

Issue 3 / Volume 19 / 6 December 2018

_ISH EDITION

ENGL

SPECIAL FAITH OR KNOWLEDGE

Radboudumc

Malaria is de meest voorkomende tropische infectieziekte. Jaarlijks zijn er ruim 200 miljoen nieuwe gevallen van malaria en bijna een half miljoen sterfgevallen door malaria. Verreweg de meeste slachtoffers zijn Afrikaanse kinderen. Er is daarom dringend behoefte aan een vaccin tegen malaria. Het Radboudumc voert gecontroleerde malaria-infecties uit bij gezonde vrijwilligers om zo een bijdrage te leveren aan de ontwikkeling van een malariavaccin.

Doel

Het doel van deze studie is te onderzoeken hoe veilig en werkzaam de immunisatie met malaria-sporozoïeten (NF135) is tegen een gecontroleerde humane malaria-infectie.

Wij organiseren vrijblijvende informatieavonden.

Contactpersonen:

Saskia van der Boor & Manon Alkema, arts-onderzoekers

Telefoon:	06 15 39 95 80	
E-mail:	malariavaccin@radboudumc.nl	
Website:	www.malariavaccin.nl	
Facebook:	facebook.com/malariavaccin	

De afdeling Medische Microbiologie van het Radboudumc is op zoek naar:

Gezonde vrijwilligers (18-35 jaar) voor een Malaria-onderzoek

Periode: 4 februari 2019 t/m 23 juni 2020 Vergoeding: 800 – 3100 euro

Schema

Groep	Periode	Onderzoek	Vergoeding*
A1	4 februari 2019 t/m 12 mei 2020	3 immunisaties Tweemaal infectie met malaria onder strikt gecontroleerde omstandigheden	€2300-3100
A2	26 augustus 2019 t/m 1 oktober 2019	Éénmaal infectie met malaria onder strikt gecontroleerde omstandigheden	€800
A3	6 april 2020 t/m 12 mei 2020	Éénmaal infectie met malaria onder strikt gecontroleerde omstandigheden	€800
B1	18 maart 2019 t/m 23 juni 2020	3 immunisaties Tweemaal infectie met malaria onder strikt gecontroleerde omstandigheden	€2300-3100
B2	7 oktober 2019 t/m 12 november 2019	Éénmaal infectie met malaria onder strikt gecontroleerde omstandigheden	€800
B3	18 mei 2020 t/m 23 juni 2020	Éénmaal infectie met malaria onder strikt gecontroleerde omstandigheden	€800

*afhankelijk van het verloop van het onderzoek



Radboud in'to Languages opens up new worlds

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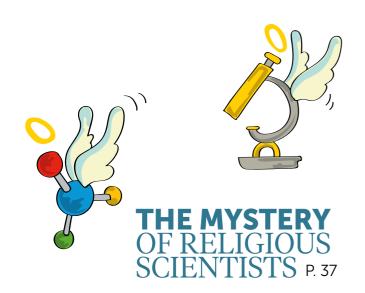
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COVER EDITING: JEROEN MURRÉ



Of course you can argue that those few words don't make much of a difference. Not to mention the fact that the prayer spoken at inaugural lectures and PhD defences is in Latin, a language nobody understands. Maybe prayer is simply an integral element of a university with a Catholic identity. Or you can dismiss it as yet another 'tradition'.

Until the day comes when someone feels uncomfortable invoking the Lord's name at her PhD defence. And an American columnist, who just happens to be a member of the PhD committee of the atheist doctor in question, decides to share her discomfort with the world. "A PhD defence without God turned out to be impossible [in Nijmegen]", wrote Linda Duits in October in university magazine Folia. She concluded with: "Science shouldn't impose religion on its followers." Well, as you might guess, this led to some commotion. Professors joined the debate. Apparently in the year 2018 religious faith is still a sensitive topic on Campus. "Away with it!" versus "It's sacrosanct!" Vox put the 'prayer' question to all five hundred Nijmegen professors. Approximately half completed our survey on

mately half completed our survey on religious faith. The results? 52% think that it should be possible to defend a PhD without prayer. Incidentally, 60% claim to be an atheist or agnostic.

This special edition of *Vox* is devoted to religious faith. Can faith and knowledge co-exist – or continue to co-exist – in peace?

Annemarie Haverkamp editor in chief *Vox*



ABOVE PAR **FUNS ELBERSEN**



With twelfth position on the list, he's in line to become the second youngest member ever of the Dutch Senate. Funs Elbersen, 23 years old and Law student at Radboud University, is standing for election to the Dutch Senate on behalf of GroenLinks. Young Members of Senate are important, says Elbersen: "A large group of young people are currently unrepresented, while the decisions being taken have serious consequences for our future." A seat on the Senate will allow him to combine his two passions: law and politics. The accessibility of higher education is one of the issues closest to his heart.

NOTE TAKEN

'Universities are losing sight of the well-being of students. They're devoting all their energy to elite students.'

Hans Thijssen, Professor of Philosophy, in a report in *ScienceGuide* on a seminar held in Utrecht about student well-being. The rise of the excellence culture at universities has increased the pressure on students, says Thijssen. He believes the universities' wish to present themselves as centres of excellence to be detrimental to the well-being of students.

DAY-TO-DAY NEWS: VOXWEB.NL/ INTERNATIONAL

> **Cardboard bed** This November, surrounded by sleeping bags and removal boxes, students demonstrated for more student accommodation in the city. "Nijmegen students run the risk of literally ending up on the street," says Political Science student Janno Rook, who stood with other students outside the City Hall for over an hour and a half. The very same day, the Municipal Council called on SSH& to build more accommodation. Various parties are now investigating available space for students in need of a room.





Aerial view of low water levels

Learning dutch Students have to work harder to learn Dutch. In his inaugural lecture at the end of October, Professor Marc van Oostendorp argued that language is more important than ever. "Whereas in the past you could be a miner and dig for coal all day without giving language a second thought, now nearly all professions require the ability to communicate. You've got to be able to express yourself eloquently and convince others." Oostendorp believes this is something university lecturers need to take more responsibility for. In his ideal world, lecturers would see it as their duty to help improve their students' Dutch proficiency.

Radboud hip-hop At a bowling evening organised by the study association, Marnix Mohrmann met fellow student Maarten Smaling. Sometime later, they were recording together in the studio, and now their album *Synthetisch* can be found on Spotify. Mohrmann: "It's an album about doing drugs on the couch. About all the crazy stuff that goes through your mind as you sit staring into space." The two are critical of what Mohrmann refers to as "modern hip-hop". They find it boring and simplistic. The two Management Science students plan to launch more humoristic hip-hop in the future.

Confused students Student Housing Association SSH& reports an increase in the number of confused students. Not that throngs of confused people daily fill the halls of the housing complexes, but reports have increased in number. Aside from an increase in the total number of students, SSH& representative Vincent Buitenhuis believes this to be due to the fact that students are using more drugs. The housing association is now making agreements with institutions to ensure rapid assistance in the case of incidents.

Fast medics Radboudumc Top Team 1 won this year's Seven Hills Run company race. After the finishing times of all team members had been added together, it was found that the Radboudumc team was slightly faster than the officers of the National Police team. Triathlon athlete Wesley Mols was the fastest Nijmegen student. The Medical Biology student crossed the finish line in 47 minutes and 31 seconds.

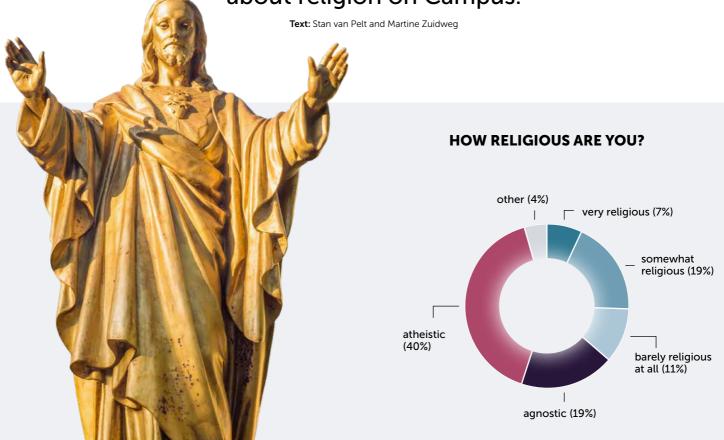
High and dry The water level in the Waal has been historically low of late, which is not only a problem for houseboat inhabitants. The ecosystem is also suffering from the low water level. Ecologist Rob Leuven told *Vox* that many fish, snails, mussels and larvae of dragonflies, mayflies and caddis worms cannot survive the lasting drought. Invasive exotic species, like the killer shrimp from the area around the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, on the other hand, are gaining ground. They reproduce faster and eat a lot of indigenous animal species. Time for action, says Leuven. "We have to think seriously about how we want to shape water management in the Netherlands."

BURVEY HOW RELIGIOUS FAITH FADES AWAY FROM THE CAMPUS

6 CURRENT

Vox 3

Radboud University professors are more likely to be atheist or agnostic than religious, and the vast majority neither pray nor attend church services on a regular basis. Still, opinions are strongly divided on the traditional prayer, although the majority believe it shouldn't be a requirement for a PhD defence. These are the results of a *Vox* survey about religion on Campus.



his autumn, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) reported that for the first time in history, the majority of Dutch citizens are nonreligious. But how do things stand at Radboud University? And if the majority are

non-religious, should the University continue to protect its religious identity? Vox sent all Nijmegen professors more than five hundred in total -

a survey with questions about their religious beliefs and Radboud University's Catholic persuasion. Approximately half responded. The figures show that religion plays a minimal role in the lives of the Campus inhabitants surveyed. The majority of the professors surveyed view themselves as non-religious: and a small 20% agnostic. Of the

IF YOU WANT TO DEFEND YOUR PHD WITHOUT PRAYER

Could she perhaps defend her PhD without the traditional prayer, asked Marijke Naezer, postdoc at Gender Studies, as the

day of her defence approached. She was told that she couldn't. The Beadle informed her that it was impossible to defend a PhD thesis without the prayer. Naezer was disappointed. And it felt 'odd' and 'alienating' to hear the Latin text about the 'Holy Spirit' and 'Almighty God' at her PhD defence, Folia columnist Linda Duits attended Naezer's PhD defence and heard about her objections. In response, she wrote her much debated column. More than a month later, Marijke Naezer shares how uncomfortable she feels about things done in the name of faith. "For example, I find it incredibly painful to watch how the Catholic Church approaches homosexuality. And this more than 40% claim to be atheist while brotherly love is one of their core themes. Well, apparently brotherly love only

religious professors (one quarter), one third is strongly religious, while the rest see themselves as 'slightly religious'.

Meanwhile, the University continues to promote itself as a Catholic institution. For as long as we can remember, all academic ceremonies at Radboud University have begun and ended with a short prayer. Even though only initiates and classicists know what is being said, as the text is in Latin: 'Spiritus Sancti gratia illuminet sensus et corda nostra' - in English: 'May the Holy Spirit illuminate our minds and hearts'. Ceremonies are concluded with a closing prayer, also in Latin: 'Almighty God, we thank You for all Your blessings. You who lives and reigns forever and ever.'

On a recent visit to Nijmegen as member of a PhD committee, Folia columnist Linda Duits reacted indignantly. "In a university environment, God should be entirely optional," she argued. The Nijmegen Executive applies to a certain group of people. And I'm not even talking about inequality between men and women within the Church, problematic views on issues like abortion, or the way the Church deals with the large-scale incidence of child abuse. These are all reasons why I distanced myself from the Catholic Church. I have very unpleasant associations with Catholicism." A ritual during a ceremony is a beautiful thing. says Naezer, "But why does it have to take the form of a prayer?" The recitation of the prayer actually makes her feel excluded. And that while "it's my University too!"

* You can find Linda Duits' column at Voxweb.nl

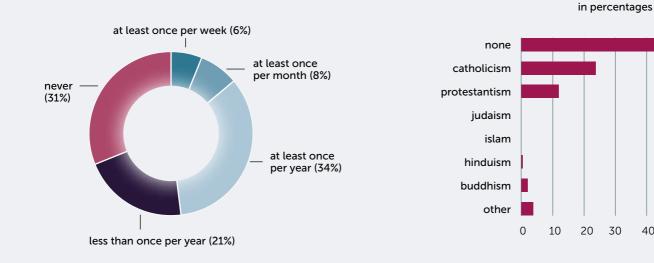
HOW OFTEN DO YOU GO TO **CHURCH OR A HOUSE OF PRAYER?**



40

50

60



YOU CAN'T SHAKE OFF OUR CATHOLIC IDENTITY THAT EASILY

What will we lose if we let go of our Catholic identity? Marc de Kesel, one of the two directors of the Titus Brandsma Institute, a research institute on Christian

mysticism and spirituality, answers that it's not even possible to do so. "A centuries' old tradition becomes part of your identity. You don't choose it, it simply exists." You can't shake off our Catholic identity that easily, says De Kesel. Nor should we try to get rid of it, in his opinion. Because if we want to change society for the bet-ter, we'd better to do so from the support base created by tradition. "A tradition is always many-voiced and therefore broader than you think." You can easily use the Catholic notion of brotherly love to criticise anti-abortion views or fight for the rights of homosexuals, he says. "The Pope may take a different view, but the Pope and your tradition are two different things. You shouldn't let tradition pre-

"This is terrible!" says Professor of French Literature and Culture Alicia Montoya, who is very much in favour of the prayer. Not because of the Catholic faith it represents –
do so. "A centuries' Montoya is an atheist – but purely it, it simply exists."
do so. "A centuries' Montoya is an atheist – but purely because of tradition. "I believe the University also has a museum function, in the sense of preserving and studying traditions. They form our link to the past, and strengthen the idea that we're part of something larger than our small individual selves."

vent you from raising your voice." This means you can use your Catholic background to fight against ultra-conservative forces within Catholicism. But, says De Kesel, "We can also draw from this tradition something that can benefit the University as a whole." He believes that the task of a university is to work on solving important problems facing society. "And a Catholic university is just as well equipped to do this as a university with no religious tradition. Maybe even better. So use your Catholic background to do your work well."

Paradoxically

This may be due to her literary background, she says. "Especially when you study history, you come to see the value of tradition, of recognising what previous generations bequeathed us." And it can hardly be denied that Catholic faith is part of Radboud University, she argues. "It's like with family. You may have an uncle who's done something quite unacceptable, yet he's still your uncle, and he belongs to your family. Catholic faith is part of our history and this alone makes it important."

Board disagrees. In a column on the University website,

And yet the traditional prayer is not popular. A small

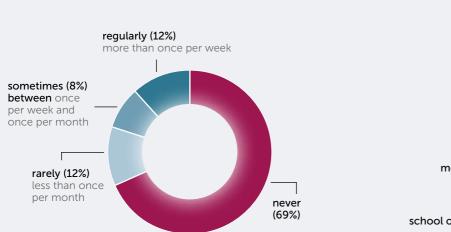
President of the Executive Board Daniël Wigboldus praised the binding power of joining in prayer.

majority of the professors surveyed agree with Linda

Duits: it should be possible to defend one's PhD at

Radboud University without prayers.

There are other professors, who despite being atheists, also belong to the minority of respondents (one quarter in total) who treasure the prayer tradition. Like Professor of Jurisprudence Roel Schutgens. "I find it a very charming ritual. It's how we distinguish ourselves from other uni-

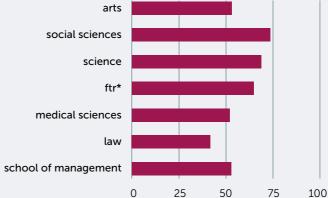


HOW OFTEN DO YOU PRAY?

NON-RELIG







* ftr: faculty of philosophy, theology and religious studies

versities. We've done it for decades, there's something ceremonial about it, and it lends colour and charm to academic sessions. I think it's a fairly harmless practice. As far as I'm concerned, we should keep it." Or take Mark Huijbregts, Professor of Environmental Science. "I recently awarded an honorary doctorate in the Stevenskerk, and began my speech with the words 'In the name of the Lord'. My mother nearly fell off her chair when she heard it. She knows I'm a non-believer. It may sound paradoxical, as an atheist, but I find that the prayer lends cachet to the ceremony, that it marks the importance of the gathering. Not in the letter, but in the spirit."

Old-fashioned

Critics, however, believe there is no room for prayer at a university. An obsolete tradition, says Professor of Cardiology Angela Maas, who was raised a Catholic. "I particularly notice it when Professors from other universities come to visit. People find it a strange tradition. I think this kind of old-fashioned ritual can be counterproductive: It causes surprise among visitors, but also repulsion. Especially among visitors with alternative religious beliefs. Surely this is not what we want."

A university should be a mirror of society, says Maas. "This means we need to create a neutral identity, so that everyone feels truly welcome."

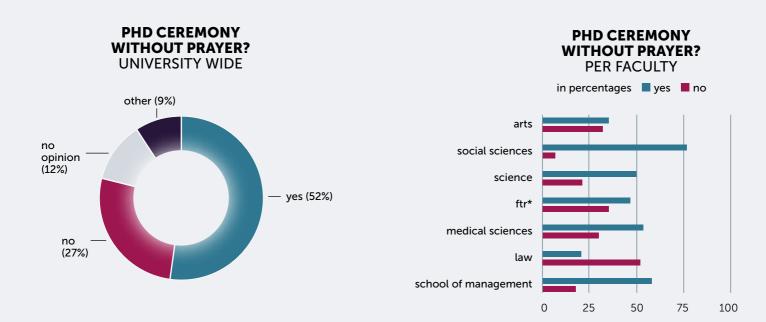
Professor of Cognitive Psychology Ivan Toni finds religious expressions 'bizarre' in a university environment. The Italian obtained his degree in Bologna, the oldest European university. It was founded in 1088 as an autonomous source of knowledge, independent of the Church. "The region I come from has been under Church jurisdiction for over 1200 years. People felt the weight of this yoke for centuries. The foundation of independent universities represented a liberation." He therefore finds it a contradiction in terms for Radboud University to affiliate

'A UNIVERSITY SHOULD STAND FOR **UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE**, FREE OF DOGMA'

itself with the Church. "A university should stand for universal knowledge, free of dogma." This made him doubt his choice of Nijmegen. "But I'm not the kind to stay away out of a feeling of moral superiority. I thought I could also become part of the community and contribute to the debate from the inside out."

Like Maas, he pleads for the abolition of the prayer during academic ceremonies. Because of the link with the Catholic Church, but also because he believes it to be offensive to many non-Catholics. "The University is becoming increasingly international and culturally diverse. I think its disrespectful towards all the cultures that are part of our community."

Finally, there is a more pragmatic group, who don't quite understand what the critics are making such a fuss about. "It comes with the job", says Wilbert Spooren, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and also an atheist.



"If someone says a little prayer, surely that doesn't harm the values of someone with a different faith?" In his opinion, the prayer doesn't offend anybody. "It's very short and in a language that nobody understands. It's simply a ritual. We also all wear funny clothes at PhD defences, which we'd rather not be seen in on the street." Professor of Management Philosophy René ten Bos agrees with Spooren. "I've never understood this mutual aversion between faith and science. The boundary between the two is historically also rather vague, as both try to make sense of the world. Biologists also attribute an almost divine

explanatory power to DNA." If it was up to Bos – incidentally also the Dutch Philosopher Laureate – he would keep the prayer. "Keep doing it. The praying, the toga, these are all deliciously glorious rituals. I'm an atheist, and I still whisper 'Amen' at the end."



Is the Bishop of 's-Hertogenbosch a member of the Board of the *Stichting Katholieke Universiteit*

(SKU)? And does he have a voice in the appointment of Executive Board members? The majority of the professors surveyed are unsure about the answers to these questions. Here is how it works: The Board of the *Stichting Katholieke Universiteit* (SKU) is responsible for supervising the Executive Board of Radboud University and the Executive Board of Radboud university medical center. The members of the Board of the SKU are appointed by the Bishops' Conference of the Netherlands, on the recommendation of the SKU Board itself. At present, the Board of the SKU consists of five members and is chaired by former politician Loek Hermans. There are

Persuasion

Where the opinions of the surveyed professors diverge concerning the prayer, there is clear consensus concerning the University's Catholic persuasion. Should Radboud University place greater emphasis on its identity as a Catholic University? 'No', say 80% of the respondents. Religion should not play a role at all, say Professor of Psychology Toni and Professor of Medicine Maas, except perhaps within a theological faculty. Legal expert Schutgens notes that the Catholic faith is not particularly prominent on Campus. "It's mainly present in symbolic form, as a consideration for others or care for the living environment. And what sane person could object to this?" no Bishops on the board.

The SKU appoints the members of the Executive Board. The Bishops have nothing to say about these appointments. Professors are appointed by the Executive Board on the recommendation of the Dean of the Faculty. In addition, all lecturers of the Theology department – including professors – also need a 'mandatum docendi' (teaching mandate) from the Bishop. But the theologians don't have to be Catholic. Nevertheless, vacancies for membership of the Radboud University Executive Board and the Stichting Katholieke Universiteit mention that "preference will be given to candidates of Catholic persuasion." This is in line with the statutes of the Stichting, which stipulate that the Stichting Board is responsible for 'protecting and promoting' the Catholic identity of the University and hospital. Also, formally, the responsibility for appointing members of the Board of the Stichting (on the recommendation of the SKU) falls to the Bishops' Conference of the Netherlands – as representatives of Rome.

> The majority of professors are, however, of the opinion that Catholic persuasion doesn't matter in the least. The prevailing view is that faith should play no role at all. "Everyone should feel equally welcome at Radboud University, no matter what their faith," says environmental expert Huijbregts. "As far as

I'm concerned, religious persuasion should have no impact on administrative appointments. Faith has an important ceremonial function on Campus, but it shouldn't be more than that."

Religious faith is also mentioned in job interviews with Professors. Schutgens: "Our protocol states that we have to ask them to respect the Catholic faith. I was asked this too during my job interview. And I feel somewhat bound to my promise. I'm a very convinced atheist, but I would refrain from publishing articles with a strongly pro-atheist stance. Not out of fear, but because I've agreed to respect my employer's Catholic identity."

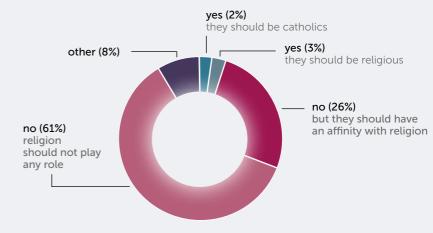
other (6%) yes (8%) opinion (6%)

no (80%)

SHOULD THE UNIVERSITY STRENGTHEN

ITS CATHOLIC IDENTITY?



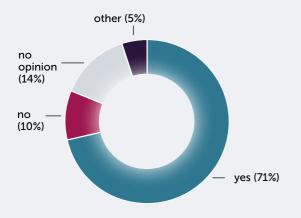


'I WOULD REFRAIN FROM **PUBLISHING ARTICLES** WITH A STRONGLY PRO-ATHEIST STANCE'

More than 70% of respondents believe that the Church's role in appointments at the University and hospital should be abolished. Although you might wonder what this role is, says Schutgens. "In the Netherlands, judges are also appointed by the King, aren't they? Which means a committee puts forward a recommendation and the King obediently signs it. I think it's the same with the Bishops too. I've never heard of them disagreeing with a suggested appointment. I think the Bishops also feel they can't afford to." Management Philosopher Ten Bos actually sees the advantages of administrators with a religious persuasion. "I see Catholicism as a bastion against the rise of bureaucracy. Catholics understand better that the best scientists are not the ones with the most publications. This is due to the fact that religious faith focuses on other values, such as tolerance and forgiveness. Administrators can learn a lot from this!" *



DISMISS THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN APPOINTMENTS?



To each their faith

Monika Beck (20), European Law School student

"I'm absolutely convinced that my exam pen, which is what I call this pen, is the reason I pass my exams. Of course, it's not the only factor, but I wouldn't miss it for the world! This began at secondary school: I had the same pen at the time. A blue Clic Stic pen by Bic, not the standard version, but one from the Ecolutions series. I used it for all my final exams, and I passed every single one.

Since coming to University, I've used this pen for all my exams, and I passed them all. I also use this pen when preparing for an exam. It may sound stupid, but I've got the idea that the material ends up in the pen, and flows out of it again during the exam. Plus, it's just a nice pen to write with.

When my first exam pen ran out of ink, I panicked a little. I'd literally never done an exam without this pen, and I definitely didn't want to. I went to so many stores, but none of them stocked the one-and-only exam pen. In the end, I found it on the Internet, although I had to order 50 all at once. So I did, ha ha. I'm not going to run the risk of failing my exams!"





A DOLL HOUSE FOR PRIESTS IN TRAINING. Until the late 1950s, little boys practiced with toy altars like these. "We had one in our nursery," remembers Lodewijk Winkeler of the Catholic Documentation Centre. "I played with it a lot, you know. The oldest boy in our family played the priest, the other boys were missionaries, and the girls from the neighbourhood were the believers. It had all kind of accessories for conducting a Holy Mass. You had toy chalices, a toy censer, and a toy candlestick."

Photo: Julie de Bruin



KEEPING FAITH A LOSING BATTLE

It's clear that the influence of religious faith in the Netherlands is dwindling. But there are still students for whom faith plays an important role. What does the life of a religious student look like on a not very religious Campus? Vox gauges the mood of the religious student.

Text: Mickey Steijaert / Photography Perplex: Tom Hessels



o matter what figures you consult, the trend is abundantly clear. Very few young Dutch people are still members of a church or religious community. "Religious youngsters in the minority," read the headline of a press report by Statistics Netherlands as early as 2011. And the figures continue to drop. By 2017, only 32.8% of Dutch people aged 18-25 were members of a church or religious community. And the percentage is probably even lower among highly educated youngsters.

Have all Nijmegen students turned atheist then? No. A small band of religious associations continue to bravely resist the invasion. Nijmegen is home to no less than six religious student associations, jointly good for 363 members, all of them Radboud University students. What role does faith play in their lives? And what is life like for religious students on a not very religious campus?

VGSN-TQ, Ichthus, Quo Vadis – these are unfamiliar names for many students. The religious associations are clearly less well-known than Carolus or Ovum. But they do play an important role for religious students. The associations offer a space to meet like-minded people. And this is very valuable when there are so few fellow students with whom you can talk about faith.

Albert Rijs (23) is President of KSN, the Katholieke Studentenvereniging Nijmegen, with 32 members the smallest Christian association. Fellow students look surprised when he tells them he's a member of the Catholic association. "I'm often asked the usual questions, like: What about sex before marriage and acceptance of homosexuals? I understand why people ask questions like these. And I see it as an opportunity to enter into dialogue with one another." tains relevant passages on pretty much any topic you can think of."

Both Rijs and Holtrop are regularly confronted with prejudice. Rijs: "At the introduction market, we were drinking a beer next to our stand. Passers-by would call out: 'I thought you guys weren't allowed to drink beer...'" Holtrop has heard similar stories. "Some fellow students make stupid jokes about it. If I tell them I'm hung-over after a VGSN party, they ask: 'Is God OK with that kind

'EVERYONE TAKES CARE OF ONE ANOTHER'



Who: Jari Holtrop (22), Master's student in Biology Active at: Vereniging van Gereformeerde Studenten te Nijmegen – Thesaurum Quaeritans (VGSN-TQ)

"I used to think I would never join a student association. And I only became a Christian in my second year. I met a religious girl who was also studying biology. In our conversations, I noticed that despite her faith, we shared the same thoughts about fundamental biological processes. She took me along to Church and via her I got to know people at VGSN-TQ. I found it easier to meet people with similar interests at this kind of association

What appealed to me is the fact that VGSN-TQ is quite small – a lot smaller, for example, than NSN. Everyone knows and takes care of one another. In addition to faith and conviviality, there's also a lot of focus on science: It's one of the three pillars of our association. For example, we organise lectures and theme groups where members talk about their studies. Just the other day, we all had a go at translating Latin texts together. This kind of thing is unlikely to happen elsewhere. Sometimes people react strangely when they hear that I'm a member of a Christian association. But this is mainly a problem for the person in question. I'm not ashamed of what I do and I'd never keep my faith a secret "

'SOMETIMES PEOPLE REACT **STRANGELY**'

Like other associations, the religious associations offer a combination of conviviality and more serious activities. They organise get-togethers, pub quizzes and cantus sessions. Many Christian associations work with so-called 'circles': small groups of members who meet on a weekly basis to pray and discuss Biblical texts.

"Usually, a circle member prepares a topic, which we then discuss based on the Bible," explains Jari Holtrop (23), assessor at VGSN-TQ. The topic could be anything, for example a problem that a circle member is experiencing in his or her personal life. Holtrop: "The Bible con-

'WE TRY TO BE THERE FOR ALL STUDENTS'



Who: Denise Kluit (26, left), Master's in Educational Science, and Jaël van Dijk (23), recently graduates Active at: Student Café Perplex Kluit: "At our café we offer students a space to find connection. Connection with God, but also with each other. Free meals are an ideal vehicle for this. Sharing food is a good way to start a dialogue. And it's very helpful when vou've run out of monev at the end of the month." Van Dijk: "Perplex is not a student association. Community is a better word. We don't have members and we try to be there for all students."

Kluit: "The great thing in my opinion is that students come to us to tell us what it means to them, how coming to Perplex has helped them feel less isolated. I'm personally convinced that this place was given to us by God. This café just crossed our path, and the atmosphere is always good here. That's how we know that God is here. It's his work we're doing." Perplex' prayer room



'DOES GOD ALLOW HANGOVERS?'

of thing?' But these are exceptions. Most people are rather surprised to hear that we don't just sit around drinking tea and discussing the Bible, but that we also drink beer, that people sometimes end up kissing, and that kind of thing. After all, we're students too."

Holtrop understands the prejudices very well. He used to think that way too, before he converted to Christianity in his second year of studies and joined VGSN-TQ. "I had the idea that everyone in this kind of association was expected to live by the same rules. But you get all the space you need to experiment and find out which rules you want to follow, how you want to give your faith shape. This is important, because your student time is a time of growth and development."

'I FEEL MUCH STRONGER'



Who: Albert Rijs (23), fourth-year student in Pedagogical Sciences Active at: Katholieke Studenten Nijmegen (KSN)

"My mother is a Catholic, but my father isn't, which is why I never went to Catholic youth camps the way lots of other Catholic children do. I come from an environment in Limburg that is fairly anti-religious. This made it quite difficult for me to hold on to my faith. It's great to be a member of KSN. I feel much stronger, and I no longer have to defend myself all the time. KSN is the only Catholic association in Nijmegen. If you want to become a Board member, you have to be a Roman Catholic, including baptism and first communion. Beyond that we're also open to people from other religious back-

grounds, even though our activities are usually marked by a focus on Catholic faith. Our spiritual teacher from the Maria Geboortekerk, whom members can consult on any faith-related questions, ensures that our activities remain in line with the Catholic spirit. When someone asks me about it, I simply tell them I'm a member of a Christian association. Sometimes this leads to nasty reactions. It's part of the deal. Jesus said you will be spat upon. I'm not ashamed of it."

Nobody knows how many Nijmegen students are religious. There are simply no figures. Statistics Netherlands does collect data on religious faith in the Netherlands, but has no specific data on Radboud students. The University itself doesn't keep track of whether students belong to a particular faith. The Health Monitor of GGD Gelderland Zuid does reveal that relatively few highly educated Nijmegen inhabitants view themselves as members of a church or religious community: 17% versus 41% of low-skilled inhabitants. But this may also have to do with age, emphasises religion researcher Joris Kregting. "These highly educated Nijmegen inhabitants are probably mainly students. And students are young, and therefore less religious than average."

Kregting is affiliated with Kaski, the Radboud University research centre for religion and society. Faith plays a modest role among students and Kregting has devoted a number of publications to the reasons why. "In particular among highly educated people, scientific rationalism plays a strong role," he says. "The idea that for every assertion, you ask: 'Yes, but do you have any evidence for this?' Add to this the fact the Church used to provide social security. Now you have all kinds of social security legislation, but in the old days, if you got sick, you were in trouble. You only had the Church to turn to for support." This led to a decline in the importance of church membership particularly among the often wealthy highly educated population.

Safety net

And yet the religious community continues to care for those in need within the Nijmegen student community. At VGSN and KSN, the circles offer a safety net for students who are experiencing problems, explain Rijs and Holtrop. And then there's student café Perplex. Every Tuesday night, approximately twenty students gather in the building of religious association De Verwondering for a free meal, prepared by the Perplex team. "All students are welcome, also those with a different or no religious background," explains initiator Denise Kluit (26).

On Mondays and Tuesdays, Perplex organises prayer hours in the prayer room they set up at the back of the café. But faith doesn't play a prominent role during the Perplex meals. Sure, prayers are said beforehand. And dessert represents an opportunity for Kluit or a team member to throw in a question which the students can then debate. "But these questions are not necessarily of a religious nature," says Kluit.

Kluit sees that the current generation of students is suffering from psychological problems: loneliness, stress, and depression. This was her motivation for launching Perplex. Kluit: "On the *Vox* website, it stated that housing association SSH& is getting more frequent reports from students who find themselves confused and unhappy. My heart broke when I read it. It's sometimes so hard to feel at home in a new city, to really feel seen, known and appreciated. Perplex is a place where you always feel welcome when you need it." *****





MEET A MUSLIM

'When I hear that someone has never met a Muslim, I invite them to join us.' Sümer Sen, from Muslim student association MSV enjoys entering into dialogue with non-Muslims. At the University, but also outside of it. A meet-theboard party with mineral water and hummus.

Text: Jozien Wijkhuijs / Photography: Bert Beelen

he snacks and mineral water bottles are ready on the table in the associations' hall beneath the Sports Centre. It's Monday night and 'Meet MSV' is about to start. Treasurer Fatima Ba has made some chicken and beef snacks with her mother and there are all sorts of hummus, dips and bread. What there isn't, though, is beer. The brand-new Board members of the Moslim Studenten Vereniging (MSV) extensively thank all those present for braving the cold and coming to congratulate them on their new position. They take the time to personally pour a drink for each visitor.

'Meet MSV' is a variation on the traditional Meet-the-Board events organised by student boards in October and November. "We sometimes attend those as well," says Sarah Boulehoual, Political Science student and the association's Secretary, "but in our own way. For example, we attended the get-together for the Christian student associations as soon as it began, at 7 pm. We shook some hands, had a chat with people, and went home at a reasonable hour." She adds, laughing: "Sometimes people are surprised: 'Oh my God, do Muslims attend Meet-the-Board events too?' Sure we do, but because of our faith we choose not to drink alcohol." "Which is why we don't organise drinks evenings ourselves," explains External

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Lisa Schmeinck (21), student of Theology and Religious Studies

"Sometimes I leave them on my desk and touch them for a moment during an exam. I sometimes wonder whether anybody notices, but no one's ever mentioned it. Maybe it's because I study Theology: there are lots of religious people in the room.

If I have to do something important, like a job interview or an exam, I always take my rosary and Mary medallion along. I keep them in my hand and use them to pray. Last week I had a presentation, so I said a quick prayer beforehand. Doing this helps me to feel calm and know that I'm ready to start my presentation. A kind of peace comes over me. It's good to know that someone's watching over me. I was not raised a Catholic. I became a Catholic at the age of 14, and discovered faith all by myself. In the Catholic Church, some people always have their rosary with them, or a token of Mary's presence. Others burn candles. But I don't think they do so during exams, ha ha."





'PEOPLE WHO WANT TO UNDERSTAND **ISLAM** BETTER ARE ALSO VERY WELCOME'

Affairs Officer and Philosophy student Sümer Sen. "But we do want to meet everyone, which is why we organised this introduction party."

Monsters

The new, fourteenth board of MSV consists of 4 students from Radboud University and one student from HAN University of Applied Sciences. The number of members has grown fast in the last few years and the association now has approximately 160 members. By comparison, the largest Christian association, 'beer-and-Bible' association NSN, has 183 members, "Our activities often attract non-members too," says Boulehoual, "for example our lectures about Mecca or on the question of whether God exists." What's more, not all members are Muslim, explains Sen. "People who want to understand Islam better are also very welcome."

This hospitality is immediately apparent at 'Meet MSV'. When someone mentions that they don't eat meat, medical student and Chair Sherin Said immediately takes it upon herself to ask her successors to bake some vegetarian snacks next year. The board members show visitors around their office, give tours of the associations' hall and invite everyone to come back. The desire to remain in dialogue is strong, explains Sen, both in society, and on a smaller scale within the University. "When I hear that someone has never met a Muslin, I invite them to join us." he says. MSV members also visit primary schools to talk about Islam and Muslims in the Netherlands. "Distance creates fear, a dark street at night is filled with monsters," says Sen. "I think it's important and rational to try to prevent this from happening."

'Hutspot and Couscous'

This is why MSV likes to work with other parties. Members sometimes organise joint lectures with Christian association *Quo Vadis* and PTRS faculty association *Awaz*. In collaboration with these and with NSN and Political Science association *Ismus*, MSV also initiated 'Hutspot and Couscous', a series of activities in which students share a meal while listening to speakers and engaging in a debate. Other activities include the annual trip, a course in Arabic, and Islam Awareness Month. To raise awareness, MSV for instance created a 'tea corner' in the Refter, where anyone who's interested can drink tea with Muslims.

Although the board members don't experience studying at a non-Muslim university as negative, MSV does meet a need many have for a place where they aren't 'different'. "Political Science, the programme I follow, is a very white study programme," says Boulehoual. Fatima Ba is also an exception on her Chemistry programme at HAN University of Applied Sciences. "As a Muslim and a non-white student. I don't mind, but it's nice to be here among like-minded people who have a similar approach to faith." Catholic Radboud traditions, such as the prayer at the opening of the academic year, don't bother them. "The University isn't so traditional anymore," says Sen. "There's room for other faiths."

For example, they are happy with the prayer room for Muslims at the Student Chaplaincy. "I often find myself chatting with people from other faiths, as I wait for my turn," says Sen. "It's interesting, I learn from their perspectives on life." MSV also has good contacts with the other religious associations. "Even though we're not members of CSN – which is after all an umbrella organisation for Christian associations – we can always turn to them for collaboration or advice."

New car

Although religion plays a central role, conversations at MSV don't only centre on prayer, says Boulehoual. "We have lots of fun, for instance during ladies' nights." "We're very funny, you know!" laughs Ba. How you experience your faith is a very personal issue, says Sen. "I've no idea who prays five times a day. Praying is not asking for stuff like a new car. It's entering into connection with Allah. This is a private matter."

At the end of the evening, Sen gives the last chicken snack away to another member. He explains that he sometimes finds it important to give away something he really wants. Not to get attention, but to do good without self-interest. "For example, I always try to think through the reasons behind my actions. This applies to my studies too: I want to work hard. This is motivated by my faith, because I think I'm here for a reason. I want to get the best out of myself, and put all the talents I was blessed with to good use." *****

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Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen



20 PORTRAIT

To truly be there for another person. This is what Francine,

To truly be there for another person. This is what Francine, Wouter and Ninke are learning in their Spiritual Care programme. Once they have completed their Master's programme, they will be able to help people with existential questions concerning life and death. 'People sometimes share things they've never told anyone before.'

ext: Annemarie Haverkamp / Photography: Duncan de Fey

'I WANT TO OFFER MORE THAN AN INTERVIEW'

Francine Wildenborg (36) from Utrecht

"Spiritual Care has traditionally been a profession practiced by ministers. The pastor would come to a person's deathbed to talk about the afterlife or faith in God. Society has changed, fewer people go to church. I'm training to become a spiritual care counsellor without a religious background. In my previous work as journalist for the Algemeen Dagblad I wrote a lot about healthcare. My articles often focused on illnesses and treatments, but rarely on how to deal with an unresolvable situation. Who will take care of you if you contract an incurable disease, become handicapped, or suffer a loss? Yet these were the stories that touched me most. As a journalist, there isn't much you can do other than nod your head and write what people tell you. In my role of spiritual care counsellor I have the opportunity for longer and deeper contact, and I have tools at my disposal to help people. In the study programme I learn interview techniques, somewhat similar to journalistic interviews. It's important to ask good questions and to listen. The interviews are confidential; people sometimes share things they've never told anyone before. Painful matters, or things they're ashamed of. This can be a great relief and make way for a different mindset. Together with the person, you can help him or her find an experience or metaphor that offers them support. As part of my study programme I now read the Bible and the Quran. You have to understand what Jesus means to a Christian and how important the Prophet Muhammad is in the life of a Muslim. I don't have to pray along with people, but I need to understand their rituals. After my studies I hope to work parttime in a hospital and part-time in people's homes. As of 1 January, the Minister of Health is making € 25 million available for spiritual care in the home, which is really good news!"

'PEOPLE SAY I'VE FOUND **MY** CALLING'

People I know sometimes say: 'You've really found your calling.' I wouldn't use the word 'calling' myself, but I understand what they mean. A spiritual care counsellor is a confidante. People struggle with something, and you have the honour of listening to them. I find it amazing to be able to truly be there for someone. Already as a child I knew I wanted to do something for society. My father is a pastoral worker and sometimes lets me read his sermons. This leads to some great conversations. As a spiritual care counsellor, I won't only be there for believers, but for anyone facing existential guestions or questions about purpose. I'm aware of the fact that I'm still guite

Wouter Derks (20) from Dongen "A few years ago I came out of the closet as a Christian. My parents are religious, both of them theologians, but they've always allowed me a lot of freedom. For a long time, I wasn't sure where I stood. I've always been interested in faith-related and existential questions. Why are we on Earth? Why do I get out of bed every morning? Sometimes I have encounters that are so moving, I think of them as divine. Compare it to love. Everyone knows it's real, but its existence is hard to prove.

I'm currently completing the higher professional education Bachelor's programme in Spiritual Care in Utrecht and following the pre-Master's programme at Radboud University. If you want to work in an academic hospital, you need an academic degree. I really enjoy the higher professional education programme because I really need some practical skills. Last year I was already allowed to do an internship at

a hospital.

young, and that I don't have much life experience. I can only try to grow further as a person; it's important in this work. According to my internship supervisor at the hospital I'm good at creating an atmosphere in which people feel heard."

Ninke Luijters (32) from Cuijk

"Since I turned sixteen it's been my dream to join an NGO and go to Congo to help war victims. But our children are still young, and this isn't the right time. A topic that keeps me busy is moral injury (for example towards veterans, Eds.). Attentively listening to the experiences of people who have experienced a traumatic event is essential to help them to process it. I believe the essence of the work of a spiritual care counsellor lies in listening to someone without prejudice.

I worked for more than ten years as a nurse in a hospital, primarily in obstetrics. There I also organised memorial services for parents who had lost a baby. In this role I noticed how important it is to give the person in front of you recognition and to take them seriously. A mother who had lost two babies once said

IT'S **MY DREAM** TO GO TO CONGO

to me: 'At the other hospital I felt so unheard and misunderstood.' This touched me. It had made an already intensely sad situation unnecessarily difficult for her.

I'm a good listener and I've decided to make this my life's work. I was personally raised as a Catholic, but I don't think you need a religious background to be a good spiritual care counsellor. In the study programme we learn a lot about Islam and Judaism, which is very useful. From my own Western, Christian identity, it's easy to make mistakes. For example, in the delivery room, it's good to know that according to tradition a Muslim father wants to whisper a prayer in the ear of his new-born baby. Where possible, we should make room for this. As a spiritual care counsellor, I'd like to work with a therapy dog, and I'm figuring out how to make this possible."



The NEERLANDICA CATHOLICA is an 1888 overview of all parishes, schools, monasteries and other Catholic Dutch institutions. "And therefore the most boring book in the Netherlands," grins former Director and now volunteer at the Catholic Documentation Centre (KDC) Lodewijk Winkeler. But Dutch Catholics were very proud of it in the late 19th century, as the book showcases how successful Catholics had become in the Low Lands. The first copy of Neerlandica Catholica was handed over to Pope Leo XIII on the occasion of the golden anniversary of his priesthood.

Photo: Julie de Bruin

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OPERATING AT THE INTERFACE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

God is never far away in a hospital. He plays an important role in the history of Radboud university medical center and in the minds of its religious patients. As a doctor, how do you deal with this? Fertility programmes and treatments for seriously ill babies remain sensitive topics even without appealing to religious morality.

Text: Annemarie Haverkamp / Photo left: Getty Images / Other photo's: Radboudumc

oes he ever feel like he's sitting in God's chair? Yes, admits neonatologist Arno van Heijst. Sometimes, as he wrestles with a dilemma on whether or not to continue to treat a new-born, he hears a small voice in his head. "Stay away from these kinds of decisions," whispers the voice. "Who are you to take a decision on this life?"

"On the other hand," says Van Heijst, "it's us doctors who decide to start a treatment in the first place. At times we begin full of hope, but the treatment fails to deliver the desired results. In these cases, you have no choice but to talk about whether it's in the interests of the child to continue."

Van Heijst is Head of the Neonatology Department at Radboud university medical center. Half of all babies who end up on his ward were born prematurely. In the Netherlands, babies can receive treatment from 24 weeks of pregnancy onwards. The decision is up to the parents. Until 2010, the limit was set at 25 weeks. As technological advances make more possible, doctors are beginning to wonder what is desirable, says Van Heijst. He chairs a national working group committed to re-examining this guideline. What's the absolute lower limit? What factors play a role in the decision to offer treatment or not? If doctors and nurses don't offer care to extremely premature babies, the babies won't make it. Four out of ten babies born at 24 weeks still die at the Neonatology Department and research shows that some of the survivors suffer from neurological, mental and/or physical disabilities.

A far-reaching decision about a baby's life is not something you take alone, says Van Heijst. "I always say that if anyone at our department has any doubts about whether a treatment makes sense - no matter whether they're a doctor or a cleaner – they must speak up. Wethen sit down and hold a moral discussion. This happens according to a set protocol. The discussion is chaired by an ethicist."

The discussion doesn't centre on the medical treatment, but on the consequences it may have, the severity of the illness or disability, and the child's prognosis. The parents' religious beliefs may also be a factor in the discussion. Parents who are Reformed Calvinists may, for instance, want doctors to proceed with a treatment

because to stop would be unacceptable from the perspective of their faith. "Discontinuing treatment is viewed by some as a form of euthanasia, but from a legal perspective, it isn't. These are sometimes severely ill patients who can only live with medical support. Discontinuing treatment is not the same as active life termination."

It sometimes helps to explain this to very religious parents. But usually, in Van Heijst's experience, it is not faith that plays the decisive role. Once parents understand that their child has a poor prognosis, they need time to accept it. "I once had parents here who said their Pastor had told them they weren't allowed to discontinue the treatment. I asked how the Pastor could know what state their child was in, and invited him to come and see for himself. We went to look at the baby together. In the end he said to me: 'You must do what you think is best.'"

Traditionally, Radboud university medical center has had the reputation of following the precepts of the Catholic Church, says Van Heijst. And there are still people who say to him: "But in Nijmegen you never discontinue a treatment, do you?" As if every life, no matter how hopeless, is holy. He knows from stories that doctors

ARNO VAN HEIJST



At the fertility lab.



'DISCON-TINUING TREATMENT IS NOT THE SAME AS ACTIVE LIFE TERMI-NATION'

in the past were indeed accountable to the Bishops who stood guard over the hospital's Catholic identity, for example in abortion cases.

"I've worked here for thirty years, and a lot has changed during this time," he says. "I don't think we're more reticent than other hospitals, but this kind of reputation is hard to shake off."

Single mothers

Didi Braat echoes Arno van Heijst's words: Catholic identity used to play a more important role at the hospital, whereas guidelines are now driven by social debate. Braat is head of the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department at Radboud university medical center. There was a time when lesbian couples did not qualify for fertility treatment in Nijmegen, she remembers. "But as doctors, we've all taken an oath. It's our duty to help people to the best of our abilities. What could be more beautiful than helping two people who love one another to realise their dream of having a child, and why should it matter that they are two women?"

For years now, lesbian couples have been welcome at the Gynaecology Department. Braat doesn't remember exactly when the shift took place, but she finds the current policy only logical. Single women can also get treatment in Nijmegen. "In the latter cases, we do take special care to consider the interests of the child." To do so gynaecologists use the 'moral contraindications' protocol devised by the Dutch Society for Obstetrics and Gynaecology (NVOG). Based on the protocol's questions, doctors and other parties involved try to assess whether there is too much risk of severe damage to the unborn child. Will the mother be able to take on the task of raising the child single-handedly? Does she have a strong support network? "Sometimes the discussion is attended by a GP or the patient herself."

SINGLE ROOMS

At the new Neonatology Department of Radboud university medical center, completed in 2022, the goal is to give all new-born babies their own room. The main advantage for parents is, of course, that they have more privacy. An additional advantage, according to Head of Department Arno van Heijst, is that people have more room to perform rituals. This may be the baptism of a baby that recently died, or a farewell. "We've had Moroccan families of 25 members gather here. I think it's beautiful, and it's important that people can be there for each other. Rituals are often essential for the parents to be able to go on with their lives."



'WHAT COULD BE MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN HELPING TWO PEOPLE TO REALISE THEIR DREAM OF HAVING A CHILD'

DIDI BRAAT

Didi Braat has also had occasion to welcome a Pastor in her office. There was a couple who couldn't get pregnant, but who due to their Reformed background had issues with IVF because the embryos that were not reinserted would be destroyed. According to their faith, an embryo was already a person, and under no circumstances was it permitted to kill a person. The Pastor came along to hear how the fertility treatment works. "It can help tremendously to explain what you're doing. If people have moral objections to the creation of supernumerary embryos, we can offer them the option of only fertilising one egg. Normally, we perform IVF with multiple eggs, which are all fertilised, so we can select and reinsert the best one. Supernumerary embryos are frozen, so they can be reinserted at a later stage if the pregnancy fails, or for a following pregnancy. This makes for higher odds of success."

Another solution is to harvest multiple eggs from a woman, only fertilise one, and freeze the remaining eggs for later use. Since an egg is different to an embryo, any objection to 'the creation of surplus embryos' disappears and people can get help getting pregnant with a clear conscience.

Personally, Braat wouldn't refer to the procedure as the 'destruction' of an embryo. She likes to explain this to the couples in some detail. "When an egg is fertilised, we first look at whether its cells continue to divide. If they don't, the embryo is not viable. Only embryos that divide further are frozen and later thawed. Some don't survive this stage. If we get them out of the nitrogen and they don't respond, they've simply reached the end of their life."

To be clear: in this context an embryo is microscopic material contained in a straw, so small it can't be seen with the naked eye. People can also pick up the thawed straw. Just the other day, a Muslim couple came to the Department, says Braat. They had received a letter asking whether they wanted their frozen embryos to be kept. 'No', was their answer; their family was already complete. But they did want to take up the offered opportunity to say good-bye properly at home. "This happens six or seven times a year," says Braat, and it is by no means always due to religious beliefs. "I think it's beautiful."

Active life termination

Radboud university medical center specialises in fertility preservation, in other words: helping people who have or have had cancer to have a child. For example, emergency IVF treatments are offered where eggs (or embryos) are frozen before a woman undergoes chemo treatment. After the illness the eggs can be thawed, fertilised, and reinserted in the uterus. But what if, due to cancer, a woman no longer has a uterus? "We've asked the Executive Board of our hospital to investigate the possibility of pregnancy via a surrogate mother," explains Braat. "This option is increasingly the subject of social debate. It forces us to think about it carefully and thoroughly. At the moment, we're looking into the option of offering surrogate motherhood. In the coming months, we'll investigate what this could mean for our hospital."



At the fertility lab.

All this to say that Radboud university medical center is by no means a conservative hospital - or not anymore. Her colleague Arno van Heijst, from the Neonatology Department, recently wrote a letter to the legal department. Imagine, he wrote, that he had a baby in his Department who was in hopeless and unbearable distress and the doctor in charge decided, after careful deliberation with his team, to actively terminate the baby's life something the law permits - would this doctor have the hospital's support? And how would the Executive Board feel about it? "This question was submitted to the hospital's Ethics Committee, and was considered in great depth. The answer was that in a case like this, active life termination would be allowed." Van Heijst is currently working on a protocol for such exceptional cases within the hospital. His conclusion: times have changed. *

To each their faith

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Ruud de Hoop (25), Master's student in Civil Law

"I've had this ritual for many years now, and it has to do with football. Early one Saturday morning, I must have been 10 or so, I was playing in defence. Here's what happened: | was still in my own half of the field, when the ball rolled towards me, and I kicked it. You wouldn't believe it, but that ball flew right over the keeper into the opponents' goal. I couldn't believe what had happened. I was so happy! Later on I wondered why it had gone so well. By chance, I had done something different that morning, and that's how my ritual came into being. I'd put on my left shin guard before the right. Same thing with my socks: first the left, then the right. I'd put my shoes on in a different order, first the right, then the left. In the eyes of my ten-year-old self, this was what had brought me good luck. After this amazing goal, I had no choice but to keep doing things in that order when getting changed. And it worked. It's brought me championships, tournament victories, and lots of other SUCCESSES

I still play football. The ritual gives me a feeling of safety and that extra bit of motivation. And when things go wrong, I immediately ask myself whether I've followed my ritual properly. And the next time around I'm more careful to put everything on in the right order."



HOW TO BECOME A SAINT IN 8 STEPS

It's not that easy to become a Saint. Over the centuries, the Vatican has developed quite an impressive canonisation procedure. An attempt at a summary in 8 steps.

Text: Ken Lambeets / illustration: Roel Venderbosch







Right off the most important condition for canonisation. Not always as easy as it seems.

HAVE A SPOTLESS REPUTATION

2

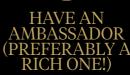
Canonisation is not for crooks or villains. Immediately after your death people should say: This was a truly exceptional man or woman. And your 'blessed reputation' should continue to last long after your death.



BE WORSHIPPED

People say that 'Only the forgotten are truly dead'. If you want to be canonised, though, the opposite applies. If a person is still worshipped years after his or her death, the Diocese may initiate an investigation into canonisation.





A beatification or canonisation doesn't only take a lot of time, it also costs a lot of money. A person or institution to plead your case and pay the procedural costs is a must for any candidate Saint.



5 -

HAVE BEEN A GOOD PERSON

A spotless reputation is not enough to become a Saint. Every word you've ever written is thoroughly scrutinised. Friends and family are questioned. If there's the slightest doubt concerning your goodness, the entire procedure will be aborted.



A FIRST MIRACLE

To become a Saint, you first need to be beatified. This requires a miracle, pretty much always recovery from an incurable disease after praying to the candidate Saint. Ten independent doctors investigate the recovery and theologians check whether the aspiring Saint was responsible. A committee of Cardinals and Bishops then issues a recommendation to the Pope.

A SECOND MIRACLE

7

No.2

Congratulations! You have been beatified and may now be worshipped in your own Diocese. For global worship, all you need is a second miracle. Even martyrs, who can be beatified without a first miracle, now have to get to work on one. You should therefore repeat Step 6.



EARN THE POPE'S FAVOUR

God's ways are unfathomable and the same can be said of the Pope. He alone decides whether and when a canonisation Mass takes place on Saint Peter's Square in Rome. The reasons for his decision are unknown: they belong to the secrets of the Vatican.

WELL ON THE WAY: TITUS BRANDSMA

Carmelite and priest Titus Brandsma was one of the first professors of Radboud University. He was appointed Professor of Philosophy and Mysticism in 1923, and was Rector Magnificus in the academic year 1932-1933. Brandsma was arrested on 19 January 1942 for resisting the Nazi regime. He died in Dachau on 26 July 1942.

"Since he died a martyr, Titus Brandsma was

beatified immediately", explains Anne-Marie Bos from the Titus Brandsma Institute. Brandsma then only needed a miracle to be canonised and this has now also happened. Bos: "In 2004, a Carmelite Father in Florida suffered from a skin cancer that had metastasised to his head and neck. His life expectancy was so minimal that the fact that he's still alive today, fourteen years later, is truly a miracle.

One he owes to his worship of Titus Brandsma." A committee of Florida doctors have already declared it a miracle that the man is still alive. The file is now at the Vatican. "We expect the three committees to have completed their investigation within six months," says Bos. It will then be up to the Pope to decide if and when Brandsma is to be canonised. Bos: "If this happens, there'll be a big celebration!"

MONIX AND RESEARCHER

Ritual researcher Thomas Quartier lives in the St. Willibrord's Abbey in Doetinchem. He sings psalms and mops the hallway floors on a weekly basis. When the bell rings for evening prayers, he gets up and walks to church. 'That which seems most pointless is our core business here.'

Text: Ken Lambeets / Photography: Bert Beelen



uarter past noon on the dot, six kilometres outside Doetinchem. The small Neo-Roman church of the St. Willibrord's Abbey – made

of bricks from the stone factories of the Achterhoek – is pretty full for this afternoon mass. Their hands folded under their black habit, eleven monks sing psalms.

One of them is Thomas Quartier, Director of the Benedictine Centre for Liturgical Studies at Radboud University, and Professor at KU Leuven. For the past five years, he's spent three and a half hours here every day. "It's an emotional place for me. I fell in love with this church."

Among the Benedictines, the researcher is the odd man out. Normally, the Order's monks never leave the abbey, but that doesn't apply to Quartier: he's in Nijmegen two days a week, inLeuven once a month, and in Rome three weeks a year.

After the afternoon prayers, the monks walk one by one towards the canteen. In the bare room, they take their seats. There's no talking during lunch. In celebration of the current Abbot's third anniversary as head of the Abbey, Monteverdi's Vespers of the Virgin Mary can be heard through the speakers.

The soup terrine passes from hand to hand, and the monks eat their soup in silent concentration. When everyone's done, a Brother comes around with a trolley to pick up the empty plates. The soup is quickly followed by a pasta dish with fish – vegetarian Quartier is offered a meat substitute – and a fruit pudding.

"Shortly after taking my vows, I gained a lot of weight," says Quartier as we share a cup of coffee after lunch. "There's a tendency to eat much too much here. But I've lost the extra weight since."

Petrol station

And to think that the Kranenburg-born Quartier never intended to study Theology. "My father died when I was 19, and I didn't know what to do with my life," he says.

"I happened to be classmates with the son of Herman Häring, at the time Dean of Theology at Radboud University. 'Come and study at our Faculty,' the Dean told me. I drove across the border every day and didn't even have to rent a room. And now, 25 years later, I'm still affiliated with the University."

After his studies, Quartier's career really took off. Even before defending his PhD, he had already been offered a permanent contract. He worked hard, and attended many international conferences. Quartier: "Like many, I was married to my academic career."

As he turned 35, Quartier began to wonder whether he wanted to continue in this vein until retirement. "It wasn't a principle-based decision on my part not to get married, it just never happened. But I did miss a kind of life form."

Quartier had visited the St. Willibrord's Abbey in Doetinchem on an abbey weekend with his students. The place appealed to him, an appeal that went beyond professional interest. "For a long time I thought I only needed a spiritual petrol station to fill my tank once a month. But the contemplation, silence, openness and predictable rhythm of the Abbey appealed to me more and more."

At a certain point, Quartier came to the realisation that he wasn't a researcher who occasionally visited the Abbey, but a monk

'NOT EVERYONE SUFFERING FROM A **MID-LIFE CRISIS** SHOULD JOIN A MONASTERY'



whose craft was academic work. "That is not to say that everyone suffering from a mid-life crisis should join a monastery. If you'd told me eight years ago that I would end up in an abbey, I would have run the other way screaming. Every day you have to put your own priorities aside. When I have a deadline and the bell rings for vespers (evening prayers, Eds.) at ten to five, I walk to church. That which is seemingly pointless is our core business here. It's incredibly salubrious."

Bob Dylan

Now aged 45, Quartier, a wordsmith if ever there was one, still has a boyish air about him. In his own words, the extravert monk needs the regularity of monastery life to remain in balance. "I teach seventy to eighty public lectures per year; sometimes I don't get home until 1 a.m. Luckily, I don't get tired easily."

Quartier takes us to his monastery cell. It's not easy to keep up with his fast walking pace through the dark monastery corridors. Via a

'IT'S HERE, IRONICALLY, THAT I **REDISCOVERED MUSIC**'

low door we enter the first room, a small office with a desk, a bookcase, and a modest CD collection. A bed only just fits in the adjoining bedroom.

The walls are adorned with a hand-painted icon, but also some portraits of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. "When I first joined the monastery, I thought you could only sing Gregorian chants and psalms in Dutch translation. But it's here, ironically, that I rediscovered music."

On the chair lies a scarf from FC Cologne. Wistfully, Quartier remembers the matches played by his favourite club at the RheinEnergie-Stadion. "I hope to go to another FC Cologne match soon. When I was young, we often went to Cologne. I love the openness, playfulness and nonchalance of the Rhineland."

Side effect

And yet the monk also uses his monastery cell, equipped with an excellent Wi-Fi connection, to work. "I use Skype to supervise theses and PhD theses. If I feel like the walls are closing in on me, I take a pile of exam papers to the Abbey library."

Quartier is absolutely convinced that life at the Abbey has made him a better researcher. "The 1990s were a decade of hysterical objec-



tivity claims in the humanities. Anyone who took a religious stance or a different perspective was dismissed as being non-objective. I have the feeling that when I give interviews wearing my habit, people are more open to what really interests them. That doesn't make my approach any less scientific than that of my colleagues. By the way, I also notice that many students are looking for this kind of engaged form of science."

The monk believes that a clear identity has added value for a humanities researcher. "By adopting an impartial perspective in my research, I gain insights I could never achieve otherwise. Take the feeling for rituals: I can only really enter into dialogue with participants if I talk to them on their level. You have to get a feel for what you want to investigate, and genuinely step into it; otherwise you'll miss the ritual boat."

Since joining the Order Quartier has doubled his number of publications. "Despite the many interruptions for prayer services, I have

an ideal rhythm here. But I should rap myself on the knuckles for saying things like this: it's not what monastery life is about."

Since he's often away from the abbey, Quartier has relatively few house duties. One afternoon a week he has to clean the hallways, and walks through corridors wielding a gigantic mop. He then vacuums up the dust he has collected. "I don't feel superior to the other Brothers because I have fewer tasks. Sometimes I even feel unacknowledged. My fellow Brothers have no idea how hard I work to finish a book on time."

The Professor does not see his fellow Brothers as colleagues, let alone friends. "In a monastery, you need to keep a healthy distance, otherwise cliques form. If you're incapable of maintaining a certain degree of self-relativisation, you won't make it here. But all in all, we have relatively good relations with each other."

Godchild

We go outside for a moment. The monk is keen to show us the silence centre located in the former bull stables of the Abbey. The fall of the Berlin Wall led to a massive import of cheap meat from the East, and the monks had to find other sources of income. "We are entirely self-sufficient," says Quartier. "Our guest quarters can accommodate ten individual visitors and groups of up to 21 persons. I often teach courses there about our spirituality. And I contribute some income through my work at the University and the lectures I give."

In the garden, Quartier explains that obedience is also part of monastery life. An old plane tree is losing its leaves, a blanket of dew covers the grass. In the distance, you can hear the sounds of a busy road. In summer, the monks take a daily walk around the estate. "If I'm asked by Radboud Reflects to give a lecture or if I want to attend my godchild's birthday party, I have to ask the Abbot for permission. If you can surrender to this, you become freer in life. It's a paradox, of course: a life of obedience is the ultimate act of disobedience."

Quartier finds the question of whether he wants to remain in the monastery for the rest of his life 'a difficult one'. "It's a bit like with marriage: most marriages end in divorce, but nobody starts out with the intention of separating. This is also how I see my life at the monastery. More than half of the monks who

To each their faith

Anastacia Demydenko (24), Bachelor's student in Political Science

"The night before an exam I always wash my hair with shampoo. It feels as if all the unimportant information gets washed out and only the important stuff remains. I then read all the material one more time and immediately turn off the light. Then I put all my noots under my pillow. When I walk into the exam room the next day, I make sure I sit at the back on the right. So I don't feel the pressure of someone being behind me and I have all the space I need. I really need that seat because if I sit anywhere else, I tend to panic. To make sure I get my spot, I always show up really early.

It may sound strange, but it really works! When I failed my driving test for the third time, a friend told me that it helped to wear red underwear on important occasions. On the fourth try, I thought: Fuck it, I'm just going to do it! And I passed the test.

I've being doing these rituals for more than seven years now. I think people need superstitions, because it gives them a feeling of control over situations. Of course you can study for an exam, but sometimes you can do even more."





COLUMN

.ucy's law Lucienne van der Geld is a lecturer of notarial law and director of Network Notarissen.

Marriage law

Religion is a hot topic in my field, in particular when it comes to marriage law, which was modernised in 2018. The legal default is no longer general community of property (est. 1838), but limited community of property. This means that when you get divorced, you don't have to share everything with your ex. But it's still possible to sign a prenuptial agreement at a notary's office. The new marriage law didn't get much support in the two Houses of the Dutch Parliament from the religious parties: despite the high incidence of divorce, they still believe in general community of property. Shortly after the new law was passed, the CDA and CU made it into government. They managed to get a workaround into the coalition agreement, so that general community of property can once again be introduced as the legal default. Luckily things haven't gone that far vet.

In the Islamic faith there is the practice of bride price or dowry. A bride price is a gift from the man to the woman, which she can use to support herself if they get divorced. A dowry, on the other hand, comes from the parents of the bride. Neither the bride price nor the dowry comes under community of property; they remain the property of the woman (after a divorce). This is easier to implement under limited community of property than under general community of property.

Next time marriage law makes it onto the political agenda, should we once again take these kinds of 'religious' interests into consideration? No! Not only because the interests of Protestants and Christians generally seem to oppose those of Muslim traditions. But because partners are already free - within legal frameworks - to arrange things as they see fit. That's what prenuptial agreements are for! My message to the CDA and CU: don't subject all Dutch spouses-to-be to a Calvinist marriage regime again. As far as I'm concerned, from 1838 to 2018 was long enough!



join the Order leave after a few years. After a while, they don't find it so special anymore to walk dark corridors at the crack of dawn wearing a habit, or they have issues with communal life."

Duiven

It's now 9.15 p.m. After the last mass of the day, Quartier walks to his monastery cell to write a few personal e-mails. "I never go to bed later than 10 p.m. My alarm clock goes off at 5.15 a.m.: it's always a struggle to get up, but I manage. When I was a student, I often partied until the morning. These days, I think it's

more rock-'n'-roll to sit on my meditation plank at 5.45 a.m."

Quartier continues to combine research and his life as a monk, although he finds it difficult at times not to be at the monastery full-time. "Sometimes I don't make it to vespers because I'm stuck in traffic in Duiven on the way back from the University. And when I finally make it to bed at 1 a.m. after a public lecture, I still attend church at 6.15 a.m. the next morning. My Brothers sometimes say: Why don't you sleep in? But I can't. I belong there. My love of this life is far from over." *

THE MYSTERY OF RELIGIOUS SCIENTISTS

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In their office or lab they study the cosmos and the workings of the human body. Out in the world they pray, go to church or sometimes even work as lay pastor. There are still quite a few of them out there: religious scientists.

Text: Lara Maassen / Illustration: emdé

ong ago, the church and the university were closely linked, and churches founded their own universities. In 2018, such a combination is much less self-evident, as society – and science – have become largely secularised. As a quantum physicist, can you still believe that the world was created in six days?

Of course not, says Professor of Mathematics Klaas Landsman. "A Catholic university is a contradiction in terms. The Catholic Church rests on four pillars: tradition, authority, dogma, and faith in miracles. Each of them conflicts with the idea of science. Universities are supposed to seek the truth, a quest that is blocked by religion." The Bible is full of factually inaccurate claims, argues Landsman. "Whether about the origins of life on earth, and about its further history, including the origins of Christian faith itself. As a scientist you have to compare two scenarios: either life on earth has divine origins, or it's a natural process. Everything seems to point to the latter."

It's not that Landsman is not occupied with religion. He's written dozens of books about Jesus as a historical figure, and he enjoys studying the historicity of religion. Almost every year, his online New Year's greetings includes a quotation from the Bible. The mathematician has nothing against religious people, he says. What he those six days are primarily a literary choice, one that provides structure to consider deeper questions. Genesis is a story written by priests for shepherds and scientists, but it's not a scientific story. It is, however, interesting that such an old story should take such a rational view of the world's origins as a step-by-step process. No Big Bang and Multiverse theory can truly explain our origins. Where does the Big Bang itself come from? What about nature's laws? You always have to start with a hypothesis. For me, this 'hypothesis' is God, who is approachable, and has anidea for this Universe – this last bit is indeed faith."

Falcke recently shared a podium discussion with former Minister and researcher Ronald Plasterk. "He focused not so much on the 'religion' versus 'science' dichotomy, but rather on the importance of having an open attitude to life, as a religious person and as a scientist. Do you find yourself holding on to radical truths? Of course there are still fundamental believers. But if you dare to take a critical look at your religion and at science, you can easily combine the two."

Jonah and the whale

Mathematician Henk Don also has no trouble combining work and faith. He was raised as a

> Reformed Protestant and still lives in the Bible Belt. In addition to his assistant professor job, he attends church on a weekly basis and represents the SGP on the municipal council. His office in the Huygens building reveals little: the mathematical formulas on the chalkboard draw most attention, and there are no crucifixes on the walls. Don doesn't like to push his faith in people's faces. He believes that faith is a personal matter. Within mathematics he hasn't run into any themes that would

make him feel uncomfortable about his faith.

"I see that there's tension between science and religion, but for me the two don't contradict each other. With complex themes, such as the origins of life on earth, it's unclear to me where the truth lies. The Bible story sounds improbable, but at the same time, the Big Bang theory also only appeared in the last century. I wouldn't be at all surprised if people had a completely different perspective on it in a hundred years' time."

Don considers Biblical stories such as that of Jonah and the whale to be improbable, but not necessarily untrue. "Of course, we can't prove that Jonah really spent time inside the whale. At the same time, we also can't prove that he didn't. I think this falls outside the realm of science." Is that allowed, then, to doubt one's faith? Don: "There are many people for whom literal interpretation is beyond all doubt, but I can't accept such definitive answers."





objects to is people who say that science and religion are compatible. "In my experience these people tend to avoid facts and rely on deep feelings which I apparently don't share."

Nonsense, says Professor Heino Falcke. The astronomer is not only a scientist, but also a lay minister in Frechen, Germany, where he lives. His daughter is about to graduate as a minister, and his family attends church every Sunday. All of this is perfectly compatible with his job as a scientist, he says. At every important career milestone, he inherits a family-owned Bible, which he then gives place of honour next to a crucifix on the bookshelf.

"Many critics, but also some fundamentalists, read the Bible as if it were a physics text book – as a single-level manual that contains only technical facts," says Falcke. "So you probably assume I do so too. But nothing could be less true." Take the creation of the earth. "I think



Octopuses

According to Klaas Landsman there are fundamental aspects in which religion and science really do clash. Take the position of humans within the Universe, he says. "Science sees humans as not so very different from animals, and vice versa, mammals and even squids are seen as remarkably similar to people. Both can be social and intelligent, experience emotions, and know suffering and mortal fear. Dutch biologists like Radboud University Honorary Fellow Frans de Waal and Nobel Prize Winner Niko Tinbergen already subscribed to this idea a long time ago. In Christianity, on the contrary, humans have a unique position in the Universe. Humans, the idea goes, are fundamentally different from animals. This is what entitles us, without any objections from Christianity, to slaughter them by the hundreds of millions. Every day."

Student of Medical Biology Jet Westerink recognises this contradiction. In addition to her studies, she's also an active member of the *Christelijke Nijmegen studentenvereniging de Navigators* (NSN), and in this context took part in a roundtable discussion last year on science and religion. "Biology has taught me that humans and animals are not genetically different. But if I personally look at a cat and a human, I can't help but see fundamental differences. The question is of course: would this kind of distinction really be apparent in our DNA? Or did God make humans special in a different way, without adjusting their biological programming?"

Two hundred years

And yet, she believes science could take a more critical look at itself. "Many scientific discoveries currently rely on an atheistic worldview. This is also the conceptual framework of most scientists. In the US, there are groups of people who do research from a religious perspective. I think it's a good idea. Not to prove that we're right, but so that people – including scientists – continue to think beyond the atheistic framework."

Don also believes science could do with a bit less arrogance. "It's not true that religion alone is full of assumptions and dogma. These are just as prevalent in science. Take, for instance, the idea that something is only true if we can prove it. That's also an assumption. I'm not saying it's wrong, but science relies on so many assumptions and other ideas that nobody ever doubts. Religion is by no means the only place where this happens."

What's more, science is only three hundred years old, whereas religion has been around for thousands of years, emphasise Westerink and Falcke. "The fact that we only now question whether 'PEOPLE FIND IT EASIER TO TALK ABOUT SEX THAN ABOUT RELIGION' religion and science are compatible also goes to show how long they were able to co-exist peacefully," says Falcke. "It's only in the last two hundred years that people have started making an issue out of it. Many important scientists were also religious."

Jesus' fan club

Religion can enrich and add meaning to a scientific worldview, says Falcke. "If I were to look at the world from a purely scientific perspective, I would only see particles. Questions like: 'What's the purpose of being human?' and 'What is good and evil?' would remain unanswered. This seems dangerous to me. As scientists, we need to ask these questions more than anyone."

Can we then see religion as a separate domain, one that falls outside science? No, says Landsman. "Science is just as capable of investigating the origins of our morality or sense of meaning. Its conclusion is that these concepts, just like the concept of God, don't originate outside, but inside the human mind."

Falcke: "There are already enough fields that are not covered by science. That doesn't necessarily make them untrue. Take love: you can't prove its existence. Or hope. Just because you can't prove something doesn't mean it doesn't exist."

Falcke finds an ally in Russian Physicist Misha Katsnelson who, following an imposed period of atheism in the Soviet Union, converted to the Russian Orthodox Church at the age of 24. He now works together with Nobel Prize Winners, has written two books on faith and science (in Russian), and still reads the Bible. "In science, we're required to investigate things very precisely and in a controlled manner. But religion is not something you can study in a lab. It's about life itself. It requires you to become involved, rather than remain asmuch as pos-

sible on the sidelines. For me, it's not at all about proving what is true or not in the Bible. It's about the lifestyle it inspires in me."

Although all the scientists interviewed walk around the Huygens Building, religion is not a topic of conversation at the coffee machine. "People find it easier to talk about sex than about religion," concludes Falcke. "Some colleagues behave as if it's 'not done'

to have religious faith as a scientist. I find this annoying. It means missing out on a lot of knowledge and depth in the discussion. When I hear arguments for it, I often find them flat

or polemic. We need to talk about faith more!"

But the question is whether Landsman and the people who think like him will ever be convinced. "What's left of religion if you don't believe the Bible's factual claims? A kind of Jesus fan club?" *

NEWS FROM THE OR AND THE USR www.radboudnet.nl/medezeggenschap www.numedezeggenschap.nl

POINT TAKEN!

University Student Council

Dear students,

Here it is once again: an update from the University Student Council (USR). The year started well with our public meet-the-board get-together at the CultuurCafé. We'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for attending! As a Student Council we've been working on the University's budget and annual plan. These documents are extremely important for charting the course of the University. The budget states that the well-being of students is a core theme for this year, something which we as a Council fully support. While plodding our way through endless budget figures, we're also pondering the new long-term internationalisation plan. In addition, new agreements have again been reached on institutional tuition fees and we're exploring options for a central sustainability policy.

We're also actively considering the best scenarios when it comes to student loans. Every faculty has been awarded additional funds by the government to invest in the quality of education. The idea is that these funds should really be devoted to improving education quality and not to ensuring you can get great coffee on the corner of the Erasmusplein. Although we can't deny that the latter is sometimes necessary to survive working late in the University Library. We're also having a thorough look at the BSA and a study is being made of digital resources in education (including Brightspace). What's going well and what could be improved?

We're also delighted to report that the new long-term plan of the Radboud Honours Academy has been ratified! The Honours Academy is now open to all students and excellence is no longer the norm.

Another important issue for us as a Council is the problems students experience finding a study workplace at busy times. We are now addressing this problem and aim to create both short-term and long-term solutions. In short, plenty of fun and exciting developments!

Don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Instagram, where you can also find great 'Did you know that?' items about our University, like the following: #didyouknowthat if a lecture room is too cold/too warm, you can report this via storingen@uvb.ru.nl or (024-36)33333 (5x3)? This way you can make sure the temperature is just right next time! Useful in view of the cold weather to come this winter.

Kind regards, The 22th University Student Council

Works Council

New agreement with AMD

The Works Council has the right of consent to the cooperation agreement with the Occupational Health & Safety and Environmental Service (AMD). An extension of this agreement will be decided on in December. This agreement contains, for example, the number of hours that the university purchases for the deployment of occupational physicians, environmental experts, staff welfare work and occupational health and safety nurses. Partly at the insistence of the Works Council, the university decided to evaluate the cooperation with the AMD; this evaluation will take place early in 2019. Not only the AMD services will be examined, but also the way in which the university uses these services. The question is whether all managers have enough information on how to deal with sick employees. It is also not clear whether the prevention staff within the university receive the correct additional training. The aim of the evaluation is to clarify this before a subsequent agreement is concluded. Pending the results of the evaluation, the service agreement will be extended by one year. Vox 3 12/2018





RELIGION ON CAMPUS

The only real **BEADLE'S STAFF** is kept in a heavy iron safe. The silver staff is the attribute of the University's ceremony master, the Beadle, and nearly as old as the University itself.

The Catholic citizens of Nijmegen donated it to the University in 1924. The Beadle uses it to hit the floor during academic ceremonies, which hasn't been particularly good for the staff and has led to slight damage from intensive use. This is why a replica has been used since 2000, with small bells that tinkle during ceremonies. Both staffs are decorated with a figure of Christ on a rose-adorned globe and the coats of arms of he Netherlands, the city of

Nijmegen, and Nijmegen University. The original staff only comes out of its safe for

celebrations outside the Campus, at the St. Steven's Church or the Vereeniging. "Off Campus, I prefer to use the real one," says Beadle Nico Bouwman.

Photo: Julie de Bruin

The Yearlings' boyhood dream

After a twelve year break, the new record by the alt-country band The Yearlings from Utrecht has received nothing but praise. 'Skywriting is a lot more personal than our earlier work,' says frontman and assistant professor of English Language Olaf Koeneman. 'I'm not holding back anymore." On January 18th, The Yearlings give a concert in Merleyn.

Text: Ken Lambeets / Photo: René Martens

he Yearlings have been making music that blends guitar pop with country since 1999. Two successful records and dozens of gigs later, the group split up in 2006. 'People were busy with their new families,' says Olaf Koeneman, leaning back comfortably in his chair on the seventh floor of the Erasmus Building.

Four years ago, the English professor got restless again. 'In the meantime, all the band members had established their families,' he says. 'And I thought: they probably would enjoy getting out of the house in the evening. And it turned out to be true (laughs).'

So now there is *Skywriting*. The new Yearlings record receives one positive review after the other. They received four stars in de Volkskrant some time ago. Those in the know like to compare their music to R.E.M., and the music is clearly influenced by Wilco, Ryan Adams, and the Jayhawks. Koeneman, 48, is not only the driving force behind the band, one of its two vocalists, and the group's guitarist: he also wrote the music and lyrics for most of the songs on the album. 'I steer the band in a musical direction that sounds good to me,' says the Utrecht native, now with his feet on the chair.

Lecturer Olaf Koeneman, second from the left

A reviewer wrote that your music had become 'more mature, more layered, and more powerful'.

'When we first started, we wanted to do something in the style of our idols. Now our music is far more a mix of everything I listen to. We wanted to improve on our previous work, in the technical sense too. The record is also a lot more personal. Maybe you need to be older and more self-confident to write more about yourself. I used to talk about types other than myself. I'm not holding back anymore.' In 'My Deliverance' you sing: I'm older now / I don't need a motorcycle / standing on the lawn / I don't need no retro car / but I picked up my guitar.

'That song is about being enthusiastic about our new start, even though our surroundings have changed a lot. A lot of bands that would play with us no longer exist. This feels good, but strange at the same time. It is a bit like we are the last of the Mohicans, who can't do much else other than make records.'

What do the four stars in the Volkskrant mean to the Yearlings' frontman?

'When I received a message from our drummer that morning, I was truly euphoric. The Volkskrant reviewers get boatloads of music sent in to them. I had never thought they would review us, let alone so positively. It is a boyhood dream come true. More bookings are rolling in, and the number of listeners on Spotify is increasing.'

'I HAD NEVER THOUGHT **DE VOLKSKRANT** WOULD REVIEW US'

Koeneman thinks for a moment while a few drops of rain hit the window. 'When you are young, everything comes naturally. But if you have a job with responsibilities and a family like the other members of the band, then making a good record is a lot less natural. You are more grateful for the recognition than before.'

Do you listen to music in the office?

'Never. Music is for evenings and weekends. Colleagues and students know I play in a band, but I don't advertise it.'

'Although there is some overlap between my work and our music. When creating a linguistic theory, you try to find the inspiration that makes something understandable, and you use a certain technique to express it, just like you need melodic solutions when writing a song. At a certain point, you accept the thought you have formulated or the melody you have composed. But making music is still a lot more instinctive than academia.' *

TIPS

Of course you can scour all the broadsheets and websites for information or subscribe to some spam-like newsletter to find out what's happening in Nijmegen in the field of arts & culture the next few weeks. But it may be easier to just trust Vox.

GOING-OUT TIPS

THIJS VAN BEUSEKOM (25) IS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *NIJMEGEN CULTUURSTAD* AND WRITES FOR VOX.

YALLAH! YALLAH!

22 December, Merleyn

A party night devoted to Middle Eastern sounds. Moroccan and Palestinian hiphop, reggaeton from Egypt and Israel, trap from Syria, speed dabke from Lebanon. And alongside the DJs, a live performance by the Iraqi Babylon Trio! 11 p.m. € 10

HOT & CLOSE

26 December, LUX

Late on Boxing Day, join us at LUX for a hot & close party, with the café metamorphosed into a dance floor, and various Nijmegen DJs mixing R&B and dancehall. Bring your entire family if you need to, but don't miss it!

11 p.m. Free of charge

DISKODIP: MR. SCRUFF ALL NIGHT LONG



18 January, Doornroosje

Mr. Scruff has mixed legendary nights for almost thirty years. His style is eclectic, mixing genres like jazz, house, hip-hop and disco. All accompanied by his famous visuals.

11 p.m. € 18.50

LISTENING TIPS

TED VAN AANHOLT (23) IS A BACHELOR'S STUDENT IN PHILOSOPHY, CRITIC FOR 3VOOR12 GELDERLAND AND CONCERT PHOTOGRAPHER

BRUUT!

12 December, Brebl

BRUUT! is in Nijmegen to invite you to dance. This swinging jazz quartet knows how to get everyone onto the dance floor with their sensual sax solos and rolling organ intermezzos. The band is also a great hit among lovers of men in suits: BRUUT! won the 2016 *Esquire* Award for 'best dressed band'. 8.30 p.m. € 15

SPINVIS



13 December, LUX

The Dutch singer-songwriter masters are coming to LUX with their new show, *In Werkelijkheid*. Expect an audio-visual masterpiece with old and new songs about a world that could be ours. 8.30 p.m. \in 19.50

EUT + FOXLANE

18 December, Merleyn

EUT is gaining fame fast. Last year the band conquered every city during the Popronde. This year, EUT was voted best act of the *Noorderslag festival* by *3voor12*. Together with Foxlane, the winner of the student band contest *Kaf en Koren* in 2017, the band promises a night of pop with a raw edge.

10 p.m. € 11

VIEWING TIPS

BAS DORRESTEIJN 24) IS VICE CHAIR OF *CULTURE ON CAMPUS*, MEMBER OF THE FILM COMMITTEE AND STUDENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION.

YELLOW SUBMARINE

12 December, Theaterzaal C

An exceptional screening in Theaterzaal C. *Yellow Submarine* (1968) is an animated film about The Beatles trying to defeat the Blue Meanies armed with their unforgettable music. 7.30 p.m. Free of charge

EUROPEAN DAY OF THE SHORT FILM 21 December, LUX

On the occasion of the European Day of the Short Film, LUX offers a varied programme with international award winners like *De Spelende Mens*, winner of the *Go Short 2018* Public Award, and *Hallo Salaam*, which was screened at many important national and international festivals. 7.30 p.m.

I, MARY OF GUELDERS



Until 6 January, Museum Het Valkhof Come and admire one of the greatest Dutch mediaeval art treasures: the Prayer Book of Mary of Guelders. Visitors are invited to join Radboud University researchers in exploring Mary's fascinatinglife. Students € 6.25

ADVERTISEMENT

Autoverhuur **Nijmegen**

Autoverhuur Nijmegen Nieuwe Dukenburgseweg 13, 6534 AD, Nijmegen Postbus 1130, 6501 BC Nijmegen Tel. 024-3817161

AGENDA MESSAGES FOR VOX CAMPUS CAN BE SENT TO: REDACTIE@VOX.RU.NL

GENERAL

25 JANUARY, 8 p.m.: Mysticism Night. Mystical texts are timeless and contain lots of interesting reflections on love. Experience the world of mystical love during this evening full of readings, theatre and music, organised by the Titus Brandsma Institute. Location: Stadsschouwburg Nijmegen.

STUDENT CHAPLAINCY

www.ru.nl/studentenkerk

24 DECEMBER, , 9.30 p.m.: Christmas Mass. Join us for a Dutch-spoken ecumenical service and let's celebrate Christmas together! Location: Student Chaplaincy.

29 JANUARY, 7.00 p.m.: Start of the new student mourning group. Under the guidance of John Hacking and a student counsellor, join us to learn how to deal with grief after the death of a loved one. Location: Student Chaplaincy.

STAFF ASSOCIATION www.ru.nl/pv

11 DECEMBER, 10.30 a.m.: A walk through Nijmegen and its surroundings (7 km). Join us for a short walk through the Nijmegen region. Itineraries and departure points to be announced upon registration. **2 JANUARY,** 10.00 a.m.: A strenuous walk through Nijmegen and its surroundings. If you're up for a bigger challenge, come and join the Radboud Seniors on this 12-15 km hike. Itineraries and departure points to be announced upon registration.

CULTURE ON CAMPUS

www.ru.nl/cultuuropdecampus

6 DECEMBER, 3.30 p.m.: Cultural Salon. What obstacles do you run up against when trying to grow and develop as a student, artist or performer in the city? Come join the debate during this afternoon full of art, music and poetry, and get to meet new people. Location: Theaterzaal C.

Radboud Reflects www.ru.nl/radboudreflects

11 DECEMBER, 8 p.m.: Poland and Hungary: The end of the constitutional state? Lecture and discussion with legal expert Paul Bovend'Eert and political science expert Anna van der Vleuten. In Poland and Hungary, the constitutional state is under pressure. The European Commission is losing patience. What are the consequences? Location: LUX.

12 DECEMBER, 7.30 p.m.: Images of Mary of Guelders. Lecture by Art Historian Johan Oosterman. Was Mary of Guelders the power woman of the Middle Ages? Come and find out what we can learn from her famous prayer book. Location: Lecture Hall Complex.

8 JANUARY, 7.30 p.m.: Black '47. Film and discussion on the Great Famine with literary scholars Marguérite Corporaal and Chris Cusack. What influence did the catastrophe of 1845-1851 have on the Ireland of today? Location: LUX.

10 JANUARY, 7.30 p.m.: Rituals. Why we can't do without them. Lecture by Philosopher Herman De Dijn. From fireworks on New Year's Eve to love

10 DECEMBER, 8 p.m.: Winter stories. Cold outside? Join us for some mulled wine and hot chocolate as you listen to Winter and Christmas stories. Location: Theaterzaal C.

11 DECEMBER, 8 p.m.: *Stukafest* Kick-off. On 6 February Nijmegen is home to the student room festival *Stukafest*. Take this opportunity to buy your tickets in advance and enjoy live music by The Hazzah. Location: Cultuurcafé.

19 DECEMBER, 7.30 p.m.: Santa's Choice. In the mood for Christmas? Join us for a foretaste with Kloosterkino's selection of alternative Christmas films. Location: Theaterzaal C.

9 JANUARY, 7.30 p.m.: Screening of *The Butterfly Effect*. Bring your friends along and watch this cult film classic as if it was 2004 again. *Change one thing, change everything*. Location: Theaterzaal C.
29 JANUARY, 8 p.m.: *Nootuitgang*. The Nijmegen singer-songwriter competition for students is back! Come and enjoy the Campus' varied musical talent. Location: Theaterzaal C.



padlocks on bridges: people are creatures of ritual. Rituals give us a feeling of purpose and magic, argues Herman De Dijn. Location: Lecture Hall Complex.

15 JANUARY, 7.30 p.m.: The Political Activism of Pussy Riot. Discussion with Maria Alyokhina, one of the founders of Russian punk band Pussy Riot.
What are their feminist and anti-capitalistic ideas?
And why does Pussy Riot choose music as a form of resistance? Location: Stadsschouwburg.
21 JANUARY. How do you lead a pointless life?
Philosophical workshop with Philosopher Annemarie van Stee. Find out why life sometimes seems more pointless than at other times and what gives life meaning. Location: Studio LUX.

30 JANUARY, 7.30 p.m.: Deported. Holocaust Memorial Day Testimony by survivor Mieke van Creveld. She was six years old when she was sent with her parents to Camp Westerbork. Come and listen to her powerful story, about how as a youngJewish girl she survived the Holocaust. Location: Aula.

DOEM

Het wezen

het wezen van God was liefde ik hoop dat diens aard dat weerspiegelt in de zorg uitgedragen aan eenieder

LEV AVITAN

IS THE OFFICIAL CAMPUS POET THIS ACADEMIC YEAR. EACH MONTH HE WRITES A POEM (IN DUTCH) FOR VOX

COLOPHON

Vox is the independent magazine of the Radboud University.

Editorial adress: Thomas van Aquinostraat 1, Postbus 9104, 6500 HE Nijmegen, Tel: 024-3612112 redactie@vox.ru.nl www.voxweb.nl / @voxnieuws Editors: Leoni Andriessen, Annemarie Haverkamp (editor in chief), Ken Lambeets, Mathijs Noij, Jozien Wijkhuijs, Martine Zuidweg (magazine coordinator) Proofreading: Lydia van Aert Columnist: Lucienne van der Geld

Contributors to this issue: Ted van Aanholt, Lev Avitan, Thijs van Beusekom, Pim ten Broeke, Kayleigh Jansen, Lara Maassen, Robin Oosthout, Stan van Pelt, Mickey Steijaert, Aimée van Zutphen Photos: Dick van Aalst, Bert Beelen, Julie de Bruin, Marjolein van Diejen, Duncan de Fey,
Tom Hessels, Erik van 't Hullenaar illustrations: emdé, JeRoen Murré,
Roel Venderbosch
Design: gloedcommunicatie, Nijmegen
Advertising: Bureau van Vliet
Tel: 023-5714745
zandvoort@bureauvanvliet.com
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Telephone: 024-3616129

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