

Apostle's Child

Renske Doorenspleet



Between 1946 and 2001 thousands of Dutch children grew up in a hidden, parallel world. They were part of a community with aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, and one Father. The group had daily meetings, its own words and expressions, an intensive youth programme, specific rituals and rules. During the day, the children functioned in the normal, visible life in the Netherlands. In the evenings and during the weekends, they lived in a world that was invisible to outsiders. The children learned they had a special mission but shouldn't tell anybody. They were told to change the world without being noticed. Nobody knew, nobody knows.

When Renske Doorenspleet was born in 1973, the 'Apostle' led the Dutch group with around 30,000 followers. As 'the Dear Leader, God, Father and Living Norm' he demanded full devotion to his ideas, obedience to him, and conformation to the group. After Doorenspleet left this group (Apostolisch Genootschap/ Apostolic Society), in 1998, there has been just one thing she wants to do: explore her own paths. But even years later she discovers that the past keeps haunting her.

In *Apostle's Child*, Doorenspleet interweaves archival material with memories into an intriguing and disconcerting story of a common, Dutch child growing up in an uncommon world. She describes how the movement started in the United Kingdom in 1830, and how it moved to the Netherlands in 1863. She also shows how the group has been able to function – hidden in plain sight - within a democratic country, for more than 150 years. The result is a breath-taking book about internal coercion and control, shame and silence, the outsiders' lack of interest, but also about the power of unbroken curiosity and warm friendships. An untold story.