GOD'S GENERALS IN THE NETHERLANDS

VOLUME 3

Follow Their Faith

Eight Dutch men and women of God, from Anna Maria van Schurman to Willem Barnard

I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
2 Timothy 4:7

WIM KAMPHORST

GOD'S GENERALS IN THE NETHERLANDS · VOLUME 3

Follow Their Faith

Eight Dutch men and women of God,
from Anna Maria van Schurman to Willem Barnard

WIM KAMPHORST

Contents

Introduction: finished the race **2**

Anna Maria van Schurman: the scholar behind the screen **4**

Johannes van der Kemp: the cavalry captain who shared a hut with the Khoikhoi **23**

Hendrik de Cock: the minister who preached from the elders' pew **44**

Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint: the writer who brought the Reformation back **62**

Anna Reynvaan: the woman who walked the wards at night **82**

Titus Brandsma: the mystic with the train pass **101**

Hebe Kohlbrugge: the woman who said good morning **122**

Willem Barnard: the barber's son who taught the church to sing **143**

Afterword **162**

Follow Their Faith. God's generals in the Netherlands, volume 3

© 2026 Wim Kamphorst
Stichting (F)Luister Nederland

Translated from the Dutch edition. Scripture taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or made public without prior written permission from the author.

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: finished the race

Paul wrote his last letter from a prison. He knew he did not have long to live. His words sound calm: *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* (2 Timothy 4:7).

That sentence fits the people in this third volume. Their lives were seldom complete or tidy. For most of them, things turned out differently than they had expected. A learned woman who gave up her fame. An officer who lost his family and then went to Africa. A young minister who ended up in prison for what he preached. A writer who was almost always ill. A woman who turned caring for the sick into a profession. A Carmelite friar who died in Dachau. A great-granddaughter of a well-known preacher who joined the resistance and later built bridges to Christians behind the Iron Curtain. And a minister who found words for what a congregation sings on Sunday.

They came from different centuries and from different churches. Some of them would have disagreed with one another. All of them held on to the faith, even when it cost them something.

How this volume was made

As in volumes 1 and 2, facts come first. After each chapter you will find what is certain, what is known only from a person's own testimony, and what remains uncertain. The sources are listed, so that you can look further yourself.

This volume includes a Roman Catholic voice for the first time. I tell his life as it was, without turning it into a debate about churches. You do not have to agree with him on everything to see how he held on to his faith in a camp where that was a matter of life and death.

How you can read this book

Each chapter stands on its own, and the order follows time: from the seventeenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first. You do not need to have read volumes 1 and 2.

Read it with the same question as in the other volumes. What did God ask of them, and what does He ask of you? None of them knew the end of the road in advance. They only knew that they did not walk that road alone.

Anna Maria van Schurman: the scholar behind the screen

On an afternoon in September 1677, around five o'clock, two travelers arrived at a manor house in the Frisian village of Wieuwerd. One of them was William Penn, an English Quaker of thirty-two. He wanted to speak with the old woman about whom all of Europe had once talked.

The ministers of the house held him back. She was weak, they said, she was old and she was taking medicine. Penn kept asking. The next morning he could come.

There she sat, in her chair, among her fellow believers. She could no longer walk. First the minister told how the community had come to be. Then she spoke herself. Penn wrote it down in his travel journal. She felt moved to add a short testimony, she said. She told how much pleasure she had found in learning, and how dear the faith of her youth had been to her. From childhood on, God had visited her at times. But her learning had proved to be vanity. She had braved the disgrace and let go of her old life and her old acquaintances, to give herself completely to the Lord, as a living sacrifice.

She spoke earnestly and haltingly, Penn noted, and her voice trembled as she did.

The woman was named Anna Maria van Schurman. Forty years earlier she had sat in the lecture hall of the young university of Utrecht, in a screened-off box, a kind of booth with a curtain in front of it. She could hear the professor, but the young men in the hall could not see her. The professor was Gisbertus Voetius, the strict theologian who was her neighbor and who had arranged for her to be admitted. Utrecht University today calls her the first female student in the Netherlands, and possibly in all of Europe.

She read and wrote in more languages than most professors. She drew, painted, engraved and wrote poetry. Scholars from all over Europe wrote her letters. People of her time gave her nicknames such as the Star of Utrecht and the Dutch Minerva.

And then, at sixty-two, she left all of it behind. She sold her house and her books and joined a small, controversial community of believers. Her admirers could not understand it. She herself called it choosing the best part.

To see how it came to that, you have to go back to Cologne, and to a little stream.

A child who was not her own

Anna Maria van Schurman was born on November 5, 1607, in Cologne. The family had left Antwerp because of their Protestant faith and had ended up in Cologne in 1593, by way of Frankfurt. Her father was Frederik van Schurman, her mother Eva von Harff. Anna Maria had three brothers, one of whom, Johan Godschalk, would later play a large part in her life. She was the only girl.

The oldest story of faith from her life comes from her own pen. She wrote it down when she was already old, in the book in which she looked back over her life.

She was not yet four and was sitting with a servant girl on the bank of a little stream, picking herbs. The girl asked her to recite the first question of the Heidelberg Catechism. What is your only comfort in life and in death? Anna Maria said the answer. And at the words that she was "not my own, but belonged to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ," something happened. A great joy flooded her, and she felt the love of Christ so strongly that she never lost it again for the rest of her life.

A child of three, with a handful of herbs. That is where it began.

A few years later, around the age of eleven, she read for the first time about Christians who had been put to death for their faith. It gripped her so much, she said later, that she would gladly have traded her "sweet life" for such a glorious death.

I love that the whole story of this learned woman begins with a child's answer to a catechism question. The answer goes back to what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth. They were not their own: *For you were bought at a price.* (1 Corinthians 6:20). Do you still remember where you were when you first understood that you belonged to Someone?

An eagle does not catch flies

In 1615 the family moved to Utrecht. Anna Maria lived there for most of her life.

Her father noticed that his daughter learned quickly, and he taught her himself. She learned Latin, and when she was eleven he gave her the Roman writer Seneca to read. An eagle does not catch flies,

he told her. Later Greek was added. She also learned French and German, music, embroidery and drawing. For a girl in those days that was exceptional. Girls learned to read, write and run a household. Latin was the language of the university, and the university was for boys.

Frederik van Schurman watched over something else as well. He warned his daughter against vain and worldly company.

In 1623 the family moved to Franeker, where her brothers went to study at the Frisian university. Her father died there that same year. On his deathbed he urged her not to let herself be caught in a worldly marriage, and she promised him never to marry. She was sixteen. She kept that promise all her life.

In 1626 she returned to Utrecht with her mother and her brothers. In 1629 her mother bought a house right next to the Dom, the great cathedral church of Utrecht, on what is now called Achter de Dom. Anna Maria would live there, with interruptions, for about forty years. A gable stone there still reminds people of her.

Letters from Cats and Huygens

Even as a young woman Anna Maria became well known. She wrote poems in several languages. She made portraits, cut paper silhouettes, embroidered and engraved, and she took lessons from the engraver Magdalena van de Passe. In her book about her life she tells that she also taught herself to model and to carve wood: she made a self-portrait in wax and a little figure in palm wood. In Museum Martena in Franeker hangs a pastel self-portrait she made on June 29, 1640.

The famous men of her time sought her out in letters. The poet Jacob Cats was already in touch with her in 1621. She corresponded with the Leiden professor Daniël Heinsius, with Caspar Barlaeus

in Amsterdam and with Constantijn Huygens, the secretary of the stadtholder (the prince who led the Dutch Republic). From 1631 she wrote to the theologian Andreas Rivet, who remained her friend until his death. The French writer Marie de Gournay and Princess Elisabeth of the Palatinate also belonged to her circle. Elisabeth was the daughter of the exiled Winter King, who had lived with his family in Rhenen. That friendship would become important later.

The praise poured in, and she did not trust it. In 1636 she wrote to the minister and poet Revius that she did not know where "the flood of praise" would carry her. To Rivet she called God as her witness: by the life she led, she meant something very different from fame. She did not study to be admired.

Her motto said it more briefly. She had it from an ancient church father, and it stayed with her all her life: my Love is crucified.

Around 1634 she got a new teacher: Gisbertus Voetius, minister in Utrecht and her neighbor. He taught her Greek, Hebrew and theology. From about 1640, theology became the heart of her studies.

A poem for a university that kept her out

In 1636 the Illustrious School of Utrecht became a university. Voetius became a professor there and asked Anna Maria to write a poem for the opening. She wrote a Latin song of praise for the new university. And in that festive poem she did something else as well: she pointed to the exclusion of women. The gate of the new university stood open to boys. Why not to girls?

The poem was printed and made her known throughout Europe. It also had a practical result. She was allowed to attend the lectures of Voetius, as well as lectures in literature and medicine. She did so from that screened-off box with the curtain. The university let a woman in, but put her out of sight.

You could call that a half solution. For Anna Maria it was a door, and she went through it.

May a woman study?

In 1637 her mother died. A year later Anna Maria wrote a Latin treatise on a question that touched her personally: is the study of the sciences suited to a woman's mind? She worked out the question in an exchange of letters with her friend Rivet. The physician Johan van Beverwijck from Dordrecht helped with the publication, which appeared in print in 1641. The work was translated into French, German, Italian and Swedish.

Her answer was yes. Women who have the time and the means for it can study, and ought to. What stands out is her reason. She wanted above all for women to understand the Bible and theology better. At its core, her plea for study was a plea to know God better.

You could see that in her own languages too. Besides French, German and English, she learned Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Chaldean, Arabic, Syriac and Ethiopic. Anyone who masters ancient Hebrew and the languages around it can read the Bible close to the source. Pieta van Beek, who has published a great deal about her, speaks of fourteen languages in all.

In those years the quarrel broke out in Utrecht between Voetius and the philosopher René Descartes. Anna Maria took the side of Voetius. There is a story that Descartes visited her and told her she could spend her time better than on Hebrew. Whether it went that way can no longer be checked. What she thought of him we do know. Later she called him a profane man.

In 1648 the Leiden professor Frederik Spanheim collected her poems, letters and other writings in Latin, Greek, Hebrew and French. The book was called *Opuscula*, little works. A reprint soon followed.

Two elderly aunts

At this point in her life Anna Maria had everything a scholar in the seventeenth century could wish for. But her world grew smaller, and the reason was simple. After her mother's death she cared for two elderly aunts, Sibylla and Agnes von Harff. They lived with her and went blind, so that they needed more and more help. As a result, she wrote herself, she had less and less time left for learning and art. Her letters to scholars became fewer.

In a life story full of languages and fame, years like these easily disappear. Two old women needed care, and one of the best-known scholars in Europe gave it, year after year. That, too, is part of her story. Perhaps it was even her first exercise in letting go.

In 1653 she traveled with the aunts and her brother Johan Godschalk to Cologne, to recover family property. In August 1654 she was back in Utrecht. In 1660 she went to live with the aunts in the village of Lexmond, on the river Lek. Both of them died there in 1661. They were buried in the Cunerakerk in Rhenen, where her mother also lay.

The brother who met a preacher

Around 1662 her brother Johan Godschalk traveled to Geneva. There he heard a French preacher named Jean de Labadie. Labadie had started out as a Roman Catholic priest, but had become a Protestant in 1650. Johan Godschalk came home full of fire and told his sister what he had heard. In 1664 he died in Utrecht.

Anna Maria contacted Labadie herself. In 1666 she wrote letters of recommendation that helped bring him to Middelburg as a minister. On his way there he stayed ten days with her in Utrecht. There, in the house behind the Dom, she heard him for the first time. He proclaimed, she wrote, the oldest and most ordinary truths. Eleven

years later she put it to Penn this way: God had sought her out from her youth, but never had she felt such a powerful blow as under the preaching of Labadie.

After that she regularly traveled to Zeeland to hear him preach. Labadie soon clashed with the Reformed Church.

What drew her so strongly? Labadie dreamed of a church made up only of people who were truly born again. Such a pure congregation appealed to Anna Maria. She wanted to keep her distance from what she called "name Christians": Christians in name only. In 1668 she wrote a long poem about the future of the kingdom of Christ, and in 1669 a French treatise on the reform the church needed.

You may have questions about that. I have them too. A church of only true believers sounds beautiful, but who decides who truly belongs? Still, I understand the longing. All her life she had heard that she was a wonder of learning. She was looking for something that did not depend on what people thought of her.

The house sold

In 1669 she made the decision. Labadie had broken with the Reformed Church and founded a house church in Amsterdam. Anna Maria joined it, as one of the first. She was the first prominent and internationally famous person to join the group. Her house by the Dom, her library and her furniture she sold. Most of what she owned she gave to the community.

It did not come without pain. In one of her Dutch poems stands the line: "O Utrecht lieve Stadt hoe soud ick u vergeeten," in old Dutch, which means: O Utrecht, dear city, how could I forget you.

The reactions were fierce. The church council of Utrecht wrote her a letter asking her to come back. She did not. Learned friends also

voiced their criticism, and she set that aside too. Voetius and Huygens, her old teacher and her old friend, are said to have wanted to stop her in person.

To her old admirers it was a riddle. The Star of Utrecht was suddenly living in a community that many saw as a sect. The learned world did not know what to make of her after that break. For a long time writers saw her last years as a strange side road in a brilliant life.

She herself saw it the other way around.

Herford and Altona

Labadie and his followers could not stay in Amsterdam. In 1670 they found shelter in Herford in Westphalia. There Anna Maria's old friend had by then become abbess of a Protestant convent for noblewomen: Princess Elisabeth of the Palatinate. She let the group in. The community then numbered about fifty people.

In Herford, too, there was trouble with the local population. In 1672 the group moved on, to Altona near Hamburg, where there was more religious freedom. The community had its own printing press there.

On that press, in 1673, appeared the book for which Anna Maria is best known in the history of faith: *Eukleria seu melioris partis electio*. In Dutch it later became *Eucleria, of uitkiezing van het beste deel*, that is, Eucleria, or the choice of the best part. It is an autobiography and a theological argument at the same time. She tells about her life, starting with the girl by the stream, and she defends her choice for Labadie. She settles accounts with the learning and the art for which Utrecht had praised her, and she speaks humbly of her old fame. The ministers who criticized her also get their share. The book is at times disturbingly frank.

Do not read it as the story of a sudden turnaround. Anyone who looks closely sees in the Eukleria how her faith began early and grew gradually, until the step into the community became a logical one. Learning and faith continued to shape her work to the end, only the emphasis shifted. She remained a learned woman. She even wrote her defense in Latin, and translated it into Dutch herself.

In 1674 Labadie died in Altona. Pierre Yvon took over the leadership. In those years Anna Maria came to be called the mother of the congregation.

The best part

The title of her book comes from the Gospel of Luke. There Martha welcomes Jesus into her home and is busy serving, while her sister Mary sits at His feet and listens. Jesus then says to Martha: *But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.* (Luke 10:42).

Anna Maria had a life full of languages, art and fame. In the end she chose to sit still with the Lord, in a small community, far from the scholars who admired her.

You do not have to agree with all her choices to see that. Anyone who seeks the good part sooner or later comes to the question of what he can let go of.

A manor in Friesland

In the summer of 1675 the community moved on again, this time to Friesland. In the village of Wieuwerd stood Walta-state, an estate with lands and tenant farms (a state is a Frisian manor house). The estate had come into the hands of three unmarried sisters from the Van Aerssen van Sommelsdijk family, who themselves belonged to the Labadists. They opened the estate to the group. Anna Maria

wrote that she saw the departure from Altona and the choice of Friesland as a sign from God.

In Wieuwerd the community lived off its own land. The members shared their possessions, and this community of goods lasted until 1692. You did not wear jewelry there. In 1675 more than a hundred and fifty people settled there, and around 1680 there were three to four hundred, children included. In 1675 a book of songs also appeared, *Heilige Lof-sangen ter Eeren Gods*, Holy Songs of Praise to the Honor of God. Visitors came from abroad.

One of them was William Penn. You saw him arrive at the beginning of this chapter. That morning in September 1677 he listened to her testimony, and to that of one of the Van Sommelsdijk sisters, of the second minister and of the physician of the house. Then he said he had not come to judge but to visit them, and he told how God had called him as a boy. Toward noon he said goodbye. The whole house walked with him to the front door and shook his hand. One person stayed inside: the old Anna Maria, who could not walk.

She was almost seventy by then. Because of her age she no longer had to do household work. She sat in a kind of wheelchair among her fellow believers. Her hands stayed busy. She still painted small portraits of Labadie, the man who had changed her life so much. She wrote letters to bring people to God. And as long as she could hold a pen, she worked on the second part of her Eukleria, about the road the congregation had traveled.

"Nothing but my God Himself"

The last years were hard. Kidney stones and gout kept her in bed for weeks at a time. Those who came to see her saw how she bore it. Her first biographer, the minister Schotel, has preserved what was said at that bedside.

After a day of severe pain she said she was one step closer to eternity again. A brother wanted to comfort her and called her pain splinters of the cross of Christ. Yes, she said, splinters, and small ones at that. Another time she said: "The will of God is everything to me."

A few days before her death she still sat at table with the congregation.

On her last night someone asked whether she still desired anything. She answered: "I desire nothing but my God Himself." When a friend said that in a few moments she would enter eternity, she repeated the word, twice. Into eternity, into eternity. That was how Labadie had put it too, she added. Half an hour later she was dead, calm, with the brothers and sisters around her.

It was May 1678. Anna Maria van Schurman was seventy years old.

She had still been able to finish the second part of her Eukleria. It appeared after her death. In 1684 the Dutch version of her book was published by Jacob van de Velde in Amsterdam.

She had put down in writing herself how she wanted to be buried. According to her last will she was buried in all simplicity in the churchyard of Wieuwerd, in the quiet of the morning, without pomp. She had asked for a place next to Sara Moot, a young woman from a distinguished family in The Hague who had joined the congregation, and whom she had loved dearly. Not a burial vault with her family in Rhenen, but a simple grave by a village church in Friesland.

Paul wrote to Timothy: *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.* (1 Timothy 6:7). Anna Maria had put that into practice long before, when she sold her house and her books. Her grave in Wieuwerd says the same.

What Utrecht kept

After her death she remained known for a time as an artist. Her learning faded into the background, and many writers preferred to stay silent about her choice for Labadie. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries writers mainly praised her modesty and virtue. Only in the twentieth century did her plea for women's study receive attention again.

In 1978, three hundred years after her death, there were exhibitions, a postage stamp and a reprint of the Eucleria. Utrecht University today proudly names her as its first female student. In 2026 two long devotional poems of hers appeared in a bilingual English edition. She wrote them in a period when she had withdrawn from public life, and they were never printed during her lifetime.

I find that something special. The university remembers the woman who sat in the booth. The church had trouble with the woman who walked out of the booth. She herself would probably say that neither was the most important thing.

Because her story did not begin in the lecture hall. It began by a little stream, with a handful of herbs and a servant girl. A girl of almost four said out loud that she was not her own. Seventy years later she lay in the ground of Wieuwerd, without title and without pomp, with the Lord to Whom she had said she was His own.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth in Cologne on November 5, 1607, in a Protestant refugee family from Antwerp; the move to Utrecht in 1615; the death of her father in Franeker in 1623 and the return to Utrecht in 1626; that she remained unmarried; teaching by Voetius from about 1634; the Latin poem at the opening of the Utrecht university in 1636; attending lectures

from a screened-off box; the treatise on women's study (written 1638, printed 1641); the Opuscula; the break with the Reformed Church and joining Labadie in Amsterdam (1669); Herford (1670), Altona (1672) and Wieuwerd (1675); the Eukleria of 1673 and the Dutch edition of 1684; the visit of William Penn in 1677; her death in Wieuwerd in May 1678.

Only from own testimony (Eukleria and letters): the joy by the stream when she was almost four; reading about martyrs around the age of eleven and the wish to trade her "sweet life"; the modeling and wood carving; her view of the move to Friesland as a sign from God; that caring for her aunts took away her time for study; her words about the preaching of Labadie; her distrust of praise (letter to Revius, 1636, and a letter to Rivet). She wrote down the two childhood stories more than sixty years later. I have not read the Eukleria myself, but used it through the article by Hendrika Ghijsen in De Gids (1926), which quotes from it, and through reviews.

From the travel journal of William Penn (1677): her testimony in Wieuwerd, the reluctance of the ministers, the farewell at the door. Penn says himself that he gives only brief notes of what she said. He dates the visit to the twelfth and thirteenth day of the seventh month. In the old Quaker calendar that is September. According to Schotel, Anna Maria also defended the separation from the church before Penn. Penn mentions one more thing: six years earlier Labadie had refused to receive him in Herford. That Penn was thirty-two I worked out from his year of birth, 1644.

From the biography by G.D.J. Schotel (1853): the sickbed with kidney stones (Schotel writes graveel) and gout, her words at that bed, her last words, the burial in the morning next to Sara Moot, the name mother of the congregation. Schotel names no source for the deathbed; it probably goes back to an account from the congregation itself. The Biografisch Woordenboek of Van der Aa also writes

that she died calmly, surrounded by brothers and sisters, and contradicts the story that she died lonely and in despair. Schotel further tells that in 1765 or 1766 the body of a woman was found in the burial vault of the church of Wieuwerd, in whom some saw Anna Maria. He leaves that open; according to the tradition in the village she lay in the churchyard.

From one source or one circle:

- *Seneca and the eagle.* That her father had her read Seneca at eleven, with the words about the eagle and the flies, and that he warned her against worldly company and a worldly marriage, is found in Ghijsen (1926).
- *The promise at the deathbed.* Simonne Dubois (1984) and Pieta van Beek write that she promised her father never to marry. The Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie (1891) and Ghijsen speak of an urging or warning from her father. That she was sixteen follows from her year of birth; the day her father died is November 5 in Ghijsen and November 15 in Van Beek.
- *The festive poem of 1636.* That she pointed in it to the exclusion of women, and that above all she wanted women to understand the Bible better, I take from Mirjam de Baar in the Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon. The sentence that learning and devotion shaped her work to the end is also hers, as are the term "name Christians," the little wheelchair, the portraits of Labadie, the trips to Zeeland and the burial according to her last will.
- *The letters of recommendation of 1666.* That her letters helped bring Labadie to Middelburg is written by Pieta van Beek.
- *Fourteen languages.* Only in Pieta van Beek and the Historische Vereniging Oud Rhenen.
- *Descartes.* The visit and his remark about Hebrew are in Dubois; Ghijsen places an anecdote about Descartes and

Hebrew around 1640 and gives her word "profanen mensch" (profane man). There is no account of the conversation itself.

- *Voetius and Huygens.* That they tried to hold her back in person in 1669 is found only in Dubois.
- *The first famous follower.* The judgment is from the historian Mirjam de Baar. From her also come the numbers in Wieuwerd (more than a hundred and fifty in 1675, three to four hundred around 1680), the community of goods until 1692 and the visit of Penn.
- *About fifty people in Herford.* From the French description by Dubois.
- *The motto, the ten days in Utrecht, the poem of 1668, the French treatise of 1669, the songbook of 1675 and the line about Utrecht.* From the website of Pieta van Beek. When she wrote the line about Utrecht is not stated; so I do not know whether she wrote it at her departure in 1669. The motto goes back to Ignatius of Antioch.
- *The aunts went blind.* In Ghijsen.
- *The second part of the Eukleria.* Dubois writes that she finished it before her death, Schotel that she worked on it until her last days.
- *The judgments on the Eukleria.* "At times disturbingly frank" is from the reviewer K. Porteman (1979). That the book has too often been read only as a life story and shows a gradual growth is the reading of Mirjam de Baar and Erica Scheenstra. That the learned world did not know what to make of her after 1669 was written by the literary historian Lia van Gemert in 1993.

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

- *The day of her death.* May 4, 1678 (Schotel, Van der Aa, the Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Van Bork and Verkruijsse) or May 14 (Vrouwenlexicon, Dubois, Porteman). The difference probably arises because Friesland still used the old Julian calendar at the time, which ran ten days behind the new one. That explanation is my own deduction; it is not spelled out in the sources. Schotel and Van der Aa call her seventy-one; counted from November 1607 she was seventy.
- *The start of the correspondence with Rivet.* 1631 or 1632.
- *The aunts.* The Vrouwenlexicon has the care begin after the death of her mother in 1637 and the aunts die in 1661; Ghijsen has them move in around 1642 and die in 1662. The trip to Cologne is 1653 to 1654 (Vrouwenlexicon, Van Beek) or 1652 to 1656 (Ghijsen).
- *Johan Godschalk.* Died in 1664 (Vrouwenlexicon, Van Beek) or 1665 (Ghijsen). The Vrouwenlexicon places the first contact with Labadie shortly after 1661.
- *Opuscula.* 1648 according to most reference works, 1647 in Ghijsen.
- *Joining Labadie.* 1669 according to most sources, 1668 in Ghijsen. Dubois dates the festive poem of 1636 to 1634.
- *The Eukleria.* 1673 according to most sources, 1672 in Dubois. The second part appeared in 1683 according to one source, in 1684 or 1685 according to others.
- *The death of Labadie.* 1674 (Dubois, Van Bork and Verkruijsse, Van Beek) or February 1673 (Van der Aa, the Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie). According to Van Beek he could be buried only a month later, so great was the aversion to the group.
- *Herford.* Older sources (the Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, and also Van Beek) tell that the Lord's Supper was celebrated there in ecstasy, with dancing and kissing, and that this fed the

unrest in the town. I have left that out of the story, because I could not trace where those reports come from: from the congregation itself or from its opponents.

Interpretation: that the title Eukleria refers to Luke 10:42 is stated in so many words by the Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie. The thought that caring for the aunts was a first exercise in letting go is mine.

Sources for this chapter

1. Mirjam de Baar, “Schurman, Anna Maria van”, Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland (Huygens Instituut)
2. G.J. van Bork en P.J. Verkruijsse, De Nederlandse en Vlaamse auteurs (1985), via DBNL
3. Hendrika Ghijsen, “Anna Maria van Schurman 1607-1678”, De Gids 90 (1926), via DBNL
4. Simonne Dubois, Septentrion 13 (1984), via DBNL
5. E. Martin, “Schurman, Anna Maria van”, Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie 33 (1891), via Deutsche Biographie
6. M. de Baar, “Godsdienstvrijheid voor de labadisten in Wieuwerd (1675-1732)”, De Zeventiende Eeuw 20 (2004), via DBNL
7. K. Porteman, review of the Eucleria facsimile, Spiegel der Letteren 21 (1979), via DBNL
8. Lia van Gemert, review in Literatuur 10 (1993), via DBNL
9. DBNL, auteurspagina Anna Maria van Schurman
10. Pieta van Beek, “About Anna Maria van Schurman”
11. Universiteit Utrecht, “Anna Maria van Schurman”
12. Historische Vereniging Oud Rhenen, “Anna Maria van Schurman, de Nederlandse Minerva”
13. University of Chicago Press, “Come, Lord Jesus!”: Two Devotional Poems (2026)

14. Hendrika Ghijsen, “Anna Maria van Schurman 1607-1678” (slot), De Gids 90 (1926), via DBNL
15. William Penn, Journal of William Penn while visiting Holland and Germany in 1677, via Internet Archive
16. G.D.J. Schotel, Anna Maria van Schurman (1853), via Internet Archive
17. A.J. van der Aa, Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden, lemma Schurman, via DBNL
18. A Library of Wonders and Curiosities, “Anna Maria Schurman” (lijfspreuk)
19. Bible.com, 1 Korinthe 6:20 (NKJV)
20. Bible.com, Lukas 10:42 (NKJV)
21. Bible.com, 1 Timotheüs 6:7 (NKJV)

Johannes van der Kemp: the cavalry captain who shared a hut with the Khoikhoi

On June 27, 1791, Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp was crossing the river at Dordrecht with his wife and his daughter. He was forty-four, a physician and a former cavalry officer. It was a little sailing trip, in a small boat. On the way back a gust of wind caught the boat, and it capsized.

Van der Kemp could not swim. Twice he got hold of his wife Christina and pulled her up. Then he lost his grip. He saw her and their daughter Johanna drown before his eyes. He clung to the keel himself, until the crew of another ship pulled him out of the water at the last moment.

He was saved. They were not.

For years this man had reasoned God away. To him the Christian faith was something that could not be squared with reason. Eight years after that summer day he stood on the other side of the world, in Africa, as one of the first missionaries of the London Missionary Society. He learned languages that no one had ever written down. He went to live among people whom the colonists saw only as la-

borers. He married a young woman who had been born a slave. When he died in Cape Town, he was a controversial figure, and huge crowds stood at his grave.

But first that river. Who was the man who was pulled out of the water there?

A minister's son in Leiden

Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp was born on May 7, 1747, in Rotterdam, the youngest son. His father, Cornelius van der Kemp, was a minister and a professor. His mother was Anna Maria van Teylingen. A brother also became a minister.

It was a family where faith was taken seriously and where learning mattered. On September 19, 1763, at sixteen, he enrolled in medicine at Leiden. He also attended lectures in philosophy and theology, and those drew him more than medicine did. He was clever, read a great deal and had a gift for languages.

He did not finish. Just before the end of his studies, he quit. In that same period he turned his back on the Bible and on the faith of his father.

A cadet in the Guard Dragoons

In 1766 he joined the Guard Dragoons, a cavalry regiment, as a cadet. He rose quickly. In 1768 he was an ensign, in 1771 first a lieutenant and soon after a ritmeester, the rank of a captain in the cavalry. He served for fourteen years.

They were not respectable years. At first he had still tried to live strictly and virtuously by his own strength. He could not keep it up, and after that he let himself go. He began an affair with a married woman, the wife of a barber in Rotterdam. Later he wrote it down without any detour: he had stolen her from her husband and lived

openly with her in Leiden. The manuscript in which he tells about those years was stained with tears.

A daughter was born from that affair. The girl was named Johanna.

In 1772 it came out. His father, who had lost his wife shortly before, wrote him heartfelt letters. The son did not listen. He was disinherited. On July 3, 1772, Cornelius van der Kemp died, partly from grief over the life of his youngest son.

Johannes took the child in and raised her on his own.

I am not writing this to make him small. He told it himself, and it belongs to who he was when God found him.

He was thinking all the while. In 1775 a Latin book by his hand appeared in Leiden, in which he defended a doctrine of God resting on nature and reason alone. A Creator, yes. A Redeemer he did not need.

Then he fell in love. Christina Helena Frank came from a humble background. She was a young spinster, a woman who earned her bread spinning wool. In the circle of officers she was not seen as a suitable wife for a cavalry captain from a learned family. Van der Kemp chose her. On March 24, 1780, he received an honorable discharge from the army, and on May 8, 1780, they married in the Pieterskerk in Leiden. Christina also became the mother of Johanna.

A doctor who did not need God

Shortly after the wedding the family left for Scotland. In Edinburgh Van der Kemp took up medicine again. There his Latin book *Parmenides* was published in 1781, and on June 27, 1782, he received his doctorate in medicine.

Back in the Netherlands he settled as a physician in Middelburg. They were restless political years, and he was a colonel in the civic militia. In 1787 a street song about a Mennonite minister with the same surname put the mob on the wrong track. His house was looted and he himself was badly beaten. A brave trick by Christina saved his life. The city council still praised him in a resolution on August 18, 1787, but the hostility remained. The family moved to Zwijndrecht, on the river across from Dordrecht. There he buried himself in Eastern languages.

In matters of faith he was a deist in those years. He believed in a Creator. A God who concerns Himself with people and came to them in Christ seemed to him contrary to reason. He called the Bible a collection of incoherent opinions and stories. At first he had still admired Jesus as a wise and learned man. That stopped when he saw that Jesus called Himself the Son of God.

He was not at peace with it. He felt the weight of his sins, he told later, and in those years he prayed a strange prayer: that God would punish him as long and as hard as was needed to make sin unbearable to him. Setbacks came. They did not make him a better man. He compared himself to a blind man who is lost and hopes for a guide. Once he heard a sermon on a line from a psalm that would not let him go, the cry of one who asks God when He will come to him (Psalm 101:2).

He had his science, his books, his wife and his daughter.

Until that June day in 1791. It was exactly nine years after his doctorate.

Eat this bread now

The Sunday after the accident, Van der Kemp went to church. He wanted to bow before what God had done. He acknowledged that God had the right to take his wife and his child away.

That Sunday the Lord's Supper was celebrated. He was ashamed to go forward, for he did not believe in Christ. He did not dare to stand up and walk out either. So he sat there, the physician who could reason everything out.

While he was thinking it over, something came to him that he understood as a command. He was to entrust the souls of his wife and his daughter, and his own life besides, to Christ. And then came the words telling him to eat this bread now and remember his new Master.

He ate. He drank. He gave himself, with everything he had, to the Lord whose power and love he now felt. At that moment he understood that there is only one faith that gives a person rest: leaning on Jesus alone.

That day he lay unconscious for hours. When he came to, a voice urged him to take up the Bible. The next morning, Monday, July 4, 1791, he laid Romans 8 beside his own first principles. His reasonings did not hold. What he had thought about justification and grace and about Christ Himself fell apart. He never forgot that date. Twelve years later, in Africa, he wrote that on the morning of July 4, 1791, in the fury of his hostility, he had been stopped by the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He also described how it went. When the Lord Jesus first made Himself known to him, He did not engage him in a conversation about truth and error. He attacked him like a warrior and struck him to the ground. Only afterward, when he had surrendered, did Christ

become his teacher. And Van der Kemp did what he had never done with all his learning: he confessed to God his helplessness and his blindness.

The blind man had found his Guide.

Have you ever tried to find God by reasoning your way to Him? Van der Kemp did it for years. He found Him at a communion table where he did not dare to stand up.

The doctor of Feijenoord

How does someone go on who has lost everything and then finds God? Van der Kemp did not start preaching right away. He remained a physician. From 1793 to 1795 he served as a health officer with the army in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, and afterward he ran the large military hospital in Feijenoord near Rotterdam, set up for two thousand soldiers. He cared there for bodies and also for souls: he appointed a catechist to teach the sick. A certain Cornelis Brem saw him at work there. That would matter later.

When the French invaded the country, the hospital lost its purpose. Van der Kemp went to live in Dordrecht. There he began a large work on the letter to the Romans, a translation with commentary. He did not want to become a minister, although the people around him pressed him to.

For six years there was little to show the outside world what was coming.

A letter from London

In 1797 he got hold of sermons from a new society in London. That London Missionary Society had been founded in 1795 to bring the gospel to peoples who had never heard it. There were six sermons,

preached at the founding. Van der Kemp read them and they gripped him. He applied.

The London directors looked into who was applying: a man of fifty, a physician, a former officer, an expert in languages. They hesitated, because they knew his past. They asked for information from Cornelis Brem, the man who had seen him in Feijenoord. Brem could testify that this man had truly changed. After that he was accepted.

Where did he want to go? To people who had never heard of Christ, and because of his knowledge of languages he chose the interior of Africa. The board had great objections. In the end they gave in.

He did more than apply. With a translated appeal dated November 6, 1797, he roused the Dutch, and on December 19, 1797, the Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap (the Netherlands Missionary Society) was founded in Rotterdam. His Dutch biographer I.H. Enklaar calls him its founder in the title of his book. It began with a widower from Dordrecht who had read an English sermon.

On March 18, 1798, he left the Netherlands for good. On the ship to England he held a service every day. In London he, the scholar of fifty, learned to build ships and bake bricks: skills for the life that awaited him. On November 16, 1798, he was ordained in London as a missionary. He was to lead the first group to South Africa.

A ship full of prisoners

On December 12, 1798, he left Portsmouth on the *Hillsborough*, a convict ship. There were 240 convicts on board, on their way to the penal colony in Australia. With him traveled the missionaries J.J. Kicherer, William Edwards and John Edmonds.

Van der Kemp sought out the prisoners. No one had yet found a way in with these men. They let him in.

It was a hard crossing. A mutiny broke out among the prisoners. Then a severe illness came in the stuffy air below deck, and the missionaries nursed the sick. Then came the storm. For three days the ship threatened to go down. The old cavalry captain stayed in good spirits, and his love for the men struck everyone.

On March 31, 1799, the ship entered Table Bay. Van der Kemp was fifty-one. Weeks later it turned out that the prisoners on board still gathered to pray.

In April of that year he helped found a South African missionary society in Cape Town. He did not stay long. He wanted to go to the people beyond the borders of the colony.

The bald man at Ngqika's

In May 1799 Van der Kemp traveled with John Edmonds through the Snowy Mountains and across the Great Fish River into Xhosa territory. He sought out the chief Ngqika. The Xhosa gave him a name: Jank'hanna, the bald man.

He walked there barefoot and without a hat, in the heat and over rough terrain. Ngqika asked him why. Van der Kemp said that God wanted it so. What did it matter that he wore no shoes, he wrote, if his feet were shod with the gospel of peace? And what did it matter that he had no hat, if the helmet of salvation protected his head?

He lived in a shaky hut, with wild animals prowling around it. His companions dropped out. He was left alone.

A story is told from that time about rain. It was dry, long and severe, and Ngqika asked the missionary to pray to his God. Van der Kemp prayed. Within a few hours the rain came down in buckets. The chief's mother, the foremost rainmaker of the region, resented it.

He worked on the language of the Xhosa and was the first to write it down. He saw hardly any fruit: perhaps one convert in almost a year. That was his greatest sorrow. The hostility to everything that belonged to the English grew. The hut he had built himself was set on fire. Ngqika decided that the missionary must die. For eleven months Van der Kemp wandered about, barefoot and under the open sky. In the end war drove him back to the colony. On that return journey five people from his group were killed.

I find this one of the quiet moments in his life. A learned man, who had published a Latin book in Edinburgh, sat in the valley of the Tyume and wrote down the words of a language that no one had yet recorded. Without shoes, without a hat, without visible result.

Years later the Xhosa spoke of him with respect.

Graaff-Reinet and a night of fire

In 1801 he came to Graaff-Reinet, a frontier town in the east of the colony. The congregation of the colonists had asked for him, and he preached there. But soon another group drew his attention: the Khoikhoi, who in those unsettled times came to the little town in large numbers.

The Europeans called them Hottentots. They called themselves Khoikhoi, which means something like people of people. They had lost most of their land and worked on the farms of colonists, often for little or no pay. Van der Kemp held that they should stand on equal footing with the colonists, before the law and before God. Colonists who appealed to the Bible and called the Khoikhoi children of Ham, destined for servitude, he contradicted. In Graaff-Reinet he was already preaching about his dream: a Bethel, a house of God for these people.

With the support of the commissioner of the time, Maynier, he began a mission settlement near Graaff-Reinet in September 1801. He taught the Khoikhoi to read and write, and for many farmers that went too far. In November 1801 a crowd marched on the settlement and set houses on fire. Van der Kemp fled in the night with his followers and their cattle to Algoa Bay, on the coast. About eighty Khoikhoi went with him.

They found shelter on an abandoned farm, Botha's Plaats, some twenty kilometers from Fort Frederick on the bay. They stayed there about a year. Then war broke out again and the farm was attacked. Later colonists burned it down. The group moved to the fort, which the English soldiers had just left. The city of Gqeberha, the former Port Elizabeth, now lies there.

A village named Bethel

On that flight a young Englishman was with him, James Read. Read became his closest colleague. In 1803 the Batavian governor Jan Willem Janssens came by and assigned them a piece of land, not far from the bay. It was not fertile. They called it Bethelsdorp.

The name refers to the place where Jacob dreamed of a ladder to heaven. When he woke up, he said that this was none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven (Genesis 28:17).

To outsiders Bethelsdorp looked nothing like a gate of heaven. Travelers described a dusty, almost treeless place with little water, a messy collection of dilapidated huts. There were about fifty of them, with a small clay church with a thatched roof in the middle. Governor Janssens did not like to see the missionaries teaching the residents to read and write.

For the Khoikhoi it was a refuge. Anyone who ran away from a farmer who beat him or did not pay him could find a place there.

The farmers in the area saw in it a breeding ground for disobedience, a nest of thieves and vagrants. The striking way of life of the missionaries themselves also went over badly. Van der Kemp and Read lived the way the Khoikhoi lived and dressed the way they dressed. Van der Kemp lived in a hut, just like them. He held that Christ came to people in their own world. They did not have to become European to be Christian. In 1803 Read married a Khoikhoi woman. For the colonists they had thereby crossed a line.

Paul wrote: *I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.* (1 Corinthians 9:22). In Van der Kemp and Read this took a very literal form, down to their clothing and their dwelling. It made them suspect among people of their own color.

The old scholar kept writing in the meantime. In 1803 he completed his work on the letter to the Romans at Algoa Bay. In 1804 a catechism for the Khoikhoi appeared. For Bethelsdorp he wrote a textbook for midwives. And converts came, some of whom became evangelists themselves among their own people.

In that same year, 1803, a Khoikhoi man came to Bethelsdorp who would later become well known. Andries Stoffels joined the congregation in 1815 and in 1836 testified in London before the British Parliament about the fate of his people. A life like that began in a village of huts.

Complaints all the way to London

Van der Kemp and Read wrote down what they heard: forced labor, abuse, murder. From 1805 they sent complaints about what farmers did to the Khoikhoi to the landdrost (the local magistrate), to the governor in Cape Town and to London. Today in South Africa they are called whistle-blowers. Their letters ended up with the English movement against slavery. In Proverbs it says: *Open your mouth for*

the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die. (Proverbs 31:8). These two missionaries did that with pen and paper.

It did not make them loved. With Jacob Cuyler, the local landdrost and military commander, a deep hostility grew. Cuyler tried to get rid of the settlement and the missionaries.

In April 1805 the Batavian government summoned Van der Kemp to Cape Town. There he worked among the slaves of the city, until the English retook the Cape in January 1806. He also bought the freedom of several slaves. In Bethelsdorp a woman from Cape Town, Machtelt Schmidt, took over the leadership for the time being. From 1805 to 1807 she taught handicrafts there. Van der Kemp quarreled with her when it turned out that she kept slaves, and she went back to the city.

When Great Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807, a day of thanksgiving was held in Bethelsdorp, and Van der Kemp wrote a hymn of praise for it. That, too, the colonists did not forgive him.

What do you do when you are right and many people around you hate you for it? Van der Kemp kept writing, and he stayed.

Sara

Then the marriage that shocked friend and foe.

In 1806 Van der Kemp married Sara Janse. Sara was the daughter of a Malagasy slave woman and had been born a slave herself. Van der Kemp had freed her from slavery. She was about seventeen, he almost sixty.

Much has been said about this marriage, and I want to be honest about it. The age difference was large, even for that time. She was young and came from a position in which she had had little to choose. Even his friends were shocked by it. How Sara herself felt

about it, we do not know. I have not been able to find any surviving letters from her.

There is another side as well. In the Cape Colony, marriages between whites and people of color were unwelcome. He married a woman of color partly on principle. What he preached about equality before God, he made visible at his own table. At the time of the marriage Sara was not yet a Christian. Three years later she was baptized. They had four children.

Both sides are true. I let them stand next to each other here.

"Light, all is light!"

The last years were hard. Bethelsdorp stayed poor, and since Machtelt Schmidt left, there was no one teaching the residents a trade. There were complaints about the poor conditions and the weak discipline. The complaints of Van der Kemp and Read irritated the British administration, and Governor Caledon summoned both missionaries to Cape Town. When Sir John Cradock succeeded him, they were free to go again. Read returned to Bethelsdorp. Van der Kemp stayed in Cape Town and gave his testimony there about what had been done to the Khoikhoi. In doing so he also admitted that he had not handled everything well in Bethelsdorp.

He had new plans. He wanted to hand over his work and go to Madagascar, the land Sara's family came from. He had long yearned for it. Shortly before his death he also became the first superintendent of the work of the London Missionary Society in South Africa.

On December 7, 1811, he suddenly fell ill. Fever. He lay in the house of Machtelt Schmidt, the woman with whom he had quarreled.

A friend asked anxiously how it stood with his soul. Van der Kemp whispered that all was well. The friend asked further: was it light or dark inside him? "Light," he said. In the Netherlands it has been handed down that on his deathbed he kept repeating the same words: "Light, all is light!"

The man who had spent most of his life searching in the dark died on December 15, 1811, in Cape Town. He was sixty-four.

Large crowds came to his funeral, including leaders from church and government. Even his opponents acknowledged that a remarkable man had died.

What came after him

Shortly after his death Governor Cradock sent a traveling court to the east of the colony, the first in the history of the Cape. It was to investigate the complaints that Van der Kemp and Read had collected, and it was given the name Black Circuit. About a thousand witnesses were heard and 58 colonists came before the judge. No one was convicted of murder; seven people were convicted of abuse. Many laborers did not dare to testify against their employer.

Historians do not agree about Bethelsdorp. Van der Kemp has always had many critics and many defenders. His defenders see in him the first to say out loud that Khoikhoi and colonists were equal. The mission historian Andrew Walls wrote that he put the relation between the races on the agenda of the mission, and that it has never come off it since. He called him a man no one could get around. In the Netherlands he was later called the most remarkable of all missionaries.

In Bethelsdorp, now a district of Gqeberha, stands the Van der Kemp Memorial Church. His Dutch Bible lies there. Many residents of the district descend from the people who lived in those

first little huts. A memorial stone in Rondebosch, near Cape Town, says that Dr. Van der Kemp was once an unbeliever, but became a Christian by the grace of God.

Paul, who used to persecute Christians, wrote about himself that he obtained mercy because he had acted ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13). The stone in Rondebosch says the same about Van der Kemp in other words.

The gate of heaven

I keep coming back to that memorial stone. Not a word about his rank, his books or his languages. Only that he did not believe, and that God found him anyway.

Perhaps you know someone who has reasoned everything out and shut God outside the door. Perhaps you are that person yourself. Johannes van der Kemp was someone like that, until he was forty-four. The loss on that river brought him to a communion table, and the morning after to Romans 8. For the rest of his life he kept walking that road, barefoot, to people whom no one saw standing there.

He named his village after a stone on which a fugitive had laid his head. A dusty field on Algoa Bay. Fifty little huts, a clay church with a thatched roof. House of God, gate of heaven.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth in Rotterdam in 1747 as the son of the minister and professor Cornelius van der Kemp; studies in Leiden without finishing; years of service in the Guard Dragoons; a daughter, Johanna, from a relationship outside marriage; marriage to Christina Frank, a woman of humble standing; doctorate in Edinburgh in 1782; the boat accident near Dordrecht on June 27, 1791, in which wife and daughter drowned (the Royal

Museums Greenwich, which own a portrait of him, also give that day); his conversion after the accident, at a Lord's Supper service on the Sunday after; his part in founding the Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap; ordination in London in November 1798; departure on the *Hillsborough* and arrival at the Cape in March 1799; work among the Xhosa of Ngqika; the choice for the Khoikhoi from 1801; the mission station Bethelsdorp with James Read; the complaints about abuse of the Khoikhoi and the conflict with colonists and government; the marriage to Sara Janse, a young woman of Malagasy descent who had been born a slave; four children; death from fever in Cape Town in December 1811; the well-attended funeral.

From his own testimony: what went on inside him before and after the accident. He wrote about it in his own account of his young years and his conversion, and in 1803 in his work on the letter to the Romans (*De Theodicee van den Apostel Paulus*, three volumes, published 1799 to 1800 by H.J. Krom and completed in 1803 at Algoa Bay). I have not read those writings myself, but used them through later authors: the Dutch reference work of 1931 (the Lord's Supper service against his will, the hours of unconsciousness, the voice, Romans 8, the date of July 4, 1791), Simonetta Carr (Jesus as a warrior, the confession of helplessness and blindness, the verdict on the Bible, the blind man and the guide), Faith Cook (the prayer for punishment, the sermon on Psalm 101, the confession about the stolen woman, the manuscript with tears, the surrender at the communion table, the two grabs for Christina and the keel) and Dan Graves of the Christian History Institute (the shame of going forward and the words about the bread). The spoken sentences have been translated back from English and so are not literally his. The words about the bare feet and the helmet of salvation also come from his own pen, through Graves, who does not say from which writing.

From one source:

- *The Dutch reference work of 1931* (Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden): the ranks and years in the army; the aversion to the Bible at the end of his studies and the attempt at a strict life; the letters from his father, the disinheritance and the year 1772; that his father died partly from grief over him (entry on the father); the book of 1775 (*Theologia dunatoscopica*); the looting in Middelburg, the street song, the trick of his wife (without further details) and the resolution of August 18, 1787; the Eastern languages in Zwijndrecht; the hospital for two thousand men; Cornelis Brem; the hesitation in London and the choice for Africa; the appeal of November 6, 1797 and the date of December 19, 1797; the departure on March 18, 1798; shipbuilding and brickmaking; the 240 prisoners, the mutiny, the illness, the storm and the prayer meetings; the Snowy Mountains, the burning of his house and the eleven months of wandering; that he did not want to become a minister; the words about the most remarkable missionary (the reference work does not say whom they come from).
- *The rain.* The prayer for rain, the rainmaker, Ngqika's decision that he must die (the last one in Faith Cook) and the five dead on the return journey I found only in Dan Graves and Faith Cook, who name no source. I was not able to check it in his own diary.
- *The wool spinner.* The reference work calls Christina a young spinster; a South African opinion piece from 2019 (IOL) says wool spinner. The same piece calls the missionaries whistleblowers and gives the thousand witnesses and 58 colonists of the Black Circuit.
- *The article by Mike Oettle (1991):* the about eighty Khoikhoi; Botha's Plaats, the attack and the fire; Fort Frederick; the sermon on Bethel in Graaff-Reinet; Machtelt Schmidt and the quarrel about her slaves; April 1805 and January 1806; the

slaves whose freedom he bought; that Sara was seventeen, not yet a Christian and baptized three years later; that in Cape Town he admitted having made mistakes and died in the house of Machtelt Schmidt; no convictions for murder and seven for abuse; the frightened witnesses. According to the same article his eldest son, Cornelius, worked for the missionary society in Bethelsdorp until his death in 1859.

- *That he had freed Sara:* the London archive description (AIM25). *That he married partly on principle:* two reference works. *Poor conditions and weak discipline in Bethelsdorp:* an American Christian encyclopedia. *That he always had many critics and defenders:* a study by D. Roy Briggs at Rhodes University (1952). *The memorial stone in Rondebosch and the Dutch Bible in the church:* Oettle and South African History Online.

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

- *Birthday.* May 7, 1747 according to the Dutch reference work, May 17 according to others.
- *Discharge and first marriage.* March 24 and May 8, 1780 according to the reference work; other sources say 1779.
- *The accident.* The reference work speaks of a gust of wind, English tellers of a storm, a whirlwind or a waterspout. One article mentions two daughters; all the others one. Graves writes that he was dragged along for a mile.
- *The sermons from London.* The reference work, in my reading, gives 1794, which cannot be, because the society was founded in 1795; other sources say 1797. Two South African reference works write that he heard of the society through the Moravians in Zeist and was confirmed in 1797; the reference work gives November 16, 1798.

- *The time among the Xhosa.* Almost a year or two years. One convert or none.
- *Bethelsdorp.* Begun in 1803 according to most sources, in 1802 according to one.
- *The marriage to Sara.* 1806 (Royal Museums Greenwich, South African sources; Oettle gives July 1806) or 1807 (an American reference work and the London archive description). Two sources call her seventeen, Graves fourteen, and he calls her Sara of the Cape.
- *His death.* Fell ill on December 7 and died on December 15, 1811, in Cape Town according to most sources. The reference work has him die on December 7; one article writes that he died on the way to Cape Town.
- *The last words.* "Light, all is light!" in the Dutch reference work; the conversation with the friend in Faith Cook. The two fit together, but I have not myself seen an eyewitness account.
- *The Black Circuit.* Oettle dates it to 1812 to 1813.

Interpretation: historians judge differently about the marriage to Sara and about the state of Bethelsdorp. The large age difference and her dependent position make the marriage uncomfortable even now; in the Cape Colony it was also an open break with the color line. That June 27, 1791, was a Monday and July 4 thus the Monday after the communion Sunday, I worked out myself. That his deathbed fits a life of searching in the dark is my own thought.

Sources for this chapter

1. Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden in Nederland, deel 4, lemma J.Th. van der Kemp (DBNL)
2. Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden in Nederland, deel 4, lemma Cornelius van der Kemp (DBNL)

3. Royal Museums Greenwich, “John Theodorus van der Kemp, 1747-1811”
4. Dictionary of African Christian Biography, “Van der Kemp, Johannes Theodorus” (Boston University)
5. Dictionary of African Christian Biography, klassieke collectie (2)
6. Lipschutz en Rasmussen, Dictionary of African Historical Biography (via DACB)
7. AIM25, archiefbeschrijving John Theodosius van der Kemp
8. Saints and Seasons, Van der Kemp deel 1 (Mike Oettle, Western Light, 1991)
9. Saints and Seasons, Van der Kemp deel 2 (Mike Oettle, Western Light, 1991)
10. Camissa Museum, “Dr Johannes van der Kemp”
11. South African History Online, Bethelsdorp
12. South African History Online, overlijden van dr. J.T. van der Kemp
13. IOL, “Of missionaries and whistle-blowers” (5 november 2019)
14. Simonetta Carr, “Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp: An Unconventional Missionary”, Place for Truth
15. Jared McDonald, “Introduction to Andries Stoffels”, One More Voice
16. BiblicalTraining, “Johannes Theodorus Vanderkemp”
17. E. Brown, review of I.H. Enklaar over Van der Kemp, Historia
18. BMGN, I.H. Enklaar, De levensgeschiedenis van Johannes Theodorus van der Kemp
19. D. Roy Briggs, An historical survey of the Bethelsdorp station (Rhodes University, 1952)
20. English Wikipedia, “Johannes van der Kemp” (starting point)
21. Faith Cook, “Triumphs of grace: John Vanderkemp, subdued by God”, Evangelical Times (juli 2002)

22. Dan Graves, “Remarkable Van der Kemp denounced slavery and promoted Christ”, Christian History Institute
23. Bible.com, Genesis 28:17 (NKJV)
24. Bible.com, 1 Korinthe 9:22 (NKJV)
25. Bible.com, Spreuken 31:8 (NKJV)
26. Bible.com, 1 Timotheüs 1:13 (NKJV)
27. Bible.com, Psalm 101:2 (NKJV)

Hendrik de Cock: the minister who preached from the elders' pew

On Sunday, October 19, 1834, Hendrik de Cock walked into his own church in Ulrum. He had been the minister there for almost five years. At the pulpit he was stopped. The village constable denied him entry. Another minister had been appointed to preach that morning.

De Cock did not go home. He stayed down in the church and climbed onto a pew by the baptismal railing, the pew of the elders. Later he wrote it to the king, without any fuss: he had preached "standing on a pew," because the pulpit had been kept from him.

From that pew he read aloud a document that had been signed five days earlier by his church council and a large part of his congregation. Then he preached. His text came from the letter to the Ephesians: by grace you have been saved, through faith.

In the afternoon he stood in the barn behind the parsonage, on a farmer's wagon, and preached again.

The document was called the Act of Secession or Return, and it would change the history of the church in the Netherlands. What

began in Ulrum was followed in the years after in Groningen, Friesland, Drenthe and far beyond. Hendrik de Cock came to be called the father of the Secession. He paid for it with fines, a prison sentence, soldiers in his house and the loss of his office.

He was thirty-three then. Eight years later he was dead.

Who was this man, who was no longer allowed in the pulpit of his own village church?

A boy from the Veenkoloniën

Hendrik de Cock was born on April 12, 1801, and grew up in Wildervank, in the east of Groningen, in the region of the Veenkoloniën, the peat colonies. His father, Tjaarda de Cock, was a farmer and later a magistrate and mayor. His mother was Jantje Kappen de Boer.

The family had standing in the village, and Hendrik was allowed to study. After primary school in Wildervank he studied languages and then theology at the college in Groningen. On May 14, 1823, he was admitted to preach.

On February 11, 1824, he married Frouwe Venema, the daughter of a farmer from Wildervank. She would outlive him by forty-seven years. A month after the wedding, on March 7, 1824, he was installed as minister of Eppenhuizen, a small village in the north of Groningen. In 1827 he left for Noordlaren, on the other side of the city.

His career in those years was quite ordinary. De Cock preached what he had learned at the university, and his professors in Groningen were liberal. As a young minister he had never read the Canons of Dort, and he hardly knew the works of Calvin. Those who knew him described him as gentle and kindly, frank and open. His son

Helenius summed up those years in a single sentence: his father was a very sincere man, but he lacked the grace of God.

Installed by the professor

In November 1829 he came to Ulrum, a village in the northwest of Groningen. There he was installed by Petrus Hofstede de Groot, professor of theology in Groningen and his friend.

Anyone who knows how the story ends already feels the tension. The professor who installed him would stand on the other side a few years later.

In Ulrum De Cock found a congregation unlike what he was used to. The church council was strictly orthodox. Elder Jan Jacobs Beukema, a man in his sixties, reproached the new minister that his sermons were not orthodox. At first De Cock tried to mediate between the followers of Hofstede de Groot and the old guard on his church council.

At home, too, he heard it. Frouwe told him that something was missing in his sermons. They stayed on the surface.

And in Ulrum there lived simple church members who knew the old doctrine. Conversations with them changed his thinking. One of those conversations he never forgot.

One sigh

Just outside Ulrum lived an old farmer, Klaas Pieters Kuipenga. He came to the young minister as a catechumen, because he wanted to make public profession of faith.

During one of those lessons at the parsonage, Kuipenga said something that comes back in almost every account of De Cock's life. He

said it more than once, the tellers add: "If I had to contribute even one sigh to my salvation, I would be lost forever."

One sigh. Not even that.

De Cock himself thought otherwise, and it struck him. The simplicity and humility of the old man set him thinking. Was he on the right track, in his sermons and on his house visits? Kuipenga also told him what he was missing and advised him to read the writings of the old fathers. De Cock began to search the Bible anew.

I find it a lovely detail that the man who changed the history of a church was first taught himself by his catechumen. How often does a teacher learn the most from the one who sits at his table? In part the story of the Secession begins in the words of an old farmer.

A borrowed book from Warfhuizen

More came his way. In the winter of 1831 De Cock borrowed an abridged edition of the Institutes of John Calvin, the great textbook of the Reformation. He got it from Rev. Wormnest, minister in nearby Warfhuizen. He had asked for it himself, and Wormnest said yes at once.

He read, and he found a different doctrine from the one he had learned and preached. He also read writings by Baron Van Zuylen van Nijevelt.

In 1832 an old widow from his congregation brought him a copy of the Canons of Dort, the confession that the Synod of Dort had drawn up in 1618 and 1619. She told him it was a confession of the church. De Cock did not know it. A minister of the church, and he had never read its confession. He read it, showed it to elder Beukema and decided to publish it again. That edition appeared in 1833, with a preface by himself.

Through an old farmer, a borrowed book and a widow, he came to the doctrine that the Dutch church had once professed itself: that a person is saved by grace alone.

A garment to be thrown away

What happened to him in those months, De Cock wrote down himself. It is in the defense he sent to the synod in June 1834. In the middle of the arguments about church law he suddenly tells about himself.

His life had always been proper, he writes. Civilly there was nothing to criticize in him. But God gave him enlightened eyes, and he came to know himself as a sinner. He saw that he had broken God's law, the law that only Jesus has fulfilled. His own righteousnesses, everything he had leaned on, had become to him "a garment to be thrown away." He needed a higher righteousness than a person can gather for himself. He needed a Savior.

Then he prayed for that Savior. And God, he writes, did not leave his prayer unanswered. Whoever seeks, finds.

Since that time he preached differently. Christ the Crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Read that again with the synod in mind. A suspended village minister writes to the highest church assembly in the land, and the strongest thing he can put forward is this: I was a decent man, and I turned out to be a sinner, and God has heard me.

What Kuipenga said in the parsonage, Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9). Not of yourselves. Not even a sigh.

From then on De Cock preached that doctrine, strict and clear. And the people came. Some walked for hours to do so. In Appingedam it is still told that villagers set out at three in the morning to be at the nine o'clock service in Ulrum.

Children from elsewhere

After that it went fast. Parents from neighboring villages brought their children to Ulrum to have them baptized there. They could not answer the baptismal questions with a clear conscience before their own ministers. De Cock baptized them. He also accepted catechumens from outside his congregation.

In 1832 a writing of his had already appeared, a serious and heartfelt address to his countrymen. In 1833 he wrote a defense titled *Verdediging van de ware Gereformeerde leer en van de ware Gereformeerden* (Defense of the true Reformed doctrine and of the true Reformed). In it he sharply attacked two colleagues, Rev. Meyer Brouwer of Uithuizen and Rev. Benthem Reddingius of Assen. He called them wolves attacking the sheepfold of Christ. The tone was harsh, and his own classis (the regional church assembly) thought so too. Paul wrote of a church that grows by *speaking the truth in love* (Ephesians 4:15). Truth and love stand side by side in that verse. Holding them together is hard, even for someone who has just rediscovered the truth.

In the summer of 1833 a committee of the classis of Middelstum, led by Rev. A. Rutgers, tried to change his mind. It did not work. In December 1833 he had to appear before the classis. He admitted outright what he was accused of. He refused to stop baptizing children from elsewhere, and he did not take back his words about the two colleagues. The classis suspended him indefinitely, with his salary continuing.

Two years without a stipend

On April 1, 1834, the provincial church board of Groningen turned that into a suspension of two years, now without salary. The De Cock family had no income left. He was, he wrote to the synod, a husband and the father of a large household. He also asked the synod for compassion for the congregation that was attached to him and that now had lost its shepherd. He was willing to suffer, as a Christian, and without being ashamed of it.

Soon afterward De Cock wrote a preface to a booklet by Jacobus Klok, a painter and merchant from Delfzijl. It was about the Evangelische Gezangen, the hymnbook the church sang alongside the psalms. De Cock rejected those hymns. The church board asked him to withdraw the preface. He refused.

On May 29, 1834, the provincial church board deposed him. The synod softened that on July 16, 1834: he was given six months to reconsider. Anyone who expressed regret could return.

His old friend the professor watched it with dismay. "De Cock, De Cock, how deeply you have fallen!" Hofstede de Groot said to him.

In that same year his eldest daughter also died, after three weeks of illness.

Monday evening, October 13

The six months ran, but De Cock did not change his mind. In early October 1834 the talks with the provincial church board also reached a deadlock. On October 2 he again refused to express regret. There was no way back.

He did have support. Luitsen Dijkstra from Smilde stood by him in that threatening time. And there was a colleague who saw the same thing he did.

In the fall of 1834 Hendrik Pieter Scholte came to Ulrum, minister of Doveren, Genderen and Gansoijen, who thought as De Cock did. On Friday evening, October 10, Scholte preached in Ulrum and baptized children. For the Sunday, the consulent who was filling in for the suspended minister denied him the pulpit. The church was packed that day. On Sunday afternoon Scholte preached in the open air.

On Monday evening, October 13, 1834, the church council of Ulrum met. The men knelt and prayed. De Cock said he now found freedom to separate. The whole church council signed the act. The next day, Tuesday, October 14, the congregation gathered, also in prayer. De Cock read out the act, and the members signed: a hundred and thirty-seven members, the minister included.

The act was sharp in tone. The signers wrote that the church from which they were separating was, according to God's Word, not the true church but the false one. They also declared that they continued to recognize their unjustly suspended minister as their lawfully called shepherd and teacher. In the title stood the word return: they saw themselves as people who were returning.

Five days later De Cock stood on the elders' pew.

Twelve soldiers in the parsonage

After that Sunday it went hard. On October 17 the court had already imposed a first fine of fifty guilders on him, together with Geertje Harms Hulshof. On November 7, 1834, the court in Appingedam sentenced him, for the service of October 19, to a fine of a hundred and fifty guilders and three months in prison. According to the verdict he had caused unrest in the church of Ulrum.

Meanwhile the government sent soldiers. A company of infantry, about a hundred and fifty men, was billeted with the seceders in

Ulrum. De Cock himself described what came to his house: twelve men billeted in the parsonage, with him, his wife and his children, and besides that a guard of more than twenty. He was under house arrest. Later it was reduced to an officer and an orderly.

His congregation fared no better. The flock was, he wrote, assaulted, torn apart, robbed and put in prison. He names one name: Klaas de Wit, a believing man of about seventy, was arrested.

Twelve soldiers in the house, while her husband no longer received a salary: that was how Frouwe de Cock lived now. According to the authorities, the soldiers were to prevent further disturbances of the peace. An old law from the French period forbade gatherings of more than twenty persons without permission. Anyone who met anyway got fines or soldiers in the house.

Prisoner for Christ's sake

De Cock appealed. On November 27 and 28, 1834, the court in Groningen confirmed the sentences. After that he served his sentence in the prison of the city of Groningen.

He was given a room of his own there, and he thanked the governor politely for it, in a letter of December 6. He called the place where he sat "my prison for Christ's sake." In the same letter he asked for more: that his friends might visit him longer, that his wife might be with him, and also his fellow villager and fellow believer K.P. Ritsema. Most of it was refused. He had also asked whether he might write freely and have it printed. The governor kept that request "under advisement." De Cock knew what that meant. It was, he wrote to Frouwe on December 3, a polite term of refusal, after the fashion of this world.

You can hear something of the man himself there. A dry smile, in a cell.

He wrote to the king as well. He asked William I to uphold the freedom of religion from the constitution and to release the prisoners for Christ's sake.

Friends came to visit him. From Drenthe fellow believers came to Groningen, and those conversations in prison strengthened the bond with the seceders there. With his fellow prisoners he spoke about the gospel of free grace. He kept a little diary. And it became a blessed time for him: the Lord visited him there and gave him the full assurance of faith.

At home in Ulrum, meanwhile, things went differently. While he was locked up, Frouwe received word that she had to leave the parsonage, within ten or twelve days at the latest. It was winter. She got no delay. De Cock wrote about it later, and he praised her: she had left quietly, obedient to the authorities.

In the history books it is mostly the verdicts and the dates that appear. Frouwe Venema hardly appears in them. She was the one who had said that something was missing in his sermons. Now she bore the price of those months, with her children, in winter, while her husband sat in a cell.

On January 20, 1835, the six months of reflection were over, and the provincial church board deposed him for good. In a church paper the board announced that De Cock had been deposed "not for his views, but for his conduct." According to the church, it was about his actions and not about what he believed.

On February 26, 1835, he was released. Two days later, on February 28, he was back in Ulrum.

A minister without a church

He did not stay long. As early as March he traveled through Drenthe. On March 18, 1835, he was in Dwingeloo, and on March 30 he led the founding of the congregation in Hijken. On April 8, 1835, an assembly of the northern seceded congregations appointed him minister at large for the north. On May 3 and 4 he baptized children in Appingedam and Delfzijl.

On May 9, 1835, he left Ulrum for good. With his family he moved to Smilde, in Drenthe, where brothers received them. For two years he traveled from village to village, through Groningen, Friesland and Drenthe. He preached, baptized children and helped new congregations get started. Those gatherings were still forbidden, and anyone who opened his house for them risked a fine.

As a scholar he no longer showed himself. After the separation he wrote no more books. He had become a traveling shepherd.

In 1837 he settled in the city of Groningen, as minister of the seceded congregation there. From there, too, he kept traveling. In 1839 the congregation got a church of its own on the Guldenstraat, a building that had formerly belonged to the Roman Catholics.

Follow their faith

Hendrik de Cock did not grow old. He died on November 14, 1842, in Groningen, after a serious illness. He was forty-one.

He left behind his wife Frouwe and five children. His eldest son, Helenius, later also became a minister and wrote down the life of his father. Frouwe later remarried, to Rev. H.G. Poelman, a seceded minister in Uithuizermeeden.

De Cock was buried in the Zuiderbegraafplaats in Groningen. Hundreds of people came to the grave. For a time afterward it had to be

guarded, so that opponents would not vandalize it. That was how deep the division still ran.

On November 20, 1842, Rev. H.J. de Wind of Leens gave the funeral sermon. He chose a text from the letter to the Hebrews: *Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.* (Hebrews 13:7). A year later the sermon was printed in Groningen.

When I came across that text, I had to stop for a moment. The closing words of that verse are on the cover of this book. In 1842 they were already being spoken over Hendrik de Cock.

A pew by the baptismal railing

What was left of him? The persecution stopped when King William II took a milder course after 1840. The congregations De Cock had helped found continued to exist. Part of the seceders later went to America with Scholte. For their churches, here and there, Ulrum is a beginning.

In 1891, almost fifty years after his death, a monument was placed on the grave of him and Frouwe Venema. She had died two years earlier.

You can judge Hendrik de Cock by the sharp tone of his writings. His opponents did that too. But it began somewhere other than with a pamphlet. It began with an old farmer who said that he could not even contribute a sigh to his own salvation. A young minister heard that and dared to admit that his own proper life was a garment to be thrown away.

Do you know what your own assurance rests on?

On that Sunday in October 1834 the pulpit of Ulrum remained closed to him. Below, by the baptismal railing, a suspended minister stood on a pew, and he read out the act.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): date of birth April 12, 1801 and youth in Wildervank; marriage to Frouwe Venema in February 1824; ministry in Eppenhuizen (1824), Noordlaren (1827) and Ulrum (1829), installation in Ulrum by Hofstede de Groot; Kuipenga's word about the one sigh; the borrowed abridged Institutes (1831) and the Canons of Dort through a widow; re-publication of the Canons of Dort (1833); suspension by the classis (December 1833), suspension of two years without salary (April 1, 1834), deposition (May 29, 1834), six months of reflection (July 16, 1834), final deposition (January 20, 1835); signing of the act by the church council (October 13, 1834) and the members (October 14, 1834); the service from the pew on October 19, 1834 and the sermon on Ephesians 2; twelve soldiers in the parsonage; sentence on November 7, 1834 to 150 guilders and three months in prison; the eviction of his family from the parsonage; release at the end of February 1835; move to Smilde (May 1835); Groningen (1837); death on November 14, 1842; funeral sermon on Hebrews 13:7 by H.J. de Wind.

From his own pen (documents from 1834 and 1835, printed in the edition of Stichting De Gihonbron):

- *The defense to the synod (June 1834):* how he came to know himself as a sinner, the garment to be thrown away, the prayer for a Savior and the answer; the words about his large household, his congregation and suffering as a Christian. K. Schilder pointed out in 1934 that for this document De Cock took over a draft by D. van Hogendorp almost unchanged.

How that relates to the personal passage I have not been able to determine.

- *His letter to the king:* that the police kept him from climbing the pulpit, that he preached standing on a pew and later in his own barn; the appeal to the constitution. The letter is undated in my source; that the king was William I follows from the year.
- *His afterword:* the twelve men billeted and the guard of more than twenty, later an officer and an orderly; what was done to the congregation; Klaas de Wit; the full church when Scholte was kept out. That he was a believing man appears there as "a devout man."
- *Letters from prison:* to the governor (December 6, 1834) and to his wife (December 3, 1834). What exactly he asked for Ritsema is not entirely clear in my source: that he might be with him, or that they might be imprisoned together. On February 14, 1835 it was reported that his sentence was almost over, and the request to write freely lapsed with it.
- *The eviction:* that his wife had to leave the parsonage within ten or twelve days, in winter and without delay, and that she went quietly.

I have not read these documents in full, but the passages named from them.

From later tradition or one source:

- *Kuipenga.* The conversation has no date and the wording varies with the teller; I follow the version in Daan Grootveld, who places it around 1830 or 1831. How old Kuipenga was is not stated anywhere. That he wanted to make profession of faith is in Grootveld; that he said the word more than once, in A. Baars; that he advised De Cock to read the old writers, in C. Vogelaar. Grootveld's book is a story, with conversations

that the author filled in himself. I have therefore taken from it only what is also found elsewhere.

- *Frouwe on his sermons, the word of Hofstede de Groot, the writer Van Zuylen van Nijevelt, the sermon on the farmer's wagon, the daily visits in prison, the talks with fellow prisoners and the assurance of faith in the cell:* only in C. Vogelaar (1989), who names no sources. He also mentions the death of the eldest daughter in 1834. In Grootveld the child is called Jantje and is three and a half (so too in Hoekstra; other sources say three); I have not seen a record. That Hofstede de Groot was his friend is also said by Vogelaar.
- *The constable.* So it stands in the De Gihonbron edition; De Cock himself writes "the Police," Vogelaar speaks of policemen. The pew by the baptismal railing comes from the Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden. From that dictionary also come Beukema (with his birth year 1766), the mediating, the character sketch, A. Rutgers, the return on February 28, 1835 and the remark that he no longer wrote after the separation.
- *The sentence of Helenius de Cock* about his father I know through Baars, in English. I have not been able to see the book of Helenius himself. Baars also tells of the kneeling of the church council and gives the words from the act.
- *That Wormnest lent the booklet at once, the refusal of October 2, the consulent, the appointment of April 8, 1835, the Guldenstraat church, the hundreds at the grave and its guarding:* the De Gihonbron edition. *The liberal professors:* Baars. *That he did not know the Canons and Calvin:* a historian, and Vogelaar. *The conversations with simple church members:* L.G.J. Verberne (around 1935).
- *The fine of October 17, the appeal, the little diary, the tradition from Appingedam and the baptismal services of May 3 and 4, 1835:* J.

Wesseling. *Luitsen Dijkstra, the visit from Drenthe, Dwingeloo and Hijken:* H. Veldman. That Dijkstra came from Smilde is in Grootveld.

- *House arrest and the remarriage of Frouwe Venema to Rev. Poelman:* the dictionary of Van der Aa.

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

- *Birthplace.* Wildervank according to the old biographical dictionaries, Veendam according to other sources. It is certain that he grew up in Wildervank.
- *The first suspension.* December 16, 19 or 20, 1833.
- *The number of signers.* A hundred and thirty-seven members, the minister included, according to the historian G.J. Schutte (1986) and M. Golverdingen; the old dictionaries say fifty-three. Possibly one number counts all members and the other the heads of households, but that is not stated anywhere.
- *The soldiers.* About a hundred and fifty men according to most sources. An English-language summary speaks of a hundred and four men, arrived on October 25, half of whom stayed until July 1835; Van der Aa has them come as early as October 19. I have not found a reliable Dutch source for arrival and duration.
- *The sentences.* Wesseling gives October 17 and November 7 for the court in Appingedam and November 27 and 28 for the appeal in Groningen; in De Cock's own documents the fine of fifty guilders stands on November 27 and the prison sentence on November 28.
- *The parsonage.* De Cock himself writes that his wife had to leave. The Biographisch woordenboek says that after his return he stayed in the parsonage for a while. Where the family lived that winter, I do not know.

- *The deposition.* May 29, 1834 according to most sources; Vogelaar gives March 29.
- *The address to his countrymen.* 1832 according to Vogelaar; a biographical dictionary mentions an edition in Veendam in 1834.

Unconfirmed: the nature of his last illness (one reference work mentions a lung disease); what he said on his deathbed. I have not found an account of his last days. It may be in the book by his son Helenius.

Interpretation: whether the Secession was a return to the true church or an unnecessary break, Protestants think differently about to this day. The church said it deposed him for his conduct. He himself and his followers saw it as faithfulness to the confession. The dry smile that I read in his letter to Frouwe is my own impression.

Sources for this chapter

1. J.P. de Bie en J. Loosjes, Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden in Nederland, deel 2: Hendrik de Cock (DBNL)
2. A.J. van der Aa, Biographisch woordenboek der Nederlanden, deel 3: Hendrik de Cock (DBNL)
3. Stichting De Gihonbron, Ds. H. de Cock (1801-1842) en Frouwe Venema, met D. Grootveld, Ziende in het gebod, en stukken van De Cock uit 1834 en 1835
4. M. Golverdingen, Kerkgeschiedenis van de gereformeerde gezindte
5. J. Wesseling, De Afscheiding van 1834 in Groningerland, deel 2 (DBNL)
6. H. Veldman, De Afscheiding van 1834 in Drenthe (reader, 2023)

7. G.J. Schutte, “De Afscheiding van 1834 herdacht”, BMGN 101 (1986)
8. L.G.J. Verberne, “De afscheiding van 1834” (DBNL)
9. D.R. Drost, “Thesinge en de Afscheiding van 1834”, Groniek
10. C. Vogelaar, “Rev. H. De Cock and the Secession”, The Banner of Truth 1989 (Christian Study Library)
11. A. Baars, “The Secession of 1834”, The Messenger 1985 (Christian Study Library)
12. W. Bredenhof, “Quotable Church History”, 13 maart 2018
13. Y. Hoitink, “Start of the secession”, Dutch Genealogy
14. Calvin University Archives, Cock, Hendrik de (1801-1842)
15. Wikipedia, Hendrik de Cock (only as a starting point)
16. Biographisch woordenboek van Noord- en Zuidnederlandsche letterkunde, lemma Hendrik de Cock (DBNL)
17. Bible.com, Efeze 2:8-9 (NKJV)
18. Bible.com, Efeze 4:15 (NKJV)
19. Bible.com, Hebreeën 13:7 (NKJV)

Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint: the writer who brought the Reformation back

In November 1843 a woman of thirty-one in Alkmaar wrote a letter to the poet Isaäc da Costa. Her fiancé had fled to Belgium a year earlier to escape his creditors. She did not know when he would come back, or whether he would come back at all. In the little town people were talking about her.

She wrote to Da Costa that she was about to begin a new book, a large novel about the Earl of Leicester and the young Protestant Netherlands. She did not do it lightly. She began it, she wrote, in the earnest confidence that it was a good work and that God was asking it of her. He would also give her the strength for it. The success of her previous book had taught her that even a novel can have influence. And so she had not sunk away in her sorrow. "I have held my head up," she wrote.

Her name was Geertruida Toussaint. The country already knew her as the author of *Het huis Lauernesse*. The book she announced that autumn would take her twelve years. In those years she broke off her engagement, said she would never marry, and married anyway,

a painter of churches. She lived to be seventy-three and wrote until the end.

She never wrote sermons or little devotional books. She wrote thick historical novels, and she prayed that God would bless that work.

It began in a pharmacy.

That pitiably frail little creature

Anna Louisa Geertruida Toussaint was born on September 16, 1812, in Alkmaar. Her father, Hendrik Toussaint, was a pharmacist. Her mother, Cornelia Magdalena Cecilia Rocquette, came from a Huguenot family: French Protestants who had fled to the Netherlands centuries earlier because of their faith. The parents had married on December 30, 1810, in Haarlem.

The child was so weak that no one knew whether she would live. Later she wrote about it herself, as her mother had told it to her: how much care and worry "that pitiably frail little creature" must have cost her parents, who were themselves small in stature too.

When she was three or four weeks old she was baptized. Her Frisian grandmother was there. At the baptismal meal Rev. O. Porjeere, a friend of the house, addressed the baby in a little poem, with a wish for her life. As an old woman she came back to it. The verse was no great poem, she thought, but the heart behind it was good. And she held it for certain that this sincere prayer had not gone unanswered.

That is how she looked back on her own beginning: as a life that had been prayed for.

On May 29, 1820, she got a little brother, Johan Daniël Sybrand.

Faith was not simple in the house. Her mother once told her in confidence that French had always remained for her the language

of religion. In Dutch she could not really pray. She did not feel at home in the Reformed church of Alkmaar, and later she went to the Remonstrants, a small, more liberal Protestant church. The girl grew up with the question of where you belong when church and heart do not coincide. That question would occupy her for a long time.

Ten years with grandmother in Harlingen

When she was eight she went to Harlingen, to her grandmother, Mrs. Toussaint-Talma. Until she was eighteen she stayed in the Frisian harbor town. Her biographer Dyserinck calls the grandmother a woman of good taste and more than ordinary gifts, and writes that she had a good influence on her upbringing. Geertruida had lessons there for six years from a Miss Herbig. She also found a friend for life, Johanna Blok. In the Blok family it was warm, she wrote later, warmer than at home in Alkmaar.

Her aunts gave her pious stories to read, full of lessons. She swallowed them, she wrote, like medicines that are nauseatingly sweet. Then they took pity and gave her the historical novels of Walter Scott. Later Jacob van Lennep was added. That is where her love of the past began. She tried to translate French books, but found no publisher.

In April 1829, at Easter, she made public profession of faith in the Reformed church of Alkmaar, with Rev. H.E. Vinke. She was sixteen. What that step meant for her, the sources do not tell. It would be years before her faith truly became her own.

A diploma she did not use

On April 16, 1833, she passed the teacher's examination in Haarlem. That year, in Nieuwediep, she also got to know Geertruid Beets, with whom she began to write.

In May 1834 she became a governess with the De Bruyn Kops family in Hoorn. It did not go well. According to her biographer her life there turned bitter. She had everything against her, she wrote later: her small stature, her delicate build, her weak voice. The girls did not listen. At the end of December 1834 she wrote to Geertruid Beets that they had become disobedient and that she could no longer govern them. What did work was telling stories. She rewarded the children with tales, and it wore her out. It felt, she wrote to a friend, as if she were doing violence to herself.

By February 1835 she was back in Alkmaar. Teaching no longer satisfied her. She wanted to write.

On July 30, 1837, she explained to Johanna Blok what writing was for her. Opium numbs the pain of the body, she wrote, and gives you an imagined health. And then: "Morally, writing is opium to me."

A strikingly honest sentence. She knew that in her stories she was also running away.

Almagro and a voice from De Gids

In March 1837 the publisher Van der Aa accepted her first novella for his magazine. *Almagro* was a romantic story, strongly influenced by the playwright Schiller. A year later her first large historical novel followed, *De graaf van Devonshire*. She wrote it in the upstairs room of her parents' house. "How happy I was while writing," she remembered at the end of her life.

The poet and critic E.J. Potgieter reviewed her work in the important magazine *De Gids*. About *Almagro* he was favorable. About *Devonshire* he was strict, but warm, so she herself felt, for he saw talent. He came to visit her in Alkmaar and became the friend of her youth. From that moment she belonged to the literary world of the Netherlands, and until 1848 *De Gids* regularly printed her stories.

Her health remained a worry. After a stay in Amsterdam, in the bustle around her first novel, she wrote to Johanna Blok that she had come home worn out, "sick and half dead," and needed rest. Sentences like that come back often in her letters. She was nervous by nature, writes Hans Reeser, who devoted an article to her in 1986. She avoided large gatherings. Only the theater and sometimes the opera got her out of the house.

A parsonage in Heiloo

At the end of 1838 Potgieter took her along to the parsonage of Heiloo, close to Alkmaar. There lived Rev. J.P. Hasebroek, who wrote himself as well. She was invited to meet his sister Betsy. Geertruida called the house a temple of friendship and letters.

In that parsonage the Réveil lived, the movement of revival that went through Protestant Netherlands in those years. People like Isaäc da Costa, Willem de Clercq and Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer were seeking a personal, warm faith, with attention to the Bible and to the poor. Through the Hasebroeks she got to know De Clercq. With Betsy she formed a friendship that lasted her whole life.

Nicolaas Beets, the minister who had written the *Camera Obscura*, saw what was going on inside her. He wrote to Hasebroek how he hoped she might become "a sister in the Lord."

More was going on. She fell in love with Hasebroek, but he did not return her feelings. Years later he did ask her to marry him after all. By then she refused.

And she got caught. The liberal circle of *De Gids* and the parsonage of Heiloo did not get along well. She belonged to both, was drawn into their quarrels and as a result often fell into psychological difficulties. Feeling at home with two groups that distrust each other takes a lot of strength.

Het huis Lauernesse

In 1840 *Het huis Lauernesse* appeared. The book is set in the sixteenth century, when the Reformation came into the Netherlands. It tells how the new teaching enters a family and puts people before choices that cost them their lives or change them.

She wrote it as someone who felt herself a daughter of the Reformation; her mother had Huguenot blood. In her novel she gave a voice to the people who had been the first in the Netherlands to suffer for their Protestant faith. When a Catholic publisher later pestered her about her text, she wrote to Beets that she had never thanked Luther so heartily for his reformation.

On October 22, 1840, she wrote the afterword. It was a need for her, it says, to give thanks openly, first of all to the God who had blessed this work, a work that she had begun in weakness and had finished.

It became her best-known book. According to her biographer it went through at least ten printings. Years later she heard from a minister in the circle of the Secession what one of his friends had said: "Het huis Lauernesse has made me better." She wrote back that precisely this appreciation did her good, because he had seen in her work what for her too was the highest thing.

Few people know that chapter eighteen was written by someone else: R.C. Bakhuizen van den Brink, a scholar from the circle of *De Gids*. Not long after, he would take up a large place in her life.

Engaged, abandoned and a voice

In the fall of 1841 Geertruida got engaged to Bakhuizen van den Brink. On November 30 she wrote about it to Beets. In him she had found the superior in mind and knowledge that she sought in a husband. "I am supremely happy." On the day of her engagement, she added, she had thrown the pen from her hand. Later she thought it a weakness that she had been so proud of his intellect.

The happiness was short. Bakhuizen had run up debts that endangered his mother's fortune. In the fall of 1842 he left for Belgium.

There she sat, in Alkmaar, engaged to a man who was gone. In her own look back she tells what happened then. It was as if a voice in her inner being whispered: "Take up your task again!"

She took the pen back. Against all probability, she wrote, what she needed had happened, without her having dared to hope for it. From those months comes the letter to Da Costa with which this chapter began. Even more than with *Lauernesse*, she wrote him, she would write this book with an eye to the Lord of the church. If under His blessing it might bring a little more warmth into the church, she would not have bought it too dearly with her bitter sorrow and her postponed hope.

I read that as the calling of her life. She received it at the moment she had lost the most.

She stayed faithful in the meantime. In January 1844 she traveled to Amsterdam, to Bakhuizen's mother, who turned seventy-five. The old woman sat alone. Two women who missed the same man: it

moved them both. To Beets she wrote that God had given her the strength to master all emotions with calm.

In those same years J.J. van Oosterzee stood in the pulpit in Alkmaar. She admired his sermons. To testify of Christ, she wrote, that was his great calling. When he left for Rotterdam in 1844, she found the Reformed church spiritually poor. The Grote Kerk (the Great Church) was cold and the sermons mediocre. She went to the Remonstrants, where the ministers W. van Oorde and M. Cohen Stuart had more to offer her, and she also went to the Lord's Supper there. Her own Reformed congregation sent someone around for an admonishing house visit. Earlier, when she had longed for such a visit, she had waited for it in vain.

The years of uncertainty dragged on. In Liège Bakhuizen met Julie Simon, and for a long time Geertruida did not know where she stood. She became estranged from many friends and even from her father.

On October 1, 1846, Bakhuizen received the letter in which she broke the engagement. In December 1847 he married Julie Simon.

"Passion I shall never feel again, for anyone," she wrote. And to Beets: "I shall never have an engagement again."

I find those moving sentences. A woman in her thirties, famous, believing and deeply disappointed, closing the door. She went on remembering him all her life. As late as 1872 she defended him in a letter to his eldest son, after *De Gids* had judged him harshly. Earnestness had not been lacking in his father, she wrote, but steadiness of character was. She asked the son to forgive her for saying this, she who had loved his father and had suffered much through his weakness.

Her friends from the Réveil did not let go of her in those years. Mrs. Groen van Prinsterer and Da Costa supported her, and in her dealings with them her own faith deepened. It kept her standing in the tightest moments, writes Reeser, and it remained her support for the rest of her life.

In Psalm 34 it says: *The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart* (Psalm 34:18). For her that road ran through friends who did not let her go.

A task for God

In 1846 the first part of *De graaf van Leycester in Nederland* appeared. It is about the English earl who at the end of the sixteenth century was given the government of the rebellious Netherlands, in the years when the young Protestant country was fighting for its existence. A whole series followed: *De vrouwen van het Leycestersche tijdvak* and *Gideon Florensz*. Only in 1855 was the cycle finished. In the minister Gideon Florensz the Schrijverslexicon (a dictionary of authors) later saw her Christian ideal: gentle, but firm.

Not everyone was pleased. Mr. Hugo Beijerman doubted her historical accuracy. Mr. Maurits Cornelis van Hall advised her to stop. She answered him on November 21, 1848, that she found that advice incomprehensible.

The heaviest objection came from fellow believers. A novel was in their eyes unconsecrated art, and a Christian should not write such a thing. Even Beets, her friend, wrote to her in those years that he was quarreling with art.

Geertruida answered him. Where would it end if only mediocrity held the field? Imagination and poetry are gifts that no one can give himself. She could not believe that God had put them in a soul to wither there, certainly not in someone whom He could sanctify

through faith. There was an art that, looking up to God, did what she saw in her conscience as her assignment. In that she was allowed to believe.

And in the afterword to her Leycester books she put it in black and white: "I have prayed down the Lord's blessing on my work." God had given her the zest for life, the strength and the courage to begin and complete this work.

Paul wrote to the church in Colossae: *And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men* (Colossians 3:23). Whatever, it says. A thick novel about the sixteenth century falls under that too.

How do you look at your own work? She sat at a writing desk in Alkmaar, with a pen and stacks of old chronicles, and asked God for His blessing on something that others did not even consider spiritual.

A drawing in a studio in The Hague

In the summer of 1846, shortly after the first part of *Leycester*, she went to The Hague to rest from her hard work. The poet S.J. van den Bergh took her to the studio of a young painter: Johannes Bosboom. He had been born on February 18, 1817, in The Hague and painted mostly church interiors, tall white spaces where light falls through large windows.

She was allowed to choose a drawing. She chose the one of *Lux in Tenebris*, light in darkness, the painting with which he had won gold in Brussels in 1842. In thanks she sent him her *Leycester*, with a dedication at the front: a keepsake of her visit to his studio.

In September Bosboom came to Alkmaar, and they saw each other often. A writer in the magazine *Onze Eeuw* later called that first meeting decisive for both of them.

The country began to talk. She asked Beets to contradict the rumor of an engagement if the occasion arose. An engagement never came again. But, she added, if she ever did have to marry after all, it would be all at once.

It became five years of waiting. There was no money for a marriage. At the end of August 1846 she moved into an upper floor on the Bierkade in Alkmaar, a small room with blue wallpaper under a green ceiling, which startled her. But she was independent there and could receive visitors. In May 1848 she moved to number 23, "my little house." Bosboom came to visit and made watercolors of the interior. To get by she wrote work that paid well, such as *Het huis Honselaarsdijk* and a commemorative book for the inauguration of King William III, both in 1849. The second part of *Leycester* had to wait, partly because her publisher was nearly bankrupt. When Van Oosterzee criticized *Honselaarsdijk*, she wrote to Da Costa that she wrote as a Christian. A little advanced perhaps, but that name she dared to bear.

She liked to grumble about Alkmaar in those years. She lived in Greenland, she wrote to Potgieter, and the spiritual temperature there was always several degrees lower than elsewhere.

The town thought differently. On the evening of April 2, 1851, the steamboat De Zaanstroom lay in front of her house on the Bierkade, fully lit. The civic guard played music, a serenade was brought, and to conclude fireworks went up into the sky. Alkmaar was saying goodbye to one of its best-known residents.

The next morning, April 3, Geertruida Toussaint stood in the Grote Kerk beside Johannes Bosboom. Rev. Van Oosterzee, whose ser-

mons she had so admired, blessed the marriage. She was thirty-eight. In the Alkmaarsche Courant she let it be known that the tribute had made a lasting impression on her.

A phrase like "never again" is spoken in the pain of the moment. Her life turned out to be wider than that phrase.

The Lord who brought you to me

After the wedding the couple moved to The Hague. They lived first on the Zuidwal, with a view over the meadows toward Rijswijk.

On February 10, 1854, she dedicated a collection of novellas to her husband. The stories carried memories of their marriage, and he had supported her while she wrote. In that dedication it says how she saw their being together. It was the Lord who had brought him to her, she wrote, to brighten this time of her life with light and cheerfulness. And they both knew it: where they wanted to thank each other, all thanks belonged first of all to Him.

They were married for thirty-five years.

Her letters to Potgieter from the first years breathe quiet contentment and steady work, wrote *Onze Eeuw*. Bosboom was greatly attached to her and could not bear any criticism of her. She had written about him shortly after they met that he was "more a heartfelt Christian than many a wig," and that his feeling for art kept him from exaggeration. She meant: a simple, warmly believing person, more than many a stuffy gentleman in a powdered wig.

In 1860 they moved to the Zuidbinnensingel, which was also called Buitenom. From that house she looked out over grass and water, with the tower of Delft in the distance.

She kept working. Between 1860 and 1877 she wrote about seventeen volumes of novels, besides shorter stories. Around 1856, her

biographer tells, she prayed that she might keep life and strength for a novel about the Portuguese Jews in the Netherlands. That book never came. That too belongs to her story: she did not get everything she asked for.

In 1862 she entered into a public conversation with the critic Conrad Busken Huet about modern theology, which put the miracles and the resurrection up for debate. She did not stand on the side of the moderns, and she did not join the party of Groen van Prinsterer either. She remained a voice of her own in the Réveil. To Van Oosterzee she once wrote that faith is a gift and doubt is a sickness. Someone who falls ill when the infection is in the air can do little about it. But he can reach for the medicine.

Her father died in 1859. In the family book she wrote that after a well-spent but toilsome life he rested and awaited the Lord on the day of the resurrection. She inherited nothing. She left everything in the pharmacy so that her brother could continue the business, and she paid her father's debts out of her own pocket, to keep his name in honor. A gravestone could only be placed almost twenty-five years later, after her seventieth birthday. It says that he rests in the hope of the resurrection. "Now I can do it," she said then.

Her mother died in 1867, eighty-three years old. A year later her brother died.

When the painter could no longer work

In 1862 Johannes Bosboom lost his twin brother and his brother's daughter. Around 1863 he fell into a deep crisis. *Onze Eeuw* describes how he began to doubt himself and feared that he would never be able to work again. At times he uttered terrible cries of lament. Reeser speaks of depressions and a serious nervous disor-

der, and of money worries that weighed on the household. In those years she earned the living with her pen.

In 1864 Geertruida herself became seriously ill.

So the woman who had so often been sick and weak herself now stood beside a man who had lost the light. How she supported him in those years, no account has been preserved. We do know that he got back on his feet. A friend, Jonkheer C.C.A. ridder van Rappard, took him to his country house Deijnzelburg and advised him to go out sketching. Bosboom drew farm barns and small scenes, and the beach at Scheveningen. After that he painted for years, though later too he knew periods in which he could make little.

The other could do no more, and she herself had a hard time too. She kept writing. Perhaps that was her way of staying upright.

Majoor Frans and a believing seventy-year-old

After 1870 she chose other subjects. Instead of the sixteenth century she now wrote about her own time. In 1870 and 1871 *De Delftsche wonderdokter* appeared. In 1874 came *Majoor Frans*, the novel that, together with *Het huis Lauernesse*, became one of her best-known books. An English translation followed in 1885.

She herself felt that the public did not always reward her for the work that had cost her the most effort. The magazines kept silent about her death, she complained in 1874 to her friend Loman, and another book had cost her far more effort than *Majoor Frans*. She was not the kind to let her own work sparkle, she wrote.

Around her seventieth birthday, in 1882, she wrote a new introduction to the third printing of *De Delftsche wonderdokter*. The reviewer Dirk Coster later called it in *De Gids* the word of a believing seventy-year-old. In it she took a stand against the anti-revolutionaries and

the socialists, and spoke a hearty and warm word to the Dutch people. Into old age she kept thinking and choosing, out of her faith.

After that her body declined quickly. A last novel plan, *De molenaar van Mühlberg*, never got off the ground. In 1884 she still wrote a piece for the tribute to her old friend Nicolaas Beets, on September 13 of that year. In 1885 Bosboom declined a retrospective exhibition of his own work, partly because his wife was ill. In that same year the edition of her complete romantic works began, which in the end ran to twenty-five volumes. Checking the proofs was hard on her.

On October 24, 1885, she put a closing note under the old afterword of *Lauernesse*. Forty-five years after the first printing she again thanked the God who had kept her standing until now. It had been a great work of the Lord, she wrote about the Reformation, even though it was done by weak, sinful people. The gift is weak, the Giver is great. And she quoted the psalmist: *I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD* (Psalm 118:17).

More than that she has actually never said about her writing.

A swift death in April

On April 13, 1886, Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint died in The Hague. She was seventy-three. She had begun on memories of her youth. They remained unfinished.

The end came almost suddenly. Bosboom was grateful that she had gone without suffering and without a sickbed, writes *Onze Eeuw*. Some friends did not understand how calmly he bore her death. For a time he was even remarkably cheerful.

On April 17 she was buried in the cemetery by the canal in The Hague. It went in great simplicity, wrote a Flemish magazine, but very many people came. The same writer called her one of the most

gifted women in Dutch literature, and said that her strength had not slackened to the end.

Bosboom lived another five years. He kept painting until a stroke made it impossible. On September 14, 1891, he died, and he was buried beside her.

A muse on the Kerkhoflaan

A year after her death a monument was placed on the grave on the Kerkhoflaan in The Hague, offered together by Dutch women. On top stands a statue of the muse of poetry, made by the sculptor Bart van Hove. On the base it says: tribute of Dutch women.

The grave is now a national monument. In Alkmaar a statue was placed in 1912, on her hundredth birthday. On September 16, 1987, a memorial stone was unveiled at Bierkade 23, the house where she lived before her marriage.

In 1881 she had written to Busken Huet that others would have to make her biography later. She left it to them. What she left behind herself were her books and hundreds of letters, which are now being put online by the Huygens Institute.

The most beautiful thing said about her is not in a book. It is on the flat stone of her grave, chiseled in the name of the man who married her after she had said she would never again become engaged. It says that here her body rests, and beneath it are his words about her: “My dearly beloved, adored wife, my glory and my pride.”

What is certain and what is told

Certain (**several independent sources**)**:** birth on September 16, 1812 in Alkmaar, as the daughter of a pharmacist and a mother of Huguenot descent; upbringing with her grandmother in Harlingen from her eighth to her eighteenth year; teacher’s examination in

1833 and a short time as a governess in Hoorn; debut with *Almagro* in 1837; contact with the Réveil circle in the parsonage of Hasebroek in Heiloo from 1838; *Het huis Lauernesse* in 1840; engagement to Bakhuizen van den Brink in 1841 and the break; the first part of *Leycester* in 1846; the meeting with Johannes Bosboom in 1846; the marriage on April 3, 1851 in Alkmaar, blessed by Van Oosterzee; the depressions of Bosboom in the sixties; death in The Hague in April 1886; the grave monument with the text by Bosboom.

From her own testimony (letters, prefaces and afterwords, and memoirs, as quoted by her biographer J. Dyserinck): the weak child, the baptismal verse of Rev. Porjeere and her conviction that this prayer was answered; what her mother told her about praying in French; the sweet stories of the aunts; her complaints about Hoorn; that writing was opium for her (letter to Johanna Blok, July 30, 1837); that she came home from Amsterdam worn out, sick and half dead; her happiness in writing *Devonshire*; the thanks to God in the afterword of *Lauernesse* (October 22, 1840) and the closing with Psalm 118 (October 24, 1885); her happiness about the engagement (to Beets, November 30, 1841); the inner voice that said she must take up her task again; the letter to Da Costa of November 1843 about *Leycester* as work that God asked of her; the strength God gave her on the visit to Bakhuizen's mother (to Beets, January 30, 1844); her defense of art to Beets; the prayer for the Lord's blessing on her work; her words that she would never feel passion again and never become engaged again; the dedication to Bosboom of February 10, 1854; her judgment of Bosboom as a heartfelt Christian; the prayer for strength for the novel about the Portuguese Jews; her words about her father and about faith and doubt. I consulted the biography by Dyserinck in the chapters that are on DBNL. I have not had the letters themselves in hand, and the quotations are in part retold in contemporary Dutch.

Unconfirmed or based on one source: her unreturned love for Hasebroek and his later proposal (Reeser; the yearbook also mentions the infatuation); the admonishing house visit by the Reformed congregation after her going to communion with the Remonstrants (only the yearbook, without a date; in the previous version of this chapter I called it a reprimand); her serious illness in 1864, the decline after 1882, the death of Bosboom's twin brother and his daughter in 1862 and the unfinished plan for *De molenaar van Mühlberg* (only Reeser, 1986); the steamboat, the serenade and the fireworks on the evening before the wedding (only the yearbook); the cheerfulness of Bosboom after her death and the name of the friend who helped him back on his feet (only *Onze Eeuw*). The nickname Truitje I have not found again in the sources opened. Reeser thinks that her many complaints were probably mostly psychological in nature, and that after the illness of 1864 she came across as calmer. That is his judgment; it has not been established.

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

- *The departure of Bakhuizen.* Her biographer gives the fall of 1842, the Schrijverslexicon October 1843. The letter to Da Costa is from November 1843.
- *The break.* Most sources give 1846, with October 1 as the day Bakhuizen received her letter; Reeser gives 1847.
- *Governess in Hoorn.* Her biographer gives May 1834 to early 1835. In the previous version of this chapter it said May 1833; that was the year of her examination.
- *The first acquaintance with Heiloo.* Reeser writes that Potgieter brought her there at the end of 1838; her biographer that Hasebroek invited her to meet his sister.

- *De graaf van Devonshire.* 1838 according to most sources; a single reference work gives 1839.
- *The drawing by Bosboom.* *Onze Eeuw* writes that she was allowed to choose and chose *Lux in Tenebris*; her biographer that he gave her a drawing for that painting.
- *The afterword with the prayer for blessing.* Her biographer quotes it for the Leycester books, without a date; to which part it belongs I have not been able to see.
- *Majoor Frans.* 1874 according to her biographer and Literatuurgeschiedenis.org; a single source gives 1875.
- *Her day of death.* April 13, 1886 according to almost all sources; a single one gives April 14.
- *The first name of her teacher in Harlingen.* My notes give Froukje and Sjouke Herbig; in the story therefore only the surname appears.

Interpretation: that God called her to write novels and that He brought Bosboom to her is her own conviction. I believe it along with her. How she helped her husband through his dark years we do not know; the sources I opened are silent about that.

Sources for this chapter

1. J. Dyserinck, Anna Louisa Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint, chapter on youth and debut (DBNL)
2. J. Dyserinck, same book, chapter on Lauernesse and Bakhuizen (DBNL)
3. J. Dyserinck, same book, chapter on Leycester and Bosboom (DBNL)
4. J. Dyserinck, same book, chapter on marriage and The Hague (DBNL)
5. Biografisch lemma Anna Louisa Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint (DBNL)

6. Schrijverslexicon: Bosboom-Toussaint, Anna (DBNL)
7. Literatuurgeschiedenis.org: A.L.G. Bosboom-Toussaint
8. Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde 1988, gedenksteen Bierkade 23 (DBNL)
9. Hans Reeser, Herdenken en herlezen, Literatuur 1986 (DBNL)
10. Onze Eeuw 1917, over Johannes Bosboom (DBNL)
11. De Vlaamsche School 1886, in memoriam (DBNL)
12. De Gids 1912, review of the centenary edition (DBNL)
13. Rijksmonumentenregister 476060, grafmonument Bosboom-Toussaint
14. Huygens ING, letters of Geertruida Bosboom-Toussaint
15. Shewrote (Radboud Universiteit), persoonsrecord Bosboom-Toussaint
16. Bible.com, Psalm 34:19 (NKJV)
17. Bible.com, Kolossenzen 3:23 (NKJV)
18. Bible.com, Psalm 118:17 (NKJV)

Anna Reynvaan: the woman who walked the wards at night

The Buitengasthuis in Amsterdam, the 1880s. In the small hours of the night, a woman of about forty walked along the wards. She had come to see whether the night shift was awake. She had introduced that night shift herself, and she checked it herself too. Some of the staff thought she went too far. According to her first biographer, they threatened to "break her legs."

She kept walking.

The woman's name was Johanna Paulina Reynvaan, but everyone called her Anna. She came from a well-to-do Amsterdam family, had never needed to learn a trade, and was already past thirty when she began her first training. She became one of the first professional nurses in the Netherlands. She helped set up a training program that became a model for others, co-founded the first professional journal, and stood at the cradle of the first professional association. Anyone who studies nursing in the Netherlands today still comes across her name. Every year, a lecture in Amsterdam carries it.

She did not have it easy. Her father held her back for years. In the hospital she worked among people who wanted nothing to do with her plans. She pressed on, for patients who were poor and often would not get better.

She had three words for it herself. She called it "the work of serving love."

It began in a house where a daughter was mainly expected to marry.

A daughter with a French governess

Anna Reynvaan was born on April 5, 1844, in Amsterdam, on the Doelenstraat. Her father, Apolonius Johannes Reynvaan, was a tobacco merchant, and he had money. Her mother was Maria Cornelia van de Poll. Ten children were born in the family, and six of them grew up.

In 1854 her mother died. Anna was about ten. In the years after that she took care of her younger brothers and sisters. Her father remarried, to Catharina Hachmeester Eekhout, and had four more children with her.

Anna was taught at home by a French governess, the usual path for a girl of her class. There was embroidery and music, and on weekends the family drove by carriage to the newly opened Vondelpark. She was expected to marry. She did not. Like many women in her position, she stayed on in her parents' house as an unmarried daughter.

One thing was there early. An English nursing journal that wrote about her in her own lifetime says that from childhood she wanted to care for the sick, and that in her large family she often stepped in when someone was ill.

Beyond that we know little about her youth. There is a biography from 1963 by M. van Brink-Poort, and the Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon (the online dictionary of Dutch women) draws on it. I have not found a diary or letters from those years. But she did leave something behind in which she speaks for herself, and I will come to that shortly.

"No" in 1870

In 1870 the Franco-Prussian War broke out. Anna was twenty-six. Red Cross ambulances left the Netherlands for the front, and she helped pack the crates of bandages that were sent along. She wanted more. She wanted to go to Germany with the sisters who went to nurse the wounded. According to the Vrouwenlexicon, she was inspired by a relative.

Her father refused. She stayed at home.

A grown woman who needs her father's permission to do something good: to us that is strange. In 1870 it was normal. Paid work outside the home did not suit a daughter of the well-off middle class. Charity was fine, but going out into the world to wash and bandage strangers was something else. In the Netherlands of that time, nursing was work for two kinds of people. On one side were the religious: sisters in Catholic hospitals and, in Protestant circles, deaconesses. On the other side were the untrained menservants and maids in the large city hospitals. In neither group was there a place for a lady of the Amsterdam middle class.

That "no" of 1870 stood for eight years.

What Clara was looking for

What went on inside her during those eight years? She has not told us directly. But in 1892 she wrote a short book, *Zuster Clara* (Sister

Clara), about a girl who becomes a nurse in a city hospital. In the preface she says that her sketches are "all based on truth." The book is partly her own story. Clara is not Anna, the dates do not match her life, and so I do not read it as a diary. But anyone who wants to know how it felt will find nothing closer.

Clara van Doorne is one of the many daughters of a rich merchant in the capital. She has a restless energy and a gift for organizing. As her younger sisters grow up, there is little left for her to do at home. She is bored. She suggests doing something for others, and her father waves it away as a pastime. A daughter leaves the house to marry, he thinks, and for nothing else. Again and again she hears the same sentence: young girls can make themselves useful enough at home.

Then, at a German spa, Clara meets a nurse named Louise, a cheerful woman who comes every day to walk with a sick girl. Louise tells her about her training in a city hospital, how hard it was, and how glad she was to get her diploma. In her, Clara sees what serving love is. That night she cannot sleep. Her own life suddenly seems insignificant to her. Toward morning she falls asleep, and by then she has made her decision.

What she was looking for, Clara says herself later, when she reports to the hospital: to ease the suffering of others, and a purpose for her life.

A training course for ordinary women

In 1878 something changed. That year a training course began in Amsterdam for lay nurses, women who were neither nuns nor deaconesses. It was led by Jeltje de Bosch Kemper, who would later become one of Anna's closest allies. The course lasted a year, and whoever passed was allowed to wear a small white cross.

Anna enrolled. She was about thirty-four.

In Ecclesiastes it says: *To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven* (Ecclesiastes 3:1). For Anna Reynvaan that season came late, after eight years of waiting.

It did not go easily at home. In *Zuster Clara*, the daughter gets her permission only after a long struggle with her family, who have great objections to work in a city hospital. Anna, too, had to wait a long time: she was thirty-six when her father finally agreed. It is also told that in those days she secretly slipped out of the house at night to work while her father slept, and that her sisters helped her do it. Family and acquaintances sent threatening letters telling her to stop. She put them aside.

In her book she describes the day of departure. Clara wants to go alone. At the farewell she holds herself together, and to the coachman she says: "To the hospital!" Only in the carriage does she let her tears go. Before she arrives she has pulled herself together again, and she walks in cheerfully. The building looks more like a prison than a home. She sleeps in an attic with eleven other nurses. And for the first time she puts on the simple dress of a nursing sister, in complete earnest, as the sign of the life that now begins.

In 1880 Anna earned her diploma, the seventh woman to pass. With that she was one of the very first professionally trained nurses in the Netherlands.

What she saw in the Binnengasthuis

Anna did the practical part of her training in the Binnengasthuis, the old city hospital in the middle of Amsterdam. The Vrouwenlexicon describes what she saw there briefly and bluntly. The care of the patients was poor. It lay in the hands of untrained, rough menservants and maids.

After her diploma she first took a post in the Burgerziekenhuis, a newly opened private hospital that led the way in the new style of nursing. She gained experience with operations there. She could have done well there. She did not stay. It did not suit her, writes the Amsterdam Museum, because she wanted to care for poor patients.

She wanted to go to the municipal hospitals. They lagged furthest behind, and that is where the poor lay. In 1881 she offered her services to the Binnengasthuis again, and she was accepted. She had plans to improve the care, but they met with strong resistance, including from the hospital's management.

You may wonder why she did not stay where things were already going well. She came from a rich family, and an easier place was within reach. In her book she has Clara dream of work as a district nurse, going from house to house: living "for and in the households of the poor." That is where her heart lay.

In Proverbs it says: *He who oppresses the poor reproaches his Maker, But he who honors Him has mercy on the needy* (Proverbs 14:31). Anna Reynvaan went to the wards where the poor lay.

The hospital outside the city

In those years she got to know the physician Jacob van Deventer, the director of the Buitengasthuis. He taught her and three friends the things they had missed in their training. In 1882 Anna moved over to his hospital.

The Buitengasthuis lay outside the old city and was meant for people nobody was eager to have at home: the incurably ill, the insane and patients with contagious diseases. It was an old and gloomy building. In the winter of 1882 into 1883, the Amsterdam hospitals were reorganized. At Van Deventer's urging, the city council appointed women to lead the nursing.

In Van Deventer she had found someone who wanted what she wanted. On May 17, 1883, she became deputy director. She was thirty-nine. She went to live on the grounds, and there she would spend the rest of her working life.

She began with things you could see. The staff got uniforms, and the patients got hospital clothing. Plants and flowers appeared on the wards, because she believed they helped healing. A night shift was introduced, so that the sick were not left to fend for themselves at night. She checked that night shift herself: in the small hours she went round to see whether everyone was awake.

Not everyone was happy about this. A few staff members threatened to harm her. She would not be driven away.

That did not make her hard. Together with the Van Deventers, she turned the gloomy house into a friendlier place, for the nurses and for the sick. She worked on friendship and trust among the sisters. On Saint Nicholas Day and at Christmas she organized a party for the staff. And slowly something of the dread that poor Amsterdammers felt toward the hospitals wore away. So a contemporary described it in 1895.

A course for cultivated women

Together with Van Deventer, Anna set up a training program for nurses in the Buitengasthuis. They divided the tasks. Van Deventer taught the theory, and Anna the practical part: on the ward, with the sick themselves.

The course lasted two to three years. Only "cultivated women" were admitted. They lived in the hospital and earned 125 guilders a year. Slowly these trained nurses took the place of the untrained ward maids and ward servants. The program became a model for other training programs in the Netherlands. Anna was proud of her sis-

ters, the English nursing journal wrote. Anyone trained by her was in great demand elsewhere.

What she thought about learning is found in a letter that she has Clara write in her book to a friend who also wants to become a nurse. Come only, Clara writes, if you come with the firm intention to learn. You do not become a nursing sister by yourself. You have to be formed for it.

Perhaps her greatest work lies here. She herself was one of the first with a diploma. Now she trained others, and they in turn went further. A profession does not come from one person. It grows because people pass it on.

She did not write a textbook for it. Her teaching was practical, at the bedside. What she did write appeared mainly in a journal, and in that one book which was not a textbook.

A journal, a conference, an association

In 1890 Anna and Jeltje de Bosch Kemper founded the Maandblad voor Ziekenverpleging (Monthly for Nursing), the first professional journal for nursing in the Netherlands. Both of them wrote for it regularly. Anna wrote, among other things, about preventing infections and about working sterilely. She sat on the editorial board until her death. From 1914 the journal was called Tijdschrift voor Ziekenverpleging, and it still exists.

In 1892 the two women organized the first conference on nursing in the Netherlands: the Samenkomst van Belangstellenden in Ziekenverpleging (the Gathering of Those Interested in Nursing), with Jeltje de Bosch Kemper as chair. Nurses were let in at a discount, but were not allowed to speak themselves. The floor belonged to doctors and administrators. Even a deputy director like Anna had

trouble being heard, writes the Museum voor de Verpleegkunde (the Dutch museum of nursing).

Out of that gathering came, in 1893, the Nederlandsche Bond voor Ziekenverpleging (the Dutch Nursing Association), the first professional association. The Association dealt with training and exams. Anna took a seat on its board.

Her views were conservative, and I say so honestly. For Anna, nursing was a calling, a women's profession, and the nurse stood under the doctor. She thought pay and working hours less important. Later generations of nurses thought differently and fought for better conditions. For her, a good nurse needed two things besides professional knowledge: the willingness to set herself aside, and mercy. The work for the patient always came first.

Sister Bertha and Sister Clara

In 1891 a novel appeared that made Anna angry. The author was the Amsterdam physician Arnold Aletrino, and the book was called *Zuster Bertha* (Sister Bertha). It was about a nurse in a hospital. The profession came across as disappointing, and the story, around a doctor who fell in love with the nurse, ended in despair.

Anna felt the book sullied her profession. In those years she and others were trying to persuade respectable young women to become nurses. Such a book threatened "to destroy in one blow" what others had built up with great effort, she wrote. She admired how skillfully it was written. But she missed higher, better, purer principles in it. Sister Bertha lived in and for herself alone.

Her answer appeared in 1892, under the title *Zuster Clara. Schetsen uit het leven eener verpleegster in een stedelijk gasthuis* (Sister Clara: Sketches from the life of a nurse in a city hospital). She signed the preface with her initials, J.P.R. She had written the sketches earlier,

on various occasions, and now she put them together. She hoped they would find their way to the heart of everyone who felt desire and calling for the work of serving love, in the hospital and outside it.

What she meant by that work is already in the first chapter. At six o'clock the clock of the Vondelkerk strikes and the day begins on the ward: washing, dressing, bandaging. Behind a screen in the corner lies Mina, who died quietly early in the morning. Sister Clara washes her, puts a clean nightgown on her, braids her hair and lays her head on the pillow. Then she weaves a wreath of wildflowers and greenery.

While she works, Clara thinks of the others she has seen die. Of Dora, a girl of two with croup, whose little bed she decorated with flowers. And of Willem, a boy of eight who never had visitors and had no family. The sisters became his family. Reynvaan calls him a "little creature of God." When he died, the head nurse asked for flowers, because "our Willem" was not to have less than the others.

She never wrote a theory of nursing. She wrote about flowers for a dead child with no family.

The book follows Clara further. She works the night shift in the barracks for contagious diseases. She assists with the amputation of a young patient's leg and comforts him beforehand. She plays the piano and accompanies the sick when they sing. She receives a reprimand from the physician-director that costs her bitter tears. She passes the White Cross exam and wears the little white cross. When she says goodbye after two years, she says: "A part of my heart stays behind here."

The magazine *De Gids* reviewed both books that same year. The reviewer understood what the deputy director of the Buitengasthuis wanted: to show that a nurse in the hospital could find "satisfaction

and fulfillment." He did find her book one-sided. All the nurses, doctors and patients in her story were ideal, and you read almost nothing about struggle and abuse. He spoke of an enormous misunderstanding between the two writers. He added that he had deep respect for the work of love in the hospitals, and himself saw nursing as a calling.

The book became a great success, writes the Amsterdam Museum.

What did she believe?

Here I must be honest with you as a reader. This is a book about Dutch people who followed God, and I have included Anna Reynvaan in it. When I went looking for her faith, I found no church, no confession and no minister.

The Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon says nothing about her church or her faith. Neither do the Museum voor de Verpleegkunde and the other biographies. I looked for a link with the Réveil, the Protestant revival movement of the nineteenth century, and found none. She was certainly not a deaconess. She deliberately chose the new training for lay nurses, outside the church institutions. She did later sit on the board of a foundation for Christian institutions for the care of the mentally disabled.

And then there is that book again. Because in *Zuster Clara* there is a chapter that I had not expected in a book meant to promote the profession.

Clara comes back from leave, and the work weighs on her. She sees only poverty and suffering. She is irritated by the cheerfulness of the other sisters. Her mind rebels against what Reynvaan calls the terrifying injustice of human existence. Trust in a higher government that orders and guides the fate of people no longer comforts

her. She prefers to immerse herself in the darkest philosophies of life, those in which only matter exists.

I think only someone who knows it would write it down like this.

Clara comes through. No sermon helps her. She is transferred to the ward she dreaded most, the one for nervous patients. There she sees how the doctor deals with his patients, honestly and warmly, without promising anything he cannot deliver. She is ashamed of her coldness. And then comes the sentence that I find the heart of the book: Sister Clara had learned "to lose herself by giving herself to others."

Afterward the doctor calls her "our cheerful sister."

Later, when the suffering on the ward sometimes brings back her old gloom, Clara holds on to what she now believes. Wisdom and love govern the order of the world, Reynvaan writes. The existence of a human being is not left to the whims of a capricious fate.

You will not find a confession like the one you hear in a church. The name of Jesus does not appear. But here someone is writing who knows what doubt feels like, and who lets her Clara find trust again at the bedside of sick people.

Jesus told of people who visited someone who was sick and did not even know they were serving Him by doing so. Anna Reynvaan walked at night past the beds of people nobody wanted, and she called it serving love. I will not make more of it than that. You may look for yourself at what she did, and listen to what she let her Clara say.

Twelve and a half years

In 1893 the Buitengasthuis closed. The work moved to the new Wilhelmina Gasthuis, which she had helped prepare, and Anna

went along as deputy director. Van Deventer left in those years for Meerenberg, the large asylum, and got a successor. Her health began to fail her. She had gallstones.

In 1895 she celebrated twelve and a half years as deputy director. That day her rooms were so full of flowers that they looked like a garden. Queen Regent Emma and the city government of Amsterdam sent word. The British association of matrons made her an honorary member. And a fund was set up that took her name, the J.P. Reynvaan Fund, meant for nurses who fell into financial need through illness or old age. A fitting gift for someone who cared little about pay herself, but did see what happened to a nurse who could no longer work.

A year later she had to stop. On August 15, 1896, she reluctantly laid down her work. Her weak health forced her to take things easier, she said. She was fifty-two.

Across the street from the hospital

Anna did not go far. She moved to a home in the Eerste Helmersstraat, diagonally across from the Wilhelmina Gasthuis. Now and then she still did volunteer work there, while more and more often she had to stay in bed.

She stayed active. She wrote for the Maandblad and stayed on the board of the Association. With her successor Lientje Kruysse she founded, in 1899, an association for directors and deputy directors of hospitals. She sat on the boards of various societies, among them the Amsterdam district nursing and the Vereeniging Toevlucht voor Onbehuisden (the Refuge for the Homeless society). An English nursing journal called her in those years a noble pioneer. Her words and deeds had led many educated women to become nurses. When

the exhibition De Vrouw 1813-1913 (Woman 1813-1913) was held in 1913, Anna led the committee that set up the nursing section.

In 1914 she turned seventy. Then she withdrew from public life.

March 1920

Anna Reynvaan died on March 19, 1920, in Amsterdam, at the age of seventy-five, in the days when the Spanish flu was going around. She was buried in the family grave at the Zorgvlied cemetery.

After her death, obituaries appeared in the Tijdschrift voor Ziekenverpleging, the journal she had helped found, and on March 27 in De Groene Amsterdammer, an Amsterdam weekly.

A face on the gate

What remained of her? Her likeness was placed on the entrance gate of the Wilhelmina Gasthuis, and the nursing school of that hospital was given her name. In the late 1950s a street in Amsterdam-Slotervaart was named after her. Streets elsewhere in the country carry her name too.

Since 1999 the Amsterdam academic hospital, the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences) and the journal she co-founded have held the Anna Reynvaan Lecture every year. A well-known nurse from the Netherlands or abroad speaks there. Two prizes are awarded, one for research and one for practice, to nurses who make patient care better.

On the old site of the Wilhelmina Gasthuis, where there is no longer a hospital, stands a bronze lamppost three meters tall. The artwork is called Voor de Verpleging (For Nursing). The light falls on a lectern with two women in relief: Jeltje de Bosch Kemper and Anna Reynvaan. In 2023 a memorial plaque was added in the small park on the Pesthuislaan, designed by a fifteen-year-old schoolgirl.

A lantern, on the spot where she walked past the wards in the small hours.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on April 5, 1844, in Amsterdam; father a tobacco merchant; death of her mother when Anna was about ten; home schooling by a French governess; her father's refusal in 1870; the training for lay nurses from 1878 and the diploma in 1880; work in the Burgerziekenhuis and the Binnengasthuis; appointment as deputy director of the Buitengasthuis on May 17, 1883; uniforms, the night shift and the training program with Jacob van Deventer; the Maandblad voor Ziekenverpleging (1890); the conference of 1892 and the Association of 1893; *Zuster Clara* (1892) as a reply to *Zuster Bertha*; the move to the Wilhelmina Gasthuis (1893); the fund of 1895; the end of her work in 1896; the exhibition of 1913; death on March 19, 1920, during the Spanish flu; the Anna Reynvaan Lecture.

Only from her own pen (*Zuster Clara*, 1892, opened on DBNL): the preface with "all based on truth," the verdict on Sister Bertha and "the work of serving love"; Clara's home, her father and the sentence about young girls; the meeting with Sister Louise; the departure for the hospital; the laying out of Mina, Dora and Willem; the rebellion and the turnaround; the sentence about wisdom and love; the letter about learning; the farewell. This is a story, not a biography. The Vrouwenlexicon and the Amsterdam Museum call it partly autobiographical, and Clara's background resembles Anna's, but the dates differ: Clara meets Louise in the summer of 1887, while Anna began her training in 1878. Which scenes Anna lived through herself can no longer be determined. I opened the chapters that DBNL shows; that edition has omissions, and I was not able to open every chapter. The quotations are in part retold in

contemporary Dutch. The phrase "to destroy in one blow" I quote via the Vrouwenlexicon; in the part of the preface that I saw myself, it did not appear.

Only from one source or from her first biography: the threat from staff members (Van Brink-Poort, via the Vrouwenlexicon); her care for younger brothers and sisters, the length of the course, the pay of 125 guilders and the admission of only "cultivated women" (Museum voor de Verpleegkunde); the Doelenstraat, the embroidery, the music and the Vondelpark, the secret night work, the threatening letters from family, living on the grounds, the plants and flowers on the wards, her articles on infections, her words at the farewell in 1896, the Eerste Helmersstraat, the volunteer work and the long spells in bed, the board work (district nursing, Toevlucht voor Onbehuisden, Christian institutions for the mentally disabled), the success of *Zuster Clara* and the grave at Zorgvlied (only the Amsterdam Museum, in a tribute from 2024); her early wish to nurse, the bandage crates of 1870, the lessons from Van Deventer to her and three friends, the appointment by the city council, the parties on Saint Nicholas Day and at Christmas, the flowers and the Queen Regent at the jubilee, the honorary membership of the British Matrons' Council and Van Deventer's departure for Meerenberg (only the English nursing journal *The Nursing Record*, later *The British Journal of Nursing*, in three pieces by a Dutch correspondent from about 1893, 1896 and 1901; the exact date is not on the pages I opened). That the obituaries appeared, I know from the Vrouwenlexicon's bibliography; I have not read them.

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

- *The training of 1878.* The Vrouwenlexicon calls it the training of the White Cross; the entry on De Bosch Kemper speaks of

the Vereeniging voor Ziekenverpleging (Association for Nursing).

- *How she left home.* The Amsterdam Museum and a local newspaper write that her father finally gave her permission when she was thirty-six. The Museum voor de Verpleegkunde tells that she went without permission, that her sisters secretly helped her out of the house at night, and that her father accepted her choice only later. The English nursing journal writes that family circumstances made it possible for her in 1881. Which version is right, I have not been able to establish; perhaps there is some truth in all three.
- *The year of the diploma.* 1880 according to the Vrouwenlexicon; the English nursing journal has her training begin in 1881.
- *The Franco-Prussian War.* The Museum voor de Verpleegkunde says she wanted to join a Red Cross ambulance service; the Vrouwenlexicon says a relative inspired her.
- *To the Buitengasthuis.* 1882 according to the Vrouwenlexicon; another reference work gives 1883. The Amsterdam Museum calls her, from 1887, the first nursing director in the Netherlands; I found that nowhere else.
- *The conference.* 1892 according to the Vrouwenlexicon and the Museum voor de Verpleegkunde; one reference work gives 1891.
- *The farewell.* August 15, 1896 according to the Vrouwenlexicon, August 16 according to the Amsterdam Museum.
- *The association of directors.* 1899 according to the Vrouwenlexicon; the Museum voor de Verpleegkunde gives no year.
- *Her day of death and age.* March 19, 1920 according to all sources except the Amsterdam Museum, which gives October 19. Two sources give seventy-six years; born in April 1844, she was seventy-five.

- *The lecture.* Since 1999 according to two sources, since 1998 according to the Amsterdam Museum.

Unconfirmed: any link with the Réveil. I have not found a textbook or handbook from her hand.

Interpretation: about her personal faith and church ties, the biographies say nothing. She was not a deaconess. That she saw nursing as a calling is certain. What I tell about doubt and trust comes from her story about Clara, and she never said that Clara's struggle was her own. I read that into it, and I say so.

Sources for this chapter

1. Annet Mooij, "Reynvaan, Johanna Paulina", Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland (Huygens ING)
2. Museum voor de Verpleegkunde, "Anna Reynvaan"
3. Amsterdam Museum, Vrouwen van Amsterdam, "Aanbeden door verpleegsters en artsen" (2024)
4. De Gids 1892, Bibliographie: review of Zuster Clara (via DBNL)
5. DBNL, auteurspagina J.P. Reynvaan
6. Lof van de lezing: Anna Reynvaanlezing (via DBNL)
7. Shewrote (Radboud Universiteit), Johanna Paulina Reynvaan
8. Rodi, "Terug in de tijd: Johanna Reynvaanstraat"
9. Wikisage, "Anna Reynvaan"
10. Leidraad bij de godsdienstige opleiding tot vorming van Diaconessen (Arnhem, ca. 1891), Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht
11. J.P. Reynvaan, Zuster Clara (1892), voorwoord (DBNL)
12. J.P. Reynvaan, Zuster Clara, chapter I (DBNL)
13. J.P. Reynvaan, Zuster Clara, chapter II (DBNL)
14. J.P. Reynvaan, Zuster Clara, chapter III (DBNL)
15. J.P. Reynvaan, Zuster Clara, intrede in het gasthuis (DBNL)

16. J.P. Reynvaan, Zuster Clara, chapter V (DBNL)
17. J.P. Reynvaan, Zuster Clara, chapter VI (DBNL)
18. J.P. Reynvaan, Zuster Clara, chapter VII (DBNL)
19. J.P. Reynvaan, Zuster Clara, chapter VIII (DBNL)
20. J.P. Reynvaan, Zuster Clara, slot (DBNL)
21. The Nursing Record, "Madame Reijnvaan at the City Hospital, Amsterdam" (RCN-archief, deel 10, p. 66)
22. The Nursing Record, bericht uit Amsterdam van december 1895 (RCN-archief, deel 16, p. 6)
23. The British Journal of Nursing, over de Nederlandse verpleging (RCN-archief, deel 27, p. 335)
24. Bible.com, Prediker 3:1 (NKJV)
25. Bible.com, Spreuken 14:31 (NKJV)

Titus Brandsma: the mystic with the train pass

It was a Tuesday evening in January 1942, around half past seven, when the door of cell 577 closed behind him. The bolts slid into place. Father Titus Brandsma, sixty years old, a professor in Nijmegen, stood in a cubicle less than two meters wide in the penitentiary at Scheveningen.

Nothing had been set out for him. He was given a jug of water, a washbasin, a mug of milk and a roll for the next morning. There was no sheet. He rolled up his towel as a pillow, kept his socks on because he did not trust the straw mattresses and the woolen blankets, and lay down. He did not find it tragic, he wrote a week later. Rather comical. "It was no Inferno, my little cell no. 577."

In the days that followed he made himself at home. On the folding table he spread a newspaper as a tablecloth. From wrapping paper and a cigar nail he made a little altar, with three pictures from his prayer book: Christ on the cross, Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross. On January 27 he wrote down what he had found there. He was alone, yes. But, he wrote, "never was Our Dear Lord so near to me."

Ten years earlier this man had been rector magnificus of the Catholic University in Nijmegen. He was a professor, a journalist, a founder of schools and magazines, and an adviser to dozens of Catholic newspapers. Now he sat alone, far from the trains in which he had crossed the country. Half a year later he would die in the Dachau concentration camp.

Titus Brandsma was a Catholic friar, and his church declared him a saint in 2022. Not every reader of this book will feel at home with that word. But anyone who reads his life sees a man who loved his Lord, who told the truth when that was dangerous, and who kept praying in his cell. That is why he is in this book.

It began on a farm in Friesland, the province in the far north.

Five of the six children

Anno Sjoerd Brandsma was born on February 23, 1881, in Oegeklooster, near Bolsward. His parents were Titus Brandsma and Tjitsje Postma. They had a dairy farm and made their own cheese. It was an old Frisian farming family, and Catholic, in a region where Catholics were socially and economically behind.

There were six children, four girls and two boys. Anno was the second youngest. Five of the six chose the religious life. His father was active in local politics and worked for the Frisian language and culture. Anno carried that love for Frisian with him all his life.

He went to primary school in Bolsward. In 1892 he left for the Franciscans' grammar school in Megen, in the province of Brabant. He was eleven. Friesland was far away, and the boy stayed in the south for six years. He was not strong. His stomach in particular acted up, so badly that his father threatened to take him out of school. With extra rest and better food it improved again.

In Megen he learned an English poem by Longfellow, about a monk who lies kneeling on a stone floor and prays that he may learn to deny himself when the trial comes. Almost fifty years later, in a cell, it came back to him.

At seventeen he chose the order of the Carmelites.

His father's name

In September 1898 he began his novitiate in the Carmelite monastery in Boxmeer. There he received a religious name. He became Titus, after his father.

A year later, in October 1899, he took his first vows. In Boxmeer, too, he fell ill from overwork, and one of his teachers, Father Hubertus Driessen, sat at his bedside regularly. On June 17, 1905, he was ordained a priest, in the Sint-Jan, the cathedral in 's-Hertogenbosch.

The Carmelites saw that this young friar had a good mind. Driessen brought him to Rome, to the Gregorian, a papal university, to study philosophy. The busy life there nearly became too much for him. In 1907 he had a stomach hemorrhage and hovered between life and death. He pulled through, and in 1909 he earned his doctorate in philosophy.

He never got rid of that stomach. Remember that when you see him crossing the country by train in a moment.

Fourteen years in Oss

From 1909 to 1923 Titus taught at the Carmelite house of studies in Oss, where he trained young friars. In those fourteen years he did much more besides.

He became editor-in-chief of the local paper *De Stad Oss* and gave it a new look. He founded the magazine *Carmelrozen* (Carmel Roses),

about the life of faith and spirituality. In *De Gelderlander*, a regional newspaper, he wrote about the history of devotion in the Netherlands. And he started a school in Oss, with its own library. That school grew into the foundation that is now called Carmel College.

One line runs through all that work. Catholics in the Netherlands had long been behind, in education, in the press, in society. Titus wanted them to take part, with good schools and good newspapers. Radboud University calls him a champion of Catholic emancipation and of press freedom. He also argued that Frisian should have a place in schools.

"The mystic with the train pass"

In 1923 the Catholic University was founded in Nijmegen, the forerunner of today's Radboud University. Titus was there from the very first hour. He became professor of philosophy and also taught the history of mysticism in the Netherlands. He lived first on the Kronenburgersingel and later in the Carmelite monastery on the Doddendaal, which he had helped to set up.

Mysticism was his great love. By that he did not mean anything vague or airy. He cared about the old writers who described how a person can know God closely. And he held that this was for everyone, including people with a busy job. Prayer is life, he said, and not an oasis in the desert of life. No separation should come in our heart between God and the world.

He gave lectures all over the country and traveled by train from city to city. The writer Godfried Bomans, who had studied in Nijmegen, gave him a nickname because of this that stuck: "the mystic with the train pass."

It was meant lovingly, and it was true. Titus sat on boards, founded societies, wrote articles and gave lectures. He did not give his stu-

dents dry knowledge, Pope John Paul II said later. He shared with them what he himself lived on.

Not everyone in Nijmegen was equally happy with all that activity. Colleagues felt that his many commitments left him too little time for his academic work. University historians call his contribution to philosophy modest, but his articles on mysticism groundbreaking. It seems he preferred to give his time to people rather than to books. I find it hard to blame him for that.

Rector for one year

In the academic year 1932-1933 Titus Brandsma was rector magnificus of the university. On October 17, 1932, he gave the address on the university's anniversary. He spoke about the concept of God: how do people know God? Our image of God does not stand fixed like a rock, he said. Every age must seek the Eternal anew.

In that address he also said something about what was happening in Europe. Racial theory and totalitarian thinking he called a kind of filling of the emptiness that had arisen in many lives now that faith had disappeared from them. It was 1932. Hitler was not yet in power in Germany.

He saw the danger early. In his lectures he talked with his students about National Socialism. In 1936 he joined the Comité van Waakzaamheid (the Vigilance Committee), a group of intellectuals who warned against it. It was a secular organization, not a church one. That says something about him: when it mattered, he looked for allies wherever he found them.

That openness went far. He worked for the ecumenical movement, for bringing the churches closer together, loyal to his own church and honest toward the other. A Protestant minister called him "our dear brother in Christ" and a *mysterium gratiae*, a mystery of grace.

A friar among the journalists

In 1935 Titus traveled to Ireland. He stayed in Carmelite monasteries in Dublin and Kinsale to prepare for a series of lectures in the United States. At the end of that year he was given a new task. The Dutch bishops appointed him spiritual adviser to the association of Catholic journalists.

He took the task seriously. He worked to renew the Catholic daily papers and to improve journalists' working conditions. He started a training course for journalists, which was further developed after his death. More than thirty Catholic newspapers had him as an adviser.

On October 3, 1939, he was made a knight in the Order of the Netherlands Lion. A little more than half a year later the Germans invaded the country.

From May 1940 everything changed. The Catholic journalists' association was banned and press freedom disappeared. Titus urged the bishops to speak out against the persecution of the Jews. In 1941 the occupiers demanded that Jewish children be sent away from Catholic schools. In August Titus wrote to the head teachers about it. He called it a crying injustice and an attack on the mission of the church itself. The church, he wrote, makes no distinction in its work by sex, race or people.

The prophet Micah summed up what God asks: *to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God* (Micah 6:8). For Titus Brandsma, doing justly took on a face in 1941: Jewish children who had to leave school.

It did not stop at letters. That same year a young man from his circle was picked up by the Gestapo. Titus drew up a petition and had it signed by people of weight, because the Germans were sensitive to

big names. On December 20 the boy was released. His sister told later that the friar stood at the Nijmegen station that day to wait for the family.

Fourteen newsrooms in January

At the end of 1941 the NSB, the Dutch party that collaborated with the occupiers, wanted to place advertisements in Catholic newspapers. In the 1930s the bishops had already forbidden Catholics to become members of the NSB. Archbishop Jan de Jong of Utrecht asked Titus to visit the management of the Catholic daily papers and explain to them that such advertisements must not be printed.

Titus set out. By train, as always. In the first weeks of January 1942 he visited fourteen newsrooms. He had a letter from the bishops with him.

The German Sicherheitsdienst (the security service) got a tip about his visits. He traveled on, from paper to paper.

What would you have done if you were sixty, in poor health, and knew you were being followed? I ask myself that question too. I am not sure of the answer.

On Monday, January 19, 1942, he came back to Nijmegen. In the monastery on the Doddendaal he was waited for and arrested. A dangerous monk, the Sicherheitsdienst called him.

What was said then, he wrote down himself four days later. He joked that at sixty he was still ending up in prison. The man who arrested him answered in German that he should not have accepted the archbishop's assignment, then. Titus said he considered that assignment an honor.

He spent the night in the prison in Arnhem. On January 20 he was taken to Scheveningen.

"Never was Our Dear Lord so near to me"

The penitentiary in Scheveningen was called the Oranjehotel during the war. Titus at first thought that after the interrogation in The Hague he would be allowed home the same afternoon, for the sake of his health. On January 21 he heard that he had to stay. For weeks he was interrogated by the SS man Paul Hardegen. Hardegen was polite to him. A man of the cloth, he said, would find a stay in a cell somewhat easier.

On January 23 Titus wrote down how he stood. To go to prison at sixty was no small thing, but it was bearable. He thought of Longfellow's poem from Megen, about the monk on the stone floor. He thought of Job, who had accepted the good from God and so also accepted the bad. He was glad he had been allowed to keep his old prayer book. And he wrote: "I know myself to be entirely in God's hand." At the bottom he put the little verse that Teresa of Ávila always carried with her. Let nothing disturb you. God alone is enough.

Hardegen asked him to explain on paper why the Dutch people, and especially the Catholic part of it, opposed the NSB. Titus filled nine pages. His answer begins with the sentence: "First of all, because of the anti-national character of its origin and growth." Then follow his other objections: a movement that ignores the Christian character of the people, that overestimates itself and that leans on the occupier. He softened nothing. And he ended with a prayer for two countries: "May God grant that both peoples will soon stand side by side again in full peace and freedom."

After that there was no more talk of release. After his death the resistance printed and spread his text. In 1944 it appeared as the last writing of Professor Brandsma.

In his cell he wrote more. On January 27 he described his cell, in the piece that later became known as *Mijn cel* (My Cell). He begins with an old monastic saying: a cell grows sweeter the longer you live in it. He tells of the young prisoner who brought him a sheet after all the first morning, and who said lightly that he himself might be in for three years. He measures the cell, describes the yellow and white walls, the blue stone floor, the weak heating, the window high above the door. And then it comes, under the Latin words for blessed solitude: "I am already completely at home, in that little cell." He was not bored. He felt safe and happy. If God willed it, he would stay there.

A day later he wrote down his daily schedule, as a friar does. Get up when the light came on. On his knees, pray along with the Mass he could not celebrate. Bread in the coffee. Then the hours from his prayer book, and a meditation on the life of Jesus. He prayed the rosary on his fingers, because he had forgotten his rosary beads. At ten o'clock, writing. After the midday meal he sang softly the *Adoro Te*, an old Latin hymn for the evening meal, in thought together with his fellow friars. He also took walks: three meters there and three meters back. He had gotten his watch back and now kept, he wrote, his own time, independent of Amsterdam or Berlin.

He did not lose that humor. On Thursday, January 29, a German soldier came to collect his pipe, his tobacco and his cigars. The soldier felt for him. "I knocked out my little pipe and just handed over the things," Titus noted, and he crossed smoking out of his schedule. The same day the doctor came. Titus told him about his stomach and his old bleeding. He weighed fifty-six kilos and from then on got milk bread and a little extra milk.

He wrote meditations on the Stations of the Cross. He began a book about Teresa of Ávila, the Spanish nun of the sixteenth cen-

tury whom he loved dearly. By early March he had six of the twelve chapters done. The book was never finished.

And in the night of February 12 to 13 he wrote a poem. In his cell he had a picture of Jesus. He looked at it and wrote five stanzas. When he looks at Jesus, his love comes alive again, and he knows that Jesus loves him as a friend. Suffering is hard to bear, but it makes him like his Lord and it is the way to God's kingdom. He is happy in his pain, because he no longer experiences it as pain. He asks to be left alone here; being alone is not hard for him. Jesus is with him, nearer than ever. The poem ends with a prayer in simple words: "Stay with me, with me, sweet Jesus."

It became one of the best-known texts he left behind. Two handwritten versions have been preserved, the first with a title and date at the top. Another poem of his from that time, *Alleen zijn* (Being Alone), was later included in the Geuzenliedboek, a collection of songs and poems from the resistance.

Jesus said to His disciples: *Abide in Me, and I in you* (John 15:4). In Scheveningen it sounded like a conversation in two directions.

On that same February 12 he wrote home, to his fellow friars, his family and his friends. He missed church, the Mass and Communion, and no priest came. But God was near to him. "I pray, I read, I write," and the days were too short. He asked for a rosary, a pair of pajamas, preferably blue, and three writing pads. They were not to worry. "I suffer it here gladly and make the best of it." On March 5 he wrote that he slept badly at night, but that sometimes he sat softly singing.

I read those pages and think: this is not how a hero writes who puts on a brave face. This is how someone writes who knows Who is with him.

Kamp Amersfoort, March 12, 1942

On March 12, 1942, Titus was moved to Kamp Amersfoort, the occupiers' transit camp. Life there was much harder. On arrival he had to stand outside in the cold rain with about a hundred others. He ended up in block 2A and received number 58. He had to work in the forest.

Fellow prisoners told later what he did there. He shared his small ration with those who were hungry. Priestly work was forbidden, so he blessed the men by drawing a little cross in their palms with his thumb. He heard confession, visited the dying and prayed the Stations of the Cross with others. He was warm toward everyone, one of them said, including communists and the guards. In that way he helped others keep their inner dignity.

On Good Friday 1942 he gave a talk to his fellow prisoners, about Geert Grote and about the suffering a person is given to bear. The heart of it was one sentence: in the wounds of Christ lies our healing.

He was ill himself and lay for a time in the sick barracks. The young Utrecht painter John Dons lay there too, a resistance man with tuberculosis. Dons drew him in secret, in pencil, on a small sheet. That is how we know Titus from those weeks: attentive, friendly, determined. Dons was executed on July 9, 1942.

On April 1 Titus wrote to Nijmegen that he was adjusting well. He wished everyone a blessed Easter and sang the Hallelujah along in thought.

"The dear Lord is everywhere"

At the end of April he was taken back to Scheveningen. There he heard where he was going. On May 6 he wrote, in German because

he had to, to his brother-in-law and his sister that he was being sent to the Dachau concentration camp near Munich. They were not to worry. He would meet acquaintances there. And: "der liebe Herr Gott ist überall." The dear Lord God is everywhere.

On the way he spent weeks in the prison in Kleve, just over the German border. There on May 17 he could attend Mass again for the first time, and at Pentecost he received Communion, after more than four months. He had had dysentery and stomach cramps. He had been told that he was being kept in because he was hostile to Germany.

In Kleve he had a hard time. He realized that no one could get him out anymore. He had a moment of despair and sought support from the prison chaplain. He asked for release because his health was declining. He suggested to his prior that he ask whether he could live in a German monastery, and on June 12 he himself wrote once more to the Sicherheitsdienst in The Hague. It accomplished nothing. When he was given the chance to revise his words about National Socialism, he refused.

After that struggle he surrendered, so the Carmelites tell it. He no longer counted on rescue. He knew himself to be in God's hand.

On June 19, 1942, he arrived in Dachau.

The priests' barracks in Dachau

In Dachau he was number 30492. He ended up in the barracks for priests. He was sixty-one and already ill, and the work was hard and the food too little.

What we know about those weeks comes from the men who lived next to him, above all his fellow friar Raphael Tijhuis, a Carmelite

who survived the camp, and from other priests. They told it after the war, and the church wrote it down.

He was beaten, from the start, with fists, sticks and planks, until he bled. The Capuchin Father Othmarus saw that his teeth were hanging loose in his mouth. He never heard him complain. He did hear him pray, with the words of Jesus on the cross: *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do* (Luke 23:34). Othmarus spoke of an eternal smile full of patience. He called him a saint.

Once, under the blows, Titus kept his arm pressed stiffly against his body. In his tobacco pouch a consecrated host was hidden, the bread of Communion. When Raphael wanted to comfort him afterward, he said there was no need. He had had Jesus with him.

His feet split open. Sometimes others had to carry him back to the barracks. He blessed fellow prisoners in secret and shared his food here too. To the men around him he said they must not hate. The guards too are children of the good God, he said, and perhaps something will stick in them. And he said they were in a dark tunnel, but that they had to go on. At the end the eternal light shone for them.

On July 12 he wrote his last letter, in German. It was addressed to his brother-in-law and his sister on the farm in Oegeklooster where he was born. "Mir geht es gut," I am doing well. He had to get used to it, but with God's help that worked here too. The dear Lord would help further. He asked about the new novices, about sick fellow friars and about the exams at the schools in Oss and Oldenzaal. Let us stay united under the protection of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, he wrote. Not too many worries about me. He signed with the name he had borne as a boy at home: Anno.

Two weeks later he was dead.

The rosary

In the third week of July he was admitted to the sick barracks. He had put it off as long as possible. He knew that medical experiments were being done on prisoners there. According to several sources, that happened to him too.

In that barracks worked a nurse who gave prisoners lethal injections. In the church inquiry after the war she was given a pseudonym: Tizia. She was a convinced National Socialist and wanted nothing to do with priests. The other prisoners were hostile toward her. With this old friar she felt uneasy, because he was kind to her.

What was said between the two, we know from her own account. He gave her his rosary, a wooden string of beads that Catholics use in prayer. She said she could not pray and did not need that thing. Then she only had to say, he answered: "Pray for us sinners."

"Then I started to laugh," she told later.

He said she would not be lost if she prayed much. She put the rosary in the pocket of her apron.

Sunday, July 26, 1942

On Sunday, July 26, 1942, at ten to two in the afternoon, Titus Brandsma died in Dachau. He was sixty-one. The nurse had given him an injection of carbolic acid. She was nervous and irritable that day, she said herself. On his death certificate the camp authorities wrote a different cause: failure of the heart and circulation due to an inflammation of the intestines. Three days later his body was cremated. His ashes went into a mass grave by the crematorium.

On the day he died, a letter from the bishops was read aloud in the Catholic churches in the Netherlands. In it they protested against

the deportation of the Jews. Titus never heard it. He had asked for this for years.

It is a quiet coincidence. What he had pleaded for over the years rang out that Sunday in the churches of his country, while he died in Dachau. He sowed without seeing the harvest.

And the nurse? She later found the rosary again and was moved by it. She turned away from National Socialism and became a Catholic, and she herself gave the friar the credit for it. Years later she knocked at a Carmelite monastery to ask forgiveness, and she testified in the inquiry into his life. She had always kept the face of that priest before her, she said. He had felt pity for her.

Titus had once put it this way himself: the new paganism no longer wants love, but love will win back the heart of the pagans. In the sick barracks of Dachau he made that true, with the woman who came to kill him.

How can you manage that? I do not know if I could. On the cross Jesus prayed for those who crucified Him. In Dachau a captive friar resembled Him.

A piece of his habit

After the war Titus Brandsma was not forgotten. Queen Wilhelmina sent the family her sympathy and mentioned in it the piece he had written in Scheveningen for the Gestapo. In 1968 the Titus Brandsma Instituut was founded in Nijmegen, based on copies of manuscripts he had collected. In 1982 he was posthumously awarded the Verzetsherdenkingskruis (the Resistance Memorial Cross). On November 3, 1985, Pope John Paul II beatified him as a martyr in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. In the Catholic Church that is the step before canonization.

Since 1992 there has been a Titus Brandsma Prize for courageous journalism. In 1999 a jury of the KRO, the Catholic broadcaster, chose him as the most remarkable Catholic of the twentieth century. In 2005 he was voted the greatest Nijmegen citizen of all time. Oss made him an honorary citizen in 2015. In the Titus Brandsma chapel in Nijmegen hangs the pencil drawing by John Dons.

For a canonization the Catholic Church asks for a miracle. One was found in the United States. The American Carmelite Michael Driscoll developed a serious form of skin cancer in 2004, at an advanced stage. He prayed for healing through the intercession of Titus Brandsma, as Catholics call it. Someone gave him a small piece of cloth from a garment of Titus, and he laid it on his head every day. He also underwent major surgery, in which eighty-four lymph nodes were removed, and thirty-five days of radiation. He recovered, and the cancer did not come back. His doctor said he did not need to come back. Medical advisers of the Vatican called his recovery scientifically inexplicable. On November 25, 2021, Pope Francis recognized it as a miracle.

How you see that depends on where you come from. Many Protestants do not pray through believers who have died, and I am not going to present it differently here. But the gratitude of a sick man who got better and wanted to honor God for it is easy to recognize.

Rome, May 15, 2022

On Sunday morning, May 15, 2022, St. Peter's Square in Rome was full. Pope Francis declared ten people saints. Titus Brandsma was one of them. Three Dutch bishops and about two hundred Dutch pilgrims were there. Minister Wopke Hoekstra was there, and the mayor of Nijmegen, Hubert Bruls. Michael Driscoll was also in the square, eighty years old and healthy.

A piece of Titus's habit was brought forward as a relic. The square was decorated with Dutch flowers.

Eighty years earlier the body of the Frisian friar had been cremated in a camp in Bavaria. There was no grave. What remained was a poem written in a cell in Scheveningen, and a wooden rosary in the apron pocket of the nurse who killed him.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on February 23, 1881, in Oegeklooster near Bolsward; six children, five in the religious life; grammar school in Megen (1892-1898); entry into the Carmelites in Boxmeer (1898) and the name Titus after his father; ordination as a priest on June 17, 1905; doctorate in Rome (1909); teacher in Oss (1909-1923) and editor-in-chief of *De Stad Oss*; professor in Nijmegen from 1923; rector magnificus in 1932-1933; spiritual adviser to the Catholic journalists from 1935; member of the Comité van Waakzaamheid (1936); the visits to the newsrooms to refuse NSB advertisements; arrest on January 19, 1942; Scheveningen, Amersfoort, Kleve and Dachau; the poem of February 12 and 13, 1942; death on July 26, 1942, by injection; the nurse who later testified; beatification on November 3, 1985; canonization on May 15, 2022.

Only from his own pen (the edition of the Titus Brandsma Instituut at titusbrandsmateksten.nl, based on the manuscripts in the Nederlands Carmelitaans Instituut): the account of January 23, 1942 (the conversation at the arrest, the night in Arnhem, Longfellow, Job, Teresa); *Waarom verzet* (Why Resist, January 22, 1942, nine pages); *Mijn cel* (January 27, 1942); *Mijn dagorde* (My Daily Schedule, January 28, with a postscript of January 31); the poem; the letters of February 12, March 5, April 1, May 6, May 28 and July 12, 1942. The letters of March 5, April 1 and May 28 and a letter of November 1941 I know from the English translation at EWTN. The

book *Mijn cel* itself I have not had in my hands. The quotations follow his own words, translated from his Dutch; the rest is retold. His statements about prayer, about God and the world and about the love that wins back the pagans are in Pope John Paul II's homily of 1985, in Italian; I have translated them.

From the testimony of others: the nurse Tizia told about the rosary, her laughing and his words herself (via Catholic World Report, which quotes a Carmelite magazine from 2001, and via the biography by Fernando Millán Romeral, quoted in America Magazine); that he felt pity for her is in the pope's homily. The beatings, the host in the tobacco pouch, the feet, the sharing of food and the blessing in Amersfoort and Dachau come from fellow prisoners, recorded by the Franciscan Boniface Hanley and quoted in Catholic World Report; the words of Father Othmarus and of Brother Raphael are on the website of the Carmelite order. The surname Tijhuis I have from general knowledge about him; the page I opened names only Raphael. The story of the released boy comes from his sister (EWTN). The portrait by John Dons is described by the Titus Brandsma Memorial.

Only from one source or from church circles: the primary school in Bolsward, the weak stomach, Father Driessen and the stomach hemorrhage in Rome (1907), the Good Friday talk in Amersfoort, the despair in Kleve and the refusal to revise his text (only a Flemish church portrait; that he spoke about Geert Grote in Amersfoort is also said by the Carmelite order); the ordination in the Sint-Jan in 's-Hertogenbosch (Omroep Brabant); the tip to the Sicherheitsdienst (Vox); Bomans's nickname (via the Titus Brandsma Instituut); Queen Wilhelmina's sympathy (a note to the edition of *Waarom verzet*); the details of the nurse's conversion. One American source tells that at his arrest he knelt for the blessing

of his superior; I have found that nowhere else and it is not in the story.

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

- *The arrest.* Nearly all sources name Nijmegen, the monastery on the Doddendaal; an American Catholic source names Boxmeer. His own account mentions only a night in Arnhem and the arrival in cell 577 on January 20. The man who arrested him is called Steven in the edition of his account, Steffen in the English translation.
- *The letter about the Jewish children.* America Magazine calls him in this connection director of the association of Catholic schools and calls the letter the last straw that led to his arrest; most sources point to his trip along the newspapers.
- *The dark tunnel.* The previous version of this chapter placed those words in Amersfoort; my source mentions only "the camp." I have placed them at Dachau.
- *Arrival in Dachau.* June 19 according to Radboud University and the Arolsen Archives; the Carmelite order gives June 16 as the day of departure, Vox June 13, one magazine May.
- *The medical experiments.* Several sources write that they were also done on him; the Arolsen Archives say it with a reservation.
- *The injection.* Phenol or carbolic acid; that is the same substance.
- *Driscoll's piece of cloth.* Catholic World Report speaks of a piece of his black suit; the previous version of this chapter wrote habit. The relic in Rome was, according to the NOS, a piece of his habit.

- *The date of the beatification.* November 3, 1985 according to the Vatican; one report from Vatican News gives September by mistake.

Interpretation: whether Michael Driscoll's recovery was a miracle, and whether the intercession of Titus Brandsma played a part in it, is a question of faith and a judgment of the Catholic Church. Doctors described an unexpected recovery, not a cause. That God was near to him in his cell, he says himself, and I believe it along with him.

Sources for this chapter

1. Radboud Universiteit, tijdlijn Titus Brandsma
2. Radboud Universiteit, "Who was Titus Brandsma" (Inigo Bocken, Titus Brandsma Instituut)
3. Titus Brandsma Memorial, Levensweg
4. Britse karmelieten, korte biografie
5. Vox, 13 mei 2022
6. Vaticaan, homilie bij de zaligverklaring, 3 november 1985
7. Vatican News, 4 maart 2022
8. Arolsen Archives, "Titus Anno Brandsma: Resistance Fighter and Patron Saint"
9. America Magazine, 10 mei 2022
10. Catholic World Report, 8 maart 2022
11. EWTN, biografieën van heiligen verklaard door paus Franciscus
12. NOS, 15 mei 2022, "Oorlogsheld Titus Brandsma heiligverklaard"
13. NOS, 15 mei 2022, "Pater en hoogleraar Brandsma wordt heiligverklaard: zo gaat dat"
14. Omroep Brabant, 15 mei 2022

15. Kerknet, “Titus Brandsma, op weg naar heiligheid”, 12 april 2022
16. Titus Brandsma Teksten, “O Jezus”
17. De Linkerwang, maart 2023
18. Friesland.nl, geboorteplaats Titus Brandsma
19. DBNL, auteurspagina Titus Brandsma
20. Titus Brandsma Teksten, “Mijn cel” (27 januari 1942)
21. Titus Brandsma Teksten, “Mijn Dagorde” (28 en 31 januari 1942)
22. Titus Brandsma Teksten, “Politie-gevangenis Scheveningen 23 Januari 1942”
23. Titus Brandsma Teksten, “Waarom verzet” (22 januari 1942)
24. Titus Brandsma Teksten, toelichting van Gerrit Steunebrink bij het laatste geschrift
25. Titus Brandsma Teksten, brief van 12 februari 1942
26. Titus Brandsma Teksten, brief van 6 mei 1942
27. Titus Brandsma Teksten, laatste brief, Dachau, 12 juli 1942
28. Titus Brandsma Teksten, overzicht van de gevangenisbrieven
29. EWTN, “The Last Days of Titus: Letters Written in Prison”
30. Karmelietenorde (O.Carm.), “Lessons from his life”
31. Titus Brandsma Memorial, John Dons
32. Bible.com, Micha 6:8 (NKJV)
33. Bible.com, Johannes 15:4 (NKJV)
34. Bible.com, Lukas 23:34 (NKJV)

Hebe Kohlbrugge: the woman who said good morning

Fehrbellin is a small town in Brandenburg, about sixty kilometers (forty miles) north of Berlin. In the late 1930s a young Dutch woman works there as an assistant to a pastor. One morning two policemen speak to her. They expect the Hitler salute. They do not get it.

What she answered back, she later wrote down herself. She asked the men whether "guten Morgen" (good morning) was not a fine greeting after all.

She was arrested. The Dutch embassy stepped in and got her released, on one condition: she was never again to set foot on German soil. "Für ewig," it was called. Forever.

Her name was Hebe Kohlbrugge. She would join the resistance, survive Ravensbrück and then spend forty years building bridges to Christians behind the Iron Curtain. She lived to be one hundred and two. To the end she kept doing what she had already done in Fehrbellin: saying a friendly and firm no to what was not right.

It began in a house in Utrecht.

Lotje, the youngest of five

Hebe Charlotte Kohlbrugge was born on April 8, 1914, in Utrecht, on the Nieuwegracht, a few months before the First World War broke out. She was the youngest of five daughters. At home she was called Lotje. Her father, Hermann Kohlbrugge, was a chemist and a teacher. Her mother was Johanna Elisabeth Barner. The family had German roots. Her father was Dutch Reformed, her mother Lutheran.

A famous name ran in the family. Hebe was a great-granddaughter of Dr. Hermann Friedrich Kohlbrugge, the pastor who preached in Elberfeld in the nineteenth century and was called the "Lion of Elberfeld." In her youth he played little part, she told the Reformatorisch Dagblad (a Dutch Protestant daily) in 2002. She did read a few of his sermons, and in her view they laid a foundation. The paper called unyieldingness a family trait. Anyone who knows her life understands why.

One sister would stay close to her all her life. Hanna Kohlbrugge, three years older, later became professor of Persian and Islamic studies in Utrecht. From the 1950s the two sisters lived together in one house.

After secondary school Hebe took a one-year nursing course. In 1935 she went to England as an au pair. There she looked after a child of John Churchill, a nephew of Winston. Winston she found unfriendly, she added dryly later.

"Helping where help is needed"

In 1936 she left for Berlin, to a seminary for church women's work in the Dahlem district. The city was in the grip of National Socialism.

On April 20, 1936, his birthday, she saw Hitler himself drive by. At the seminary hung a swastika flag. One day she took it down. She was punished, and the flag was quickly hung up again.

Dahlem was the congregation of Martin Niemöller, one of the leaders of the Bekennende Kirche, the Confessing Church. That was the movement of Christians who refused to let the church be absorbed into the Nazi state. Hebe came into contact with it through her Berlin district pastor. She went to Niemöller's Bible classes and distributed his sermons. Much later she told the American writer Jim Forest how she made her choice in those months. Hitler was the wrong man, she saw, and so she took Niemöller's side.

When her training was finished, she wrote her parents a letter. She wanted to help where help was needed, she wrote. The answer from home was short. It was fine.

What would you have done, at twenty-two in a foreign country, with a passport that could have taken you straight home? Hebe stayed.

Bells for Niemöller

Later she spoke warmly about life in that church. There were many meetings and serious talks, because something had to be decided every week. When the state began to confiscate the offerings, the congregation sat together for a long time. Was the money worth fighting for? They decided it belonged to the church and not to the state. From then on the offering was laid on the Communion table. There the SS did not dare to take it away. The next day the pastor brought the money to safety.

Reformed and Lutherans, who had kept each other at arm's length for centuries, celebrated Communion together in this church for the first time. Hebe herself had a Reformed father and a Lutheran mother.

In the summer of 1937 Niemöller was imprisoned. In the congregations of the Bekennende Kirche the bells then rang at six o'clock, as a call to pray for him, and later for all prisoners. Hebe took the children up into the tower. In turn they were allowed to pull the rope: now you, now me, now you. The children loved it. At home they told their parents they had done it for Niemöller.

That was how she prayed in those years: with a bell rope in her hands and a row of children around her.

In 1938 she became assistant to Günther Harder in Fehrbellin, a pastor who was among the leaders of the Bekennende Kirche. In November of that year the synagogues burned all over Germany. Hebe lived through Kristallnacht in Germany. In her church there was talk afterward about the great sin of hatred of the Jews, and about the question Dietrich Bonhoeffer asked: what does it mean to help Jews?

One of her tasks in Fehrbellin was writing out baptism certificates. With such a certificate people could prove they were "Aryan" and so qualified for a government job.

What that work meant, she saw only later. In a documentary by the EO (a Dutch Christian broadcaster) from 2009 she told that after leaving Fehrbellin she realized how those papers helped the German state in persecuting Jews. That insight made her resistance stronger.

It is an honest moment. She had meant well and had meanwhile helped a system she abhorred. She did not hide it. She took it with her.

Then came that morning with the two policemen. The greeting was not the only thing held against her. She had told the children that Jews were nice people. And she had rung the bells with them. She

herself told later that the Dutch ambassador had gone to talk to Himmler about it. She was released and had to leave the country.

Almost too late

In the spring of 1939 she went to Basel to study theology with Karl Barth, the theologian who had helped the Bekennende Kirche write its confession. He found her a place. She had one semester. In the summer she was home on vacation, and in September the war broke out. She could not go back to Basel.

She found a half-time job in Amsterdam, as a secretary in church work, and moved there as well. Her office was in the Nieuwe Kerk on the Dam. In May 1940 Germany invaded the Netherlands. Nobody had expected it, she said later. She knew better than most Dutch people what was now coming.

As early as July 1940 she met with about thirty-five people to discuss what they should do. That group later got the name Lunterse Kring. Those who were there then proved trustworthy in the years that followed.

In October came the Aryan declaration, the form on which civil servants had to state whether they were Jewish. The group decided to distribute a pamphlet, written by the theologian Jan Koopmans. It was called *Bijna te laat* (Almost Too Late). A small printer printed about thirty thousand, Hebe told Jim Forest. Together with her sister Hanna she took care of the distribution. They had address lists of schools. The envelopes were addressed in different handwritings and on different typewriters and mailed in one night from all sorts of cities, so the occupier could not see where they came from. Through this work she got to know other resistance people, among them Henk van Randwijk of *Vrij Nederland*.

The pamphlet told ordinary Dutch people something simple: you do not have to answer every question the occupier puts to you. To a bad question you give no answer.

That one thought she carried on all her life. She said it again decades later in a speech in Münster. Five friends from Romania, who lived under another dictatorship, called it the most important sentence they had heard from her. For them it was new. "You do not have to answer all the questions," she had said.

Shortly after that autumn the arrests began, and later the transports. About gas chambers they did not yet know, Hebe said. The group began to hide Jews. First with family, then with family of family, then with friends. It went from mouth to mouth. They looked for addresses, arranged ration cards and also helped students and workers who did not want to go to work in Germany. Every four to six weeks an illegal paper appeared with news and warnings.

One rule held the group together. If someone was caught, everyone left their address at once. That way anyone interrogated could endanger no one. They never had a traitor in their midst. That did not change the fact that nearly all her friends from those years were shot, some after a trial, others without. She never counted them.

Eight hours under the eaves

In February 1942 three men of the Gestapo stood in her office in the Nieuwe Kerk. Hebe had a bundle of illegal papers with her at that moment.

She walked ahead of them up the spiral staircase. On the way she let the bundle fall into the stairwell. Then she had to open her bag. There was one dirty handkerchief in it. The sexton's wife had meanwhile taken the bundle away.

She got the chance to call her boss, and so others could empty her room. She lived in the house of a pastor and his wife. When the Gestapo came to search that house too, Hebe crawled into a small space under the eaves. For five hours the men walked through the house. They did not find her. The pastor's wife was taken away and was released the next morning. After about eight hours, when the Gestapo was gone, Hebe came out.

From that day she lived in hiding. The work went on as before.

"God's law is not against us!"

The government in London knew too little about what was happening in occupied Netherlands. What the radio broadcast from England was sometimes completely wrong. Someone had to go to Switzerland to bring better reports, along what later came to be called the "Swiss Way." The choice fell on Hebe, because a woman attracted less attention.

At the end of June 1942 she set out. On foot across the border into occupied Belgium, by train into the north of France, and the last stretch on foot again, into Switzerland.

In Geneva she spoke with W.A. Visser 't Hooft, the Dutchman who was building up the World Council of Churches. And she saw Karl Barth again.

You have to know what she was carrying. She traveled on false papers and worked in secret against a state. Was that allowed by God?

Barth gave the Dutch resistance his blessing. In her autobiography his words are recorded: "God's law is not against us!" That was of the greatest importance to her, she wrote. She took that sentence back home with her.

In August 1942 she was back in the Netherlands. She went to work for the Ordedienst, a resistance organization, and mapped German military installations. Several times she smuggled microfilms to London by way of Switzerland. She also told later about the explosives the Germans had placed at the power stations. No electricity, no pumping stations, and without pumping stations half of the Netherlands floods. Her group removed the explosives.

Christine Doorman

In 1944 she was sent out again, this time to London itself. She was to tell the government how things were in occupied Netherlands.

In April 1944 she was stopped in the train at a check. Her false identity card was in the name of Christine Doorman, and it was not in order.

What happened in that train, she told later herself. She had microfilms with her. If they were found, it was over. Unnoticed she let them slide into the coat of a fellow passenger. Then she began to speak German. She spoke it flawlessly. She was a German from the Reich, she said, on her way to her fiancé in Switzerland.

They believed her. That is how she escaped an execution, she said in 2016. She got ten months in prison, as a German woman with wrong papers.

She ended up in the Oranjehotel, the prison in Scheveningen, and then in camp Vught. On September 5, 1944, she was put on a transport to Ravensbrück, the women's camp north of Berlin. She was never beaten, she told, because her guards took her for a German.

The babies of Ravensbrück

The hell of the women, she called the camp. She was put in the sick barracks and given the care of the newborns.

Every day one or two children were born. Most of the mothers were Polish. She seldom had more than thirty-five babies at one time, and why that was so, she told honestly. The mothers got too little food to be able to nurse. After about three days such a little one began to waste away. Mostly they died quietly. Hebe had them in her hands. In 2016, at one hundred and two, she still told about it.

She saw more. Romani girls of eight to twelve were sterilized, after their mothers had been told that their daughters would then be set free. Torturing children, she called it. It was the worst thing she experienced in the camp.

There was a girl who told her that she was in here only because of her nose. Hebe never forgot it. She and the others from the resistance knew why they were imprisoned. They had fought. This child had done nothing.

From the Polish women she heard what their country had gone through. Compared with that, what had happened to the Netherlands seemed small to her. She never lost that lesson.

How did she herself stay on her feet? Jim Forest asked her, and she gave two answers. She did not want to give the Germans the pleasure of her death. And she did not want to die as Christine Doorman. She wanted to go home as Hebe Kohlbrugge.

He asked about her prayer life too. You might expect a story about quiet hours. She did not give that. She had not had much time to pray, she said. Probably not enough. But she knew she was a Christian, and that as a Christian she was fighting a lie. I find that an honest answer. She did not make herself prettier. She knew Whose she was, and she left it at that.

Then she herself fell ill: tuberculosis, and typhus on top of it. Her condition got worse. That she survived she owed to two Czech fel-

low prisoners, Eliska and Zdenka, who cared for her. They were communist women. A Dutch Christian, kept alive by Czech communists. Miraculous, one of her former students called it later. After the war she would go to Prague again and again.

In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus asks at the end: *So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?* (Luke 10:36). The answer was someone the listeners did not expect. In Ravensbrück it was Eliska and Zdenka.

In those months Corrie ten Boom was also in Ravensbrück. Hebe said in 2002 that she was there when Corrie heard she would be released.

Soon after, it was her own turn. Sick prisoners were not usually released. A doctor let her go anyway. Why he did, she never knew. On January 24, 1945, "Christine Doorman" walked out of the gate and was put on the train to Berlin. By a roundabout route she reached the Netherlands. It took her well over a week. At home she went straight to bed. In May she lived through the liberation.

Her family had survived the war. Her father had once driven around for half an hour with a pistol in his back, but they had not shot.

Years later she told Forest that, compared with others, nothing very bad had happened to her. She said it without bitterness. She had a thought about that too. Anyone who had been in the middle of it could more easily live without resentment. The hatred was more often found in people who had done nothing out of fear, and knew it about themselves.

And the question of how you can still believe after Auschwitz? She found that nonsense. Evil was there before the Nazis and it was there afterward: the Gulag, Cambodia, Vietnam, Afghanistan. The

last book of the Bible, the Revelation to John, had taught her that history goes that way. "So if I believe, I believe," she said. It was that simple for her.

Back to Germany

First she had to recover. She spent about two years in Switzerland to heal from her tuberculosis.

In 1947 she went to work for the Netherlands Reformed Church. As secretary of the Germany Committee of the Raad voor Kerk en Overheid (the Council for Church and Government) she was given an assignment that few Dutch people were waiting for at the time: to seek ways to reconciliation with defeated Germany. The ban from before the war no longer applied. Together with Arend van Leeuwen she traveled through a country in ruins and looked up the friends she knew from the Bekennende Kirche. She knew from her own experience that not everything there had been black.

The east especially drew her. In the 1950s she made contact with Christians in East Germany, the later GDR, and helped restore the ties between the churches there and in the Netherlands.

In 1952 she received the Bronze Lion, a Dutch decoration for bravery. In 1954 followed the American Medal of Freedom. She did not like to show those decorations. They lay out of sight. Once she took out the Bronze Lion, she told Jim Forest. She wanted to speak with a Dutch minister. She put the lion on a desk, and she got her conversation.

I notice that I grow quiet at this part of her life. She had every reason to turn her back on Germany. She went back there. In the letter to the Romans it says: *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good* (Romans 12:21). After Ravensbrück she looked for that good in Germany itself.

Two times two is five

In 1957 the church asked her to build up an international aid department, the later Werelddiakonaat (World Diaconate). She said yes, on one condition: her work for Eastern Europe had to go on. She traveled to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and other countries behind the Iron Curtain. The historian John Conway calls her travel reports of the 1960s and 1970s valuable testimonies of life under communism.

She also became involved in the Christian Peace Conference in Prague, a movement of the Czech professor Josef Hromádka that wanted to bring churches from East and West together. She made Czech friends there. When troops of the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968, the conference refused to distance itself from Moscow. Together with the theologian Hannes de Graaf, Hebe turned her back on the conference. Taking part in a lie was something she could not do. In the years after, her Czech friends lost their jobs.

Two years earlier, in 1966, she had sent her first student to Prague. It became the work for which many are most grateful to her. In about twenty-five years more than eighty Dutch theology students went for one or more years to Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Yugoslavia. Each student first came to her home for an introductory talk. Only when she found someone suitable did the journey begin. She wanted them to take the theology of the postwar years with them to the east. And she wanted them to see with their own eyes what living under a dictatorship meant.

Her autobiography from 2002 was given the title *Tweemaal twee is vijf* (Twice Two Is Five). She explained the title herself: "Twice two is not four, but five." Life seldom turned out the way you calculated

it. She also knew that under communism official truths applied that were not true. Anyone who kept seeing that was already half free.

A living room in Utrecht

It did not go without clashes. In church circles her critical view of the communist regimes was far from always welcome. From the 1960s part of the church, and the World Council of Churches too, shifted to the left. Hebe thought the World Council was becoming too dependent on East European church leaders who stood under the supervision of the party. For her it was settled from 1968 that no compromise could be made with such a regime. In 1972, after a conflict, she lost her seat on the church's diaconal council.

She simply carried on, from her own house on the 2e Kortebaanstraat in Utrecht. She lived there with Hanna. There, mostly in her living room, the Subcommissie Oost-Europa (Subcommittee on Eastern Europe) of the Council of Churches met, of which she was secretary and Hannes de Graaf chairman. A difficult bunch, they thought at the Council. The students also came there for their talks.

Meanwhile she smuggled Bibles and theological books to friends in Eastern Europe and supported dissidents. In Prague she helped the "flying university" of the philosopher Ladislav Hejdánek, where banned lectures were given in living rooms. Dutch professors such as Theo de Boer and Karel Deurloo went there to teach. It had a price, and she accepted it: more than one country behind the Iron Curtain no longer wanted to let her in.

Her view reached beyond Europe. Conway mentions assignments that took her to Mississippi, Soweto and Israel. Jim Forest writes that she supported social work by Vietnamese Buddhists.

In 1975 she received the Joost van den Vondel Prize, for her work on the bond between the Netherlands and Germany. Former Federal President Gustav Heinemann presented it in Münster. The woman who had been put out of the country "für ewig" was now honored there.

When the Wall fell, Hebe was seventy-five. In November 1989 she brought ecumenical greetings to the churches in the GDR and Czechoslovakia. The friends she had visited for decades were free.

Charles University in Prague gave her an honorary doctorate for her work on friendship and dialogue between East and West. In 1995 followed an honorary doctorate in Cluj, Romania. In 2013 she also received a Czech prize named after the dissident Václav Benda.

A delivery van in December

In December 1999 Hanna was hit by a delivery van close to their house. She died. For almost half a century the sisters had lived together.

In the quiet evenings that followed, Hebe began to write. That is how her autobiography came about. She was eighty-five then.

The book appeared in 2002. In the interview she gave the Reformatorisch Dagblad then, she also said something about faith. Truth meant for her: living to serve others, carried by the gospel. The Holy Spirit, she said, is not locked up with Christians and works where He wills. I have to think of Eliska and Zdenka here. She thanked God for the help of Christ. With big words about God's guidance she was careful.

You would think it went quiet after that. It turned out differently. In her last ten years she read the Bible, partly out of annoyance at sermons she found too flat. In a strong, beautiful handwriting she

wrote commentaries in German on Matthew, Luke, Acts and the five books of Moses. She sent them by post to friends all over Europe. She kept following the world news and wrote letters, thousands in her life. Into old age she told about the war in schools and in prisons.

Psalm 92 says of the righteous: *They shall still bear fruit in old age* (Psalm 92:14). Hebe wrote her commentaries on Matthew and Moses after her ninetieth year.

"There must be remembrance"

In April 2016 she was one hundred and two. She still lived independently in Utrecht-Oost and walked every morning along the Maliebaan. A greengrocer brought her fruit and vegetables at home.

A journalist from Nieuws030 visited her. She was worried about Ukraine and about how little the Dutch knew about Eastern Europe. When she told somewhere about the Polish resistance, people only asked: the Poles? That resistance had been much larger than the Dutch one, she said. She had heard it in Ravensbrück from the Polish women themselves. About history she was firm: "There must be remembrance. As much as possible."

Whether she already knew what she would think of on May 4, the journalist asked. Of course not, she said. Memories sometimes came suddenly, and sometimes not.

On May 4, 2016, she stood for the first time at the National Remembrance of the Dead on the Domplein. On behalf of the former resistance she laid a wreath, together with great-grandchildren of Leo Heij, a resistance man who was shot by the Germans in 1944.

On September 16, 2016, she still spoke in Arnhem, at a conference on women and war violence. That she was a woman had never occupied her, she said there. Although it had sometimes helped her.

Light in Advent

Every year she sent a Christmas letter. The last one went out the door a week before her death. On the yellow paper was a sun against a starry sky, with a text from the beginning of the Bible, in German. In the New King James Version it reads: *Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light* (Genesis 1:3).

In December she was admitted to the Diaconessenhuis in Utrecht. There Hebe Kohlbrugge died in the night of December 13 to 14, 2016, one hundred and two years old. She never married. On December 21 she was buried in the family grave in Amerongen. Utrecht later named a street after her.

Her former students, men and women from all over Europe, placed a death notice. They wrote about her humor and her self-mockery, and that their years behind the Iron Curtain had shaped their lives. Above it they put a sentence of hers: "When we see the neighbor, the world opens up..."

Perhaps you too have had a moment in your life when a small greeting became a choice. Hebe said good morning to two policemen. Almost eighty years later her sentence stood above an advertisement in the newspaper, with underneath it the names of people who had once, after a conversation in her living room in Utrecht, left for the east.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on April 8, 1914, in Utrecht as the youngest of five daughters; father a chemist and

teacher (not a minister); great-granddaughter of H.F. Kohlbrugge; study in Berlin from 1936 and contact with Niemöller and the Bekennende Kirche; work in Fehrbellin from 1938 and expulsion from Germany; semester with Karl Barth in Basel (1939); distribution of *Bijna te laat*; trip to Switzerland in 1942 and meeting with Visser 't Hooft and Barth; arrest in April 1944 under the name Christine Doorman; Oranjehotel, Vught and Ravensbrück; work with babies and surviving tuberculosis with the help of Czech fellow prisoners; work for the Germany Committee from 1947; Bronze Lion (1952) and Medal of Freedom (1954); the student work to Eastern Europe; break with the Christian Peace Conference after 1968; conflict and departure from the church's diaconal council in 1972; Vondel Prize (1975), presented by Gustav Heinemann in Münster; honorary doctorates in Prague and Cluj; autobiography (2002); the last Christmas letter; death in December 2016 in Utrecht, burial in Amerongen.

From her own testimony (autobiography *Tweemaal twee is vijf*, 2002, as quoted in the Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon; I have not had the book in my hands myself): the words "guten Morgen" to the police; Barth's words in Geneva and what they meant to her.

From her own testimony (conversation with Jim Forest, posted on his website in 2005): her choice for Niemöller and the letter to her parents; the offering on the Communion table and the shared Communion; the bells for Niemöller with the children; Kristallnacht and the conversation in the church afterward; the reasons for her arrest in Germany and the words "für Ewig"; the vacation at home when the war broke out and the office in the Nieuwe Kerk; the group of thirty-five; the printer, the thirty thousand copies and the way of mailing; the five Romanian friends; the hiding of Jews and the rule at arrests; the raid of February 1942 with the spiral staircase, the handkerchief, the sexton's wife and the eight hours under

the roof; the route to Switzerland; the explosives at the power stations; everything she tells about the babies, the Romani girls, the girl and the Polish women in Ravensbrück; her two reasons for surviving; her words about praying in the camp and about believing after Auschwitz; the doctor who let her go; her father and the pistol; her thought about bitterness; the Bronze Lion on the desk. Forest's text is in English; the quotations from her given here, such as "So if I believe, I believe," are taken from it, and the rest of her words I have retold.

From her own testimony (other conversations): the flag at the seminary, the mediation with Himmler, the Churchill family and the moment with Corrie ten Boom (Reformatorisch Dagblad, 2002); Hitler on April 20, 1936, the birth on the Nieuwegracht, the microfilms in the coat of a fellow passenger, the ten months' sentence and the typhus (Nieuws030, 2016); the late realization about the baptism certificates (EO, 2009).

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

- *The greeting.* The Vrouwenlexicon gives "guten Morgen" from her autobiography. In the conversation with Forest it is "Guten Tag."
- *Reason, year and place of the arrest in Germany.* In the Vrouwenlexicon it is about the refused Hitler salute in Fehrbellin. To Forest she also mentioned what she had told the children about Jews and the ringing of the bells, and spoke of imprisonment in Berlin in 1939. The English Wikipedia also mentions a short imprisonment in Potsdam, because she delivered sermons. The year is 1938 or 1939. It is certain that the embassy got her released and that she had to leave Germany. Where the bells and the offering took place, Forest's text does not say.

- *Günther Harder.* That he was the pastor in Fehrbellin is found with the historian John Conway and in Wikipedia; the Vrouwenlexicon names no one.
- *The arrest of 1944.* The English Wikipedia gives April 4 near Antwerp. I have not found that date and place in any other source. Forest writes the false name as Christina Dormann.
- *The transport to Ravensbrück.* September 5, 1944 (Vrouwenlexicon) or September 4 (Forest).
- *Her work in the camp.* The Vrouwenlexicon says she ended up in the sick barracks and declined there; she herself told that she worked there, with the babies. The one does not rule out the other.
- *The release.* January 24, 1945 according to the Vrouwenlexicon, February 1945 according to Forest. She herself told about a doctor who let her go; Wikipedia writes that her sentence was up. The ten months from Nieuws030 fit with the latter. I have not seen a document about her discharge.
- *The Germany Committee.* From 1947 (Vrouwenlexicon) or from 1948 to 1957 (Forest).
- *The number of students.* More than eighty (Katholieke Vereniging voor Oecumene) or about seventy (Reformatorisch Dagblad).
- *The honorary doctorate in Prague.* 1990 (Conway, Katholieke Vereniging voor Oecumene) or 1991 (Vrouwenlexicon, Wikipedia: May 1991). Possibly the decision fell in 1990 and the presentation in 1991.

Only from one source: the name Lunterse Kring, the Vondel Prize on October 30, 1975, the Václav Benda Prize of 2013 and the statement that Czechoslovakia and Hungary expelled her in 1975 and that more countries declared her persona non grata (all only the English Wikipedia; I could not open the newspaper report on the prize

of 2013). That she was no longer allowed into Czechoslovakia, she also told Forest herself. The number of thirty thousand pamphlets comes only from herself. The word "miraculous" about her survival is by Geert van Dartel, one of her former students, in his obituary.

Not found: recognition by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. No source mentions it.

Interpretation: the connection between her faith and her choices comes mainly from her own words and from what friends wrote after her death. That I think of Eliska and Zdenka at her words about the Holy Spirit is my own connection; she herself did not make it in so many words, as far as I could tell. That Niemöller was imprisoned in the summer of 1937 and that Kristallnacht fell in November 1938 is generally known history and does not come from her own story.

Sources for this chapter

1. Wim Berkelaar, "Kohlbrugge, Hebe Charlotte (1914-2016)", Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland (Huygens ING)
2. Reformatorisch Dagblad, 21 juni 2002, "Onverzettelijkheid als familietrek" (via Digibron)
3. Katholieke Vereniging voor Oecumene, "In memoriam Hebe Kohlbrugge (1914-2016)"
4. Rouwadvertentie van oud-studenten, december 2016
5. Nieuws030, 29 april 2016, "Hebe Kohlbrugge: Zonder weten van het verleden geen toekomst"
6. Jim Forest, "You Do Not Have to Answer All the Questions"
7. John S. Conway, Contemporary Church History Newsletter, november 2004
8. University of Edinburgh Archives, Hanna Kohlbrugge
9. EHRI / USHMM, Oral history interview with Hebe Kohlbrügge

10. Wikipedia, “Hebe Charlotte Kohlbrugge” (starting point)

Willem Barnard: the barber's son who taught the church to sing

In March 1943 a theology student in Utrecht was told to sign a paper. The German occupier demanded a declaration of loyalty from the students. Willem Barnard did not sign.

The punishment came quickly. He was called up for the Arbeitseinsatz, the forced labor in Germany, and two months later he stood in Berlin, in a Siemens factory. He was twenty-two, and he would stay there for more than a year, from May 1943 to June 1944.

Later he told what he feared in those months. That someone would notice he was sabotaging the work. That he would die in the sick bay. That during a night air raid a bomb would hit the factory or his lodging. He did get truly ill, too. In a Berlin infirmary he lay with a disease of the lungs, tuberculosis, which would catch up with him again years later.

He was already writing poems then. A few of them appeared in magazines the occupier had banned. Anyone who had predicted then that this quiet, somewhat fearful young man would become one of the most important hymn writers of his century would have

had little evidence. It happened all the same. Willem Barnard wrote dozens of psalm versions and hundreds of hymns. As a poet, under the name Guillaume van der Graft, he won literary prizes. As a minister he helped renew Protestant worship in the Netherlands. And he kept a diary, from his youth until his last years.

It began in a barbershop in Rotterdam.

A barbershop on the Van Speijkstraat

Wilhelmus Barnard was born on August 15, 1920, in Delfshaven, an old district of Rotterdam. His parents, Hendrik Barnard and Cornelia Jannetje Zuur, had a barbershop on the Van Speijkstraat. He was their only child. When he was born, his mother was forty-three.

Of that parental home he later spoke as of a double inheritance. From his father he had the doubt, the tendency toward gloom. His mother was a picture of cheerful and heartfelt faith. Cheerfully orthodox, she has also been called. He carried both of them all his life, the doubt and the faith, and both come back in what he wrote.

He grew up sheltered, and also somewhat fearful. He was a solitary child, with a diary and poems as his most faithful companions. From the age of thirteen he wrote in that diary. He would never let it go again.

Around the age of fifteen something happened that happens in many lives. The boy from the believing home no longer felt like a believing Christian. For the time being, his father's inheritance had won.

A depth and a height

In 1938 he went to Leiden to study Dutch literature. There he read the poets of his time: Marsman, Slauerhoff, Du Perron. In mid-1939 he had to go into military service, because war was approaching.

Then came the May days of 1940. Rotterdam, his city, was bombed.

What that did to him, he told fifty years later in an interview with the Nederlands Dagblad (a Dutch Christian daily). He saw the hatred. And as with a stroke of lightning he knew something he had not known before. Hans Werkman, who quotes the interview, sums it up this way: "over against this dreadful depth there must be a height."

Feel free to read that twice. There are people who lose their faith through a disaster. With this boy of nineteen it went the other way. He looked into an abyss, and the abyss itself told him there had to be a heaven. Anyone who surveys his life sees that this is where it turned.

In June 1940, after the capitulation, he was demobilized. He did not go back to Leiden and literature. He chose theology, in Utrecht. That faculty had a reputation for being more orthodox than the one in Leiden, and that weighed with him. He hoped to find firm answers there to the questions the war raised. Writing poems he simply kept doing.

He was halfway through that study when the loyalty declaration came.

About that year in Berlin he never spoke as a hero. The opposite is true. He kept asking himself why he had not had the courage to go into hiding. He never got rid of that question. It comes back later in this story, at a dark moment.

By the summer of 1944 he was back in Rotterdam. He recovered slowly, and writing helped him with that. His poems appeared in underground magazines, such as *De Parade der Profeten* (The Parade of the Prophets).

"As into a fish trap"

After the liberation he graduated. In 1946 his first two collections of poems appeared, *In exilio* and *Achterstand* (Arrears). The title of the first is Latin for "in exile," and anyone who knows about Berlin understands it. He published them under a pseudonym: Guillaume van der Graft. Guillaume is the French form of Willem, and Van der Graft is a variant on the word *gracht*, a canal. With that name he kept his poems and his work for the church apart.

That year he also became a minister in the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (the Netherlands Reformed Church). That was less obvious than it seems. The closer the office came, the greater his doubt. On February 24, 1946, he wrote in his diary that it bewildered him that he would soon be in office. Much later he looked back on it with an image from fishing. He had, he said, "swum into the ministry as into a fish trap."

It is an honest image. A fish trap is a net that a fish swims into easily but can hardly get out of again. Barnard did not feel like a natural *dominee*, as Dutch Protestants call their ministers. He doubted, and he was first of all a poet. And he stayed in that net for almost thirty years.

Do you recognize that? That you end up in a place you did not really choose, and only later see what you had to do there?

In September 1946 he married Tinka van Malde, Christina in full. In his poems she is called Katinka. They had three children. Their daughter, born in 1951, later became a minister herself. Their son Benno, born in 1954, became a poet and writer, like his father.

No echo in Hardenberg

Ten days after the wedding, at the end of September 1946, he was installed as assistant minister in Hardenberg, in the province of Overijssel. A year later he was the minister there.

It was not a success. The young poet from Rotterdam felt cut off from the people in his church. He noticed that he lacked the warmth a shepherd needs, and that he kept too much at a distance. That same first autumn he wrote a poem, "Landerig in Ambt Hardenberg" (Listless in Office in Hardenberg), in which he took his own measure: a little too much intellect he had, and far too little heart. In 1948 he wrote in his diary that he felt no echo there.

I find it brave that he wrote that down, and that it was later published as well. Many life stories of ministers skip such years. Here it simply stands: it did not go well.

The city child did learn something in Hardenberg that he could not have learned anywhere else. He came into contact with the countryside, where life was still whole and the Bible was held in honor. He wrote a poem about it, "Het boek" (The Book). A man, Hazekamps-Hendrik, reads aloud from the Bible after the meal, solemnly, in an elevated tone, so that those who listen catch their breath. And breath, the poem says, that is the Spirit.

Meanwhile the writing of poems went on. In 1948 *Poëzie in praktijk* (Poetry in Practice) appeared, in 1950 *Mythologisch* (Mythological). For that last collection he received a poetry prize from the province of Gelderland in 1950. That same year the family moved to Nijmegen, where he became a minister. He found the city more challenging. The minister's work remained heavy for him, there too.

Nijhoff comes to Nijmegen

In Nijmegen he received a visit that gave his life a different direction.

In those years the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk was working on a new rhyming of the psalms. A synod committee led by the theologian K.H. Miskotte was looking for young poets. Barnard first said no. He was afraid of church meddling, of committees that prescribe to a poet what he may write.

From 1951 the well-known poet Martinus Nijhoff was literary adviser to that committee. He came to Nijmegen himself to persuade Barnard. Barnard put his hesitation aside. Nijhoff died in January 1953. He did not live to see what came of his visit.

So Barnard ended up in a small group of poets: Ad den Besten, Klaas Heeroma, Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, Jan Wit and himself. Jan Wit, the blind minister of the Walloon church, he had come to know in Nijmegen. With a wink they called themselves "het landvolk" (the country folk). From 1953 they withdrew every year for a week to De Pietersberg in Oosterbeek to work on the psalms together. In 1958 a joint collection appeared under the name *Het landvolk*. A reference work calls Barnard the pivot of that circle.

The work took years. In 1968 the new psalm rhyming was finished. Twenty-seven psalms Barnard had rhymed alone, and on eleven others he had worked with others.

Meanwhile his poetry drew plenty of attention. In 1951 *Landarbeid* (Farm Labor) appeared, in 1953 *Vogels en vissen* (Birds and Fishes), for which he received the Van der Hoogt Prize of the Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde (the Society of Dutch Literature) in 1954. The jury heard something of Nijhoff in his language, and warned him at once that he sometimes took too much pleasure in playing with words. Two years later followed *Woorden van brood*

(Words of Bread), awarded the poetry prize of the city of Amsterdam.

The word "beauty" in a prayer

In 1954 he left the ordinary congregation. He became study secretary of the Prof. dr. G. van der Leeuw-Stichting in Amsterdam, a foundation that wanted to bring church and art together. For a man who led two lives, as a minister and as a poet, that was a godsend.

At the end of the 1940s he had once been to England, and had fallen in love with the Anglican liturgy and its wealth of hymns. There church and art lay closer together than he was used to in the Netherlands. In 1956 he went back, from April until mid-December, on study leave to study religious drama.

What he found there was something other than theater. He heard a prayer in which God was praised for beauty. The word "beauty," in a prayer. For the Reformed boy from Rotterdam that was a revelation. At home a gulf yawned between the church and art, and that gulf ran straight through himself. Here it did not exist.

In England he also spoke with the poet T.S. Eliot. Those conversations brought a breakthrough. Barnard understood that he did not have to choose. He could be a minister and an artist, if he made worship itself his work.

Do you see what is happening here? Ten years earlier he had swum into a fish trap. Now he discovered what for.

Tuesday evening in the Maranathakerk

In January 1957 something new began in the Maranathakerk in Amsterdam: the Nocturnes, evening services on Tuesdays. Barnard and the cantor-organist Frits Mehrtens were the driving forces.

Together they wrote many hymns for them. The services became known all over the country.

What Barnard did there was unusual for the Protestant church of those years. He let himself be inspired by the Roman Catholic missal and the fixed readings for each Sunday, something the Reformed tradition did not know. He wanted the church to live through the year, from Sunday to Sunday, with readings that belonged together and fixed forms that came back in every service. He also made room for readings from the Old Testament, and for the way the synagogue reads the Torah.

The services that proved to work best he collected in *De adem van het jaar* (The Breath of the Year), in three volumes between 1962 and 1964. In 1963 *De tale Kanaäns* (The Language of Canaan) appeared, under his own name Willem Barnard: a course of hymns that followed the church year, with at least three hymns for every Sunday. In the introduction he argued that the psalms are the ground of Christian singing, and that new hymns are a supplement to them.

Paul wrote to the congregation in Colossae that they should teach one another and sing *in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* (Colossians 3:16). With Barnard too the psalms came first. The new hymns were a supplement, not a replacement.

Poetry, liturgy and theology were one whole for him. Hymns are poems, he said, and poems are written by poets. A church deserves neither a leaking roof nor smoking candles, nor hymns that rattle. About a later edition of his hymns it is handed down that he said faith had to be breathed in deeply, "preferably over the lungs."

A sanatorium in Laren

It did not always go well with him. In 1959 he was overworked, and his lung did not do what it should. In December he was admitted

to a sanatorium in Laren, for tuberculosis, a remnant of the illness he had picked up in Berlin. In February 1960 he was operated on. He stayed until April. In the sanatorium he edited a collection of essays, *Tussen twee stoelen* (Between Two Stools), which appeared in 1960.

Then came a severe depression. All his old fears came back at once. They are known by name. The fear that his work amounted to nothing. The fear that he stood outside of everything. The fear of a new war. And the question from Berlin, now at its sharpest: the fear that in the war he had made himself unforgivably guilty through cowardice.

Only in the spring of 1961 did it lift.

I tell this because it belongs to his life, and because he did not hide it himself. Barnard was a man of big words about God, and also someone who sometimes sat in the dark for months. His father's doubt and his mother's faith both lived in him.

In the Gospel of Mark a father cries out: *Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!* (Mark 9:24). Jesus did not send that man away. In Willem Barnard too those two sentences lived side by side.

At Christmas 1961 he started again as a minister, in the village of Rozendaal near Arnhem. He gave half of his time there to assisting with pastoral care. The other half he remained study secretary of the Van der Leeuw-Stichting. They became fruitful years, with, among other things, the church yearbooks *Lieve gemeente* (Dear Congregation) in 1962 and *Binnen de tijd* (Within Time) in 1965. From 1968 to 1972 he also taught homiletics and liturgy at the Protestant theological faculty in Brussels. He loved that city.

Seventy-six hymns

In 1966 the University of Utrecht gave him an honorary doctorate in theology, for his work on the liturgy. It was the same faculty where he had begun in 1940.

Not everything went as he wished. The country folk were also working on a new hymnal. Barnard had proposed making new hymns for every Sunday that connected with the Bible readings. That proposal was rejected. What he had feared in Nijmegen now happened. It frustrated him, and in September 1966 he wrote a satirical poem about it, with the title "Gezangen-commissies" (Hymn Committees). Later too he complained about what he saw as clumsy interference by church committees.

He did carry on, for the people in the pews.

More churches joined the project, and the work came under an interchurch foundation. In 1973 the *Liedboek voor de Kerken* (Hymnal for the Churches) appeared, with the new psalm rhyming and 491 hymns. Seventy-six of them came from Barnard: fifty-five texts of his own and twenty-one translations. Under those hymns he put no pseudonym. It says W. Barnard, the name he was baptized with, under what he wrote for the community he was baptized in.

One of his most willful hymns is "Jeruzalem, mijn vaderstad" (Jerusalem, My Father-City): twenty-one verses, to an almost folk tune, full of longing for the city of God.

Werkman counted further later. In the Flemish Catholic collection *Zingt Jubilate* of 1977 there were about forty hymns of his, in the Old Catholic hymnal of 1990 more than eighty.

Whoever sings in a Protestant church soon sings something of his, even without knowing his name. Who wrote the hymns you know by heart, you often do not know.

A church without dominees

In 1971 he moved to Ellecom. His health remained fragile, and in Rozendaal, for all the appreciation he received there, he had the feeling that he was letting his congregation down. In 1973 he broke down. In 1974 he asked for early emeritus status, which was granted to him in 1975. Werkman names a deep depression as the reason.

On January 8, 1975, he wrote in his diary that he had fallen short, and that he always fell short. A year later he called it a defeat. He had, he wrote, officially failed as a minister. The word *dominee-dichter*, minister-poet, he always abhorred.

I read those sentences with the hymns beside them. The hymns of the man who called himself a failure were already being sung all over the country. That is how poorly we can judge our own fruit.

In 1978 he settled with Tinka in Utrecht, on the Van Ruisdaelstraat, and looked for a church there. With the Reformed neighborhood congregations he had mixed experiences. In 1985 he became a member of the Oud-Katholieke Kerk (the Old Catholic Church). A retired minister of the Reformed Church he simply remained.

What drew him there? He valued the modern, open character of that church, together with the old liturgical forms that had been preserved in it. That liturgy comforted him. He went there as an ordinary member. It pleased him that they did not even know the word *dominee* there. For this church too he wrote hymns.

From those years a small incident is preserved, in his own diary. While singing the creed, a lens fell out of his glasses. He first sang the creed to the end. Only then did he pick it up.

Faith did not get easier in those years. In the diary of that time he writes that he cannot pray, and he explains what he means: letting go of oneself and entrusting oneself to Another. In a radio conver-

sation about his collection *De hondewacht* (The Dog Watch), from 1993, he said he could not approach God. At the last moment he was pinched off from Him. Werkman, who quotes this, wrote that in his poems he was "frightened but comforted," and comforted but frightened.

I let that stand as it stands. A man who cannot pray and meanwhile sings the creed to the end before he picks up his glasses lens. Perhaps that too is faith: to keep singing what you cannot feel at that moment.

Twelve hundred pages in the margin

In 1981 he began a work that would take ten years. In 1992 *Stille omgang* (Silent Procession) appeared, a book of about twelve hundred pages: a poetic, meditative explanation of Bible texts. He himself called it a journal intime, a personal diary, scribbled in the margin of the Bible. It was meant to be read in small pieces, a little each day.

He borrowed his way of reading from two traditions. From the rabbis, who kept knocking on the words until their meaning opened. And from the desert fathers, the early Christian hermits who carried the Bible texts with them, inwardly.

In 1993 he received the Dr. C. Rijnsdorp Prize, a prize for Christian literature, for his whole body of work.

By now he had become a teacher for younger ministers and poets. The poet and minister Jaap Zijlstra told how Barnard once waited for him after he, Zijlstra, had preached. He laid his hands on Zijlstra's shoulders and said that he had understood his teacher well.

Unreachably near

In the early 1990s it turned out that his wife Tinka had Alzheimer's disease. A sneaking assassin, he called that illness. In his diary he described with compassion how she slowly drifted away from him. She died in April 1995.

Out of his grief grew the collection *Onbereikbaar nabij* (Unreachably Near), which appeared in 1996. The collection brought him a new, wider circle of readers. In 1998 he appeared at the Nacht van de Poëzie (Night of Poetry) in Utrecht, and younger poets also became enthusiastic.

He kept writing. For his eightieth birthday in 2000 he received a collection with a title about his own age: *Als een moeder haar zoontje van tachtig* (Like a Mother Her Little Son of Eighty), with poems by twenty-five friends. In 2004 and 2005 selections from his diaries came out, among them *Anno Domini*, with diaries from the years 1978 to 1992. Then followed *Een zon diep in de nacht* (A Sun Deep in the Night), with his diaries from 1945 to 2005.

The little boy from Delfshaven who had his diary as a friend published it himself that way: sixty years of notes.

On October 6, 2005, when he was eighty-five, he wrote in that diary once more about his mother. His heartfelt piety he had from her. The double inheritance was still there, but at the end of his life he named her share.

In 2005 he was operated on for a malignant tumor. He recovered poorly. In 2007 he broke his hip after a collision. He moved to a care home, and there too he went on writing. In 2008 *Orthodox of niks* (Orthodox or Nothing) appeared, a small book about the choice between liberal and orthodox. The title leaves little doubt about where the old doubter had ended up.

Ninety years

Honors came. In October 2008 a portrait of him, made by Dennis Coenraad, was handed over to the Letterkundig Museum (the Literary Museum). In January 2010 a memorial stone was unveiled in the sidewalk in front of the house on the Van Ruisdaelstraat, where he had lived for thirty years. On August 15 he turned ninety. The Utrecht artist Kees Wennekendonk drew his portrait as a birthday present. In October the NCRV, a Dutch broadcaster, devoted a day full of church music to his birthday. Asked what he thought of it, he said only that he enjoyed it.

A little over a month later, on November 21, 2010, Willem Barnard died in Utrecht. The funeral Mass was in the Sint-Gertrudiskathedraal, the cathedral of the Old Catholic Church. The service began with one of his best-known hymns.

Soon after, the editors of the literary magazine *Liter* wrote about him as a great poet, reader and writer, and as a friend and father. They quoted a passage from his diary. We human beings cannot get outside our body, he writes there, not even with God. But the other way around it is different: "God, though, with us!" And so dying is for him a last appeal to God, a complete surrender. The photos with that issue had been taken by his daughter.

The man who wrote that he could not entrust himself to Another also wrote this down.

In Psalm 31 it says: *Into Your hand I commit my spirit* (Psalm 31:5). Jesus prayed those words on the cross. The man who rhymed so many psalms wrote in his diary about that same surrender.

A hymn that went on

His hymns went on without him. In 2013 a new *Liedboek* for the Protestant churches appeared, and in it too are many of his psalms and hymns: sixty-four hymns and six meditative texts, alongside his psalm rhymings.

In December 2021 one of his hymns made the news. In the Jerusalem hymn, which he wrote around 1960, there was a word that in our time is heard as hurtful, and also a line about Jews that raised questions. The Interkerkelijke Stichting voor het Kerklied (the Interchurch Foundation for the Church Hymn) adjusted those lines. His son Benno had said earlier, according to the NOS, that his father had no racist intentions but lived in a time when words carried a different weight.

In the spring of 2023 *In wind en vuur* (In Wind and Fire) appeared, an edition in three volumes with about three hundred and fifty of his hymns and a commentary on each hymn. In it he is named as one of the most important hymn writers of the twentieth century.

Somewhere in the Netherlands on a Sunday a church door opens. The organ plays the first line, and a congregation that perhaps does not know his name sings his words. The student who refused his signature in 1943 and swam into the ministry without wanting to is not standing in the pulpit then. He is in the voices of the people in the pews.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on August 15, 1920, in Delfshaven (Rotterdam) as the son of a barber; study in Leiden and theology in Utrecht; refusal of the loyalty declaration in 1943 and forced labor in Berlin; debut in 1946 under the pseudonym Guillaume van der Graft; minister in Hardenberg and Nijmegen;

study secretary of the Van der Leeuw-Stichting (1954); study leave in England (1956); the Nocturnes in the Maranathakerk; the sanatorium in Laren and the operation of February 1960; Rozendaal from Christmas 1961; lecturer in Brussels (1968-1972); participation in the psalm rhyming (finished 1968); 76 hymns in the *Liedboek voor de Kerken* (1973); Van der Hoogt Prize (1954), honorary doctorate Utrecht (1966), Rijnsdorp Prize (1993); early emeritus status in 1975; move to Utrecht; *Stille omgang* (1992); death in November 2010; the adjustment of the Jerusalem hymn in 2021.

From his own testimony (diaries and stories, as given in the obituary by Th. Marius van Leeuwen; I have not had the diaries themselves in my hands): his fears in Berlin and the question why he did not go into hiding; the double inheritance from his parents; the bewilderment at taking office (February 24, 1946) and the image of the fish trap; his lack of pastoral warmth and the feeling of finding no echo in Hardenberg (1948), with the line from "Landerig in Ambt Hardenberg"; his fear of church meddling; the fears of 1960 and 1961; the diary sentences of January 8, 1975 and January 3, 1976; his reasons for going to the Old Catholic Church and his words about the title *dominee*; the word sneaking assassin; the note about his mother of October 6, 2005; his answer to the NCRV.

From his own testimony (other sources):

- *The loss of his faith around the age of fifteen and the turn at the bombing of Rotterdam.* Hans Werkman tells this and refers to an interview in the Nederlands Dagblad of September 1990. I could not open that interview itself. The sentence quoted is Werkman's formulation. That the bombing fell on May 14, 1940, when Barnard was nineteen, is generally known history. The words "cheerfully orthodox" about his mother stand in quotation marks in Werkman, without his saying whose they are.

- *The prayer with the word "beauty" and the conversations with T.S. Eliot.* Only in Werkman, who places them in the English half-year of 1956. The obituary mentions an earlier trip at the end of the 1940s on which he fell for the Anglican liturgy. In the story I have mentioned both.
- *"Hymns are poems," the leaking roof and the candles, and the radio conversation about approaching God.* In Werkman; of the radio conversation he gives no date.
- *The glasses lens and the creed, and that he could not pray.* From *Anno Domini*, as discussed by Paul Gillaerts in Ons Erfdeel (2004). The compassion with which he wrote about Tinka's decline also comes from there.
- *Diary from the age of thirteen.* A review of *Anno Domini* in *Liter* (2004).
- *Dying as a last surrender.* An undated diary passage, quoted by the editors of *Liter* (2010).
- *The hands on the shoulders.* Jaap Zijlstra, in *Liter* (2000).

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

- *Year of the marriage and name of his wife.* September 1946 according to the obituary and the Kritisch literair lexicon; Werkman gives 1945 and writes Katinka.
- *Hardenberg.* Assistant minister from the end of September 1946 (obituary), minister in 1947 (lexicon). Werkman gives 1942, which cannot be right.
- *The prize of 1950.* Poetry prize of the province of Gelderland for *Mythologisch* (lexicon) or cultural prize of the municipality of Arnhem for three collections (Werkman).
- *Van der Hoogt Prize.* 1954 according to the obituary and Werkman; a writers' lexicon gives 1974, presumably a misprint.
- *Poetry prize of Amsterdam.* 1956 or 1957.

- *England 1956.* From April to mid-December according to my earlier notes; Werkman speaks of six months.
- *Rozendaal.* Christmas 1961 (obituary, lexicon); the caption of a photo in *Liter* gives 1962 to 1974. Werkman has him already teaching in Brussels in 1961; the obituary gives 1968 to 1972.
- *Move to Utrecht.* 1978 (obituary, lexicon) or 1980 (Werkman).
- *Transfer to the Old Catholic Church.* 1985 according to the obituary. Werkman gives no year of his own, but has it follow on 1980.
- *Een zon diep in de nacht.* 2009 according to the obituary, 2008 according to *Liter*.
- *The broken hip of 2007.* The obituary speaks of a collision; in the earlier version of this chapter it was a fall.
- *The Liedboek of 2013.* Sixty-four hymns and six meditative texts according to the obituary; a church magazine from Brielle speaks of more than seventy hymns and thirty-seven psalms.

Only from one source: the yearly week at De Pietersberg, the memorial stone of January 2010, the NCRV day in October 2010 and the Night of Poetry of 1998 (obituary); the numbers in *Zingt Jubilate* and the Old Catholic hymnal, the twenty-one verses of "Jeruzalem, mijn vaderstad" and the meeting with Jan Wit in Nijmegen (Werkman).

A misunderstanding: it is sometimes written that Barnard received the Constantijn Huygens Prize. His name is not on the list of winners.

Interpretation: that the bombing was the turning point in his faith, that in England he discovered what he had become a minister for, and that *Orthodox of niks* shows where he ended up, are my readings. He himself spoke to the end of doubt and faith as two things he had both.

Sources for this chapter

1. Th. Marius van Leeuwen, levensbericht Willem Barnard, Jaarboek van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde 2013 (DBNL)
2. P. Gillaerts, "Guillaume van der Graft", Kritisch literair lexicon (DBNL)
3. Lemma "Graft, Guillaume van der" (DBNL)
4. Hans Werkman, " 'Boer van het alfabet': Guillaume van der Graft", Literator 15 (1994)
5. DBNL, colofon van De tale Kanaäns (1963)
6. NOS, 9 december 2021, "Kerklied aangepast vanwege racistische strofe"
7. Liter, "Van de redactie" (2010, DBNL)
8. Liter, verjaardagsportret door Kees Wennekendonk (2010, DBNL)
9. Poëziecentrum Nederland, bibliografie Willem Barnard
10. Hoeksteen Boekhandel, In wind en vuur (2023)
11. Kerkblad Protestantse Gemeente Brielle, november 2023
12. Constantijn Huygens Prize, lijst van laureaten (Wikipedia)
13. Paul Gillaerts, review of Anno Domini. Dagboeken 1978-1992, Ons Erfdeel 2004 (DBNL)
14. Liter, review of Anno Domini (2004, DBNL)
15. Jaap Zijlstra over Willem Barnard, Liter jaargang 3 (2000, DBNL)

Afterword

A learned woman behind a screen in Utrecht. A cavalry captain in a hut among the Khoikhoi. A minister who preached from the elders' pew because he was not allowed into the pulpit. A writer who brought the Reformation back to life from her sickbed. A woman who walked the wards of a hospital at night. A Carmelite in Dachau. A woman who was in the resistance and later said good morning to Christians behind the Iron Curtain. A barber's son who taught the church to sing.

For some of them we know little about what they believed inside. For others we know it precisely from their own words, and little from outside. I have tried to show both honestly.

Paul wrote that he had finished the race. That phrase fits none of these people as a cry of victory. It does fit as a quiet statement of fact: they kept on running.

With this third volume there are twenty-four chapters in this series. There are many more. Perhaps you can write a next chapter, even if only with your own life.

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)