

questions” (Bill, *Erinnerungen*, [memoirs], p.82).

For the feast of St. Joseph, Fr. Arnold gave a conference and at the end he said: “we should also pray for the one who chaired the conference ... so that God would send another, more capable man into the house, to whom he would give the place ...” (ibid.)

On Monday, March 20, Fr. Bill went once again to the Bishop of Roermond, to whom Arnold Janssen had sent the letter of Bishop Adames. The Bishop insisted on Fr. Bill having the house registered under Fr. Arnold’s name. “But he still agreed with my ideas about the organization of the house. Then I decided to finally give in, since I had done everything I could to stop or prevent the regression (if not the decline) of the Mission House, which as I was fully convinced would certainly or most probably happen, if Fr. Janssen was to carry out his plans. First I was very much depressed, but then almost happy and joyful, because in this way I was relieved of any kind of responsibility” (ibid., p. 83).

Originally Fr. Arnold wanted to reregister the purchase contract on March 21; however, since the notary had no time on that day, finally March 24 was decided upon for changing the owner of the property. “But,” so Fr. Bill writes, “new difficulties concerning the different formalities arose ... That made me hope once again and I thought of going once again to the Bishop. However, Fr. Arnold threatened to write again to my Bishop of Luxembourg, who already had threatened me with harsh punishments. Since I had tried to the utmost, I did not feel obliged to expose myself to the danger of such great evils (suspension?!). Furthermore, it was also still possible, that something good would come out of what Fr. Janssen wanted to found. Therefore I finally gave in, and in the afternoon of 24.3., on a Friday, the transaction took place and the property was registered under the name of Fr. Janssen” (ibid.).

Fr. Arnold recalled the event with these words: “The whole morning I appealed in vain to my *socius* to resell the house to me in the presence of a notary; I had almost given up hope. Then after dinner, in the afternoon when the first celebration of the *Festi Incarnationis Verbi Divini* (24 March, vigil of the feast of the Incarnation of the Divine Word) began, he suddenly agreed to do it. Without delay we went to the notary Clerckx in Blerick who had been waiting for us since the morning, and there we completed the transaction” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, p. 113).



## The Arnoldus Family Story

### March 11 -13, 1876

In order to understand the events of March 11-13, 1876 we have to remember the following:

During the cultural battle [Kulturkampf] in Germany Arnold Janssen experienced how quickly the State took possession of monasteries or other ecclesiastical institutions. He did not want that to happen to the new mission house. Therefore it had to be private property which the State could not easily confiscate and so he developed this plan: “I will have it [the Mission House] registered in the name of my colleague, Fr. Bill, in whom I have the greatest confidence, especially because of his humility. He pays for it; however, I lend him the money, that is, the donations received; and he gives me a promissory note. ... I also intend to ask Fr. Bill to become naturalized as a Dutchman in order to safeguard the holy undertaking even further. (I myself have to keep a foothold in Germany; for me to give up my nationality is out of the question.)” (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, pp. 73f). This plan was carried out on August 4 when the Mission House was bought legally. Having “signed a promissory note in favour of Fr. Janssen regarding the payment, Fr. Bill was registered during the legal transaction as owner and then given the money” (ibid., p. 74).

Seven months later Fr. Arnold no longer trusted Fr. Bill; “he does not fit in our house,” he had written on March 10, 1876. With the support of Bishop Paredis of Roermond, he required of Fr. Bill that the Mission House be registered in his, Fr. Arnold’s name. Fr. Bill, however, refused to do it. In his memoirs he writes:

“Having received the letter of the Bishop [Paredis], Fr. Janssen urged me to have the registration of the house changed to his name the next day. But I was not yet ready to do that; for it was clear to me that then I would have no more influence on Fr. Janssen. But I still hoped for some way to unite the two of us; furthermore I hoped for help from the outside. Therefore I turned for advice and help to the Rev. Dean of Venlo (Peter Bill, *Erinnerungen [Memoirs]*, p. 76). He advised him to speak once more with Bishop Paredis about the situation in Steyl. So on March 11, Fr. Bill went to Roermond to see the Bishop. The Bishop “answered me that

the matter, that is the change of the registration of the house to Fr. Janssen, was not so urgent. ... He did not accuse me of not recognising Fr. Janssen as Superior or of refusing to obey him” (ibid.).

In the evening of March 11, after evening prayer, Fr. Arnold asked Fr. Bill if he “would go with him the next day, March 12, to the notary in order to transfer the property to him. I answered that there was no hurry to do that, etc.” (ibid., p. 77).

Now Fr. Arnold did not want to wait any longer. On March 13, in the presence of seminarians Reichart and Anzer, he terminated the promissory note in his favour which Fr. Bill had signed on August 4, 1875. The termination read: “Lent on August 4, 1875 to Mr. Peter Bill: 13,600 German Mark, 731 Dutch Guilders for the payment of expenses, about which I herewith serve notice to Mr. Bill of its termination on *ultimo* March [on the last day of March]. Steyl, March 13, 1876, Arnold Janssen. The actual termination on the aforementioned date is witnessed on March 13, 1876 by Josef Althoff. Joh. B. Anzer” (Fritz Bornemann, *Johann Baptist Anzer bis zur Ankunft in Shantung* [John Baptist Anzer until his arrival in Shantung], 1880, *Analecta SVD* -38, Rome 1977, p. 66, footnote 18). Josef Althoff was a volunteer worker in the Mission House; he was asked to be a witness since seminarian Reichart refused to give his signature (Hermann Fischer, *Arnold Janssen*, transl. Frederick M. Lynk, p. 184). With that termination Fr. Arnold wanted to force Fr. Bill to give him the money back or give him the house. Since Fr. Bill did not have the money, he had to hand the house over to him.

The same day at 5 pm, so Fr. Bill writes in his memoirs, “Fr. Janssen informed me that he had written to my bishop in Luxembourg; if I agreed to register the Mission house under his name the following day, he would not send the letter ... I did not agree. I just could not get myself to do so; for I realized that if I had no longer this means at hand [of ownership of the Mission House] I could not stay any longer in Steyl, unless I wanted to follow with full sails in Fr. Arnold’s wake, and I just could not bring myself to do so; for I always thought that Fr. Janssen’s plans could develop into a good foundation which over the years could also produce a lot of good, but not a mission society which alone was necessary for Germany and which in the present (in the then) situation would undoubtedly be successful, whereas it seemed to me impossible to do right now what Fr. Janssen planned to do” (Peter Bill, *Erinnerungen [memoirs]*, p. 78). Fr. Arnold then sent his letter to Bishop Adames in Luxembourg.

### **March 14-24, 1876**

Fr. Bill had consulted several people regarding the situation in the Mission House in Steyl. One of them was the Luxembourg priest and professor Hengesch who was also an acquaintance of Fr. Arnold. Amongst other things, on March 14 Professor Hengesch wrote to Fr. Bill the following:

“I cannot see how you, the four men gathered together, under the leadership

of Fr. Janssen can found such an institution [a mission seminary]... . How can one expect that priests or clerics still in training can place themselves under a high school teacher or a simple parish priest or a student of theology? – As long as not a person of excellence who already has a name or who right from the beginning recommends himself in some way is at the helm or will still enter (which I always expected) one cannot think of such a seminary...”. He advised Fr. Bill also, to assert his rights as owner of the house. Fr. Bill read this letter to Reichart and Anzer “who thought that it should be given to Arnold Janssen to read, which then also happened” (ibid., p.79).

On March 16, Bishop Adames replied to Fr. Arnold’s letter of March 13: “I am very sorry that Fr. Bill caused you frustration and difficulties instead of giving you consolation and help. I never knew him as you described him in your letter of the 13<sup>th</sup> of this month. Here, he always appeared to be a pious, humble, and zealous [assistant and] parish priest [in charge of a parish]. Of course Fr. Bill was never in a situation like he was at the very start when Your Reverence bought the house in his name. That probably went to the poor man’s head and gave him false notions about his real position. He probably believed that this gave him a right to be, if not rector, at least co-rector of the house.

“I have just written to Fr. Bill to tell him to submit himself to the demands of the Most Reverend Bishop of Roermond, otherwise I would be obliged to take stronger measures against him. If he objects to this, which I doubt, please inform me. If he obeys, then please have patience with his present state of error. I hope he soon sees his mistake and decisively amends his ways. [...]. I ask God for a peaceful resolution of the present disagreement and heaven’s blessing on the future of this good work” (Alt, *Journey in faith*, p. 110f).

On March 17 or 18 Fr. Bill received the above-mentioned letter of his Bishop Adames. Having read the letter of Fr. Bill, the declaration of the Bishop of Roermond from March 10 and after having read Fr. Arnold’s March 13<sup>th</sup> letter to him, the Bishop sees himself obliged, “to appeal to you earnestly and, if necessary, order you strictly to follow the declarations and orders of the Most Reverend Bishop of Roermond, especially article 6 of these declarations regarding the resale of the Mission House to Fr. Rector Janssen in return for the promissory note. Since His Episcopal Grace [of Roermond] finds these measures necessary, I hope you will readily abide by them. To disobey them would be an abuse of the trust placed in you and I would have no option but to punish you severely” (ibid., p. 111). In the evening of March 17 or 18, after the evening meal, Fr. Janssen asked Fr. Bill if he was willing to go with him to the notary, in order to register the purchase in his [Janssen’s] name. “Thinking of the letter of my Bishop Adames, I answered. ‘Well, if it has to be, then I will,’ and I added, ‘then I will first, on Monday (20.3.) go to the Bishop of Roermond to seek clarification of several