



Call for Papers

The International Synod of Dort (1618-1619) Contents, Contexts, and Effects, 17th – 21th Centuries

International Conference, Dordrecht, 14-16 November 2018

The Synod of Dordrecht was held in 1618 and 1619 on the authority of the States-General of the Dutch Republic to resolve a conflict within the Reformed Church in the Netherlands about the doctrine of predestination that had arisen at Leiden's theological faculty in 1602. At the same time, the synod was to re-establish the unity of the young state of the United Provinces in a crucial stage of the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648), part of the broader confrontation between Catholic and Protestant powers in Europe since the Reformation. Both goals were achieved in the presence of congenial theologians from friendly states, while other ecclesiastical questions were decided by the national assembly. The synod's results, such as the Canons of Dort, the Church Order of Dort, and the States Bible, exerted strong influence on religious life, theological tradition, and cultural identity in the Netherlands and its overseas territories up to the present day. Moreover, its impact has also been significant in areas where Dutch colonial impact was minimal, such as Korea. Dort's legacy took unexpected turns in new settings. In sum – its contents, contexts, and effects are vital in understanding the history, reception and heritage of the important event that took place in Dordrecht nearly 400 years ago.

The 400st anniversary of Synod in 2018 and 2019 is a welcome opportunity to revisit its historical significance as well as its actual standing, both in an academic, multidisciplinary and transconfessional way. Building further on an initial conference in 2006,¹ and profiting from new source editions,² a consortium of scholars are organizing an international conference on 14-16 November 2018, to be held, of course, in the city of Dordrecht and, as in 1618-1619, generously hosted by the local government as part of a large program of public activities in commemoration of the European summit of Calvinism four centuries ago. The conference committee invites proposals for paper presentations about any topic regarding the overall theme, based on original research of sources, fresh interpretations of debates, or new insights on the continuing reception of ‘Dort’ and its impact on recent debates. The following provisional division of sections and subsequent questions might help to set an agenda for an update of scholarship on several dimensions covered by the Synod of Dordrecht.

(A) Politics and society

Which scene of politics of European states, in particular the United Provinces of the Netherlands, determined the whole stage of the Synod of Dordrecht? What was at stake in the Dutch Republic and all empires involved in the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries? What was the desired outcome of the crisis in Holland and how did international diplomacy try to influence the course of events? Which political theories, state reasons, religious politics or strategies of discipline played a role in the discussions and decisions at Dordrecht? What place did discussions over Bible translation, censure of books, and the baptism of slaves have on the general policies of confessionalization and globalization?

(B) Theology and philosophy

What was exactly at stake in the Remonstrance and the Five Articles against the Remonstrants and in the theological debates leading to the synod? What can be said about other issues that were dealt with during the synod? To what extent were Reformed dogmatics in 1618/1619 indebted to philosophy and theology of the Middle Ages and the early confessional era? What was new in Arminianism? Which shifts in epistemology, natural science or world view influenced the discussions? What range of differentiations, compromises or incompatibilities can be discovered in the composition of the Canons? How did they reflect the unity and diversity of international Calvinism? Which interpretations, appropriations and modernities have occurred in later claims of ‘Dortian’ theology?

(C) Ecclesiology and church policy

What views of managing religion in society were held by political and ecclesiastical leaders convening in Dordrecht? How did different standings influence the theological discussions and dealings with theologians and ministers? What heritage of late medieval structures of the church, especially in the Netherlands, preconditioned any (Dutch) Reformed church order? How were the synodical acts on the place of the (public) church in the state related to earlier Protestant (e.g. Reformed) model of ecclesiastical organisation? How did ideals match practices of local congregations, provincial bodies and translocal entities? What status can be ascribed to the Church Order of Dort as adopted in international church history? How can essentialization of ‘Dortian’ church policy be distinguished from extrapolation of Reformed notions to later and other situations than that of the Dutch Republic in 1618/19?

¹ Aza Goudriaan and Fred van Lieburg eds., *Revisiting the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619)* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

² Anthony Milton ed., *The British Delegation and the Synod of Dort (1618-19)* (Suffolk: Boydelland & Brewer, 2005); Nicolas Fornerod et al., eds, *Registres de la Compagnie des pasteurs de Genève, t. XIV et dernier: Le synode de Dordrecht* (Genève: Droz, 2012); Don Sinnema/Christian Moser/Herman J. Selderhuis eds., *Acta et Documenta Synodi Nationalis Dordrechtanae (1618-1619)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014-).

(D) Culture and identity

How was the Synod of Dordrecht framed in the experience of the time or the eschatology of the people? How was the 1618 comet associated with the teleology of religious affairs? How were textual and media used to influence the debates and developments? What forms, customs and practices influenced the ways of conference organisation, city marketing, public hosting, meeting behaviour, academic discourse, communication style, personal tourism, and other modes of meaning? How was the Synod of Dordrecht remembered in (popular) historiography, public or private education, and material culture? What might the synod history have to say to modern people in a globalized world and a secular age?

Please note that your contribution should directly link to matters that were addressed at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618/1619. The conference is not devoted to four centuries of international Calvinism *tout court*. It is about one historical event and the wide-ranging legacies it has engendered since.

The conference language is English. Publication of papers in one or more edited volumes will be considered at the conclusion of the conference.

Deadline for abstract: 15 March 2018. Acceptance will be notified as soon as possible upon submission. All abstracts should be sent to Fred van Lieburg (f.a.van.lieburg@vu.nl). Proposals should include a 250 word abstract and title, as well as the author's name, address, telephone number, email address and institutional affiliation.

Committee: Henk van den Belt (University of Groningen), Erik de Boer (Theological University Kampen + Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam/Faculty of Religion and Theology), Leon van den Broeke (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam/Faculty of Religion and Theology + Theological University Kampen), Klaas-Willem de Jong (Protestant Theological University Amsterdam/Groningen), James Kennedy (University College Utrecht), Fred van Lieburg (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam/Faculty of Humanities), Wim Moehn (Protestant Theological University Amsterdam/Groningen), Joke Roelevink (Huygens Institute for Netherlands History), Herman Selderhuis (Theological University Apeldoorn).

Conference website: www.dordrechtmuseum.nl/synod

Within the commemoration program of the city of Dordrecht an international exhibition entitled "Work, pray, admire. New views on Calvinism and art" will be hosted by the Dordrechts Museum from 10 November 2018 until May 2019.