GOD'S GENERALS IN THE NETHERLANDS

VOLUME 4

Follow Their Faith

Eight Dutch men and women of God, from Guido de Brès to Arnol Kox

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Hebrews 12:1

WIM KAMPHORST

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

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

Introduction: a cloud of witnesses

In Valenciennes, in the north of France, there is no grave of Guido de Brès. After the war, the body of Johannes Post was taken out of a pit in the dunes. Of a few people in this book, little that you can touch is left. A letter, a confession of faith, an orphanage that became a youth care organization, a path with sayings on it in a neighborhood of Eindhoven.

And yet they still speak. In the letter to the Hebrews, after a long row of names of believers from the Old Testament, it says: *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us* (Hebrews 12:1).

This is the fourth volume of a series about such witnesses from our own country, the Netherlands. In it I follow the example of Roberts Liardon, who in his book series *God's Generals* described the lives of preachers and revival leaders, with their calling, their strength and also their weak sides.

Five centuries

The people in this book span almost five hundred years. The first died on a gallows in 1567. The last died in Eindhoven in 2020, after he had made one final round through the city that same month.

In between stand a minister of the Hervormde Kerk (the Dutch Reformed Church) in Drenthe who had himself baptized in a ditch and so began the first Baptist church in the Netherlands. A Catholic priest from Limburg who ended up in Dublin, where thousands of people came to him to ask for his prayers. A colporteur from the Betuwe who, with his wife and without money, started an orphanage that grew into a village. A Reformed farmer from Drenthe who opened his door to Jews in hiding. An art historian who began to read the Bible in a prisoner of war camp. A sailor from Maassluis who built up a mission work from Switzerland. And a street preacher who for forty years called out that no one is immortal.

They are people from very different churches: Gereformeerd, Hervormd, Baptist, evangelical, Roman Catholic. They would have disagreed with one another about many things. That is no reason not to place them side by side. It is in fact a reason to do it.

Why a Walloon and a street preacher?

Guido de Brès was a French-speaking Walloon who never lived in what is now the Netherlands. But in his time Belgium and the Netherlands did not yet exist as separate countries, and the confession he wrote became the heart of the Dutch Protestant churches.

Arnol Kox was a Roman Catholic street preacher without training or an organization behind him. Many people found him annoying or laughable. I have still included him, because he did something

that almost none of us dare to do, and because he kept it up until his last week.

Facts first

As in the earlier volumes, I want to be honest about what we know. About people who have been dead for centuries, stories go around that have become more beautiful in the retelling. About people who died recently, there is often no good biography yet. In both cases you have to be careful.

For each person I have looked into what is certain. Where sources contradict each other, I say so. Stories that we know only because someone told them himself, or because friends or a church process wrote them down, I tell as well, but I say where they come from. After each chapter you will find a short overview of what is certain and what is only told, with the sources.

Not just the good sides

A few people in this book made mistakes or met with resistance. An orphan father who could not manage money and whose home ended up in a national scandal. A minister who was removed from his office. A preacher with outspoken views on Israel and the end times. A street preacher who was fined. I tell these things because they are known and because they belong to the story. The Bible does the same: David, Peter and Paul are not described as perfect people.

How you can read this book

Each chapter stands on its own. The order is that of time, from the sixteenth century to 2020. You do not need to have read the earlier volumes.

Read it with a question in the back of your mind. What did God ask of them, and what is He asking of you? None of them knew at the start where it would end. De Brès threw a package over a wall. Feisser stepped into the water. Post took one person in hiding into his home. Rookmaaker opened a Bible in a camp. Each time it began small.

Guido de Brès: the man who threw his faith over the wall

In the night of November 1 to 2, 1561, someone crept through the streets of Doornik (Tournai in French). The city lay in the Southern Netherlands, in what is now Belgium. It was a city full of soldiers. At that moment the castle was home to the regent, Margaret of Parma, who ruled the Netherlands on behalf of the Spanish king, Philip II.

By the castle wall the man stopped. He had a package with him. In it was a small book of thirty-seven articles, with a letter to the king. He threw the package over the wall and disappeared into the dark.

The little book was called *Confession de foy*, confession of faith. It explained what the Protestants in the Netherlands believed. They were not troublemakers, said the letter to the king that came with the confession. They wanted to obey the king in everything that did not go against God's Word. But they could not give up their faith. They would rather give their backs to the whip, their tongues to the knife, their mouths to the gag and their bodies to the fire.

Margaret of Parma saw the little book. It really did reach her. She did not know who had written it. That only came out later.

The man in the dark was Guido de Brès. Five and a half years later he hung from a gallows in Valenciennes. In his last night he told his fellow prisoners that he was very glad. His confession lives on. In almost every Reformed church in the Netherlands it is read today, as the Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis, known in English as the Belgic Confession.

A Walloon in a Dutch book

You may wonder what a man from Bergen in Hainaut (Mons in French) is doing in a book about Dutch men and women of God. He spoke French. He never lived in Holland. But in his day the border between the Netherlands and Belgium did not exist yet. There were the Netherlands, seventeen provinces under one lord, from Groningen to Artois. Bergen, Doornik and Valenciennes belonged to them just as much as Amsterdam and Utrecht.

And his confession became a Dutch document. As early as 1562 a Dutch translation appeared, printed in Emden. The Synod of Dordrecht adopted it in 1618 and 1619 as one of the Three Forms of Unity. Since then it has belonged to the heart of the Dutch Protestant churches. Whoever makes public profession of faith in a Reformed congregation in the Netherlands often promises to agree with the teaching that Guido de Brès once wrote down. So he belongs in this book too.

The son of a glass painter

Guido de Brès was born in 1522 in Bergen, in French Mons. His father was called Jean du Béguinage. He was a painter and took the name De Brès in Bergen. The family had four sons and a daughter.

Guido learned a trade. Together with his brother Christoffel he was apprenticed to a glass painter. He made stained glass, the colored windows you see in churches. That is where he came from: a workshop, with no study and no title.

His mother was a devout Roman Catholic woman. She hoped her son would serve in the church. Jean Crespin, a contemporary who collected the stories of the martyrs, tells us that in his youth Guido himself was also a sincere Catholic. The old Dutch martyr book says it more sharply: at first he clung strongly to the teaching of the pope. It is good to know that. He did not become a Protestant out of rebellion against the church. He was first a convinced member of it.

Around the age of twenty-five

What changed him? A Bible. A glass painter who had to set Bible stories in glass read those stories first. Guido kept reading. The martyr book says that through constant Bible reading he came to the Gospel.

An account that appeared a year after his death says that around the age of twenty-five he went through a heavy inner struggle. He laid the teaching of his church next to the Word of God, point by point. He went to secret meetings where the Bible was read. He read Luther's catechism and Calvin's *Institutes*. The preacher Pierre Brully, who was burned in Doornik in 1545, also influenced him.

That reading was not without danger. Emperor Charles V had harsh laws proclaimed in the Netherlands, the edicts known as the placards. Anyone who owned forbidden books, held Protestant meetings or began to explain the Bible himself could be sentenced to death. In 1540 French and Flemish Bible texts were added to the list of forbidden books. In those years more people were put

to death for their faith in the Netherlands than anywhere else in Europe.

He could not stay at home with this. His family could not bear the consequences of his choice, says the martyr book. And he did not keep quiet: in Bergen he passed on what he had found.

In 1548 it became too hot. Guido had made friends with an English couple, and those people were arrested, together with other Protestants. He fled to London. England then had a young Protestant king, Edward VI, and in London there was a church for refugees from the continent. Its leader was John a Lasco, a Pole. Guido found a home in that congregation. There he also received the call to become a minister.

La Rose in Rijsel

In 1552 he returned. He went to Rijsel, today's Lille, and built up a secret congregation there. It met under the code name la Rose, the rose. In those years he also wrote his first book, *Le Baston de la foy chrestienne*, the staff of the Christian faith. It was a collection of sayings from the church fathers and the Bible, meant to show ordinary believers that the teaching of the Reformation was not new.

In March 1555 persecution struck the congregation in Rijsel hard. A family from the congregation, the Aughier family, was arrested. A father, a mother and two sons from one of his congregations died as martyrs. Guido fled again, by way of Ghent and Antwerp to Frankfurt, where he met John a Lasco again, and then on to Switzerland. In Lausanne and Geneva he studied for about three years, under John Calvin and Theodore Beza. There he learned Latin and the languages of the Bible.

I try to imagine what this life looked like. A glass painter with no academic training, who always had to flee, who saw friends die, and

who kept on learning. In his thirties he sits down in a classroom again so that he can explain the Word better. For him faith was not just a feeling. It was also something to understand and to explain.

A garden house in Doornik

In 1559 he came back to the Netherlands, now as minister of the secret congregation in Doornik. That year he married Catherine Ramon. On August 31, 1560, their son Israël was born. More children followed. By 1567 there were five, and the oldest was then six years old. One of them was a daughter, Sara.

He lived under a false name. Often he used the name Jérôme. From Doornik he traveled to Rijsel, Valenciennes, Douai and Bergen to visit small groups of believers. Everywhere he appointed elders and deacons and gave the congregation a church council. Those congregations later called themselves the churches under the cross. They met in houses, barns and woods. Anyone who showed himself took a risk.

The authorities were already looking for him. In their papers he was called the overseer and general preacher of the Calvinists. His description has been preserved: a man of about forty, tall, with a reddish beard and the accent of Hainaut.

In Doornik he worked in a hidden garden house, near his home in the parish of Saint-Brice. There he wrote letters, and there he also wrote his confession. He used a French confession from two years earlier as a model and reworked it. He wanted to show two things. To the authorities: we are not rebels. And to everyone: we are not Anabaptists either. That was a sensitive point. The uprising of radical Anabaptists in Münster in 1534 and 1535 was still fresh in people's memory. Rulers thought of riots whenever they thought

of Protestants. In 1561 the little book was printed, in Rouen and in Lyon.

The confession begins with a sentence that you still hear in churches today, in a somewhat more modern form: we all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God. Then follows the whole story of the faith: the Bible, the Trinity, creation, sin, Christ, justification by faith, the church, the sacraments, the government and the last judgment.

It did not become a fiery sermon. It is calm and clear, and that is why it touches me. Here someone is writing who knew he could be arrested any day, and he writes an explanation where you would expect a cry of anger. Paul writes: *For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* (Romans 10:10). De Brès took that literally. Believing was not enough. You also had to be able to say it.

Do not go looking for danger

In September 1561 something happened in Doornik that Guido did not want. In the evenings Protestants marched singing through the streets. They sang the French psalms, in large groups at once. It was a kind of demonstration. The authorities reacted fiercely.

Guido disapproved of these processions. You should not go looking for danger, he said. Not everyone in his congregation agreed with him. A member of the congregation, Gilles Espringalles, thought differently. I find this an interesting side of De Brès. He was brave, and he was not reckless. He believed that you should not challenge the authorities without need. He would hold to that attitude all the way to the gallows.

In those same restless weeks he threw his package over the castle wall. It was an explanation, not a challenge. He wanted the regent and the king to read what the Protestants really believed, before they treated all of them as rebels.

It turned out differently. The authorities began to search. His wife and children had already been sent earlier to Sedan, a small principality just across the border where Protestants were safer. Guido himself fled. On January 10, 1562, the regent's commissioners found his house. Friends had still tried to burn his books and papers in the garden, but the fire was discovered. During the search two hundred and fifty copies of the confession were seized, along with books by Luther and Calvin and his letters. The regent had everything burned. From that moment the authorities knew who the author was.

He did not fall silent because of it. While he was being hunted, he preached in the open air in Valenciennes to thousands of people. He moved on to France and helped congregations in Dieppe and Amiens. In Amiens he was arrested at a secret meeting. He was released again.

Sedan and the prince

The next years, from 1563 to 1565, he lived in Sedan. He was house preacher to the Duke of Bouillon, who was a Protestant. He wrote a large book against the Anabaptists, *La racine, source et fondement des anabaptistes*, which appeared in 1565. He visited prisoners. He traveled to secret synods in Antwerp.

In 1564 he spoke in Brussels with Prince William of Orange. The question was whether the Lutherans and the Calvinists in the Netherlands could not join forces. That conversation came to nothing. They could not agree about the Lord's Supper. It does

show how seriously De Brès was taken by now. A glass painter from Bergen spoke with the man who would later be called the Father of the Fatherland.

In those years the tension in the Netherlands grew. In 1566 noblemen presented a petition to the regent. In the summer of that year preachers traveled through the country and held field sermons in the open air, for thousands of people. Then things exploded.

Valenciennes, 1566

The congregation of Antwerp had called him as their minister, and in July 1566 he was there. In August he was sent to Valenciennes. He arrived on August 9, together with his colleague Pérégrin de la Grange. The believers welcomed him with joy. The next day he was already preaching, at first in the open air.

On August 24 the iconoclastic fury broke out in Valenciennes. Groups of people moved into the churches and destroyed statues, altars and paintings. Whether Guido approved of that is not known. His own line had always been that you should not challenge the authorities. After the iconoclastic fury he did preach in the church of Saint John, and the Protestants effectively held the city. They celebrated the Lord's Supper there, against the regent's ban. That Lord's Supper would later appear in his sentence.

The authorities struck back. In December 1566 Valenciennes was besieged by an army under the command of Philippe de Noircarmes. The siege lasted months. The ministers, De Brès and De la Grange in the lead, led the resistance in the city. Here you see another side of his story. The man who had said in Doornik that you should not go looking for danger now stood in a city that had taken up arms against the regent. Historians have asked how that can be reconciled. There is no clear answer. Perhaps he saw it as his duty to stay

with his congregation. Perhaps in the chaos of those months it was no longer in his hands.

On Palm Sunday, March 23, 1567, the city surrendered.

Chains as music

A few days earlier Guido had escaped over the walls at night with De la Grange and a few others. They crossed the Scheldt in a little boat. They were in disguise. A few days later they were arrested anyway, near Saint-Amand. A villager had recognized one of the fugitives.

In his letter to Catherine, Guido honestly tells what went through him then. He kept thinking about how things could have gone differently. They should never have traveled with so many at once. It overwhelmed him. Peace came only when he began to think about God's providence. God knows the number of my hairs, he wrote. Then he could pray and lay himself in God's hand.

They were first taken to the castle of Doornik. That was where the package with the confession had once flown over the wall. Now the writer himself sat there, on the inside.

There were many visitors, the martyr book tells us. Noblemen, women and young ladies wanted to see the famous heretic. Some came to mock, others to argue with him. Guido answered every question and opened the Bible. Whoever noticed how well he knew it pulled back: "We are not theologians." A priest came who had drunk too much and could not explain the sacrament. The commissioners wanted to talk with him about the saints. Whoever may not worship Mary, said Guido, may not call on her either.

The commander of the castle, the lord of Maulbay, asked whether he did not believe in purgatory. Guido answered that he knew one

cleansing, the blood of Christ, and that he did not recognize the ovens of the priests. Then he would get to know purgatory if he was damned, said Maulbay. Guido pointed him to the Judge in heaven.

And then there was the countess of Reux. She came to see him several times in prison. She saw him in chains and said that in his place she could not sleep, eat or drink. His answer has been preserved. His good cause and his good conscience gave him peace, he said. He ate, drank and slept better than the people who wished him harm. And the chains? They were worth more to him than golden chains, because they did him more good. The rattling sounded in his ears like music. He wore them for the Word of God.

I read that and fall silent. You cannot invent a sentence like that to make an impression. Someone sitting in irons that scrape to the bone says only what he truly holds in his hands.

The Black Hole

After about two weeks Guido was moved to Valenciennes. On April 16, 1567, he ended up in the Brunain, a dungeon that people called the Black Hole. It was dark, cold and foul. He sat in the lowest part, among the sewage, with heavy irons on his legs. Air came in only through a small hole through which filth was thrown down on him. The martyr book speaks of an iron grate above a hole where drunken men relieved themselves.

He describes it himself in his letter to Catherine. The irons, he says, were "a continual hell, hollowing my limbs up to my poor bones." They gave him no rest for a moment. The provost came to check them several times a day. Three groups of guards stood at the door. And then there was the lord De Hamaide, who said he came to comfort him and urge him to be patient. He came after the meal, Guido writes dryly, with wine in his head and a full stomach. Then he

threatened to have the prisoner chained much tighter if he tried to escape.

Here too visitors came. Noblemen, women from the city, monks. Augustinian monks tried to talk him into recanting his faith. It did not work. The bishop of Arras, François Richardot, held long conversations with him on April 18 and May 22 about the Mass, the Lord's Supper and the sacrifice, and about the question whether the bread really changes. Guido stayed calm. He answered with the Bible and with the old church fathers, Cyprian, Origen, Tertullian, the same names he had gathered in his first little book years before. De la Grange spoke with the bishop in the same way.

Peter writes: *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.* (1 Peter 3:15). I know few lives in which that text was carried out so literally as in those weeks in the Brunain.

A letter to Catherine

In prison he wrote letters, many letters: to congregations, to friends, to his family. Three are preserved that are often mentioned: to the congregation in Valenciennes, to his mother and to his wife. They were printed soon after his death, and that is how we still have them.

The letter to Catherine is one of the most beautiful Christian letters I know. He calls her his beloved wife and his sister in Christ. Her sorrow, he writes, disturbs his joy more than his own suffering. They were married for seven years and God gave them five children. If God had wanted to give them more time, He would have done so. He knows he is leaving her behind with five small children. And he tries to comfort her, not himself.

He did not fall into the hands of his enemies by chance, he writes. God willed it so, and in that he can find rest. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father. He reminds her of Joseph, who told his brothers that God had turned the evil to good, and of David and Job. He thanks her for everything she has carried with him in the years of exile. He goes ahead alone, he writes. She will follow later. The separation is not forever. This world is a stop along the way, and at home they will see Christ.

He asks her not to grieve too much, not to grieve God. Let her take comfort that God gave her a husband who was allowed to serve the Gospel and whom He counted worthy of the crown of martyrdom. God is, he writes, the husband of believing widows and the father of poor orphans. And then, about the children: be their father and their mother. Teach them to know the true God and His Son. Deal wisely with the little that there is. If she stays alone, that is good. If she finds a God-fearing man who takes care of her, that is good too. Their daughter Sara will be her company and help her.

About himself he writes a sentence that is often quoted: "I am happy; my heart is light and it lacks nothing in my afflictions." And also: "Since I was taken prisoner I have profited more and learned more than during all the rest of my life." He is in a very good school, he writes. In the past he spoke about these things the way a blind man talks about colors. Now the Holy Spirit is teaching him to fight against Satan, and he sees that God's power is made visible in his weakness. The Lord does not let go of anyone who trusts in Him. He has experienced that.

He calls it an honor to die for Christ, a privilege that God did not give even to the angels. It is not bravado. It is in a letter to the wife he loved, at a moment when he had nothing left to prove. At the end he asks her to keep the letter as a memento. He apologizes that it is badly written. He sends greetings to his mother and his sister.

Underneath he puts his name: her faithful husband, minister of the Word of God at Valenciennes, and presently prisoner for the Son of God.

On May 19 he wrote to his mother, the devout Catholic woman who had hoped to see him serve in the church. He wrote that he had served his Savior for more than twenty years, and that He had never let him lack anything. She should not grieve, he said, but rejoice over the honor God was showing her. Her son was going the way of the prophets and the martyrs. The seed he had sown would grow with his blood. He asked her to help his wife and children. He signed as her son who loved her dearly, a prisoner in chains for Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Saturday, May 31, 1567

At three o'clock in the night of Saturday, May 31, 1567, they came to tell him. At six o'clock he would die.

Guido said goodbye to his fellow prisoners. The martyr book has preserved what he said. He was very glad of this news. Death was nothing. He had fought the good fight and would reap in heaven what he had sown on earth. He quoted the words from Revelation about the dead who die in the Lord and are blessed. And he said that what he wanted most was for his chains to be buried with him, as a testimony. Someone asked whether he had finished his book. No, he said, he would work no more. Bread and wine stood ready as breakfast. "My brothers, today I have been condemned to death for the teaching of the Son of God. To Him be the praise."

At six o'clock in the morning he was taken with De la Grange to the town hall. There they heard their sentence. The charge went further than his faith. He was condemned for rebellion and because

he had celebrated the Lord's Supper against the regent's ban. The punishment was death by hanging.

On the square, the Place d'Armes, more than a thousand people stood. At the foot of the ladder Guido knelt to pray. It was not allowed. Rough hands pulled him up and forced him up the ladder. At the top he spoke to the people. He called on them to honor the authorities and to remain faithful to the teaching he had proclaimed. The commissioners gave the executioner a sign to hurry. In the middle of his words Guido was pushed off the ladder. He was about forty-five years old.

De la Grange also spoke from the ladder. He was dying only because he had defended the truth of God, he said, and he called heaven and earth as witnesses.

Afterward unrest broke out among the soldiers. The martyr book tells that they walked through the streets with loaded guns and shot at everyone, Catholic or not. There were dead and wounded, for no reason at all. Some contemporaries saw a judgment of God in that.

His body was buried hastily and very simply that evening on the Mont d'Anzin, outside the city. A grave of Guido de Brès does not exist.

Submissive to the authorities, faithful to the truth

What Guido de Brès said on the ladder was later summed up in a French sentence that became well known in Valenciennes: Soyez soumis au magistrat mais fidèles à la vérité. Be submissive to the authorities, but faithful to the truth.

The tension of his whole life is in that. He wanted to be an obedient subject. He wrote that in his confession too, in the article on the

government. And he wanted to obey God more than men. Where the two clashed, he chose God, and he accepted the price.

His life was not perfect. He was not a saint on a stained-glass window, even though he had learned to make such windows. He stood in a city that was in revolt. His confession also contains sentences that sound uncomfortable today, for example about the task of the government to keep false religion away. Many churches later changed that sentence, because they found it at odds with the freedom of conscience that De Brès himself died for. That too belongs to this story.

Look at what remains. A refugee with no university title wrote thirty-seven articles in a garden house. They were seized and burned. The writer was hanged. Almost five hundred years later they are still read, also in the north of the Netherlands, where he never lived.

Jesus said to the church in Smyrna: *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.* (Revelation 2:10). Perhaps you will never be asked to die for your faith. You are asked to confess it, with your heart and also with your mouth. Do you dare to say what you believe, even when it costs you something?

I think then of those two sounds from his life. A package of paper landing in the dark on the other side of a wall. And more than five years later, in a dungeon in Valenciennes, the rattling of iron, in which one man heard music.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth in Bergen (Mons), usually dated to 1522; training as a glass painter; flight to London around 1548 and contact with John a Lasco; work in Rijsel in the 1550s; study in Lausanne and Geneva; minister in Doornik from

1559; marriage to Catherine Ramon in 1559; the *Confession de foy* of 1561 and the package over the castle wall of Doornik in the night of November 1 to 2, 1561; the Dutch edition of 1562; Sedan and the conversation with William of Orange; his role in Valenciennes in 1566 and 1567; the surrender of the city in March 1567; his imprisonment in Doornik and in the Brunain; the conversations with Bishop Richardot; the letters to his wife, his mother and the congregation; his execution on May 31, 1567, in Valenciennes.

Only from own testimony (his letters from prison): his first reaction after the arrest and the peace he found in God's providence; the description of the Brunain, the irons, the provost, the guards and the visits of the lord De Hamaide; his joy and what he learned in prison; that he had served his Savior for more than twenty years. I read the letter to his wife in the English translation of W. Bredenhof, the letter to his mother in the rendering of B.J. van Wijk. The two sentences in quotation marks from the letter to his wife are given in the English words of that translation.

From accounts by fellow believers: his inner struggle around the age of twenty-five (from the *Procédures* of 1568); that in his youth he was a sincere Catholic (Crespin; also the martyr book that is attributed to Adriaan van Haamstede); that his family could not bear his choice; the saying that you should not go looking for danger; the conversations in the castle of Doornik with the noblemen, the commissioners, the lord of Maulbay and the countess of Reux, with the words about the chains; his words in the last night, the wish that his chains be buried with him, and his words on the ladder; the words of De la Grange; the shooting of the soldiers after the execution. I know these stories from the martyr book as B.J. van Wijk renders it, and from Crespin as later authors quote him. I have not held the old books themselves. That some contemporaries saw a judgment

of God in the unrest among the soldiers is in such an old account; I have not found an independent source for that unrest.

From a single source (not independently checked): the number of two hundred and fifty seized copies, the date of the search (January 10, 1562), the house in the parish of Saint-Brice, the description with the reddish beard, the printing in Rouen and Lyon and the arrest in Amiens (all from the 2017 study by F. Verspeeten); the heavy irons and the place in the lowest part of the dungeon; the false name Jérôme; the crowd of more than a thousand people at the execution; the name Gilles Espringalles (J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, in Van Wijk); the work in Dieppe and Amiens and the call to Antwerp (martyr book); that in one of his congregations a father, a mother and two sons died as martyrs (an American author).

Where the sources differ:

- The year of birth. 1522 is in most sources, but a recent study says it cannot be proved with a record. That also makes his age at death uncertain: forty-four or forty-five.
- The name of his father. That he took the name De Brès in Bergen is told this way; I know of no record.
- The night of the package. Verspeeten speaks of the night of November 1, 1561, and of the castle of the governor; he writes that De Brès did it with a few helpers and that, besides the confession, there was a letter from inhabitants of Doornik in it.
- Who influenced him. That Pierre Brully influenced him is said by some authors; it is not proved. According to English Wikipedia he converted between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five.
- The number of martyrs in the Netherlands. That more people were put to death for their faith here than elsewhere in Europe is a judgment of some historians.

- The call in London. Verspeeten writes that the contact with A Lasco strengthened his calling.
- Where *Le Baston* was written. Verspeeten places it in Rijsel; the martyr book names Ghent. Verspeeten has the work in Rijsel last until 1556.
- The years in Sedan. Verspeeten names 1563 to 1565, and synods in Antwerp in 1563 and 1564. The martyr book puts the call to Antwerp in August 1565.
- The escape and the arrest. That they crossed the Scheldt in a little boat and that a villager recognized them is in one account. On the place the sources differ: Van Wijk names Saint-Amand and March 29, Verspeeten names Rumegnies, Bredenhof gives March 28 as the day of the arrest. According to the martyr book a captain Tramery brought him to Saint-Amand.
- The time in Doornik. One source says a few weeks, Verspeeten about two weeks, with April 16 as the day he came to the Brunain.
- The dates of the letters. The letter to his wife is dated April 12, 1567, in Bredenhof's translation. According to another reading the letter bears no date. The date of April 12 clashes with April 16 as the start of the time in the Brunain, because the letter already describes that dungeon. Other authors place the letter later in May; English Wikipedia says twelve days before his death. The letter to his mother is dated May 19.
- The signing of the letter to his mother. It is translated in different ways; Van Wijk gives: prisoner and in chains for Jesus Christ.
- The countess of Reux. The martyr book places her visit in the time of his imprisonment; whether she came in Doornik or in Valenciennes cannot be made out with certainty from the rendering I read.

- The sentence. An older retelling names the eve of Pentecost, and Verspeeten too writes that the sentence fell on the day before Pentecost. Pentecost fell on May 18 in 1567. More recent studies and the martyr book name the morning of May 31. According to the martyr book the sentence names hanging and strangling, because of the Lord's Supper against the ban of the court in Brussels.
- The prayer at the ladder. One rendering says the executioner did not let him pray, the other that he knelt and was pulled upright.
- The summary of his last words. The French sentence was made, according to Verspeeten, by Daniel Ollier.
- The burial. An American author writes that the grave was so shallow that animals dug up the body. That is in no scholarly source I have seen.
- The role of De Brès in the iconoclastic fury and the armed resistance in Valenciennes.

Interpretation: De Brès was condemned as a heretic and also as a rebel. His defenders see him as a martyr for the faith, his opponents saw him as the leader of an armed uprising. Both sides have grounds in the facts of 1566 and 1567.

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Johannes Elias Feisser: the doctor who went into the water

On Thursday, May 15, 1845, toward evening, a small group of people walked to a barn at the farm of Roelof Reiling in Gasselternijveen. Behind the farm lay the water. It was called the Nijveensche Mond, and it was not deep. Seven of them had prepared for what was about to happen. A German preacher from Hamburg, Julius Köbner, was the first to step into the water.

After him went a man of thirty-nine with a doctorate in theology. For fifteen years he had been a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, in Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe. Now he let himself be immersed in a ditch in Drenthe. Then the others followed, one by one. Roelof Reiling, and his wife Geertruida Teissens. Arend Speelman, who came from Nieuwe Pekela. Three Kruit brothers: Willem, Jannes and Hendrik.

The man with the doctorate was Johannes Elias Feisser. A year and a half earlier he had been removed from his office as minister. With those seven people at the water the first Baptist congregation in the Netherlands began. Baptists still call him their spiritual father and pioneer, wrote the Baptist historian Jan Brandsma in 1955. His for-

mer church saw it differently. To the Reformed church authorities he was a minister who refused his work and brought unrest.

Both sides have their reasons. In this chapter I want to let both be heard.

It began in a family in Groningen.

A doctor from Winsum

Johannes Elias Feisser was born on December 10, 1805, in Winsum, in the province of Groningen. He was the first son of Johannes Feisser and Anna Maria Bouer. Two years later the family moved to Veendam, where his father became a tax collector. It was a well-to-do family. They went to church because that was what one did.

His parents saw an army officer in him. It was his grandmother, a believing woman, who insisted that he become a minister. On May 16, 1823, he enrolled as a student of theology at the University of Groningen. He was seventeen. The theology he learned there was liberal and optimistic about human nature, and he took over those views. On May 3, 1827, he took his candidate's examination before the provincial church board of Friesland. He also studied in Leiden, where he chose church history as his main subject under Professor Clarisse. On June 21, 1828, he received his doctorate. His dissertation was about Basil the Great, a church father of the fourth century, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia.

That same year he became a minister. His first congregation was Miedum-Lekkum, in Friesland. There he married Geertruida Elisabeth Barbara Orck, baroness of Heeckeren. In 1831 he went to Winschoten, in 1833 to Franeker. He also wrote. In 1832 his book about the life and teachings of Jesus appeared in Groningen, *Jezus Christus, of Lotgevallen en Lessen van den Zaligmaker der menschheid* (Jesus Christ, or the Fortunes and Lessons of the Savior of Mankind). With

it he wanted to spread a pure knowledge of the Gospel. In that book he rejected the idea of a personal devil.

In Franeker he was loved. He preached well, and scholars, rich people and ordinary people came to listen to him.

On paper it was a career like many in those years. A gifted boy, a doctorate, a marriage to a baroness, a few congregations, a book. Nothing suggested that he would ever stand outside the church in which he had been trained. He was a liberal minister with an interest in the history of the early church.

Three graves in Franeker

In Franeker the blow came. First his health declined. Then two of his children died. After that his wife died. With his right eye he could hardly see anything anymore.

He was a broken man. He went back to his parents' house in Veendam to recover. There he began to read, especially Puritan books. The historians Teun van der Leer and Arjen Stellingwerf write that those books put him on the track of the turnaround that came a few years later. In Veendam he found rest for his soul, says Brandsma.

I pause for a moment at that order of events. A young minister loses two children and his wife. He goes back to the house where he grew up. And there, in that grief, he comes across books he had never been taught to read at the university. What he felt in those months he did not, as far as I know, write down. It is not the first time that God has found someone at the place where everything had fallen away.

Do you also have such a place in your life, where you only began to search when you had nothing left?

Not five Christians

On March 3, 1839, Feisser was installed as minister in Gasselternijveen, a village in Drenthe with a small country church. That day he preached on the parable of the sower, from Matthew 13.

From the outside, things went well. The church filled up and more money came in. Feisser was not at ease. He looked at his congregation and saw little life. There were not five true Christians here, he wrote later. Almost nobody knew the way of salvation.

He worked hard. After a year or two his sermons began to touch hearts. A small group formed that came to his house to talk about faith. In 1841 he had a writing printed in Groningen, *Het eene noodige* (The One Thing Needful), in which he told what he had experienced. He also wanted to reach the people outside the church.

The autumn of 1841

Then came the book that turned everything around. In the autumn of 1841 Feisser read *Cardiphonia*, a collection of letters by the English minister John Newton. Newton had been a slave trader before he came to faith, and he wrote "Amazing Grace." His letters are about one thing: what grace does to a person who has nothing to offer.

Feisser read it and saw himself. The doctor of theology, who had learned in Groningen that man is basically good, now wrote it down like this: nothing good lives in man, his nature is sinful through and through. You are saved only by grace. In that autumn he came to faith in Christ. So J.W. Weenink tells it, who described his life in 1935 for a Baptist journal.

He was thirty-five. He had stood in the pulpit for thirteen years.

His sermons changed. He now spoke about the inability of man and about the sovereignty of God. He drew a sharp line between

the converted and the unconverted, between being a Christian in outward appearance and being a Christian by faith. He let go of the optimistic theology of his student days. In 1843 a little book followed that called the sleepers to wake up.

He wanted to reform the church. He himself called it a reformation of the Reformation.

Who may come to the table?

It did not stay with sermons. On November 27, 1842, it came to a clash with the church council over the election of new officebearers. Feisser rejected the candidate Hendrik Theeuwes. He missed in him the marks of grace, he said. He himself wanted Hendrik Reiling. The church council chose Theeuwes.

On May 17, 1843, it was about the Lord's Supper. Feisser asked the church council to keep members who did not live faithfully away from the table. Elders were among them. He wanted to remove three elders from their office and to admonish others. A Christian must live in the fear of God on an ordinary workday too, he thought. The church council refused. They did not have the power to do that, they said. Feisser then refused to lead the Lord's Supper.

For the villagers that must have come across as harsh. A minister who keeps his own elders away from the Lord's Supper touched who they were in their village. Little has been handed down from their side. What we know comes largely from what Feisser himself wrote and from what Baptist historians later found out.

He could not give in. He did not want to buy peace at the cost of the truth and the will of God. So he wrote it himself.

Meanwhile another question was growing in him. If the congregation is to consist of converted people, what then is the meaning of

the baptism of babies who cannot yet believe anything? He wrote to the classis board in Assen and asked to be exempted from baptizing small children. His conscience forbade it. He hoped, he wrote, for a true and apostolic church, as Paul draws it in 1 Corinthians 12: one body with many members. Letting go of infant baptism was the first thing needed for that. In September 1843 he had a little book published in Groningen, *Beknopte aanwijzing van het ongeoorloofde in den doop der kleine kinderen* (A Brief Indication of What Is Unlawful in the Baptism of Small Children), with his reasons from the Bible, from history and from the church.

Sunday, September 24, 1843

On Sunday, September 24, 1843, a child was to be baptized. The father was under church discipline. He insisted that his child be baptized, although he rejected what baptism meant. Feisser refused. He also refused to baptize any more children and to hand out bread and wine to people whom he regarded as unbelievers. The classis summoned him to appear. He did not go.

The village turned against him. On a night in October the windows of the parsonage were smashed.

On December 19, 1843, the provincial church board removed him from his office. On January 1, 1844, the decision was made public. The reason was that he categorically refused parts of his work and caused offense and disorder.

I have to stand still here for a moment, because here the stories part ways.

Two ways to read it

For the Reformed Church the matter was simple at its core. A minister was bound by the rules of the church. Since 1816 the church

had been ordered according to a general regulation, and in it the work of a minister was laid down. Baptizing was part of it. Whoever refused to baptize the child of a church member refused a part of his office.

There was a conviction underneath that as well. The Heidelberg Catechism, one of the confessional documents of the church, teaches in question 74 that small children must be baptized. Like their parents, they belong to God's covenant and to His congregation. As boys in Israel received the sign of circumcision, so children now receive the sign of baptism. For Reformed Christians infant baptism is not a custom without ground. They see in it God's promise, which is already there before a child can say or do anything. A minister who denied that took away something that to them belonged to the gospel.

Baptists read the same events differently. In their eyes baptism is the answer of someone who has come to faith himself. A congregation consists of people who have consciously turned to God. Whoever reads that in the Bible and wants to act on it can no longer baptize babies without doing violence to his conscience. Van der Leer and Stellingwerf, themselves Baptists, write that the higher church boards appealed to the regulation and did not want to hear his theological objections.

I am not the referee in this question myself, and neither is this book. Christians who love the Bible have been divided over it for centuries. What I do see is that both sides took something seriously. The church took its order and its confession seriously. Feisser took his conscience seriously. They could not go on together.

There is also much that they shared. Both sides believed that baptism was instituted by Christ Himself. Both wanted a church in which faith was more than a form. The difference lay in the ques-

tion of who may receive the sign, and when. Reformed believers begin with God's promise to parents and children. Baptists begin with the answer of the believer. Whoever grew up in one of the two traditions sometimes finds the other side hard to understand.

How would you explain it to someone from the other tradition, without immediately wanting to convince him?

Without a church, without an income

Feisser now stood outside the church. He had no congregation anymore and no income. Friends dropped him. His parents wanted nothing more to do with him. In the meantime he had remarried, to Karsina Hovingh Wichers, and she stood by him.

He was not discouraged, writes Brandsma. A few people from the village stayed with him. For half a year they met in his house.

He kept writing. In 1844 a faithful account of what had happened in Gasselternijveen appeared. In February of that year he had a tract on the Holy Spirit printed in Groningen, under a title that was a Bible text: if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. It was about the name and the work of the Spirit, and it put one question to the reader: do you really belong to Christ? Burning words from a burning heart, Brandsma calls it.

He also looked for people with whom he could go on. First he spoke with the Seceders, the Christians who had left the Reformed Church in 1834. Nothing came of it. They held on to infant baptism, and for him that was the great objection: that way you could not keep believers and unbelievers apart. They were separated, he wrote, but that did not yet make them united.

In Zutphen lived Jan de Liefde, a Mennonite minister who had clashed with his own deacons because he preached Christ crucified.

In March 1844 De Liefde had published a writing that responded to Feisser's little book on baptism. Feisser read it. In the summer of 1844 he went to see him. They became friends and wrote to each other regularly for a time.

Visitors from Hamburg

Feisser's little books ended up in Germany. In Hamburg Johann Gerhard Oncken and Julius Köbner read them. In those years Oncken was founding Baptist congregations all over Germany. In the deposed Dutch minister they recognized someone who was on their track.

In November 1844 Oncken sent two men to Drenthe to see who this Feisser was: Köbner from Hamburg and A.F. Remmers from Jever. They stayed a night at the Feissers' house. Köbner told them about the Baptists and how their congregations lived in Hamburg. Feisser was impressed.

He did not intend to start a Baptist congregation. Nor did he regard himself as unbaptized. Only after that meeting and after an exchange of letters with the German brothers did he see it: baptism belongs with faith, and then he himself was not yet baptized.

Köbner wrote him a letter on December 27, 1844, which has been preserved. It is wonderful, he wrote, when the Lord brings together small flocks of humble people and gives them back His Word as the lamp for their feet. He does not lead them to Dordrecht and not to Augsburg. He leads them to Jerusalem, where He poured out His Spirit. For the Netherlands Köbner had hope. The field seemed to him white for harvest.

There was hardly any money. On January 12, 1845, Feisser traveled with Roelof Reiling to Zutphen, and they spoke at length with De Liefde about baptism. In February De Liefde advised him to buy

a printing press. In April he wrote that Feisser should bring his worries about money and bread to God in prayer. Two days later, on April 11, a letter came from Köbner. Would he come to Hamburg? If he did not have the travel money, the German brothers would pay.

At the beginning of May 1845 he was in Hamburg. He spoke with Oncken and Köbner and saw the congregation. Oncken listened to him and drew his conclusion: this was a man with a thoroughly evangelical faith and a purely biblical doctrine.

Köbner traveled back with him to Gasselternijveen.

The right gate

So the seven came on that evening in May to the water behind Reiling's farm. Six men and one woman went under and came up.

Afterward they sat together in the farmhouse. Köbner read Psalm 92 and preached on a few verses from it. *For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands.* (Psalm 92:4). The group chose a deacon and a leader. Roelof Reiling became deacon of the new congregation. Feisser became its leader. Köbner confirmed them both.

Roelof Reiling had given his land for the baptism. His son Jannes later became an evangelist near Nieuw-Weerdinge, and his grandson Koop studied in Hamburg and became one of the first well-trained pastors of the Baptists. His great-grandson Jannes Reiling (1923-2005) became a theologian. In 2024 a biography about him appeared.

Later Feisser looked for a picture of what he had done that evening. He found it in *The Pilgrim's Progress* by John Bunyan. "It seemed to us, as if we had entered through the right gate," he wrote. They

had not climbed over the wall, he added, although that custom was already more than a thousand years old.

He also saw his step as the logical consequence of his Calvinist conviction. The true Calvinist, he said, is a Baptist.

Reformed readers will not agree with that. The churches that appeal to Calvin baptize children. It does say something about Feisser. He did not see himself as someone who left Reformed doctrine. He thought he was thinking it through to the end.

Such a small group

The day after the baptism, on May 16, Feisser and Köbner went to Zutphen. They thought that Jan de Liefde and his friend Jacob Benjamin de Pinto also wanted to be baptized. De Pinto was a Portuguese Jew from The Hague who had come to faith through De Liefde. Together those two had published a sharp writing against the Mennonites in 1844, *Gevaar! Gevaar! en geen Vrede!* (Danger! Danger! and No Peace!).

It turned out to be a misunderstanding. De Liefde became angry. De Pinto said that there was now a Baptist congregation in Gasselternijveen, but that he did not yet see the church of Jesus Christ in the Netherlands. It turned into a quarrel, and they left. On May 22 Feisser wrote them a harsh letter: they dishonored God by being disobedient in baptism. De Liefde wrote back that Feisser had come to him as a Baptist from head to toe. De Pinto thought it over, repented, and asked Feisser for forgiveness on May 24. On June 24 he let himself be baptized. Afterward he baptized two others himself. In a letter he greeted Feisser's congregation as a sister congregation.

That same month of May Köbner was also in Amsterdam. There a group of people had been reading the Bible together since 1840, under the leadership of Hendrik Gerardus Tekelenburg. Köbner

baptized four there, Tekelenburg himself among them. Feisser was present, writes Jannes Reiling.

De Liefde went his own way. Later in 1845 he broke with De Pinto and with the Mennonites and founded a congregation of his own.

And Feisser? He sat in Gasselternijveen with a handful of people, mocked by the church and by the village, and poor. Brandsma has preserved what he asked himself in those months: "Why in the world did I give up my pastorate to become leader of such a small group of people?"

I am glad that sentence is there. A man who has gone through the right gate can still think on a quiet evening that he has made a mistake. Obedience does not always feel like a victory.

Friends helped him through. On September 12, 1845, Oncken wrote him that the truth has always had to fight the same battle, and that in orthodox Holland he should expect nothing else. That same month Oncken himself came to Gasselternijveen. He then baptized Feisser's wife Karsina.

There is another story from those poor years. A member of the small congregation was in need. Feisser decided to sell belongings of his own family to help him. In the end it was not necessary: another brother came with the money.

A cure in Bohemia

His health was weak and became weaker. De Liefde had earlier advised him to take a water cure. Oncken and an unknown friend in the Netherlands paid for the journey. On May 15, 1846, exactly a year after his baptism, the journey east began. On the way he passed through Weener, Leer, Aurich, Jever and Hamburg. Near Dresden steam baths did him good. The health resort lay on the Geltschberg

near Leitmeritz, in Bohemia. At home Reiling and two of the Kruit brothers led the congregation. On July 20, 1846, he was back. It had helped. He was not healed.

He tried to keep the group in Zutphen going. De Pinto baptized a few more people there, but when he moved to The Hague in May 1848, it fell apart. Some became Mormons, others joined the followers of Darby. Feisser's visits could not stop it.

In 1849 he moved to Nieuwe Pekela, about thirteen kilometers (eight miles) to the east, just across the border in Groningen. He hoped to reach more people there. Arend Speelman lived there, one of the seven of 1845. Every Sunday morning the two of them sat bent over the Bible together. A small congregation grew. The ground was hard there too. Feisser kept leading services regularly in Gasselternijveen. The congregation there later moved to Stadskanaal.

In 1850 he wrote the history of his congregation for a German mission paper from Hamburg, the *Hamburger Missionsblätter*. In September of that year, at the invitation of Tekelenburg and others, he went to Amsterdam to lead the congregation there. He found little zeal there to carry the Gospel further. By mid-October he was back in Nieuwe Pekela.

Great gentleness, cutting sharpness

In 1858 another brochure of his hand appeared in Groningen, *De Levenswekker* (The Life Awakener). This time it was about the body: about the illnesses that come from catching cold, written by a man who had himself been ill for years.

In his last years the bond with the German brothers loosened. He could not subscribe to their confession of faith. He thought they took too much the position of the Seceders and did not distinguish

well between the Old and the New Testament. In the autumn of 1864 he wrote to Tekelenburg that he doubted whether the fellowship with the Germans could continue. He felt more akin to the English and American Baptists, who left every local congregation free. The Dutch Baptists later went the same way.

What kind of man was he? The old Protestant reference work in which he received an entry writes that he hated everything that was insincere and the fixed, worn-out language of the church. He wanted to hear what someone had experienced with God himself. He could be cuttingly sharp, it says, and gentleness was one of his character traits. For those two things and for his way of thinking he has been compared with Menno Simons, the leader of the Mennonites in the sixteenth century.

Gentle and sharp side by side: perhaps that explains much. He could not pretend. In a church where baptism and the Lord's Supper were taken for granted, he asked whether the faith behind them was real. That made people angry. It also brought seven people to the water.

When did you last do something because your conscience asked it, knowing it would cost you something?

A portrait in a yearbook

For sixteen years, with his weak body, he served the small congregations. In the last years he withdrew more and more. He had always been combative. In his last days he wanted to go his way with God in quiet, writes the reference work.

Johannes Elias Feisser died on June 2, 1865. He was fifty-nine. He died in peace. He left behind a few writings and two small congregations that mourned him.

Something of his course remained visible. The congregation that he began with six others moved in 1866 to Stadskanaal and built a simple little church there. Its pastor became Hendrikus Kloekers, a former missionary to China. In Franeker, the city of the three graves, Peter Johannes de Neui founded a Baptist congregation that was oriented toward the Germans. On May 26, 1869, Dutch and German Baptists met in Franeker. Franeker agreed to a proposal to join the German union. Stadskanaal, the continuation of that first group from Gasselternijveen, protested. The proposal did not go through. The Dutch Baptists wanted to remain free, independent congregations. On January 26, 1881, they founded their own union in Foxhol, after the English example. In 1935 Weenink counted thirty-five Baptist congregations in the Netherlands that owed their spirit to the work of Feisser.

In 1884 a yearbook of that union appeared in Sneek. It contains a portrait of Feisser.

I have not seen that portrait. I do see the water behind the farm of Roelof Reiling. A man with a doctorate and one good eye, who on an evening in May steps into a ditch in Drenthe, because he could not do otherwise than what he read in the Bible.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth in 1805 as the son of Johannes Feisser and Anna Maria Bouer; study with liberal views and ministry from 1828; the loss of his first wife and two children in Franeker; his arrival in Gasselternijveen in 1839; his theological turnaround around 1841-1843; conflicts over officebearers and the Lord's Supper; his removal on December 19, 1843 (made public on January 1, 1844, so that some sources name 1843 and others 1844); the visit of Köbner and Remmers in November 1844; the baptism of seven people by Köbner on May 15, 1845, in Gasselternijveen; the

move to Nieuwe Pekela in 1849; the distancing from the German Baptists in his last years; his death on June 2, 1865.

Only from his own testimony (as Baptist historians quote it from his writings and letters): that there were not five true Christians in his congregation; what he wrote about man after reading Newton; that he did not want peace at the cost of the truth; his letter to the classis board; the image of the right gate from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*; the statement that the true Calvinist is a Baptist; his judgment of the Seceders; his question why he had given up his pastorate. I have not held his own little books. The sentences come from the English articles of Brandsma, Weenink and Van der Leer and Stellingwerf and have been translated back by me; the original Dutch words may differ. The two sentences in quotation marks (the right gate and the small group) I checked against Brandsma's English article and give in his wording.

From a single source:

- From Brandsma (1955): the precise date of September 24, 1843; the dates of the conflicts (November 27, 1842, and May 17, 1843) and the names Theeuwes and Hendrik Reiling; the titles of his early writings; the letters of Köbner, Oncken and De Liefde; the journey to Hamburg; the events in Zutphen with De Liefde and De Pinto; the water cure and the route (from the summary I read it cannot be made out with certainty whether he left Gasselternijveen or Hamburg on May 15, 1846); the short stay in Amsterdam in 1850; the letter to Tekelenburg of 1864; the meetings of 1869 and 1881.
- From Weenink (1935): the grandmother and the wish of his parents; his popularity in Franeker; the almost blind right eye and the order of the deaths; the smashed windows; that friends and parents dropped him and his wife supported him; the barn, the evening, the order at the water, Psalm 92

and the confirmation by Köbner; the story about the family belongings; who paid for the cure.
- From *De Waarheidsvriend* (2024): the Nijveensche Mond behind Reiling's farm, and the descendants of Roelof Reiling.

Where the sources differ:

- The water. *De Waarheidsvriend* names the shallow water of the Nijveensche Mond, Brandsma calls it a ditch, Weenink a canal by a farm.

- The day of the baptism. May 15, 1845, was a Thursday. Weenink writes Sunday evening. The hour of the evening comes only from him.

- His father's occupation. Brandsma calls him a city tax collector in Veendam, Weenink a state tax collector. Brandsma writes only that Feisser grew up in Veendam; the move two years after his birth comes from Weenink.

- The deaths in Franeker. Brandsma and Van der Leer and Stellingwerf name them without order or date; no source says how they died. An American church website writes that he lost his right eye; Weenink speaks of almost blind, Brandsma of a damaged eye.

- The title of the writing of 1841. The old file gives *Het eene noodige*; in the scan of Brandsma I read *Het eene en 't andere noodige*. The little book of 1843 is called in the file *Ontwaakt, gij die slaapt* (Awake, You Who Sleep); the title is garbled in the scan.

- Newton. Brandsma writes "Newman's Cardiphonia"; John Newton is meant. That Newton was a slave trader and wrote "Amazing Grace" is common knowledge and does not come from the sources on Feisser.

- The conversion. Weenink writes that Feisser came to faith in Christ in the autumn of 1841. Van der Leer and Stellingwerf speak of a theological turnaround in the years 1841 to 1843, prepared by the Puritan books in Veendam.

- The conflict of 1842. Brandsma speaks of the election of a deacon, Van der Leer and Stellingwerf of an elder.

- The second wife. No source names the date of his second marriage. Weenink writes that his wife supported him at the removal; that must then have been his second wife. That is my inference.

- Amsterdam, May 1845. Brandsma writes that Köbner baptized four people there; J. Reiling (1979) names Feisser as present.

- His character. An earlier version of this chapter said that Jan de Liefde wrote about Feisser's gentleness and sharpness. In the reference work that sentence stands without a name, as the judgment of the writer of the entry. Who compared him with Menno Simons, the entry does not say.

- *De Levenswekker* (1858). According to the reference work the brochure is about illnesses caused by catching cold, and was communicated to the Netherlands from Germany.

- The Bible verse at the baptism. Weenink names Psalm 92 verses 4 and 5 in the English numbering; in the Dutch Statenvertaling-based HSV those are verses 5 and 6. I quote the verse in the NKJV, which numbers it 92:4.

- 1869. Brandsma describes the outcome as a covenant without subordination; later the union joined the German union and remained independent.

Unconfirmed: it is told that he later worked in Amsterdam (after 1850) and in Ilpendam. In the sources I could consult I did not find that confirmed; Brandsma names only the short stay in Amsterdam in 1850. I found his place of death in no source.

Interpretation: most of the detailed sources on Feisser were written by Baptist historians. How the church council and the villagers of Gasselternijveen experienced the conflict has hardly been handed down. Whether infant baptism or believer's baptism does most justice to the Bible is a question on which Reformed and Baptist Christians differ to this day.

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Karel Houben: the miller's son with the blessing hands

On January 5, 1893, the day before Epiphany, the death bell rang at the monastery of Mount Argus in Dublin. An old priest had died that morning at half past five. His body was taken to the chapel, and a crowd was already waiting there. Everyone wanted to touch him. A man who was there said later that it took him an hour to reach the coffin.

In the days that followed, thousands of people came. A thick layer of snow lay on Dublin and the police had to keep order. From early morning until late evening the line moved past the coffin. Four priests stood beside it. People handed over their handkerchiefs, rosaries and books, and the priests held them against the body for a moment. Then the people took them home again. On January 8 he was buried, and people had come from all over Ireland. Afterward they even took away the wax of the candles that had burned beside the bier. A newspaper wrote about an explosion of religious feeling.

The rector of the monastery, Father O'Neill, afterward wrote a letter to the family of the deceased, far away in Limburg. Nobody wanted

to pray for the rest of his soul, he wrote. Everyone was calling on his help instead. And he wrote a sentence that more than a hundred years later would be quoted by a pope in St. Peter's Square: "The people have already declared him a saint."

The man in the coffin was a Dutchman. His name was Johannes Andreas Houben, called Drieske in his village, Karel van Sint Andries (Charles of St. Andrew) in the monastery, and Father Charles of Mount Argus in Ireland. His English was poor and he never gave a real sermon there. And yet on some days more than three hundred people came to his monastery gate to be blessed by him. In 2007 he was declared a saint by the Roman Catholic Church.

If you are a Protestant, you may swallow hard at some of the words in this chapter: relics, intercession, canonization. I explain them where they come up. I ask you only to look at the man first. He began in a mill on the Geleenbeek.

"Gott lof und Dank"

Johannes Andreas Houben was born on December 11, 1821, in Munstergeleen, a village between Sittard and Geleen in the diocese of Roermond. He was baptized the same day in the old parish church, and received the names of his uncle and godfather, a brother of his mother. He was the fourth of eleven children. His father, Peter Joseph Houben, was a miller. His mother was called Johanna Elisabeth Luijten.

His father wrote down the birth in the church book, in the German that was still in use in that region. On the eleventh of December in the year 1821 Joannes Andreas Houben became man, it says. And then: "Gott lof und Dank." God be praised and thanked.

In the village the boy was called Andries or Drieske. Because his father was a miller, they also called him Drieske of the miller. The

family worked in a mill that belonged to an uncle. At home they prayed together, morning and evening, and said the rosary together.

He was a quiet and shy child. At home he was cheerful, and he liked to sing to himself. On April 26, 1835, he made his first communion, and on June 28 of that year he was confirmed. He was an altar boy and went to church every day. Early on he wanted to become a priest.

Wanting and being able are two different things. After primary school Drieske went to school in Sittard and Broeksittard, but learning came hard to him. Latin especially, which a priest needed then, was a struggle. He was no brilliant student. In a large miller's family it was also too busy at home to study. So for a time he lived with his sister Sibylla at the house of an uncle, Peter Luyten.

For ten years he walked back and forth to school in Sittard, two miles there and two miles back. The neighbors doubted whether he would ever finish. The Irish biographies call him shy and slow at learning. They also call him faithful.

I find that a comforting beginning. There is no child prodigy sitting at the school desk here. Here is a boy who wants something that is really too high for him, and who keeps trying. Do you recognize that? That you want to do something for God, and your head or your hands do not cooperate?

A barracks in Bergen op Zoom

Around his twentieth year his studies were interrupted. He was drawn by lot for military service. On July 9, 1841, he reported to the First Infantry Regiment in the Markiezenhof in Bergen op Zoom.

A soldier he was not. He was often found in church. There is a story told about him that I do not want to keep from you. During

a disturbance his unit was ordered to fire. Drieske was so afraid of hitting someone that he aimed his rifle the wrong way. He almost shot his own superior.

After a little over three months he was allowed to go home. He remained a reservist.

In that barracks something happened that gave his life a different direction. A fellow soldier, Antonius Raaymakers, talked about his brother. He had entered a new monastery in Belgium, with priests who proclaimed the suffering of Jesus. They were Passionists. This was the first time Drieske heard of them. He decided that he wanted to join them too.

The Passionists are a Catholic religious order, founded in Italy in the eighteenth century by Paul of the Cross. Their name comes from the Latin word passio, suffering. Their life revolves around the suffering and death of Jesus. They promise to keep that suffering alive in their own prayer and to tell it to others. Their emblem is a heart.

Back in Munstergeleen he worked in the mill by day and studied at night. His uncle died. On January 19, 1844, his mother died. She was fifty-two. A month later he received his definitive discharge from the service. After that he contacted the Passionist monastery in Ere. His father tried to talk him out of it. Drieske held on.

On November 5, 1845, Andreas Houben left Munstergeleen, and that day his novitiate began in Ere, near Doornik in Belgium. He was twenty-three. He never returned to his village.

In Ere he was received by Dominic Barberi, an Italian Passionist who was later beatified. He received the habit and the monastic name Karel van Sint Andries, in Latin Carolus a Sancto Andrea. At such a clothing ceremony the death bell of the monastery was rung. From then on the novice was dead to the world. On December 10, 1846,

he took his first vows. In the summer of 1849 he was among the students allowed to take Father Barberi to the boat. Shortly afterward Barberi died in England.

For four years he studied philosophy and theology. That too was hard for him. On December 21, 1850, he was ordained a priest in Doornik by Bishop Labis. His family was not there. His father had died in August, and after the costs of illness and burial the family could not pay for the journey. Later he wrote that even his happy days were lonely.

"My people"

After his ordination he stayed another year in Ere. On February 16, 1852, Father Karel left for England. In a letter to his family he wrote about a very uncomfortable crossing, and about a train that even ran underground. He was thirty and would not see the European continent again.

In England he worked for four years in monasteries of his order, in Staffordshire and Broadway. He helped guide the young novices there and did the work of a parish priest in the surrounding villages. That is how he came to be among Irish migrants. From 1845 the potato harvest had failed in Ireland. At least a million people died. At least two million left, most of them for America, and some for England, where they worked as cheap laborers. The Passionists cared for the poor there. In those years they also nursed wounded soldiers from the Crimean War.

Father Karel became attached to the Irish. He felt for them and he admired their faith. He called them "my people."

In Dublin the Passionists had founded a new monastery in 1856, on Mount Argus in the district of Harold's Cross. It was called St Paul's Retreat. The founder, Father Paul Mary Pakenham, was the

son of an earl and a Protestant by upbringing. He began with ten priests in a converted farmhouse. In early 1857 he died of a heart condition. Father Ignatius Spencer then asked whether Father Karel could come.

On July 9, 1857, he arrived. He was thirty-five. He would stay in Dublin for most of the rest of his life.

A priest who could not preach

The Dublin he entered was a poor city. The parish of Mount Argus describes it without detours: many soldiers, many pubs and brothels, much violence, and people who knew almost nothing about the faith. There were Catholics who had never been to confession or received communion.

The Passionists had come to preach. That was exactly what Father Karel could not do. His English remained poor all his life. He gave no formal sermons and led no missions, the great preaching weeks the order was known for. In one of his first letters from Dublin he wrote what his work was: saying Mass and hearing confession.

What he could do was listen. He heard confession, gave spiritual guidance and visited the sick. In the confessional and at the sickbed he was at his best. Whoever came to him went away comforted.

His fellow monks saw a man who always held a small crucifix in his hand, to keep thinking of the suffering of Christ. When he celebrated Mass, he did so with such devotion that it lasted much longer than with others. The night prayer of the monastic community, at two o'clock in the night, he never missed. Among the young novices he was known as gentle. He did not put them to the test. And he was cheerful around the house. When he walked through the corridors, he hummed the Dutch national anthem.

He also made long journeys through Ireland to collect money for the new church and the monastery, a house with eighty rooms. With well-to-do people he got along well, despite his language. In this way his name became known throughout the country.

I pause here for a moment, because I recognize this from my own work. We often think that God works mainly through people who can speak well. With Father Karel it went through a man who could not find his words, and who simply listened.

Three hundred people at the gate

It began with sick people whom he visited. Afterward people told that they had been healed. The story spread, and soon people came to Mount Argus every day. On some days there were more than three hundred.

Every day he walked from the monastery to the church. He spoke a few words about the suffering of Christ. He prayed in silence. He asked the people to renew their baptismal promises. Then he blessed them with a relic of Paul of the Cross, the founder of his order, and laid his hands on them. A relic is an object connected with a saint, such as a piece of his clothing or body. He also gave out water that had been in contact with that relic.

And things happened. The paralyzed walked again. The blind saw again. People who coughed up blood stopped. People were healed of tuberculosis and women of childbed fever. There were also those who came to him melancholy or confused and went away healed.

Father Sebastian Keens, a fellow monk, told it himself. A boy of twelve was brought who could no longer use his leg. Keens went at once to fetch Father Karel. Shortly afterward the boy was walking back and forth outside the house, completely healed.

There is the story of John Patterson, a boy of six who had gone blind from flying stones. Father Karel blessed him. The first thing the child saw when he could see again was the priest himself, with his arms spread wide.

In the archive of the Irish Passionists lie the letters of people who experienced it. A woman from Dublin wrote that shortly before his death she had received a great healing. Another woman, Jane Fannin of Little Mary Street, wrote that she had been healed of rheumatic fever, of dropsy and of a third illness. She had forgotten the name of the third.

I love that last little sentence. That is how someone talks who has nothing to prove. She was ill, she was blessed, she was better, and what the doctor called it she no longer knew.

He was asked for everywhere. Carriages were sent to bring him to the sick, in the city and far beyond. Once, when he was staying in a village in the country, the people laid their sick in a long row along the road in front of the house. In 1860 he was invited to Glendalough, the old holy place by the lake. When he arrived, a large crowd came toward him. People came from England and from America. Whoever traveled from the United States to Europe planned the trip so that Mount Argus fit into it. His name was known as far as Australia. In Dublin they called him the saint of Mount Argus. Later his hands were called the healing hands.

Holy water at the market

So much traffic brought problems. He was humble, and he had enemies. There were doctors in Dublin who complained that Father Karel kept the sick away from the doctor. They sent their complaints to Cardinal Paul Cullen, the archbishop of Dublin, and wrote letters to the newspapers: he was said to have told the sick that they did

not need a doctor. In the same period traders made off with the water he had blessed. They bottled it and sold it all over Ireland. He knew nothing about it. Then came the accusation of simony, the selling of holy things for money.

He was innocent. He had kept nobody from a doctor, and the doctors later withdrew their complaint. He had given the water away and sold nothing himself. Meanwhile he was becoming exhausted by the thousands who wanted to be blessed by him every week.

The cardinal and the superiors of the order wanted an end to the commotion. They agreed that he would leave Dublin. In 1866 he was sent to England.

In Munstergeleen they call those years his exile. He lived at St Saviour's in Broadway, then in Sutton, where the population had quadrupled in twenty years because of the coal mines and the houses could not cope, and finally in Highgate in London. He worked with novices and in parishes, among the poor. In Sutton he was deliberately kept in the background. The sick found him anyway, Catholics and also people of another faith.

How does it feel to be sent away for something you did not do? The sources do not tell what went on inside him. They tell only that he obeyed and went. For a monk obedience was a vow. I think of Jesus, who bore injustice without defending Himself.

In January 1874 he was allowed to return to Dublin.

Tuesday in Holy Week

The superiors had hoped that the crowds would have blown over in those eight years. They had not. The sick and the grieving came almost immediately again. He traveled through Dublin and across the country again to bless, and he collected money again for the

new church. He prayed, heard confession and blessed, year after year. He would live another nineteen years on Mount Argus.

Around 1880 his health declined. He lived strictly and allowed his body little. He did not complain.

On April 12, 1881, the Tuesday of Holy Week, he was on his way to a sick person. At the convent of the Poor Clares in Harold's Cross his little carriage collided with another carriage and overturned. He broke his leg. The break never healed well and he limped for the rest of his life. The wound stayed open and festered. A constant toothache and a swollen jaw came on top of that. He bore the pain as a share in the suffering of Christ, the suffering that his whole order revolved around. Every time someone asked for him, he came down the many stairs from his cell. To give him some rest, fixed times were set.

He grew older. In the 1880s he kept the life of prayer in the monastery going, at a time when many fellow monks found the money for completing the church and monastery more urgent than prayer. A few years before his death his spiritual director thought he was overdoing his religiousness, and he dealt with him harshly, too harshly. Father Karel stayed calm and good-natured under it. He did so too when a young novice asked him teasingly whether he had worked any miracles that day.

A saint he did not consider himself. He often prayed, saying that after all that praying and all those Masses he was still full of sins. In 1889 he wrote to his family in Limburg that he was also afraid of dying soon. He asked them to pray for a blessed death and a merciful judgment. At home in Limburg his relatives were dying in those years.

The old altar

In the course of 1892 he began to arrive late at the hours of prayer, or to be absent. At seventy he looked much older than he was. On December 8, 1892, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, he celebrated Mass for the last time. He did so at the old altar to which he was so attached, the altar that had stood in the old church. The old wound on his leg flared up again and erysipelas was added. He had to stay in bed and grew weaker.

The news went through the city. People came to the monastery to ask how he was. At the gate the sick kept coming too. Another priest, Father Salvian, took over the blessing with the relics from him. He later wrote honestly about it, saying that there was not enough holiness in him to work miracles. He did not like that task, he added.

I find that one of the most beautiful sentences in this whole story. It shows how the people around Father Karel looked at him. They saw in him someone close to whom God was near.

Father Karel kept praying, without ceasing. The young students who kept watch at his bed he urged to pray along. On January 5, 1893, he died in peace, at the break of day. He was seventy-one.

After that came the days of the death bell, the snow, the coffin, the handkerchiefs and the rosaries, with which this chapter began. In Dublin they said that his funeral was bigger than that of Charles Stewart Parnell, the well-known Irish politician who had died in 1891.

Clay from a grave

He was buried in the monastery cemetery, beside the church. His grave became a place of pilgrimage where people came every day.

They took clay from it home with them. His name was so well known in Dublin that James Joyce later mentioned him in his novel *Ulysses*. In 1949 his body was moved to a tomb in the church of Mount Argus. He still lies there. It is the only church in Ireland where the body of a canonized saint rests.

For Protestant readers what follows is perhaps the hardest part. In the Roman Catholic Church someone can be declared blessed or a saint after his death. That happens after a long investigation into his life. Attention is also given to a healing that took place after people prayed to God and asked the deceased to pray for them. That is called intercession. A beatification applies to a region or an order, a canonization to the whole worldwide church. Protestants generally do not believe that deceased believers pray for us. I tell here what the Roman Catholic Church investigated and decided, without passing judgment on that difference.

As early as May 30, 1922, the superior general of the Passionists gave the order to investigate the case of Father Karel. In 1934 theologians approved his writings. On November 13, 1935, the process was officially opened. Meanwhile the Passionists in Munstergeleen bought the family's birthplace, on the left bank of the Geleenbeek. In 1954 the large barn by the mill was furnished and blessed as the Chapel of Mary, with a corner for Father Karel.

In 1951 in Valkenburg, fifteen kilometers (nine miles) south of Munstergeleen, a woman was healed of a tumor of her gallbladder. Her name was Octavia Spaetgens-Verheggen and she was seventy-one. The tumor was large and the doctors could not operate. They had given up on her. Through her marriage she was related to Father Karel, and his intercession was called on. She was healed and lived another twenty-three years without complaints.

Then it went quiet. In that time more than one miracle was needed, and the next one failed to appear. In Munstergeleen buildings were sold and the case faded into the background. In 1979 Father Karel received the title Venerable. Pope John Paul II decided that one miracle was enough for a beatification. On October 16, 1988, he declared Father Karel blessed. The healing of Mrs. Verheggen was the miracle accepted for that.

An appendix in Munstergeleen

The second miracle came from his own village. In 1999 Adolf Dormans, called Dolf in Munstergeleen, became deathly ill. His appendix had burst and died, and the infection was in his whole abdominal lining. When the surgeons in Sittard operated on him, his intestines turned out to be porous. They told the family that they could do nothing more. He received the sacrament of the sick. The family called on the intercession of the blessed Father Karel, the boy from their own village. Dormans entrusted himself to him.

He recovered. In a later operation the doctors saw that the intestines had healed by themselves.

Then the investigation began, and Dormans himself has told how it went. He had to collect his medical file at the hospital, because only the patient gets it. The first attempt went wrong: the papers had been sent straight to Rome, and that was not how it should be done. First a church court of the diocese had to be set up. He collected his file again. The court sat in Rolduc. Dormans was heard first. He sat alone on a chair, swore the oath on the Bible and was interrupted again and again by the devil's advocate: someone who is assigned by the church to look for all the weak points in a case. Medical experts were present, and a notary wrote everything down. His wife, a sister, brothers, children, the surgeons and the nurses were heard as well.

The statements were translated into Italian and sealed by the bishop. The Italian doctor who translated them added a note saying that if this was not a miracle, no miracle had ever happened. When the documents were brought to the nuncio in The Hague, the car was hit from behind in a traffic jam near Utrecht. The papers lay everywhere. They were gathered up, and a new copy had to be made. The file became a book of almost a thousand pages.

The diocese of Roermond investigated the case from November 6, 2002, to February 19, 2003. On November 7, 2003, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints recognized that the investigation was valid. On November 24, 2005, the medical board met. It judged unanimously that the healing could not be explained scientifically. Theologians followed on February 21, 2006, cardinals and bishops on December 12, 2006. On December 21, 2006, the decree was signed in the presence of Pope Benedict XVI.

In February 2007 the Irish broadcaster RTÉ reported that Dublin would get a new saint in June. The archbishop of Dublin, Diarmuid Martin, who had carried the case on behalf of the church, was glad about it. On Sunday, June 3, 2007, Father Karel was canonized in St. Peter's Square in Rome, together with George Preca, Szymon of Lipnica and Marie Eugénie Milleret. Dolf Dormans was there. The Irish president Mary McAleese was there, with hundreds of Irish pilgrims, the lord mayor of Dublin and the head of the Irish police. The day before, she had called him, at the Irish College in Rome, a remarkable Dutchman, who was not a preacher and spoke poor English. She also told that he had worked in her own parish in Belfast, Holy Cross in Ardoyne, and that they still remembered him there. Two government ministers traveled from the Netherlands to Rome. The Belgian broadcaster BRF counted about eight hundred believers from the border region on the square.

In his sermon Benedict XVI quoted the sentence from the rector's letter of 1893, about the people who had already declared him a saint. In Ireland the ceremony was broadcast live. On June 5 the Irish post office issued a 55 cent stamp, after a painting by James Hanley: Father Karel in front of Mount Argus and the Limburg farm where he was born. In Munstergeleen so many visitors came to the chapel in those weeks that the municipality of Sittard-Geleen had the access road resurfaced. From June 22 to 25 the village held a celebration. At the thanksgiving Mass on Mount Argus, a few hours after the ceremony in Rome, more than a thousand people stood outside or in a tent, because the church was full. His feast day is January 5, the day of his death.

A barn on the Geleenbeek

In Munstergeleen the old half-timbered farm still stands. The address is Pater Karelweg 1. The barn has been a chapel since 1954. The Meertens Institute, which describes places of pilgrimage in the Netherlands, has taken photographs there: his statue among burning novena candles, a small reliquary, an intention book in which visitors could write their prayers, a prayer card with the monastery in Dublin on it. The keepers of the chapel write that tens of thousands of visitors come every year. On June 3, 2024, the village's Saint Pancras church commemorated that the canonization had taken place seventeen years earlier.

You do not have to agree with the veneration of saints to see something in the life of this man. He was a miller's son who learned with difficulty, who had to give up his own language and never mastered the new one. He was sent away for something he had not done, and came back without bitterness. He limped to every sick person who called him.

Among the photographs of the Meertens Institute there is also a simple transfer form. A woman from Boskoop used it to send a gift to the chapel. She asked for a good relationship, and for healing for her brother. A few words, on a strip of the giro slip. That is how they also stood at his gate in Dublin, with a few words and a question, and then he came down the stairs.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on December 11, 1821, in Munstergeleen as the son of a miller; difficult study in Sittard; military service in which he heard of the Passionists; entry in Ere on November 5, 1845, and the monastic name Karel van Sint Andries; first vows on December 10, 1846; ordination to the priesthood on December 21, 1850, in Doornik; departure for England in 1852; arrival at Mount Argus on July 9, 1857; poor English and therefore no preaching work; great crowds of sick people; complaints by doctors and the sale of blessed water, after which he worked in England from 1866 to 1874; the carriage accident on April 12, 1881; last Mass on December 8, 1892; death on January 5, 1893; the superior's letter about the people who declared him a saint; transfer to the church in 1949; beatification on October 16, 1988; the church investigation into the healing of Adolf Dormans (2002-2006); canonization on June 3, 2007, also reported by RTÉ (February 23 and May 31, 2007), The Irish Times (June 2, 2007), DutchNews (May 29, 2007) and the Belgian broadcaster BRF (June 4, 2007); the presence of President McAleese and her speech of June 2, 2007; the Irish stamp of June 5, 2007. A note of caution: for his life itself nearly all sources are church sources or come from the circle of his veneration.

From his own letters (as the exhibition in Munstergeleen and other sources quote them): the uncomfortable crossing and the

train underground (1852); that his work in Dublin consisted of saying Mass and hearing confession; his fear of dying soon and his request for prayer (1889); that even his happy days were lonely (only Wikipedia, without a source reference). I have not read the letters themselves.

Only from the circle of monastery, chapel and exhibition: the note of his father in the church book; the nicknames Drieske and Drieske of the miller; that he lived with his sister Sibylla at uncle Peter Luyten's; the name of the fellow soldier Antonius Raaymakers (the Pater Karel Chapel and the Vatican name a fellow soldier without a name); that he never returned to Munstergeleen; the death bell at the clothing ceremony; the night prayer he never missed; the crucifix in his hand and the long Mass (Vatican); the humming of the national anthem and the baptismal promises (Catholic Ireland); Glendalough in 1860; the correction by his spiritual director and the teasing novice; his prayer about his sins; the old altar, the erysipelas and the students at his bed; the words of Father Salvian; the details of the lying in state, the witness who needed an hour, the candle wax and the name of rector O'Neill; the order of May 30, 1922; that John Paul II thought one miracle was enough. I know the rector's letter from the translation in Munstergeleen and from the sermon of Benedict XVI, whose English wording ("The people have already declared him a saint") I checked.

From a single source: the opposition of his father to his entry (Catholic Ireland); the story of the rifle, the name of his regiment, that he was named after his uncle and godfather, that he took Father Barberi to the boat in 1849, the request of Ignatius Spencer and the mention in *Ulysses* (all Wikipedia, without my having seen the source behind it); the story of John Patterson (The Irish Times); the row of sick people along the road (Vatican); his work in Holy Cross, Ardoyne in Belfast (President McAleese); the toothache and

the swollen jaw (Catholic Ireland); the description of Dublin and the police at the lying in state (Mount Argus parish).

Testimonies of healing. The healings during his life come from church and monastic tradition: the story of Father Sebastian Keens about the boy of twelve (Mount Argus parish, The Irish Times), that of John Patterson, the list of the exhibition (paralyzed, blind, coughing blood, tuberculosis, childbed fever) and the letters in the archive of the Irish Passionists, which were later collected for the church investigation. Of those letters I have seen only the description in the catalog: that of a woman from Dublin about a great healing shortly before his death, and that of Jane Fannin. They are testimonies after the fact. I have not been able to see medical records from that time, and independent researchers have not checked the cases. What is certain is that very many people came to him and that during his lifetime he was already called a wonder-worker; the Vatican also writes this. What happened in each separate case, we do not know.

Where the sources differ:

- His mother. Johanna Elisabeth Luijten; the exhibition calls her Anna Luyten.
- The family. The Vatican calls his father a well-to-do miller, the Irish sources speak of a poor family. That the family worked in the mill of an uncle is only in the Irish sources.
- The school. The ten years and the two miles come from Irish tradition. The Vatican names Sittard and Broeksittard; the old version of this chapter spoke of the college in Sittard.
- The military service. The Vatican names 1840. The exhibition gives July 9, 1841, and the Passionists in Glasgow and the Pater Karel Chapel also name 1841. The Irish sources say he entered service at nineteen and was a soldier from 1840 to 1845, of which three months in reality. The discharge fell according to

the exhibition on February 18, 1844; Wikipedia gives February 18, 1845, and Glasgow and the Irish sources also name 1845.

- The entry. RTÉ writes that he entered at nineteen; that agrees with no other source (he was twenty-three). That Dominic Barberi received him is in the Vatican texts.
- Habit and vows. According to the Vatican (Dutch text) he received the habit in December 1845 and took his first vows on December 10, 1846. The exhibition names December 10, 1846, as the day of the clothing ceremony. The Passionist headquarters in Rome gives December 10, 1846, for the first vows. Only the English Vatican text names 1850, which seems a mistake.
- England, 1852 to 1857. The exhibition names four years in St. Michael's Retreat, Aston Hall (Staffordshire). The Vatican names Broadway and the parish of St Wilfrid, and says that he helped there in the training of the novices. Wikipedia names St Wilfrid's Retreat in Cotton Hall and the work around Cheadle. The Pater Karel Chapel writes that he was a parish priest there.
- The famine. The exhibition gives eight million inhabitants before the crisis and fewer than five million after, at least a million dead and at least two million emigrants.
- The arrival in Dublin. The Vatican text names 1856, the year in which the monastery began. The parish of Mount Argus, the Passionists in Glasgow, the Pater Karel Chapel and The Irish Times give July 9, 1857.
- Three hundred a day. The parish says up to three hundred, the exhibition more than three hundred.
- The departure in 1866. The Vatican writes that it was partly to give him rest. Catholic Ireland, the exhibition and The Irish Times show that the complaints and the trade in the water were the reason. Catholic Ireland names Cardinal Cullen by name, the exhibition speaks of the archbishop. That the doc-

tors withdrew their complaint is in The Irish Times and in Wikipedia.

- The years in England. The Vatican writes that many people came to him there too, and the exhibition that the sick managed to find him in Sutton. Catholic Ireland says that no special healings are recorded in England. The exhibition places Sutton near Oxford; according to Wikipedia it is Sutton near St Helens. The order of the three houses is not certain.
- The accident. The Vatican text speaks of his right foot and hip and of gangrene, the exhibition of his ankle. The exhibition writes that his little carriage collided with another carriage, Catholic Ireland that the carriage overturned near the convent of St Clare.
- Bedridden. The Vatican text says he had to stay in bed from December 9, 1882. The other sources have him working until the end of 1892; I suspect 1892 is meant.
- The lying in state and the funeral. The exhibition has the lying in state last until the burial on January 8. The Irish sources speak of five days. The Pater Karel Chapel writes that hundreds of people attended the funeral, the other sources speak of thousands. That the funeral was bigger than that of Parnell is said by the Irish sources; I have found no count.
- The grave. Catholic Ireland speaks of clay that people took with them. The Pater Karel Chapel writes that he received a monumental tomb in the church at the beatification in 1988; the Irish sources give 1949 for the transfer.
- The healing of 1951. The exhibition speaks of a tumor of the gallbladder and names her Octavia Spaetgens-Verheggen. The Irish sources write “Mrs Verhegge” and speak of a large tumor in the stomach that could not be operated on. The exhibition calls her healing wonderful and mentions no church ruling; that this was the miracle for the beatification

is in the Irish sources. What was prayed around her sickbed, I have not found.

- The beatification. The exhibition writes that it took place in the cathedral of Roermond. I have not seen that confirmed anywhere else.
- The healing of Dormans. Catholic Ireland and The Irish Times name 1999; the exhibition puts 1999 to 2007 above it and elsewhere also names 1988. The medical description comes from the English Vatican text. That the surgeons could do nothing more, that he received the sacrament of the sick and that the family called on the intercession of Father Karel is in Catholic Ireland and in The Irish Times. The story of the investigation, the translator and the collision comes from his own telling at the exhibition. RTÉ, DutchNews and BRF do not name the miracle by name.
- The canonization. An American weblog names June 2, 2007, and St. Peter's Basilica; all other sources give June 3 on the square. The Irish Times expected about five hundred Dutch and six hundred Irish, BRF counted about eight hundred believers from the border region.

Interpretation: whether the healings of Octavia Spaetgens-Verheggen and Adolf Dormans were worked by God is a question of faith. The medical board of the Vatican established that the recovery could not be explained scientifically; that is a medical judgment, not proof of the cause. Catholic and Protestant Christians think differently about intercession and the veneration of saints.

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Johannes and Hendrina van 't Lindenhout: the orphan village

It was the last evening of June, in one of the first years at Neerbosch. The orphanage's cash box was empty. In a day a large bill had to be paid, and Johannes van 't Lindenhout had no idea where the money would come from. He had asked no one. He had asked God, day after day, and nothing had come.

Late in the evening a woman stood at the door. She was dressed in black and he did not know her. She handed him an envelope and was gone again before he could ask anything. In the envelope was one banknote. It was twice as much as he needed the next day.

Only later did he hear her story. She had lent someone money and had given up expecting to see it again. That day it had been repaid after all. She felt so strongly that it had to go to the orphans that she could not go to bed before she had delivered it.

That is how Johannes told it himself, and that is how it was recorded in 1908 in a book titled *Helden van het geloof* (Heroes of the Faith).

On the western side of Nijmegen, where there are now residential neighborhoods and a hospital, there stood in those years a village

full of children. There were houses for boys and houses for girls. There was a church, a school, a bakery, a farm, a print shop, a tailor's shop and a wooden-shoe workshop. A steam tram ran there, because so many people wanted to see it. Around 1892 almost a thousand children lived there. It was called the Weesinrichting Neerbosch (Neerbosch Orphanage), and it was one of the largest orphanages in the Netherlands.

It had begun in 1863 in an old inn in the lower town of Nijmegen, with a man and a woman who had no money, and a text from the letter of James.

Thirty years later that same man stood in all the newspapers of the Netherlands, accused of abuse and of enriching himself. A play was staged about him that was performed more than eighty times. A cartoonist drew a caricature of him.

This is a story about great faith, and about the shadow that sometimes falls over great work. I tell them both.

A farmer's son from Herveld

Jan van 't Lindenhout was born on September 4, 1836, in Herveld, a village in the Betuwe. Later he called himself Johannes. His parents, Jan Jacob van 't Lindenhout and Derkje Gertzen, had a farm. The family went to the Reformed church in Beuningen. After Johannes came a brother, Hendrik, and two sisters. Johannes was the oldest son, and he was expected to take over the farm.

At sixteen he went to a boarding school in Nijmegen. There he began to doubt. He wondered whether the miracles in the Bible had really happened. It was the time of modern theology, which set many young people thinking.

Then his younger brother Hendrik died, still only a teenager. Johannes himself later called that death the most important cause of his conversion. He was eighteen when he came to faith. The loss of his brother had brought the boy who could no longer believe in miracles back to God.

You will meet this pattern more than once in this book. A loss brings someone to a standstill, and in that stillness God speaks.

Two years with a chest of books

After his conversion Johannes read devotional booklets he had bought from a colporteur. That was someone who went from door to door with a chest or a backpack full of Bibles, tracts and small books. He wanted to do the same. He no longer wanted to be a farmer.

Against his father's will he traveled around the country for two years. It was hard work and poorly paid. On those journeys he saw something that stayed with him: orphans who had been placed with farmers and were used there as cheap farmhands. His health gave way under the wandering and he had to stop. A sickly Bible colporteur, that is how he continued to see himself later too.

In Goes, in Zeeland, on one of those journeys he got to know the Seceder minister Huibert Jacobus Budding. Budding had been in Bristol, at the orphanages of George Müller, and told what he had seen there: thousands of children, cared for without fixed capital, on prayer. Johannes did not forget it. In Budding's circle he also met the baker Johannes Otte, who would leave for America in 1867. That name comes back.

At twenty-one he joined the Nederlandsche Evangelisch-Protestantsche Vereeniging (Dutch Evangelical Protestant Society). There he met Abraham Capadose, a Jewish physician from Am-

sterdam who had come to faith in Jesus together with Isaac da Costa and was one of the leaders of the Réveil, the Dutch revival movement of the early nineteenth century. From 1859 Johannes held Bible lectures in Nijmegen and in the villages of Wely, Zetten and Valburg.

Around that time he also got to know Ottho Gerhard Heldring, the minister of Hemmen, about whom you could read in the first volume of this series. Heldring became his teacher. From him Johannes learned that preaching the gospel was not enough. Whoever loved Christ also had to do something for those in need. In Zetten he saw the houses that Heldring had founded for girls and women who had nowhere else to go.

In 1861 Heldring blessed his marriage to Hendrina Sipman, a cousin of his. We know less about Hendrina than about her husband. But in the stories from the first years she is always there: she prays along and she comes to meet him with good news. The sources call them together the orphan father and the orphan mother.

James 1:27

For years Johannes had carried the orphans with him. He prayed, he told later, that God would give a man who would do for the Netherlands what Müller did for England. That man became himself.

In March 1863 he and Hendrina made the decision. According to his biographer Anton van Renssen the decisive moment came while reading the letter of James: *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.* (James 1:27). Johannes was twenty-seven. He chose the orphans and left the rest to God.

There were orphanages in the Netherlands at that time. But they were there mainly for children of citizens of their own city. Poor children from the countryside, or children whose parents did not belong to the right church, fell outside the boat. Poor-relief boards often farmed them out to whoever asked least. Johannes had seen how that turned out.

He and Hendrina wanted a house where children were taken in free of charge, boys and girls, no matter where they came from. He had a circular letter printed with four principles. All orphans would be welcome free of charge, in trust in God as the Father of the orphans, without capital and without fixed contributions. The first aim was their spiritual upbringing. They would also receive a simple education, the girls for housekeeping and the boys in a trade. And whoever came to work there had to be a believer who was willing to do it without a salary.

They had no money. A landowner, Jan Theodorus Lijbers, bought an old inn on the Lange Brouwerstraat in Nijmegen and rented it to them. Friends gave money to furnish it. Johannes and Hendrina already had young children of their own.

The haunted house and Pietje's cow

It was a very large house, and it had stood empty for some time. In the neighborhood it was said to be haunted. Johannes, says the old book dryly, was not very afraid of that. When the living rooms and work rooms were furnished, nineteen large rooms were still left over.

The ghosts turned out to be rats and mice, living in the holes by the sewers and the manure pit. Johannes had the holes stuffed with broken glass and bricked up. An old gray tomcat did the rest.

On Ascension Day 1863 a small group of friends came together, and there the first collection for the work was held. It was an amount of a few guilders. Johannes never forgot that amount. It was the first of everything God would send afterward.

By summer the house was ready. A day was set on which the first two children would come, a boy and a girl, and guests had been invited. Then a letter came. The children would stay in their own village after all.

There he stood, with a furnished house and not a single child. Friends advised him to give it up. But a few remained loyal to him. In those weeks, as the old book has it, he learned not to look at the circumstances and to hold on to what God had promised.

In October 1863 they did come after all, a girl and a boy. The girl was called Pietje. She came in rags, with a wooden shoe on one foot and on the other a shoe that was too big. Her parents had died when she was six. After that she had herded a cow for a farmer, and at night she slept next to that animal under a lean-to. She had never been in a church. She did not know who the first people were. When someone asked her who had ever loved her, she said that the cow had sometimes licked her.

Pietje stayed four years. She became a maid, later married and became the mother of a Christian family.

For a child like that this house existed.

From the hand of the Lord

How do you pay for work like this? Johannes and Hendrina had a phrase for it. They wanted to live with the children "from the hands of the Lord."

It is very much like what Müller did in Bristol. Müller never asked for money, only prayed, and published reports of what came in. Johannes did ask for money, and not so sparingly either. He gave lectures all over the country and said that he could go on only as long as believers kept giving. But he too faithfully published what came in and what he needed, and he believed that God would provide it.

He told the stories from those first years himself, and they are too beautiful to dismiss briefly.

December 1863. There were seven children in the house, the cash box was empty and there was no bread for the evening. Then a man stood at the door with a basket. He came from a baker in the city. The baker had baked too much for market day, it would spoil, and he had thought that it might as well go to the orphans. It was currant bread. The baker was Roman Catholic and Johannes had never bought anything from him.

A while later there were nineteen children, eleven of them girls, and those girls needed new skirts. There was no money. Johannes and Hendrina prayed for it for three days. On the third evening someone threw a large parcel in through the door and ran off. In it was enough cloth for all the skirts, and a note: "From an Unknown: a Thank Offering to the Lord for the poor orphans." They never found out who it was.

One giver sent a large amount by registered letter every year around the same time.

I tell these stories because they are the heart of this life. You can shrug your shoulders at them. You can also stop and think that a man and a woman with a house full of other people's children had to trust anew every day that there would be food. And that it was there.

An anchor for the new house

By 1865 there were already about seventy children. The house on the Lange Brouwerstraat was too small. Johannes and Hendrina prayed for three weeks for a place.

In March 1866 two friends bought a farm in Neerbosch, an hour's walk west of the city, and offered part of the land for a new orphanage. Johannes hesitated. Was this really God's will? He went to look with the friends, in the rain. When he came home, Hendrina came to meet him. A gift had come in that day, with an inscription: "An anchor for the new House." She said: "The Lord has answered our prayer."

He began to build. There was no building plan and no building fund. Every time money was needed, it came: the proceeds of a collection in a village, an amount a friend brought from Switzerland when the bricks ran out, a money order that exactly covered a shipload of bricks.

Johannes ordered five thousand roof tiles. The brother of the tile maker sent seven thousand, as a gift from both of them, with some money added. The carter who brought them said as he unloaded that not one tile was broken and that he had earned a tip for that. Johannes answered that they owed it to God's care. The carter then refused the tip altogether, and himself gave a few coins for the orphans.

Four hundred sheets and a hundred blankets came in. At that time cholera was going around. One boy of the orphanage fell ill. Everyone else was spared.

On May 9, 1867, the girls' house was taken into use. The older boys who were learning a trade stayed on in the Lange Brouwerstraat for the time being. Hendrina's sister Marie Sipman came to help and

led the girls' education together with her, until a heart condition made that impossible.

At the end of 1867 the cash box was almost empty again. A young woman stepped out of a carriage, gave Johannes an envelope with one large banknote, and drove away. He never knew who she was. A friend of the mission gave money for a boys' house. And when they prayed for a bell to call the children to the table and to school, a bell came. A friend near Haarlem had sent his servant to an auction to buy an old cabinet, with a number on a slip. The servant bid on that number and came home with a bell. The friend gave it to Neerbosch, and someone else paid for the pole to hang it on.

"The cow is back"

For days Johannes had been going about with the plan for a small farm next to the orphanage. He had spoken to no one about it, only to God. Then a friend sat across from him who offered, on his own, an amount, precisely for that. They decided that it was God's will.

The carpenter had beech trees cut down and made into beams. Into one of those beams he chiseled a text from Romans 8: *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:31).

When the stable was ready, two friends gave money for a milk cow. Another guest said that he would give a cow too. The boys cheered when the animals came. There would be milk.

Shortly afterward one of the two fell ill and had to be slaughtered. Three days later, late in the evening, the boys pounded on the door: "The cow is back!" And a second cow stood in the stable. Nobody knew where she had come from. Later it turned out that a noblewoman from the area, a friend of the orphans, had sent her coachman. He was to put the cow quietly in the stable as long as the doors of the house were not yet locked. She was an excellent milk cow.

The man who had given the slaughtered cow heard the story. He felt he should do his gift over again and sent a new one. Before winter there were three cows where there had been two.

The Van 't Lindenhout family moved to Neerbosch too. In 1870 the institution received royal approval and statutes were drawn up. In March of that same year, on a Saturday evening, all the bills were paid. A few cents were left in the cash box after that, and every day three hundred and thirty orphans and staff had to be fed. On Tuesday a large gift came. Before the week was out, almost three times as much had come in.

The evening with the woman in black, with which I began this chapter, also belongs to these years.

That money came, and a great deal of it, is also certain apart from his own stories. According to Van Renssen, in the second half of the nineteenth century Neerbosch attracted more gifts than any other private institution in the Netherlands, and far more than the comparable homes of Heldring. All over the country associations of women and girls held collections. And more came in than guilders. In 1874 a hundred and twenty-two smoked sausages (metworsten, a Dutch smoked sausage) arrived from Varsseveld, and such shipments kept coming for years, also from Dinxperlo. Givers were thanked by name in the weekly paper and in the almanac.

A village full of children

After that things went fast. A children's home for the youngest was added, a school, a church, a hospital, workshops, a laundry, a bakery, a smithy, a market garden and a farm. The children helped build, under the guidance of their masters. Neerbosch became a village of dozens of hectares and some fifty buildings, which almost entirely provided for its own upkeep. Boys learned a trade as

carpenter, bricklayer, wooden-shoe maker, tailor, blacksmith, bookbinder or printer. Girls were trained for housekeeping. Whoever completed the apprenticeship received a complete chest of tools.

In 1870 Johannes started a print shop. He brought a printer from Middelburg for it, P.J. Milborn, who stayed more than thirty years. The print shop published weekly papers, among them *Het Oosten* (The East), and hymnals and books. The best known became the Neerbossche Weezen-Almanak (Neerbosch Orphans' Almanac). The first appeared in 1871, for the year 1872, with more than five thousand copies. After a high-speed press arrived there were seventeen thousand in 1874. In 1878 forty-five thousand were printed, in 1886 forty thousand, in 1891 still twenty-three thousand. The almanac was, Johannes wrote proudly, typeset, printed and bound by the orphans themselves. Readers all over the country bought it, and whoever read it knew what was happening in Neerbosch and what was needed. The press he called "the means par excellence to speak to many."

A visitor who had walked the hour from Nijmegen to Neerbosch heard the children playing from far away. He saw the dining hall and the school, and it struck him that the children did not look frightened. About the singing he wrote that the orphans' choir was already famous. The Neerbosch songbooks were sung as far away as South Africa.

Whit Monday in the woods

In 1873 something happened that Johannes himself considered more important than all the buildings.

Among the older boys there were a few so wild that the orphanage got a bad name because of them. Some had already been picked up by the police. On Whit Monday Johannes went walking with

the group in the woods near Nijmegen. He saw their hardness and cried out silently to God. Then he took the naughtiest boy aside and prayed aloud with him. Afterward he went on praying alone.

There was a knock. One of the hardest boys stood before him. He said he was so godless that there was no hope left for him. Then more came. They wept, fell on their knees and confessed what they had done. Some found the joy of faith.

It spread to the girls, and there too it began with the most difficult ones. Even the little ones began to pray. A prayer meeting was held every day. The cash box was almost empty in those same weeks.

You would expect that a man like Johannes would have made a habit of it. He did the opposite. He warned against bringing children to conversion with excited speeches, because with a child it is so hard to tell real from false. You do not always find such wisdom in men with so much fire.

From those daily prayer meetings come also the stories about healing. A friend with a cancerous tumor had read about Dorothea Trudel, who prayed with the sick in Männedorf in Switzerland. Johannes gave him a letter of recommendation for her successor, Samuel Zeller. The man returned after weeks. The pain was gone and he had found peace. Later he died.

In Neerbosch itself it went like this. A girl of fourteen had the disease that was then called Saint Vitus' dance. In the middle of an attack she prayed, stood up and said: "Now the Lord Jesus has delivered me." The attacks did not return. Another girl had crawled on hands and knees for ten years. After prayer she came walking into the room. One foot was completely healed, the other much better. She lived another six years. A girl with consumption in its last stage, too weak to get up, was carried with her bed to the prayer meeting. After three days she was better. On the fourth day she was

playing outside. And an old woman felt something change during the prayer and cried out that she was completely healed. Her husband burst into tears.

Johannes told this himself in this way. A later writer called him a vain fantasist for it. I was not there. But I see a man who went to God with his sick children, and who honestly added that one foot healed only halfway and that his friend died anyway. That is not how a boaster writes.

To America

There were sad years too. Their daughter Johanna died in 1882 of tuberculosis. She was fourteen.

In those years the orphanage increasingly became a family business. Daughter Dina worked there until her marriage in 1884. Son Dirk took charge of the print shop and the bookbindery, son Jacob of the farm, the market garden and the wooden-shoe workshop. From 1885 Johannes formed the daily board with his two sons. The sons married two Koper sisters, and in 1890 their father-in-law, Hendrik Jan Koper, also joined the board.

In 1886 Johannes crossed the ocean. The baker Otte from Goes, who now lived in Grand Rapids, had invited him. Johannes wanted to meet the Dutch emigrants who had been sending money for years, his "friends of the orphans," and he wanted to know whether there was work in America for his boys. In six weeks he gave thirty-eight speeches, in Paterson, in Albany, in Grand Rapids, sometimes to more than two thousand people. He came back with five thousand guilders. His travel report, *Zes weken tusschen de wielen* (Six Weeks Between the Wheels), was a success. Two years later he wrote down his memories in *Na vijf-en-twintig jaren* (After Twenty-Five Years).

Otte's son traveled back with him, a young physician, who worked for a time in the hospital at Neerbosch. He lived through the measles epidemic of the winter of 1886, in which ten children died. Later he went as a missionary doctor to China and named his hospital there after Neerbosch.

From the end of September 1886 orphans themselves also left. Until 1903 more than a hundred emigrated, most of them to the Midwest. One of them wrote in the spring of 1887 that he could not thank Johannes enough. It would always remain his honor, he wrote, to be an orphan of Neerbosch.

Meanwhile Johannes sat on all kinds of boards. In 1889 he helped found an association for the mission in Salatiga on Java, and from 1892 he sat on a committee for the emigration of unemployed people to America and Canada.

In 1892 almost a thousand children lived in Neerbosch. The English child rescuer Thomas Barnardo came to see it and was impressed. Members of the royal house supported the work. Neerbosch was the showpiece of Protestant Christian charity in the Netherlands.

The storm of 1893

And then came the storm.

In June 1893 a brochure appeared with the title *De weesvader Van 't Lindenhout ontmaskerd* (The Orphan Father Van 't Lindenhout Unmasked). The authors were Amos Johannes van Houten, who had been a teacher at Neerbosch for nine months and had been dismissed, and a sea captain, Gerrit van Deth, whose children had been placed in the orphanage after their mother's death. They accused Johannes of enriching himself, poor hygiene, poor teaching, neglect, harsh corporal punishment and even sexual abuse.

According to a publication of the CBS (Statistics Netherlands), a boy of twelve had died shortly before after a punishment.

The national newspapers first discussed the brochure critically. Then an Amsterdam morning paper came with new accusations, and *De Telegraaf* and the *Algemeen Handelsblad* took them over. It became an uproar that lasted a year, with new brochures, counter-writings and lawsuits. Former orphans told about the harsh regime. Van Deth gave dozens of lectures around the country. On January 23, 1894, he had more than two thousand listeners and the police had to keep order.

A play appeared, *De geheimen van de Weesinrichting Meerbosch* (The Secrets of the Meerbosch Orphanage), which premiered in Amsterdam on December 19, 1893, and was then performed in Haarlem, Rotterdam and The Hague. When the mayor of Utrecht banned it, it became a real success. At the beginning of March 1894 the eighty-first and last performance took place. There even appeared a socialist novel about it. And in the weekly *De Amsterdammer* Johan Braakensiek drew on November 26, 1893, how Johannes and Hendrina went to visit Queen Regent Emma and the young Wilhelmina.

There were other voices too. On August 8, 1893, eleven former orphans in Iowa signed a letter to the investigators. They called the accusations slander. Nobody had forced them to emigrate, they wrote, and they had had an excellent upbringing.

The board had first tried to ignore the matter. When the pressure increased and an investigation by the state threatened, it set up a committee itself, with prominent politicians, scholars and experts. In 1894 the report came.

It cleared Johannes on important points. No money had disappeared from the cash box. Little remained of Van Deth's accusations. But the report was also critical. The orphanage had

grown too fast. It had to stop expanding and first hire skilled staff. The number of children had to go back to five or six hundred, and the upbringing and hygiene had to improve. And the finances were, in the words of a reviewer of Van Renssen, an impenetrable disorder. There was no annual budget. Johannes built, spent and trusted that the money would come. That had worked for years. But you cannot run a village of a thousand children the way you run a household, and certainly not with one man at the head.

Relatives took thirty-two children away, "because of the slander," wrote the almanac for 1895. Some of them now wandered the streets begging. Subscribers canceled the weekly papers, gifts declined, sales of the almanac collapsed, and the copies that were not sold went free to Sunday schools. Although the report largely cleared him, a stench hung over Neerbosch.

Van Deth left for America in July 1894 and tried again there, with lectures in Paterson.

What are you to make of it?

How do you look at this today? I think it is important not to whitewash it. His biographer Van Renssen is mild, but even he concludes that the finances were chaotic, that his way of raising children was not especially innovative and that Johannes left the institution in a deep crisis when he departed. The punishments at Neerbosch were harsh. They were in most homes of that time, but that does not make it any less bad for a child.

On the other hand, the accusations of 1893 were not all true either. The committee found no evidence of self-enrichment. The newspapers earned well from the uproar, and Van Deth earned money with his lectures. The press itself found the play tactless, because unproven things were performed as truth. And the children who

grew up in Neerbosch often had nowhere else they could have gone without this house. Think of Pietje and her cow.

I think you may hold on to both. Johannes van 't Lindenhout took God at His word. He began without money a work for children whom nobody wanted, and God blessed it more than he had dared to dream. He was also a human being with a large ego, who was poor at delegating, careless with money, and let the work grow until it outgrew him. The same faith that made him begin made it hard for him to stop, to plan or to ask for help.

Moses too was told by his father-in-law Jethro that he could not manage alone: *The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you.* (Exodus 18:17-18). Moses listened. Van 't Lindenhout listened only when it was too late.

A mustard seed

In the middle of the storm he began something new again. In 1894 he was the initiator of Het Hoogeland in Beekbergen, a Christian colony where vagrants, beggars and former prisoners learned to work again on the Veluwe heath.

In Neerbosch he remained director for another nine years. He tried to win back trust with new publications, hymnals and children's books. In 1901 the print shop again made a considerable profit. His sons and daughters-in-law were given an ever larger role. In 1900 the printer Milborn handed his work over to the oldest son.

In that same year Hendrina died. For thirty-seven years she had been the orphan mother, from the first skirts she prayed together. Daughter-in-law Adriana Koper, the wife of son Jacob, became directress after her.

In the last days of 1901 Johannes wrote a look back for the almanac. "How small was the beginning," he wrote. The work of 1863 he called a small mustard seed from which a tree had grown, with branches reaching to the west of America, South Africa and China. The image comes from the parable of Jesus in Matthew 13. About the years after 1893 he wrote that one storm after another had risen, and that God had kept them from shipwreck.

In 1903, after forty years, he stepped down. He was sixty-seven. The leadership went to a minister, Rev. J. Schrijver. In that year he still wrote down how a child at Neerbosch was trained, from the day of admission to the day it went out into the world. In 1915 his last book followed, *Lichtstralen aan mijn levensavond* (Rays of Light at My Evening of Life).

There was another great sorrow in the family. A young Johannes van 't Lindenhout, born on June 14, 1893, in Neerbosch and in all likelihood his grandson, was a gifted poet. On July 12, 1916, during the mobilization, he ended his own life. He was twenty-three. Two years later his father and a few friends published his poems.

Johannes van 't Lindenhout died on January 22, 1918, in Neerbosch. He was eighty-one. He was buried in the orphanage cemetery, among the people he had raised.

The work went on. About twenty thousand children were taken in over the years. The almanac continued to appear until 1943. The orphanage later became a children's village and then a youth care institution. The foundation that came out of it still bears his name: Lindenhout. The site was sold in 2001. Of the orphan village only the chapel from 1882 still stands, and in it is a small museum about the children's village.

Perhaps you too have begun something with only a text and a prayer, without knowing how it would be paid for. Then you know

something of Johannes and Hendrina. Then take Jethro along as well. Whoever takes James 1:27 seriously also takes seriously the children who pay the price when things go wrong.

In Neerbosch a carpenter once chiseled a text into a beech beam. If God is for us. Under that beam stood three cows before the winter, and around that stable a village grew.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): years of life 1836 to 1918; work as Bible seller (colporteur) and evangelist; the beginning of the orphanage in 1863 in Nijmegen, after reading James 1:27; the growth from 1867 in Neerbosch; the print shop from 1870 with the printer P.J. Milborn from Middelburg; the Weezen-Almanak from 1871 (for 1872) with 5,100 copies, rising to 45,000 in 1878 and around 40,000 in the 1880s; the steam tram for visitors (also in Van Renssen's review); the support of members of the royal house (also in *De Boekenwereld*); the trip to America in 1886 and the emigration of more than a hundred orphans; the growth to about a thousand children around 1892-1893; the brochure of June 1893 by Van Houten and Van Deth, the play with 81 performances, the national uproar and the investigation that cleared him on important points but found the finances a disorder; the 32 children taken away (almanac for 1895); Het Hoogeland in Beekbergen (1894, also at the CBS); his stepping down in 1903 and the succession by Rev. J. Schrijver.

From his own testimony and the reports of the orphanage: the death of his brother as the cause of his conversion; his prayer for a man who would do for the Netherlands what Müller did in England; the haunted house with the rats and the tomcat; the first collection on Ascension Day 1863; the cancellation of the first two children and the story of Pietje; the four principles of the circular letter; the

currant bread of the Catholic baker; the cloth for the skirts; the three weeks of prayer for land and the gift with the anchor; the bricks, the seven thousand tiles and the carter; the sheets and blankets and the cholera; the young woman with the carriage; the bell from the auction; the farm, the beam and the cows; the woman in black on the evening before July 1; the almost empty cash box in March 1870; the revival of Whit Monday 1873 and his warning; the four healings and the journey of his friend to Männedorf. All these stories are in J. du Plessis, *Helden van het geloof* (Cape Town 1908), chapters VII to IX. Du Plessis adds that Van 't Lindenhout tells it himself, but does not name the book he draws on. They have not been independently checked. The name Samuel Zeller is not given in full there; Du Plessis names "Mr. Zeller" as director in Männedorf.

On the amounts: Du Plessis wrote for South African readers and converted everything into pounds. For that reason I name no amounts in the story. In his book it says: first collection seven shillings and eight pence; an annual gift of 85 pounds; the "anchor" 41 pounds; almost 6 pounds from a village collection, 15 pounds from Switzerland and over 16 pounds by money order; 2 pounds and 2 shillings with the tiles and later for the pole of the bell; 80 pounds from the young woman with the carriage; 40 pounds from the mission friend; 25 pounds for the farm and 15 pounds for the first cow; on July 1, 40 pounds needed and 80 pounds received; in March 1870 two and a half pence still in the cash box, then 80 pounds on Tuesday and 230 pounds in that week. An earlier version of this chapter spoke of two and a half cents. The year of the evening before July 1 he does not name; in his book it stands between the building of the farm and 1870.

From the letters and papers of Neerbosch (via Van Renssen's article in *Origins*, 2016): the meeting with Budding and Otte in Goes; what he saw as a colporteur of the farmed-out orphans; the 38

speeches and the 5,000 guilders of the trip in 1886; the letter of the former orphan about the honor of being an orphan of Neerbosch (*Het Oosten*, May 2, 1887); the letter of eleven former orphans from Iowa of August 8, 1893; the letter of Dr. Otte about the measles (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, February 9, 1894); the departure of Van Deth for America; the number of about twenty thousand children; the sale of the site in 2001 and the chapel of 1882.

From a single source (not independently checked): the boy of twelve who died after a punishment (CBS); the judgment vain fantasist, who in his memoirs boasted about conversions, exorcisms and prayer healings (CBS); the boards of Salatiga (1889) and the emigration committee (1892) (CBS); the 122 smoked sausages and the shipments from Dinxperlo, the print runs of 1874 and 1891, the profit of the print shop in 1901 of more than 13,000 guilders, the hymnals of C.S. Adama van Scheltema and the children's books of Eduard Gerdes with which he wanted to win back trust after 1894, and the almanac until 1943 (*De Boekenwereld*); the cartoon by Braakensiek, which according to the paper meant that the couple at the queen's precisely did not ask for a state investigation (*De Boekenwereld*); that Neerbosch attracted more gifts than any other private institution (Van Renssen).

Found only on Wikipedia: the exact birth date of September 4, 1836, and the death date of January 22, 1918; the names and years of his sisters Catharina Arnoldina (1843-1925) and Anna Alberta (1846-1928); the marriage in 1861; Lijbers and the Lange Brouwerstraat; the villages Wely, Zetten and Valburg; the dates March 1866 and May 9, 1867; the children Dina or Derkje (1861-1919), Dirk (1863-1936), Jacob (1864-1947), Johanna (1868-1882) and Anette Marie (1874-1939); the roles of Dina, Dirk and Jacob and the daily board from 1885; the Koper sisters and their father Hendrik Jan Koper (1834-1906); the month of the committee report (February

1894) and the advice of five to six hundred children; the death of Hendrina in 1900 and that daughter-in-law Adriana Catharina Margaretha Koper (1867-1936), the wife of son Jacob, then became directress; the fifty buildings; his burial in the orphanage cemetery; the books *God is een Vader der weezen* (1866), *Uit de weezenkapel* (1888), the *Beredeneerd overzicht* (1903) and *Lichtstralen aan mijn levensavond* (1915).

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

- *The year of his brother Hendrik's death.* 1854 or the summer of 1855; Wikipedia names both. Van Renssen says that Johannes came to conversion at eighteen, which fits 1854 or 1855.
- *The arrival of the first orphans.* According to Wikipedia the house was ready for the first orphans in the summer of 1863; according to Du Plessis the first two children came only in October 1863. I told it together: ready in the summer, the first children in October.
- *The house in Nijmegen.* Du Plessis writes that Van 't Lindenhout took the house; Wikipedia that Lijbers bought it and rented it to him. Van Renssen speaks of a former inn with nineteen rooms.
- *The number of children at the peak.* Almost a thousand according to most sources; more than a thousand residents according to the review of Van Renssen; about 1,100 people, of whom 1,062 orphans, according to his article in *Origins*; around 1,100 according to *De Boekenwereld* and the CBS (which places this number shortly after 1900).
- *The name of the sea captain.* Gerrit van Deth in *De Boekenwereld*, Gerard van Deth in *Origins*.
- *The year of his departure.* 1903 according to Van Renssen and the municipality of Nijmegen; *De Boekenwereld* (2015) writes that he led it until his death.

- *The emigration.* More than a hundred orphans between 1886 or 1887 and 1903; the archives give at least 105.
- *The museum.* *De Boekenwereld* gives the address as the Scherpenkampweg in Nijmegen; *Origins* writes that it is in the chapel of 1882.

Unconfirmed or disputed: the visit of Thomas Barnardo (not found in the sources consulted); the exact family tie with the poet Johannes van 't Lindenhout (1893-1916); the truth of the separate accusations of 1893, which the investigation largely rejected but which have never been fully cleared up.

Interpretation: the most important modern study, the dissertation of Anton van Renssen (2015), sees in Van 't Lindenhout a charismatic leader of great faith, with a financial policy that was a disorder and a pedagogy that was not especially innovative. The CBS is much harsher in its judgment in a short sketch. Whether the healings and answers to prayer were miracles is a question of faith. I believe them along with Johannes and Hendrina, and I let the judgment of the investigation of 1894 about his management stand beside it.

Sources for this chapter

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2. P. Altena, "Storm over Neerbosch: Johannes van 't Lindenhout en zijn Weezen Almanak", *De Boekenwereld* 31 (2015), DBNL
3. *De Boekenwereld* 31 (2015), over het toneelstuk en de roman rond Neerbosch, DBNL
4. M. Altena, over de drukkerij van Neerbosch, *De Boekenwereld* 13 (1996), DBNL
5. Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, "Johannes van 't Lindenhout: schandaal", in *Het licht van de statistiek*

6. Gemeente Nijmegen, redengevende omschrijving gemeentelijk monument Scherpenkampweg 69, Kinderdorp Neerbosch
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8. Wikipedia NL, "Johannes van 't Lindenhout" (accessed November 2026)
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10. J. du Plessis, *Helden van het geloof*, pages 50 to 99 (chapters VII and VIII)
11. J. du Plessis, *Helden van het geloof*, pages 100 to 149 (end of chapter VIII and chapter IX)
12. A. van Renssen, artikel over de wezen van Neerbosch in Amerika, *Origins* 34 nr. 2 (Calvin College, 2016)

Background (not consulted myself): A. van Renssen, *Het wezendorp Neerbosch* (dissertation VU, Nijkerk 2015); *Verslag van de Commissie van Onderzoek in zake de Weesinrichting Neerbosch* (1894); M. Altena, P. Altena and H. Rullmann, *Druk geweest in Neerbosch* (1870-1965); J. van 't Lindenhout, *Zes weken tusschen de wielen* (Nijmegen 1886), *Na vijf-en-twintig jaren* (Nijmegen 1888) and *Lichtstralen aan mijn levensavond* (Neerbosch 1915).

Johannes Post: the farmer who opened his door

On May 10, 1940, Johannes Post watched the first German soldiers come through his village. He was thirty-three, a farmer in Nieuwlande, a peat colony village in the southeast of Drenthe, a rural province in the northeast of the Netherlands. He had a wife, a growing family, a farm and a seat on the municipal council. He traded in eggs, chickens and horses. On Sundays he sat in the Gereformeerde church (a strict Reformed denomination).

One of his daughters remembered it, long afterward. She was a girl then, and she kept what her father said when the war broke out. He did not want to raise his children under a regime like that.

Not many more of his own words have survived. But everything that followed is contained in that one sentence.

Four years later he lay in a mass grave in the dunes near Overveen. He had become one of the leaders of the armed squads of the resistance. His name was on the lists of the Sicherheitspolizei, the German security police. His wife and children were in hiding, scattered among relatives.

And in those four years, hundreds of Jewish people had found a hiding place in Nieuwlande. Later the village as a whole was honored by Yad Vashem. It began with one farmer who opened his door.

The youngest of eleven

Johannes Post was born on October 4, 1906, in Hollandscheveld, near Hoogeveen, in the hamlet of Nieuw-Moscou. He was the eleventh and youngest child of Jan Wolters Post and Trijntje Tempen. His father was a small farmer and peat worker. It was a Gereformeerde family, in a region where faith shaped life: church on Sunday, hard work in the peat and on the land during the week.

As a child Johannes was in poor health. He went to primary school and then spent a year at the mulo, a type of secondary school. Then he had to go to work, in his father's business, to the disappointment of his parents. He was not a top student. But he proved to be a clever businessman, and someone who could bring others along with him.

At sixteen he joined the Gereformeerde young men's society in Hollandscheveld. In 1926 he became its chairman. He was smart, a good speaker, and he had a mind of his own. One of his friends in those years was Henk Dienske. That name comes back later.

On May 19, 1925, his brother Marinus married. At that wedding Johannes met a girl three years older than he was: Dina Salomons, whom everyone called Dien. Four years later, on July 29, 1929, they got engaged, and on November 26, 1929, they married. They went to live on a farm in Nieuwlande.

Their first child, Jan Wolter, was born on October 13, 1930. He lived for one week.

After that came three more sons and five daughters. Johannes farmed, traded in poultry, eggs and horses, and set up a freight

service for the poultry farmers of the region. He joined the Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (ARP), the Protestant party of Abraham Kuyper, and in 1935 he was elected to the municipal council of Oosterhesselen. He became an alderman there. In the council he took part in fierce debates, especially with the Social Democrats.

People who knew him described him as a hard worker, intelligent, headstrong and a man of principle. He was strict in doctrine. He did not avoid a fight. And, as several sources put it, he also liked a bit of adventure.

May 1940

The invasion shocked him. He wanted to go west to join the fighting, together with a few men from the village. But the fighting was over after five days. Nothing came of it.

In the first years of the war he did small things. In September 1940 he refused to pay his income tax and resisted the mandatory registration of his livestock. He spread illegal newspapers. Through the ARP he kept in touch with the leaders of the party and with the people of the resistance newspaper *Trouw*, which had grown out of that circle.

It was not yet large-scale resistance. The declaration that he was not a Jew, which civil servants and officials had to fill in, he probably signed without protest as an alderman. That belongs to the story too. A hero does not begin as a hero.

A man with a star

That changed in 1942.

From April 30 of that year, Jews had to wear a yellow star. In May someone wanted by the Sicherheitspolizei came looking for shelter at the farm. It was Arnold Douwes, the son of a minister, who had

shown himself in public wearing a Star of David. Johannes took him in.

Later that year he was at the home of his brother Marinus. There he met a Jewish refugee, Dr. Cohen, who told him what was happening to the Jews. What Johannes heard would not let him go.

From the winter of 1942, he and Marinus began looking for hiding places for Jewish people. He went to pick them up himself, from the west of the country, often from Amsterdam. Many of them were children. His daughter told it later like this: he picked up Jews and brought them to our home. Step by step, she said, her father had rolled into the resistance.

At home Dien took over. She received the people, gave them food and then took them to a more permanent place. At first that was with relatives, later also with other people in the village. It was hard and dangerous work. Anyone who hid people ran the risk of being arrested himself. A person in hiding also needed to eat, and food was rationed. That meant extra burdens for a family that was already large. The children helped. The daughter I mentioned earlier, as a girl, brought Jewish people to their addresses and later delivered ration cards.

Johannes went from farm to farm and asked whether they would take someone in. According to the sources, he used both moral and religious arguments. In a Gereformeerde village you could point to the Bible. You could ask what the Good Samaritan would do. You could recall the old command from Leviticus about the stranger: *you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt* (Leviticus 19:34).

Nieuwlande was the right place for it. The village had no real center. It was a ribbon of about a hundred and fifty farms along a road, separated from each other by ditches, with woods and wasteland

around them. A patrol saw little there. The region came to be called the Jerusalem of Drenthe.

In December 1942 Johannes met the minister Frits Slomp, who traveled the country as Frits de Zwerver (Frits the Wanderer) and built the organization from which the Landelijke Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers (the National Organization for Help to People in Hiding) grew. Johannes picked up ration cards and helped forge identity cards.

Arnold Douwes became his most important helper. Together they devised a code to describe people in hiding: man or woman, how old, and how Jewish someone looked. Douwes cycled around day and night to find addresses and move people. He kept a diary, which he hid in jars in the ground. It is the only known diary of a rescuer of Jews from all of occupied Europe. When Johannes was given more and more national work, Douwes took over Nieuwlande from him, together with the young Jewish man in hiding, Max Léons.

How many people were hidden in and around Nieuwlande is hard to say exactly. A statement by resistance workers from 1946 speaks of more than eighty Jewish people in hiding in Nieuwlande itself. For the village and the surrounding area together, it is about three hundred and fifty Jewish people, among them about a hundred children. More than two hundred and fifty residents helped. Those numbers concern many more people than Johannes. But without him it probably would not have started.

A man who had been hidden in Nieuwlande as a boy said, at the age of eighty-eight, that his rescuers were mostly believers, and that he thought that was why they did it.

A revolver from his brother

The work of hiding people forced him to do more. People in hiding needed ration cards, and those could only be had with false papers or by theft. From his brother Marinus, Johannes received a revolver. That was his first step toward armed resistance.

In February 1943 a young Jewish woman came to Nieuwlande, Celine Kuijper. She was called Lien, and in the resistance her name was Thea. She became his courier. A few weeks later her fiancé followed, Ies Davids. In May came Jan Wildschut, a former career soldier. He became Johannes's best friend.

In April and May 1943, strikes broke out across large parts of the Netherlands against the deportation of former soldiers to Germany. After that, Johannes set up a knokploeg in Nieuwlande, an armed resistance squad. On June 23, 1943, in a single day, the group raided the offices of the local ration clerks in the surrounding area, in Nieuweroord, Oosterhesselen, Sleen, Zweeloo and Hollandscheveld. The papers for food distribution and exemptions were kept there. The records were destroyed. An action like that had not been seen in Drenthe before. Johannes himself mostly stayed in the background.

With a few others, Johannes set fire to the building of the WA in Hollandscheveld, the uniformed branch of the NSB (the Dutch Nazi party). Some things also failed. Two of his men, Jan Naber and Albert Jan Rozeman, tried to kill a traitor from the region. It did not work. Rozeman was caught, tortured and shot near Overveen on June 6, 1944. He was thirty. Naber was arrested in Groningen on November 10, 1944. He jumped from the attic window of the Scholtenhuis, the headquarters of the Sicherheitspolizei, and so ended his own life. He was thirty-eight.

For a time Johannes, Thea, Ies Davids, Naber and Rozeman stayed hidden in the woods along the Kerkhofdijk in Hollandscheveld.

As far as is known, Johannes Post himself never killed anyone. That is stated in the biographies written about him, with the addition that it cannot be said with certainty. But he did choose to take up arms. He knew that people could die in a raid, on both sides. Many Christians in the resistance wrestled with that question. May a follower of Jesus carry a weapon? May you lie to save a life? Most came to the conclusion that they had to choose between two evils, and that doing nothing was also a choice.

What would you have done?

Ugchelen

On July 16, 1943, Johannes and Thea went to Ugchelen, near Apeldoorn, to place people in hiding at a guesthouse. The Sicherheitspolizei had already searched that guesthouse the same day. They walked into an ambush. Two officers of the Apeldoorn police arrested them and took them to the station.

The next day Johannes tried to escape. He was caught again at once. On July 18 a Dutch policeman, Jan Mennink, let him go.

Thea was not freed. Her own attempt to escape failed. She was taken to Westerbork, the transit camp in Drenthe, and an attempt to get her out of there came to nothing as well. She was put on a transport to Auschwitz and murdered there.

Johannes could no longer go home. He went into hiding at the farm of a brother in Pesse and in October moved to Rijnsburg. From then on he was called Hemke van der Zwaag, sometimes Johannes van Setten. During a check of his papers he escaped arrest once more.

Betsy Trompetter, a Jewish woman from the resistance who went by the name Tineke, became his new courier.

For Dien and the children, Nieuwlande now became dangerous too. The Germans wanted to seize the farm. The family had to go into hiding and was divided among relatives. Two of the boys went to an uncle and aunt. Dien herself was hidden for a time in a parsonage.

From that moment on, Johannes hardly saw his family. A father of a large family who can no longer come home. Who sees his children only now and then, in secret. Who knows that his wife has to carry everything alone. The resistance cost him a great deal, and his whole family paid the price with him.

The armed squads

From then on Johannes worked in the Landelijke Knokploegen (LKP), the National Armed Squads, the armed branch of the resistance. Those squads raided distribution offices, population registers and prisons. They destroyed personal records, stole ration cards and freed prisoners. They worked closely with the Landelijke Organisatie, which supplied tens of thousands of people in hiding with ration cards.

In Drenthe he had become too well known. In January 1944 he settled with his squad in Breda, on the Nachtegaalstraat. From there they raided offices in West Brabant and South Holland: Leiderdorp, Poortugaal, Oud-Beijerland, Klundert, Heerjansdam, Boekel, Lisse, Katwijk, Maassluis. In Hardinxveld, Woerden, Spijkenisse, Rhoon and Zwijndrecht it went wrong, or he came close to being caught. In February they took a large batch of pistols with ammunition from the police station on the Archimedesstraat in The Hague.

In March 1944 he was asked to join the top of the squads and was given Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe. There was an offer to

cross over to England and continue his work from there. He turned it down. After Easter he went north to link the squads there. In May he took part in the raid on the Hoitsema printing works in Groningen, where the ration cards were printed. It is regarded as the most successful raid ever carried out on a printing works.

Soon afterward the national leaders were arrested one by one: Henk Dienske, his friend from Hollandscheveld, Leendert Valstar, Izaak van der Horst. Johannes handed the north over to the young Reint Dijkema and took Valstar's place in Amsterdam. After new arrests in the north he could no longer go there. In May and June of 1944 he was in effect the leader of the squads in the west of the country. He sat at the table at the meetings between the large resistance groups, which was called the Kern (the Core). He wanted nothing to do with the political bickering between those groups. He was afraid it would tear the armed squads apart.

The arrest of Van der Horst changed him. Liepke Scheepstra, who sat next to him in the leadership, said after the war that Johannes seemed a different person afterward. The two men came to oppose each other. When Scheepstra had to go into hiding at the end of June, Johannes was almost alone.

On June 23, 1944, exactly a year after the first raids in Drenthe, a raid on a distribution office in Haarlem failed. Johannes had given the order for it. Jan Wildschut, who had been brought in at the last moment, was arrested. He ended up in the Huis van Bewaring (the house of detention) on the Weteringschans in Amsterdam, one of the most heavily guarded prisons in the country.

The Weteringschans

Johannes wanted to free his friend, and with him the dozens of other resistance people who were held there. Henk Dienske was there too.

Three plans were made. An armed assault was advised against by a guard who could be trusted. A staged burglary was rejected. The third plan was a raid from the home of the caretaker. That required help from the inside, from a guard in the service of the SS who said he wanted to help.

That guard was a traitor. His name was Jan Boogaard, and after the first meeting with the Amsterdam group he had immediately informed his bosses at the Sicherheitsdienst.

On the evening of July 14, 1944, the team gathered in the caretaker's residence. The raid was to take place in the early morning. Boogaard left the door open. After a few minutes came the words in German: hands up, any resistance is useless. Shots were fired. Guus Trestorff was so badly wounded that he died in the Wilhelmina Gasthuis. The others were seized.

Johannes was not inside. That was the agreement at the top: the leaders did not go inside on an action like this. But he was close by, and after an attempt to get away he was arrested on the spot. Hilbert van Dijk, who had also stayed outside, was later betrayed by local residents.

The next day the interrogations began. Nobody said anything.

On July 16, around noon, the men from the raid were brought together: Johannes Post, Jan Niklaas Veldman, Willem Frederik Smit, Arie Stramrood, Jacques Stil, Hilbert van Dijk and Cor ten Hoope. Two of them lay on a stretcher. Eight resistance people were added who had been arrested after an earlier attack on the Amsterdam

population register. In a closed truck they were driven to the dunes near Overveen. There they were shot, the wounded as well. Johannes Post was thirty-seven.

No last words of his have been preserved. No farewell letter, no prayer that anyone wrote down. In the novel that Anne de Vries wrote about him in 1948 there are conversations and thoughts, but that is a novel. What Johannes thought in those last hours, we do not know. I find it more honest to say so than to make something up.

Jan Wildschut, the reason it all began, died on January 31, 1945, in the camp at Leonberg, thirty-one years old. Henk Dienske died on February 16, 1945, in Beendorf. Valstar and Van der Horst were executed by firing squad on September 4, 1944, and Reint Dijkema on August 22, 1944, in Vught. He was twenty-four. Marinus Post was executed by firing squad in Alkmaar on November 17, 1944.

Jan Boogaard confessed after the liberation. He was sentenced to death on July 19, 1946, and executed on March 1, 1947.

A child he never saw

When Johannes died, Dien was pregnant. Their youngest child was born shortly before the liberation. Johannes never saw the child.

In 1945 a band from the region played at the farm where he had lived, to remember him. So it says in a letter from a fellow villager from that year.

On July 25, 1945, the mass grave in the dunes was found. On November 27, 1945, Johannes was reburied at the Eerebegraafplaats (the Field of Honor) in Bloemendaal, where Hannie Schaft and other resistance people also lie.

One of his daughters was in hiding with an uncle when she heard that her father was dead. It did not really sink in, she said later. The youngest daughter no longer had any memory of her own parents. When they were reunited, she cried mostly because she wanted to go back to the family that had hidden her. The family still had to live in different places for two more years. Everything had changed, one of her sisters said, we had grown apart.

That belongs to the story of resistance heroes too. Behind every name on a monument there is a family that had to go on. Seventy-five years after his death, his children told their side of the story in a documentary: the price the family paid, about which there had been silence for years.

Dien Post lived until 1991. All the children survived the war.

Honor after death

After the war Johannes received the Verzetskruis (the Resistance Cross) by Royal Decree, the highest Dutch decoration for resistance. It was awarded to him for courage, initiative, perseverance, spirit of sacrifice and devotion. The United States gave him the Medal of Freedom with Silver Palm, which his family received in The Hague on April 8, 1953. A barracks near Havelte is named after him, bridges in Zwinderen and Leiden, schools in Sneek, Amstelveen and Hazerswoude-Dorp, a scouting group in Assen, and streets in dozens of places.

Anne de Vries wrote his biographical novel, which first appeared as a serial and was read after the war in many Gereformeerde families. It is mainly through that book that his name has lived on. A fellow party member, Bruins Slot, called him a fantastic freebooter.

Yad Vashem, the memorial center in Jerusalem, honored Johannes Post as Righteous Among the Nations. Later the village of Nieuw-

lande as a whole received that honor too. Arnold Douwes had threatened to set fire to the tree planted for him if the whole village was not recognized. Besides Nieuwlande, only one other place in the world has received that honor.

Why he did it

Why did a Gereformeerde farmer from Drenthe do this? There are several answers, and they are probably all a little true.

He was a man of principle. What he saw as injustice, he could not leave alone. He hated National Socialism, which went against everything he believed about God and people. According to the introduction to Douwes's diary, he had compassion for the hunted. And, to be honest, he also loved adventure and action. The sources mention that without embarrassment, and I think it is true. God also uses our character, with its good sides and its difficult ones.

But beneath all of that lay his faith. The NOS, too, calls it an important motive in its look back. In Nieuwlande it was precisely the Gereformeerde people who took part, people who read the Bible at the table at home and went to church on Sunday. They read about Rahab, who hid the spies. About the midwives in Egypt, who let the Hebrew baby boys live. About the Samaritan who did not walk on by. For them these were not old stories. They were a command.

Jesus said: *inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me* (Matthew 25:40). In Nieuwlande, people took those words literally.

Johannes Post was no saint. He was stubborn, could be fierce, and he took risks that others would not take. His choice for armed resistance is still a question for some Christians. He paid with his life, and his family paid with him.

Perhaps you wonder what this story means for you, in a country where there is no occupier. But today too there are people who are hunted, shut out or forgotten. Today too someone has to be the first. Johannes Post was that person in Nieuwlande. He was not the only one who helped. But he was the one who began.

In May 1942 a hunted man came looking for shelter at a farm along a long road in Drenthe. The farmer opened the door.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth in Hollandscheveld on October 4, 1906, as the youngest of eleven children; Gereformeerde and a member of the ARP; marriage to Dina Salomons (1903-1991) on November 26, 1929; farmer and alderman in Nieuwlande and Oosterhesselen; his role with Arnold Douwes and others in hiding Jewish people in 1942 and after; raids from June 23, 1943; his arrest in Ugchelen on July 16, 1943, his release on July 18 and the death of Celine Kuijper; his leading role in the Landelijke Knokploegen in 1944; the failed raid on the Huis van Bewaring on the Weteringschans on the night of July 14 to 15, 1944, and the betrayal by Jan Boogaard; his execution in the dunes near Overveen on July 16, 1944; the finding of the grave on July 25, 1945, and the reburial in Bloemendaal; the Verzetskruis; the recognition by Yad Vashem of him and of Nieuwlande.

From testimony of family or co-workers: the sentence at the start of the war about raising his children, that he picked up Jews and brought them home, that he rolled step by step into the resistance, what the daughters told about the news of his death and the reunion (NOS, from a conversation of one of the daughters with the NIOD); his plan to join the fighting in May 1940; the way he was released in 1943; what Liepke Scheepstra said about him after the war; the words of Bruins Slot; the statement of the man who was in hiding

in Nieuwlande as a boy (the news agency JTA, 2021). The names of his daughters, which were in an earlier version, I have left out because they are private persons.

From a single source (not independently checked): the number of more than eighty Jewish people in hiding in Nieuwlande according to a statement from 1946; that as far as is known he never killed anyone; his poor health as a child, his parents' disappointment, the meeting with Dien on May 19, 1925, the engagement and the first child, the tax refusal of September 1940, the declaration of Aryan descent, the three plans for the Weteringschans and the German words at the raid (TracesOfWar); the freight service, the fire at the WA building, the failed attack by Naber and Rozeman on the collaborator De Krol, the woods along the Kerkhofdijk, the names of the places raided, the refused offer to go to England, the Hoitsema printing works, the names of the men brought together on July 16 and the eight from the population register (ww2gravestone.com); the letter from 1945 about the band (Liberation Route); the code for people in hiding and Douwes's threat about the tree (JTA).

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

- *The number of children.* The Biografisch Woordenboek names three sons and five daughters, plus a son who died young: nine in all. The NOS speaks of seven children, the VPRO of eight. That fits together: nine born, eight living, of whom the youngest came into the world after his death.
- *Whom he took in first in 1942.* The Biografisch Woordenboek speaks of someone who was wanted; TracesOfWar and ww2gravestone.com name Arnold Douwes, in May 1942. According to the English Wikipedia he met both Douwes and Dr. Cohen at his brother Marinus's home; according to a review of Douwes's diary, Post brought him to Nieuwlande in 1942.

- *May 1940.* He wanted to go and fight with a local preacher (an earlier version of this chapter) or with two farmers (TracesOfWar).
- *The revolver.* Received from Marinus in the autumn of 1942 in Kampen (TracesOfWar) or in the spring of 1943, when his group was founded (an earlier version of this chapter).
- *June 23, 1943.* Four raids in one day (Biografisch Woordenboek, TracesOfWar) or five (ww2gravestone.com, which names five places). They were the offices of local food-distribution clerks; other sources speak of distribution offices. TracesOfWar notes that he was not the first in the Netherlands: Theo Dobbe had already raided the distribution office in Joure on October 14, 1942.
- *Celine Kuijper.* From Rotterdam (English Wikipedia) or from Amsterdam-Zuid (ww2gravestone.com). Murdered immediately on arrival in Auschwitz, or three days later.
- *The release in 1943.* The policeman is named Jan Mennink in the English Wikipedia; other sources give no name and speak of an officer or a detective.
- *Hiding after July 1943.* At a brother's in Pesse and then in Rijnsburg (English Wikipedia); according to other sources his brother Marinus or his brother Henk, who was a minister there, lived in Rijnsburg.
- *The pistols.* About sixty (English Wikipedia) or fifty-six (TracesOfWar); in January or on February 19, 1944 (Biografisch Woordenboek).
- *The arrest of Wildschut.* On June 23, 1944, at the raid in Haarlem, or on June 26.
- *Where Johannes was during the raid on the Weteringschans.* The Biografisch Woordenboek and TracesOfWar say that he did not take part in the raid himself and was arrested outside; the NOS writes that he was seized after an escape attempt. An ear-

lier version of this chapter told that he tried to shoot his way out; I found no source for that. The Biografisch Woordenboek gives July 15 as the day of his arrest, other sources July 14.

- *The number executed.* Thirteen (Biografisch Woordenboek), fourteen (TracesOfWar) or fifteen (NOS; the list of names at ww2gravestone.com also comes to seven plus eight). The date is July 16, 1944 in almost all sources; one or two give July 15.
- *Jan Boogaard.* An SS guard or an NSB member (a member of the Dutch Nazi party), depending on the source.
- *The barracks.* In Havelte according to most sources; a scouting document mentions 1964 and Steenwijkerwold.
- *Yad Vashem.* According to the English Wikipedia, Johannes Post was recognized in 1965. For Nieuwlande the sources give 1983 (Christian Courier, which calls it the first community in the world) or 1985 (JTA, which writes that only the French Le Chambon-sur-Lignon received the same honor); in 1988 a monument followed. Douwes himself was recognized in 1965 according to one source, in 1983 according to another.
- *The number of people saved.* About 350 Jewish people in and around Nieuwlande, among them about 100 children (Christian Courier); at least 500 by Douwes and his helpers (Encyclopaedia Judaica); "hundreds" in most other sources.

Unconfirmed: the conversations in the biographical novel of Anne de Vries are literary invention, not a historical source. I have found no last words or farewell letter of Johannes Post.

Interpretation: Post is seen as a hero in nearly all sources. There is, however, discussion about armed resistance as a Christian choice, about the myth that has grown up around him, and about the price his family paid.

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Background (not consulted myself): J. Houwink ten Cate and B. Moore (eds.), *Het geheime dagboek van Arnold Douwes, Jodenredder* (Amsterdam; 2016 according to the earlier version of this chapter, 2018 according to JTA); Anne de Vries, *De levensroman van Johannes Post* (Kampen 1948), except for the reading excerpt; C.M. Schulten, *Zeg mij aan wien ik toebehoor. Het Verzetskruis 1940-1945* (1993); R. van Aerde et al., *Het grote gebod. Gedenkboek van het verzet in LO en*

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Hans Rookmaaker: the art expert from the camp

In August 1948 an international conference of conservative Protestant churches was held in Amsterdam. A young man stood leaning against a wall, with a pipe. He was not a delegate. He had come along with his fiancée, Anky Huitker, who was helping at the conference office that week. He was twenty-six and studying art history.

He was looking, as he told it himself later, for an American who looked intelligent. He had a question about spirituals, the songs of black Americans. His eye fell on a minister of thirty-six, Francis Schaeffer. Schaeffer had a little time. In half an hour, at seven o'clock, the next session began.

Soon it was no longer about spirituals. It was about modern art, about history and philosophy, about what was happening to Europe now that it was losing its faith. The session started without Schaeffer, who was supposed to take the minutes, too. The student told him that the people in there did not understand a thing, but that the two of them understood each other.

They walked into the city, along the canals, without Anky, and kept on talking. They ended up in the student room of the younger man. At four in the morning they got home.

The student's name was Hans Rookmaaker. From that night of talking grew a friendship that would last almost thirty years. Together they would teach a generation of young Christians that as a believer you do not have to be afraid of art, music and culture. That you may look, listen and think. That faith opens your mind.

Six years earlier Hans Rookmaaker had not yet believed. He was in a prisoner-of-war camp in the east of Europe, with a Bible and almost nothing else.

A boy between two worlds

Henderik Roelof Rookmaaker, whom everyone called Hans, was born on February 27, 1922, in The Hague. His father, who had the same name, was a civil servant in the Dutch East Indies (today's Indonesia, then a Dutch colony) and in his free time a naturalist. He was on study leave in the Netherlands when Hans was born. Then the family went back. Hans grew up largely in the Indies, where his father was a district officer on Celebes and later resident of the Lampung districts on Sumatra. In 1936 the father had to return to The Hague for health reasons, and the family stayed in the Netherlands for good.

They were not especially religious at home. Hans went to a technical hbs in Leiden (a type of secondary school) and was good at both science and the humanities. He loved drawing and reading. And he had one great love that he would keep all his life: the music of black Americans. Jazz, blues and spirituals. He bought records and gramophone needles with his pocket money. He listened to Jelly

Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong and Billie Holiday. Later he would own one of the best collections of early jazz in Europe.

He wanted to join the navy. He became a young officer in training, and when the Germans closed the naval training, he began a technical study in Delft. He fell in love with a girl from The Hague, Riki Spetter. She was Jewish. They got engaged.

Arrested

Then came the occupation. In Delft, Hans was given an anti-German pamphlet by a lecturer. He had promised to distribute such leaflets. He was caught on the very first night.

He spent six and a half months in the prison at Scheveningen. His parents' house and Riki's were close by. They were not allowed to visit. They were allowed to write. His father knew people, and that probably helped with his release.

Freedom did not last long. In April 1942, as a naval officer, Hans was ordered to report in Breda. There he was taken prisoner of war. He was brought to an officers' camp near Nuremberg, and later that year to Stalag 371 in Stanislau, in what is now Ukraine. He would stay there until early 1944. After that the prisoners were moved to Neubrandenburg in northern Germany.

He would never see his father again. His father died on January 30, 1945, in the last winter of the war, at the age of fifty-seven.

A book that turned out to be true

In the camp there was little to do and little to read. Hans had a Bible. Riki had asked him to read in it, the book of her people. He read the Old Testament, and he read it with the questions of a young intellectual. He wanted to know what was in it, whether it was right, whether it meant anything.

He had no other books about it. Only the text. He wrote later that as he read, he slowly came to the conviction that the Bible reveals the truth.

It was not a conversion with tears and one great moment. It was a change of mind. But it was not easy. He himself later called it a dogmatic struggle, like the one the first church had gone through. He fought his way through the questions and came out at what he later recognized as the old, biblical Protestant faith. Everyone could admire the beauty and wisdom of the Bible, he thought, but that was not the point. The point was whether it was true. He said the Bible is either true or not true, and there is nothing in between. And what he found was a joyful message: God as Father, and therefore His Son as Savior.

Anyone who had come to know God and His Son this way from the Bible, he said, could not afterward become theologically liberal.

A young man of twenty, from a family where faith counted for little, sits in a prisoner-of-war camp and opens a book because his fiancée asked him to. And he cannot let go of it.

He began to write. A study on prophecy in the Old and the New Testament, *Betreffende de profetie* (Concerning Prophecy). He dedicated it to Riki. It was about the books of her own people. In the camp he also wrote a piece on beauty, *Aesthetica*.

A father in the faith

Stanislau was a camp full of officers, and it became a kind of university. Hans learned Latin and Greek there. And he met a career officer twenty-five years older: Johan Mekkes, a convinced Reformed Christian and philosopher.

Mekkes lent him the work of Herman Dooyeweerd, the Amsterdam professor who had developed a Christian view of the whole of reality: of science, art, law, economics, everything. They talked endlessly. Through those conversations, Hans said later, he was formed as a scholar. Mekkes became his father in the faith, and he continued to support him after the war.

A world opened up for Hans. Believing did not have to be limited to Sunday and church. Christ was Lord over everything, also over the music and painting he loved so much. What he found in Dooyeweerd, he said, was that the thinking of a Christian is not shut down but opened up.

Paul writes: *For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things* (Romans 11:36). Those words could stand over the whole of the rest of Hans Rookmaaker's life.

Riki

Four months after Hans had reported in Breda, in the summer of 1942, Riki Spetter and her family were arrested in The Hague. They were taken to Westerbork, the transit camp in the northeast of the Netherlands. There she was last seen on August 18, 1942. She was deported to Auschwitz and murdered there, according to later records on September 30, 1942.

Still in August, Anky Huitker, a good friend of Riki's, let Hans know in the camp that Riki and her family had been taken away. That was all he knew. He kept writing to her. Through his family, letter after letter, until shortly before his return home in 1945. The study on the prophets that he wanted to give her never reached her.

After the war he placed advertisements in newspapers in various Dutch cities to find out something about her. Anky helped search. No answer came that gave him hope. He could only assume that

she had died in the Holocaust. Where and when, he never knew for certain.

I find that one of the hardest parts of his story. He came to faith through a book he read with her in mind. And she was murdered before she knew anything of it. There is no comforting ending to this part of the story. That may be said too. Some grief gets no answer in this life.

Anky

After the war Hans was baptized in The Hague and became a member of the Gereformeerde Kerk (vrijgemaakt), a Reformed denomination. He no longer wanted to become a naval officer. What he would most have liked to study was music history. But he played no instrument and could not carry a tune. In 1946 he began studying art history in Amsterdam. He founded a Reformed student society there, and from 1947 he led a Bible study group in it.

He and Anky Huitker met more and more often. He had known her since before the war, from The Hague. She was seven years older than he was. Anky had also grown up in the Indies. After the war she was open to faith, and through Hans's patient witness she came to it.

For years they waited with an engagement. They still hoped that Riki would come back. In 1947 they got engaged. In 1949 Anky was baptized, and on June 1 of that year they married. They had three children, two sons and a daughter.

Anky was not a woman who stood in the shadows. She was warm and practical, a gifted organizer, and she kept an open house. At the conference in 1948 she got into a conversation with Edith Schaeffer about the children's work the Schaeffers were doing. At home she already had a small group of children to whom she told Bible

stories. The conversation made her enthusiastic. Later she founded Redt een Kind (Save a Child), an organization for orphans and poor children in developing countries, and led it for thirty-eight years. What Hans did in public, she supported at home, and often outside it too.

Gauguin and jazz

Hans was a gifted student. From 1949 to 1956 he wrote as an art critic for the daily newspaper *Trouw*. Anyone who read his pieces heard the same thing again and again: go and see for yourself. He became an assistant at the university, first in Amsterdam and then in Leiden, where he worked with Henri van de Waal on a large system for organizing the subjects of paintings. On July 7, 1959, he received his doctorate at the University of Amsterdam with a dissertation on the art theory of Paul Gauguin and his circle.

Meanwhile he held on to his love of jazz and blues. In 1960 his book *Jazz, blues en spirituals* was published. He wrote liner notes for reissues of classic jazz records for the American label Riverside and was the European editor of a record series of black American music. He compared the music of King Oliver with that of Bach. In early jazz, the blues and gospel he heard the voice of people who had suffered and called on God.

In 1961 he made a trip through North America and gave lectures at Calvin College in Grand Rapids. In Chicago he went with his friend Calvin Seerveld to the Greater Salem Baptist Church. Mahalia Jackson, the great gospel singer, sang there.

Seerveld described that Sunday. During the singing a middle-aged woman stiffened completely, and two helpers carried her out of the church. Half an hour later she came back, calm and glad. Afterward

Mahalia told the two visitors that people came there to lay down their cares and take home hope for a new week.

She invited them to her home, on South Indiana Avenue, to talk about her music. She told them that she herself preferred to sing with only piano or organ, and that the big orchestras on her records were the wish of the record company. Hans wrote later that there was no doubt that Mahalia was a true Christian. What she and singers like her did, he called living church music, in the same line as Schütz and Bach: music to the glory of God, to sing His praise and to bear witness to what He had done for His people.

A friendship with Schaeffer

The friendship with Francis Schaeffer grew. Schaeffer settled with his wife Edith in Switzerland and opened L'Abri there in 1955, which means shelter. It was a house where young people with questions about faith and life could come, eat, talk and study. Hans and Anky were among the first guests and came back often. Hans gave lectures there and talked with students deep into the night.

The two men complemented each other. One biographer wrote that if Schaeffer was an evangelist who was an intellectual, Rookmaaker was an intellectual who was an evangelist. Hans helped Schaeffer look at art and encouraged him to publish his thoughts in books. Schaeffer helped Hans share his knowledge with ordinary young people, outside the circle of fellow experts, and urged him to finish his dissertation. When Schaeffer was attacked for not having academic degrees, Hans stood up for him.

Hans himself said something about it in 1972. He found Dutch Christianity strong in thinking and sometimes weak in personal faith. With English and American Christianity it was the other way

around. He and Schaeffer tried to forge those two strengths together into something new.

In 1964 Hans was asked to set up a department of art history at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. He accepted and became the first professor of art history at the VU. He taught there until his death. He gave his inaugural lecture in 1968. Schaeffer had come from Switzerland for it, and in his address Hans thanked him for twenty years of conversations about faith, philosophy, art and the modern world.

Where are you looking?

How did such a man teach?

One morning a week he took his students to the Rijksmuseum. Sometimes they stood for hours before a single painting. Once he had a group study the same canvas for days. He often began with a simple question: what are you looking at? You see what you know, he said. Looking well takes time.

Every two weeks students came to his home in the evening, after a heavy load of homework. The room was full of old jazz records. When one of them crackled badly, he said that was because so many people had danced to it.

He gave his lectures in a three-piece suit. He looked more like a banker than an art historian. But he spoke without notes, and those who heard him compared it to a jazz musician improvising. He could challenge his audience, startle them and make them laugh. He hated sentimentality and art that preaches. To young artists he always said the same thing: paint what you love. And: work hard, learn your craft.

From the mid-1960s he spoke at English art schools, and from 1970 he gave summer courses in Vancouver. An English painter said later that in 1967 he was about to give up, because he thought painting was too worldly for a Christian. One late-night conversation with Rookmaaker at the art school in Birmingham kept him at work. In the Netherlands a group of painters from the north was influenced by him, among them Henk Helmantel.

William Edgar, who got to know him at L'Abri, once drove with him through Connecticut. Hans pointed at a house from the seventeenth century and said: this is the real thing. He had no use for later imitations in that style. Edgar summed him up later like this: brilliant, combative, loyal, hardworking, unpredictable and very sensitive.

Modern art and the death of a culture

In 1970 his best-known book appeared in England: *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*. It was also published in Dutch and in other languages. In it Hans showed how Western art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had increasingly let go of what had carried it before: the belief that reality has meaning, because God made it. He read paintings as expressions of the spirit of the age. He was critical of much modern art, but he always took it seriously. He admired Rouault, and he could accept the abstraction of Pollock. He did not want Christians just to get angry about it. He wanted them to understand it.

In the 1970s the book was read by thousands of young evangelical Christians, especially in England and America. Major journals reviewed it, and the English journalist Malcolm Muggeridge chose it as one of his books of the year. For many it was the first time anyone showed them that art and faith could go together.

After his death a smaller book appeared with a title that stuck: *Art Needs No Justification*. In it he writes about the people who tell an artist that his work is fine, as long as it can be used for evangelism. He would have none of that. Art did not need to be useful, contain a sermon or be evangelism in order to be good. It was a gift from God, like a flower or a sunset. And if Christ came to make us human, he writes, then art too finds its ground in Him.

In that sentence lies the saying he is most often quoted for: Jesus did not come to make us Christians, Jesus came to make us fully human. In that exact form I have not found it in his own work. The thought, however, is entirely his.

Not everyone agreed with him. Art experts sometimes found his judgment of modern art too quick and too gloomy. Some Christians found, on the contrary, that he paid too much attention to the world. Hans kept to the middle and would not be put in a box. He could be fierce in a discussion. But whoever came to his home found mostly a warm, modest man.

L'Abri in the Netherlands

Hans and Anky started a Dutch branch of L'Abri in their own home. Students came by to talk about faith, art and philosophy. In 1971 the work moved to a large house, Huize Kortenhoeve, in Eck en Wiel in the Betuwe (a river region in the center of the Netherlands). As in Switzerland, people could stay there for a while, study and ask their questions.

For that time it was unusual. In the Netherlands many churches were still mostly occupied with their own members and their own doctrine. Hans and Anky opened their door to doubters, artists and searching students, believing or not. He mentored remarkably

many women, just as many as men. In those circles in the sixties and seventies that was unusual too.

A Sunday in March

Shortly before his death he was in America again and spoke at a museum in Pittsburgh.

On Sunday, March 13, 1977, Hans went to church in the morning in the new chapel of L'Abri in Eck en Wiel. It had just been put into use. In the evening he died suddenly. He was fifty-five.

It was a shock to his family, his students and his friends all over the world. Francis Schaeffer lost one of his best friends. Johan Mekkes, his father in the faith from the camp, outlived him by ten years. Anky lived nearly twenty-six more years. She died in 2003. Their daughter Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker later published his collected works, six volumes, and set up a website on art and faith. Only then did everyone see how much he had written.

An open life

Laurel Gasque, who knew him for the last seven years of his life, called her biography of him *An Open Life*. You cannot describe him better in a few words. Hans Rookmaaker had an open house, an open gaze and an open mind. For him the Bible was not a wall to hide behind. It was a window on the whole of reality.

Many Christians do not know what to do with art, music and culture. They find it suspect, or they adopt it without thinking. Hans chose a third way. He looked, listened, thought, and asked himself what God thought of it. And he enjoyed it. Bach, Rembrandt, Mahalia Jackson and Jelly Roll Morton.

Paul wrote to the Philippians: *Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things*

are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things (Philippians 4:8).

Do you dare to do that, to think about your faith without being afraid that it will break?

His life as a Christian began in the silence of a camp, with a book he read for someone who would never read it. It ended on a Sunday, after a church service in a chapel that had just been finished. In between, he showed that you can believe with your whole head and your whole heart, and he taught a generation the question with which he began his lessons.

Where are you looking?

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth in The Hague on February 27, 1922; childhood in the Dutch East Indies and his father in colonial service; his love of jazz, blues and gospel; engagement to Riki Spetter; imprisonment in Scheveningen; reporting in Breda in April 1942, then prisoner of war near Nuremberg, in Stalag 371 in Stanislau and later in Neubrandenburg; his choice of faith in captivity; the meeting with J.P.A. Mekkes (1897-1987); the deportation and death of Riki Spetter in 1942; art history studies in Amsterdam from 1946; marriage to Anky Huitker on June 1, 1949; doctorate on Gauguin at the University of Amsterdam on July 7, 1959; the friendship with Francis Schaeffer from August 1948; first professor of art history at the Vrije Universiteit; *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture* (1970); L'Abri Netherlands in Huize Kortenhoeve in Eck en Wiel (1971); his death on Sunday, March 13, 1977.

Only from own testimony: how he began reading the Bible in the camp and his sentence about it; the dogmatic struggle, the sentence

that the Bible is true or not true, the joyful message and what he said about liberalism (quoted from the biography by Laurel Gasque, page 56); the dedication of his study on prophecy to Riki; what Dooyeweerd and the conversations with Mekkes meant to him (from his essay on the philosophy of the law-idea, via Gasque); the American who looked intelligent, the half hour before seven o'clock and the conversation until four in the morning (from a later lecture at L'Abri, via the Schaeffer biography by Colin Duriez); the words of thanks in his inaugural lecture of 1968 and what he said in 1972 about Dutch and Anglo-Saxon Christianity (Duriez); his judgment of the faith and music of Mahalia Jackson (his article "Mahalia Jackson: A Personal Testimony", via Wheaton College). The sentences quoted are translated from English, and here they are retold without quotation marks.

From the testimony of others who were there: that Hans and Schaeffer walked into the city without her and came home at four, and her conversation with Edith Schaeffer (Anky, in an interview, via Duriez); the pipe, the wall, the missed minutes and the sentence about the people inside (Duriez, after Edith Schaeffer, who according to him was mistaken on one point: Hans was not yet writing for *Trouw* in 1948); the service in Chicago, the words of Mahalia Jackson and the invitation to her home (Calvin Seerveld, 2014); the house in Connecticut and the character sketch (William Edgar); the lessons in the Rijksmuseum, the evenings at home, the crackling record, the three-piece suit and his advice to artists (former students, collected by D.B. Hegeman in *Comment*, 2004); the conversation in Birmingham in 1967 (the painter Peter Smith, in Hegeman).

From a single source (not independently checked): that at his first arrest he was caught on the very first night and that his father's connections helped with his release (only Wheaton College Archives, which contains demonstrable errors elsewhere in the same piece,

such as the year 1943 for his captivity as a prisoner of war); that the pamphlet came from a lecturer in Delft and that parents and fiancée were allowed to write (Gasque on ArtWay); that Anky informed him in August 1942 of Riki's removal; that he kept writing to Riki through his family until shortly before his return (Gasque); that Hans and Anky waited for years with their engagement (Duriez); that he had wanted to study music history, learned Latin and Greek in the camp and knew Anky before the war (Hegeman); that he was a critic for Trouw from 1949 to 1956; that Anky led Redt een Kind for thirty-eight years; the lecture in Pittsburgh in 1977 (Hegeman).

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

- *Why he began reading the Bible.* At Riki's urging, so it says in William Edgar's review of Gasque's biography. According to ArtWay, Riki's letters suggest he was already occupied with it.
- *The length of his imprisonment in Scheveningen.* Six and a half months (Gasque) or nine months, after an arrest in 1941 (Hegeman).
- *The first camp.* Oflag 67 in Langwasser near Nuremberg according to Gasque; other sources speak only of a camp near Nuremberg.
- *What Mekkes gave him to read.* Hegeman names Dooyeweerd's *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, but that English edition dates from after the war; in the story it says only that it was the work of Dooyeweerd.
- *The student society.* According to Hegeman he founded the Reformed student society in Amsterdam; Gasque writes that from 1947 he led the Bible study group there.
- *The year of his appointment at the Vrije Universiteit.* ArtWay gives 1964, Hegeman and another reference site 1965; the inaugural lecture was in 1968.

- *The place of his death.* ArtWay gives Eck en Wiel, the Album Academicum of the University of Amsterdam gives Ommeren, the neighboring village.

Unconfirmed: the saying about Jesus coming to make us fully human, in that exact form. In *Art Needs No Justification* there is a sentence that the humanity and reality of art find their ground in Christ if He came to make us human (I saw that sentence as a quotation, not in the book itself).

Names: the first names of his two sons, which were in an earlier version, I have left out because they are private persons. His daughter is named in her public role as editor of his work.

Interpretation: art historians have often found his judgment of modern art too gloomy. For a generation of evangelical Christians, however, he was the one who brought art and faith back together.

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Wim Malgo: the sailor who cried at midnight

On a Saturday in the late summer of 1979, a Dutchman from Switzerland stood on a stage in Amsterdam. The mission organization Middernachtsroep (Midnight Cry) was holding its national Israel Day there. The speaker was Dr. Wim Malgo, the man who had founded the work. He was fifty-six.

He spoke about a country that was growing more and more lonely. Israel could not build on the promises of America, he said, because the interest in oil was changing the minds of President Carter and the Americans. French policy toward Israel he called disgusting. The Netherlands got its share too: a united Europe was taking the side of the Arab countries. The price Israel was paying for peace with Egypt he thought too high. For him the turning point of history lay in 1967, when Israel conquered Jerusalem. And the world, he said, still did not recognize Israel as "the apple of God's eye."

The Reformatorisch Dagblad (a Dutch Christian daily newspaper) reported on it a few days later. A short item, on page two. For Malgo a day like this was no exception. In tents, halls and churches and on the radio, he kept coming back to the same two subjects: Israel and the return of Jesus.

Who was this man? A Dutchman who had been a forced laborer in Austria, who discovered prophecy at a Swiss Bible school, and who from Zurich built up a mission work that distributed a magazine in many languages. In the Netherlands many people know the magazine Middernachtsroep. Fewer people know the life of the man behind it.

It began in Maassluis.

A boy of fourteen at sea

Wim Malgo was born on October 3, 1922, in Maassluis, the port town on the Nieuwe Waterweg (the shipping channel to Rotterdam). His parents were believing people, shaped by the revival movement.

At fourteen he went into the merchant navy. Still a boy.

There, as a sailor, he came to conversion. His parents' faith became his own. The mission work he later founded still presents him that way, in three words: "a Dutch sailor." He held on to that beginning. One of the first booklets he had printed years later was about how you recognize a born-again person. He knew what he was talking about.

How exactly it happened on that ship, I have not found described anywhere. No date, no port, no sermon. I find that a pity, because with many men and women in this series we know the hour in which God called them. With Malgo you see mostly what came after: a life that from then on went in only one direction.

Forced labor in Austria

When Germany occupied the Netherlands, the war came to this young seaman too. The occupier took him away and put him to

work as a forced laborer in Austria. Far from home and far from the sea.

One thing from those years never let go of him. He saw what the occupiers did to the Jews. The persecution remained vivid in his mind later, so says the history published by his own mission work. The booklet says it in a single sentence and explains nothing.

Anyone who knows his later life reads that one sentence with different eyes. The young man who had experienced the persecution of the Jews up close would, as a man, never again be able to speak about anything else without ending up at Israel.

A house above Lake Thun

After the war Malgo went to Switzerland. In Beatenberg, high above Lake Thun, there was a Bible school. Saturnin Wasserzug and his wife Gertrud had founded it in 1934. Saturnin was a Swiss man of Jewish descent who had found his Messiah in Jesus. He had earlier led a mission school in Tunis and worked as a missionary in Palestine. Under Gertrud's leadership the school grew into one of the well-known evangelical training institutions in Europe.

Malgo arrived there in 1947, and he stayed until 1949. The old Wasserzug was already in his eighties. The two became friends. Imagine it: a Dutch former sailor in his mid-twenties, who had seen the persecution of the Jews with his own eyes, at the feet of a Jewish teacher who taught him to read the prophets of the Bible.

What Beatenberg did to him, all the sources tell in the same way. Saturnin Wasserzug made a deep impression on him, especially through his explanation of the prophetic books of the Bible. The book about his own work says that both Wasserzugs awakened in him the love for the prophetic Word.

It was also a remarkable moment to be there. In May 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed. In Malgo's circle it was later described as the moment when the fulfillment of prophecy became visible. That same year Youth for Christ held its first world congress on evangelism in Beatenberg, with about five hundred participants. Among them were Oswald Smith and a young American evangelist, Billy Graham.

Annie Schouten, the woman he married, also belongs in Beatenberg. The American branch of his work writes that Wim and Annie Malgo arrived there in 1947.

How do you look at the news? Malgo would hold the Bible next to it all his life. Years later he wrote that you find the very latest news literally in the Bible.

With a tent through the Alps

After Bible school, Malgo was ordained as a minister. He first joined evangelists in Austria, the country where he had worked as a forced laborer. Now he came back with the gospel.

After that Samuel Furrer took him under his wing, a well-known tent evangelist from Zurich. With a group of young Bible school students they traveled with a large tent through Switzerland and parts of Austria. They called people to conversion, in the tent, in halls and in churches. He also did street work. The message was short: Jesus is coming back.

At home, meanwhile, the family was growing. Wim and Annie had twelve children, seven sons and five daughters. The family lived in Switzerland, and the father was often away. Annie wrote about it herself later, in the anniversary issue of her husband's magazine, in 1975. One sentence of hers has been preserved: "Our papa was away again all week, as almost always."

I read no reproach in that sentence. I do read the price in it. A calling is never paid for by one person alone. Beyond this, Annie does not step forward in the sources, and I respect that.

"The bridegroom is coming!"

A tent is full on an evening. And whoever does not want to go there, does not come. Malgo thought of those people. His own mission work tells that he felt a strong inner urge to bring the gospel to people who would never attend a meeting. He saw radio as the way. In those years Europe was divided by the Iron Curtain, and a radio wave did not stop at any border.

In the autumn of 1955 he founded the Missionswerk Mitternachtsruf in Zurich, together with his friend Willy Straumann. The name came from the parable of the ten virgins, which Jesus tells in Matthew 25. The girls wait with their lamps for the bridegroom. It gets late, they fall asleep. And then, in the middle of the night:

And at midnight a cry was heard: Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him! (Matthew 25:6)

That cry became the motto of the work: the bridegroom is coming! In the American branch the name later became Midnight Call, because an organization called Midnight Cry already existed.

In April 1956 his voice went on the air for the first time, via Radio Tangier in Morocco. Soon responses and gifts came in, from Europe and from Africa. Later he also spoke via Radio Monte Carlo, on Thursday evenings at 11:35 p.m. Close to midnight, in other words. And from September 1957 he was heard on Radio Luxembourg, at that time one of the strongest stations in Europe.

Then what he had hoped for happened. Letters came from the communist countries behind the Iron Curtain. Even from Siberia. All

the way there the voice of the former sailor from Maassluis had reached, with the message that Jesus is coming back.

Three hundred addresses

In April 1956 the first monthly magazine also appeared, Radio Mitternachtsruf. It went to about three hundred addresses: listeners and friends. In June 1957 it took a new form, twenty pages thick, and from then on was called Mitternachtsruf. That same year a first gramophone record followed, and a first conference in the Volkshaus in Zurich, a concert hall with twelve hundred seats. From 1960 cassettes with sermons also went out the door. His first booklets had already appeared in 1955, among them the one on the seven marks of a born-again person. In 2021 a thirteenth printing of it appeared.

From Switzerland the work spread to other countries. In June 1957 a branch opened in Germany and at the end of 1957 one in the Netherlands. That Dutch branch began in Leiden. In 1984 Middernachtsroep was still publishing its books from a post office box in that city. Around Christmas 1975 the Reformatorisch Dagblad, in its column on the church press, mentioned an issue of Middernachtsroep on the Christmas story, "under the direction of evangelist Wim Malgo." Today the work is based in Doorn and calls itself an independent evangelical mission work. The website still carries CDs with the voice of Wim Malgo.

The magazine grew fast. In 1984 the Reformatorisch Dagblad wrote that Malgo published two monthly magazines, Middernachtsroep and Nieuws uit Israël (News from Israel), in six languages, with a combined circulation of more than a hundred and fifty thousand. By then there were also more than a hundred and fifty cassettes of his sermons. From three hundred addresses to a hundred and fifty thousand, in less than thirty years.

"Do you pray?"

If you go only by the titles of his books, you think Malgo spoke only about the end times. Anyone who reads his sermons hears another voice as well. A shepherd, who addressed his readers formally, as "u."

He wrote about prayer. Real prayer, he taught, begins with God, goes through the believer and returns to God. It is a work of the Spirit. Being busy in God's Kingdom without praying he called empty and powerless. And then came the question, aimed straight at the reader: do you pray? He pointed to Jacob, who wrestled at Peniel, and to Moses, who pleaded for Israel. Then followed the call, in two words: "Pray earnestly!"

He wrote about silence. Silence before the LORD he found one of the most neglected sources of strength for a Christian. He cited Isaiah 30:15, the word that Luther made his motto in the storm of the Reformation, and he pointed to Jesus, who was silent when He was mocked and struck. Our greatest struggle, Malgo wrote, is that we no longer have to struggle. The victory has already been won at Golgotha.

He wrote about discouragement. A small flock, little strength, few fighters, many opponents, an evil time, heavier trials and a boundless mission field: seven reasons to lose heart, and in all seven he pointed to Christ. He summed it up like this: "To be discouraged means: not having looked far enough."

And he wrote about sanctification. He had once read an article on revival in a good Christian magazine in which the words conversion and sanctification did not appear. He found that a great lack. Forgiveness is a no to sin, he wrote, sanctification is a yes to Jesus. He told how the words of Psalm 50 had shaken him, and how the godlessness he saw among believers weighed on him deeply. He

mentioned the gossiping about brothers and sisters too. Praying for revival and skipping repentance, according to him, did not go together. "There is no middle way."

That is how Malgo sounded too. Strict, and full of Jesus.

Bolivia, Haifa and a hall in Dübendorf

In 1961 Malgo began an overseas mission. The first missionaries went to Bolivia. That became the oldest station, later with a boarding school and a school in Riberalta. Brazil followed in 1968, Uruguay in 1979, Guatemala in 1986 and Argentina in 1992. In 1968 a branch also arose in the United States, first in Ohio and since 1978 in South Carolina.

In 1969 a second pillar was added: Beth-Shalom, house of peace, an association that wanted to awaken love and understanding for Israel. Malgo became its chairman. In the autumn of 1975 the work opened a Christian-run hotel in Haifa, which is also called Beth-Shalom. Trips to Israel followed, and an annual prophetic congress in Jerusalem. The man who as a forced laborer had seen how Jews were taken away now brought groups of Christians to their land.

In Switzerland too the work found a fixed place. In 1973 the Mitternachtsruf congregation in Zurich was officially founded, with its own services, baptism and communion. It first met in the Volkshaus. On September 4, 1976, in Dübendorf, close to Zurich, the first spade went into the ground for a hall of its own, the Zionshalle (Zion Hall). Services began there at Easter 1978. Ten years later, in 1988, the work opened a retirement home there, Zion.

In those years an old face returned to his life. Gertrud Wasserzug, the wife of his former teacher, parted ways with the school in Beatenberg in 1968. After that she worked closely with Mitternachtsruf. The line from Beatenberg to Dübendorf continued.

In 1979 and in 1984 the Reformatorisch Dagblad called him "Dr. Wim Malgo." The title was an honorary doctorate in letters, from the American Christian College in Tulsa.

Israel as the center of the world

What did Wim Malgo believe? I want to present it as honestly as I can, without defending it and without tearing it down.

For Malgo, Israel was the center of the world, in God's history with humankind and on the map as well. Jerusalem was the heart. The founding of the State of Israel in 1948 he saw as the fulfillment of what the prophets had said. He argued for a greater Israel, with borders far beyond the borders of the time, and he was against giving back territory. The peace treaty between Israel and Egypt of 1979 he regarded with suspicion, as he also said that year in Amsterdam.

What he did not do is striking. He saw no task in mission among Jews. Israel, he believed, would first accept the antichrist as messiah. As early as 1968 a reader of the Dutch magazine In de Rechte Straat quoted him as saying: "The antichrist must be a Jew." Only after that, Malgo believed, would Israel look up to Him whom they have pierced and turn to Christ.

His theology was evangelical, with strong emphasis on a holy life. He believed that the church of Jesus would be taken up before the great tribulation, and that a thousand-year kingdom would follow. The Pentecostal teaching of baptism in the Spirit as a second step after conversion he rejected. The Reformatorisch Dagblad wrote in 1984 that his work placed itself "above confessions."

A year on the calendar

The great theme of his life was the near return of Jesus. He was certain that He was coming soon. Waiting for the LORD, he wrote once, compelled him personally to search the prophetic Word.

That is how he read the world news: as a row of signs. He wrote books with German titles such as *Israel, das Zeichen an der Wand* (Israel, the Sign on the Wall, 1974), *Der beschleunigte Aufmarsch Russlands nach Israel* (Russia's Accelerated March on Israel, 1980) and *Atomares Feuer in Nahost* (Atomic Fire in the Middle East, 1981). In Dutch, among others, *De totale controle 666* (Total Control 666, 1984) appeared. The titles show what he was occupied with. In the book of 1974 there is a sentence that sums up all his books: "Time is running out. Jesus is coming!"

He did not name a fixed date for the return. He did name years and signs that he thought were important. He said that the antichrist had been born in 1962. He referred to an alignment of the planets in the spring of 1982. He reckoned with a generation of forty years from 1967. Between 1968 and 1987 he repeatedly announced an attack by the Soviet Union on Israel. In 1986, the year of Chernobyl, a book appeared with the words *Das Ende ist da!* (The End Is Here!) on the title page, and he pointed to May 1988, when Israel turned forty.

That attack did not come, and the years passed. Malgo spoke later of obstacles and of a time of grace that God was still giving. The Reformatorisch Dagblad was critical of De totale controle 666 in 1984: little proof and much fantasy, thought the reviewer. But anyone who reads the review also sees how great his reach was then.

After his death his son Peter defended the work against that criticism. The work was imperfect, he admitted. But people had come to conversion through it.

How do you deal with an expectation that does not come true? I do not ask that question to condemn Malgo. I have expected things myself that turned out differently. The question applies to everyone who sincerely looks out for Jesus and opens the newspaper. And perhaps there is an even sharper question, which Malgo would ask us: are you still looking out?

A man like us

In 1991 a book appeared in German with the title *Wim Malgo: Ein Mensch wie wir*, a man like us. It was a year before his death. The title fits a man who all his life spoke about great prophetic lines, and who was also a father and husband, with a family that often had to do without him.

He fell ill, and the illness lasted a long time. For the explanation of prophecy he had thought of a successor: he expressly asked his co-worker Norbert Lieth to write a book about it.

Wim Malgo died on August 8, 1992, in Dübendorf, the place of his Zionshalle. He was sixty-nine. In one of his sermons, on Revelation 5, there is a sentence in the first person. He wrote about John, who weeps because no one can open the scroll, and about the Lamb who stands, slain and yet alive. And then he says it about himself: "Jesus lives, and with Him I do too."

Two months later, on October 6, 1992, Gertrud Wasserzug also died, the woman who with her husband had taught him to read prophecy in Beatenberg.

Norbert Lieth took over the explanation of prophecy. In 1993 his first book appeared, *Die Zeit ist nahe* (The Time Is Near). Malgo's son Peter wrote in the foreword about the passing on of the pen. Some of the twelve children remained active in the work.

The magazine on the doormat

The work that Malgo began in 1955 still exists. The magazine now appears in twelve languages, and there are branches in Europe, North and South America, Cameroon, India and South Korea. In Doorn, Middernachtsroep is still mailed out. In Haifa the guest house stands. In Dübendorf the congregation meets in the hall he had built.

You can disagree with much of his teaching. Many did, in his own time too. But an image remains of a boy from Maassluis who went to sea and found Jesus there, who as a forced laborer saw what was happening to the Jews, and who afterward never stopped speaking about Israel. He built his life around one sentence from a parable.

Somewhere in the Netherlands this month, a magazine will again land on a doormat, with the cry of midnight on the front.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on October 3, 1922, in Maassluis; believing family; into the merchant navy at fourteen; conversion as a sailor; forced labor in Austria during the war; Bible school in Beatenberg and the influence of Saturnin Wasserzug; ordination as a minister; marriage to Annie Malgo-Schouten and twelve children; founding of Mitternachtsruf in the autumn of 1955; magazine from 1956; broadcasts via Radio Tangier, Radio Monte Carlo and Radio Luxembourg; overseas mission from 1961; chairmanship of Beth-Shalom from 1969; the congregation in Zurich (1973); Zionshalle in Dübendorf (1978) and the retirement home (1988); Israel Day in Amsterdam in 1979; circulation of more than 150,000 in 1984; his views on Israel and the end times, as described by the Evangelische Informationsstelle (Relinfo) and the Reformatorisch Dagblad; death on August 8, 1992, after a longer illness; Norbert Lieth

as successor in the explanation of prophecy; the death of Gertrud Wasserzug on October 6, 1992, and her cooperation with Mitternachtsruf after 1968.

Only from his own testimony or organization: the memory of the persecution of the Jews (one sentence in *Der Mitternachtsruf*, the book his work published in 2017, second printing 2019); the friendship with the Wasserzugs; the work with evangelists in Austria and the tent evangelism with Samuel Furrer; the role of Willy Straumann; the inner urge to choose radio; the motto from Matthew 25; the responses and gifts from Europe and Africa; the first magazine with three hundred addresses; the letters from Siberia; the Youth for Christ congress in 1948; the founding of the branches in Germany and the Netherlands (Leiden) in 1957; the years of the foreign branches and mission fields (Relinfo confirms that the overseas work in South America and Guatemala became active); the first spade for the Zionshalle on September 4, 1976; the hotel in Haifa (1975); the present size of the work (twelve languages, according to the American branch). The thoughts on prayer, silence, discouragement and sanctification come from articles by Malgo that his work re-posted on its website between 2021 and 2025; when he wrote them is not stated. The sentence "Jesus lives, and with Him I do too" comes from such an article on Revelation 5 and is not a handed-down word from his deathbed.

From Relinfo, the Swiss Evangelische Informationsstelle: the sentence of Annie Malgo from the anniversary issue of 1975 (page 4); Malgo's statements about waiting for the LORD and about the news in the Bible; the years and signs he named; the defense by his son Peter (1997); that Malgo himself asked Norbert Lieth for a book. Relinfo is a critical source. After 1998 it noted that the magazine appeared in nine languages with a circulation of over 140,000, and that part of it was distributed free of charge, so that the number

of regular readers was probably lower. Relinfo names the book of 1986 *Ist das Ende aller Dinge gekommen?* (Has the End of All Things Come?), with *Das Ende ist da!* on the title page.

Where the sources differ or stand alone:

- His conversion. That he came to faith as a sailor is stated by Relinfo. A scene, ship, date or sermon is not handed down anywhere. Perhaps he told it in one of his books or on one of his cassettes; I have not found it.
- Leiden. According to the German Wikipedia he grew up in Leiden. I have found no other source for that.
- 1939 and 1942. According to Wikipedia he broke off his training as a sailor in 1939 and the forced labor began in 1942. Both years appear nowhere else.
- Beatenberg. His own work gives 1946 as the starting year. Relinfo speaks of 1947 to 1949, and the American branch writes that Wim and Annie Malgo arrived there in 1947. The story follows 1947. According to Wikipedia he got to know his wife at the school itself. I cannot say which version is right.
- The tent years. Relinfo says only that he was ordained as a minister and worked with various evangelistic works, without names and places. The street work and the split of seven sons and five daughters appear only in Wikipedia.
- The first broadcast. His own German history and Relinfo name Radio Tangier (Relinfo: April 1956). According to the American branch the first broadcast was in 1955 on Radio Monte Carlo, on Thursday evening at 11:35 p.m. The story follows the first reading.
- Bern or Zurich. The American branch writes that the work moved from Bern to Zurich in 1962. Relinfo says it was founded in Zurich in 1955. Perhaps the administrative work began in Bern first. The sources do not explain it.

- The Israel Day. The Reformatorisch Dagblad of September 4, 1979, speaks of Saturday; that was the end of August or the beginning of September.
- The honorary doctorate from Tulsa appears only in Wikipedia. Where the title came from, the Reformatorisch Dagblad does not say.
- Dübendorf as the place of death appears only in Wikipedia. An in memoriam in a Dutch newspaper I have not found.
- What the cooperation with Gertrud Wasserzug looked like, the sources do not say.

Interpretation: whether Malgo's interpretation of prophecy was correct is a question of faith and Bible interpretation. This chapter describes what he taught and does not say who is right.

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Arnol Kox: the man who cried out in the shopping street

It was Sunday, July 5, 2020, and in the inner city of Eindhoven a man in a wheelchair could hardly move forward. Every few yards someone stopped him. People wanted to have their picture taken with him. They applauded him. Some wept. A woman who stood clapping called out that he was the man of Eindhoven.

The man in the wheelchair had a long beard and only one leg. His voice was weaker than before, but he still preached. With men it is manly, he said, with women it is womanly, and with the Lord it is lordly. (In Dutch it rhymes: mannelijk, vrouwelijk, heerlijk.)

Two days earlier he had been discharged from the hospital. The doctors could do nothing more for him. This was his last round.

It was the same city that had laughed at him for years. Anyone who shopped in the center of Eindhoven at any time between about 1972 and 2020 probably heard him before they saw him. A man with a long beard, usually dressed in white, who called across the street with a voice like a ship's horn. No one is immortal! Turn to God, He will save you! Eternal life!

He often stood across from the V&D department store, later on the 18 Septemberplein and near the station. People called him the Schreeuwjezus, the Screaming Jesus. Shopkeepers went to court to get rid of him. Police officers wrote him fines. And when he died, ten days after that last round, Mayor John Jorritsma wrote that a striking icon of the city had passed away. Not everyone had been enthusiastic about him, he added. But however you think about him: he too is Eindhoven.

His name was Arnol Kox. He was no minister, no priest, no evangelist with an organization behind him. He was a man who, after an accident, started reading a book, and who afterward could not keep his mouth shut for more than forty years.

He perhaps does not fit the lineup you would expect in a book about men and women of God. For that very reason he is here.

Bergeijk

Arnol Kox was born on October 11, 1952, in Bergeijk, a village in the Kempen, south of Eindhoven. Officially his name was Arnold. He grew up in the Catholic Brabant of the fifties and sixties, when the church still stood in the middle of the village and the bells divided up the day. He had sisters.

There is one story about the boy Arnol. His wife told it later: the story goes that he would fly into the church whenever he heard a church bell. It is a family story, the kind you tell afterward. But it does fit the man he became.

As a boy he briefly worked as a gardener and as an electrician. Little is known about the rest of his youth. He himself never said much about it.

Nine months

When he was sixteen, he had a serious accident on his moped. He broke the base of his skull, suffered brain injury and broke his leg. He lay in the hospital for nine months.

Nine months is long for a boy of sixteen. Your friends go on with their lives, and you lie in a bed and look at the ceiling. He said himself later that in those nine months he thought a lot about the meaning of life.

He began to read the Bible. And more happened. In that hospital he saw Jesus, he told it: he had visions of Him. The boy who asked questions about the meaning of life did not get an argument back. He got a Person.

What exactly he read and what exactly he saw, he never wrote down. What it did to him could be heard for forty years. He decided that he would go out on the street and proclaim the love of Jesus.

After the accident he could no longer do ordinary work. For a time he worked at Ergon, the sheltered workshop. The writer of his in memoriam in the Katholiek Nieuwsblad (a Dutch Catholic weekly) saw another side to it later: because he could no longer work, he could give himself completely to his calling. His real work was the street.

Cola in front of the V&D

He was nineteen when he started. At first he stood there only on Saturdays. Later he came every day.

In those first years he did not stand entirely alone. Every week he went to a prayer group at someone's home. The man at whose house the group met wrote later that the young Arnol was eager to learn

and open to constructive criticism. That would not stay so. Later he went his own way and no longer listened to criticism.

His best-known story takes place in front of the door of the V&D on the Vrijstraat. There, he told it, he met Jesus. They drank cola together and shared an uienkruier (a Dutch snack of bread with onions).

You may think what you like about that. I notice that I cannot laugh at it. The Jesus of the Gospels ate fish by the lake with men who had let Him down. He broke bread in Emmaus. That He would look up a Brabant man with brain injury at a department store and share with him what there is, fits Him better than it fits our respectability.

After that meeting Arnol knew what his task was: to proclaim the Word, with his own slogans. After that, he said himself, he never did anything else.

No one is immortal

You may wonder what was going on in a young man who decides to stand in a shopping street and call out to people. You do not usually learn that at catechism class. Most Christians in the Netherlands grow up with the idea that faith is something personal, something for home and for church. You share it when someone asks, and preferably modestly.

Arnol Kox did it differently. He called out. His day had a fixed rhythm: at eleven o'clock he left the house, and until about half past five he stood in the city. On the corner of the Vrijstraat and the Rechtestraat, on the Markt, in front of the V&D. At first standing, later sitting, with handwritten signs full of sayings around him. He spoke to people who walked past him with bags full of groceries. He repeated the same message again and again, in short sentences. No one is immortal. Turn to God. God will save you. Do you want

to live now, or do you want to live after your death? Sometimes he called out the same sentence for days in a row: life is short, eternity is long.

It is an old way of preaching. John the Baptist did it in the wilderness: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!* (Matthew 3:2). The prophets of Israel did it in the squares of Jerusalem. In the Middle Ages, mendicant friars traveled through the cities. In the Netherlands too there have always been street preachers, from the Salvation Army to evangelists with a megaphone. But few have kept it up as long and as loudly as Arnol Kox.

He had humor too. He played with words and sang songs, because he wanted people to be glad because of it. At the end of a sermon that one sentence liked to come: with men it is manly, with women womanly, and with the Lord it is lordly. Or this one: "In heaven it is always high." And about death he had an argument that is airtight. When you have died, you cannot die anymore. And whoever cannot die anymore is immortal.

When he turned sixty-five, a big 65 hung in front of his window and the cards lay on the table. He asked the reporter whether he knew what had happened to him that morning. "I have been given a new day, one I have never had before."

Beneath all that calling out was a quieter life. Every Sunday he went to church. Around his neck he wore a rosary, even at night. With it he prayed every day, always the same short prayer: "Jesus, Mary, I love You, save souls." With every bead, so says the young man from Eindhoven who wrote a book about him, he had the feeling that a soul had been saved. In fact everything in his life was marked by faith.

You did not see that as you walked past him with your bags. You heard a man shouting. You did not see that every day he prayed for their salvation.

Before the judge

Not everyone could appreciate it. For the shopkeepers in the area he was a source of nuisance, especially because he kept repeating the same texts. In 2008 shopkeepers went to court to have his loud sermons banned. He was acquitted. Rightly, of course, he thought. He had only expressed his concern about people who were being robbed of their freedom en masse, and conversion to Jesus was the only solution. "You may not fine such a person."

In 2009 the court of appeal in Den Bosch ruled that he could be fined one hundred and fifty euros if he caused unnecessary noise nuisance. He promised not to preach longer than twenty minutes in one place. An earlier fine he refused to pay. He appealed to freedom of religion.

The railways also tried to keep him out of the station hall. In October 2017 the subdistrict court acquitted him of that too, on the day before his sixty-fifth birthday. They could congratulate him twice, he said. On his birthday he simply went by taxi bus to the 18 Septemberplein. He did not retire. He had noticed, he said with one of his puns, that the demon keeps on demonizing (in Dutch, "demon" and "demonteren" play on each other), and he wanted to keep warning people.

And then there were the pigeons. Arnol Kox fed the pigeons in the center of the city. That was not allowed. He considered it a divine assignment. He got fines, and in the end the judge banned it for a year. That too he called an infringement of his freedom of religion. He also got fines for leaving litter behind. The deputy mayor of

Eindhoven summed it up years later: "He was a bird of paradise and certainly no saint."

I do not tell this to make fun of him. He was a headstrong person, who did not let himself be told what to do. His wife put it like this later: he did not blow with the wind and was convinced of himself. The man from the prayer group wrote that his lack of embarrassment was his weakness and his strength. It made him persevere for more than forty years. It also made him sometimes clash with everyone.

Praying for those who cursed him

How did he respond to the mockery? He was laughed at a lot, and he was regularly insulted, especially in front of the V&D. They called him village idiot and Schreeuwjezus. He did not let it get to him.

That last name he wore as a title of honor. And for the people who insulted him, he would pray. When someone treated him with hostility or attacked him, he forgave, with the words of Jesus on the cross: *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do* (Luke 23:34).

It sounds easy and it is hard. Jesus said: *love your enemies, bless those who curse you* (Matthew 5:44). I know many Christians, myself included, who already struggle with a critical remark about their work. Arnol Kox had mockery poured over him daily, and he kept standing.

There were also people who saw him differently. Young people often struck up a conversation with him. Whoever agreed with his message received a blessing: he laid his hand on your head and whispered something in your ear. A man who had come to the Netherlands as a newcomer remembered that Arnol was the first

to welcome him here. And once someone heard a passerby say to his partner: "That madman isn't so mad after all..."

After his death a young girl told what he had been to her. "I could always tell him my story." He gave, she said, such positive energy to the city and to her. For her he was no joke. He was someone who was always there.

"Do you want to walk again?"

Regularly he prayed for people in the middle of the street, with his hands on them.

In 1996, at the Bijenkorf, he met a woman in a wheelchair. He asked her whether she wanted to walk again. Then he laid hands on her and prayed for her.

When the woman got home, the pain was gone. She could walk.

The story made the national news, and so the shouting man from Eindhoven became known throughout the Netherlands. Almost thirty years later the woman told it herself once more, for the book that was written about him. In Eindhoven it is also passed on more briefly: an hour after the prayer she walked home.

The man from the prayer group, too, wrote after Arnol's death about a woman who said that his prayer had led to her physical healing.

I tell it as it was told. Arnol himself kept calling out what he had always called out: that no one is immortal, and that God saves.

"And then me"

In the Paterskerk in Eindhoven he got to know a German teacher from Kerkrade. In 2000 they married.

"I wanted to take care of him," she said. And she knew what she was getting into. When they married, she told later, she knew that Jesus came first for him. Then came Mother Mary. And then her.

That sentence says something about his faith too. Arnol Kox was Roman Catholic, with a great love for Mary. Many readers of this book come from Protestant churches, and will have questions about that. That is allowed. But the core of what he called out was not Mary. It was Jesus, and the call to turn to God before it is too late.

His wife took care of him for twenty years. She took him to the city, picked him up, arranged his birthdays and later sat at his hospital bed. She called him a quiet person, who took things as they were. He let her surprise him. She organized all sorts of things, he said on his sixty-fifth birthday, and he did not have to worry about it.

A leg, a heart and the blood

From 2010 his health went downhill. Around that time one of his legs had to be amputated. His wife joked about it. At least he could never again get out of bed on the wrong foot. For a time he rode a mobility scooter, until the municipality asked for it back because it would not be safe in traffic. After that he used the wheelchair.

On a Friday in April 2013, on the Markt in Eindhoven, he had a heart attack, in his wheelchair. He was resuscitated on the spot. His condition was critical. A few days later he lay in the Catharina Hospital doing a jigsaw puzzle, and he and his wife were using the local broadcaster to search for the people who had saved his life. They wanted to thank them.

At the beginning of 2019 the heart came back. Pressure on the chest, clogged vessels, open-heart surgery with four bypasses. For weeks it was quiet in the inner city. At home he had to learn to calm down,

he said, and he found that the hardest part. He hoped it would turn out well. "God will not let me down, I love Him too much for that."

He also lost his godchild. And in the summer of 2019 he was told that his bone marrow was making almost no blood cells anymore. Later it turned out to be leukemia. Blood transfusions and chemotherapy followed. After the first course he was back in his wheelchair in the city, with a voice much softer than before. Then came the fever. It became so serious that his sisters were called to his bedside.

He pulled through, and he asked for an appelflap (a Dutch apple pastry).

In the hospital he first lay in a room with three women, with whom he joked a lot. Growing older when you are young is a lot of fun, he told a reporter, but growing older when you are old feels less good. He thought the end of his earthly existence was approaching. But he held on to the fact that a new life would then begin for him, because he would enter paradise. And then: "But I am not giving up yet."

In October, a week after his sixty-seventh birthday, he received eighty cards in the hospital from listeners and viewers of the regional broadcaster. On this earth he had seen enough, he said then. And after that: "I will come back on a new earth." Everything comes to an end, he also said, but he hoped it would be a long time before an end came for him to Eindhoven.

His wife watched it with amazement. The strength he drew from his faith, she said, was enormous. He did not seem to suffer. His calm and cheerfulness made the family calm too. Physically he went further and further downhill. But the spirit had the upper hand, she said, and spiritually he was very strong.

Later he told that he had had near-death experiences, and that in them he had seen Jesus. His illness he called a demon that kept attacking him.

One thing I want to show you here. This man had called out to complete strangers for forty years that no one is immortal. Now it was his own turn. And he turned out to believe it.

Three hours a day

From November 2019 he was to be found in the city again. His wife took him by car to the center every day. She did not allow him to stay longer than three hours. After such a day he was exhausted. But it gave him strength, she said. He preached from his wheelchair, less loudly than before, but still. And he looked at the people who walked past him. "Everyone is always in a hurry."

Even when in the spring of 2020 the coronavirus emptied the streets, he carried on. For a few listeners it was worth the trouble too, he thought. Corona belonged to what is temporary and perishable. In his last week on the street he said: "Believing the truth is much better than believing the lie."

A councilman of Eindhoven, Yassin Torunglu, started a card campaign for him. About two hundred and fifty came, from all over the country.

At the beginning of July 2020 he was discharged from the hospital. And so came that Sunday, July 5, with which this chapter began. The round through the inner city, the photos, the applause, the tears. A man who had known him for a long time said it hurt him to see him there for the last time. A young man felt it was an honor to be there. Arnol himself stayed calm. "It is painful to say goodbye but I have beautiful prospects."

His task was finished, he said. Now he had to stop.

Ten days later, on Wednesday, July 15, 2020, he died in the Catharina Hospital in Eindhoven. He was sixty-seven.

Farewell

On Saturday afternoon, July 18, he lay in state in a white coffin in the funeral hall of the Sint Catharinakerkhof in Eindhoven. He and his wife had prepared the farewell together down to the details. Around the coffin stood candles and caricatures that people had made of him. On the wall hung his pamphlets. His wife sat beside the coffin and talked with whoever came. Visitors were asked to make a gift to street pastoral care. Corona rules applied, and a few dozen visitors came.

The funeral was on Wednesday in the Sint-Trudokerk in Strijp, the district where he lived. He was buried in the churchyard behind that church.

The Brabant writer Wim Daniëls wrote a poem. "I can picture it. Arnol embracing Jesus." And calling out: I knew it, I knew it.

Eindhoven could not quite let him go. People hung up street signs with his name on them, and they were taken down again. In July 2022 the Stationsplein (the station square) got a sign with the name Arnol Kox Plein, a playful action by a Brabant heritage foundation. A beer with his name appeared. And on Good Friday 2026, close to the churchyard, between the Strijpsestraat and the Sint Severusstraat, a path was named after him: the Arnol Koxpad. A woman from the neighborhood had thought of it. Along the path stand colored signs with his sayings, some in his own handwriting. It is not an official street name. In Eindhoven a street may only be named after someone ten years after his death. But the neighborhood did not want to wait.

The foolishness of preaching

What are you supposed to do with such a life? You can ask yourself whether Arnol Kox belongs in this book. He was no theologian, no founder, no leader. We know little about his teaching. His way of preaching put many people off. He was headstrong and got fines. That must be said too.

And yet. For more than forty years, every day, he did what most Christians never dare. He said out loud that life comes to an end and that God saves. He did it in the rain and the cold, with one leg and later with leukemia. What he got back for it was mostly mockery and fines. Paul wrote: *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God* (1 Corinthians 1:18). And further on: *it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe* (1 Corinthians 1:21).

How many people came to faith through his calling out, no one knows. It is not registered anywhere. The man who recorded his life story says that some came to faith through him and that others dropped out precisely because of him. Perhaps there was also a student who, years later, at a deathbed or in a crisis, suddenly heard that voice again: no one is immortal.

I do not think you have to imitate Arnol Kox. Few are called to stand shouting in a shopping street. But you can ask yourself what his life says about yours. He was not afraid to look foolish. He persevered when it hurt. And he saw the hurry of the people around him, and wanted them to stand still for a moment.

The same young man from Eindhoven tried it himself once after his death, in the Vrijstraat, with a stack of flyers. After half an hour he gave up.

Everyone is always in a hurry, he said. On a path in Strijp there is now a colored sign with his question, for whoever stops for a moment. Do you want to live now, or do you want to live after your death?

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth in Bergeijk on October 11, 1952; the moped accident at sixteen and the long hospital stay; about forty years of street preaching in Eindhoven; the nickname Schreeuwjezus; the court cases of 2008, 2009 (fine of 150 euros for unnecessary noise nuisance, court of appeal in Den Bosch) and October 2017 (acquittal by the subdistrict court); the fines and the ban around feeding pigeons; the marriage in 2000 to a German teacher from Kerkrade; his heart attack in 2013, the bone marrow disease (myelodysplastic syndrome) and the leukemia from 2019; his last round on July 5, 2020; his death on July 15, 2020, in Eindhoven; the farewell on July 18 and his burial at the Sint-Trudokerk; the Arnol Koxpad (2026).

Only from own testimony or from his wife: that in the hospital he began to read the Bible and there decided to go and preach; that after his nineteenth year he did nothing else; that he prayed for those who insulted him and forgave them; the story about the church bells in his youth (whether it was so, I do not know); his statements about his dying; that on the edge of death he saw Jesus (told by himself in 2020, as reported by Revive).

From the book about him, as the author retells it in interviews: Sander Perquin wrote *Arnol Kox. Een Eindhovens icoon* (Arnol Kox, an Eindhoven Icon, 2024/2025) and spoke for it with the widow, the two oldest sisters, friends and the woman of the healing. I have not had the book itself in my hands. From two interviews with the author come: the visions of Jesus in the hospital; the meeting with

Jesus in front of the V&D, with cola and an uienkruier; that at first he preached only on Saturdays; the rosary and the daily prayer; the blessing with the hand on the head; the newcomer he welcomed; the fixed places in the city. These are stories of Kox himself and of the people around him. There is no independent confirmation, and with visions there cannot be.

The healing of 1996: told by the woman herself (via Perquin, in Groot Eindhoven and the Katholiek Nieuwsblad): at the Bijenkorf, after laying on of hands and prayer; at home the pain was gone and she could walk. According to both papers it was national news at the time; I have not found a report from 1996 itself. The heritage foundation Pacte des Cygnes tells it as tradition and says that she walked home an hour later. The in memoriam in the Katholiek Nieuwsblad also mentions a woman who said that his prayer had led to her physical healing. Whether that is the same woman is not stated. A medical confirmation is not known to me.

Where the sources differ or stand alone:

- How long he preached. He began at nineteen (NOS, Omroep Brabant, Katholiek Nieuwsblad) or around twenty (Perquin), so around 1972. The press speaks of "almost forty," "at least forty" or "more than forty" years; from 1972 to 2020 is forty-eight years.
- The year of the amputation: around 2009 or 2010. It is stated nowhere exactly.
- The heart operation. The reports at his death write that he recovered after the heart attack of 2013 following an open-heart operation. Omroep Brabant reported in January 2019 on an operation with four bypasses shortly before, and in 2013 on an angioplasty. The story follows the reports from the years themselves.

- October 2019. One report names a suspicion of acute leukemia, another of acute rheumatism.
- The statement about the hurry. In the first version of this chapter it stood at the last round. The source is the report of November 2019, which quotes an earlier interview. It now stands there.
- The meeting in front of the V&D. When it was, is not stated.
- The loss of his godchild appears in one report, without a year.
- The card campaign of the councilman (about 250 cards) is mentioned by the NOS and Studio040; the eighty cards of October 2019 came via Omroep Brabant.
- The statement of his wife that he did not blow with the wind and was convinced of himself I did not find again in an opened source in this rewrite. It stands here as in the first version of this chapter.
- The date of the funeral: "Wednesday at eleven o'clock" according to Omroep Brabant, so in all probability July 22, 2020.

Unconfirmed: details about his youth, his upbringing and the precise course of his conversion. What he read and saw in the hospital he did not write down in detail, and I know of no source that describes it accurately. This chapter relies mostly on reports from the regional and national press.

Interpretation: Kox was for some a hero of the faith, for others a colorful fool or a nuisance. The municipality of Eindhoven and many residents have, after his death, honored mostly his faithfulness and his individuality. The comparison with Jesus by the lake and in Emmaus is mine.

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Afterword

A Walloon who threw his confession of faith over a castle wall. A doctor of theology who had himself baptized in a ditch in Drenthe. A miller's son from Limburg with blessing hands in Dublin. A colporteur and his wife with a village full of orphans. A farmer who opened his door. An art expert who began reading the Bible in a camp. A sailor who cried at midnight. A man who cried out in the shopping street.

They had little in common. One wrote a confession of faith that is still used in churches every week, another left no book behind. One was declared a saint by his church, another was deposed by his church. With a few of them, their story chafes. I have tried not to polish that away.

What they shared was that they kept walking. Even when it cost them their office, their freedom or their life.

With this fourth volume, this series holds thirty-two lives. There are many more. Perhaps you can write a next chapter, even if only with your own life.

let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1)