

Review: Ernest Cassutto, *The Last Jew of Rotterdam*, Purple Pomegranate Productions, San Francisco, CA, 2001

Pages: 169

Surviving to be Born Again

An account of life under Nazi occupation in Holland for a young secular Jew who decided to follow Christ as Messiah. His family was continually on the run to safe houses, which were usually soon discovered and had to be abandoned. The story brings Deuteronomy 28.66 to life; the continual stress and anxiety of death being only a door knock away.

A neutral country in WWI, the Netherlands quickly fell to Germany in WWII; just five days with Rotterdam levelled in just forty minutes. Life soon changed for the Jews; curfews; shopping restrictions; yellow stars; then deportations. The Dutch in general suffered great lack with much food and goods being sent to the Nazi fronts.

Ernest and others found help from Christians willing to risk death in aiding Jews, so were willing to 'play Christian' to survive. However, due to God's answer to prayer, this was turned into true salvation for them. The internal dialogue of Jews over Jesus' identity is useful to know; "how could he have been the deliverer when he didn't save Israel from the Romans?"; and, "after the war is over, we can forget about all this 'Jesus' business!"

The only fault is difficulty in keeping track of the characters as the story frequently skips between them.

Foreword (pp. v-vii)

In 1938, the Nazis subdued Holland in five days.

I) 1941: The Hague, Holland (pp. 1-2)

“Isaac Cassutto! You have three minutes to pack a bag and come with us.”

II) 1925: Bandung, Indonesia (pp. 3-8)

In Indonesian folklore, Sanhkuiang fell in love with his mother, Davan Sumbi [echoing Krishna].

In 1915 during the Great War, the Netherlands remained neutral.

III) 1931 (pp. 9-10)

IV) Moving (pp. 11-16)

Many Dutch East Indies government officials relocate to the Hague after retirement.

V) Father! (pp. 17-19)

Queen Wilhelmina and Prince Bernard fled to England during the Nazi invasion; Hitler appointed Arthur Seyss-Inquart as overseer. He assured the people life would continue as usual.

Stories were spreading of Jews forced to clean sidewalks with toothbrushes in Austria and Czechoslovakia.

VI) Summer 1941: Amsterdam (pp. 21-23)

Amsterdammers were ordered to turn in their radios to the Nazis.

VII) God? (pp. 24-27)

All Jews were barred from universities.

VIII) New School (pp. 28-29)

IX) Questions (pp. 30-36)

Sinterklaasdag is on December 6; on the evening before children leave wooden shoes out to collect candy from ‘Santa’.

X) Barry (pp. 37-38)

XI) Invitation (pp. 39-42)

Gentile friends of Jew quickly abandoned them after the occupation.

Delicacies were scarce since they were sent to the Nazis on the Russian front.

“Jews didn’t accept Jesus because he didn’t save them from the Romans. How could he be the deliverer?”

XII) Answers (pp. 43-47)

XIII) The Star (pp. 48-57)

The local Nazi food office made Jews buy a yellow star at 16c to be sewn into their clothing. This made enforcing discriminatory laws even easier.

Punishment for not wearing the star was six months’ jail or a thousand guilders.

Jews could only enter non-Jewish shops from 1500-1700 when stock was low or sold out.

Public phones, non-Jewish barbers, and public transport usage were all prohibited for Jews.

Jewish males 16-41 in Holland were to be deported to Germany due to a ‘labour shortage’.

A Jew curfew of 2000-0600 was put in place.

XIV) November 1942 (pp. 58-65)

Barry didn’t have to wear the yellow star since he was an American citizen.

Hearses and ambulances were the only vehicles the Gestapo didn’t search.

Jews had a bounty of a loaf of bread, one pack of cigarettes, and 500 guilders.

XV) Visit (pp. 66-69)

XVI) Loss (pp. 70-74)

XVII) Birthday (pp. 75-81)

XVIII) Friends (pp. 82-84)

XIX) Gretje (pp. 85-92)

XX) Westerbork (pp. 93-94)

XXI) Mistake (pp. 95-98)

XXII) Arrest (pp. 99-104)

XXIII) Amersfoort (pp. 105-107)

XXIV) Hazersvoude (pp. 108-111)

XXV) Guest (pp. 112-114)

Typical camped diet was fake tea with cherry leaves, fake bread of ground peas and potato starch, and fake meat of barley, oats, and turnips.

XXVI) September 1944 (pp. 115-122)

Gestapo interrogators used a hot iron to brand the cheek, and pliers to pull out each fingernail.

One sympathetic Dutch camp guard had become disillusioned with Christianity which led him to National Socialism; “there is only one god, and that is Hitler!”.

XXVII) Prison (pp. 123-130)

XXVIII) May 1945 (pp. 131-137)

People would paint quarantine signs over their doors to prevent Gestapo inspection.

XXIX) Free (pp. 138-142)

XXX) Henry (pp. 143-146)

XXXI) Max (pp. 147-151)

Before WWI there were 140,000 Jews in the Netherlands, after only 40,000.

XXXII) Love (pp. 152-163)

XXXIII) Last (Jew) but not Least (pp. 164-169)