



Research Programme

Centre for Dutch Reformation Studies (CDRS) 2018-2023

Programme title

Religious Life and Ecclesial Practice: Europe and the Netherlands (16-18th Century)

Summary

Research on the Protestant reformations needs to be based on a thorough knowledge of the theology of Martin Luther, the first reformer of the 16th Century, and on the development of Lutheran traditions. Scholarship of both, Luther and Calvin, and of the traditions they ignited, strengthens the profile and mission of the Theological University Kampen. The first phase of the reformation was deeply influenced by Martin Luther, and Lutheranism gained its own place as a religious minority tradition within the Dutch religious landscape. The *Kooiman-Boendermaker Chair for Luther Research and the history of (Dutch) Lutheranism*, held by Prof. Dr. Sabine Hiebsch, has been established to study these influences.

The European context is central in the research of the CDRS, because the development of Lutheran and Reformed traditions in the Low Countries didn't happen in isolation, but was highly influenced by developments in other parts of Europe and vice versa.

Historiography of the reformation in the Low Countries has mostly focused on the position of the Reformed Church as the public church. The minorities have been less prominent. Leading question of the research programme therefore is: How did religious life and ecclesial practises develop in the coexistence of a public church and confessional minorities?

Prof. Dr. Sabine Hiebsch

The research activities are in alignment with the four main objectives of the *Kooiman-Boendermaker Chair for Luther Research and the History of (Dutch) Lutheranism*:

- a. The theology of Martin Luther and the traditions that were instrumental for its formation process.
- b. The reception of Luther's theology and its development, specifically in the Netherlands.
- c. The history of Dutch Lutheranism and the religious live and practices of the Lutheran congregations, also in connection and comparison to global Lutheranism.
- d. The relationship between Dutch Lutheranism and other religious and confessional groups in the Netherlands, in particular Reformed Protestantism.

The research focuses on a variety of source material: texts and religious material culture. Research of the historical context of these sources is combined with the assessment of their relevance and meaning in past, present and future.

Goals

The research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the formation process and development of Dutch Lutheranism and the organization of the Lutheran congregations and their religious life and practices. This will make Luther's theology and Dutch Lutheranism more visible within the topography of the Dutch religious and cultural landscape as well as within the broader context of global Lutheranism.



Furthermore, the research will expand the knowledge on how toleration and confessional and religious coexistence functioned in the Dutch Republic. Research on the relation of Dutch Lutheranism with other faith groups, in particular Reformed Protestantism, will not only shed light on the role of Lutheranism in the development of the Reformed Church but can provide a new perspective on that development.

Examples of specific research topics

Dutch Lutheran confessional and religious identity

My research will provide a critical evaluation of the concepts of *confessionalization* (W. Reinhard, H. Schilling) and *confessional cultures* (Th. Kaufmann) within a Lutheran minority context and conceptualize a new framework to describe and interpret Dutch Lutheranism. The groundwork has been laid in my inaugural lecture *Luther en Nederland: verleden – heden – toekomst* (2018).

This research is based on the specific context of Dutch Lutheranism. On the one hand Dutch Lutheranism had a confessional and religious minority status opposite the public Reformed Church and amid other religious minorities. On the other hand it could only develop thanks to the migrant streams of the 16th and 17th centuries, mainly from the Scandinavian countries and the German Lands of the Empire, where Lutheranism had become a dominant confession. This makes Dutch Lutheranism very interesting for comparisons with Lutheran majority contexts.

This research will result in several articles (2018, 2019, 2022, 2023) and my editorship of a co-edited volume (2021/2022).

presentia realis

One of the main points of conflict between the Lutherans and the Reformed revolves around the different interpretations of *presentia realis*. In the period until the Fall of Antwerp (1585) as well as in the start-up period in the (nascent) Dutch Republic this led to a series of theological disputes about the understanding of the Lord's Supper and the meaning of Ascension Day. Sources for research are theological treatises, sermons, church order articles, liturgical forms, and material culture e.g. communion tokens, vasa sacra and the design of the church interiors.

This research is partly connected to the network 'EPCOT' – Eucharistic, political and cultural organizational transformations before, under and after the Reformation, LUMEN Centre, University of Aarhus, in which I am a participant. My research will be presented in a guest lecture at the University of Aarhus and a master class for their PhD students (2018) and published in an article (2022).

Dutch Lutheran inauguration sermons

Until 1700 41 Dutch Lutheran congregations had been founded. Their German or Scandinavian co-religionists had taken over the Catholic churches. In the Dutch Republic this privileged position was reserved for the public Reformed Church. With high regional disparities the Dutch Lutheran congregations gradually expanded their religious space and most congregations were able to build churches. They marked these special occasions with inauguration sermons.

The task is to collect the Lutheran inauguration sermons of the 17th century and interpret them in their historical context and in comparison to likewise sermons from another Lutheran minority context and to Lutheran majority contexts such as the German Lands and Scandinavia.



Intermediate results of this research have already been presented at several international conferences (7th RefoRC Conference Berlin 2017, Reformation conference in Cambridge organized by Alexandra Walsham 2017, Sixteenth Century Society & Conference Milwaukee 2017) and an article (2019) and a book (2023) on this topic are planned.

Martin Luther as lieu de mémoire in Dutch Lutheranism

An intriguing characteristic feature of Dutch Lutheranism is its patchwork identity due to the international influences, not only in its formation period but throughout its history until the present day. The same is true for the Dutch Lutheran image of Martin Luther. The research will show how Luther functioned as *lieu de mémoire* within the specific Dutch Lutheran minority context. I will to that end examine a variety of sources: written sources e.g. sermons and polemic pamphlets and sources from the realm of (religious) material culture e.g. church buildings, paintings, illustrations, vasa sacra and communion tokens.

The result of my research will be published in articles (2019, 2022).

'Miscellaneous' topics in Luther research

I always like to find the niches in Luther research, the topics that have not already been discussed over and over again. I have planned articles on a few of these topics (2022, 2023).

PhD research:

- Maarten Diepenbroek:

'The liturgical theology of Martin Luther and the movement of liturgical renewal in modern Dutch Lutheranism'

Key research question:

How are the liturgical concepts of Martin Luther and the movement of liturgical renewal that took place in twentieth century Dutch Lutheranism related, placed in the perspective of Luther's own liturgical development? (start June 2020 parttime; promotion 2025)