

# ARE THE NETHERLANDS A NORDIC COUNTRY? REFLECTIONS ON UNDERSTANDING THE LUTHERAN TRADITION IN THE NETHERLANDS

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## Abstract

Contrary to the German Lands and the Nordic Countries the Lutherans in the Netherlands were always a religious minority under a non-Lutheran authority.

The history of the Dutch Lutherans is closely related to the migration streams of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, especially from the German Lands and the Nordic Countries. But the Nordic countries have barely been considered in the historiography of Dutch Lutheranism.

This article shows that the relations between the Netherlands and the Nordic Countries happened on a variety of levels. Even though the confessional motivation wasn't always paramount, this Northern dimension had a decisive influence on the development of Dutch Lutheranism and provides an excellent comparative context to study it. In order to understand its place in the Dutch religious landscape and within the broader context of global Lutheranism, research on the role of the Nordic countries is indispensable.

## Keywords

Dutch Lutherans, Nordic influences, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Leeuwarden, Swedish agents

## Introduction

By all the customary definitions the Netherlands are not perceived as a Nordic country: They do not belong to the geographical and cultural region in Northern Europe and the North Atlantic that encompasses the Nordic countries. Nor were they ever part of the Kalmar Union (1397-1523) or of any of the political alliances between Denmark, Norway and Sweden after the dissolution of the Union.

When I started to study the history of the Lutherans in the Netherlands, it became however quite obvious that the Nordic countries had a decisive influence on the development of Dutch Lutheranism. But in its historiography these Nordic influences have barely been considered.


I will argue in this article that the Nordic-Dutch relations play an integral role in the history of Dutch Lutheranism and therefore need to have a part in the framework for its interpretation. I will start by briefly describing three of the core characteristics of Dutch Lutheranism that are relevant in the context of this topic in order to provide an outline, and then proceed to discuss a variety of examples of Nordic influences on its development.

## Core characteristics of Dutch Lutheranism

### Religious minority status

The most striking and distinctive characteristic of Dutch Lutheranism lies in the fact that it was not introduced, established and protected by rulers as was the case in parts of the

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German Lands and in the kingdoms of Denmark/Norway and Sweden, where Lutheranism could thus become a dominant confession. Lutheranism in the Netherlands has always been a religious minority tradition without the support or protection of a Lutheran authority.

Dutch Lutheranism first developed under the Catholic rule of the Habsburg and then the Spanish Netherlands, with Antwerp as its cradle<sup>1</sup>. In the nascent Dutch Republic of the Seven United Provinces Lutheran congregations then had to establish themselves opposite the dominant, public Reformed Church. As privileged church the Reformed had the most rights, the highest visibility and financial support from the authorities. The Lutherans were one of the tolerated religious minorities.

The basis for this multi-religious coexistence was the *Union of Utrecht* (January 23, 1579), the nearest thing the nascent Dutch Republic had to a constitution. Art. XIII dealt specifically with the 'matter of religion'. It guaranteed freedom of conscience for each individual and freedom from investigation and prosecution because of religion<sup>2</sup>.

But this article was not uniformly interpreted or put into practice throughout the Republic. The dynamics of toleration<sup>3</sup> were very local and of a pragmatic nature and they could vary immensely even within the same religious community. The reason for this was the structure of the Dutch Republic, which was in essence a group of eventually seven semi-independent provinces that delegated their foreign policy and warfare to the States General, seated in The Hague, who were in effect the sovereign power. Most government functions and policies remained however with the provincial states.

#### International influences

In 1585, when Alexander Farnese, duke of Parma (Governor-General of the Spanish Netherlands 1578-1592) (Soen 2012) reconquered Antwerp, the so called Fall of Antwerp, this was celebrated as a victory for the Catholic powers. But in the end it turned out to be the beginning of Antwerp's downfall and a decisive watershed in the course of the Dutch Revolt. Antwerp lost its position as international metropolis and commercial centre, and the Lutherans and other non-Catholic faith groups left the city that had been a place of refuge before the Revolt. Most of them went to the Northern Provinces.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the development of Lutheranism in Antwerp see Hiebsch 2016, 3-7 and the literature in the corresponding footnotes; van Manen 2011, 66-91; Marnef 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Art. XIII: ' As for the matter of religion, the States of Holland and Zeeland shall act according to their own pleasure, and the other Provinces of this Union shall follow the rules set down in the religious peace drafted by Archduke Matthias, governor and captain-general of these countries, with the advice of the Council of State and the States General, or shall establish such general or special regulations in this matter as they shall find good and most fitting for the repose and welfare of the provinces, cities, and individual Members thereof, and the preservation of the property and rights of each individual, whether churchman or layman, and no other Province shall be permitted to interfere or make difficulties, provided that each person shall remain free in his religion and that no one shall be investigated or persecuted because of his religion, as is provided in the Pacification of Ghent... '. See Groenveld & Leeuwenberg 1979 and in particular de Jong's contribution "Unie en religie", 155-184.

<sup>3</sup> In Anglophone research on religious tolerance in the Early Modern period one can find the distinction between *tolerance* and *toleration*. *Tolerance* refers to the ideological framework, the theory, whereas *toleration* describes the everyday practice in specific, local situations, see Walsham 2007; Christman 2015; Turchetti 1991, 379-395.

Art. XIII of the *Union of Utrecht* provided a basis for religious diversity that made the Republic appealing for international commerce and trade and attracted large groups of migrants. Holland as maritime province with a high level of urbanization developed into the richest and most powerful province of the nascent Republic. The rise of the Republic and its growing success was epitomized in the new-found status of Amsterdam as a metropolis of international standing. The city took over from Antwerp in every relevant aspect – commerce, trade, migration, information, culture and sophisticated lifestyle – and became the richest and most powerful city of the Republic: the centre of the Dutch Golden Age.

Religious diversity was nowhere in the Republic as tangible and comprehensive as in Amsterdam and made the city particularly attractive for migrants. And vice versa, the migrants with their skills and international connections were a pivotal factor in Amsterdam's success. This is reflected in the growth of the population: from 30.000 inhabitants around 1550 to 200.000-220.000 around 1670 (Hart 1976, 118).<sup>4</sup> A large number of the migrants who came to the Republic, and in particular to Amsterdam, came from the German Lands and the Nordic Countries where the Lutheran Reformation had gained a strong foothold in the first decades of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These international influences were a decisive factor in the formation process of most of the Dutch Lutheran congregations in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century and they remained important in later centuries as well (Hiebsch 2018, 12-16).

#### The centralised power position of one Lutheran congregation: Amsterdam

Amsterdam had joined the Revolt in 1578 and the political leadership changed from Catholic to Reformed, the so called *Alteration*.

But the city was by no means a Reformed city. It had a Reformed façade, but behind it there was a wide range of religious diversity.

Apart from the Lutherans there were the Jews who had – mostly via Antwerp – come to Amsterdam as *nuevos christianos*, after being expelled from Spain and Portugal, but gradually decided to live as *new Jews* (Bodian 1999; Swetschinski 2004). There were factions of Mennonites/Doopsgezinde, and Arminians after the synod of Dordt (1618-1619). And, not to forget, the defeated Catholics, who, while still being a numeric majority, were now treated as a religious minority.<sup>5</sup>

In the dynamic of Dutch toleration the religious space of minorities was to a large extent a process of give and take. The more advantageous the contributions of a religious minority were for the city, the more extensive the conceded religious space.

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<sup>4</sup> By 1670 Amsterdam had become the third city of Europe, after Paris (430.000) and London (400.000; after the population had been substantially decimated in the Great Fire in September 1666), see Fokkema 2004, 168. Antwerp on the other hand shows the reverse development, from 90.000 in 1550 down to 50.000 in 1670.

<sup>5</sup> Around 1600, only approximately 10% of Amsterdam's inhabitants were full members of the Reformed Church, going up to an estimate of 45% around 1700, see Hiebsch 2016, 28, n94.

Next to the fact that the Amsterdam Lutherans had quite a few elite members and were deemed unlikely to cause public uproar by the city authorities, it was in particular due to their international connections that they could contribute substantially to the booming city at the centre of the Dutch Golden Age. As a result their religious space grew and with their first church, the Old Lutheran Church, inaugurated in 1633, it became public (Figure 1). Except for the Jews (van Rooden 2002), the other religious minorities were still in hidden churches at that time. As were Lutheran congregations in other cities of the Republic.



Figure 1: The Old Lutheran Church in Amsterdam (Jan de Beijer, *Het Spui met de Oude Lutherse Kerk* (1765))

Subsequently the Amsterdam Lutherans came to be the most successful and leading Lutheran congregation in the Republic and they held on to that position all through the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Their influence was threefold: financial, organizational and theological. The Lutheran congregation in Amsterdam was e.g. involved and often had the decisive vote in the appointing and dismissing of ministers in other Lutheran congregations. They partially or completely payed the salary of Lutheran ministers in some of the other congregations and contributed regularly to the construction costs of other Lutheran churches, e.g. in Utrecht and Leeuwarden. The Amsterdam congregation was responsible for the examination of theological candidates and they monitored the theological publications of Lutheran ministers. They also took the lead in asking German Lutheran theological faculties for their assessment in controversial theological matters that could potentially threaten the cohesion of the Lutheran community.

But other Lutheran congregations also often asked Amsterdam for advice, for conflict mediation or for financial support. In many ways the Lutheran congregation in Amsterdam seemed to have the role comparable to that of the Lutheran authority in other countries (Hiebsch 2018, 18-19).

This description is not meant as a proof of *Amsterdam-centrism*, as if the history of Dutch Lutheranism, especially in its formation process in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century, should only be viewed and studied through the lens of Amsterdam. It is however a reminder that what happened there could and did impact the other Lutheran congregations in the Republic as well.

### **Nordic influences on the development of Dutch Lutheranism**

The demographics of the Lutheran congregations in the Republic – with Amsterdam as prime example – were closely tied to the migration streams of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. Next to Antwerp<sup>6</sup> and the German Lands, the Nordic Countries played a major part in that respect.

But the focus in the historiography of Dutch Lutheranism has mainly been on the role of the German Lands, as homeland of Luther and starting point of Lutheranism. Another reason for this focus lies in the fact that through the most part of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century the ministers in Dutch Lutheran congregations were German and/or had studied there. Contrary to the German Lands and the kingdom of Denmark where Lutheran rulers had founded Lutheran universities<sup>7</sup>, or in the case of Copenhagen<sup>8</sup> reopened, the Dutch Lutherans, by lack of a Lutheran authority, did not have the possibility to establish a Lutheran university. They did not want their future ministers to study at the Reformed theological faculties in Leiden (1575) and Franeker (1585-1811). Therefore Dutch Lutherans who wanted to become a minister had to study at a Lutheran theological faculty in the German Lands, as a warranty for what was perceived as an 'authentic' brand of Lutheranism.<sup>9</sup>

Nordic influences on the development of Dutch Lutheranism are multi-layered. They were embedded primarily in the economic relations between the two geographical spaces. These economic relations didn't start with Lutheranism. They predate the Reformation, but the Reformation put its distinct mark on them. Trade relations between the Netherlands and the Baltic region, as well as with Norway had already been important in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century when Antwerp was taking over from Bruges as major city in the Netherlands (Brand 2015). As early as 1440 the Netherlands were awarded trading privileges with Norway. Zierikzee in the province of Zeeland and Amsterdam were granted royal permission to trade with cities such as Bergen, a permission that had previously been a privilege of the Hanseatic League. The Dutch vessels that sailed to Norway in the 17<sup>th</sup> century came from seafaring towns around the Zuiderzee such as Hoorn, Enkhuizen, Hindelopen and Harlingen. But the main connection for trade between the Netherlands and Norway was the province of Holland, and Amsterdam in particular. This close connection explains why the period between 1550 and 1750 in Norway is called the *Holland era* (Loyland 2012).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Lutherans who had come to the Northern Provinces from Antwerp were not all 'Dutch', but of international origins, from far and wide.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. the University of Marburg (1527), the University of Jena (1558), the University of Helmstedt (1576).

<sup>8</sup> For the discussion of the role of the University of Copenhagen as instrument for the establishment and control of Lutheranism in Denmark, see Ingesman 2014, 29-48. I think this approach is very interesting for a comparison with the role of Lutheran universities in the German Lands.

<sup>9</sup> This practise was formalized in a decision by the Amsterdam consistory in 1661 and was applicable until 1816, when the Republic had turned into the Kingdom of the Netherlands and king William I. (1815-1840) founded the Evangelical-Lutheran Seminary in Amsterdam.

<sup>10</sup> The Netherlands and Norway were also connected through the triangular trade system (*driehoeksvaart*) with which the Dutch ships worked. They did not only sail to Norway to bring and fetch goods but they also went to Norway to then transport goods from there to England, Scotland and Ireland.

The economic and maritime connections between the Netherlands and the Nordic Countries have been studied much more elaborately than the confessional and religious connections. But both are intertwined as religion, theology and religious cultures also travel along the routes of trade and commerce.

The following examples show different layers of the Nordic influence on Dutch Lutheranism to illustrate the complexity of the relations.

#### Royal and diplomatic connections

At the highest political and societal level the kings of Denmark and Sweden as well as prominent Nordic diplomatic connections played an important role in safeguarding and supporting Lutheranism in the Netherlands.

#### Amsterdam

The impressive building of the Old Lutheran Church (1633), the first church of the Amsterdam Lutherans, might lead to the conclusion that their prominent position within the hierarchy of religious minorities had been a given from the start. But that would be a wrong assumption. Their position was a hard-won success that involved continuous strategic manoeuvring and negotiating. Particularly in the first years after the Fall of Antwerp (1585) when large groups of Lutherans came to Amsterdam, they had to overcome quite a few obstacles. These involved e.g. Reformed ministers who questioned the need for a Lutheran congregation and did everything within their power to prevent the Lutherans from coming together for religious gatherings, even though they initially took place in private houses. With some of these Reformed ministers the Lutherans had already been embroiled in theological disputes in Antwerp, mostly about the interpretation of the *presentia realis* in the Lord's Supper, the meaning of Ascension Day and the concept of original sin.<sup>11</sup> Without a Lutheran authority to protect them the Lutherans had to find allies on their own in order to be able to start a congregation and then see it grow. They did so with varying success. Sometimes the city magistrates answered their requests favourably and permitted their private gatherings, sometimes they didn't.

One of the strategies of the Lutherans was to bring their connection with the Danish court into play. The Danish kings, especially Christian IV (1588-1648), provided letters of recommendation to help the Amsterdam Lutherans in their struggles with the magistrates and other political powers during the difficult start-up period of the congregation. Those letters are an interesting example of the different intertwining levels, typical for the Dutch-Nordic relation.

On the one hand there was a clear confessional motivation: Lutherans living as a religious minority in a country without a Lutheran authority turned to the Lutheran authority of another country, Denmark, to ask for protection. And it is safe to assume that the Danish king had a confessional motivation as well to provide that protection.

But on the other hand it only made sense for the Amsterdam Lutherans to turn to the Danish king, and his letters of recommendation did only have effect because of the

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<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed account of the theological disputes between the Lutherans and the Reformed in Amsterdam and the Danish royal letters of recommendation, see Hiebsch 2016, 9-12.

economic connection between Denmark and the Dutch Republic. More specifically because the Danish king had the power to levy taxes on all the shipping through the Sound (Öresund) and thus control of the trade in the Baltic Sea region. Up till the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century more than half of all the ships that passed the Sound were Dutch<sup>12</sup>. The Sound was quintessential for the Dutch mother of all trades (*moedernegotie*), the commerce with grain and wood in the Baltic Sea, which was the basis for the Dutch Golden Age. So, at a crucial crossroads in 1603, when the Amsterdam Lutherans were on the verge of being allowed to buy a building for their religious gatherings – a step that would enable the expansion of the congregation – , the recommendation of the Danish king was a decisive reminder of the economic stakes for the city and for the Republic, and it showed at the same time that the Amsterdam Lutherans were by no means unconnected.

When they finally were allowed to build a church and then again, when they built their second church – the New or Round Lutheran Church, inaugurated in 1671 – they needed sponsors because they could not carry the financial burden on their own (Figures 2 and 3).

The Danish and Swedish kings were among the biggest donors for the building costs of both churches.<sup>13</sup> The Swedish king also provided construction materials, e.g. copper for the roof.<sup>14</sup>



Figure 2: The New or Round Lutheran Church (Casparus Commelin, *Beschrijvinge van Amsterdam*, 1693)

<sup>12</sup> For further information see *The Sound Toll Registers* which for a large part can be consulted online: <http://www.soundtoll.nl/index.php/en/> (last consulted on October 12, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> The list of sponsors gives good insight into the international connections of the Amsterdam Lutherans. Next to the Danish and Swedish kings there were contributions from e.g. the Grand Duke of Oldenburg and from wealthy cities with Lutheran congregations such as Nuremberg, Brunswick, Gdansk, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Lübeck, Riga, see Hiebsch 2016, 17-18 and in particular n55.

<sup>14</sup> The copper for the Old Lutheran Church arrived in Amsterdam too late, when the roof was already finished. But the congregation could sell the material and the proceeds were used for other necessities for the church.



Figure 3: Round Lutheran Church Amsterdam, interior (H.P. Schouten; ca. 1770-1780, ©Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 010001000731

### Utrecht

Utrecht, one of the oldest Dutch Lutheran congregations, is another example for financial support from the Danish and Swedish kings, albeit in a different period of time than Amsterdam. The Utrecht congregation was founded largely by Lutherans moving there from Antwerp. They started their gatherings in private homes at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and after overcoming fierce resistance from Reformed ministers and the city authorities they could appoint their first minister, Johannes Cremerius, in 1608<sup>15</sup>. The congregation – although not comparable to the size and status of the Amsterdam congregation – prospered, in particular due to German merchants settling there. The second minister, Hibbaeus Magnus<sup>16</sup> who served the congregation from 1613-1618, was the first to establish a consistory, which is why 1613 is commonly seen as the founding date of the congregation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Johannes Cremerius – his dates of birth and death are unknown – was a minister in Germany before he was appointed as minister in the Lutheran congregation in Rotterdam in 1605. In the same year he switched to Amsterdam where he was a minister until 1608. After his years as minister in Utrecht from 1608-1611 he became minister in Haarlem. In 1614 or 1615 he was appointed by the Lutheran congregation in Zwolle, cf. Van Manen 2011, 124.

<sup>16</sup> Hibbaeus Magnus (1574-1638) was born in Weimar and served as minister in East-Frisia from 1603-1611. After his years as Lutheran minister in Utrecht from 1611-1618 he returned to Germany. In 1624 he came back to the Netherlands and served as minister in the Lutheran congregation in The Hague until his death, cf. Van Manen 2011, 129.

<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to note that within the historiography of Dutch Lutheranism there isn't a uniform criterion to determine the founding date of a congregation. In Utrecht, the founding date is based on the first establishment of a consistory as the beginning of a structured organization of the congregation.



At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Utrecht Lutherans needed a bigger church. The city authorities put the former chapel of the convent of the Franciscan sisters at their disposal. This illustrates an interesting change in how the Lutherans were looked at, because in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the use of religious buildings of Catholic origin was a privilege reserved for the public Reformed Church and not for the religious minorities. Nonetheless the Utrecht congregation did not have the means to cover the costs for the necessary rebuilding process. Between December 1737 and June 1745, when the church was finally inaugurated, they made every effort to collect the money for the construction costs which amounted to approximately fl 35.000. The first contributions in 1737 came from the duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and from a court council from Brunswick. The next contributions came from Denmark: In 1740 from a mr. Ziegel, the pastry chef at the royal court in Copenhagen and in 1742 from the collection that king Christian VI. (1730-1746) had ordered in his kingdom. That amount, fl 2861, was the second highest contribution, the highest being fl 3000 from a mr. Jolitemps from Utrecht. There were also other contributions from individual persons, from inside and outside the congregation and also from the Lutheran congregations in Amsterdam (fl 976 in 1743), in Middelburg (fl 101 in 1745) and in Rotterdam (fl 402 in 1745). After the final account had been made up the congregation received another fl 345 from a collection that had been ordered by the Swedish king Frederik (1720-1751). That means that the collection ordered by the Danish king accounted for almost 10% of the building costs.

The royal Danish and Swedish help for the Amsterdam Lutherans in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century was based on a confessional bond, but had also a clear economic motivation. In the case of Utrecht in the 18<sup>th</sup> century there didn't appear to be such a clear-cut economic component, because the economic status and relevance of Utrecht was in no way comparable to Amsterdam. The money provided through the collection ordered by the Danish king may well be seen as foremost an expression of his confessional engagement for and solidarity with Lutheran co-religionists in a foreign country with many Danish and Norwegian migrants. This confessional engagement might also have been reinforced by the king's pietistic convictions, due to the influences from his mother, Louise of Mecklenburg-Güstrow (1667-1721) and his wife Sophie-Magdalene of Brandenburg-Kulmbach (1700-1770).

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Consequently in 2013 the Utrecht congregation celebrated its 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In the historiography of the Amsterdam congregation on the other hand two possible founding dates are competing: 1588 when a group of Lutherans appointed their first consoler of the sick (*ziekentrooster*)/minister and 1592 when the *Instruction for the house churches of the Christian congregation under the cross, dedicated to the Augsburg Confession (Instructie dienende tot ordonnantie van der huijskercken der christelijcker gemeijnte onder het cruijs der Ausborgsche confessie toegedaan)* was signed. This later date is, just as in Utrecht, based on what is perceived as the beginning of a structured organization of the congregation. The earlier date is based on Luther's ecclesiology: For Luther the church is a spiritual community, the body of Christ, the *communio sanctorum*. It becomes visible when the message of God's loving attention is proclaimed so that people may come to faith and have their faith strengthened. That proclamation takes place in the preaching of God's Word and the celebration of the sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. For those tasks a minister is appointed. In the last thirty years, this ecclesiological argumentation has prevailed and thus in 2013 the Lutheran congregation in Amsterdam celebrated its 425<sup>th</sup> anniversary, see Hiebsch and van Wijngaarden 2013.

The Utrecht congregation came to see Christian VI as their special protector and had a wooden memorial board made, richly decorated with his coat of arms, heaping praise upon him in a relatively elaborate inscription (Figure 4).<sup>18</sup> The memorial board was made in 1750 and hang above the pulpit, forming a straight vertical line with the pulpit and the altar that was underneath it.<sup>19</sup> This proximity to pulpit and altar, liturgical-theological locations of key significance in a Lutheran church, where the word of the Gospel is preached and the sacraments are celebrated is an interesting choice of place and stresses the importance the congregation attached to the decisive role the king played in securing the financial means to build the church. Every service, in looking to the altar and the pulpit, the two places where the minister performed his duties, the congregation had also the memorial board at the corner of their eyes. Even though the inscription was in Latin, the king's name was in large capitals and the coat of arms told the story as well. In a Lutheran church in Scandinavia royal insignia or other manifestations of the royal auspice were self-evident and a symbolic expression of the position of the king as head of the church (Ingesman 2014, 29-48; Johannsen 2015, 59-74). In a Lutheran church in the Dutch Republic this was quite exceptional. In 1826, when the church was restored, the memorial board was moved to a place on one of the galleries, close to the entrance of the church. In its original place came an oval-shaped board with the Dutch text from 1 Peter 1: 25: 'But the word of the Lord endureth for ever'.

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<sup>18</sup> The design of the Danish royal coat of arms of the Utrecht memorial board bears a striking resemblance to the one placed on the organ of the Trinity Church in Copenhagen. The organ was build by Lambert Daniel Kastens (1690-1744) in 1731. Kastens, born and raised in the northern parts of the German Lands, had come to Denmark in 1722 and had been granted royal privilege in 1728. As one of the most prolific organ builders of his period, he also built e.g. the organs of the dome in Oslo and in Aarhus and of several other churches in Copenhagen.

<sup>19</sup> For more detailed information on the collections for the construction costs and on the memorial board see *Het Utrechts Archief*, inventaris 714-3, 17.



Figure 4: Memorial board in honour of the Danish king Christian VI, Lutheran church in Utrecht (height: 2,5m; width: 2m)

### Leeuwarden

The third example is the Lutheran congregation in Leeuwarden in Frisia where Nordic diplomatic connections came into play during the lengthy formation process. Leeuwarden is also a good example to illustrate the very local dynamics of Dutch toleration. While the Amsterdam Lutherans already had two publicly visible churches in 1671, the Leeuwarden Lutherans, in the same period, still came together in private homes and even that was disputed. Contrary to Holland with its high level of urbanization, Frisia had a predominantly rural character with much smaller cities. Leeuwarden's population had grown from barely 5.000 at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century to approximately 16.000 in the last third of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Nowhere near the 200.000-220.000 inhabitants of Amsterdam in the same time slot.

The first reports about Lutheran gatherings in Leeuwarden can be dated from around 1650<sup>20</sup>, but it was not until 1681 that the congregation was granted freedom of religious practice by the Provincial Estates of Frisia. As was the case in other Dutch Lutheran congregations, this permission to practice their religion came with restrictions such as the prohibition of a bell tower and the requirement to refrain from a too ostentatious church building. It didn't mean however that they had a new status; they remained a tolerated religious minority.

<sup>20</sup> There is e.g. a demountable silver chalice for the celebration of the Lord's Supper in private homes, made by a Leeuwarden silversmith, see van Lennep 1994, 141.

This achievement of obtaining a conditional permission was the result of a process of more than thirty years of lobbying and petitioning the political authorities. Within the political structure of Frisia the Provincial Estates had the power to grant or refuse a petition from the Lutherans. It was not sufficient to convince the city authorities of Leeuwarden<sup>21</sup>. This made the process of lobbying and petitioning even more complicated than for other Lutheran congregations elsewhere in the Republic. In Amsterdam e.g. the Lutherans could address the city authorities directly, because they could make decisions about the religious matters of the city. Only in the cases where they didn't get the desired result, the Lutherans then addressed their petitions at the States-General or, on occasion, even pleaded their case again with the Land's Advocate, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt (1547-1619), who was regarded as the most powerful and influential man of the Republic at the time (Hiebsch 2016, 11-12).

Thus for the Leeuwarden Lutherans the process to obtain a conditional permission to practice their religion was much more complicated and it required a complex strategy that had to combine a variety of tactics: private conversations with someone influential, who could provide a recommendation which could pave the way to the next person who could be helpful; an official request for a recommendation that could accompany a petition etc. The Lutheran congregation in Amsterdam, due to its centralized power position as leading Lutheran congregation in the Republic, often played the role of intermediary in this struggle. They couldn't officially act on behalf of the Leeuwarden Lutherans, but they used their connections with influential people to clear the way. Next to Lutheran rulers in the German Lands their appeals for help very often were directed at their Scandinavian contacts: Swedish ambassadors and Swedish and Danish diplomats (Spaans 2004, 45).

An example of such an influential Swedish connection is Harald Appelboom (1612-1674)<sup>22</sup>. The Amsterdam Lutheran consistory asked Appelboom to intervene on behalf of the Leeuwarden Lutherans in 1671 and in 1673. At the time he was resident and *extraordinaris envoyé* on behalf of the Swedish crown, residing in The Hague where he was also a member of the Lutheran congregation. Appelboom moved in the highest royal, diplomatic and political circles and as a fellow Lutheran he was willing to help the congregation in Leeuwarden. In particular his connections in The Hague, seat of the States-General, were important. In his letters of recommendation from 1671, directed at the Provincial Estates of Frisia and the authorities in Leeuwarden he appealed to their kindness and generosity. But he also pointed out to them that it wouldn't look good if the enemies of the 'true religion' saw the two Protestant confessions at war with each other, when there was the threat of a war with Catholic France (Spaans 2004, 45). In 1673 the Amsterdam consistory asked Appelboom to plead the case of the Leeuwarden Lutherans with the ambassadors of the Swedish king and the minister at the Swedish royal court and they sent him written petitions from the Leeuwarden consistory to use as he saw fit (Spaans 2004, 48).

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<sup>21</sup> For more information on the political structure of Frisia see Spaans 2004, 38-60.

<sup>22</sup> Harald Appelboom is further discussed in the last part of this article: Swedish Agents. For more information on him see Schutte, 1983, pp. 492-494. The *Repertorium* can also be consulted online: <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/schutte/#page=0&accessor=toc&view=imagePane&size=679> (consulted on October 12, 2018).

Even though Appelbom's efforts didn't bring immediate success, they were an important part of a strategy that patiently, but steadfastly kept up the pressure until the Leeuwarden Lutheran congregation finally was allowed to come together in a church in 1681. Without their foreign and in particular Swedish co-religionists who were able and willing to use their diplomatic, political and economic connections to influence the Frisian authorities, with the Amsterdam consistory as crucial intermediary, they would not have been able to get the conditional permission to practice their religion.

## **Migrants**

Besides the royal and diplomatic influences from the kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden the large group of Nordic migrants that came to the Republic has also been an important factor in the development of Dutch Lutheranism. From the 41 Lutheran congregations that were founded in the (nascent) Dutch Republic until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there virtually wasn't any without Lutherans from outside the Republic. And even the Lutherans who had come to the Northern provinces after the Fall of Antwerp in 1585 were mostly from far and wide. After the German Lands and Schleswig-Holstein the biggest contingent of Lutherans came from the Nordic Countries.

However, contrary to the migrants from Antwerp in the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and from the German Lands during the Thirty Years War, the migrants from the Nordic Countries were not religious refugees. They came to the Republic for work, and also happened to be predominantly Lutheran.

The largest group of Nordic migrants came to Amsterdam, with its newfound status of international metropolis and commercial capital, not only of the Republic but of Europe. In fact, together with migrants from various countries the migrants from the Nordic countries – Nordic Nation (*Noordse Natie*) as they were called – were one of the interacting factors that made Amsterdam such a success.

The rapid growth of the city due to the large influx of migrants is reflected in the Lutheran congregation: From 3723 members when the communicants were registered in 1626 to 25.976 new members between 1663 and 1700<sup>23</sup>. 25% of these new members were born in Amsterdam, 40% came from the German lands and Schleswig-Holstein, 23% came from Scandinavia and 12% from other countries. So even though the largest group of new members were German, the Lutherans from Scandinavia accounted almost for as many as the Lutherans born in Amsterdam. Of the 5.974 Scandinavians, 3020 were Norwegians compared to 98 Norwegians among the communicants in 1626. Most of them came from the southwest areas of Norway where timber trade was the main export commodity. Norwegian timber was needed e.g. for ship building and for all the ambitious house building activities connected to Amsterdam's fourth large expansion that started in 1662 (Hiebsch 2016, 20-23). While some Nordic migrants were certainly able to achieve economic success, the majority had low-paying jobs and was dependant on poor relief (Sogner and van Lottum 2007, 153-168).

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<sup>23</sup> Demographic data for the Dutch Lutherans in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century aren't consistent, but cover only certain time slots. The data mentioned in this part of the article are based on Hart 1976, 115-181, see Hiebsch 2016, 19 [n 61].

In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, around the peak of the Nordic migration, the large group of (working) poor became a problem for the city authorities. In Amsterdam, as in the entire Republic, the various religious communities became responsible to organize and pay for the support of their own poor members, instead of relying primarily on city welfare (Spaans 2011, 109-110). Among the religious minorities in Amsterdam the Lutherans had the largest group of poor to care for and that was mainly due to the large contingent of Nordic migrants. But their impact on the development of the congregation was multi-fold: On the one hand the new poor relief regulations put a heavy strain on the congregation's finances; on the other hand the size of the Nordic Nation also emphasized the need for a second church.<sup>24</sup> The Old Lutheran Church could hold up to 6.000 people, but already in 1656, 23 years after its inauguration, the Amsterdam consistory talked about building a second church, because one church was no longer sufficient (Kooiman 1941, 11-19). The New or Round Lutheran Church was eventually inaugurated in 1671.

### Swedish agents

The last example of Nordic influences on the development of Dutch Lutheranism here to be discussed are the Swedish agents.

After the Torstenson War (1643-1645), when Sweden had taken over from Denmark as *dominium maris baltici*, the Swedish elite turned to the Dutch Republic for ways to express their newfound power and status. On an academic level the universities of Leiden and Franeker attracted over 800 Swedish students between 1630 and 1680 (Noldus 2003, 215-225; Hiebsch 2016, 24). For luxurious lifestyle Amsterdam, as metropolis with a cosmopolitan allure, provided all sorts of possibilities. Members of the Swedish elite like Queen Christina (1632-1654) and prominent members of the Swedish Privy Council and the military such as e.g. Count Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie (1622-1686) and Count Carl Gustav Wrangel (1613-1676) had agents in cultural affairs in Amsterdam. Badeloch Vera Noldus and Maria Keblusek did research on these agents mainly from an art and book historical perspective and they coined the term *double agents* to describe the wide range of their activities (Keblusek and Noldus 2011). These agents were appointed e.g. as trade representative for the Swedish crown, Swedish diplomat or Swedish resident. But next to these official appointments they were also dealing in art, books, architecture and information for a circle of patrons from the Swedish elite.

Among the most prominent Swedish double agents were Peter Spiering (1595-1652), Harald Appelboom, Peter Trotzig (1613-1679) and Michel Le Blon (1587-1658).<sup>25</sup> Besides sharing patrons and a high-level network, most of them also shared a confessional bond: They were Lutheran. That fact, on the one hand, hasn't really been included in the analysis of their activities as double agents. On the other hand, they haven't been

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<sup>24</sup> The Nordic Nation also brought about a conflict that almost resulted in a split of the congregation, when they attempted to call a minister of their own and have their own church building. For more information see Hiebsch 2016, 22-23; Pedersen & Thuijs 2016, 46-87.

<sup>25</sup> Some of the Swedish agents were born in Sweden, others were born elsewhere, but later worked for the Swedish crown. Michel Le Blon e.g. was born in Frankfurt and later was appointed as diplomatic agent for the Swedish crown.

perceived as a factor of influence in the historiography of Dutch Lutheranism either. I did research on Peter Trotzig when I analysed the coming of age process of the Lutheran congregation in Amsterdam (Hiebsch 2016, 23-29). Trotzig was the Swedish trade representative in Amsterdam since 1646 and the Swedish agent with the States-General since 1661. He combined these appointments with being an agent in architectural affairs, providing architectural drawings, building material and garden architecture for his Swedish elite patrons. At the period Dutch Classicism was very popular in Sweden and in the whole Baltic area. In 1666, when Trotzig returned to Sweden as burgomaster of Stockholm, the Lutheran consistory asked him to use his access to the wealthy and influential circles of Stockholm in order to organize a collection, because they were trying to raise funds for the building costs of their second church, the Round Lutheran Church. The Amsterdam Lutherans hoped that Trotzig's wealthy connections might be persuaded to contribute, because the architect of the church was Adriaan Dortsman (1625-1682), a prominent and highly regarded architect who designed the Round Lutheran Church as a prime example of Dutch Classicism and whose designs were very sought after in Sweden as well.

Harald Appelboom, aforementioned in connection with the Lutheran congregation in Leeuwarden, was born in Söderby in Sweden in 1612 and came to the Republic in 1631 as a student at the University of Franeker.<sup>26</sup> He was a Swedish trade representative in Amsterdam since 1642. In 1652 he became the Swedish resident in The Hague – succeeding Peter Spiering who had died in that year –, a position he had until his death in 1674. In 1665 he was also appointed as *extraordinaris* envoyé (Schutte 1983, 492; Kernkamp 1905, 291-292). Besides these official positions Appelboom was also an agent in political and cultural affairs and had taken over some of Spiering's cultural clients (Noldus, 2003, p. 2018). Where Trotzig was well known as agent in architectural affairs, Appelboom was renowned as supplier of books and paintings to the Swedish elite. 'Every year between 1647 and 1650, Harald Appelboom sent some 50 to 100 books from Amsterdam to Stockholm upon the request of the Swedish Queen Christina. (Noldus 2003, 2015) And he regularly purchased paintings by Dutch masters for Count Wrangel. But Appelboom was also a high-ranking mediator in delicate political negotiations, e.g. during the war between France and Spain (1668) and between France and the Republic (1672) (Schutte 1983, 493).

Appelboom married Susanna Rogeau (1620/21-1681) in Amsterdam in 1645 and they had six children.<sup>27</sup> The first three were baptized in the Old Lutheran Church in Amsterdam, the three younger children in The Hague.<sup>28</sup> The baptismal records of the children (Schutte 1983, 494). are an interesting illustration of Appelboom's status and place in society, and they also show that he did not just interact in a professional network

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<sup>26</sup> He was enrolled under the name Haraldus Andreae and used the name Appelboom once he arrived in Amsterdam, see Kernkamp 1905, 290-375; here in particular: p. 290.

<sup>27</sup> Harald, the first child, died as an infant in 1646, the same year he was born. He was buried in the Reformed Westerkerk, because the Lutherans in Amsterdam were only granted the right to bury their dead in their churches in 1674.

<sup>28</sup> Their baptism is registered as 'Evangelical-Lutheran', but they were baptized at home, see Schutte 1983, 494.

with his double agent colleagues, but that they also shared ties of friendship. One of the witnesses at the baptism of his third child, Christina, in 1649 was Queen Christina of Sweden, even though she wasn't present in person. This was five years before she converted to Roman-Catholicism and abdicated her throne. In 1651, for the baptism of Appelboom's and Rogeau's fourth child, Cathrijna, the first to be baptized in The Hague, Peter Trotzig was one of the witnesses. The marriage of the fifth child, Maria (1653-?), further strengthened the Appelboom family's place within the Dutch Lutheran community. Maria Appelboom married Henricus Cordes (1649-1678) in 1676, two years after her father's death. Cordes had started as Lutheran minister in The Hague in the same year and was quite likely involved in Harald Appelboom's funeral service. He was also the son of Paul Cordes who was one of the Lutheran ministers in Amsterdam between 1641 and 1670.

Appelboom's network as double agent, his connections with the political, economic and financial elite in the Republic, but also in Sweden, and his close confessional ties to the Lutheran congregations in Amsterdam and in The Hague explain why the Amsterdam consistory asked him for help on behalf of the Leeuwarden Lutherans in their struggle to convince the Frisian authorities to grant them a conditional permission to practise their religion.

## **Conclusion**

International influences from the German Lands and the Nordic Countries were a vital factor and a core characteristic in the development of Dutch Lutheranism. These countries, with longstanding economic ties to the Netherlands, had become predominantly Lutheran through the Reformation. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Dutch Golden Age, the (nascent) Dutch Republic attracted a large influx of migrants, and a considerable number of them were German and Nordic Lutherans. Virtually all of the 41 Dutch Lutheran congregations that were founded until 1700 had members who were originally from the German Lands and/or the Nordic Countries.

But the historiography of Dutch Lutheranism concentrated rather one-sidedly on the role of the German Lands, because they were the homeland of Luther and the starting point of the Reformation. Furthermore, a majority of the ministers in Dutch Lutheran congregations throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century was German, and until 1816 Dutch Lutheran ministers got (the major part of) their academic training at German theological faculties.

Nonetheless, the role of the Nordic Countries needs to be incorporated as well. Through a variety of examples I tried to show that the Nordic influences on the development of Dutch Lutheranism are multi-layered. They encompass a variety of societal levels as well: From the Danish kings who wrote letters of recommendation in order to influence the political powers in favour of the Amsterdam Lutherans and who, together with the Swedish kings, provided financial and material help for a number of Dutch Lutheran congregations. To the large group of Nordic migrants who came to the Republic, and in particular to Amsterdam, to find work, but who, to a considerable extent, ended up needing poor relief because their jobs were often low-paid. But even though they were a burden on the finances of the Amsterdam Lutherans, they also helped them make an argument opposite the city magistrates for the need of a second church.



The example of Utrecht shows that the Nordic influences were not only important during the initial years in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when most Dutch Lutheran congregations were founded, but that they remained vital throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century as well.

The struggle of the Leeuwarden Lutherans for the permission to practice their religion in a church and not just in private homes, illustrates both the importance of Nordic Lutherans with diplomatic and political influence who tried to help them, and the centralized power position of the Lutheran congregation in Amsterdam – another core characteristic of Dutch Lutheranism – because they were the intermediary in facilitating this help on behalf of the Leeuwarden Lutherans.

Finally the example of the Swedish double agents Peter Trotzic and Harald Appelboom stresses the fact that the history of Dutch Lutheranism cannot be fully grasped by just looking at it from the perspective of those with an ecclesial office. Individuals like Trotzic and Appelboom were also of vital importance in overcoming the resistance that the Dutch Lutherans encountered in trying to establish congregations. These double agents might well be called *triple agents*, because besides their official appointments on behalf of the Swedish crown and their various cultural services for their Swedish elite clients, they were willing to help their Dutch co-religionists through their influential networks, because they shared a confessional Lutheran bond.

All these different layers of Nordic influences provide a glimpse into the well thought out strategy the Dutch Lutherans developed to deal with the various problems they encountered as tolerated religious minority. They also demonstrate that the Dutch Lutherans knew quite well when to ask whom for help. When Denmark had the *dominium maris baltici* they asked the Danish king for letters of recommendation; when Sweden had that power, they appealed to the Swedish agents. The Amsterdam Lutherans asked Trotzic to organize a collection for the building costs of the Round Lutheran Church because of his expertise in architectural affairs, and they asked Appelboom for help on behalf of the Leeuwarden Lutherans because of his diplomatic and political clout in The Hague; and not vice versa.

To end with the question I asked in the beginning: In a strict sense the Netherlands may never be considered a Nordic country. But all the examples discussed here demonstrate that the Nordic Lutheran influences had a pivotal impact on the development of Dutch Lutheranism because they provided the Dutch Lutherans with much needed leverage to negotiate their religious space and survive as tolerated minority.

This means that the Nordic Countries are an indispensable link in understanding Dutch Lutheranism. Their multi-layered influences are indeed a part of its history.

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