

# FOREWORD

Lourens Baas Becking is a pivotal figure in the history of microbial ecology and geobiology, having coined the term “Geobiologie” in the title of his 1934 opus (*Geobiologie of inleiding tot de milieukunde*). This work has been translated into English (Baas Becking, 2016), so everyone now can read of Baas Becking’s contributions and see for themselves the context of his most famous proposition “Everything is everywhere, but the milieu (environment) selects”. One can read of many other things as well and be particularly struck by Baas Becking’s fondness for extreme environments and, generally, how much was known about the microbial ecology of aquatic ecosystems in the 1930s.

This was not, however, the end of Baas Becking’s writings about geobiology. Without revealing too much in this foreword, Baas Becking was imprisoned for trying to escape Nazi-occupied Netherlands, and he wrote an updated version, in English, of the original *Geobiologie* over a seven week period during his initial stay in prison. The writing was by hand and all figures were hand drawn. This 1944 edition of *Geobiologie* is the volume that is presented here.

At this point, we must introduce Lex Raat, an academic grandson of Baas Becking (his academic teacher was Baas Becking’s student Anton Quispel), and the contributing editor for this volume. Lex is also the founding president of the Baas Becking Society and a keen Baas Becking scholar. Lex became aware of the existence of this manuscript and was able to purchase it with help from the Agouron Institute and the Leiden University Fund. After this, Lex spent countless hours poring over the manuscript and transcribing it into a legible form, while producing a staggering number of important footnotes. He has also extensively researched Baas Becking’s life and contributed with this volume the most comprehensive Baas Becking biography in existence.

We felt that this volume would be an unusual, but also excellent, fit into the *Geochemical Perspectives* series. This volume has great historical significance, giving an excellent insight into the nature of geobiology and microbial ecology in the 1940s, as well as into the workings of a brilliant academic mind. Fitting this volume into the *Geochemical Perspectives* format has been a huge undertaking. The volume is rather long, and Rob Raiswell has done an outstanding job of proofreading. This has been a nontrivial task as Rob needed

to constantly balance between expression, readability and historical accuracy. Overall, the writing has been edited with a light touch. We have also elected to use the original Baas Becking hand-drawn figures. Most of these are quite straightforward to read, but some have required additional clarification in the figure caption or as text additions onto the figure itself. A very few have needed to be redrawn.

Marie-Aude Hulshoff, managing editor of *Geochemical Perspectives*, has also done an outstanding job of coordinating everything including figuring out how to take this important, but unusual, document and putting it into something that resembles a *Geochemical Perspectives* volume.

As noted, the volume is long, and in a break from normal *Geochemical Perspectives* tradition, will only be offered online. However, this also offers some advantages as one can easily access footnotes from the text.

Overall, the editors of *Geochemical Perspectives* hope that you enjoy this volume.

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# REFERENCES FOREWORD

Baas Beeking, L.G.M. (1934) *Geobiologie of Inleiding tot de Milieukunde*. W.P. van Stockum, Den Haag.

Baas Beeking, L.G.M. (2016) *Baas Beeking's Geobiology, or Introduction to environmental science*. Edited by D.E. Canfield. Translation of *Geobiologie 1934*. Wiley Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118295472>

