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CHRISTENDOM
& SLAVERNIJ

Christianity
and slavery

These texts were written for the exhibition
Christianity & Slavery. A Dutch narrative, on display
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Colophon

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Churches in this exhibition

Dutch Reformed Church (NGK): The largest Protestant (Calvinist) church in the Netherlands, which long held the status of 'public' church. From 1816 the 'Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk' (NHK), now the Protestant Church Netherlands (PKN).

Lutheran Church: Protestant church based on the work and teachings of Martin Luther. Part of the PKN since 2004.

Moravian Church (or Moravian Brethren): Also called 'Hernhutters' in Dutch. The originally German brethren is a mission-oriented Protestant church, active in the Caribbean from 1732, in the Republic from 1734 and in Suriname from 1735.

Roman Catholic Church: Despite the Reformation in the second half of the 16th century, many residents of the Republic remained Catholic. The Roman Catholic Church led an invisible existence, but was tolerated. In 1795, Catholics were also granted freedom of religion by law.

Mennonites: The Mennonites are a group of Anabaptist Christians who split off from the Lutheran Reformation. Anabaptists get their name from practising adult baptism.

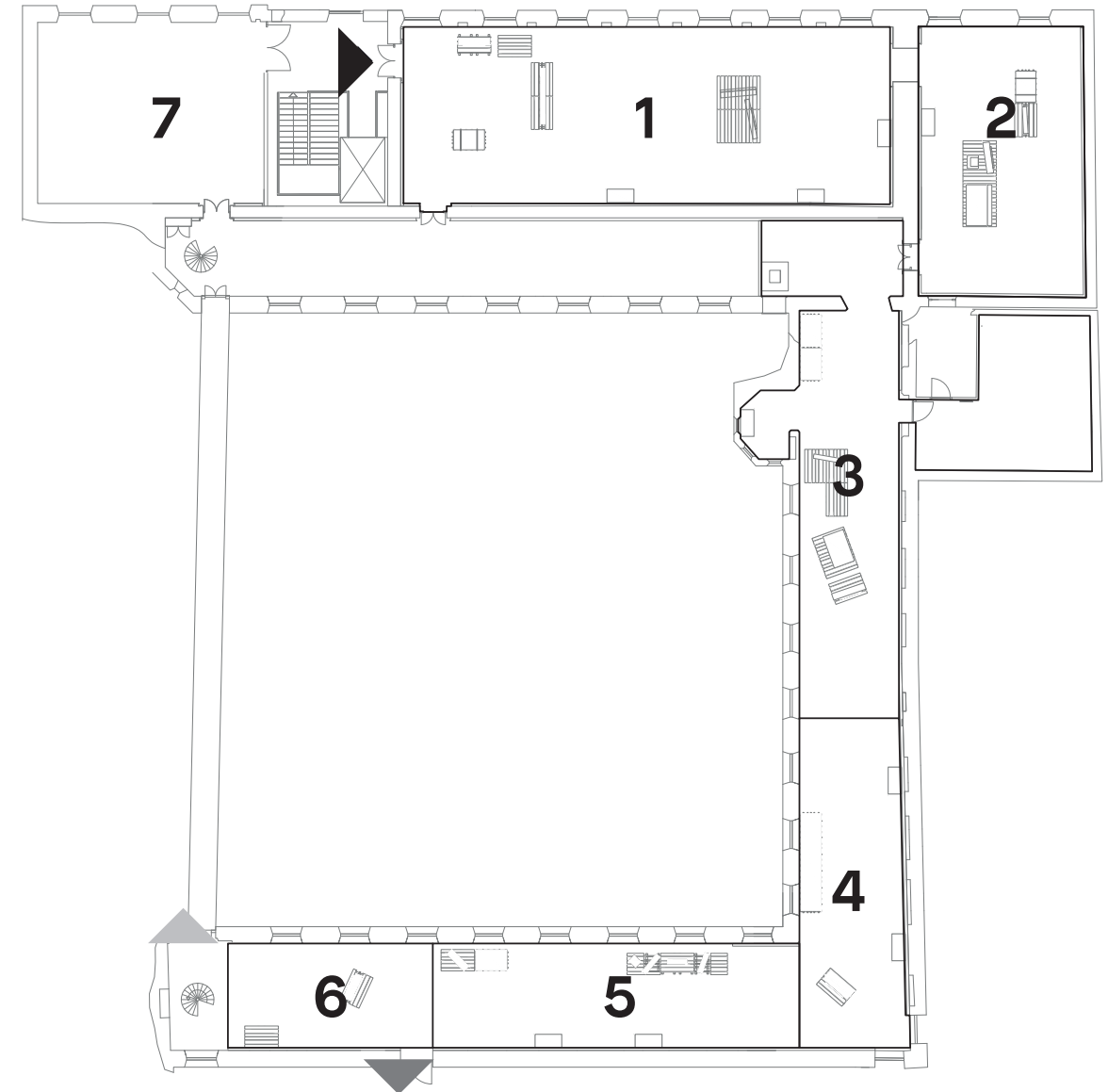
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- 1 The Republic (1588–1795): a Protestant nation
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- 7 Reflection room

▶ Entrance

▶ Exit+wc

▶ Reflection room



CHRISTENDOM & SLAVERNIJ

Christianity
and slavery

Can a good Christian be a slave owner? Should you convert your enslaved? And what does the Bible actually say about who may be enslaved? During the nearly three centuries of slavery in the Dutch colonial empire (ca. 1600–1863/1873), many pastors and other Christians searched for answers to such questions. As the ‘public’ church of the Republic, the Dutch Reformed Church played a major role in this. Overseas, the government and the Dutch Reformed Church kept watch over colonial society and determined whether other churches were allowed access to the colonies. While Western historical sources rarely feature the voices of enslaved people, resistance, resourcefulness and perseverance nonetheless resonate. Personal stories and contemporary art demonstrate that spirituality can be a source of strength.

Slavery in Dutch overseas territories

From the early seventeenth century, trading companies controlled the colonies of the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands. The monopoly on trade with the East Indies was held by the Dutch East India Company (VOC), founded in 1602. The Dutch West India Company (WIC) was founded in 1621 to conduct trade with North and South America. The Republic's administration mandated these companies to conquer and govern territories. To ensure a profit, a stable supply and production of the commodity (nutmeg, sugar, cocoa, etc.) was necessary. To guarantee such supply and production, people soon switched to slave labour. An extensive trade in enslaved people under Dutch rule emerged. People in slavery were treated like cattle and deprived of their basic human dignity.

Up to 1814, more than 600,000 African adults and children were enslaved and transported across the Atlantic to the Americas by Dutch traders. This was mainly done by the WIC. In Asia, between 660,000 and 1.2 million people were traded within the territories under the authority of the VOC. The extent of this trade of enslaved people in the East is difficult to determine. It mainly took place within Asia, from different areas, and was carried out by both European and Asian traders. Enslaved people were also transported to Asia from East Africa.

Language used in the exhibition

This exhibition contains words and images that are violent or racist and can be perceived as offensive or shocking. Historical sources and quotations sometimes include the word 'Negro', a once common designation for black people from sub-Saharan Africa, which today is considered offensive and hurtful. To indicate that being a slave is never a person's natural state but rather is forced upon them, we use the term 'enslaved person' rather than 'slave', unless historical material is shown or quoted.

The Republic (1588–1795): a Protestant nation

Slavery did not exist in the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands around 1600. Everyone was free, or they became free after arriving in the Republic. Slavery in Spanish and Portuguese colonies was viewed with horror. The Protestant Dutch considered such practices 'niet christelyck' (unchristian) and associated them with Catholics. Overseas, in the Republic's colonies, there were fewer conscientious objections. There, it was not long before slavery was considered inevitable and permitted by legislation.

World map

Dutch Reformed Churches in the Dutch Colonial Empire

On the WIC and VOC ships, Reformed pastors and ziekentrousters (chaplains employed to provide spiritual guidance to dying people) were brought along for spiritual care en route and in the overseas territories. Once there, they founded churches, some of which have survived to this day. To some extent, the Reformed churches maintained their presence in the colonies even after the companies were disbanded in the late 18th century and slavery and the trade of enslaved people were banned in the 19th century. On this map, a selection of Reformed churches shows how the Dutch Reformed Church settled overseas in the footsteps of the Dutch.

1. Wolvendaal Church, Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1749

From 1642 Reformed church services were held in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. This church in Colombo was built by the VOC and is still in use.

2. The Groote Kerk, Cape Town, South Africa, 1704

A VOC settlement colony was established at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. There has been a church congregation there since 1665, and it continues to exist. The current building dates from 1841.

3. Fort Elmina, Ghana, 1482

From 1637, the WIC used this fort to hold enslaved people until they were transported to the Americas by ship. Church services were held in the fort between 1669 and 1872.

4. The Reformed church (Walloon Church) in Recife, Brazil, 1642

Soon after the first plantations were captured from the Portuguese in Brazil in 1630, WIC-paid pastors arrived. The Reformed church was officially established there in 1636. This church in Mauritsstad (Maurice City), in today's Recife, opened its doors in 1642.

5. Centrumkerk, Paramaribo, Suriname, 1835

Johannes Basseliers (1640–1689) was the first pastor to set foot in Suriname in 1668. Following his arrival, members of the Dutch Reformed Church went to church in various places. From 1701 to 1809, services were held on the first floor of the town house in Paramaribo. In 1835, the Centrumkerk replaced a domed church that had been destroyed by fire. This building still provides a home for the Reformed Church in Suriname.

6. Reformed Church, New York, United States, 1642

In 1628, the first minister arrived in New Amsterdam, present-day New York. A church was built in the local fort in 1642. This community still exists today.

7. First Church in Albany, United States, 1656

The first service of the Reformed church in present-day Albany, took place in 1642 for the people living in and around Fort Orange. A proper church building was completed here in 1656. The current church building from 1799 still contains the pulpit that the WIC donated to the first church.

8. The Hollandsche Kerk or Kruyskerk, Jakarta, Indonesia, 1640

Batavia, now Jakarta, was the headquarters of the VOC in Asia from 1611. In 1619, governor-general Jan Pieterszoon Coen had a fort built to reinforce the trading post. Church services were held here until 1640, the year the Hollandsche Kerk opened its doors.

9. Fort Church, Willemstad, Curaçao, 1769

In 1634, the WIC took Curaçao from the Spanish. Shortly afterwards, the first pastor was appointed. A wooden church was constructed in the courtyard of Fort Amsterdam, later to be replaced by a stone one. The Fort Church from 1769 is still in use today.

10. St Francis Church, Kochi, India, 1503

This was the first European Christian church in India. After the VOC took what was then Cochin from the Portuguese in 1663, this Catholic church became a Protestant church. From 1717, Jacobus Canter Visscher was the pastor at St Francis Church. The church is still in use.

11. Hervormde Kerk, Oranjestad, St Eustatius, 1755

The island of St Eustatius was colonised by the Netherlands from 1636. This church ruin can be found in the capital, Oranjestad. Just 37 years after its consecration in 1755, a hurricane ripped the roof off the church. Since then, it has been out of use.

12. Fort Christian on Saint Thomas, Virgin Islands, ca. 1672

Around 1660, the Dutch founded a Reformed community on Saint Thomas. Not much later, the island came under Danish rule. The Dutch were permitted to use the Lutheran church in Fort Christian for their services. The Saint Thomas community is still active. Its current building dates from 1848.

13. Oude Hollandsche Kerk in Ambon, Indonesia, 17th century

In 1605, the VOC took Amboina, now Ambon, from the Portuguese. After a few years, a pastor was appointed. This church was built later.

14. Fort Nassau in New Amsterdam, Guyana, 1682

Fort Nassau was built in 1627 as a Dutch trading post in Berbice, present-day Guyana. In 1671, the first pastor arrived. The stone house for the colonial government in the centre of the fort also served as a church.

15. Portugese Buitenkerk in Jakarta, Indonesia, 1695

This church was built for people who had been enslaved by the Portuguese. Under Dutch rule, they could be released if they were willing to convert to Protestantism. Services were held for them in Portuguese. The church is still in use today and is known as the Gereja Sion.

No slavery exists in the Republic...

In 1596, the ship of merchant Pieter van der Hagen docked in Middelburg. On board were 130 enslaved Africans. Previously, these were thought to be an 'incidental discovery' made during privateering, but recent research suggests that this was an early example of Dutch participation in the slave trade. The stopover in the Republic had been unplanned, with the Africans destined for sale in the Dutch West Indies. The Middelburg mayor believed that the baptised enslaved people on board the ship should be free and allowed to determine their future in Middelburg in a state of 'natural freedom'. In his argument, he explicitly invoked his Christian beliefs.

01.

The mayor and the slave ship

Mayor Ten Haeff's speech, starting at the bottom left, shows how slavery was seen in the late sixteenth century. Ten Haeff believed that slaves 'being all baptised Christians should not be held or sold by anyone as slaves but should be free'. It does beg the question whether Ten Haeff is against slavery in general, or only because these are baptised Christians. The Zeeland States proposed to help the African men, women and children finding addresses through proclamations in churches, where they could practise a craft and 'grow up' to be good Christians. The owner of the ship disagreed with this proposal and asked the States General, the highest governing body in the Republic, for permission to leave with the ship and the enslaved persons. At first, the States General did not grant the request; after a second request, the States declared that he may do what he wants with the 'Moors', but that he should not expect an official decision on the matter. What happened to the enslaved persons after this is unknown.

Resolutions of the States of Zeeland, 15 November 1596,
Zeeuws Archief, Middelburg

02.

The happy state of the Netherlands

This print from 1603 shows how the Republic sees itself at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Central are three pillars: justice, religion and politics. Between the pillars sits the Dutch Virgin - symbol of the Netherlands - with Christ as her foundation. In the centre front, the Dutch lion carries banners reading 'freedom of conscience' and 'freedom of the fatherland'. This shows the Republic's commitment to freedom, a stark contrast to the memory of the oppressive rule by the Catholic Spaniards. In the background of the print, the importance of trade and shipping is shown by the many ships. Perhaps some are on their way to the colonies. Above, the hands of God are visible: His blessing rests on the Republic.

Hendrik Hondius, 1603, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

03.

Portuguese priests baptise Africans

Roman Catholic Spaniards and Portuguese had been active in Asia and the Americas since the 15th century. They had an open baptismal practice and baptised as many local residents as possible. Enslaved Africans were also baptised before being transported to the Americas. When the Protestant Dutch conquered overseas territories from the Spanish and Portuguese, they took their enslaved persons but not their baptismal practice. Dutch pastors focused on caring for their own small, white communities.

From: *Istorica descrizione de' tre' regni Congi, Matamba et Angola sitvati nell' Etiopia Inferiore Occidentale e delle missioni apostoliche esercitateui da Religiosi Capuccini*, Fortunato Alamandini, 1687, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden (reproduction)

04.

Nutmeg war on Banda

The importance attached to freedom in the Republic did not extend to peoples in its colonial sphere of influence. Jan Pieterszoon Coen, governor general of the VOC, eager to secure the sole right to nutmeg, violently conquered the Banda Islands, part of the Moluccas in modern-day Indonesia, in 1621. All the approximately 15,000 inhabitants were killed or taken away. This event is known as the Banda genocide.

Pak Sukri, Germen Boelens, ca. 1990, LSEM/Boelens, Museum Maluku, The Hague (reproduction)

05.

Plan of Lonthor (Greater Banda) with Fort Hollandia

After the violent depopulation of the Banda Islands, the islands were divided into plantations ('beds'), which were worked by enslaved persons. The VOC brought these people in from various Asian countries and East Africa. The Banda Islands thus formed the first plantation society in the Dutch colonial empire. Clergymen had been present on the islands from 1617, but after the genocide, the Dutch Reformed Church was the only authorised church there. The enslaved people were also encouraged or forced to convert to Protestantism.

1600-1700, Nationaal Archief, The Hague

06.

What is more intrusive than air?

The starting point of this installation is the pre-Christian way of life on the Moluccan islands. Before Jan Pieterszoon Coen and other Dutch persons arrived, the indigenous inhabitants had a rich culture which focused on the relationships within their community and with surrounding nature. Although church life is now an important pillar of the Moluccan community in the Netherlands, there are clear traces of pre-Christian customs in the modern religious experience. The piring natzar (sacrificial bowl) and lenso adat (handkerchief) are telling examples. This installation refers to these two objects, with the movement of the signs symbolising an ever present change in personal lives, in shared customs and in the stories told to future generations. And just as sunlight creates the patterns on the textiles, history leaves traces in the present.

Jerrold Saija, 2024, Amsterdam

...but Protestant Christians do participate in the slave trade

Although slavery was not allowed in the Republic, overseas slavery and Christianity went hand in hand without issue. An example of this seemingly problem-free relationship is the case of the Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie. The MCC was one of the Dutch trading companies active in the eighteenth century – alongside large companies such as the Dutch East India Company (VOC) and the Dutch West India Company (WIC). Although the MCC increasingly specialised in the transatlantic slave trade over the course of its existence, this did not seem to cause problems of conscience among Christian staff or shareholders in the Republic.

07.

The Bible on board

The ship the Zeemercuur was owned by the MCC and made two triangular voyages, also called slave voyages. Prior to her maiden voyage, the Zeemercuur received a number of books for religious practice on board. This certificate of delivery lists one Quarto Bible, one Christelijke Zeevaart, 12 Psalm books and one large Quarto Psalm book. A quarto is a paper size for books, from about 25 to 35 centimetres high. *Christelijke Zeevaart* is a book of sermons, prayers and hymns especially for sailors.

29 June 1787, Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie, Zeeuws Archief, Middelburg

08.

Ship's inventory

During her maiden voyage (1787-1790), the Zeemercuur transported a total of 272 enslaved persons, of which, due to an outbreak of scurvy, only 98 were auctioned in Suriname - a gruesome mortality rate of 64%. In the ship's inventory of the Zeemercuur, the shackles used to secure the enslaved persons are listed at the top left.

1787-1790, Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie, Zeeuws Archief, Middelburg

09.

How much does a slave cost?

Another MCC ship, Vrouw Johanna Cores, transported enslaved persons to Paramaribo on its sixth voyage. This document, dated 21 February 1763, lists the sale prices of enslaved persons at their auction in Paramaribo. A woman with child, both healthy, yields 300 guilders. The highest price is paid for number 27: 430 guilders for one healthy man. The enslaved persons have been dehumanised and relegated to an anonymous number on a price list.

Accounts and returns of the Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie, 1763, Zeeuws Archief, Middelburg (reproduction)

10.

Major shareholder and pastor

Described as a 'pious and gentle church teacher', Jacobus Willemsen was a popular preacher in Middelburg. His marriage to Anna Catharina Matthaeus made him a wealthy man. The preacher was the largest shareholder of the MCC in the eighteenth century and retained his shares until his death - even when the MCC became increasingly focused on the slave trade.

Jean Appelius (after design by), Reinier Vinkeles (engraver), Hendrik Sas (publisher, Middelburg), Jan Dane (publisher, Middelburg), 1774, Museum Catharijneconvent

11.

Framed prayer

This framed prayer from the boardroom of the MCC in Middelburg is a telling example of the intertwining of Christianity and commerce. At the beginning of their meetings, the management prays to God for His blessing for a prosperous trade and after the meetings, they thank God. We read among other things: Let all our Deliberations and Enterprises be in Thy Favour, and make them Prosperous. That our Ships that We Send Out From Time to Time may go with Thy Blessing.’ Whether the forced passengers of the MCC ships felt that blessing is anyone’s guess.

1778, Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie, Zeeuws Archief, Middelburg

12.

No swearing on board

If there are no clergymen on a ship - and this will usually have been the case with the MCC - the captain is responsible for religious worship on board. Accordingly, the first provision of the instructions for the captain and his officers on the Zeemercuur reads: The captain will have to take care that good discipline is kept on board and that all cursing and swearing is refrained from; and that morning and evening prayers to God Almighty are made to obtain His blessing on the voyage.

1787-1790, Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie, Zeeuws Archief, Middelburg

With the Bible in hand

Dutch theologians and pastors, both overseas and in the Republic, spoke out on human trafficking and slavery with Scripture in hand. Arguments both for and against were found in the Bible. Although advocates of slavery eventually gained the upper hand, opposing voices continued to be heard throughout the period of Dutch colonial slavery.

Meet proponents and opponents of slavery here. The focus is on theologians active in the Dutch Reformed Church before the rise of abolitionism (the struggle for the abolition of slavery from around 1800 onwards).

Therefore, this group consists of white men only.

Opposite them hangs a portrait of the Curaçao freedom fighter Tula. In his fight against slavery, he too made use of the Bible.

13.

Petrus Plancius (1552–1622) 'Father of the Protestant mission.'

Preacher and cartographer Petrus Plancius is linked to the Dutch colonial empire in several ways. He co-founded and managed the VOC and was also involved in the WIC. He also made maps for maritime navigation. Because Plancius also saw the colonial enterprise as an opportunity to preach the gospel, he has been called the 'father of the Protestant mission'. In his written work, as far as is known, he does not explicitly address the fate of enslaved persons.

Willem Jacobsz. Delff (engraver), 1623, Museum Catharijneconvent

14.

Godefridus Udemans (1581/1582–1649)
'in order that they may ... all the more effectively be lured to the Christian faith.'

An early, authoritative voice in the slavery debate is that of pastor Godefridus Udemans from Zierikzee. In his book *'t Geestelyck Roer van 't Coopmans schip* (1638), he elaborates a Protestant trade ethic. According to him, slavery is not part of the world as God intended it. But now that slavery is here, it must be regulated especially well. One of Udemans' proposals is that faithful, Christian slaves 'be set free after a certain period of years, so that they ... may be all the more effectively be lured to the Christian faith'.

Joannes Sarragon, *Zelandia Illustrata*, Deel IV, 1635, Zeeuws Archief, Middelburg

15.

Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) 'crude, unreliable, misleading, perilous and inequitable trade.'

Preacher and professor Gisbertus Voetius had great influence on the teachings of the young Dutch Reformed Church. Voetius' views on slavery are best known from his *Vraegen over den Catechismus* (1650). About the slave trade, 'as happens a great deal in the East and West Indies', this textbook notes that it 'does not and should not become Christians to put their hands to this crude, unreliable, misleading, perilous and inequitable trade'. Voetius bases his arguments, among other things, on the prohibition of human theft in the Bible.

Christiaan van Geelen, 1815-1826, Museum Catharijneconvent

16.

Johan Picardt (1600–1670) ‘their prosperity exists in slavery.’

German Johan Picardt lived most of his life in Drenthe. He published a historical work about this region in 1660. At the beginning of this book, Picardt argues that people from Africa should serve the other peoples as enslaved persons. He bases this on an erroneous and even in his day controversial interpretation of the Bible story about Ham’s curse. In this story, Noah curses Ham’s descendants, saying they would serve the descendants of his brothers. According to Picardt, the ‘godless Ham’ is the ancestor of ‘all the Moors in Africa’ and about these peoples he writes ‘that their prosperity exists in slavery’.

Pieter Holsteyn, 1648-1670, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

17.

Georgius de Raad (1625–1667) ‘A merchant must take care of the bodies and souls of the slaves he has purchased.’

Zeeland preacher Georgius de Raad is very critical of the slave trade. Of particular concern to him is the possibility of enslaved persons being sold to ‘papists’ (Roman Catholics) and the ‘anti-Christ’ (the Pope). Thus, they would be condemned to eternal damnation. A characteristic sentence from De Raad’s work is therefore: ‘a merchant must take care of the bodies and souls of the slaves he has purchased / and in particular the soul’.

Bedenckingen over den Guineeschen Slaefhandel der gereformeerde met de papisten, G. de Raad, 1665, Zeeuwse Bibliotheek, Middelburg (reproduction)

18.**Bernardus Smytegelt (1665–1739) ‘That kind of thievery is committed in the slave trade.’**

In his sermons, Bernardus Smytegelt of Middelburg expressed sharp views on slavery, which he called a ‘gross thievery’ based on the biblical text Exodus 21:16. ‘Isn’t that sad’, sighs Smytegelt, ‘the Christians have made a trade of that.’ According to a famous story, Smytegelt was once saved by two angels when two slave traders threatened to throw him off a bridge because of his opinion.

Des Christens eenige troost in leven en sterven, of Verklaringe over den Heidelbergschen Catechismus in LII. Predicatiën, Bernardus Smytegelt, Ottho en Pieter van Thol, 1747, Zeeuwse Bibliotheek, Middelburg (reproduction)

19.**François Valentijn (1666–1727) ‘One needs many slaves.’**

The Dordrecht pastor François Valentijn was sent out twice to present-day Indonesia. Among other things, he worked on a Malay Bible translation. After returning to the Republic, he wrote the richly illustrated five-volume work *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indiën* (1726), in which he covered all the Asian territories where the Dutch were active. In his work, he regularly expressed uncritical views on slavery by both Europeans and locals. About his own enslaved persons, he writes: ‘Possibly ye will ask, to what end does one need twenty slaves and more in a household?’ He then describes how he has enslaved persons for every little task, from holding up a sunscreen to carrying a tobacco box.

Arnold Houbraken (after design by); Jacob Houbraken (engraver); Arnold Boonen (engraver); Gilliam van der Gouwen (engraver), 1724, Museum Catharijneconvent

20.

Jacobus Canter Visscher (1692–1735)

‘Force of habit compels us.’

After studying theology, Jacobus Canter Visscher left for the East in 1715. From 1717 to 1723, he worked as a preacher in Cochin, on the Malabar coast in southern India. Half the population of this town consisted of enslaved people. Canter Visscher describes life on the Malabar coast in numerous letters, including writing about the twenty enslaved persons in his own household. He makes disparaging remarks about the system of slavery: ‘Law of habit compels us, to participate in all this [i.e. slavery].’

Mallabaar letters, containing an accurate description of the coast of Mallabaar, Jacobus Canter Visscher, 1743 (published posthumously), Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht (reproduction)

21.

Cornelius van Velzen (1696–1752) ‘in no way compatible with the nature of faithful Christians.’

Groningen professor Cornelius van Velzen was an orthodox Reformed theologian with a keen interest in the practice of the life of faith. In his main work *Institutiones Theologiae Practicae*, he deals extensively with the relationship between master and servant or slave. Citing the biblical book Galatians 3:28, he argues ‘that slavery is in no way compatible with the nature of believing New Testament Christians, under whose dispensation greater civil and religious freedom was brought by Christ.’ Whether Van Velzen is equally critical of enslavement of non-Christian groups is an unanswered question.

Jan Abel (I) Wassenbergh (after design by); Jacob Houbraken (engraver); J. van Nieburg (author); Warnerus Febens (publisher); Cornelis (II) Barlinckhof (publisher), 1746, Museum Catharijneconvent

22.

Jacobus Capitein (1717–1747) ‘No physical, but only spiritual freedom.’

Jacobus Capitein’s life begins and ends on the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana). As a young, enslaved man, he was taken to the Netherlands where he was trained to become the world’s first Protestant pastor of African descent. Full of ideals, he returned to Ghana to take the gospel to the ‘Gentiles’, but he barely succeeded and soon died.

At Leiden University, Capitein defended the thesis that slavery is compatible with Christianity, since the Bible does not speak of ‘Physical freedom ... but only of a Spiritual one.’ In other words, an enslaved person can convert to Christianity without this meaning he has to be released from slavery.

Philip van Dijk (after design by); Pieter Tanjé (engraver), 1742-1747, Museum Catharijneconvent

23.

Engelbertus Matthias Engelberts (1731–1807) ‘Blood and sweat in your cup of coffee.’

Engelbertus Matthias Engelberts was in many ways a preacher ahead of his time. He was an enlightened thinker who was averse to church divisions and took a stand against slavery. In an article in *De Vaderlander* (1775), he shows an early form of consumer activism. He urges readers not to drink coffee any more, after all: ‘The liquid that you have in your coffee cup is [...] no longer water, but tears; I say, it is the blood and sweat of those wretches, in whom lived a whiter soul than in the bodies of their executioners’.

Jacobus Buys (after design by); Reinier Vinkeles (engraver); Jacob Yntema (publisher, Amsterdam); Jacob Tieboel (publisher, Amsterdam), 1784, Museum Catharijneconvent

24.

Johannes van der Kemp (1747–1811) ‘[to be] perfectly free, upon an equal footing in every respect with the Colonists.’

After his wife and daughter die in an accident, Johannes van der Kemp changed his course of life. The ex-military man and doctor founded the Dutch Missionary Society and left as a missionary to South Africa, where he worked among the Xhosa and Khoikoi (‘Moor and Caffer’). Van der Kemp fought against slavery and bought and freed seven enslaved persons – one of whom he married. On the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, he composed a song. His dream for the Khoikoi was for them ‘[to be] perfectly free, upon an equal footing in every respect with the Colonists.’

Text belonging to a portrait of J.T. van der Kemp (1748-1811), 1799, Museum Catharijneconvent

25.

Tula (unknown-1795) ‘Do not all men come from one father Adam, and Eve?’

Tula is the central figure of the Curaçao slave revolt that began on 17 August 1795. Inspired by the credo of freedom, equality and fraternity from the French and Haitian revolutions, Tula went on strike from his work on the Kenepa (Knip) plantation and, together with many other enslaved people, moved in protest towards Willemstad with many. The island had never seen a rebellion of this magnitude before. Father Schinck offered himself as a negotiator and engaged with the freedom fighters. Tula made several arguments. ‘Ah Father, one takes more care of a beast, if a beast breaks a leg, it is healed.’ Schinck also drew a religious argument from Tula’s mouth: ‘Father, do not all men come from one father Adam, and Eve?’ This painting is not based on an existing portrait of Tula. No image of him is known.

Dion Rosina, 2024, Amsterdam

The curse of Ham

Some theologians underpinned their support for slavery with a racist interpretation of the biblical story of Ham. The Bible tells of Noah drinking too much wine one day and then lying naked in his tent. Ham, his youngest son, discovers this and tells his brothers. They show more respect: without looking, they cover their father with a cloak. When Noah hears what Ham has done, he curses Ham's son: 'Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall Canaan be to his brothers.' Although the biblical text says nothing at all about skin colour or ethnicity, the story was later used to explain why black people in particular should serve other peoples as enslaved people. Ham was said to be their ancestor.

26.

'When we pay attention to Ham and his descendants...'

The beginning of this book by Johan Picardt deals with the racial interpretation of the curse of Ham. This is not Picardt's invention: it is in a long tradition that starts with Judaism and enters the Republic via Islam and medieval Christianity. Incidentally, most Dutch theologians of Picardt's time resolutely rejected this specific connection between Ham's curse and African slavery because there is hardly any evidence for it in the Bible - not because they were against slavery. Nevertheless, the racial interpretation of Ham's curse became extremely popular, especially in the colonies in the Americas. For instance, pastor Jan Willem Kals records from the mouths of Surinamese plantation owners that they see Africans as 'those cursed Children of Ham', 'stupid Beasts, who are born to Slavery.'

Korte beschryvinge van eenige vergetene en verborgene antiquiteten der provintien en landen gelegen tusschen de Noord-zee, de Yssel, Emse en Lippe, Johan Picardt, 1660, Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht

27.

'Because their colour and figure is different from ours.'

This beautifully illustrated Bible depicts the story of Ham's curse. While Shem and Japheth do their best to cover their father's nakedness, Ham seems to want to draw attention to it instead. All three sons have the same skin colour. Here no connection is made between Ham's curse and different skin colours or ethnicity - just as most Dutch theologians of this time do not. A 1706 discussion in the journal *Boekzaal der geleerde Werelt* vigorously denies that the curse refers to 'a black skin'. So why this idea that black skin is a sign of the curse? The anonymous author notes that this may only be 'because their colour and figure is different from ours.'

States Bible; Romeyn de Hooghe, 1714, Utrecht, Museum Catharijneconvent. Donation from pastor Kees van Lent

28.

Ham's curse in children's bibles

In 2023, journalist Aaldert van Soest of the *Nederlands Dagblad* investigated the impact of Ham's curse in children's bibles and teaching methods from the 19th century to the present. The continuing impact is extensive. For example, in a recent edition (2015) of this popular children's Bible, one can read: "That curse still rests on the children of Ham. For years they were the slaves of the children of Shem and Japheth. [...] We, the Dutch, are children of Japheth. That we have the Bible and can go to church on Sundays is a result of that blessing." Even in Suriname, the curse continues to this day, for example in the expression: *ay baja, Cham vervloek unu* (Ham curses us).

Children's Bible, Johannes Vreugdenhil, 2015, Museum Catharijneconvent

29.

Sons of Ham, no. 3

The idea that black Africans would be the cursed descendants of Ham is a persistent misconception that is still cited today. In a series of paintings, patricia kaersenhout explores the impact Ham's story can have on people. This painting depicts her brother. He led a lonely life for years and believed he was cursed. kaersenhout contrasts the silent inner world of the invisible individual with the chaos of an outer world he does not feel a part of.

patricia kaersenhout, Sons of Ham, no. 3, 2008, Centrum Beeldende Kunst Zuidoost, Amsterdam

30.

Trial of Tula

Tula paid a high price for his resistance. The leader of the great slave revolt was sentenced to death and brutally executed. He reportedly underwent his execution with a smile on his face; his job was done, the seed had been planted. Already in the same year, new rules were drawn up that contributed to the improved treatment of enslaved persons, such as maximum working hours. Moreover, he had many supporters and followers. To this day, Tula is a figurehead and a source of inspiration for resistance and activism.

Aruban-Surinamese artist and puppet maker Rita Maasdamme (1944-2016) created many dioramas on the history of the Dutch colonies in the Caribbean and Suriname. In this diorama, we see the Kenepa (Knip) plantation and the moment leading up to Tula's execution at Fort Amsterdam.

Rita Maasdamme, 1980-2000, Amsterdam Museum, Maasdamme Family, Amsterdam

Church, merchant, minister

Money and faith, merchant and minister – in the time of the Republic, they went hand in hand. Merchants and pastors of the Dutch Reformed Church set sail together. The pastors received their salaries from the WIC or the VOC and had several enslaved people at their disposal. If they were too critical of the settlers' behaviour, they could be sent away or fired.

The church and slavery became closely intertwined. The urban elite holding important positions in the WIC and VOC often also sat on the church council; vice versa, several pastors had interests in the companies. Clergymen in the colonies supplemented their salaries by trading in enslaved people or starting a plantation. Families getting rich through the slave trade and slavery donated hefty sums of money to the church in the Republic.

Church land

31.

This map of Paramaribo shows 'the church' (a Dutch Reformed church) and a Lutheran church. In 1741, almost a century after the Reformed Church, the colonial government granted the Lutheran Church access to Suriname. Initially, Lutherans themselves are responsible for church finances. For this reason, the congregation started its own plantation, popularly called *Kerkigron* (church land). However, the plantation did not yield enough profit and it was handed over to a creditor, presumably including all the enslaved persons working there.

Reinier and Josua Ottens (publisher), 1758-1767, Luther Collection, Amsterdam

32.

Showing off enslaved persons

In this drawing, everyone is wearing their best clothes. The bare feet betray that some of these Surinamese churchgoers live in slavery. A so-called *futuboi* (personal enslaved person) closely follows his owner. The enslaved persons carry various attributes for the church service, such as a Bible or hymnbook. The drawing shows that ownership of enslaved persons is also a status symbol. In Batavia (Jakarta), 'measures to curb splendour' were even proclaimed in 1754. This put a stop to the ostentation of the Dutch residents, who were accompanied on the streets by increasing numbers of luxuriously dressed enslaved persons. In the church, this behaviour had already been curtailed earlier, as it led to congestion and disruption of the church service.

P.J. Benoit, c. 1830, *Buku Bibliotheca Surinamica*, Amsterdam (reproduction)

33.

The Lutheran church in Batavia

After studying theology in Leiden, Jan Brandes (1743-1808) became a pastor for the Lutheran church in Batavia and visited Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the Cape Colony (South Africa). An avid amateur painter, Brandes captured many scenes from his colonial days. Here we see the interior of the Lutheran church in Batavia with Brandes himself in the pulpit. On the floor between the pews, enslaved persons sit at the feet of their owners. They carry their things, like bibles, with them to church. The painting literally depicts the position of enslaved persons in a Dutch colonial church. In Suriname, black Christians were not allowed to sit among white churchgoers. Their place was at the back or in the gallery of the church. They were also usually baptised on a different day and in a different place, and had a separate cemetery.

Jan Brandes, c. 1785, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

34.

Church chair

This kind of church chair was carried by an enslaved person behind the lady of the house to the church - where for a long time there were no pews or chairs. A church chair reflects a woman's status: the more richly decorated, the greater her wealth. Enslaved persons have no chairs of their own and stand or sit on the floor next to their owners. Their position is marked here with a beam of light. In a way, the missing chair is also symbolic of the position of enslaved persons in historical sources: often their role is not named and they remain invisible.

1850-1930, Wereldmuseum

35.

Philippus Baldaeus and Gerrit Mossopotam

An exceptional painting. Not only do we know the (slave) name of the enslaved person Gerrit Mossopotam, but he is also at the centre. In addition, Reverend Philippus Baldaeus (1632-1672) is depicted wearing South Asian clothing. Baldaeus trained at a special seminary for the mission, the Seminarium Indicum, which existed in Leiden for a short time. He eventually went to work in Sri Lanka and South India, where he learnt Sanskrit, Sinhalese and Tamil. After his return in 1665, Baldeus wrote a book on this region, most likely with the assistance of Mossopotam, who came to the Republic with Baldaeus and lived in his house.

Johan de la Rocquette, 1668, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

36.

Reverend Basseliers' plantation

Johannes Basseliers (1640-1689) was the first official pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church in Suriname. Descended from a Middelburg family of merchants and administrators, he travelled to America in 1668 with Zeeland Admiral Abraham Crijnsen's fleet. Because the WIC did not pay his salary for the first eight years of his tenure, Basseliers decided to start a plantation, Surimombo, in 1671. A tax assessment from 1681-1682 shows that Basseliers then owned 50 people over the age of 12. On this list of buyers from 28 April 1683 we read how 'do.' (dominee) Johannes Basseliers bought six 'pieces' from the ship d'Orange Boom for a total of 18,000 pounds of sugar.

Inventory Rev. Johannes Basseliers, 1683,
Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden

37.

Who was it who painted my heaven?

With his sound installation, Jörgen Gario addresses the multifaceted ways in which structures from the slavery era affect the present. As we look at images of the Dutch Caribbean island of Curaçao, we hear Gario singing about the hankering after cultural visibility and ownership. His song touches on how the built environment not only bears traces of a past, but also how – on closer inspection – these structures still represent history. He also sings about how renaming places and people affect the way we see and experience them today. Can we learn to look at the past and the present in a different way and see that change is needed for the future?

Jörgen Gario, 2024

The East and the West

For a long time, the assumption was that slavery in the East (Asia, South- and East Africa) was of a smaller scale and 'milder' than in the West (the Americas). This is increasingly the subject of debate these days. Enslaved people in Asia often had to do heavy work in shipyards, building forts, or in mining and agriculture. In terms of numbers, Asian slavery very likely even surpassed slavery in the Americas. Whether the role of the church and Christianity in the East was the same or different from that in the West has barely been the subject of research yet. In some respects, however, there seem to be differences. For instance, so-called company slaves in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) received education in Christianity. If enslaved people were baptised, they were no longer allowed to be sold or resold.

38.

Jan Brandes (1743-1808)

Pastor Jan Brandes created portraits and scenes of his domestic life. Several of these also depict enslaved persons. For instance, there is a scene of his living room, where his son Jantje is visible together with an enslaved woman, Flora, and in a painting of Brandes' bedroom we see not only his son but also his presumed playmate Bietja, an enslaved girl. This portrait here is of himself.

Jan Brandes, 1784-1785, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (reproduction)

39.

Basie (Roosje)

This intimate portrait is a drawing of a woman Brandes calls Roosje, but was called Basie when he bought her. Presumably, Roosje shared the bed with her master. Fearing Brandes, who suspected she was having an affair with another enslaved person, Roosje fled his household for several days. On her return, Brandes whipped her, chained her up and sold her soon afterwards. We know all this from Brandes' personal papers.

Jan Brandes, 1779 -1785, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (reproduction)

40.

Still Life of Moor (silhouette)

This silhouette portrait was made by Natasja Kensmil after a self-portrait by Moses Williams (1777- c. 1825). Williams was born into slavery in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, into the household of artist and museum owner Charles Willson Peale. When Williams' parents were released, the law mandated that the then 9-year-old Moses would remain in Peale's service until his 27th birthday. So Williams grew up among Peale's many artistic children. As an enslaved person, he did not learn the 'higher art' of painting, but Peale did teach Williams several other skills. Williams was so good in making silhouette portraits, that he became very successful with it.

Natasja Kensmil, 2022, Amsterdam, andriessse ~eyck gallery, Amsterdam

41.

A VOC chief merchant

This painting depicts a VOC chief merchant, presumably Jakob Martensen, together with his wife. They are dressed in the sober and dark style of the Dutch regents. The view of Batavia (Jakarta) looks Dutch, with the ships bearing the tricolour and church towers in the distance. However, the landscape and vegetation betray that we are many kilometres away from the Republic. In the corner of the painting, an enslaved man is holding a parasol. It shows that slavery and Christianity are not incompatible in the self-image of the Dutch mercantile elite - indeed, the enslaved persons underline the wealth and power of the Dutch couple.

Aelbert Cuyp (vicinity of), c. 1650 - 1655, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

42.

Still Life of Moor (ship)

Natasja Kensmil wants to confront us with the black pages of history. To do so, she uses the visual language of the heyday of Dutch painting. At the centre of the painting is a ship, symbolising the Dutch's drive for expansion in the 17th century. To this historical image of wealth and power, she adds shadows and drawings. With the layering that emerges, she shows that unambiguous views are no longer of our time.

Natasja Kensmil, 2022, Amsterdam, andriessse ~eyck gallery, Amsterdam

43.

Barak Houwink (1736-1824)

The man in the formal preacher's outfit is Barak Houwink. He served as a pastor on the Antillean island of Sint Maarten from 1760 to 1772. In 1774, he returned to his hometown of Oude Pekela, where this painting was made. It is known that Houwink owned enslaved persons on Sint Maarten. Did the boy next to him travel with him to the Netherlands or, like the ship on the left, does he symbolise Houwink's time overseas?

Fridericus Carolus de Hosson, c. 1780, Veenkoloniaal Museum, Veendam

44.

Still Life of Moor (moor)

Before the start of the colonial period, there was already contact with the African continent, and African persons were not uncommon in Western Europe. It was also not unusual for portraits to be taken of them. The people portrayed were then mentioned by name. During the slavery era, black people were increasingly dehumanised. This also removed the status of black people in paintings: they were no longer people, but objects depicted without specific designation as an anonymous status symbol.

Natasja Kensmil, 2022, Amsterdam, andriesse ~eyck gallery, Amsterdam

Wealth for the glory of God

Within the Protestant faith, wealth is a blessing from God. However, it is not meant to be enjoyed only by oneself: wealth should be used to honour God. Protestant Christians earning wealth from overseas trade, plantations and slavery therefore shared their fortunes with church communities in the Netherlands. Among other things, this money was used for charity. In the colonies, it happened that enslaved people were donated to the church as a good deed.

45.

Allegory of Care in the Old Men's and Women's Home

In the Republic, caring for the elderly was not a government task, but a form of charity. Churches played an important role here. In this painting, taken from the Old Men and Women's Home in Amsterdam, we see on the left a row of elderly people trying to enter the home. The woman in the middle (with compass) is *Economia*, symbol of good care, the woman diagonally behind her (with planetarium on her head) is *Hope in Distress*. To be admitted to the home, residents had to belong to the Dutch Reformed Church, have lived in the city for 15 years, and pay ten guilders. Within the churches, the diaconate was (and still is) responsible for works of charity. The diaconate of the city of Groningen is known to have had interests in the WIC through donations; whether the same applies to the Amsterdam diaconate remains to be investigated.

Barend Graat, 1685, Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam

46.

Gavel

In caring for the poor, sick, orphans and elderly, the diaconate has traditionally played an important role. In Protestant Holland, the diaconate was usually organised separately from the church council. This gavel was used during the meetings of the Amsterdam diaconate, to which the Old Men and Women's Home belonged in the 18th century. The hammer is made of ivory, a typical colonial product that can come from either Africa or Asia. Did a settler donate this valuable item to the diaconate?

1752, Museum Catharijneconvent

47.

Slave tax

Money earned in the colonies regularly benefited churches in the Netherlands. But how were churches in the colonies actually funded? Under the WIC and the VOC, Reformed pastors were simply on the payroll of the companies as civil servants. However, the money for their salaries had to come from somewhere. To this end, the colonial government in Essequibo, present-day British Guiana, levied a special tax on the sale of each enslaved person. In this cashbook, we see how one Edward Arthur has to pay the tax sum of 4 guilders, 14 pennies and 8 diamonds - 'for church and the poor' - on the purchase of four enslaved persons.

1778-1791, Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie, Zeeuws Archief, Middelburg

48.

Anna Insinger (1824-1910) and Maria Insinger (1831-1916)

These ladies were descendants of Herman Albrecht Insinger (1757-1805). This banker specialised in plantation loans and estate settlement in Suriname and the Caribbean. As a result, over time, many plantations came into the hands of Insinger & Co. The lobby to prevent the abolition of slavery failed, but the family managed to receive a phenomenal amount of compensation: for the 1,200 enslaved persons the firm owned in Suriname, the family received the sum of 350,000 guilders from the Dutch state. Anna and Maria Insinger, donate 37.000 guilders to the Lutheran Church to build a house for old women in Amsterdam. This house opened in 1894 under the name Anna Maria Foundation.

Ferdinand Behrens, 1901, Luther Museum, Amsterdam, property Insinger Foundation

Conversion without freedom

Is Christianity compatible with slavery or not? Initially, the most common theological view in the Dutch Republic was that no Christian should be a slave. As a result, there were few efforts to organise missions among enslaved people. Slave owners feared that they would have to release enslaved people if they were baptised. By the mid-18th century, the idea that slavery was not contrary to Christian freedom was gaining ground. According to this view, conversion to Christianity would lead to spiritual freedom (freedom from sin), but not physical freedom. This opened the door to more missions among enslaved people, with slave owners no longer having to worry about losing their property. Missionaries were gradually allowed to work more on plantations, provided they focused only on spiritual and not physical liberation.

49.

Synod of Dordrecht

At the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619), a very important church meeting, the question from the East Indies was addressed as to whether 'children of Gentiles' could be baptised. Normally - in the case of white Dutch people - the Reformed church had an open baptismal practice where, in principle, any child could be baptised. This time, however, the assembly ruled otherwise: baptism can only take place after receiving instruction in the 'fundamentals of the Christian religion'. Thereafter, however, the baptised person should 'enjoy the same right of liberty that other Christians have.' Does this explain why religious education was not actively organised in most colonies? After all, baptism could result in enslaved persons having to be set free.

Claes Jansz. (II) Visscher (publisher, Amsterdam), 1639, Museum Catharijneconvent

50.

Jan Willem Kals (1700-1781)

In Suriname, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Lutheran Church put up barriers to the conversion of black people. Reformed pastor Jan Willem Kals was disappointed in the lack of missionary zeal among his fellow Christians in Suriname. He did however advocate the 'conversion of the Gentile'. Based on his encounters with a number of Christian enslaved persons, he concluded 'that those People as well as we, can be made capable, and that they are in many parts better, than our Nominal Christians'. Kals is one of the few Reformed pastors to combine criticism of slavery with his own experience in the colonies. Because of his critical stance, he was soon expelled from Suriname.

Neerlands hooft- en wortelsonde, het verzuym van de bekeringe der heydenen, 1756, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden

51.

Early mission in Suriname

The Moravian Church has a strong focus on mission. Members came to Suriname in the early 18th century to convert the black population. Because they were initially denied access to the plantations, they spread the gospel mainly among free people in the interior: the Maroons and the indigenous inhabitants. The German Moravian Church missionary Theophilus Salomo Schumann (1719-1760) was active in Berbice (a Dutch colony in present-day Guyana). He had a talent for language and developed a good relationship with the indigenous people as a result. So good, in fact, that he was nicknamed the Arawak Apostle - after the Arawak people he worked with.

Fritz Staehelin, Die Mission der Bruedergemeine in Suriname und Berbice im achtzehnten Jahrhundert: Eine Missionsgeschichte hauptsächlich in Briefen und Originalberichten, c. 1913-1916, Buku Bibliotheca Surinamica

52.

Letter to the king

This 1739 letter was written in 'Negro Dutch,' a mixed language spoken in the former Dutch colony of St Thomas. From the now Danish colony, the enslaved persons Pieter, Mingo, Andries, Abraham, Madlena, Rebecca and Anna Maria addressed the Danish king. On behalf of 650 black Christians baptised by missionaries of the Moravian Church, they complained that plantation owners called their baptism 'dog-baptism' and called them 'firewood in hell'. They asked the king for help and also asked him not to send away the Moravian missionaries, as they protected them from the misconduct of the plantation owners. Whether the king did anything with their appeal is not known.

1739, Evangelische Brüder-Unität, Herrnhut, Germany

53.

Mary of St Thomas (c. 1705-1749)

Conversion and baptism can change the lives of enslaved persons. For Mary of St Thomas, this is certainly true. The enslaved Mary, called Magdalena before her conversion, was baptised by Moravian missionaries in 1738. A few years later, the Moravian Church bought her and set her free. Together with the missionaries, she travelled to the United States, where she married. She then left with her husband for Herrnhut in Germany, home of the Moravian congregation. In this painting, she is wearing the distinctive clothing of the Moravian Church. The red bow tie is a sign that she worked in a children's home of the congregation.

Johann Valentin Haidt, 1745-1749, Evangelische Brüder-Unität, Herrnhut, Germany

54.

The Firstlings

Within the Moravian Church, this is an important painting. It depicts the vision that people from all corners of the world belong to the Church of Christ. The first converts of each nation are depicted equally, some wear their original clothes, and we know everyone's name. A telling illustration of the Brethren's ideals. Yet the painting also raises questions. Some people are enslaved persons, recognisable by the slave bracelet or bare feet. The names we know are baptismal names, not the original names. Some people's Moravian clothes are clearly western. Doesn't this show that the new Christians had to abandon their old way of life and culture?

Johann Valentin Haidt, c. 1749. Unitätsarchiv of the Evangelische Brüder-Unität, Herrnhut, Germany

Baptism in the Dutch Republic

Dutch people returning from the colonies regularly took one or more enslaved people with them. Formally, slavery did not exist in the Republic, but enslaved people who came along were usually not truly free. Normally, they remained servants to the families they had been tied to. Many of these people ended up being baptised.

55.

Baptism of Maria Zara Johanna Niabi

This unique print shows the baptism of 24-year-old Maria Zara Johanna Niabi in Delft's Remonstrant church. The baptism book of this church records that Mary is the daughter of Cajo Sainquo Niabi and Massa Oribo, born in Zoogwoin, a day's journey from Elmina (Ghana). Kidnapped from Africa, she was sold at an auction in the Dutch colony of Demerary (now Guyana) to Christoffel Johan Hecke, to work at his coffee plantation Met en Meerzorg. Hecke took her to the Republic, where she was eventually baptised. Her baptismal text is Ephesians 5:8: 'For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.'

24 September 1794, Stadsarchief, Delft

56.

Baptism book of Maria Zara Johanna Niabi

This baptism book states that Maria's former owner refused to have her baptised in his own reformed church. Remonstrant minister Abraham van der Meersch saw no problem, 'finding in her a religious and honest mind, too noble to live any longer in an unchristian state of slavery'. He baptised her with, among others, his wife Sara Turfkloot as witness. In the baptism book, Rev. Van der Meersch notes with a sneer at his fellow Christians: 'Ah may her unfortunate peers enjoy freedom with her, and Christians be less barbarians!' Presumably, Maria worked for Sara Turfkloot for the rest of her life. She inherited from her several valuable objects, such as a silver needle case.

1674-1809, Stadsarchief, Delft

57.

Baptism book with entry of baptism of Duren

After the critical preacher Jan Willem Kals was pressured out of Suriname by the colonial government, he returned to the Republic with his 'own Boy' Duren, very likely an enslaved person. Kals presumably named him after his birthplace in Germany; we do not know his original name. Unable to care for Duren, the preacher handed him over to Prince Van Holstein Beek, at that time governor in Den Bosch. On 5 January 1742, the boy was baptised there in the Grote Kerk, and given the name Kristiaen Steinholt. In the *Maendelyke Uittreksels, of de Boekzaal der geleerde Waerelt*, it is recorded that 'among a great throng of people' a 'Black person from Angolen, in the service of his Highness the Prince of Holstein' was baptised.

1742, Erfgoed 's-Hertogenbosch

58.

Susanna Dumion

Susanna Dumion was born into slavery in Paramaribo in 1713. At 35, the widow of her (presumed) owner, Susanna Taunay-Lespinasse, took her to Amsterdam. Her baptism took place more than 10 years later, on 28 April 1759. Although officially free, she is referred to in Lespinasse's 1766 will as 'her slave or maid'. Only on Lespinasse's death in 1778 would Dumion receive her freedom and a small allowance. Susanna Dumion died in 1818, aged 105. She is buried in the Grote Kerk in Haarlem.

Jacob Ernst Marcus, c. 1813-1818, Teylers Museum, Haarlem

59.

Naï (1797/1798-1869)

Naï was born into slavery in Leeot, on the island of Flores in Indonesia. After being resold several times, Jan Hendrik Bagelaar bought him in Surabaya in 1808. He took Naï back to the Netherlands. He went to live in Delft, learned Dutch and was baptised in Delft's Nieuwe Kerk on 27 December 1818. He was then given the name Wange Hendrik Richard van Bali. He married, went to work first as a porter and then at 's Lands Kledingmagazijn. Later in life, he wrote down his childhood memories, preserving a unique insight into his life.

Ernst Bagelaar, 1798-1837, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

60.

Joost, Laloupe, Anna, Leonora and Duren

Especially for this exhibition, Kenneth Aidoo made portraits of people we know from archives but of whom we have no image. Aidoo gives these people a face. At the same time, he draws attention to the lack of black people in visual art and history books.

60.

Joost, Laloupe and Anna

In 1770, governor-general of Suriname Wigbold Crommelin (1712-1789) returned to Breda with his family after 21 years in the West. He took three enslaved servants with him. The boy Laloupe and the double-blooded girl Anna are his legal property. However, Joost is a so-called 'society slave': formally owned by the colonial administration the Society of Suriname. Crommelin probably wants to give Joost a better life. In the Republic, slavery does not exist, in the sense that enslaved persons are released there after six months to a maximum of a year plus one day. However, the society board threatens Crommelin with a penalty of 1,200 guilders if he does not return their property to Suriname within the maximum deadline. The boy travelled to Amsterdam several times to plead for his freedom at WIC headquarters, but the Society remained implacable. In February 1771, Joost was forced to return to Suriname for a life in slavery. Anna and Laloupe fared better, gaining their freedom and being baptised in Breda's Grote Kerk on 22 February 1772. Very likely, they remained employed by Crommelin as 'house servants'.

Kenneth Aidoo, 2024

61.

Leonora

In 1732, the enslaved woman Leonora managed to hide aboard a Middelburgse Commercie Compagnie (MCC) ship bound from Curaçao for Middelburg. A full day after departure, Leonora showed herself to the crew. She explained that she hid on board to regain her freedom, because she was treated badly by her 'mistress'. Zierikzee skipper Jan Bijl decided to take her with him. Despite requests from Curaçao to send Leonora back, the MCC refused. Leonora had found a good job and would also soon become a member of the local Reformed Church, the MCC directors argued. Thus, Leonora succeeded in her bold plan to gain freedom.

Kenneth Aidoo, 2024

62.

Duren, christened Kristiaen Steinholt

See text at object number 57.

Kenneth Aidoo, 2024

When religious traditions meet

Torn from their environment, network, culture and religion, enslaved people created new religious customs, mixing influences from their country of origin with influences from the new environment. For example, Brua and Montamentu arose in Curaçao and Winti in Suriname. In the East, people were Muslim or Hindu or had other religious traditions. Non-Christian religions were tolerated by the coloniser, partly also because of a lack of interest in the spiritual salvation of the enslaved.

Only when it became clear in the nineteenth century that slavery and the slave trade were no longer sustainable was a missionary offensive launched. Whereas conversion had previously been incidental, colonial rulers now became convinced that it was desirable for enslaved people to become Christians. The new Christians brought their cultural and religious backgrounds into the Christian faith. From this, new, local forms of Christianity emerged. Sometimes elements from different traditions were combined – either secretly or openly. The missionaries actively combated these forms of 'idolatry'.

63.**Funeral of priest Joannes Vitus Janssen in Paramaribo**

The funeral of Roman Catholic cleric Joannes Vitus Janssen (1803-1843) brought people together from different backgrounds and classes in Suriname. Thus, Janssen's coffin is carried by a dozen white-clad black men. The spectators include enslaved persons in military service to the Dutch, called 'Colonial Guides' or 'Redi-moesoes'. We also see the original inhabitants of Suriname and enslaved persons, recognisable by their bare feet. The parade also features Father Peerke Donders (1809-1887) walking along.

1843-1845, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

64.**Afro-Surinamese funeral customs**

The blending or influence of different religious traditions is visible in funerals and mourning rituals. This photo series shows a contemporary Moravian funeral. This Afro-Surinamese funeral is a combination of Moravian elements and Winti. Features include the Moravian white mourning clothes combined with pangis, traditional shawls. The ablution and songs such as the (p)soko psalms are clear Afro-Surinamese customs. There is also 'dancing' with the coffin, to ensure the spirit of the deceased of a prosperous journey to the afterlife.

Femke Dix, 2016, Amsterdam

65.**Dutch government provisions to released enslaved persons**

Enslaved persons were sometimes released, for instance because their owner was well-disposed to them, or if they had served in military service for a number of years. Release (or manumission) was subject to strict rules, though. Here, Christianity was used as a way to mould and discipline enslaved persons. For instance, these government regulations from 1761 in Suriname state at number IV that manumitted (freed enslaved persons) must be 'educated' Christians. From 1832, they must also join a church. Provision IX states that if they do attend 'dances' (presumably a reference to gatherings in the context of the Winti religion), they can be enslaved again. Earlier curbs on dance parties of enslaved persons preceded this rule, and later ones go even further: from 1874, the Winti religion as a whole was banned. This ban lasted until 1971.

4 February 1761, Wereldmuseum (reproduction)

66.**Fight against 'idolatry'**

The kankantrie (kapok tree) is a sacred tree in the Winti religion. This forest giant can grow over 70 metres tall, towering far above the rest of the tropical jungle. According to French traveller P.J. Benoit, the nightly dance honouring the watra-mama (water goddess) typically takes place under a kankantrie. Not surprisingly, the tree was seen by missionaries as a symbol of 'idolatry'. This children's book by pastor Jan de Liefde shows how a leriman (missionary) cuts down a kankantrie as the final piece of the successful conversion of the local enslaved population.

Uit drie landen, Jan de Liefde, 1900. KB, nationale bibliotheek, The Hague (reproduction)

67.

Johannes King (1838-1898)

What does hell look like? Johannes King, from the Matawai Maroon community, described it with a clear image. He described hell as a row of metal cauldrons in which people are boiled alive. This image, taken directly from the sugar mills where enslaved persons were put to work, must have made a deep impression on King's audience. They knew these infamous places, if not from their own experience, then from the stories of others.

Inspired by visions, King was baptised on his own initiative by the Moravian Church. King developed into the first Surinamese pastor and missionary, with a special calling for the Maroon communities. Maroons are independent communities in the interior of Suriname made up of descendants of escaped enslaved persons. King knew how to translate the Bible to the context of his audience in a language that people understand.

Buku Bibliotheca Surinamica, Amsterdam (reproduction)

68.

Petrus Kafiar (1864/1873-1926)

In 1860, slavery was officially abolished in the Dutch East Indies. Nevertheless, slavery persisted in the area for a long time, including in New Guinea. Petrus Kafiar was enslaved there as a child after his father's death, and later sold to a Christian couple. The couple let him go to the seminary in Depok. Kafiar returned to his native region as a missionary and became very successful among his own people. The missionary Van der Roest puts words in Kafiar's mouth: 'Dreadful it is to be captured, to be a slave. [...] to hear the word slave every time, that was for me, a freeborn, the greatest misery. God has turned these things for the better.'

Van slaaf tot evangelist: 'Petrus Kafiar', Universiteitsbibliotheek Utrecht (reproduction)

The road to abolition

Partly due to the efforts of Christian abolitionists, the British Empire abolished the slave trade in 1807 and slavery in 1833. Following this, a modest debate unfolded in the Netherlands, in which women's voices were also heard. The voice against slavery and commitment to improving the welfare of enslaved people was often accompanied by a patronizing attitude: the abolition of slavery could only be a success if enslaved people became 'civilised' and 'elevated' and learned 'Christian obedience'. This focus on education and training was also what opponents used to delay actual abolition. The Netherlands was one of the last countries in Europe to abolish slavery. Slavery legally ended in the East in 1860 and in the West in 1863. In Suriname, abolition was followed by another 10-year period of state control, with many enslaved people having to continue working for their former owners. In Sint Maarten, slavery effectively stopped in 1848, when it was abolished in the French part of the island.

Care and education

In the run-up to the abolition of slavery, several initiatives were being taken to manage the process. In Surinam, churches – especially the Evangelical Moravian Church and the Roman Catholic Church – founded schools from 1850 to improve the position of enslaved people. The colonial government actively participated in these developments. Self-interest certainly played a role in this: after all, through education, the colonial government could regulate and control the development of the enslaved and how they were educated. Literacy and conversion to Christianity went hand in hand. Compulsory education was introduced in Surinam in 1876 – significantly earlier than in the Netherlands (1901). Apart from schools, churches built hospitals, orphanages and homes for the elderly, among other things. In this way, the church cared for the lives of its members from cradle to grave.

69.

Peerke Donders (1809-1887)

Tilburg's Petrus 'Peerke' Donders left for Suriname in 1842. There, he made a special commitment to the lepers in the leper colony of Batavia. He also made several mission trips to indigenous people in the interior. On the subject of slavery, he wrote in a letter that he hoped that the good Lord would 'mitigate the fate of the unfortunate and so long oppressed slaves and grant them that freedom that will enable them to be able to know and serve their Creator truthfully'. Donders was beatified in 1982.

Albinus Windhausen, 1922, Museum Catharijneconvent

70.

Martinus Niewindt (1796-1860)

Amsterdam-based Martinus Niewindt was Curaçao's first apostolic vicar - head of a catholic mission area. On his arrival in 1824, there was only one church building on the island for the black, Catholic population. Under his leadership, new churches were built, as were schools, an orphanage and a hospital. To build a church, Niewindt bought a plantation, including enslaved persons: thus, the bishop himself became a slave owner. Niewindt was also a major contributor to the development of the language most widely used on the island, Papiamentu, by translating religious literature. The *Catecismo Corticu* is the oldest surviving printed publication in Papiamentu and has been part of UNESCO's Memory of the World register since 2009.

Johann Peter Berghaus (lithographer), 1844, Museum Catharijneconvent

71.

The Moravian Church at the Leliëndaal plantation

It is an idyllic scene. But appearances can be deceiving: the picturesque village with a church in the centre is actually a plantation where enslaved persons worked. The church was built by the Moravian Church, which gained access to plantations in Suriname in the 1830s. As a mission-minded congregation, the Moravian Church welcomed the opportunity to convert enslaved persons. Many became members of the Brethren. Later, churches like the Moravian Church have been criticised for advocating obedience to colonial authority and fighting the original religious traditions of the enslaved persons.

Jacob Marius Adriaan Martini van Geffen, c. 1850-1860, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

72.

Toe - tron feifitentin na toe. Tori vo da Santa Bybel

Among Moravian church members, much value is placed on reading the Bible. Their education is also focused on this, and the Moravian Church was committed early on to Bible translations in local languages in Suriname. This illustrated booklet from 1852 with 52 narrations from the Bible was translated by a Moravian Church missionary. It has deliberately been kept cheap. Partly as a result of this, the entire print run of 1,000 copies sold out within a year. The book was used in the mission among the creole population and will have been used for study and for reading out loud.

Toe - tron feifitentin na toe: Tori vo da Santa Bybel-Boekoe: vo gebruike dem na hoso en na skolo, 1852, Buku Bibliotheca Surinamica, Amsterdam (reproduction)

73.**Otto Tank (1800-1864)**

The Norwegian Nils Otto Tank left for Suriname in 1842 to lead the Moravian Church's mission to convert the black (slave) population. Tank increasingly realised how bad conditions were for enslaved persons in Suriname and could and would not stay silent any longer. During his leave in the Netherlands, he wrote a circular letter calling for much better treatment of enslaved persons: 'you will find that the more education and Christian civilisation the Negro slaves have received, the better they behave; yea, the whole condition of Lords and slaves becomes so much happier'. The response to this from plantation owners was furious. The Moravian Church would subsequently disassociate from Tank and a return to Suriname became impossible.

Reverend Nils Otto Tank, Wisconsin Historical Society collection, Madison, Wisconsin (reproduction)

74.**Peepina Devil Maroon**

From the 17th century, the religion of the non-Christian inhabitants of Suriname was referred to as 'pagan' and 'devilish'. This triptych shows an image of a Maroon village head (mayor) with horns. The pattern in the background refers to a pangi, a shawl worn by Maroons and Afro-Surinamese people. Pangis are person-specific and have a variety of meanings. They are worn on special occasions such as weddings, birthdays or funerals. Here, Remy Jungerman is drawing attention to the position of the Maroons in Surinamese society and the negative image of non-Christian religions.

Remy Jungerman, Peepina Devil Maroon, 2011

75.

Congo Blues

Enslaved black Africans shipped to the Caribbean became alienated from their culture there. Active efforts of both the government and the church contributed to this for centuries. This abstracted body symbolises the bodies of people taken from Africa and mutilated and dehumanised in the West. The image is neatly finished at the front, like a shiny facade, while the back shows the rough, dark material. The gaps and unevenness symbolise centuries of oppression and its continuing impact in the present. With the cross in the head and the nailed feet, the artist depicts how the conversion of enslaved people to Christianity involved coercion and oppression.

Nelson Carrilho, Congo Blues, 2020, Luther collection, Amsterdam

Christian abolitionism

In the Netherlands too, more and more people spoke out against slavery in the nineteenth century. Abolitionists regularly argued that slavery was unchristian. As far as is known, the synod of the Dutch Reformed Church did not speak out against slavery until May 1858, a few years before the abolition. In a letter to King William III, the church called slavery a 'mark of shame', which 'is in open conflict with the spirit of Christianity' and 'from which it must purge itself the sooner the better.' Although many Christians devoted their efforts to the abolition of slavery, this letter from the synod came rather late.

76.

Elizabeth Fry (1780-1845)

English abolitionist and philanthropist

Elizabeth Fry travelled to the Netherlands in 1840 to stir up the slavery debate - which had lagged far behind the British one. Probably inspired by her, 128 Rotterdam ladies sent a letter to King William II calling for an end to slavery. One of the Dutch women Fry met was Anna Amalia Bergendahl (1827-1899). Bergendahl founded the 'Ladies Committee for the Promotion of Gospel Proclamation and the Abolition of Slavery in Suriname' in 1856. To her 'sisters in Holland' she wrote: 'Help to free sisters, now slave women in Suriname, from dishonouring slave bonds'.

Charles Robert Leslie, c. 1823, National Portrait Gallery, London (reproduction)

77.

Cup and saucer with an anti-slavery image

Following the lead of the British, Dutch abolitionists raised money for enslaved persons by selling crockery. Josiah Wedgwood's design and the production of this cup and saucer are both entirely English. On the saucer, below the image of a black woman and child in a tropical setting, one can read the text 'If no one sees you, God sees you.' This message is presumably intended not only as an exhortation to white Dutch people (God sees the fact that they allow slavery to continue), but also as comfort to the black enslaved persons in their miserable situation: the Christian coloniser may not care about them, but God sees them.

Etruria Works, c. 1853-1863, Buku Bibliotheca Surinamica, Amsterdam

78.**Marten Douwes Teenstra (1795-1864)**

The 'hail biezunder Grunneger' (very special Groninger) Marten Douwes Teenstra came from a wealthy and enlightened Baptist farming family. He saw the cruel sides of slavery with his own eyes during his time as a supervisor of bridges and roads in Java and in Suriname. Upon returning to the Netherlands, he wrote this book on the importance of abolishing slavery and the role of Christianity. Among other things, he said: 'As long as Christians keep their fellow human beings in slavery and continue to treat them so barbarously, their preaching of Christianity cannot exert any influence on the oppressed Blacks.' On these pages, we see the portraits of Codjo, Mentor and Present. These enslaved men were seen as responsible for the great city fire in Paramaribo of 1832. As punishment, they were burned alive - according to Teenstra, a good example of the cruelty of the slavery system in Suriname. Codjo, Mentor and Present are remembered today as resistance fighters.

Marten Douwes Teenstra, *De Neger-slaven in de Kolonie Suriname en de uitbreiding van het Christendom onder de Heidensche Bevolking*, 1842, private collection

79.**Nicolaas Beets (1814-1903)**

Nicolaas Beets, reverend and later professor of church history in Utrecht, is best known as the author of the book *Camera Obscura* (1839). However, he was also one of the leaders of the Réveil, a revival movement within the Protestant church, which was the driver of Christian abolitionism in the Netherlands. Beets created poems from the perspective of enslaved persons: 'O Netherland's mighty and brave! / Break our yoke / Bring, bring your poor Negro slaves / finally, finally out of pressure. / We may be blacks / But do have hearts'. Beets' most famous work against slavery is the speech 'Liberation of the Slaves' (1856), in which he advocated for the abolition of slavery as 'justly desired by Humanity; demanded by Civilisation; [and] commanded by the Spirit of Christianity'.

Elisabeth Adriani-Hovy, 1898, Museum Catharijneconvent

80.**Volter Robert van Hoëvell (1812-1879)**

Baron Volter Robert van Hoëvell studied theology in Groningen and left for the Dutch East Indies in 1836 to work as a preacher. He regularly spoke out against abuses, and partly for this reason he was expelled from the colony in 1848. In the Netherlands, he became a member of the House of Representatives, where he advocated for the abolition of slavery in both East and West. His novel *Eene slaven-vendutie* (1853) shows the degrading aspects of the slavery system in the East, but it is mainly his book *Slaven en vrijen onder de Nederlandse wet* (1854) that made an impression in the Netherlands. Based on eyewitness accounts and reports - Van Hoëvell would never set foot in Suriname himself - he described Suriname's slave society as 'the most agonising rape of justice, the blackest scorn of godliness, the most public violation of all allegiance.' One year after Van Hoëvell left the House of Representatives, slavery in the West was officially abolished.

Carel Christiaan Antony Last, 1855, Museum Catharijneconvent

81.**Petronella Moens (1762-1843)**

Petronella Moens was virtually blind, but that did not prevent her from playing an important role as an author, poet, abolitionist and political activist. For example, she started her own political magazine, *De Vriendin van 't Vaderland*, in which she emerged as a parliamentary journalist avant la lettre. She showed herself to be an early advocate of the abolition of slavery, for example in her poem 'On the abolition of the slave trade by the French Nation' (1798): 'The free French Nation, / Breaks the slaves' chains; / She calls oppressed Negroes, / Her freeborn brothers' Moens was the daughter of a pastor and worked extensively with pastor Bernardus Bosch. Inspired by Christianity and the French Revolution, she described a utopian plantation society in her novel *Aardenburg, of de Onbekende volksplanting in Zuid-Amerika* (1817).

Margaretha Cornelia Boellaard, 1836, Centraal Museum, Utrecht

82.

Commemorative medal

This commemorative medal was struck in 1963 to commemorate the abolition of slavery in Suriname 100 years earlier. One side of the coin features the much-used image of two hands with broken chains, while the other side features the Bible text that was central to the festive church service celebrating abolition on 1 July 1863. During this service, held at the Moravian Church's Grote Stadskerk in Paramaribo, the sermon was on John 8:36: 'If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.' It would take another 10 years in 1863 until the Surinamese enslaved persons would actually gain their legal freedom. Slavery also persisted in the East for decades after its official abolition in 1860. Descendants of enslaved persons would still face a long struggle for the equal treatment which Tula advocated as early as 1795.

1963, private collection

AND NOW?

This exhibition aims to tell the less known story of Christianity and slavery. Knowledge of the past is essential for acknowledging it and can hopefully contribute to a process of coming to terms with that past and reconciliation in the future. The exhibition is not neutral, the story is not complete and things are not yet over.

Many questions do not have clear-cut answers. How could this have happened? How could people reconcile their faith with the exploitation of other people? Where did people find the strength and courage to keep looking for ways to improve their future or that of their loved ones? Through films and written media, you will discover that some steps have already been taken – steps that are necessary to achieve healing.

What choices would you have made yourself if you had lived in those times? And can religion and the church play a role in recovery today? We are curious about your voice in the conversation about the history of slavery and its impact.

83.

Contemporary conflicts

The Surinamese artist Ruben Cabenda is a devout Christian by birth, but became interested in the Afro-Surinamese religion of Winti while studying in the Netherlands. Winti is based on religious traditions brought over from Africa by enslaved people. Church communities disapprove of Winti to this day. As a result, many Afro-Surinamese people face a choice between the cross and the gourd, an important object for Winti rituals. In this video, Cabenda explores the roots of this conflict and relates it to the slavery past and the role of the church.

Ruben Cabenda, 2024

84.

Ketikoti celebration 2022 at Wi Eegi Kerki

The Moravian Church in the Netherlands is a mixed church. Germans, Afro-Surinamese, Dutch and also descendants of Asian contract workers are members. Every year on 1 July, the Moravian Church holds a Ketikoti celebration, such as here at the Wi Eegi Kerki in Amsterdam Southeast. In 2023, the theme was equality. To what extent are black and white Dutch people treated equally? The fight against inequality remains a work in progress. The internal divisions of the black community are named as areas of concern, as are also the permeation of racism and oppression by misplaced feelings of white superiority. The pastors encourage church members to engage and stay engaged with each other. To what extent does this call speak to all of us?

Bram Petraeus, Museum Catharijneconvent

Council of Churches remembrance service

Back in 2013 - nine years before the Dutch government – the Dutch Council of Churches apologised for the history of slavery. Ten years later, those present confessed guilt again, and sought new ways for a shared future through words, song and dance. This service was held at the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam on the eve of the celebration of the abolition of transatlantic slavery, on 30 June 2023. The theme of the service was: 'Shared past - shared future. Churches together towards a wholesome processing of a history of slavery.' This memorial service was an initiative of a broad network group with representatives of churches, the foundation Heilzame verwerking slavernijverleden and Samen Kerk in Nederland (SKIN).

Fragments from the church service: *Shared past, shared future*, 2 juli 2023, NPO 2, produced by EO. With thanks to EO and Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, copyright EO

About the exhibition design

The global trade network has a history steeped in cultural racism and slavery. The unequal balance of power between North and South is a product of our colonial past. Valuable tropical forests are cut down to produce our timber. Waste (mainly e-waste, cotton, paper and plastic) that we produce in Europe is often illegally dumped in Africa and Asia. The design of this exhibition was inspired by the relationship between slavery and contemporary waste distribution. Blocks of wood chips, paper boards and boxes of spray pulp illustrate the degrading process from tree to waste. In form, the design refers to the pallets and crates used in the global trading system. The result shows, on the one hand, the potential of waste material. On the other hand, it exposes the post-colonial, unequal and, above all, harmful nature of our contemporary trading system.

Namelok, 2024



About the graphic design

The wallpapers in the exhibition are inspired by historical portraits of white men on display.

They are distorted and extremely enlarged. Hence, in the halls, they symbolically represent the prevailing influence of the white man in historical writing. These historical colour schemes embrace the spaces while subtly creating a dialogue with the different themes in which oppression and resistance alternate.

Serana Angelista, 2024



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