The Research Institute for Religious Studies and Theology (RST) brings together the academic research of the Faculties of Religious Studies and of Theology at Radboud University Nijmegen. Its point of departure is the continuing relevance of religion for present-day societies, with a focus on religions’ presence and interaction in their various social, cultural and political habitats. Its aim is to develop, integrate, facilitate, perform and valorise excellent research in religious studies and theology and to educate and supervise new generations of scholars.

Research focus
The research programme ‘Religions and Transformation in Contexts’ (RATIC) (2007-2012) makes a scientifically and socially relevant contribution to our insight into religious dynamics by focusing on the concept of transformation. While this concept is commonly associated with dynamics, it is seldom accurately defined or operationalized. In the RATIC programme transformation is studied as a process of change in religious and spiritual identities, both at the level of the individual believer and at the collective level of communities and institutions. The programme ‘Religions and Transformation in Contexts’ is carried out by five research groups:

**Trajectories of Religiosity**
(Prof. Gerard Wiegers and Prof. Eric Venbrux)
This programme, which combines comparative religious studies with anthropology of religion, focuses on the transformations of Islam, Asian religions, and new religious movements (including indigenous and local religions) in relationship to the Western world. There is a focus on 1) ritual and religiosity (death rites, pilgrimage, and religious tourism), 2) religion and the arts, 3) religion, conflict, and media, 4) methods and theories of comparative religious studies, and 5) the history of religions.

**Reframing Spirituality and Mysticism in Past and Present**
(Prof. Frans Maas)
This programme starts from the observation that there is growing interest in spirituality and mysticism in contemporary Western societies. Recent social and cultural developments have deeply transformed both socio-cultural manifestations of spirituality and mysticism and awareness of the inner structures of spirituality and mysticism and their relationship to texts, material objects, images, social and economic culture, histories, practices, and theoretical presuppositions.

**Biblical Studies, Ancient Judaism, Early Christianity, and Gnosticism**
(Prof. Ellen van Wolde)
This programme focuses on biblical and extra-biblical texts that mirror religious transformations in social, political, or religious
contexts. Research concentrates on interpreting a number of key texts on religious transformations, different levels of interpretation, and re-interpreting early Christian and Jewish texts, as well as their historical, religious and hermeneutical backgrounds.

**Transformation of Religion within the Frameworks of Modernity**  
*Prof. Georg Essen*

The aim of this programme is to investigate the effects of social and cultural transformation on the normative quality of religious interpretive systems. It includes the following subjects: 1) the crisis of theism in modernity, 2) science and theology, 3) conflict and cohesion, and 4) chronology and topography. Researchers from the former Heyendaal Institute have joined this research cluster, in which historical and systematic research concentrates on cultural and religious transformation processes against the background of the crisis of theism. It focuses on two topics: ‘Evil, modernity, and the making of tradition’ and ‘The problem of divine and human agency within a scientific world view.’

**Religious Identity Transformation in Context**  
*Prof. Chris Hermans*

This research programme develops theories about the transformation of religious identity within a pluralizing and individualizing context that involves various types of interactions between religions. Transformation of religious identity is studied as a continuity or discontinuity of religious identity in time, through adaptation within its current contexts and within an explanatory framework of its antecedents and consequents. The context within which religious identity is transformed includes both intended and unintentional interactions between individuals and groups with different religions and their impact on social cohesion.

In order to sharpen the focus and enhance the profile of this research, the programme was reorganised in the latter half of 2009. From 1 January 2010, there will be a Religious Studies and a Theological research programme at the institute. The number of sub-programmes will be reduced from five to two, while the structure will be aligned with the international academic profiles.

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### Staff

| Prof. W.P. van den Berken (e) |
| Prof. H.G.G.M. Driessen (o) |
| Prof. G. Essen (o) |
| Prof. R.L. Grimes (p) |
| Prof. M.A.C. de Haardt (p) |
| Prof. C.A.M. Hermans (o) |
| Prof. A.J.M. van den Hoogen (p) |
| Prof. F.A. Maas (o) |
| Prof. H. Motzki (p) |
| Prof. D.A.T. Müller (o) |
| Prof. P.J.A. Nissen (p) |
| Prof. J. van Oort (p) |
| Prof. J.B.A.M. Schilderman (p) |
| Prof. H.G.B. Teule (p) |
| Prof. P.J.C.L. van der Velde (p) |
| Prof. J.A. van der Ven (p) |
| Prof. H.J.M. Venbrux (o) |
| Prof. C.H.M. Versteegh (o) |
| Prof. J. van der Vliet (e) |
| Prof. J.G. van der Watt (o) |
| Prof. G.A. Wiegers (o) |
| Prof. F.J.S. Wijsen (o) |
| Prof. J.-P. Wils (o) |
| Prof. E.J. van Wolde (o) |

(o), (e) and (p) see Glossary

### Tenured

| Full Professors | 6.6 FTE |
| Associate Professors | 0.8 FTE |
| Assistant Professors | 4.6 FTE |
| Researchers | 1.7 FTE |

### Non-tenured

| Researchers | 4.5 FTE |
| Doctoral candidates | 10.1 FTE |

FTE 1st  FTE 2nd  FTE 3rd
After a close study of the original Hebrew and its context, Prof. Ellen van Wolde concluded that the first verse of Genesis describes the separation of heaven and earth within infinite swirling waters and not *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing).

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and the education programmes at the faculties. These changes will result in a more integrated programme that will be better equipped to meet future challenges.

**Research facilities**
The institute houses special collections in the University Library such as the Egyptological collection of books named after the Nijmegen professor J. M.A. Janssen, which is considered to be one of the richest in the Netherlands, and the collections of the Titus Brandsma Institute, a fine collection of publications on Mysticism and Spirituality. Furthermore, the collections of the Catholic Documentation Centre (Katholiek Documentatie Centrum) are important. In addition to publications, the KDC also preserves audio-visual materials.

**Collaboration**
The institute participates in the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER), collaborating with the Theological Faculty of the Catholic University Louvain, the Catholic University of America (Washington, USA), the University of South Africa (UNISA Pretoria, South Africa); the University of Pretoria (South-Africa), the University of Dar-es-Salam (Tanzania), the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (Germany), the Faculty of Theology of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetra in Bangalore (India), the University of Heidelberg (Germany), the University of the Philippines in Manila (Philippines) and the Gadjah Madah University in Yogyakarta (Indonesia).

International research contacts are maintained in lectures, courses and guest scholarships. The Nijmegen-based institutes related to our two faculties include the Institute of Eastern Christianity (Prof. Teule), the Titus Brandsma Institute (Prof. Waayman), the Nijmegen Institute of Missiology (Prof. Wijsen), and the Centre for Thanatology (Prof. Venbrux). These institutes disseminate and discuss RST research outcomes in their global networks.

Scholars at the Institute have initiated and/or supervised various international research programmes:
- The Euresource Religious Sources of Solidarity programme (Profs. Scheepers and Schilderman): Johann-Wolfgang Goethe University Frankfurt, Fachbereich Gesellschaftswissenschaften (Prof. Rossteutscher), and University of Warwick, Religion and Education Research Unit (Prof. Francis) (11 researchers).

The Institute cooperates with the Catholic University of Leuven through joint supervision of PhD students and double degree certificates (2009: Dr Zaccharia and Dr Capucao).

**Research results**
In 2009, eight dissertations were successfully defended on the basis of the Institutes’ research: seven in the Faculty of Theology (including one *cum laude*) and one at the Faculty of Religious Studies.

**Trajectories of Religiosity**
Researchers in this cluster studied the unexpected re-emerging relevance of religion to contemporary issues in society by researching the interaction of Islam and modern culture in terms of current developments within Salafism (NWO-funded project; Prof. Motzki), the refashioning of Muslim piety in the performing arts (NWO-
funded project, Prof. van Nieuwkerk), the influence of religion on
the struggle between Muslims and Christians in North Maluku in
Indonesia (NWO Veni-funded) project (Prof. Hermkens), and on
gender discourse in Islam (Dr Sahar Noor, NWO Mozaiëk-funded).
The renewed significance of religion was also demonstrated in
studies of changing mortuary rituals and bereavement (NWO-
funded). Additional studies were presented on western reception
of ancient Buddhism (Prof. van der Velde) and holistic tendencies
in popular religiosity (Prof. Jespers).

Biblical Studies, Ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Gnosticism
A breakthrough in this cluster came as the result of applying cog-
nitive linguistics to biblical scholarship. Prof. van Wolde developed
a new cognitive theoretical framework and cognitive linguistic
method to study culturally embedded concepts and transform-
ations in ancient religious views. She presented conference papers
in Ciudad Real, Rome and Atlanta, Georgia. Prof. van der Watt
focused on the linguistic basis underlying John’s view of religious
and ethical transformation. He presented conference papers in
Pretoria, Mainz and Yale. Prof. van Oort studied the transform-
ation of ideas in early Christianity (including Irenaeus) in relation-
ship to Gnostic texts such as the Gospel of Judas.

Transformation of Religions within the Frameworks of Modernity
A successful priority within this cluster proved to be the reinter-
pretation of Christian tradition in light of its contribution to
the modern state and its constitution. Prof. Essen analyzed ways
in which modern constitutions affirm the secular principles of
profane legal orders and handle religious conflicts. He addressed
this issue in keynote lectures at international conferences in Berlin,
Alexandria, Houston, and Rostock. Prof. van den Brandt studied
the transition from communicative memory to historical memory
in her research on ‘Witnesses of Theresienstadt, Jews deported
from the Netherlands (1943-1945)’, which was funded by the
Dutch government (VWS).

Reframing Spirituality and Mysticism in Past and Present
Researchers in this cluster invested in an innovative methodology
that has been grafted onto a theological epistemology of mystical
knowing (‘via negativa’) and is exemplified in a study of Meister
Eckhart’s vision. Research on Eastern Christianity focused on the
function of orthodoxy in terms of the integration and disintegra-
tion of European identity. One of the spin-offs of this research a
symposium on the relationship between orthodoxy and human
rights. Prof. Teule reported on intercultural and interreligious
issues at conferences in Leuven, Bagdad/Irbil, Beirut, Lviv,
Bergamo, Vienna, Moscow and Birmingham.

Religious Identity Transformation and Social Cohesion
Researchers in this cluster achieved their ambition to clarify
the process of eu-functions and dysfunctions of religion for social
coherence issues in contemporary society. Profs. Scheepers and
Schilderman studied change in religious identity and its conse-
quences for social capital in Europe, with papers presented at con-
ferences in London and Nijmegen. Dr Sterkens and Dr Hadiwitanto
studied the religious origins of violence in the Malukan province
of Indonesia by clarifying the relationship between religion,
agonistic cultural attitudes and authoritarian networks. Prof.
van der Ven presented his international research on human rights
and religion at institutes in Manila and Oslo. Prof. Hermans
studied the significance of abductive reasoning processes for
empirical research.

Societal impact
The Faculty of Religious Studies signed an agreement on 29 Septem-
ber with the Dominican Study Centre for Theology and Society in
Amsterdam (DSTS), with the aim of addressing socially and politi-
cally engaged audiences that take an interest in religion and social
or existential issues. With a similar aim, the Faculties of Theology
and Religious Studies participate in the Soeterbeeck programme of
the Radboud University Nijmegen.

The RST intends to relate its research to the Faculties’ priorities
in Master’s programmes on care, culture and policy. With this in
mind, the research group Reframing Spirituality and Mysticism in
Past and Present focuses on the topic of ‘societal spirituality’. It
participated in a discussion organized by the KSGV on Mindfulness
and Christian prayer (Utrecht and Groningen, 500 participants),
and the symposia ‘Perspectives on spirituality’ (Radboud University
Nijmegen, 4 March, 120 participants), ‘Levensbeschouwelijke
vorming’ of the Thijmgenootschap (Utrecht University, 4 February
110 participants), and ‘workplace spirituality’ (Katholiek Netwerk /
VKMO in Utrecht, 19 September, 90 participants). The chair of the
programme ‘Religion and Care’ co-organized a symposium on
‘Spirituality in palliative care’ (Faculty of Religious Studies/UMC
Radboud, 28 January, 160 participants).

Several conferences were organized by the research clusters with
the aim of disseminating and discussing research results. The
Annual Faculty Symposium (25 March, 340 participants) was co-
organized by the Centre for Thanatology with ‘changing death rites’
as its topic. On 8 May, the research group led by Prof. Motzki hosted
the Conference ‘Dynamics of Islamic Culture’ at Radboud University
Nijmegen they. The Heyendaal research programme organized a
conference on ‘God and Darwin! Evolution biology and theology
of creation in evolution’ on 16 December. Holocaust survivor Fred
Schwarz gave a lecture on Holocaust Memorial Day, which was
organized by RST.

Five inaugural lectures received broad attention. Prof. van der Vliet
(30 January) gave a lecture on the origins of the Coptic language
in Egypt. Prof. Müller’s lecture was on the historical ascription of
Catharism (19 March). Prof. Schilderman’s lecture on May 15 on
the philosophical assumptions in spiritual care was frequented by
Key publications


Dissertations: 8
Scientific publications: 214
Professional publications: 77
Director: Prof. Hans Schilderman

Prof. Schilderman specializes in Religion and Care. He coordinates the international research programme ‘EURESOURCE’, which studies the impact of religion on solidarity in a cross-national and longitudinal survey of European countries. Schilderman publishes on spiritual care, solidarity, ritual and empirical research methods in theology. He is a Board Member of the International Society of Empirical Research in Theology (ISERT).

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Future research

In the latter half of 2009 an initiative began to reformulate the research programme and increase the effectiveness of the Institute. New research programme texts have been discussed and edited. As of 1 January 2010, the Institute will have abandoned its former five-part ‘Religion and Transformation in Context’ programme and established complementary programmes for Religious Studies: ‘Dynamics of Religious Change’ and Theology: ‘Quest for God.’

In 2010 an NWO-funded research project entitled ‘Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Indonesia and the Philippines (involving one postdoc and four PhD researchers) will start. A comparative study funded by the NWO programme on Conflict and Safety, lasting from January 2010 to December 2013, was granted to Profs. Sterkens, Hüskens and Scheepers. It will focus on the influence of ethno-religious identification on support for collective violence in areas of actual and potential conflict in Indonesia (Maluku and Yogyakarta) and the Philippines (Mindanao and Metro-Manila).

With the inclusion of the Department of Islam and Arabic, an excellent research group has joined the Institute. Several high-quality research applications have been submitted for NWO funding (Profs. Motzki and Van Nieuwkerk). The Centre for Thanatology intends to focus future research on a comparison of changing European ways of death, and extend current research on newly emerging rituals to include the celebration of All Souls’ Day. Profs. Nissen and Jespers are planning new research which will compare historical and contemporary forms of new religiosity.

Prof. Hermans is planning to undertake research on intercultural education as part of citizenship education. Applications for research on topics related to interreligious communication have been submitted to EU KF7 and Marie Curie ITN and for educational research to PROO NWO. Contacts have been established with universities in South-Africa (Unisa-Pretoria; Pietermaritzburg) and Indonesia (Universitas Christen Duca Watana, Yogyakarta) to carry out research on religion and conflict.