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The Statenbijbel

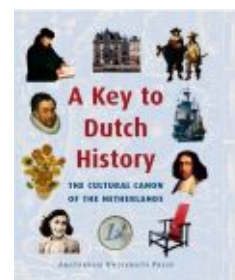
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Slings, Hubert and Frits van Oostrom.

A Key to Dutch History: The Cultural Canon of the Netherlands.

Amsterdam University Press, 2007.

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1637

The Statenbijbel **(authorised version of the Bible)**

The Book of Books

For Christians, the Bible is the most important book in existence because it contains the truth revealed by God, “the word of God”. One of the points of conflict during the Reformation had been the question of for whom the Bible was meant. The Catholic Church believed that the Bible should preferably not be read by ordinary people. Rather, they could listen to the explanations of the clergy in church, where the priests read from the Bible in Latin. The priests acted as intermediaries between God and the faithful.

The protestants, on the other hand, believed that the faithful themselves should be able to read the Bible and that the preacher in the first place was a servant of the word of God. It was the task of preachers to let God’s word speak to the congregation, through Bible readings and exegesis of the Scriptures. This meant,

therefore, that the Bible should be available in the language of the faithful, preferably in as reliable a translation as possible. Consequently, the reformer Luther translated the Bible from the original texts into German in around 1535. In the sixteenth century, a number of Dutch translations were made of Luther’s German work.

Over the course of time, the call from the Dutch Reformed Church became ever stronger for a new translation based on the original manuscripts of the Bible in Hebrew and Greek. In 1618, the synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, during its main assembly in the city of Dordrecht, commissioned such a translation based on the example of the English Authorised Version (the King James Bible of 1611). The States General was asked to finance the translation.

The States General only agreed to this in 1626 and the translators were then able to start work. Nine years later the translation was completed, and in 1637 the Dutch authorised version, the *Statenvertaling* or *Statenbijbel*, was printed for the first time. Over 500,000 copies were printed between 1637 and 1657. The *Statenbijbel* remained the most important Bible in the Dutch Reformed Church for over three hundred years. Even today it is still used in some church communities. Currently,

work is being done on a revised version of the *Statenvertaling*.

Over the course of time, through sermons and Bible readings, large groups of people became familiar with the language of the *Statenbijbel*, that also had an enormous impact on Dutch culture. The *Statenvertaling* was the source for expressions like “in the sweat of thy face” and “a feast for the eye”, that have now become embedded in the Dutch language.



Sub-topics

Primary education sector

Holy books (the Bible, the Koran and the Torah)
 Stories from the Bible (the story behind Christian holidays)
 Bible sayings and proverbs

Secondary education sector

The Synod of Dordrecht
 The Bible and literature
 World religions

Past and Present

The most recent Dutch translation of the Bible

In the Treasure Chest

Facsimile of the *Statenbijbel*

References

Places to Go

Amsterdam: Bible Museum
 Amsterdam: Jewish Historical Museum
 Utrecht: Catharijneconvent
 Uden: Museum of Religious Art

Books for young people

Jan van Reenen, *De komst van de Statenbijbel*

Background literature

Els Kloek, “De Synode van Dordrecht (1618-1619)” in:
 Els Kloek (ed.), *Verzameld Verleden*, Hilversum 2004.

Websites

www.statenvertaling.net
www.bijbelencultuur.nl