



Rococo and Religion: A Room for Hernhutters in an Amsterdam Canal House*

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One of Amsterdam's most precious eighteenth-century rooms was created in the 1740s in 187 Keizersgracht, a canal house. The ensemble is now on display at the Rijksmuseum, and comprises an exquisitely carved mahogany panelling, a richly ornamented stucco ceiling and a marble fireplace with an overmantel painting by Jacob de Wit (see figs. on pp. 18-27). In addition to being one of the most beautiful Dutch rococo interiors, the room has great historical value because it was once the meeting room of the Moravian Church, or Unity of the Brethren (Evangelische Broedergemeente). Members of this protestant denomination were known in the Netherlands as *Hernhutters*, from the German, *Herrnhüter*.

In 1990, Richard Harmanni was the first to conduct fundamental research on the periods in which the room was created, and Reinier Baarsen, Paul van Duin and Frédérique ter Brugge-Drielsma went on to build on this knowledge.¹ This article is based on further research in a variety of archives, shedding new light on the earliest days of the 'mahogany room' (later the Beuning Room). The main focus here is on the married couple who commissioned the work – Matthijs (1707-1755) and Catharina (1705-1764) Beuning – and on the construction, iconography and use of the Beuning Room in its initial years.

Weaving Wealth from Threads of Gold

Matthijs Beuning was the son of Christiaan Beuning (1666-1716) and Geertruijd van den Bosch (1689-1744). Christiaan's parents married in the capital, but his father probably came from Beuningen, near Nijmegen.² Matthijs, his sisters Cornelia (1710-1769) and Magdalena (1711-1779) and brother Cornelis (b. 1714) were probably born in a house on Rozengracht in the working-class Jordaan district of Amsterdam.³ Christiaan bought the canal house at 187 Keizersgracht in 1714 from the heirs of Cornelia Bruinsee for 16,415 guilders, and the family moved to this wealthy and fashionable area.⁴

The Beunings worked their way up to the upper echelons of society. Records of the *personele quotisatie*, a one-off income tax levied in 1742, show that Geertruijd van den Bosch and her son Matthijs had an annual income of 8,000 guilders, an amount exceeded by only two per cent of the Amsterdam households subject to the tax. Both owned a country estate and a coach with two horses, and employed servants. However, the rental value specified for Matthijs' house, 272 Keizersgracht, was considerably lower than that of his parent's home: 830 guilders compared to 1,500.⁵

This wealth had been acquired through trade. Although his father was a baker, Christiaan Beuning was running a factory producing thread. It was undoubtedly helpful to him that his mother, Maria Gestel, came from a family of silk textile manufacturers.⁶ After Christiaan's death, his widow Geertruijd continued to run the firm, first with her brother, then with her sons Matthijs and Cornelis, who joined in 1727 and 1734 respectively.⁷ Evidently Cornelis withdrew from the firm after Geertruijd's death, because from 1745 all the deeds are in Matthijs' name and refer only to 'his company'.⁸ The firm was engaged in the manufacture and sale of gold and silver thread and trimmings,⁹ and both activities are depicted on a business card; the factory is represented in an engraving showing the weighing of the silver and gilded ingots from which the thread was drawn, while the shop is shown in a retail scene (fig. 1).¹⁰

The business probably began on Rozengracht. There are two versions

of a second business card, printed after Christiaan's death, each bearing a different address: 'Heerengracht over MYN GLAS LOOPT RAS' (on Herengracht opposite the sign 'my hourglass runs fast') and 'Keizersgracht over de Westerkerk' (Keizersgracht opposite the Westerkerk church). The first of these addresses, now 59 Herengracht, was inherited by Geertruijd van den Bosch in 1725,¹¹ and contracts confirm that the second must have been 187 Keizersgracht.¹²

The Beunings were Mennonites and attended church at De Zon on the Singel canal.¹³ Like many well-to-do Mennonites, they were members of the Collegiants, a lay association for whom Geertruijd hosted meetings at her home. This group rejected the Church as an institution and believed in the revival of an apostolic congregation. It is illustrative of Geertruijd's religious journey that she took her daughters to the Frisian village of Wieuwerd to visit the Labadist community there. Religion played an important role in both of Matthijs' marriages. His first wife Christina Luyken (1703-1729), daughter of Cornelia Laars and Albert Luyken, was a Mennonite. She was the second cousin of Caspar Luyken, the maker of the first address card.¹⁴ Christina died while giving birth to Christiaan (b. 1729). A year later Matthijs married Catharina Oudaen (1705-1764) from Rotterdam, daughter of Frans Oudaen and Maria Breedenburg. The Oudaens were also Mennonites, and Catharina's parents took her twice a year to the town of Rijnsburg, the centre for Collegiants.¹⁵ Matthijs Beuning and Catharina Oudaen (hereafter Beuning) had three sons: Frans (1732-1757), Matthijs (b. 1739) and Cornelis (1744-1755).

When Geertruijd van den Bosch died in 1744, the four children each inherited a capital of 79,000 guilders in bonds and houses. In total, no fewer than twenty houses were shared out among them. Matthijs Beuning inherited the parental

Fig. 1
Attributed to CASPAR
LUYKEN (1672-1708),
*Beuningen Address
Card*, c. 1697.
Etching (proof),
204 x 181 mm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum, inv. no.
RP-P-OB-44-596.

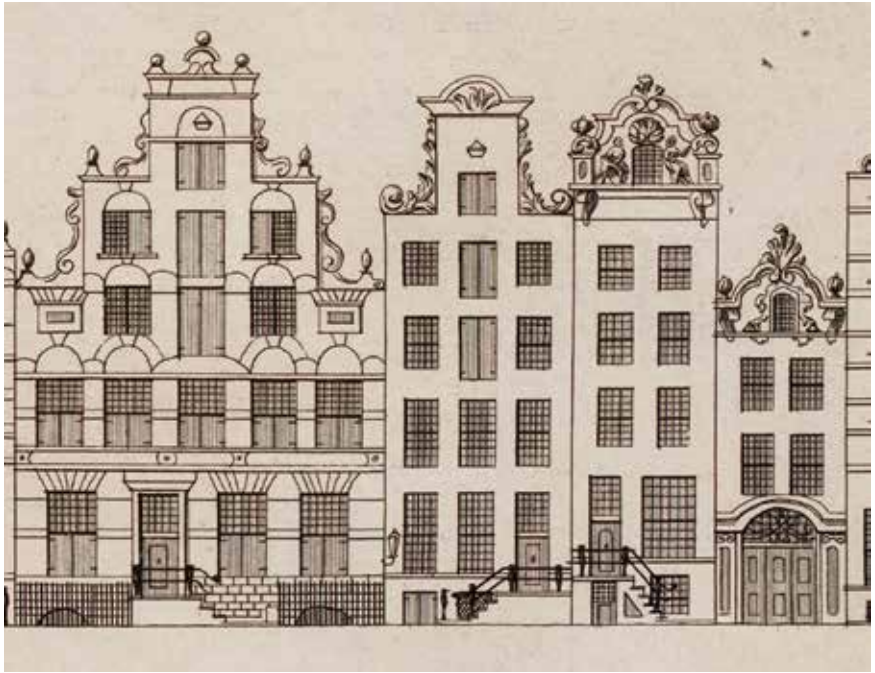


Fig. 2

JAN CASPAR PHILIPS (1700-1775), No. 18. *De Keizers Gragt. De Heeren Gragt.* c. 1768. Engraving, 370 x 490 mm. From Caspar Jacobsz Philips, *Verzaaming van alle de huizen en prachtige gebouwen langs de Keizers en Heere-grachten der stadt Amsteldam ...*, Amsterdam 1768-71. Amsterdam City Archives, image no. 010097012572.

From left to right:

- 185 Keizersgracht, purchased by Geertruid van den Bosch in 1729, inherited by Matthijs Beuning in 1744, sold to Adriaen Temminck in 1753;
- 187 Keizersgracht, purchased by Christiaan Beuning in 1714, inherited by Matthijs Beuning in 1744, sold to Jacob de Clercq in 1753;
- 187-1 Keizersgracht, purchased by Maria and Margareta Grotenhuis in 1714, sold to Andries van de Ende in 1740;
- 189 Keizersgracht, purchased by Geertruid van den Bosch in 1740 and converted by her into a coach house, inherited by Matthijs Beuning in 1744, sold to Jacob de Clercq in 1753.



home at 187 Keizersgracht, the house next door on the left and next door but one on the right, and two houses in Heemstede (fig. 2).¹⁶ A year later he and Catharina moved into his parental home, which was also the address of his family business.¹⁷ This house was to play a crucial role in the history of the Hernhutters in Amsterdam.

Under the Hernhutter Spell

The Hernhutters' roots lie in the Bohemian village of Kunvald, where in 1457 a group of disciples of a priest who was burned as a heretic, Johannes Hus (1369-1415), founded a denomination called Unity of the Brethren. While it quickly spread across Moravia and Bohemia, its followers were subjected to harsh persecution. In 1722 a group of refugees arrived in Saxony, where Nikolaus Ludwig, Imperial Count of Zinzendorf and Pottendorf (1700-1760), gave them permission to settle on his estate Berthelsdorf. The settlement was named Herrnhut, derived from *Unter des Herrn Hut*, 'under the Lord's protection'. Herrnhut also attracted

other religious dissidents, such as Lutherans and Calvinists. This initially led to conflict, but during a celebration in 1727, differences were set aside and the renewed Unity was born.

In 1733, Elector Frederick Augustus II (1696-1763) put a stop to Herrnhut's growth, and a search began for places to settle and for missionary stations. In 1734, Zinzendorf sent August Gottlieb Spangenburg (1704-1792) to Amsterdam to ask the Society of Suriname about whether it might be possible for Hernhutters to sail as colonists to the Dutch colony, while in Spangenburg he made contact with local religious circles, in particular the Mennonites. Through the Mennonite pastor Joannes Deknatel (1698-1759) he was introduced to Geertruid van den Bosch, and at her home he also met Matthijs Beuning and Jacob Schellinger (1706-1769), the husband of Magdalena Beuning.¹⁸

In 1736, Zinzendorf also visited Amsterdam and met with the Beunings. He noted with some surprise that although the widow Beuning had a large fortune, her

attire was conspicuously simple. The meals he was served were also frugal.¹⁹ Catharina Beuning's first introduction to Zinzendorf likewise made a deep impression on her: 'My heart was aflame, I fell in love with the salvation of these people, even though I could not understand a word they said.'²⁰ She was to become one of his most faithful followers. When in 1738 Zinzendorf officially founded the Amsterdam congregation, he named Catharina as Eldress, the leader of the married women.²¹ In 1741, Matthijs Beuning was also admitted to the Moravian Church.²² Matthijs and Catharina would regularly visit the congregations in IJsselstein, Zeist, the Wetterau district of Hesse in Germany, and in London, where the brethren and sisters lived in a community together.²³ The couple's children were first educated by Melchior Till, a private tutor whom Zinzendorf had brought with him, and later in schools at Hernhutter settlements.²⁴ Matthijs senior's brother Cornelis was the only family member who did not join the Moravian Church.²⁵

In 1736, Zinzendorf was banished from Saxony, which made Herrnhut's future uncertain, and the urgency to move increased. Jacob Schellinger bought land at IJsselstein, where the Heerendijk settlement was then founded. Matthijs Beuning had actually wanted to do this himself, but his money was put to a different use. After Zinzendorf was banished, he took up residence at Marienborn, a castle in the Wetterau. The owner of the castle, Count von Isenburg-Büdingen, was deeply in debt and agreed to lease the castle and the entire district of Eckarthausen to Zinzendorf for 150,000 guilders. Beuning was the one to sign for it.²⁶ He stepped in yet again for the foundation of the congregation in Zeist. In 1745, Cornelis Schellinger, brother of Jacob, bought the town's castle, Slot Zeist, and put part of it at the disposal of the Moravian Church. To finance the communal

buildings, nineteen wealthy brethren, Beuning among them, founded a so-called 'congregation credit', a loan with interest. The idea was that the forty-one participants would invest a third of their fortunes and thereby raise 150,000 guilders. In practice, however, no such vast sum was ever collected.²⁷ In addition to the communal buildings in Zeist, wealthy members of the congregation built private dwellings for themselves. Matthijs and Catharina Beuning completed theirs first in 1749/50, and it was the largest one of all (fig. 3).²⁸ A year earlier they had completed work on the congregation meeting room in their Amsterdam home.

A Room for the Word

After inheriting three buildings on Keizersgracht in 1744, Matthijs Beuning moved with his wife into his parental home. He probably continued to let the house next door, number 185, to the merchant Jan Brand.²⁹ The other neighbouring house (next door but one to number 187, on the other side) had already been converted into a coach house.³⁰

187 Keizersgracht is in the area of Amsterdam's ring of canals that was built during the city's Third Expansion (1613-16). An engraving by Jan Caspar Philips (1700-1775), the earliest known depiction of it, shows a house three bays wide with a neckgable with a raised pediment (fig. 2). There are five floors above the basement, and steps lead up to the front door on the raised ground floor, the *bel-etage*. The shutters in the central bay indicate that this was a storage room, probably for the family business. At the time the engraving was made, the house had already undergone a round of alterations. Christiaan Beuning bought the house in 1714 for 16,415 guilders, but by 1744 it was valued at 35,000. Apart from this increase in value, the fact that a reference to a red lion on the façade no longer appears in deeds after 1714 shows that alterations had been made by Matthijs's parents.³¹



Fig. 3

A.H.C. SCHOLLEN,
*The Former
 Residence of Matthijs
 and Catharina
 Beuning in Zeist,*
 with entrances
 for servants and
 tradesmen left
 and right (now Het
 Schellingerhuis,
 25-29 Broederplein),
 1981.
 Photograph.
 Amersfoort, Cultural
 Heritage Agency,
 inv. no. 221.435.

The Hernhutter tradition of writing a *Lebenslauf*, a memoir, at the end of their lives has provided us with some valuable insights. Catharina Beuning wrote in her memoir that in 1745 she was 'greatly burdened with the move from a small house to a large one'.³² Matthijs Beuning's memoir – in his case not self-written – reports that in the same year he 'built a large house, which contained the Society Room and another room'.³³ These rooms were both on the raised ground floor of the rear annex, which was wider than the main house at the front and continued behind the two adjacent buildings (fig. 4). The exterior of the right-hand side of the rear annex possibly already existed.³⁴ The annex could be reached via the corridor that led from the front door past the front and back rooms to the courtyard and the staircase.

The steps led to both rooms, which were connected by double doors.³⁵ In a design for alterations dating from 1863, in which the annex was still intact, the rooms are described as the *petit salon* and *grand Salon de réception* (fig. 5), the latter being the mahogany room.

The room was probably completed in 1748, the year Jacob de Wit's overmantel painting *Saint Philip Baptizes the Eunuch* is dated:³⁶ the painting could only have been made once the chimney-breast was finished, or at least when the measurements were known. It is not known who else was involved in the room's construction (see Baarsen's introduction). It is highly unlikely that it was the work of Beuning's fellow brethren, because the austere Moravian meeting halls bear no resemblance to this mahogany room with its costly materials and rich ornamentation.³⁷ Although Beuning had easy access to the best Hernhutter cabinetmakers, Johann Friedrich Hintz (1711-1772) and Abraham Roentgen (1711-1793),³⁸ neither of them could have been involved, since

Fig. 4

PUBLIC WORKS
 SERVICE, *Neighbourhood LL*, detail showing Keizersgracht 187 (here 225) with the rear annex situation, 1861/67. From a hand-drawn neighbourhood atlas of Amsterdam in 46 neighbourhoods, scale 1:2,250, house numbering of 1853. Amsterdam City Archives, image no. 800000030890.



the symbols of Christ's suffering, in particular the wound in his side. The veneration of the stigmata was expressed in liturgies and hymns, in paintings, illustrations and ceremonies. In 1749, Zinzendorf brought an end to these excessive rituals of piety, invoking Christ's warning to Saint Peter during the Last Supper (Luke 22:31) and labelling the period, which was soon looked back on with shame, as the *Sichtungszeit*, or 'Sifting Period'.⁴² Although it is notable that the mahogany room was constructed precisely in the period that the Hernhutters were abandoning their ascetic way of life, it bears no sign of the imagery of the *Sichtungszeit*. Neither did Beuning opt for other common subjects of Hernhutter art, such as the Crucifixion or the Lamentation.

De Wit's overmantel painting shows Philip the Apostle baptizing a eunuch, a treasury official of the queen of Ethiopia (fig. 6). Philip met the eunuch returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, reading the Book of Isaiah. When Philip asked him if he could understand what he was reading, the eunuch asked him to explain it. The eunuch then became so convinced that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied by Isaiah that he asked Philip to baptize him there and then (Acts 8:26-40). To Zinzendorf, the story set an important example of missionary work for the Hernhutters.⁴³ The value he attached to it is also apparent from his edition of the New Testament of 1739, in which one of the three illustrations depicts the baptism of the eunuch (fig. 7). Although the engraver Christoph Heinrich Müller (1705-1751) followed iconographic tradition, he also received instruction from Zinzendorf, and the engraving deviates in some respects from the more usual portrayal. The most striking difference is the eunuch's plain attire, and instead of standing at the water's edge, Philip is in the water himself as the eunuch's equal.⁴⁴

De Wit's depiction is closer to that in Rembrandt's painting of 1626 (fig. 8),



Fig. 6
JACOB DE WIT
(1695-1754), *Saint
Philip Baptizes the
Eunuch*, 1748.
Oil on canvas,
215 x 108.5 cm.

Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. BK-C-2007-1-A;
on loan from the
Amsterdam
Museum.

Fig. 7

CHRISTOPH
HEINRICH MÜLLER
(1705-1751), *The
Baptism of the
Eunuch*, c. 1738-39.
Engraving.
From Nikolaus Ludwig
von Zinzendorf,
*Eines abermahligen
Versuchs zur
Übersetzung der
Historischen Bücher
Neuen Testaments
Unsers Herrn Jesu
Christi aus dem
Original Erste Probe*,
Büdingen 1739.
Photo: BPK /
Staatsbibliothek zu
Berlin / Dietmar Katz.

which also shows the figures arranged in a tight group, with the baptism placed dramatically in the centre. As with *De Wit*, the eunuch, like his retinue, is richly dressed, and a servant is holding his turban. It is unknown whether De Wit was aware of Rembrandt's painting. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, the baptism of the eunuch was portrayed with conspicuous frequency in the Northern Netherlands. Defoer attributes the popularity of the subject to the Reformation. Of the seven sacraments, the Protestants retained only baptism and Holy Communion. Preaching was seen as a condition for baptism and the conversion story as setting an example worthy of imitation,

since the eunuch was only baptized after he had acquired his faith through exegesis.⁴⁵

The woodwork of the pier-glasses, the door and wainscot, and the chimneybreast are richly carved with decorative motifs from nature, mostly containing Christian symbols. Many, including the two birds above the mirrors, refer to Christ or the Passion. These are not, as has previously been concluded, eagles or *Kreuzluft-vögel*, but a pelican and a phoenix, symbols respectively of Christ's self-sacrifice on the cross and his Resurrection (fig. 9).⁴⁶ They might not accurately resemble these birds but their iconography leaves us in no doubt. The pelican is pecking its own breast and the first drops of blood to feed its young can already be seen. The phoenix stands on a fire of twigs, its wings spread, rising out of the ashes.

Other references to Christ are the ears of corn and the grapevines, which as Ter Brugge points out, represent bread and wine and by extension the Last Supper.⁴⁷ The holly and acorns, the base materials for the crown of thorns and the cross, represent the passion of Christ.⁴⁸ The roses, pomegranates and olives stand, respectively, for martyrdom, resurrection and peace, and the bulrushes for the abundance that comes to the humble faithful.⁴⁹ This abundance is symbolized by the variety of fruits and flowers, many of which independently bear a Christian significance.⁵⁰ Thus, although the main focus of the carving is on the figure of Christ, which is central to Hernhutter religious doctrine, it also contains clear references to universal Christian themes. Only the two hearts on the mirror can be seen as typical of Hernhutters. Zinzendorf's theology was one 'of the heart', and a personal bond with Christ was central to it. The designs on the stucco ceiling are divided into four corner cartouches (fig. on pp. 24-25). The cornucopia, jewel case, coins, corn ears and





Fig. 8

REMBRANDT VAN RIJN (1606-1669),
The Baptism of the Eunuch, 1626.
 Oil on panel,
 64 x 47.5 cm.
 Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent,
 inv. no. ABM 5380.

grapevines on the right above the fireplace are an allegory on abundance. The stork on the left of the double doors symbolizes Christ; just as the stork protects its young from snakes, Christ protects the faithful from the devil. The departure of the stork in the winter and its return in the spring represent the Ascension and Resurrection. Another meaning is that of the loving child. Possibly this refers to the custom among Hershutters to address Zinzendorf as 'Papa'. The cartouche on the other side of the doors features a brazier, sword, dove, and a twig sprouting from a stump, a reference to the Tree of Jesse. All are Christian symbols, but their interrelationship is unclear. The same goes for the cartouche with a burnt offering, censer, book and chalice in a temple. The key to this iconography has yet to be discovered, but it is certainly not to be found with the Hershutters. The Beuning Room is exceptional not only in the context of the Hershutters. As far as we can glean from those that survived, the Mennonite churches and the halls in which Collegiants met were generally austere.⁵¹ Evidently Catharina Beuning also came to realise that the room was incongruous. In her memoir she admits that 'the inheritance, and the

Fig. 9

Two pier-glasses in the mahogany room, details, 1745-48. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum; on loan from the Amsterdam Museum.



interior of that beautiful house' had led her astray from the true path of religion. After a miscarriage in the same year, 1745, she renewed her pledge 'to live as a pilgrim here in the world, and to view all that beauty as not belonging to me.'⁵² Her remorse, however, did not prevent her from receiving the congregation in the room.

Love Feasts, *Singstunden* and Baptisms

The very earliest known meeting at the home of Matthijs Beuning, in 1738, was also an important one: it was when Zinzendorf officially founded the Amsterdam congregation. Beuning and his wife were then still living at 272 Keizersgracht,⁵³ where they received the congregation in the back room.⁵⁴ In 1745 they moved to 187 Keizersgracht, but it is not possible to pinpoint when meetings were first held in the mahogany room. Until the end of 1746 meetings were certainly still being held at number 272,⁵⁵ inherited by Magdalena Beuning, who was living in Herrnhag in the Wetterau at the time.⁵⁶ Presumably this was because the Beuning Room was still being built. The Amsterdam *diaria*, in which important events in the congregation were recorded, refer to a meeting in July 1746 in 'Beuning's Room', possibly the mahogany room.⁵⁷ In January 1747 the missionary society met at 'Matthijs Beuning's house in the Society Room'.⁵⁸ This can only have been the room in 187 Keizersgracht, which is referred to in the same way in Matthijs Beuning's memoir. The missionary work of this society is underlined in De Wit's painting of *Saint Philip Baptizes the Eunuch*.

Various types of meetings took place in the houses owned by Matthijs and Catharina Beuning, reflecting the liturgical lives of the Hernhutters. The founding meeting at 272 Keizersgracht was held during a Love Feast, at which hymns were traditionally sung.⁵⁹ De Watteville describes how at a *Singstunde*, a sermon in song, the

congregation sang as 'we had never sung before in our lives'.⁶⁰ Zinzendorf held home meetings at the house during his stay there in 1745.⁶¹ The Single Brethren's Choir also met here, in 1746.⁶² The unmarried brethren met at Beuning's home until 1748, during the later years probably at his new house.⁶³ The *diaria* also refer to various *Stunden* or services (1746-47), baptisms (1746) and a meeting of the congregation council (1749).⁶⁴ In the light of De Wit's painting, it is interesting that children were baptized at Beuning's home. There is no indication as to whether other meetings such as the *Gemeintag*, or Congregation Day, took place at the home of Cornelia or of Matthijs Beuning.⁶⁵

As already mentioned, in the rear annex at 187 Keizersgracht, apart from the mahogany room there was a second room (fig. 5). The author of Matthijs Beuning's memoir writes that the sisters clearly remembered the 'blissful and unforgettable occasions' that took place there.⁶⁶

A Sorry End

The meetings at Beuning's home and of the Moravian Church in general met with resistance from the Reformed Church, with the Amsterdam church council combatting the Hernhutters both in print (in what became a full-blown pamphlet war) and from the pulpit.⁶⁷ The Reformed Church won the day, and in 1739, a jeering, menacing crowd gathered outside 272 Keizersgracht. The brethren and sisters' response was to move their meetings to the evening. The Amsterdam mayors even called for the meetings to be discontinued.⁶⁸ In 1746, there were more protests outside the house, and the congregation began to meet more clandestinely.⁶⁹ It is almost certain that a riot in 1748 took place outside 187 Keizersgracht. The faithful went their separate ways, 'Not without danger of being pelted with dung or stones, or being thrown in

the canal'. But they did not let the matter lie.⁷⁰ Four brethren, Beuning among them, reported the incident to the provincial government and made an appeal for freedom of religious practice. A copy was sent to Stadtholder William IV. Neither these letters nor those addressed to the mayors of Amsterdam, all signed by Beuning, yielded any results. Quite the contrary, because after a riot in 1749 outside Deknatels house, the mayors issued a ban on meetings that did not conform to the Reformed faith. Matthijs and Cornelia Beuning were summoned to the chief officer of justice, and ordered not to receive groups of more than three or four people at their home.⁷¹

As a result of these troubles, many Hernhutters left Amsterdam in 1749 and 1750.⁷² Among them were Matthijs and Catharina Beuning. Even more serious were their growing financial problems. Little if any of the money Beuning had lent to Zinzendorf was repaid, and creditors were at his heels. In 1752, the couple fled to London, where they first stayed with the congregation in Westminster, and then tried to reverse their fortunes by setting up a factory in Chelsea.⁷³

Ultimately, and inevitably, the Amsterdam houses had to be put up for sale. Beuning, now living in London, spent six months trying to find a buyer. When he did not succeed, he called in the help of his brother Cornelis to have the buildings auctioned 'at any price', as he wrote to the congregation member Jonas Paulus Weiss in February 1753. Opposition from the congregation drove Beuning to despair: 'If my debts are not paid in time, I will be bankrupt for the whole world, and then of course all the creditors will come ... and seize my possessions'.⁷⁴ Fear of being reported to the 'Desolate Boedelkamer', the authority that dealt with bankruptcy, is again plain in a letter from Catharina to Zinzendorf: 'Our clothes will be sold in front of our door and that would be too much for

my husband to bear'.⁷⁵ The houses were eventually sold at auction on 20 March 1753. The sale price of 66,538 guilders was almost double the 1744 valuation, so despite his dire situation, Beuning still got a good price.⁷⁶ In addition to his houses, he also sold a lot of silver, furniture and valuable books.⁷⁷

After the forced sale, Beuning turned against the Hernhutters and lodged a complaint against Zinzendorf with the court in Dresden.⁷⁸ Catharina was now caught in a dilemma, torn between her loyalty to her husband and to the congregation.⁷⁹ Illness caused her to return to Zeist in 1754. Beuning followed her and tried to make a living in Amsterdam, but while his wife was recovering he fell ill himself. He died on 12 June 1755, aged 47. Three months later Catharina also lost her 11-year-old son, Cornelis. Father and son were both buried in Zeist – Matthijs at Catharina's request.⁸⁰ Catharina then decided to free herself of 'all worldly connections', and ended the court case. On the advice of the Hernhutter Jonas Paulus Weiss, and against that of her sceptical brother-in-law Cornelis, it seems she accepted her husband's inheritance including the liability for his debts. She then moved from her substantial home on the Broederplein square in Zeist to a room in the widows' house.⁸¹

The mahogany room had only just been completed when the protests brought the curtain down. Just a very few years later the house had to be sold. The once so wealthy Beunings were ruined, and the faith that had once brought unity became divisive. Only the mahogany room itself survived this upheaval. In an incongruous twist of fate this most beautiful and valuable eighteenth-century room was created by two members of the Moravian Church, which set such great store by simplicity. The congregation was only to use the room briefly, but the Beuning's legacy lives on as the zenith of the Dutch rococo interior.

NOTES

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- 1 Harmanni 1990, vol. 1, pp. 32-58, vol. 2, ill. 18-48; Baarsen et al. 2001, pp. 204-10; Van Duin 2010 and 2014; Ter Brugge-Drielsma 2015, pp. 30-69.
 - 2 Harmanni 1990, vol. 1, p. 32, Lütjeharms 1935, p. 142.
 - 3 Christiaan Beuning certainly lived here in 1705 and 1714. Eisma 1999, pp. 72, 81; Harmanni 1990, vol. 1, p. 33.
 - 4 The address 187 Keizersgracht is historically incorrect, but is used here for consistency with the literature. See Ter Brugge-Drielsma 2015, pp. 31-43.
 - 5 Oldewelt 1945, vol. 1, p. 14, vol. 2, pp. 225, 245. Van den Berg incorrectly refers to house number 270 (1954, 88). A conversion from the land tax number in Oldewelt reveals that it was number 272. This is in accordance with the will of Geertruijd van den Bosch, 1740 (p. 4), which states that Matthijs then lived between the Reestraat and Berenstraat.
 - 6 Eisma 1999, p. 73.
 - 7 *Contract 1719*, pp. 1, 4, 13, 16-17; *Contract 1727*, p. 1; *Contract 1735*, pp. 1-2, 6.
 - 8 *Power of attorney 1745*, p. 1; *Affirmation and power of attorney 1749*, p. 1; *Power of attorney 1750*, p. 1. In addition he held a fifty per cent share of the ownership of a sugar refinery managed by Pieter Stellingh (*Contract 1732*).
 - 9 *Contract 1719*, pp. 1, 3, 9.
 - 10 Eisma 1999, pp. 63-65, 69, 73.
 - 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 79-80, 82.
 - 12 *Contract 1719*, pp. 2, 29-31; *Contract 1735*, pp. 1-2, 6, 14-15.
 - 13 Baptism record of Matthijs, Cornelia and Magdalena Beuning, 18 April 1714 and of Cornelis on 27 January 1717. Amsterdam City Archives (SAA), DTB 297, p. 37 (fol. 64), no. 2; SAA, DTB 297, p. 61 (fol. 129), no. 15; SAA, DTB 297, p. 84 (fol. 182), no. 19; SAA, DTB 297, p. 7 (fol. 15), no. 11.
 - 14 Ter Brugge-Drielsma 2015, pp. 60-64.
 - 15 Peucker 1991, p. 26.
 - 16 *Partition of the estate of Geertruijd van den Bosch 1744*, pp. 2-3.
 - 17 *Life of Catharina Beuning*, p. 5.
 - 18 Peucker 1991, pp. 31-32.
 - 19 Peucker 1994, pp. 82-83, 87.
 - 20 *Life of Catharina Beuning*, p. 2. The meeting was conducted in German.
 - 21 Jordaan, p. 20; *Life of Catharina Beuning*, p. 3.
 - 22 Jordaan, p. 58.
 - 23 See *Life of Catharina Beuning*.
 - 24 Lütjeharms 1935, p. 54; Peucker 1991, pp. 63, 70; *Life of Catharina Beuning*; *Life of Frans Ludewig Beuning*.
 - 25 Peucker 1991, p. 123.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40, 202, note 4; Peucker 1994, p. 102. For Beuning's role as a leaseholder, see Graf 2006, pp. 183-86, 192-94, 199-201.
 - 27 De Groot and Peucker 1996, pp. 123-26.
 - 28 Wels 1999, p. 77; Van Groningen 2000, p. 235; Ter Brugge-Drielsma 2015, p. 66.
 - 29 Oldewelt 1945, vol. 2, p. 245; Will of Geertruijd van den Bosch 1740, p. 2.
 - 30 *Partition of the estate of Geertruijd van den Bosch 1744*, pp. 2-3.
 - 31 Harmanni 1990, pp. 32-33, Ter Brugge-Drielsma 2015, p. 33.
 - 32 *Life of Catharina Beuning*, p. 5.
 - 33 *Life (not autograph) of Matthijs Beuning*, p. 2. According to Dr Rödiger Kröger this year-by-year document of Beuning's life dates from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Although not contemporary, the memoir's systematic structure, consistency with the memoir of Catharina Beuning and place of storage suggest that it is a reliable source.
 - 34 Ter Brugge-Drielsma 2015, p. 39.
 - 35 *Ibid.*, pp. 43-47.
 - 36 Two preliminary studies are held by the SAA (image no. 010094000261) and the Albertina in Vienna. One was probably sold as 'The Baptism of a Moor' at the auction of De Wit's estate in 1755 (auction catalogue drawings, book L, no. 1).
 - 37 See for example Carstensen 2009, pp. 29, 41-48, 62, 92, 101-06 and Peucker 1991, p. 104.
 - 38 Roentgen was in Heerendijk in 1740, and in the period that Beuning's room was built, he and Hintz worked in Herrnhag, which the Beunings regularly visited. Peucker 1991, p. 126; Kröger 2015a, pp. 2-6. Catharina Beuning's memoir refers to visits to Herrnhag in 1742, 1744, 1747 and 1749. For Herrnhutter furniture, see Boynton 1993, Graf 2004 and Kröger 2015a.
 - 39 Baarsen et al. 2001, p. 210.
 - 40 Kröger 2015b, p. 4.

- 41 See Peucker 2005 and 2009.
- 42 Luke 22:31: 'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.'
- 43 See Gallagher 2005, pp. 15-16, 23.
- 44 Dose 2011, pp. 99-100, 106-07.
- 45 Defoer 1977, pp. 9-14, 19-24.
- 46 Harmanni 1990, vol. 1, p. 45; Ter Brugge-Drielsma 2015, p. 57. *Kreuzluft-vögels* were an idea of Zinzendorf's, who conceived of brethren and sisters flying as birds around the crucified Christ (Dohm 2011, pp. 301, 342).
- 47 Ter Brugge-Drielsma 2015, p. 56.
- 48 Ferguson 1966, pp. 32, 35. The vines with pod-like fruits on the phoenix mirror are reminiscent of the acacia, the tree from which according to some sources the crown of thorns was made (Lehner 1960, p. 23). Thorns, however, are notable for their absence.
- 49 Ibid., pp. 28, 35, 37-38.
- 50 Apart from the pears (symbol of the incarnation of God in Christ) these are not easy to identify. The following are possibilities: marguerite (innocence of the Christ child), strawberries (justice and good works), peaches (virtue), oranges (purity, chastity and generosity) mulberry and hops. Ferguson 1966, pp. 30, 35-36, 38.
- 51 Van Swigchem et al. 1984, pp. 15, 35, 53, 79.
- 52 *Life of Catharina Beuning*, p. 5.
- 53 See note 7. It is unclear why Jordaan refers to Cornelia Beuning as residing there a year later (Jordaan, pp. 40-41).
- 54 De Watteville, p. 17, mentions a *Singstunde* in the back room in 1738. For other locations, see Van den Berg 1954, pp. 92-93. Meetings were also held at the homes of Cornelia Beuning and of Jacob and Magdalena Schellinger, and in De Schulp/De drie schulpen. This former brewery on Prinsengracht was bought for the congregation in the name of Matthijs Beuning in 1747, and was sold in 1753 on the same day as his home. Contract and receipt of payment 1747; SAA, accession no. 5062, inv. no. 127, date of conveyance 20-03-1753.
- 55 Jordaan, p. 80.
- 56 Peucker 2007, p. 127.
- 57 *Diaria Amsterdam*, p. 111.
- 58 Ibid., p. 311. For the missionary society, see Lütjeharms 1935, pp. 104-10, esp. p. 109.
- 59 Jordaan, p. 20.
- 60 De Watteville, p. 17.
- 61 Jordaan, p. 70.
- 62 According to Jordaan, from August 1746 the brethren held meetings in three places, among them Beuning's house. These meetings were temporarily suspended after a riot in front of the 'house next to the Gold Chain' (Keizersgracht 272) in November, more on which later. The implication seems to be that Matthijs Beuning received the brethren there. Jordaan, p. 80.
- 63 Jordaan*, pp. 21, 27-28.
- 64 *Diaria Amsterdam*, pp. 111, 14r, 19l, 25r, 46r, 261-r.
- 65 Ibid., pp. 33r, 40r. Meetings at the home of Cornelia Beuning are mentioned regularly, in particular of the Sisters' Choir.
- 66 *Life (not autograph) of Matthijs Beuning*.
- 67 See Van der Berg 1954, pp. 85-92, 96-102.
- 68 Jordaan, 11*, pp. 40-41.
- 69 Jordaan, p. 80.
- 70 Ibid., p. 101.
- 71 Van der Berg 1954, pp. 99-100; Jordaan, 1, pp. 101*-05*, 114*-16*, 131-31*.
- 72 Jordaan, p. 163.
- 73 *Life of Catharina Beuning*, pp. 8-9; *Life (not autograph) of Matthijs Beuning*, pp. 2-3. Possibly a factory making gold and silver thread, because Catharina wrote that her husband told her to 'rewind all the thread' (*Life of Catharina Beuning*, p. 9).
- 74 *Letter from Matthijs Beuning to Jonas Paulus Weiss, Chelsea 8 Feb 1753*. See also his letter to Zinzendorf of 1753.
- 75 *Letter from Catharina Beuning to Jonas Paulus Weiss, Chelsea 10 March (1753)*. Matthijs Beuning and Catharina Oudaen do not appear in the archives of the Desolate Boedelkamer (consulted: SAA, accession no. 5072, inv. nos. 145, 488-90, 671-73, 750-58, 793-94, 810-11, 855-63, 933, 938, 942-43, 949-50).
- 76 Harmanni 1990, vol. 1, p. 37; *Conveyance 1753*.
- 77 *Letter from Catharina Beuning to Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, Chelsea 26 Feb. 1754*.
- 78 Lütjeharms, p. 67; *Life of Catharina Beuning*, p. 10.
- 79 Ibid., pp. 9-11. For Catherina's role as a mediator and her struggle with her conscience, see also the letters 5, 20, 21, 23, 32, 45, 50, 52, 55 and 62 (Unity Archives, Moravian Archives Herrnhut, accession no. R.4.A.24c.1, inv. no. 5).
- 80 *Life of Catharina Beuning*, pp. 11-12; *Life (not autograph) of Matthijs Beuning*, p. 3; *Letter from Jonas Paulus Weiss to Catharina Beuning, Haarlem 8 June 1755*.
- 81 Lütjeharms, p. 67; *Life of Catharina Beuning*, p. 12; *Letter from Catharina Beuning to Jonas Paulus Weiss, Amsterdam 1 July 1755*; *Letter from Jonas Paulus Weiss to Catharina Beuning, Zeist 2 July 1755*; *Letter from Catharina Beuning to Jonas Paulus Weiss, 4 July 1755*.