* (*Oudere tijdgenooten*, Older Contemporaries): the description of an evening at his home. I know it through a later quotation.

From one source: the prayer with Luke 23:34 after the attack of 1858, the words of Hirsch and the officer who protected him (the scholarly article by Colthof, 2016; the attack itself is well researched, among other things with the court records); the description of the funeral, with the students who carried his body (a later description, based on the report from his own circle); the break with Van der Palm; the friendship with Jamieson since 1839, the lectures in the Casino and the letter of May 30, 1849; the twenty-five theses of 1855.

Where the sources differ (in the story I have chosen one version each time):

- *Date of the baptism.* One later description gives October 22, 1822. De Clercq's diary, Koenen and the other sources point to Sunday, October 20.
- *Year of the wedding.* The same description gives 1818, according to the Jewish ritual. Koenen gives July 11, 1821, and the Jewish Encyclopedia also gives 1821.
- *Who was present at the baptism.* One later description also names Groen van Prinsterer, who later became one of the best-known Christian statesmen of our country. De Clercq, who was there, does not name him.

- *The police surveillance.* One source says that Da Costa was under surveillance, Koenen that the secret police had to report weekly on who came to his home. I have not seen documents from the police themselves.
- *The address of the Bible lectures.* Two descriptions name his house on the Rozengracht. According to a third, Schimsheimer speaks of the Prinsengracht and of Sunday evenings at home until November 7, 1852. Possibly he moved; I have not been able to establish that.
- *Nederlandsche Stemmen.* Begun in 1834; stopped in 1838 or in 1840, depending on the reference work.
- *The nomination as professor.* Koenen tells it without a year; one later source gives 1845.
- *The seminary.* Koenen calls him director and preacher from 1852 to 1860, the Jewish Encyclopedia of 1903 teacher and leader in his last years. What exactly he taught there, I have not found.
- *The English translation of The Four Witnesses.* The title page names David Dundas Scott as translator; a biographical fragment about Jamieson connects the translation with him.
- *The grave.* Koenen writes that he was interred in the church where Vondel and De Ruyter also lie. The Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam names his name among the grave slabs in and around the choir, and adds that few slabs still lie in their old place.

Unconfirmed: Bilderdijk's exact words in 1820 and at table on the evening of the baptism were retold, not taken over literally.

Interpretation: Da Costa's defense of slavery in 1823 is seen, also by his admirers, as a blind spot of his time.

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Hendrik Pierson: the minister who wanted the houses of shame closed

On April 14, 1877, Reverend Hendrik Pierson sat at the bedside of a dying woman in Zetten. Petronella Voûte had led the Asyl Steenbeek for almost thirty years, the house that took in women who were coming out of prostitution. Pierson had been its director for only three months. He prayed with her, talked with her and left.

Less than an hour later he received word. Steenbeek was on fire.

Miss Voûte was carried to his house, dying, while the walls were almost falling in above her. This is how Pierson described it himself, in a letter to the Englishwoman Josephine Butler. The house burned to the ground. Four days later she died.

A month earlier she had told him something he never forgot. She had a strange presentiment, she said, that the whole work of Steenbeek would be changed and begin anew, in every respect. How, she did not know.

The new director was forty-two. Steenbeek was gone, the women had no roof, and he had no idea what else would come at him that year. Thirty-four years later, on March 16, 1911, the Tweede Kamer,

the lower house of the Dutch parliament, forbade the keeping of brothels. The old man in Zetten put three letters under it: S.D.G. To God alone be the glory.

This is the story of what lies in between. It began in an Amsterdam merchant's home.

"The godly glazier"

Hendrik Pierson was born on June 10, 1834, in Amsterdam. His father, Jan Lodewijk Gregory Pierson, was a merchant who had been born in Alkmaar in 1806, a partner in the trading house De Burlett and Pierson. His mother, Ida Oyens, came from Amsterdam. They had married in 1829.

The family was well off, and devout. His father was given the nickname "the godly glazier." The home had been shaped by the Réveil, the revival movement that in those years went through the upper class of Protestant Netherlands. People who belonged to it sought a personal faith and wanted to show it in mission, education and care for the poor. In the Pierson household the family took part in mission work and charity. Duty counted there as the road to happiness, wrote a biographer of Hendrik's younger brother.

There were seven children, and Hendrik was somewhere in the middle. His older brother Allard would become a professor. His younger brother Nicolaas Gerard, the youngest of the family, became an economist. Allard and Hendrik both wanted to study theology.

His mother wrote too. In 1853 a little Bible devotional for children by her appeared, without her name on the cover. Her letters are now in the archive of the Réveil. Hendrik grew up in a home where the Bible lay open and where faith was something you did.

In 1847, when he was thirteen, he stayed for a few days with a minister in the Betuwe. It was Ottho Gerhard Heldring, forty-three years old, and he was building. A place of refuge had to be made for women whom nobody wanted. It opened on January 1, 1848, and the leadership went to an Amsterdam woman from a family of French refugees: Petronella Voûte. To Hendrik she was a friend from his childhood years.

I already wrote about Heldring in volume 1. Pierson himself wrote down that visit years later. "I saw Heldring first in 1847," it says in his letter to Butler.

What do you carry with you from the home where you grew up, and from the homes where you stayed as a child? Sometimes you only notice much later what was put into you.

A minister on the Oude Maas

In September 1851 Hendrik began his theology studies in Utrecht. In 1857 he became minister in Heinenoord, a village in the Hoeksche Waard, among strict Calvinists, as he later described it himself. That same year, on June 4, he married Hermine Agnes Kolff in Rotterdam, a woman from that city who was a year older than he was.

He stayed in Heinenoord for twelve years. He preached there, and he wrote. In 1864 a study of his appeared on sacred stones in ancient Israel, and two years later a second one on the same subject. He contributed to magazines such as the Theologisch Tijdschrift, De Gids and Stemmen voor waarheid en vrede. He was a learned minister, interested in ancient religions and in the questions of his own time.

Six children were born. One of them was Christine Hermine, born in 1863. Her name comes back later in this chapter.

From those years he tells one small incident, and it is one of the finest of his life. In 1852 Heldring had written a pamphlet with a friend, without his name on it. In it he rejected every form of regulation of prostitution by the government. In the Netherlands he stood alone in this, and the booklet did not sell. In 1858 Pierson found the remaining copies in the attic of a bookseller. There were a few hundred. He bought them all, for an amount that he converted for his English readers into two pounds.

He was twenty-four and a village minister. He kept them for twenty years.

A school for the children of Den Bosch

In 1869 the family moved to 's-Hertogenbosch, where Hendrik became minister of the Hervormde congregation (the Dutch Reformed Church). It was a city of about twenty-five thousand people, and one in ten was Protestant. A year later, on October 28, 1870, Hermine died. Hendrik was left with young children. Later he married again, a cousin, Petronella Adriana Oyens.

In Den Bosch he got into a public fight for the first time. It was about a school. The Hervormde church council had its own deacons' school, once set up for children of poor families. In 1874 the majority of the council decided to close that school. Public education had improved, they felt, and it saved money.

Pierson wanted something different. He proposed turning it into a Protestant school, under the supervision of the church, and together with two others he offered to put money into it. The church council voted down both proposals. When a Catholic teacher was appointed at a public school around that time, Pierson wrote a fierce piece about it in the magazine De Tijdspiegel.

That did not go unanswered. In October 1874 the church council published its own explanation, and one of the elders added that he regretted the public tone of his minister. Meanwhile Pierson looked for support across the country and wanted to start a school of their own together with the Christelijke Gereformeerden, a church that had come out of the Afscheiding (the secession of 1834). He published his pieces as a pamphlet, *De Bossche schoolkwestie* (The Den Bosch School Question). Two years later a *Catechismus van de schoolkwestie* (Catechism of the School Question) followed.

It is a small story in a provincial town. Still, something shows in it that kept coming back later in his life. When Pierson thought something was wrong, he could not keep quiet. He wrote sharply, and not everyone appreciated that.

In those same years in Den Bosch he heard Heldring worry again and again about something else. Since 1852 several Dutch cities had quietly introduced a regulation of prostitution. The old Heldring felt that something was not right about a state that allowed such a thing. In March 1870 he wrote this in a letter to a young man, Van den Bergh, who later became Pierson's son-in-law. He did no more than voice doubt. There was no one who thought along with him.

An empty chair in Zetten

On July 11, 1876, Ottho Gerhard Heldring died in Marienbad, a spa town in Bohemia. He was seventy-two. In Zetten he left behind a whole complex: the Asyl Steenbeek, the homes Talitha Kumi and Bethel for girls, and a teachers' college from 1864. He was buried by the Vluchtheuvelkerk (the Church on the Refuge Hill) in Zetten.

Who was to take over this work? The choice fell on the minister from Den Bosch. In January 1877 Hendrik Pierson came to Steenbeek. He had made it a condition that he could also start work outside

Zetten. Miss Voûte was glad that it would be him, but her strength was failing.

For Pierson it was a big step. He left a city congregation behind and ended up in a village in the Betuwe, among girls and women whom society had written off. In the language of that time they were called fallen women. Heldring had believed that they could be rescued, through a new beginning, through work and through the gospel. Pierson believed that too.

I write the word "fallen" with some hesitation. It belongs to that century. Pierson would spend the rest of his life trying to lay the blame where he thought it belonged.

Jesus once said to the religious leaders in the temple: *Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.* (Matthew 21:31). Those whom society had written off were not written off by Him. In Zetten, Heldring and Pierson built on that faith.

Then came the fire of April 14, and the death of Petronella Voûte.

The women of Steenbeek were given shelter in the church. Gifts came in from all over the country. Within five months a large new building stood there. At the opening, friends came to Zetten from every corner of the Netherlands, and Pierson used that day to start talking about something bigger than Zetten. Some felt that he was steering a different course from Heldring.

The work began anew, in every respect. Miss Voûte had said so.

Geneva

Heldring had taken women in. Pierson looked further. Why did new women keep coming? Saving souls through evangelism was not enough, he felt. The causes in society also had to be tackled.

And one of those causes, Pierson believed, was the government itself.

In the Netherlands at that time prostitution was regulated. The government allowed brothels under certain conditions, and women in prostitution were required to undergo medical checks for venereal diseases. Those who defended that system saw prostitution as an evil that simply existed and that you were better off controlling. Pierson saw it the other way around. A government that licensed brothels was, in his view, taking part. In a pamphlet he wrote that the government promoted fornication and was therefore an accomplice.

In England, Josephine Butler had been campaigning against the same system for years. She and her supporters saw prostitution under state supervision as a form of slavery. They therefore called their struggle abolitionism: abolition, after the word for the abolition of slavery. In September 1877 the first international congress of her movement met in Geneva, with six to seven hundred participants. There the International Abolitionist Federation was formally founded.

Pierson hesitated about whether to go. He had always found the medical control repulsive, and he shuddered at organized houses of shame. He did not need to be converted. He was afraid that the congress would dodge the heart of the matter and look at the cause in a humane way instead of a Christian way.

He went anyway. It was five months after the fire.

In Geneva he met Josephine Butler. She later wrote that there she first made the acquaintance of Mr. Pierson of Holland, the successor of Reverend Heldring, and that he had been a great strength for the work. He came home with the conviction that the cause was far more important than he had thought. They had all been taken in,

he wrote, by a science that called itself medical and was not. And he found an image for what he had discovered. This one question was the heel of Achilles of the whole matter of moral renewal. Whoever touched it touched everything.

The pamphlets from the attic

At home he was reproached for pulling Heldring's work in a direction Heldring had never wanted. Pierson had an answer to that, and it had been lying in his cupboard for twenty years.

He brought out the pamphlets from 1852. A strong weapon, he called them. They proved that the old Heldring had thought exactly the same and had only kept silent because nobody stood by him. Pierson picked up the thread his predecessor had had to drop. He wrote a circular letter and put a copy of the booklet in with every address.

After that he invited four to five hundred people to a meeting in Utrecht, in the middle of the country. It was March 1878. The turnout was large. There, he wrote, the foundation of our work was laid.

That work took shape in the Nederlandsche Vereeniging tegen de Prostitutie, the Dutch Association against Prostitution, which he founded. Pierson became chairman and for years set the course. It was a small association, with mostly Protestant members and relatively many people from the elite, paid for out of his own means and those of his acquaintances. Outwardly it took no side in religion or politics. It published pamphlets, encouraged research and tried to persuade administrators and politicians. Pierson also directed the association's magazine, *Het Maandblad* (The Monthly).

Opposition came from Christians too. In one city a committee for better morals had been formed, which wanted to fight immorality

and would not speak out on the role of the government. Pierson called those gentlemen Nicodemites, after the man who came to Jesus by night. They were deeply offended. He stuck to it. Many Christians, he wrote, act as if the government is something worldly that the church stands outside of, as under the Roman emperors, when it could only save souls. In the Netherlands that was not so. Christians here were responsible for the spirit in which the laws were made.

Have you ever been a Nicodemite? Condemning evil costs little, as long as you dodge the question of who keeps it going.

An association for men

According to the historians Martin Bossenbroek and Jan Kompagnie, who have reread his writings, Pierson had a clear division in his mind. Women, in his view, were best suited for the rescue work: taking in and guiding women who wanted to get out. Men had to give the public witness and organize the political pressure. Men who worked among prostitutes themselves ran a moral risk, he thought. In the statutes women were given a place in separate women's committees. They did not get onto the board.

His real struggle lay elsewhere. He fought what he called the double standard: one moral law for women and another for men. A woman who ended up in prostitution lost her good name. The man who visited her simply walked back out onto the street. Pierson believed that men could control their urges and that the same measure applied to them. In 1889 he put that question in the title of a pamphlet: *Tweeërlei zedewet?* (Two Moral Laws?)

He found poverty too easy an explanation. The strength to resist temptation, he wrote, is not a privilege of rich people.

For the respectable gentlemen of his time it was an uncomfortable message. He laid the blame on their own class.

In the Gospel of John, the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman to Jesus who had been caught in adultery. About the man the story is silent. Jesus said: *He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.* (John 8:7). Pierson saw the same crooked measure in his own time.

A violin on his shoulder

Anyone who reads only his pamphlets gets the picture of a stern man. In Josephine Butler's book there is a different picture. In August 1879 the federation held its annual meeting in Liège. Pierson spoke there about his work in Zetten and told how that very practice had convinced him of the principles of the federation. On Sunday, August 24, the delegates sat with a minister in Chênée, near the city. They sang in his chapel. The host played the violin, and Mr. Pierson's shoulder served as a support. A day later Pierson spoke in Verviers, next to Butler. Mrs. Pierson had traveled with him.

At home it did not always go so warmly. In 1881 a yearbook appeared called *Magdalena*, for the benefit of the Asyl Steenbeek. Pierson was one of the editors. De Tijdspiegel reviewed it critically. The reviewer felt that the book wrote about prostitution in a tone that could offend readers. He also defended the medical checks of prostitutes that Pierson fought so hard. Theologians, he felt, should leave that question to doctors and the police. Six years later another writer in the same magazine wrote that Pierson's speech at a meeting in Düsseldorf in 1884 had been received coolly, and that witnessing and rescuing might better be kept apart.

Pierson kept writing about it. For him it was a question of conscience.

Meanwhile the work in Zetten went on. In those years Steenbeek had fifty-one beds and was the largest house of its kind in the Netherlands. In 1882 a Magdalenahuis was added, for unmarried mothers. Later came a home for the children born there, two smaller houses for young girls and training courses. Every year the leaders of shelters from Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Leiden, Arnhem, Groningen and Alphen came together in Zetten under his leadership. In September 1883 the federation held its international congress in The Hague.

Antwerp, September 1885

In 1885 the London journalist W.T. Stead ran a sensational campaign in his newspaper, the Pall Mall Gazette, against the trade in girls.

Pierson admired Stead's courage. He considered his method unacceptable. In September 1885 he met Stead in Antwerp, and he told him straight to his face that he admired him and at the same time loathed him.

How far may you go for a good cause? That is an old question. Pierson at any rate thought that Stead had crossed a line, however good his goal was. Shortly afterward England abolished the system of regulation. In his magazine Pierson headlined that the victory began with England.

Men at the brothel door

In Haarlem, from the early 1880s, a small group of young men stood in the evenings in front of the doors of the brothels. Among them were Gerard Velthuysen, Johannes van der Steur and H. Stap. They tried to persuade the visitors not to go in.

When a few girls from those houses wanted to leave, the young men wrote to Zetten. Was there room? That is how Pierson got to know

them, and from that moment he supported their work with money. In 1888 Velthuysen and Van der Steur went to Amsterdam, at the invitation of a retired colonel, Roosmale Nepveu. In 1890 a national association followed, the Nederlandsche Middernachtzending-Vereeniging, the Dutch Midnight Mission Association. Pierson became chairman of the central board of five men, and Velthuysen senior secretary.

The work was simple and risky. The so-called working members went out every evening to the streets with brothels. They stood in front of the door, spoke to men who wanted to go in and handed out tracts. The board consisted of gentlemen who did not stand on the street themselves. In Amsterdam the local branch was made up of working men.

They took a beating for it, from visitors, brothel keepers and landlords. Van der Steur later wrote that he had been hit and that someone once poured urine over his head. In the first years the police tended to take the side of the brothel keepers. The men were sent away, chased by people from the neighborhood and themselves taken along to the station. In April 1892 the council member Hovy raised those assaults in the Amsterdam city council. The mayor answered that the police could not protect them against the violence of citizens. In March 1901 diluted sulfuric acid was thrown at two of them from a doorway. One was wounded.

One of the workers, Jan van Tijn, received a punch in the face from a brothel keeper. In March 1902 he wrote the man a letter. He offered him forgiveness and asked him to think about his sin.

Pierson did not stand on the street. He spoke at the meetings. In 1895 he closed one with words about the brothels: “plague boils and plague dens from which plague vapors rose.” In January 1900

he reproached the Amsterdam city government for acting far too weakly.

It helped. In 1897 the city council of Amsterdam banned the open brothels, by eighteen votes to twelve. In 1902 the ban was tightened, and by the end of that year the registered brothels had disappeared from the city.

I find it a striking picture. A minister in Zetten, far from the inner city of Amsterdam, pays for and directs a group of men who stand at a brothel door at night to change someone else's mind. He wrote the pamphlets. They took the blows.

Fighting together, marching apart

In 1884 Protestant women had founded their own organization: the Nederlandsche Vrouwenbond tot Verhooging van het Zedelijk Bewustzijn, the Dutch Women's Union for Raising Moral Awareness. The initiative came from women who were often relatives of members of Pierson's association. The driving force was Marianne Klerck-van Hogendorp, and she too had been inspired by Josephine Butler. The two organizations worked together, held a congress and sent petitions to the government.

The relationship remained tense. Pierson did not want women on the board of his association. His motto was, in the words of Bossenbroek and Kompagnie, to fight together and march separately. In 1906 Marianne Klerck and Anna van Hogendorp openly attacked him on this. The board of the association took his side. The conflict was never fully resolved.

Here you see the limit of a man of his time. Pierson stood up for women whom nobody defended. To the women beside him in the struggle he gave no voice on his board. Both lived in the same head.

I tell it because it is in the sources, and because generals of God do not see everything either.

Reference works name him from 1898 as president of the International Abolitionist Federation, the movement Butler had founded.

Butler asked him to write down for her book how it had begun in the Netherlands. The letter he sent from Zetten then is the source of much of what you have read above. At the end he looks back. He feels the first holy fire flare up again, he writes. It would be long before the principles were understood, but that time was not lost. The daily prayers had not been in vain. And then one sentence without ornament: "We have not done as much as we wished." The honor he gave to God.

Thirty-three years

And then came March 1911. On March 16 the Tweede Kamer voted on a new morality law, which also made the trade in women a criminal offense. One of the articles, number 250bis, made keeping a brothel a criminal offense. It passed without a roll-call vote. Nobody asked for one.

Pierson was seventy-six by then. Thirty-three years had passed since the meeting in Utrecht. He called the result the success of a crusade and read in it that the conscience of the whole country had changed. And he gave God the glory: S.D.G., Soli Deo Gloria.

Those three letters sound like the beginning of Psalm 115: *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory.* (Psalm 115:1). After thirty-three years of struggle, Pierson did not give the honor to himself.

What he wrote in that piece you can read as the motto of his life. A house of shame had no right to exist, and "no woman may be

condemned to be a slave." For thirty-three years he had repeated it, in pamphlets, in his magazine, in meeting halls in the Netherlands and abroad.

Whether the law drove out prostitution is another question, and this chapter does not answer it. But from that moment on the government no longer licensed any brothel. That was what Pierson had fought for.

A stone on the slope

The fighter also wrote songs. For years he made spiritual songs for his own circle in Zetten, because he felt that the Hervormden had too little to sing. A gifted coworker set them to music, mostly for two voices, on melodies of Bach, Handel and Haydn. They appeared as *Vluchtheuvelzangen* (Songs of the Refuge Hill), after the church on the hill. By 1913 the second printing was already largely sold, and they were sung as far away as America. The magazine Neerlandia called him that year the Christian poet, the only one still living of the three well-known Pierson brothers.

In 1914 Pierson stepped down as director in Zetten. That year he turned eighty. His successor was J. Lammerts van Bueren. Pierson was a Knight of the Order of the Netherlands Lion.

Little is known about his last years. He died on August 7, 1923, in Groningen, eighty-nine years old.

They brought him back to Zetten. On the slope that leads up to the Vluchtheuvelkerk lie four plain natural stone grave slabs, today a national monument. One of them bears the names of Ottho Gerhard Heldring and his wife Anna Elisabeth. Another bears Petronella Voûte, who led the Asyl Steenbeek and died in 1877, four days after the fire. A third bears the name of Christine Hermine Pierson, Hendrik's daughter, born in 1863 and died in 1887. She had been mar-

ried to the minister C.C. Schot from Hardenberg. And the fourth bears Hendrik Pierson himself, 1834 to 1923, died at Groningen.

Schools have been named after him, I read, in Zetten and in 's-Hertogenbosch, the city where he once quarreled over a school.

Maybe you know a struggle that has lasted for years and where little can be seen. An injustice that everyone thinks is normal. Pierson saw it in the women who knocked on the door in Zetten, and in the town councils that licensed brothels. He wrote, he held meetings, he paid the men who stood on the street at night. When it came, he put three letters under it.

On the slope in Zetten the stones lie a few meters from each other. Heldring, who took the women in. Miss Voûte, who sensed that everything would begin anew. And the boy who in 1847 stayed with the minister, who eleven years later took a pile of forgotten pamphlets from an attic and kept them until the time had come.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on June 10, 1834, in Amsterdam; his parents Jan Lodewijk Gregory Pierson and Ida Oyens and the Réveil circle in which he grew up; studies in Utrecht from 1851; marriage to Hermine Agnes Kolff (1857) and her death in 1870; ministry in Heinenoord (1857) and 's-Hertogenbosch (1869); the Den Bosch school question of 1874; the death of Heldring on July 11, 1876; director in Zetten from 1877 as Heldring's successor; his presence at the congress in Geneva in September 1877 (his own letter and the book by Josephine Butler); founding and chairmanship of the Nederlandsche Vereeniging tegen de Prostitutie; the Magdalenahuis (1882); his role in the Midnight Mission and the violence the workers faced; the inspiration of Josephine Butler; the passing of the morality law in 1911 and

his reaction to it; death in 1923 in Groningen and his grave by the Vluchtheuvelkerk in Zetten.

From his own testimony (letter from Zetten to Josephine Butler, included by her in *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Crusade*, 1896): the stay with Heldring in 1847; the strict Calvinists of his first congregation and the situation in Den Bosch; Heldring's pamphlet of 1852 and the purchase of the remainders in 1858; Heldring's doubts and the letter of March 1870; his arrival in January 1877; the friendship with Petronella Voûte, her presentiment, his visit to her sickbed, the fire of April 14, 1877 and her death four days later; the shelter in the church and the rebuilding in five months; his hesitation about Geneva and what he learned there; the circular letter and the meeting in Utrecht in March 1878; the Nicodemites; the look back at the end. The letter has come down in English; the sentences in this chapter are translated and retold from it. Nobody else tells these things. How the fire started, he does not write. Butler herself tells about the first meeting in Geneva and about Liège, Chênée and Verviers in August 1879 (in a report by a French participant).

From one scholarly source: his meeting with W.T. Stead in Antwerp in 1885; the conflict with Marianne Klerck-van Hogendorp and Anna van Hogendorp in 1906; his views on the division of roles between men and women; the words with which he reacted in 1911, with S.D.G. (all from Bossenbroek and Kompagnie, 1998). From the Leiden thesis on the Midnight Mission: the beginning in Haarlem and the request for places in Zetten; Colonel Roosmale Nepveu; Van der Steur, Van Tijn and the incidents of 1892 and 1901; Pierson's words in 1895 and 1900; the Amsterdam bans of 1897 and 1902; that on his arrival he made it a condition that he could also work outside Zetten; that he felt saving souls alone was not enough. Knighthood: only from a genealogy of 1901. The songs: only from Neerlandia 1913. Düsseldorf 1884, the fifty-one beds, the annual

consultation of shelters and his statement about poverty: from a critical article in De Tijdspiegel of 1887.

Where the sources differ (in the story I have chosen one version each time):

- *Founding of the association.* The Leiden thesis gives 1878, Bossenbroek and Kompagnie 1879. Pierson himself places the beginning at the meeting in Utrecht in March 1878; he does not name a decision to found it there.
- *The number of children in his parents' home.* Seven according to a database of women writers, six according to the biographical sketch of his brother Nicolaas Gerard.
- *His second marriage.* That he remarried is evident from Butler's book: in 1879 Mrs. Pierson traveled with him, nine years after Hermine's death. The name Petronella Adriana Oyens, the year 1872 and that she became a mother to his children I have found only on Wikipedia. The number of six children from the first marriage also comes from there.
- *Wedding day and birthday.* The English Wikipedia gives May 4, 1857, and July 10, 1834; the genealogy of 1901 and the other sources give June 4 and June 10.
- *The thirty-three years.* In 1911 Pierson himself counted thirty-three years of struggle. That works out to 1878, the year of Utrecht.

Unconfirmed: his presidency of the International Abolitionist Federation from 1898 (two English-language Wikipedia articles; I have found no other source); that he organized the congress of 1883 in The Hague (the congress itself is certain); the reason for his departure from Zetten in 1914 (the English Wikipedia writes that it was for his health); the day of his death (the grave slab gives only the year and the place); the years of the children's home and the training courses in Zetten; the schools named after him. These

points come only from Wikipedia. How exactly his mother shaped him, we do not know. That Van den Bergh became his son-in-law, Pierson says himself; which daughter he married is stated only on Wikipedia.

Interpretation: whether the morality law of 1911 really reduced prostitution has not been researched in this chapter. It is certain that from then on the government no longer permitted brothels. In Amsterdam too, hidden prostitution continued after 1902.

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Albert Kruyt: the missionary who waited seventeen years

On February 18, 1892, a young Dutchman stood alone on the beach at Poso, on the Gulf of Tomini on Celebes. De Zeeduif (the Sea Dove), a steamship of the government, had brought him. Now he was left behind alone. He was twenty-two. He did not speak the language of the people in the interior. On the coast he could get by with Malay.

His wife was not there. Jo had given birth to a baby girl five months earlier who had not lived, and on the doctor's advice she had gone to Tomohon, in the Minahasa.

Two weeks before, on February 3, he had written in his diary: "I go in God's strength to Poso." In that strength he would overcome all obstacles, he wrote after it. The next day he went on board. He noted how good it was to pray in his mother tongue, now that he was separated from everyone with whom he could speak that language. At sea he sang hymns to keep his courage up. And he wrote down his most fervent prayer: that he might become a true missionary.

We know this because Albert Kruyt kept a diary for almost his entire working life, from 1892 to 1922. The theologian Gerrit Noort read through those diaries and the archives of the mission society for his doctoral dissertation of 2006. What follows comes for the most part from Kruyt's own pen.

The man on that beach would work for forty years in Central Celebes, today Central Sulawesi in Indonesia. He became one of the best known missionaries of the Netherlands and an ethnologist with an international name. But for seventeen years nobody from the people he had come for let themselves be baptized. And when it finally happened, it went differently from what he had hoped.

It began with a boy who was carried on board asleep.

Carried on board asleep

Albertus Christiaan Kruyt was born on October 10, 1869, in Surabaya. His father, Johannes Kruyt, was a missionary of the Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap, the Netherlands Missionary Society, known as the NZG. Since 1864 he had worked in Mojowarno, in East Java. His mother, Dorothea van der Linden, was the daughter of a doctor from Barneveld. For every birth she traveled from Mojowarno to the city. Albert was the sixth of eight children.

As a small boy he was afraid that his parents would leave him behind. He wrote this himself later, and he remembered that fear above all from stays with other families.

As in other missionary families, Albert went to the Netherlands young to attend school. That was early in 1877, when he was seven. His parents had him carried on board early in the morning while he was still asleep. The captain was a distant relative and would look after him. That way of saying goodbye colored his memories of the

separation. Together with his older sister Jaantje he arrived in the Netherlands on June 15, 1877.

At first he lived for a short time with his grandmother in The Hague. In her house prayer meetings for the mission were held, and he knew them well from his vacations there. From September 1877 he went to a boys' home in Rotterdam for sons of missionaries, led by J.W. Roskes. He was happy there, he said later. Roskes taught him that a person must pray at fixed times. In 1879 the home was closed and he moved to a foster family. He described those years as lonely. He felt excluded there. But since 1878 he had had a friend, Bram van der Flier. That friendship lasted his whole life.

On July 11, 1881, his mother died. She was buried in Malang, on Java. Albert was eleven and lived on the other side of the world. Some people said she had died of homesickness. Albert later contradicted that. He added that she had always committed her children to God in prayer.

I am a father myself, and these lines touch me. To have a child of seven put on a ship while he sleeps: I can hardly imagine it. His parents did it because they believed it had to be done that way.

An exam before fifteen

On April 26, 1884, Albert wrote a letter to the board of the NZG. He wanted to become a missionary, just like his father. On September 15 of that year he took the entrance exam for the Zendelinghuis, the mission training house in Rotterdam, even before he had reached the minimum age of fifteen. He was admitted.

He has no calling story with a voice from heaven. He was honest about that. "Devout in the ordinary sense of the word I was not," he wrote when he was old. An urge to bring the gospel he could not remember from those years. Nobody had ever suggested to him

that he could become something else. His father was a missionary, his older brothers were heading that way, and in the house of Roskes it was talked about nowhere else.

Maybe you recognize that. You grew up in the faith and you no longer know where your parents' faith ends and yours begins. For Kruyt that question came only later, and hard.

The training took seven years. Three years of languages and mathematics, then theology, knowledge of missions, Malay and four years of Javanese. For a year he walked along every day for two hours with a doctor in the hospital on the Coolsingel. He read one missionary biography after another. Toward the end he fell into a severe crisis of faith. A cousin, an uncle and someone else from his circle helped him through it. His final exam in October 1889 was mediocre according to the report. He did not seem to be an outstanding student.

He had been trained for Java, where he would work alongside his father and a brother. But in February 1889 the board had already decided to send him to a new area: Poso. It was a new mission field, with the town of Gorontalo as its base. His father objected to that destination. Albert himself was glad about it. As his letters show, he dreaded working in the shadow of his family.

The NZG wanted the Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap, the Netherlands Bible Society, to send someone to the same area as well. A translator was needed. From that arrangement grew the partnership that later shaped his work.

Jo from Nijmegen

During the Easter holidays of 1889 Albert stayed with the Moulijn family in Nijmegen. There he met Johanna Hendrika Moulijn,

whom everyone called Jo. She was two years older than he was and the daughter of the Reverend Jacob Moulijn.

In September he asked the board for permission to become engaged. It was given, with one condition: the society would not pay for her passage. Albert protested and asked for part of the money. The board refused. The roughly seven hundred guilders had to be raised through the family.

On June 19, 1890, he was confirmed as a missionary in The Hague. On November 12, 1890, Albert and Jo were married. Six days later he signed a statement that he would repay three thousand guilders in training costs if he ever left the society. On November 22 they sailed, on the Semarang.

For two months they stayed with his family in Mojowarno. On May 22, 1891, they arrived in Gorontalo, where he would stay for more than eight months to prepare. He took over the work in the congregation there and preached his first sermon in Malay on June 28.

On September 15, 1891, Jo gave birth to a daughter. The baby was stillborn. Shortly afterward a sister-in-law also died in childbirth. On January 13, 1892, Jo went to Tomohon on the advice of the doctor.

From those weeks a letter from him to her has been preserved, dated January 16, 1892. In it he admits what many believers will recognize. He sometimes sighed to God, he wrote, but he neglected to lay his needs before Him like a child. He longed for a heart that believed. Two days later he wrote in his diary that God surely had a purpose in his having to wait still longer.

Jo Kruyt-Moulijn would live to be ninety-five and outlived her husband by fourteen years. They had three children who lived: Jan in 1893, Miep in 1895 and Doortje in 1896. What Jo did in Poso all

those years is hardly described in the sources I could consult. I find that a pity. A woman who buries a child, sees her husband leave alone for an unknown coast and then lives for decades at a remote mission post has a story of her own. It was just never written down, or it still lies in an archive.

"A misfit of a missionary"

That is how it came about that in February 1892 he stood alone on that beach.

An interpreter, a Bugis named Rasai, introduced him to the people. He was the teacher who had come to teach and to help the sick. Two days later he was already writing about schools. The To Pamona, the people of the interior, lived mostly by their fields. Kruyt sought them out there and visited the chiefs.

Three times that spring he went to watch a healing ritual, in which a priestess treated the sick person. He wanted to show the people that they were being deceived, and he said that God had given real medicines. He did that too: he treated the sick. At the end of those first months he got to know a man whose daughter suffered from yaws, a tropical skin disease. It was Papa i Woente, the chief of the To Pebato and one of the most influential men of the region. Kruyt treated the girl. That same spring he told the father that priests and priestesses deceive, and that only God can make a person well.

Remember that name. Papa i Woente walks along with this story for forty years.

In the diary of that year there is no hero. Kruyt struggled with the language and prayed about it every day. In February he wrote that his feeling of falling short was really a lack of faith, and he prayed that Jesus would live in his heart. A week later he prayed for the Holy Spirit, whom he felt he did not yet have. In March: a mis-

sionary he wanted to be, he only lacked the inspiration this work demanded. He no longer wanted to feel "a misfit of a missionary."

In June he went back to Gorontalo. In September he came again, alone again, until the end of December. He lacked the power of the Spirit that overcomes everything, he wrote, and he doubted whether he was suited to be a pioneer. Prayer helped him over the threshold each time. He prayed about the indifference of the people, and added: "and God will help."

On September 18, 1892, he noted that he did not yet speak about baptism or about becoming a Christian. He was afraid of frightening the people off with it. He hoped that God would change their hearts without their actually noticing.

At Christmas he was still there. He wrote that he was becoming "more and more unbelieving."

Knowing that you can pray, and still not doing it. Coming to bring the gospel, and at Christmas writing down that your own faith is sinking. Albert Kruyt is often described as a sober scientist. In his diary from 1892 stands a young man who seeks God and feels he falls short. He did not run away.

On March 30, 1893, their son Jan was born in Gorontalo. In December of that year the family moved to Poso. Now they lived there.

Only much later

In October 1893 Kruyt wrote an honest letter to the board in the Netherlands. The message of God's love did not touch the people, he said, as long as they were not prepared for it. Conversions in large numbers he expected only much later. The villages lay scattered in the mountains, the tribes were at war with each other, and the gospel had to be brought to each village separately.

In his annual report for 1896 he wrote that he could not say whether the Kingdom of God had advanced that year. He kept going. In the summer of that year he was ill, and he wrote down what he learned from it: a person must also accept illness in faith from God's hand, because impatience makes it worse.

In Ecclesiastes it says: *In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good.* (Ecclesiastes 11:6). Kruyt did not know, and he wrote that down honestly. He kept sowing.

On the coast, in the meantime, a small congregation did arise, of people from elsewhere who spoke Malay. In November 1892 Kruyt had found Christians from the Sangir Islands in Mapane and read with them from the New Testament. From his weekly gatherings a congregation grew. On March 23, 1894, Good Friday, the first communion was celebrated. In May 1895 he baptized the first members, and in 1900 the congregation had a hundred and twenty members. Teachers from the Minahasa, in the north of Celebes, helped and started the first schools in 1894. One of them, Herman Kolondam, worked in Poso and Mapane from 1894 to 1910. The chiefs kept their distance, and the prince of Luwu forbade the children to go to school.

But the To Pamona themselves, the people for whom he had come, stayed with their own religion.

In March 1895 reinforcements arrived. The Bible Society sent the linguist Nicolaus Adriani, four years older than Kruyt and just graduated with his doctorate in Leiden. Adriani would translate the New Testament into the language of the To Pamona. The two men complemented each other. Adriani studied the language, Kruyt the religion and the customs. Together they traveled through the interior, in 1897 to Sigi and in 1899 to Mori, and wrote travel reports.

In 1898 Kruyt read the biography of David Brainerd, the American missionary among the Indians. At first he was irritated. Brainerd filled his diary with himself, he thought. Four days later he had finished it and wrote something else: how completely this man had given his heart to Jesus. He felt how much was still missing in himself.

And on March 29, 1901, there is a sentence in his diary that shows where he stood by then. Only faith in the atoning death of Christ has made a person happy.

In March 1903 Jo left for the Netherlands, partly because their daughter Miep had to go to school. For almost three years they did not see each other. A hundred and two letters from him to her from that time have been preserved. In December 1903 a second missionary arrived, Philip Hofman.

The tame buffalo

One conversation shows something of the position Kruyt was in. In 1904 he told a number of chiefs that he was only an ordinary subject of the government. They laughed. And they gave him an answer that he wrote down himself: "You are the tame buffalo with which the Government wants to catch us, wild buffaloes."

A year later the Dutch army came. In 1905 and 1906 Central Celebes was brought under Dutch authority by military expeditions. Kruyt had left Poso at the end of 1904 for a study trip and then gone on leave. In January 1906, when he was away, his younger colleague Hofman helped persuade a chief named Tarama to tear down his fortifications and accept the authority. The mission historian Van Randwijck later called that a typical example of how missionaries supported the expansion of colonial authority.

After the subjugation, life in the interior changed quickly. The administration banned headhunting, the temple cult and the great funeral feasts. Villages had to move from the hilltops to a new road between Poso and Tentena. Wet rice cultivation came. The old religion lost its hold.

On September 3, 1907, Albert and Jo were back in Poso. Kruyt saw what had happened. He wrote that the intervention of the government had broken open the old religion, and he remarked that the new order cleared the way for Islam. Noort calls his attitude ambivalent. Kruyt acknowledged what the administration had done, but about his own part in it he was reserved.

I want to be honest here and gentle at the same time. Historians broadly agree that the mission in Poso cannot be seen apart from the colonial conquest. Kruyt was not a soldier. But already in the nineties he spoke of a pressure that had to be gentle, but also strong. And he lived under the protection of an authority that had come by force. The chiefs had seen that sharply as early as 1904. That buffalo from 1904 walks along through the rest of this story.

Christmas in Kasiguncu

For seventeen years Kruyt and Papa i Woente had by then walked side by side. Since the sick daughter of 1892 a friendship had grown that became so close that Kruyt called the chief father, and Papa i Woente called him his eldest son.

In the spring of 1909 a smallpox epidemic broke out. The missionaries and the teachers went around vaccinating people, and that earned the mission a great deal of trust.

Then came the summer. A group of schoolchildren was to begin baptismal instruction. Papa i Woente judged that there were now enough people behind him to take the step together. In July he

called the heads of the families to decide in family council whether they wanted to become Christians. Openly he declared that he wanted it himself. The outward obstacles were gone, he told Kruyt, and now he wanted to give himself to God. Kruyt wrote it down in the life sketch he dedicated to his friend a year later.

And Kruyt himself? He held back. He was very reserved in those weeks, Noort writes. The man who had waited seventeen years for this moment did not push.

On the first and second day of Christmas 1909, a hundred and sixty-two people were baptized in Kasiguncu, and twelve more in Kuku. The first To Pamona. One of them was Marisi Mbau, who later told that the Bible instruction had come first and the baptism only after. Among the adult candidates Kruyt saw many people who as children had sat in his school in Panta. Most of them had long belonged with them, he wrote in a circular letter.

What he felt in those days, we do not know. The letter in which he described the ceremony has been lost.

What is certain is this: for seventeen years a man sowed among the To Pamona without harvesting. In those years he wrote no triumphant reports. He wrote that he did not know whether the Kingdom was advancing, and once that he himself was becoming more unbelieving. And he stayed.

A whole people at once

After 1909 it went fast, faster than Kruyt wanted. In Panjoka a whole group converted at once. On November 14, 1910, Kruyt wrote in his diary that they would rather have had it differently, but that it was not for them to indicate the way. He wanted slow growth, from within. A man from Pepewoloka, Ta Maeka, put it in his own way:

it was as if they wanted to start walking while there was no road yet.

About a mass baptism among another people, the To Loinang, he was even sharper. Whoever is baptized with his whole people, he wrote, remains a heathen on the inside. He compared it with the Christianization of the Germanic tribes in Europe: Christian in name, not yet on the inside.

Here lies a tension that runs through all his work. Kruyt thought in peoples, not in separate persons. He believed that a community as a whole had to come to Christ, with its own customs, its own language and its own leaders. For these people, he wrote in 1919, it still held: together, or not at all. He wanted a Christian adat, a Christian folk custom. Using Malay as the mission language he refused.

In that same year he came to the village of Bo'e, in the district of Pendolo. He noted that the people there actually still had no spiritual experience at all. They were baptized, but he saw little change. He was honest enough to write that down.

A baptismal register counts names. What changes in a person is not in it. When Samuel had to anoint a king, he was told: *for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart* (1 Samuel 16:7).

The church did grow. In 1926 there were 1,830 Christians in the district of Pendolo out of 3,661 inhabitants. Every Sunday on average almost twelve hundred people sat in church.

A school in Pendolo

In July 1909 Kruyt had moved to Pendolo. From 1912 to 1922 he led the teacher training there. In the beginning the teachers came

from the Minahasa. Here young men from the people's own villages were trained. In July 1916 the first eleven graduated.

On November 16, 1913, a telegram came from Utrecht. The university had appointed him honorary doctor of theology. On December 4 the title was conferred, without his being there. He thanked them by letter. Kruyt himself felt, Noort writes, that a doctorate in letters would have fitted his work better. He had written a great deal about peoples and religions. In 1906 *Het animisme in den Indischen Archipel* (Animism in the Indian Archipelago) appeared. Between 1910 and 1914 followed the great work he wrote with Adriani, in three volumes: *De Bare'e-sprekende Toradja's van Midden-Celebes* (The Bare'e-speaking Toraja of Central Celebes). It is still an important source on the peoples of Central Sulawesi. Later came *Van heiden tot christen* (From Heathen to Christian, 1925), *Zending en volkskracht* (Mission and the Strength of a People, 1937) and *De West-Toradjas op Midden-Celebes* (The West Toraja of Central Celebes, 1938).

Those years were not easy. In 1917 he was so overburdened that he did not want to stay if the work no longer received support from the Netherlands. To his old friend Bram van der Flier he wrote on April 9 how he struggled inside, and where he ended up: "I will not run away like Jonah." He wanted to obey God's voice. Half a year earlier he had written to the same friend that at home, at the daily family devotions, they read only from the Bible.

In 1920 he did ethnological research for the government. To Van der Flier he wrote that he hoped this work lay on God's path. Two years later the government withdrew a promise to take him into service. Kruyt wrote that he could accept this turn of events too as God's path.

In 1910 his colleague Hofman had had to go back to the Netherlands with tuberculosis, and in 1919 he had died. In 1926 Nicolaus

Adriani died in Poso. He had translated about seventy percent of the New Testament. The Gospel of Luke had already appeared in 1907, two years before the first baptisms. In 1929 Kruyt took over the translation work, with the help of the linguist S.J. Esser. In 1933 the whole New Testament appeared in the language of the To Pamona. More than forty years after a young man on De Zeeduif had prayed in his mother tongue, the To Pamona could read the gospels in their own language.

Adriani began the translation, Kruyt and Esser finished it. Jesus said to His disciples: *For in this the saying is true: "One sows and another reaps."* (John 4:37). Adriani did not live to see the completed New Testament.

Their son Jan was by then a missionary himself. In August 1922 he took over the teacher training in Pendolo that his father had built up, and he led it until 1939.

Glasses from Europe

Albert Kruyt looked at the To Pamona with great interest, but through glasses he had brought from Europe. He was influenced by thinkers like E.B. Tylor, who held that religion develops in stages, from magic to faith. Hence the title of Noort's dissertation: *De weg van magie tot geloof* (The Road from Magic to Faith). Reformed and evangelical missions rejected that evolutionist view, and later theologians also had trouble with it.

Noort is appreciative, but he also names the limits. Kruyt underestimated how fast the modern age would change the interior, with administration, schools, roads and Malay as the language of government. For the liberation of slaves and their children he did little. Only in 1937 were children of former slaves admitted to the teacher training. And before the Second World War not a single native min-

ister was ordained. The church became independent only after the war.

The anthropologist Albert Schrauwers went further. According to him Kruyt's ethnology also served to form an administrative unit that suited the colonial power well. Noort finds that Schrauwers does not demonstrate this from the sources. Kruyt's way of speaking also sounds strange to our ears now. He spoke freely about heathens and heathendom, words we now experience as belittling.

Nor was he an easy colleague. With one of the other missionaries it ended in a break in 1922, and in his diary he could judge people harshly.

I mention this because it is honest. Whoever describes a hero of the faith as a flawless person does him and the reader an injustice. Kruyt was a man of his time, with the blind spots of that time. He was also a man who stayed seventeen years, learned the language, wrote down the stories of a people and helped bring God's Word in their language.

The prayer of an old friend

In October 1932 Albert and Jo Kruyt said goodbye to Central Celebes. He had worked there for forty years. In Pendolo and in Tentena the people came together for a shared meal. In Poso there was a gathering.

And in Kasiguncu Papa i Woente was waiting. He had become an old man. The missionary had once told him that only God can make a person well. Now it was he who prayed. He committed Albert and Jo to God in prayer.

The father prayed for his eldest son. Then they left.

Tough perseverance

In the Netherlands they first lived with family in Nijmegen. In May 1933 they bought a house in The Hague. Kruyt taught at the mission school in Oegstgeest, wrote his last books and remained a board member of the NZG until his death.

Every morning there was morning prayer, with a few verses from the Gospel. A granddaughter was his sexton, he wrote to his son Jan: every morning she brought him the Bible. The same letters dealt with the question of how to raise children in the faith. And on October 3, 1933, he wrote Jan a sentence with forty years in it: "We have always seen God's guidance in the work and in our life."

The boy on the beach, the misfit, the man who became more unbelieving at Christmas. That is how he looked back on it.

In the spring of 1935 they lost their daughter Miep, who was born in 1895. She was killed in a traffic accident.

On June 17, 1940, a month after the German invasion, Kruyt wrote a letter to the mission man Hendrik Kraemer. A calling in a sometimes sickly, pietistic form did not count for him. Whoever had once chosen the mission, he wrote, had to follow it with tough perseverance. Mission life brought more disappointments than the life of a minister in the Netherlands. Whoever reads that sentence thinks almost automatically of the seventeen years without baptisms.

That winter Albert and Jo celebrated fifty years of marriage. The war was hard on two old people. Kruyt had an operation on his gallbladder and recovered only slowly because of the poor food. In 1942 they had to leave their house near the coast and moved in with an acquaintance in Leiden. Their son Jan was in those years in a Japanese camp in Manado. In the Hunger Winter Kruyt developed

hunger edema. After the liberation he lay in the university hospital in Leiden.

How would you keep going if you sowed for seventeen years and saw nothing come up? Kruyt had no formula. He had a diary, a wife who stayed, a friend who translated, a chief who called him son, and a God before whom he had felt himself falling short as a young man and to whom he kept returning.

No other name

On October 18, 1947, the Gereja Kristen Sulawesi Tengah became independent, the Christian Church of Central Sulawesi. The church that had begun at Christmas 1909 in Kasiguncu now stood on its own feet. According to his son Jan it then counted about eighty thousand members. Kruyt lived to see it.

On January 19, 1949, Albertus Christiaan Kruyt died in The Hague. He was seventy-nine. He was buried at Oud Eik en Duinen, in the grave where Miep already lay. On the cross was placed a reference to a text from Acts, words that Peter spoke before the Jewish council in Jerusalem: *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.* (Acts 4:12).

Jo lived until February 22, 1963.

In 1992, a hundred years after Kruyt's arrival in Poso, the church in Central Sulawesi celebrated its centenary. It honored him as *bapak gereja*, father of the church. From conversations that Noort held with ministers of that church comes a sentence that stays with you: Kruyt is honored there, but not known. They know his name. Who he was, most of them no longer know.

Maybe that does not matter. On a grave in The Hague stand three words and a reference to the Bible: No other name. It is the Name for

which he boarded De Zeeduif in February 1892, and stayed behind alone on a beach.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on October 10, 1869; training at the Zendelinghuis in Rotterdam; marriage to Johanna Hendrika Moulijn on November 12, 1890; arrival in Poso in 1892; the coming of Nicolaus Adriani in 1895; the military expeditions of 1905 and 1906 and the measures afterward; the first baptisms among the To Pamona at Christmas 1909 in Kasiguncu (according to Noort 162 candidates, and 12 in Kuku); the work with Adriani (1910-1914); the honorary doctorate in Utrecht (1913); the teacher training in Pendolo; the New Testament in Pamona (1933); return to the Netherlands in 1932; the independent church in 1947; death on January 19, 1949, in The Hague; the text on his grave.

From his own testimony (diaries 1892-1922, letters, circular letters and later memories, as Gerrit Noort found them in the archives and quotes them): the fear of being abandoned and the memory of the departure in 1877; the happy years with Roskes and the lonely years in the foster family; what he wrote about his mother's death and prayer; that he was not devout and knew no other choice; the crisis of faith at the end of the training; the letter to Jo of January 16, 1892; all diary sentences of 1892, from "I go in God's strength to Poso" to the Christmas on which he became more unbelieving; the conversations with Papa i Woente about priestesses and healing; his judgment on the lack of growth (1893, 1896); the illness of 1896; Brainerd (June 28 and July 2, 1898); the sentence about the atoning death (1901); the conversation about the tame buffalo (1904); the decision and the words of Papa i Woente, as Kruyt recorded them in his *Levensschets van Papa i Woente* (Life Sketch of Papa i Woente, 1910); that they called each other father and eldest son; his reac-

tion to the mass conversions; the letters to Bram van der Flier (1916, 1917, 1920, 1922); the letters to his son Jan (1933 and 1934); the letter to Kraemer (1940). I have not seen the diaries and letters myself, only the quotations in the dissertation. Noort mentions the farewell prayer of Papa i Woente in 1932; which words were prayed is not stated.

Where the sources differ (in the story I have chosen one version each time):

- *Place of birth.* Noort found in the family papers that his mother went to Surabaya for every birth, and Albert was born there too; the Nationaal Herbarium also names Surabaya. Many other reference works name Mojowarno, the family's station.
- *The beginning in Poso.* Kruyt arrived on February 16, 1892; the mission society counted from that day. He himself counted from February 18, when he was left alone, and in 1943 he also named December 19, 1893, the day the family settled in Poso.
- *The day Adriani died.* Noort gives only the year 1926. Adriani died on May 1, 1926 (Van Ronkel and Swellengrebel, see the chapter on Adriani in Tot het uiterste van de aarde, volume 2). The English Wikipedia gives August 5, 1926; that is probably a mistake.
- *The New Testament.* The title page gives 1933; Kruyt himself later named 1935, another writer 1934.
- *His age at death.* Seventy-nine, counted from his birthday; Noort writes eighty.
- *Children.* Three children grew up; the stillborn daughter of September 15, 1891, is not counted in most biographies.

Unconfirmed: who performed the first baptisms at Christmas 1909 and whether Kruyt spoke at them. An Indonesian reference work, which appeals to an in memoriam that Adriani wrote about Hofman in 1919, names Hofman as the missionary who baptized and tells

that Kruyt came from Pendolo to speak at the baptism. I have not been able to see that in memoriam myself, and Kruyt's own letter about the ceremony is lost. The same reference work writes that Papa i Woente had been willing since 1898, but did not want to take that step on his own, because he was responsible for the unity of his people, and that Kruyt respected him in that. That fits what we know of both men, but I have no second source for it. The day of the church's independence (October 18, 1947) is given by Noort; that Kruyt was himself involved appears nowhere, and no reaction from him has been preserved.

Cleared up since the previous version: daughter Miep was killed in a traffic accident in the spring of 1935 (Noort, in a footnote; there is no letter about it). Kruyt and his wife lie at Oud Eik en Duinen in The Hague.

Interpretation: historians broadly agree that the mission in Poso was interwoven with the colonial conquest of 1905 and 1906. How large Kruyt's own share in that was, and whether his ethnology consciously served the colonial administration, is disputed among researchers. About his wife Jo and her work the sources consulted say almost nothing.

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Tante Riek and Frits Slomp: the mother and the wanderer of the LO

In the autumn of 1942 a Gereformeerde minister from Heemse (the Gereformeerde Kerken were a strict Reformed denomination) was in Winterswijk, a town in the east of the Netherlands near the German border. He had spoken about resistance against National Socialism. Afterward a woman of forty-nine came up to him. She was a mother of five, married to a grain merchant, and she sat on the national board of the Gereformeerde women's associations.

She had an assignment for him. He had to travel the country, from village to village, to find hiding places and host families everywhere.

The minister had his objections. He was already being hunted, and he did not quite dare to travel by train. She waved it away. "Listen, man, would it really be so bad if you lost your life," she asked, if thousands of boys were saved because of it? This is how he told it himself later.

He went.

The woman's name was Helena Theodora Kuipers-Rietberg. In the resistance she became Tante Riek, Aunt Riek. The minister was Fredrik Slomp, whom everyone called Frits, and who was soon known as Frits de Zwerver, Frits the Wanderer. Out of that conversation grew the Landelijke Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers, the National Organization for Help to People in Hiding, the LO. It became the largest resistance organization in the Netherlands. She would not live to see the end of the war. He would live almost thirty-four more years and did not want a statue.

Their story begins in two Gereformeerde families, one in the Achterhoek, the rural east of the province of Gelderland, and one in Drenthe, in the northeast.

A grain merchant's daughter from Winterswijk

Helena Rietberg was born on May 26, 1893, in Winterswijk. Her father, Hendrik Rietberg, was a grain merchant and miller. Her mother's name was Clara Christina Theodora Dulfer. It was a Gereformeerde middle-class family with several children.

At the HBS, a secondary school, she met Piet Kuipers, in full Pieter Heijo Kuipers. He too became a grain merchant. On April 21, 1921, they married. Between 1922 and 1932 they had five children, two sons and three daughters.

They were two very different people. Piet was a quiet man. Heleen, as she was also called, had the power to persuade and the will to persevere, and some ambition too, her biographer writes. She did not stay within her own household. In 1932 she helped found a Gereformeerde women's association in Winterswijk. From 1937 she sat on the central board of the national Bond van Gereformeerde Vrouwenvereenigingen, the Union of Gereformeerde Women's As-

sociations, as treasurer. In this way she knew women all over the country, in villages and cities where she herself had never lived.

What that list of addresses would one day be needed for, nobody knew in those years. For ten years she built a network without knowing what it was for.

It brings to mind Esther, a Jewish woman at the Persian court. Her uncle Mordecai said to her: *Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?* (Esther 4:14). The treasurer of a women's union is no queen. Her place too turned out to be a place for such a time as this.

What was happening in Germany she saw early and clearly. Winterswijk lies right against the border. For this believing woman Hitler was the antichrist. That was how far her judgment went, and how firmly it stood.

A farmer's son who wanted to wake people up

Fredrik Slomp was born on March 5, 1898, in Ruinerwold, in Drenthe. His father Jan was a farmer, his mother's name was Grietje Zantinge. He was the second of three sons, and this too was a Gereformeerde family.

At first he wanted to become a farmer, like his father. In 1914 he chose theology. Much later, in 1952, he told the newspaper Trouw why. He wanted to wake people up.

It did not come by itself. After his military service he failed the state exam in 1920. A year later he was admitted, by an exception to the rules, to the Theologische School in Kampen, where Gereformeerde ministers were trained. On September 27, 1926, he graduated. A month later, on October 26, he married Tjaltje ten Kate, the eldest

daughter of a school headmaster. They had a daughter in 1929 and a son in 1932.

Early in 1927 he became the first Gereformeerde minister of Nieuwlande in the south of Drenthe. Around 1930 he came to Heemse, next to Hardenberg, close to the German border. He stayed there until after the war.

Preaching on the other side of the border

In Heemse and Hardenberg the 1930s were years of unemployment. The historian Bert Jan Hartman wrote an article in 2021 about Slomp in that time of crisis. The minister committed himself personally to men who had lost their jobs. And from 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany, he warned against National Socialism. Far from everyone did that in those years.

Slomp had contacts on the other side. He preached for Reformed believers in the County of Bentheim and spoke in East Frisia. Believers from across the border told him how parents were losing their hold on their children. The school and the Hitler Youth were taking over.

In 1937 Germany forbade Dutch ministers to preach there any longer. Slomp went anyway. He crossed the border and spoke at hidden meetings, hedge sermons, as in the time of the Reformation. Family and colleagues advised him against it.

Jan Hof, who spoke with Slomp himself for a long time for his biography, tells about the spring of 1938. Slomp cycled to a German colleague in Bentheim. The colleague told him that ministers had sworn loyalty to Hitler under pressure. A pagan oath, Slomp thought. If the church kept silent, who was left to speak? The colleague thought it was already too late. In those weeks they also

talked about the swastika flag on the church buildings. Slomp's advice to the German ministers was short: "Don't do it. Refuse!"

On the way back it rained, Hof tells. Slomp prayed on his bicycle. He asked God for strength against this evil, and whether He would not let the destruction come any further over the land. At home his father-in-law thought him headstrong. He decided to go on warning.

After Kristallnacht in November 1938, more and more German Jews crossed the border illegally. Slomp helped them find shelter. He also helped Germans who did not want to serve in the Wehrmacht. He had nothing against Germans. Against the Nazis he had everything.

How would you respond if refugees from the neighboring country stood at your door, at a time when most people still thought things would not be so bad?

Sunday, July 12, 1942

When the Germans occupied the Netherlands in May 1940, Slomp kept speaking: from the pulpit and at banned meetings of the Anti-Revolutionaire Partij, the Protestant political party, and of the Christian trade union federation.

On July 12, 1942, he preached in Zwolle. He called on the churchgoers to sabotage the work of the Arbeidsdienst, the labor service set up under the occupation, and he called that a Christian duty. After that the Gestapo wanted to arrest him. Someone warned him in time, and he went into hiding.

So the minister of Heemse became a man without a fixed address.

A conversation after the sermon

A few months later he was in Winterswijk, and Mrs. Kuipers was waiting for him there.

She and Piet had begun right after the occupation. It started with ration coupons and an illegal newspaper. In 1941 Piet and the sons helped escaped British and French prisoners of war on their way home. They helped Jews, men who did not want to work in Germany and downed Allied pilots. In their own house two Jewish people were in hiding.

Now Heleen wanted more. What was happening in Winterswijk had to happen everywhere, with its own committee in every place. She knew women all over the country. He had the voice.

The initiative lay with her. The bronze plaque in Winterswijk says it in so many words: she took the initiative for the LO. The historian Dick Kaajan also writes that the push for Slomp's travels came from Mrs. Kuipers-Rietberg.

Slomp later described how he saw her that day. Energetic and decisive, with sharp insight, and at the same time tender. A very loving mother. And her assignment stood so firm for her that you could not contradict her. Her sense of calling was absolute.

He tried anyway, with his objection about the train. You know how that ended.

In November 1942 the LO was officially founded in Aalten, in the house of resistance leader Jan Wikkerink, whom everyone called Ome Jan, Uncle Jan. Tante Riek stayed in close contact with him.

The midwives of Egypt

From November 1942 Slomp traveled the country, under assumed names such as Reverend Planken and Elder Van Zanten from Dor-

drecht. He looked for people who were willing to take in people in hiding, and he helped set up local committees everywhere, often within a day.

He had two sermons that he knew by heart and gave again and again. Dick Kaajan has described them.

The first was about the midwives Shiphrah and Puah in Egypt. Pharaoh had ordered them to kill the Hebrew boys at birth. *But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.* (Exodus 1:17). And when Pharaoh asked why, they did not tell him the truth. Slomp drew a lesson from this for farmers, bakers and civil servants who had never lied to the government. In this war that was allowed. Sabotage was a duty for Christians.

The second sermon was about the word of Jesus: *I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.* (Luke 10:18). Slomp connected that text with May 10, 1940, and with the victory of Christ. The enemy seemed all-powerful, but his fall was already certain. On January 30, 1944, he preached on it in Wolfheze.

In Dordrecht he made it very concrete. If tonight a Jew or a person in hiding knocks at your door, he told the congregation, then you will take him in for Christ's sake.

After such a service a branch of the LO often arose the same day. The Nationaal Onderduikmuseum, the National Museum of Hiding in Aalten, calls his sermons inspiring and recruiting. They contributed to the fast growth of the LO. In August 1943 the Landelijke Knokploegen were added, the LKP, the national fighting squads. They raided distribution offices to get ration coupons for the people in hiding. The plaque in Winterswijk says that the LO provided for about 300,000 people in hiding.

Slomp did not devise a new theology. He took an old story about two women who feared God more than the king, and let ordinary believers see their own choice in it.

A house full of people who were not allowed to be there

Meanwhile Tante Riek went on working in Winterswijk. Every week there was a meeting called the Beurs, the Exchange. There people in hiding and addresses were matched. She was the only woman there, on behalf of the LO in Winterswijk. From the autumn of 1943 she also paid out money to families of people in hiding for the Nationaal Steun Fonds, the National Support Fund.

It was almost too much for her. In that autumn of 1943 she all but broke down from overwork. Gerda Brethouwer, who as director of the Onderduikmuseum researched the resistance stories of the Achterhoek, found an honest detail. Tante Riek actually wanted to stop, because of her young family. But her network and her knowledge made her indispensable. "So she went on." Faith was her driving force, Brethouwer adds.

I am glad this has been preserved. She had children at home, she was tired, she wanted out. And she stayed.

Cell 56 in the Koepel

In October 1943 LO leader A.J. Boss was arrested, and soon after that came a raid in Hoorn. The occupier knew the organization well. The Germans spoke of "Die Organisation Frits," and they even knew which psalms Slomp had had sung at his sermon on Luke 10.

Slomp then withdrew from the daily leadership. It was safer, and some of those arrested blamed him. They were locked up, and he was in hiding somewhere. Reverend B.A. van Lummel took his place.

He stayed in Oosterbeek and Wageningen. He had dyed his hair black, grown a mustache, wore glasses and had a false identity card in the name of Roelofsen, furniture dealer.

On May 1, 1944, he was cycling near Ruurlo, with a suitcase on the back. It was about three in the afternoon. Marechaussee (military police) officer G.F. Stap stopped him and searched him. The identity card turned out to be false. And in his luggage was a forbidden pamphlet that he had written himself, *Mogen wij zoo verder gaan?* (May We Go On Like This?), signed Frits de Zwerver. In it he called on Gereformeerden and colleagues not to keep silent any longer out of fear.

For two hours he was interrogated, under threat of death. Finally he said who he was: Reverend Fredrik Slomp. After that he went to the Sicherheitsdienst, the German security service, in Arnhem and to the Koepel, the domed prison, as prisoner 1102 in cell 56.

What happened in that cell we know from himself and from his cellmate, the Roman Catholic writer B.J. Verhoeven. Slomp came in with a thick book on theology and explained election to his cellmate. But he knew deep valleys. He was a heavy case for the Germans, he said, and it was over for him. He thought he would never see his wife and children again. One morning a jailer told him that eight men had been shot that night. They had sung together all night.

There were other hours too. Then he read in his little Bible, and it was as if God Himself spoke with him.

So it went up and down in cell 56. The man who had spoken courage into others all over the country was less calm there than later stories made one believe. Kaajan has written that down honestly, and I am grateful for it. Courage is something other than having no fear. David wrote: *Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.*

(Psalm 56:3). The fear comes first in that sentence, and only then the trust.

The prison librarian belonged to the resistance. He told Slomp that there was a plan to free him. On May 3 Slomp had a message taken outside: "Do not risk the lives of the boys to get me out." He could stand it here well enough.

They did it anyway.

"We have come to get you"

On May 11, 1944, around eight in the evening, a small group of Marechaussee officers reported at the gate of the Koepel. They were men of a fighting squad, in uniform. The gatekeeper was held at gunpoint, the guards were put out of action. Not a shot was fired.

At cell 56 the door opened. One of the men, Johannes ter Horst, asked who he was. Reverend Slomp, he said. Then they had come to get him.

On the stairs Slomp asked whether it was really true. He walked in wooden shoes and in the haste had left his underpants behind. Together with him they took out LO district leader Henk Kruithof, who lost his wooden shoes on those same stairs.

In the car Slomp told his liberators that they were heroes. Ter Horst passed on the honor. It had not been done in their own strength, Reverend.

Near Oosterbeek Slomp threw away his prison shirt. He no longer needed it. That night they slept with a family in Wolfheze. Slomp said he would not mind a fried egg. He had a toothache, and a Jewish dentist who was in hiding there relieved him of it the same night.

Prince Bernhard later called it, in the foreword of the biography, a perfect raid. There were no reprisals.

Until the end of the war Slomp and his family lived in hiding, under new names. In the weeks after his liberation he stayed in Wageningen. There he saw Tante Riek a few more times.

Bennekom, August 19, 1944

In May 1944 the LO was betrayed by a woman who had worked her way into the organization. On May 24 Piet Kuipers was warned that his arrest was coming, and he went into hiding. At the beginning of July Heleen and Piet placed the children partly elsewhere. They escaped just in time and ended up with a cigar manufacturer in Bennekom.

On August 17 a courier was picked up who was carrying new identity cards for them. Two days later, on August 19, 1944, the Sicherheitsdienst arrested them both.

They ended up in the Koepel in Arnhem, the prison from which Slomp had been taken three months earlier. There they made an agreement: she would take all the blame. They thought a woman would be punished less severely than a man. For Piet it worked. He was released and went into hiding again.

They sat in cells next to each other. To give Piet courage, she sometimes sang a psalm out loud. The Germans understood nothing of her trust. They called it religious madness.

Which psalm it was has not been preserved.

A note from the train

On August 25, 1944, she was transferred to camp Vught. In early September the Allies approached, and the camp was evacuated.

On September 7, 1944, she went on transport to Ravensbrück, the women's camp north of Berlin.

From the train she threw a note outside. It arrived. It began with "Dear Piet and children." They were waiting in wagons for transport, she wrote. Where to, they did not know. She prayed that God would watch over them, and she asked them to pray for each other. Underneath she wrote that she was their loving mother.

She did not know whether she would see her children again. She could do nothing more for them, and so she laid them in God's hands. Peter wrote: *Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.* (1 Peter 5:7). She did it on a note, from a wagon that stood waiting.

The knitting squad of Ravensbrück

In Ravensbrück she was not put to the heavy forced labor because of her eyes. She was placed in the knitting squad. Later she became Tischälteste, the woman who divided the food at the table, and she handed out food to women who worked in the Siemens factory.

The woman who in Winterswijk had run an entire network now had only a table. She did there what she had always done. A fellow prisoner said later that she kept making something out of the small possibilities in the camp, and that she spread love and warmth around her. When her resistance friend Minnie Jolink died, she sat with her.

After the war Piet received a letter from a woman who had been close to her in the camp. She called her a very dear woman, a motherly friend. And she told something that Piet could not have known. Together they kept reciting a beloved spiritual poem. They did it during roll calls, where the women had to stand for hours, and at night, when they slept on the floor.

At the end of October 1944 she fell ill. She died in Ravensbrück, shortly after Christmas, on December 27, 1944. The cause was probably typhus or a double pneumonia. She was fifty-one. As with most of the dead of Ravensbrück, her body was cremated. There is no grave.

For months her family did not know how she was.

A land mine and an evangelization hall

In April 1945 liberation came. At the request of the dismissed mayor, Slomp briefly took over authority in Hardenberg. After that he became a noncommissioned officer in the Canadian army, as a liaison between the Allies and the resistance.

His church in Heemse gave him a year of leave. That year he took care of the widows and orphans of some 1,700 resistance people who had been killed. From June 1945 to March 1946 he also gave lectures on the spiritual background of the resistance, together with Lodewijk Bleijs and Father Victor. One of those widows, Pietertje te Rietstap, kept a diary that was published in 2020. She writes in it that he came to comfort her.

He also came to the other side. As a minister Slomp also saw the need of the people who had been in the wrong. A few former members of the NSB, the Dutch Nazi party, and a Dutch SS man made their profession of faith with him. And in 1950 he went to visit Stap in the prison of Scheveningen. The Marechaussee officer who had stopped him near Ruurlo and threatened him with death was serving a long sentence there.

What was said there, I do not know. That he went says enough.

He did not forget his liberators either. On November 1, 1947, Geert Schoonman was reburied, one of the men who had taken him out of the Koepel. To his heroism he owed his life, Slomp said that day.

In October 1945 he accepted a call as an evangelization minister in Hoorn. In 1948 he received a British award for courage, and he went as a field chaplain to the Dutch East Indies. There in 1949 a jeep in which he was riding hit a land mine, and he was left with permanent hearing loss. In 1950 he returned to Hoorn, where he worked from the building Rehoboth. He wanted to evangelize among workers and people with little money. He fell into disagreement with the church council about this, and in 1962 he retired early. The man who wanted to wake people up had never become an easy colleague.

Until 1966 he did evangelization work in Wolvega. After that he moved to Vaassen. On his seventieth birthday, March 5, 1968, he received a royal decoration from the hands of the mayor of Epe. In 1972 he learned that he had cancer. He kept preaching until shortly before his death. In 1975 he spoke at length with Jan Hof, who wanted to write his life story.

Fredrik Slomp died on December 13, 1978, in Vaassen. He was eighty. He is buried in Berghuizen, in the Drenthe municipality of De Wolden, not far from Ruinerwold, where he was born.

A deer on the square

On May 9, 1946, Helena Kuipers-Rietberg was posthumously awarded the Verzetskruis, the Resistance Cross. In resistance circles she received a name of honor: the mother of the LO.

On May 4, 1955, Princess Wilhelmina unveiled in Winterswijk a monument for her and for all the women in the resistance. The statue first stood in front of her former house and later was given another place. It shows a woman protecting a young deer. The deer

stands for the people who found a hiding place with her like hunted game, and refers to Psalm 42: *As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.* (Psalm 42:1).

Frits Slomp did not want to be honored like that during his life. Only in 1995, seventeen years after his death, did a bronze bust by Norman Burkett appear in Heemse. The stone says that it is for all who gave us a future.

Two statues in the east of the country. One of a minister who sought no honor and called his liberators heroes. The other of a woman with a hunted deer in her arms.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth of Helena Rietberg on May 26, 1893, in Winterswijk; marriage to Piet Kuipers and five children; board work in the Gereformeerde women's union; help to Jews, labor refusers and pilots; the conversation with Slomp in the autumn of 1942 and her initiative for the LO; the LKP from August 1943; betrayal in May 1944; arrest in Bennekom on August 19, 1944; that she took the blame and Piet was released; Vught and Ravensbrück (from September 7, 1944); death in Ravensbrück at the end of December 1944 (officially December 27); the name of honor mother of the LO; the monument of 1955. For Slomp: birth on March 5, 1898; minister in Heemse from about 1930; warnings against National Socialism from 1933; the German preaching ban and his hedge sermons; help to German Jews after 1938; the sermon in Zwolle in July 1942 and the hiding afterward; travels as Frits de Zwerver; his fixed sermons on Exodus 1 and Luke 10:18; arrest near Ruurlo on May 1, 1944 and liberation from the Koepel on May 11, 1944; care for the widows and orphans of about 1,700 fallen resistance people; evangelization minister in Hoorn from 1945, field chaplain in the Indies

(1948-1950, with the land mine in 1949), early retirement in 1962; death on December 13, 1978; bust in Heemse in 1995.

From own testimony or from the circle of family and fellow prisoners: - *The conversation in Winterswijk.* Her words about the train and the thousands of boys come from Slomp himself and were recorded by the NOS, the Dutch public broadcaster, which names the Historisch Nieuwsblad as its source. His description of her character and her calling is there too. - *The note from the train* and *the letter from the fellow prisoner to Piet* (the motherly friend, the poem at the roll calls): through the family, at the NOS. Which poem it was, I have not been able to establish. That she was treasurer of the Union is also at the NOS. - *That she wanted to stop and went on:* research by Gerda Brethouwer, quoted by Bram de Graaf. - *The psalm singing in the Koepel* and that the Germans called her faith religious madness: Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland (the Biographical Dictionary of the Netherlands) and ww2gravestone.com. Which psalm it was, no source tells. - *That she saw Hitler as the antichrist*, her character next to Piet's, and that she almost broke down in the autumn of 1943: Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland. - *Slomp's wish to wake people up:* Trouw, February 6, 1952, quoted on ww2gravestone.com. - *The spring of 1938* (the visit to the German colleague, the prayer on the bicycle, "Don't do it. Refuse!"): from the biography by Jan Hof. Hof spoke with Slomp at length in 1975, but he wrote his book as a story. The conversations and the prayer are retold by him and can no longer be checked. - *The cell and the liberation* (the valleys, the little Bible, the eight men who sang, the words on the stairs and in the car, the shirt, the fried egg, the dentist): from the research of Dick Kaajan, who laid statements of Slomp, his cellmate and the liberators side by side. According to Kaajan, Slomp's own most extensive account appeared in 1968 in the magazine *De Goede Tijding*. I have not seen

that myself. - *The visit to Stap in 1950*, the profession of faith of former NSB members and his words at the reburial of Schoonman: Kaajan. - *The details of his early years* (military service, the failed exam, the dates of graduation and marriage, Nieuwlande) rely on one extensive biographical sketch on ww2gravestone.com. I have not found them in a second source.

Where the sources differ: - *Her place in the family.* Ww2gravestone.com calls her the fifth of eight children, the English Wikipedia the fourth child. I have left it open. - *The wedding date* of April 21, 1921, appears only in the Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland. - *The month of the conversation.* The Nationaal Onderduikmuseum in Aalten speaks of October 1942, after a sermon by Slomp in Winterswijk. The Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland, Kaajan and the Anne Frank House keep to November 1942. One source speaks of a lecture on the struggle against National Socialism instead of a sermon. It is certain that it was the autumn of 1942, and that the initiative lay with her. - *The founding in Aalten* in November 1942, in the house of Jan Wikkerink, comes from the Nationaal Onderduikmuseum. - *The Nationaal Steun Fonds.* The chapter keeps to the autumn of 1943; another source names the summer. - *The sermon in Zwolle.* The exact date, July 12, 1942, appears on ww2gravestone.com. The Biografisch Woordenboek and Liberation Route Europe confirm the sermon and the hiding in 1942. - *The help to German conscientious objectors* appears at Liberation Route Europe, in the Biografisch Woordenboek and on ww2gravestone.com. - *The stop near Ruurlo.* According to Slomp, Stap said he took him for a Jewish resistance man in hiding. Stap later denied that. Kaajan names a second Marechaussee officer next to Stap. Stap was sentenced to life in 1948; in 1950 that became twenty years. - *The liberation.* In 1963 Trouw wrote that Johannes Post was there. That is not correct, Kaajan writes:

Johannes ter Horst opened the cell door. Besides Ter Horst and Schoonman, Harry Saathof took part. The librarian was named J.J. van Veldhoven. - *Her day of death.* The plaque in Winterswijk and the Nationaal Onderduikmuseum give December 27, 1944. The Biografisch Woordenboek keeps to December 27 or 28. The NOS names typhus as the cause, Bram de Graaf pneumonia, the Biografisch Woordenboek leaves both open. - *After the war.* The call of 1945 was to Blokker, near Hoorn. For the land mine the Biografisch Woordenboek names a light concussion and then work as a hospital chaplain in Surabaya; the hearing loss is on ww2gravestone.com. For the work after 1962 ww2gravestone.com names Wolvega and the Biografisch Woordenboek Noordwolde. That he worked in Hoorn in the building Rehoboth is confirmed by Kaajan. The British award of October 18, 1948 was the King's Medal for Courage in the Cause of Freedom; the one of 1968 was the officer's rank in the Order of Orange-Nassau. Both appear only on ww2gravestone.com. - *That Slomp wanted no tribute*, ArtWay writes.

Unconfirmed: - *Yad Vashem.* Ww2gravestone.com says that Slomp and Tjaltje were posthumously recognized in 2014 by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. In the Yad Vashem database itself I could not confirm that. - *The name of the female traitor.* Only the English Wikipedia names a name. I leave it out. - *A commemoration in the camp.* According to the English Wikipedia, Tante Riek held a commemoration in Ravensbrück for Minnie Jolink, and later also for Betsie ten Boom. I have no second source for that.

Interpretation: the number of about 300,000 people in hiding is on the plaque in Winterswijk. It gives an order of magnitude, not a count. ArtWay names an estimate of the NIOD of 350,000 people in hiding in total. The cause of her death is not known with certainty.

Whether God spoke with Slomp in cell 56 is a question of faith. I believe it with him.

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Johannes Verkuyl: the missionary who chose the freedom of another nation

On October 20, 1966, an Indonesian Christian stood on the stage of the Vrije Universiteit (the Free University, a Protestant university) in Amsterdam. His name was Todung Sutan Gunung Mulia. He received an honorary doctorate for his work in teaching and encouraging the Christian community in Indonesia. The man who handed him the diploma and gave the speech in his honor was his promoter, the professor who presents a candidate for the degree: Johannes Verkuyl.

It very nearly never happened. In 1964 Mulia had turned the honorary doctorate down. In Sukarno's Indonesia, a doctorate from the old colonial power was no recommendation. In 1965 he asked for a delay. Only in January 1966, when relations between the two countries improved, did he let them know he could come.

Verkuyl knew the background of that hesitation from up close. Twenty years earlier he had worked with Mulia in Jakarta, in the years when Indonesia was breaking away from the Netherlands. He had taken sides then, and he had paid a price for it. In the Netherlands he was called a traitor.

Johannes Verkuyl became one of the best known mission figures in the Netherlands. He spent twenty-three years in Indonesia, survived a Japanese camp, wrote dozens of books and became a professor of missiology. All his life he kept saying that the gospel has to do with justice for people, and also for nations.

It began at a table, in a farmhouse in the polder.

Stories at the table

Johannes Verkuyl was born on January 16, 1908, in Nieuw-Vennep, in the Haarlemmermeer, a polder of land reclaimed from a lake west of Amsterdam. He was the fifth of ten children in a farming family. People worked hard, lived frugally and read. In that young polder, where everyone depended on everyone else, you learned that you are responsible for each other.

At the table his mother told stories about the mission field. The boy listened. The desire to go and serve himself began there and never left him.

He went to the Christelijk Lyceum (a Christian secondary school) in Haarlem and chose the gymnasium track: Latin, Greek and Hebrew, plus four modern languages. In 1927 he began studying theology at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. He studied there until 1932. In those years he struggled with the synod of his own church. He found it narrow and turned inward, busy with itself and blind to what was happening in the world.

In 1932 he became pastor of a small gereformeerde congregation (part of the Reformed denomination formed in 1892) in Laren. Two years later he married Rie van den Heuvel.

It could have become an ordinary pastor's career. But his mother's stories were still with him.

Students from the other side of the world

In the 1930s, young people from the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and other parts of Asia were studying in the Netherlands. In 1935 Verkuyl became their student pastor, at first for part of his time and later full-time.

He came into contact with the Perhimpunan Indonesia, the association of Indonesian students who wanted independence, and with the Indonesian Christian youth movement. He got to know Indonesians before he had ever been to Indonesia. And he heard their side of the story.

Something began to shift there. Mission was about the conversion of people. He had always believed that, and he kept believing it. But he began to see that the gospel also has something to say about peoples who live under another people. Later he would give it a scholarly name. For now they were faces: students, far from home.

Rie and he had children. When they left at the end of 1939, there were three. Before leaving he passed his exam with distinction under Professor J.H. Bavinck.

A ship to Tanjung Priok

At the end of December 1939 the Verkuyl family left for the Dutch East Indies. In Europe the war had just begun. They traveled to the port of Genoa and boarded there. In January 1940 they arrived in Tanjung Priok, the port of Batavia, present-day Jakarta.

His church sent him out as a mission pastor for Central Java. He started in Purwokerto, in the Banyumas region. There he called himself an assistant preacher. He chose that word on purpose. He had come to help the Javanese congregation, to stand beside it and not to rule over it.

In Purwokerto something struck him. The church members read little, and there was almost nothing in Christian books in their own language. He began to write. Late in the evening he sat by a kerosene lamp, with a copper pen that he dipped in ink.

I want you to carry that image with you through the rest of this story. A Dutch pastor in a Javanese town, writing by a lamp, because he believed the church there should have something to read. Everything that came later, the publishing house, the thirty books, began at that lamp.

Why did he go? For Verkuyl, proclaiming Christ and seeking justice belonged together. The Indonesian Bible Society, which described his life, calls it a courageous calling to stand up for justice, also in the structures of a society. He would keep saying that for the rest of his life, and he would also live it.

It is an old combination. The prophet Micah summed up what God asks of a person: *And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8). Justice and faith stand together in one sentence.

Pekalongan and Bandung

Two years later everything changed. In 1942 Japan occupied the Dutch East Indies. Dutch people were arrested and put in camps, men separated from women and children.

Verkuyl was imprisoned in Pekalongan, on the north coast of Central Java. Rie had given birth shortly before. With four young children she was taken to a camp in Bandung. For three and a half years the family was held in various Japanese camps, until 1945.

How his wife held on with four small children, I have not found described anywhere. I would rather leave that place empty here than fill it with what I think myself.

A little more is known about him. He ended up in the Baros camp in Cimahi, where the Japanese had gathered prominent Dutch people. There a group of Christians formed around Verkuyl that was called the Political Club. In the camp they thought about the question of what should come next between the Netherlands and Indonesia after the war. They wrote proposals for a new relationship.

A man who is a prisoner and thinks about the freedom of another people. When the gate opened, he had a reason to stay.

August 1945

On August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered. Two days later Sukarno and Hatta proclaimed the Republic of Indonesia. For the Dutch who had just come out of the Japanese camps, an uncertain time began.

The Verkuyl family found each other again. They went to Jakarta and moved in beside the church hall on the Kwitang, at number 28. Verkuyl became head of the Dutch mission. His transportation was an old bicycle.

You would think he knew right away where he stood. He did not, and I think it is honest to tell that. On January 1, 1946, he wrote that Indonesia should receive more independence, but he rejected the Republic as it now stood. The whole group from Baros thought the same.

In the course of 1946 that changed. It came through people. Verkuyl spoke with Indonesian Christians who belonged to the Republic: Leimena, Probowinoto, Sjarifoeddin. They showed him that the Re-

public was broadly supported, by Christians too. They were his brothers, and they wanted to be free.

He chose. And once he had chosen, he went far.

The Netherlands sent troops to restore its authority. In July 1947 and in December 1948 came the two military offensives that in the Netherlands were called "police actions." Verkuyl crossed the line into Republican territory around Yogyakarta to speak with President Sukarno and Vice President Hatta. He traveled back and forth to the Netherlands and urged the churches, the public and even Queen Wilhelmina to recognize Indonesian sovereignty.

In May 1947 there was a mission conference on the Kwitang. Shortly before, Verkuyl had been in the Republic and had spoken with Indonesian Christians, among them five ministers and undersecretaries. He had tried to explain why the Christian parties in the Netherlands thought the way they did. For Indonesians that was impossible to follow. And he heard stories there about young Indonesian fighters who had been mutilated by Dutch soldiers. Terrible stories. In the minutes of the conference they were set aside as one-sided. A colleague who was present, the missionary Hildering, wrote in his own notes that he believed them.

The background of the Indonesian question

In 1946 a pamphlet by his hand appeared: *De achtergrond van het Indonesische vraagstuk* (The background of the Indonesian question). He tried to explain to Dutch people what was happening in Indonesia, and why.

More than half a century later, Reinier Salverda wrote that this pamphlet was one of the best explanations from that time of a painful question. Why could Indonesians no longer trust the Netherlands, whatever the Netherlands intended?

In the Netherlands it hit hard. Churchgoers did not understand how a leading theologian could take the side of the Indonesians. He was called a traitor. And in Indonesia, some also looked at him with suspicion, as someone who after all belonged to the religion of the colonial power. He was caught between two chairs. In a place like that you get applause from neither side.

Within his own gereformeerde world, too, his position did not go unnoticed. In October 1950 the well-known theologian Klaas Schilder wrote an article in the magazine *De Reformatie* with the title "Verkuyl and Kuyper." It was about colonial policy.

What would you have done, if you had just come out of a camp and your own people asked for your loyalty? It is easy to say seventy years later who was right. In 1946 it was not. Verkuyl chose what he saw as just, and he accepted the insults that came with it.

On December 27, 1949, the Netherlands transferred sovereignty to Indonesia.

A house on the Kwitang, October 1946

In the middle of those restless years, Verkuyl picked up the thread of the kerosene lamp again. In October 1946 he took the initiative for an emergency committee for Christian literature. There had to be reading material for the churches in Indonesia. The committee met on the Kwitang, at number 22, close to his home.

In this he worked together with Todung Sutan Gunung Mulia, the same man who twenty years later would receive his honorary doctorate in Amsterdam. In 1933 Mulia had been one of the first Indonesians to earn a doctorate. Their cooperation grew into a Christian publishing house, the Badan Penerbit Kristen. In 1950 Mulia would also help found the Council of Churches in Indonesia. In his speech, Verkuyl later called that council "unique" in Asia. Verkuyl worked

at the publishing house from 1946 to 1963 and helped shape its theological direction. In 1971, on his advice, the publishing house added his friend's name: BPK Gunung Mulia. It still bears that name today.

There was hardly any money. When there was too little to have a book printed, a gift would sometimes arrive without a name. N.N., it said. That meant a name unknown. It came from Verkuyl himself. It was Rie's housekeeping money.

Paul wrote about Christ: *For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one.* (Ephesians 2:14). He wrote it about Jews and Gentiles. Something of that can be seen in the cooperation between a Dutch missionary and an Indonesian Christian, in the years when their countries stood opposed to each other.

Between 1946 and 1990, this publisher brought out more than thirty books by Verkuyl, in Indonesian. Some of them are still used in Indonesian churches today.

In its sketch of his life from 2026, the Indonesian Bible Society compares him to a grain of wheat that fell into the ground in the garden on the Kwitang in October 1946. He set aside his own interests, they write, so that a harvest could come for the church in all of Indonesia. It is their image, taken from the words of Jesus: *unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.* (John 12:24). It comes from Indonesians themselves. They did not see a colonial missionary in him. They saw someone who had let go of something of himself.

What it cost at home

There was also something he should not have let go of, and he said so himself later.

As soon as the children were old enough for primary school, they went to the Netherlands one by one. Brothers and sisters grew up apart for years. There was no telephone, and an airmail letter took a long time. At home in Jakarta, their father typed away at his manuscripts. It happened that Rie fed him his meal while he kept on typing.

One of his sons said something about it later that you do not quickly forget. They were proud that their father was famous, he said. But they had never really known him.

In later life Verkuyl regretted having been so little present as a father.

I leave that here without adding anything. Whoever wants to follow people like him must also know this about them.

Credo

In 1953 a book of his appeared in the Netherlands with the title *Credo*. The subtitle says what mattered to him: an explanation of the gospel and a call to faith. A man known for his political courage wrote almost three hundred pages to invite people to follow Jesus.

To my mind, that is the key to his life. His commitment to justice came from his faith, and his faith never became a matter of the heart alone. The Norwegian mission historian Olav Myklebust later called his basic theological attitude conservative, with a broad horizon. Verkuyl believed the classic confession of the church, and he thought that confession had consequences for how nations treat each other.

During a leave in 1948 he had completed his doctorate at the Vrije Universiteit. His dissertation appeared that year with Kok in Kampen, under the title *Enkele aspecten van het probleem der godsdienstvri-*

jheid (Some aspects of the problem of religious freedom), about the place and work of the Christian churches in Asia. From 1954 to 1962 he taught at an interdenominational theological college in Jakarta. The question of New Guinea would not let him go either. From 1956 onward he tried to bring about a change of course on that question within the Antirevolutionaire Partij (the Anti-Revolutionary Party, a Protestant political party).

At the end of 1962 he returned to the Netherlands. He was fifty-four. For more than twenty years he had lived in Indonesia, been imprisoned, taught and written books.

Maybe you know the feeling: you build something up, and one day you have to put it in other hands. For years Verkuyl had argued that the Netherlands had to let Indonesia go. Now he was leaving himself.

A chair in Amsterdam

In the Netherlands, new work was waiting. From 1963 to 1968 he was general secretary of the Nederlandse Zendingsraad (the Netherlands Missionary Council). In 1965 he became professor of missiology at the Vrije Universiteit, succeeding J.H. Bavinck, the man who had earlier been the first professor of missions at the VU. At first it was a part-time position, full-time from 1968. He stayed until his retirement in 1978.

He was not always an easy man. In 1965 students wanted to include in a volume on Indonesia an article by Professor W.F. Wertheim, which was said to have a Marxist slant. Verkuyl became angry. It was the year of the great upheaval in Indonesia, and he feared for the name of mission. He treated Wertheim as an enemy. Later he heard that the article was about the fate of the Chinese minority, and he backed down. Under pressure he could be rigid and intol-

erant. The Indonesian Bible Society, which otherwise honors him highly, simply tells this too.

In 1975 his most important book appeared, *Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap* (Introduction to modern missiology), more than five hundred seventy pages thick. In 1978 it came out in English as *Contemporary Missiology*. It became his best known book. Mission is first of all the work of God Himself, he wrote. And the old churches in Europe and the young churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America ought to be each other's equals, receiving from one another. In those pages I read his years in Jakarta again: the young church as a partner, from whom the Netherlands could also learn something. He also wrote about the secularism that was rising in a West that still called itself Christian.

He closed the book with an approving quotation from the missiologist J. Aagaard: missiology that replaces taking part in mission oneself borders on blasphemy. Studying mission without going yourself was not enough for him.

His former student John Boer, an American missionary, wrote his doctorate under him on colonialism and mission. When Verkuyl read the chapters, he often exclaimed, *Mijn hart klopt er van*, which means that his heart was racing over it. By Boer's account, he could hardly restrain himself. A professor who after so many years could still be so moved.

His fields of work were social ethics, apologetics, dialogue with other religions, evangelism and missiology. His colleague Jerald Gort counted sixty-six books and about four hundred articles. Verkuyl also helped found the journal *Wereld en Zending* (World and Mission), which he edited for a number of years, and international associations for missiology.

An honorary doctorate for an Afrikaner

The question of justice followed him to Amsterdam as well. Now it was about South Africa.

The Vrije Universiteit had had ties with South Africa since the nineteenth century. Verkuyl played a leading role in the movement against apartheid and in the movement for justice and peace in the world. In 1973 a book of his appeared in English with a title that says it all: *Break Down the Walls*.

One moment stands out. In 1972 the Vrije Universiteit awarded an honorary doctorate to Beyers Naudé, an Afrikaner pastor and a well-known opponent of apartheid. According to the VU itself, the senate agreed to this honorary doctorate after efforts by the missiologist Verkuyl. The ceremony is seen as a turning point in the relationship between the university and South Africa.

His archive at the Vrije Universiteit holds folders on South Africa running from 1968 to 1995. There are also papers on black theology and lectures by the South African theologian Allan Boesak.

For Verkuyl it was connected with what he had seen in Indonesia. To him the gospel was a message of liberation. In 1970 he wrote a book with the title *De boodschap der bevrijding in deze tijd* (The message of liberation in our time).

A star from Jakarta

On January 18, 1977, Verkuyl received a decoration from the Republic of Indonesia, the Bintang Jasa Pratama.

A country that had broken away from the Netherlands by force honored a Dutch pastor thirty years later. The man who had been called a traitor in his own country became a friend in the other.

On October 6, 1978, he gave his farewell lecture, on the unfinished task of world mission. From colleagues he received a volume titled *Zending op weg naar de toekomst* (Mission on the way to the future). After that he kept writing. In 1983 his memoirs appeared, *Gedenken en verwachten* (Remembering and expecting). In 1989 he published an article in an international mission journal about mission in the 1990s.

Old age came with diabetes, severe deafness and finally blindness in his left eye. Rie died. He remarried, and his second wife helped him with his writing. About growing old he said something I have remembered. The little word already belongs to your youth, he said. When you are old, it still does.

He kept writing. In 1992 *De kern van het christelijk geloof* (The core of the Christian faith) appeared. He was eighty-four at the time.

The Indonesian pastor and writer Andar Ismail met him in 1995 in Leiden. Verkuyl sat in a wheelchair. When he held a pen, his wife guided his fingers. But his mind was clear, and he spoke fluently and coherently, Ismail writes.

The pen of Purwokerto, still in his hand.

A grain in the ground

Johannes Verkuyl died on January 27, 2001. He was ninety-three years old. The funeral service was on February 2.

His papers now fill almost five meters of archive at the Vrije Universiteit: letters, lectures, folders on Indonesia and South Africa. In Indonesia the publishing house he helped start in 1946 still exists, with the name of his Indonesian friend on it. Indonesian church leaders called him a man who stayed the same all his life.

I think of that afternoon in October 1966. Two men on a stage in Amsterdam. One had given his life to the church of a new nation. The other had supported the freedom of that nation, and had been insulted for it in his own country. They had known each other for twenty years, from the days of the church hall on the Kwitang and an emergency committee that wanted to make books.

Mulia accepted the diploma. Verkuyl gave it.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): born on January 16, 1908, in Nieuw-Vennep; student pastor for Asian students in the Netherlands; departure for Central Java at the end of 1939; Japanese internment of him and his family in separate camps until 1945; involvement in Indonesian independence; the pamphlet *De achtergrond van het Indonesische vraagstuk* (1946); the cooperation with T.S.G. Mulia and the founding of the Christian publishing house BPK (1946); return at the end of 1962; general secretary of the Missionary Council (1963-1968); professor at the VU from 1965 as successor to Bavinck; the honorary doctorate for Mulia on October 20, 1966; his role in the honorary doctorate for Beyers Naudé (1972); the doctorate at the VU in 1948 on *Enkele aspecten van het probleem der godsdienstvrijheid*; *Inleiding in de nieuwere zendingswetenschap* (1975); died on January 27, 2001.

From one source or from the circle around him: - *His youth and his family.* The farming family with ten children, his mother's mission stories, the lyceum in Haarlem, his criticism of the synod, the marriage to Rie van den Heuvel, the kerosene lamp in Purwokerto, the word assistant preacher, the gifts without a name, the children who went to the Netherlands, his son's words, his regret, the clash over Wertheim, his words about "already" and "still," his illnesses and his second marriage, the visit of Andar Ismail: all of this comes

from the sketch of his life by the Indonesian Bible Society (2026). That sketch visibly leans on his own memories and on Indonesian witnesses, but it does not name a source for each story. I have not been able to consult his memoirs *Gedenken en verwachten* (1983) myself. About his parents I know nothing further; a genealogy of the family is kept in his archive at the Vrije Universiteit, but it is not public. What he heard as student pastor from the Indonesian students is in no source I could consult. - *The camps.* Pekalongan for him and Bandung for his wife and four children: Indonesian Bible Society. Three and a half years in separate camps: Jerald Gort. The Baros camp in Cimahi and the Political Club: a Leiden master's thesis by Marleen van den Berg (2017), which relies on the historians Tan and Van de Wal. - *His choice in 1946.* His position of January 1, 1946, the turnaround that year and the names of the Indonesian Christians who convinced him come from the same thesis. So do the visit to the Republic before the Kwitang conference of May 19 to 24, 1947, and the stories about Dutch soldiers, on the basis of the minutes and the notes of the missionary H.A.C. Hildering. - *Sukarno, Hatta and Wilhelmina.* The conversation in Yogyakarta and the lobbying of the queen appear only with the Indonesian Bible Society. Outside that source I have not been able to check them. The same goes for the word traitor and for the Bintang Jasa Pratama of 1977. - *New Guinea.* His lobbying within the ARP from 1956 appears in one article from 2019. - *Mijn hart klopt er van* is a memory of his former student John Boer (2015). - *The count of 66 books and about 400 articles* comes from Jerald Gort, who wrote his biography for a missiological reference work. Gort is also the source for Laren, the years at the college in Jakarta, his support for the Indonesian desire for their own national expression, and the farewell volume.

Where the sources differ: - *Student pastor.* The Indonesian Bible Society gives 1935, as a part-time job that later became full-time. Gort

gives 1937. Possibly that is the year it became a full job. - *Doctorate.* The Indonesian Bible Society writes that he received his doctorate cum laude under Bavinck before he left. Gort writes that he completed his doctorate during a leave in 1948, and the dissertation is also from that year. In the story, therefore, an exam stands before 1939 and the doctorate in 1948. - *The number of years in Indonesia.* Gort counts twenty-four, from 1939 through 1962; I keep to twenty-three, from January 1940 to the end of 1962. - *The year of the wedding.* The Indonesian Bible Society says he became student pastor a year after his marriage, in 1935. From that follows 1934.

Unconfirmed: - *Imprisoned by the Dutch?* John Boer wrote in 2015 that Verkuyl was even imprisoned by the Dutch for his support of independence. I have not found that in any other source. Possibly it is a confusion with the Japanese camp. I have therefore not put it in the story. - *Schilder.* That Klaas Schilder wrote the article "Verkuyl and Kuyper" in 1950 is certain. What it said, I have not been able to read. - *South Africa.* What exactly he did beyond the honorary doctorate for Naudé, which letters he wrote and which conversations he had, has not yet been worked out in any public source. - *Salverda* regretted that the historian whose book he was reviewing, H.W. van den Doel, had not discussed the pamphlet of 1946. - *His last place of residence and his grave.* Where he died and where he is buried, I have not been able to find. In 1995 Andar Ismail met him in Leiden.

Interpretation: the image of the grain of wheat comes from the Indonesian Bible Society, not from Verkuyl himself. The characterization of his theology and the lines in his main work come from Olav Myklebust and the Indonesian Bible Society. Whether his choice in 1945-1949 was right was a fierce debate in his time; this chapter describes his choice without pretending that it was obvious then.

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Alida Bosshardt: the major of the Wallen

On April 28, 1965, on the Wallen, Amsterdam's red-light district, a young woman walked along with an officer of the Leger des Heils (the Salvation Army). She wore a wig, glasses and a raincoat, and she sold *De Strijdkreet* (the Dutch *War Cry*, the Army's magazine) in the cafés and alleys of the district. Anyone who saw her saw a new trainee helping the major.

Photographer Peter Zonneveld looked more closely. He recognized her and pressed the shutter. The next day his photos were in De Telegraaf, a national newspaper, and the whole of the Netherlands knew. The trainee was Princess Beatrix, the woman who would later become queen. She had gone out with Major Bosshardt to visit prostitutes and poor families.

It was news for days. The woman next to the princess had already been walking those streets for more than sixteen years. She knew the women behind the windows, the café owners and the homeless. She would keep walking there for decades, in the same uniform, with the same hat and the same magazine under her arm.

Alida Bosshardt became the best known Salvation Army soldier the Netherlands has ever had. In 2009 the people of Amsterdam chose

her as the greatest Amsterdammer of all time, ahead of Johan Cruijff and André Hazes. For her, all of that was beside the point. She served God by serving people.

It began in Utrecht, with a girl who wanted to become a nurse.

Too weak for the hospital

Alida Margaretha Bosshardt was born on June 8, 1913, in Utrecht, on the Nachtegaalstraat, above her parents' grocery store. Her father, Lambertus Bosshardt, was a grocer and a sales representative and later became a journalist. Her mother's name was Wilhelmina Dieuwertje Teeling. Alida had one brother, Henk, who was three years older. At home they called her Zus (Sis).

It was a family in which the mission field was close. Her father had wanted to become a pastor or missionary himself, but after the early death of his own father there was no money for it. An aunt had died of cholera in Egypt, an uncle of yellow fever in Paramaribo. And living in the house with the family was a cousin of her father's generation, Jan Pennings, the son of a missionary who had died in the Indies. He was fifteen years older than Alida, painted and played the violin.

The family belonged to the Nederlands-Hervormde Kerk (the Dutch Reformed Church) and moved often. It was not easy. The shop did badly and was sold. Her father went bankrupt. When he later became Roman Catholic, he lost his job. Her mother was caring but nervous, her father took life more lightly.

Her brother was allowed to go to the HBS (a secondary school preparing for higher education). After primary school Alida stayed at home, helped her mother with the housekeeping and worked half days in a dry goods store.

She wanted to become a nurse. She was not accepted. She was often ill and had poor sight in one eye. Later she put it simply herself: she had been found too weak.

Anyone who saw her later, on her feet day and night in the center of Amsterdam, would have found that hard to believe. That rejection took her somewhere else.

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: *God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty* (1 Corinthians 1:27). A hospital found her too weak. On the Wallen she later walked day and night.

On her knees in Utrecht

Jan Pennings had a girlfriend, Wil Dillen, and Wil was a Salvation Army soldier. She asked Alida whether she would come along to the Salvation Army sometime. Alida went.

In those years the Army was a movement of the street. It held meetings in squares, with music and a short sermon, for people who would never walk into a church. At one of those open-air meetings Alida was deeply touched by the love of God. That is how the Majoor Bosshardthuis tells it, the Army's museum in her old home.

And one evening she knelt at the mercy seat. The mercy seat stands at the front of the Army's hall. Someone who wants to give his life to God comes forward and kneels there, where everyone can see. She was eighteen. Later she said one word about it that has stuck: she turned to God that evening, deliberately.

A girl from a Reformed family, baptized in the Geertekerk, certainly knew who God was. That evening she chose for herself.

Right away she went to work. In the Lange Nieuwstraat the Army had a post where children and adults received clothes and food. She

helped there. Her mother pitched in too, even though she had little to do with the Army itself. Alida wanted to give her faith "hands and feet."

In 1932 she became a Salvation Army soldier. Her parents had resisted at first, but they accepted it. Her father did more than that. He bought her uniform, and the hat that went with it.

Who bought your first Bible, or took you into a church for the first time? Sometimes there is someone standing next to you whom you hardly notice.

A father who stood surety

She wanted to go further. She wanted to become an officer, for her whole life. It was God's purpose for her life, she said.

The Army hesitated. This girl had been ill so often. Again her father stepped in: he guaranteed financially that any medical costs would be paid. On November 12, 1934, Alida began as a cadet at the Army's training college in Amstelveen. On July 9, 1935, she was promoted to lieutenant in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam. Her parents were in the hall. Only during that service did she hear where she was to go.

It was Rotterdam. A year later she went to Amsterdam, to the children's home De Zonnehoek on the Rapenburg. The home lay in the middle of the old Jewish Quarter, among many Jewish residents. About a hundred children from broken families lived there, and she cared for them.

In 1938 she became a captain. That was her rank when German troops invaded the Netherlands in May 1940.

A home without a flag

In 1941 the occupying forces banned the Salvation Army. Its money and buildings were confiscated. Uniforms could no longer be worn. The Army refused to be absorbed into the Winterhulp, an organization the Germans had set up. To save the work, the children's homes continued as private homes.

Jewish parents from the neighborhood brought their children to De Zonnehoek. They trusted the captain.

That same year three Jewish sisters came to the home: Hendrina, Dimphina and Helena Terhorst. Their mother was pregnant and also found shelter with the Army for a while. Shortly afterwards a fourth sister was born, Roos.

When the home had to be placed under the Winterhulp, Bosshardt left. With some seventy children, many of them Jewish, she went to Amsterdam-Noord, the part of the city north of the IJ river, to a few small houses on the other side of the water.

During that move she removed the yellow stars from the clothes of the Jewish children. Someone asked her about it. They did not do that sort of thing, she said.

That was all. No speech. A young captain who decided that in her house no child would wear a star.

A copper kettle and a baby under blankets

In July 1943 Amsterdam-Noord was bombed. None of the children were hurt. But they had to move on. From that year the children, many of them of Jewish descent, were placed elsewhere in the country.

They traveled by train and on foot, to Hilversum and the Gooi region, and ended up in ten different places. The children had to put

on as many clothes over each other as possible, even in summer. At every move little Roos was tucked under blankets, because she looked Jewish. The oldest child carried a copper kettle and had to take good care of it. Why was not said. After the war the children heard that money and food coupons had been hidden in it.

Bosshardt also transported children by bicycle. A colleague from the Army, Colonel Margaret White, wrote after her death how she cycled past German soldiers with Jewish babies in wicker baskets. She took them to a safe place, often without knowing their names. That was deliberate. Through the resistance she received addresses, but names and addresses were never written down. What was not on paper, the occupier could not find either.

How many children there were, we therefore do not know exactly. The Army itself put it at more than seventy-five Jewish children in 2004. It was many.

There is no list. Jesus said about giving: *But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing* (Matthew 6:3). In the war that was pure necessity for Bosshardt. It also fits the rest of her life.

Two weeks and an open door

Getting food outside the ration coupons was forbidden work in those years. She had no money. Bosshardt got food anyway, for the children. She was betrayed and arrested.

For two weeks she was held and questioned. Then her interrogator left the door open behind him. She walked out, into the street.

Had he forgotten it? Did he want it that way? No source says. The Army puts the word forgot in quotation marks. Her superiors found it too dangerous afterward and ordered her to go into hiding for a

time. She did. When the worst danger had passed, she went on with the children.

In the hunger winter of 1944 she cycled into the countryside, on a bicycle with wooden tires. Along the way people often gave her cigarettes. She traded those with the farmers for potatoes. She did not tell the Army's leadership. The Salvation Army had a strict ban on smoking, and cigarettes did not belong in the hands of an officer. If children were hungry, she did what was needed. Explaining could come later.

The four Terhorst sisters stayed together throughout the war. Bosshardt had made sure of that. Sixty years later they wrote a letter together to the Yad Vashem commission in Jerusalem. The major had given them a feeling of warmth and protection, they wrote, while she herself had nothing. She was like a mother to them, and she still called them her children. They thanked her for their lives, and for their children and grandchildren.

She herself later thought it nothing special. She had made sure the children were safe, and that was only natural. How dangerous it had been, she had not fully realized at the time.

An assignment with a hundred guilders

Shortly after the war her father died. Bosshardt considered resigning to care for her mother. It did not happen. Her mother moved in with her and later lived in a retirement home of the Army. Alida remained an officer and went looking for children who had been in hiding during the war or were under guardianship.

She now worked at the Army's headquarters in Amsterdam, and there something struck her. On the Wallen, the city's old red-light district, the Salvation Army was doing nothing. She kept asking to

be allowed to start there. The Army belonged there, she thought, with the people who had lost their way.

On October 8, 1948, she got her way. She began the Goodwill work. The Army's leadership gave her a hundred guilders, a flag and a blessing. Nothing more.

With that money and that flag she went out into the street. On Friday evenings she went into the dark district with a small group of young officers. They sold *De Strijdkreet* in the cafés. They talked with women who worked in prostitution, with homeless people and with people addicted to drink. At the end of November she wrote in her diary what it was doing to her helpers. Something new had arisen in them: love for the lost.

Already that first year she celebrated Christmas with the women of the Wallen.

She did not come to fight prostitution. She wanted to be there, again and again, so that a woman could take her hand at the moment she was ready. And she did not look down on them. She could just as well have been sitting there herself, she said.

Until 1971 the work received no subsidy from the city, and the support of the Army itself also remained limited. Thirty years after the start there were four locations and more than a hundred staff. A supermarket of services, she called it herself.

The oldest stone house in Amsterdam

At the end of 1951 Bosshardt got her own building, at Oudezijds Voorburgwal 14, in the middle of the Wallen. The building is said to be the oldest stone dwelling in Amsterdam. At first she had only the ground floor. There she took in people who worked in prostitution or had no home, and she slept there herself, in the same space. For

years it was her home and her workplace. She offered a place to sleep, food and clothing. When it was needed, she took people into her own home.

She knew everyone in the neighborhood. Café 't Mandje on the Zeedijk was one of her workplaces for a long time, and with its owner, Bet van Beeren, she had a warm friendship. Sometimes she celebrated New Year's Eve with her, and when Bet died, the major spoke at her funeral. She also knew Zwarte Joop (Black Joop) of Casa Rosso, a well-known figure from the Amsterdam underworld.

A neighbor from the Wallen, Riny Reiken, tells a story that sums her up. In the middle of the night the major heard shouting by the canal. She ran outside and pulled a man out of the water. It turned out he had not paid a woman. Bosshardt gave him dry clothes and a warm bed. On one condition: he would go back and settle up. He did.

What did she think about prostitution itself? She did not approve of it. But she thought it was "not the worst sin there was." She did not think it could be wiped out, and as long as it existed, the women had to be able to live decently. She did criticize the double standards of the government: it was punishable, but the state earned money from it. For women who wanted to return to a different life, she set up a halfway house.

In 1955 her mother died. In 1961 she completed a training in social work. Her thesis was about social work among women in prostitution. She did her work with love, and she also wanted to do it well.

In her story I read few big words about God. Mostly I read what she did. Every morning at seven o'clock she began, with cinnamon rusks.

"Serving God is serving people"

In 1959 she appeared on television for the first time, in the VARA program *Anders dan anderen* (Different from others) hosted by Bert Garthoff. After that, donations poured in. All the money went to the Goodwill work.

She became a familiar face and gave lectures all over the country. There she could be sharp. Sometimes she calculated for her audience how likely it was that there were men in the hall who had visited a prostitute.

Her motto was on everything the Army later published about her: "Serving God is serving people, serving people is serving God." She lived it first. Only then did it become a saying. There was another one: everyone is equal before God, so also to me.

It sounds like an echo of what Jesus said about the last judgment: *inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me* (Matthew 25:40). On the Wallen those least ones got a face: a woman behind a window, a homeless man in an alley, a man in the canal.

She was not a saint without rough edges. She was strict with herself and generous with others, but critics sometimes found her a little authoritarian. She would gladly have had a husband and a family, she told later. It never happened.

The princess as a trainee

And so we come back to April 28, 1965. Princess Beatrix wanted to get to know the underside of society. She went along in disguise as a trainee and sold *De Strijdkreet* on the Wallen. Together they visited bars, prostitutes and poor families. Peter Zonneveld's photos made it front-page news, and the major had to talk to the press.

It was the beginning of a friendship that lasted. Queen Juliana had already invited Bosshardt once, shortly after the war. Two months after the walk through the Wallen, the major was a guest at the engagement of Beatrix and Claus, and in the same year she was made a Knight in the Order of Orange-Nassau. Beatrix and she wrote each other letters and cards for years. She also stayed in touch with Juliana, who was there when the major turned eighty. When she died, the queen wrote about her grief.

In 1968 she was promoted to lieutenant colonel. It made no difference. To the whole of the Netherlands she remained the major.

A bath for Herman Brood

In 1978 Alida Bosshardt retired. She did not stop. In America she took another course in elderly care, traveled for the Army to conferences, visited the sick, and kept giving lectures and selling *De Strijdkreet*, until she was ninety-two. In 1985 she became an Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau. The Salvation Army gave her the Order of the Founder, the highest honor the Army has. In 2000 her own life story appeared, *Met hart en ziel* (With heart and soul).

She also kept appearing on television. In 1996, in the program *Villa Felderhof*, she met the rock musician Herman Brood. In front of the camera she gave him a bath and washed his back. Not everyone thought that fitting. She stayed down to earth about it. Every child of God is valuable, she said. A friendship grew between the old Salvation Army soldier and the man who lived in the world of drugs and music. She knew how to talk with people like him. She had been doing it for fifty years.

Bosshardt sought out the people others preferred to avoid, and she did not come to take anything.

At her eighty-fifth birthday, in 1998, there was a celebration in the Mozes en Aäronkerk (Moses and Aaron Church). People in the church stood up to thank her. They were children from back then, whom she had taken away to safety during the war.

In June 2003 her ninetieth birthday was celebrated in a big way.

A medal from Jerusalem

On August 30, 2004, the Israeli ambassador Eitan Margalit came to the headquarters of the Salvation Army in Almere. He presented Alida Bosshardt with the medal and certificate of Righteous Among the Nations. With this, Yad Vashem, the Holocaust center in Jerusalem, recognized what she had done for Jewish children during the war.

It was sixty years after the hunger winter. Most of the children she had taken away in those years she did not know by name. That was how she had wanted it. But the four Terhorst sisters she did know, and their letter was with the commission.

When the conversation turned to her, she sent it back to God. She was in God's service to serve people, she would say. "Not to me, but to Him belongs all the glory." Her honors lay in a cupboard.

An old coat

After a stroke she had to stop delivering *De Strijdkreet*. Lectures and visits to the sick she kept up until 2005. In a broadcast in August of that year she still said that it makes more sense to bring God's message than to be the director of a fireworks factory.

She was not afraid of death. The body you leave behind like an old coat, she had once said, and the spirit rises to eternity.

On Monday, June 25, 2007, Alida Bosshardt died, at home in Amsterdam. She was ninety-four years old. She had never been married. In the Salvation Army they put it differently: she was promoted to glory.

Prime Minister Balkenende called her a shining example. Mayor Cohen called her a true Amsterdammer: courageous, determined and full of compassion.

On Saturday, June 30, the farewell service was held in the Koningskerk (King's Church) in the Watergraafsmeer. The coffin was white. The funeral procession and the service were broadcast live on television, and the whole of the Netherlands could watch. She had wanted a simple burial. She was laid to rest in a grave for officers of the Salvation Army at the Nieuwe Ooster cemetery.

A bridge over the canal

Her name remained in the city. A Majoor Bosshardt Prize had already been established in 2006. In 2008 nine postage stamps about her life appeared. On November 13, 2009, a poll by De Telegraaf and the city of Amsterdam named her the greatest Amsterdammer of all time.

A bridge over the Oudezijds Achterburgwal, in the middle of her old working area, bears her name. In 2014 Princess Beatrix opened the Majoor Bosshardtburgh, a residential facility for thirty-six people. On June 8, 2022, the day she would have turned one hundred and nine, Queen Máxima opened the Majoor Bosshardthuis in her old home on the Oudezijds Voorburgwal. It houses a community center, and there is a wax figure of the major in her uniform. The house offers tours through her old home and over the Wallen, in her footsteps.

Her right hand, Henny Tinga, still works on the Wallen. She calls the major her spiritual mother.

If you walk across the Wallen today, you see the windows, the tourists and the light. At number 14 on the Oudezijds Voorburgwal stands a statue of the major. She sits on a bench, in uniform, and she is laughing. Her motto is on the bench. Behind her is the house where she lived, and where she let in people who had nowhere else to go.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): born on June 8, 1913, in Utrecht; rejected as a nurse; came to faith through the Salvation Army at the age of eighteen; Salvation Army soldier in 1932; officer training in 1934; work in the children's home De Zonnehoek in Amsterdam; ban on the Army in 1941; placing Jewish children at hiding addresses from 1943; start of the Goodwill work on the Wallen on October 8, 1948, with a hundred guilders; the building at Oudezijds Voorburgwal 14 from 1951; first television appearance in 1959; the outing with Princess Beatrix in 1965; rank of lieutenant colonel in 1968; retirement in 1978; recognition by Yad Vashem (presented on August 30, 2004); died on June 25, 2007, in Amsterdam; funeral on June 30, 2007, broadcast live on television; voted greatest Amsterdammer in 2009.

Only from own testimony or from the Salvation Army: - *Her conversion.* The open-air meeting appears with the Majoor Bosshardthuis and in the teaching material of Nieuwsbegrip, which was made together with the museum; that is also where it says she wanted to give her faith hands and feet. The kneeling at the mercy seat and the word deliberately appear in the Dutch Wikipedia and with Omroep MAX, which rely on her biographies. I have not consulted those biographies myself. That it was God's purpose for

her life: Omroep MAX. - *The war.* The Terhorst sisters, the flight with seventy children, the copper kettle, baby Roos under blankets, the arrest and the open door, the cigarettes for potatoes: we know all this from what the Salvation Army published when Bosshardt was honored by Yad Vashem in 2004, and from the letter of the four sisters quoted in the Army's magazine. It is probably also in the Yad Vashem file itself, but I have not been able to see that. I have found no other sources for the arrest. The yellow stars and the order to go into hiding appear with the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews; her answer has been handed down there in English, and I therefore give it without quotation marks. The wicker baskets come from a memorial article by Colonel Margaret White. That she was betrayed by an NSB member (a Dutch Nazi collaborator) and that rescued children thanked her in 1998 in the Mozes en Aäronkerk is told by Riny Reiken. - *That she did not realize the danger and simply did her work,* and that her honors lay in a cupboard: a tribute by Anna Rottier at the Amsterdam Museum (2024), written as a theatrical monologue in the writer's own words. - *The diary of November 1948,* the first Christmas, sleeping in the shelter space: Dutch Wikipedia and Omroep MAX. That she herself could have been sitting there: Omroep MAX. - *The man in the canal,* the blessing with the hundred guilders, the Friday evenings, the bath with Herman Brood and her words about it, the white coffin, her book *Met hart en ziel:* Riny Reiken, former owner of a tasting house on the Wallen, in a tribute at the Amsterdam Museum (2025). - *On the bicycle, without names:* brochure of the Salvation Army. That she kept asking whether she could start on the Wallen: Peer Magazine, a magazine of the Army. - *Her motto and sayings:* Majoor Bosshardthuis and Salvation Army. The words about the old coat: DutchNews, June 26, 2007. - *The cinnamon rusks:* a report from NH Nieuws from 2024.

From the Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland (Fia Dieteren): her father's bankruptcy and the loss of his job; the character of her parents; her parents' resistance, the uniform and the hat; the financial guarantee; the search for children after the war; Juliana's invitation; her view of prostitution and the halfway house; Bet van Beeren and Zwarte Joop; the subsidy and the growth of the work; the thesis; the lectures; the date of the walk with Beatrix and the name of the photographer; the engagement; the knighthoods; that she would gladly have had a family; that critics found her a little authoritarian; that Juliana was there at her eightieth birthday (Omroep MAX writes that Beatrix came to congratulate her then).

Where the sources differ: - *The year of her conversion.* The Vrouwenlexicon says that in 1931 she first went along to the Army. The Dutch Wikipedia puts the kneeling at the mercy seat in 1930. On her age the sources agree: eighteen. That fits only with 1931. - *Salvation Army soldier.* The Vrouwenlexicon, Nieuwsbegrip and the Majoor Bosshardthuis give 1932; the Dutch Wikipedia 1933. - *The training.* The Vrouwenlexicon and the Dutch Wikipedia give 1934 as the start. The Majoor Bosshardthuis writes that she completed the training in 1933. - *Family on the mission field,* the baptism in the Geertekerk, the address Nachtegaalstraat 44, the exact dates of the training college and the promotion in the Concertgebouw, the year 1938 for the rank of captain, the houses in Amsterdam-Noord, Hilversum and the Gooi, the year 1996 for *Villa Felderhof* and the Koningskerk appear only in the Dutch Wikipedia (in part also with Omroep MAX and Riny Reiken). - *The number of children.* The Army's magazine in 2004 mentions seventy children in the home and more than seventy-five Jewish children who were placed. Colonel White speaks of eighty. A later English article speaks of hundreds. Because nothing was written down, it can no longer be checked. - *Selling De Strijdkreet until she was ninety-two:* that is how the city of Amsterdam puts it.

According to the Dutch Wikipedia she stopped after a stroke; no date is given.

Unconfirmed: - *A national day of mourning.* An English Army magazine later wrote that a national day of mourning was declared at her funeral. I have not found that in any Dutch source, and it seems to me to be a mistake. - *Tours.* About tours of the Wallen that she herself gave to groups of visitors, I have found no source. It is certain that she gave lectures and that well-known guests walked along with her. - *The Yad Vashem file* itself could not be consulted. The war stories in this chapter are therefore drawn from what the Salvation Army and others published from it.

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Johan Maasbach: the ship's cook on the Malieveld

At the end of August 1958 a stage stood on the Malieveld in The Hague, a large field in the center of the city. A young American spoke from it in short sentences: the evangelist Tommy Lee Osborn. Next to him stood a Dutchman who caught every sentence and immediately gave it back in Dutch. Thousands of people were listening.

When the sermon was over, people came up onto the stage. They said they had been healed. Someone could hear again, without a hearing aid. Someone walked without sticks.

Polygoon filmed it. On August 30 the newsreel ran in Dutch cinemas, just over two minutes long, and it named the interpreter: evangelist Johan Maasbach from Gouda.

He was around forty at the time and had spent years as a cook on ships. After that summer he grew into one of the best known faith healers in the country. He bought a cinema in The Hague and turned it into a church. For more than twenty years he spoke on Sunday mornings over Radio Luxembourg. Thousands of people came

to his services, while newspapers, doctors and churches looked on with suspicion. Shortly before his death, about ten thousand people in the Netherlands belonged to his movement.

Who he was is best heard in one sentence he said to a reporter in 1964: "I have never healed anyone."

His story begins in Rotterdam.

A Salvation Army soldier at nine

Johan Maasbach was born on December 5, 1918, in Rotterdam, into a large family. He was one of the youngest of fourteen children.

At nine he went to a service of the Leger des Heils (the Salvation Army) in his city. There he came to faith. That is how he told it himself later, and he never told it differently: it began with a nine-year-old boy in a service of the Army. After that he walked as a young Salvation Army soldier through the streets of the port city. He wanted to keep working in that movement. In his own mind he had already found his calling.

His parents thought more practically. A boy had to learn a trade, and so Johan became an apprentice to a baker.

These are small details, but they say something. The boy who would later draw full halls began in a bakery.

God's protecting hand

At seventeen, in 1935, Johan went to sea. He signed on as a cook's mate on a ship to Hamburg. Later he sailed on the ships of the Holland America Line and became head cook. For years he stood in a ship's galley.

About those years he passed on two things, and his mission still tells them today. The first: at sea he experienced "God's protecting

hand." What exactly happened is not said. The second: there, on board, he knew that God was calling him to preach the gospel.

So he did not hear that calling in a church, and not at a training school. He heard it at sea, far from home. Have you ever understood something from God in a place where you did not expect it?

The psalm says of sailors that they see the works of the LORD and His wonders in the deep (Psalm 107:23-24). The psalmist already knew that God can be seen far from the church too, on the open water.

A brother in New York

During the Second World War his ship arrived in New York. Johan had a brother there who had lived in America since 1919, and he looked him up. That brother took him along to meetings of Pentecostal believers.

What he saw there he did not know from the Netherlands. These people expected God to step in even today, to speak and to heal the sick. Johan kept coming. In America he also saw the faith healers and the television preachers, and he was impressed by them. Soon he thought a similar task was waiting for him.

In 1947 he joined a small Full Gospel church. Shortly afterwards he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, as Pentecostal believers call it. The Salvation Army soldier of earlier days now belonged to the Pentecostal movement.

A Dutch ship's cook had come to know in America a way of believing that was still almost unknown in his own country. He took it home with him.

A tent and six hundred folding chairs

He was still sailing, but his free time went to the gospel. With a tent he traveled through the Netherlands.

How he got that tent is a story in itself. During a sea voyage he got into a serious fight on board. Johan lost the fight. But he came out of it so visibly battered that his opponent was punished and had to pay him a large sum in damages. With that money he bought a big tent and six hundred folding chairs.

I find that a good and honest story. It does not describe a hero. It shows a sailor who takes a beating, and who uses the money he gets out of it to buy chairs for people who want to hear the gospel.

At a tent meeting in Stadskanaal, in the northeast of the country, he met Willy Klumper. She had completed a two-year Bible school in Switzerland and was helping to spread the gospel in Stadskanaal and Vroomshoop. So she knew what she was getting into.

In 1952 Johan said goodbye to the ocean routes and married Willy. From then on they worked together, full-time. They had eight children. The eldest was named David.

That same year he began holding prayer services and revival meetings in the Netherlands. People prayed for the sick, hands were laid on them, and people stood up to tell what God had done for them. Even his fiercest critics later wrote that these services soon drew full halls.

Johan and Willy began in Gouda. In that city there was as yet no Pentecostal church and no Full Gospel church. They held evangelistic services and bought their first small church building: the Bethlehemskerk at Zeugstraat 38.

The beginning was small. A couple used to the tent, and a small church building in Gouda.

Six years later he stood before tens of thousands of people.

"Osborn's echo"

In the summer of 1958 the American evangelist T.L. Osborn came to the Low Countries. He had been born in 1923 in Oklahoma, the son of a farmer. After a period as a missionary in India, from 1947 he traveled through Africa, Asia and South America. In 1954 he had preached in Jakarta for two months. On August 18, 1958, the NCRV, a Protestant broadcaster, aired a television report on his campaigns in Belgium. A few days later Osborn stood on the Malieveld.

An interdenominational committee led by the Hervormde (Dutch Reformed) minister P.C. van Leeuwen had invited him. The flyers said that everyone was free to come in and that you could bring your sick. The campaign ran from August 22 through 31.

On the first evening about forty thousand people came. That evening Osborn prayed for people who were deaf in one ear. Afterward forty came to the stage. In the days that followed, people told that thrombosis, tumors, heart conditions and back problems had disappeared after the prayer. There were hundreds of conversions. Evening after evening the field filled up, even when it rained.

Johan Maasbach was there. Osborn's interpreter was doing poorly, and the American pulled Maasbach out of the audience and onto the stage. He then translated most of the campaign. The cook had sailed to America for years and knew the faith of the American meetings from the inside.

The journalist H.J.A. Hofland stood on the field one evening and wrote down what he saw. He did not name the interpreter. He

did describe a man next to Osborn who took over every sentence directly, with the same tone and the same gestures. When Osborn asked the people whether it was not true what he said, the interpreter asked them in exactly the same way.

That earned Maasbach a nickname: "Osborn's echo."

After The Hague, from September 3 to 7, came a campaign on the Bodenterrein in Groningen, and there too he translated. Groningen was harder. Gereformeerden (members of the Gereformeerde Kerken, a Reformed denomination formed in 1892) handed out pamphlets near the grounds warning against Osborn. On Sunday afternoon the police switched off the sound system, at the request of gereformeerden who were holding a service in a nearby church. Eleven ministers issued a warning in the Nieuwe Drentsche Courant. Osborn did not want to argue about it. The salvation of a person, he said, is the greatest miracle.

A field that emptied

I also want to tell you the other side, because it belongs to this story.

On the Malieveld Hofland saw tens of thousands of people in front of the stage. He saw sick people on stretchers, in tents with open fronts, guarded by police and army medics. Spectacular healings he did not see that evening. At the end the field emptied, he wrote, "as at the end of a football match in which no goals have been scored."

A doctor from Leiden, Dr. F.A. Nolle, also came to watch twice. He pointed out that the evidence for the miracles depended on what the patients themselves declared.

That is true. It is always so with a testimony: someone tells what happened to him. The blind man in the Gospel of John could not say more either than that he had been blind and now he saw. Some

people went home disappointed that summer. Others stood on the stage and could hear without a device. Both were there, on the same field.

The Dutch Osborn

For Johan Maasbach that summer changed everything. His mission calls 1958 the great breakthrough for the Full Gospel in the Netherlands. The criticism of the ministers worked out differently than they meant it: people who had been touched by Osborn became confused by it and streamed to the Pentecostal churches.

Maasbach received invitations for campaigns at home and abroad. He was called "the Dutch Osborn." In three years he held thirty-three evangelistic campaigns. More than three hundred thousand people came to them, and more than seven thousand of them came to faith. All told, in those three years he led some two thousand meetings.

Churches sprang up in Dordrecht, Leiden, Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. He started one in Arnhem too. When Margot Alt returned to the Netherlands in October 1961, he asked her to take over that church.

In those years he also called himself John Maasbach. One of his sons was named John T.L. Maasbach, after Osborn. That summer left traces, even in the names of his children.

The friendship lasted. When Maasbach later bought large buildings in The Hague, Osborn came over to bless them.

Arrested in Spain

He remained a sailor: he could not stay long in one place.

In the summer of 1963 he traveled through Spain with a staff. Evangelism was forbidden there, and the police arrested him more than once. Each time he was released again. He had his own explanation for it, and it was typical of him: the Lord worked on the hearts of the police commissioners.

In the spring of 1964 he led dozens of meetings in Antwerp, London, Stockholm and Helsinki. His message was the same everywhere: whoever believes is healed. In June of that year he started a school of his own, the Zion Bible College. In 1965 a trip followed through the United States, Lebanon, Hong Kong and Indonesia. Suriname was on the list too, but the government did not let him in.

On Sunday morning from Luxembourg

In 1961 Maasbach began broadcasting on Radio Luxembourg. In the Dutch airwaves he never gained a foothold, not even when he knocked on the door of the EO (the Evangelische Omroep, the evangelical broadcaster). So he bought airtime abroad: half an hour a week, for twenty-five thousand guilders a year.

Every Sunday morning at eight o'clock he could be heard. He kept that up for twenty-three years. Later the pirate stations at sea were added: Radio Caroline, Mi Amigo, Radio Noordzee and Radio Monique. His voice also sounded over Radio Sri Lanka.

It did not bother him that his message ended up among very different things. "We bring the message right between Playboy and Penthouse," he said about it.

And letters came. Listeners wrote that they had been healed while listening to his broadcast on Sunday morning.

"The party goes on"

In 1964 his head office was on the Koningstraat in The Hague. On the facade were neon letters: Jezus Redt (Jesus Saves). Downstairs was a shop with books, magazines and records. On the floors above, twenty-two permanent staff worked on the administration, the mail and the shipping.

A reporter visited him there and asked about the healings in his services. The answer is the sentence I began this chapter with: "I have never healed anyone. It is Jesus who saves people." He did not want to be called a miracle worker. Whoever surrenders completely to Jesus, he said, finds healing. If you believe that God made you, you can also believe that He can repair you. Advising people not to go to the doctor, he never did. A doctor could simply do no more than advise.

It recalls Peter. When a lame man in Jerusalem had begun to walk, Peter asked the onlookers why they stared at them so, as if they had made the man walk by their own power or godliness (Acts 3:12). Whatever happened in Maasbach's services, he pointed away from himself.

What was it like in such a service? A journalist from De Tijd-Maasbode, a Catholic newspaper, sat in on one evening that year, and through his report you can look along.

At the front stands a man of middle age, a little bald. He has just told that he has been healed of several ailments. Maasbach asks what his profession is. Real estate agent, the man says. "Isn't it wonderful?" says Maasbach. "Praise the Lord!" answers the agent, and the whole church shouts hallelujah. He has also quit smoking, he tells. What does he do with his pocket money now, Maasbach wants to know. The man has no ready answer. Maasbach helps him: "We'll send him a mission box." The church roars with laughter.

"The party goes on," says Maasbach.

Another man tells that he has thrown away his medicines. After that his wife fell ill. At his wits' end, he says, he went to work with Mark 16, the chapter in which Jesus says that believers in His name will cast out demons and lay hands on the sick. He sent Satan away. Then his wife, whose arm had been paralyzed, simply lifted it above her head and shouted hallelujah.

The journalist was no ally. He wrote that Maasbach could bring "a full church within a few minutes" into religious rapture, and he thought it sometimes tended toward hysteria. Another reporter called him that year a gifted speaker, with humor, who had his hall well in hand. Even Dr. Nolle, his opponent, admitted that the man had a good voice and could sing beautifully.

In his magazine the testimonies were in print, from people who had been healed of nervous breakdowns and even cancer.

The filmmaker Jan Vrijman made a film for the VARA at that time about one of his meetings. The broadcaster found the portrait too insinuating and did not air it. The footage later ended up in Vrijman's cinema film *Op de bodem van de hemel* (At the bottom of heaven).

That criticism followed him all his life. For many Dutch people, faith healing counted as quackery, and the Vereniging tegen de Kwakzalverij (the Dutch Society Against Quackery) kept an eye on him until after his death. His son later summed up how his father dealt with it: whoever does not want criticism should say nothing, be nothing and do nothing.

A cinema becomes a church

In 1966 Maasbach bought the Capitol cinema in The Hague, for eight hundred thousand guilders. In 1968 followed the building of

the Lijnkamp clothing store, which became the head office. Osborn came to bless both buildings. The former cinema became the Capitol Evangelie Centrum (Capitol Gospel Center). Where films had once been shown, he now held his healing services.

The work grew in every direction. He founded the Stichting Volle Evangelie Zending (Full Gospel Mission Foundation) and had a staff of about twenty people. His magazine *Nieuw Leven* (New Life) began with a print run of twenty thousand. At Christmas 1978 it was one hundred fifty thousand, with editions in English, German and Indonesian. Around him about ten churches formed, together the Johan Maasbach Wereldzending (Johan Maasbach World Mission). He had his own publishing house, Gazon. He bought old churches, the Havenkerk in Schiedam and the Gouwekerk in Gouda, and ran a care home for the elderly in The Hague. Anyone in spiritual need could call a telephone number. Later a printing house, children's homes, a travel agency and a television company were added. His children all worked in it.

In the 1970s a stir arose over handkerchiefs. *Nieuw Leven* advised readers to send in a handkerchief so that Maasbach could pray over it. The magazine referred to the apostle Paul. Acts says that even cloths that had touched Paul's body were brought to the sick, and that the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them (Acts 19:12). A reporter from Trouw, a Protestant daily, found the notice, and the Vereniging tegen de Kwakzalverij reacted sharply.

The verse is there. Whether it is a pattern for every age, Christians have disagreed about for a very long time. Maasbach read it as he read the whole Bible: as something God still does today.

Thirty years together, and then 1992

One of the young men who joined his church in the 1950s was Jan Zijlstra from Hillegom. He became pastor of the Bethlehemskerk in Leiden and Maasbach's right hand. His life is in volume 1 of this book. For more than thirty years the two men worked together.

In 1992 it came to a break. On Sunday, August 16, Maasbach came unannounced to the church in Leiden and wanted to speak. Painful scenes followed. Zijlstra continued with a church of his own in Leiderdorp.

What exactly went on between the two men, I do not know, and it is not for me to judge. Both of them told many people about Jesus. Both of them carried this with them.

In the Bible too, men who had brought the gospel together went their separate ways. Acts says of Paul and Barnabas that their disagreement became so sharp that they parted (Acts 15:39). The work went on afterward along two roads.

A year later, in 1993, Johan blessed his son David and daughter-in-law Regina to take over the whole mission work.

September eighteenth

Johan Maasbach died on September 18, 1997, in The Hague, the city where he lived. He was seventy-eight. The next day the Reformatorisch Dagblad wrote that for more than fifty years he had helped shape the Pentecostal movement in the Netherlands.

The newspaper also gave a few figures. In 1995 his movement in the Netherlands had fifteen churches and about ten thousand members. There were branches in Indonesia, India and the United States. Every week there were some sixty meetings in the Netherlands, with

much attention to young people. A spokeswoman said that his two sons would continue the work.

His own mission wrote that in 1997 it had to say goodbye for now to the man God had chosen as founder of the work. In those words for now you can hear their hope of seeing him again.

The World Mission still exists and is led by David and Regina Maasbach. In 2013 the VPRO broadcaster aired a radio portrait of Johan Maasbach, in a series about prophets, seers and healers.

The echo

I keep coming back to that stage on the Malieveld. An American who speaks, and next to him a Dutchman who catches every sentence and passes it on. Johan Maasbach had learned to work in a ship's galley. He was no theologian and no minister. In America he had seen something of a faith that expects God to step in today as well, and he took that home with him.

For forty years he gave the floor to people who wanted to tell what God had done for them: a real estate agent, a man with his wife, a listener with a letter. He himself insisted that he had never healed anyone.

On a Sunday morning in the 1960s, somewhere in the Netherlands, someone turned on the radio at eight o'clock, on the Luxembourg wavelength. A voice was speaking about Jesus.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): born in 1918; a cook on the ocean routes for years; marriage to Willy Klumper and farewell to the sea in 1952; start of his work in Gouda; interpreter for T.L. Osborn in 1958 on the Malieveld in The Hague (Polygoon newsreel of August 30, 1958) and in Groningen; radio broadcasts on Radio

Luxembourg; the film by Jan Vrijman that the VARA did not broadcast; the purchase of the Capitol cinema in The Hague in 1966; the magazine *Nieuw Leven* and the call to send in handkerchiefs; more than thirty years of cooperation with Jan Zijlstra and the break in 1992; died on September 18, 1997, in The Hague; continuation of the work by his son David and daughter-in-law Regina; the radio portrait of the VPRO in 2013.

From his own testimony or from his own organization: his conversion at the age of nine at the Salvation Army; the experience of God's protection at sea and his calling there; the gospel tent and the meeting with Willy in Stadskanaal, with her Bible school in Switzerland and her work in Stadskanaal and Vroomshoop; that there was as yet no Pentecostal church in Gouda, and the address of the first little church; 1958 as a breakthrough and the churches in Dordrecht, Leiden, Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht; his explanation of the releases in Spain; the blessing of the buildings by Osborn; the handover to David and Regina in 1993; the word about the farewell for now; the healings testified to in his services, in his magazine and by radio listeners.

From reports by journalists who were there: the evening on the Malieveld (H.J.A. Hofland, 1958); the service with the real estate agent and the man who told about his discarded medicines and his wife's arm (De Tijd-Maasbode, 1964, as quoted in the Maandblad tegen de Kwakzalverij; place and date of that service are not given); the head office on the Koningstraat with the neon letters, the shop and the twenty-two staff, and his statements there (Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 1964, as quoted by radio historian Hans Knot); the remark about Playboy and Penthouse and his son's summary (the magazine Kerk in Den Haag, 2013). I have not been able to see those newspapers themselves, only the quotations.

Only from Hans Knot, without an archival document: the date and place of birth (December 5, 1918, Rotterdam); the young Salvation Army soldier and the wish to work in the Army; the apprenticeship with a baker (an obituary from 1997 does call him "originally a baker"); the year 1935 and the Holland America Line (also mentioned in the obituary); the brother in New York; joining a Full Gospel church in 1947 and the baptism in the Spirit; the fight, the damages, the tent and the six hundred folding chairs; that Osborn pulled him out of the audience and the nickname "Osborn's echo"; Spain in 1963; the trip of spring 1964; the Zion Bible College; the eight o'clock hour, the twenty-three years and the cost of the airtime; Radio Caroline, Radio Noordzee (RNI) and Radio Monique; the two thousand meetings and the first print run of *Nieuw Leven*.

Only in the obituary of the Vereniging tegen de Kwakzalverij (1997), a source that opposed him: that in America he was impressed by faith healers and television preachers; the name John Maasbach; the purchase price of the Capitol; the half hour of airtime; the lobbying at the EO; the Stichting Volle Evangelie Zending, the staff of twenty and a print run of 25,000 for *Nieuw Leven*; the trip of 1965 and the refusal in Suriname; the printing house, the children's homes, the travel agency and the television company, and that all his children took part in the work.

Where the sources differ (in the story I chose one reading each time):

- *Place in the family.* Knot calls him in one place the twelfth of fourteen children, in another the thirteenth child. I have not been able to see a birth certificate.
- *The first voyage.* His mission mentions a ship to Hamburg, Knot the Holland America Line. They both say cook's mate; later sources speak of head cook.

- *The calling.* His mission says he knew it at sea. A piece by the Vereniging tegen de Kwakzalverij from 2008 says he was called in a dream. For that dream I found no second source. Knot writes that he already saw his calling as a young Salvation Army soldier.
- *America.* According to Knot he joined a Pentecostal church in 1947 after returning to the Netherlands. An article from 1964 says that as a head cook in America he came into contact with Pentecostal believers and stayed there after the war.
- *Osborn's year of birth.* CVandaag gives 1925; I keep to 1923.
- *The campaign in The Hague.* The dates of August 22 through 31, the committee, the forty thousand visitors on the first evening, the prayer for the deaf and the healings mentioned come from CVandaag (2008), which relies on the Pentecostal historians Cees and Paul van der Laan. Hofland's report is dated online to September 6, 1958, and Kerk in Den Haag places the campaign in September; that does not fit well with it. Hofland saw a little girl take a few steps and collapse again; an army medic thought Osborn should be banned.
- *How long he interpreted.* Knot: most of the campaign, after Osborn pulled him from the audience. The Reformatorisch Dagblad wrote in 1979 that he translated Osborn on the Malieveld and mentions the last day. The figure of more than a hundred thousand visitors on that last day came, according to that newspaper, from Maasbach himself. Hofland does not name the interpreter; I cannot prove that it was Maasbach that evening.
- *The years after 1958.* The thirty-three campaigns, more than three hundred thousand visitors and seven thousand converts come from the Van der Laan brothers, via CVandaag; I have not been able to check them in their book. Knot mentions two thousand meetings in three years. The name of his son John

T.L. and the pull toward the Pentecostal churches also come from CVandaag.

- *The staff.* Twenty-two staff in 1964, twenty in the obituary.
- *The number of churches.* About ten in 1979, fifteen in 1995 (Reformatorisch Dagblad).
- *Vrijman's film.* The obituary writes that first the VARA and later the IKOR declined to broadcast it. The IDFA dates the film to 1965.
- *The handkerchiefs.* The year is not clearly legible in the archive of the Vereniging tegen de Kwakzalverij; presumably the 1970s.
- *August 16, 1992.* Date and course of events come from CVandaag (2016). What exactly was said, I leave alone.

Interpretation: whether the healings in the services of Maasbach and Osborn were the work of God, no newsreel or newspaper can establish. The Polygoon newsreel does not say what happened medically to the people on the stage. The sources from that time show what people themselves declared. I have told their testimony as they gave it.

Sources for this chapter

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6. CVandaag, 5 september 2008, "Osborn werd nauwelijks geduld in Groningen"

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10. Maandblad tegen de Kwakzalverij, nr. 10 (jaren zeventig), over *Nieuw Leven* en de zakdoeken
11. Actieblad tegen de Kwakzalverij, december 1997, In memoriam Johan Maasbach
12. Nederlands Tijdschrift tegen de Kwakzalverij, juni 2008
13. IDFA, “De gebedsgenezer” (Jan Vrijman, 1965)
14. CVandaag, 1 juli 2016, over de video’s van Jan Zijlstra en Johan Maasbach
15. NOS, 9 september 2021, over Jan Zijlstra
16. Reformatorisch Dagblad, 10 september 2021, over Jan Zijlstra (via Digibron)
17. VPRO OVT, 11 augustus 2013, “Profeten, zieners en genezers: Johan Maasbach (1918-1997)”
18. Rejoice Now, over de Maasbach Wereldzending
19. Kerk in Den Haag, april 2013, over Osborn, Maasbach en het Capitol
20. Plaatsingslijst archief M.A. Alt, samengesteld door Cees van der Laan (Vrije Universiteit, collectie 1217)

Nel Benschop: the teacher who comforted in rhyme

In the mid-1980s the columnist Nico Scheepmaker sat with a pair of scissors over the newspaper. He was cutting out death notices. He had been doing it for a while, because the same poem kept turning up in them, or at least its opening. It was about saying goodbye to a friend and about rest after a life. Each time it was printed slightly differently. Sometimes one word had been replaced, sometimes the name of the person who had died was in it. In the end he only cut when he saw a new variant.

He counted 77 different versions. In not one of them was it said who had written the poem. Scheepmaker was so astonished that in his piece for the magazine Onze Taal (Our Language) he wrote it in capital letters.

The poem was called "In memoriam for a friend" and was in the collection *Een vlinder van God* (A butterfly of God) from 1973. The poet lived on the edge of Arnhem, a city in the east of the Netherlands, and had been retired for a few years as a teacher of Dutch. Her name was Nel Benschop.

According to Scheepmaker, no poem in Dutch was quoted so often. Families chose her words at the loss of someone they loved, without knowing whose words they were. It had become everyone's, he wrote, and therefore no one's.

Nel Benschop became the best-selling poet in the Netherlands. With the Christian publisher Kok in Kampen, her collections went over the counter by the hundreds of thousands. Literary critics had little time for them. She herself said she did not write literature. She saw it as pastoral work, as comfort for people who were having a hard time.

How a gereformeerd girl (from the Reformed denomination formed in 1892) from The Hague ended up there begins with a gardener.

The sixth of seven

Nelly Anna Benschop was born on January 16, 1918, in The Hague, as the sixth of seven children. She had three older brothers, two older sisters, and after her came one more little sister. Her father, Gerrit Benschop, had had a nursery in Boskoop. In 1912 he had given it up because he was looking for a steady job, and he went to work as a gardener for the parks department of The Hague. From him Nel received her love of nature and music. Her mother's name was Elisabeth Krijnen. She held the family together and effaced herself to do it.

The family was gereformeerd and lived frugally. Sometimes money was short. On Sundays strict rules applied.

When she turned seventy, Nel told the Reformatorisch Dagblad (a Protestant daily newspaper) about it. Her brothers were allowed to draw on Sundays. She and her sisters were not allowed to do needlework. She thought that was unfair. It did not make her rebel-

lious. For her parents, she added, also spoke at home about the joy of faith.

She carried both with her all her life: the seriousness of her Reformed childhood and a faith that made her glad. They come back in her poems.

She went to primary school, to the mulo (a type of secondary school) and then to teacher training college. At primary school there was a head teacher, J. Lens, who won her for teaching. As a girl she was already writing poems, and a lot of them, mostly about love.

A classroom in the Scheldestraat

In 1937 she stood in front of a class for the first time, at the Abraham Kuyperschool in the Scheldestraat in The Hague. She was nineteen. After that she earned one teaching certificate after another: the head teacher's certificate in 1940, and during the war years the certificates for English and French.

She also took lessons in recitation. Recitation evenings were popular in those days, and Nel had a gift for it. She read poems by others, including work by Henriëtte Roland Holst. She did not yet bring her own work there. That came much later. In between she taught herself to read handwriting, the way a graphologist does.

During the war she went hungry. Toward the end she grew weak, and at the beginning of 1945 it turned out she had a mild form of cholera. In the hunger winter, the last winter of the occupation when food ran out in the west of the country, she recovered for five weeks with a market gardener's family in Naaldwijk.

After the liberation, in 1945, she left her parents' home. She became a teacher at the Coolsma institute in Driebergen, a boarding school

with a mulo for girls, where the women teachers also lived and ate. There she met a colleague who became a friend for life. Almost sixty years later that friend was still there at her last birthday.

In 1948 she moved to Arnhem, where she began teaching at the Christian mulo Molenbeke in the Parkstraat. She taught Dutch and French, and she stayed there until 1975.

She was no ordinary teacher. She wore colorful clothes. In French class she treated chansons, which at a Christian mulo in those years was very unusual. Pupils walked home with her and called her Aunt Nel.

That same year, 1948, she began writing poems in earnest. She was thirty. Why it began then, she told later herself.

A love she let go of herself

Around the age of thirty, Nel fell in love with a married man, a colleague. They wrote each other long letters. When his wife found those letters, the contact had to stop completely, on paper too. The school had a hand in it.

After that break she began to write poems. There she found comfort.

Six years later, she was thirty-six, it happened again. Again she loved a man who was married. This love too was brief. This time she herself put an end to it. She thought it was not allowed. She left his life, and later she said about it that it had been God's providence.

It was not easy. From her poems of those years, which could only be read after her death, speak longing and rebellion, fear of God's judgment, and disappointment when he picked up his life again faster than she did. She summed up her struggle herself in five words: I struggle and rise above.

She never married. From those years she kept about two hundred love poems, which she showed to almost no one. She herself thought them better than everything she published later. She had decided that they could only appear after her death, and after the death of everyone involved.

In 1988 she told the Reformatorisch Dagblad that this period had been a decisive phase in her life. That was where her life as a poet had begun.

I dwell on this a little longer because it is so easily skipped. The woman who later comforted so many people in their loss had had to give something up herself. In public she made no story of it. She wrote it down and put it away.

Have you also let go of something because you knew it was not right? Then you know what it costs.

A question from the pastor

In 1951 she showed her work to the critic P.H. Ritter Jr., a well-known name in those days. He appreciated what he read. He also warned her: modern literary criticism could be merciless to anyone who wrote like that.

He was proved right, but she could not know that yet.

Her first readers sat in church. Her pastor in Arnhem, the Reverend Willemse, asked her for contributions to the magazine of the gereformeerde church, *Ons Kerkblad* (Our Church Paper). From 1953 her poems appeared there.

In 1958 she dared to take the step to a publisher. The pastor had advised her to try Kok in Kampen, and she sent in a manuscript. It was called *Dialoog* (Dialogue). The director, Steunenberg, turned it down. He saw no market for it. Other publishers passed on it too.

After that disappointment she did not look for a publisher for years. She went on teaching and writing. In 1955 one of her brothers had drowned, and in that same year her father died. Her mother died in 1962. The poems kept coming.

Paul wrote to the Galatians: *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.* (Galatians 6:9). In due season, it says. For Nel Benschop that took another nine years.

A boy in the house

In 1961 she moved from the Boulevard Heuvelink in Arnhem to the Kemperbergerweg in Schaarsbergen, a suburb of the city. She would live there for the rest of her life.

Around that time, one of her former pupils had to leave the boarding school where he lived after his mulo exams. Nel offered him a home. He stayed about seven years, until 1967, and became her foster son. She encouraged him to continue his studies. He became a teacher and began studying Dutch, and Nel sometimes sat next to him in the lecture hall for the company. Later he became a teacher of Dutch himself.

People in Schaarsbergen talked about it. An unmarried teacher with a boy in the house: not everyone thought that proper. Her friend from Driebergen also lived with her for a time. Nel paid no attention to the gossip.

She had never been married, but for him she became a mother. When she died, he told the Reformatorisch Dagblad that she had been a wonderful grandmother to his daughter. She could, he said, listen for an hour to someone else's problems without turning the conversation to herself.

In the letter of James it says: *let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak* (James 1:19). Her readers knew her words. Her foster son remembered above all how she listened.

Two hundred copies

In 1965 a friendly couple looked after her house. They urged her to try a publisher again. Again rejections came.

Then a bookseller in Arnhem stepped up, Bert Oranje. He believed in her poems and guaranteed the sale of two hundred copies. With that assurance in hand, Kok dared to go ahead.

In December 1967 *Gouddraad uit vlas* (Gold thread from flax) appeared, a thin booklet of 48 pages. By the title she meant what she wanted to do with writing poetry: to make something beautiful out of ordinary, everyday life. Nel Benschop was forty-nine. She had been writing for almost twenty years before a collection of hers was in the shops.

After nine years a hundred thousand of it had been sold. In 1973 the booklet was in De Telegraaf's top ten of best-selling books. By 1977 it was in its forty-second printing. By 1987 the count stood at 247,000. The last printing, the sixty-fourth, came in 2001. The Nederlandse Poëzie Encyclopedie (the Dutch Poetry Encyclopedia) calls it the Dutch-language poetry collection with the highest print run of the twentieth century.

A bookseller in Arnhem took a chance on two hundred copies. Twenty years later there were almost a quarter of a million.

For Nora

In 1970 came *Een boom in de wind* (A tree in the wind), which also included older poems. In 1973 came *Een vlinder van God*. In that

collection she spoke more with others about God than about herself. From then on she also read her own work at her recitation evenings.

That collection contained the poem Scheepmaker would later find 77 times in death notices. A second poem that was often used at a death was "A Dieu." She wrote that, as she said herself, for a woman named Nora. Under the poem is a date: September 26, 1964.

That is how most of her poems came about. Something had happened, had really happened, to a person of flesh and blood. Then Nel wrote a poem to encourage or comfort that one person. That hundreds of thousands later read along came on top of it.

She also did it close to home. In 1977 her sister Corrie suffered a brain hemorrhage at home. Nel stayed with her until she died. About those weeks she wrote a small book, *Morgen kom ik bij je* (Tomorrow I will come to you). It never reached the shops.

After that the collections came quickly. *Wit als sneeuw* (White as snow) in 1974. *Een open hand naar de hemel* (An open hand toward heaven) in 1976, with a first printing of twenty-five thousand. *Geloof je dat nog?* (Do you still believe that?) in 1979. *De vogel van het woord* (The bird of the word) in 1980, with a first printing of fifty thousand. In later collections she more often let a believer talk with someone who doubted. In 1976 a long-playing record also appeared on which she read twenty-five poems herself, *Verzen van geloof hoop en liefde* (Verses of faith, hope and love).

In September 1982 her millionth collection was sold. Her poems also appeared on calendars, in diaries and on wall tiles. They were in death notices and on wedding cards, they were heard in sermons and speeches. Ministers took them along on house visits.

At her death more than three million collections had been sold, wrote the Reformatorisch Dagblad and De Waarheidsvriend (a Reformed church weekly).

Five talents

The criticism stayed harsh. In Trouw, a Protestant daily, a reviewer wrote in 1975 about old wine in old bags. In 1979 the critic Wam de Moor spoke of "profitable dilettantism." Someone else called it sanctimonious doggerel. Others wrote that she was burying her talent. Scheepmaker was one of the few who did appreciate her fixed form and her simplicity. A poem by Nel Benschop, he thought, fits like a door in a house.

She paid little attention to it. "I write meditations in rhyme," she said.

In January 1988, in the interview for her seventieth birthday, she took up the charge of the buried talent and turned it around. Perhaps, she said, it was the case "that I received five talents from God to comfort others."

The image comes from the parable in Matthew, where a master entrusts money to his servants: *And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability* (Matthew 25:15). Her talent did not need a place in an anthology. It had to work for people who were grieving.

For her, writing poetry was a form of evangelism, an extension of her office in the church. She saw her poems as pastoral conversations with her readers. And those readers wrote back. She received letters from people who told her they had found rest through her verses. Often that was a reason for them to open the Bible themselves, she said. She did add a warning: not every verse suits every person.

Her readers came from every corner: Protestants and Roman Catholics, believers and people who no longer went to church. Her poems were about the great events in a human life, she said, and everyone goes through those. From the strict Reformed circles, she said, people wrote to her mostly about sin, grace and sorrow.

Elder in Schaarsbergen

In 1971 she earned the MO-A certificate for Dutch and in 1975 the MO-B, the highest qualification for the subject. In that same year she began teaching at the Christelijk Lyceum (a Christian secondary school) in Veenendaal. In 1981 she retired. She had stood in front of a class for forty-four years.

In her own church she became an elder. That was possible because women were admitted to office in the gereformeerde church she belonged to. She saw the office as service and did not want to draw any authority from it. She honestly admitted that she found the church council meetings tedious. When her church later merged into Samen op Weg (the Together on the Way process that led to the Protestant Church in the Netherlands), she went along. She also felt at home with Roman Catholic mysticism and liked to visit monasteries.

With her poems she performed for women's associations, for people with disabilities and for the elderly. In this way many people got to know her personally. A good friend was Major Alida Bosshardt of the Salvation Army, whom you read about earlier in this book. Together they appeared at evenings for the foundation Zending over Grenzen (Mission across Borders). Nel read poems, the singer Renate Heemskerk sang and the major spoke. After her death Bosshardt said that Nel brought people closer to God, and God closer to people.

In 1987 it was celebrated that she had been a poet for twenty years. The writer Hans Werkman, who had interviewed her two years earlier, published a small book about her life and work on that occasion, *Van harte* (From the heart). There was nothing wrong with her poems, he thought. In 1988 she was nominated for the Publieksprijs (the Audience Prize) and a second record appeared, *Tussen hemel en aarde* (Between heaven and earth).

In the weeks before her seventieth birthday, journalists from De Telegraaf and Omroep Gelderland, the regional broadcaster, approached her. She refused an appearance on a Sunday morning. Then she was in church.

In that same interview she said something her readers might not have expected. By nature she was actually a bit gloomy, she said. Growing older had made her more cheerful. She lived, she said, in the expectation of a glorious future with God and with Christ. As long as she could, she wanted to tell others about God's goodness.

So her comfort did not come from a sunny character. At her death De Waarheidsvriend called her faith deeply lived. She did not keep quiet about the dark sides of life, the author wrote. She had experienced them herself, in love and in death.

Paul wrote about God, *who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.* (2 Corinthians 1:4). Her poems comforted people in a loss. She herself knew what loss was.

Love poems in a folder

In Werkman's small book, in 1987, one of her love poems appeared for the first time. Ten years later, in 1997, one was read aloud on the television program *Villa Felderhof*. There she also made clear that she did not want the rest to be published.

She kept making collections. *Zo zag ik Hem* (This is how I saw Him) in 1983, *Licht onder de horizon* (Light below the horizon) in 1987, *Geloven is geluk* (Believing is happiness) in 1990, *Sporen in het zand* (Footprints in the sand) in 1992. In 1997 came *De stem uit de wolk* (The voice from the cloud), a collection of her poems. Her last new collection was *Zie de mens* (Behold the man), in 1999. In that year she still sat on the jury of a poetry contest of the Elisabethbode, and on the day before Christmas Trouw printed a poem of hers.

On one of the folders of love poems she had written: "After my death something may possibly be published from this." In February 2001 she gave a folder with about fifty of those poems to a producer who wanted to make a CD of them. In April she recorded seventeen of them in his studio in Tiel. She was eighty-three. What she had put away for half a century, she now spoke aloud herself.

A care home in Renkum

In her last years she developed vascular dementia, a form of dementia caused by problems with the blood vessels in the brain. Her foster son said it was hard for her that she could no longer serve through writing and speaking. She did accept it. God decides, not man, is how he summed up her attitude.

At the end of 2004 she moved to a care home in Renkum. On January 16, 2005, she celebrated her eighty-seventh birthday there, with her friend from Driebergen, with her foster son, his wife and their daughter.

Fifteen days later, on Monday morning, January 31, 2005, she died of the effects of her illness. On Saturday she was buried at the Vredenoord cemetery in Schaarsbergen.

Major Bosshardt was ninety-one at the time. She was too unsteady to come to the funeral, she said.

A death notice said that with her sincere poems she had brought encouragement, assurance and comfort to many. De Waarheidsvriend called her the queen of the pastoral poem.

After her death a court case followed over the love poems. The producer wanted to release the CD. Her foster son, her only heir, stopped it, and the judge ruled in his favor in 2006 and again in 2009.

In 2006 her *Verzamelde gedichten* (Collected poems) appeared, with an afterword by her foster son. In 2011 Kok brought out a selection of the secret poems: *Echte liefde kan niet sterven* (True love cannot die), with 55 poems. The Reformatorisch Dagblad wrote about it that her life showed how deeply faith and conviction can shape a life. In 2015 another collection followed with what the publisher called her hundred most beautiful poems.

The literary world kept its distance. In 1995 the magazine Streven noted that an anthology of poems about death had passed her over, because her work was supposedly too easy.

Gold thread

Nel Benschop never preached from a pulpit. She stood in front of classes in The Hague, Driebergen, Arnhem and Veenendaal, and she was an elder in her church. Her pulpit was a thin booklet of 48 pages, and a notice in the newspaper.

Maybe you yourself once received a card at a time of loss. Maybe there was a poem on it and you did not know who wrote it. Chances are it was hers.

Flax is an ordinary plant fiber. Lay her life next to the title of that first booklet and you see it happen. A gloomy girl with strict Sundays, a love she had to let go, twenty years of writing without a pub-

lisher. From that ordinary thread she made something that many people held on to in their loss.

Her name was not in 77 death notices. Only her words were there, above the name of someone who had died.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): born on January 16, 1918, in The Hague as the sixth child in a gereformeerd family; father a gardener for the parks department after a nursery in Boskoop; teacher training college and first job in 1937 at the Abraham Kuyperschool; the certificates; the lessons in recitation; a mild form of cholera at the beginning of 1945; Coolsma in Driebergen (1945); mulo Molenbeke in Arnhem (1948 to 1975); began writing poetry around 1948; the judgment of P.H. Ritter Jr. in 1951; two impossible loves, each time for a married man, and about two hundred hidden love poems; poems in the church newsletter from 1953; rejection by Kok in 1958; a foster son in the 1960s; debut *Gouddraad uit vlas* in December 1967 thanks to the guarantee of bookseller Bert Oranje; the millionth copy in 1982; elder; the 77 variants in death notices (Scheepmaker); Christelijk Lyceum Veenendaal (1975 to 1981); the booklet by Hans Werkman (1987); friendship with Major Bosshardt; died on January 31, 2005, of the effects of vascular dementia; buried in Schaarsbergen; the court case over the love poems (summary proceedings of June 23, 2006, ruling of the Zwolle-Lelystad court of September 30, 2009); posthumous collection *Echte liefde kan niet sterven* (2011).

From her own testimony (above all the interview in the Reformatorisch Dagblad of January 22, 1988): the strict Sundays and the joy of faith with her parents; the decisive importance of the period of love for her life as a poet; that her poems came about after something that had really happened; "A Dieu" written for Nora; her ex-

planation of the five talents; writing poetry as evangelism and as an extension of her office; what readers wrote to her and her warning that not every verse suits every person; the office as service and the tedious meetings; the refusal to perform on Sunday morning; her gloomy disposition and later cheerfulness; her expectation of the future with God. Handed down elsewhere: "meditations in rhyme" and "God's providence" (Mijn Gelderland); that her poems are about the great events in a human life (publisher Kok); I struggle and rise above (De Waarheidsvriend); that she thought the love poems better than her other work, and her condition for publication (Reformatorisch Dagblad, 2011); the note on the folder and the recordings in Tiel (the ruling of 2009).

From the testimony of others: what she felt in her last years and how she listened we know from the words of her foster son (Reformatorisch Dagblad, February 2, 2005); the words of Major Bosshardt are in the same article. The feelings from the years of love are derived from the collection of 2011 as the Reformatorisch Dagblad reviewed it; I have not read the poems themselves.

Found in only one source: the recovery in Naaldwijk, the self-study of graphology, the brother who drowned in 1955, the deathbed of her sister Corrie in 1977 and the small book *Morgen kom ik bij je*, the title *Dialoog*, the long-playing records of 1976 and 1988, the jubilee of 1987, the interview with Werkman in 1985, the nomination for the Publieksprijs, the jury of the Elisabethbode and the poem in Trouw of December 24, 1999, the forty-second printing in 1977 and the month of September 1982 (all Schrijversinfo, an overview from older reference works); director Steunenberg, the pastor's advice, the couple who looked after her house in 1965, the lectures with her foster son and the hundred thousand copies after nine years (Mijn Gelderland); the names and years of life of her parents (Gerrit Benschop, 1878 to 1955, and Elisabeth Krijnen, 1879 to 1962), head

teacher J. Lens, the colorful clothes, the nickname Aunt Nel, the address Boulevard Heuvelink 144, the transition to Samen op Weg, the monasteries, the phrase "profitable dilettantism" and the last birthday (Biografisch Woordenboek Gelderland); the chansons and the explanation of the title *Gouddraad uit vlas* (Beeldfiguren van het christendom; an explanation in her own words I have not found); the top-ten listing in De Telegraaf in 1973 and the 247,000 copies in 1987 (Nederlandse Poëzie Encyclopedie); the date under "A Dieu" (a reading sample from the publisher).

Where the sources differ (in the story I chose one reading each time):

- *When she began writing poetry.* Most sources give 1948. Peter Altena writes in the Biografisch Woordenboek Gelderland that she wrote at a young age already, and a lot, mostly about love.
- *The first love.* Mijn Gelderland places it in Driebergen and writes that the colleague's wife complained to the school board. Beeldfiguren places it in Arnhem and writes that his wife demanded that all contact stop. The Reformatorisch Dagblad (2011) writes that Nel herself withdrew both times. The ages of thirty and thirty-six come from that newspaper.
- *The neighborhood of her first school.* One source mentions the Schilderswijk, another speaks of a red-light district; the school stood on the Scheldestraat.
- *The pastor's name.* Willemse (Altena) or Willemsen (Mijn Gelderland).
- *The foster son.* In her house from 1961 or 1962 to 1967; he himself spoke of about seven years.
- *The first hundred thousand.* After nine years (Mijn Gelderland) or within fifteen years (Beeldfiguren). Scheepmaker counted the fifty-fifth printing around 1984.

- *The total print run.* More than three million according to the Reformatorisch Dagblad, De Waarheidsvriend and Mijn Gelderland; other sources put it at just over a million. The figures come from the publisher; as far as I could check, no one has counted them independently. That there were hundreds of thousands is certain.
- *The number of collections.* Fifteen, sixteen or twenty, depending on who counts and whether anthologies count.
- *De stem uit de wolk.* 1997 according to most sources; Schrijversinfo gives 1998, for a large-print edition.
- *Scheepmaker's piece.* 1984 or 1985.
- *The place of death.* The Biografisch Woordenboek Gelderland and Beeldfiguren give the care home in Renkum. Other sources write Arnhem, her hometown.
- *Her illness in 2001.* In the court case her foster son argued that the dementia already affected her judgment then; the producer said she was lucid. The judge left that open.

Interpretation: the image of her life as an ordinary thread that gold was made of is mine. For copyright reasons, no lines from her poems are included in this chapter.

Sources for this chapter

1. Peter Altena, "Nel Benschop", Biografisch Woordenboek Gelderland, deel 6 (2007)
2. Reformatorisch Dagblad, 22 januari 1988, "Kan het zijn dat ik vijf talenten kreeg om te troosten?" (via Digibron)
3. Reformatorisch Dagblad, 2 februari 2005, "Een geweldige grootmoeder" (via Digibron)
4. De Waarheidsvriend, 10 februari 2005, J. de Gier, "Pastorale poëzie als bemoediging" (via Digibron)

5. Reformatorisch Dagblad, 11 juni 2011, Enny de Bruijn, “Onmogelijke liefde” (via Digibron)
6. Rechtbank Zwolle-Lelystad, uitspraak 30 september 2009 (via IE-Forum)
7. Nico Scheepmaker, “Rust nu maar uit: 77 variaties”, Onze Taal (via DBNL)
8. Robert-Henk Zuidinga, “Zoveel soorten van verdriet”, Rozenberg Quarterly
9. Joris Gerits, “Het novembergevoel”, Streven 62 (1995) (via DBNL)
10. Nederlandse Poëzie Encyclopedie, Gouddraad uit vlas
11. Schrijversinfo, Nel Benschop, bi(bli)ografie
12. Mijn Gelderland, Nel Benschop
13. Beeldfiguren van het christendom, Nel Benschop
14. AbsoluteFacts, Nel Benschop (1918-2005)
15. Eilanden-Nieuws, 24 april 2015, “De 100 mooiste gedichten van Nel Benschop” (via Digibron)
16. Poëziecentrum Nederland, bibliografie Nel Benschop
17. Uitgeverij Kok, leesfragment *De 100 mooiste gedichten* (2015)

Afterword

A poet who did not let go of his Jewish family. A minister who fought against the trafficking of women. A missionary who waited seventeen years. A housewife and a pastor who gave people in hiding an address. A missionary who stood between two nations. A major with a hundred guilders and a flag. An evangelist who interpreted on the Malieveld. A poet who gave comfort in simple words.

None of them did it alone, and none of them was finished. With some of them, the sources contain things that chafe. I have not left those out when they are widely known, and I have not made them bigger than they were.

What they share is that they stayed. On the Wallen, in Poso, in a camp, in an empty hall. They ran the race that lay before them, with the weight they carried.

A road lies before you too. You do not have to walk it the way they did. But you do not walk alone. A crowd of witnesses stands along the way.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us (Hebrews 12:1)