

HEROES OF FAITH FROM AROUND THE
WORLD
VOLUME 3

From Every Nation

*Eight Christians from four continents,
from Samson Occom to
Hassan Dehqani-Tafti*

*A great multitude which no one could number,
of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues.*

Revelation 7:9

WIM KAMPHORST

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From Every Nation. Heroes of faith from around the world, volume 3

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Stichting (F)Luister Nederland

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

This book can be read and downloaded free of charge at wimkamphorst.nl.

Introduction: to the edges

The first two volumes of this book were about Christians from Asia, Africa and Latin America. In this third volume the map grows larger. It includes people from North America, from the islands of the Pacific, from Australia and from the Middle East. Again they are not missionaries who came from far away, but people who carried the gospel in their own countries and among their own people.

A Mohegan in New England whose sermon, according to historians, was the first printed work published under the name of a Native American. A Tongan who sailed to Fiji to bring the gospel there. An Aboriginal inventor and preacher who appears on Australian money. A young Congolese man on a rubber plantation who wore a scapular around his neck. A Mexican evangelist who started his own church when he saw how little say Spanish speakers had in other churches. A Chinese pastor in Beijing who spent more than twenty years in prison. A Korean pastor who took in the young man who had killed his sons as a son of his own. And an Iranian bishop who wrote a prayer for the murderers of his son.

THE SAME APPROACH

In this volume too, the facts come first. After each chapter you will find what is certain, what is known only from a person's own words or from later tradition, and what is uncertain or disputed. The sources are listed with it.

For a few people in this volume the sources are thin. Little has been written in Dutch or English about Francisco Olazábal and Son Yang-won. For Joeli Bulu much comes from his own life story, as a missionary wrote it down. Where I could not check more, I have kept the story shorter, and I say so when a story rests on a single source.

The eight people in this volume belonged to very different churches: Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Anglican, and congregations they started themselves. The order is again that of time, from the eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth.

FROM EVERY NATION

John saw *a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues* (Revelation 7:9). Some of the people in this volume came from peoples who almost disappeared, or who were long left out of the count. They too stand in that multitude. Who knows whom else you will meet there.

Samson Occom: the Mohegan who never stopped seeking his own people

On September 2, 1772, a man stood ready to be hanged in New Haven, Connecticut. His name was Moses Paul, and he was a Wampanoag, a Native American. In December of the year before, he had got into a fight in a tavern in Bethany. The innkeeper refused to serve him any more drink, a certain Moses Cook struck him, and Paul killed Cook. The court in New Haven sentenced him to the gallows.

In July, Paul had written a letter from prison. He asked one particular minister to preach on the day of his death. His reason was brief: “considering that we are of the same nation.” That minister was Samson Occom, a Mohegan from eastern Connecticut.

Occom came. He preached on a text from the letter to the Romans: *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 6:23). He spoke directly to the condemned man. He spoke to the rest of the listeners. And he turned separately to the Native people who had come, with a stern warning about drink.

That sermon was printed in New Haven the same year. Then came one reprint after another. Historians usually call it the first writing by a Native American to be published under his own name. Ocom was forty-nine at the time. He already had a whole life behind him as a teacher, preacher and spokesman for his people. He had raised money in England for a school that later became Dartmouth College, one of the oldest universities in America. And he had discovered that the school did not remain what he had been promised.

It began in Mohegan, in 1723.

A PEOPLE LOSING THEIR LAND

Mohegan lay close to the small town of New London. The area is now called Montville and lies within the Mohegan reservation. In 1723 Connecticut was a British colony. Colonists and Native peoples lived side by side, and between them it kept coming back to one thing: land.

For the Mohegan, one matter would color their entire century. In 1640 their leader Uncas had made an agreement with the colony about a large piece of land. Who actually owned that land now? The Mohegan said: it was entrusted, not given away. The colony saw it differently. That lawsuit, the Mason case, dragged on for decades, until 1773. It divided the tribe and would occupy Ocom for half his life.

His father was called Joshua and was known as a hunter. His mother was called Sarah. The family name is spelled differently in the sources: Tomacham, Ockham. According to some biographers the family descended from Uncas. That is often said, but I have not found a firm source for it. The Brothertown Indian Nation, the people Ocom would later help to found, tells that he was born in a wigwam.

He grew up in the religion of his people. That is how he later put it himself: he was born a heathen and brought up a heathen.

A PRIMER AND A NEW TESTAMENT

Around 1740 a wave of revival swept through the English colonies. Historians call it the Great Awakening. Traveling preachers called people to personal conversion, and this reached the Native villages too. Sarah, Occom's mother, became one of the first Mohegan to become Christians.

In 1768 Occom wrote a short account of his life. In it he tells that he was sixteen when the preachers came. For half a year he was restless inside. He bought a primer, a simple reading book, and asked English neighbors to teach him the letters. At seventeen he found, as he wrote, rest in Jesus Christ. He began to read the New Testament and wanted to teach the children of his people to read. Other sources give 1741 as the year of his conversion. One biographer names the preacher James Davenport, but Occom himself names no one.

What drove a Mohegan boy to knock on his white neighbors' door with a spelling book? He wrote little about it. He mostly described what he did.

In 1742 the Mohegan chose him, not yet twenty, as counselor to their leader Ben Uncas II. So even as a young man he was someone his people listened to.

A WEEK OR TWO IN LEBANON

In 1743 his mother went to Eleazar Wheelock, a young minister in the village of Lebanon, Connecticut. She asked him to teach her son for a week or two. Occom stayed four years.

Wheelock was a Congregationalist, part of a movement of English Protestants in which each local congregation is self-governing. He taught Occom Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Later Occom continued his studies with another minister, Benjamin Pomeroy, in preparation for Yale. It never came to that. In the summer of 1749 his eyes became so strained that he had to stop.

In 1754 Wheelock opened a school for Native pupils in Lebanon, Moor's Indian Charity School. Later that school would send Occom to the other side of the ocean.

TWELVE YEARS AT THE EASTERN TIP OF LONG ISLAND

In 1749 Occom went along on a fishing trip to Montauk, at the eastern end of Long Island. The Montaukett were looking for a schoolmaster. He first agreed to half a year. He stayed about twelve years.

His own account is matter-of-fact. He had some thirty pupils during the day and an evening school besides. He led the services, visited the sick and settled quarrels. He rode some thirty miles to preach to the Shinnecock as well. He lived in a wigwam and moved twice a year with his family. To have his corn ground he had to travel eighteen miles.

In 1751 he married Mary Fowler, a Montaukett and one of his former pupils. They had ten children; Wikipedia counts eleven. Researchers at Dartmouth describe Mary as a woman who stayed faithful to the Montauk way of life, and as a counterweight to Wheelock's influence. I mention her here because she is missing from many books about Occom. His story cannot be told without her.

On August 30, 1759, Occom was ordained by the Suffolk Presbytery on Long Island. In the Presbyterian church a presbytery is the gathering of ministers and elders from a region, which appoints minis-

ters. He had never finished university. The Presbyterians ordained him all the same, as a missionary among his own peoples.

ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY POUNDS

In his life story of 1768 Occom does something almost nobody dared to do at the time. He sets the figures side by side.

For his work at Montauk he received fifteen pounds a year from the missionary committee in Boston, and later another fifteen to pay off debts. A young, unmarried white missionary received from the same committee one hundred pounds for a single year, plus fifty for an interpreter and thirty for someone to introduce him. One hundred and eighty pounds in all. Occom calculated that for twelve years of work he had received about as much as that man got in one year. And Occom was his own interpreter.

Then he tells a story about a Native boy who was bound out to an English family. The master's son beat him almost every day. Someone asked the boy why. He thought it was because he was an Indian. Occom applied it to himself. "I believe it is because I am a poor Indian," he wrote. And he closed with the thought that God had made him so.

I read that sentence as something other than self-pity. A man calls injustice by its name, and at the same time places his origins in the hand of God. This account, by the way, was not published until 1982. It lay in an archive for more than two hundred years.

THREE HUNDRED SERMONS IN ENGLAND

After his ordination Occom traveled in 1761 and 1762 to the Oneida, a people in the west of the colony of New York. His brother-in-law David Fowler went with him. A third journey in 1763 came to nothing, because war broke out between the British and Native peoples

around the Great Lakes. In 1764 Occom moved with his family back to Mohegan. There he came into conflict with the local minister, David Jewett, who had his own interest in the Mason case. The Connecticut mission board cleared Occom of all complaints except his role in that land dispute. Whoever stood up for the land of his people, then, got into trouble with the people who paid his salary.

In December 1765 Wheelock asked him to go to Great Britain. The school needed money. Occom sailed across the ocean with the minister Nathaniel Whitaker. The well-known evangelist George Whitefield introduced him to nobles and senior clergy. In March 1766 Occom had himself inoculated against smallpox in London, a controversial treatment at the time.

What followed was a journey of almost two years through England and Scotland. Occom preached an estimated three hundred to four hundred sermons. King George III gave two hundred pounds. The Earl of Dartmouth, William Legge, subscribed fifty guineas and became one of the largest donors. Together Occom and Whitaker raised about twelve thousand pounds. That was an enormous sum. Researchers at Dartmouth estimate it at more than two million dollars in today's money.

His sermons and his manner received much praise. Later he would write to Wheelock that in England he had sometimes felt like a curiosity on show. In May 1768 he arrived back in America.

A FAMILY THAT HAD BEEN MADE TO WAIT

At home a disappointment awaited him. Wheelock had not properly cared for his family while he was away. Occom no longer had a paid position. Wheelock offered him a post as missionary, far inland, but Occom was not well and did not want to leave his family alone for years again.

In those months something else happened that he put on paper himself. On January 4, 1769, he wrote a short letter to the board of the Scottish missionary society that supported him. He confessed that he had let himself be overcome by strong drink. He wrote that he had thereby harmed the cause of God and the name of the Christian faith, and he asked for forgiveness and prayer. That letter is still in the Dartmouth archive.

Shortly afterward a new rumor came up. In March 1769 Wheelock wrote to him that someone claimed Occom had been drinking too much again. Wheelock wrote that he did not believe it and contradicted it everywhere. He added that, if it were true, it would be “a greater wound to Christ and his cause” than what had happened before. Wikipedia says that Wheelock spread rumors about Occom. His own letter says something different. What exactly was passed around, and by whom, can no longer be properly traced.

It was the same sin Occom would warn against three years later at the gallows of Moses Paul. He knew it from the inside.

“TOO ALBA MATER”

On December 13, 1769, Wheelock received a charter for a new college from the governor of New Hampshire. It was named after the earl who had given so generously: Dartmouth. Wheelock moved to New Hampshire. The money Occom had raised in England for educating Native young people now went largely to a college for white students.

Occom saw it happen. On July 24, 1771, he wrote Wheelock a letter that changed their relationship for good. He had heard that there were no Native students anymore. “I understand you have no Indians at present except two or three mulattoes,” he wrote. He had gone to England for the poor Indians, and that was what they had

told the donors too. Now he feared that “we Shall be deemed as Liars and Deceivers in Europe.”

And then a play on words that still stings two hundred and fifty years later. In Latin a university is called *alma mater*, nourishing mother. Occom wrote that instead of becoming *alma mater*, the school would be “too alba mater to Suckle the Tawnies”: a white mother, who would no longer nurse the brown children. His whole verdict lay in that one letter.

According to Dartmouth itself, the two men never saw each other again. Occom never set foot on the campus of the college for which he had raised the money.

I want to be careful here. Wheelock also wrote many letters and had his own explanations. This is not a chapter about him. But the facts are clear: the money was requested for Native children, and it was spent mostly on others. In 1970 Dartmouth committed itself anew to the education of Native students. There is a pond there now called Occom Pond.

AT THE GALLOWS IN NEW HAVEN

In those bitter years came the letter from Moses Paul. In December 1771 Paul had killed Moses Cook, after a quarrel that began when the innkeeper refused to serve him any more drink. The execution was first set for June 1772 and, after an appeal, postponed to September 2.

That day Occom preached on the wages of sin. He held nothing back from the condemned man. “Alas! poor Moses, now you know, by sad, by woful experience, the living truth of our text, that the wages of sin is death,” he said to him. Then he turned to the Native listeners and warned them against drunkenness. In another sermon from those years he blamed the colonists for bringing drink and dis-

ease among his people, but he did not call his own people innocent because of it.

You can read that sermon as a sentence passed. I prefer to read it as a man standing at the gallows of a fellow countryman and explaining the gospel to everyone who will listen. Paul had asked for it. Occom came.

The sermon was printed in New Haven on October 31, 1772, and shortly afterward in New London as well. More than twenty editions followed. A count by the American Antiquarian Society comes to twenty-three different printings between 1772 and 1829. A Welsh translation appeared too. Some later printings contained a dialogue between Occom and Paul that was invented.

In 1773 the verdict in the Mason case was given in London. The Mohegan lost. A year later Occom published a hymnbook, *A Choice Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs*, printed in New London. Nobody knows exactly how many of the hymns he wrote himself. The hymn *Awaked by Sinai's awful sound* is often attributed to him, but it only appeared after his death.

EEYAWQUITTOOWAUCONNUCK

If the colonists' church would not serve his people, then it had to be done differently. Occom was convinced that Native peoples needed pastors and teachers from among themselves. He wrote that "the Indians must have Teachers of the own color or Nation."

Together with his brother-in-law David Fowler, a Montaukett, and his son-in-law Joseph Johnson, a Mohegan, he worked on a plan. Christian families from several small peoples in New England would found a new community together. They were Mohegan, Pequot, Narragansett, Montauk, Tunxis and Niantic. In October

1774 the Oneida gave them a piece of land in the interior of New York. In 1775 a first group of fifty to seventy-five people went there.

Then the American Revolution broke out. The war scattered the new community. Some went back to New England, others found shelter with the Stockbridge in Massachusetts. Joseph Johnson disappeared during a peace mission. Only after 1783 could the families return.

In the autumn of 1785 the time had come. On November 7 Occom wrote in his journal: “we named our town by the name of Brotherton, in Indian Eeyawquittoowauconnuck.” Brother town. He became its pastor, and also served the Stockbridge and his own Mohegan.

What must it have meant for someone who had worked all his life in other people’s schools, other people’s churches and from other people’s purses, to write down a name of his own for a place of his own?

In 1787 he spoke out against slavery in a sermon. That deserves mention, and so does this: before leaving for England he had asked Wheelock whether he could use an enslaved person for the work on his farm. Dartmouth mentions both. So do I.

A SMALLER PIECE OF LAND

In 1789 Occom moved with his family to western New York for good. The land remained under pressure. A treaty of 1788 gave Brothertown a smaller area, and the state of New York allowed land to be leased to outsiders. Wikipedia reports that in April 1792 Occom put settlers off the land, but I have found no other source for that.

On July 14, 1792, Samson Occom died in New Stockbridge, New York. He was sixty-nine. Accounts of how he died differ. According

to one tradition he collapsed on the way home, shortly after writing something, and his wife found him. According to another he was fetching wood to finish building the Brothertown church. Later biographers write that more than three hundred Native people came to his funeral. Where he is buried is not certain.

After his death the community fell apart. In 1795 about sixty percent of the land was sold to white settlers. Between 1824 and 1848 most Brothertown families moved further west, to Wisconsin. The Brothertown Indian Nation still exists there today. Since 2020 the Brothertown Indian Nation has celebrated Samson Occom Day every year on July 14.

WHAT REMAINS OF A VOICE?

Occom left no large denomination and no university bearing his name. He did leave a sermon, a hymnbook, a stack of letters and a short life story that had to wait two hundred years for a reader. He also left a people who still name themselves after his town.

Perhaps you recognize something of him. You gave yourself to something that was later used differently from what had been agreed. Or you carry a failure you have had to write about yourself. Occom did both. He set the sums side by side, and he put his own guilt on paper. Then he went on preaching.

On the grounds of Dartmouth, the college he never visited, a pond bears his name. And every year on July 14 a people who call themselves after Brother town remember the Mohegan who wrote that name down.

WHAT IS CERTAIN AND WHAT IS TOLD

Certain (several independent sources): birth in 1723 in Mohegan near New London; counselor to Ben Uncas II (1742); four years

with Eleazar Wheelock from 1743; about twelve years as teacher and preacher at Montauk; marriage to Mary Fowler (1751); ordination by the Suffolk Presbytery (August 30, 1759); journey to Great Britain (1765-1768) raising about £12,000; the Dartmouth charter (1769) and the use of the money for a college mainly for white students; the letter of July 24, 1771; the sermon at the execution of Moses Paul (September 2, 1772) and its many printings; the lost Mason case (1773); the hymnbook (1774); the founding of Brothertown on Oneida land; death on July 14, 1792, in New Stockbridge.

Only from own testimony or later tradition: his conversion and teaching himself to read (his own account of 1768); the amounts of his salary and that of the white missionary (his own account); the birth in a wigwam (tradition of the Brothertown Indian Nation); the feeling of having been used as a curiosity in England (his own letter); the number of people at his funeral (later biographers).

Unconfirmed: descent from Uncas; his conversion under James Davenport; whether Wheelock spread rumors about drinking (his own letter of March 1769 says he contradicted them); the eviction of settlers in April 1792; the exact circumstances of his death and the location of his grave; whether the hymn *Awaked by Sinai's awful sound* is his.

Interpretation: Occom himself confessed in January 1769 that he had drunk too much. That is certain. What was said about him afterward is hard to verify. His sharp verdict on Wheelock stands in his own letters; Wheelock had his own side of the story, which has not been discussed at length here.

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Joeli Bulu: the man who wanted to live among the stars

On August 3, 1838, the Scottish missionary David Cargill wrote a short note in his diary. He lived on Lakeba, an island in the east of Fiji. Joeli Bulu, he wrote, had gone to live in Narothake, a village on the same island. There were a few Fijians there who worshipped God, and Joeli would teach them. Cargill added that this man was learning the Fijian language very diligently.

Four days later Cargill went to the village himself. The believers were grateful, he noted, that a teacher now lived among them. They were kind to him and to his wife.

These are a few lines in a European's diary. The teacher himself was a Tongan of around twenty-eight, a Christian for only five years. He came from another country, with another language. He would stay there for almost forty years. He became the first islander in Fiji to be given sole charge of a church district, he started congregations in places no European missionary had yet been, and he ended as Bible teacher to the most powerful chief in Fiji. When he was old, he told his life to a missionary, who wrote it down and translated it.

That story begins with a boy who wanted nothing to do with the new faith, and a clear night.

TWO TAHITIANS IN NUKU'ALOFA

Tonga is an island kingdom in the Pacific Ocean, east of Fiji. Joeli Bulu was born there around 1810. Exactly where, I have not been able to find. In Tongan his name was later written as Siaoeli Pulu.

When he was a boy, Christianity came to Tonga. Around 1824 there were already two teachers from Tahiti in Nuku'alofa, the capital on the island of Tongatapu. They were islanders themselves. In 1826 the Wesleyan missionaries came, among them John Thomas. Wesleyans were Methodists, followers of the English preacher John Wesley. In 1830 they made an agreement with the London Missionary Society, another Protestant mission organization: Tonga and Fiji would be for the Methodists, Samoa for the London mission.

The greatest change came from a Tongan chief. Taufa'ahau became a Christian and in 1831 took the name King George Tupou I. He would bring all of Tonga under his rule. According to the missiologist Ewan Stilwell, that was the pattern in Tonga: a chief was converted and then tried to bring his family and his people with him.

In Tongan the new faith was called the lotu. You could take up the lotu, the way you choose a new road. At first Joeli Bulu did not want to. He turned against it, as he later told in his autobiography. A museum description accompanying a photograph of him calls him a rascal in his younger years. The description does not say where that label comes from.

“THAT I MAY LIVE AMONG THE STARS”

What turned him around was a promise. He heard that the lotu spoke of a home in heaven. One clear evening he looked up at the stars. He later told that he decided then: “I will lotu so that I may live among the stars.”

We know this sentence only from his own story. The Australian church historian John Garrett found it so telling that in 1982 he named his book on the rise of Christianity in the Pacific *To Live Among the Stars*. A young Tongan looking up at the sky and wanting to live there: for Garrett, that one sentence held the longing of a whole region.

I find it an honest sentence. There is nothing in it yet about sin or about Christ. It is the longing of someone who senses that there is more than the islands under his feet. Do you recognize that? That is how it began for him, and it did not stay with that evening.

EYES THAT WERE OPENED

In 1833 Joeli Bulu became a Christian. He was about twenty-three. According to the museum description it happened after he heard the preaching of John Thomas. It coincided with a great revival in Tonga. Stilwell, on the authority of an older study, mentions nine thousand full members within six years. That figure comes from within the mission itself.

Bulu described his conversion as a struggle. He went through a time when he saw his sin and found no rest. Then one day he listened to a missionary speaking about the love of Christ. His eyes were opened, he said. He had wept from fear and sorrow, and now he wept for joy. His heart was full of love for Him who had loved him and given Himself for him.

Those last words are almost exactly the words of Paul: *who loved me and gave Himself for me.* (Galatians 2:20). Bulu had evidently heard them and made them his own.

Not everyone was pleased with his choice. According to the story Garrett retells from his autobiography, his own family wanted to club him to death. Bulu heard of the plan, fled into the bush and prayed there. This story too we know only from him.

A MAN ON THE PATH

Meanwhile work had begun in Fiji. On October 12, 1835, the Methodist missionaries William Cross and David Cargill arrived on Lakeba, an island in the Lau group in eastern Fiji. They were not the first. Tongan Christians already lived in that part of Fiji, and they supported the work from the start. A Fijian, Josua Mateinaniu, had become a Christian in Tonga and went back to his country to look for villages that were open.

Fiji in those years was a land of rival chiefs. Wars were fought between powerful centers such as Bau and Rewa, and the eating of fallen enemies took place. The missionaries could do little there without the protection of chiefs, and without people who knew the language and the customs.

So they asked Tonga for teachers. Bulu later told how the news reached him. He was walking along a path, and a man told him that the missionaries in Fiji had asked for help. He felt he had to go and bring the good news to people who did not know God. When he told a missionary, the missionary said of his own accord that he had already thought Bulu should be one of them.

In a story like that I hear how calling often works. An ordinary message, an inner knowing, and someone else who says the same thing without being prompted. Bulu went.

SIX PREACHERS FROM VAVA'U

In 1838 King George sent a group of teachers to Fiji. Cargill wrote that six Tongan lay preachers had come from Vava'u, the northern island group of Tonga. Joeli Bulu was one of them, and he was married. I have not found his wife's name in any source.

There are small differences about the journey. An article in the Fiji Times from 2018 says that he came to Fiji with the English missionary James Calvert. Other sources speak only of the group the king sent. What is certain is that in August 1838 he was living on Lakeba and teaching in Narothake, as Cargill noted.

The work on Lakeba was more than preaching. The missionary Richard Lyth had brought a small printing press. Bulu helped print catechisms and portions of the Bible there, in a language he was still learning himself. A catechism is a booklet of questions and answers about the faith.

Tongan Christians already lived in this part of Fiji, and a Tongan teacher could get closer to people than an Englishman. He also remained a stranger, and a stranger bringing a new faith.

"IT IS A SHARK"

From Lakeba, Bulu went to Rewa, a powerful district on the river on the largest island, Viti Levu. There something happened that he later told at length.

A young chief asked him to go swimming. Bulu refused at first, because of the sharks. The chief persuaded him. Together with some boys they sailed toy canoes on the river. Bulu swam to the other side and wanted to swim back. Then he saw movement in the water. He had dreamed about it before. "It is a shark; my dream is true," he thought.

The shark bit him. According to his own account he thought his life was over. He fought, pushed his hand into the animal's throat and dragged it toward the bank. There the shark swam away. According to Garrett he had been bitten in the thigh and the arm and collapsed on the bank. He survived.

This story comes from one mouth: Bulu's own. I have found no other account of it. I tell it because it belongs to his life, and because it shows how close death was to him in those years.

BY CANOE TO VANUA LEVU

Rewa became unsafe. A war was growing between Bau and Rewa, and the missionaries left. Bulu went to Viwa, a small island right next to Bau, where the English missionary John Hunt lived. That station too later closed because of the wars.

Hunt sent him by canoe to Vanua Levu, Fiji's second large island. He was to scout out where the mission might begin. An islander sent ahead to places where Europeans had not yet gone: that happened often in the Pacific.

Bulu was later stationed at Nadi on Vanua Levu, also spelled Nandi in the sources. This Nadi lies on Vanua Levu and should not be confused with the town of Nadi near the airport on Viti Levu. He worked there with the English missionaries Watsford and Ford, after a hurricane had destroyed the houses on the coast.

"NOBODY MUST FIGHT"

On Vanua Levu he met opposition. According to Garrett, who retells his autobiography, people stole his pigs, killed his chickens and wrecked his gardens. One night the village was surrounded. Bulu told the Christians to sit down, without weapons. "Nobody must fight."

The attackers said later that they had not been able to use their weapons. Men of the tribe came to him with a *tabua*, a polished whale's tooth. In Fiji that is a precious gift you give with a request, a reconciliation or an important occasion. They admitted that they had stolen his pigs.

Another story from his own mouth tells of a voyage on a king's great sea canoe. A storm rose that nearly sank the vessel. Bulu prayed, and the wind dropped. This too we know only from his own testimony.

Stilwell writes that his life was in danger more than once because of chiefs who were against the *lotu*. Which of these stories happened exactly as told, no one can now check. What is certain is that he stayed. A stranger without weapons in a land full of war. What would you have done, if your pigs were stolen and your house surrounded?

ONO, AUGUST 18, 1850

In 1848 Bulu was given a responsibility no islander before him had received. He was placed in sole charge of the Ono circuit, on the island of Ono-i-Lau in the far south of the Lau group. Among Methodists a circuit is an area with several congregations under one minister.

On August 18, 1850, he was ordained on Ono-i-Lau by the missionary David Hazlewood. He became a Native Assistant Missionary, an assistant missionary from the local people. He was the first to receive that title. Stilwell counts almost twenty years of service up to that point, evidently from his conversion in 1833.

The title also says something about the relationships. A European was called a missionary, an islander an assistant. By then Bulu had done the work in Fiji for twelve years, often alone, and he stayed

below the English missionaries in rank. I do not judge that from the standpoint of my own time, but it belongs to the picture if you want to look honestly at how the mission worked back then.

A GRAVE IN WAIRIKI

After Ono he went back to Nadi. There was fighting. Two men of the mission were killed while cutting reeds for roofs. The town was burned after the enemy broke a promise to spare the inhabitants. Bulu took his wife and children to Bua for their safety.

After that he was stationed with the Tongan Aaron Fotofili in Cakau-drove, the realm of the Tui Cakau on Taveuni and the south of Vanua Levu. He began the work there before there were any European missionaries. Later Waterhouse and Carey came. In Wairiki, on Taveuni, it was mainly women and children, in his own words, who were diligent at the mission schools.

Here too the chiefs were unpredictable. Ratu Ngolea, later Tui Cakau, was at first friendly to the mission. When he asked the Christians to fight with him in a war near Macuata and they refused, he threatened to attack them on his return. According to a Fijian newspaper article about the autobiography, Ngolea took one of Bulu's daughters and forced her to live with him. Nothing more is said about it, and I will leave it there.

In Wairiki his wife died. He told it in one sentence: he went on, but his wife did not go with him, for she had died at Wairiki and there he had buried her. She had come with him from Tonga. When she died, I do not know.

The station moved to Waikava, on Fawn Harbour. There Bulu was put in charge of a training school for catechists, Fijian teachers who in turn went out into the villages. Stilwell writes that he had already begun training his own converts when the mission could not

send him helpers. According to an article in the Fiji Times, some of his students later went to New Britain, in present-day Papua New Guinea. I have not been able to check that further.

AT THE COURT OF CAKOBAU

In the last part of his life Bulu lived on Bau, the small island where Ratu Seru Cakobau ruled. Cakobau was the most powerful chief in Fiji. In 1854 he became a Christian and renounced the eating of people. After that large parts of the population turned to Christianity. On October 10, 1874, Cakobau ceded Fiji to Great Britain, and Fiji became a British colony.

On Bau, Bulu was chaplain and Bible teacher to Cakobau and his family. The Tongan boy who had once opposed the lotu now taught the king of Bau.

A photograph survives from those years, probably taken in the early 1870s. It is now in an Australian collection. You see an older man with a beard, dressed as a Fijian chief, in a wrap, holding something that looks like a fly whisk. A Tongan who had come home in Fiji.

A VOICE SOMEONE ELSE WROTE DOWN

In that time Bulu told his life to the missionary Lorimer Fison, who translated it. George Stringer Rowe edited the text. In 1871 the Wesleyan mission in London published *Joel Bulu: The Autobiography of a Native Minister in the South Seas*. The story tells of fires, storms, wars, floods and escapes from death. In 1976 the missiologist Alan Tippett and Tomasi Kanailagi produced an annotated edition. It was reissued in 2013.

I have to say honestly: almost everything we know of his inner life comes from that one book. It is his testimony, written down by a European missionary and edited for English readers. I have not been

able to consult the original text myself; I know it through quotations in Stilwell and in the Fiji Times. Where Cargill's diaries and the church records touch his story, they agree with what he tells. Nobody else has been able to check the miracle stories.

That one book is also a rarity. Hundreds of islanders went as missionaries to other islands in the nineteenth century. Of most of them, not a word of their own survived. From the Cook Islands alone, according to recent archival research, more than two hundred and fifty went out. The Tahitian Papeiha went to Aitutaki in 1821 with the English missionary John Williams. Cook Islanders went to Samoa, Vanuatu and southern Papua. The colonial archives mainly record the names of Europeans. The names of women are often missing altogether.

In Fiji, what had happened in Tonga happened again. In 1875, the year a measles epidemic in Fiji took about forty thousand lives, eighty-three Fijian men volunteered to go with the missionary George Brown to New Britain. Nine were chosen. Their leader, Aminio Baledrokadroka, told the colonial officials that they had given themselves to the work of God, whether they would die or live. Within three years most of them were dead. Three were killed, others died of malaria. According to Stilwell, by the middle of the twentieth century more than three hundred Fijians had served as missionaries on other islands.

Stilwell writes that without these islanders the gospel would never have spread so quickly through the Pacific. The history of the mission in that region is often told with the names of Williams, Hunt and Calvert. The work in the villages was done to a large extent by people like Bulu.

BESIDE JOHN HUNT ON VIWA

Joeli Bulu died on May 7, 1877, on Bau. He had worked in Fiji for almost forty years. Cakobau, his old friend, provided a coffin and saw to the funeral. He was buried on Viwa, next to the grave of John Hunt, the missionary who had once sent him by canoe to Vanua Levu. Many mourned him.

In Fiji they still know his name. At Lelean Memorial School, a Methodist school in Davuilevu near Nausori, one of the four houses is named after him.

On Viwa an Englishman and a Tongan lie side by side, on a small island across from Bau. When it is clear, the stars stand over those two graves at night, the same stars a young Tongan once looked at when he decided that he wanted to live there.

WHAT IS CERTAIN AND WHAT IS TOLD

Certain (several independent sources): birth around 1810 in Tonga; conversion in 1833; departure for Fiji in 1838 with a group of Tongan teachers; his work in Narothake on Lakeba in August 1838 (diary of David Cargill); work on Lakeba, Rewa, Viwa, Vanua Levu, Nadi, Ono-i-Lau, Cakaudrove and Bau; appointment over the Ono circuit in 1848 as the first islander; ordination on August 18, 1850; leadership of the training school for catechists; Bible teacher to Cakobau on Bau; the autobiography of 1871 (translated by Lorimer Fison, edited by George Stringer Rowe); death on May 7, 1877, and burial on Viwa next to John Hunt.

Only from own testimony or later tradition: his earlier resistance to the lotu and the decision under the stars; the inner struggle and joy at his conversion; his family's plan to kill him; the man on the path and the confirmation by a missionary; the shark attack in Rewa and the dream beforehand; the night-time encirclement and the

tabua of reconciliation; the storm that dropped after prayer; the events surrounding Ratu Ngolea and his daughter; the death of his wife in Wairiki.

Unconfirmed: the description of him as a rascal in his youth (museum text without a source); whether he traveled to Fiji with James Calvert; the length of eight years on Ono; that students of his later went to New Britain; his birthplace and the name of his wife are not known.

Interpretation: the autobiography is an oral account, translated and edited by European missionaries for an English readership. The original 1871 text was not consulted directly for this chapter; quotations come via Stilwell, Garrett and the Fiji Times.

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David Unaipon: the inventor who said “look at me”

On October 4, 1995, the Reserve Bank of Australia put a new fifty-dollar note into circulation. It was made of polymer, a kind of plastic. On one side was a woman, Edith Cowan, the first woman elected to a parliament in Australia. On the other side was an Aboriginal man, and beside him a drawing of a handpiece for shearing sheep.

It was the first time that an Aboriginal Australian who could be identified by name appeared on an Australian banknote. The bank had chosen him from suggestions put forward by what was then the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission.

The man was David Unaipon. He was an inventor and a writer. He was also a preacher, and that came across less clearly on the banknote. For almost fifty years he traveled through southeastern Australia and spoke in churches and cathedrals of every denomination. In old age he still walked from town to town to tell people about Christ, while hotels turned him away because he was black.

He was born beside a lake, in a village that was a mission station.

First something about his name. In many Aboriginal communities it is customary not to use the name, the image or the voice of someone who has died for a period of time. The museum of the Reserve Bank therefore warns on its website that it contains names, images and voices of people who have died. In this chapter I do name David Unaipon. He died in 1967, his name is on a banknote that circulates throughout Australia, and the design of the new note from 2018 was made together with his people. Anyone reading this chapter aloud to Aboriginal readers would do well to know this custom.

A BOAT PAST THE CAMPS

The land of the Ngarrindjeri lies in the south of Australia, where the Murray River flows into Lake Alexandrina and the long lagoon of the Coorong. It is about eighty kilometers (fifty miles) southeast of Adelaide. In the nineteenth century this area became part of the British colony of South Australia. The Ngarrindjeri, a confederation of clans and language groups, lost much of their land, as other Aboriginal peoples did.

In 1859 the Aborigines' Friends' Association, a society of Christians in Adelaide, founded a mission station on the shore of Lake Alexandrina. It was given the name Point McLeay. Since 1982 the place has been called Raukkan. The first leader was George Taplin, a Congregationalist minister. Congregationalists are Protestants among whom each local congregation governs itself. The mission station itself was formally attached to no church. A school, a church and houses were built. The Raukkan church was built in 1869.

David's father was the man who had taken the first step. James Ngunaitponi was born around 1835 near Piwingang, a lagoon on the Murray, west of present-day Tailem Bend. At first he was called James McPherson, probably after an innkeeper he worked for. In 1861 the Scottish missionary James Reid of the Free Church baptized

him. He was Reid's first convert and took the surname Reid at his baptism. Later he became known by his own name, Ngunaitponi, which the colonists anglicized to Unaipon. Reid drowned in Lake Albert in July 1863.

James went to Point McLeay. Taplin saw in him someone who could bring the gospel to his own people. He later described him as "a steady Christian." From 1869 James sailed a mission boat past the camps around the lake to read from the Bible. Where the boat could not go, he walked. In 1871 he became the first deacon from among the Ngarrindjeri. Taplin leaned heavily on him in translating portions of the Gospels into the local language.

On July 27, 1866, James married Nymbulda, a daughter of the Yaraldi leader Pullum. It was the first Christian marriage on the mission station. They had nine children.

AFRAID OF THE BLOOD

The fourth child was born on September 28, 1872. His name was David. The Australian Dictionary of Biography, the State Library of South Australia and the State Records of South Australia all give that date. The national institute AIATSIS puts it in the late 1870s, but that divergence stands alone.

From the age of seven David went to the mission school. The Christian teaching frightened him as a child, he later wrote. Above all the hymns about the blood of Jesus filled him with fear. Yet as an adult he said that he owed a great deal to his Bible study and to the example of his father. We know this from his own look back on his life, as AIATSIS summarizes it.

Do you recognize that? A child hears words bigger than it can carry. It is frightened. And years later those very words turn out to be the

foundation under its life. I find it honest that David did not polish that fear away.

HANDEL ON THE MISSION ORGAN

As a teenager David became a servant to Charles Burney Young at Kanmantoo, in the hills near Adelaide. According to the State Records he left on September 1, 1887. The Australian Dictionary of Biography gives 1885. Young encouraged his interest in philosophy, science and music.

In 1890 David returned to Point McLeay. There he learned boot-making and later became bookkeeper of the mission store. At the end of the 1890s he worked for a time as a storeman for a bootmaker in Adelaide. At the mission he played the church organ for many years. According to AIATSIS he played Handel's *Messiah* among other complex pieces. From the mission library he read scientific books. He became fascinated by the idea of a machine that keeps itself running, a perpetual motion machine. That thought never let go of him for the rest of his life.

On January 4, 1902, at Point McLeay, he married Katherine Carter, née Sumner, a Tangani woman from the Coorong. The Australian Dictionary of Biography notes briefly that the marriage was not happy. Nothing more is said, and I know nothing more about it either. Katherine died in 1928. They had a son.

SHEARS FOR SHEEP

David devised an improved handpiece for mechanical shears. In 1909 he registered it with the patent office.

Here the sources diverge. The Australian Dictionary of Biography and the State Library speak of a patent. AIATSIS writes that he received only a provisional patent and had no money to protect the

invention fully. The design was later used anyway, and he received nothing in return. They also differ on the number of inventions: ten applications between 1909 and 1944 according to one source, nineteen according to the other. What is certain is that he never grew rich from them and that his patents lapsed.

The handpiece is now on the fifty-dollar note. There is something bitter in that. The tool that earned him nothing now passes from hand to hand across Australia.

"AUSTRALIA'S LEONARDO"

In 1914 David made the newspapers with ideas about flight. He had watched the boomerang, which spins and stays aloft. In his view that motion could be used to build a machine able to rise straight up. The Reserve Bank writes that in this he foresaw the helicopter. The Australian Dictionary of Biography is more cautious and says he was repeating other people's predictions, about flight and about polarized light. Either way, the publicity made him famous. Newspapers called him a black genius. The Reserve Bank writes that he gained a reputation as "Australia's Leonardo."

The compliment cut both ways. An Aboriginal man who spoke about physics did not fit the picture many white Australians had of his people. The Australian Dictionary of Biography writes that his fame, his cultivated manner and his careful English confused the prejudices of his time. He was admired as an exception. Whether his people were better off for it was another question.

He himself did not smoke or drink alcohol. It frustrated him that there was so little work on the mission stations for educated Aboriginal people.

LOOK AT ME

In 1913 David went to work for the Aborigines' Friends' Association, the same society that had founded the mission. He collected subscriptions and sold their booklets. It gave him something few Aboriginal men had in those days: he could travel.

He did so for about fifty years. He spoke in churches and cathedrals of various denominations in southeastern Australia, including South Australia and Victoria. According to John Harris, who wrote about the first Aboriginal evangelists, he preached in Ngarrindjeri when his audience was Aboriginal and in English when it was white. He knew large parts of the King James Bible by heart. His sermons were full of biblical references.

He had a set phrase. He pointed to himself and said: "Look at me and you will see what the Bible can do." That is how the Australian Dictionary of Biography records it. According to the historian Billy Griffiths, he used the phrase mainly in lectures for the Anglican Church.

I have to admit that the phrase gives me mixed feelings. It sounds like a testimony, and it was one. But it also fits a message of assimilation: look how far an Aboriginal man can go if he lives the way the white church taught him. The Australian Dictionary of Biography writes that David shared the mission society's view that Aboriginal people should find their way into European society through education. In a pamphlet from 1954 he called himself a "product of missionary work," according to Griffiths.

Was that submission or conviction? Historians do not agree. I think it can be both, in one person. He believed in Christ. He lived in a country that kept his people small. And within that reality he looked for a place to stand and to speak.

A MANUSCRIPT THAT CHANGED NAMES

In 1924 his first article appeared in a Sydney newspaper. In 1924 and 1925 he traveled through southern and central Australia and collected stories and legends from various Aboriginal peoples. Most came from the Ngarrindjeri. He wrote them down in the ornate English of his day, with references to the Bible and to classical authors. Griffiths describes how in these stories he presented a Great Spirit as a figure resembling God, and had a crow play the part of the serpent in paradise. David saw similarities between the stories of his people and the Bible, and he wanted white readers to see them too.

In the preface he wrote that, as a member of his people, he could claim to be “the first” to produce an enduring record of their traditions. He added: “but I hope, not the last.”

The manuscript was titled *Legendary Tales of the Australian Aborigines*. He sold it to the publisher Angus & Robertson. When contact between him and the publisher lapsed, William Ramsay Smith, a doctor from Adelaide, bought the manuscript. In 1930 it appeared in London as *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines*, under Ramsay Smith’s name. David was not mentioned. According to Griffiths, Ramsay Smith also removed David’s own commentary and voice from the text.

It was not until 2001 that the book appeared under David’s name and with his own title, edited by Stephen Muecke and Adam Shoemaker. About seventy-five years lay between the writing and that edition.

During his lifetime, though, smaller booklets did appear under his own name, paid for by the mission society: *Hungarrda* in 1927, *Kinie Ger, the Native Cat* in 1928 and *Native Legends* in 1929. He sold these on his travels. He is regarded as the first Aboriginal writer published in English.

A BOARD INSTEAD OF A PROTECTOR

To understand what David argued for, you need to know how the law in South Australia treated his people. Since the Aborigines Act of 1911 the Chief Protector of Aborigines had been the legal guardian of every Aboriginal child up to the age of twenty-one. That applied even if the parents were still alive. He could compel people to stay on a reserve or in an institution and could move them. Anyone who refused was breaking the law. From 1916 the government also took over the running of Point McLeay.

David spoke out about this. In 1912 he led a deputation asking for government control of the mission. In 1913 and in 1926 he gave evidence to a royal commission into the treatment of Aboriginal Australians. In 1928 and 1929 he assisted J.W. Bleakley in an inquiry into their conditions. In 1934 he asked the federal government to take over responsibility for Aboriginal affairs. He proposed replacing the Chief Protector in South Australia with an independent board. According to the State Library, his views on land rights did not endear him to the governments of the day.

In 1939 the Chief Protector was indeed replaced by a board, the Aborigines Protection Board. Whether David had any influence on that, I do not know. That law also brought a scheme under which an Aboriginal person could cease to be Aboriginal in the eyes of the law, if the board considered him fit for it. It shows how narrow the path was that he walked.

In 1925 the minister John H. Sexton tried to arrange a job for him at the museum in Adelaide. It came to nothing.

ON FOOT TO ADELAIDE

David grew old. His wife had died in 1928. He kept preaching. In old age he walked to Adelaide and to the country towns of South

Australia to speak. The Australian Dictionary of Biography writes that he was often refused accommodation because of his race. Harris adds that the police sometimes detained him.

In 1953 he received the Coronation Medal, an award marking the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. He was eighty at the time. A man honored by the Crown was often denied a bed to sleep in in his own country.

He wrote two more short reflections on his life, *My Life Story* in 1951 and *Leaves of Memory* in 1953. At eighty-seven he was still preaching. In his last years he was convinced he was close to the secret of perpetual motion.

On February 7, 1967, David Unaipon died in the hospital at Taillem Bend, ninety-four years old. He was buried in the Point McLeay cemetery, in the village where his father had sailed a boat past the camps.

A BLACK SWAN ON THE BANKNOTE

After his death his name grew. In 1985 he received a posthumous award from the Fellowship of Australian Writers. In 1988 a literary prize was named after him, the David Unaipon Award, for unpublished Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander writers. So the wish from that preface came true after all: he was not the last.

In 1974 his people regained control of Point McLeay. In 1982 the village received its old name, Raukkan.

On October 18, 2018, a new fifty-dollar note was issued. His portrait remained, based on the same photographs as in 1995. This time the design was made together with the Ngarrindjeri. According to the Christian magazine *Eternity*, the Raukkan church is now on it as well. It shows shields of his people from the 1850s. It carries

references to customs he wrote about. In very small letters there are fragments of text from his own *Legendary Tales*, the book that once appeared under someone else's name. And there is a black swan on it, his ngaitji, the creature that belonged to him.

I have never held that banknote in my hand. But I can picture it: a plastic note passing from till to wallet across Australia. A face, a pair of sheep shears, a small church by a lake. And somewhere in the microprint, too small to read without a magnifying glass, the words of a man who once hoped he would not be the last.

WHAT IS CERTAIN AND WHAT IS TOLD

Certain (several independent sources): birth on September 28, 1872, at Point McLeay (Raukkan); parents James Ngunaitponi, the first Christian and evangelist of the mission, and Nymbulda; founding of the mission in 1859 by the Aborigines' Friends' Association with George Taplin as first leader; return to the mission in 1890; marriage to Katherine Carter on January 4, 1902; invention of the shearing handpiece in 1909 and later patent applications up to 1944; employment with the Aborigines' Friends' Association from 1913; many years of preaching in churches of various denominations; the saying about the Bible; collecting legends in 1924-1925 and their publication by Ramsay Smith in 1930 without acknowledgment; the booklets of 1927 to 1929; evidence before royal commissions (1913, 1926), assistance with the Bleakley inquiry and the appeal of 1934; refusal of accommodation on his travels; Coronation Medal (1953); death on February 7, 1967, at Taillem Bend; the banknotes of 1995 and 2018.

Only from own testimony or later tradition: his childhood fear of the hymns about the blood of Jesus and his gratitude for his father's example (from his own reflections, via AIATSIS).

Unconfirmed or contradictory in the sources: the year he left for C.B. Young (1885 or 1887); whether in 1909 he received a full or only a provisional patent, and whether there were ten or nineteen inventions; whether he foresaw the helicopter himself or repeated other people's ideas; his year of birth (one source gives the late 1870s). Stories about a fine for vagrancy in 1926 and about his rejection of the Day of Mourning in 1938 could not be checked in an opened primary source and have therefore been left out.

Interpretation: whether his emphasis on adapting to European society was conviction or a way of surviving in a system that kept his people small is disputed among historians.

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Isidore Bakanja: the young man who would not take off his scapular

On February 6, 1909, according to the date given in a Carmelite article, a young man came out of the forest near Ikili, in the heart of Congo. He could barely walk. Two local men, Iyongo and Moya Mputsu, had kept him hidden and brought him to a European inspector of the rubber company. That inspector's name was Dorpinghaus. He later wrote down what he saw. In free translation: "I saw a man come out of the forest, his back torn open." The wounds were deep and infected. According to the Dictionary of African Christian Biography, in some places the bones were exposed.

The scapular he always wore, two small pieces of brown cloth on cords, had been torn from his neck by his boss shortly before. It was for that bit of cloth that he had been beaten.

His name was Isidore Bakanja. He was about twenty-four years old, a houseboy, an ordinary laborer. He was not a priest and not an official catechist. He had been baptized less than three years. Six months later he was dead. In 1994 Pope John Paul II, in St. Peter's Square in Rome, called him "a man of heroic faith" (freely trans-

lated). In 2019 Pope Francis placed him in a line of young saints whom he held up to young people all over the world.

To understand why a scrap of cloth could arouse so much rage, we have to go back to the country where he was born.

A KING WHO OWNED A COUNTRY

Isidore Bakanja was born in Bokendela, a village in the rainforest north of the present-day city of Mbandaka, in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His parents were called Iyonzwa and Inyuka. They belonged to the Boangi people and were not Christians. His year of birth is not certain. The sources give years between 1880 and 1890. The Dictionary of African Christian Biography settles on 1885, the Vatican on about 1887.

The country he grew up in had a strange status. At the Berlin Conference of 1884 and 1885 the European powers recognized the claims of the Belgian king Leopold II to the vast basin of the Congo River. It became the Congo Free State. The name sounds free, but the country was the private property of one man. Leopold governed it from Brussels and never went there himself.

Most of the land was declared state land. Villages had to deliver fixed quantities of rubber and ivory. An army, the Force Publique, enforced this. Anyone who brought too little could be flogged with the *chicotte*, a whip of dried hippopotamus hide. Women were held hostage until their husbands had collected enough rubber. Soldiers cut off hands as proof. The Irish diplomat Roger Casement traveled through the region in 1903 and in February 1904 published a report on what he had seen. It caused a great stir in Europe.

Under outside pressure the Belgian state took the country over from the king on November 15, 1908. From then on it was called the Belgian Congo. That date matters for Isidore Bakanja. What happened

to him in 1909 took place under Belgian rule. The system of rubber companies with their own agents and their own plantations continued after the takeover.

One of those companies was the Société anonyme belge pour le commerce du Haut-Congo, SAB for short. It had been founded in Brussels in 1888. From 1893 it laid out rubber plantations along the Busira River, not far from Bakanja's home village.

MONKS FROM WESTMALLE

Around 1904 the young Bakanja went downriver to Mbandaka. The Belgians then called the town Coquilhatville. He was looking for work and found it in construction, as a mason's helper.

Trappist missionaries were working in Mbandaka. Trappists are monks of the Cistercian order, known for their strict life of prayer and manual labor. These Trappists came from the abbey of Westmalle, near Antwerp in Belgium.

We do not know for certain who first told Bakanja about Jesus. An article by the Carmelite Patrick Mullins names a certain Linganga. He received his instruction in the faith from the fathers, according to Mullins Gregory Van Dun and Robert Brepols. On May 6, 1906, he was baptized. He received the baptismal name Isidore. The sources differ about the parish, and also about the date of his confirmation. That he was baptized in 1906 is certain. His baptismal record is the oldest document about his life that we know of.

THE ROSARY AND THE SCAPULAR

The Trappists taught the new Christians to pray the rosary and gave them a scapular. For a Protestant reader that word may be unfamiliar. Originally a scapular is a long strip of cloth that monks wear over their habit. There is also a small form: two pieces of cloth

joined by cords, worn under your clothes over the shoulders, one piece on the chest and one on the back. It is a sign that you belong to a religious order or a confraternity.

Bakanja wore the brown scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the devotion of the Carmelites. According to Mullins he had himself enrolled in the scapular confraternity. For him it was a visible sign that he belonged to Christ and to the church. A Roman Catholic would call it a sacramental, something that helps you think of God. A Protestant does not have to share that form of piety to understand what happened. A young man did not want to hide that he was a Christian.

And he talked about it. He held no official role in the church, but he helped other catechumens and spoke with anyone who wanted to listen. That is how the Carmelite sources describe him. Pope John Paul II put it this way in 1994: he was “truly a catechist,” even without that title (freely translated).

How would you show your faith if you worked in a place where no one shared it?

A JOB IN RUBBER

In 1907 Bakanja decided to go back to his own region. According to the Dictionary of African Christian Biography, friends warned him. He took work with the rubber company in Busira all the same, as houseboy to a European agent named Reynders.

In 1908 Reynders was transferred to Ikili, and Bakanja went with him. The plantation at Ikili was run by another Belgian, André Van Cauter. Van Cauter hated Christianity and the missionaries. Reynders saw trouble coming and advised his servant to keep his faith to himself. Bakanja did not.

Let me say something here about those Belgians. I do not want to turn this story into a reckoning with a whole nation. It was Belgian monks who taught Bakanja to pray. It was a Belgian plantation boss who had him beaten for it. And it was a European inspector who later brought him out of the forest. Van Cauter, writes the Dictionary of African Christian Biography, was fiercely opposed to Christianity and to the missionaries themselves.

“SOON THE WHOLE VILLAGE WILL BE PRAYING”

Van Cauter forbade Bakanja to tell other workers about the faith. According to a witness in the later inquiry, he is said to have claimed that Bakanja was teaching the workers all sorts of nonsense. An Irish Carmelite page passes on another sentence of his, in free translation: “Soon the whole village will be praying and nobody will work anymore.” Those words come from the tradition surrounding the beatification. They are not preserved in any report from 1909. They do fit what is certain: Van Cauter wanted no Christian influence on his plantation, and he demanded that Bakanja take off his scapular.

Bakanja refused. Van Cauter then had him flogged a first time. According to the sources he endured it without resisting.

Shortly afterward Van Cauter saw him praying during a rest break. He flew into a rage, tore the scapular from his neck and had his overseer beat him on the spot. The sources differ about the whip. The Dictionary of African Christian Biography speaks of hippopotamus hide, the Carmelites of elephant hide. All of them say there were nails at the end. They also differ on the number of blows. Most Carmelite sources say the onlookers stopped counting after a hundred. The Dictionary gives more than two hundred and fifty. There is no firm count.

When exactly this happened is not entirely certain either. The Carmelites and the documents of the beatification process give February 2, 1909. Other sources give April 22. The February date fits best with what follows, because all sources say he lived for about six more months.

According to Carmelite tradition he murmured under the blows: "My God, I am dying." A fragment from the process file, published in 1995, says he screamed it, so loudly that people sleeping some distance away woke up. He was no hero out of a legend who felt nothing. He was a man in pain who cried out.

CHAINED IN THE RUBBER SHED

After the second flogging Van Cauter had him put in chains. According to Mullins he was locked in a room of the rubber factory, out of sight. An inspection was coming. Van Cauter sent his wounded servant away to Isoko, so that the inspector would not see him.

Bakanja did not get far. He could barely walk and hid in the forest. There Iyongo and Moya Mputsu found him. After a few days they brought him to the inspector, Dorpinghaus. According to Mullins that was on February 6, 1909. So we come back to the beginning of this chapter, to the man who came out of the forest.

Dorpinghaus had him taken by boat to have his wounds treated. He also wrote a report on what he had found. According to Mullins he later brought Van Cauter to court. The archives of the Centre Aequatoria in Mbandaka hold a report from the public prosecutor's office in Coquilhatville, dated July 31, 1909, and a file on the trial. The Dictionary of African Christian Biography writes that Van Cauter was prosecuted by his employers and received a prison sentence. I have not been able to consult the exact verdict myself.

"I AM DYING BECAUSE I AM A CHRISTIAN"

The boat stopped at Ngomb'Isongo. There it proved impossible to stop the infection. Bakanja was taken on to Busira, where a Congolese catechist cared for him. A fragment from the process file says his wounds turned into gangrenous sores. The medicines at Isongo and Busira did not help.

He asked visitors to pass something on, to his mother, to the judge or to a priest. In free translation: "Tell them that I am dying because I am a Christian." To the missionaries he explained why he had been beaten. The white man did not like Christians, he said. He had shouted at him when he prayed, and he did not want him to wear the scapular.

Those sentences come from the statements witnesses made years later, when the church investigated his life. They have been passed on in a great many places, but they remain words that reach us through others.

TWO MONKS WITH A DYING SERVANT

On July 24 and 25, 1909, two Trappists came to see him. They gave him the last sacraments: confession and the anointing of the sick, the prayer with oil for those who are seriously ill. Mullins names one of them as Father Grégoire.

The missionaries urged him to pray for Van Cauter. The answer that has been preserved runs, in free translation: "Certainly I will pray for him. When I am in heaven, I will pray for him very much." Another sentence the Carmelites pass on sounds more sober, almost dry: "The white man beat me, that is his business." The judgment he left to God.

I read those two sentences side by side and both sound true to me. He does not pretend nothing happened. He calls it what it was. And he refuses to give the rest of his life to it. Do you know someone from whom you will never get an apology? Bakanja never got one either.

He died on August 15, 1909, in Busira. Some sources leave August 8 open, but most give the fifteenth, the day on which the Roman Catholic Church celebrates the Assumption of Mary. He had the rosary in his hand and the scapular around his neck. He had been baptized a little over three years.

A GRAVE IN BOKOTE

After his death his name kept circulating. In August 1913 a church inquiry began, as the Aequatoria archive shows. On June 7, 1917, his remains were exhumed and reburied at the parish of the Immaculate Conception in Bokote, a mission station in the same region.

After that things went quiet for a long time. According to Mullins, Pope John Paul II already spoke of him with praise in 1980, during a journey through Africa. The country was then called Zaire. The same pope would beatify him fourteen years later.

WHAT A BEATIFICATION IS

For readers from a Protestant tradition, first a word of explanation. In the Roman Catholic Church a person can, after death, officially be declared blessed and then a saint. In a beatification the church establishes, after a long inquiry, that someone led an exemplary Christian life, and that person may then be publicly venerated and remembered in a particular region or order. Canonization is the next step, for the worldwide church. In the case of a martyr the church also investigates whether the person was truly killed for the

faith. Protestant churches do not have this. They prefer to speak of witnesses of faith, like the long line in Hebrews 11.

The inquiry into Bakanja was not without questions. In January 1995 The New York Times published a fragment from the file used by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Some consultors doubted whether he had really died of the wounds, since he had lived another half year. Perhaps he had also had an illness, they wrote. One consultor wondered whether the case would stir up the old hatred in Zaire against the Belgians. In the end nine theological consultors voted unanimously in favor. In their view the witness statements showed that he had been beaten because he was a Christian.

A SUNDAY IN APRIL

On Sunday, April 24, 1994, Pope John Paul II beatified him in St. Peter's Square in Rome. The bishops of Africa were meeting in Rome at the time in a special synod. On the same day two Italian women were beatified, Gianna Beretta Molla and Elisabetta Canori Mora.

In his homily the pope addressed Bakanja directly. He called him a young layman from Zaire. He said that Bakanja had been scourged like his Master and that he had forgiven his persecutors as his Master did on the cross. He spoke of his love for everyone, without distinction of race or social position. Many of his fellow workers were not Christians and yet respected him.

The day before, the pope had received pilgrims from Zaire. He asked them, following Bakanja's example, to be people of dialogue and peace. In his homily he called Bakanja's example an invitation to unity and reconciliation among children of the same heavenly Father.

His feast day is August 15. The Carmelites and the church in Africa celebrate him on August 12. In 2019 Pope Francis wrote a letter to young people, *Christus vivit*. In it he names Bakanja as a layman from Congo who bore witness to his faith. The process for his canonization is still under way.

TWO PIECES OF CLOTH

Isidore Bakanja wrote no book and founded no church. There is no photograph of him. What we know of him comes from a baptismal record, a few reports by the colonial authorities, and the memories of people who saw him in his last months.

It is little. But it is enough to see who he was. A young Congolese laborer in a system that treated people like work animals. He had to do only one thing to escape the beatings: take a piece of cloth off his neck. He did not do it. And when he had been beaten almost to death for it, he said he would pray for the man who had ordered it.

He died in Busira, by the river along which the rubber plantations lay. He died with a rosary in his hand. And around his neck hung the scapular again, two small pieces of brown cloth.

WHAT IS CERTAIN AND WHAT IS TOLD

Certain (several independent sources): birth in Bokendela near Mbandaka, around 1885 (year uncertain); work as a mason's helper in Mbandaka (Coquilhatville); instruction by Trappists from Westmalle; baptism on May 6, 1906; work as a houseboy for the agent Reynders of a Belgian rubber company in Busira and Ikili; plantation boss Van Cauter's ban on the faith and the scapular; the two floggings in 1909; his being found by inspector Dorpinghaus; the last sacraments from two Trappists at the end of July 1909; death in August 1909; a court file against Van Cauter; reburial in Bokote in

1917; beatification on April 24, 1994, in St. Peter's Square; mention in *Christus vivit* (2019). The colonial context (Congo Free State from 1885, the rubber regime, the Casement report of 1904, the Belgian takeover on November 15, 1908) is generally confirmed.

Only from own testimony or later tradition: his words on his sickbed ("I am dying because I am a Christian," the prayer for his persecutor, "that is his business") and his words under the whip come from witness statements in the beatification process and from Carmelite sources; Van Cauter's remarks about praying; the Dorpinghaus quotation (found only in a devotional article); the names Linganga, Iyongo and Moya Mputsu and the names of the priests (only in one Carmelite article).

Unconfirmed: the date of the beating (February 2 or April 22, 1909); the number of blows (more than a hundred or more than two hundred and fifty) and the kind of whip; the date of death (August 15 or 8); his year of birth (1880 to 1890); the parish of his baptism and the date of confirmation and first communion; the length and year of Van Cauter's sentence.

Interpretation: the Dictionary of African Christian Biography places the events in the Congo Free State, but by 1909 Congo was already the Belgian Congo. The question of whether he died of his wounds or partly of an illness was raised in the process itself; the church recognized him as a martyr.

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Francisco Olazábal: the Aztec who started his own church

In 1923 a Mexican minister walked out of an American Pentecostal denomination. His name was Francisco Olazábal. Seven years earlier he had been ordained by the Assemblies of God, a young American Pentecostal church that also worked among Mexicans. Now he was leaving. He summed up his reason in one short sentence, later recorded by the historian Gastón Espinosa: “The gringos have control.” In Mexico, gringo is the word for a white American.

It was not a quarrel over doctrine. Olazábal went on believing what he believed: that the Holy Spirit still fills people today, and that God still heals today. The question was who would lead the Spanish-speaking congregations. A white missionary, or the Mexicans themselves?

That same year he began something new. Out of that step grew the Concilio Latino Americano de Iglesias Cristianas, according to the sources the first independent denomination of Latin American Protestants in the United States. The man who founded it would spend the following years traveling through Texas, California,

Chicago, New York, Mexico and Puerto Rico. His followers called him El Azteca, the Aztec.

To understand why that one sentence carried so much weight, we have to go back to a mother in a Mexican port city.

A MOTHER IN MAZATLÁN

Francisco Olazábal was born on October 12, 1886, in El Venado, in the state of Sinaloa, on the west coast of Mexico. That date and that place come from the reference works that rely on Espinosa's research.

In those years Mexico was a Roman Catholic country. There were Protestant missions, among them those of American Methodists, but they were small. Anyone who switched stood out.

In 1898 his mother, Refugio Velázquez, did exactly that. In Mazatlán, the port city of Sinaloa, she became a Methodist. According to the account of the Christian History Institute she even became an evangelist, a woman who traveled around telling people about Jesus. His father, Juan Olazábal, then left the family. Two independent sources say he left after his wife had become a Protestant. What exactly happened between them is not recorded.

Francisco was eleven or twelve at the time. He grew up with a mother who had paid for her faith with her marriage.

I keep coming back to that detail. We know not a single word she said, no letter, no photograph. We only know that she chose, and that her son would preach for thirty years in the language in which she had heard the gospel.

SIXTEEN, AND BOUND FOR THE SEA

In 1902 Francisco went to San Francisco, in California. He was sixteen and, so the Christian History Institute writes, wanted to live the life of a sailor. He stayed with relatives.

In San Francisco he came into contact with George and Carrie Judd Montgomery. Carrie Judd Montgomery was at that time a well-known American preacher on divine healing. She and her husband led the boy to give his life to Christ again. Again, because through his mother he had already grown up with the faith.

He did not go to sea. He went back to Mexico, and back to the Methodist church.

What went on inside him in those months, we do not know. There is no diary, no account of his own that I have been able to see. What is certain is the direction. A boy who wanted to get away came back.

SELLING BIBLES IN A LAND IN TURMOIL

From 1908 to 1910 Olazábal studied at the Wesleyan theological school in San Luis Potosí, a Methodist training college in the heart of Mexico. After that he spent some time selling Bibles in his country, as a colporteur. Only the Christian History Institute mentions that last detail.

In 1910 the Mexican Revolution broke out. For ten years armies and rebels fought for power. According to the Assemblies of God, more than a million Mexicans fled to the United States as refugees in those years. Many ended up in camps along the border, where disease was rife.

Olazábal went the same way. In 1911 he became pastor of a Spanish-speaking Methodist congregation in El Paso, the Texas city across

from Ciudad Juárez in Mexico. He emigrated to the United States. His congregation spoke Spanish, as he did.

A SEMESTER UNDER TORREY

In that same year, 1911, he spent one semester at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. There he sat under the teaching of Reuben A. Torrey, one of the best-known American preachers and Bible teachers of the day.

Torrey taught that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a separate experience, after conversion, that every Christian needs. According to the English-language reference work based on Espinosa, Olazábal rejected that at the time. He was a Methodist, and that was not what he had been taught.

Torrey saw something in him. He invited him to Los Angeles, to evangelize among Spanish speakers for the Church of the Open Door, the large church where Torrey was then working. After that Olazábal served as pastor and evangelist in Pasadena and in the San Francisco area.

In 1914 he married Macrina Orozco. They had known each other since childhood. Beyond her name and the year of the marriage I have found nothing about her, not even whether they had children.

TWO ORDINATIONS IN ONE YEAR

The year 1916 is the hinge of his life. That year Bishop A. W. Leonard ordained him as a Methodist minister. After years of work in the Methodist church he was now officially a minister as well.

And in the same year he left that church behind.

George and Carrie Judd Montgomery, the couple who had brought him to a decision in San Francisco in 1902, had meanwhile become

Pentecostals. That happened in the years after the revival on Azusa Street in Los Angeles, where the modern Pentecostal movement was born from 1906 onward. Pentecostals taught what Torrey also taught, the baptism in the Spirit as a separate experience, and they saw speaking in tongues as its sign. The Montgomerys encouraged Olazábal to take the same step. He did. Efraim Espinoza, who coordinated Spanish-language work in the Assemblies of God, writes that he received the baptism in the Spirit in their home in California, and gives the year as 1917. The other sources keep to 1916.

He left the Methodists to preach what the English sources call the “full gospel”: conversion, the baptism in the Spirit, healing and the expectation of Jesus’ return. On September 24, 1916, he was ordained by the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

One reference work also mentions an ordination on February 14, 1918, by Robert J. Craig. How those two dates relate to each other, I was unable to establish.

What moves someone to receive ordination in a given year and then choose a different church anyway? As far as I could find, Olazábal left no account of his own about it. Have you ever let go of something at the very moment you finally had it in your hands?

“THE GRINGOS HAVE CONTROL”

Within the Assemblies of God, Olazábal found himself in a work that was very much on the move. The American missionary Henry C. Ball, first a Methodist and later a Pentecostal, began the church’s Latin work in 1915, according to Espinoza. According to the Assemblies of God itself, in 1918 Ball, together with the Mexican leader Isabel Flores, founded the Latin American Conference, which brought the Mexican Pentecostal congregations into the

church. With the English missionary Alice Luce, Ball published a magazine and a hymnbook in Spanish.

The Texas borderland was a hard place in those years. In 1922 Ball wrote in the church's magazine about a Mexican congregation near Edna, where Black Americans also sang along in Spanish. A white man could hardly preach there, he wrote, because of the race laws. These were the laws in the American South that kept white and Black people apart.

In that world Olazábal worked as an evangelist in Los Angeles, El Paso and further across Texas. In 1920 he started the Buenas Nuevas mission in El Paso, Good News. In 1922 he founded a Bible school there. He was tall and heavily built, Espinosa writes, and he drew people.

Then came the clash. According to Espinosa, the conflict between Olazábal, Ball and the white leadership of the Assemblies of God was about who would lead the Latin congregations in South Texas, and about forming a separate Latin district. Espinosa describes Ball's attitude toward Mexicans as stubborn and paternalistic, and calls that attitude one cause of a major split. In her review of his book, Angela Tarango writes that Espinosa explains the motives on all sides.

I want to do the same. Ball had built up the Spanish-speaking work with great dedication, at a time when few white Americans cared about Mexicans. Olazábal saw that Mexican leaders remained under supervision, even when they were carrying the work themselves. Both things can be true.

In 1923 he left, with the sentence with which this chapter began.

A CHURCH WITHOUT A GUARDIAN

Still in 1923, Olazábal founded the Interdenominational Mexican Council of Christian Churches. According to Efraim Espinoza, this happened in Houston, together with other ministers. It was later renamed the Concilio Latino Americano de Iglesias Cristianas, the Latin American Council of Christian Churches. Both the Christian History Institute and the reference work based on Espinoza call it the first independent Latin American Protestant denomination in the United States. A church, in other words, that did not fall under an American mother church but was governed by Latinos themselves.

In Los Angeles Olazábal came into contact with Aimee Semple McPherson, the best-known female evangelist in America in those years and founder of the Foursquare Church. According to the English-language reference work, she called him the “Mexican Billy Sunday,” after a famous American revival preacher. In March 1927 he visited her Angelus Temple with his congregation. Those details come from one reference work.

What is better established is what happened next. McPherson proposed that the Concilio merge into her church. The Concilio said no. Two sources mention this. The man who had left because others had control did not now hand it over, not even to an admirer.

“THEY WERE HUNGRY FOR IT!”

His work in Mexico itself began with an invitation. According to the Christian History Institute, which relies on an American biographical reference work from 1938, a Mexican pastor invited him to preach in a large church in Mexico City. About fifteen hundred people came on the first night. By the end of the week the church was packed every night with about forty-five hundred.

Olazábal later said of it: "They were hungry for it!"

No year is given for that campaign. The numbers come from a source that appeared shortly after his death and that probably relies on his own circle. I pass them on as they stand there, with that caveat.

I find that short exclamation telling. He did not say how well he had preached. He said something about the people who came.

FROM CHICAGO TO SPANISH HARLEM

From the late 1920s Olazábal traveled with large evangelistic and healing campaigns through the Spanish-speaking neighborhoods of America. In the United States those neighborhoods are called *barrios*. Espinosa names Los Angeles, El Paso, Chicago, New York and Puerto Rico. The Christian History Institute adds San Antonio and Mexico City.

In 1929 he held a healing campaign in Chicago. In 1931 New York followed, in Spanish Harlem, a district of Manhattan where many Puerto Ricans lived. According to the English-language reference work based on Espinosa, more than a hundred thousand people came, and there were also services in a Baptist church in Brooklyn. I have not found that number in any second source. It is an estimate of attendance over a whole campaign, not a count of converts.

And the healings? They were the heart of his campaigns. Espinosa's first major article on Olazábal already had healing in its title. But in the sources I was able to open, there is not a single concrete healing story with a name, a date and a witness. That is why I tell none here. Anyone who wants to read them will have to go to Espinosa's work.

According to the 1938 reference work, Olazábal founded eighty churches in Texas. That figure, too, comes from one source. Efraim

Espinoza gives, for his whole movement at the end of the 1930s, fifty churches and an estimated fifty thousand adherents.

AN ISLAND THAT HAD BECOME AMERICAN

Since 1898 Puerto Rico had been a territory of the United States, an island with Spanish-speaking inhabitants under American rule. There too a Pentecostal revival was under way in the 1930s, including one in 1933 in Bayamón.

His campaign was called “Puerto Rico para Cristo,” Puerto Rico for Christ. The sources disagree about the year. An article from the Hispanic Theological Initiative gives 1934. The English-language reference work gives 1936 and writes that the campaign was considered a failure. The Christian History Institute reports, using the word “reportedly,” twenty thousand converts and thirty new churches.

Twenty thousand converts or a failure. Those two reports do not fit well together. Perhaps there were two different campaigns, perhaps two ways of counting. I cannot decide, and so I leave it open. What does stay with me is a family memory. The author of that article heard her aunt tell of healing meetings on the island in the 1930s, and recognized Olazábal’s campaigns in them.

A ROAD IN SOUTH TEXAS

In 1936 Olazábal once again sought to join a larger church. On September 10 of that year he announced that he wanted to affiliate with A. J. Tomlinson’s Church of God, a Pentecostal church from Tennessee that later became the Church of God of Prophecy. According to Harold D. Hunter, who writes the history of the Church of God of Prophecy, this took place before the full annual General Assembly of that church. Olazábal had already led its annual heal-

ing service there in 1932. He was to bring with him a following of fifty thousand Spanish speakers. The union never came about.

Meanwhile he was making plans for campaigns in South America.

On June 1, 1937, he was badly injured in a car accident in Texas. Two sources give the place as "Alice Springs, Texas." No place by that name is known in Texas. It is probably the small town of Alice, in the south of the state, but that is not what the sources say. The other sources simply say Texas. Eight days later, on June 9, 1937, he died in hospital of internal bleeding. He was fifty years old.

According to the English-language reference work, he was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in East Los Angeles.

THE AZTEC AND THE BROWN MOSES

After his death Olazábal largely disappeared from view in English-language church history. Histories of the Assemblies of God told the story of the Latin work mainly through the white missionaries. Gastón Espinosa began to change that in the 1990s. In 1998 he wrote in *Christian History* about the "silent Pentecostals," the Latinos who had helped shape the story of the Pentecostal movement but hardly appeared in it. In 1999 came his scholarly article on Olazábal, titled *El Azteca*.

Espinosa worked on a book with the working title *Brown Moses*. He sees in Olazábal what the German sociologist Max Weber called a charismatic prophet: someone who rises up at the edge of an existing religion and sets up a movement of his own over against it. According to Espinosa, his life helps explain why today more than five million Latinos in the United States call themselves Pentecostal. That figure comes from Espinosa, and the link with Olazábal is his interpretation.

I do not want to make the man bigger than the sources make him. Many of the numbers around his campaigns cannot be checked. Of the healings we mainly know that they were prayed for on a massive scale. About his marriage and his family we know almost nothing. And about the break of 1923 history gives you two sides, rightly so.

What remains is a line through a life that you can follow. A mother in Mazatlán who became a Methodist and lost her husband for it. A son who wanted to go to sea and came back. A minister who was ordained twice in one year and then chose another path. A leader who said that Mexicans could govern their own church, and who did just that.

He died after an accident on a road in South Texas, with the campaigns in South America still in his plans.

WHAT IS CERTAIN AND WHAT IS TOLD

Certain (several independent sources): his mother's move to Methodism in 1898 and his father's departure; the journey to San Francisco in 1902 and the role of George and Carrie Judd Montgomery; his training in San Luis Potosí; the Methodist congregation in El Paso and the semester at the Moody Bible Institute; his work for Torrey in Los Angeles; his Methodist ordination by Bishop A. W. Leonard and his move to the Pentecostal movement in 1916; his ordination by the Assemblies of God on September 24, 1916; his departure from the Assemblies of God in 1923 and the conflict with Henry C. Ball and the white leadership; the founding in 1923 of what became the Concilio Latino Americano de Iglesias Cristianas; the nickname El Azteca; the rejected merger proposal from Aimee Semple McPherson; campaigns in Los Angeles, El Paso, Chicago, New York and Puerto Rico; the announced affiliation with Tomlinson's Church of God on September 10, 1936, which was never

completed; the car accident on June 1, 1937, and his death eight days later.

Only from own testimony or later tradition: the numbers in Mexico City (1,500 and 4,500) and his exclamation about them, from a 1938 reference work; the eighty churches in Texas; the fifty churches and fifty thousand adherents at the end of the 1930s (figures from Pentecostal churches themselves); the founding of the Concilio in Houston and the year 1917 for his baptism in the Spirit (one article by Efraim Espinoza); the twenty thousand converts and thirty churches in Puerto Rico (“reportedly”).

Unconfirmed: the more than one hundred thousand visitors in New York in 1931 (one source); the year of the Puerto Rico campaign (1934 or 1936) and whether it succeeded or failed; the second ordination on February 14, 1918; the place of the accident (“Alice Springs, Texas,” probably Alice; I could not consult the Handbook of Texas); the details from a single reference work: date and place of birth, the marriage to Macrina Orozco in 1914, the name “Mexican Billy Sunday,” the visit to Angelus Temple in 1927, the cemetery.

Interpretation: I found no concrete healing stories in the sources I opened, so this chapter tells none. Whether the healings in his campaigns were miracles of God is a question of faith. The picture of Olazábal as a charismatic prophet, and his significance for today’s Latino Pentecostal movement, is the interpretation of Gastón Espinosa.

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Wang Mingdao: the iron son who fell and rose again

On Sunday morning, August 7, 1955, Wang Mingdao preached in his own church in Peking, today's Beijing. The building stood on Shijia Hutong, a narrow street in the old city, and was called the Christian Tabernacle. He was fifty-five. His sermon was titled: The Son of Man Is Betrayed into the Hands of Sinners.

A week earlier the magazine Tianfeng, the voice of the official Protestant movement in China, had published an attack on him. In the night after that service, at about one o'clock, the police were at the door. Wang was arrested, together with his wife Liu Jingwen and eighteen young people from the church. Shortly afterward the building was sealed.

Wang Mingdao would spend more than twenty years in prisons and labor camps. In China he became the man who refused: first the Japanese occupiers, then the church movement that supported the new government. He is also the man who, once, did sign. That belongs to his story, and he himself never kept it quiet.

It began in a besieged quarter, in the summer of 1900.

BORN AMONG THE BULLETS

In 1900 the Boxer Uprising swept across northern China. The Boxers were a movement that attacked foreigners and Chinese Christians, because they saw them as agents of the Western powers that were pressing hard on China at the time. China was still ruled by an emperor, of the Qing dynasty. In Peking, Christians fled to the Legation Quarter, where the foreign embassies were. That quarter was besieged for weeks.

The Wang family was there too. The father, Wang Zihou, was a doctor and had ties with Western missionaries. According to the Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity, the family feared for their lives for that reason. Before his son was born, Wang Zihou took his own life in the besieged quarter. On July 25, 1900, the child was born.

His mother, Li Wenyi, was a member of the church of the London Missionary Society, a British mission organization. She named her son Tiezi. It means iron son. The life that followed was hard. Mother and son often did not have enough to eat, and the boy was weak and often ill. They lived in a crowded courtyard among poor families. According to his Chinese biography, he saw quarreling, violence and deceit up close there, and a strong aversion to evil grew in him.

At nine he went to the primary school of the same mission organization.

A FRIEND WHO PUT HIM IN HIS PLACE

In the spring of 1914 the fourteen-year-old received a sharp rebuke from a Christian friend. What exactly that friend said has not been preserved. We do know what Tiezi did next. He began reading the books of Xie Hongfu, a Chinese writer who worked for the Chris-

tian youth organization the YMCA. Wang later wrote that he then began to understand the meaning and the responsibility of life. At Easter that year he was baptized in a chapel of the London Missionary Society.

In those years he dreamed of a career in politics. China had become a republic in 1912. In June 1918 he fell seriously ill. According to his own account, he promised God that he would give his life to Him if he got better. He recovered, and he kept that promise. What happened in that sickroom we know only from what he himself told about it.

Have you ever made a promise in a moment of need, and then forgotten it once things were going well again? Wang did not forget.

ICE-COLD WATER NEAR BAODING

In 1919 he became a teacher at a Presbyterian mission school in Baoding, a city southwest of Peking. Presbyterians are Protestants who baptize children and have their church led by elders. In 1920 Wang took a new name: Mingdao. It means roughly: understanding the Way, or understanding the Word.

In the same year he became convinced that the Bible speaks of the baptism of believers by immersion. His earlier baptism, by sprinkling, he no longer considered enough. For the school that was unacceptable. He refused to give up his view and lost his job, and according to The Gospel Coalition also a chance to study abroad. Together with five friends he had himself immersed. It was winter. According to his Chinese biography, it happened in ice-cold water under a bridge outside Baoding.

After that he withdrew to the Western Hills near Peking. This is how he told it later: in sixty-two days he read the whole Bible six times. The number comes from his own memory. What is certain

is that he came out of those years as someone who knew the Bible almost word for word and wanted to build his life on it.

A CHURCH WITHOUT FOREIGN MONEY

From 1921 he preached, at first in small circles. Early in 1925 he began holding meetings in his own home. In 1927 he started a magazine, the Lingshi Jikan, known in English as Spiritual Food Quarterly.

In November 1926 he became engaged in Hangzhou to Liu Jingwen, the daughter of a pastor. In August 1928 they married. They had a son, Tianduo.

The group in his home grew. It moved a few times, to halls in the city. In the spring of 1936 the congregation bought land at number 42 Shijia Hutong. On August 1, 1937, the building was opened. It was named Jidutu Huitang, Christian Tabernacle.

What made this church special was its independence. It belonged to no Western denomination and accepted no money from foreign mission organizations. In the China of that time this was rare. Most Protestant churches had been founded by missionaries and were partly paid for by them. The Biographical Dictionary notes that long before the Communists came to power, Wang lived by what would later be called the Three-Self principles: a church that governs itself, supports itself and spreads the gospel itself.

He was also strict. Someone was baptized only after showing that there was real repentance and a new life. Between 1933 and 1949 a little over five hundred and seventy people were baptized in the Tabernacle. That number comes from the congregation's own count. Wang preferred a small church of true believers to a full church of nominal Christians. He preached about conversion, holiness and

an honest life, and he was sharp toward preachers who, in his view, no longer took the Bible seriously.

A COFFIN IN THE HOUSE

In the summer of 1937, in the very weeks when the new church building was finished, the Japanese army invaded northern China and took Peking. The occupation would last until 1945.

The Japanese occupiers wanted to bring the churches under control. The Gospel Coalition relates, for example, that from 1939 Wang refused to put patriotic slogans in his magazine, as was demanded of publishers. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the churches of British and American missions in Peking were closed. In January 1942 the Japanese set up a Christian federation for North China, which all churches had to join. Wang was invited. He refused.

On October 10, 1942, he was summoned to a Japanese official, Takeda Hiroshi. Takeda explained that the unity of the churches was Japanese policy. Wang's answer has been preserved, in Chinese. In substance he said that he would never obey an order that went against God's will. Joining was impossible for him and his congregation, he said. He appealed to the biblical command not to be unequally yoked with those who do not believe.

His biographers tell that in those years he kept a coffin in the house. Nothing happened. The Japanese left him alone, and the Tabernacle stayed open. Wang saw God's protection in this. Whether there were other reasons why the occupiers left him in peace, we do not know.

"I WON'T ATTEND"

In 1949 the Communist Party came to power in China. At the end of that year some seven to eight hundred people attended a service at the Tabernacle. In May 1950 a statement by a group of Protestant leaders appeared in Peking, the Christian Manifesto. It was the beginning of what would become the Three-Self Patriotic Movement. That movement was meant to cut the Protestant churches loose from abroad and have them cooperate with the new state.

On paper the movement asked for what Wang had been doing for thirty years. But he refused to take part. His objection was first of all theological, all his biographers write. In the leadership of the movement he saw people he called modernists: Christians who, in his view, explained away the core of what the Bible teaches about Christ. He could not share a church with them. In December 1951 he wrote in his magazine: "I covet the faithfulness and courage of Martin Luther."

In July 1954 a national Christian conference was held in Peking. Leaders of the movement tried to persuade him. His answer, according to Christian History: "I won't attend." In September the movement organized a meeting in Peking at which he was publicly denounced. He sat there, looked at the ceiling and said not a word. Afterward he was allowed to go home.

In the summer of 1955 he wrote a long piece titled *We, Because of Faith*. In it he explained one more time why he could not join. Christian History quotes from his writings of those years an appeal to his readers: "Don't give way, don't compromise!"

Two months later came that night of August 7 to 8.

THE STATEMENT OF SEPTEMBER 1956

What happened in the cell we know in broad outline. Wang was given fifteen years. According to Christianity Today of April 1957, fellow prisoners were put in his cell who talked at him day and night. According to other accounts, he heard that Christians who sympathized with him had been arrested, and that his wife was ill in prison. According to The Gospel Coalition, he was afraid of a long sentence or even the death penalty.

At the end of September 1956, at a special meeting in Peking, he made a public self-condemnation. He confessed to a long list of counterrevolutionary crimes, things that according to all his biographers he had not done. He signed a letter in which he promised to bring the Tabernacle into the Three-Self Movement. After that he and his wife were released.

I do not want to hurry past this. In many stories about courageous Christians, a moment like this is left out or made smaller. With Wang Mingdao that is impossible, and it is not necessary either. He signed. He said things that were not true, because he was broken.

What followed was worse for him than the cell. In the spring of 1957 Christianity Today reported that, according to reliable sources, he was a changed man, under a dark cloud. According to the Biographical Dictionary, he nearly collapsed. He saw himself as Peter, who denied Jesus, and at other moments as Judas, who betrayed Him. He did not preach for the movement and did not join it either.

Do you know that feeling, of having said or signed something you know was not true, and of not being able to let it go?

BACK TO THE POLICE STATION

Slowly he recovered. His faith was restored, the Biographical Dictionary writes. Then he did something most people in his situation would not do. Together with his wife he went to the police. He withdrew his statement. He said the accusations were false and that he had confessed to them under pressure.

His biographer in the Biographical Dictionary sums it up like this: he decided it was better to die in prison than to lie.

The consequences came quickly. In April he and his wife were arrested again. The year differs from source to source. The Biographical Dictionary gives April 1958. The Gospel Coalition gives April 29, 1957, and another account speaks of exactly seven months after his release. I have not been able to decide this. Wang was now sentenced to life. Liu Jingwen received fifteen years.

Watchman Nee, the subject of an earlier chapter in this book, was also in prison in those years. Two very different leaders, with very different churches, ended up in the same place in the same years.

OF MORE VALUE THAN MANY SPARROWS

Of the years that followed, we know mainly places and dates. Wang was held in various prisons in Peking. In 1963, according to Asia Harvest, he lay in the prison infirmary coughing up blood. According to Christian History, in that same year he sensed that his spiritual life was being restored. In 1966 he was moved to a labor camp near Datong, in Shanxi Province. In April 1968 he went to Yinying in Yangquan district, also in Shanxi, where prisoners worked in a coal mine. He was beaten and, according to Asia Harvest, kept in handcuffs for months.

In the summer of 1971 a letter from him reached the outside world. He wrote to his family that they need not worry about him, because he was of more value than many sparrows. He was referring to the words of Jesus to His disciples, when He was preparing them for persecution: *Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.* (Matthew 10:31)

A man who fifteen years earlier had nearly collapsed now wrote that he did not need to be afraid.

Liu Jingwen was released in the 1970s. Here too the sources differ: 1973, 1974 or 1977. According to the Biographical Dictionary, she had gone blind in one eye. She went to live with their son in Shanghai.

A RELEASE HE REFUSED

In November 1979 the government decided to release Wang. He was seventy-nine. But his release paper stated that he was a counter-revolutionary criminal. He refused to leave. According to his Chinese biography, he said that before God he was a sinner, but that before the law of the land he had never committed a crime. Asia Harvest gives a similar statement: "I am not a criminal."

It is a remarkable picture. An old man who does not want to leave prison, because he does not want to sign something untrue one more time. Twenty-three years earlier he had done just that.

On December 29, 1979, the guards took him to a house outside the prison walls. With that his imprisonment was in effect over. In January 1980 his son came for him and took him to Shanghai.

A ROOM IN SHANGHAI

He came back an old man without teeth, almost blind and almost deaf. He needed a hearing aid. He lived with his wife at their son's

home, from 1983 on Wukang Road. People gathered in their home to read the Bible and pray.

Visitors also came from far away. In 1981 the missionary David Adeney. On April 23, 1988, the American evangelist Billy Graham. For Christians inside and outside China, Wang had become a symbol of a church that would not let its faith be dictated to it. According to Christian History, his refusal helped prepare the way for the house churches in China, congregations that met in homes outside the official structures.

He was not an easy man. His biographer Stephen Wang wrote that in old age he became very stubborn. A Catholic reviewer of a book about him called him a martyr for the faith, and also a man with perhaps too much pride. Leaders of the Three-Self Movement saw him as someone who kept himself apart and would not help build a new country. I cannot weigh those judgments. I see a man who all his life found it hard to bend along with anything, and who paid a high price for it.

On the morning of July 28, 1991, Wang Mingdao died in Shanghai. He was ninety-one. His Chinese biography says he was faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ until death. Liu Jingwen died nine months later, on April 18, 1992. They were buried in Dongshan Cemetery, by Lake Tai, southwest of Suzhou.

TWO SIGNATURES

Anyone who lays out the life of Wang Mingdao sees two moments when a paper was put in front of him.

In September 1956 he signed. He was afraid, he was tired, his wife was in prison. He signed something that was not true.

In November 1979 he was given another paper. He was old, half blind and deaf, and the door stood open. He did not sign.

WHAT IS CERTAIN AND WHAT IS TOLD

Certain (several independent sources): his birth in 1900 in the besieged Legation Quarter of Peking; his father's suicide before his birth; his conversion at around fourteen; his dismissal in Baoding in 1920 over baptism by immersion; his marriage to Liu Jingwen in 1928; the Christian Tabernacle building in 1937; his refusal to join the Japanese church federation; his refusal to join the Three-Self Movement; the denunciation meeting of 1954; his arrest in the night after August 7, 1955; the statement and release in September 1956; the withdrawal of that statement and the second arrest; the life sentence; his release at the end of 1979; his death in Shanghai on July 28, 1991.

Only from own testimony or later tradition: the promise to God during his illness in 1918; the sixty-two days in the Western Hills and reading the Bible six times; the coffin in the house and his explanation of Japanese restraint as God's protection; the details of his spiritual struggle after 1956; the 1971 letter about the sparrows (known through his Chinese biography); his statement at his release in 1979.

Unconfirmed: the year of the second arrest (April 1957 or April 1958); the year Liu Jingwen was released (1973, 1974 or 1977); the year he received the life sentence (Wikipedia gives 1963); the exact number of baptisms, which comes from the congregation's own count.

Interpretation: whether his resistance to the Three-Self Movement was faithfulness or also stubbornness and pride is something Chris-

tians disagree about, including those who admire him. This chapter says nothing about the present situation of the churches in China.

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Son Yang-won: the father who gave his sons' killer a home

On October 21, 1948, in Suncheon, a city in the southwest of Korea, two brothers were shot dead. Dong-in was twenty-four. Dong-sin was nineteen. They were active in a Christian student group. Left-wing students of their own age had seized them and beaten them. The brothers were suspected of siding with the Americans. Then came the shots.

At the spot where it happened, on a shopping street now called Hwanggeum-ro, a small memorial plaque has stood since January 2015. It is sixty centimeters wide and a hundred and twenty centimeters high. It tells who the brothers were and how they died.

Their father was the pastor of a leprosy colony near Yeosu, on the south coast. His name was Son Yang-won. He was forty-six. Shortly afterward he did something Korea has never forgotten. He worked to save one of the young men involved in the killing from execution. And when that succeeded, he took him into his home as a son.

Ever since, Korean Christians have called him “the atomic bomb of love.” The Encyclopedia of Korean Culture, the national reference

work, calls him a martyr. He spent almost five years in prison because he would not bow to the Japanese gods. Two years after the death of his sons, he himself was shot.

To understand how a father gets to that point, we have to go back to a village in the south, and to a boy who would not bow at school.

A BOW TOWARD TOKYO

Son Yang-won was born on July 7, 1902, in Chilwon, in Haman County, in South Gyeongsang Province. As a child he was called Son Yeon-jun. He was the eldest son. Around 1909 he and his father became Christians. The Korean Wikipedia gives 1908, the encyclopedia 1909. According to that Korean Wikipedia, his father, Son Jong-il, later became an elder in the church at Chilwon.

In those years Korea was a country losing its freedom. Japan annexed it in 1910. Until 1945 Korea was a Japanese colony. At school, children bowed in the direction of the imperial palace in Tokyo. In Japan the emperor was regarded as divine.

The young Son refused that bow. He was expelled from primary school for it. An Australian missionary, Macrae, protested to the school, and the boy was allowed back. That is how the encyclopedia tells it. In the south of Korea at that time, the missionaries were mostly Australian Presbyterians. Presbyterians are Protestants in the tradition of Calvin, with a church led by elders and ministers. According to the Korean Wikipedia, Macrae baptized the boy in 1918.

In 1919 he went to the Jungdong School in Seoul. That year the March 1st Movement broke out, a great, peaceful uprising for Korean independence. Many Christians took part. So did his father. He was locked up in Masan prison, and his son had to leave the

school in Seoul. Ninety-five years later, in 2014, the same school awarded Son Yang-won an honorary diploma.

TOKYO, AND WHAT HE SAW THERE

In 1921 he left for Japan. In Tokyo he attended evening classes at a secondary school in Sugamo. So for years he lived in the country that occupied his own.

According to the Korean Wikipedia, he came into contact there with a church that devoted itself to people with leprosy and to street evangelism. It is said to have moved him. I have not found that detail in other sources. It does fit with what came next.

Back in Korea he married Jeong Yang-sun. The encyclopedia gives 1924 as the year. They had four sons and three daughters. In 1926 he began studying at the South Gyeongsang Bible Institute, a school of the Australian mission. According to the encyclopedia, he became a student there of Ju Ki-cheol, who has a chapter in an earlier volume of this series.

A CHURCH AMONG THE SICK

His first post as an assistant evangelist was the church of Sangae-won, a leprosy institution near Busan. He did not stay long. According to the encyclopedia, he was criticized for using texts from *Sungseo Joseon*, a Korean Christian magazine, in his Bible studies. He left and became an itinerant evangelist, traveling through villages near Ulsan and Yangsan.

In Korea, as everywhere, leprosy was a disease people feared. Those who caught it often lost their family, their work and their village. There were no good medicines yet. Anyone who went to work among leprosy patients went to live on the margins of society.

In 1938 Son completed his training at the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pyongyang, now the capital of North Korea. According to the Korean Wikipedia, the students received their diplomas by mail, because the school had been closed. He was thirty-six.

After that he became pastor of the church at Aeyangwon. The encyclopedia gives 1938. An English-language study by Soo Kwang Lee, based on Korean biographies, gives July 14, 1939, as the date of his appointment. Aeyangwon was a leprosy institution near Yeosu, on the south coast. It had been started by American missionaries. According to an academic article, the work began in 1909 in Gwangju, when the missionary Wylie Forsythe brought a woman with leprosy to the mission hospital. Afterward the city of Gwangju no longer wanted the leprosy village. By 1928 the move to Yecheon, an area that is now part of Yeosu, was complete.

There is a story about him that you come across in Korean newspaper columns. He is said to have gone barefoot to a dangerous patient, prayed for him and sucked the pus from his wound. I have only found it in a later column, without a source. It belongs to the way he is remembered. Whether it happened that way, I do not know.

THE EMPEROR'S RELIGION

During those same 1930s, Japan increased the pressure. All Koreans had to pay their respects at Shinto shrines. Shinto is the old Japanese religion, which at the time was closely bound up with the worship of the emperor. The government called it a civic duty. Many Christians saw it as idolatry.

In September 1938, under Japanese pressure, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea had to accept Shinto worship. Some of the ministers gave in. Others refused. One of them was

Ju Ki-cheol, a pastor in Pyongyang. He died in prison on April 21, 1944.

Son Yang-won refused too. On September 25, 1940, after a Wednesday evening service, the Yeosu police took him away. That date appears in the Korean Wikipedia and in Lee's study. An English-language profile says that in a sermon he had warned that Japan would be judged. That profile was written by a school student and cites no source. So I put it here with a question mark.

How far do you go in obeying a government? In the 1930s that question was on the table in every Korean church. For Son the answer was simple. He would not bow to another god, not even when it was called a civic duty.

ALMOST FIVE YEARS

On the years in prison, the sources are not all equally precise. The encyclopedia says he was imprisoned from 1940 until liberation in 1945. The Korean Wikipedia gives more detail. First ten months at the Yeosu police station. Then a year and a half in Gwangju prison. In May 1943 he had served his sentence, but he was not released. He received a new sentence of life imprisonment, and was afterward held in Seoul and Cheongju.

An Australian church calendar of commemorations says that he was held in Gwangju prison, that the story of Ju Ki-cheol inspired him, and that he longed for martyrdom. According to the English-language profile, his father died while he was in prison. I have not been able to check either of these in a second source.

On August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered. Korea was free. Son came out on August 17, according to the Korean Wikipedia and Lee's study. He went back to Aeyangwon. In 1946 he was ordained as a minister. According to the same two sources, this took place in

March, at a meeting of the South Gyeongsang Presbytery, the regional church assembly. He was then forty-three, and he had been preaching for twenty years. Until then he had worked as an evangelist, a pastor without full ordination.

A COUNTRY THAT BROKE IN TWO

Freedom did not last long. After the Japanese surrender, Korea was divided along the thirty-eighth parallel. In the north the Soviet Union and the Korean communists came to power. In the south, the United States and a fiercely anticommunist government. In 1948 they became two states.

On the night of October 19, 1948, the 14th Regiment of the South Korean army mutinied in Yeosu. The soldiers refused to go to Jeju Island, where the government was harshly crushing an uprising. Members of the communist party supported them. On October 20 the rebels also took Suncheon. They executed police officers, officials, right-wing families and members of Christian youth groups. On October 23 the government army retook Suncheon. Government troops then killed hundreds of civilians regarded as accomplices. A South Korean truth commission later arrived at a figure of 439 to 2,000 civilians killed in those reprisals. In Korea this history is called the Yeosu-Suncheon incident. To this day it is a painful chapter.

Dong-in and Dong-sin were in Suncheon. That is how they ended up on the wrong side of a gun.

WHAT HE DID WITH THE YOUNG MAN

After the city was retaken, the army and police went looking for the perpetrators. Anyone under suspicion could be killed without trial. The encyclopedia uses the term summary execution for this.

One of those arrested was a student named Ahn Jae-seon. He had been involved in the killing of the two brothers. Lee's study calls him the leader of the group of students. Son Yang-won worked to save his life. According to the Australian commemoration calendar, he rescued him from anticommunist authorities who wanted to execute him. When that succeeded, he adopted him as his son. Ahn Jae-seon came to live with the family.

I read that sentence many times before I truly saw it. A father takes into his home the young man who was involved in the death of his children. At his table there are then two empty chairs and one new son.

There are more stories about how it happened. A Korean column says that Son could not go to the authorities himself, because he had to preach. He is said to have sent his daughter in his place. That daughter, Son Dong-hee, later wrote a book about her father herself. It has also been published in Japanese, but I have not been able to read it. The same column says that at his sons' funeral he thanked God that his children had died as martyrs. There is also a text by Son himself. After the death of his sons he wrote a prayer of thanksgiving. It appears in his collected writings, published in English in 2009. Lee summarizes it in nine points; in Korea it is often passed on as ten. Son thanks God that his two sons died together as martyrs, while they were bringing the gospel. And he gives thanks for a loving heart to lead an enemy to repentance and embrace him as a son. That he spoke this prayer at the funeral comes from tradition. The rescue and the adoption are certain.

What later became of Ahn Jae-seon appears only in that same column. He is said to have gone to study theology, but to have stopped because he could not shake off his sense of guilt. He is said to have died of cancer. I cannot check this, and so I leave it at these few sentences.

THE ATOMIC BOMB

The story spread quickly. A pastor, Ahn Yong-jun, wrote a book about it with a title that stuck: *Sarang-ui wonjatan*, the atomic bomb of love. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that was a word everyone knew. The nickname stayed with Son Yang-won. According to the encyclopedia, the book was translated into English and German, and made into a film.

Son himself meanwhile carried on with his work at Aeyangwon. He also remained a man who would not bow. In 1949 he opposed the salute to the national flag. He considered it idolatry just the same. The encyclopedia states this briefly and without explanation. I find it a telling detail. He had spent five years in prison because he would not bow to the Japanese emperor. Now Korea had a government of its own, and he did not simply bow to its symbol either.

STAYING

On June 25, 1950, North Korea invaded the south. The Korean War had begun. Within a few weeks the North Korean army had occupied almost the whole of the south, including Yeosu.

Son Yang-won could have fled. Several sources say so. He stayed with the people of Aeyangwon. On September 13, 1950, he was arrested by the communists. According to Lee, their security office in Yulcheon, near Yeosu, took him into custody. He was held in Yeosu for about two weeks. The Korean Wikipedia records that he was tortured.

At the end of September the war turned. After the United Nations landing at Incheon on September 15, the North Korean troops withdrew. Son was taken away with other prisoners, in the direction of Suncheon. On the night of September 28, 1950, he was shot at Mipyeong, in an orchard on the edge of Yeosu. He was forty-eight.

Some sources give September 27 or 29. The encyclopedia and the memorial hall hold to September 28.

He was buried beside his two sons. Their three graves lie next to the memorial hall at Aeyangwon.

WHOSE MARTYR?

After his death, Son Yang-won became one of the best-known Christians in Korea. His own words were preserved too. According to the source list of the Korean Wikipedia, Ahn Yong-jun published his letters from prison in 1952, and a collection of sermons in 1963. In 2008 the Korean institute KIATS published a selection of his writings in English, *The Apostle of Love and Passion*. If you want to hear his own voice, without the layer of later stories, you can start there.

His pen name was Sandol. It means living stone. Under that name, societies in Korea still keep his memory alive. A memorial hall opened in Yeosu in 1993, and a second one in his birthplace of Haman in 2015. There were a musical, an opera, documentaries. In Suncheon the plaque for his sons was unveiled in 2015. Writing about that plaque, the Seoul Shinmun said it also speaks of the brothers' anticommunist patriotism.

There is a tension here that I want to name honestly. In 2013 the Korean theologian Choi Sang Do wrote a doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh on how Protestant churches in Korea designate their martyrs. He took Son Yang-won as one of his two main examples. In his view, after the war Son's martyrdom was placed in a framework of anticommunism and nationalism. The story was also used to point out an enemy.

That does not make his life any less real. But it does recall something Son himself did in 1948. When everyone around him was busy deciding who the enemy was, he adopted one. In 2024 the

Seoul Shinmun wrote about him again, in a series on the roots of Christianity in the southwest. In that same article a Korean church leader said that in a divided society the church must lead the way in reconciliation.

TWO EMPTY CHAIRS

What would you do if someone harmed your child? I do not ask that to corner you. I do not know the answer myself. I do not think Son Yang-won knew it in advance either. He was a man who already refused to bow at school, who went to school in Tokyo in the land of the occupier, who lived among the leprosy patients and who spent five years in a cell. When the moment came, he did not have years to think about it. He had a few days.

He gave the young man a home. The young man kept his own name, Ahn. The letters Son wrote from prison are now kept in the memorial hall at Aeyangwon. Beside the building lie three graves: a father and his two sons.

WHAT IS CERTAIN AND WHAT IS TOLD

Certain (several independent sources): born in 1902 in Chilwon (Haman); as a schoolboy, refused to bow toward the imperial palace, and the missionary Macrae intervened; studied in Tokyo from 1921; pastor at Aeyangwon from the late 1930s; arrested on September 25, 1940, for refusing Shinto worship and imprisoned until August 17, 1945; ordained as a minister in March 1946; the deaths of Dong-in and Dong-sin in Suncheon in October 1948; his efforts to save Ahn Jae-seon from execution, and the adoption; the nickname “atomic bomb of love” and the book by Ahn Yong-jun; his arrest on September 13, 1950, and his death at Mipyeong at the end of September 1950.

Only from own testimony or later tradition: that he was moved by leprosy care in Tokyo; that he sucked the pus from a patient's wound; that he sent his daughter to plead for Ahn Jae-seon; his prayer of thanksgiving after the death of his sons (his own text, published in his collected writings; nine or ten points) and that he spoke it at the funeral; that Ahn Jae-seon led the group (one study); the later life and death of Ahn Jae-seon; that the example of Ju Ki-cheol inspired him in prison.

Unconfirmed: the sermon about God's judgment on Japan that allegedly led to his arrest; the death of his father during his imprisonment; the year he began at Aeyangwon (1938 or July 14, 1939); the exact date of death, which varies in the sources from September 27 to 29, 1950; the year of the family's conversion (1908 or 1909).

Interpretation: that Son Yang-won is a martyr is generally accepted within the Korean churches. How his death was later used politically is a question Korean researchers themselves are asking.

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Hassan Dehqani-Tafti: the bishop who prayed for his son's murderers

In May 1980 Bishop Hassan Dehqani-Tafti was in Cyprus for meetings. There he heard that his only son Bahram, twenty-four years old, had been shot dead in Tehran. He could not go home. Half a year earlier he himself had been shot at, and the church leaders around him had urged him to stay away.

So he did the only thing he could do from that distance. He wrote a prayer. His youngest daughter, then thirteen, said forty years later that he dictated it over the telephone to her mother Margaret. At the funeral in Isfahan it was read aloud, in Persian. It began like this: "O God, we remember not only Bahram, but also his murderers."

The man who wrote that prayer had been born into a Muslim family, in a small town in the middle of Iran. He became the first Iranian to lead the Anglican church in his own country as its bishop. He wrote poems, hymns and books in his mother tongue. For the last twenty-eight years of his life he lived in England, and he never saw again the country he prayed for.

It began in Taft.

A TOWN NEAR YAZD

Hassan Dehqani-Tafti was born on May 14, 1920, in Taft, a small town near Yazd, in the middle of Iran. At that time foreigners still called the country Persia. It was a Muslim country, with small, ancient Christian churches of Armenians and Assyrians.

His parents were Muslims and they were poor. About his father and mother the sources do not fully agree. A Christian journalist wrote in 2016 that his father was a shoemaker and that his mother had become a Christian. The major English obituaries do not say this. There you read only that he had an Islamic upbringing that later found a place in his life as a follower of Jesus. He described his childhood himself in his 1959 autobiography. I have not been able to consult it, so about his parents I say no more than this.

We do know how the Christian faith had come to that region. In 1869 the Church Missionary Society, an English Anglican mission society, opened a station in Julfa, the Armenian quarter of Isfahan. Later came stations in Kerman, in Yazd and in Shiraz. The mission built hospitals and schools. In 1912 Persia became an Anglican diocese of its own, with English bishops. An Anglican church is a church in the tradition of the Church of England, with bishops, a set liturgy and its own prayer book.

Hassan attended such church schools. He ended up at Stuart Memorial College in Isfahan, a mission school.

SEVENTEEN AND BAPTIZED

In 1938 he was baptized in Isfahan. He was seventeen. For a boy from a Muslim family, that was a big step. The sources do not say how his family reacted, and I am not going to fill that in.

What is certain is that he quickly became a leader in the city's growing Christian youth group. After that he trained as a teacher at the University of Tehran. From 1943 to 1945, in the years of the Second World War, he served as an officer in the Imperial Iranian Army, where he also worked as an interpreter.

After the war he worked for two years as a layman in the diocese, under the English bishop William Thompson. A layman is a church worker who is not ordained. In those years he got to know Thompson's daughter Margaret.

A PERSIAN POET IN CAMBRIDGE

In 1947 Hassan left for England, for Ridley Hall in Cambridge, a college that trains Anglican clergy. The theologian Kenneth Cragg, who knew him well, wrote after his death that the poetry in him quickly responded to the aura of the ancient stones of the university.

I find that a lovely detail. There was a young Persian walking among the Gothic colleges, raised on the poets of his own country, and he felt no contradiction. Cragg described him as someone who believed his Persian background and his Christian faith could come together. He worked at that all his life.

In 1949 he was ordained deacon, in 1950 priest. He returned to Isfahan and became pastor of St Luke's Church, the church that would later become the cathedral of the diocese. He stayed there ten years.

A MARRIAGE IN THE OIL CRISIS

In 1952 he married Margaret Thompson. She had been in England training as a nurse and came back to Iran for the wedding. It was the year of the oil crisis between Iran and Britain, when Iran nationalized the British oil company and relations between the two countries were very bad.

According to her obituary in the Church Times, Margaret was eighteen when she wanted to marry him. He was twelve years older. Not everyone was pleased. There were objections, including from people with a colonial outlook, who did not think a marriage between the daughter of an English bishop and an Iranian priest was fitting. Her parents did support the couple.

Here you touch something that plays a part in much mission history. The English missionaries brought the gospel, the schools and the hospitals. But leadership long remained in English hands, and treating an Iranian as an equal did not always come naturally. With their marriage Margaret and Hassan showed that it could be different.

They had four children: three daughters and one son. Bahram was born on September 22, 1955, in the Christian hospital in Isfahan.

In 1959 Hassan's autobiography appeared, in Persian and in English. The English title was *Design of My World*. He named the book after the great royal square in Isfahan, Naqsh-e Jahan, which means something like the design of the world.

APRIL 25, 1961

In 1960 he became pastor of St Paul's Church in Tehran. A year later he succeeded his father-in-law. On April 25, 1961, Hassan Dehqani-Tafti became bishop in Iran. He was the first bishop of Iranian descent in the Anglican diocese. One English obituary even calls him the first ethnically Persian bishop in the country since the Islamic conquest in the seventh century.

He would remain bishop for thirty years. His church was small, much smaller than the ancient Armenian and Assyrian churches. Unlike those churches, the Anglican church also sought contact

with Muslims, and people from a Muslim background, like himself, joined it.

He built up schools, for girls and for boys. He wrote hymns and poems in Persian.

From 1976 to 1986 he was also the first President-Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, the Anglican province for that region. A British magazine later wrote that he led the movement toward local leaders of their own in the churches of the Middle East. He himself was the first example of it.

A REVOLUTION HE WELCOMED AT FIRST

At the end of the 1970s Iran was in upheaval. The shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, ruled as a monarch with strong ties to the West. In 1978 there were mass protests against him. In January 1979 the shah left the country, and in February Ayatollah Khomeini came to power. An Islamic Republic was established.

According to the human rights organization Article 18, which cites the bishop's book, he welcomed the revolution at first. Many Iranians hoped for more freedom and justice. For the small Anglican church things turned out differently. The ancient Armenian and Assyrian churches were given rights in the new constitution. Churches that reached Muslims faced restrictions, confiscations and arrests, as a Polish scholarly article sums it up.

It happened fast. On February 19, 1979, eight days after the change of power, the Reverend Arastoo Sayyah was murdered in his church office in Shiraz. He was the pastor of the churches in Fars Province. In June and July the Christian hospitals in Isfahan and Shiraz were confiscated. The hospital in Isfahan had cared for people for more than a hundred years. In August the bishop's house and the dioce-

san offices in Isfahan were searched. Papers, photographs and personal belongings were taken or burned.

What I write here is about 1979 and 1980. It is not a judgment on Iran or on the people who live there now. It is what happened to this one church and this one family.

FOUR BULLETS IN THE PILLOW

In the early morning of October 26, 1979, two armed men entered the bishop's house in Isfahan. Hassan and Margaret were in bed. Five shots were fired. Margaret threw herself over her husband. One bullet went through her hand. The other four hit the pillow, around his head. Her obituary in the Church Times calls it a halo, a ring of bullet holes.

According to Article 18, the bishop had shortly before refused to hand over access to a church fund. The diocese had a trust fund, used among other things for the pensions of church workers.

Shortly after the attack he traveled to Cyprus and England, for engagements that had been planned earlier. The leaders of the Anglican churches worldwide advised him not to go back and to lead his diocese from outside. Margaret did go back to Iran. Their children were still there.

What it feels like to see on your own pillow the holes where your head lay, no source says. I am not going to fill it in either. What is certain: he remained bishop of Iran.

A PASSPORT AS A BARGAINING CHIP

Bahram was by now a young man. At twelve he had gone to a boarding school in England, Monkton Combe, and he had studied at Oxford. In 1978 he earned a master's degree in economics at George Washington University in Washington. After that he went back to

Iran. He taught economics and dramatic literature at Damavand College in Tehran. In the years of the revolution he also worked as an interpreter for foreign journalists.

His sister was getting married in England. Bahram wanted to go, but his passport was withheld. According to the family, and according to papers later found in his car, he was not allowed to leave the country. He was told he could get his passport back if his father handed over the church fund.

Friends warned him that he was in danger. According to his sister, he refused to leave, partly in order to stay with his sisters.

On May 1, 1980, Jean Waddell, the diocesan secretary, was badly beaten in Tehran. Five days later it was Bahram's turn.

TUESDAY, MAY 6, 1980

On Tuesday, May 6, 1980, Bahram drove away from his college after work. His car was forced to a stop by another car. Two men got in with him and drove with him to a deserted plot of land near Evin Prison. A fourteen-year-old boy saw him talking with the two men. Then he heard a shot and saw two people running away to another car. Bahram died of a gunshot wound to the head before he could be treated.

All of this is in Iranian newspapers from that month and in a file of the Abdorrahman Boroumand Center, an organization that documents human rights violations in Iran. Who the killers were has never been established by a court. No one was convicted. The Iranian newspapers of the time gave conflicting explanations. The family has always said that he was killed because he belonged to the church, and because he was his father's son.

In *The Hard Awakening* the bishop wrote a sentence that comes back in almost every story about him: "They took his passport as they couldn't take mine, and killed him instead of me."

What do you do then, as a father? You are on an island, you cannot get to your child, you cannot get to your wife, you cannot even go to the funeral.

A PRAYER OVER THE TELEPHONE

He wrote. First a letter, in which, according to the Independent, he said he felt bewildered but very calm. He also wrote that the killers did not know what they were doing. Those are almost the words of Jesus on the cross: *Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."* (Luke 23:34)

And he wrote the prayer that he dictated to Margaret. On May 11, 1980, Bahram was buried after a service at St Luke's Church in Isfahan, the church where his father had been pastor for ten years. Margaret had identified his body. She spoke at the funeral and arranged the grave. And her husband's prayer was read.

Here I give in my own words what it says. He remembers his son and also the men who killed him. He thanks God that through this grief the family follows Jesus more closely, in the way of sacrifice. He prays for love that sets them free from hatred toward their persecutors. He writes that Bahram's blood multiplies the fruit of the Spirit in the soil of their souls. And it ends with a petition for love that teaches how to prepare yourself to face your own day of death.

I have read this prayer often. What strikes me every time is that it does not pretend it does not hurt. It calls the murderers what they are. And then it prays for them.

Could you do that? To be honest, I do not know it of myself. Hassan Dehqani-Tafti sat with exactly that question on an island in the Mediterranean, and he prayed.

A BISHOP IN BASINGSTOKE

A few weeks later Margaret and the daughters came to England. Hassan joined them from Cyprus. They thought it would be for a few weeks or months. It became the rest of their lives. His youngest daughter, who later became a bishop in the Church of England herself, said that they arrived as refugees.

They went to live in Basingstoke, in the Diocese of Winchester. Bishop John V. Taylor made Hassan an assistant bishop there. That way he could carry on his work for Iran. Until 1990 he remained bishop of Iran, in exile. He supported the Christians in Iran, worked with Iranians in England and kept writing and translating.

In 1981 SPCK in London published *The Hard Awakening*, his account of the revolution and what it meant for his church. A Polish researcher later discovered that officials of the British Foreign Office discussed the book before it appeared. At that time British staff members of the diocese were still imprisoned in Iran, among them Jean Waddell, and relations were tense.

He founded a publishing house for Persian Christian books. He called it Sohrab, in honor of Bahram. Sohrab is the young hero of the Persian epic the Shahnameh, who dies at the hand of his own father. I do not know whether he chose the name for that reason. The source says only that it was a tribute to his son.

CHRIST IN PERSIAN POETRY

According to a review in the magazine of the friends of the church in the Middle East, he wrote or translated more than thirty books.

That review calls him “a wise pastor, teacher and evangelist,” and also a poet, hymn-writer and artist. Between 1992 and 1994 a three-volume work on Christ and the Iranians appeared in Persian. In 2000 the sequel to his autobiography came out: *The Unfolding Design of My World. A Pilgrim in Exile*. The design of his world had unfolded further, and it had become a different design from anything he could have known in 1959.

After his retirement in 1990 he remained involved until 2000 as the bishop’s representative for Iran.

PARADISE IN WINCHESTER

In 2005 Hassan and Margaret moved to Oakham, a small town in the English Midlands. He died there at the end of April 2008, at the age of eighty-seven. The sources differ about the exact day and place: the Independent gives April 28 in Oakham, other sources April 29 in Winchester.

At his death the Anglican province in the Middle East wrote: “The way he forgave those who broke his heart continues as an unforgettable lesson throughout the Anglican Communion.”

He was buried in the grounds of Winchester Cathedral, in the part called Paradise, the burial ground of the bishops and deans. Margaret lived for another eight years. She died on October 22, 2016, and was buried beside him. In Isfahan, Shiraz and Tehran memorial services were held for her.

Bahram was buried in Isfahan, after the service in his father’s church. In Canterbury Cathedral he is remembered in the chapel of the martyrs of our own time. His father lies far away from there, in an English garden called Paradise, the man who from an island dictated a prayer for his son and for the men who killed him.

WHAT IS CERTAIN AND WHAT IS TOLD

Certain (several independent sources): his birth on May 14, 1920, in Taft near Yazd; his baptism in Isfahan in 1938; his training at Ridley Hall in Cambridge from 1947; pastor of St Luke's in Isfahan (1950 to 1960); his marriage to Margaret Thompson in 1952; bishop in Iran from 1961 as the first Iranian; President-Bishop from 1976; the murder of Arastoo Sayyah on February 19, 1979; the confiscation of hospitals in 1979; the attack of October 26, 1979, in which Margaret was hit in the hand; the murder of Bahram on May 6, 1980; the prayer for the murderers, read at his funeral; exile in England and assistant bishop in Winchester; *The Hard Awakening* (1981); his death in 2008 and burial in Winchester.

Only from own testimony or later tradition: that he welcomed the revolution at first; that Bahram was killed "instead of" him; that the prayer was dictated over the telephone (his daughter's testimony); the reason for the attack (his refusal to hand over the church fund) and for the murder of Bahram come from the family and the church.

Unconfirmed: that his father was a shoemaker and his mother became a Christian (one journalistic source, not in the obituaries); the exact date and place of his death (April 28 in Oakham or April 29 in Winchester); who exactly killed Bahram (never established by a court); the name Sohrab as a deliberate reference to the Shahnameh.

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Afterword

A Mohegan who kept seeking his own people. A Tongan who wanted to live among the stars. An inventor who said: look at me. A young man on a plantation who would not take off his scapular. An Aztec who started his own church. An iron son who fell and stood up again. A father who gave the killer of his sons a home. A bishop who prayed for the murderers of his son.

With this third volume, the book holds twenty-four lives. They come from Asia, Africa, the Americas and Oceania. They differed in language, in church and in the way they prayed. A few of them fell and stood up again. What they shared was that they stayed, even when it cost them.

There are many more. Behind every name in this book stand others whom no one wrote down. They too belong to that great multitude.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues. (Revelation 7:9)