DUTCH CHURCH HISTORY

VOLUME 2

What Do These Stones Mean?

Eight places you can visit, from the Pilgrim Fathers to the Secession of 1834

When your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?'

Joshua 4:6

WIM KAMPHORST

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What Do These Stones Mean?. Dutch church history in places you can visit, volume 2

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

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Introduction: a land with many doors

In the first volume of this series we stood beside stones from the time when there was still only one church in these lands. That volume ended in Brielle, in the summer of 1572. There nineteen priests and friars were hanged, in the first year of the revolt against Spain.

This second volume begins a generation later. The Dutch Republic has become a country where the Reformed church is the public church. But far from everyone belongs to it. Catholics, Mennonites, Lutherans, Remonstrants and refugees from other countries live there too. Some are allowed to meet openly, others only behind an ordinary front door.

A history you can visit

Just as in volume 1, each chapter begins at a place you can still visit today. A church in Leiden where the pastor of the English refugees lies buried. A street in Dordrecht where a hall once stood that is no longer there. An attic in Amsterdam where Catholics held church for more than two hundred years. A cemetery in Zeist where all the gravestones are the same size. A village in Groningen, in the far north, where a signature was put down in an inn that would split the church in the Netherlands.

Then we go back to the moment that happened there, and to the people who were there.

This volume runs from 1609 to 1834. From the English pilgrims who found a roof over their heads in Leiden before they left for America, to the people in Ulrum who separated from the Hervormde Kerk (the Dutch Reformed Church) and had soldiers billeted in their homes for it.

Facts first

In these centuries, too, many stories go around that are more beautiful than the sources. For some moments we know only what one eyewitness wrote down later. Sometimes dates contradict each other, because two calendars were in use at the same time in the Republic. Sometimes a building has been rebuilt so often that little remains of what stood there then.

For each chapter I have found out what is certain, what we know only from tradition or from someone's own words, and what is uncertain. I say so in the text. After each chapter there is a short overview and then the sources.

Belonging to everyone

In this volume you see how close freedom and lack of freedom lay to each other. The same Republic that took in English refugees forbade Catholics to celebrate Mass openly. The synod in Dordrecht laid down what the Reformed church taught, and those who did not agree had to leave the country. In Ulrum, a few centuries later, Reformed believers themselves stood opposite the government.

I do not take sides. I try to show honestly what happened, and what it meant for the people who lived through it.

A few people about whom I have already written a whole chapter in other books appear here only briefly. This book is about the places and the moments.

How you can read this book

The chapters are in order of time. You can read the book from front to back, but you can also take it with you. After each chapter, under **Go and see for yourself**, you will find where the place is and what you can see there. I do not include opening hours, because they change. For those, check the website of the place itself.

And when someone asks you what those stones mean, you can tell them. *when your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?'* (Joshua 4:6)

Leiden: the city that gave the pilgrims a roof

On the Kloksteeg in Leiden, just behind the Pieterskerk (St. Peter's Church), stands a stone gatehouse with a chimney in the middle. If you push the door open, you step into a quiet courtyard with twelve low little houses. It is called the Hof van Jean Pesijn, one of the almshouse courtyards (hofjes) that Dutch towns built for the poor. On the back wall of the gateway there is a sundial with the year 1683. The hofje is a national monument. The door is often closed, but you are welcome to go in.

Other houses once stood on this spot: smaller, poorer, and full of English voices. Here lived John Robinson, the pastor of a group of English refugees we now call the Pilgrims. Here he lay sick for eight days in February 1625, and here he died. Across the alley he lies buried, in the Pieterskerk.

In America, children learn about the Mayflower, the ship that sailed to the New World in 1620. Fewer people know that the core of that group lived in Leiden for eleven years. Here they wove cloth, printed books, married, and buried their children. And when some of them left, their pastor stayed behind.

"Refuse no honest persons"

To understand how a group of English farmers and craftsmen ended up in Leiden, you have to go back to England around 1600. There the church was a state church. Anyone who did not want to belong to it could lose his job or end up in prison.

The Pilgrims were Separatists. That was the name for people who broke away from the English state church, because they felt it had stayed too much like the old Roman Catholic Church. They wanted a congregation of believers who chose their own pastors, with no bishops above them. In the village of Scrooby they met in the house of William Brewster. Richard Clifton was their pastor. John Robinson was his assistant.

Robinson was no simple village boy. He was born around 1575 in Sturton-le-Steeple, in Nottinghamshire, and went to Cambridge in 1592. In 1599 he became a fellow of Corpus Christi College, a permanent teaching post. When he married Bridget White on February 15, 1604, he had to give up that post, because fellows were not allowed to be married. He became a minister in Norwich. That same year the bishop removed him.

In 1607 the group from Scrooby tried to flee to Holland, from Boston on the east coast of England. They were betrayed, and Robinson ended up in a cell. A year later it worked, from Immingham. In a flight, everyone wants to be on the first boat. Robinson had only just been in prison, and still he stayed behind to care for the weaker ones. Only after that did he come to Amsterdam.

Paul wrote: *Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others* (Philippians 2:4). That is how Robinson was already a shepherd to this group, before they had even left England.

Amsterdam did not become a home. In 1609 Robinson and about a hundred followers asked the city government of Leiden whether they could live there. On February 12, 1609, the answer came. The archive still keeps the words: the city would "refuse no honest persons" who wanted to come and live there. Free entry, then, for honest people.

That answer suited Leiden, a city of refugees. In 1574 the city had survived a long siege by Spanish troops. The relief of the city is still celebrated every year on October 3. After that liberation thousands of refugees came to the city, mostly textile workers from the Southern Netherlands, but also from England, Germany and France. Flemish refugees brought the say industry with them, the weaving of a light woolen cloth. Around 1640 Leiden had some sixty thousand inhabitants, and at least half of them worked in textiles.

And there was the university. On February 8, 1575, a few months after the relief, Leiden University was opened in the Pieterskerk. William of Orange wanted the young Republic to be able to train ministers and other learned people. Protestant students could no longer go to Catholic Leuven. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Leiden grew into the most important Protestant university in Europe.

William Bradford, a young man from the group who would later write the history of the colony, came along with the others. He called Leiden a fair and beautiful city, pleasantly situated. The group found work as weavers, printers, tobacco sellers and hatmakers, the Pieterskerk writes. Life was hard. Almost no one became rich.

Twenty-one little houses behind a green gate

The group bought land close to the Pieterskerk, at a spot called the Groene Poort (the Green Gate). Behind the main house small homes went up for the poorer families. Sources speak of twenty-one little houses. In the city it was called the English Gate. Robinson himself lived in the Groene Poort until his death. The congregation met in a house close to the church.

Bradford tells how poverty came upon them. He calls it "the grim and grisly face of poverty," which fell on them like an armed man. They held on, he writes. Their work gave them a reasonable and solid living, even though it was hard and unending labor, and they lived in peace, love and devotion to God.

The congregation grew. According to the Mayflower 400 project in England, at its height it had several hundred members. Leiden University writes that between 1609 and 1630 more than five hundred people belonged to the group.

They had a complicated relationship with the Pieterskerk across the way. In 2022 a curator of the church told the newspaper Trouw that the Pilgrims wanted nothing to do with the organ or with the bells that played at set times. Yet they did bury their dead in that church, because they had no church building of their own with a graveyard.

How would you feel about living every day next to a building that contradicts your own faith, and still burying your children there?

An Englishman in the lecture hall

Robinson was looking for more than a safe place in Leiden. In 1615 he enrolled at the university. As an enrolled scholar he received privileges, such as a generous supply of free beer and wine. More important to him were the lectures. A curator of Museum De Lak-

enhal put it like this in 2020: in Leiden Robinson was looking for "brain gym."

He was not the only one who learned something. According to the same curator, Samuel Fuller came to Leiden as a weaver and left eleven years later as a physician. Leiden University writes that he may have visited the anatomical theater, where bodies were dissected in front of an audience. In the Hortus botanicus, the university's botanical garden from 1594, professors and physicians gave the Pilgrims advice on medicinal plants, such as foxglove, according to Trouw.

Robinson arrived at a university that was on fire in those years. Two professors, Jacobus Arminius and Franciscus Gomarus, disagreed about whether God decides in advance who will be saved. Arminius put more emphasis on the free choice of man, Gomarus on God's election. The quarrel split the church, and later the whole Republic. Students picked a camp and only went to the lectures of their own teacher.

Robinson did not. He did take the side of Gomarus, but he walked into the lecture hall of both. That way he knew the arguments of both parties from the inside. He became friends with the theologians Johannes Polyander and Festus Hommius.

Bradford describes in his chronicle what happened there. Simon Episcopius, the student of Arminius who was now the leading voice on that side, put up theses that he was ready to defend against anyone. Polyander and the leading ministers of the city came to Robinson. They asked whether he would take up the debate.

Robinson did not want to. He was a stranger in this country, he said. Polyander kept pressing, and said that the truth would suffer if Robinson stayed silent.

That weighed heavily. Robinson gave in and prepared. On the day of the debate he stood in a large public hall facing Episcopius. According to Bradford he put his opponent thoroughly to shame, in front of everyone present. It happened two or three more times on other occasions. Many people praised God, Bradford writes, for the victory of the truth. Learned men and others who loved the truth gave Robinson more honor and respect than he had ever had. Among the Arminians he was "terrible," Bradford writes: awe-inspiring.

That is how a friend and follower tells it. I do not know of an account from the side of Episcopius. What stands out is that Bradford lets the story begin with a man who did not want to, and who only joined in when the truth would otherwise suffer, as others saw it.

In Leiden Robinson developed into one of the most important thinkers of the Separatists. In 1966 the historian Alice Clare Carter described him as truly ecumenical. He regretted the quarrels among the Separatists themselves and their hostility toward the Dutch Reformed Church. He continued to regard the Reformed churches as true churches, even though he did not join them.

The press in the Koorsteeg

Not everything the Pilgrims did in Leiden was without risk. William Brewster, the elder of the congregation, lived in a side alley off the Pieterskerkkoorsteeg. He gave English lessons to Leiden students. And from 1617 he printed books.

The Pilgrim Press, as the printing house was later called, published writings that were banned in England. Two of them were by the Scottish minister David Calderwood and were critical of King James I, Pilgrim Hall Museum writes. The books were smuggled into Eng-

land. Another Englishman in Leiden, Thomas Brewer, helped pay for it.

That did not go unnoticed in England. The English ambassador stepped in. At his request Brewer was put in prison. Brewster went into hiding, his house was searched and his type was seized. The university had the investigation carried out by one of its own professors: Polyander, the same man who had asked Robinson to debate Episcopius.

Now the group felt what it had known for some time. Leiden was generous, but not without limits. The Republic had to take England into account, and the room for printing and debate grew smaller.

Children who became Dutch

There were more reasons to leave. Bradford tells how heavy the work was. Older members of the congregation wore out faster than they had in England, and even the children bent under the labor. People in England who heard about the group and wanted to join it were frightened by the hard life. The young people came into contact with everything the city had to offer in the way of temptation. Robinson worried about something else: his young people were becoming more Dutch than English.

And a new war threatened between the Republic and Spain. The Twelve Years' Truce was running out, and Bradford writes that you could hear the beating of drums everywhere. If the war came back, what would be left of their freedom?

Bradford names one more reason, and perhaps the heaviest. They dreamed of bringing the gospel to regions where it had never been heard.

The decision was made: part of the congregation would go ahead to America. The others, and Robinson with them, would follow later. In Holland the group bought a small ship, the Speedwell. In London a second ship was hired: the Mayflower.

For those who stayed and for those who went, it was a parting with an open end. No one knew how long it would last.

The day of fasting before the departure

Shortly before the departure Robinson held a service that Bradford later described. He took as his starting point the story of Ezra, who held a day of fasting with his people at the river Ahava for a safe journey: *Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God* (Ezra 8:21). Robinson spoke for a large part of the day. The rest of the time they prayed with tears.

He chose the text with care. Ezra asked God then for a safe way for his people, their little ones and all they had with them. For the parents in that room this was no ancient history. Within a few weeks their children would step aboard an ocean ship for the first time, and no one knew what waited on the other side.

Edward Winslow of the group later wrote about the words Robinson gave to those who were leaving. He did not put them on paper until 1646, in a little book titled Hypocrisie Unmasked. Robinson, Winslow writes, charged them not to follow him any further than he followed Christ. God had yet more truth and light to bring forth out of His holy Word. If God showed them something, they had to be ready for it.

He went further still. The Reformed and Lutheran churches, he said, had stayed where their reformers had left them. He reminded them of the covenant with which the congregation had begun: they had

promised to receive all light and truth from God's Word, and to weigh it carefully. He advised them not to let themselves be called Brownists, a nickname meant to blacken their faith.

That is how a shepherd speaks who lets his flock go and still holds it fast to Christ. Winslow also mentions the image that a flock with two shepherds is safe. Robinson hoped that a believing pastor would travel with them.

Scholars disagree about whether Winslow heard this advice in Leiden or only in Delfshaven.

"They knew they were pilgrimes"

In the summer of 1620 those who were leaving left Leiden. According to Trouw they boarded a trekschuit, a boat pulled by horses, at the Vliet and traveled over the water to Delfshaven, then a harbor of Delft and now a district of Rotterdam. Most of the brothers and sisters went along to say goodbye.

Years later Bradford wrote down what went on inside them. They were leaving the city that had been their resting place for almost twelve years. But, he wrote, "they knew they were pilgrimes": they knew they were pilgrims. They did not look too much at what they were leaving behind, and lifted up their eyes to heaven, the country they longed for most.

It is to that word that they owe the name by which they later became known. It brings to mind what the letter to the Hebrews says about the believers of the Old Testament: they died in faith, without having received what was promised, and they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (Hebrews 11:13).

They spent the night in Delfshaven with little sleep. Bradford writes that most of them were simply together that night: friendly,

in Christian conversation. The next day the wind was favorable and everyone went on board, including the friends who were staying behind. As they boarded there were sighs, sobs and prayers. Even the Dutch on the quay, Bradford writes, could not hold back their tears.

When the tide called them, their pastor fell on his knees, and all with him. With wet cheeks Robinson commended them to the Lord, with the most fervent prayers. Then they embraced one another. For many it was the last time.

Paul, too, said goodbye like this to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus: when he had finished speaking, he knelt down and prayed with them all (Acts 20:36). There too, people wept. Robinson stayed behind in Leiden, and he himself would never come to America.

Pilgrim Hall Museum in Plymouth, Massachusetts, gives July 22, 1620, as the date of departure from Delfshaven. On the quay now stands the Oude of Pelgrimvaderskerk (the Old or Pilgrim Fathers' Church). According to tradition they knelt close to that church. Whether it was exactly there, I cannot check.

A leaking ship and a long crossing

The Speedwell sailed to Southampton, where the Mayflower lay with other colonists from England. Then things went wrong. The Speedwell leaked so badly that both ships had to turn back, first to Dartmouth and later to Plymouth in England. The Speedwell stayed behind. In September 1620 the Mayflower left alone, with 102 passengers on board according to Pilgrim Hall. The crossing took 66 days.

In Leiden more than half of the group stayed behind, waiting for word that they could come. The Fortune left in 1621. In 1623 the Anne and the Little James sailed. In 1629 a second ship by the name

of Mayflower left. The Blossom family went on that ship. They left three of their children behind, buried in the Pieterskerk. People from Leiden kept leaving for America until 1643.

Bradford wrote that they knew they were pilgrims. For the Blossom family that also meant leaving three graves behind in Leiden, on the other side of the ocean. Those who left said goodbye to the living and to the dead.

A letter from Leiden

Robinson never came. He remained the shepherd of those who stayed behind and wrote letters across the ocean.

His letter of June 30, 1621, to the congregation in Plymouth has been preserved. Many had died in the first winter, and he wrote to comfort them and to urge them to peace and obedience. He said he did not need to urge them to peace, "the bond of perfection," and called on them to be at peace with God first, through faith in His promises.

A second letter shows even better what kind of man he was. In December 1623 he heard in Leiden that the colonists at Wessagusset had killed seven Native Americans. On December 19 he wrote to Bradford that he did not understand it. He did not see the necessity of it, especially of killing so many. How happy it would have been, he wrote, if they had first converted some before they had killed any. He was on the other side of the ocean, and still he spoke out about what his people were doing.

In the middle of the same letter there is a sentence that shows his longing. He and those who stayed behind would always keep longing for them and loving them, he writes, and wait for God's time. In another letter from the same month, to Brewster, he wrote that it was precisely the financial backers in England, the adventurers, who would not let him go.

I find that moving. A pastor who cannot follow his congregation keeps saying, from his little house on a Leiden alley, what he thinks is right and what is not. How easy it would have been to let it rest. He did not write like a boss checking on his employees. He wrote like someone who loved them, even when he disagreed with them.

Buried in the baptistry

At the end of February 1625 Robinson fell ill. According to the memoir printed in nineteenth-century editions of his works, it began on Saturday, February 22. The Sunday after, he still preached twice. After that he grew weaker, with little pain. It was not the plague, and his friends could visit him freely. He remained conscious to the end. On March 1, 1625, he died, in his small house opposite the baptistry of the Pieterskerk, on the spot where the Jean Pesijnhof now stands. His last words have not been preserved.

He left a widow. In all likelihood two sons, John and Isaac, stayed on in Leiden for a few more years.

According to the Mayflower 400 project he was buried on March 4, 1625. His grave was placed in what was then the baptistry of the church, the space where children were baptized. According to Winslow and later writers, the university, the ministers and the magistrates followed him to the grave.

There is something special about that place. Jacobus Arminius also lies buried in the same church, the professor with whom Robinson so thoroughly disagreed. Now they share a roof.

After his death people kept leaving Leiden for America for years. Others stayed and became people of Leiden.

A memorial tablet with a big promise

Almost three centuries later the Americans came back. On the south wall of the Pieterskerk hangs a bronze plaque from the council of Congregational churches in the United States. Inside the church, on September 8, 1928, a stone memorial tablet was unveiled, a gift of the General Society of Mayflower Descendants, an association of descendants.

That tablet says of Robinson that "his broadly tolerant mind guided and developed the religious life" of the Pilgrims. It is a fine sentence, and it fits the man Carter called ecumenical. Anyone who reads Bradford's account of the debate with Episcopius also sees a Robinson who took a firm stand. Both may be true.

On July 17, 1989, the American president George Bush stood in the Pieterskerk and gave a speech there. Leiden University writes that nine American presidents are descended from the Pilgrims. It is also often said that Thanksgiving and civil marriage in America partly come from Leiden. Not all historians agree on that, and I will leave it at this mention.

The smallest museum goes home

In 1997 the American art historian Jeremy Bangs opened a small museum in Leiden: the Leiden American Pilgrim Museum. He had earlier been curator of the open-air museum Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts. The museum was housed in two rooms of a fourteenth-century house on the Beschuitsteeg. According to Sleutelstad, the local broadcaster, some three thousand visitors came each year, mostly Americans. Bangs also wrote several books about the Pilgrims. He died in 2023.

At the end of 2024 the museum had to leave the Beschuitsteeg, because the owner wanted to use the space himself. The city of Leiden

put the museum board in touch with the Pieterskerk. That is how the museum ended up in the former sexton's house of the church, on the Kloksteeg, built against the church, directly opposite the hofje where Robinson lived. The chairman of the museum board said on that occasion that this way the Pilgrims came home again.

The courtyard on the Kloksteeg

If you step out of the Pieterskerk today, a few paces bring you to the little gate of the hofje. Inside it is quiet. The twelve little houses are later than Robinson: the hofje dates from 1683. Nothing is left of the twenty-one English homes. Only the place has remained.

Behind you lies the church with his grave. Beside you stands the museum in the old sexton's house. And above the gateway the shadow of the sundial moves slowly across the wall, as it has for more than three centuries.

Go there yourself

The Pieterskerk stands in the middle of the old center of Leiden, on the Pieterskerkhof. In the former baptistry there is a small exhibition about the Pilgrims, which the church set up together with Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken (the regional heritage organization), and John Robinson's gravestone is there as well. The 1928 memorial tablet hangs in the church. The building is no longer used as a church and is open for visitors and events. For opening hours, check the website of the Pieterskerk Leiden.

The Leiden American Pilgrim Museum is in the former sexton's house at Kloksteeg 16, built against the church. The entrance is through Museumcafé Pieter. You can see original objects and documents about the life of the Pilgrims in Leiden. Because of the stairs, the museum is not accessible to wheelchair users. For open-

ing hours and guided tours, check the website of the Pieterskerk, which also lists the museum.

Directly opposite the church lies the Hof van Jean Pesijn, Kloksteeg 21. The courtyard is free to visit. Keep it quiet, because people live there.

If you want to follow the whole story, you can travel on to Rotterdam-Delfshaven. There, on the Aelbrechtskolk, stands the Oude of Pelgrimvaderskerk, a church from 1417 that is still used as a church and as a hall. For open days, check the website of the Oude of Pelgrimvaderskerk.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): the Pilgrims under John Robinson came from Amsterdam to Leiden in 1609; the city government gave permission on February 12, 1609; the group bought land near the Pieterskerk and built homes there for poor families; Robinson enrolled at the university in 1615; William Brewster printed books banned in England from 1617 to 1619, and the press was seized after English pressure; in 1620 part of the group left Delfshaven on the Speedwell and then sailed on the Mayflower; more than half stayed in Leiden; Robinson died in Leiden in 1625 and lies in the Pieterskerk; his letter of December 1623 to Bradford has been preserved; the memorial tablet in the church dates from 1928; Bush spoke in the Pieterskerk in 1989; the Leiden American Pilgrim Museum moved to the sexton's house in 2025.

Only from tradition or own testimony: Robinson's debate with Episcopius and its outcome (only from Bradford, a follower of Robinson, who also uses the words "terrible to ye Arminians"); the description of life in Leiden, the poverty and the reasons for leaving (Bradford); the day of fasting on Ezra 8:21 and the

description of the last night, the farewell and Robinson's kneeling prayer in Delfshaven (Bradford); that the kneeling took place at the present Pelgrimvaderskerk; Robinson's last illness of eight days, that he preached twice more and remained conscious to the end (memoir in nineteenth-century editions, based on the account of a contemporary); the procession of university, ministers and magistrates to the grave (Winslow, through later writers).

Unconfirmed or disputed: the burial on March 4, 1625 (two sources that depend on each other); the date of death, March 1 (from the memoir, not from an archive); the dislike of organ and bells (one source, a newspaper article); the precise departure date of the Mayflower from Plymouth (September 6 or 16, because of the difference in calendar); the use of a university church as a chapel, which I found in one source and have left out here; the words of Robinson's farewell advice, which were only written down in 1646 by Edward Winslow, and about which scholars debate whether they were spoken in Leiden or in Delfshaven; the names of his two sons and that they stayed in Leiden ("probably"); whether the plaque of 1891 on the south wall is correct (not checked).

Interpretation: that Thanksgiving, civil marriage or American civil liberties partly come from Leiden is an interpretation often mentioned in Leiden, but not shared by all historians.

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Dordrecht: the hall that no longer stands

On January 14, 1619, a Frisian minister stood up in a hall full of men and sent thirteen others away. He spoke Latin. The words that have come down to us are short and hard: *Dimittimini, exite.* You are dismissed, go away.

That hall no longer exists. You can walk along the Doelstraat in Dordrecht, a river city south of Rotterdam, without noticing that you are passing one of the most important places in Dutch church history. There is no hall anymore, no gate, no tower. The building that stood here, the Kloveniersdoelen (the hall of the civic guard), was torn down in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Regionaal Archief Dordrecht (the regional archive) gives 1858 as the year, other sources say 1857. A prison was built on the spot, and that has disappeared too.

In the same old city center, something does still stand that was there at the time. The Grote Kerk (Great Church) on the Lange Geldersekade, with its tower that leans more than two meters (about seven feet) out of plumb, can be seen from far away. Inside you will find, among other things, wooden choir stalls from the sixteenth century.

Between those two places, in 1618 and 1619, a meeting took place that lasted half a year and marked the church in the Netherlands for centuries. There was prayer and there was struggle. People were sent away. And a decision was made about the Bible that generations of Dutch people would read.

In the winter of 2018 to 2019 a life-size canvas with the front of the old doelen on it hung in the Doelstraat for a while, the Vereniging van Vrienden van de Grote Kerk (the Friends of the Grote Kerk) reported. Four hundred years later you could briefly see what was missing. Then the canvas was taken down again.

Two professors in one city

The story begins in Leiden, at the university. At the beginning of the seventeenth century two professors of theology worked there who came to disagree with each other deeply.

One was Franciscus Gomarus, born in Bruges in 1563. He had been a professor in Leiden since 1594. Gomarus held to a strict form of the teaching of Calvin. According to that teaching, God has decided in advance who will be saved and who will not. Theologians call that predestination.

The other was Jacobus Arminius. He was born in Oudewater in 1560, studied in Leiden, Basel and Geneva, and served as a minister in Amsterdam. In 1603 he became a professor in Leiden, alongside Gomarus. Arminius had begun to doubt. If God decides everything beforehand, what becomes of the human being who must choose for himself? He arrived at what is later called conditional election: God chooses those of whom He knows that they will respond in faith.

It sounds like a point of dispute for scholars. But it was about a question every believer asks at some point. Does my salvation lie entirely

with God, or do I have some choice in it myself? How would you answer that question?

A conversation that solved nothing

In 1608 Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, the Land's Advocate of Holland (the leading statesman of the province), had the two theologians debate each other. The conversation did not bring them any closer.

A year later Arminius became seriously ill. On October 19, 1609, he died in Leiden, forty-nine years old. The struggle did not die with him.

On January 14, 1610, about forty of his followers presented a petition to the States of Holland, the provincial government. Such a petition was called a remonstrance, and that is how they got their name: Remonstrants. The followers of Gomarus answered with a counter-document, the Counter-Remonstrance. From that moment the country had two camps, each with a name.

Church and politics mixed together

Anyone who wants to tell this history honestly cannot leave politics out of it. Since 1609 the Republic had had a truce with Spain, a ceasefire of twelve years. In those quiet years the tensions inside the country came to the surface.

The regents of Holland, the ruling merchant families, with Oldenbarnevelt at their head, wanted a broad national church without too much theological hairsplitting. In their view both opinions could exist side by side. Oldenbarnevelt asked the church for a solution that would be acceptable to everyone. It did not come. The Counter-Remonstrants saw it differently. For them the purity of doctrine was at stake.

Stadtholder Maurice of Orange, the army commander of the Republic, finally took sides. In July 1617 he went openly to a Counter-Remonstrant church service in the Kloosterkerk in The Hague. Everyone understood what that meant. A month later, on August 4, 1617, the States of Holland adopted the Sharp Resolution. Cities were allowed to hire their own mercenary troops, called waardgelders. Maurice saw this as an attack on his authority.

More than faith was involved. Opponents accused the Remonstrants of being too soft toward Spain. The poet Vondel, on the other hand, mocked Gomarus and Maurice in 1618. On both sides pamphlets and satirical songs flew through the streets.

In the summer of 1618 Maurice intervened. He disbanded the waardgelders. At the end of August Oldenbarnevelt, the jurist Hugo Grotius and others were arrested. The way to a national synod lay open.

A sermon in the choir

A synod is a meeting of delegates of the churches, who make decisions together about doctrine and church life. This synod was called by the States General, the highest government of the Republic. It met in Dordrecht.

On November 13, 1618, it began in the Grote Kerk. Balthasar Lydius, a minister of Dordrecht, preached in the choir in Dutch. Then the delegates went to the Kloveniersdoelen, the building of the civic guard, where the men of the citizens' militia trained and met. In the great hall on the upper floor Lydius addressed them again, this time in Latin.

A print by François Schillemans, made in 1618 and 1619 and dedicated to Maurice, shows that hall on the day of the opening. The participants are numbered, so that the viewer could look up in a

key who was who. There were about a hundred people present: ministers and elders from the provinces, professors, delegates of the States General. There were eleven Dutch delegations and eight foreign ones, and voting went by delegation. It became an international meeting of Reformed churches, with guests from England and Scotland, from German lands such as the Palatinate, Hesse, Bremen and Emden, from Switzerland and from Geneva. The language of the meeting was Latin.

They elected Johannes Bogerman, a minister in Leeuwarden, as president. He was a Frisian, the son of a priest who had become a Protestant. He had studied at Franeker, Heidelberg, Geneva, Zurich, Lausanne, Oxford and Cambridge, and his Hebrew was strong. Since 1599 he had been a minister in Friesland and Holland. He was known for his fiery tone.

Seven sessions about a Bible

The first thing the synod did caused the least strife and had the longest effect. Between November 19 and 27, 1618, the meeting spent seven sessions discussing a new Dutch translation of the Bible.

The synod wanted a translation directly from the original languages, Hebrew and Greek. According to an overview by the Meeter Center of Calvin University, Bogerman named the English King James Bible and Spanish and Italian translations as examples. Agreements were made about faithfulness to the original text, clear language and short notes in the margin. Every book of the Bible would get a short summary. The apocryphal books, books that are in the Catholic Bible but not in the Hebrew one, were placed at the back, with a warning introduction. Translators were appointed.

In those same first weeks the synod discussed more practical matters. How should children receive catechism, instruction in the faith? Could the children of slaves be baptized? How should ministers be trained? And what had to be done about printers who published all sorts of things without supervision? These are questions from the ordinary life of a church.

It would take almost twenty years before the new Bible was there.

A table in the middle

At the beginning of December the Remonstrants came in. They had been summoned, and the sources give between thirteen and fifteen men. They sat at a table in the middle of the hall, with their opponents around them.

Their spokesman was Simon Episcopius, born in Amsterdam in 1583 and a professor in Leiden. He was not in Dordrecht of his own accord. The States had sent him as a delegate, and only afterward did he himself become the accused. On November 13, 1618, the day the synod began, he had said goodbye to his students in Leiden. It was an impressive and moving farewell, a nineteenth-century biographical dictionary tells us, because he foresaw what awaited him and the Remonstrants.

On December 6 or 7, 1618, he gave a speech on behalf of the Remonstrants. The reference works give both dates. The Remonstrants wanted to begin the discussion with their objections to the doctrine of reprobation, the idea that God passes over some people and does not choose them beforehand. The synod first wanted to hear from them how they justified their own views from the Bible.

Imagine you had sat there, at that table, with dozens of men around you who contradict you. Every sentence you say is weighed by two sides. Who can still defend himself calmly?

There followed weeks of tug-of-war over the rules. Could the Remonstrants decide for themselves what they would speak about? Were they here as partners in a conversation or as the accused? They questioned the authority of the synod. Their opponents felt they were holding things up. After about five weeks of this struggle over the rules, the synod's patience ran out.

One of the men opposite Episcopius was Gomarus, who played a leading role at the synod as an opponent of the teaching of Arminius. His old colleague had been dead for nine years. Gomarus later became a professor in Groningen, where he died in 1641.

It was no accident that Episcopius stood here. The biographical dictionary describes him as calm and tolerant, so calm that he often put his opponents to shame. His motto was *Pietas ad omnia utilis*: godliness is useful for everything. That remains the judgment of a later writer who was sympathetic to him. It does show how he was remembered.

"Depart"

On January 14, 1619, in the fifty-seventh session, the president's patience ran out. Bogerman sent the Remonstrants out of the hall. His words have come down to us in Latin: "Dimittimini, exite." In Dutch they are rendered as "Gij wordt weggezonden, gaat heen," which means: you are dismissed, depart. According to National Geographic Historia he was visibly furious.

What else he said has been preserved in an English translation from 1867. "With a lie you made your entrance into the Synod; with a lie you take your leave of it," he said. He said that their conduct had been full of deceit and evasive answers, and that the synod would make their stubbornness known to the whole world.

The other delegates agreed with the decision, but some were surprised at the tone. The English delegate Walter Balcanqual wrote to his countryman Dudley Carleton that the Remonstrants had been dismissed with "such a powdering speech": a speech that gave them a thorough drubbing. He too thought the Remonstrants had been stubborn. Still, he was saddened by what had happened, he wrote, because now the Remonstrants had a new complaint.

I find it one of the harshest sentences in this whole history. A president sends away men he disagrees with, about the questions they gave their lives to. You can read that sentence as the end of an honest conversation, or as the moment a meeting could finally move on. Both readings exist to this day.

After that day the synod spoke about the Remonstrants, no longer with them. It studied their writings and wrote its answer.

Five chapters

That answer became the Dordtse Leerregels, known in English as the Canons of Dort. There were three drafts, and the last was approved and signed by all the delegates. The canons follow the five points of the Remonstrants and give an answer to each point, in five chapters. They reject the views of the Remonstrants and hold to the teaching that God elects who will be saved.

At the end of the canons there is a closing word that is less well known than the five chapters. The synod asks the ministers and professors to handle this teaching devoutly and with reverence, to the glory of God, for a holy life and for the comfort of troubled people. They must test their thoughts and their words against the Bible, and not use expressions that go further than necessary, because opponents can seize on them. Whether everyone who preached on

the canons afterward kept to this is another question. But that is what the synod itself asked.

On April 24, 1619, the verdict on the Remonstrants was given. The speech Episcopius addressed to the States is called solemn by the dictionary. What exactly he said has not been preserved. On May 6 the verdict was made public, and that same day the canons were read aloud in Dutch in the Grote Kerk. The church was so large that ministers had to take turns to be heard everywhere.

Then the foreign guests went home. The Dutch stayed another three weeks. They laid down a church order, the Church Order of Dort, with rules for the ordinary life of the congregations.

On May 29, 1619, the synod closed. How many sessions there were depends on how you count: the Friends of the Grote Kerk speak of one hundred fifty-four, other sources of one hundred eighty, counting the last weeks. In the Grote Kerk Lydius preached a closing sermon on Isaiah 12. There it says: *Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation* (Isaiah 12:3).

For one half of the church it was a day of joy. For the other half something very different began.

The guests from abroad did not all think the same about those months either. The English scholar John Hales, who worked at the synod, later told a friend, so the story goes, that there he said goodnight to John Calvin. By that he meant that he let go of Calvin's strict teaching. In his younger years he had been a Calvinist himself. The story comes from a letter by that friend, Anthony Farindon, and is therefore secondhand. But it shows that not everyone who sat in that hall came out with the same thoughts.

The Binnenhof, May 13, 1619

A little more than two weeks before the end of the synod, on May 13, 1619, the Binnenhof in The Hague, the seat of government, filled early in the morning with thousands of onlookers. At the entrance of the Great Hall, today's Ridderzaal (Knights' Hall), stood a scaffold. Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, seventy-one years old, had been sentenced to death for high treason. He had been in prison for almost nine months. Literary historians call his trial a show trial.

His servant came to say goodbye. "Make it short, make it short," Oldenbarnevelt told him, according to the account. Then he knelt and prayed. Then the sword fell. On the scaffold he is also said to have added that no one needed to believe he was a traitor. That last part has not been confirmed.

His valet Jan Francken kept a diary of the trial in those months. A second part is by a writer who signed only with the letters D.V.K. The diary vanished, and after more than two hundred years it turned up in 2019, hidden inside a thicker book. On May 13, 2019, it was put on display in the Flehite Museum in Amersfoort, next to the sword with which he was beheaded.

In the months before, Oldenbarnevelt had been held in a small room on the Binnenhof. His wife and two sons-in-law tried in vain to arrange his release. He never admitted guilt. His supporters called the execution a political murder. Whether he got a fair trial, according to The Low Countries, has never been answered in a single way.

The sentence came from a court, not from the synod. But it fell in the same weeks and came out of the same struggle. Hugo Grotius was given life imprisonment and was locked up in Loevestein Castle. In 1621 he escaped in a book chest.

Go or be silent

What did the outcome mean for the Remonstrant ministers? About two hundred of them were removed from office, among them the poet Dirk Camphuysen. They had to sign the Acte van Stilstand (the Act of Cessation): a promise to preach no more. According to National Geographic Historia about eighty of them refused. They were expelled from the country. Episcopius was taken to Waalwijk, which then lay in Spanish territory.

When the sentence was carried out, Episcopius received his daily allowance in rijksdaalders (large silver coins), the dictionary tells us. On one of the coins was written *recte faciendo neminem timeas*: whoever does right need fear no one. Ever since, that coin has been called the Episcopius-daalder. In the Southern Netherlands the exiles were warmly received, among others by Bishop Nicolaas Zoesius of 's-Hertogenbosch.

About eighty ministers did not put their names under the Act. With that signature they could have stayed in the country. When the council in Jerusalem forbade the apostles to teach any more in the name of Jesus, they answered: *We ought to obey God rather than men* (Acts 5:29). Christians still differ today about the teaching of the Remonstrants, but that these men would rather leave the country than be silent is certain.

In August and September 1619 the banished Remonstrants met in Antwerp, with Episcopius as chairman. There the Remonstrant Brotherhood came into being. Episcopius wrote its confession of faith. After that he wandered by way of Cologne and Rouen. In Rouen he stayed mostly with his fellow exiles Uyttenbogaert and Grotius. He also wrote a pamphlet against the synod: *Onbillycke wreetheyt der Dordsche Synode*, the unfair cruelty of the Synod of Dort.

I do not want to read past these pages. Ministers lost their congregation, their income and their country, because they thought differently about a question Christians have not settled to this day. Even those who hold to the Canons of Dort with heart and soul can see that sorrow.

Back, but in hiding

After the death of Maurice in 1625 things gradually became calmer. Exiles returned. Episcopius arrived in Rotterdam in August 1626. Their teaching remained officially forbidden, and they held church in schuilkerken, hidden churches, such as De Rode Hoed on the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam. In 1634 the brotherhood opened its own training school for ministers, where Episcopius became the first professor. Only in 1795, with the Batavian Republic, were the Remonstrants officially recognized.

Episcopius died on April 4, 1643, a little over sixty. At his funeral in the Westerkerk in Amsterdam the very aged Uyttenbogaert was also present, the friend with whom he had shared exile. The poet Barlaeus wrote a funeral song, and friends had a commemorative medal struck. Even his opponents honored him after his death, the dictionary says.

Balthasar Lydius, the man who opened and closed the synod, had been seen as moderate at the start of the disputes. According to the same nineteenth-century dictionary, he later became one of the fiercest opponents of the Remonstrants. He died on January 20, 1629.

Together with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of Dort became the foundation of the Reformed faith. They still carry authority in Reformed churches worldwide.

A Bible for the States

The decision of November 1618 still had to be carried out. There were discussions, and it lasted until 1625 and 1626 before the States General had the commission and the payment settled. Because they paid, the translation got its name: the Statenvertaling, the States Translation.

In 1626 the translators began in Leiden, close to the university and its library. There were six translators, chosen from different provinces: three for the Old and three for the New Testament. In this way different regional languages came into play, and words had to be negotiated. Bogerman was one of the translators of the Old Testament, as was Willem Baudartius. He received the meetings at his home in Leiden. A minister, Henricus Alting, doubted whether his Hebrew was good enough. Bogerman encouraged him, so the story goes: a sound explanation of a single passage of the Bible weighed more heavily with him than the guesses of a thousand critics.

A group of revisers read everything through, among them Jacob Revius from Deventer, the poet and minister. In 1633 the first revisers began, and in September 1634 Revius finished his part. Translators died along the way, and in 1635 the plague struck the city.

In 1637 the Bible was finished. It was printed by Paulus Aertsz van Ravesteyn in Leiden and presented to the States General. On the title page there is a motto: *Eendracht maakt macht*, unity makes strength. One people, one language, one Bible: that was the intention. Bogerman had become a professor in Franeker in December 1636. He died in September 1637, the year the Bible appeared.

Some translators died along the way, and Bogerman too outlived the work only briefly. Isaiah says: *The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever* (Isaiah 40:8). The men who

worked on it disappeared one by one, and their translation was read for centuries.

The first printing was large, luxurious and expensive. Later, smaller and cheaper editions followed. In Reformed families the Bible was read aloud every day. Many copies contained psalms to sing. Before 1700 the translation was reprinted twenty-two times, and for years it was the most widely owned book in the country. The Canon van Nederland, the official overview of Dutch history, gives about half a million copies printed between 1637 and 1657, in a country of some two million people. Dutch expressions such as “een doorn in het oog” (a thorn in the eye) and “verboden vrucht” (forbidden fruit) come from this translation. For a long time it was thought that the Statenvertaling shaped standard Dutch. Linguists are now more cautious about that. But it remained the most widely read Bible in Protestant churches until around 1950.

It moves me that the translation with the longest influence came out of the same meeting that caused so much pain. On December 4, 2010, the Herziene Statenvertaling (the Revised States Translation) was presented in the Grote Kerk of Dordrecht. The word returned to the city where the decision was made.

A front on a canvas

In the Doelstraat nothing can be seen anymore. No hall, no table in the middle, no bench where Episcopius sat. The stones are gone, and so is the prison that took their place.

What remained are words. The five chapters of the canons, which are still read in churches. The Remonstrant congregations, which still exist. And a Bible that lay on the table in millions of homes. If you stand in the Doelstraat, you stand at the place where all of that began, in a hall on the first floor that is no longer there.

In the same old center the Grote Kerk still stands, with its leaning tower above the rooftops. That is where it began, with a sermon in the choir.

Go there yourself

The Grote Kerk stands at Lange Geldersekade 2 in the old center of Dordrecht. Here the synod opened on November 13, 1618, and here the canons were read aloud on May 6, 1619. Among other things you can see the sixteenth-century choir stalls and the tower of 65 meters (213 feet), with 275 steps. According to the Friends of the Grote Kerk there is a permanent exhibition about the synod in the chapels of the south aisle, made together with the Dordrechts Museum. The church is not open to visitors all year round. For opening hours, check the website of the Grote Kerk Dordrecht.

The Kloveniersdoelen stood on the Doelstraat, in the same old center. Nothing is left of the building, and I could not find a permanent memorial on the spot. According to the Grote Kerk website, the Dordrechts Museum does still keep a mantelpiece from the building, from the lower hall.

You can combine the visit with Hof van Nederland, on the Hof in the old center. That museum tells about the First Free Assembly of the States of 1572, another turning point that took place in Dordrecht. For opening hours, check the website of Hof van Nederland.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): the struggle between Arminius and Gomarus in Leiden; the Remonstrance of January 14, 1610; Maurice in the Kloosterkerk (July 1617); the arrest of Oldenbarnevelt in August 1618 and his beheading on May 13, 1619, on the Binnenhof, at the age of seventy-one; the opening of the

synod on November 13, 1618, in the Grote Kerk and the sessions in the upper hall of the Kloveniersdoelen; Bogerman as president; the decision for a new Bible translation in November 1618; the sending away of the Remonstrants on January 14, 1619; the canons in five chapters; the closing on May 29, 1619; the removal from office of about two hundred Remonstrant ministers; the Remonstrant Brotherhood (1619); the publication of the Statenvertaling in 1637; the demolition of the Kloveniersdoelen around 1857 or 1858.

Only from tradition or a single source: the closing word of the canons (CCEL, only this part opened); Bogerman's exact words ("Dimittimini, exite") and that he was visibly furious; the words about the lie (an English translation from 1867, via Simonetta Carr); Balcanqual's letter to Carleton about the "powdering speech" (via Carr, who refers to John Hales' Golden Remains); the judgment about the calm of Episcopius, his farewell to the students and the Episcopius-daalder (Van der Aa, nineteenth-century lexicon); the judgment about the later fierceness of Lydius; the examples Bogerman named for the new translation and his encouragement to Alting (Meeter Center); Lydius' closing sermon on Isaiah 12; the reading aloud by alternating ministers on May 6; the mantelpiece in the Dordrechts Museum; the permanent exhibition in the Grote Kerk; Oldenbarnevelt's last words to his servant (Low Countries); the diary of Jan Francken and the sword in the Flehite Museum (NL Times, 2019); the saying of John Hales about Calvin (letter of Anthony Farindon in Hales' Golden Remains, one source that I could only see as a title page and a fragment).

Unconfirmed: the date of Episcopius' speech (December 6 or 7, 1618); the number of Remonstrants summoned (thirteen to fifteen); the number of sessions (154 or 180); the year of demolition (1857 or 1858); the exact number of ministers who went into exile; the words of Oldenbarnevelt on the scaffold that he was not a traitor

("reportedly," one source); the age of Uyttenbogaert at the funeral (87 according to the dictionary, which does not fit his year of birth, so it is not mentioned).

Interpretation: whether the synod was an honest conversation or a trial with a fixed outcome is a point of disagreement between historians and between churches to this day.

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's-Hertogenbosch: the cathedral that had to wait

If you stand on the Parade in 's-Hertogenbosch, the city in the southern province of Brabant that the Dutch usually call Den Bosch, you look up. The Sint-Jan (St. John's) fills the square. High on the ledges stand angels in stone, a few of them made only during the last restoration. The church is open every day. You can climb the tower, past the carillon and the clockwork. Inside, a small statue of Mary is venerated, the Zoete Lieve Vrouw (Sweet Dear Lady) of Den Bosch.

It is a Catholic cathedral, the seat of the bishop. It looks as if it has always been that way. It was not.

In September 1629 the first Reformed service was held in this church. The bishop had to leave the city. The statue of Mary disappeared to Brussels. And the Catholic farmers and craftsmen in the villages around the city went to church in a barn for more than a century and a half.

This is the story of that church, of the man who left it as its last bishop, and of the barns where the faith of Brabant went on living.

Baptized under the same vaults

Michael Ophovius was baptized in the Sint-Jan on January 22, 1570. He was a Den Bosch boy. At fifteen he joined the Dominicans in Antwerp in 1585, a religious order of preachers. In Dutch the Dominicans are also called predikheren, preaching friars, because preaching is their first task.

On March 13, 1593, Ophovius was ordained a priest in Leuven. In 1609 he received his doctorate in theology. He was a learned man, but historian Wim Cöp calls him above all a Dominican to the core. What that meant would become clear later.

The church in which he was baptized already had a restless history by then. Since 1559 the Sint-Jan had been the cathedral of a new diocese. On August 22, 1566, the Beeldenstorm, the iconoclastic fury, swept through the city, and in the Sint-Jan statues, books and church furniture were destroyed. A few years later the tide turned: with support from Brussels the Catholic church got the city back, and in April 1577 most Protestants left 's-Hertogenbosch. So Ophovius grew up in a city where one group of Christians had already once seen the other leave. In 1629 it would go the other way.

The land in which he grew up was torn apart. The Netherlands were in revolt against the Spanish king. In the north the Republic had come into being, with the Reformed church as the public church. The south remained under Spain and remained Catholic. 's-Hertogenbosch lay right on that fault line. The city belonged to the south, but a large part of the surrounding land already lay within reach of the Republic.

A conversation in Heusden

On March 17, 1623, Ophovius sat facing Willem Adriaan van Horne, the governor of Heusden, a fortress town to the northwest. He came

with a message from the government in Brussels: the governor was to be persuaded to bring Heusden over to the Spanish side. That is how it appears in the research of Wim Cöp.

The conversation went completely differently from what was intended. The governor became furious and had Ophovius held. In his own account Van Horne later wrote that he had told him he would be the first traitor of his house if he accepted the proposal. The historian Bor tells that the governor would have refused the proposal even if all the treasures of the king of Spain had been offered to him.

Ophovius pleaded. He appealed to the freedom to speak freely, pointed to French nobles who had reconciled with the king, and offered extra rewards. It did not help.

Then a long time of waiting began. From Heusden he asked permission to write to his monastery in Antwerp and to his cousin Jan van de Gevel. He also asked whether the Infanta, the Spanish governess of the Netherlands, could take Godefroij van Horne prisoner. When that had been done, he wrote hopefully to the governor on April 2 that Godefroij was now under arrest. His request for release had no result. He was taken to the Voorpoort in The Hague, the Gevangenpoort (the prison gate).

There he was questioned by the advocate-fiscal Nicolaas van Kinschot, the public prosecutor. A series of twelve questions came, about his visit, about a floodplain meadow in Maren and about the seal of the Infanta that he had cut off. A second series of about ten questions was about the instruction he had been given. One question was whether he had considered not carrying out that instruction. His answers have not been preserved. There are also no indications that he was tortured.

Exactly how it happened is not entirely clear. For a long time it was assumed that a distant cousin of the governor had set up the affair on his own. In an article from 2017 Cöp considers it possible that Ophovius walked into a trap, with the knowledge of the governor and perhaps of Prince Maurice. There was no conviction for high treason.

Ophovius spent a year locked up as a criminal and then eight months as a civil prisoner. Barbara van Swieten, a woman who traveled back and forth between the parties, saw to better conditions. In November 1623 Maurice gave orders to let the proceedings rest. According to Cöp, Ophovius was worth more as a bargaining chip than as a convicted man.

That showed in the negotiations. The States did not want to include him in the agreement on the exchange of prisoners. A deed of October 1623 says in French that the so-called Father Ophovius would not be included in this agreement. The Infanta answered that without him there would be no exchange. And more than a hundred wives and relatives of Dutch prisoners in Dunkirk asked that Ophovius be included after all, because otherwise their own men would stay where they were.

On November 26, 1624, he was set free, after almost two years. It was an exchange of about fifty prisoners of the Republic for two hundred forty or more from the other side. In a letter to the church leadership in Rome, the Propaganda Fide, he himself wrote that he had been exchanged for two hundred forty prisoners.

In his cell he had not sat idle. He held a dispute about the faith with two Protestant ministers, among them Hommius, probably the Leiden theologian Festus Hommius whom we already met in the first chapter. Ophovius mentions the dispute himself in his letters. A Dominican is a preacher, even in prison.

Bishop of a divided diocese

In 1626 Pope Urban VIII approved his appointment, on June 22. That year he was consecrated bishop in Antwerp. On October 30, 1626, he was solemnly received in his own city. He became bishop of the cathedral where he had been baptized as a baby. A contemporary, Pontanus, described him in 1626, in Latin, as in a way a reformer of his own order.

Ophovius could have made another choice. He could have become bishop of Bruges, in safe territory. He chose to keep working in his own diocese and in the mission in Holland.

It became a restless time. A third of his diocese already lay in the Republic, where Catholic priests were not allowed to work openly. Ophovius remained what he was: a preacher. On Sundays and feast days he himself stood in the pulpit of the Sint-Jan.

For three years the bishop preached in this church every Sunday. After that no Catholic sermon would be heard there for more than a century and a half.

A dike of forty-five kilometers

On April 30, 1629, the army of the Republic appeared on the Vughterheide, south of the city. The commander-in-chief was Frederick Henry, Prince of Orange and stadtholder. He set up his headquarters in Vught. That day, according to the Den Bosch alderman Robbert van Voorne, more than a hundred and fifty ships already lay at Crèvecoeur. The governor of the city, Grobbendonck, counted six hundred. He did not know what was coming.

’s-Hertogenbosch lay in a marsh and was hard to reach. So Frederick Henry chose a different approach. From May 3 onward, twenty-four thousand foot soldiers built a ring of dikes and earth-

works around the city. That line was to be forty-five kilometers (about twenty-eight miles) long. The rivers Dommel and Aa were dammed, so that the water no longer hindered the besiegers. By May 18 the city was completely surrounded. In all, the Republic had brought together some twenty-eight thousand men. In the army camp near Vught alone there were sixteen to seventeen thousand. The Bossche Encyclopedie, a local history encyclopedia, calls Frederick Henry by his nickname: the Stedendwinger, the Tamer of Cities.

Voices from the camp have been preserved. The prince visited the workers at the outer defenses, praised them and encouraged them. The scholar Heinsius describes him as soaking wet and covered in mud. An English captain wrote that he showed no fear and went into the trenches just like that. According to Heinsius the soldiers praised him to the skies. A soldier, Steven Nolis, had a promissory note collected for his family, because he did not know whether he would survive. The young Guillaume vande Velde, sixteen or seventeen years old, was enrolled as a soldier after an evening of drinking. On June 26 a fire broke out in Vught, and tents of English soldiers went up in flames.

Inside the walls people sought support from one another and from the holy statues in the Sint-Jan, the Bossche Encyclopedie tells. The siege lasted the whole summer.

An orange flag on the tower

On September 11, 1629, a mine exploded under one of the bastions. The defense broke. Three days later, on September 14, the city surrendered.

On one of those days the people of Den Bosch saw an unknown flag above the tower of the Sint-Jan. It caused panic and the question

whether the city had already fallen. According to a local story the flag was a bold stunt by a soldier from Vlissingen, Pieter Jansen, who had smuggled it into the city under his clothes. I know that story from only one source.

The terms were negotiated in Vught. Bishop Ophovius led the Den Bosch delegation. He asked for freedom of religion for the Catholic citizens and for a place for the city in the States General, the government of the Republic. The Bossche Encyclopedie calls his plea hopeless. He got neither.

According to a story that circulates in the English-language literature, Frederick Henry himself would have liked to give the Catholics some freedom, but gave in to the Calvinist ministers. I have not found a Dutch source that confirms this. What is certain is that the Republic chose the same strictness as in the rest of the country. Ophovius was the first to put his signature under the treaty of surrender.

He had asked for freedom for his people and did not get it. His name came first under the treaty. Ophovius kept a diary in those weeks. It runs from August 4, 1629, to the end of 1631 and has been published by A.M. Frenken. I have not been able to see it myself, so what went on inside him I cannot retell here.

Two days later

On September 17, 1629, Frederick Henry entered the city. Two days later, on September 19, the first Reformed service was held in the Sint-Jan. That is what the cathedral's own website says.

Everything changed in a few weeks. Catholic priests and members of religious orders were given two months to leave the city. The property of the church went to the States General. According to one source the convents of women were allowed to continue until

the last sister who lived there in 1629 had died. No new sisters were added. The Capuchins had to leave the city.

The city remained Catholic at heart. About a fifth of the population became Protestant. The rest stayed with the old faith and met in schuilkerken, hidden churches, rooms that could not be recognized as churches from the outside.

For the small Reformed congregation the Sint-Jan was far too big. It hung a heavy new bell in it and large chandeliers. But the upkeep of such a building could not be afforded, and in the centuries that followed the church fell into decay. When the restoration began in 1859, plants were growing on parts of the building.

In 1646 the old Lieve Vrouwe Broederschap (Brotherhood of Our Lady) was reformed into a mixed society of thirty-six members: eighteen Catholics and eighteen Protestants. Strict ministers, with Gisbertus Voetius at the head, protested fiercely.

The statue that went to Brussels

The departing Catholics also took a precious possession with them: the statue of the Zoete Lieve Vrouw. According to the church's book of miracles it had been found around 1380 in a builders' lodge near the Sint-Jan. It was venerated as a statue at which miracles happened. In 1629 it was taken out of the city, to Brussels. It would stay there until well into the nineteenth century. In those more than two hundred fifty years the Belgians came to see the statue as their own property, the cathedral itself writes.

Why would you take a small statue with you when your city is lost? For a Protestant reader that question may be hard to follow. For the Catholics of Den Bosch the statue belonged to their church and their city.

The twentieth of November

Ophovius stayed another two months. On November 20, 1629, he left 's-Hertogenbosch for good. Other sources give November 12.

He was now a bishop without a cathedral. From March 1630 he lived mostly at the castle of Geldrop, as the guest of the lord of Geldrop, Amand van Horne. From there he tried to continue his work: preaching, and urging people to remain faithful to the Catholic faith. It became harder and harder to practice the faith there. In November 1636 he left Geldrop, for fear that the Republic would arrest him again.

He went to the house of the Dominicans in Lier, in the south. There he had founded a vicariate, and he kept working for it. There he died on November 4, 1637. According to the English Wikipedia he was almost destitute by then. On January 5, 1638, he was buried in the church of the preaching friars in Antwerp, the order he had entered at the age of fifteen.

Ophovius lost his city, his cathedral and in the end almost all his possessions. The letter to the Hebrews says: *For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come* (Hebrews 13:14). What he did not lose was what he had become at fifteen: a preaching friar, who kept on preaching from Geldrop.

A barn on the edge of the village

What happened in the city also happened in the countryside. After the Peace of Münster in 1648 the border between the Republic and the Spanish Netherlands was fixed. From then on the north of Brabant belonged to the Republic for good. It became a Generality Land: an area that fell under the Republic but had no voice of its own in the States General. The inhabitants were subjects, not allies.

In the villages the Catholics had to give up their churches. In Oirschot that happened after 1648. In Eersel the government took the church away in 1648 from pastor Dierixzoon Roijmans and his parishioners. In Gilze the Protestants took over the Sint-Petrus Bandenkerk (the Church of St. Peter in Chains). Most villagers remained Catholic. Where were they to go?

The answer became a barn. A schuurkerk, or barn church, was a church space in a building that looked like a farm barn from the outside. In the course of time such churches were tolerated, as long as they did not draw attention. According to the Dutch Wikipedia the congregations paid money to the local authorities for this, a kind of fee for turning a blind eye. For Brabant I have not been able to check this in a second source.

A nineteenth-century list of parishes in West Brabant shows how differently it went. In Gastel, pastor Hesselius had to do his work "ter sluiks" (in secret) from 1650 onward, now here, now there. In Halsteren the services were held in a farm barn for years. In Wouw the Catholics gathered in stables and barns. In Roozendaal the Catholics had to make do with a barn church for a century and a half. And in Breda pastor Gobbincx served the faithful "in the deepest secrecy."

Museum Catharijneconvent writes that in North Brabant and Limburg "almost every village" had such a barn church. On the outside they were plain, on the inside often richly furnished. The places changed constantly, for safety, and the objects had to be easy to remove quickly or make unrecognizable, in case officials of the government burst in. Even after 1672, when there was more room for Catholics, they were nowhere allowed to come out of their hidden churches and barn churches. This lasted from the second half of the seventeenth century into the nineteenth.

In such a barn Mass was celebrated. The priests lived among their people in the village. Their names have mostly been forgotten.

Sunday after Sunday these priests stood in a barn before their fellow villagers, and almost no one remembers any more what they were called. In the prophet Malachi it says of those who fear God: *a book of remembrance was written before Him* (Malachi 3:16). So the Bible knows a memory that reaches further than a village history.

The night before the consecration

A few of those stories have been preserved.

In Oirschot the Catholics built a barn church in 1677 on a corner where the Spoordonkseweg, the Nieuwstraat and the Gasthuisstraat now meet. The priests lived scattered through the village until the middle of the eighteenth century. In 1763 the parish priest and dean Petrus van Helmont had a rectory of his own built, close to the barn church. That house still stands, a well-preserved example of a Kempen gentleman's house. Around 1800 the Catholics were allowed to go back to the large church. In 1853 the church board exchanged the rectory for the house of the notary De Jong at Nieuwstraat 17a, closer to the church.

In Gilze the barn church lay on the northern edge of the village. The Mass in Baarle under the Duke (Baarle-Hertog) was too far away, so they built a barn church of their own. In 1761 it was "badly in need of renewal," and a new one was built on the same spot. The consecration was planned for June 19, 1762. In the night before, the new church burned down completely. The villagers had to go back to the temporary shelter on the Alphensebaan, which had served during the building, and they went on holding church there.

The source from the local history society gives no more than the facts. I do not want to invent anything about what the people of

Gilze felt that morning. Have you ever worked toward something for a long time and seen it disappear on the last day?

The old church of the village was standing there all the while. The first stone church of Gilze dates from 1235, burned down in 1584 in the Eighty Years' War and was rebuilt in 1617. That year can still be seen on the outside. A hundred and seventy years after the Protestants took over the little church, the Catholics were allowed back in 1818.

I have to be honest about something else here. For this book I looked for a preserved Catholic barn church in Brabant, with a door that can open, so that you can stand inside. I have not found one that I could point to with certainty. According to art historian Wies van Leeuwen, about fifty-five Brabant barn churches were replaced by new buildings, and most of them were torn down between 1795 and 1844. Around 1850 hardly a single barn church was left to be found. Churches with towers took their place. The barns disappeared.

Napoleon on the Parade

The end came from outside. In 1795 the Republic fell and the Batavian Republic came, supported by France. On August 5, 1796, a decree laid down that there would no longer be a privileged or ruling church. From then on Catholics were equal before the law.

In the villages it went differently from place to place. In Oirschot the Catholics returned to the large church around 1800. In Gilze it took until 1818, a hundred and seventy years later.

In 's-Hertogenbosch it was more complicated with the Sint-Jan. It was the largest church in the city, and the Reformed congregation had used it for almost two centuries. You can ask yourself what is just when two groups of Christians both see a church as their own.

The Catholics had built it. The Protestants had held their services there for more than a hundred and eighty years.

The decision came from an emperor. On April 26, 1810, Napoleon re-established the diocese of 's-Hertogenbosch by decree. In May 1810 he visited the city himself and promised the Catholics that they would get their church back. One source dates his decision to May 10, 1810.

Sometimes it is attributed to his brother Louis Napoleon, who was then King of Holland. The sources I read all name Napoleon Bonaparte himself.

A promise is not yet a handover. According to the cathedral itself, the Sint-Jan remained in use by the Reformed until 1813. After the fall of Napoleon the negotiations took years. On December 11, 1816, King William I signed the decision by which the Sint-Jan was finally returned to the Catholics. They had to pay sixty thousand guilders for it, as compensation for the Protestants. The tower became the property of the city. The Reformed congregation received money for a new church, which was built between 1818 and 1821.

It became a settlement, and both congregations carried something of it.

A procession in December

One thing was still missing. In 1853 the Catholic dioceses were re-established in the Netherlands. Bishop Zwijsen, appointed in 's-Hertogenbosch that year, worked to bring the statue of the Zoete Lieve Vrouw back from Brussels. He succeeded, though it took effort. The old book of miracles came back too.

On December 27, 1853, the feast of the evangelist John, the statue was carried back into the Sint-Jan in a solemn procession. The

church was still in decay. Six years later the first great restoration began, which would last until around 1946. In 1929 the church received the honorary title of basilica.

Jesus said it long before there were cathedrals or barns: *For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them* (Matthew 18:20). It holds for a cathedral. It held for a barn in Gilze too.

Whoever walks into the Sint-Jan now sees a church that has been through three restorations. The last one began in 1998 and was finished at the end of 2010. For about ten years the church stood in scaffolding, and walls were taken apart stone by stone to replace rusted anchors. On the ledges new angels stand beside old ones.

When I go in, what matters to me is the story around the small statue: a bishop who lost his city with his signature, a little statue that went into exile for two centuries, and a people who meanwhile simply carried on in barns.

You do not have to be Catholic to see what it cost them. You do not have to be Protestant to understand that the Reformed people of Den Bosch, who had to give up their church after almost two centuries, also lost something.

In 1816 the tower went to the city and the church went back to the bishop. And on the edge of a village in the Kempen, the sandy region of southern Brabant, a piece of a barn's wall still stands.

Go there yourself

The Sint-Janskathedraal stands on the Parade in the old center of 's-Hertogenbosch. The church is a cathedral basilica and a national monument. You can walk around inside and climb the tower past the carillon and the clockwork, and guided tours are given of the

church and the tower. For opening hours and tours, check the website of the Sint-Janskathedraal.

In Oirschot, south of Den Bosch, at Nieuwstraat 39 stands the rectory that the parish priest and dean Petrus van Helmont built next to the barn church in 1763. It is now a private home, so you view it from the outside. On the corner of the Spoordonkseweg, the Nieuwstraat and the Gasthuisstraat part of the wall of the 1677 barn church can still be seen. Combine it with the Sint-Petruskerk on the Markt, the large church to which the Catholics of Oirschot returned around 1800.

In Gilze the Sint-Petrus Bandenkerk stands on the Kerkstraat, the church to which the Catholics came back in 1818 after a hundred and seventy years. The site of the old barn church lies on the present-day Abdis van Thornstraat, on the northern edge of the village.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): the baptism of Ophovius in the Sint-Jan (1570), his entry into the Dominicans (1585), his imprisonment in 1623 to 1624 and his release on November 26, 1624, his reception as bishop on October 30, 1626; the siege from April 30, 1629, and the surrender on September 14, 1629; Ophovius as leader of the Den Bosch delegation and first signatory; the first Reformed service in the Sint-Jan on September 19, 1629; the departure of the clergy; the statue of the Zoete Lieve Vrouw that went to Brussels and returned on December 27, 1853; the death of Ophovius on November 4, 1637, in Lier; the decree of 1796; the founding of the diocese by Napoleon in April 1810 and his promise during his visit in May 1810; the decision of William I of December 11, 1816; the barn churches in almost every Brabant village.

Only from tradition or a single source: the conversation in Heusden, the interrogation and the prisoner exchange (Wim Cöp, who bases himself on the governor's memorial, Bor and letters of Ophovius); the finding of the statue of Mary around 1380 (book of miracles); the flag of Pieter Jansen from Vlissingen and the panic over it (Bossche Encyclopedie); the stories of soldiers such as Steven Nolis and Guillaume vande Velde (the same source); the exception for the convents of women; the existence of the diary of Ophovius (I did not read it); the fire in Gilze in the night before June 19, 1762 (local history society); that the Hommius in Cöp's article is the Leiden Festus Hommius (not expressly checked); the barn church of 1677 and the rectory of 1763 in Oirschot (Visit-Brabant); the parishes in West Brabant (Dietsche Warande, 1871); the Den Bosch Brotherhood of 1646 (website of the Sint-Jan); the recognition fee for barn churches.

Unconfirmed: that Frederick Henry himself had wanted to give the Catholics freedom; the question of who led Ophovius into the trap in 1623; that he died poor; whether violence was used during his imprisonment (there are no indications). The date of his departure (November 20 or 12, 1629), the moment the Reformed really left the Sint-Jan (1810 or 1813), the number of prisoners exchanged (about fifty against two hundred forty or more) and the day of his consecration (September 13 or 17, 1626) differ from source to source. The date on which the orange flag stood on the tower has not been recorded.

Interpretation: the return of the Sint-Jan is sometimes attributed to Louis Napoleon. All the sources consulted name Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, and the final handover only came in 1816 from King William I.

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Utrecht: a sermon about a boy among the teachers

It is Sunday in the Domkerk of Utrecht. The city has decided that the school that has been running for two years will become a university. Three days later the solemn opening will follow, with processions and officials. But first the congregation gathers to ask God for His blessing.

In the pulpit stands a man of forty-seven, professor and minister. He speaks about a boy of twelve who sat among the teachers in the temple, listening and asking questions. He gives a long discourse on the use of schools and of the sciences taught in them. Then he addresses the congregation, the officials, the professors and the students. And at the end he prays, in words that are still quoted two hundred fifty years later: "O God, let Your work be seen by Your servants."

If you stand on the Domplein in Utrecht today, you are looking at the gap where that church stood. On one side rises the Domtoren, the cathedral tower, on the other side stands the Domkerk, the cathedral church. Between them lies a square where the nave of a church ought to stand. In 1674 a great storm blew the nave

away. The choir and the tower stayed standing, and what lay between them was cleared away in the nineteenth century. That is how the square came about.

On the square stands the Academiegebouw (Academy Building) of Utrecht University, with a neo-Renaissance front from the years 1891 to 1894. If you look closely, you see a bend in that front. As a compromise with the Gothic church next door, the building was set farther back from the church than first intended. Behind that front is something much older: the Aula, the old chapter house of the cathedral, which goes back to 1462. There the Union of Utrecht was signed in 1579, the treaty that became the foundation of the Dutch Republic. And there, in 1636, a new university found its first place.

Close to the square, between the Domstraat and the Pieterskerkhof, lies a short street with a name that will mean nothing to most passersby: the Voetiusstraat. It is named after the man in that pulpit, who taught and preached here for forty-two years. Gisbertus Voetius was the first professor of theology in Utrecht. He wanted learning and a God-fearing life to stay together. He preached for that, and he also fought hard for it.

A boy from Heusden

His real name was Gijsbert Voet. He was born on March 3, 1589, in Heusden, a small fortress town on the river Meuse. Those were the years of the Revolt against Spain. His father, the knight Paul Voet, was killed in that war when Gijsbert was eight. His mother was left behind as a widow with four children. Other families helped her, so that the boy could go on studying.

He stood out early, through his diligence and an excellent memory. At fifteen he went to Leiden. He studied there from 1604 to 1611, in the years when two professors there clashed with each other, Fran-

ciscus Gomarus and Jacobus Arminius. It was about the question of whether God decides beforehand who will be saved. Voetius was taught by both, but Gomarus shaped him. He chose the strict line of Calvin's teaching and never let go of it again.

In 1611 he became a minister in Vlijmen, a village near his hometown. A year later he married Deliana van Diest. They had ten children. Some of them died as infants, and a biographical sketch calls that a heavy blow for the family.

Four o'clock in the morning

If you want to see his days, you have to get up early. Voetius rose at four o'clock and worked at least sixteen hours a day. A biographical sketch from 1989 by Karel Deddens calls him, in Latin, a devourer of books. It also tells that he gave away almost his entire income to poor people. His wife was more practical. She took care of the wages of the staff.

He was not a gentle man. His opponents gave him names: Abbot Voetius, Pope Gisbertus, Papa Ultrajectinus. He called Arminianism a cancer that had lodged itself in the healthy words of Christ. And he opposed in public dancing and the theater, gluttony and luxury in house and clothing, lotteries, gambling and card playing. On organ playing in church he thought so strictly that he called it wrong.

You can find that stifling. You can also read in it what kind of man stood in that pulpit: someone who wanted his faith to reach into his clothes, his table and his time.

Eight sermons a week

In 1617 he came back to Heusden, now as minister of his own town. According to an old theological encyclopedia he preached there eight times a week. Between those sermons he learned Arabic.

A year later he was in Dordrecht, at the great synod of 1618 and 1619 where the struggle from his student days was settled. He was the youngest delegate. The synod rejected the teaching of the followers of Arminius. Voetius stood on the side that won, and he went on writing against that teaching later.

In 1629 he went along with the army of the Republic as a field chaplain to the siege of 's-Hertogenbosch. After the city was taken he helped build up the Reformed church there. Forty-four years later he came back to those weeks, in a sermon I will return to further on. Then he remembers that in the army camp near 's-Hertogenbosch he gave a sermon of thanksgiving, after the army had conquered the city of Wesel.

Heusden remained his post.

A minister from Middelburg

In those same years a man was preaching in Middelburg, in the province of Zeeland, who made a great impression on Voetius. Willem Teellinck was born in Zierikzee in 1579. He studied law, but in 1604 he lived for nine months in Banbury in England, among the Puritans. They were English Protestants who sought a pure church and a holy daily life. According to the American theologian Joel Beeke, Teellinck believed that God had converted him there. He studied theology in Leiden and became a minister, from 1613 in Middelburg. He died there in 1629.

Teellinck is often called the father of the Nadere Reformatie. That word needs explaining. In English it is often called the Dutch Further Reformation. The Reformation of the sixteenth century had reformed the teaching of the church. The men and women of the Nadere Reformatie felt that it must not stop there. Life itself had to be reformed too: in the family, at work, in politics. A Dutch study describes it as a movement that wanted to fill all areas of life with God's Word.

Voetius heard Teellinck preach a few times. He later wished that more ministers in the country would preach like that. When Teellinck's book *Het Nieuwe Jeruzalem* (The New Jerusalem) appeared in 1635, after his death, Voetius wrote the preface. He called him a second Thomas a Kempis, after the medieval author of *The Imitation of Christ*. They did not agree on everything: in Voetius' view Teellinck was too strict about Sunday rest. But the line had been drawn. What Teellinck preached in Zeeland, Voetius would go on to teach in Utrecht.

Teellinck died in 1629 and never saw the school in Utrecht. What he preached in Middelburg went on in a man who had heard him only a few times, and who did not agree with him on everything. Jesus told His disciples that the saying is true that one sows and another reaps (John 4:37).

An unexpected calling

Utrecht had long wanted a university. As early as 1470 there had been a proposal. It only came about in 1632, when the vroedschap, the city council, decided on an Illustre School. That was a college that gave academic teaching but was not allowed to grant degrees. The city paid for everything itself. In 1634 the school opened, with theology, law and the arts. The Groot Kapittelhuis next to the cathedral, the hall now called the Aula, was rebuilt into two lecture halls.

For theology the choice fell on Voetius, forty-five years old and a minister in Heusden. He became professor of theology and of the Oriental languages. Years later, looking back on his career, he called it in Latin an unexpected and sudden calling to the work of the school.

Do you recognize that? That you are in a place where you thought you would stay, and then someone knocks on the door with a question that changes the course of your life? Voetius accepted the appointment.

Godliness and learning

A new professor began with a public address, an inaugural lecture. For his inaugural lecture in 1634 Voetius chose a title that says a great deal: *De pietate cum scientia coniungenda*. That means: on joining godliness with learning. Godliness is an old word for a life that is wholly directed toward God, in what you think, feel and do.

Later researchers agree in summing up its content. Voetius called on the students to do their studies in true godliness. All scholarly work was to serve the glory of God and the salvation of people. A writer in the magazine *The Banner of Truth* summed it up like this: godliness belongs in the head and in the heart.

For a theologian that sounds obvious. But it concerned all study at the new school, and it came in the years when the philosophy of Descartes was rising. A South African study writes that the address set the tone for everything Voetius did in Utrecht after that.

A biographical sketch tells how that looked in the lecture hall. On Saturdays Voetius held disputation classes, where students learned to defend the Reformed teaching against the errors of their time. He always let the teaching land in daily life: in bringing up children, in

the sermon, in the work of a minister. A professor from Groningen later even called Utrecht the Academia Voetiana.

A letter shows that he was no enemy of thinking. On April 12, 1640, he advised a friend to study Greek, and he named Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Plutarch and Theophrastus. Greek thinkers, recommended by the man who also urged his students to pray.

Sunday, March 13, 1636

Two years after the inaugural lecture the time had come. The States of Utrecht decided to raise the Illustre School to a university, which would be allowed to grant degrees. On the Sunday before the solemn opening Voetius stood in the pulpit of the Domkerk.

According to Professor J.J.L. Valeton, who stood in the same pulpit in 1886 for the two hundred fiftieth anniversary of the university, that was on March 13, 1636. Utrecht still reckoned with the old Julian calendar at the time. On our calendar it was March 23.

Valeton describes how it went. The city had decided to raise the school to a university, and the congregation came together on the Sunday before to ask God's blessing on the undertaking. Voetius chose a text about a boy of twelve. Jesus had gone with His parents to Jerusalem and stayed behind in the temple. *Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions* (Luke 2:46).

In this way Voetius connected the work of the new university with Jesus Himself, who listened and asked questions. The sermon was later printed under the title *Sermoen van de nutticheydt der Academien ende Scholen*, about the usefulness of academies and schools and of the sciences and arts that are learned there. Students were later to be useful to the churches and able to apply their knowledge in pastoral work.

After the discourse he turned to the people in the pews: to the congregation, to the officials who paid for the school, to the professors and to the students. Then came the prayer. Valeton tells that Voetius asked whether God would make the work visible to His servants. He also prayed that God would establish the work of their hands, and with that petition he closed.

I like to read that prayer. A scholar opens a university, and at the end he asks God to let His work be seen. Valeton, who stood in the same place two hundred fifty years later, said that the prayer had been answered. The academy still existed.

Two processions on a Wednesday

Three days later, on Wednesday, March 16, 1636, on our calendar March 26, the university was inaugurated. Utrecht University still celebrates March 26 as its birthday, its dies natalis.

It was a rainy day. De Geer tells that in his book on the Dom of Utrecht: early in the morning it rained, around nine o'clock the sun broke through. Then the procession began.

Two processions went through the city. According to a study on the history of the Utrecht law faculty, one set out from the city hall: at the front five messengers, then the sheriff and the mayors, after them the new rector and the professors. The other procession came from the Statenkamer, with the governors of the province and the nobles. On the gown of the beadle, the university's messenger, was written "Ac. Ultr.", for Academia Ultrajectina.

It was a small university. There were seven professors, all Protestant and many of them from abroad, and a few dozen students, among them Germans, Englishmen and Scots. All lectures were in Latin. The university chose as its motto *Sol Iustitiae Illustra Nos*: Sun of righteousness, shine on us. Valeton writes that the sun in the coat

of arms and the words around it belong with the prayer of Voetius. That morning the sun really did shine.

Who the first rector was is not entirely clear. The legal history study names the jurist Bernardus Schotanus, another biographical sketch names Voetius.

Behind the curtain

From 1636 there was also a woman in the lecture hall. Anna Maria van Schurman was a learned woman from Utrecht who mastered many languages: Hebrew, Arabic, Chaldean, Syriac and Ethiopic. In a poem at the opening of the university she had criticized the exclusion of women. After that she was given permission to attend lectures. She sat behind a curtain, in a separate box, the first woman in the Netherlands who was allowed to do so. That way the male students could not see her. Voetius, who was also her family's neighbor, gave her private lessons.

The two were friends, until they grew apart. In the 1660s she became disappointed in the Reformed church. In March 1669 she wrote a pamphlet of ten pages on the necessary reform of the church, in which she accused the churchmen of trampling heavenly wisdom underfoot. In this way she broke with the church of Voetius. She sold her house and joined the community of Jean de Labadie. He had earlier stayed as a guest in her house in Utrecht. In her book *Eukleria* of 1673 she criticized Voetius' resistance to her admiration for Saint Paula. After her break with the church she was attacked by, among others, Voetius and Constantijn Huygens.

On May 4, 1678, she died in Wieuwerd, in Friesland, at the age of seventy. She had outlived Voetius by a year and a half. Of the lectures behind the curtain only the memory remained.

What a student learned

Voetius kept urging a practical faith. He encouraged his students to meet together for prayer and Bible reading. In 1644 he wrote a book with the title *Exercitia pietatis*, exercises in godliness. Teellinck's movement found a home in Utrecht. A Dutch study calls Voetius the pivot of the Nadere Reformatie.

A few letters show how he dealt with people. On May 12, 1636, two months after the opening, he wrote to a theology student in England. He advised him to look for a godly minister and pointed to a teaching and church order that stood close to the time of the apostles. He closed with the wish that the student would fare well in the Lord. On November 21, 1649, he wrote to Nicolaas Blancardus that he was sending his son Daniel to Leiden to attend lectures there. In the same letter he congratulated Blancardus on his marriage and referred to Psalm 68.

In 1636 he earned his doctorate in theology in Groningen. His promoter, the professor who conferred it, was his old teacher Gomarus. A year later, in 1637, he also became a minister of the Utrecht congregation. From then on he stood in two places at once: in the lecture hall and in the pulpit.

Man as an accidental being

But strife came too, and it began in medicine. In 1638 Henricus Regius became professor of theoretical medicine and botany in Utrecht. He laid out an herb garden. That same year he began corresponding with a French philosopher who lived in the Republic: René Descartes.

Descartes wanted to rebuild all knowledge anew, starting from what can be known for certain. He broke with Aristotle, the Greek philosopher on whose thought the universities of Europe had

rested for centuries. In 1639 his philosophy entered the University of Utrecht, and Regius became its advocate there.

On December 8, 1641, a student under Regius' direction defended the thesis that body and mind together form an accidental unity. In Latin: *unum per accidens*. Descartes himself later warned that such a statement would turn the theologians against them. Voetius reacted that same month. To his own theological disputations he attached theses against the new philosophy. Regius wrote a reply on February 16, 1642.

In March 1642 the academic senate gave its verdict. Voetius was rector at the time. The senate condemned the new philosophy, with the approval of the city government. Regius was no longer allowed to teach natural philosophy and had to keep to traditional medicine.

An open letter to Voetius

Descartes did not let it rest. In 1642 he added to a new edition of his *Meditations* a letter to Father Dinet, a French cleric. In it he attacked Voetius without naming him. A year later the book *Admiranda methodus* appeared in Utrecht, written by Martinus Schoock, with Voetius' support. It accused Descartes of unbelief and skepticism. Descartes answered in 1643 with an open letter, this time addressed straight to Voetius himself: the *Epistola ad Voetium*.

In the same weeks Voetius himself wrote to Schoock in Groningen, on March 30, 1643. He reported that the professors of the university had approved a joint statement against the new philosophy, but that the publication had been postponed. In that letter he called Descartes our new doubter. At the end he prayed that God would keep them all, in body and mind.

The quarrel occupied the city for years. In 1645 the city government banned the printing and selling of writings for or against Descartes.

How should you read this? It is tempting to present Voetius here as the man who held back progress, or on the contrary as the man who saw where Descartes' thinking could lead. I do neither. What is certain is that Voetius rejected the new philosophy for reasons of faith and suspected it of atheism. What is also certain is that he won the debate with the power of the senate and the city government, and that this did not end the debate. A few years later Utrecht did get a professor who followed Descartes.

The Pope of Utrecht

More conflicts followed. Voetius clashed with the theologian Johannes Cocceius, who explained the Bible in his own way. The quarrel between their followers divided the Reformed church for decades. He at first supported the minister Jean de Labadie. He helped him to his call to Middelburg. But he turned against him when Labadie separated from the church, and a disputation of 1669 dealt Labadie a heavy blow. Voetius wanted a fervent faith, but within the church.

In 1643 he bought a house close to the Dom. According to a publication of the historical society Oud-Utrecht, it stood behind the church. In the city he got the nickname "Pope of Utrecht". That says something about his authority.

Meanwhile he kept writing, among other things a large work on the government of the church, the *Politica ecclesiastica*, and disputations on missions. He held that the church should be independent of the state. He urged the trading companies to take ministers along on their ships.

A church full of Frenchmen

In 1672, the rampjaar or year of disaster, the French army invaded the Republic. Utrecht was occupied. Buildings of the academy and churches were used to supply the army. The Domkerk, where Voetius had preached, became a Roman Catholic house of worship.

Voetius himself described that time later, in a sermon that has been printed. In September 1672 everyone who had fled the city had to come back, on pain of a fine of fifty guilders a day. The houses of those who stayed away were seized. The intendant had two beautiful houses torn down to the ground. Soldiers were quartered in homes, and they demanded food, beer and fuel. Villages were plundered. Rhijnauwen, Amerongen, Maarssen and Abcoude went up in flames. Captured soldiers got only bread and water. And women and children lived in fear of what soldiers could do.

In November 1673 the French pulled out. On Thursday, November 13, by the calendar of Utrecht, they left the city.

Like those who dream

Three days later, on Sunday, November 16, 1673, at nine o'clock, Voetius stood again in the pulpit of the Dom. He was eighty-four. The church was not what it had been, because the French had held their own worship there.

He chose a psalm about coming home. *When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream* (Psalm 126:1).

He told it himself, in a sermon that was later printed. He began with the seasons and with day and night. Prosperity and adversity follow one another, he said, and God arranges both. He remembered the thanksgiving sermon of 1629 in the camp at 's-Hertogenbosch. Then he worked out three points: why they were glad, what that

gladness had to look like and what the words meant that God had done great things.

About the liberation itself he spoke soberly. God used means, he said. The French had gone because Prince William III had marched with an army into the land of Cologne, and that drew the enemy away from Utrecht. For him the liberation remained God's work. He compared it to Hannibal, who had to leave Italy when Rome attacked his own land in Africa.

Then he spoke to the people in the pews directly. He called on himself to wake up and praise God, with heart and strings. But he also called the congregation to repentance for their own sin and ingratitude. And he asked for something concrete. In the surrounding provinces there were still prisoners. For them he prayed with the words of the fourth verse of the same psalm: that God would turn back their captivity. He urged the congregation to help them. He mentioned the women of the city who had collected clothes and food for captured soldiers. A noble lady had had wounded men cared for in her own palace, and others lay in the Catharijnegasthuis. He ended with praise to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

It is remarkable to see how close that sermon and the one of 1636 lie to each other. Both times he stood in the same church. Both times it was about something God had given and that people had not made themselves. The first time it was a school. The second time it was a city.

A few months later, in 1674, the storm came. The nave of the Domkerk blew away. Where Voetius had given his sermon about the boy in the temple in 1636, and in 1673 his thanksgiving sermon, a smaller church was left, with the tower standing apart from it.

Fresh and green

Psalm 92 says of the righteous: *They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing* (Psalm 92:14). According to another source Voetius became rector magnificus once more in 1675, at the age of eighty-six.

On November 1, 1676, he died in Utrecht, eighty-seven years old. He had been a professor for forty-two years. His friend, the minister C. Gentman, gave a memorial sermon on 2 Samuel 3:38, the words of King David at the grave of Abner: that a prince and a great man had fallen. The funeral orations of Gentman and of A. Essenius were printed the following year.

A gap between tower and church

Go back to the Domplein. Where you are standing, in 1636 there still stood the nave of the church in which Voetius preached about Jesus among the teachers. On one side the tower, on the other side the choir, and close by the bend in the front of the Academiegebouw. In the Aula behind it, inaugural lectures are still given. New professors begin their work there with a public address, as Voetius did in 1634.

In that address he asked for learning that bows before God. In the Senaatszaal (Senate Hall) hang the portraits of professors, a bell bears the name of Anna Maria van Schurman, and the sun is still on the front of the building. Sun of righteousness, shine on us.

Go there yourself

The Domplein lies in the middle of the old center of Utrecht. The Domkerk is open daily for visitors and for services. You can see gravestones in the floor, stained-glass windows and the triforium. You can also visit the Pandhof, a medieval inner garden with a clois-

ter around it. For opening hours and guided tours, check the website of the Domkerk.

The Academiegebouw stands on the Domplein. Outside you can see the statue of Count John of Nassau, in memory of the Union of Utrecht, and the sun on the front. Inside are the Aula, with stained-glass windows by Joep Nicolas from 1936, and the Senaatszaal with portraits of professors. The building is used for doctoral ceremonies and other ceremonies. Check the website of Utrecht University for when you can go inside; a free brochure is available at the reception desk.

The Voetiusstraat lies close to the square, between the Domstraat and the Pieterskerkhof. Combine your visit with the Universiteitsmuseum (University Museum) at Lange Nieuwstraat 106. In the Oude Hortus there lies the Regiustuin, laid out after the seventeenth-century herb garden where medical students learned what plants could do. So in one afternoon you stand in the world of Voetius and of his great opponent. For opening hours, check the website of the Universiteitsmuseum.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): birth on March 3, 1589, in Heusden; study in Leiden (1604 to 1611); minister in Vlijmen (1611) and Heusden (1617); marriage to Deliana van Diest; youngest delegate at the Synod of Dordrecht; the Illustre School in 1634 and Voetius' professorship; the title and thrust of his inaugural lecture *De pietate cum scientia coniungenda* (1634); his sermon in the Domkerk just before the opening of the university in March 1636, with the prayer at the end (Valeton); the opening on March 16 old style (March 26 new style); doctorate in Groningen under Gomarus (1636); minister in Utrecht (1637); Anna Maria van Schurman behind the curtain; the struggle with Regius and

Descartes (1641 to 1645) and the condemnation by the senate in March 1642; the storm of 1674; death on November 1, 1676.

From Voetius' own mouth or pen (through print): the prayer at the close of the sermon of 1636, as Valeton quotes it in 1886; the letters of May 12, 1636, April 12, 1640, March 30, 1643 and November 21, 1649, which I read in an English selection with notes; the thanksgiving sermon on Psalm 126 of November 16, 1673, of which I read an English translation (the publisher says the text was captured with the help of a computer program and then checked; I have therefore used only the main lines and the numbers, and the words in the story are my own retelling). The memory of the thanksgiving sermon of 1629 at 's-Hertogenbosch appears in that same sermon. His words about his calling of 1634 I know from a Latin quotation in an article.

Only from a single source or tradition: the death of his father in the war and the help for his mother (one biographical sketch, Deddens 1989); rising at four in the morning, working sixteen hours and giving away his income (the same sketch); the dislike of dancing, theater, lotteries and card playing and the statement about the organ (the same sketch); eight sermons a week in Heusden; the post of field chaplain in 1629; Voetius' judgment of Teellinck and the comparison with Thomas a Kempis (Beeke); the nicknames Pope of Utrecht, Abbot Voetius and Papa Ultrajectinus; the rectorship in 1675; the weather on March 16, 1636 (De Geer, through a review); the description of the occupation in the sermon of 1673.

Unconfirmed or disputed: the exact day of the sermon of 1636. Valeton names March 13, two sources name March 16, but according to two other sources that was the day of the opening itself. If you count by the days of the week, March 13 old style fits a Sunday, and I have followed that in the story. The text Luke 2:46 is named explicitly in one biographical sketch, while Valeton describes the same

scene without naming the text. Who the first rector was (Schotanus or Voetius). The day and the hall of the inaugural lecture of 1634; I have not read the full text of that lecture, only summaries. Where Voetius lies buried (one source names the Catharijnekerk). The weekday of the opening: the review of De Geer names a Tuesday, the calculation a Wednesday. Whether Van Schurman's poem fell at the opening of the Illustre School in 1634 or at the opening of the university in 1636 cannot be made out from my source. The date of the sermon of 1673 appears in the sources as November 16 or 27, by old or new style.

Interpretation: whether Voetius, with his struggle against Descartes, protected the faith or restricted thinking is a question on which historians and believers judge differently. The sources describe what happened, not who was right.

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Amsterdam: the church above the living room

In 1667, in a church above a family home in Amsterdam, seventy children were baptized and fourteen marriages were performed. People came in through an alley. They climbed a staircase, dipped their fingers on the way up into a small bowl of holy water set in the wall, and made the sign of the cross. Above them, in the attic, a priest was waiting.

Anyone who stands today on the Oudezijds Voorburgwal, on the corner of the Heintje Hoekssteeg, sees a narrow canal house. It has a wooden shopfront and a pointed gable, like so many houses on this street. If you walk past, you see nothing special. There is no tower.

Inside, it is different. You climb narrow stairs, past a front room with a box bed built into the wall, past a kitchen. In the sael, the stately reception room, the floor, the wood paneling and the fireplace are still there from the years when the house was rebuilt, 1661 to 1663. Then the stairs go on. At the top, a space opens up that you do not expect in a family home, with pews and an organ. A baroque altar with two marbled columns and two little angels holding lily branches. Above the altar hangs a painting by Jacob de Wit

from 1716: the baptism of Christ in the Jordan. There is room for about one hundred and fifty people.

This church is called Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder, Our Lord in the Attic. It only received that name in the nineteenth century. The people who went to church here in the seventeenth century called it Het Hart, The Heart.

How does a church end up in an attic? To understand that, you have to go back to a morning in May, almost eighty years before Jan Hartman bought this house.

Boats to the Anthoniesdijk

Amsterdam had stayed Catholic for a long time. While the other cities of Holland joined the revolt against King Philip II, the city remained loyal to the king and to the old church. Early in 1578, that came to an end. On February 8, Amsterdam signed the Satisfactie, an agreement by which the city placed itself under the authority of the Prince of Orange and the States of Holland.

One of the people who watched this from close by kept a diary. Wouter Jacobsz. was prior of the monastery of Stein, a churchman who was in Amsterdam during these months. He wrote down what he saw, and he wrote it as someone who is afraid of what is coming.

On January 1, 1578, he noted that Catholics had gathered at the city hall to demand that the Geuzen, the rebel fighters, not be allowed into the city. One of them would rather be burned on the Dam than give up the city. In the months that followed, he saw the mood turn. Anyone who opposed the new policy was called names. At the Nieuwe Kerk, a former mayor and a chaplain got into a fierce quarrel. On April 22, he himself had to swear that he would undertake nothing against the Pacification of Ghent, the Satisfactie of Amsterdam, or the prince. He added a note that he would keep to

it only until he left the city, and that he wanted to do so as soon as possible. On May 1, the soldiers set up maypoles, carried new banners, and threatened to tear down the Catholic churches.

Then came May 26, 1578. Early in the morning, a change of city government was forced through at the city hall. According to Jacobsz., foreign Geuzen demanded a church, and the mayors refused because it went against their oath. The whole city government was then arrested. Soldiers occupied the Dam, the gates, and the monasteries. At the Franciscans, the monks were beaten, their altars smashed, and their belongings plundered.

Later that day, the city was stripped of its Catholic government. The Catholic mayors and council members were removed from office. Together with a number of priests and most of the Franciscan friars, they were put into small boats. The boats went down the Damrak to the IJ and set them ashore at the Anthoniesdijk, just outside the city. Maarten Donck, the priest of the Nieuwe Kerk, and the vicar general went along too. Pastor Joost Buyck went into hiding. Historians call this the Alteratie, the Alteration, the great overturning.

A few small images of that day have survived. Mayor Hendrik Dircks was handed a few clean shirts in a hurry by a maid, but nobody had thought of traveling clothes. The clergy took shelter in a barn. A woman who had confessed to a Franciscan father later brought a bale of ordinary clothing, so that they could travel without being noticed. Most did not go far. They came back, unnoticed, to the city from which they had been driven.

According to the descriptions I read, no one died that day. But for the Catholic city, everything changed. On May 29, in the Heilige Stede, the tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament was destroyed. Jacobsz. wrote that it was done in great fury, and that it struck many honorable people like a heavy blow. In everything that happened,

he saw God's punishment for the sins of men. He called on God to be merciful.

The great parish church of Amsterdam was dedicated to Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of the city. It passed into the hands of the Reformed and from then on was called the Oude Kerk, the Old Church. On September 2, 1578, the Nieuwe Kerk and the church of the Franciscans were emptied: the altars and the statues were taken out. In 1579, the mayors confiscated the bells of the monasteries.

On April 18, 1580, Amsterdam proclaimed a ban issued by the States of Holland. From then on, Catholic worship was forbidden. Only freedom of conscience remained. You were allowed to be Catholic in your heart. You were not allowed to celebrate it.

A church everyone knew about

What do people do when their church is taken from them? In Amsterdam, they kept meeting. They met in living rooms, in workshops, in warehouses. The city government knew about it and often let it happen, as long as the gatherings could not be recognized from outside.

There is a Dutch word for this: gedogen. Something is forbidden, but the government does not act against it. The writer Russell Shorto, in a book about this museum, explains it as something that is technically illegal but officially tolerated.

The word schuilkerk, hidden church, actually fits this poorly. The church historian Joke Spaans writes that the name is incorrect, because these houses of prayer were openly known. The art historian Richard de Beer calls it a romantic idea from the nineteenth century. Everyone in the neighborhood knew where the Catholics went on Sunday. The only rule was that you were not allowed to see it from

the street. A tower, according to De Beer, was completely out of the question.

And there were many of them. In 1656, the Reformed church council of Amsterdam made a list of sixty-two houses where Catholics regularly met. Around 1650, an estimated thirty thousand Catholics lived in the city, more than a fifth of the population. In those years, more than sixty priests worked in Amsterdam, twice as many as there were Reformed ministers. Mayor Bicker was seen as a protector of those priests.

It did not always go smoothly. In 1596, Portuguese merchants looked for a priest for a quiet mass. Through a go-between, they ended up with a monk from Amersfoort, Bartholomeus Cornelisz. The schout took them by surprise, and the service did not go ahead. In 1660, the priest Zacharias de Metz was arrested because he had let himself be seen in the street in his vestments and had collected money too openly. He got a warning and was allowed to stay in the city.

In the Begijnhof, where Catholic women lived, you could see another side of this life. A beguine, Willemtje Heindriksdochter, had a practice there as a healer. She treated "the rich for money and the poor for God's sake," as Spaans quotes it. She also read mass there. Her sister Annetge lived with her. Together they helped the sick, supported the poor, and provided for poor students for the priesthood. And they tried to bring people to the Catholic faith.

Richard de Beer describes how this grew in Holland. Between 1580 and 1620, Catholics met in living rooms that kept changing. Around 1620, permanent house churches appeared. Large churches in the cities, behind an ordinary front, were only allowed from the last quarter of the seventeenth century. In Amsterdam, the number of

places went down in that period. In 1683, the list still had twenty-six addresses, and at the end of the eighteenth century, twenty-four.

Corpus Christi 1641

Tolerating did not mean that nothing ever happened.

On Corpus Christi in 1641, a Catholic feast day in honor of the bread of the Eucharist, the schout burst in on two masses. The schout was the official who had to keep order and punish offenses. More than five hundred believers were present. The fines added up to 6,200 guilders.

For a group of people who had come together to celebrate mass, that was a large sum. Anyone who was Catholic in the Dutch Republic knew that something like this could happen. You could keep your faith. Sometimes you paid for it.

An Augustinian from Ghent

In April 1636, a priest came to Amsterdam who would later live in this house. His name was Petrus Parmentier, and he was born in 1601. He was an Augustinian, a friar from the order named after the church father Augustine, and he came from the monastery of Saint Stephen in Ghent. He had joined at the age of twenty-one, and in 1626 he had taken his vows. His assignment, says the museum, was to win as many people as possible for the Catholic faith.

A priest in Amsterdam in those years had no parish church and no regular income from the church. The property of the old church had passed into the hands of the government. He depended on the believers who supported him. Parmentier first rented a room on the Zeedijk. He preached in people's houses and gave the sacraments in rooms that became a church on Sunday.

He was helped by spiritual daughters, unmarried women who devoted themselves to prayer, chastity, and good works. One of the first was Maria van Eck, born in 1608. She lived with him on the Zeedijk.

His name only comes into clear view when a merchant on the Oudezijds Voorburgwal begins to rebuild.

From baker's boy to merchant

That merchant was Jan Hartman. He came from Coesfeld, a small town in Germany, not far from Münster. He grew up with his brother Hendrick in a family of brewers and merchants. In 1633, the two brothers set out for Amsterdam, looking for work. They traveled by way of Zwolle and Utrecht, by coach and barge.

Jan began as a baker's journeyman, a young hired hand working for a baker. For a newcomer, that was usual, because food and lodging came with the work. The museum tells us that he worked his way up to become a successful businessman. In 1643, he married Maria Verhoeven of Haarlem, who died the following year. He was living then near the Spui, in the Wijde Heisteeg. Later he lived on the Zeedijk. His second wife was named Elisabeth. They had children.

Hartman was a Catholic. He lived in a city where he was allowed to earn his money and buy his house, but where his church was not allowed to have a building on the street. He was a newcomer from Germany who had become rich in Amsterdam.

May 10, 1661

On May 10, 1661, Jan Hartman bought the house on the Oudezijds Voorburgwal, together with the two dwellings behind it along the alley. He paid sixteen thousand guilders for it. Right away he had everything thoroughly rebuilt.

What he did can still be seen today. For his family he built a front room, the daghkamer: the living room by day, the bedroom by night, with a built-in box bed and a view of the canal. The sael became his showpiece, for receiving guests. It got a fireplace with twisted columns, a walnut cabinet, and a floor of white marble and black Belgian stone. Above the fireplace he had a family coat of arms put up, even though he was not of noble birth. It shows a reclining deer for his own family and a compass for his wife's, because her father was a compass maker.

And above all that, he had the attics of the three houses joined together. In this way, one space came into being on the top floors, large enough for a church. The monument register gives the construction period as 1661 to 1663. In 1663, the church was taken into use.

According to the museum, the way to the church runs through the Heintje Hoekssteeg, and on the way up, a holy water stoup still hangs in the wall. When Catholics enter a church, they dip their fingers in blessed water and make the sign of the cross, as a reminder of their baptism. Anyone who went up here did so in an ordinary stairwell.

The church was named Het Hart, after the man who built it. Sometimes it was also called Het Haantje, after the alley. It was dedicated to Saint Nicholas, the same saint to whom the Oude Kerk was dedicated, the church the Catholics had lost in 1578. Later it was officially known as the statie of Saint Nicholas within the walls. Statie was the name in the Republic for such a Catholic congregation.

A baker's journeyman from Coesfeld became a merchant, and in the attics of his house he had a church built. The church was named after him: Het Hart. Jesus said, *For where your treasure is, there your*

heart will be also (Matthew 6:21). In Jan Hartman's case, that sentence almost got an address on the Oudezijds Voorburgwal.

A priest, a helper and two spiritual daughters

Petrus Parmentier rented the church and one of the dwellings in the alley. He became the first priest of Het Hart. In 1662, he moved with his spiritual daughters into the dwelling on the Heintje Hoekssteeg. From 1664, he had the help of a second priest, Johannes van den Eeckhout.

The museum names two women: Maria van Eck and Margaretha van Loon. Margaretha, born in 1632, succeeded Maria as a spiritual daughter. Through her father, the wealthy cloth merchant Jacob van Loon, Parmentier got to know the Hartman family. She died in 1664.

Spiritual daughters were also called klopjes: Catholic women who stayed unmarried and gave their lives to the church, without entering a convent. In Amsterdam, the convents were closed. From research on such women in Haarlem, we know what they did. They kept the priest's household, sang in the choir, taught the faith, and collected money. They were sextons in the house churches, embroidered vestments, and repaired statues and books. Without them, a statie did not run. The museum speaks of more than five thousand of these women in the whole Republic.

I often stop to think how little their names are mentioned. Maria van Eck and Margaretha van Loon are two names on a museum website. We know no more about them. But they sat at the heart of this story.

In 1664, a woman named Sybilla Fonteijn ordered a series of paintings for the church from the painter Adriaen van de Velde. They show the suffering of Christ, and they still hang in the museum.

A house full of debts

Jan Hartman saw his church in use for only a few years. He died in April 1668. His widow had the bells tolled for three hours. On April 25, he was buried in the Oude Kerk. So the builder of the new Saint Nicholas church in the attic came to lie in the old Saint Nicholas church.

He left considerable debts, and a few years later his family had to sell the houses. For Parmentier, that meant the end of his time in Het Hart. In 1670, he had to leave the dwelling and the church. The Van Loon family, who had a house church of their own on the Oudezijds Achterburgwal, De Ster, asked him to become the priest there. He went.

Parmentier was almost seventy when he had to leave the house where he had been priest for seven years. He started over one canal further on, in another house church. That is how his whole life in Amsterdam had been: preaching in other people's houses. Between 1673 and 1676, he was praefectus of the Augustinian mission in the northern Netherlands, a leading role among his fellow friars.

Parmentier died in 1681, around the age of eighty. The Catholics of Amsterdam mourned him. He was buried in the Nieuwe Kerk, in the grave of the Van Loon family. In the museum hangs a portrait of him from that year.

The church stayed in use. In the eighteenth century, it was rebuilt, and in 1737, fixed pews were added for the notables. In 1794, it received the organ that is still there.

Behind the houses of the Keizersgracht

Het Hart was not the only church in Amsterdam that hid behind an ordinary front. Catholics were hit hardest, because they were

linked with Spain and the pope. But they were not the only ones who were not allowed to build a church on the street.

The Mennonites, the spiritual heirs of the Anabaptists and of Menno Simons, were given relatively much room in Holland. Their church on the Singel dates from 1639. They too built behind the houses. In 1664, their Amsterdam congregation itself became divided, in a conflict that is called the Lammerenkrijg, the Lambs' War.

The Lutherans were the most tolerated. In 1600, they were given a warehouse on the Spui. In 1633, they built a church there that stood plainly on the street. In 1671 came the round domed church on the Singel.

The Remonstrants had a harder time. In 1617, the house of Rem Bisschop in Amsterdam was plundered. In 1619, they were put out of the Reformed church. On Easter Monday 1626, a Remonstrant house on the Oude Schans was plundered. Only after 1627 did they find peace. In 1630, their church was consecrated, behind the houses on the Keizersgracht. That building is now called De Rode Hoed, the Red Hat.

The Jewish community, too, found a place in these years. In 1612, it took a synagogue into use. In 1671 and 1675, the High German and the Portuguese congregations built large synagogues.

Where tolerance ended

The Netherlands has a reputation as a land of tolerance. In part, that is right: in Amsterdam, many faiths lived side by side. But anyone who looks closely sees the limits.

Catholics, Mennonites, Lutherans, and Jews were excluded from public office. A Catholic merchant could become rich, but not mayor. The Reformed church was the public church, and the city

government itself kept watch over it. Even Reformed ministers had to be careful. In 1629, the preacher Smout was dismissed and banished because he attacked the city government from the pulpit.

In 1750, the Portuguese and the High German Jewish congregations each offered ten thousand guilders to be admitted to the guilds. They were refused.

How would you feel about being allowed to keep your faith, as long as no one could see it from the street? The Catholics of Het Hart were given room to gather. They were also told plainly that they were second-class citizens. Both were true, for more than two hundred years.

A new church on the Prins Hendrikkade

In 1795, the Republic came to an end. All faiths received the freedom to build houses of worship openly. But it still took decades before the Catholics of Amsterdam put up new churches on the street, mostly from the 1860s onward.

For the congregation of Het Hart, the moment came in 1887. On the Prins Hendrikkade, a large new church had been built between 1884 and 1887, to a design by Adrianus Bleijs. That one too was dedicated to Saint Nicholas. After more than two hundred years, the congregation moved from the attic to a church on the street.

The house on the canal was in danger of being torn down. In 1883, a Catholic society, De Amstelkring, had been founded to study the history of the Catholic church in Amsterdam. Its board members came from established, well-off Catholic families. In 1884, they discussed how to prevent the demolition of the church on the Heintje Hoekssteeg: the old church would be sold to pay for the new one. On May 31, 1887, the Amstelkring bought the building for six thousand guilders. The building was in poor condition, with

cracks in the walls and beams that threatened to sag. There was little money, so only what was strictly necessary was repaired. The official opening was on Tuesday, April 24, 1888, and on April 28, the house opened to the public. After the Rijksmuseum, it is the oldest museum in Amsterdam.

In the beginning, the walls were hung full of objects. The pews of the notables became display cases. In 1918, the foundation removed the cases and restored the situation from before 1887. The museum had a new opening on June 23, 1919. In 1950, there were plans to turn the museum into a convent for nuns, with an auction of a large part of the collection. Those plans were stopped. On June 1, 1951, the museum opened again, after a thorough cleaning, with professional staff for the first time.

Mass in the attic again

A museum is something other than a church. In 1951, a group of Amsterdam artists began again with a monthly mass in the attic. They are still held. The museum calls them Soldermissen, Attic Masses.

In 1970, the house became a national monument. Between 2009 and 2015, it was restored once more, and next to it came a new entrance building, designed by the architect Felix Claus. On September 22, 2015, the renewed museum was opened, in the presence of Queen Máxima. An underground passage connects the new building with the old house. The museum wanted to show the house as a place where people lived, worked, and practiced their faith. Every year the museum also takes part in Sinterklaas on December 5, because Saint Nicholas is the patron saint of the church.

When I read about this place, I thought of a word of Jesus that Catholics and Protestants both know: *For where two or three are gath-*

ered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20). You do not need a tower for that.

Go back once more to that attic. Beside the altar stand the two marbled columns. In the base of the left column is a pulpit of mahogany that you can fold out. When it was not in use, it disappeared into the column.

Outside, the city just goes on. Above hangs the baptism of Christ by Jacob de Wit, in an attic that Jan Hartman had opened up, with room for one hundred and fifty people. From the canal, you still see nothing of it.

Go there yourself

Museum Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder is at Oudezijds Voorburgwal 38-40 in the old center of Amsterdam, on the corner of the Heintje Hoekssteeg. It is about a five-minute walk from Amsterdam Centraal and from Nieuwmarkt metro station. You enter through the new entrance building next to the canal house, with a museum café and a shop on the ground floor.

In the house you see the sael with its seventeenth-century floor and fireplace, the front room with the box bed, kitchens, and narrow stairs. At the top is the attic church with the baroque altar, the painting by Jacob de Wit, the fold-out pulpit, and the organ from 1794. There is a free audio tour, also for children. Be prepared for narrow stairs. For opening hours, accessibility, and the dates of the Soldermissen, check the website of Museum Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder.

Nearby, you can visit the Oude Kerk, the former Saint Nicholas church where Jan Hartman is buried. The Saint Nicholas church on the Prins Hendrikkade, where the congregation moved in 1887, is close to Central Station. Together with the Vrije Universiteit, the museum has also made De andere kaart van Amsterdam, The Other

Map of Amsterdam, an online map with the stories of religious communities in the city, with walking routes.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): the Satisfactie of February 8, 1578, and the Alteratie of May 26, 1578, in which the Catholic city government and most of the Franciscans were put out of the city by boat; the transfer of the Saint Nicholas church to the Reformed as the Oude Kerk; the ban on Catholic worship with freedom of conscience kept; the purchase by Jan Hartman on May 10, 1661, and the rebuilding in 1661 to 1663; the use as a church from 1663 to 1887; the names Het Hart and Ons' Lieve Heer op Solder; Petrus Parmentier as first priest and his departure in 1670; Hartman's burial in the Oude Kerk in 1668 and his debts; the altarpiece by Jacob de Wit (1716) and the organ of 1794; the purchase by De Amstelkring in 1887 and the opening as a museum on April 28, 1888; the reopening with a new entrance building in 2015; the dates of the Lutheran, Mennonite, and Remonstrant churches in Amsterdam.

From a contemporary (Wouter Jacobsz., diary 1572 to 1578): the gathering at the city hall on January 1, 1578, the oath of April 22, the events of May 26 and the destruction of the tabernacle on May 29, with his judgment that it was God's punishment. I read his diary in a summary with notes, not the manuscript. From his text I infer that he was in Amsterdam in those months; his diary does not say so in so many words in my source.

Only from one source or from tradition: the raid on Corpus Christi 1641 with 6,200 guilders in fines, the list of 62 houses from 1656, the stories about Bartholomeus Cornelisz (1596), Zacharias de Metz (1660), Mayor Bicker, and the beguine Willemtje Heindriksdochter with her sister Annetge (all in Joke Spaans; the time of Willemtje's story remains unclear in that source); Hartman's

journey by way of Zwolle and Utrecht, his first marriage, and his residences (one book about the museum); the coat of arms with deer and compass, the columns, the walnut cabinet, and the widow who had the bells tolled for three hours (museum); the number of baptisms and marriages in 1667 (museum); the names and years of the spiritual daughters Maria van Eck and Margaretha van Loon (museum); the figure of five thousand spiritual daughters in the Republic (museum); that no one died on the day of the Alteratie; the descriptions of the clothing of the expelled clergy (Spaans, after Van Heel and Knipping); Parmentier's vows in 1626 and his function as praefectus (an Augustinian journal article that I could only partly read).

Unconfirmed or disputed: the birth year of Jan Hartman (1619 according to the museum, 1609 in a book about the museum); the birth year of Parmentier (1601 according to the museum, 1600 in the journal article); the year of the ban on Catholic worship (April 18, 1580 according to Spaans, December 20, 1581 according to the Getty research); a claim that a son of Hartman was a priest (one English-language website, not found in other sources and therefore left out of the text); where exactly Parmentier worked between 1636 and 1661; whether Parmentier moved into the alley dwelling in 1661 or 1662; the official opening date of the museum (April 24, 1888 according to the Getty, the museum itself gives April 28 as the day of opening to the public).

Interpretation: the word schuilkerk is misleading, according to historians, because everyone knew where these churches were. Tolerating gave Catholics room and at the same time kept them out of public life. How it felt to live like this, the sources show only in fragments, in people like Wouter Jacobsz., who in his diary was afraid of what was coming.

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Zeist: a field where all the stones are equal

Behind the houses on the Zusterplein in Zeist, a town just east of Utrecht, lies a cemetery with a moat around it. You enter from the Zinzendorflaan, over a wooden bridge and through a wooden turnstile between two brick pillars. The graves lie in straight rows. You see no angels, no columns, no family coats of arms. All the stones lie flat in the grass, and they all have the same shape. On each stone is a number in Roman numerals: the membership number of the person buried there. Trees stand between the graves. Against the wall stands a small mortuary with a flat roof.

In Zeist, this field is called the Godsakker, God's Acre. The national register of monuments calls it a burial ground and also says why it is protected: for the intact layout, typical of the church community for which it was meant. That church community is the Evangelische Broedergemeente, the Moravian Church. In the Netherlands, almost everyone knows them as the Hernhutters, after their village of Herrnhut.

If you walk from the cemetery toward the front, you come to two squares in front of Slot Zeist, Zeist Castle. On the west side lies the Zusterplein, the Sisters' Square, and on the east side the Broed-

erplein, the Brothers' Square. You see severe eighteenth-century houses, and between them a church hall with a small turret. Today the Broedergemeente owns about fifty national monuments here, the largest group of monuments in the province of Utrecht.

How does a congregation from Central Europe end up on an estate near Utrecht? It begins with a count, a group of refugees, and a summer in which people learned to love.

Refugees on a count's land

In 1722, refugees arrived on the estate of a young German nobleman in the Oberlausitz, in the east of Saxony. They had fled from Moravia and Bohemia because of their faith. A visitor from the nineteenth century called them descendants of the Waldensians and the followers of Jan Hus. The nobleman gave them land. They built a village there and called it Herrnhut, the Lord's Watch.

That nobleman was Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. He was a Pietist: someone who sought faith above all in a personal bond with Jesus and in a holy life, more than in doctrines. He did not want to found a new church. He dreamed of a circle of living Christians, cutting across the existing churches. He did not even exclude Catholics.

He already knew the Republic. As a young man, around 1719, he had traveled through the Netherlands and France. There he met people from all kinds of churches who showed their faith in deeds. That land, where so many faith groups lived side by side, would later take an important place in his life.

"We learned to love"

Herrnhut was not peaceful at first. The residents had different backgrounds, and they quarreled over doctrine. On May 12, 1727, they

signed a Brotherly Agreement, a set of arrangements about how they wanted to live together. That day Zinzendorf spoke for three hours about the blessing of Christian unity. The residents admitted their quarrels and promised to live in love and simplicity.

What followed is what the American church historian A.K. Curtis calls a golden summer. On August 5, Zinzendorf spent the whole night in conversation and prayer with fourteen brothers.

Five days later, on August 10, there was an afternoon service in Herrnhut. Pastor Rothe, the minister of nearby Berthelsdorf, was there too. While he prayed, he was so overwhelmed by God's nearness that he fell to the ground. He cried out to God for mercy, as he had never done before. The congregation was moved to tears. They stayed until midnight, praising God and singing.

The next day, Rothe invited the people of Herrnhut to celebrate the Lord's Supper with his own congregation in the church of Berthelsdorf, on Wednesday, August 13.

Zinzendorf visited every house in Herrnhut beforehand. The people there had never felt so aware of their own sin and helplessness. During the service, they prayed painful prayers: for themselves, for Christians who were still being persecuted, and for their unity. Zinzendorf made a confession of repentance on behalf of the congregation. A minister from a neighboring town served the Lord's Supper, so that Rothe too could sit at the table as a member of the congregation. The diary of Herrnhut speaks of reconciliation and fellowship. People sought each other out, in pairs. Afterward, someone wrote, they went home completely beside themselves. They spent that day and the days after in a quiet, joyful mood. The diary has a short sentence for it: "we learned to love."

Zinzendorf later called August 13 the congregation's Pentecost, a day on which the Holy Spirit was poured out on it. John wrote:

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God (1 John 4:7). In the diary of Herrnhut, that summer is not about a debate that was won, only about that one verb.

From that same summer comes the story of the hourly prayer. According to the tradition of the Broedergemeente, about two weeks after the revival, twenty-four men and twenty-four women agreed that each of them would pray for one hour a day, for God's blessing on the congregation and its witness. In this way, prayer went on day and night, and it is said to have been kept up for more than a hundred years. This story is told in the Broedergemeente, and far beyond it.

That prayer makes me think of a line from the law of Moses about the altar, that the fire on it was to be kept burning always and never allowed to go out (Leviticus 6:13). That connection is mine, not the sources'. But the image fits people who agreed that someone would always stay awake to pray.

Two young men to St. Thomas

The prayer did not stay within the village limits. In 1732, two young men left Herrnhut for St. Thomas, an island in the Caribbean under Danish rule. They went to the enslaved men and women on the plantations. A year later, others went to Greenland. Within fifteen years, the congregation had mission posts in the Virgin Islands, Greenland, the Gold Coast, South Africa, and North America.

In 1735, missionaries were at work in Suriname, then a Dutch colony. They went to Indigenous peoples, to Maroons, the descendants of people who had escaped from the plantations, and to the enslaved. Partly because of this mission, Zinzendorf turned his attention to the Republic. He had good contacts there with the family of the Frisian stadtholder.

A guest in Amsterdam

In Amsterdam lived a minister who opened his door to the Hernhutters. Joannes Deknatel was born on November 1, 1698, in Norden, the oldest of nine children of a Mennonite deacon. The Mennonites, or doopsgezinden, are the heirs of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. They baptize only those who believe for themselves, and for a long time they refused to use violence. In 1717, Deknatel began his studies in Amsterdam. A flood caused his parents such losses that they could no longer pay for his studies, and he had to go home. But the Mennonite congregation bij het Lam, At the Lamb, which had heard him preach, decided on March 23, 1719, to support him financially. So he was able to continue.

He himself later told how at first he had prejudices against the old ways, because he did not yet know Menno Simons. When he read him, he was impressed.

In 1735, a circle formed in Amsterdam of people who felt drawn to Herrnhut. Deknatel belonged to it, through his friendship with Isaäc Lelong, an admirer of Zinzendorf's congregation. On August 1, 1735, he wrote a poem in honor of a book by Lelong about the Hernhutters.

In the spring of 1736, Zinzendorf came himself, with his wife Erdmuthe Dorothea and their eldest daughter Benigna. A diary of the journey exists that lies in the archive of the Moravian Church in Herrnhut and is attributed to Erdmuthe. The count stayed four months in Amsterdam. Deknatel and Lelong came to welcome him, and Deknatel embraced him. Zinzendorf was a guest in his house. In 1736, Deknatel also remarried, to a woman who shared his interest in Herrnhut. Zinzendorf sent them a wedding poem from Frankfurt.

In 1736, Zinzendorf was also banished from Saxony. Nobles from the area had accused him, and there were questions about his orthodoxy. He became a traveling count, with no fixed place.

In January and February 1737, he was again in Amsterdam for a few weeks, on his way to England. At Deknatel's home, he celebrated the Lord's Supper with his friends. In the years after, when Zinzendorf was not there, Deknatel led the Thursday meetings of the Hernhutters.

A house on the Hollandse IJssel

In IJsselstein, too, a congregation arose in 1736. The invitation came from Maria Louise of Hesse-Kassel, the widow of the Frisian stadtholder. The Frisians called her Marijke Meu, Aunt Marijke. She was lady of the barony of IJsselstein. Along the Hollandse IJssel, the Hernhutters built a large house, as a transit house for missionaries on their way overseas.

That house was called 's Heerendijk, and something of it still stands. At Noord IJsseldijk 53 in IJsselstein stands a building with a thatched roof, built in 1735. The national register of monuments calls it a remnant of 's Heerendijk, "the first settlement of the Hernhutters in the Netherlands."

Within a few years, the movement had places in Amsterdam, in IJsselstein, and soon after in Haarlem. A village of its own like Herrnhut, it did not yet have.

A warning from the pulpit

Not everyone was glad about the new brothers. The Reformed Church, the public church of the Republic, saw a danger in Zinzendorf's teaching. He was vague about doctrine, the ministers felt, and he had no written confession. They accused him of

enthusiasm, a word that then meant fanaticism. Around 1744 to 1750, something else was added: hymns and sermons that strongly stressed the blood and the wounds of Jesus, in images that went too far for many people. Zinzendorf himself later distanced himself from them.

In 1738, the classis of Amsterdam, the assembly of Reformed ministers in that region, issued a Pastoral and Fatherly Letter, a warning to the believers. Church councils put pressure on members who associated with the Hernhutters. Other classes and synods put the Hernhutters on the list of heretical sects. In 1739, the minister Kulenkamp wrote a book against them, *De naakt ontdekte enthusiasterij* (Enthusiasm Laid Bare). In 1740, he attacked Deknatel himself and openly called him a man with Socinian leanings.

For thirteen years, Deknatel held Sunday evening meetings in his house on the Leliegracht. Reformed people came in great numbers, so many that their ministers forbade their members to go there. On June 1, 1749, a crowd gathered outside his house. Someone shouted: "They believe that God is no God, but they believe in an Island." The city authorities stepped in. Three days later, Deknatel promised to stop the meetings, and a proclamation was issued.

Deknatel had opened his house for Zinzendorf and his family, and for the meetings of the Hernhutters. In 1749, a crowd stood at his door. Paul wrote to the church in Rome: *given to hospitality* (Romans 12:13). What that could cost, Deknatel found out on the Leliegracht.

After 1750, the campaign died down. In the province of Utrecht, the synod softened the sharp article against the Hernhutters in 1784. Only in 1810 did the warning disappear altogether. There were two sides. The ministers wanted to protect their congregations from what they saw as error. The Hernhutters wanted to gather in peace. It cost the brothers years of distrust and mockery.

A quarrel over money

A friendship can be a test you do not expect. Deknatel had lent money to Zinzendorf for the building of houses in Zeist. After 1747, the relationship became stiffer. In 1752, he refused to accept bonds from the congregation, and Zinzendorf wrote to him from London that in that case he could not give money. Deknatel brought a lawsuit and got part of his money back. Later, Zinzendorf wanted to appoint him president of the brethren's congregation, but Deknatel remained suspicious. He suspected that the count wanted to draw people away from the Mennonite congregation.

His sons Jan and Jacobus were brought up in Lindheim and Marienborg, which in the Netherlands counted as an honor. The stay led to conflicts, because Zinzendorf let them return only after being pressed. Jacobus died shortly after his return. His father wrote a song in German at his deathbed.

Deknatel remained a catechist and taught hundreds of children. His catechism had 475 questions and answers. On January 22, 1759, he died. He left six hundred guilders to the Mennonite congregation in Amsterdam. That he left his whole estate to the Broedergemeente is unlikely, according to his biography. In 1760, the first volume of his sermons appeared.

An iron merchant buys a castle

In 1745, Slot Zeist and the lordship of Zeist and Driebergen were for sale. The owner was Willem Adriaan of Nassau-Odijk. On August 29, 1745, he sold everything to Cornelis Schellinger, an Amsterdam iron merchant, and his wife Sophia Centen. The purchase was meant for the Broedergemeente, and the price was 157,000 guilders. Amsterdam merchants, mostly of Mennonite background, together raised about half a million guilders. Besides Cornelis Schellinger, Ja-

cob Schellinger, Matthijs Beuning, and Jan Verbeek are named. The money went into a building fund. As lord of the manor, Schellinger appointed a Hernhutter as schout, the local official.

First, Schellinger and his wife went to live in the Slot themselves. Co-workers were given rooms there. In 1746, a synod at the Slot, a meeting of the leadership of the brothers, decided to found a congregation in Zeist. That year counts as the beginning of the Broedergemeente Zeist. At first, the services were held in the west wing of the Slot.

In 1747, the congregation had a room added on the garden side of the Slot for Zinzendorf. They called it Papa's Stube, Papa's Room. As patron, the count also received the Koningskamer, the King's Room, and five rooms next to it. One study calls him the actual founder of the congregation.

Brothers on one side, sisters on the other

In 1747, the unmarried brothers moved into an old beer brewery near the Slot. They called the building Bethlehem. Then building began in the meadows in front of the Slot.

On August 23, 1748, the first stone was laid of the Broederhuis, the Brothers' House, on the eastern square. On October 8, 1748, the Zusterhuis, the Sisters' House, followed on the western square. Between 1748 and 1750, a Weduwenhuis, a Widows' House, for widows and children, rose on the Zusterplein.

In these buildings you can see how the congregation lived. The Hernhutters divided their members into choirs. It had nothing to do with singing. A choir was a group of people in the same stage of life: unmarried brothers, unmarried sisters, married people, widows, children. Each choir had its own meetings and often its own house. The Broederhuis and the Zusterhuis were called choir

houses. When a resident died, the heirs had to be members of the congregation themselves. Otherwise, the house was sold to the congregation or to outsiders.

The church services, too, followed that division. Until 1768, the congregation met in the orangery of the Slot, with a separate entrance for the brothers and one for the sisters.

A church hall like a row of houses

On October 9, 1766, the building of a church hall began on the Zusterplein. Moritz Christian von Schweinitz made the design and also led the construction. It did not become a church with a tower rising above the village. The hall was put under one roof with dwellings and workshops, like a row of houses. That fit the Hernhutters' feeling that all of life is worship. On October 20, 1768, the Grote Kerkzaal, the Great Church Hall, was taken into use. The turret you see now came only in 1854.

A few months before it came into use, distinguished visitors came to look. Stadtholder William V and King Christian VII of Denmark visited the squares. The king was so impressed that he invited the Hernhutters to found a settlement in Denmark too. It became Christiansfeld, today a World Heritage Site.

Zinzendorf did not live to see that hall. He died on May 9, 1760, in Herrnhut, at the age of fifty-nine.

Anyone who enters the church hall steps into a space that has been in use for more than two hundred and fifty years. The first organ came from Thuringia: two heavy wagons, each with nine horses in front, brought it over. In Advent 1883, the second organ came into use, built by Bätz-Witte of Utrecht. In the opening service, the hymn *Macht hoch die Tür* was sung. When the Oude Kerk was rebuilt in 1820, the Reformed congregation of Zeist worshiped here.

So the Reformed, who seventy years earlier had still distrusted the brothers, sat under their roof.

Missionaries on the Zusterplein

Living, working, and believing belonged together in Zeist. There were workshops, a bakery, a butcher shop, a smithy, a lace-making shop. But the squares also looked outward. Missionaries often came to Zeist first before they left, and missionaries on leave lived in the apartments next to the hall.

In 1792, there was a sending service for the first missionaries to South Africa. A year later, in 1793, the Broedergemeente founded the Zeister Zendingsgenootschap, the Zeist Missionary Society. In the Netherlands, it became best known for its work in Suriname. From 1794, there was a Mission Festival every year in the church hall. In 1862, more than two thousand people came to it. That festival is still held, on the third Saturday of September.

The history of that mission is not simple. M. Lenders described in a dissertation the life of Hernhutter brothers and sisters in Suriname from 1735 to 1900. They worked in the middle of a society that rested on slavery. The enslaved were not allowed to marry legally. The mission offered them a covenant as a substitute, but according to a review of the book, few wanted that. In the first decades, among the brothers and sisters themselves, the lot sometimes decided who married whom. In 2013, at the commemoration of a hundred and fifty years since the abolition of slavery, the Council of Churches offered apologies for the role of the churches in the history of slavery, also on behalf of the Evangelische Broedergemeente.

The story goes on. On July 1, 1913, fifty years after the abolition of slavery in Suriname, the American bishop J.T. Hamilton ordained the Surinamese deacon Cornelis Blijd in Zeist as a presbyter, an

office in which he could administer the sacraments. According to Utrecht University, about sixty thousand Hernhutters live in Suriname today.

What do you do with a history in which faith and injustice run together like this? I have no short answer. I see people who left with a gospel in their luggage, into a world they had not made and did not overthrow. And I see their Surinamese children in the faith, who took over the church.

Soldiers on the squares

In the winter of 1795, the French army moved through the region. An anonymous writer kept a daily account of those weeks. The publisher thinks it is by Jens Fridlezius, the leader of the unmarried brothers, but that is not certain. The writer tells calmly about the French. The population was relieved that the soldiers behaved in a friendly way, even though they looked like a ragged band.

Not everyone stayed calm. Jacob Schmidt, the innkeeper of the Gemeinlogis, the congregation's guesthouse, fled in panic to Amsterdam. In a letter of January 25, 1795, he wrote about rumors of plundering, and about the terrible news that many sisters had been mistreated. He did not dare to come back. Another man, Hendrik Keettel, saw the English soldiers plundering and robbing. He called that the daily work of soldiers. In March, Baron Von Ranzau showed General Pichegru around the congregation. The general was received kindly.

The bell that disappeared

In 1818, the Slot was sold to Coenraad Wyborch. The Broedergemeente kept the two squares, the Karpervijver, the carp pond, and the cemetery. In 1924, it bought the Slot back, to prevent its demo-

lition. According to a walking tour along the squares, the services were in German until 1945.

In the Second World War, the Germans took the bell from the church hall. It never came back. In the last weeks of the war, the hall gave shelter to refugees from Arnhem. On the sisters' side, coffee was served in the box. The consistory room on the brothers' side became a treatment room for the sick. The hall itself was one big dormitory.

On the inner wall of the cemetery hangs a memorial plaque for two members of the congregation who died in the war. Paul Oscar Martin, born in Zeist in 1900, died in 1943 as a prisoner of war in Singapore. John Otto Arkes, born in Zeist in 1920, was executed in Amsterdam on September 26, 1944.

In 1993, the Zeister Zendingsgenootschap existed two hundred years. There was a service in the church on the Zusterplein and a reception in Slot Zeist. The society received a prize for "two centuries of selfless work." It then supported mainly projects in Suriname, for children, the elderly, education, and medical care.

Equal in the ground

According to the national register of monuments, the cemetery was laid out after 1748. The oldest grave that lies there now is from 1777.

What you see is certain. Rows of equal stones. A number, a name. Whether someone was rich or poor, you cannot tell from the stones. That form is typical of this church community, the register writes.

In August 1883, a visitor came to look, and he wrote down what he saw. The congregation numbered about three hundred people. They had trades and a pharmacy. On Sundays, there were separate meetings for married men, widows, young men, married women, young daughters, and orphans. The day was divided into prayer

and work. Everyone worked, except the sick and the old. He noted a short sentence: "Idlers are not tolerated in that small congregation." Anyone who refused the rules or caused offense was put out of the congregation. The old leader, a dignified man with white hair, was polite but gave little in answer. The visitor described the people as very reserved.

In the Broederhuis was a shop where anyone could walk in. In the shop lay purses, gloves, snuffboxes, pipes, spectacles, cigars, wood carvings, toys, and tin buckets. For half a stuiver, a coin of small value, you could have a glass of soft drink, not beer. Nobody pressed you to buy, but almost everyone left with a souvenir. The profit went to the common fund, which the members topped up with voluntary gifts. Many men worked in a large vegetable garden that supplied the basic food, and every house had a small garden of its own with hedges. There were two schools, one for boys and one for girls. Anyone who married an outsider had in principle to leave the congregation, unless the other joined.

The visitor described one more custom. On Easter morning, the congregation gathered at sunrise for a special ceremony. There his report breaks off.

Most members of the congregation no longer live on the squares today. The houses are rented out, to businesses and to residents. The Great Church Hall seats about four hundred people and is also used for concerts, weddings, and lectures. Every year there is a Christmas meal for the drop-in centers, with long tables and kale stew for everyone. The congregation calls itself open and liberal, and it keeps up its ties with the churches in Suriname.

At the end, walk back once more to the moat. Over the little wooden bridge, through the turnstile. There they lie, brothers and sisters,

with their numbers turned to heaven. In their lives, they had a room in a choir house and a place in the row. Here they still have that.

Go there yourself

The squares of the Evangelische Broedergemeente lie in the center of Zeist, straight in front of Slot Zeist. The Zusterplein lies on the west side, the Broederplein on the east side. The Grote Kerkzaal stands on the Zusterplein, recognizable by its small turret. The cemetery lies behind the buildings of the Zusterplein, with the entrance on the Zinzendorflaan. For services, tours, and the accessibility of the church hall and cemetery, check the website of the Evangelische Broedergemeente Zeist.

At Lageweg 27 in Zeist is Museum Het Hernhutter Huis. The Broedergemeente and the Zeister Zendingsgenootschap founded it. Since 2018, it has had a permanent exhibition about the Hernhutters, their life in Zeist, and their mission work. There are also changing exhibitions. For opening hours, check the website of Het Hernhutter Huis.

Anyone who wants to see the first steps of the Hernhutters in the Netherlands can drive on to IJsselstein. At Noord IJsseldijk 53 stands the building from 1735 that the national register of monuments calls a remnant of 's Heerendijk. View it from the public road.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): the founding of Herrnhut (1722) and the Lord's Supper of August 13, 1727; the mission to St. Thomas (1732) and Suriname (from 1735); the Amsterdam circle around Deknatel and Zinzendorf's stays in Amsterdam in 1736 and 1737; the congregation in IJsselstein (1736) and the remnant of

's Heerendijk; the opposition of the Reformed Church from 1738; the purchase of Slot Zeist in 1745 for 157,000 guilders; the decision of 1746; the building of the Broederhuis, Zusterhuis, and Weduwenhuis from 1748; the church hall of Von Schweinitz (1766 to 1768); the Zeister Zendingsgenootschap (1793); the layout and form of the cemetery; the apologies of 2013, also on behalf of the Broedergemeente.

From the diary of Herrnhut and from the people themselves: the sentence "we learned to love" and the stories about the days around August 10 and 13, 1727 (the congregation's diary, via an article by the archivist of the Moravian Church and via an article of the Christian History Institute; I did not read a manuscript); Zinzendorf's words about the congregation's Pentecost (as quoted in that last article); the remark from the crowd in 1749 and the quarrel over money (the biography of Deknatel); the description of the congregation in 1883 (one eyewitness); the daily account of 1795, with the letter of Jacob Schmidt (from an article about the Batavian Revolution in Zeist). I know the travel diary of 1736 only from a short description; who wrote it is not entirely clear there (the description names Erdmuthe, the title of the accompanying publication points to her husband's diary).

Only from tradition or one source: the hourly prayer of twenty-four men and twenty-four women that is said to have lasted more than a hundred years (tradition of the Broedergemeente; I have not read a scholarly source that fixes the hundred years precisely, and other descriptions of that summer speak of nightly prayer meetings); the name Godsakker for the cemetery in Zeist; the visit of Stadtholder William V and King Christian VII in 1768 and the settlement of Christiansfeld (only the anniversary book about the church hall); the first organ with the two wagons and nine horses (the same book); the stay of refugees from Arnhem (the same book, which

speaks of tens of thousands; I left that number out); the facts around Rothe and the afternoon service of August 10 (one article).

Unconfirmed: the exact year in which the cemetery was laid out (1747 according to some texts, after 1748 according to the register of monuments, oldest grave 1777); German-language services until 1945; whether and for how long Zinzendorf himself stayed in Zeist; an Easter service at the cemetery in Zeist; the day on which the hourly prayer began. Christian History says that Rothe invited on August 11, while the article by Curtis says he spoke the invitation after the service of August 10.

Interpretation: how the mission in Suriname should be weighed against its place in a slave society is an open conversation, also within the Broedergemeente itself. Whether the days of August 1727 were an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as Zinzendorf saw it, is a question of faith. The sources confirm that the people of Herrnhut experienced it that way.

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Nijkerk: the winter the church began to weep

On Monday evening, November 17, 1749, people gathered in Nijkerk for the public catechism class. The evening before, their young minister Gerardus Kuypers had preached on a verse from Psalm 72, and on these evenings he continued with what he had said on Sunday. It began as always. Then something changed.

People began to weep. Some trembled. Toward the end of the meeting the weeping grew louder, as Kuypers himself wrote a year later in his *Getrouw verhaal* (Faithful Account), and when the blessing was spoken, a few fell down trembling at the feet of the people around them. They could no longer stand.

Kuypers was twenty-seven. Within a year, pamphlets appeared about what began that evening, and a professor from Leiden, his own former teacher, turned publicly against him. Between 1750 and 1753, there would be about one hundred and twenty-five of them.

A tower above the roofs

As you drive into Nijkerk, you see the place from far away: a white tower above the roofs of the old town. In 2012, it was voted the most beautiful church tower in the Netherlands in a national contest.

Under that tower stands the Grote Kerk, the Great Church, on the Holkerstraat, a late Gothic church with three aisles and a high choir. It is a national monument. Inside it is light and plain, as in many Protestant churches. There is woodcarving on the organ case, and at the front stands the pulpit.

Almost everything you see there is younger than the story of this chapter. The organ by Matthijs van Deventer is from 1756. The pulpit and the baptismal railing were made by H.G. van Raan of Amsterdam in 1789. The white upper part of the tower was added between 1774 and 1776. Only the walls and the vaults are older. The first stone of the choir was laid in 1461, and after a town fire in 1540, the church was almost completely rebuilt.

Within those walls, something happened in the winter of 1749 that was written about throughout the Republic. People at the time called it the Nijkerkse beroeringen, the Nijkerk disturbances. Later generations spoke of the revival of Nijkerk. Which name you choose says a lot about how you look at it.

The story does not begin in that church, but in a minister's house in the Hoeksche Waard, a rural island south of Rotterdam.

A student of Arabic poems

Gerardus Kuypers was born in 1722 in Mijnsheerenland, where his father Franciscus Kuypers was the minister. He was a minister who wrote: he made a commentary on the Kort Begrip, the small textbook for catechism, and in 1739 and 1740 he published two treatises against the Hernhutters, the Moravian Brethren.

Gerardus was a gifted student. In 1739, he began studying theology in Leiden, with a lot of attention to Eastern languages. His teacher in these was Albertus Schultens, a well-known expert in Hebrew and Arabic. In 1743, Kuypers received his doctorate on a subject

from the Old Testament. Two years later, he published a collection of Arabic poems attributed to Ali ibn Abi Talib.

In Leiden he also had a friend, the African student Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein. When Capitein held a disputation in 1742, Kuypers wrote a congratulatory ode for it, addressed to "my highly esteemed friend." We know little more about that friendship. It is one of the few personal things that have been handed down about the young Kuypers.

Another teacher in Leiden was Joan van den Honert, professor of theology. He counted Kuypers among his ablest students. Remember that name.

After his studies, Kuypers first worked as an assistant preacher in Amsterdam. In 1745, he became minister in Jutphaas, a village near Utrecht. His father installed him, and poets wrote verses on father and son in a journal. Kuypers did not see much fruit there. His preaching found little response there, the biographical dictionary of Protestant theologians notes carefully. In 1748, he married in Woudrichem, his father's congregation, Anna Catharina Huysinkvelt, a widow from Breda.

In 1749, he was called to Nijkerk, a small town on the edge of the Veluwe, a wooded region in the middle of the country. He took up his post there in April, installed by his new colleague Johannes Jacobus Roldanus.

Tobacco and taverns

Nijkerk was prosperous in those years, mainly thanks to the growing of tobacco. According to the church historian C. Smits, the money also brought worldliness. The taverns drew unusually many people, and even church council members went straight from church to the tavern after the service. The people of Nijkerk

had not yet unlearned going to church, Smits writes, but there was a general spiritual slump.

Kuypers himself saw it gloomily. Looking back, he wrote that in Nijkerk "little fear of God" was to be found. That is how he saw it himself, written down afterward by a man who wanted to show how great the change was.

Fred van Lieburg wrote a book in 2013 about the religious history of Nijkerk. According to him, a circle of earnest believers had existed in the town for years, people who longed for a warmer and more deeply lived faith. A town can be full of taverns and still have people who pray for something new. So Kuypers did not come into an empty field. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase* (1 Corinthians 3:6). In Nijkerk, too, the minister was not the first to have sown something there.

Seriousness on Sunday, conversations on Sunday evening

Kuypers was one of the two ministers of Nijkerk. He preached with great seriousness, and he did more than preach. Every week he held a public catechism class on Monday evening, a lesson in the teaching of the faith open to everyone. After the services he went visiting homes. He asked how people's souls were doing, and he prayed with them. According to J. Fekkes, who wrote about him in 1999, he sometimes visited as many as twenty houses a day in those times. "Pray now, help now: I spoke, I prayed, I helped," he said about it, as Fekkes renders it.

On Sunday evening, a conversation circle was added, in the home of one of the members. There each person was asked about his progress on the way of life. The interest grew so fast that soon no house was big enough for everyone who wanted to come. At first all of this happened quietly, in the inner room. Many people began

to see their sins and came to faith in Jesus Christ. Fekkes counts more than twenty-five hundred people among his hearers.

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

Anyone who was Reformed in the eighteenth century knew the idea of bevinding, inner experience: faith is also something you experience inside, with sorrow over your sin and joy over forgiveness. In the fall of 1749, that became very visible in Nijkerk.

On Sunday, November 9, it already happened once. During a sermon by Kuypers' colleague Roldanus, an old woman began to wail aloud. A week later, it was no longer about one woman.

A handful of grain

On Sunday, November 16, 1749, Kuypers stood in the pulpit of the Grote Kerk. His text came from Psalm 72, a psalm about a king who does justice and about a land that flourishes. He read verse 16:

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).

Kuypers read it in the old Dutch Bible translation of his day, which speaks of a handful of grain. A handful of grain, in a place where nothing seems to grow. What exactly Kuypers said about it that Sunday has not been handed down. We do know that a few churchgoers burst into tears. A description of the history of the Nijkerk churches speaks of people who sat "choked in violent weeping."

The evening after, at the catechism class, it became more intense. Kuypers described it in his *Getrouw verhaal*: streams of tears were poured out. When the blessing was spoken, a few fell down. Some

called out to the people around them: "Look at me, and see how bitter sins are." "Then the rustling of this Lebanon began, by the wind of the Spirit," he wrote, looking back on the psalm of that Sunday.

In the weeks that followed, the streets rang with cries and weeping. People asked each other: "How do I get a gracious God?" The parsonage filled up. According to Kuypers' 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 minister would pray with them, now that they saw their sins. The historian Nauta points out that Kuypers kept open hours for people in need, met with them in the parsonage until late in the evening, and tried in letters to tell his parents almost daily what was happening.

While I was writing this, I read that psalm text a few times. You do not expect tears and screaming with it. It is about grain and growth, about something small that grows large. What went on inside those people, we do not know from their own mouths. We know only what the minister and his contemporaries wrote about it.

"First Satan sat there, now Jesus sits in the tavern"

In the months after, it did not stay in the church. In houses, taverns, and barns, too, the phenomena occurred. People sighed, wept, and screamed. They called aloud on the name of Jesus. In some, the eyes rolled back; others had convulsions or fainted.

The news spread, and from far and near people came to look. Five men from Harderwijk traveled to Nijkerk by wagon on a Saturday, April 25. In their travel report it says that the church was full of people in the morning and the afternoon. The reverence and the attention were "beyond words," they wrote, and half of what they now saw had not yet been told to them. Around May 1750, the dis-

turbances reached their peak. In the summer of that year, other ministers came to help Kuypers. They preached along and comforted people who were shaken.

We know the name of one man from Nijkerk. Hendrik van Koot was a tavern keeper and wanted nothing to do with the church. So Fekkes and a later collection tell about these years, on the basis of Kuypers' own account. One day that changed. Van Koot realized, it says, that his life without and outside God would end in outer darkness. He closed his tavern. There were no more parties and no more strong drink served, and the building became a place for edifying conversation and psalm singing. Fekkes adds what Kuypers himself said about that house: "First Satan sat there, now Jesus sits in the tavern on the throne."

What Kuypers saw beyond that, he called the fruits. The taverns emptied and the churches filled. Instead of cards and dice, the Bible lay on the table. Fekkes writes that in nearly all the houses there was regular prayer and singing, that drunkenness disappeared and hatred and envy almost too. Fellow ministers from other places came to look and went back with a heart full of zeal, among others to Putten, where clear fruits could be seen. "All this shows that it is not the work of fools or the gullible," Kuypers wrote.

According to his own account, then, the way of life in the town changed deeply. How far that change went, we can no longer check well. The minute book of the Nijkerk church council for the years 1715 to 1785 has been lost.

A minister who kept the door open, and closed it

You would expect the minister to have stoked the fire further. The sources show something else. For Kuypers, the movements of the body were no proof that the Holy Spirit was at work. In his view,

they could come from anguish of soul. They were not a direct expression of the Spirit, although they could go together with His work. "Far from my seeking to stir up these disturbances," he wrote in his *Apologie* (Defense). He wished for quiet calm. A working of the Spirit that went above or against the Word, he did not recognize. He did not make the physical disturbance a necessary condition for a true conversion. By his own judgment, most people came in all calm to assurance of faith, and only a few caused great unrest.

He acted accordingly. Anyone who became too restless during the service, he first tried to calm down. If that did not help, the person was taken outside and was allowed to return when he or she could listen again. He even gave advice about medicines.

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 to be carried at the minister's direction straight to the consistory room, the council's meeting room, or elsewhere. Those who were prone to this were asked to sit close to the doors. Anyone in Nijkerk who held an oefening, a gathering outside the church service, had to keep to these rules on pain of church discipline. Smits, who described the events in 1980, thought that Kuypers reacted wisely.

How would you respond if you were a minister and people fainted under your preaching? Slam the door, because it does not fit proper worship? Or let everything happen, because you do not want to hold back the Spirit? Kuypers looked for a way in between, and got criticism from both sides.

A paper war

Kuypers wrote letters about what was happening in his congregation. The first is dated November 19, 1749, two days after that

Monday evening. On November 25 a second followed, and on January 16, 1750 a third. They were not meant for the printing press. Someone had them printed anyway, on one 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 an announcement, he declared that the publication had happened without his knowledge and that the letters were "badly mutilated." According to A.M. Roest, who mapped all the writings on the matter, this was the spark for a paper war.

Between 1750 and 1753, about one hundred and twenty-five pamphlets, books, and articles appeared. Some were a few pages long, others were thick books. The most important opponent was Joan van den Honert, professor in Leiden and formerly one of Kuypers' own teachers. According to the dictionary, it hurt him most that one of his best students did not oppose the movement but rather promoted it. He wrote remarks on a reprint of the letters and on Kuypers' account, at first without his name. Later he admitted who had written them.

Kuypers answered in 1750 with his *Getrouw verhaal en apologie*, an account and a defense in one. In it he also opposed the thinkers who wanted to explain everything with the intellect, such as Stinstra. He held to the view that a person needs a special working of the Holy Spirit to come to faith. Anyone who reads that account must know what it is: the own testimony of the man who stood at the center and had to account for himself. It is an important source, and also a plea. In 1751 there followed a series of writings under the title *Pleitgeding* (Pleading). He also wrote *Oud en Nieuw* (Old and New), about similar phenomena among the first Christians, and in 1752 *Gamaliëls raad* (Gamaliel's Counsel), a sermon on Acts. The title refers to the advice Gamaliel gave in Acts 5: leave these men alone, for if their work is of God, you cannot stop it (Acts 5:38-39).

People who had been there themselves also wrote. On August 12, 1750, a certain J. Hardes wrote from Nijkerk a letter to his daughter, who had questions about what was happening. He advised her to hold back her judgment. A gentleman from Utrecht described on October 20, 1750, what he had experienced when he himself sat under Kuypers' preaching. And from Putten came a letter from the minister J. Smith about the work of God in his own village, which was later printed after one of Kuypers' letters.

Fanaticism or work of the Spirit

The criticism came from different corners. Johannes Stinstra, a Mennonite minister in Harlingen, warned against geestdrijverij, fanaticism: the idea that feelings and rapture come directly from God. But even in the strict Reformed circle itself, people rejected it. The experiential minister Theodorus van der Groe wrote in June 1752 a preface to the first part of his *Toetssteen der ware en valsche genade* (Touchstone of True and False Grace). In it he called the movement "the corrupted enthusiasm." He feared that the work of disturbance had gone far too wild and impure, although he left open the possibility that there was also good grain among the chaff. On the day of prayer of March 28, 1753, he went much further in a sermon on Psalm 119:126. He called the work of disturbance a ruinous work of Satan and a judgment of God on the church. He did not name Nijkerk.

Kuypers had preached about a handful of grain. Van der Groe saw mostly chaff.

There were also defenders. Hugh Kennedy, minister of the Scottish church in Rotterdam, published in 1751 a *Nederige verdediging* (Humble Defense) of what he saw as the work of the Holy Spirit. Jacob Groenewegen, minister in Werkendam, wrote that what happened in Nijkerk and in his own village was one and the same work,

even though the physical reactions differed. He pointed out that many in Nijkerk were regarded as converted, and he described their joy and their peace with God. That people rejected it was, in his view, mostly because of the unusual behavior of the body that went with it. Philippus de Roy in Aalten also took Kuypers' side.

And his father took up the pen. François Kuypers was almost sixty. He wrote *De saeke Godts verdedigt* (God's Cause Defended) and after that a series of pieces, and over a preface to a published sermon of his son, he got into a quarrel with his own classis in Gorinchem, a regional assembly of churches. In June 1752, that conflict was settled. Among all those pamphlets, then, stands a human detail: a father who stood up for his son and so got into trouble himself. His father, too, shared the burden of what happened in Nijkerk.

The government preferred to stay aloof. The Reformed church took an official position only in 1752, with rules for gatherings outside the church services, the so-called conventicles.

From Cambuslang to Boston

Nijkerk did not stand alone. In Northampton, in the American colonies, Jonathan Edwards had experienced a revival in his congregation between 1733 and 1735, and Kuypers knew his account. In 1742, something similar happened in Cambuslang, in Scotland, in the years when the English preacher George Whitefield traveled around there. Between 1742 and 1744, Hugh Kennedy translated accounts of the Scottish revival into Dutch. Smits sees Nijkerk as an offshoot of the Scottish movement.

The news also went the other way. Letters from the circle around Nijkerk ended up in a collection published by the Scottish minister John Gillies in 1754. They even reached Boston, where it was seen as "a miracle and an answer to prayer," as the Reformatorisch Dagblad

summarizes Van Lieburg's research. Kuypers himself wrote Gillies a letter in which he looked back on everything, and in it he wrote cautiously about the trembling and falling. In 2013, that letter was published in Dutch for the first time.

Closer to home, the disturbance spread too. Putten, Barneveld, and Nunspeet are mentioned, Aalten and Werkendam, and in 1752 Bleskensgraaf in the Alblasserwaard. In Werkendam, it began in September 1751 with children. Groenewegen writes that about ten children between twelve and sixteen came to his door, weeping, asking whether they too did not need to be converted. They said that they "had to have Jesus" and that they had a heart of stone. They went on lamenting until deep in the night, until the minister prayed for them. In the Netherlands, it remained a local matter, the historian Els Stronks writes, while movements of this kind drew far more attention abroad.

Calm returns

Slowly, it became quieter in the Grote Kerk. The minister and the church council put an end to the violent scenes, partly under pressure from criticism from outside, partly out of their own conviction. In the course of 1750 and 1751, it ebbed away. Around 1753, the pamphlet war stopped as well.

Kuypers stayed in Nijkerk for a few more years. In 1752, he was called to Schoonhoven, but he declined. In Nijkerk, his son Christiaan François was born, and a daughter, Anna, came too. In November 1758, they chose him in Winschoten, and in 1759, he took up his post there. A year earlier, in April 1758, Van den Honert had died. Whether the two were reconciled is not known.

In 1760, Kuypers became minister in Scheemda. A nineteenth-century dictionary says that as a preacher he was "gladly heard."

In 1765, he became professor of theology in Groningen, and more than once he was rector magnificus of the university. He was known as moderate and faithful to the Reformed confession. In 1772, he prepared a new edition of the Canons of Dort. The man who twenty years before had been called a false teacher now republished the confession of his church.

On June 5, 1798, he died in Groningen, early in the morning and unexpectedly. Three days later, his widow had a notice put in the newspaper that it had pleased God to take her husband "this morning" by a sudden death, at the age of seventy-five years and more than seven months. He was laid to rest in the Martinikerk.

So the young minister who saw people weep in a tobacco town became a moderate scholar in the north. To Gillies in Scotland, he wrote a letter about what he had seen in Nijkerk.

An organ from 1756

What was it, then? Historians do not agree about it, and believers do not either. In conservative church circles, many see in it a work of God's Spirit. Later too, experts pondered the question how you test something like this. The church historian S.D. van Veen named three touchstones for such revivals: do people come to a sense of their sin, are they sincere in their distress, and does fruit follow in their lives? The resistance came, according to Van Veen, mostly because people had lost the belief in a God who still does miracles. He also admitted that some exaggerated, and that among those affected there were hypocrites. So he kept room for two things: a true work of God, and people who joined in without anything changing in their hearts.

I cannot prove what happened in that winter, and I will not cut the knot over it. What I do see is a minister who stayed open and also

set limits. He did not reject it, and he did not let it take over the service either. He looked at what it changed in people. Someone who experiences something of God often wants it to become bigger. Kuypers had people carried outside until they could listen again, and he kept his parsonage open to anyone who wanted to pray.

That measure is older than Nijkerk, and it still works. How you judge such experiences, every generation must ask again, in the Pentecostal church and in the old village church.

In the Rijksmuseum lies a small etching of the church of Nijkerk, dated around 1749. It belongs to a collection of prints about the disturbances. When that etching was made, the tower did not yet have its white upper part. Much later, Reinier Vinkeles made an engraving to go with the story, titled *Onrust in de kerk te Nijkerk, 1749* (Unrest in the Church at Nijkerk, 1749). If you stand on the Holkerstraat now and look up, you see a top that came only when it had long since grown quiet. Below it, behind the old walls, lies the floor where in November 1749 people fell down at the blessing. And above the floor stands the organ of Van Deventer, built in 1756, when Kuypers was still in Nijkerk.

Go there yourself

The Grote Kerk stands at Holkerstraat 1, in the middle of the old center of Nijkerk. The white tower shows you the way. The building is a national monument and is used by the Hervormde Gemeente Nijkerk (Dutch Reformed congregation). Right next to the church stands the community center ’t Gasthuus.

Inside you see the Van Deventer organ from 1756, the pulpit and baptismal railing from 1789, a gravestone from 1602, and a text board from the seventeenth century. Visitors are welcome at

the church services. For opening hours and activities, check the website of Hervormd Nijkerk.

There is a story that Nijkerk got its name from a "nije kerk," a new church, built after a peat fire in 1222. According to Fred van Lieburg, that is a legend. No trace of an earlier church building has been found. The church on the Holkerstraat is, as far as is known, the very first house of God in Nijkerk.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): the life course of Gerardus Kuypers (1722-1798), his studies in Leiden, his friendship with Capitein, his coming to Nijkerk in 1749, and his later career; the sermon on Psalm 72:16 on Sunday, November 16, 1749, and the disturbance at the catechism class on Monday, November 17; the phenomena (weeping, screaming, trembling, fainting), also in houses, taverns, and barns; the peak around May 1750; the measures of the church council on Kuypers' proposal (October 29, 1750); the three letters of November 1749 and January 1750, which were printed without his knowledge; the pamphlet war of about one hundred and twenty-five writings (1750-1753) with Van den Honert as the main opponent and Kennedy, Groenewegen, De Roy, and Kuypers' father as defenders; the father's conflict with the classis of Gorinchem, settled in June 1752; the rejection by Stinstra and Van der Groe; the reports in Scotland and America; the letter to Gillies; the building history of the Grote Kerk.

Only from tradition or own testimony: Kuypers' description of Nijkerk as a place without fear of God; the scene at the catechism class with streams of tears and falling down, the cry "Look at me" and the words about the rustling of Lebanon (his *Getrouw verhaal*, via a later collection in modern spelling; it is not clear whether the cry describes the Sunday or the Monday); the more than two hundred

people in his house (his own statement); the deep change in way of life, with taverns that emptied and the Bible on the table instead of cards and dice (his *Getrouw verhaal* and *Apologie*); the story of the tavern keeper Hendrik van Koot and the saying "First Satan sat there" (Fekkes and a collection on Van der Groe, both on the basis of Kuypers' account; no archive document found); that the letters were "badly mutilated" (his own statement; what had been changed cannot be checked); his judgment that most people came calmly to faith; his statements in the *Apologie* about the disturbances and the Spirit; his advice about medicines; the letters to his parents (Nauta, via Smits).

One source or popular history (Fekkes, 1999): the twenty houses a day and the words "Pray now, help now"; the more than twenty-five hundred hearers; the prayer and singing in nearly all houses; the journey of the five men from Harderwijk on Saturday, April 25 (their report gives no year; April 25 fell on a Saturday in 1750, which fits the peak); the passage about Putten; the conversion scene of Van Koot ("would end in outer darkness"). About a rumor that people stood on ladders against the parsonage walls, a collection writes that it appears in some sources; I did not include it in the story, because I could not point to a source for it. The same goes for the figure of two hundred to four hundred present at some meetings.

Witnesses from the pamphlet war (Roest, catalog): the letter of J. Hardes to his daughter (August 12, 1750), the letter of a gentleman from Utrecht (October 20, 1750), and the letter of the minister J. Smith of Putten are known from Roest's description; I could not read the letters themselves. Roest notes that Kuypers' three letters are short and describe the events "not always without mutual contradiction." The Werkendam scene with the children (September 3, 1751) comes from the account of Groenewegen himself, a defender.

Where the sources differ: De Roos (a blog) gives December 16 as the date of the sermon and 1759 as the year of departure from Nijkerk; I follow the other sources (November 16, chosen 1758 and took up post 1759). The engraving is by Reinier Vinkeles: that is how it stands in the Rijksmuseum collection, which dates it between 1783 and 1795. The preview copy of Hooghwerff names Jacobus Buys as the maker. The date 1788 and the repository in the Atlas van Stolk in Rotterdam come from the source I used earlier and could not open again; they are therefore not in the story. That Kuypers borrowed words from Edwards' account is reported by Wim van Vlastuin.

Unconfirmed: a formal investigation by the classis into the events in Nijkerk (not found; the minute book of the church council for 1715 to 1785 is missing, and according to Stronks the government stayed aloof); the role of Stadtholder William IV behind Van den Honert and behind the church rules of 1752 (one summarizing source and a blog); numbers of visitors and converts; what was changed in Kuypers' letters; the name Sint-Catharinakerk (in one source); whether Kuypers and Van den Honert were reconciled.

Interpretation: whether the disturbances were a work of God's Spirit, mass hysteria, a social reaction, or the result of thorn apple (a poisonous plant that was common in the Nijkerk tobacco fields and in certain forms can cause hallucinations) cannot be established. Nearly everything we know comes from pamphlets, and these were often combative in tone, writes Els Stronks. The historian P.T. van Rooden remarked that even the title *Getrouw verhaal* says something about the relation between story and fact: the writer wants you to believe him. Historians such as Smits and Van Lieburg see Nijkerk as part of a broader wave of revival in Scotland and America. Van Veen's touchstones are a measure of faith, not proof.

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Ulrum: one hundred and thirty-seven names in a tavern

On Tuesday, October 14, 1834, the day laborer Klaas Pieters Ritsema put his name to a piece of paper in Ulrum. "Name" is saying too much. Ritsema had never learned to write, and he signed with three letters: K.P.R. His wife did not go with him.

The paper under which he put his letters declared that he was leaving the Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk, the Dutch Reformed Church, the church of the king and of almost everyone around him. The Sunday after, he did not let the minister the authorities had sent come near the pulpit. It cost him a month in prison and a fine of eight guilders. In the prison in Groningen, his minister got a room of his own, and he sat in the kitchen.

He was one of one hundred and thirty-seven men and women who signed that day. Nobody remembers most of the names anymore. They are the main characters of this chapter. Their minister we do know. I have written a chapter of its own about Hendrik de Cock elsewhere, so here he stays in the background. I want to know what it meant for a farmer, a laborer, or a widow in Ulrum to sign that paper. And what it cost them.

A church on the mound

The church of Ulrum, a village in the far north of the province of Groningen, stands high, on the western of the two wierden on which the village is built. A wierde is an artificial mound that people raised long ago to stay dry above the sea. The church stands inside a wall around the old churchyard. The building is from the thirteenth century and has a sturdy tower. Inside hangs a pulpit from 1745, with carving by Casper Struiwig, and there is an organ that Nicolaas Anthonie Lohman built in 1806. Next to the church stands a large white house with a hipped roof and four chimneys: the old parsonage. The street is called the H. de Cockstraat.

You do not see a tavern there. It stood farther on in the village and was demolished in 1906. It was a cooper's workshop with a taproom, belonging to a widow named Koster. There the members of the congregation came that Tuesday to sign.

To understand why they came, you have to go to the white parsonage.

A minister who changed his mind

In 1829, a young minister came to live in the white parsonage. According to a village history of Ulrum, Hendrik de Cock at first preached in a more liberal way than his congregation. Liberal here means: looser from the old confession of the church, with more emphasis on virtue and reason than on sin and grace.

In Ulrum lived people who did know the old teaching. A story goes around about one of them. Klaas Pieters Kuipenga lived on the farm Zuidhof, on the road to Zuurdijk. He wanted to make profession of faith and came to the young minister for instruction. At the parsonage he said something that comes back in almost every description of De Cock's life: if he had to contribute even one

sigh to his salvation, he was lost forever. One sigh. Not even that. According to the stories, it touched De Cock deeply. He began to examine the Bible anew and read the old writers whom Kuipenga recommended to him. The story has long been told in the circle of the seceded churches. I have not found an account from that time itself.

What happened to him after that, De Cock wrote down himself. In the defense he sent to the synod in June 1834, he suddenly tells about himself in the middle of the church-law arguments. His life had always been respectable. Then he came to know himself as a sinner, and his own righteousness became to him "a loathsome garment." He prayed for a Savior, he writes, and God did not leave his prayer unanswered. From that time on, he preached differently.

The church filled up, also with people from other villages. In Appingedam, it is still told that believers left on horseback at three o'clock on Sunday morning to attend the service in Ulrum at nine. Parents who did not trust their own minister came to have their children baptized in Ulrum, and under the rules of the church that was not allowed. When De Cock also wrote a pamphlet against two colleagues, the church authorities stepped in. On December 20, 1833, he was suspended. He was no longer allowed to preach in his own church.

A little girl beneath the pulpit

In the fall of 1834, everything came together. On October 2, De Cock stood again before the provincial church authorities in Groningen. His oldest daughter was seriously ill at home. He barely got a chance to speak. According to Els Zwerver, the chairman, Hendriksz, cut off the conversation with the words "No pourparlers!": there would be no negotiating. De Cock did not give in, and neither did the board.

Three days later, on October 5, his little daughter Jantje died. She was three and a half. After three weeks of illness, it said in the death notice De Cock had placed, the all-powerful, only, and triune God had taken her away. He and his wife hoped to see her again "where there will be no more mourning or crying." The historian Hanneke Hoekstra described this grief in an article about the De Cock family. She points out that De Cock had the notice placed out of fear that strictly believing people would interpret the death of his child as God's punishment for his resistance.

On Thursday, October 9, a guest came to Ulrum: Hendrik Pieter Scholte, minister in Doeveren in Brabant, who thought just as De Cock did. Elder Beukema had gone to pick him up. Jantje was still above ground. Scholte found, according to Hoekstra, a shattered couple. On Friday, October 10, the girl was buried at the foot of the church wall, beneath the pulpit on which her father had not been allowed to stand for months.

Frouwe Venema, the mother, was a well-to-do farmer's daughter who had attended a French boarding school. Hoekstra describes her as deeply devout. She had encouraged Hendrik years before to preach simply and clearly, and she dated her own definitive conversion to around the birth of her daughter Eelbrin in 1833. Hoekstra wonders whether the death of Jantje did not become for the parents a sign that it was time to rise up. The son Helenius wrote later that his father saw in the events of that week the indication that the moment for the break had come.

I mention this because the story of the Afscheiding, the Secession, is often told as a struggle over doctrine. It was that too. But the people in the middle of it also carried their own lives with them. The Secession began in a house in mourning.

"Here is the time, here it must happen"

Already on October 7, the church wardens, afraid for their building, had asked the Kollegie van Toezigt (the supervisory board) for instructions because of an "astonishing crowd." On Friday evening, October 10, Scholte preached in Ulrum, at the request of the church council. A rule of the church authorities forbidding that was not yet known to him then, he wrote later. On Sunday, October 12, the church was full. According to the story Els Zwerver wrote for De Verhalen van Groningen, carriages stood in the streets and horses in the meadow next to the church. Another minister had been assigned for the service, Nicolaas Smith from nearby Leens. Scholte asked him to leave the preaching turn to him. Smith refused, and again when Scholte asked once more in the afternoon.

In the church, people shouted that they wanted to hear Scholte and not him. There was pushing and pulling. When De Cock addressed the minister, the crowd pressed in so close that Smith, De Cock wrote later, became "completely embarrassed." Scholte brought the old man safely outside. Then Frouwe Venema, De Cock's wife, according to Hoekstra, cried out three times: "Here is the time, here it must happen!"

What exactly was said and done, the sources do not tell quite the same. What is certain is that church warden A.J. Sleuver locked the church. A church warden managed the building and the money of the congregation, and Sleuver did not belong to the people around De Cock. In the afternoon, Scholte preached outside, in the grassland by the parsonage. He stood on a farm cart, and his text came from Hebrews 10:19-22, about the boldness to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus. De Cock gave a short address.

On Monday, October 13, De Cock sat all day over a text. It became the Acte van Afscheiding of Wederkeer, the Act of Secession or Re-

turn. That second name is important. The writers themselves did not think they were beginning something new. This is how they saw it: they were returning to the church of the Reformation.

The Act begins with the declaration that the signers are overseers and members of the Reformed congregation of Ulrum. Overseers are the elders and deacons. Then the text lists what, in their view, was wrong. The Hervormde Kerk had let go of the teaching of the fathers, desecrated the sacraments, and almost abandoned discipline. Their minister had been suspended because he preached against error. Scholte was not allowed to speak. The conclusion is hard: the Hervormde Kerk was "not the true but the false Church."

They broke away, the Act says, until the church returned to "the true worship of the Lord." In their own words, then, the door was left ajar. They also sought fellowship with other Reformed believers in the country who thought the same. The signers promised to hold to the confessional writings of the Reformed churches, the so-called Three Forms of Unity, and to the church order of the Synod of Dort of 1619. De Cock remained their lawful shepherd and teacher.

In the evening, the church council met. They were the elders J.J. Beukema and K.S. Barkema and the deacons K.A. van der Laan, D.P. Ritsema, and Geert K. Bos. They knelt and prayed, deacon Van der Laan wrote later to Scholte, and so they came to their decision. There is a small, striking detail with it. According to Hoekstra, the name of Hendrik de Cock is not under it. That of his wife Frouwe is.

Three days earlier, Frouwe had buried her little daughter beneath the pulpit. Now she put her name under the Act. Grief and choice fell in the same week for her.

Tuesday in the cooper's workshop

The next day, Tuesday, October 14, the Act lay ready in the cooper's tavern of the widow Koster-Hulshoff. A cooper made barrels and casks. Because it was also a tavern, villagers gathered there. Zwerver describes how it went. De Cock knelt, and those present knelt with him, from the old elder Beukema to his wife. According to Zwerver, he said: "It is not about you following me." It was about the Reformed teaching. A congregation signed the Act, not one man.

At first everyone hesitated. Then people came forward one by one. Those who could not write made a cross or had their name noted down. The Reformatorisch Dagblad and Hoekstra give 137 names, of men and women. Eight people refused, among them the two church wardens.

For some families, the dividing line ran straight through the house. Ritsema signed, his wife did not.

What would you have done? You live in a village where everyone knows everyone. The church wardens do not sign. Some of your neighbors stay in the church of the king. Your children go to the only school in the village. And you put your name, or three letters, on a paper that says the church of your parents is the false church.

Constables on the church path

The Sunday after, October 19, it became clear that the village lay in two halves. A minister from Niekerk, Van der Helm, came to lead the service. According to Zwerver, seven constables and a court officer walked with him to the church. A constable was a kind of village police officer.

The church was full, and it was loud. There was shouting and cursing: "Priest of Baal, false teacher, idol worshiper!" Klaas Pieters

Ritsema, who a week earlier had signed with his three letters, did not let the minister come to the pulpit. That cost him the month in prison. De Cock himself could not reach the pulpit. The constable denied him entry. He stood on the elders' bench, read the Act aloud, and preached on Ephesians 2: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast* (Ephesians 2:8-9). Van der Helm fled the church. After that, the doors were shut.

The governor of the province, Rengers, sent soldiers.

Twelve soldiers at the table

On Saturday, October 25, 1834, more than a hundred infantrymen marched from the city of Groningen into Ulrum to keep order. They were billeted, mostly with seceded families. Billeting meant that a family had to take soldiers into its home, with bed and board, whether it wanted to or not. A village history of Ulrum calculates that in those months there was one soldier for every nine inhabitants.

Twelve came to the parsonage. De Cock described it himself: twelve men billeted, and in addition a guard of more than twenty. He was under house arrest. Later it was reduced to an officer and an orderly. According to Zwerver, the soldiers drank wine and broke dishes. The doors of the parsonage were sealed, De Cock's books and papers confiscated. A day later, on Sunday, October 26, the church bell of Ulrum rang, and the drums of the soldiers sounded through it.

According to Omroep Het Hogeland, De Cock had many followers among the poorer population. Seceded families especially now had to feed these men. In a winter. How they experienced it exactly is in no source I was able to read. How long it lasted, we do know. Ac-

cording to Zwerver, the last soldiers left only in July 1835. Stichting Ulrum 1834 speaks of about half a year.

The consequences of the decision thus landed at the kitchen table, with families who often had little themselves. Jesus called them blessed: *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:10). In Ulrum, persecution did not look like a stake, but like a soldier who ate with you every day. De Cock wrote about his flock that it was assaulted, robbed, and put in prison. He names one name: Klaas de Wit, a devout man of about seventy, who was arrested.

Meanwhile, the congregation gathered wherever it could: in the parsonage, in barns, on Kuipenga's farm Zuidhof. Sometimes there were so many that the service had to move outside, into the field. That was punishable. The Netherlands had kept from the French period the code of Napoleon. An article of it provided that an association of more than twenty persons could meet only with the permission of the government. King William I had that rule used against the seceders. The minister who led got a fine, and the owner of the house or barn often too.

People from other villages also sought out De Cock. On November 1, A.J. van der Lande from Middelstum came to Uithuizermeeden to have his child baptized. He had promised his wife on her deathbed that a "priest of Baal" would not do it. His letter is in the membership book.

Ordinary life went on meanwhile. In 1834, Ulrum had only one church and only one school. The children of the seceders kept going to that school, together with the children of the people who had not signed. Only in 1870 did a Christian elementary school come to the village. For thirty-six years, the children from both sides went to

the same school. The parents had chosen, each for a side. Their children walked to the same school building every morning.

A winter without a home

De Cock himself was convicted on October 31, Reformation Day, by the court in Appingedam. On November 28, the court in Groningen confirmed the sentence: a fine of one hundred and fifty guilders and three months in a cell. He served it in the house of detention on the Zoutstraat in Groningen. In a letter from those weeks, he addressed Frouwe as his wife, "called with and in me to suffer for His name and cause." His prison he called "a Patmos of John," and also a Wartburg "of Luther and you, dear wife." In his diary of December 1, it says: "Satan began to sift me." The governor held his request to be allowed to write freely "under advisement." That was, he remarked, a polite term for refusal.

At home in Ulrum, things went differently meanwhile. In February 1835, Frouwe and the children had to leave the parsonage. Members of the congregation brought some household goods to the front room of the widow Martje Wierenga, with whom the family found shelter. On February 28, De Cock was released. Dozens of people from Ulrum came to shake his hand, Zwerver writes.

In May 1835, the family moved by towboat to Smilde, in Drenthe.

Frouwe Venema hardly appears in the history books. It was she who had said that something was lacking in his sermons, she cried out that the time had come, her name is under the Act, and with her children she bore the price of those months. In 1841, she lost another little son, one year old, Regnerus, to smallpox. Helenius wrote that his father uttered not a word of complaint or rebellion, and quotes the words: "Your will and not mine was done."

A farmer who wrote against it

Not everyone in Ulrum agreed with the seceders. One of the fiercest opponents lived in the same village: Marten Douwes Teenstra, farmer and writer. He wrote pamphlets against slavery, against superstition, and against what he called the "fanaticism" of De Cock and his followers. An anonymous pamphlet that Hoekstra attributes to him claimed that Frouwe sat laughing beside her husband after the funeral of her little daughter. That is how cruel mockery could be toward a mother who had just buried her child. Teenstra lies buried in the old churchyard at Snakkeburen.

I think it is good that he is in this story. The man who wrote against slavery saw fanatics in his seceded neighbors. Both belong to him. In the church history of a village, good people are seldom set against bad ones. Mostly it is about neighbors who no longer understood each other, and who kept running into each other in the street.

From Ulrum to Pella

What began in Ulrum did not stay there. Within a few weeks, other congregations followed. In Smilde, a group seceded on November 20, 1834. According to Historiek, about one hundred and thirty seceded congregations arose between 1834 and 1836. By the end of 1839, there were more than one hundred and fifty.

The persecution lasted for years, with fines, billeting, and broken-up services. Scholte had to deal with it too. In Loosdrecht he got a fine of twenty-five guilders in January 1836, and later that year in Gorinchem one hundred guilders. From September 1836, the seceders in Loosdrecht also had soldiers in their homes. Only after the change of throne in 1840 did seceded congregations that asked for it receive recognition from the king. With the Constitution of 1848 came freedom of religion for everyone.

In Ulrum itself, the seceded congregation grew into a fixed group in the village. In 1849, 28.9 percent of the inhabitants of the municipality of Ulrum belonged to it, the historian Dick Drost calculated. Their first church of their own stood in De Fuik, where the nursing home Asingahof now stands. There is no memorial stone. In 1901, the Gereformeerden (Reformed) built a new church on the Leensterweg, which still stands.

For some of the seceders, the Netherlands became too small. The persecution weighed heavily, and in 1845 and 1846 the potato harvest failed. For poor families, that meant want. An overview from the University of Groningen concludes that faith and poverty counted about equally.

In the fall of 1846, the minister Albertus van Raalte left Rotterdam with a group. They wanted to go to Wisconsin, but winter held them back. In February 1847, they arrived at the mouth of the Black River in Michigan. There they built their first log cabin. The place is now called Holland.

At the end of April 1847, Scholte also left, the man of the farm cart in Ulrum. He had been suspended and arrested. At the end of November 1834, he was held for a few days in Appingedam, and according to the historical society of Pella, he was held three weeks in total. His group sailed to America with four ships, three from Rotterdam and one from Amsterdam. On August 26, 1847, almost eight hundred colonists arrived in Iowa. They called their town Pella, after the place where, according to an old tradition, the Christians of Jerusalem found a refuge. On the town seal are the words *In Deo Spes Nostra et Refugium*: in God is our hope and our refuge.

Until 1857, according to Historiek, 7,570 seceders left for America. Whether there were people from Ulrum among them, and who, I

have not been able to establish. It would not surprise me. But I will write it down only when I find their names.

The church on the mound

The church that the seceders left in 1834 remained the Hervormde church of Ulrum. In 2013 or 2014, it passed to the Stichting Oude Groninger Kerken, the Old Groningen Churches Foundation. In September 2014, a reissue of the Act was presented in the building, with the original text in it. Inhabitants are working with the foundation on a church history museum. In 2021, that museum was still being set up and organized tours through the village.

In 1834, Ulrum had one church. According to the Reformatorisch Dagblad, there were four in 2010. Stichting Ulrum 1834 now and then holds a festival in which the village reenacts the year of the Secession, with old carriages, street theater, and again soldiers in the streets. This time they are villagers in uniform.

So the two halves of the story come together again in the same building. In the church the seceders left, their history is now told.

Anyone who walks around there stands in the churchyard inside the old wall. At the foot of the church wall, beneath the pulpit, a girl of three and a half was buried in October 1834. Four days later, 137 men and women in a cooper's workshop elsewhere in the village put their name, or three letters if they could not write. Her mother was one of them. The tavern is gone. The church wall still stands.

Go there yourself

The Hervormde church, also called the Catharinakerk, stands at H. de Cockstraat 5 in Ulrum, in the northwest of the province of Groningen. You recognize it by the sturdy tower on the mound and the wall around the churchyard. Inside you see the pulpit from

1745, the gentlemen's pew with the carved coat of arms of the family Inn- and Knyphausen, and the Lohman organ from 1806. The church belongs to the Stichting Oude Groninger Kerken: for opening hours and activities, check the website of that foundation.

Right next to the church stands the white parsonage, H. de Cockstraat 1, where De Cock lived from 1829. The house is a national monument, and from the street you can see well how close it stands to the church. At Leensterweg 1 stands the Gereformeerde church from 1901, built after the merger in 1892 of the seceders with the doleantie group, the group around Abraham Kuyper.

Stichting Ulrum 1834 has a walking route through the village past places from that time. You can download the folder from the foundation's website. Anyone who wants to go further can visit, in the city of Groningen, the grave of Hendrik and Frouwe de Cock at the Zuiderbegraafplaats.

What is certain and what is told

Certain (several independent sources): De Cock minister in Ulrum from 1829 and living in the parsonage; suspension in December 1833; the closed church and the afternoon sermon of Scholte outside on Sunday, October 12, 1834; the signing by the church council on October 13 and by the congregation on October 14 in the tavern of the widow Koster; the content of the Act; the service of October 19 from the elders' bench; more than a hundred soldiers in Ulrum from the end of October 1834, twelve in the parsonage; a fine of 150 guilders and three months in a cell for De Cock; the family had to leave the parsonage in February 1835; the ban on gatherings of more than twenty persons; recognition from 1840 and freedom of religion in 1848; the emigration under Van Raalte (Holland, Michigan, 1847) and Scholte (Pella, Iowa, 1847); the present monuments (church, parsonage, Gereformeerde church).

From De Cock's own pen or own circle: the words about his conversion ("a loathsome garment," defense of June 1834); his description of the twelve men and the guard, Klaas de Wit, and the full church when Scholte was kept out (afterword); his letters and diary from prison (Hoekstra quotes "to suffer for His name and cause," the Patmos and the Wartburg, "Satan began to sift me"); the death notice for Jantje; what Helenius writes about his father (the indication in the week of October 12; the little son Regnerus). I come across those last two via Hoekstra; I have not been able to see the book of Helenius myself.

Only from tradition or one source: the word of Kuipenga about "one sigh" (the conversation has no date and the wording varies by teller; a story in the circle of the seceders); the death and burial of Jantje beneath the pulpit (Hoekstra, a scholarly source; the age of three and a half follows Hoekstra, other sources say three); the visit of Scholte to the tavern on October 9 and 10 and the seven baptisms (Zwerver); the statement of De Cock on October 14 (Zwerver); the kneeling of those present and the crosses (Zwerver); the wine and the dishes (Zwerver); the number of constables on October 19; the cry "Priest of Baal, false teacher, idol worshiper" (Zwerver); the ratio of one soldier to nine inhabitants; the punishment of Klaas Pieters Ritsema, his three letters K.P.R., and that his wife did not go along (Zwerver for the punishment, an edition of Stichting De Gihonbron for the rest); the names of the church council members, taken from a note in that same edition; the promise of Van der Lande (membership book, via the same edition); the letter of the church wardens of October 7, Scholte's sermon on October 10, and his imprisonment in Appingedam from November 29 to December 4, 1834 (notes to the De Gihonbron edition); the one school until 1870; the ride to Ulrum on horseback at three o'clock at night (Wesseling, a local tradition from Appingedam); the departure of the last sol-

diers in July 1835; the household goods at Martje Wierenga's and the handshakes on February 28 (Zwerver); the percentage of 28.9 in 1849; the location of the first seceded church; the pamphlet about Frouwe (Hoekstra attributes it to Teenstra; the text is not quoted).

Where the sources differ: the exact number of signers (137 in Hoekstra and the Reformatorisch Dagblad; Zwerver mentions more than one hundred and fifty present, 144 signers and eight refusers, among them the two church wardens, and seven who later came back; 144 minus 7 is 137, but that explanation is my own arithmetic, I have not found a source that explains it that way); the date of the Act (the printed version is of October 13, the handwritten original of October 14); the verdict (October 31 in Hoekstra, November 7 in Wesseling); whether Ritsema stopped the minister at the pulpit (Gihonbron) or cursed him (Zwerver); the spelling Kuipenga or Kuipinga; the age of Jantje (three in the older version of this chapter, three and a half in Hoekstra); whether the words "It is not about you following me" were said that way (Zwerver; I cannot check it, but they fit what is on paper).

Unconfirmed: whether there were people from Ulrum among the emigrants to America; whether the museum in Ulrum has opened by now; how the soldiers were experienced by the families; what De Cock and Frouwe said to each other in those weeks.

Interpretation: whether the Hervormde Kerk of 1834 was the false church is a judgment of faith by the signers. This chapter describes what they believed and what it cost them, without adopting that judgment. That the death of Jantje helped determine the decision is the reading of Hoekstra and of Helenius.

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Afterword

Eight places, from Leiden in 1609 to Ulrum in 1834. A city that gave the Pilgrims a roof over their heads. A hall in Dordrecht that is no longer standing. A cathedral in 's-Hertogenbosch that had to wait. A sermon in Utrecht about a boy among the teachers. A church above a living room in Amsterdam. A field in Zeist where all the stones are equal. A winter in Nijkerk when the church began to weep. And one hundred and thirty-seven names in a tavern in Ulrum.

If you visit these places one after another, you see a country that had to learn again and again how to live with difference. Sometimes that went well. Refugees found a place, and behind ordinary front doors people could meet. Sometimes it went badly. Ministers had to leave the country, Catholics worshiped in attics and barns, and in Ulrum families had soldiers billeted in their homes.

Strikingly often, something new began small. A group of English people in a city full of strangers. A family that had an attic fitted out. A sermon on an ordinary Sunday in Nijkerk. A congregation that met in a tavern. None of them knew what would grow from it.

In this volume too I often ran into limits. Buildings have been torn down, archives have been lost, and for some stories we only know the version of those who were involved. I have left those gaps as they are. What is certain is enough to show that faith cost something in these centuries.

In the third volume we come closer to our own time. To Utrecht and Amsterdam in the nineteenth century, to a convent in Echt during the war, a conference center in Noordwijkerhout, a festival ground in Biddinghuizen and the churches in Amsterdam-Zuidoost. Until then, the stones of this volume are simply there. Go and see them. Take someone with you.

When your children ask in time to come, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' (Joshua 4:6)