

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 29

Trip to Europe—1987

Editor's Notes: In 1987, Rev. Hanko and Allie traveled with Rich and Elaine Bos and their two sons, Ed and Bob to Europe. No doubt a highlight of the trip was the time spent in The Netherlands, the land of their fathers.

On August 12, 1987 we packed the Olds at Rich and Elaine's house. We parked the car at the Detroit airport, carried in our luggage, were checked in, and then discovered that we would have a four-hour wait. Our plane had to come from Chicago. We were given a meal ticket so we went to a restaurant and idled away some time there. When we finally got under way we found that the plane was making a stop in Minneapolis. At sunset we arrived there; we were not allowed to leave the plane, and after a short wait, we were under way to The Netherlands. This delay meant that we lost a half-day in Netherlands. Instead of arriving at 7 o'clock in the morning, we arrive at 1 PM. But we made the most of it, rented a car and started out of Schipol airport north to Zaandam, where we visited Czar Peter's house. This was by no means a mansion, but rather a very small house of but a few small rooms, with the bed built into the wall. Czar Peter of Russia stayed there, while his ship was being built by the expert ship builders of the Netherlands.

From there we continued on to the Afsluit Dijk, the well known masterpiece of engineering that shuts out the ocean and serves to drain the Zuider Zee and make it a fresh water lake, called the Ijsel Meer. This was a rather rainy day, but we did get a few pictures.

We arrived in Harlingen, where we looked for a bed and breakfast for the night. It so happened that the fishermen's ships lay in harbor and all the bed and breakfasts were taken. We ended up in a hotel. We had supper in a small coffee shop. A cup of coffee cost us a florin and 75 cents. The hotel was an old building with a spiral staircase leading to the second floor. We stayed on the third floor, where Ed and Bob dozed off to sleep to the rhythm of Rich's and my snoring.

On Friday morning we went to Franeker, where we saw a planetarium built in a home. In the attic this man had all kinds of gears which controlled the models of various heavenly bodies displayed down below. It was amazing how he could build such a

display. There was also a miniature planetarium in the museum. He told us that there is a similar miniature planetarium made by a Bos somewhere in Michigan.

A Reformed University was established in Franeker soon after the Reformation in the Netherlands. It had some outstanding professors, one of whom, Cocceius, still has his name engraved above the entrance. It is now an old people's home. A nearby café was once the meeting place for students and it is said to be the oldest café in the whole of Europe. A row of houses in front of the old university was once "professor row," for all the professors lived in them.

We then went on to Dokkum, where we saw a hand-operated draw bridge and a number of windmills. There we had lunch.

In the afternoon we went to Ulrum where Don Rietema was raised. But our interest was especially focused on the Reformed Church where Rev. De Cock was minister and where the Secession of 1834 originated. This church is now a Protestant Church in Netherlands, the name of a new denomination recently formed by a merger of the old State Church, the Reformed Church and a Lutheran denomination. It is totally apostate. This church had a pulpit built up on the wall over against a section enclosed for the consistory. It had hard wooden seats, and a small opening in the wall where it is thought the lepers could come and listen to the sermon. We took in the town and went to 't Sandt where my father was born and raised. We saw the Hervormde Kerk which he likely attended.

Then we went on to Spijk. Elaine had spent some time there in her visit to the Netherlands 33 years before. We had hoped to see the Rondorp, where Elaine stayed with the Pastors but this had burned down. We did see the large Hervormde Kerk surrounded by a moat and also the windmill where Rich's dad was born in Woldendorp, which was our next stop. We saw a truck there that had the name Bos on its side. Rich asked the driver whether he knew any of his dad's relation, but that man seemed to know nothing about them.

So we went on to the capital of Groningen, Stad Groningen. This is a rather large and old city. Here is where Rev. Herman Hoeksema spent his early days. Here we saw the famous Martinitoren and also the large Catholic Church.¹ We had supper there, but no one enjoyed the hamburger they fed us.

It was getting late, so we passed Ouddyk, where acquaintances lived whom I met in Lynden, and then on to Leeuwarden, where we spent the night at a rather old, but pleasant hotel, called De Paauw.

We drove back to Ouddijk to spend a few minutes with the former acquaintance and to drop off some literature. We did not find them home, so we hastened on our way, for we had a full schedule for the day. We did see cows out in the front yards of this town, but maybe that was not so strange.

Urk. This is the town on the IJzel Meer in which the people still dress in clothing of the Middle Ages. What also makes the town interesting is that all the land in this area has been taken from what was formerly the sea. Besides, ships had their harbor here, so that on the shore of the lake there is a memorial bearing plaques with names of those of this area who suffered shipwreck in times past. Ed, Bob and Allie took a number of pictures and then we went on to Kampen. This city was on our itinerary because here is where the Schilder Theological School is located. It took us awhile to find it because of poor directions. In fact, we rode past it once without seeing it. But we finally found it, a red brick building set between others of similar design. But the name was clearly written above the doorway.

Now we went to Arnhem, well known from World War II and from the excellent book by Cornelius Ryan entitled, *A Bridge Too Far*. Here is where the Allies were driven back by the Germans as they fought to regain Holland for the Dutch. The American soldiers are still appreciated for their part in the battle.²

By afternoon we were in Utrecht, the former home of Pa and Ma Griffioen. With great effort we managed to see the famous dome of the Catholic Church. But it was with great effort because wherever we went the road was blocked by a parade that was being held in that city that day.

Now we made our way to Amsterdam, the well-known Kalver Straat, the royal palace, the square where the dope addicts hang out day and night. We ate supper that night on the second floor of the McDonald's on Kalver Straat. Then we took a ride on the canal to see the city from that vantage point. Ed took some pictures of the canal at night, and then we hastened to go to Leidensdorp where we had reservations at the Ibis Hotel, and where we would meet the rest of our party.

On Sunday morning we went out to look for a church. We found a church that had just finished its first service. As the people were coming out, I asked one woman whether there was a second service. She assured me that there was and said that we should hurry to participate. This church was a Hervormde-Gereformeerde Kerk (a combination of the State Church and the Reformed Church). It was called "De Schepping Kerk" (the Creation Church) and had a large mural on the front wall of the auditorium representing the "Big Bang." Obviously this was a very modern church. There were women in the consistory, and after the sermon a communion service was

held, in which children as well as adults went forward to receive the elements. At that stage we walked out.

We next headed to Sassenheim. Anyone who has not heard of Sassenheim has not known Rev. Gerrit Vos. That was his birthplace and he loved it. He was certain that of all of the Netherlands only in that area was the pure Dutch spoken. It is a neat little town. Elaine looked all around the two churches in the town, but could not find a name on either one, so we do not know which one Rev. Vos attended.

We went back to the Ibis Hotel to meet the rest of our tour group. We met them and had a short meeting with them and the guide Shabon. Until the tour group arrived we were treated like guests. When they arrived we became a part of the tour group. Immediately the meals and service were not as good.

Now we were about to leave the Netherlands, a country that had a strong appeal especially because it was for years the seat of Calvinism. Here the great Synod of Dordt was held. Here was the history of reformation in the 19th century that still affects our lives today. Besides all that, here we had our roots, since our forefathers came from this little country.

Endnotes

¹ The Martinitoren is the highest church tower in the city of Groningen.

² The Allies wanted to bring an early end to the war against Germany in September of 1944. Rather than advancing along the entire European front, which would take much longer and cause many more casualties, they planned to make a quick dash across German-occupied Netherlands, across the Rhine River, and into Germany itself. The plan, called Operation Market-Garden, made use of airborne forces and armored units in securing a series of bridges, the last of which was in Arnhem, across the main rivers of Holland. The plan was a colossal failure for the Allies, who suffered almost 18,000 casualties. Arnhem was not liberated until April of the following year, and by that time, many of the Dutch had suffered through the “hunger winter” in which thousands starved.