

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JACOB AND MARIA ROLANDUS

In 1654, the young Dutchman Jacob Rolandus converted from his family's Reformed religion to Catholicism. Because he was still a minor (until 25), he believed he wouldn't be able to practice his new religion freely unless he left home and country. So one night in May, he climbed out his bedroom window and rode across the border to Antwerp, in the Spanish Netherlands

His family was heartbroken, maybe especially because his father wasn't just an ordinary Reformed layman, but a preacher, and Jacob was supposed to become a preacher as well. Thus his father, along with numerous relatives, went after Jacob, to try to bring him back. But after several unsuccessful attempts, and a dramatic heartbreaking confrontation, Jacob's father finally gave up. Neither his father nor his mother ever saw or contacted him again.

The devastated father and mother instead put their hope in Jacob's only sibling, Maria: maybe she could persuade Jacob to see the error of his ways and come home. And so several months after Jacob's escape, Maria sent a message that she wanted her brother to write. He was only too glad to do so, as he wanted to stay in contact with his family, despite his rash departure. And so began the correspondence between these siblings, lasting about three years—until the time that Jacob decided to enter the Jesuit order, causing Maria to give up for good too.

Like his father and grandfather, Jacob was excellent at languages, was ordained a priest in 1663, and went to Brazil as a Jesuit missionary the next year, until the year of his death, in 1684. As for Maria, almost nothing is known about her aside from her letters. She was obviously well-versed in the Bible, as the daughter of a preacher, but she would not have had the same educational opportunities as Jacob, meaning more specifically that she wouldn't have learned Greek or Latin, as he did. She did marry in 1665, by which time she was probably around 30 or 35 years old (her birthdate isn't known either, but Jacob was born in 1632). It's now known whether she had any children, or when she died.

The letters here were written between September 1654 and 1657. I've added some explanatory context here and there too, as necessary, and have not always included the entire letter (when there was much repetition, for instance). Much of the context was taken from the other key document for the book, Jacob's own journal, kept during 1654. The letters between the siblings, and Jacob's

journal, are located in the Provincial Archive of Antwerp, collection Jesuitica. Editorial comments and occasional summaries are between brackets [] while parentheses () are from the original text.

3 August 1654, a Sunday. [Jacob walked in a religious procession in Antwerp. When he came to the Great Market, someone pulled on his coat. He turned to see that it was the brother of his mother's maid, from back home in Boxtel. The young man had come on instruction from Jacob's sister Maria, who had no doubt learned that the young man was going to Antwerp, and so she asked him whether he would please tell Jacob that she wanted Jacob to write. The young man even asked Jacob whether he wanted to write something on the spot, but Jacob replied that he was obviously busy. If the young man had to return to Boxtel right away, would he please tell Jacob's mother and father hello, and tell Maria to write and let him know about their health.]

[Jacob notes in the meantime that he's heard a couple of times from messengers that his father and mother greatly desired news of him. More than once Maria told other people going to Antwerp, which was only a day or two's journey away, to give her greetings to Jacob. There was also a question of where Maria should send her letters, because Jacob did not want to give the address of the place where he was living, as he feared his father might try taking him home again. Finally it was arranged that she'd send them to the home of one of Jacob's new friends.]

[Jacob starts the correspondence after getting Maria's initial message. He's just moved into his new permanent lodgings in Antwerp.]

1 September 1654. Beloved Sister. It has pleased the good God, not through any worthiness or merit on my part but according to his inexhaustible mercy, to pull me unworthy creature to his church, which he has bought with his precious blood and so carefully preserved until now.

And while it has pleased the unspeakably good God to grant me his spirit, I trust he shall also grant the grace (without which I can do nothing) to endure in it, to the praise and adoration of his most holy name and to the salvation of my soul, which salvation God wants all people to attain, and which they may if they would investigate and reject all the lies which are heaped upon Catholics.

For the FOY religion is founded on lies, after all. But I advise you, as Christ himself said, to judge the tree by its fruit. And certainly one can know the true Bride of Christ, his church, by her fruits, for this church seeks only to plant within us true virtues and sincere love and gratitude to the Divine Majesty.

Having received this love, we then learn how we work to please God in all things, and thus sprouts forth love for one's neighbor, loving truth and righteousness, relieving the oppressed, protecting God's honor, loving and serving father and mother above all other people, in a word in seeking to keep God's commandments. These are the olive branches which our God, through his church, seeks always to graft into us, and if we work with him we will also bring forth fruit which will serve as eternal sustenance for us at the wedding of the Lamb.

As for me, these will be my eternal purposes, along with my desire to serve my dear father and mother in all things that I can, wishing nothing more than to have the joy of showing my love to them as well as to my sister, in order to remove any doubt that I've withdrawn my natural love—no not at all. If I must love God with my whole heart, well then how could I not have the utmost love for my dear father and mother, through whose hand God brought me forth, and who have shown me so much goodness and love?

God is my witness how sorrowful it is to me that my joy has brought this sadness as well, that I must live here as if alienated from father and mother. But I hope that the good God will hear my prayers and protect them, and see the sincere piety of my father, just as he looked favorably upon the good works of Cornelius, even though he was pagan, so that we may embrace each other once in joy. I do hope that father, and my dear mother, will be dear to God, that he will strengthen them in their old age, and support them and save them in their needs and burdens, and plead their lawsuit, and stand by them against all lovers of unrighteousness who seek to oppress them, to the glory of his name and the salvation of our souls, Amen.

Finally my beloved sister, may God be merciful to you and to all my friends. I'm happy that you gave me occasion to write you, and for that reason did not want to delay. Let me know how mother and father are, for I greatly desire news of them. Farewell, your servant and brother.

25 September 1654. My Brother. Greetings from me your sister. I read your letter with tears, for you write that God has called you to his church.

How can you write such a thing in good conscience?

How can you say this of the church to which you now belong, and to which you have run so lightly and loosely, without any investigation, nor any consultation with divines or preachers or much less your father, of whose good conscience you can be sure, and who so faithfully and carefully and diligently

taught you in all things, especially in the constant exercise of God's word, from the time you were a child?

How can you write such a thing after being nourished with the milk of your mother's breast in the true pure Reformed religion? How can you say that you've been called to God's true church?

His church is full of the truly faithful, who serve God in the spirit of truth, and fear his word, and those who fear God's word will honor their parents. And to honor one's parents is to obey them and be subject to them as long as we may live, and not to set our heart against them, nor to reject outright their faithful exhortations, nor to bring our hearts to alienation, much less to remove ourselves entirely from their homes.

Oh my brother, look inside yourself and consider what you've done, how you've brought us into the uttermost sorrow, especially your elderly parents, in their old age. You know well how much this concerns your old father. Surely you'll bring his gray hairs down into the grave with his constant sobbing. May God nevertheless have mercy on you, and watch over you, for which I constantly pray, without ceasing.

I hope that God will be merciful and forgive your sins and that you'll humble yourself before God, and bring you to true penance, for you have sinned mightily against God and your parents, and it has pleased God to allow a cloud to descend upon your understanding, which is evident enough from your last letter in which you dare to write about the FOY religion, founded on lies.

I cannot express my sorrow enough, that you my only brother in the entire world, dare to curse your own religion in which you've been raised since a boy, in which your old father and mother and I your only sister still believe and endure through God's grace, and in which God in his goodness will strengthen me ever more. For I am certain that our religion which you condemn is the true pure religion, which conforms to God's pure word, for I dare say boldly with the apostle, that neither death nor life nor angel nor power nor authority nor present things nor future things nor height nor depth nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

Thus we are able to go to the throne of mercy and call to God, Abba Father; if God is our father then we come to him as children, because for Christ's sake we have become children of God. And we must seek to serve him with a good conscience, according to the rule of his word, which is holy and pure, and

not go outside it to an unwritten word, which is embellished and imagined by flesh, and imported by the devil.

That's why people go forward so blindly, not knowing in which direction to turn, and so they turn away from the word of God written for us, and rob themselves of the rights of the children and of the brotherhood we have with Christ our Savior and only mediator. For there is but one mediator between God and us, of which the Apostle testifies. Either Christ must be the only complete mediator and savior, and thus we must seek in him all that is necessary to our salvation, or he is not. Whoever seeks another mediator in any earthly creature that one strays from the true path, for Christ said, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the father but by me.

Therefore your fancy words and your letters are but the powder and lipstick on the whore of Babylon. All what you say good about her is not the truth, and I'm amazed that you've already learned to dress her up so much. It's all pretense with the Holy Roman church, as they call it, which dares to import all sorts of fables against God and his word, leading people away from the grace of God, which comes only through Christ, just as they've imported other stubborn fables regarding human merit, under the cover of good works.

Let's first learn from the word of God what exactly these good works are. If they already know the word of God then they'll need to scratch out the words of the apostle, before I can believe what they say about good works. For he says if from grace then not from works, otherwise is grace no grace; if from works then it's not from grace.

This doesn't mean of course that we ought not do any good works, for faith must be evident in good works, defined in the word of God and not those which grounded on our vain imaginings or human invention. These and a thousand more such shameless errors against and outside of God's word, which the devil has imported through the Roman church, I'd gladly refute, if I had the time, with the help of God's word.

I hope that God will, according to his goodness, strengthen me ever more in the true pure Reformed religion, according to his word, to the end of my life, and preserve me from the awful errors of idolatrous popery, to which you've run so horribly, so abominably, so scandalously, and so extremely lightheartedly, and separated yourself from your pious and so faithful parents, whom you cause so much sorrow.

Oh my brother, may God work true penance within your soul, and have mercy on you poor sinner. You've let yourself through your fickleness be led away by those papists, especially through that sneaky (doortrapten) spirit Vlierden, who men say has gone off to war. His horses and his servant are dead, his property is vanished, and one doesn't know whether he's dead or alive. One of the beguines is also dead. That lighthearted Jonker Ravenschot sits in prison for obtaining your horse on false pretenses.

Thus does God sometimes punish the worldly people who know nothing except quinkeleeren and idle singing, and then go confess again and read some rosaries, and fast two or three times a year, as if God with such fasting were well-served; that's not serving God, it's ridiculing him. But God will eventually ridicule them, those are also the fruits of the Roman Church. Think brother what you've done, in which you're so involved now.

In conclusion, I pray you my brother that you'll consider my true exhortation, offered to you with little skill but in sisterly love, and to absolve my conscience before the living God who knows my hearts, who knows I do this out of the sincerity of my heart, in the name of your temporal and especially eternal salvation.

Which I pray the almighty God, according to his immeasurable mercy, will grant you, and forgive your sins, and for Christ's sake pull you out of the slavery of sin and the devils who seek to curse you to eternal ruin. Come alas again to God, and take your flight to his mercy and endless mercy, in penance. Your sister, Maria Rolandus.

P.S. I just remembered something else: that I must tell you that it sorrows your old father greatly that you took the lovely Hebrew Bible with you and thus stole it from your father's library, as well as his Hebrew lexicon.... I even heard father once say over table recently that if he'd wanted to, he could have easily had you arrested in Antwerp by mentioning that you had stolen something from his house, but he didn't want to, in the hope that you'd repent. I counsel you to send the Bible and Lexicon to father with the first opportunity.

10 November 1654. Beloved Sister. Received yours of the 25 September on October 2, reading and rereading it partly with joy and partly with sorrow. I say with joy, because I thought to have already won the battle, assured as I was of your good zeal for your salvation, and now it was as if a door were opening to bring you, my sister, through it with still others, not doubting that God's great

mercy, thanks to the precious merits and bloodshedding of his son JESUS Christ, would work in your heart, and remove the blinders from your eyes, so that we might devote ourselves with one heart and one soul to our uppermost shepherd Christ JESUS, upon whom I now solely call to guide my pen, seeing that I am but dust and ashes, so that all may work to his greater glory and the salvation of our souls.

Oh my dear sister you are so amazed that I wrote that God called me to his church, but I tell you this is no wonder at all, but the unspeakable greatness of this blessing binds me more each day to endless praise that he has led me thus, for my conscience, which God knows, will not allow that this endless goodness should be known only to myself. I wish nothing else but that it would be spread to the entire world.

Now regarding my dear father and mother, I'm amazed that you write me in such a manner, since in my previous letter I protested my love so strongly, and I still call upon my God and my Judge as my witness that I am free of all those things which you lay upon me. For all that faithful care and diligence with which they taught me, I thank them in the extreme, and am eternally obligated to them. I admit that in the meantime their sorrow must be extreme, and I also know very well the sincerity of my father and his good heart, always trying to have a good conscience in all things; but since my path is the will of God, possibly to an even better purpose, I must submit myself to it, and ask you as well if I mustn't follow God even more than my parents, since God's Holy Word is full of that? Who knows but that the unspeakable mercy and love may watch over you and transform all your tears and sorrow into joy and happiness?

Further, my dear sister, I confess gladly my heavy sins and transgressions against both God and my parents, in fact I'm sure I've earned every Hellish torment and eternal separation from the divine majesty and even the outermost darkness, where wailing and gnashing of teeth take place, but just as God demonstrated his love to us, that he granted his own son to us, when we were still enemies, so has he yanked me out of the pool of ruin, when I was his even greater enemy, only so that his mercy might shine even more brightly. O wonderful love! O foundation of Mercy and Goodness! Just like Augustine, pulled from his sins. Jacob thus admits he was miserable, but now saved. Thus, for you to say that I'm not saved would also be to condemn countless saints, who've been likewise preserved by God, when he pulled them toward conversion. And it follows that you cannot have the true religion, because all of your foreparents

were good Catholics, and as you judge they had strayed from God, and were godless idolatrous servants.

Further, it seems that you were a bit upset that I dared use that little word “Foy.” I admit it is rather hateful, and if I’ve done wrongly in that, I pray you to forgive me. Meanwhile I say with the prophet David, The zeal of your house has slain me (verslonden). That you meanwhile say that neither I nor any other papist could ever prove my words, well sister I don’t need to ask help from any other papist, for I, however little I’ve already investigated as you say, will prove it to you more clearly than the daylight, and that only from your own letter, in which you accuse us of two or three of the usual wrongheaded things, which no Catholic has ever dreamed of. No wonder you’ll stay so hard toward them, but you’ve never heard anything else about them either, and God will be merciful to you because of it, as you sin from ignorance. I find it clearer than the midday sun that your religion (I can’t help but say it) is founded on lies. But if you search sister, you’ll also find the truth. Consider that to be banished from God eternally, eternally, is so long, without end, here is reason enough to undertake the study the truth. See that you don’t harden your heart, for what would it profit you if you for but this moment, as this life truly is, won the whole world and did damage to your soul? As for me, I’d rather die a thousand times than, as Holy Scripture says, return like a dog to its vomit and a grown swine to its slop.

[Jacob then turns to refuting her charges, no doubt with help from newly abundant controversy manuals of the day, which summarized refutations of all the usual points of a rival faith; he’d gotten one on Oct 2—he hadn’t written since then, so no doubt he was doing lots of studying to answer her, thinking this would be the big letter to show her all the truths he had learned and convince her. He begins with the “first lie which you imagine,” regarding the Catholic view of works, then goes on down the usual line of subjects, including tradition vs. scripture [Catholics don’t accept any tradition that conflicts with scripture, and where are your 12 articles of the Reformed faith in the Bible, or where does it say to celebrate Sunday and not the Sabbath, or Easter, Pentecost, Christmas, or your prayer days? And why don’t you wash each other’s feet when you do the Lord’s Supper?], saints vs. Christ as the sole mediator [we don’t worship saints, Christ is obviously the key; we only ask saints to pray for us, just as Paul asked saints to pray for him or your preachers ask for prayers for this person or that, or when you give a little note to the preacher at the pulpit asking him to ask for prayers,

and saints work through merits of Christ, not through themselves], grace vs. works [she falsely says Catholics don't believe in grace, when in fact they know all their good works alone won't save them; even if someone had all the virtues and perfections so that he kept the word of God in every point and part, in the most perfect sense, and even if he had in addition to this all the good works together ever done by any holy person, together with all the holy angels that exist or that might still be created by God, I say even if he had all these things together and even sealed all of them with his blood, they wouldn't help him one iota without the merits of Christ JESU. That's what Catholics believe. That we do good works is no wonder, since Holy Scripture is full of them and promise us the good reward through the merits of Christ, on condition that we add the correct faith, through which good works are made perfect, to it. Thus if we have good faith and then come to do good works, thus we come to earn the promised reward which Christ earned for us, through his bitter suffering. We earn the opposite by doing evil and bad works, not keeping God's commandments, etc.]. He doesn't go into detail on Confession, Rosary, or Fasting [although these are also all in scripture]. And in total he cites even more scriptures than she from Samuel, Tobit, John, Acts, Thessalonians, and using all the classic arguments on the Catholic side, but because these are to his sister they have more than the usual bite.)

That you suppose, O sister, that I'm just dressing this all up, that is in fact not true, and I'm not going against my own conscience, as you say—ah, surely that's your good diligence speaking. In fact I would have said much the same thing as you in years past, even more clever things, against the pope and the Holy Church, but now thanks to God's endless goodness, I see things otherwise. I pray you to consider, my sister, that I don't say this alone. You've heard the same from Juffr. Donkers, your own playmate, after she became Catholic. And you would say the same yourself if you'd investigate it without partisanship. God forgive you, because you do it out of ignorance. I also wish that you could show me one fable which you say the Holy Roman Church teaches against God and his word. But I'm certain that the sun will stand still and the earth be blown away, yeah even God conquered in the heavens, before you could do such a thing.

As for your judgments regarding Vlierden and his sister and Ravenschot, as if they were punished by God for helping me escape: Christ taught that those born blind were no more sinners than those born seeing, and those on whom the

tower of Silo fell were no less righteous. Sun shines on evil and good, so does rain.

With this, dear Sister, I wish to end, praying in the utmost in the name of your soul's salvation that you consider all this. And if there's something not explained here, or anything else, just write it to me, and do not doubt but that with the help of God, who's brought me this far, I'll be able to satisfy you; but do this one thing, and set aside all your prejudices first. May God, whom I serve, who penetrates all hearts and lakes and bends all rivers, likewise bend your heart, and bring you to the true light of the Holy Gospel and his Holy Church, so that we with one heart and soul may sing with the prophet David, You Lord have broken our bands. God preserve you and my old father and mother, and strengthen and help them in all their needs and burdens, assuring them again of my unblemished love, with offering of all serve they may need. Farewell my sister, farewell to your salvation, to which God will bring you according to his unspeakable tenderness and mercy. Amen. Your brother and servant with all my heart. J. Rolandus.

P.S. As for the Hebrew bible and lexicon which you mentioned: I admit taking them, but not in the way you accuse. Stealing is carrying something away against their will and keeping it. I didn't take it that way, but to help my schooling, but if father would like to have them back, I will send them, and have patience. You may humbly propose this to father and then let me know in your next letter.

14 November 1654. My Brother. Greetings from your sister. Since I haven't heard from you for 2 months after sending my long letter [of early September], I write again to awaken you to the reception of childlike love, to which God has obligated you to show to your sorrowful parents, that you not forget them as if you had never known them; and to set before your eyes again that you ought to consider what you have done, that notwithstanding you have left your parents and me, you've nevertheless promised me, your only sister, that you'll never cease to show me your brotherly love... So do I also show my sisterly affection, but nevertheless my sorrow will never leave me, that I must write you in such a way, that you've fallen into such an unfortunately miserable and lost state. May God save you from it according to his goodness, to your temporal preservation and eternal salvation....Oh brother how you've wandered so, that you've left your heavenly father and then after your heavenly father your own natural father, from which

fathers you've always enjoyed temporal and eternal welfare, and would enjoy eternal salvation, and then you go looking for another father to your own ruin.

[News about his departure: father is mad at the drossard, the local sheriff, and suspects him not only of helping with Jacob's conversion, but of knowing about his flight; and now the drossard comes snooping around, looking for papers from Timothy's lawsuit against the schoolmaster, as the schoolmaster was also accused of helping Jacob escape; and the drossard, who is in charge of paying the local preacher and maintaining the rectory, won't finish repairing that horrible leak in the roof, and he stokes up others against father. The drossard acts like he's a papist himself, and he's done that ever since father put in so much effort to try to bring Jacob back, because during all that he came under suspicion for helping you, and he also spoke ill of father, saying father himself had made you a papist!]

[Maria also warns him, in light of the recent reconciliation between father and the schoolmaster, and the support of his brother preachers behind him, not to judge the preachers so lightly and harshly, as you've done in the past; in past years, Jacob believed that Timothy's brother preachers had treated him poorly, and Jacob used that, she says, as an excuse to quit the church]. They have their faults and weaknesses, but it's not as if these are a result of their faith, as you suggest. They are the faults and weaknesses common to all of us, and they are more and more resisted and conquered by those who fear God through the true faith. We shouldn't take occasion on seeing such faults to take offense, much less seek the chance to curse our religion, which is a sign in truth of being wholly frozen from the love of God, from which follows a hate toward our neighbor and a fostering of ourselves in our obstinate evils, and wallowing in the mud of our sins....Oh brother open your eyes, learn to know yourself, come back to the true religion, and subject yourself to your father and his judgment, and don't set your judgment constantly against your father's judgment.

[She also tells him the disturbing news that various persons have threatened to shoot father, including the beguine Vlierden, a beguine being a sort of religious woman who hasn't taken formal vows; she said she'd either shoot him or stab him, and the drossard, despite his animosity for father, has ordered a special guard over their house all night, and he keeps an eye in the day too, and over father's person.] I also have to tell you about the powder box in which you kept your powder, with which you powdered yourself [as with a wig], outside of your father's knowledge, which you knew well was against his heart and

sensibility, but then you've always been inclined to follow that worldly allure and your own foolishness. That powderbox is not at the barber's, but you had it fetched from the beguine's, and that's where you left it; the secretary also saw it there after your departure. And now the beguine says she doesn't have it but that you took it with you; that denying and lying is typical of her, they're sticking with it as long as they can.

[Maria receives his long 11-page letter while finishing this one, and his letter disturbs her very much; she promises with God's help to answer it soon.] The messenger has been charged with bringing back the Hebrew Bible and Lexicon. Your Sister, Maria Rolandus.

28 November 1654. Dearest Sister. Greetings to dear father and mother and to you, with presentation of all service whatever it may be.

I am happy about the happy conclusion to father's case with the schoolmaster, and rejoice from my heart, unable to thank God enough. Thus does God help those who always stand for the truth, and who must suffer error despite a good conscience, may that be an example to us, that we always in such a manner strive for the truth, and rather lose everything than commit the least affront to truth and our conscience. I certainly find this is the case with me, more and more each day, for it's miraculous how God brought me here and to this day preserves me; my clothes even to the smallest piece have almost not aged at all, even though I wear them daily, so that you couldn't find anything on my entire body that I didn't wear in Boxtel too, and yet it looks as whole here as it ever did in Boxtel, which is the same that those who see me here have said. To me the words of Christ have come true: seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all other things will be added to you. Thus the miraculous good God who always cares for his.

I am sorrowful about the drossard, especially since he, even if wrongly accused, is seen as the cause of my escape. It is pure suspicion however what father chooses to believe about him, namely that he had anything to do with making me a papist, or that he knew the least thing about my departure. No wonder that such a nobleman, hearing such a thing, would react against such an accusation, especially toward the person [Jacob's father] who's behind such talk. (Although it truly is sorrowful to me that dear father is again in trouble because of it). The drossard even advised me before I left, having gotten wind that I was going to leave for The Hague or something, to devote myself to my studies as

father wished me to do, but I told him there was nothing to the rumor. I will even swear to all this if necessary, legally. Don't believe all claims against the drossard so lightly.

Regarding the classis [Timothy's fellow preachers], don't suppose that it was only because of their godless procedures against father (which appeared so clearly not once but twice) that I've left your religion. Certainly that would be a bad foundation. The cause of my departure is clear enough to anyone who wants to investigate it impartially, although I admit that it played some role, namely in making me more inclined to investigate that which God now mercifully has blessed me with. That they are people and have weaknesses (although it wasn't simply weakness in these cases) I freely admit. But please do the same with our papists, against whom you so many time have spoken slanderous words. God forgive you for it. Remember that among only 12 there was still one Judas. It's no wonder then that among many millions, there are several thousand who don't live according to their callings.

Regarding those who have threatened to shoot father: may God prevent it, and he will I trust, for which I'll constantly pray. That in the meantime Juffrouw Vlierden should have made such a threat with the least bit of intent I just can't believe. In fact anyone with any knowledge of her would laugh upon hearing such a thing, especially if it were believed. It amazes me that you'd even pay attention to such foolishness, since you didn't hear her yourself. You, sister, ought well to know what people are capable of saying, and what they can say in word and deed against those they hate, paying little heed to whether it's true or not. But even so, it would be little wonder if some courageous nun might say some such thing in the heat of the moment or otherwise. Our mother, you know well, and you yourself have sometimes hastily said such things in anger against your own preachers, only because of their ungodly behavior toward father. And they don't actually hold back father's income, which now wrongly occurs to this iuffer [Vlierden], without which you know very well she cannot live... It's like people are holding her mouth shut right now. Who wouldn't then lose his patience, except perhaps exceptionally holy people? In the meantime it also amazes me that they blame my conversion on her too, especially since it's a basic principle of your faith, first of all, that faith is a pure gift from God; if it is so, then who can resist it, and second, whomever God grants it ought to receive it. Moreover, if all things must occur because God appointed them so to occur [as the Reformed say], it's no wonder then that since God wanted it thus it occurred

thus.... And who am I to strive against God's will? And who should then condemn those whom God chooses to use as instruments to carry out his will? They would only be striving against God, which is a horrible thing to ponder.

Regarding the powderbox: time is too precious to waste on such a trivial matter. I know that I've let it be fetched once or twice, but then hid it again. And the attestations that have been given that such and such has seen it here or there, or with the beguines (who are likely to have more than one of their own), I can't even begin to go there.

Finally, I'm glad my letter reached you, and that God has begun to trouble your soul, I trust he will continue to work in you. I seek only that you'll pay attention to your own profit and the eternal welfare of your soul. I pray only that you'll serve God in the right faith to his greater glory. I will meanwhile pray for you and father and mother, and don't doubt I'll be heard. I pray that you'll answer me with the first opportunity. Meanwhile O Dear Sister, fare well on to your salvation. Amen. Your brother and servant with all my heart, J. Rol. Amst.

P.S. See there sister, according to the messenger's charge, the Bible and lexicon, please hand them to my father. I will, I hope, be able to pursue my studies in Hebrew at a future time. Again, fare you well. [The messenger returned to Antwerp on 4 December, and said that Jacob's family was surprised to receive the Bible and lexicon, as they actually didn't expect them.]

27 December 1654. My Brother. Greetings from me, your sister. After you wrote me such a large letter, and now recently another, the time that it's taking me to respond is obviously getting longer, although I'm busy with it. I can hardly employ my time continuously to the task, while so many hindrances intervene, both regarding the housekeeping as otherwise. Thus I write you this short letter, lest you think I've forgotten you, or don't want to answer you. No, I certainly do. Even though your letter is rather long, and you could have made it rather shorter, I will answer you indeed. And know you're never out of my thoughts nor those of your parents, though not without much sobbing and crying over you, as long as you're so tragically lost and stay away. With this, my brother, I wish to recommend God to you, to the end that he'll be merciful to you, that he will watch over you, according to his endless mercy, for which I'll never cease praying. Last, I pray and recommend to you that you will think about your grieving parents, how deeply you've wounded them, so that you'll rightfully take it to heart, and repent before God. O my brother I pray and wish this will all my

heart, that God will work within you for Christ's sake through his spirit. Your Sister, Maria Rolandus.

11 January 1655. My Brother. Rightly may I well call you my poor lost brother. Oh if you only understood how poor you are you would return from your lost ways. Though you're far from me, nevertheless my thoughts are with you always, which cause me so often and loud to call out and sob with a pressing out of my tears, that this heavy misfortune has hit me so (though you most of all), that I, since I have only one brother, have been robbed of you—yes as if snatched away secretly by night. Oh my brother, how have you passed the years of your life since the day of your birth? Oh that I could call those years back, which you spent in idleness, and now have resulted in such a disastrous end. Yes, if I could call those years back now I would wish that you would never have seen the light of day rather than that you'd stay as you are now. The intent and purpose of my letter is mainly this: that the beginning of this new year 1655 may be one in which God according to his immeasurable goodness will grant his blessing, which he has given us in Christ his son eternally, namely to all who believe in his son, without searching for any other saviors or redeemers. And whom I will trust will be pleased to call you to repentance. O if God would only please to do so, all is possible to God. The 15th of this month will mark the day of your birth, on which day you will have completed 22 years, the twenty-second of which I must say with sadness was the year of your fall and the uttermost pain (smerte) of your parents in their old age. Which year I hope you'll now unload, and enter into the new year, your 23rd, I pray constantly, in the spirit and truth to God and will never cease praying thus, that in your 23rd year he will renew you with his spirit, which will rightly humble you and bring you to the right knowledge of your sins, so that being rightly humbled may be raised again by that same spirit, and then have with us the blessed hope of eternal live in Christ Jesus. For now you are as if without God, without hope in this world, alienated from citizenship in Israel, alienated from the covenant. The proof of all this I will lay out in my refutation of your long letter, of which you mention in your last letter that you will rejoice at receiving. Well Brother I will send this to you quickly, if it pleases God, unless the cold or other unusual inconveniences prevent me. And may your rejoicing at the expectation of my letter serve as a guide when you shall receive that letter, that you may not harden your heart, but let yourself be instructed according to God and from his word, which is the only guideline to our salvation. I hope that God

will grant you this, I continually pray for mercy and grace upon you, so that just as this past year was the year of your fall, this new year which you now enter may be called the year of your reestablishment in the true faith, and the recomforting of your sorrowful parents. To which end may God help you through his spirit, so that we may embrace each other again in the true faith, having a true faith in order to serve the true God, in the spirit of truth, according to his word. Your Sister, who wishes for you repentance and salvation. Maria Rolandus.

2 March 1655. Beloved Sister. Since the birthday of my Reverend father has arrived, I could not neglect sending a letter to him, if you'd be so kind as to hand it to him. Meanwhile what I've wished for father I wish for you. Namely, that God's great goodness is truly over our father, that he has brought his Reverence to such an age. But what good is it to live even to a hundred years if the eternal years do not follow? And it's these I wished for father, and now for you. Alas, sister, take it to heart. Imagine if this were your last week on earth, which it well could be, and you were to stand before the throne of God. Wouldn't you then have wanted to serve God in a truthful faith? Pondering this, keep yourself open; don't imagine simply that you're right, but investigate. If you find that you've been won by the truth, admit it and give God the glory and confess him before all people, so that the great lover of souls Christ JESUS, will also confess you before his Heavenly Father. But if you find that you're not convinced, I pray, if you hold my soul's salvation dear, then write down the truth, if she's with you, and reveal it to me. You've now written twice that you will answer me, but to my great regret I haven't yet received such a letter, and I almost begin to doubt that it will ever be sent. Help me then, this is my desire. In the meantime, I pray without ceasing that it may please God to watch over you, and to grant you that you may serve him in a true faith, to his greater glory and the salvation of your soul. Seek as well, I pray you sister, the intercession of the saints, especially of the holy mother Mary, saying sometimes when you arise as well as during the day, holy mother of God, Mary, pray for me now and in the hour of my death, Amen. You see well sister that this is no idolatry. And if you should suppose that it won't help you, then I can assure you that it also won't hurt you. You'll only be doing what has been done for over a thousand and hundreds of year. With this I end, after humble greetings to my dear mother, may the good God grant her mercy. Farewell.

5 April 1655. My Brother. Greetings from me, your sister. I received your letter of March 2 on the seventh, and some time has passed before I have found occasion to answer, thanks to hindrances. These were partly displeasure and sorrow over your letter, in which I see your mournful wandering from the true religion, which I cannot cry about enough, over which I sob night and day to God. Especially since you write that God's great goodness is wonderfully upon our father, as he has brought his Reverence to such an age—and yet you've trampled on that goodness of God yourself and brought your old father into the outermost sorrow and pain, and still do daily, both with your words as otherwise. But you're right in saying, what does it matter to live to a hundred, if the eternal years do not follow? Certainly your pious father has the assurance and the sealing in the true faith, through the blood of Christ alone, as do we who through God's mercy also live in the true faith, who will enjoy the eternal years near God, out of pure grace alone through the merits of Christ. Thus I neither need nor desire your wish in such a manner as you now make it, but only if you return to the truth which you willingly have rejected, which I will make clearer to you in my response to your very long letter.

You say that I should take it to heart—oh if God would only grant that you would take it to heart, you'd show yourself otherwise, and that which you wish to apply to me, take that to heart yourself, and see indeed how you will appear before the judgment bar of God, and how you will account for the rebellion and belittling (*versmadinge*) which you cause your poor parents. Think indeed, brother, think indeed. God grant that you may see and come to know yourself, so that you will repent. Regarding me, I am assured that I serve God in a true faith, and I seek to please him in that more and more, according to his Holy word. And I do not merely imagine that I am right but I am certain of it, there is no imagining mixed in. You say investigate, well I do investigate, and will investigate still more with God's help. And the more I investigate the more persuaded I become of the truthfulness of my religion, which rests on the scriptures of the prophets and apostles. And I confess it also, and will give the honor to God even more, who according to his goodness strengthens me in it more and more, and shall endure in it to the end of my life. And I confess him as well, but not only with the mouth like those of the popedom, who deny him with their deeds. Therefore shall Christ also deny them, and say to them, go away from me, you workers of unrighteousness, I've never known you. You name him the great lover of souls, but these are but artificial words you use, even from the

mouth of artificiality itself. For if you truly felt them in your heart you would never recommend Mary to me.

You say that I should write you, if I value the salvation of your soul; yes Brother, I love you more than you love yourself, which love bears an exceptional sorrow, which I cannot utter when I consider that we will be separated from each other in the eternities. Oh God have mercy on you. I am in fact prepared to write you, although I cannot employ all my time to it, yet I will break away from things as I can, if my letters will bear any fruit at all in your establishment in the true faith. Which I still trust you know very well is in our church, but see, God calls you today again through my letters, that you not harden your heart that comes with bitterness. May God prevent your making your heart bitter. And may you also not allow others to read my letters—and then not to read them in simplicity or to gain any profit from them, or even to refute them according to their understanding, but simply to ridicule them, as you've done already with my letters, as I hear. In any case, I will indeed answer you, though time drags on a bit, if it pleases God to keep me healthy. It would have been sent already, except that I had hindrances, and may your anticipation serve to better notice, I pray.

In the meantime you say that you'll pray for me, but I don't need this sort of praying from you. For you don't pray to God in the spirit and truth, nor even solely in the name of Christ, and his intercession is not enough for you, you poor lost servant. You'd have me learn that little prayer to Mary the Holy Virgin and Mother of Christ, if I wasn't well instructed in God's word. Oh brother your wandering is so terrible to think about. Did the saints die for you? Did the mother of Christ shed her blood for you? I'll recommend my soul instead to my faithful savior (salichmaker) Christ, with St. Stephen, and die in Christian fashion with him. I have been, praise God, instructed better than that in God's word, thus you don't need to hold up such recommendations to me. When you say, see sister it's no idolatry, well I see that only too clearly, and can taste it and feel, that it's idolatry, and can clearly prove it, if you only had the eyes which you once had. But now scales have fallen upon your eyes, from your spoiled (bedorven) brain, which I hope as I pray night and day that God according to his endless mercy will take away from your eyes once more, to our extreme happiness (may God grant it).

Poor thing, you want to assure me that when I call upon Mary as well in the hour of death, that if it won't help me well then it won't hurt me. Do you not know that what in this part of religion doesn't help does indeed hinder? What is

with God, that helps. Who is not with me is against me, said Christ. And who is against Christ hinders his salvation. The many years you mention don't make lies into truth. Lies in themselves remain lies in eternity. The devil was around then too, and did his best to lead people away from the true religion, and away from Christ our savior and intercessor; as he is not the same false liar, so he was forever and shall remain. With this I end my brother. I commend you to God, to the end that he will move your heart to good notice that you will repent. Oh may God be merciful to you, according to his bottomless mercy. Amen. Your sister, Maria Rolandus.

P.S. Come thus again to your father and mother, and admit that you've sinned heavily, for you know well your father, how quickly he forgives, although we hear that you slander him. The [Catholic] dean [of the old chapter] here says that you're just a bengel [cub] that's run away from its parents, what should one do with you? So will all papists eventually stick the dagger in your back.

20 April 1655. Dearest Sister. Except, through God's great grace, I had not already completely subjected myself to the good and holy will of our God alone, then I would have more reason to lament your letter, received here on the 12th. For seeing your most wretched state, together with the deceits which Satan is using to alienate and draw you away from me, so that you'll never do any investigating, for he sees that proper study will only snatch a desirable prey from his sleeve (muyl). Seeing this, I say, what greater sorrow could be imagined? Thus I couldn't refrain from sending you this letter right away, were it possible that the good God, from his unspeakable even bottomless love, may please to open your eyes so that you may detect the hidden way of the Satan.

First, Sister, I see that the devil teaches you, through his instruments, that I would somehow daily smear my dear father and mother with words and otherwise, and slander them, so that you might develop a repulsion to me and to the Holy Catholic faith, as if we hear would allow and teach such abominable godlessness. But indeed it is certainly contrary to that, as anyone with whom I have ever spoken here must admit. For my part, I'd rather suffer death a thousand times than slander my dearest parents in any manner whatsoever. For this wouldn't so much smear our reverend parents as it would be to once again scourge and crucify our Dear Lord once again. You cannot find one person who with any appearance of truth at all would be able to allege such a thing. You also say that we papists praise Christ with the mouth but deny him with deeds. These

are not so much your words as those of your deceptive catechism. I say deceptive, because so many ignorant people are deceived by the lovely appearance of a multitude of cited (and sometimes falsified) scriptural texts, which are noted so liberally in the margin, but hardly a tenth of them have anything to do with that which must be proven, and where they do these are in agreement with what the Holy Catholic Apostolic church, which is Roman, already teaches. All of which I've now clearly investigated and discovered for myself, having in my room one of your correct Catechisms with one of the most correct Bibles, with my Greek New Testament. Thus what you say about our popedom, dear sister, is wholly without foundation, for neither you nor any preacher will be able in eternity to bring evidence of those things which you allege about popedom. You've in fact heard to the contrary in all my letters, which I wrote with an unfeigned and pure intent, such as that I would stand by it even before the terrible judgment of God, and you can see it for yourself in the deeds of Catholics. But read!

The second strick (burden?) which the hellish enemy has cast around your neck is to make all my words, which God shall judge, appear to you as abominable lies, as if these are the methods the Antichrist uses to keep his kingdom intact, as they say slanderously among you. O Abomination of Abominations! O my dearest sister, that you let yourself be blinded again, without even any appearance of truth! Ask yourself then in the words of Christ: do you have this from yourself, or from some other? I know well that you don't have it from yourself. Therefore, you have it from others. But why not do as a wise judge and hear each side, for eternal salvation or damnation depends on it. If you can't believe me, then go yourself, among whichever Catholics you please, who have some understanding of religion, and ask them—go from the East to the West, and I am certain that you will hear nothing other than what I have told you in all my letters. Or do you possibly think that I deliberately wish to walk into the eternal torments of the devil? How can you imagine, since I write to you myself of death, which might come at any moment, and of the last judgment, and of hell and the horrible torments of the damned, how can you, I say, let yourself be so bewitched (as the apostle says) that you would think that what I am trying to tell you is the truth is instead only lies and falsities, dressed up with high and precious words, and then that I am doing so against my conscience? In the meantime, I can only console myself with meditating on the injuries, slanders, and evil talk (smaetheden) heaped upon the head of my savior and head Christ JESUS.

Third, the father of lies sticks the thought in your head that there is no more hope for me, so that you'll sit still without answering my letters, thus removing the occasion for you to investigate for yourself, and then adding to all this that somehow I am ridiculing your letters. No Sister, certainly not, the truth will and can only help me. For the sake of truth, I left your faith, but I'll take it up again if it's to be found with you. Use your reason, and from my side, with the grace of God, I'll give it place as well, without regard for any human considerations. Courage then, O Dear Sister, so that we may be together in the eternities. Don't regret the time that you may have to spend in writing, remember that it is for the salvation of us both, which is far more precious than any time and effort. Take this all the heart, I pray you my only sister. I pray it again through the five bloody wounds which our dear Savior and only Redeemer from eternal damnation received out of love for us, and the Cross of Calvary, that you'll take these things to heart, and escape from the confusion of these three false nets, which the murderer of souls has cast over your head. Don't count all the pain and torments which our Savior received for our sakes as lies and feigned words, and trample his holy blood under your feet.

Further, my intent was not, in my last letter, simply that I would pray for you, for that is no doubt being done by me as well as others. But it was simply to awaken you to pray for yourself, not simply for this or that, but that the good God would care to watch over you, forgive you yours sins through the bloodshed of his dearest son Christ JESUS, and to grant that you might serve him alone in a faith that is pleasing to him to his greater glory and the salvation of your soul. I was not praying that he would preserve you in your faith, nor that he would bring you to the Catholic faith, but simply without any qualification placing you in his fatherly care. I pray God to enlighten you that you may see the distinction between truth and lies, so that you may serve him, in a way that would be pleasing to him to your salvation, that it may be your only desire and purpose.

Finally Sister, you say that it's not enough for me to pray in the name of Christ alone. Don't think that. All my prayers, I know very well, must be heard only in the name of Christ. Thus we end all our prayers (as you can see for yourself in the missal) with these words, By our Lord Jesus Christ Your Son etc. (in Latin). For without Christ's merits we cannot attain the smallest thing...Indeed I confess that the smallest drop of his blood would be enough to save millions, which would be an endless prize.

I may well ask you, is his intercession enough for you? If you say yes, then I ask you again, why do you then use others to pray for you? Did those others die for you and shed their blood for you? You will say no, for that sort of praying no bloodshed or dying is necessary, for they pray only through the merits of Christ, but don't actually redeem anyone. Well I say the very same about our Saints, and thus we pray as well.

I also ask you, was Christ's intercession enough for Saint Paul? Then why did he ask others to pray for him?

You say that you can see very well that it's idolatry: that amazes me greatly, since it was no idolatry to the apostle Paul. Where is the idolatry in saying, pray for me? or, Holy Mother of Christ, pray for me, or Peter or Paul, pray for me. If this is no idolatry, well then we don't engage in any idolatry either, and thus is not against Christ at all.

Finally Sister, I freely admit that lies are always lies, and shall remain thus in eternity. But I deny that lies and idolatry can exist in a pure church, the bride of Christ. Thus if calling upon this or that saint is in use in the pure church, then it follows of itself that it's no lie or idolatry. In fact this calling upon saints was in use in the time when the church was still pure, as you yourself must admit. Therefore, it is no lie or idolatry, unless a pure church of Christ and an idolatrous church of Baal can be melted together into one.

With this I end dear sister. And I pray you again to open your eyes, or otherwise that you open mine through your letters (which I await with great desire, especially because our pilgrimage on earth is short, and such a long eternity, either good or bad, necessarily follows). My humble greetings to my dearest father and mother, with complete offering of any service. Fare you well. Your brother and servant, with all my heart. J. Rol.

18 June 1655. Beloved Sister. I would have written long ago to wish you happy birthday, but Jan vande Laack, who said long ago that he intended to ride home, still hasn't left, and so I'm taking the opportunity to send this short letter with this messenger Hendrik. I wish you much happiness, and especially desire that you'll investigate and answer, if possible, my letters. Especially since I have promised, and now promise again, if you can provide irrefutable answers confirmed by God's word and reason, then I will accept your Reformed faith again, since I seek nothing except my eternal salvation. I pray you dear sister, investigate, investigate; you see well that my reasons are irrefutable so far, and so

it will be with all the other points of our Catholic faith. Your faith, however, O sister, has not the least resemblance to Christ's bride, as it stands on nothing but loose assertions and no proof. You also told vande Laack that you'd like very much to speak with me in person. Oh if only God would grant it. You know well that my situation doesn't permit me to return there, as long as the same old thing is being taught. Could you not find opportunity to come here once? Such as during the upcoming Procession, or otherwise for 2 or 3 days, as long as you wish. But, fearing that father or mother won't consent, you can still write secretly through this Hendrik, who will be passing back and forth almost every week, and he will keep it quiet until you have also seen the truth, through the boundless goodness of God. Pray to God, even compel him with your protests, as Moses did, that he may allow you to see the truth wherever it may be. Pray also that the Holy Mother of God MARIA with the other saints will pray for you, since nothing more foolish can be said than that such a thing is idolatrous. God will help you. The time of this life is so short, in contrast eternity is so long. I end, dear sister, and expect some answer from you in the next week. Meanwhile I commend you with my dearest parents to the fatherly care of the good God, according to his pleasure and salvation. Amen. With all my heart. Jacobs Rolandus.

[Her answer doesn't come in the next week, but it comes indeed the next month, written on the 18 July, as if she can't wait any more, and as if this is all she has. This is her last Herculean attempt, and her most remarkable letter. She doesn't write much after this, as if this says it all: namely, that she's not convinced by Jacob in the least.]

18 July 1655. My Brother. Greetings from me your sister. I've read your long letter of November 10, which you know I've received, and I see in it many primed up angry words, but no reasons by which the false papist religion could remain standing, much less push away the pure truth. This was why I wrote that I was very disturbed by your letter. My perturbation wasn't about me but about you, seeing your horribly straying. I'm saddened with all my heart about you. As for me, I'm confirmed more and more in the truth of my religion, through God's grace. Thus it surprises me that you were partly joyous and partly sorrowed upon receiving my letter. Oh if you only had proper sadness for yourself. And as for the joy that you expressed about me, thinking that you'd begun to win the battle, is without foundation. For you have by no means used sufficient weaponry to

conquer me, in fact there's nothing in the entire letter which doesn't serve to your utter destruction. You also write of your assurance of my good zeal to my own salvation. Yes, brother, you may be assured of that, and I will strive only more for God's doctrine and for the truth of his Reformed Church, which is to my salvation. And you also had the precious opportunity to strive for your own salvation, thanks to your so good and faithful father from childhood on, but you rejected and neglected it and let yourself be tempted through the pure idleness of the world, through the desires of your flesh, through which all zeal in caring for salvation is taken away, and in place of zeal comes laziness, and who is lazy shall be spewed from the mouth of God. Beware, beware, my Brother, I hope that God has let you come only to the edge of his lips, and that he hasn't yet spit you completely out. Think also how you will possibly be able to answer to God with a good conscience, for yes you speak of having one, when you are so alienated from your parents, whom you still call your beloved Father and Mother. If they are so beloved then show it affectively to your parents. Is it love to remove oneself from the house? Thus I am amazed even more at your protestations, which will only work against you, for you dare to call upon the living God as your witness, and call him your Judge. But consider well how you will appear before that Judge. For he is a righteous judge, who acts according to his word, in righteousness. His word says, Honor Father and Mother. The honor that we owe them does not consist in merely saying that we love them, but in the recognition of the grace and gifts that we have received from God through them. That we cannot do this as we ought, I admit, but you absolve yourself completely! Therefore you may keep silent about your gratitude to them unless you can show it otherwise to them. You give to them only your outward gratitude, when you say that you are bound to them for eternity, for to the contrary it's as if you tread your pious parents beneath your feet, and all what you've learned from your father you dare to use against him. You also acknowledge your parents' extreme sorrow; now if a child acknowledges this and keeps behaving as before, that is no weakness, but an obstinance, which the true religion (which is according to God's word) does not bring forth; that is one of the fruits by which she is known. The reason is that you know very well your father's sincerity and good intention, always seeking to maintain a good conscience. You know all of this of your father, so then why do you flee from him, and reject his religion, and regard him as a heretic? For heretics are those who dare to maintain a wrongful faith against the true salvation-giving faith. If the idolatrous popish faith is right, as you say, then we

are heretics. But you need proof for that claim, which you must show with evidence and reason from God's word. And I challenge you and the stoutsten [most stubborn] Jesuit there is, who know so well with their lovely appearances and stoute shamelessness, and false deceit to transform lies and embellish them. Even as I speak if they could somehow shove Christ out of Heaven and hang him up on a cross to impress the poor laypeople they would do it, or if they could persuade them that it was so they wouldn't refrain. What a great miracle that would be!

Now back to your letter. You say, that since your departure was God's will, I must subject myself to it. Well if God was a workmaster of evil, perhaps. But God is a Holy God, with him there is no working of any evil which strives against his word, for then God would be striving against himself. He allows evil, and he reigns over those who set themselves rebelliously against him and his order. If you had subjected yourself to God, and his holy will, you would have subjected yourself as well to your parents. For God's will and order was that you should follow the wise counsel and good intention of your faithful father, who had brought you so far that had you been diligent, rather than followed your evil inclinations, and so often said, "I don't want to learn from my father, Father can pester me as often as he pleases, I won't do it and will not do it, even if father stood on his head and spread his feet," you would have walked otherwise. Are these the words of a heart concerned about salvation? In fact they are contrary words, for Christ said from the abundance of the heart speaks the mouth. If you had only clung to the knowledge you had acquired through your father's faithful diligence, but which is now taken from you, you would have achieved status and honor, and great fruit for your parents. But now it's directly contrary, for all that you've received from your father you now dare to cast against his shins and to cause him to suffer a constant death. This causes me, with tears, to call out and sob so often, that I must say, O undeserved wrong and ingratitude, from such an only son of his father, who had such good intentions for him. Oh Brother, if you could only take this rightly to heart, then you wouldn't ask me whether you should follow God (first). Yes, God's word teaches us and Christ says himself, whosoever will not leave father, mother, sister for my sake, he is not worthy of me. But understanding this to mean: in the event of persecution, in your conscience. But our true Reformed religion, which follows God's word, does not bring about a compulsion of conscience with great violence, like papists do, but with a serious exhortation, good instruction, and powerful arguments from God's

word, which are irrefutable. For God's word is powerful, sharper than a two-edged sharp sword, forcing itself through the hearts and souls of people. That is a compulsion done by God! Or has anyone ever prevented you from investigating your religion in your father's house? Or has your father ever refused to give you good instruction in your [Reformed] religion? Well, since you never sought it from him, how could he have ever refused you? Or did your father kick you out of the house, because he didn't want to see you? Look inside yourself, I pray you, my brother, investigate yourself closely in your conscience. I know that you know to the contrary, and it is indeed so. How many times did your faithful father so faithfully try to instruct you in his room against your will, where you listened to his sweet instruction with a sour face, and gave him ugly answers, and sometimes simply walked out with an angry head? How often did your father want to go walk with you and in fact did walk with you, instructing you constantly in all sorts of ways, and that with great patience, and then you always came home and argued and complained about it with me. As I think about it all, a pen is not enough to express my extreme sorrow over you. Still, I still hope with the prodigal son for your repentance and return to your father's house, from which you stole yourself by night as a thief. Thus this wasn't about the freedom of your conscience. Instead you simply stole yourself and everything else you took from my father's house, dishonoring yourself and making yourself into a rascal (schelm), much worse than a soldier who walks away from his regiment after he's stolen and then carries as much as possible with him.

You also write further about the recognition of your heavy sins against God and your parents. Oh if you only understood rightly the greatness of your sins, you would admit them and leave them, and would return truly to God and come back to comfort your devastated parents. It can't be otherwise: the admission of sins works regret, and regret seeks comfort from those offended. If you admit your sins are against God and your parents, then you must, if you truly acknowledge your sins, also show proper regret and first reconcile yourself with your parents, and then seek comfort from God, against whom you have sinned. For your sin in this case is one and the same, against God and your parents. Had you honored your parents, you would have honored God; had you honored God, you would have honored your parents. Had you honored your parents, you would never have run away from them treacherously by night. For wasn't it treacherous, that you were with us at church that morning hearing father's sermon, then came home with us and ate with your parents, and then having eaten went with your

father according to the usual custom to the afternoon service, again hearing his sermon, as if everything were fine with you, apparently better than before? Instruct me now if you can, what else this can be but treachery? Now I ask you if behaving in such a way toward your parents can be reconciled with keeping God's commandment to honor father and mother? For according to my understanding and judgment, which is based on God's word, this smells not at all like honoring your parents. Thus I judge and am certain that God's commandment is violated here. And can one find a religion in which transgressing God's commandment is pleasing to God? Can such a religion please God, in which one may speak and use lies and falsities, if it's to the advantage of that religion? For the papists and their consorts says, that one may indeed practice and say something even if it is not the truth, as long as it's to the advantage of the Roman church. And so if one persuades his parents things are one way, or deceives his parents, or lies to them, or betrays them, if it's to the advantage of the church, then they say, you have done well! Yes beyond this, they dare say, you'll have the best place in Heaven, you'll sit above everyone else. But they'd better watch that they don't fall, along with those they try to persuade thus. Lying and deceiving are the special work of the devil, thus they cannot exist in the true church, nor ever be used to her advantage. Thus those who live constantly in that religion cannot have any rest in their conscience. It's apparent in their words, for it is written, out of your words you shall be judged, for they will suffer all the hellish torments and eternal banishment from the divine majesty, in the outermost darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. And you imitate them in this, and in many other things in your letters, which are mostly but imitation, which have very little substance. But why do you use these tormented words? I judge that they come forth from a bad, gnawing, and restless conscience, for from great restlessness of conscience comes desperation, and from desperation you ran from your father's home by night, and took upon yourself that light religion. For you have indeed said [in the past] that the popish religion is light, so I am merely speaking from your own judgment. And you will rest your desperate conscience, I suppose, by confessing and reading a rosary. But how restful your conscience truly is I can well imagine, and see from your words....Yes, that religion is very light for all those persons who would like to have an easy life in this world, acting the little lord, with a dagger on the side, playing cards, and then with a feigned greeting playing My Lord and Lady, and dancing and jumping as people like to do in Antwerp, and banqueting during Carnival, and then with a

ridiculous fast of eating no meat claim to serve God. Also I know very well that you have always praised so highly that lighthearted dancing, and your betting and playing cards was without end, although against your father's wishes and without his knowledge. Is this, brother, with such outstanding worldly idleness of the utmost darkness, and kicking away of the Divine Majesty (I use your own words), how one comes to lay claim on the proven love of God in the granting of his only son, Jesus Christ? It's far from there, I think. Christ said, I am not come to call the righteous, but the sinners to repentance. That is, he didn't come for those who justify themselves, and then continue to love in worldly idleness, like the Pharisees, who knew no spiritual or internal penance, as evident in the Pharisee who boasted that he fasted twice a week, and gave a tenth of his goods to the poor, and thus sought to be justified through his works. But to the contrary he was banished from God. Thus the glorifying in his good works was idle before God. And then he dares to add, I thank you Lord that I am not like other people, such as this toll collector. And that is just as if you yourself said, in other words, like my father and mother and my sister. Thus my Brother you languish in the pool of verdorventheden [spoiled, ruined things], from which you believe yourself to have been pulled! Still I hope that God, after he has humbled you, will enlighten you once again, for you are now blind, and that you'll then see in what blindness and Egyptian darkness you have taken yourself, so that you may then rightly use that exclamation which you've so wrongly dared to use so far, saying, O wonderful love, O foundation of mercy and goodness, what can I do to show gratitude and repayment of all your benevolence? And then you would add to this, for you have brought me again to the true knowledge of the Gospel. Oh that God would show you such mercy! What gratitude you, and we, would have! You wouldn't be able to thank God enough in all the eternities. And you use here the references to Augustine, which I don't think you can properly apply to yourself. Although I haven't read Augustine myself, I certainly know that much. When Augustine made this exclamation, had he done what you've done? Was he so rebellious against his parents? Or against those appointed over him, and therefore against God? Had he so neglected and rejected the lovely opportunity to gain learning, and especially the good instruction in holy truth and the exercise of true salvation, which your pious father always did his best to instill in you? God is his witness, and you are also sufficiently convinced of it, I know that with certainty. Or did Augustine run away from his father's house by night, and leave his parents in the utmost sorrow, yeah even caused a constant death in them, as you

do? I judge not. Had he done that, and had left it that way, I doubt that he would have become such an outstanding man. For God does not wish and will not bless such actions. See and read what is written in Psalms 25:14, the hidden treasures of the Lord are for those who fear him, and his covenant. Therefore you may well say in place of Augustine's words, O Lord, the longer and the more frequently I sinned against you, and persisted in sin, and sought my pleasure only in the idle things of the world, the further you have withdrawn from me. O Lord, be merciful to me, poor sinner. Withhold your face from me no longer, renew me again through your holy spirit, and make me alive to the true knowledge of the Gospel, and the proper understanding of your word. May your good spirit lead me on even paths. Let your presence again shine upon me. These and other such cries may you, O brother, do to God day and night. Address him directly and pray in the spirit and truth, with frankness in the name of Christ, that he may watch over you. And I will never cease praying for you either, as long as I live.

Further, after quoting Augustine you continue by saying that my conclusion doesn't follow, which was that you'd sinned heavily against God and your parents, and thus that God had allowed a cloud to descend over your understanding. I may well and indeed must speak so, for you have knowingly and willingly sinned, first against your parents, from which necessarily follows the sin against God. For you knew well that you caused them great sorrow with your constant knarren [complaining] and preutelen [whining?], and that without cause. You knew well that you caused mother and father great sorrow when you said, I want not and shall not study with my father, even when you knew it was only for a short time. You knew well that you caused your father great sorrow with your running around and going out to places where father preferred you didn't go. You knew well that you caused your father great sorrow when he could see that you'd allowed yourself to be powdered away from our home at every sneaky opportunity you could take, which doesn't suit a preacher's son in the least, who ought to walk without giving offense and according to his father's position. And what you also did, which you also knew would cause them great sorrow, you know very well, and it was also a great sin before God, which you also knew. But I'll stop at that. These and still others are willing sins in which you still live, and you know very well they are sins. So that your own conclusion, in fact, doesn't follow. You also say that we cannot have the true religion because all of our foreparents were good Catholics. If they were in fact good Catholics, they would have stayed Catholic! But it has pleased God to work upon them, that they were

careful to discern the hidden treasures of salvation, which come forth from an investigation of the true religion, which alone is founded on the fundament of the written word of God. For who regulates himself according to this alone, he cannot stray. Thus says the holy prophet David, Your word Lord, is a lamp on my way, a lantern on my feet. Thus our foreparents have sinned unknowingly, but not carelessly. God did you the favor of letting you be born into the true Gospel, yet you did not love the truth. Thus what you had was taken from you, for who has shall be given, but who hath not from him shall be taken what he hath. So that your conclusion by which you assume you have shut my mouth doesn't follow. As for our foreparents, I say again that they acted according to the simpleness of their hearts, not knowing that they sinned. This was a general, ignorant blindness, quite unlike your particular sins which you committed knowingly and willingly, rebelling against your pious parents. Your conclusion then that you can apply to yourself the words of Augustine then hardly holds, for if you wished to truly ponder your sins and show true regret, you would repent of them. But as long as you don't repent, then you love your sins, and as long as you love them, you can't love God.

You also write about my being unsettled regarding the little word Foy. Indeed Brother, I was indeed unsettled, but even more sorrowful, that you could care to curse so loosely and so lightheartedly the true religion in which you were instructed from your childhood, in which your parents and I your sister still live, and hope to endure in until the end of my life, outside of which religion there is no salvation. For she rests on God's word. Thus your reliance on the words of the prophet David here, which you seek to apply to yourself, do not apply. He had a good diligence for God and his word, but your laziness toward God's word has always stood out. Had you been diligent for God and his word, as your pious father always exhorted you to be, you would not have come into this sorrowful error. And it was especially heartbreaking for him that you were so without diligence, to hear and to read God's word with attention, and were instead so eager to serve the world and your own evil desires. For it is certain that to be diligent in serving God, and diligent in serving the world and its evil effects, cannot go together. First show, if you can, that our religion is founded on lies. You note that I say that neither you nor any papist can ever prove this, in the eternities. Yes Brother, I say it again, and I challenge you again that neither you nor any Jesuit or papist can prove it. Although you say you don't need to ask the help of any other papist, you shade the truth here, for it's clear in your entire

letter that they are your counselors. You also say that however little you have studied that you can still prove this beyond the brightness of the day—well that is also sad to read, for you studied your own religion so little. Yet now you can show it beyond the brightness of the day. Well why don't you do so then? I still see no effect of the clear brightness of the day, or your proof. Neither do I see any irrefutable argument in your long letter, but only many words with a lovely sheen to them. Yet the sheen disappears when the sun shines clearly upon it, which sun is the righteousness of Christ, who shines upon us through his Gospel. You even say that you can prove things from my own words alone, where the irrefutable evidence may be found. Do you dare brother, to call the evidence from God's word false? Then you say that God's word is false. And that is horrible to ponder, let alone to say or to write, for I have only written what can be confirmed by God's word. You bring to the table an unwritten word, or tradition of men, from which all your sillinesses, superstitions, and idolatries comes, so that the Roman church under which you now live is much more learned and wiser than God and his holy church, for they are indeed ignorant of all the idolatry that goes on in your church.

You also say that I repeat 2 or 3 of the most false lies. I don't repeat anything that is false, but only true things. You also say that it's no wonder that I stay where I am, as I've never heard anything else, thus God will be merciful to you, for you sin out of ignorance. Indeed it is not wonder at all that I stay so, but only God's grace and mercy, and I will continue to stay thus, because I never hear anything nor have heard anything except that our religion shall remain standing in the eternities. And with powerful evidences, from God's word, which are irrefutable, and that's how I test my religion. And I am certain that I do not sin out of ignorance in so doing, but in truthful knowledge, and have the truth, according to the teaching of Christ. Be wise as serpents, and simple as doves. In fact it is with care and simpleness of heart that we must hold firm to God's word, otherwise it happens that one, through idleness and a heart blown up with pride, comes to stray from the truth, and that one is driven with strange winds of doctrine, which God allows to descend upon such as a righteous punishment, toward those who do not love his word, and who are lazy about hearing or reading it, much less that they would know the right meaning of the same. You set yourself stubbornly and with misunderstanding against the theologians and preachers, without any good reason or good understanding or foundation. I am compelled to say this to you brother, and truthfully, for you've done it often, and

that against your own father, against whom you dared show the greatest lack of understanding in the world, whenever he taught you in matters of the faith. So I see again with sorrow, my brother, your shameless Jesuit stubbornness (stoutigheyt). Do you really suppose that, with such evidences as you present and blow my way, I shall be moved? Not at all. I stand, through God's mercy, too firm in my religion than that I could be led away by such. I require proofs of your words, especially that my religion is founded on lies, which you cannot prove in the eternities, even if all the Jesuits together conspired with their lovely sheen and clever traps in twisting God's word, they couldn't do it. They also don't have the heart for it, to deal with questions of religion with real courage, for when the task grows hard they walk away from it and don't hold their ground except with deceitful reasoning, and krakelingen [tricks?], which you've also now learned, although badly. You also say that it's a sign that we can't have the true church because the holy ghost, which always rules the church, is itself the truth. Poor soul, first you must prove that the scriptures, the prophets, and the apostles are all liars, and then it would necessarily follow that our religion is built on lies, for it is indeed founded only on the Holy Ghost which does indeed always govern the true church.

You also say that if I would investigate carefully that I would discover the truth. Yes brother, I will indeed carefully investigate and I investigate still daily, and the more I investigate, the more I am confirmed in the purity of the truth of my religion, for I investigate in and according to God's word. The exhortation then, my brother, which you offer me, you ought to take to heart yourself, I pray that with all my heart. And remember that to be eternally, eternally banished from God's is without end. Oh, that you've left the true church, I can't sob enough about it, as often as I think about it. But this according to your bewitched understanding, as the apostle speaks in Galatians, and who also speaks in Thessalonians about those who have not possessed the love of truth. You say that God calls me today, that I not harden my heart. Yes, Brother, God calls you today again to repentance, thus see to it that you don't reject that calling from God which comes to you now through my letter, as you've done in the past, so [scandalously] smadelijk rejecting and trampling with your feet the unusually lovely opportunity to study with your so faithful father. That is why God allowed to come over you, however, the unfortunate straying, but I trust that God, who is merciful, will not let this last forever upon you, but bring you back to the true faith, to which I'm prepared, according to my weak ability, to employ the talent

God gave me to strengthen others, and to refute your weder opbousingen [senseless constructions]. I'm willing to spend all my time night and day, although many hindrances come in the way, and although I am not very skillful with a pen. Thus my brother, that which you dare encourage me to do, do it yourself. For what will it matter, you say, if you for a moment win the whole world but cause damage to your soul. Yes consider well my brother, consider it well. It's no witness from God in your heart, as you say, but from the devil, who has long tried to trap you in the world, through which you've also damaged your conscience. Yet I still pray that God will preserve you from the clutches of the Antichrist, and the claw of the roaring lion, along with King Nebuchadnezzar, who for his pride and ingratitude was banished from God, that he was like the cattle for so many years and ate grass under the blue sky with them, until God seeing him raised him again, and granted him reason and judgment once more. Oh Brother, I hope God will do the same for you, after he's humbled you for a time.

You also say that I use so many slanderous words that don't pertain to the issues at hand, especially regarding the unwritten word. This must be refuted, for you do yourself what you accuse me of doing. For isn't it slanderous to say so tiresomely again that our religion is founded on lies, and that without any proof? As for me, I haven't written one slanderous word at all, which would in any case be in conflict with our religion, for to slander is to stubbornly insist on lies, against the truth, which I've never done. But this is certainly the nature of the Roman church to do so, under which you now live, that when evidence is lacking and they cannot refute the truth, they simply say, "these are mere follies." You say first that you expressly deny that you believe in any unwritten word or tradition which is in conflict with the written word, or Bible. Because you expressly deny it, brother, doesn't mean it is refuted. To deny is no art, but you learn this from the Roman church, for that is her way. And you say this is the first lie that I imagine against the Roman Church. There's no imagining here. That which I can fundamentally hear and see, well I can't imagine that. Imaginings are fantastic thoughts, without foundation, but for this there is foundation enough, on which to build.

[She also argues with him about whether scripture condemns unwritten traditions or not, and says they do. She reviews Proverbs 30:5-6, Deut 4:2, 12:32, and Galatians, that even if a trumpet blew another Gospel, other than what you've received, from heaven we should not believe it.] If you can scratch out and

erase all these texts, which can be seen and touched, then you've won the argument, with all your traditions. You say that I cannot prove that no traditions should be accepted, but I say that you cannot prove in the eternities all your unwritten traditions. God's word is too clear on this, and I've now proven it to you clearly enough. You also say that we are bound to believe unwritten traditions that were handed down during the apostolic age. But you cannot prove that they date from the apostolic age, as that is merely the claim of the Roman church, which is the whore of Babylon as Holy Scripture calls her, and she emerged first six hundred years after the birth of Christ. How then can these unwritten traditions be remnants of the apostolic age? Third, your unwritten word cannot come from the time of the apostles, because it conflicts so strongly with the written word, in every part, and so they would constantly be in conflict with the written word. Finally, Christ said with his own mouth, study the scriptures, they are they which testify of me, and in them you will find eternal life. He didn't add, and observe the unwritten word too, you'll also find the truth there. Can we have a more powerful argument than that, from the mouth of truth himself? Or shall we chastise Christ too, and say that he did poorly in not speaking of an unwritten word. Yes, the whore of Babylon is shameless enough to do so, if she could only give it some shine. Not once does Holy Scripture mention any unwritten word, therefore it's nothing but dreams and false lies.

Well, this is how far I got this past winter in answering your very long letter of November 10, and I've now copied it out, with much effort. For the present I'll leave it at that, having no great desire to respond to your Jesuitical deceitful sheen any longer. But I hope to get to it sometime, as long as the hope isn't taken from me that you, as you say, do indeed seek to know the truth of the Gospel, which left you when you tried to trade it for the love of the world. But I still hope that it will be temporary only, and that your understanding will be enlightened by God, not only in regard to matters of religion but your evil deeds against your parents. For you say about the Bible and lexicon that you haven't stolen them, yet you confess that stealing is carrying something away against someone's will and wish, and that's what you did, not only regarding the Bible and lexicon, but also everything else you took in addition from your parents and from me, which wasn't small. And regarding your next two letters, there you turn the matter on its head, for you say that the devil is trying to convince me through his instrument, yet it's you who's experienced this through his instruments. You say that our catechism, which is based on Holy Scripture, deceives us, when in

fact all your catechisms deceive your priests and people. I pray that Christ will return you to his fold, although given your hypocritical spirit which you show in your letters cause my unspeakable sorrow within, as you absolve yourself so of idolatry, and you don't even try to understand what idolatry actually is. And you urge me in your letter of 16 June 1655 to investigate, investigate; why didn't you do that before you left? I wonder whether you might have become a Turk or Jew, if you had happened to move with your father and mother to live among them? That's how much you've always loved the world, and so lightly have you gone over to the papists. But instead investigate with me, read our books with a proper spirit, which you've never wanted to do before, and then I'll read your popish books with a true investigation. Send me your best. The little rag which you meant to take with you, well that repulses me. If you want I'll send you one or two of my books, and the Bible you used to have [which was translated in part by their grandfather]. But I have to sign off now. I'm writing this by candlelight and am very tired. I pray you to let me know about your particular state of things, if you love me as you say you do. But do it simply and according to truth and just tell me where you live, what you do, what you live from, and how everything is going. With this fare you well until your sincere repentance. Your Sister, Maria Rolanda [with the feminine a, instead of the usual "us" of a male theologian].

13 August 1655. Dear Sister. Your wonderfully long letter, well the more I read and reread it the less I know how to answer you. Not, Sister, because it contains any reasoning which cannot be easily refuted, but because my mind is so amazed at the regrettable blindness in which you find yourself, up to your ears, not understanding how it is possible that a reasonable person can so pitifully strive against reason itself, and still suppose that all is well. I say again, how is it possible that you would think to persuade me again to your errors, through such a letter, which contains nothing but allegations, and not at all any proofs, only words and no works, lies and no truths, slanders and nothing besides. Indeed sister, except for the fact I know you do so out of ignorance, I would not be able to imagine how such a letter could be conceived at all. You start out so furiously, saying that I've employed no weapons to convince you, but only that serve to destroy yourself. Yet it amazes me that you never refute my letter at all. You've tried to convince me that calling upon the saints as in "pray for me" is idolatry, but you haven't proved it. Instead you simply follow that horrific lie of your Reformed Catechism in which you abuse us as servants of idols.

You say that you will strive even more for God's honor, but if you truly want to do that then you ought not to recommend to God any reformed church, and cover him with lies, for he teaches us in his Holy word that his visible church cannot be reformed at all, when he teaches us that it shall not err neither can err. Unless of course you know how to establish a new church better than God himself. The scriptures here in the margin [about 15 of them] are clear on this matter, so that you won't be tempted by deceitful explanations. For this reason I wrote to the Reformed preachers of Den Bosch about two months ago [near his father's home], asking but one question, promising to become Reformed again if they could show me a single person who, before Calvin's arrival, taught what Calvin came to teach and what is taught among you now. But they couldn't name one to me. If you can do it, I promise the same.

That which I wrote about father and mother and my love for them, I write again. Of course God's word says, Honor Father and Mother, I admit that. But you must also admit to me that God's word says that one must hate his Father and Mother to come to Him. But you add here the qualification, "if persecution comes in your conscience." I answer first: that does not stand in the text. Second, Christ says to come to him. Now to come in full perfection to him (for one cannot be imperfect or unwhole to do so) one must use the means which he has instituted to that end: but I would never be allowed to use those means in your father's house. Thus I had to make one choice out of two: I had to give up my desire to come to God, or I had in this respect to hate father and mother and you. With this are destroyed your multitude of words on the subject, which takes up almost your entire letter.

Then you say that your Reformed church or religion doesn't allow or give rise to a compulsion of conscience with great violence. O Sister, see how the devil is tricking you, how he blinds you! Because plenty of innocent blood testifies to the contrary, of so many martyrs who were martyred, whether in England even before these Troubles, and also at Gorcum in Holland, as well as on the captured ships, such as when at a single stroke 35 or 36 good pious Roman Catholics were murdered at once. Also, don't you see daily before your eyes how the pious Catholics are robbed of their shepherds and teachers, and all their services are rooted out with constant persecution, with the intent that being robbed of their teachers they will be compelled to come into your churches, or perhaps you wouldn't consider that to be great violence. And don't you remember how father sometimes told us how the Prince of the Palatinate [in Germany] reformed his

lands? I remember very well, namely, the preachers were required by the Prince to hang a roll from the pulpit with all the names of the citizens and peasants who lived in their parish, and how he read the roll in order at each meeting, and those who were not present were punished if they had no good reason for staying away. And father even told this to the Catholics. You say then again the lies of your Reformed church, sister. Or maybe you can show me to the contrary, or maybe it's just complete blindness. For you yourself admit that lies are the work of the devil and cannot exist in the true church, thus it follows that your religion cannot be true, for it has to be bolstered by lies. It's a devilish church instead.

My words which you cite [regarding his earlier criticisms of papists], well I have never repeated them since converting. I admit that in times past I said that which other people had told me was the truth and as I then believed, may God improve it. That which you say about Augustine, you can't hold that position. His own words are clear: it's not about running away from your parents' house to follow God. Augustine ran away in fact, but with the greatest sorrow of his mother, because he was not running away to serve God but the devil. You can see it for yourself in Book 5 of the Confessions. And then you go on and cite many of the past sins, adding at the end that you'll refrain from mentioning the half of them, for my honor's sake. At another time, O Dear Sister, you need not refrain at all, for I am prepared, if you wish, to send you a copy of my abominations, which are surely longer than what you know yourself. For I regard my honor as but dross, which only enhances the honor owed to my God, seeing the unsurpassably great love and longsuffering he has shown by converting such a poor slave of the devil. I confess therefore gladly that I often willingly and knowingly sinned, carrying out my evil before God. But that you conclude from this sister, that God did not convert me, but the devil, is wholly wrong. You then steal from God the honor, as if he couldn't convert such a willing sinner, yet the Holy Scriptures are full of such cases [he names Joachoz in 2 Kings, Manasses in 2 Paral], people whom God granted his gifts through his wonderful love, even though they, like I, willingly and knowingly sinned. Thus why couldn't the good God bring this change about in me as well? Look at David and Peter and countless others, and thus I'll continue with St. Augustine to revel in the marvelously great love of God, despite your efforts to discount it.

Further: you challenge me again to prove that your religion is founded on lies. I am amazed in the utmost that you still are writing this, since I have proven it so clearly already, and say it again, that they are indeed horrible lies, namely in

the first place that we Catholic accept traditions which are in conflict with holy scripture, and second that we seek salvation outside of Christ or require other intercessors, and third that we seek to win our salvation through works outside the merits of Christ. And still more, which aren't necessary to repeat here, I'll deal with them some other time. But how do you demonstrate these lies? You say, I don't write you any false things but only true, and you stand still at that. But why don't you prove that we teach such lies? Study the doctors and teachers of the Holy Church and name me book, chapter, verse, or page, so that I may see it myself, and so that your church may be washed clean of this stain and I may convert again. And prove this with powerful evidence, reasons from God's word which are irrefutable. You say simply that the proofs are clear enough, and that it's already proven from God's word, and that you're not imagining this but that's one can touch and see the proof oneself. But Dear Sister, where are the effects? Why don't you show and say, your Roman church doctor or teacher says this or not, in this book, in this chapter. Then you'll have proven something. But so far you've offered none of that.

[He refutes her regarding the unwritten word too, regarding Paul, and the Old Testament. He uses the classic Catholic arguments by now]: how did you get a Bible but from the Catholic Church? How do you know there were only 4 Evangelists? How do you know these weren't gospels written by heretics? How do you know the Bible consists of exactly as many books as you now have, and not less, as Luther claims? Show me where the Apostle's Creed is in the Bible, which you also use. Where does it say that children must be baptized, against Menno Simons [the Anabaptist]? Where does it say clearly in the Bible that the Holy Ghost comes from the Father and the Son? How can you eat blood or cloven animals, when the bible so clearly prohibits them? Are these from traditions, or the Bible? You say you've proven all such things, I say I can't find any such proof in your letter.

You also say that I can't prove that apostolic tradition did not come from apostolic times. I answer that I can prove that indeed, say what you want. I can prove it from century to century in the first 600 years. If it's Jesuitical sheen or not doesn't matter, for truth must remain truth and before it the devil and lies must make way. [He's also weary of her charges that he stole, when he obviously gave it back, and sent what she wanted. If it's not held, it's not stolen, for holding is essential to stealing]. And the rest of what I took with me, if you'd asked for it, I would have sent that too.

And that I asked you to investigate, I say it again, and that you loose yourself from the claws of the devil, so that in the day of judgment the poor blind pagans with those of Sodom and Gomorrah don't come to accuse you. I pray to God for you, and compel him, like Moses, night and day, and use the intercession of the Saints (as St. Paul did) that they will pray for you as well, that you may obtain salvation, for yourself and your parents. Please do send me some of your books, I'll gladly study them, for that isn't denied to me here. Then I will send you some books as well—well you know I have no money, sister, to buy them. If you'd like for 4 or 5 guilders to have those books which first opened my eyes, you may give it to this messenger, I'll gladly buy them for you and would like nothing more.

My particular state is such that you'll hardly believe it, even after I write it to you, and it is to God's greater glory, who knows all things, and who will judge between you and me, and who knows that I don't lie in one point. I live on the Padde canal, near the Keyzer street, with a widow Franckx, and her daughter, who is a religious. I have a room there as big as your hall where the harpsichord stands. Inside I have a pull out bed, table, chairs, and some books. The Jesuits pay my expenses, for the love of God, who will reward them for it in the eternities. They give 200 florins a year for everything. My clothes, shirts, handkerchiefs, socks, shoes, boots, spurs, hat, are all in the same state as when I left. If you saw them, you would have to confess it as well. And I haven't worn anything else in the meantime, or had anything new. Further, I've studied almost a year of theology now, and disputed various times, and never been sick or had any inconvenience, God be praised, glorified, honored, and thanked in the eternities, Amen.

Ending now, beloved sister, I pray that you'll take care for yourself and take your soul's salvation to heart. And with heartfelt greetings, and offering of all service, to my dear father and mother, I commend you, along with father and mother and all my friends, to the protection of the Most High, to the glory of his name and your souls' eternal salvation. Fare you well, Your brother and servant, with all my heart. J. Rolandus.

[in the fall of 1655, Jacob went on a pilgrimage to Rome. He sent a couple of letters to his family along the way.]

[September: He hasn't heard from Maria right away, worries him, asks her not to forget him, as she appears to have done, for he certainly hasn't forgotten her or their parents. Prays constantly to God that it may please him to penetrate your hearts with but a tiny ray of his powerful grace, so that you'll investigate yourselves and strive for eternal salvation, especially since you must see (unless you're unreasonable) that you've been conquered in your arguments. Maria is weary of this by now, though, and won't reply much more. Jacob has some other exciting (to him) news. First, he writes on 17 September 1655 that though she never sent any money, he was able to get some books for her to read anyway, either from the author himself, or from some friends who gave him books. The murderer of souls is trying to prevent her from ordering any such books, but Jacob's got them now and is sending them anyway. Urges her on, pleading with her again that she'll investigate, and also encourage father to investigate. But an even bigger surprise comes with the next month's letter. It seems as if the Jesuits' support in Antwerp was good for only one year. They've cut Jacob off now, to see how he'll respond, and he's decided to seek entry into a religious order. Preferably the Capuchins, whose preaching has impressed him so much. But perhaps the Jesuits too.]

26 Oct 1655. To his sister and dear parents. Writes from Wurzburg, Germany, enroute. The more time goes on, the more I see how God is working in me, and does so daily still, despite my small gratitude, and I ponder how God gave himself completely for me on the cross of Calvary, so that I may attain eternal salvation. I've decided to give himself fully over to God, whatever he wants, as Paul counseled, not following my own desires and flesh, but to the contrary to put them on the cross and do penance for past sins. To that end I've decided, after long deliberation, to enter the Capuchin order. But after pleading much to enter for long, they've turned me down, as the war in French Brabant is unsettling everything. Thus I decided to go to Rome, to ask the general himself, or possibly to ask the Jesuits. [He left Antwerp 3 weeks ago, and through God's grace he hasn't had the slightest mishap along the way, fully healthy arrived in Wurzburg, about halfway thus. Would have written sooner if he had the chance. Pleads with his father to investigate just once without partisanship.] I'm certain that your reverence would convert to the Catholic faith, for the longer time goes on the more I see that father is deceived. Please study the Holy Fathers of the first 500 years [of the church]. And my dearest mother, please encourage father to sincere

study, for eternal salvation depends on it, and I wish you both happiness, through God's great grace. I pray God to spare you in long health, so that I may embrace you once more in joy, and we together may praise and thank God for all his benevolence. Amen, Amen. Your most subject son, and servant, J. Rolandus.

[He writes Maria separately too, from Innsbruck, Austria, where he witnesses the public conversion of Queen Christina of Sweden, who is on her way to Rome, and whose entourage Jacob would join for the Italian part of the trip. He writes her that he's been gone 3 weeks from Antwerp, but it's been a long time since Maria wrote him]. Please write at least about the health of our parents, at least if you have any love at all left for me. If you would only start to study seriously, it would mean very much to me. [And he sends her two more book]. I'm now in Germany, through the grace of God. After hearing the Lutherans, who dominate whole parts and towns, and then the Calvinists, I find it impossible to leave the Catholic faith, for I wouldn't know where to go. Lutherans say they are the best, so do Calvinists, and damn each other. Investigate sister, tell me about your health, I'll always tell you about mine. Read the letters I wrote, study them, ponder them, and I call upon God as my witness that I wrote them according to truth. P.S. [He adds that Christina converted on the 3rd of this month to the only Holy Catholic Apostolic faith, and did her solemn and public profession before all the people. She's studied 5, some say 7, years. God grant her as an example to you...

[Jacob returned to Antwerp in mid April 1656. Upon returning he writes hurriedly to his sister, as a messenger is waiting for his letter. He wants most of all to hear about the little books he sent her, and what attracts her most to the Holy Roman Catholic Apostolic faith so far, so that Jacob may instruct her to her soul's salvation. In the meantime he sends her a present of gloves, from Rome; don't mix them with linen, he urges, perhaps to avoid staining the linen with the dye of the gloves. And keeps praying for her, through Mary the mother of God, and all other saints.]

[Most importantly to Maria, Jacob has still not joined a religious order. It's not clear what happened in Rome, whether he asked and was turned down, or changed his mind, or whatever. But because he's not been accepted, she'll respond to his letter, albeit sarcastically. Like, it was great to hear from him, she got the gloves, and please tell all the details of your trip! It sounds nice, asking how he

traveled, and how he liked it, but then, “did you get to kiss the pope’s feet? Please tell me all in truth, for I know the Roman faith makes it no sin not to speak the truth always. Oh how I wish you’d listened to your father. I hope you saw so much there that you’ll never enter any convent now, for if you can’t be saved except by entering a convent then many Roman faithful will be doomed. If you did enter a convent, and that slavish state, then I’ll never be able to write you another familiar letter, since someone else will always read it. Don’t sell yourself so, I pray you brother. I’d really like to see you.”]

[But Jacob doesn’t respond right away—he’s busy. What else was he doing that summer of 1656? Gathering money for schooling in the fall. And that fall he goes to Douai, for 2 years of philosophy in another Jesuit school, as advised by the Jesuits of Antwerp, to acquire basic theology. The Jesuits let him raise some of his own money, so as not to appear they are buying him, or enticing him into the order. He is still a minor after all. So Jacob spent the summer begging for money from friends and acquaintances, as Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, had done himself back in the 1530s, including in the Spanish Netherlands. Jacob moves to Douai in the fall, where he has a small room with one Jean du Roo, in the Schoolstreet, and he lives from the alms he gathered in Antwerp, received from various good friends. “It hasn’t been easy for me since returning from Rome, but through this we learn to conquer much.” He’s mostly busy with school, but he manages an occasional letter to his family. He finally responds to Maria’s last letter with New Years (1657), which was the most common time to send greetings for everyone. He repeats his old theme that he’s sorrowful at pondering her state, and how her salvation is in peril, and how his heart is bursting from sadness at the thought, “especially since for your soul’s salvation, and our parents, our savior became flesh to redeem you from the slavery of the devil. I’m heartbroken at being separated from you all eternally, unless you accept God’s grace and calling. It’s impossible to stem the tears. And if you really loved me, you’d have written me a while ago to tell me of our parents’ health. I admit I haven’t written for a long while either, although that was De Grijn’s fault, for he’d promised to bring you with him to Antwerp or to bring one of your letters, so I waited. I decided to write with New Year at last.” And he’s still asking her opinion whether he should dare to write father or mother too? She never responds to that point, but Jacob tries anyway in future years, with no luck. He wishes them all a good new year in body and soul, especially soul, and true investigation of the

Holy Roman Catholic Apostolic faith. And then he tells Maria that he does hope to be received by the Jesuits, after finishing his two years of Philosophy in Douai. And he reminds her, she can see from this that they don't just take anyone in a convent, as you all dream they do. "It costs me effort enough. That's why they have let me suffer (sukkelen), and care for my own maintenance, as a test. That's why I went to Rome in the winter in pure poverty, but did it gladly, considering the reward I expect above in Heaven. Please write soon, and tell me about the health of our parents, and what you've learned from little books I sent. I hope to see you next summer in Antwerp, that you'll get permission to go there." Then he commends them all to the five holy wounds of Christ."]

[Maria doesn't get this letter though. He tries again in September 1657. He can't resist writing her again, for he has only a couple of weeks vacation left, and she still hasn't come to Antwerp. "It appears you want to cut off all friendship, as you don't respond, despite your protestations of love in your last letter. From my side, my love cannot find words, and it's greater than when I lived at home, since I now have God's grace to help me ponder what my duty was to my parents. I would gladly shed my blood for you and our." He defended a thesis in logic this year, and includes a copy of it for father. "What shall I write otherwise? I ask you to come, and it appears you won't. I ask you to write, and in vain. Please remember your brotherly love you expressed." He wishes them all prosperity, especially in their souls. Your truest brother and servant, Jacob Rolandus Amstelredamus.]

[And Maria does respond this time, for the last time. This is her last letter. Does she know this when she writes it? It's not clear. But the tone is rather of someone who's given up. She relates some news, and expresses love and sorrow. She says "that you've come alive again is dear to me, as I never got your last letter. Still, it is a great sorrow and persistent ache that I notice no sobering up by you, from the wine of the glass of the great whore, which has made you drunk, and touched your mind, taken your reason, and even blows out the light of nature along with natural love, even when you had but a whiff of it in Boxtel, for you then so unnaturally stole yourself out of your father's house and ran away. I also think you take refuge more and more in ignorance, namely in the feigned words which are the foundation of the Roman See. That you write that you realize better than ever your obligation to your parents, that gives up some hope of sobering up. But

to say that you would have no dearer hour than that in which you can shed your blood for us is but monkish feignedness in my opinion.” To Maria, Jacob is the one who’s rejected his family, they haven’t rejected him. “I cannot fathom how you write that you offer your services to us, since you know very well that by staying away you can’t do the least bit of service for us. And what is this new manner you have of recommending us in the five holy wounds of your dear Jesus? Are his wounds more than he is? But I’m weary of such matters, and simply pray to God that he’ll awaken you from your sleep, and Christ will enlighten you. My dear brother, repent, and come back to your family, about whom I must tell you this. Your cousin Jacob Corvinus has his second calling in holy church service [as a Reformed minister], and is presently in the parish of Giesen, near Workom, married to the daughter of the former burgemeester. Your cousin Jacobus Rolandus is also married, with the daughter of Dominus Colvius, a French preacher in Dordrecht, and they already have a young daughter. Cousin Klaerjen married last summer, with an honest young man of Amsterdam, a wine merchant. Moetjen Bautius Kantius will marry a week from Sunday, with a well-established rentenier. Father and mother are reasonably healthy, but your absence, plus your conversion to that abominable popedom, is a perpetual wound. I recommend myself to your sincere true conversion, so that you may be saved. Meester Gerrit van Hogerlinden, who is with us, greets you strongly. My brother, Your Sister, Maria Rolanda.]

And that’s it.

Jacob continues writing her occasionally, and his parents, telling them about his progress in the Jesuit order, all the way until the time that he leaves for Brazil in 1664. But they, or more accurately Maria, never respond again; his parents never responded at all. Still, he’s optimistic, and at one point urges Maria to run away to Antwerp and convert, just like he did; he even knows how she can support herself, sewing, at the home of one of his friends. And he urges his father to please study with an open heart and find the truth. His father dies in 1667 while Jacob’s in Brazil. It’s not clear when his mother dies, as almost nothing is known of her, except her name in birth records, and one letter she wrote to a friend.

Letter chart (number of pages in parentheses; Jacob's hand was much smaller)

<i>Jacob to Maria:</i>	<i>Maria to Jacob:</i>	<i>Jacob to father (and mother)</i> (letters not included here)
	25 Aug 1654 (1/2)	
1 Sep 1654 (2)		
	25 Sep 1654 (3.5)	
10 Nov 1654 (11)		
	14 Nov 1654 (4)	
28 Nov 1654 (3)		
	27 Dec 1654 (1)	
	11 Jan 1655 (3)	
2 Mar 1655 (1)		2 Mar 1655 (1)
	5 Apr 1655 (3)	
20 Apr 1655 (4)		
18 Jun 1655 (1)		
	18 Jul 1655 (13)	
13 Aug 1655 (7)		
17 Sep 1655 (1.5)		
26 Oct 1655 (2)		26 Oct 1655 (2)
21 Apr 1656 (1)		
	9 May 1656 (2)	
9 Jan 1657 (2)		
14 Sep 1657 (2)		
	29 Sep 1657 (2)	
31 Dec 1657 (2)		31 Dec 1657 (.5)
13 Apr 1658 (1)		
22 Apr 1658 (1)		
14 Sep 1658 (1)		
		4 Feb 1659 (1)
15 May 1660 (1)		15 May 1660 (1)
		8 Jun 1660 (1)
		13 Sep 1660 (1)
Jan 1662 (2 letters, 1 each)		Jan 1662 (1)
3 Sep 1662 (1)		
16 Dec 1662 (1)		Dec 1662 (1)