

Wintzen, Joseph

(1874–1949)

REINDER BRUINSMA

Reinder Bruinsma, Ph.D. (University of London), is a retired church administrator, scholar, and author. From September 2011 to early 2013 he served as the interim-president of the Adventist Church in Belgium and Luxembourg. Since then he has returned to his status as a retiree but remains active in preaching, lecturing, and writing.

Joseph Wintzen, administrator, evangelist, and author, was one of the most important early leaders in the Dutch Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹ Born in Rhineland, Germany, in 1874, he accepted the Adventist faith and was baptized at age 18 in 1892. In 1894 he went to Hamburg, Germany to attend the Adventist mission school in preparation for church service.

Wintzen's church career began in 1896, with colporteur work in Germany and, in 1897, in the Netherlands. He soon married Jantine Potze, the daughter of one of the very first Dutch church members. When the church experienced a major schism in 1902, with about 200 members, 80 percent of the membership, leaving the church, Joseph Wintzen was one of the two remaining ministerial workers. He soon became a rising star as the Adventist church recovered from its near-fatal blow. He was ordained to the ministry in the Hague in 1907.

Wintzen moved back to Germany in 1910, where he worked as a pastor and, after 1916, as president of several conferences. In this period he wrote a controversial booklet about the Christian and War (*Der Christ und der Krieg*) in which he defended the official position of the German Adventist Church during World War I.² German church leadership, in spite of much protest, had declared that fighting (with weapons) for one's fatherland was a Christian duty, and that active service on Sabbath could be justified under certain circumstances. This publication later also appeared in the Dutch language.³



Joseph Wintzen

From the Netherlands Biography website,

<http://shana.adventist.nl/biografieen-3/joseph-wintzen/>.

In 1922 Joseph Wintzen was elected president of the church in the Netherlands. He served in that role until 1926, when he was elected as president of the West-German Union. He left for a two-year inspection trip to the Netherlands East Indies in 1930. Upon returning to the Netherlands he assumed once again the office of union president, a position he held until 1942. Wintzen became a Dutch citizen in 1939. He gained a reputation as a strong, but rather autocratic leader. In general, workers did not appreciate his leadership style, and non-ordained workers especially tended to feel that they were treated unfairly. Wintzen strongly promoted close ties between the Adventist church in the Netherlands and the church in Germany.

Joseph Wintzen retired for health reasons after leaving his post as union president. He died on February 28, 1949.

SOURCES

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van Rijn, H. G. *110 Jaar Adventkerk in Nederland*. Bosch en Duin: Advent Pers, 1987.

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NOTES

1. H. G. van Rijn, *110 Jaar Adventkerk in Nederland* (Bosch en Duin: Advent Pers, 1987), 59-65; R. Bruinsma, *Ontstaan en Groei van de Adventbeweging* (The Hague: Boekenhuis "Veritas", n.d.), 84, 85.
2. H. G. van Rijn, "De christen en de oorlog," *Advent*, November 1982.
3. H. G. van Rijn, "Joseph Wintzen," at <http://shana.adventist.nl/biografieen-3/joseph-wintzen/>.

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