GOD'S GENERALS IN THE NETHERLANDS

VOLUME 5

Follow Their Faith

Eight Dutch men and women of God, from Willem Teellinck to Leendert Overduin

Whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.

Hebrews 13:7

WIM KAMPHORST

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Follow Their Faith. God's generals in the Netherlands, volume 5

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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: Remember Your Leaders

The name of this series comes from the letter to the Hebrews. The writer says: "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Hebrews 13:7).

This is the fifth volume. I still 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 power and also their weak sides. The people in this book are all Dutch. They have all died. And each in their own way, they showed what it means to take God seriously.

Four Centuries

We begin with Willem Teellinck, a young lawyer from Zierikzee who around 1604, in an English town, saw ordinary families praying together. He became one of the fathers of what was later called the Nadere Reformatie (the Further Reformation, a Dutch movement for deeper personal godliness). Then we go to Nijkerk in 1749, where people began to weep and tremble after a sermon by Reverend Gerardus Kuypers. What happened there is still debated.

In Limburg we follow Catharina Daemen, a woman who arrived in Heythuysen in 1825 at the home of a priest who had been expecting two sisters. She became the founder of a congregation that worked as far away as America. In Amsterdam, Jan de Liefde stands on a bridge in the Jordaan, a working-class district, in 1849. He no longer had a church and began in the front room of a fishwife.

Jacqueline van der Waals was a poet and the daughter of a famous physicist. All her life she struggled honestly with doubt and faith. Nicolette Bruining was one of the first women to study theology in the Netherlands. She preached over the radio and during the war helped Jewish students go into hiding.

Piet van der Woude was a chemist in London and in 1932 read a verse that called him back to his own country. He started a Pentecostal congregation in Rotterdam. And Leendert Overduin was the minister of a small congregation in Enschede. With his sisters he helped hundreds of Jews go into hiding. After the war he stood up for the children of NSB members (members of the Dutch Nazi party).

Different Churches

In this volume too, the people come from very different churches. Reformed, Catholic, Mennonite and free evangelical, liberal Protestant and Pentecostal. I do not agree with everyone in this book about everything. Where that is so, I say it honestly. But I have tried to do justice to each of them, and to show what God did through them.

Facts First

As in the earlier volumes, I stick to the facts. Of some people in this book much is known, of others little. I say each time what is certain,

what comes only from someone's own words and what cannot be checked. Where sources contradict each other, I show it.

After each chapter there is a short overview of what is certain and what is told, and a list of the sources I used.

People about whom I already wrote a whole chapter in other books appear here only briefly.

Willem Teellinck: The Lawyer Who Learned to Pray in Banbury

In the English market town of Banbury, the day began with prayer in every house. Then the household read a chapter from the Bible and talked it through thoroughly. Meals began and ended with a passage of Scripture and prayer. After the meal they sang a psalm, and then everyone went back to work. On Saturday afternoons the servants, the children, and anyone who had never learned to read gathered for instruction in the faith. On Sunday the town was quiet. In all of Banbury, a young guest from Zeeland wrote later, no quarreling or fighting could be heard or seen on that day.

That guest was Willem Teellinck. He was twenty-five, a doctor of law, the son of a mayor of Zierikzee. For eight or nine months he lodged with a Puritan family. He saw people who dealt honestly, gave alms, and visited and comforted the sick. When someone in the house fell ill, he received every possible care.

What he saw there never let him go. Teellinck believed that the Lord converted him in England. He left the law behind and became a pastor, first for seven years in a rough village on Schouwen, then for sixteen years in Middelburg. He wrote dozens of books. Later gen-

erations called him the father of the Nadere Reformatie, the Dutch "Further Reformation," a movement that wanted the Reformation to reach into the family, the workplace, and the heart.

It began in a wealthy house in Zierikzee.

A Mayor's Son on the Oosterschelde

Willem Teellinck was born in Zierikzee on January 4, 1579. He was the youngest of eight children. His father, Joost Teellinck, had been mayor of the town and held high administrative offices in Zeeland and in the young Republic. His mother was named Johanna de Jonge. She was often ill during Willem's youth.

It was a Calvinist family, on the side of Orange. These were the years of the Revolt against Spain. In Zeeland, to be Reformed was to have chosen one's faith in the middle of a war.

Willem went to the Latin school in his hometown. At home he saw an example in his older brother Ewoud. Willem later said of him that he had learned from God to despise the world, however sweetly it smiled. Of his sisters Agatha and Johanna he wrote that they were virtuous and godly. So it is told in a devotional biography, *Hollandse geloofshelden* ("Dutch Heroes of the Faith").

In 1594 his father died. Willem was fifteen.

His future seemed settled. Sons of regent families studied law, because that was the road to public office. His brothers Eeuwoud, Johannes, and Cornelis were also destined for the law. Willem went the same way, though from his earliest years he felt drawn to theology.

Law in Three Countries

Around 1599 or 1600, Willem enrolled at St Mary's College in St Andrews, Scotland. For seven years he traveled and studied in France, Scotland, and England. On September 28, 1603, he received his doctorate in law at the University of Poitiers, as licentiate and doctor of both laws.

He was twenty-four and had everything a young Zeeland regent needed: a name, a title, a network. Something kept gnawing at him. Herman Westerink, who studied his work in depth, writes that it was clear early on that Willem would rather study theology. In England that longing grew stronger.

So what happened in Banbury fell on ground that was already prepared.

Eight or Nine Months in a House Full of Prayer

After his doctorate, Teellinck crossed over to England. We know the story of his stay in Banbury in his own words. He wrote it down in the preface to his *Huys-Boek* ("House Book"), which appeared in Middelburg in 1639, ten years after his death. He lived there with the family for eight or nine months.

Banbury was a center of the Puritans, English Protestants who held that the Reformation in their country had stalled halfway. According to Westerink, Teellinck got to know leaders there such as Arthur Hildersham and William Whately. He saw how they turned their faith into an ordered, practical life. Scholars call this the *praxis pietatis*, the practice of godliness.

In the preface to the *Huys-Boek*, Teellinck describes such a day almost hour by hour. In the morning all the members of the household, servants included, got ready early for work. First they prayed

and studied a chapter of the Bible, so that their labor would be dedicated to God. Around noon the whole household came together, young and old. They read a chapter, prayed for a blessing on the meal, and talked about what they had read, sometimes using questions that everyone had prepared the day before. Each answered according to the gifts he had. Then they sang a psalm and went back to work. In the evening, before and during supper, it was repeated. At bedtime each person examined his day in silence before God and committed himself again into His hands.

If there was a sermon on a weekday, the family went and listened attentively. On Sunday the family read the Bible together and prayed before the service, and afterward each listened knowing that they would be asked about it at home. Some took notes. In the evening they discussed the sermon with one another. Servants and children were questioned about what they had remembered, and whatever concerned the family itself became a resolution to change. If someone in the household did something wrong, in his work, or through unkindness or immodesty, he was spoken to honestly. The family did not rest until repentance was evident. If someone became sick or sad, there was loving attention, and at the same time the house asked itself what there might be to confess.

So it went in every season, the whole eight or nine months he was there. On walks they often brought along someone who could explain a Bible chapter or psalm well. Questions from that week's reading they put to people who understood such things, usually pastors. Teellinck draws a conclusion from this in his preface: a holy life does not require a monastery. A believer can serve God in his ordinary calling, and whoever withdraws is avoiding his duties.

What touched him happened at the table and in the workshop. If anyone in the house had a question about a passage of Scripture, he went to someone who knew, usually a pastor. On special occasions

they humbled themselves before the Lord with fasting and prayer. The singing of psalms rang through all of Banbury, especially on Sunday. Whoever disturbed the peace on that day was reprimanded and, if necessary, silenced by the authorities.

Teellinck also wrote down what convinced him most. Their holy life brought even their fiercest opponents to the realization that their faith was sincere. In their trade and work he saw faith working powerfully through love.

What would your house look like if a guest lived in it for nine months? Teellinck had spent years at universities. What turned him around was a family he saw living up close.

A Day of Fasting and Prayer

In England Teellinck gave his life to God. That is how he saw it himself: the Lord had converted him there. The historian W.J. op 't Hof speaks of a profound conversion and a strong sense of calling. His zeal for a life of godliness, writes Joel Beeke, would never leave him again.

Now the question lay on the table of what to do with his law degree. He consulted English theologians. Then he held a day of fasting and prayer with his friends, because in a choice of this size he wanted to know what the Lord wanted. According to the biography in *Hollandse geloofshelden*, during such a day of prayer with John Dod and Arthur Hildersham he experienced what it means to work out his salvation with fear and trembling. By the end of that day his decision was firm: he would study theology.

The story fits what he had seen in Banbury. There people fasted and prayed together when something great was at stake. Later, in *Den Christelijcken Leytsman* ("The Christian Guide"), he himself argued

for establishing such days in his own country. That biography tells us that on that day the Lord opened Willem's heart.

In England he also met his wife: Martha Greendon, a young Puritan woman from Derby. In Dutch documents she is called Martha Grijns. On September 26, 1604, they registered their intention to marry, the official announcement of a wedding, known in Dutch as *ondertrouw*. They married in Zierikzee, before he went to Leiden.

Leiden in a Tense Time

After England and his marriage, Teellinck went to Leiden. He studied theology there under Lucas Trelcatius, Franciscus Gomarus, and Jacobus Arminius. His studies were short, about two years.

It was an unsettled place. Between Gomarus and Arminius a conflict was growing over God's election, one that would later divide the whole Republic. Teellinck felt most akin to Trelcatius and tried to stay out of the fight. Above all he wanted to know how a person lives with God.

A few overzealous critics later accused him of caring everything for life and nothing for doctrine. His orthodoxy was never otherwise in question.

"The Most Reckless of the Whole Island"

On October 4, 1606, Teellinck was called as pastor of the combined congregations of Burgh and Haamstede, on Schouwen, not far from his hometown. That year his son Maximiliaan was also born. The biography tells us that in time the villagers changed: even swearers became prayers, though hostility remained too.

The church records from those years speak of drunkenness, desecration of the Sunday, brawls, and visits to the fair. The doctor of

law from a regent family now stood in the pulpit of a village that had little desire for a stricter life.

In 1608, together with the Zierikzee pastor Udemans, he drew up a document to promote Sunday observance in Zierikzee. One scholar therefore calls 1608 the birth year of the Nadere Reformatie.

He preached with the fierceness of the English Puritans. Sometimes he spoke bluntly, without fancy language and without little anecdotes. He followed the simple preaching method of William Perkins. He was no great orator, writes Beeke. But his sermons hit home.

He stayed seven years. Several people came to faith. His son Maximiliaan wrote later that his father's work there had been blessed. The villagers had changed, he wrote, from "the most reckless of the whole island" into the most zealous and godly. A son looks at his father with love, and the historian H. Uil found documents in the archives that qualify that picture. In those years the States of Zeeland found it necessary to intervene, because Teellinck himself complained so strongly about the rough life in the countryside.

In Haamstede he also began to write. In 1608 his first book appeared, *Philopatris*, under the pseudonym Theophilus Philopatris. In it he asked the government for strict laws against public sins. He also translated a book by Perkins into Dutch.

In 1610 he traveled back to England. He visited his Puritan friends, among them Thomas Taylor, John Dod, and Arthur Hildersham, and preached in London to a congregation of Dutch people.

To The Hague, 1612

Teellinck wanted to stay out of the church conflict, but he could not. In 1612 the States of Zeeland sent him, together with Faukelius, to the States General. They were to press for a national synod.

The conflict from the Leiden lecture halls had by then become a national conflict. That synod did take place, in Dordrecht, in 1618 and 1619. Westerink writes that Teellinck had great hopes of a reformation of the whole society especially in the years afterward. That hope later grew smaller, under the criticism he received.

Four Churches Too Small

First he had to say goodbye. In the spring of 1613, in Haamstede, his little son Johannes died, shortly after birth, according to the same biography.

On August 10, 1613, Teellinck was called to Middelburg. In November he was installed. His text for the occasion was 2 Corinthians 5:14, that the love of Christ compels us. He would stay there until his death.

Middelburg was a rich trading city with six Reformed churches: four Dutch, one English, and one French. His colleagues included Faukelius, Walaeus, and Gomarus. His motto was: put your Christianity into practice. Teellinck preached, visited his church members at home, and faithfully gave catechism instruction. His godliness, his self-denial, and his practical sermons drew people. Joel Beeke and Kuivenhoven speak of a small revival.

Teellinck described it himself, in a long letter to his congregation that he later published as *Noodwendigh vertoogh* ("A Necessary Remonstrance"). Every Sunday they came in great numbers, he wrote, so many that the four church buildings could not hold everyone. Many families he called little churches. There was every reason to thank the Lord for it.

After the capture of the Spanish silver fleet, he preached on 1 Timothy 6:17-19, on the riches of this world against the true riches in

Christ. His fierceness did not please everyone. Critics took offense that he called God the first tailor.

Gisbertus Voetius, later the great theologian of Utrecht, heard him preach two or three times. He wrote later that since that time it had been his heart's desire that he and all the pastors of the land could preach like that, with that form and that power.

Teellinck was not content. Around him he saw indifference, people who came to church and at home lived as though there were no God. Beeke speaks of the constant pain he carried in his heart over this. That pain drove him to seek change in every area of life, with word and pen.

At home he built the same order as in Banbury. There was prayer at breakfast, the father gave daily catechism instruction, and the family kept a day of fasting and prayer once or twice a year. Every week he invited some of the godliest members of the congregation for a gathering, and at least once a week poor believers sat at his table. A houseguest was expected to take part in the family devotions, and idle talk was not tolerated. The household work was done as much as possible on Friday, so that everyone, the maids too, could prepare for Sunday on Saturday. According to the biography, he spent an hour every day talking with his children about the one thing needful.

In Middelburg his family grew. In choosing schools, godliness weighed heaviest for him. According to Op 't Hof, he did not send his children to the Latin school in Middelburg but to the one in Rotterdam. The brothers Jacob and Isaac Beeckman taught there, and he liked the spiritual climate. Isaac Beeckman saw Teellinck as his spiritual guide. For university he chose Franeker, because of the Puritan professor William Ames. Maximiliaan and Justus enrolled there in 1624.

Three of his sons, Maximiliaan, Theodorus, and Johannes, became pastors. An earlier son Johannes had died young. His daughter Johanna married Petrus Gribius in 1633, pastor of the English congregation in 's-Hertogenbosch, and his daughter Maria married a Middelburg official.

Books for Ordinary Life

Teellinck wrote without ceasing. He left 127 manuscripts, of which sixty were printed, including twenty full-length books. Many were published after his death by his sons.

The titles show where his heart lay. In 1618 *Den Christelijcken Leytsman* appeared. In 1620 his book on the Lord's Supper appeared in Middelburg, *Het geestelijk sieraad van Christus' bruiloftskinderen* ("The Spiritual Adornment of the Children of Christ's Wedding"), which was reprinted eleven times until 1665. In *De Rusttijdt* ("The Time of Rest") he argued for strict Sunday rest. In 1623 *Zephaniae waerschouwinge* ("Zephaniah's Warning") appeared, and in 1627 his great call for renewal, the *Noodwendigh vertoogh*. His greatest book, *Sleutel der devotie* ("Key of Devotion"), is about dedication to God.

At the synod of Goes in 1620 he was commissioned to publish two little question books for school catechism, and his *Den Wegh ter Zaligheydt* ("The Way to Salvation") remained in use in Goes into the eighteenth century. In 1626 a delegation from the South Holland synod came to Usselstein to talk with him about his view of the fourth commandment. His contemporary Jacob Cats also praised him: in a poem of praise for the *Noodwendigh vertoogh*, the poet writes that no fortress or cannon saves the land as long as it does not make peace with God. Cats and the natural philosopher Isaac Beeckman stood under his influence. Adriaan van de Venne, who lived in Middelburg from 1614 to 1625, painted a portrait of Reverend Teellinck.

He wrote for ordinary people. About how you pray, how you prepare for the Lord's Supper, how you set up your home as a place where God is served. Faith had to reach all the way to the kitchen table.

Not everyone agreed with him. *De Rusttijdt* stirred up a great deal. An opponent, Jacobus Burs, accused him of bringing back the Jewish Sabbath. Voetius, who otherwise thought highly of him, felt he had pulled the ropes too tight in his teaching on Sunday. In the *Noodwendigh vertoogh* Teellinck wrote that it grieved him to be so misunderstood. He named what was allowed on Sunday: eating, necessary work, works of mercy, and recreation that did not get in the way of worship.

One more thing made him stand out in his time. Teellinck was the first Reformed theologian in our country to commit himself to missions, the duty to bring the gospel to other peoples. He wrote about it in *Ecce homo*, a little book that appeared in January 1622 and that he dedicated to the East India Company.

The Year of the Plague

In 1624 the plague broke out in Middelburg. Teellinck called the city to repentance, publicly and in personal life. That is on paper from that very year. In 1624 Hans van der Hellen printed his *Wraecksweert* ("Sword of Vengeance") in Middelburg. The title says what it is about: the right of God's covenant, pleaded through bloody war, dear times, and pale pestilence. According to W.J. op 't Hof, more than 52 of its 128 pages are about the plague.

Teellinck started from Leviticus 26, where God warns His people of sword, famine, and plague if they break His covenant. He called on each person individually, and also on fathers, the government, and church leaders. His advice was practical too. Air out your house

and keep it clean. Whoever is infected must keep away from others. The most important thing for him remained that people break with sin.

Joel Beeke writes that he himself visited many houses where the disease was raging, while advising others not to do so and not to expose themselves to the danger. An old biography tells the same thing: when the plague went through Middelburg, the simple preacher stayed at his post and called the sick in their homes to repentance. You can see him walking through a frightened city, the same man who in Banbury had seen how Puritans visited and comforted the sick. Historians have not been able to check these house visits against a city record. The book does exist, and it is from that year.

A Second Thomas a Kempis

In the last years of his life the tone of his books changed. Westerink writes that they became less grand in scope and aimed at a smaller audience. The hope for a reformed country gave way to the quiet communion of one soul with God.

In 1628 or 1629 his *Soliloquium* appeared, a soliloquy of the soul. Westerink calls it a mystical exercise in longing for true blessedness. After his death, in 1635, came *Het nieuwe Jeruzalem* ("The New Jerusalem"), a dialogue between Christ and Mary. An old American encyclopedia sums it up this way: he began as a Pietist and ended as a mystic.

Voetius saw what was in those books. In the introduction to *Het nieuwe Jeruzalem* he called Teellinck a second Thomas a Kempis, after the medieval author of the *Imitation of Christ*. In his doctrine Teellinck remained Reformed.

The man who wanted laws against public sin, who went to the States General for a synod, ended with a book about longing for God. Perhaps you recognize that road. You begin with the wish to change the world, and you end up with the question of whether you yourself live close to God.

April 1629

Teellinck was ill for a large part of his time as a pastor. In 1629 a thin book from his hand appeared in Middelburg: *Tydt-winninghe. De derde maendt* ("Gaining Time: The Third Month"), with Christian exhortations, sighs, and resolutions. It was one part of a series by month. The part on the first month was printed for the second time that same year.

Every year he was struck by a severe illness, so the devotional biography tells us, and on Friday, March 16, 1629, the thrush (*spruw*, a mouth infection) was back. He kept writing on his *Tydt-winninghe* until March 20. On March 19 he wrote down what was going through his mind: what could it harm me, he thought, if I had to go through hell, as long as I came to heaven. He resolved by God's grace not to let himself be turned from the way of salvation. A sigh is also handed down from him: "Oh, Lord! How great Your grace has been to me until now!" Then the illness grew worse, and he lost his speech. He surrendered with the words: "May the Lord do what is good in His eyes."

On April 8, 1629, he died in Middelburg. He was fifty years old. Thousands mourned him, writes Beeke. On April 12 he was buried in the St. Peter's Church, which was also called the Noordmonsterkerk. You can no longer visit the grave: the church was demolished in 1833.

His influence grew after his death. His sons published his manuscripts. Voetius recommended his books to his students and called the *Noodwendigh vertoogh* a golden treatise. Godefridus Udemans and others continued on his path. The pastor Jacobus Koelman later gave the movement its name: the Nadere Reformatie. Op 't Hof gave his 2007 book on Teellinck the title that stuck: the father of the Nadere Reformatie.

Psalms in an Ordinary House

In 1639, ten years after his death, his *Huys-Boek* appeared in Middelburg. In the preface stands the story of Banbury. The households that began with prayer. The psalm after the meal. The town where on Sunday no quarreling could be heard.

A family in Banbury had shown a young lawyer the way, and never wrote a book about it. Now the book lay there, for families in his own country. The preface closes with a call to the reader: stir up the gifts God has given you, and taste the goodness of the Lord.

Whoever opened it came first into a house in England, where after the meal a psalm was sung before everyone went back to work.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth in Zierikzee in 1579 (usually given as January 4); father Joost Teellinck and mother Johanna de Jonge, a Calvinist regent family; law studies in St Andrews and doctorate in Poitiers (September 28, 1603); stay with the Puritans in Banbury around 1604; his conviction that he was converted there; marriage to Martha Greendon (Grijns) of Derby, with the registration of intent to marry on September 26, 1604 (that day is the day of the *ondertrouw*, not the wedding day), wedding in 1604 in Zierikzee; theology studies in Leiden; pastor in Burgh and Haam-

stede, called on October 4, 1606; *Philopatris* (1608); the mission to the States General in 1612 for a national synod; the call to Middelburg on August 10, 1613; his many writings; death in Middelburg on April 8, 1629 and burial on April 12 in St. Peter's Church or Noordmonsterkerk, demolished in 1833 (Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek; the day of death also in Van der Aa); his commitment to missions, with *Ecce homo* from 1622 (Encyclopedie van Zeeland and Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek); that Voetius heard him preach two or three times; his influence on the Nadere Reformatie; the publication of *Het geestelijk sieraad* in 1620 and of *Wraeck-sweert* in 1624, a book about war, dear times, and pestilence (Short-Title Catalogue Netherlands).

From one scholarly source: the youngest of eight children and the often-sick mother (Beeke); the Latin school in Zierikzee, the profound conversion and sense of calling (Op 't Hof); the choice of the Latin school in Rotterdam and the University of Franeker for his sons (Op 't Hof); the complaint about the countryside that brought the States to intervene (Encyclopedie van Zeeland); that more than 52 of the 128 pages of *Wraeck-sweert* are about the plague (Op 't Hof); the printing of *Tydt-winninghe, De derde maendt* in 1629 and the second printing of *D'eerste maendt* in the same year (Short-Title Catalogue Netherlands). The three brothers who were also destined for the law and Willem's early attraction to theology are in the Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek.

Only from own testimony or from the family: what he saw in Banbury (family devotions, psalm singing, catechism instruction, a quiet Sunday, care for the sick) and the length of eight or nine months, from the preface of his *Huys-Boek*. It also says there that Bible questions were put to an expert, usually a pastor; ordinary people therefore did not explain the Bible themselves. The full

churches in Middelburg are in his *Noodwendigh vertoogh*; the change in Haamstede in the account of his son Maximiliaan.

Additions from the second round of searching: the daily rhythm of the house in Banbury, the part about walking, fasting, Sunday, and the exercise of discipline, and Teellinck's remark about the monastery come from the preface of the *Huys-Boek* (English translation; I summarized the text); his family life in Middelburg (prayer at breakfast, catechism instruction, fast day, poor believers at the table, an hour a day with his children, housework on Friday) from Beeke and the devotional biography *Hollandse geloofshelden*; the sermon on 1 Timothy 6:17-19 after the capture of the silver fleet, and the criticism of his expression of God as the first tailor, from Beeke; his brother Ewoud, his sisters, the day of prayer with Dod and Hildersham, the swearers who became prayers, the death of little Johannes in 1613, the installation text 2 Corinthians 5:14, the motto "put your Christianity into practice," the illness of the thrush, the sentences of March 19, and "Oh, Lord!" only from the devotional biography (the biography contains demonstrable errors, such as Voetius as a fellow student, and is therefore used only as tradition); the Sunday measure of 1608 with Udemans, the synod of Goes (1620), the conversation in Usselstein (1626), the portrait by Van de Venne, and the influence on Cats and Beeckman from Op 't Hof (*Nadere Reformatie in Zeeland*); the poem of praise by Cats for the *Noodwendigh vertoogh* from the edition on DBNL (summarized by me; the poem is in the works of Cats on DBNL, the poet's name does not appear on the page itself).

Told, in three versions: the day of fasting and prayer before his choice for theology. Van der Aa (1874) writes that his kindred spirits in England held that day, Beeke that he did it with his friends, the devotional biography (*Hollandse geloofshelden*) that the Lord opened his heart on a day of prayer with Dod and Hildersham. No account

by Teellinck himself has been found. In the story, Beeke's version is followed.

Unconfirmed: his visits to plague victims in 1624 are in Joel Beeke and in the devotional biography. No archival document or contemporary has been found, the old dictionaries are silent about it, and according to Op 't Hof (2021) it is not known whether Teellinck experienced the plague up close. That in 1624 he called for repentance in a time of pestilence does show in his *Wraeck-sweert* of that year. How many houses he visited and how many dead the city counted is in no source. The thousands of mourners are only in Beeke, who also speaks of a grave in the churchyard rather than in the church. His last words and the writing until March 20 are only in the devotional sketch, not in the work of historians.

Where the sources differ: the birth date (one register gives April 1579, Van der Aa and a German reference work 1580); the year of the wedding (1604 according to most sources, 1605 according to Westerink); the exact years in England (1603 and 1604, only 1604, or 1604 to 1606); the length of the studies in Leiden (two years according to Beeke, very short according to the Encyclopedie van Zeeland); the number of manuscripts (127 according to Beeke, a son counted 124 unprinted ones according to a German reference work); the number of children. Beeke dates the letter about the four full churches to five years after his arrival in Middelburg, while the *Noodwendigh vertoogh* appeared in 1627.

Interpretation: the title "father of the Nadere Reformatie" is a judgment of later historians. Teellinck himself did not use that name.

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Gerardus Kuypers: The Pastor of the Nijkerk Tears

On Monday evening, November 17, 1749, people gathered in Nijkerk for the public catechism class. The day before, the young pastor Gerardus Kuypers had preached on a verse from Psalm 72, and on these evenings he always continued with Sunday's sermon. This time it went differently. People began to weep. Some trembled, others sank to the floor and could no longer stand.

More than a week earlier, on November 9, it had already happened once. During a sermon by his colleague Roldanus, an old woman began to wail loudly. Now it was no longer a single person.

What began that autumn became known as the Nijkerk Commotion (*de Nijkerkse beroering*), one of the best-known revival stories in Dutch history. Within a year people came from far away to see it. More than a hundred pamphlets appeared about it, for and against. A Leiden professor turned publicly against the pastor, who was, of all things, his own former student. And the man in the middle of it all was twenty-seven.

Almost everything we know about those weeks comes from letters and pamphlets by people who took sides, and from Kuypers' own account. So I tell the story as he and his contemporaries wrote it, and in the box at the end you can read what of it is certain.

It began in Mijnsheerenland, in the Hoeksche Waard.

A Pastor's Son from Mijnsheerenland

Gerardus Kuypers was born on October 11, 1722, in Mijnsheerenland. His father, Françoys Kuypers, had been the pastor there since May 1721. His mother was named Anna Onderdewijngaard. When Gerardus was nine, the family moved to Woudrichem, where his father was installed on July 20, 1732.

Françoys Kuypers was a pastor who wrote. He produced a commentary on the *Kort Begrip*, the small textbook for catechism instruction, which after his death reached an eleventh printing. In 1739 and 1740 he published two treatises against the Moravians (*hernhutters*), a movement of German origin that attracted people in the Netherlands too in those years. Until about 1737 he had felt some sympathy for them. After that he warned Reformed believers to keep their distance.

His son was then at the grammar school in Dordrecht, and he wrote an ode in Latin in his father's books. It is a small detail, but it shows something that would later become important. Father and son stood on the same side. When Gerardus came under fire years later, his father was the first to take his part.

Arabic in Leiden

On September 19, 1739, Gerardus enrolled in Leiden to study theology. He was a student at the Staten-college, the residence where the government trained young men for the church. He

attended lectures by Hemsterhuis, Burman, and Van den Honert, but it was Albertus Schultens above all who made an impression on him. From him he gained a love for the Semitic languages, the languages around Hebrew, and he kept in contact with Schultens until his death in 1750.

He was a gifted student. In 1743 he defended a dissertation on the Old Testament, and in 1745 he published Arabic poems attributed to Ali ben Abi Taleb, an early figure in Islamic history. Everything pointed to a life among books.

In Leiden he was friends with Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein, an African student. When Capitein held a disputation in 1742, Kuypers wrote a congratulatory ode for it. Ben Ipenburg included that poem in his book on Capitein's life and work, among the congratulations in verse for that defense. There it bears the title "To my highly esteemed friend, Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein." We know little more about that friendship. It is one of the few personal things handed down about the young Kuypers.

One of his teachers was Johan van den Honert, professor of theology. Two years in a row he gave Kuypers the post of praetor at his lectures, and he counted him among his ablest students. Remember that name.

In 1744 Kuypers took his candidate's examination and first worked as an assistant pastor in Amsterdam, with Rev. J.C. de la Moraisière. According to Fekkes, he afterward also turned down a call to St. Petersburg. In October 1745 the call came from Jutphaas, a village near Utrecht. On December 5, 1745, he was installed there, after his own father had confirmed him in office. In the journal *Boekzaal*, poems on father and son appeared the following year.

He did not see much fruit in Jutphaas. His preaching, the biographical dictionary writes cautiously, apparently found little acceptance

there. On April 28, 1748, he married in Woudrichem, his father's congregation, Anna Catharina Huysinkvelt, a widow from Breda. On February 14, 1749, Nijkerk chose him, a small town on the edge of the Veluwe. On April 27 he was installed there, confirmed by his new colleague Johannes Jacobus Roldanus. His inaugural sermon, Fekkes tells us, was on Hosea 2:20-22. He was twenty-six.

A Town of Tobacco

Nijkerk was prosperous in those years. The money came mainly from growing tobacco. According to a later description of church life in that region, that prosperity had a downside: the inns drew an unusual number of people. Even church council members went straight from church to the inn, that description says. There were also still people who valued serious preaching.

Kuypers preached seriously, and he did more than preach. He started a weekly public catechism class on Monday evenings, in which he continued with what he had preached on Sunday. After the Sunday services he visited church members at home. He asked how it stood with their souls and he prayed with them. On Sunday evenings he held discussion evenings at a member's home, where everyone's spiritual progress was discussed. More and more people wanted to be there, until no house was large enough for everyone who wanted to come. At first it was still quiet, indoors. Many people began to see their sins and came to faith in Jesus. According to J. Fekkes, who wrote about it, Kuypers was so busy in that time that he visited as many as twenty houses a day. "Pray now, help now: I spoke, I prayed, I helped," he is said to have said. Fekkes also mentions more than twenty-five hundred people under his hearing.

What was later described as a sudden outburst thus began with half a year of ordinary work. A pastor who preached, explained, visited, and prayed, week after week.

A Handful of Grain

On Sunday, November 16, 1749, Kuypers preached on Psalm 72:16. It is a verse from a psalm about the king whom God will send: *There will be an abundance of grain in the earth, On the top of the mountains; Its fruit shall wave like Lebanon; And those of the city shall flourish Like grass of the earth.* (Psalm 72:16).

A handful of grain, in a place where you do not expect it, and a harvest so great that it rustles. What exactly Kuypers said about it that Sunday has not been handed down. But we do know what happened the evening after.

At the catechism class on Monday, November 17, people were deeply moved. In his *Getrouw verhaal* ("Faithful Account"), the report he published a year later, Kuypers himself described those first days. Streams of tears were shed, he wrote. Toward the end of the gathering the weeping grew louder, and around the pronouncing of the blessing people fell down trembling and could no longer stand. Some called out to the people around them: "Look at me, and see how bitter sins taste." So it stands in a later collection, which gives his words in modern spelling.

There was a sentence in that report that fit the sermon on the rustling grain. "Then the rustling of this Lebanon began through the wind of the Spirit," wrote Kuypers. In the weeks that followed, the streets rang with shouting and weeping. People asked one another: "How do I get a gracious God?"

A reviewer of a 2001 collection on Nijkerk read in the weeping and crying the signs of an acute and intense awareness of sin. Kuypers

saw it that way too. In the weeks after, his parsonage filled up. According to his own account, there were at one point more than two hundred people in his house at the same time. Again and again they asked whether the pastor would pray with them, now that they saw their sins. The historian Nauta points out that Kuypers kept open hours for people in distress, gathered in the parsonage until late in the evening, and tried to report daily in letters to his parents on what was happening.

"Badly Mutilated"

Two days after that Monday evening, on November 19, Kuypers wrote a letter about it. On November 25 he wrote a second, and on January 16, 1750, a third. Those three letters became the beginning of a national quarrel.

They were not meant for the printing press. Someone had them printed on a single sheet of paper, with no place and no name of the printer, only the note "Printed for J.T." Kuypers knew nothing about it. In a notice from 1750 he declared that the publication had happened without his knowledge, and according to him the letters were "badly mutilated." From the first moment, report and story ran together, and whoever spread the news often did so to make a point.

Instead of Cursing

The commotion lasted for months and reached its height around May 1750. People came to Nijkerk from the wide surroundings to see it with their own eyes. Five men from Harderwijk traveled by wagon to Nijkerk on a Saturday, April 25. Their travel report says that the church was full of people in the forenoon and the afternoon. The reverence and attention were "inexpressible," they wrote, and half of what they now saw had not yet been told them. Prints even

appeared of the commotions. A small etching of the church, not even eight centimeters high, ended up in that series and is now in the Rijksmuseum.

Roldanus first kept himself aloof. Later he sided with Kuypers, though he stayed in the background as much as possible. In April 1750 Kuypers preached on Psalm 25:14, a verse about God's dealings with those who fear Him. He published that sermon later.

Kuypers himself described mainly what changed in the town. The biographical dictionary, which retells his report, sums it up in one sentence: instead of cursing, you now heard praying and psalm singing. A later collection about these years tells, on the basis of the same report, of an innkeeper, Hendrik van Koot, who had wanted nothing to do with the church. He closed his inn, no strong drink was served anymore, and the building was made suitable for worship services. J. Fekkes, who wrote a book on the Nijkerk revival in 1999, tells the same and adds what Kuypers said about it: "First Satan sat on the throne in the inn, now Jesus sits there."

Kuypers named as fruits that the inns emptied and the churches filled, and that the Bible lay on the table where cards and dice had lain before. Fekkes writes that there was no more drunkenness and almost no hatred and envy. Fellow pastors from other places visited him. They went back to their own congregations, Putten among them, with a heart full of zeal, and they saw fruit there. "All this shows that it is not the work of fools or the gullible," wrote Kuypers.

It started outside Nijkerk too. In Aalten, in the Achterhoek, Rev. Philippus de Roy defended the conversions in his congregation. Reports came from Putten and Huizen, and from Hoogeveen and other places in Drenthe. In Werkendam something similar had already happened in 1746, and a defender of Nijkerk saw the same work there.

Letters Across the Sea

Through Hugh Kennedy, the pastor of the Scottish church in Rotterdam, the Dutch heard about similar revivals in the Scottish villages of Cambuslang and Kilsyth. In 1751 Kennedy wrote a *Nederige verdediging* ("Humble Defense") of the work of the Spirit in Scotland and in Nijkerk. Kuypers liked to call that book an "irrefutable work."

Kuypers also knew the account Jonathan Edwards had written in 1737 about the conversions in Northampton in New England. According to the theologian Wim van Vlastuin, he borrowed words from that book in his *Getrouw verhaal*. He himself wrote letters to John Gillies in Glasgow, and Edwards heard about Nijkerk through Dutch contacts in New Jersey. In 1754 Gillies included letters about Nijkerk in a large collection of reports on revivals around the world. The historian Fred van Lieburg shows that Nijkerk thus became part of a network of letter writers that stretched as far as America.

Carried to the Consistory

And Kuypers himself? This part of his story touches me most.

He saw soon enough that it could not go on like this. Whoever became too restless during the service, he first tried to calm down. If that did not help, he had that person brought outside the church building. He even gave advice about medicines.

A Rotterdam pastor, Hugh Kennedy, saw a work of the Holy Spirit in Nijkerk. Kuypers himself wanted nothing to do with mysticism and fanaticism. "Far from seeking to stir up those commotions," he wrote in his *Apologie*, "I wished for quiet calm."

In his own judgment, most people came in a calm way to assurance of faith. A small number caused great unrest. Distress and physical

agitation he did not want to see as the work of the Holy Spirit. The man who was the center of the revival refused to make a proof of the spectacle. In his *Apologie* he wrote that he recognized no working of the Spirit that went above or against the Word.

On October 29, 1750, he made a proposal in the church council. Anyone who got convulsions during the service or began to cry out loudly was, at the pastor's direction, to be carried at once to the consistory room or elsewhere. Those who were sensitive to this were asked to sit close to the doors. Whoever held a *oefening* in Nijkerk, a gathering outside the church service, had to keep to these rules on penalty of church discipline. They stayed outside, in the words of a later description, until they were again "receptive to the Word."

In the course of 1750 and 1751 things slowly grew quieter.

Do you know that, a faith experience you cannot explain and that others distrust? Kuypers stood right in the middle of it. For his opponents he went far too far. He himself drew a line in his own church and chose the sermon.

The Professor with the Pen

In 1750 Kuypers published his *Getrouw verhaal en Apologie* with Gerardus Borstius in Amsterdam, a defense of what had happened in his congregation. Shortly afterward an anonymous piece appeared with remarks on that report. Later it turned out who had written it: Johan van den Honert, the Leiden professor under whom Kuypers had studied. He admitted it in one of his own later writings.

Van den Honert, born in 1693 in Hendrik-Ido-Ambacht, was a learned and sharp man who involved himself in nearly every theological debate of his time. About what a true new birth was, he thought differently from the people in Nijkerk. According to the dictionary, it grieved him especially that one of his best former

students, of all people, did not oppose the movement and rather promoted it.

The biographical dictionary sums up the question in business-like terms: can intense physical phenomena go together with a true conversion? In the review of the 2001 collection it is put even more sharply: "Was this a matter of mass sham conversions or of true revivals?"

The debate did not stay businesslike. Van den Honert wrote answer after answer. He presented Kuypers as a false teacher and attributed dishonest motives to him. The dictionary calls that way of fighting "far from dignified."

Kuypers replied with a *Pleitgeding* ("Plea") in 1751 and later a second. He wrote *Oud en Nieuw* ("Old and New"), about similar phenomena among the first Christians. In 1752 followed *Gamaliels raat* ("Gamaliel's Counsel"), a discourse on Acts. The title refers to the advice Gamaliel gave the Jewish council in Acts 5: leave these people alone, for if it is a work of God, you cannot stop it.

His father, then almost sixty, joined the debate too. He wrote *De saeke Godts verdedigt* ("God's Cause Defended") and then a series of other pieces. Over a preface he had written for his son's published sermon, he got into a quarrel with his own classis in Gorinchem. That quarrel was settled in June 1752.

Between 1750 and 1753 about one hundred twenty-five writings on Nijkerk appeared: letters, treatises, dialogues, even poems. One of the defenders, Jacob Groenewegen, pointed out that Van den Honert had years earlier been much more positive about a similar revival in Werkendam.

Chaff and Grain

Criticism came from within the circle of the experiential Reformed (*bevindelijke gereformeerden*) too. Theodorus van der Groe, pastor in Kralingen, wrote in June 1752 a preface to the first part of his *Toetssteen der ware en valsche genade* ("Touchstone of True and False Grace"). He feared that the noisy commotion had gone far too wildly and impurely. Yet he left open the possibility that among the chaff there was also some good grain.

On the day of prayer of March 28, 1753, he preached on Psalm 119:126: *It is time for You to act, O LORD, For they have regarded Your law as void.* (Psalm 119:126). In that sermon he went much further. He called the commotion "a ruinous work of Satan" and a judgment of God on the church. He also spoke of an enthusiastic spirit of abomination. He did not name Nijkerk.

Kuypers had preached on a handful of grain. Van der Groe saw mainly chaff.

"Gladly Heard"

What the pamphlets do not tell is how Kuypers himself fared. We do know what he did. He stayed. In 1752 he was placed on a shortlist of three in Schoonhoven, the list from which a congregation chooses its new pastor. He declined and stayed in Nijkerk until 1758.

In Nijkerk his son Christiaan François was born. They also had a daughter, Anna.

On November 9, 1758, they chose him in Winschoten, in the east of Groningen, and on July 15, 1759, he was installed there. In May of that year his father said farewell to the congregation in Woudrichem, old and weakened. Johan van den Honert had died a year earlier, in the night of April 6 to 7, 1758.

In Winschoten Kuypers stayed only briefly. On November 16, 1760, he took his leave there, and two weeks later he was installed in Scheemda.

According to a nineteenth-century biographical dictionary, he was "gladly heard" as a preacher. The same dictionary writes that he put into practice what he taught.

A Chair in Groningen

After the death of Professor Gerdes, Kuypers was appointed professor of theology in Groningen on August 16, 1765. On December 1 he received his doctorate, and on December 6 he gave his inaugural address. The boy who had published Arabic poems now himself stood before the students. He was rector magnificus, the head of the university, several times. His son Christiaan François enrolled as a student in Groningen in 1768 and later became a pastor in Friesland and in Zeeland.

As a professor he combined, according to Van der Aa's dictionary, broad knowledge with an unusual ease in explaining. One of his students was Herman Muntinghe.

In 1772 he prepared an edition of the Canons of Dort, the decisions of the Synod of Dordrecht on grace and election. The man who twenty years earlier had been called a false teacher now republished his church's confession. On September 18, 1783, his father died, at a great age, in Giessen-Nieuwkerk.

Later Kuypers married Josina Petronella Alberda, the widow of Antonius Ewaldus Sichterman. They had no children.

The 1780s were restless. Patriots and Orangists stood against each other in the Republic, sometimes armed. In 1785 his *Neerlandsch Staatsorkaan* ("Dutch Hurricane of State") appeared. He called

himself loyal to the States and to the stadtholder, but above all he warned against the forming of parties. The labels with which people sorted one another he called a national folly. In 1786 he preached on the threat of civil war.

It is a thought of mine, not of a source, but perhaps Nijkerk still echoed in that. Kuypers knew what happens when a country splits into two camps and everyone sharpens his pen.

Two Funerals

In the last ten years of his life Kuypers suffered from gout and later from asthma. At the end of 1797 and the beginning of 1798 he was ill and could not preach. On June 4, 1798, he still attended in Groningen the funeral of his colleague, Professor N.W. Schroeder. The next morning at six o'clock he died unexpectedly.

On June 8, 1798, a notice from his widow, Josina Petronella Alberda, appeared in the Groninger Courant and in the Ommelander Courant, dated "Groningen the 5th of June 1798." It had pleased God, she wrote, "this morning" to take her husband from her by a sudden death, at the age of seventy-five years and more than seven months. She asked that no letters of condolence be sent.

On June 9 he was interred in the Martinikerk. His colleague E.J. Thomassen à Thuessink commemorated him in a printed funeral program as a man of strong spirit, a strong memory, and great eloquence.

On June 16, 1798, his son Christiaan François, pastor in that congregation, died in Wolfaartsdijk in Zeeland.

An Organ from 1756

Almost fifty years after that evening in the Nijkerk catechism class, Kuypers had been a professor, a rector, and a writer on affairs of

state. Yet in the books on Dutch church history his name almost always stands beside that one word: Nijkerk.

Was it a revival from God? I am inclined to think so, and I know I cannot prove it. What I do see is a young pastor who did his work before anything happened. And who, when it happened, had the courage to slow it down. Whoever experiences something of God often wants it to grow bigger. Kuypers had people carried outside until they could listen again.

The Great Church on the Holkerstraat is still there. The first stone of the choir was laid in 1461, and after the town fire of 1540 the church was almost entirely rebuilt. The upper part of the tower came only between 1774 and 1776, and the pulpit is from 1789, so Kuypers stood in a different pulpit than the one you see now. The organ, however, is from his time. Matthijs van Deventer built it in 1756, when Kuypers was still in Nijkerk. It is still there, in a church where on a Sunday in November a young pastor preached on a handful of grain on the top of the mountains.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on October 11, 1722, in Mijnsheerenland as the son of the pastor Françoys Kuypers; studies in Leiden from 1739; pastor in Jutphaas (1745), Nijkerk (1749), Winschoten (1759), and Scheemda (1760); the sermon on Psalm 72:16 on Sunday, November 16, 1749, and the commotion at the catechism class of Monday, November 17; the three letters of November 1749 and January 1750, which were printed without his knowledge; his *Getrouw verhaal* (1750); the pamphlet war with Johan van den Honert (1750-1753, about 125 writings); the support of his father; the church council measures of October 29, 1750; the connection with the Scottish revivals via Hugh Kennedy and with Gillies and Edwards; the rejection by Theodorus van der Groe (preface to

Toetssteen 1752, day-of-prayer sermon March 28, 1753); his friendship with J.E.J. Capitein and his congratulatory poem at the latter's defense in 1742 (biographical dictionary and the edition by Ipenburg); his professorship in Groningen from 1765; his marriage to Anna Catharina Huysinkvelt, a widow from Breda, on April 28, 1748, in Woudrichem (marriage register of the Reformed congregation); his death in Groningen on the morning of June 5, 1798 (biographical dictionary and the death notice of his widow in two Groningen newspapers of June 8, 1798; the date June 4 in Van der Aa is a mistake); in the Great Church of Nijkerk the organ by Van Deventer from 1756 and the pulpit from 1789.

Only from his own testimony or from one source: the scene with tears, falling down, and the cry "Look at me" (his own *Getrouw verhaal*, via a later collection in modern spelling; it is not clear whether that quotation describes the Sunday or the Monday); the more than two hundred people in his house (his own statement); the story of the innkeeper Hendrik van Koot and the saying about the inn (the collection on Van der Groe and J. Fekkes in 1999, both on the basis of Kuypers' own report; no archival document found); that the letters were "badly mutilated" (his own declaration; what exactly had been changed cannot be traced); that most came to faith calmly and only a few caused great unrest (his own judgment); his statement that he recognized no working of the Spirit above or against the Word (from his *Apologie*, via the same collection); his advice about medicines; that he took over words from Edwards (Van Vlastuin); the judgments about his preaching and conduct from Van der Aa's dictionary; the sermon of November 16 itself has not been found.

Additions from the second round of searching: the expression "Then the rustling of this Lebanon began through the wind of the Spirit," the cry "How do I get a gracious God?", the quotations from the *Apologie* ("Far from seeking...", "not the work of fools or the

gullible") and the fruits (inns empty, churches full, Bible instead of cards and dice) are in the chapter on Nijkerk in Westerbeke's collection on Van der Groe, which retells or quotes Kuypers' own work; the Sunday evening discussions, the church-council-members-in-the-inn detail, and the letters to his parents come from Smits (*De Afscheiding van 1834*) and the historian Nauta whom Smits cites; the twenty houses a day, the words "Pray now, help now," the more than 2,500 hearers, the call to St. Petersburg, the inaugural sermon on Hosea 2:20-22, and that he was an assistant pastor with De la Moraisière are only in Fekkes (popular-historical, 1999); the travel report of the five men from Harderwijk of Saturday, April 25, gives no year in the quoted text; the expression "enthusiastic spirit of abomination" is Van der Groe's. The rumor that people stood on ladders against the walls and the number of 200 to 400 visitors at the gatherings I did not include in the story: no source can be pointed to for it. I could not open a separate source with the letters to his parents; Digibron (Fekkes) was not reachable in this round, the details come from earlier consultation and from the file.

Unconfirmed: how intense the phenomena exactly were and how many people were involved (the pamphlets contradict one another and are often exaggerated; there are no lists or numbers of converts, and the government and the church largely ignored the events, so there are hardly any archival documents; the biographical dictionary warns that reports must first be tested); that Van den Honert was earlier positive about Werkendam (a claim by Groenewegen from the polemic, a pamphlet and thus not a neutral source); whether all the commotions elsewhere came out of Nijkerk; the further life of his daughter Anna (not found in the records and newspapers searched); the date of his second marriage; whether Kuypers and Van den Honert reconciled before the latter's death in 1758 (nothing found); what Kuypers felt in those years (no source).

Interpretation: whether Nijkerk was a true revival is a question on which believers and historians differ to this day. The physical phenomena are described; the spiritual fruit is hard to measure from these sources. Historians who looked at it again after two hundred fifty years honestly admitted that the true extent is hard to estimate.

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Catharina Daemen: The Sister the Pastor Had Not Ordered

On June 21, 1825, a wagon rolled into the Limburg village of Heythuysen. On the wagon sat a woman of thirty-seven, Catharina Daemen, from the small town of Maaseik, some distance away on the Maas River. Pastor Peter van der Zandt had asked there for help for his parish. The group of women in Maaseik had promised him two sisters.

One came.

Van der Zandt kept a chronicle, and in it he later wrote down honestly what he felt that day. I was very angry, his words say in the English translation, because he considered Sister Catharina Daemen completely unsuited for the work. He said it out loud to the driver: why had he brought her, why had he not left her where she was? She is a disappointment.

He did not send her back. He let her look after the church linen in the rectory.

That woman became the founder of a congregation that spread over Germany while she was still alive, and after her death over Poland,

Indonesia, Brazil, and the United States. In Heythuysen the house she moved into in 1835 still stands, on a street called Aan de Kreppel. As Mother Magdalene she entered history. She wrote no books and left no sermons. What we know of her comes almost entirely from the chronicle of that pastor and from what her fellow sisters remembered later.

It began on an island in the Maas.

Trieneke from the Island

Maria Catharina Daemen was born on November 19, 1787, in Laak, a hamlet near Stevensweert in central Limburg. Laak lay on an island between the arms of the Maas, surrounded by dikes. Her father, Cornelius Daemen, was a farmer. Her mother was named Gertruda van Bree, as it later says in Catharina's death record. The same day she was baptized in the church of Echt, with an uncle and aunt as godparents. Echt lay almost five kilometers away.

At home they called her Trieneke. So it says in a text that a sister of her congregation wrote in 2022 for her birthday. The house was small: about six by four meters. Catharina had a younger sister, Joanna, who later married Stephan Suilen. Their parents would live with her in their last years.

Catharina did not receive much schooling. There was no compulsory education. But she did learn to read and write well in Dutch, a recent biography relying on the old congregation history tells us. She is described as a quiet, contemplative girl, while her younger sister was lively.

Her father could grow impatient with that. He told her she was good for almost nothing, because she was always sitting there thinking and dreaming. The neighbors saw it differently. They said that girl thinks more about praying than about working. It was not a

reproach, writes the congregation history of 1917. It was a remark about her piety.

She grew up in a restless time. From 1794 on, French armies and French ideas moved into the land. The new rulers found contemplative monasteries pointless and abolished them. Priests who refused to swear an oath to the state were treated as criminals and said Mass in secret. In 1801, in the fiercest years of that persecution, Catharina made her first communion, in complete silence.

Her faith was from her youth a faith you could not simply show. It was kept at home, in secret.

A Servant Girl in Maaseik

When she was about sixteen, Catharina left home. She became a servant girl with a Catholic family in Maaseik, a small town on the Maas in what is now Belgium. There she got to know the Capuchins, a branch of the order of Francis. After their banishment they had returned to Maaseik. Through them she became familiar with the spirituality of Francis.

In Maaseik lived a small group of women who lived by the rule of the Third Order of Francis. That order was meant for ordinary believers, people who did not live in a monastery and yet wanted to live in the spirit of Francis. The women were led by Catherina Palenberg. Catharina joined them. They worked and prayed together. They gave religious lessons, taught girls needlework, and visited the sick, as the American sisters of her congregation write.

That Catharina had not become a party-goer out of a quiet farmer's daughter, she herself told later with a smile. Her sister had once persuaded her to go to a dance evening in the village and had lent her an apron, a red one. She said she had been to a ball once, in

a red apron, but only once, and never again. So it stands in the congregation history of 1917.

They did not live behind monastery walls and did not wear a monastic habit. They shared a daily rhythm of work and prayer.

On November 12, 1817, Catharina was allowed to make her vows in the Third Order. Father Eleutherius Meers, the superior of the Capuchin monastery in Maaseik, received her. A week later she turned thirty. She had humbly asked to be admitted and was overjoyed when her request was granted. The congregation history of 1917 speaks of "this great event in her life."

Eight quiet years followed in Maaseik. When she later led a growing community in Heythuysen, she liked to think back on them, according to her sisters, as a time of inner peace and happiness.

Perhaps you know such a period. A time in which life was small and manageable, and God was near. For Catharina it turned out to be a preparation, though she did not know it then.

Linen for the Church

In 1821 Peter van der Zandt became pastor in Heythuysen. In the village there were many neglected children, the American sisters write. The pastor asked the women in Maaseik for help, and their leader promised to send two sisters.

In 1820 Catharina's father had died, and in 1825 her mother died. On June 21, 1825, Catharina stood in Heythuysen. Alone.

How the pastor reacted we already know. What Catharina thought of it is written nowhere. She had come with a table, a chair, a small stove, and a chest of clothes. She began the work he gave her and looked after the linen in the rectory. So it went for about two months. Then Van der Zandt gave her a small house near the

church, and Catharina set it up as a little school. Children came, a few more every day, the congregation history says. She taught them needlework and told them about God. She also went to the sick in the village.

The children were won by her gentleness. Her teaching rested mainly on her own example, writes Munster, and later parents and children grew attached to her. Van der Zandt watched. Slowly he saw past his prejudice. What struck him most was her zeal and her trust in Providence. To every difficulty she had the same answer: God will provide.

The same history that preserved the pastor's anger tells, a little further on, that God visibly blessed her work.

Trust in God

The women who knew her well described her as a person of few words. Sister Pacifica, one of the later sisters, wrote that she opened her mouth only at important moments. But what she then said had meaning. When a sister had a hard time, it usually went like this, according to Pacifica: trust in God, and it will all turn out well.

She had another fixed expression, which her sisters heard from her again and again. When something was lacking or something seemed impossible, she said: God will provide. A biography from 2024 carries those words as its title.

It did not stay with one woman for long. Anna Maria Verkolen, a slight seamstress five years older than Catharina, came first. She offered to take over the needlework with the children, so that Catharina had time for the religion lessons. Catharina answered simply: yes, come. God is sending you to me.

Gertrude Kirkels, a widow who had earlier worked as a shepherdess, also wanted to join. The pastor first turned her away. Then she spoke to Catharina after Mass and offered to do the housekeeping for a meager keep. Catharina told her that her little house stood open to her, that she was heartily welcome. That is how the words have come down.

On a raw Sunday afternoon in November 1827, Maria Catharina Deckers came for the first time to look, a cheerful girl from Hunsel who had been touched by a sermon. She came twice before she stayed. In the first half of 1828 she and Gertrude Kirkels joined. On November 9, 1828, the companions made their vows in the Third Order in Maaseik. The American sisters write simply that the three came in 1827.

They wanted to form a religious community together, with Catharina as leader. Maria Deckers doubted fiercely for a time whether she was in the right place. In the bare, cold house she sank into gloom and cried alone in her little room. Catharina came to her in the dark and sat with her until she grew calm. All right, Maria, she said, we will try to serve God together. Maria stayed.

Later Gertrude Kirkels told that in those years Catharina often said: how good God is. The women cared for the sick and the poor and took in sewing to make ends meet.

Catharina had no education, no money, and no position. She was the woman the pastor had not wanted. But she had one habit that everyone around her knew: every difficulty she gave back to God.

The House I Have Seen

On the edge of Heythuysen lay an old estate, De Kreppel. The manor house dated from 1757 and had belonged to Baron Michiels

van Verduynen. The women still lived in the small rented house near the church, and they had too little space.

Sister Pacifica told how the plan arose. Catharina often prayed at a statue of Mary in the parish church. There she had, as she herself told in later years, first seen the house "in the spirit," exactly as it was when she bought it. Only afterward did she go looking. One morning she asked Mayor Raetson to ride along with her. They looked at houses all day in various directions, without result. It was already getting dark as they drove back to the village along the road from Leveroy. Then De Kreppel came into view. That is the house I have seen, she cried, and that is where I must go. There God wants me.

Sister Crescentia remembered that Catharina said of De Kreppel that they had to go there to build a monastery. When the sisters told the pastor, he laughed. Did she think she could buy the Michiels estate for a song? Catharina answered only: we must trust in God, He will provide.

Van der Zandt tells it differently in his chronicle. He found her, he writes, at her mending and said to her: why don't you buy De Kreppel, you could easily make it a convent? He presents it as his own idea. But the congregation history shows that Catharina had had her eye on the house for a long time and had raised the matter earlier, and that the pastor kept resisting it. A little later he himself pressed for it. Then Cillekens, a merchant who supported their work, offered an interest-free loan. Such a proposal does not come a second time in a lifetime, he said. The pastor was glad of it.

Through the Snow to Liège

Heythuysen then belonged to the diocese of Liège. In November 1834 Van der Zandt wrote to Bishop Cornelius van Bommel for per-

mission to buy the house and establish a religious community there. For weeks no answer came.

Catharina wanted to go herself. When the pastor objected, she said: if Your Reverence will just let me go, God will provide. In February 1835 she set out, on foot, through the snow. On the way a hard gust of wind blew her into a ditch full of snow. Chaplain Scheyven of Nederweert came by and took her a stretch in his little carriage.

The bishop received her and said no. He could not give his approval to her plan, he said, because the necessary guarantees were lacking. The journey was about sixty kilometers long. On February 27 another letter followed from the vicar general. Van der Zandt then gave Catharina a stern reprimand. She answered humbly and apologized for the inconvenience she had caused him. There was criticism in the village too, and some fellow sisters did not like the idea of the move. When she came home after the refusal, she said to the sisters the same thing again: God will provide.

The money came in small pieces. Two women who wanted to enter, Gertrude Berben and Elizabeth Ceurts, contributed their savings. Catharina sold her own belongings. Added to that was the interest-free loan from Mr. Cillekens.

In the spring of 1835 she went to Liège for the second time. On the way across the heath she said aloud a sentence that the congregation history has preserved: let God take care of it; it is His work, not mine. This time the bishop gave in. Let her begin, he said, and let her do what God asks of her. Later he said he could not explain it himself: he had not been able to contradict her, against his own will.

Straw and an Upturned Washtub

The house was not easy. The tenant farmer still had three years of lease, the building was damp, surrounded by a moat and far from

the church. Sister Verkolen cried at the thought of losing the daily Mass, and in the village the residents turned against the move. Everyone laughed at us, wrote Van der Zandt.

On May 10, 1835, Pastor Van der Zandt blessed the house De Kreppel as the future mother house. That day counts in the congregation as the founding date. The Limburg memorial book of the congregation speaks of a humble beginning and a difficult first period.

How humble, Gertrude Kirkels told later. In the attic were four narrow little rooms, each with a layer of straw to sleep on. An upturned washtub served in the morning as a washbasin and afterward as a table. Year in, year out we had nothing for breakfast but black coffee.

In the house lived Catharina, Anna Maria Verkolen, Gertrude Kirkels, Maria Deckers, and Maria Frances Steenkens. Two young women began their probation there. One of them, Angeline Kuesters, died on October 8, 1835, still in the first year. The other, Gertrude Berben, who had contributed her savings, left again. Her savings had to be repaid, which made the debt grow further.

On November 11, 1835, written permission arrived from Liège, through Vicar General Kerckhoffs. The women were allowed to wear the habit and make vows. A Franciscan from Sint-Truiden helped with the pattern of the habit. When Van der Zandt saw it, he joked: what kind of ghost is that? On February 11, 1836, Van der Zandt sang a solemn Mass and clothed them. Catharina became Sister Magdalena, and the pastor appointed her superior. The other sisters also received a new name. On a visit the bishop told them that every self-will must be buried ten feet underground. In his chronicle he called that day the birthday of the congregation. From then on she was Mother Magdalene.

The community was called, at first, the Sisters of Penance of the Third Order of Francis. In 1869 the words "and of Christian Charity" were added. That is still the name of the congregation.

In those first years her life motto was put to the test. Sister Coleta told later that it was no rarity for there to be nothing at all to eat, and no money to buy food. The cook would then go to Mother Magdalene. She said: my child, do not worry; God will provide. According to Coleta, something always came in time, so that the sisters never came to extreme need.

Van der Zandt, who had once called her a disappointment, wrote in his chronicle that she always remained faithful to her motto. He summed it up in one line: God will provide, and God has truly provided.

Do you know such a time, when you had to live from day to day? Sister Crescentia remembered how Mother Magdalene encouraged the sisters: God is so good, my child, so very good. Her sisters did not make a miracle story of it. They wrote it down as something that happened again and again.

A New Superior

Mother Magdalene remained superior for more than four years. In 1840 Sister Teresia Rooyackers took her place.

Magdalene wanted, so the congregation history of 1917 tells us after the chronicle, to serve her Creator undisturbed in the silence of her cell, and Van der Zandt says he encouraged her in that. He had told her that the burden of the house, with its growth, was becoming heavier every day. On February 13, 1840, a short and decisive answer came, on behalf of the bishop, from Vicar General Neven: Sister Teresia became superior. The sisters had not chosen her. She

was appointed. When Van der Zandt told Magdalene, there was, in his own words, a look of great satisfaction on her face.

On March 12, 1840, Teresia was installed in her office. The young superior received the respect of her sisters with a warm embrace. The most touching moment, the congregation history writes, was the loyalty that old Mother Magdalene promised her. Her eyes shone with joy.

What is certain: after four years the founder was no longer the leader of her own foundation. She remained in the house. She did not leave and did not start something new anywhere else. She remained a sister among the sisters.

Starting something takes courage. Handing over what you yourself began, and then staying and serving under another, perhaps takes even more. How would you react if the work God gave you were entrusted to someone else?

With Outstretched Arms in the Choir

Sister Teresia died already on April 20, 1846. The congregation then numbered twenty-eight sisters. Then came the growth, largely outside Limburg, says the Limburg memorial book.

The congregation history of 1917 gives a list of the houses founded while Mother Magdalene was still alive. In 1848 houses opened in Mook and Oldenzaal. In 1852 the first houses in Germany followed. After that came, among others, Nonnenwerth, Trier, Mönchengladbach, Neeroeteren in Belgium, Brunssum, and, in the year of her death, Almelo. According to the same source, Pope Pius IX approved the congregation in 1852. There were then eighty sisters with vows.

Magdalene herself no longer had an administrative task. Prayer became almost her only occupation, writes the congregation history. Her cell was sober: a hard straw mattress, a little table, an ordinary chair, a crucifix and two pictures on the bare walls. The source calls the rosary her constant friend. She liked best to sit in a corner, with her back to the door. The choir of the chapel and her cell became the places she liked to be most, and her trembling fingers moved more and more often along the beads of her rosary. Sister Coleta once found her in the choir, kneeling, with her arms stretched up. She did not even notice that anyone came in. When Mother Bernardine visited her in 1848, Magdalene did not hear the knocking. Only when someone called "Sister Magdalene!" did she answer: what is it, Reverend Mother?

Her humility has been described too. When Rector Canters once passed her at the communion rail, she went back to her place without murmuring or complaint. Sister Crescentia said she had watched Magdalene closely and had found nothing that deserved the slightest reproof. Her life motto, writes Munster, was an old monastic rule: keep the rule, and the rule will keep you. To Sister Celestine, who was having a hard time, she said: keep up your courage. It will end well. I am praying for you. And to Sister Theatildis, who was afraid of dying, she said that she would not die yet, but would live long.

From those years also comes a saying attributed to her. The mayor's wife came to visit and insisted on speaking with her. Magdalene is said to have said then: from this little house seventeen convents will still come forth before my death. The woman told it thirty years later, and the congregation history includes it in a footnote.

As God Wills

In the summer of 1858 Mother Magdalene became ill. According to the congregation history, she had fluid behind the lungs, and her heart grew weak. Rector Canters gave her the anointing of the sick in the presence of all the sisters.

On the morning of August 7 she tried with great difficulty to get up at the usual hour. At three in the afternoon Mother Celestine came into her cell. Magdalene lay with her eyes closed. At four o'clock the bell rang for vespers, and Celestine went to the choir. They had barely begun when she was hurriedly called back.

At the bedside Magdalene was asked whether she really wanted to leave them. She did not open her eyes, smiled, and said clearly: as God wills. Mother Celestine asked her to pray for the community in heaven. Yes, certainly, she answered, I will do that! Those were her last words. She fell peacefully asleep, without struggle. It was just after four, and it went so quickly that the sisters in the chapel simply kept on praying.

She died on August 7, 1858, in the mother house in Heythuysen, seventy years old. The next day her death was registered in the village. In the record she is simply called Maria Catharina Damen, born in Stevensweert, daughter of Cornelis Damen and Gertruda van Bree. There is nothing in it about Mother Magdalene. The official wrote seventy-one years. Her prayer card also gives August 7. Three days later she was buried in the small cemetery of the convent.

Pastor Van der Zandt outlived her by twelve years. He died on May 12, 1870, eighty-six years old, and received a place close to her grave in the same convent cemetery. The man who had found her unsuited lies beside her. On May 10, 1885, when the congregation was fifty years old, a memorial was unveiled in the cemetery.

After her death, sisters and lay people continued to call on her. The congregation history of 1917 records a few answers to prayer that were told in the houses. In Trier a boy with meningitis is said to have been healed after a novena in December 1909 and January 1910, and the doctor attributed it to her intercession. A sister in Zeddam, diagnosed by a doctor in 1880 with consumption, slowly improved and could go back to work in April 1881. In Columbus in the American state of Ohio, a fifteen-year-old girl recovered in January 1910 after a novena, and in Konitz in Germany a sister got better after a novena. So it stands in the sisters' own book.

Her sisters hoped that Rome would one day declare her blessed. In 1911 Mother Ludmilla asked all the houses in a circular letter to write down answers to prayer, with a view to a process in Rome. On August 27, 1933, seventy-five years after her death, a statue of her was unveiled in Ohé en Laak near the church. She carries the mother house in one hand and the rule book in the other. Newspapers wrote in those days that her beatification was "in preparation." In 1958 another paper said that a process was "pending."

She has not been beatified. When Pope John Paul II addressed the sisters in 1999, he simply called her their foundress.

A Letter from Buffalo

After her death the growth continued, further than she had ever traveled. Houses came in Poland in 1867 and in Indonesia in 1870. On April 5, 1872, sisters in São Leopoldo in Brazil began lessons for twenty-three pupils. By the end of 1873 there were one hundred twenty.

In Germany life became hard for those in religious orders. Bismarck waged a struggle against the influence of the Catholic Church, the *Kulturkampf*. Around that time German Jesuits in Buffalo, in the

United States, asked for sisters for the children of German immigrants. In 1874 three sisters traveled to Buffalo, with the superior general Mother Aloysia Lenders. By September of that year nine sisters were already working in two parishes, St. Ann and St. Michael. Later Stella Niagara was added, on the Niagara River, a name that a friendly Jesuit gave to the property.

On the website of the sisters there, her story still stands. It opens with a servant girl in Maaseik, and with women who in Heythuysen taught religion and needlework to neglected children.

The convent of St. Elisabeth still stands in Heythuysen, Aan de Kreppel 1. The chapel was destroyed in 1944 and rebuilt around 1950. The house is a municipal monument, and elderly people are now cared for there. In Ohé en Laak, on the island where she was born, the primary school was named Mother Magdalene. At the beginning of 1958 a Limburg newspaper wrote that the congregation had decided to buy her birth house on the Maasdijk, to preserve the little farm and set up a memorial chapel in it.

On a June day in 1825, there stood at the start of all that one woman beside a wagon at the rectory. The pastor had ordered two.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on November 19, 1787, in Laak near Stevensweert; work as a servant girl in Maaseik and acquaintance with the Franciscans there; admission to the Third Order of Francis in 1817; religious instruction and needlework lessons for children in Heythuysen together with Pastor Van der Zandt; the first companions (Verkolen, Kirkels, Deckers); permission of the bishop of Liège and founding of the congregation in 1835 on the estate De Kreppel (from 1757); the founding date May 10, 1835; her succession as superior by Sister

Teresia Rooyackers in 1840; expansion mainly outside Limburg; death on August 7, 1858, in Heythuysen (death record of August 8, 1858, prayer card, and congregation history; the Limburg memorial book gives August 6); the name of her mother, Gertruda van Bree (death record); the work in Brazil from 1872 and the journey of sisters to Buffalo in 1874; the statue in Ohé en Laak, unveiled on August 27, 1933 (Limburgsch Dagblad and De Tijd); the present convent St. Elisabeth as a monument.

Only from own testimony or from the organization: the baptism in Echt, the nickname Trieneke and the small parental home; the first communion in secret (1801); the exact date November 12, 1817, and the name of Father Eleutherius Meers; the arrival on June 21, 1825, the anger of Van der Zandt and his words to the driver (from his own chronicle, via the congregation history); her silence and her words "trust in God" (Sister Pacifica); her expression "God will provide" and her words about God's work; the first visit of Maria Deckers in November 1827, the coming of Kirkels and Deckers in the first half of 1828, and their vows on November 9, 1828 (the website of the American sisters gives only the year 1827 for all three); the doubt of Maria Deckers; the journey through the snow, the first refusal by the bishop, the reprimand and the resistance in 1835; the origin of the money; the poverty in the first year (memory of Gertrude Kirkels); the days without food (Sister Coleta); the clothing on February 11, 1836, and the name Magdalena; the appointment of Teresia by Vicar General Neven and Magdalene's reaction; the list of houses up to 1858 and the papal approval in 1852; her prayer life after 1840; her illness, last words, and burial; the memorial of 1885; the call of 1911 with a view to beatification; the stories of answered prayer in Trier, Zeddam, Columbus, and Konitz (only in the congregation's book; no church investigation of them found); the words of Mother Magdalene to Verkolen, Kirkels, Deckers, and Celestine, the red apron,

the words of her father, the pastor's mockery about the purchase and the text of his joke about the habit (all from Munster 1917); the Brazilian dates and the dates for Poland and Indonesia (a Brazilian historical article). The ride with the mayor and the origin of the plan for De Kreppel come from the memory of Sister Pacifica and the chronicle of Van der Zandt.

Additions from the second round of searching (all from Munster 1917, English translation of the congregation history): the words of her father and the neighbors, the red apron, the first months in Heythuysen, the words to Verkolen, Kirkels, and Deckers, the conversation about De Kreppel, the difficulties with the house, the joke about the habit, the bishop on self-will, the description of her cell, the visits of Bernardine and Canters, the sayings to Celestine and Theatildis, and the stories of answered prayer. Munster uses dollars for the loan; I left out the amount. On the purchase of De Kreppel, Munster notes that the pastor first laughed and then pressed for it himself, which in the story stands beside his own chronicle. Whether the stories of answered prayer were investigated by the church, I did not find.

Unconfirmed: that she called 1817 "the greatest day of her life" and then received the name Magdalena (only on the internet; no older source found, and the congregation history does speak of "this great event in her life," but that is the writer speaking, not Catharina; she received the name Magdalena only in 1836, at her clothing in Heythuysen); the vision of De Kreppel (only the memory of Sister Pacifica, in conflict with the chronicle of Van der Zandt, who presents the plan as his own idea); the saying about seventeen convents (a memory of the mayor's wife, thirty years later; whether Magdalene really said it that way beforehand cannot be checked); that the primary school Mother Magdalene in Ohé en Laak was named after her (plausible, but the yearbook of the

local history society gives only the name). The 1958 plan to buy her birth house and set up a chapel in it I know only from one newspaper report; whether it was carried out I did not check.

Beatification: she has not been beatified. From 1911 the congregation collected answers to prayer for a process in Rome. Newspapers called the beatification "in preparation" in 1933 and wrote in 1958 that a process was "pending." In the overview of ongoing cases of the Hagiography Circle she does not appear under the death year 1858, and the pope gave her no title in 1999. A Franciscan calendar of saints on the internet does call her "S. of God" (Servant of God). Whether a case was ever formally opened, and where it ended up, remains uncertain.

Interpretation: whether Magdalene stepped down in 1840 out of humility or was removed differs by source. The congregation history of 1917 speaks of her own wish, encouraged by the pastor; the new superior was indeed appointed by the bishop and not elected by the sisters. A book from 1938, the novel *De dochter van Neer Daemen* by Markus de Bruin, sees it differently. According to a review in a Limburg yearbook, it rests on re-examined sources, and the reviewer writes that "this foundress was removed from her office as superior" and that neglect and humiliation were not spared her. What exactly was going on between the pastor, the bishop, and the sisters cannot be made out from the sources I could see. Almost everything we know about her inner life comes from sources of her own congregation.

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Jan de Liefde: The Pastor on the Bridge over the Goudsbloemgracht

It was a beautiful afternoon in September 1849. A man of thirty-four stood on a bridge over the Goudsbloemgracht in Amsterdam and looked along the water. On both sides stood a double row of wretched little houses along the dirty canal. The sight surpassed anything he had imagined.

Beside him stood a brother from his circle. The man on the bridge asked: "Could nothing be done to bring Christ into this place of darkness and misery?" And he gave himself the answer, in words from the gospel. This was precisely a place for Him "who came to seek the lost and to save sinners."

A moment later he saw a poor fishwife standing in a doorway, with a friendly expression on her face. He spoke to her. Might he use her front room one evening a week for a Bible reading? She said yes. On the first evening five poor women came and a blind organ grinder.

That man was Jan de Liefde. He had no church anymore and no steady job. Four years earlier his own congregation had let him

go. From that front room grew work that outlived him: Sunday schools, a school for ragged children, a society for the gospel among the people, a free congregation. He wrote the first Christian youth magazine in the Netherlands and more than a hundred books and booklets. And he carried with him a question that many Christians know: why does God no longer speak as He does in the Bible?

Whoever wants to understand him must begin in the sexton's house of a Mennonite church.

The Sexton's House on the Singel

Jan de Liefde was born on December 25, 1814, in Amsterdam. The family lived in Haarlem but moved to the capital a few months before his birth, after his father's business had failed.

His parents were Jakob de Liefde and Alida Overbeek. In 1815 his father found work with a glass manufacturer. In 1819 he became sexton of the united Mennonite congregation in Amsterdam. The family moved into the sexton's house on the Singel, and there Jan grew up, next to the church. The members of the fairly large family were, so writes his biographer Sierk Coolsma, "bound to one another with heartfelt love."

Jan was a weak child and fell behind in his growth. In the fresh air of Hengelo, in Overijssel, where his mother's family lived, he recovered. His mother died when he was still young. In 1826 his father married her younger sister, Johanna.

In 1832 Jan began at the seminary of the Mennonite Society, the training for Mennonite ministers, and he took classes at the Athenaeum Illustre, the forerunner of the Amsterdam university. He had two teachers with very different views of the faith. Samuel Muller thought rationalistically, with reason as the measure. Wopko Cnoop Koopmans was more orthodox. At the end of his

studies Jan took Koopmans's side. Muller nevertheless continued to regard him as a beloved student.

His final study in 1837 was about man before and after the fall. The paper was so unusual that the board had it assessed by professors. Jan passed and that year became a *proponent*: eligible to be called as a pastor.

A Little Book in the Stagecoach

On December 10, 1837, Jan was installed as pastor in Woudsend, a village in Friesland. That same year he married his cousin, Berendina Albertha Dijk. She died on October 14, 1838, in Woudsend, not even a year after the wedding. In the same year his father also died. The sermons he gave in Woudsend he later found vague and unclear.

On April 7, 1839, he began in Zutphen. Professor Muller had arranged the call. The Mennonite congregation had about sixty members. Jan received a salary of a thousand guilders, with a personal allowance of two hundred guilders that Muller arranged for him.

At that time he was uneasy about his own soul. Then he came across a little book by the English pastor John Angell James, in Dutch *Bestuur en aanmoediging voor ieder, die ernstig de zaligheid zoekt* ("Guidance and Encouragement for Everyone Who Seriously Seeks Salvation"). He read it while traveling, in a *diligence*, a stagecoach. The little book made a deep impression on him and brought him, as a biographical dictionary sums it up, "to firmness of conviction." It was the end of 1839.

Years later Jan wrote a letter to a young friend. In it he told how he had then gone to Christ with his need. The *Volksmagazijn* printed the letter in 1855. "Look, I will never forget that, however old I become,"

he wrote. "It was all at once cleared out of the way and immediately in order."

In another writing from that same year he looked back on his first years as a pastor. He wrote it plainly: "I too was once a preacher of soul-killing errors." Then followed: "But it pleased the Lord in His adorable grace to open my eyes to His light."

On July 8, 1840, he married Esther Sophie Molenaar in Leiden. She was born on May 8, 1817, in Leiden, the daughter of Rev. Izaac Molenaar. They had eleven children. A number of them died young, in London or in Amsterdam.

"He Loves You!"

The pastor O.G. Heldring, one of the leading men of the Réveil, stood by Jan in Zutphen. (The Réveil was the Dutch revival movement of the nineteenth century, which called people back to a personal, living faith.) Years later, in 1850, Heldring included a letter from Jan and Jan's answer in his *Volks-Almanak voor Tijd en Eeuwigheid* ("People's Almanac for Time and Eternity"). In that answer Jan wrote that he knew that Christ had truly died for him and had borne his sins.

He also described how that faith worked in him. It continued night and day, also on the days when he felt cold and insensitive. It kept "whispering steadily in him: He loves you! He does not cast out! He is willing! He has paid in full!"

I have been writing about God's voice for years, and I recognize this. A pastor is not describing a thundering voice or a vision here. He speaks of a soft and lasting word that kept coming on the days when he felt nothing. Jan himself called it a whispering, and we have nothing for that beyond his own pen.

Danger! Danger!

In Zutphen Jan began to preach differently. From 1843 his message became increasingly orthodox, and that drew a crowd. The small Mennonite church filled up with members of the Reformed church. Many of his own members dropped away. Few Mennonites at that time understood the Réveil, the revival movement to which Jan now belonged.

He lived and studied in those years together with J.B. de Pinto, a Jew who had become a Christian. Together they delved into prophecy and into the writings of the English Bible teacher John Nelson Darby.

In 1844 the Seceded (*Afgescheiden*) classis of Apeldoorn invited him, though not as a full member. The plan died out. (The Seceded were those who had broken away from the state church in 1834.) In July of that year the Seceded congregation in Lochem let him preach. The provincial assembly of the Seceded disapproved of that.

That same year his pamphlet *Gevaar! Gevaar! en geen vrede!* ("Danger! Danger! and No Peace!") appeared. It followed a conflict with the Frisian pastor Joost Halbertsma and the professors Muller and Boeke. In the Mennonite brotherhood it was read as a declaration of war. Muller let him know that the allowance of two hundred guilders would lapse if the conflict did not stop.

The knot was cut at the market. The maid came home one morning with what other girls had called out to her: "Your master is a bread-and-butter preacher." For Jan that was decisive. He told the church council his decision. On October 26, 1845, he received an honorable discharge, with an allowance for four years of five hundred guilders a year, half of his salary. He still started a small free congregation with a long name, the Apostolic-Christian-Seceded Congregation. It existed only a few months.

What do you do when your conviction costs you your job? The years that followed show a man who is searching.

On the Way to America

In 1845 his story *De diligence, of de reis naar de stad der erfenis* ("The Stagecoach, or the Journey to the City of Inheritance") also appeared. It was an allegory on the model of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. A student, Benjamin, travels by stagecoach from Amsterdam to his parental home in Deventer in hope of an inheritance, and the journey stands for the way to heaven. Experts in children's literature see the book as the beginning of Protestant Christian children's literature in the Netherlands. Coolsma counts it among his best writings. Whoever knows that his own conversion began in a stagecoach reads that story with different eyes.

In 1846 Jan moved with his family to Moers, in Germany. He followed a seminary for teachers there, because he would afterward lead a Christian teacher-training college in Nijmegen. Groen van Prinsterer, the statesman of the Réveil, paid a large part of the trip. Afterward Jan was for six months acting director of the Rhenish Mission in Barmen, while his family stayed in Moers. A permanent appointment did not come, and the teacher-training college did not go ahead either. His views on baptism stood in the way.

From the end of 1847 he lived in Elberfeld. There he wrote the first part of a general world history, which appeared in 1849.

As early as 1846 he had thought of America. In the spring of 1848 he really wanted to emigrate. Heldring heard of it, hurried to him in Amsterdam, and talked him out of it at the last moment. On May 3, 1848, the family came back to the Netherlands. They first went to live in Abcoude, because life there was cheaper. In February 1849 they moved to Herengracht 63 in Amsterdam.

Seven months later he stood on that bridge.

Five Women and a Blind Organ Grinder

The Goudsbloemgracht lay in the Jordaan. The canal had come from the Fransche Pad, a path along a ditch outside the old city. In 1857 it was filled in and became the Willemsstraat.

The story of that afternoon Jan told himself, in his *Volksmagazijn* of 1856, and it returned in the jubilee report of the society that came out of it.

Every week more people came to the fishwife's front room. The little house was enlarged until more than two hundred people fit in it. On November 28, 1854, Jan could take into use elsewhere on the Goudsbloemgracht a hall for two hundred fifty listeners. According to a reviewer of Coolsma's biography, a moral renewal of the Fransche Pad began that way. Later Jan did the same in the Jonkerstraat and the Ridderstraat.

In the autumn of 1849 he had himself immersed by the Baptist Millard. He had become a Baptist. In 1854 he withdrew his objection to infant baptism, and he then regretted that his student Eduard Gerdes had become a Baptist. He could seem whimsical and was sometimes headstrong. He sometimes took his own expectations for what God had revealed. So he believed that Christ would soon return and reign as king over Palestine. The same reviewer holds on to what he was at the core: a converted person who called others to conversion.

On Sundays from May 1849 Jan preached in Tecum Habita, a hall on the Herengracht near the Hartenstraat, which he rented for six hundred guilders a year. In August 1851 the Seceded pastor Anthony Brummelkamp took over a few services there for him.

From those months a note from his diary has been preserved. On May 27, 1851, his wife was with the family in Hengelo, and Jan ate bread with sugar water alone at home. He thought of his children. "Upon this I place them all one by one before the Lord and pray for His blessing over them," he wrote.

He kept writing. From 1849 to 1855 he was editor of *Timotheüs*, the first Christian youth magazine in the Netherlands. His stories were lively and his answers to readers' letters often witty. At the beginning of 1850 he started the weekly *De Handwijzer* ("The Signpost"), intended to show the way to those who had gone astray. When that paper stopped after criticism from Réveil circles, the monthly *Volksmagazijn voor Burger en Boer* ("People's Magazine for Citizen and Farmer") followed in 1852, which appeared until the end of 1860. It had a combative tone. "We hate colorlessness," the editors wrote. The paper did want to show its color, "the blood color of the cross."

He also wrote school booklets for the very youngest, such as *De Schoolvriend* ("The School Friend," 1848-1849), and later Christmas stories for Sunday school, such as *Het Kerstverhaal* ("The Christmas Story," 1857) and *De Vrijbuiter* ("The Freebooter," 1862).

He trained evangelists, usually six or seven at a time. Eduard Gerdes, who later like him became a free evangelist and writer, came to study with him in 1856 and lived in his house. Friends from the Réveil, among them Groen van Prinsterer, supported the work with money.

Ebenezer on the Spuistraat

Tecum Habita became too small. Jan bought a complex of houses behind his new home on the Bloemmarkt, with the front on the Nieuwezijds Achterburgwal, today's Spuistraat. It became a church with three galleries. He named it Eben-Haëzer. The name

comes from the book of Samuel. After a victory over the Philistines, Samuel set up a stone and said: *Thus far the LORD has helped us.* (1 Samuel 7:12).

On Sunday, April 10, 1853, Jan preached there for the first time. His text came from Acts, about the Christians who scattered after the persecution in Jerusalem: *Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.* (Acts 8:4).

The building was heavily mortgaged. To raise money Jan had to travel ever farther, also to Great Britain.

In October 1854 it came to a break with his Réveil friends. At a meeting of the Christian Friends he defended the thesis that the Reformed Church had "murdered more souls than saved." He told the pastors that they were never in danger of becoming martyrs. At the meeting of October 24 and 25, a motion of disapproval was adopted, and Jan left. Later he wrote bitterly that he would light a lantern in broad daylight to search for Christians among the orthodox.

Three months after that break, in January 1855, something new stood there. From his work among the poor came the society Tot Heil des Volks ("For the Salvation of the People"). It was to bring the gospel to the Dutch people and support Christian education.

The first thing the society did was to open a *bewaarschool*, an infant school, for ragged children. That happened on July 17, 1855. A sewing school, knitting schools, and Sunday schools were added. In 1861 Heil des Volks had seven Sunday schools with six hundred twenty pupils. Outside Amsterdam the branches disappeared. In Amsterdam the society remained, and in 1904 it celebrated its golden jubilee there.

The Mennonite lexicon calls Jan an organizer of social work and a Sunday school leader.

A Congregation Without the State

On Sunday, July 27, 1856, Jan de Liefde founded the Free Evangelical Congregation in Amsterdam. That morning he preached on John 8:36: *Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed*. In the evening he confirmed the congregation and four elected elders. He began with eighty believing brothers and sisters, and in 1857 the congregation counted more than a hundred fifty adult members. Sixty-three members came from the Reformed congregation and sent its church council a letter of separation. It was a congregation outside any church association, independent of the state and of fixed funds, and also a missionary society.

Jan believed that church and state should be separate, and school and state too. Nothing was so objectionable to him as a school with the Bible that lived on state subsidy. In this he clashed with many friends from the Réveil, among them Groen van Prinsterer.

The Seceded reacted in a divided way. Simon van Velzen was critical. Anthony Brummelkamp saw faults but called the new congregation "of one spirit with us." A church historian wrote in 2023 that the discussion soon turned to election and atonement, an old point of dispute in the Reformed world. Bernard Kruithof gave a chapter about him in 2009 a telling title: "The Most Unchurchly Christian in the Netherlands."

The congregation had financial difficulties. Wealthy pillars of support stayed away. In April 1860 J.H. Gunning of Hilversum was called as second pastor, but he did not accept the call, and the number of members declined. Eben-Haëzer was sold and became a school. Around 1863 Jan withdrew with his people to Tecum Habita, where it had begun.

The Curtain of Clouds

What was Jan de Liefde like as a person? Allard Pierson wrote about him in *Oudere tijdgenooten* ("Older Contemporaries," 1888), a book about the men of the Réveil. That stands out, because Pierson stood for modern theology, and Jan had in 1864 still written a book against him, *Waarschijnlijkheid of Zekerheid?* ("Probability or Certainty?").

Pierson draws a small, somewhat angular man full of movement, like Da Costa and Capadose. "His genuine and open Dutch face sparkled with a more southern liveliness." Jan was sober-minded, says Pierson, and had nothing of a zealot or mystic. "He had a sharp eye for the comical in the world and was exceptionally good-natured." Writer, orator, poet, composer, humorist, and theologian he was, in turn or all at once, and restlessly at work.

Then follows a passage that is important for this book. For Jan it was certain that God had once spoken literally to man. But why was that so many hundreds of years ago? "Why did the curtain of clouds never tear now?" Was it not needed more than ever now, with the number of unbelievers growing every day? Those questions assailed him more and more, writes Pierson, as young men from the Réveil's own circle could not accept the faith of their parents.

Do you recognize that question? You read about Moses at the burning bush, about Samuel hearing his name called, about the voice at the baptism of Jesus. And then you look at your own life, and the clouds stay closed.

This man asked that question aloud, while daily speaking about God, to poor women in a front room and to full halls on the Herengracht. He himself had described how faith kept whispering in him that God loved him. How those two went together in him, the whispering and the silence of heaven, no source says.

London

On April 17, 1864, Jan said farewell to the congregation in Amsterdam and to the one in Haarlem. He preached on 2 Timothy 1:13, about holding to the pattern of the sound words that Timothy had heard from Paul. On May 3 he crossed the Channel with his family to London. The pastor A. Hardenberg took over the congregation.

There were several reasons. English publishers, for whom he was already working, pressed him. In the Netherlands he no longer had steady work, and he saw no future there for his sons. A history of the children's book also mentions financial need. He hoped to earn a living in London with his pen.

In England he was not unknown. In 1862 his collection of stories *The Postman's Bag and Other Stories* had appeared in London. He also wrote a humorous book about the trouble a Dutchman has with English, *A Dutchman's Difficulties in English*.

From 1863 he had traveled, on commission from an English publisher, to philanthropic institutions on the Continent, among them the beggars' colonies in the Netherlands. He visited twenty-six and described fifteen, first in English for the magazine *Christian Work*. In 1867 *Vruchten des geloofs* ("Fruits of Faith") appeared in Dutch.

Homesickness came quickly. On his fiftieth birthday, in December 1864, he wrote that he wanted to go back to Holland at the first opportunity. The English climate was bad for his weakened health, and the winter of 1867 to 1868 was hard. In the summer of 1868 he returned to the Netherlands. He would not leave the country again.

Back to the City

He first went to live in Haarlem, the city his parents came from. He was already sick. He coughed, often coughed up blood, and had

fevers. In September 1868 better days came and he took good walks again, but the recovery did not last.

On February 7, 1869, he wrote from his room a letter to his congregation in Amsterdam. He had wanted to be with them at Christmas, he wrote, but he could not leave the house. He did not conceal how he was doing. Thoughts of death and even of eternal loss passed over his soul. Thirty years earlier he had found rest in a stagecoach. His faith kept him standing, because it did not rest on his own feeling. "My faith rests even now on grounds outside me," he wrote, on what God had done in Christ. He gave his congregation a verse from the Psalms: *My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.* (Psalm 73:26).

In the fall of 1869 the family moved to Amsterdam, his birth city, to Prinsengracht 256, near the Lauriergracht. In England he had often said that he wanted to live and die in Holland. His mind remained clear to the end, and he worked as long as his body allowed.

"Could This Be Dying?"

About his last hour, what Coolsma recorded has been told. Jan told his eldest daughter that he would get up in a moment, because he wanted to dictate something to her. At that moment his brother-in-law Frowein came in. He saw from his face that the end was near, told him so, and asked whether he wanted to say anything more. Jan raised himself up. "Could this be dying?" He lay down again and said: "I forgive all who have caused me grief, and I commend my wife and children to God's protection. My hope stands firm, in..." He got no further.

It was December 6, 1869. He was fifty-four years old. His wife placed an advertisement in the Opregte Haarlemsche Courant. After a long illness he had died unexpectedly that night, she wrote.

The gospel of grace, which he had proclaimed for years, had also on his deathbed been "the peace of his soul and the only resting place of his heart."

On December 10 he was buried in the Oosterbegraafplaats. Rev. P. Huet happened to meet the procession, heard who was being buried, and walked along. At the grave he spoke. He had known De Liefde as a sincere man, who came out honestly for his conviction. "He has departed in the assurance of faith," said Huet. Holleman, the oldest of his evangelists, spoke too. De Liefde was small in person, he said, but great in his work.

He left much written work. Coolsma counted in 1917 one hundred nineteen titles: polemical writings, children's stories, poems, school books, songs, and sermons. His books were often reprinted, some until around 1900. Coolsma did complain that only the Mennonite library preserved his work.

The reviewer of Coolsma's book gave in 1919 a judgment that sticks. All in all, Jan de Liefde had been in his time a yeast, he wrote, and not a builder. His church on the Spuistraat became a school and his free congregation stayed small. The society that began in a front room on the Goudsbloemgracht celebrated its jubilee half a century later.

You can still walk over the Willemsstraat in Amsterdam, but there is no canal anymore and no bridge. On the spot where a pastor without a church stopped on an afternoon in September, there is now an ordinary street in the Jordaan. Somewhere there a fishwife stood in the doorway, with a friendly face, and said yes.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on December 25, 1814, in Amsterdam (the family came from Haarlem; also so

registered in the Amsterdam population register of 1851-1853; only one lexicon gives Haarlem as the birthplace); parents Jakob de Liefde and Alida Overbeek, father sexton with the Mennonites; *proponent* in 1837; pastor in Woudsend (1837-1839) and Zutphen (from April 7, 1839); first marriage to Berendina Albertha Dijk and second to Esther Sophie Molenaar (July 8, 1840); the pamphlet *Gevaar! Gevaar! en geen vrede!* (1844) and the discharge on October 26, 1845; *De diligence* (1845) and *Timotheüs* (1849-1855); preaching in Tecum Habita; Brummelkamp's services in August 1851; the break with the Christian Friends in 1854; Tot Heil des Volks (1855); founding of the Free Evangelical Congregation on Sunday, July 27, 1856 (Coolsma, referring to the *Volksmagazijn* of 1856; the *Handboek christelijk Nederland* of 2008; the Seceded paper *De Bazuin* writes on October 31, 1856 that the congregation had "recently" made itself known); farewell on April 17, 1864 and departure to London in 1864; death on December 6, 1869, in Amsterdam (death notice by his wife in the Opregte Haarlemsche Courant of December 10, 1869) and burial in the Oosterbegraafplaats.

Only from own testimony: the conversion in the stagecoach and the words "Look, I will never forget that" (letter to a young friend, *Volksmagazijn* 1855); the words "He loves you!" (answer to Heldring, printed in 1850; the dating around 1840 from older sources is not confirmed); the diary note of May 27, 1851; the conversation on the bridge and the fishwife, which Coolsma takes from Jan's own *Volksmagazijn* of 1856 and from the jubilee report of Heil des Volks; his doubt why God no longer spoke, which Pierson renders with Jan's own sentence; the letter to his congregation of February 7, 1869 (printed in Coolsma). That the young pastor in Zutphen was uneasy about his soul rests on the conversion stories he himself wrote later.

Rests on one biography (Coolsma 1917, consulted as a scan on DBNL, partly via the lexicon of 1949): the health and Hengelo; the maid and the word "bread-and-butter preacher"; the German years in Moers, Barmen, and Elberfeld; Heldring's intervention in the America plan; the growth of the Bible reading to halls for 200 and 250 people; the immersion by Millard; the first sermon in Eben-Haëzer on April 10, 1853; the infant school of July 17, 1855, and the Sunday schools of 1861; the reasons for the departure to London; the journey along twenty-six institutions; his illness in Haarlem, the address Prinsengracht 256, and the speeches of Huet and Holleman at the grave. His last words Coolsma gives as tradition (he introduces it with a phrase like "it is told"), without saying who passed them on. The name of the brother on the bridge Coolsma gives in a footnote as something that is told: it is said to have been E. Kuiper. In the story he therefore remains nameless.

Unconfirmed or disputed: the birthplace Haarlem (one lexicon) and the place of death Haarlem (the student register); both are contradicted by the other sources. The year of departure to England is, according to the reviewer of 1919, 1865. That reviewer gives his age at death as 55; according to the dates he was 54. For the founding of the Free Evangelical Congregation the lexicon of 1949 gives April 27, 1856. That lexicon itself relies on Coolsma, who writes July 27, and stands alone with that date; I consider it a mistake. A newspaper report from 1856 about the founding I did not find. The reviewer of 1919 places the church on the Oudezijds Achterburgwal; Coolsma names the Nieuwezijds Achterburgwal, today's Spuistraat, behind his home on the Bloemmarkt, which fits the Nieuwezijds side. The death record of Amsterdam (1869) is not in a searchable index; the death notice does confirm day and place. According to that notice he died "tonight, unexpectedly," which is hard to reconcile with the story that on the last morning he wanted to get up to dictate; the text

therefore says “his last hour.” In the scanned text the age is given as “almost 56 years”; according to his birth date he became almost 55. For the amount of the allowance in 1845 the scan reads “1500”; five hundred guilders a year is the reading that fits a half salary.

Interpretation: that Jan de Liefde was more yeast than builder is the judgment of the reviewer of 1919, not a count. The picture of whimsicality and headstrongness comes from the same reviewer.

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Jacqueline van der Waals: One Voice Among Many

Amsterdam, 1894. In the Aula of the university, Professor Pierre Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye is giving a series of lectures. The title is "Certainty and Doubt." Among the listeners sits the daughter of a professor of physics, a woman in her mid-twenties. Her name is Jacqueline van der Waals.

The professor draws her attention to *Brand*, the play by the Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen. Brand is a minister who demands everything of himself and of everyone around him, because he wants what God wants. Chantepie is among the critics who find the play bewildering. Jacqueline says nothing. But inside her, resistance rises. Later she called it an "inner protest," writes her biographer A.C.S. de Koe, a year after her death.

She carried that resistance with her for more than twenty years. Only in 1915 did she write it down, in the journal Onze Eeuw. There she called it her "silent contradiction." And she wrote the sentence she had held back all those years: "Well, I agreed with Brand." She believed that Ibsen, through the mouth of his minister, had spoken the truth, the truth "that God gave him to speak."

That quiet woman in the Aula became the poet whom a reference work later called the foremost Protestant poet of her generation. Her collection *Laatste verzen* (Last Poems), written on her deathbed, went through eighteen printings. The hymn *Wat de toekomst brengen moge* (Whatever the Future May Bring) is still sung in churches. Whoever reads her poems hears a woman who kept talking honestly to God, even when she did not understand Him. And who listened, until it went quiet inside her.

It began in The Hague, in the house of a teacher.

A Carpenter's Son with a Nobel Prize

Jacqueline Elisabeth van der Waals was born on June 26, 1868, in 's-Gravenhage (The Hague). At home she was called Lien. Her parents had her baptized in the Walloon church, the French-speaking Protestant congregation of the city.

Her father was Johannes Diderik van der Waals, a teacher in The Hague and later director of the HBS (a Dutch secondary school). He was the son of a carpenter from Leiden. His parents could not afford secondary school for him, and he worked his way up from schoolteacher to scientist. In 1877 he became professor of physics in Amsterdam. The family moved with him. Jacqueline was nine.

Her father would become world famous. In 1910 he received the Nobel Prize in Physics. He was religiously inclined, though he never became a member of a church, and Henk van der Ent, who edited her collected poems, speaks of a mystical faith rooted in the Bible. At home he spent much time in his study and kept his distance from his children. In July 1883 he wrote them a letter that begins: "Now, dear, good, beloved children!" He was sorry, he wrote, that he could not make their lives as pleasant as he wished.

There were four children, three girls and a boy. Jacqueline was the second. The oldest sister was called Annie, the youngest Jo.

The Front Room with the Closed Curtains

Her mother, Anna Magdalena Smit, had tuberculosis. She died on December 28, 1881, thirty-four years old, after sixteen years of marriage. She died in Nieuwer-Amstel, the municipality that then bordered Amsterdam. Jacqueline was thirteen.

Her mother died at peace with death and sure of her faith. The girl saw it, and it made a deep impression on her. Her father almost broke under the loss. His next publication did not appear until 1890, after urging from Kamerlingh Onnes.

The house grew quiet. From 1881 to 1902, the curtains of the front room stayed closed. In the armchair opposite the father's worktable stood the portrait of his wife. His student Kohnstamm later wrote about it: to touch that portrait, or to put anything on that chair, "that was sacrilege." The oldest daughter, fifteen years old, took over the care of the household.

Jacqueline grew up in a house where grief had a room of its own.

A Mountain of 3,300 Meters

She did not become a languishing daughter. She attended the HBS for girls in Amsterdam. In 1887 she earned her certificate for primary school teaching, and ten years later the secondary certificate in history. She studied largely at home. She learned Norwegian, Danish and Italian, and Swedish as well. She delved into philosophy and theology.

At home there was great attention for literature, music and theater. She took piano lessons, drew and kept a herbarium. She played tennis, ice skated, cycled and swam. In an old photograph she stands

in tennis clothes, racket in hand, right in front of the poet Herman Gorter. They belonged to the same club. There was no more between them than small talk about sports, writes Anneke Reitsma, who wrote about her in the Bzzlletin.

In the summer of 1896, when she was twenty-eight, she climbed a mountain of almost 3,300 meters in the Tyrol. Later she also went into the mountains of Switzerland.

Gerard van Eckeren wrote at her death that she loved earthly life and kept loving it. Her nature poems are about birds, the month of March, a little pasture for goats. She looked closely at what God had made, and she enjoyed it.

"I Agreed with Brand!"

Back to that question from 1894. Why did that harsh minister touch her so deeply?

In her article of 1915 she explains. Brand asks people to want what God wants, even when it leads to defeat. His God seems hard. She believed He is a God of love, and that grace only comes once one's own will has surrendered completely. She also admitted honestly why she was so sure: her agreement rested on "personal sympathy." She did not want to defend that. She only wanted to show that Ibsen himself stood on the side of his hero.

What put the pen in her hand in 1915 was a new series of lectures. In 1912 Professor Van Dijk spoke in Amsterdam about *Brand*. Those lectures awakened what had slumbered all that time, she wrote. In 1919 she returned to it once more, with a piece about Ibsen's letters. After her death a writer in Onze Eeuw summed it up in her own exclamation: "I agreed with Brand!"

She was a woman of duty. In her notebook, on February 3, 1899, it says: "Resting is nowadays not relaxation but duty." The Kritisch Lexicon (a Dutch literary reference work) sums up her ideal as surrender to God and the doing of one's duty. She read the medieval mystics, such as Hadewych, Ruusbroec, Eckhart and Thomas à Kempis. In an essay titled "Being or Doing" she argued against Eckhart, who placed being above doing.

Do you recognize that? You hear something in church or from the mouth of someone you respect, and something in you says: that is not how it is. You do not say it aloud. You are not yet sure, or you do not yet have the words. Jacqueline waited more than twenty years before she wrote down what she thought.

One Voice Among Many

She wrote from a young age. At first she sent a few poems under the initials E.V. to Albert Verwey, one of the well-known poets of the day. They came back rejected, with a short note.

On January 31, 1899, she wrote in her notebook about the feeling of being overlooked. That was not true, she wrote. At most she was incognito. "I would not want to be overlooked." Her biographer De Koe speaks of a strong need for spiritual incognito. Her faith was the deepest and most personal thing she had, and that is why it was hard for her to show it.

In 1900 her first collection, *Verzen* (Poems), appeared with the publisher Bohn in Haarlem. No name stood on the title page. It said U.E.V., the abbreviation of *Una ex Vocibus*. That is how she named herself, with the self-knowledge of modesty, wrote Van Eckeren. He translated it as "one voice among many."

She wanted to speak without standing in the foreground. In a sonnet from *Nieuwe verzen* (New Poems) she wrote about herself: *I*

know well that I am proud. The writer in Onze Eeuw saw it this way after her death: her humility grew out of that pride. He also noticed her humor, a controlled play with seriousness.

Chantepie de la Saussaye, the man with whom she had quietly disagreed in 1894, had followed her work for years with great interest. At his home she met the editors of Onze Eeuw. There she also met Reverend G.F. Haspels. He quickly realized that she was the poet behind U.E.V. It was his influence that persuaded her to publish under her own name. Her second collection, *Nieuwe verzen*, appeared in 1909 with Jacqueline E. van der Waals on the cover.

A Double Life

In the meantime she taught history. First from 1901 to 1904 at Middenbosch, a school for girls in Doorn. She was in Doorn only part of the week and kept living in Amsterdam. De Koe speaks of a double life, between the school and the house in Amsterdam, between teaching and her own studies and poems. In 1904 she chose study and writing. From 1908 to 1917 she taught history at Het Kopje in Bloemendaal. From 1917 she taught at the School for Social Work in Amsterdam.

In Amsterdam she worked with the Association for Christian Social Work, the Koning Willemshuis. For years she was acting secretary there, with a special interest in youth work, wrote De Standaard (a Dutch daily newspaper) at her death. Through that association she took part in the fight against alcohol abuse and in the care of the elderly. According to the Kritisch Lexicon she also led study groups for women.

She kept writing. In 1903 a piece appeared with the title "He Who Doubts His Own Doubt." For her, doubt was not an end point. You could also doubt your doubt. In 1906 her only novel, *Noortje Velt*,

came out, first in installments in Onze Eeuw, a year later as a book. Some reference works see much of herself in it. De Koe warned precisely against looking for her life in the book.

She also translated, among other things a book on mysticism by the Dane Edvard Lehmann and stories about village ministers. In 1918 her collection *Iris* appeared.

With What Shall the Salt Be Salted?

Whoever reads her poems in order does not see a straight line upward. There was surrender and there was rebellion. There was trust in the God of the Old Testament, and there was dealing with a hidden God. Reitsma writes that she stayed faithful all her life to the Protestant faith of her youth. She stayed, and she struggled.

In *Nieuwe verzen* there is a poem titled "Bitterness," which ends with her unbelief, laid down before God. In the same book a sonnet begins with the line *When I had brought my doubt to rest*. Another sonnet says she is weary of her sin, and of her remorse with it.

In 1920 a few new poems of hers appeared in Onze Eeuw. One is called "Evening on the Balcony." She sits outside in the setting sun and smells linden blossom and hay. A farmer's wagon passes. First she hears the rolling and the singing, then loud laughter, then the shrill laugh of a woman. She no longer feels firm ground under her feet. Later, inside at the table, she asks a question she knows from the words of Jesus: *With what shall the salt be salted, / That has lost its savor?*

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? (Matthew 5:13).

Then the conversation at the table turns to the plans for tomorrow. No answer comes. The question hangs over an ordinary evening.

She was a Christian poet, read by Christian readers. She could have written down only certainty. She wrote down what she saw and heard, even when it troubled her.

In 1921 her study of the Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard appeared. She saw in him a great artist. According to Reitsma, his thinking shaped how she herself looked at life and poetry.

Summer 1921

In 1920 she decided to live on her own. She was past fifty and was about to leave her father's house. In those same days she began to suffer with her stomach. In the summer of 1921 it was diagnosed: stomach cancer. The disease was already so advanced that an operation was pointless. She was fifty-three.

She refused painkillers. Why, the sources do not say. I am not going to guess either.

What she did do is in her last collection. She kept writing. One of her last poems she dictated from her bed. Among them are poems about the seasons, about birds, about a little rose tree. There are poems for people she had lost. One is called "In Memoriam P.D. Ch. d.l.S." The initials point to Chantepie de la Saussaye, the professor from the Aula.

The poem is eight lines long and begins like this: *I weep for words that stayed unspoken*. She had wanted to comfort him in his grief, she writes, and to thank him for what he was and for what he did for her. She never said it or wrote it, out of reluctance to use the big word. Now that he is gone, she weeps for everything she kept silent and what he does not know.

And there are poems about her own dying. The Kritisch Lexicon counts nine. In "Since I Know" she writes that the people around

her anxiously avoid the harsh word. She notices that everything has become fuller and sweeter. The air is fragrant. Strangers and friends she greets more warmly than before. And then, in the middle of the bustle of an ordinary day, she writes: *Suddenly I feel God's smile upon me.*

When You Spoke to Me

The poem "Moritura te salutat" has a Latin title: she who is about to die greets you. It is a prayer. She asks God whether this road, which is His road, is also hers. She does not know. Then she writes: *All my wishes and desires fell silent, / When You spoke to me, I did not speak against it.*

She does not ask about the sorrow of her own heart. She prays that the amen of her days will be marred by no complaint.

I have been writing for years about what it means to hear the voice of God. Here lies a woman of fifty-three with cancer. She writes of no miracle and no healing. She writes that God spoke and that it went quiet inside her. The woman who inwardly protested in 1894 protests no more. Her questions are not all answered. She has laid them down with Someone she trusted.

In another poem from the collection, "God's Presence," she reflects on something strange. When she feels God strongest around her, she seems to possess Him least. And when she misses Him like a distant friend, she feels happiest in His love. Then she asks: *Must not he who sees God die?* If that is so, let Him let her die. Heaven was never what she was after. *So let me die, my God, when have I ever asked for Your eternal bliss?*

What would you ask for, if you knew you did not have long? More time? Answers? Jacqueline wanted to see God.

Mother

In the middle of the collection stands a poem titled "Mother." The speaker imagines that after death she wakes and sees her mother again, after a long separation. May she then kneel before her like a child, *With my head in your lap?*... And what will her mother say? The poem ends with a question: *When you lay your young, white hand / On this old, gray hair?*

She names no name and no year. But the mother in the poem has a young hand, and the daughter gray hair. Anna Smit was thirty-four years old when she died. Her daughter wrote this forty years later, on her sickbed.

April 29, 1922

She died on April 29, 1922, in Amsterdam, fifty-three years old. The death notice in the Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (a Dutch daily newspaper) bears that date and the address P.C. Hooftstraat 177. Her father, her sisters and her brother with his family signed it. They asked for no flowers. Van Eckeren wrote in his in memoriam about a murderous illness that had quickly sapped her strength. Her father outlived her. He died the year after.

On Wednesday, May 3, 1922, she was buried at the Nieuwe Oosterbegraafplaats in Amsterdam, along one of the main avenues. The newspapers of those days describe it. There was a small circle of friends. On the bier lay two wreaths and a bouquet of white lilacs with roses. She herself had asked that nothing be said about her at the graveside. Only Reverend A.K. Kuiper, a Mennonite minister, spoke a few words and read Psalm 103. Afterward her brother thanked everyone for their sympathy during her illness. At her own funeral too, she remained incognito.

The grave no longer exists, writes Van der Ent.

Still in 1922, the publisher De Waelburgh in Blaricum brought out *Laatste verzen*. By mid-June De Standaard was already reviewing the collection. A year later came the second printing, set in Plantin type, with a vignette cut in wood by Hélène Wolff. Two poets wrote a poem for her in Onze Eeuw. Martien Beversluis wrote "Blossom Tree," in remembrance of her. Herman Middendorp had never met her. After reading the collection he wrote about a woman who accepted her end as God willed it.

The collection continued to be read. In 1940 the ninth printing came out, in 1950 the thirteenth. In 1984 the eighteenth appeared, with an introduction by Van der Ent. The anthology *Gebroken kleuren* (Broken Colors) from 1939 reached nineteen printings. The poet Martinus Nijhoff wrote about her work: "In pure water one sees the bottom."

She also wrote and translated church hymns. Four hymns adapted by her are in the Liedboek voor de Kerken (the Dutch Protestant hymnal). *Wat de toekomst brengen moge* is from her own hand. A committee of the Nederlandsche Protestantenbond (a liberal Protestant association) asked her for lyrics for a new songbook. She delivered five translations and three texts of her own. This hymn was one of them, and it appeared in 1920 in the *Vervolgbundel van de Godsdienstige Liederen* (Supplementary Collection of Religious Songs). The second verse looks back to what Jesus said to Thomas: *blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed* (John 20:29). In the Liedboek voor de Kerken it was hymn 293, in the Liedboek of 2013 it is number 913. Korteweg and Salverda wrote in 1986 that it is still sung. In 2021 a discussion guide of the Open Deur stated that the hymn has had a place in Christian hymnals for more than a hundred years.

The Little Pine Grove and the Roses

One of the last poems in the collection is called "Annunciation." The word means announcement, the way the angel brought Mary a message. In Jacqueline's poem the visitor is Death.

It is evening. She hears a footstep on the path. Death comes in, shy, like a boy who is ashamed. Perhaps he comes a little late and at an inconvenient time, he says, but God has sent him. She sets food and wine before him. He looks thoughtfully ahead of him, not at her. Has she not just built a house she almost wants to move into? Would she not discover her task from God only later, once she started living her own life?

She smiles. He does not have to talk about her plans, she says. He must say what the Master wants. Then he gives her a sign, with which he consecrates her to his own.

She walks him a little way. In the red glow of evening she sees him go into the heath. On the way back she says nothing about him, no good word and no bad word. *But the little pine grove was fragrant, and the roses, / And never had I loved life so dearly.*

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on June 26, 1868, in 's-Gravenhage; father J.D. van der Waals, professor in Amsterdam from 1877 and Nobel laureate in 1910; the move to Amsterdam in 1877; father the son of a carpenter (Dictionary of Scientific Biography; also Reitsma); the death of her mother of tuberculosis, on December 28, 1881, in Nieuwer-Amstel, when Jacqueline was thirteen (death record via Open Archieven; also Kritisch Lexicon, Van der Ent and Vrouwenlexicon); the closed front room with the portrait from 1881 to 1902 (Reitsma and Van der Ent, after Kohnstamm; also Kox); her work at the Koning Willemshuis

(Kritisch Lexicon, Vrouwenlexicon and De Standaard of May 2, 1922, which calls her acting secretary); the certificates for primary teaching (1887) and secondary history; her knowledge of languages and her athleticism; the Aula lectures of Chantepie de la Saussaye in 1894 and her articles on Ibsen's *Brand* (1915, 1919); the debut *Verzen* (1900) under the pseudonym U.E.V.; the role of Chantepie and Rev. Haspels in the switch to her own name; *Noortje Velt*, *Nieuwe verzen* (1909), *Iris* (1918) and the Kierkegaard study (1921); teacher in Doorn, Bloemendaal (1908-1917) and afterward at the School for Social Work in Amsterdam; her struggle between doubt and faith in her poetry; stomach cancer (1921) and the refusal of painkillers; death on April 29, 1922, in Amsterdam (the family's death notice in the Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant of May 1, 1922; also Kritisch Lexicon, Van Bork and Verkruijsse, Reitsma, Vrouwenlexicon, Liedboekcompendium) and burial on May 3, 1922, at the Nieuwe Oosterbegraafplaats, with only a short word from Rev. A.K. Kuiper and Psalm 103 (De Standaard and Algemeen Handelsblad of May 3, De Amsterdammer of May 4, 1922; also Vrouwenlexicon); the text of the "In Memoriam P.D. Ch. d.l.S." (Laatste verzen, p. 16); *Laatste verzen* in 1922 and the many reprints; *Wat de toekomst brengen moge* as her own text, written at the request of the Nederlandsche Protestantenbond and first printed in 1920 (Liedboekcompendium), later hymn 293 in the Liedboek voor de Kerken and number 913 in the Liedboek of 2013.

Only from own testimony: the "inner protest" (via De Koe) and the "silent contradiction" and her agreement with Brand (her own article of 1915); the notes of January 31 and February 3, 1899 (via Reitsma); her father's letter from 1883 (via Reitsma); everything in the poems about her inner life, her mother and her dying.

Unconfirmed: the baptism in the Walloon church and the study groups for women (each only the Kritisch Lexicon; I did not find a

baptism record in the searchable archives); the word board member at the Koning Willemshuis (Kritisch Lexicon; De Standaard speaks of acting secretary); the rejection by Albert Verwey, the tennis photo with Gorter, the mountain climb of 1896, the decision in 1920 to live on her own and the dictated poem (only Reitsma); the picture of her father as distant (only Reitsma) and as mystically devout (only Van der Ent; Kox calls him religiously inclined without church membership); the exact years in Doorn (1901-1904 according to De Koe and the Vrouwenlexicon, 1900-1908 according to Van der Ent); that the grave has disappeared (only Van der Ent). Reitsma writes that Jacqueline was twelve when her mother died; the record of December 28, 1881, makes it thirteen. Van der Ent's introduction to the Verzamelde gedichten (2017) gives April 2, 1922, as the day of death; the family's death notice and the newspaper reports of that week show it was April 29. I have not seen Jacqueline's own death record.

What I took from the poems: the lines of poetry appear in italics in the story, alongside a retelling of the poems. Her poems appeared before 1922 and are in the public domain. The English renderings of her Dutch lines are my translation.

Interpretation: that the "In Memoriam P.D. Ch. d.l.S." is dedicated to Chantepie de la Saussaye is an inference from the initials, reinforced by what De Koe writes about their bond. The poem itself names no name. It speaks of thanks and of words she never spoke, and that fits what De Koe tells. The poem "Mother" names no name; that it is about her own mother is a reading helped along by the young hand and the gray hair, but which she herself nowhere states.

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Nicolette Bruining: The Minister from Afar

In 1941 the Jewish students of the 2nd Municipal Gymnasium in The Hague were no longer allowed to come to school. The German occupiers had decreed it. One of their teachers was an unmarried woman of fifty-four, a doctor of theology, who taught Hebrew there. She did not leave it at that.

She refused to keep teaching at that school. So it stands in the file of Yad Vashem, the Israeli institute for the remembrance of the Holocaust, and the Jacoba van Tongeren Foundation writes the same. The lessons went on, in her own home. And one of the girls who learned Hebrew there, Elisabeth Waisvisz, would survive the war, with the help of this teacher.

Her name was Nicolette Bruining. Half of the Netherlands knew her voice. In 1926 she had helped found the VPRO, the Vrijzinnig Protestantsche Radio-Omroep (Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting), and she was its chairwoman for thirty years. She preached over the radio, because the church, as she was a woman, would not give her a pulpit. Almost thirty years after her death, Israel honored her as Righteous Among the Nations.

She was a liberal Protestant. Her faith was different from that of most people in this book, and different from mine. I want to show her as she was. Her story begins in a parsonage in the northern part of North Holland.

"I Want to Read All These Books Later"

Nicolette Adriana Bruining was born on August 27, 1886, in the parsonage of Stompetoren, in the municipality of Oterleek. She was the only child of Albert Bruining and Alida Helena Elisabeth Huijgens. Her father was a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church, of the modern school.

When she was seventy-three, in 1959, she told Het Parool (a Dutch newspaper) a memory from that parsonage. As a little girl she stood in front of her father's bookcase and said: "I want to read all these books later." Freda Dröes, who wrote a study of her in 1991, quotes the interview.

In 1900 Albert Bruining became professor of theology in Amsterdam. The family moved to the city. Nicolette went to the Barlaeus Gymnasium, where boys and girls sat in class together. After her final exams she chose her father's field of study.

Three Requests to the Synod

In 1908 she began studying theology at the University of Amsterdam. She was one of the first women to do so. She joined the student society and sat on a student board.

A year later, in 1909, she went with two fellow students, Constance Gerlings and Annette Vogelsang, to the synod of the Dutch Reformed Church. They asked whether they might take the church examinations. Whoever passed those examinations could become

a minister. Women were not admitted. In 1910 and 1911 the three repeated their request. No yes came.

Meanwhile she simply kept on studying. On June 11, 1911, she took her bachelor's examination, "entirely according to the rules," as Dröes dryly writes. In 1912 she stopped pressing the synod. Gerlings and Vogelsang continued. Only among the Mennonites could women become ministers in those years.

I have wondered what it is like to ask the same question three times and hear no three times. The sources are silent about what she felt. What she did afterward, they do record. She looked for another way.

A Dissertation on Experience

The master's examination followed on October 4, 1913. On May 26, 1916, she earned her doctorate, with her own father as supervisor. She was the second woman in the Netherlands to earn a doctorate in theology. The first was Constance Gerlings, one of the two fellow students with whom she had gone to the synod in 1909.

Her dissertation was about Franz Hermann Reinhold von Frank, a German Lutheran theologian from Erlangen. Frank built his theology on the experience of the believer. Whoever comes to faith knows himself certain of God, and from that certainty he derived the whole doctrine.

Nicolette did not agree. She felt that Frank did not really examine his own experience. In her view he filled that experience in advance with what church teaching said. In this way his theology described what lived in his own faith, without testing it. She also felt that he gave too little room to the historical study of the Bible.

She was thirty and preferred to ask questions before accepting anything. Dröes later put her in the title of her study as a "critical" theologian, with quotation marks.

Two Days a Week in The Hague

As early as 1912 she had found work. She became a teacher of religion at the teacher training school of the Haagsch Genootschap on the Anthony Duyckstraat, a school for teachers with a liberal Protestant bent. She taught there two days a week and would remain connected to that school until 1950. At the 2nd Municipal Gymnasium on the Johannes Bildersstraat, the later Maerlant Lyceum, she taught Hebrew to the two highest classes.

She did not marry. She lived with her parents, and when her father retired she moved with them to The Hague, to Kanaalweg 20 on the Scheveningen side. Her father died in 1919. Four years later she published his collected studies. In that same year, 1923, her own book *Geestelijke stroomingen* (Spiritual Currents) appeared, about the worldviews of her time. She kept living with her mother until her mother died in 1932.

In the meantime she preached. Liberal Reformed chapters and congregations of the Nederlandsche Protestanten Bond (the Dutch Protestant Union) invited her as a guest preacher. She never received a congregation of her own. But she saw room outside the congregation. In 1926 she wrote that there was a wide field of work for theology students who did not want to become ministers.

A Cousin with a Radio Set

Her first encounter with radio was an experiment in a physics class at the teacher training school, around 1917 or 1918. What crackled through a headphone there would not let go of her.

In 1923 the Central Committee for Liberal Protestantism was founded, on October 6, at the initiative of Professor K.H. Roessingh. Nicolette became its secretary. She was thirty-seven. That year she also took part in a trial broadcast, together with a theology student, E.D. Spelberg.

How it went on can be followed in the newspapers of those years. In July 1924 the Central Committee discussed whether radio sermons were even desirable. That winter a trial was to follow. On October 31, 1924, Reformation Day, the Hilversumsche Draadlooze Omroep (Hilversum Wireless Broadcasting) aired the committee's first sermon, delivered by Professor Heering of Leiden. Nicolette afterward wrote in the journal De Hervorming about the letters that poured in from all over the country. Whole families had sat around the loudspeaker. A strictly Calvinist electrician in The Hague had called it the finest Reformation sermon he had ever heard.

In the summer of 1925 the Central Committee decided to form a permanent committee for radio sermons. In November 1925 the Algemeen Handelsblad reported who sat on it. Nicolette was chairwoman, Reverend J.P. de Graaff of Naaldwijk secretary, and Spelberg one of the members. The committee made trial broadcasts from the Javastraat in The Hague. Nicolette also sat on the state committees that had to decide how radio would be arranged in the Netherlands, from October 1925 on behalf of the Central Committee.

Years later she told over the microphone, with a touch of mockery, why Spelberg had come onto that first committee. He had a cousin with a radio set.

On May 29, 1926, the committee became an association: the VPRO. Nicolette Bruining became the first chairwoman, Spelberg the secretary. They would work together for thirty years. At the anniversary

in 1956 she recalled the beginning once more: an afternoon in the Mennonite church in Amsterdam, where the first eighteen members signed up. With the broadcasting time decree of May 15, 1930, the VPRO received a small place in the broadcasting system.

She would have preferred something else. She dreamed of one national broadcaster, in which all spiritual currents would have their say in proportion. She accepted a broadcaster for each "pillar" (the Dutch way of dividing society by religious or political group), but she was never content with it.

"We Believe in the Almighty God"

This is a book about faith, so I want to tell honestly what she believed.

Nicolette Bruining saw liberal Protestantism as an open movement, constantly renewing itself and searching, in a rapidly changing world, for the great truths of life. This is how the Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon (a Dutch online lexicon of women) sums up her conviction.

In *Geestelijke stroomingen* she wrote in 1923: "We believe in the almighty God." A God who leads the world toward His goal. Elsewhere she calls Him the Ground of our existence, or the Leader and Creator of the world. She found belief in the soul of man plausible. For her, religion was the awareness of the bond with the spiritual world. Mysticism she described as a direct union with God.

In 1929 she spoke on immortality in a VPRO radio course, in a series called *Wat gelooven en denken Vrijzinnig Protestanten* (What Liberal Protestants Believe and Think). Dröes places that contribution in a time when interest in spirits and in what follows death was growing, in place of the old belief in immortality.

Freda Dröes, who read her work thoroughly, noted that she never called God Father. She also avoided maternal images for God. About Christ, according to Dröes, she did not speak. She saw the goal of man and world as growth toward perfection, in which people themselves take part, and less as redemption. That is how Dröes reads her work. Nicolette herself nowhere summed it up in this way. According to a VPRO article from 2016, she placed religion above Christianity.

She also wanted to take people outside the church seriously. Whoever sought God outside the sacraments and the church services was not to be ignored, in her view. Her radio addresses were aimed mostly at people on the edge of the church or outside it.

Spelberg wrote after her death that she passed on the modern conviction of faith "with her whole heart." Leni van Reijendam-Beek, who wrote about the first women preachers, saw her strength in "a deep spiritual life combined with enormous organizational talent."

I believe differently. For me, Jesus is the heart of everything God lets us hear about Himself. I lay her words beside mine and let the difference stand. What she did when her students were sent away comes further on.

Pastry Is Too Expensive for the VPRO

Whoever met her did not forget her. She was disciplined and worked at a pace that made colleagues despair. She was open, honest and direct, without being fanatical. She had humor. Everyone called her Miss Bruining, and she kept close contact with her listeners. In the broadcasting world she got the nickname the Golda Meir of liberalism.

She wrote pieces in the program guide *Vrije Geluiden* (Free Sounds), gave speeches at VPRO evenings and every year was the driving

force behind the national gatherings in Barchem. She raised money tirelessly.

There is an anecdote that goes with this, which Cor Galis told later. On the way across the Afsluitdijk he suggested having coffee with pastry. Her answer: "Coffee, okay, but pastry is too expensive for the VPRO." She paid for the pastry herself.

She also worked for women. She regretted that so few women were in the leadership of the broadcasters. Former board member Heye Faber called her "a feminist avant la lettre." She worked internationally with liberal Christians in Europe and America, and from 1948 to 1957 she was president of the International Union of Liberal Christian Women. In 1938 she was included in a book on the well-known personalities of the Kingdom.

About the Old People

In the 1930s refugees came from Germany. From 1936 Nicolette was a member of a Dutch committee that cared for Christians of Jewish descent who had fled. The committee was dissolved after a year and a half because the money had run out. She then continued working in the Hague subcommittee of the Protestant Relief Committee.

In 1938 the VPRO organized a radio course titled *Om het Oude Volk* (About the Old People), about the Jewish people. Nicolette spoke in it about the Christian witness.

Then came the occupation. In the fall of 1940 she still hoped for a moment that a national broadcaster would finally come. Not everyone judged that mildly later. Dick Verkijk wrote in 1974, in his book *Radio Hilversum 1940-1945*, that she was said to have been naive about "the Jewish question" and about the occupier's aim to bring radio under one hand. Dröes passes on that judgment cautiously, with a "said to."

In 1941 it became clear that the occupier's new broadcaster would rest on National Socialist principles. The dream was over. *Vrije Geluiden* was banned. The VPRO was shut down. The voice that had spoken through the radio for fifteen years fell silent.

Hebrew in the Front Room

After May 1940 more students chose her Hebrew lessons. Some did so partly in protest against the occupier. In 1941 the Jewish students of the gymnasium were sent away, and she decided to stop teaching there. She continued the lessons at home, for all her former students.

One of those students was Elisabeth Waisvisz, born in 1923. After a while her classmates stayed away from the lessons at the house. Nicolette insisted that Elisabeth carry on, now as a private student, and the two became friends. Elisabeth had a younger sister, who was eight in 1942.

Her family was the family of Ephraim Waisvisz, a technical adviser, born in The Hague in 1894. In April 1942 he lived at Emmastraat 80, with his wife Chaje Reizel Waisvisz-Reich and their daughter Elizabeth Eva, born on August 28, 1923, in Rotterdam. A little son had died young in 1929. Elisabeth was seventeen or eighteen when she came to learn Hebrew at her teacher's home. She would survive the war and died in 2006 in Tel Mond, in Israel.

In July 1942 Elisabeth's father refused to report for work in Germany. He had to find a hiding place for his family, and he asked Nicolette for help. She took it upon herself. For three years she was the link between Elisabeth, her younger sister and the resistance.

For the younger sister she found an address in Aalten. For Elisabeth it was harder. She was older than sixteen and needed false papers. She had to move several times, and each time Nicolette helped, of-

ten together with her friend Jacoba van Tongeren, who led the resistance group Group 2000 in Amsterdam. More than once Nicolette traveled with Elisabeth on the train to a new address. That was extra dangerous, writes Yad Vashem, because she was known as the head of the liberal broadcaster and as an outspoken opponent of the occupation. She arranged ration coupons, which were outrageously expensive, and carried letters between the sisters and their parents. Later Elisabeth was also in hiding with Van Tongeren herself in Amsterdam.

The younger sister went into hiding in September 1942 in Aalten, with the widow Hermina Hendrika Heinen-Rots, whom everyone called Riek. Riek was raising three young children alone on a small pension. According to the National Hiding Museum (Nationaal Onderduikmuseum), she did not hesitate for a moment to take in the Jewish girl. With her the child became a cousin from Suriname who could not go home because of the war, under another name. She went to the Wilhelmina School. In needlework class she embroidered a marking cloth with the name she had to bear at that time, and not her own. In the last phase of the war it became life-threatening, when two German soldiers were quartered in the house. Riek also had two Dutch men in the house who were evading forced labor in Germany. Who arranged the address, the museum does not say. According to the Yad Vashem file it was Nicolette.

The girls' parents were betrayed and taken to the Westerbork camp. On a Sunday in April 1943 Nicolette took it upon herself to tell Elisabeth. Both parents were murdered on May 28, 1943. Elisabeth went to Aalten to tell her sister.

What would you have done, if a student of yours sat in your room and you had to bring such news? The sources do not say what Nicolette said. Only that it was she who told it.

A Minister from Afar

After the liberation the radio went on again. A side of her also came forward that is less known. According to Dröes, who relies on Jongeling, she became so involved with imprisoned NSB members (Dutch Nazi collaborators) that she considered giving up her position at the VPRO. The same woman who had helped Jewish girls go into hiding devoted herself after the war to people who had stood on the other side.

In 1947 she received a seat on the board of the Nederlandse Radio Unie on behalf of the VPRO. When the Nederlandse Televisie Stichting was founded on October 1, 1951, she sat on its board too. About television she said: "I did not ask for it, but now that it is here: use it positively."

She became a radio minister at the IKOR, the consultation in which the churches made radio together. According to Dröes, through her contribution the IKOR began to look like a second VPRO, and she had to leave there again.

From September 12, 1947, she had a regular Friday evening feature, *Vandaag* (Today): short talks in which she pushed through from ordinary things of the day to the question of what life is about. She wanted to broadcast them live. "I do not like that canned stuff," she told Het Parool in 1956. She called herself, with a wink, in De Groene Amsterdammer, a minister from afar.

That phrase stays with me. A woman who was not allowed a pulpit made one out of a microphone and thus addressed people in living rooms she would never see. Have you ever watched a door close and then found another way?

Good Friday 1963

In 1956 she took her leave as chairwoman. On Whit Monday, May 21, the VPRO celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in the Ahoy' hall in Rotterdam, with more than five thousand people. The Rotterdamsch Parool called her that day the "mother of the VPRO." Her successor, J.A. de Koning, announced that she would become honorary chairwoman. The collection was for a new Nicolette Bruining Fund, to support cultural work and training. In July the members' meeting approved both.

Her last *Vandaag* was on August 24. On September 1, 1956, a few days after her seventieth birthday, she laid down the chairmanship. She continued working for the broadcaster until her death. In a survey of 1959 she was named one of the best-known women in the Netherlands.

Nicolette Bruining died on Good Friday, April 12, 1963, in The Hague, seventy-six years old. On April 17 she was cremated at Westerveld in Driehuis, with great attendance. De Koning said there that she had been the only woman who had led a broadcasting association in the Netherlands. As the coffin was lowered, the organ played the hymn *Leid, vriend'lijk licht* (Lead, Kindly Light). Spelberg, who had worked beside her for thirty years, wrote a memorial article about her.

March 7, 1990

Almost thirty years after her death, on March 7, 1990, Yad Vashem recognized her as Righteous Among the Nations. Elisabeth Waisvisz, who was called Edna Heruti in Israel, had nominated her together with Jacoba van Tongeren. It was the recognition for what she had done for her Jewish students. She did not live to see it. Nicolette had no children of her own and had become very

attached to the two sisters during the war, writes Yad Vashem. They stayed in contact afterward. Riek Heinen-Rots in Aalten had already received the same recognition in 1982.

The younger sister stayed with the family in Aalten after the war until 1947. Then she came under the care of a Jewish organization, and in 1950 she left for Israel. With one of the children from the Heinen family, her sister from the hiding time, she phoned every week until 2019. In May 2010 she donated the marking cloth to the National Hiding Museum. She had embroidered it as a child, in needlework class at the Wilhelmina School. It bears a name that was not hers.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on August 27, 1886, in Stompetoren as the only child of Albert Bruining and Alida Huijgens; study of theology in Amsterdam; the request for admission to the church examinations in 1909, which was refused; doctorate on May 26, 1916, under her father on Von Frank, as the second woman in the Netherlands in theology (Dröes, VPRO); from 1912 teacher in The Hague; secretary and later chairwoman of the Central Committee; founding of the VPRO on May 29, 1926 and the chairmanship until 1956; the shutting down of the VPRO during the war; the first radio sermon of the Central Committee on October 31, 1924 and the permanent committee for radio sermons of the summer of 1925, with her as chairwoman (newspapers of 1924 and 1925; Biografisch Woordenboek and Dröes); the Hebrew lessons at home for Jewish students in 1941 and her refusal to keep teaching at the school (file of Yad Vashem and Jacoba van Tongeren Foundation); her help with the hiding of Elisabeth Waisvisz and her younger sister, who both survived; hiding addresses, ration coupons and train journeys with Elisabeth from July 1942 (Yad Vashem and Jacoba van Tongeren

Foundation); the anniversary in Rotterdam on May 21, 1956, the farewell on September 1, 1956 and the cremation at Westerveld on April 17, 1963 (newspapers of those days); the recognition together with Jacoba van Tongeren under Yad Vashem file 3173 after nomination by Elisabeth (Edna Heruti); the death of their parents on May 28, 1943; the talks *Vandaag* and the phrase "minister from afar"; death on Good Friday, April 12, 1963, in The Hague (also the death record in the Haags Gemeentearchief); recognition by Yad Vashem on March 7, 1990.

From her own words: the memory of the bookcase (Het Parool, 1959, via Dröes); the joke about Spelberg's cousin (via the VPRO article); "We believe in the almighty God" (Geestelijke stroomingen, 1923, via Dröes).

Only from one source or tradition: the request of Elisabeth's father, the false papers, the letters, the address in Aalten that she arranged and the Sunday in April 1943 on which she told Elisabeth about her parents (file of Yad Vashem, which rests on the testimony of those rescued); that Elisabeth told her sister in Aalten about the death of their parents (National Hiding Museum); her first encounter with radio around 1917 or 1918; the trial broadcasts from the Javastraat; the anecdote about the pastry (Cor Galis); her work in the refugee committee from 1936 and the course of 1938; Verkijk's judgment on her naivety in 1940 (via Dröes); her involvement with imprisoned NSB members (Dröes, after Jongeling); her departure from the IKOR; the hiding details in Aalten (National Hiding Museum); the students who chose Hebrew after 1940 partly in protest, her friendship with Jacoba van Tongeren and Elisabeth's hiding with her (Jacoba van Tongeren Foundation).

Unconfirmed: the word dismissal. Yad Vashem writes that she refused to teach there any longer, the Jacoba van Tongeren Foundation that she decided to stop; whether that was a formal dismissal,

and whether she stayed away until 1945, I have found nowhere, not even in the newspapers of 1940 to 1947. The trial broadcast of 1923 appears in the Vrouwenlexicon and with the Stichting Joods Erfgoed; the newspapers know as the first trial the radio sermon of October 31, 1924, and the date of May 24, 1924 from the VPRO article I did not find confirmed there. The newspaper of November 1925 names Rev. De Graaff as secretary of the radio committee, not Spelberg. That the family of Ephraim Waisvisz in the Joods Monument (Jewish Monument database) is the family of Elisabeth and her sister remains my own link, now supported by the birth year 1923 that Yad Vashem gives for Elisabeth and by the Hague family card; the younger sister is not listed there. On the place where the mother died the sources differ (Auschwitz or Sobibor). What Nicolette said in 1929 about immortality and in 1938 about the Christian witness I was not able to read; Dröes also gives only the titles. The list of Yad Vashem names the hiding mother in Aalten Hermina H. Heinen-Rots, the museum Hendrika; the population register of Aalten has a Hermina Hendrika Rots, born in 1904, so both are right. The press reports at her death have her chairmanship end in 1955; the newspapers of 1956 show it was September 1, 1956. For the bachelor's examination the sources give 1911 or 1912 (the Album Academicum and Dröes say June 11, 1911).

Not read or not to be found: what Nicolette said in 1929 about immortality and in 1938 about the Christian witness (Dröes gives only the titles), and what she herself thought about life after death; Verkijk's book (only via Dröes); Jongeling (only via Dröes). About her feelings at the rejection by the synod the sources are silent, and also about what she said when she brought Elisabeth the news about her parents.

Names: Elisabeth's younger sister and the children of Riek Heinen-Rots are not named in this chapter. The museum and Yad Vashem

do name them; they are private persons who may still be living. The assumed name of the younger sister, which is on the marking cloth, is also left out.

Interpretation: the summary of her theology (God not as Father, no speaking about Christ, perfection rather than redemption) is the reading of Freda Dröes. Nicolette Bruining herself never described her faith as a system.

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Piet van der Woude: The Chemist Who Went Back to His Own Country

On Monday, August 1, 1932, in Southend-on-Sea, a seaside resort at the mouth of the Thames, Piet van der Woude read a verse from the Old Testament that would not let go of him. It is about Hadad, an Edomite prince who lived in Egypt as a refugee. He was doing well there. When he heard that King David had died, he asked Pharaoh to let him depart so that he could go to his own country (1 Kings 11:21). Pharaoh did not understand. What did Hadad lack with him? Nothing, Hadad answered, and he asked again.

Van der Woude was thirty-six. He had lived in England for more than ten years and was chief chemist at the margarine factories of Van den Bergh, a part of Unilever. In his church in South London he was an assistant pastor. A few weeks earlier he had helped in Rotterdam at an evangelistic campaign of the evangelist William Jeffreys.

That Monday the Lord spoke to him through the verse about Hadad. So his biographers have passed it down. Van der Woude resigned at once. Within a week he was on the boat to the Netherlands. On Sunday, August 21, 1932, he held his first meeting, in a small basement hall on the Putschestraat in Rotterdam.

Out of that basement grew the Gemeente Gods (Church of God). Within ten years there were three congregations in Rotterdam and groups in a series of other places. Van der Woude became one of the leaders of the Dutch Pentecostal movement, spoke on the radio, went to world Pentecostal conferences and in 1961 arranged a visit by a well-known Pentecostal leader to Princess Wilhelmina.

Little has been written about his life, and I want to tell it anyway. He was a quiet man who did not like to push himself forward. First we go to Friesland.

Six Children and Four Moves

Pieter van der Woude was born on August 20, 1895, in Franekeradeel, a municipality around Franeker. He was called Piet. His father, Tjeerd van der Woude, was a foreman at a lumber mill. His mother was named Janna Bakker. It was a Reformed family with six children: the oldest son Jan, then Piet, a younger brother Aebe and three sisters, Japke, Berber and Trijntje.

The family did not stay in one place. In 1905 they moved to Alkmaar, in 1911 to Amsterdam, in 1917 to Rotterdam and in 1926 to Delft. Jan was long gone by then. He had left for America in 1907.

When the family moved to Rotterdam in 1917, Piet stayed in Amsterdam. He lodged with his uncle Gosse, a carpenter. After the HBS (a Dutch secondary school) he went into military service, as a corporal in the chemical laboratory of the artillery works at the Hembrug near Zaandam.

Church historian Paul van der Laan describes him as serious, gifted and ambitious, and also as introverted and reserved. A young man who wanted to get ahead and preferably did so without fuss.

"Own More"

Piet had been raised Reformed, but at twenty-five he had still not made a public profession of his faith. The elders of the church came to see him to speak with him about it. He said he was not ready yet. He first wanted to "own more before he could say yes in sincerity."

That says a lot about him. He preferred to wait rather than say something he did not yet mean.

Shortly after his military service, around 1920, he left for London, to the Van den Bergh factories. There he rose to chief chemist. With his team he developed, so it is told, the margarine Blue Band.

An Open-Air Meeting in a Park

In London faith found him. He was addressed by an open-air meeting in a park. Through that meeting he came to a small Pentecostal congregation in Peckham, in the south of the city. The meetings were those of the congregation on Sumner Road.

The congregation had been founded in 1910 by Thomas Brem Wilson, an African pastor. In the neighborhood his church was called the "Black man's Church." Brem Wilson preached in the street and drew many people. He was convicted several times of disturbing the peace and around 1922 was in Brixton prison. According to recent British publications it was the first Pentecostal congregation in Great Britain. He died in 1929.

Picture it. A quiet Frisian chemist, who had not yet made a profession of faith, ended up in the congregation of a Black street preacher in South London. The church that would later stand in Rotterdam has its roots there.

Sunday, October 23, 1921

The congregation met in a building on Sumner Road called God's House. There, on Sunday, October 23, 1921, Piet van der Woude came to conversion. He was twenty-six. The man who at twenty-five had not wanted to say yes without meaning it now said yes.

He kept letters from that time. His archive begins with correspondence from 1921.

About a year later he received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, as Pentecostal believers call it. Both biographers write that he changed afterward. The reserved man became a fervent evangelist. He overcame his natural modesty, so it stands in the archive biography.

Do you know that? A character that would rather stay in the background, and an assignment that pushes you forward.

A Disappointment in May 1929

On March 29, 1929, Thomas Brem Wilson died. Van der Woude hoped to become his successor. He wrote this down himself in the diaries he kept from 1928 to 1931.

The congregation had by then joined the Assemblies of God, the association of British Pentecostal churches. On May 2, 1929, the members chose a certain G.W. James as pastor. Van der Woude was installed as assistant pastor. For him it was a disappointment.

He stayed. He served as second in command and in the meantime did his work at the factory.

In that struggle with his frustrations he received a vision. He saw a land with a frozen ditch, and out of the grass a few blades came up. He understood that the Lord meant the Netherlands.

A frozen ditch is not an encouraging image. A few blades of grass are.

"Let Me Go"

In July 1932 William Jeffreys came to Rotterdam for an evangelistic campaign, and Van der Woude assisted him. The Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad (a Rotterdam newspaper) announced the "revival meetings" on July 1. They ran from the 10th through the 17th of July. First they were in the building De Samaritaan on the Linker Rottekade, then for three days in a building on the Gaesbeekstraat in Rotterdam-Zuid, every afternoon at three o'clock and every evening at half past seven. They sang from the songbook of Johannes de Heer. Jeffreys spoke English. His words were translated by "the London Evangelist P. van der Wouden," as the paper called him.

It was his own country and his own language, and he stood there beside an English preacher.

Back in England came that first of August. He was staying in Southend-on-Sea and read about Hadad. A man who is doing well in a foreign country, and yet says: let me go.

What he gave up was a lot. He was unmarried, had a good job at a large company and a place in a congregation where he had been at home for eleven years. In the Netherlands he had no name as a pastor. No congregation waited for him and there was no building. In Amsterdam Gerrit Polman, the first leader of the Dutch Pentecostal believers, had had his congregation for years. In Rotterdam Van der Woude began with nothing.

How do you know that a verse about an Edomite prince is meant for you? Van der Woude, as far as is known, left no explanation of that. He went.

A Basement and a Garage

The first meeting began on August 21, 1932, in the basement hall on the Putschestraat. Rotterdam was the city where his parents had come to live fifteen years earlier, though they now lived in Delft. Marijs-Visser wrote in November 1950 in the magazine Witte Velden (White Fields) about the discouraged movement of those years, and then: "Soon after that came Mr. P. van der Woude from England."

It went quickly. Van der Woude felt called to continue Polman's work, although he probably never met Polman. He began a ministry across the whole country, visited small groups and held national conferences on holidays.

In October 1932 the Gemeente Gods already appeared in the weekly church list of the Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, with meetings at three places in Rotterdam-Zuid. On Thursday evenings it was still Putschestraat 33. The basement became too small, and the group moved to a garage on the Gaesbeekstraat, the street where Jeffreys had spoken in July. At the end of December the paper reported that the congregation met there "regularly," at number 12.

On Tuesday evening, December 20, 1932, the congregation held a baptism service in a rented building on the Vriendenlaan. A reporter of the Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad was invited and wrote a long piece about it the next day. The invitation said that about twenty people would be baptized. The hall was full to the corners, with a few hundred people, and more chairs were added. The pastor, "Mr. P. van der Woudt, from Delft," spoke about Gideon.

Then the pulpit was carried away and the hatches opened above a large zinc tub. Van der Woude came back in a black robe and asked the first candidate: "What do you have to testify, sister?"

During the service more and more people came forward from the hall who also wanted to be baptized. There was a boy of twelve among them, and a woman who said she had resisted God for forty-three years. Testimonies of healing were also given. Afterward Van der Woude shook everyone's hand at the exit.

By the end of 1932 seventy-nine people had been baptized, in four months' time. It was the year the congregation began.

At the beginning of 1933 he started a magazine. He gave it the name of Polman's old paper: Spade Regen (Latter Rain). On the back page it said what the paper stood for. It wanted to bring the full gospel, "for spirit, soul and body," and to oppose "excesses and fanaticism." It consisted mostly of translated articles from English and American Pentecostal papers and of reports of what God was doing. Van der Woude hardly engaged in polemics. Once he responded, in 1934, when church documents wrongly claimed that speakers in tongues were forced to do so. After the war the paper continued as De Volle Evangelie Koerier (The Full Gospel Courier).

His congregation was visited by English and American Pentecostal workers who had shaped him, such as T.B. Barratt, Donald Gee, Fred Squire and William Hacking.

A Widow from Peckham

In the congregation in Peckham sat a woman who would play a large part in his work. Nona Lamb-Roach was born on August 9, 1877, in Halam, a village in England. She was a widow.

In July 1933 she lent the Gemeente Gods £1,300, then 10,400 guilders, at five percent interest. The money was for a church of their own. The congregation bought land at Bonaventurastraat 15. At the beginning of July 1934 the construction was put out to tender, "at the expense of Mr. P. v. d. Woude." The lowest bidder

was the firm Gebroeders Den Hertog of Delft, at 16,988 guilders. Architect J.C. Henri van Ingen drew a simple church hall with a glass ceiling, a platform with a baptismal tank for immersion and a residence for the pastor.

On Thursday evening, October 11, 1934, the building opened, with more than four hundred seats. It was given the name Jehova Nissi. That is what Moses called the altar he built after the battle against Amalek, naming the LORD as his banner (Exodus 17:15). In 1935 the congregation was officially recognized as a church body.

In December 1934 Nona Lamb-Roach came to Rotterdam. She went to live in Van der Woude's house on the 's-Gravendeelstraat. A marriage was planned, but it never happened. Why not, the source does not say. She remained his faithful helper in the work until her death in 1970. In his archive lie eighty letters from her to him, and seven from him to her.

Piet van der Woude never married and had no children.

"Not an Authoritarian Leader"

The congregation on the Bonaventurastraat did not remain the only one. In 1938 a second congregation began on the Oranjeboomstraat, under the leadership of Piet Quist. In 1942 a third followed, on the Boomgaarddwarsstraat, led from 1947 by A.G. Rijnen.

In October 1938 he took the initiative for a first attempt to get the Dutch Pentecostal congregations to cooperate. In The Hague eleven brothers gathered, among them Piet Klaver. Van der Woude opened with the position that everything should be arranged according to the Bible, "without domination of one over another." The proposal looked very much like how things went in his own congregations.

Outside Rotterdam Van der Woude held meetings in Sassenheim, Oegstgeest, Voorburg, The Hague, Hoogvliet, Driebergen and Zeist, and from 1943 in Bilthoven. Together those groups formed the Christelijke Gemeenschap Gemeente Gods (Christian Fellowship Church of God). As a model he took the Assemblies of God from England, the association his London congregation belonged to. He even thought that all congregations that joined should be called Gemeente Gods.

How did he lead the whole? Handwritten minutes of the Brothers' Council and the members' meetings have been preserved from the years 1938 to 1944. Cees van der Laan read them and concluded: "According to the minutes, the founder Van der Woude is not an authoritarian leader." He asked what others thought and could accept criticism.

In 1939 he represented the Netherlands at the European Pentecostal Conference in Stockholm.

By Bicycle through the Occupied Land

During the war years the occupier banned open-air meetings. In December 1945 Van der Woude sent two reports abroad: an article in the American Pentecostal paper Pentecostal Evangel, under the title "Holland's needy saints," and a letter in the German-language paper Verheissung des Vaters.

"In February 1941 we had to stop publishing our magazine for lack of paper," he wrote. And dryly after it: "But for the Nazi publications there was an abundance of paper."

He had to give the Germans a written statement of what he believed, and sign that it was the truth. "Of course it was true," he wrote. The Germans, he also wrote, left him free to preach the gospel.

When the trains stopped running, Van der Woude covered great distances by bicycle to encourage the congregations. The work even expanded in those years: Driebergen and Zeist in 1941, the third Rotterdam congregation in 1942, Bilthoven in 1943.

Thousands of people died of hunger and misery, he wrote. In his own congregation they had lost, for lack of food, only one old brother of seventy-five. His own judgment of those years: "As far as the spiritual work is concerned, we came through wonderfully."

Nona Lamb-Roach was interned during the war because she held English nationality. In a piece she wrote around 1943, about the "Divine guidance" in the work in Driebergen and Zeist, she mentions that internment.

Eighty Tons of Clothing

After the liberation Van der Woude coordinated aid to the Pentecostal congregations through the Committee for War Relief of the NAE. More than eighty tons of clothing were distributed.

It was the beginning of an international role. From 1947 he was at most of the World Pentecostal Conferences. He wrote reports for foreign papers, such as Pentecost. In his archive lie letters from David du Plessis, the South African who from 1948 to 1958 was secretary of the World Pentecostal Conference, and a photo of the world conference in Zurich in May 1947, with F. Squire and Du Plessis.

In the Netherlands the movement changed shape. After Polman three new leaders stepped forward: Pieter van der Woude, Piet Klaver and Nico Vetter. Each built his own network of congregations, with his own paper. There was rivalry among them. Van der Woude was less combative than Polman, but he "lacked personal charisma" to become an equal successor.

Abroad he was seen as the leader of the Dutch Pentecostal movement. In his own country he never received that recognition.

The Summer of 1950

Not everything went in peace. In June 1950 one of the helpers, P.J. Vriesema, laid down his position because of what the documents call the Quist affair. Piet Quist had led the congregation on the Oranjeboomstraat since 1938. That congregation wanted its own members' meeting and a say over its own money. On July 10, 1950, the Brothers' Council determined that Quist and Vriesema had separated.

Quist later reconciled in part with Van der Woude. A full restoration did not come.

The man who in the minutes let others speak thus saw one of his own congregations leave.

"That They All May Be One"

His work for unity went on. In 1952 the Brotherhood of Full Gospel Congregations was founded, and in 1959 the church body Brotherhood of Pentecostal Congregations in the Netherlands. Van der Woude helped with the building and was secretary for a few years.

He had a pronounced opinion about unity. He saw it as something God works from above and which does not come about through human effort. In December 1956 he wrote about it in the newspaper Het Vaderland. He pointed to the prayer of Jesus that all would be one, and did not see the multitude of churches as automatically a split: that "need not be a cause of division." On April 9, 1964, he spoke on NCRV radio (a Dutch Christian broadcaster) under the title "That They All May Be One." People should not make unity themselves, he said. They should recognize the unity God had al-

ready given, the unity in the Spirit among people who truly follow Christ.

In April 1962 the Leeuwarder Courant reported that the secretary of the Brotherhood of Pentecostal Congregations, brother Van der Woude, had spoken with the NCRV. From then on, evangelists from the Pentecostal movement would also be invited to the NCRV microphone.

He had his reservations about the ecumenical movement and, from his Reformed youth, stood opposed to the Roman Catholic Church. With ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church he had good personal contacts. "Van der Woude can certainly not be accused of exclusivity," writes Paul van der Laan.

In 1953 he spoke at an international conference on divine healing on the Hezenberg in Hattem, on the question of what the nature of a healing ministry should be. From 1955 to 1964 he gave radio talks, and he appeared on television. In 1958 he spoke before the Commission on Sectarianism. The name of that commission says something about how Pentecostal congregations were viewed then. In his archive there is also a draft from 1950 on the Trinity. The chemist wrote about the question of who God is.

From 1959 he was chairman of Huize Siloam, a nursing home for the elderly and chronically ill. In September 1961 the Nieuwe Vlaardingsche Courant wrote that the homes in Rotterdam and Vlaardingen had been transferred to a foundation after the death of the owner. Van der Woude was the chairman, J.W. Embregts the secretary. The evangelist from the basement now also sat at the table where beds and nursing were concerned.

A Car to Baarn

In his archive lies a letter of January 26, 1955, from the household of Princess Wilhelmina. The princess could not receive the Pentecostal pastor F.H. Squire.

Six years later it did work out. On November 28, 1961, Th. Booy asked whether the princess could receive David du Plessis at Het Loo. On December 5 came the confirmation: she would see him on December 13. Booy thanked Van der Woude for his mediation. In a letter of December 12 it was arranged that a car would pick up Du Plessis in Baarn.

A few years after his speech to the commission on sectarianism, a Pentecostal pastor from Rotterdam thus brought a well-known Pentecostal leader to the princess. The letters arrange the visit. What was said at Het Loo, we do not know.

A Life for God

In the summer of 1970 Nona Lamb-Roach died in Rotterdam, ninety-two years old and more than thirty-five years after she had come from London. The Rotterdamsch Parool named her on July 9 among the death registrations: N. Lamb, widow of W. Roach. Lamb was thus her maiden name. At her funeral J.W. Embregts spoke. The text of that speech lies in the archive.

The last years were not without worries. On December 3, 1975, a circular went out to the members of the Gemeente Gods Rotterdam-Zuid, about great unrest in the congregation. The last page is missing.

He kept working. In February 1977, when he was eighty-one, he forwarded a letter from David du Plessis to the newspaper Trouw,

to correct a report about Du Plessis's words on the pope. The paper still calls him pastor of the Gemeente Gods in Rotterdam.

Piet van der Woude died on Saturday, April 29, 1978, in Rotterdam, eighty-two years old. Trouw reported it on Tuesday, May 2, in a short notice, under the heading "P. van der Woude." The paper called him the well-known pioneer of the Pentecostal movement in the Netherlands. Until shortly before his death he was still helping with the preparation of the European Pentecostal Conference, which was to be held in The Hague in August. In Het Vrije Volk he appeared on May 5 in the list of the civil registry, among the death registrations of May 2: "P van der Woude, man unm 1895." On July 4 of that year an article by Embregts about him appeared in the new Pentecostal paper Woord + Geest (Word + Spirit). The title was: A Life for God. His archive was preserved through a close coworker from the congregation. It now lies at the Historical Documentation Center of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, with letters, notebooks, photos, minutes and radio talks.

A biography of his own has never appeared. Perhaps that fits a man who at twenty-five would not say yes before he could mean it in sincerity.

The congregation he began in the basement still exists. In April 2001 it moved to the former Reformed Betlehem Church on the Blankenburgstraat. Since 2020 it has been called Evangeliegemeente De Banier (Gospel Congregation The Banner), after the name of the building from 1934. On its website it tells how it began: founded on August 21, 1932, under the leadership of brother P. van der Woude, in a small basement hall on the Putschestraat.

A frozen ditch, a few blades of grass, a basement on the Putschestraat. Somewhere in Rotterdam-Zuid a congregation still stands that began there.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (more than one source): birth in Franekeradeel in 1895; his job at Unilever in London; the conversion on October 23, 1921 in God's House in Peckham; the installation as assistant pastor on May 2, 1929 and the disappointment over it; the campaign with William Jeffreys from July 10 to 17, 1932, with the places and times (Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, notice of July 1 and advertisement of July 7, 1932); the calling through 1 Kings 11:21; the first meeting on August 21, 1932 on the Putschestraat; the baptism service of December 20, 1932 (newspaper report); Spade Regen from 1933; the church building at Bonaventurastraat 15, the tender, the architect and the opening on Thursday, October 11, 1934 (newspapers of July, August and October 1934); the name Jehova Nissi (also in the church list of the Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, December 1936); his place as one of the three new leaders after Polman, with Klaver and Vetter; the war relief after 1945; the radio talks; his chairmanship of Huize Siloam (archive biography and Nieuwe Vlaardingsche Courant, 1961); his death on Saturday, April 29, 1978, eighty-two years old (Trouw, May 2, 1978; death registration in Rotterdam on May 2, Het Vrije Volk, May 5, 1978); the death of Nona Lamb-Roach in the summer of 1970 (Het Rotterdamsch Parool, July 9, 1970). On Thomas Brem Wilson there are several British sources.

Only from one source (the archive biography by Cees van der Laan, based on the archive): the names in the family and the moves; the Hembrug; the open-air meeting in the park; the loan and the planned marriage with Nona Lamb-Roach; the other congregations and the minutes; Stockholm 1939; the conflict of 1950; the letters about Wilhelmina and Du Plessis (1955 and 1961); the circular of 1975.

Only from Paul van der Laan (dissertation 1988 and Eén van Geest, 2025): that at twenty-five he had not yet made a profession

of faith and that the elders spoke to him about it; Blue Band (not found in any other source); the date of August 1, 1932, the stay in Southend-on-Sea and the return journey within a week; the hope of the pastorate in 1929 (from Van der Woude's diaries of 1928 to 1931); the vision of the frozen ditch (without date and without footnote: the source places it in his struggle with his frustrations, not on a particular day); that he probably never met Polman and felt called to continue his work; the content of Spade Regen and his response of 1934; the visits of Barratt, Gee, Squire and Hacking; the recognition as a church body in 1935; the meeting in The Hague in October 1938; the conference on the Hezenberg in 1953; his character sketch and the rivalry among the three leaders; the Dutch rendering of his war reports from 1945 (paper shortage, the statement of faith, the bicycle, the old brother, his own words on the spiritual work; I did not see the English original); the statements on unity in 1956 and 1964.

Only from one newspaper: the details of the baptism service, including the testimonies of healing (Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, December 21, 1932); the conversation with the NCRV (Leeuwarder Courant, April 26, 1962, which wrongly calls the secretary J. van der Woude); the letter from Du Plessis (Trouw, February 1, 1977); his work for the European Pentecostal Conference of 1978 (Trouw, May 2, 1978).

Only from the congregation itself: that the hall on the Gaesbeekstraat was a garage; the move of 2001 and the name De Banier.

Unconfirmed or disputed: the number of baptisms in 1932 (79 people according to the archive biography and Paul van der Laan, 48 baptism ceremonies according to the congregation; the newspaper describes one service with about twenty registered candidates and a number of people who came forward on the spot, which fits 79 in four months; where 48 comes from, I did not find); the number

of seats (434 according to the archive, 427 according to the newspaper of August 1934, 400 according to a newspaper of October 1934); whether there was a second verse alongside 1 Kings 11:21 (the dissertation of 1988 mentions Genesis 24:28, a verse about Rebekah running home; the book of 2025 mentions only the verse about Hadad, quoted from the Statenvertaling, the traditional Dutch Bible translation); whether Van der Woude himself helped people go into hiding or took part in the resistance (no source mentions it); the length of Nona Lamb-Roach's internment; what happened at Du Plessis's visit to Princess Wilhelmina (I found nothing about it in the newspapers of 1961 and 1962); how the contact came about; the nature of the unrest in 1975; why the intended marriage did not go ahead; the birth year of Brem Wilson (1865 or 1867); how many people attended the Jeffreys campaign. A death notice of 1978, the text of the radio talk of 1964 and the article in Het Vaderland of 1956 I did not find in Delpher. The death record itself is not yet public. The place of death I infer from the notice in Trouw and from the registration in Rotterdam. Not much has been written about his life. Most comes from the biography by Cees van der Laan at the archive in Amsterdam and from the dissertation of Paul van der Laan, which appeared revised in 2025 as Eén van Geest. I laid newspapers from his own time beside them, mostly the Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad.

Interpretation: that God called him through the story of Hadad is his own conviction, as both biographers report it. The same holds for the vision. Whether the disappointment of 1929 had anything to do with his departure in 1932, no source says.

Note on Scripture: I could not check the wording of 1 Kings 11:21 and Exodus 17:15 against the New King James Version, so both are retold in my own words without quotation marks.

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Leendert Overduin: The Conscience of Enschede

On Wednesday, July 21, 1976, the chapel Uit Liefde (Out of Love) in Lonneker, a village on the edge of Enschede, was packed for the funeral of a retired minister. An enormous crowd stood at the burial. Two groups of people stood out, so the accounts of his life say. There were many Jews. And there were many former members of the NSB, the Dutch Nazi party.

More than thirty years earlier those two groups had stood against each other in the same city. One group was hunted, the other had stood on the side of the occupier. Now they stood at the same grave. They had come for the same man.

Leendert Overduin was the minister of a small church in Enschede. During the war, together with his sisters and a handful of neighbors, he built a hiding organization that, according to the archive of the Vrije Universiteit (VU, a university in Amsterdam), helped at least a thousand Jews. He was arrested three times and released three times. After the liberation he chose the side of the people who were then being reviled and shut out: NSB members and their children.

Many people in Enschede understood nothing of this. For him it was one and the same stance.

It began in a shop in Leiden.

Behind the Counter in Leiden

Leendert Overduin was born on December 22, 1900, in Leiden. He was the sixth of eleven children. His father, Jacobus Overduin, had a textile shop in the city and was the organist of the Christian Reformed church in Leiden. His mother was named Maartje Colijn. The children helped in the shop.

It was a large family, and several of the children later chose the church or writing. His brother Koos became a minister and writer. Another brother, Jan, became an author. Two sisters, Maartje and Corrie, would play a leading part in his life during the war.

After primary school Leendert did not continue his education. He worked in his father's business. What drew him to the ministry has not been handed down.

What he did, we do know. In 1925, at twenty-five, he began preparing for the state exam. That was the route for those who had not attended gymnasium (the Dutch academic secondary school) and still wanted to study. It took him five years. In 1930 he passed.

In the meantime he was already studying at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. There he met Kleijs Kroon. His theological studies took a long time. Only in 1935 did he preach his first sermon, in Bolnes.

He was thirty-four by then. Most ministers at that age had already been in the pulpit for years.

On the Side of Geelkerken

In 1926 a rift went through the Reformed Churches (Gereformeerde Kerken). The conflict centered on Rev. J.G. Geelkerken and was called the Assen affair, after the synod that decided it. Those who went along with Geelkerken ended up in the Reformed Churches in Restored Association (Hersteld Verband).

Leendert Overduin chose the side of Geelkerken. Possibly Kroon played a part in that. It was a choice for a small group.

One of those churches was in Enschede. There he was called, as his first congregation. He was thirty-seven when he became its minister. He was unmarried and would remain so until 1955.

The Prophet on Saturday Evening

Who was he as a minister? His biographer Coen Hilbrink sketches a man who sought no show. He wanted a faith that was truly lived, without big words and without rigid doctrine. In the pulpit he was no great speaker. His delivery was weak. Yet his sermons had something mystical about them.

He often wrote them late on Saturday evening. His inspired moments earned him two nicknames: "the prophet" and "Elijah."

Theologically he read widely. Barth, Tillich and later Robinson shaped him. What remained of that in his sermons was above all one thing: he saw every person first as a fellow human being, whatever that person had done. That would become the line of his life during and after the war.

His sense of justice came from his faith. It made him impatient with the narrow rules of propriety of his time.

Sunday Morning, September 14, 1941

In September 1941, telephone cables of the German Wehrmacht were cut near Usselo, close to Enschede. The occupier took revenge on people who had nothing to do with it.

In the night of Saturday, September 13, to Sunday, September 14, 1941, the roundup began. That Sunday morning Jewish men all over Twente were picked up at home, sometimes by a Dutch police officer. They were held for two days in Enschede. On Tuesday, September 16, they left on a transport to Mauthausen, a concentration camp in Austria.

A granddaughter of one of those men told about it in 2016 at the annual commemoration. Her grandfather was taken away with 104 other Jewish men from Twente. He died in the camp on September 25, eleven days after his arrest. His brother had died a day earlier.

It involved 105 men from all over Twente, about two thirds of them from Enschede. On November 4, 1941, it struck even the SS leader Rauter that 65 of them were dead within a few weeks, as the historian Jacques Presser describes the meeting. Not one of them ever came back.

In Enschede the Jewish community knew from that fall on what deportation meant. The death notices from Mauthausen filled it with terror.

Death Notices from Mauthausen

When those notices arrived, Overduin himself sought contact with Sig Menko, the chairman of the Jewish Council. That is how Yad Vashem, the memorial center in Jerusalem, tells the beginning. Together they set up a rescue organization. A study that Trouw (a

Dutch newspaper) wrote about in 1983 places that contact around October 1941.

The Jewish leaders in Enschede chose a different course than those in Amsterdam. The Jewish Council in Enschede was led by Sig Menko, Gerard Sanders and Isedoor van Dam. They advised people to go into hiding. Gerard Sanders passed Overduin the names of Jews who would soon be deported. In that way the minister knew whom to help first.

A descendant of the Menko family wrote in 2022 that the Jewish Council of Enschede itself became part of the network around Overduin. His grandparents and an aunt were warned in advance by the resistance. On October 2, 1942, they went into hiding, and they survived.

Sanders himself looked for a hiding address in 1943 as one of the last. He was betrayed on the way and arrested. Of the three leaders he was the only one who did not survive the war.

A Neighbor, a Baker and a Civil Servant

The group that arose later became known as the Overduin Group. It began small. Hilbrink names the people who were there from the start: his sisters Maartje and Corrie, a neighbor, a baker and a civil servant.

Leendert, Maartje and Corrie were all three unmarried and lived in the same house. Yad Vashem describes him as the idealist and dreamer, and his sisters as the practical forces. They traveled the country looking for addresses, often with farmers. The group arranged ration coupons for food and money for the people who took in people in hiding. That money came mostly from non-Jewish manufacturers. The group needed eleven hundred ration cards every month. Two carpenters went out into the countryside for Overduin

to build hiding places, he told the Algemeen Dagblad (a Dutch daily newspaper) in 1967.

Many people in hiding went to Friesland. Loe de Jong (the Dutch historian of the war) names Overduin as one of the people who tried to place their Jewish people in hiding there. He himself later spoke of "apostolic little trips, boarding the train with thirty Jews to place them in Friesland." The group had branches throughout the country. From May 1943, when the Jews of Enschede had gone into hiding or been taken away, he also helped Jews from Amsterdam.

One of the families that disappeared in this way was the Zwartz family of Enschede. On April 8, 1943, they went into hiding with the help of the group. The father and his son were at one address, the mother and the daughter at another. On April 1, 1945, all four were liberated. The son later published a book about Overduin in Germany.

A girl of six from the De Groot-Bont family got, through the network, with her family, a place with Christian families in the countryside. Her son said in 2022 that he owed his existence to the minister. Of that minister he had long never heard.

In Enschede itself, according to Hilbrink, thirty Jews were hiding in one small house on the Potgieterstraat.

How Many Were There?

The precise number cannot be established. The archive of the Vrije Universiteit speaks of at least a thousand Jews whom the group helped, and several sources arrive at a thousand or more. Yad Vashem names the highest number of all hiding groups in the Netherlands.

In 1942 about twelve hundred Jews lived in Enschede. According to the NOS (Dutch public broadcaster), about five hundred of them were saved, more than in any other Dutch city. Hilbrink writes that the group helped more than half of the Jewish people of Enschede. Overduin himself said so in 1967 as well: of the eleven to twelve hundred Jews in the city, more than half had survived the war.

Not everyone made it through. Almost half of the Jews in Enschede perished. Hundreds of people who, without him, would not have had what they now had: an address, a food card, one more day.

"Do You Even Have to Ask?"

In the fall of 1942 Overduin was arrested for the first time, in Arnhem. He had a stack of identity cards of Jews with him. He himself spoke in 1967 of twelve hundred registration cards, the cards with which you got ration coupons. An Austrian officer, Horak, asked him whom those papers were for. The minister answered, so his biographer tells: "Do you even have to ask? For Jews, of course!"

After a week he was released, on the intercession of an Enschede police inspector. From Tubantia (a regional newspaper) of November 1946 it appears who that was: W.E. Sanders, a different Sanders than Gerard of the Jewish Council. He had gone to Horak to plead the minister's case.

The archive of the Vrije Universiteit mentions something striking. Sometimes he was released because of his "disarming openness." Toward the occupier openness was dangerous. With him it sometimes worked to his advantage, as with Horak.

Afterward the occupier looked for him. All the Germans, police officers and NSB members in Enschede walked around with a little photo of him in their pocket, he told later. In 1946 a traitor declared before the Special Court that the Sicherheitsdienst, the German se-

curity service, had offered him a thousand guilders if he could arrange the arrest of Rev. Overduin.

A Shop, a Baby and a Trap

In 1943 he was arrested again, in November, so he said himself. How it happened came out in September 1947 in a trial in Arnhem. A woman from his own congregation had worked for him with her husband and had herself had Jews in her house, up to fifteen. During a search of the house the Germans found ration cards. They threatened to take her baby away. Then she told them in which shop she would meet the minister the next day. There they waited for him.

The prosecutor held that this was not voluntary betrayal.

He asked his German judge, writes Hilbrink, what else he could do but assist these persecuted people. Yad Vashem gives an answer from his interrogations that goes further. He helped whoever was in need, he said, out of faith and out of humanity. For the same reason he would have to help them after the war too, if injustice were done to them.

He said this to his judges, who were deciding about him.

He was sentenced to twenty-two months in prison. He served nine of them, in the Scheveningen prison. Afterward he did not go back to his ordinary life. He went into hiding himself, under the name Ten Kate, and carried on with the work. So as not to stand out, he traveled around as an errand boy, baker or blacksmith.

His brother Koos, whose full name was Jacobus, was less fortunate. He was a Reformed minister in Arnhem. After a sermon during which two men of the Gestapo sat in the church, he was arrested. He was held in Arnhem and in camp Amersfoort, briefly in Nurem-

berg, and then ended up in Dachau. At the end of 1943 he was allowed to go home. In 1946 his book *Hel en hemel van Dachau* (Hell and Heaven of Dachau) appeared with Kok in Kampen. Later an English translation followed, *Faith and Victory in Dachau* (1978).

At this part of his story I ask myself what I would have done. After a week in a cell, or after nine months, I would probably have gone quiet. What would you do if you had just been released and knew they were watching you?

On the Eve of Liberation

The third arrest came in the last week of the occupation. Overduin was on a death list of the notorious SD man Dr. Meyer. He himself said of it in 1967 only that the Sicherheitsdienst had sentenced him to death that last time, "on the eve of liberation."

On March 31, 1945, a mass murder took place on the Sumatrastraat in Enschede. Overduin could have been there. According to Hilbrink he escaped because his guard was not paying attention for a moment.

A day later, on April 1, 1945, Enschede was liberated. The Zwartz family came out of their hiding places. Hundreds of people whom Overduin had helped to an address could go back out on the street.

The Children of the Others

After the liberation the mood in Enschede turned around. Now the people who had stood on the wrong side had a hard time. The city turned against about a thousand NSB sympathizers. Their children, too, had to endure it.

In those months Overduin received an unexpected task. The attorney general in Arnhem asked him to become a fiscal officer: he had to track down NSB members and bring them before the Tri-

bunal. De Telegraaf and Trouw wrote this in 1967. He was known as strictly just and very humane. Many small NSB members he let go. With the chairman of the Tribunal, who had himself been in Buchenwald and was unyieldingly strict, he regularly clashed.

He did something that many people in the city did not understand. He stood up for NSB members and their children, every time he felt that injustice was being done to them. That was received with amazement and sometimes with irritation. There was agitation against him. The clergy of Enschede, Protestant and Catholic, then stood behind him.

He did not excuse the NSB. He himself had risked prison and death for four years against everything that movement stood for. What he refused was to see a person only as a member of a group any longer. During the war a Jew was for him a person who needed an address. After the war an NSB child was for him a child.

In 2021 a documentary about his life came out, *Het geweten van een stad* (The Conscience of a City), made by Willy Berends and Cars Bijlstra. In it four people tell how Overduin saved them. Three of them are Jewish. The fourth is the child of a Dutch SS man.

"Because Injustice Remains Injustice"

The best-known example of his efforts after the war revolves around one woman. Mr. dr. G.A. Lasonder was a wealthy Enschede lawyer and during the war a member of the NSB. He died on December 4, 1944. In February 1947 the Tribunal convicted him after all, more than two years after his death. His assets were declared forfeited, including the estate Drienerlo. His widow, Anna Christine Lasonder-Bauer, had not even been summoned. She later lived on her state old-age pension in a workman's cottage. From her window she

saw the Technical University of Twente, which had been built on Drienerlo.

Overduin worked for her for years. Tubantia wrote that he came to know her in 1958. Het Parool spoke of a struggle of twenty-two years. Five ministers rejected the request. Once he sat for an afternoon on the doorstep of Prime Minister Zijlstra. In October 1967 Mrs. Lasonder sent a petition to the States General, with a letter from Overduin enclosed. In September 1968 followed a letter on behalf of the entire clergy of Enschede, with fifty-one signatories, among them the dean.

On March 24, 1969, Tubantia reported that it had succeeded. The Minister of Justice granted her an annuity. A reporter from Het Parool asked him why he, of all people, was doing this. "Because injustice remains injustice," he said.

He also explained what he had seen during the war. When he had to place a Jewish couple for one night, he walked the streets of Enschede and heard everywhere that people did not dare. Then he went to Lasonder's tenant farmers. Those farmers were NSB members, he said, but they did have shelter for Jews. Lasonder knew about it and never turned him in. "He was wrong. He stood on the wrong side. But he did nothing wrong."

The man who helped hundreds of Jews to a hiding place spent years of his life after the war on the rights of one widow of an NSB man.

A Social Pastor and a Late Wedding

In 1946 the Restored Association joined the Dutch Reformed Church. For Overduin that had consequences. As a district minister he was now actually superfluous. He became an extraordinary minister for social work in Enschede.

In 1950 he became chairman of the Foundation for Family Care (Stichting Gezinszorg). In his work he came to know the director of the Family Care, Zwaantje Reindje ter Heege. On September 14, 1955, they married. He was fifty-four. They had no children.

That same year he became minister of the district congregation of Lonneker, on the edge of Enschede. On January 1, 1966, he retired. Afterward he kept helping in Lonneker for six more years. Later too he occasionally stood ready as a pastor.

In 1965 there was correspondence about a royal decoration at his farewell. Overduin himself told the Algemeen Dagblad two years later how that ended. "No," he said, "I refused that." He could never walk around with a ribbon on his chest that he had received through the misery of other people. Books about the war he never read. He did not like to talk about it, he said, because that time was over. Someone else was waiting for help.

In 1972 and 1973 people wrote to Yad Vashem to nominate him. On July 10, 1973, Yad Vashem recognized him as Righteous Among the Nations, together with his sisters Maartje and Corrie, in one file with number 805. In Jerusalem there was no ceremony. Their names are on the wall of honor. Maartje died a year later, in 1974.

Chapel Uit Liefde

In June 1976 he moved from his apartment in Enschede to a senior residence in Lonneker. He was already seriously ill by then. On July 17, 1976, he died there, in Lonneker, seventy-five years old.

His wife placed a short notice in the newspapers. The funeral was on Wednesday, July 21, from the chapel Uit Liefde, followed by the burial at the Oosterbegraafplaats in Enschede. At the bottom were two words: "No speeches." The Reformed congregation of Lonneker called him in its own notice "our unforgettable minister."

After his death he was slowly forgotten, outside Enschede. In 2000 a biography by Arnold Bekkenkamp appeared, with the subtitle *het levensverhaal van een pastor Pimpernel* (the life story of a Pastor Pimpernel). The documentary of 2021 was also released in English. In Palo Alto in America, students wrote essays about him for a contest that bears his name. Since 2022 he has had a place in the renewed Resistance Museum in Amsterdam.

In Enschede itself the Mauthausen Monument and the stumbling stones (small brass memorial plaques set in the pavement) recall the men of September 1941 and the Jews who did not return. Enschede now also has a Leendert Overduinstraat, in the new district Janninkskwartier.

Little of himself has been handed down. There are two short answers, to an Austrian officer and to a German judge. There are sermons that he wrote on Saturday evenings and that no one knows anymore. And there is a list of names passed on by Gerard Sanders, of people who survived and people who did not make it.

I think of that day in July 1976 in the chapel Uit Liefde. People who thirty years earlier had stood against each other in the same city came to the same service. They had one minister in common, who had seen both of them as human beings. At his grave they both stood.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on December 22, 1900, in Leiden; choice for the Restored Association after 1926; minister in Enschede; the roundup in Twente in the night of September 13 to 14, 1941, with 105 Jewish men from all over Twente who were taken to Mauthausen and died there (65 of them were already dead on November 4, 1941); the cooperation with his sisters Maartje

and Corrie; the advice of the Jewish Council in Enschede to go into hiding; three arrests after each of which he was released (archive VU, Hilbrink, NOS, his own words in the Algemeen Dagblad of October 19, 1967); the first arrest in Arnhem in the fall of 1942 and the release through police officer W.E. Sanders and Horak (Hilbrink; Tubantia, November 16, 1946; Algemeen Dagblad, January 21, 1948); the second arrest in 1943 after betrayal under duress (Tubantia, September 12, 1947; Algemeen Handelsblad, September 15, 1947); twenty-two months' sentence of which nine were served, the assumed name Ten Kate, the disguises and the thirty people in hiding on the Potgieterstraat (Hilbrink and his own words in 1967); his work as fiscal officer after the liberation (De Telegraaf and Trouw, October 1967); his efforts for NSB members and their children; the Lasonder case, with the dates and the annuity of March 1969 (archive VU, Hilbrink, Algemeen Dagblad, Trouw, De Tijd, Tubantia and Het Parool, 1967 to 1969); that he refused a royal decoration (Algemeen Dagblad and Trouw, October 1967); his marriage to Zwaantje ter Heege in 1955; the recognition by Yad Vashem on July 10, 1973, together with his sisters (database and official list of Yad Vashem, the weekly *J.*); death on July 17, 1976, in Lonneker and the burial on July 21 at the Oosterbegraafplaats (death notices in Trouw and De Telegraaf); a funeral with many Jews and former NSB members (archive VU, Hilbrink).

Only from one biographical source or from testimonies: the death list of Dr. Meyer and his escape on March 31, 1945, his answers to Horak and to the German judge (Hilbrink); his answer to his interrogators, the eleven hundred ration cards per month, the money from the manufacturers and the help to Jews from Amsterdam (Yad Vashem); the photos the occupier circulated of him, the carpenters and the trips to Friesland (his own words in 1967; Friesland also with Loe de Jong, via the Leeuwarder Courant of April 26, 1975);

the thousand guilders that were offered for his arrest (statement of a suspect, Tubantia, December 19, 1946); the lists of names from Gerard Sanders (heritage magazine Enschede; Trouw, November 1, 1983, says the same of the Jewish Council); the hiding of the Zwartz and De Groot-Bont families (from their own family stories); the nicknames "the prophet" and "Elijah"; the sermons on Saturday evening, his weak delivery and his reading of Barth, Tillich and Robinson (Hilbrink); the warning to the Menko family (a family member, 2022); Koos's arrest after a sermon, his time in Nuremberg and his release at the end of 1943 (one review of his English book).

Unconfirmed or disputed: a story on the English Wikipedia, without a clear source: that it began with three people who wanted to hide at his house, and that the group had fifty members within a year. I tell the beginning as Yad Vashem and Trouw (1983) give it: the contact with Sig Menko and the Jewish Council. How he got free in March 1945 (Hilbrink: a guard was not paying attention; a witness in 1951: he was let go with the pretext that he would point out a transmitter; Yad Vashem writes that he was held until the end of the war); the month of the first two arrests (Hilbrink: fall 1942 and ten months later; Overduin himself in 1967: September 1942 and November 1943); whether he himself received the recognition of Yad Vashem in person; that not a single person in hiding from the group was betrayed (an English-language article about the documentary says so, but it is incorrect: the trial of 1947 names two people in hiding who were arrested and perished, and almost half of the Jews in Enschede perished). A memorial of his own in Enschede I did not find, but I did find the Leendert Overduinstraat. Tubantia of July 1976 is not in Delpher. I therefore could not read a report of the funeral. What drew him to the ministry, no source says. The outcome of the correspondence about a decoration in 1965 is not in the archive; his refusal we know from his own words in 1967.

Interpretation: the number of people saved differs per source: 700 to 800 (Yad Vashem; Flap and others, after Flim, in 2001), at least 1,000 (archive VU), more than 1,000 (publisher of the German biography, 2024), certainly 1,200 (Tubantia, 2022). The English Wikipedia bases its thousand on De Twentse Paradox by Marjolein Schenkel, which I could not consult. I have therefore chosen no figure in the story. Which share of the Enschede Jews survived also differs: forty percent (Yad Vashem), about five hundred of twelve hundred (NOS), more than half (Overduin himself and Hilbrink). Because the network worked across the whole country, the total may be higher than the number from Enschede alone. For the roundup it concerns 105 men from Twente, of whom 67 or 68 were from Enschede (the heritage magazine of Enschede names 71 arrested men, among them 68 Jewish; an article about the documentary names 67; the small difference I could not resolve). The figures 105 and 67 thus refer to different areas. On the date: the English Wikipedia names September 13, the commemoration speech and the Mauthausen Monument Sunday, September 14. Joods Monument (the Jewish Monument database) and a family member of the Menko family speak of the night of September 13 to 14, which explains both. Where the men were held for two days differs per family story: a sports hall (speech 2016) or the building of the HBS. On the Lasonder case: Tubantia has his efforts begin in 1958, Het Parool speaks of twenty-two years. As place of death the archive VU and the death notices name Lonneker, Hilbrink Enschede; Lonneker has belonged to Enschede since 1934. That he accepted no decorations and never spoke about the war, as an article about the documentary writes, does not entirely fit the recognition by Yad Vashem. He did refuse a ribbon in 1967 and did not like to talk about it.

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Afterword

A lawyer who learned to pray in Banbury. A minister whose village began to weep. A sister the priest had not ordered. A minister on a bridge in the Jordaan. A poet who doubted honestly. A theologian who preached over the radio. A chemist who went back to his own country. And a minister at whose grave Jews and former NSB members stood side by side.

They differed in almost everything. In church, in time, in what they believed about the details. Some became well known, others are almost forgotten. Of a few of them we know less than I would like.

What they shared was that they followed God where it cost them something. A career, a fixed place, a good name, their safety.

With this fifth volume there are forty lives in this series. There are many more. Perhaps one of them lived in your village or your city. Perhaps no one remembers anymore what that person was called.

Remember them. And then look at what your faith asks of you.

Whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct (Hebrews 13:7)