

# Theses on the Study of Religion in the Netherlands

**These theses reflect the position of the University of Groningen. They are intended as a fruitful contribution to the current discussion about the future of the field of religious studies and theology in the Netherlands.**

1. The academic study of religion, or religious studies (*Religionswissenschaft, religiewetenschap/religiestudies*), is an interdisciplinary field of research with a disciplinary history that reaches back into the nineteenth century.
2. Critical and independent research into religion as a category and into religions as social and historical phenomena needs to be carried out in powerful research units that have a visible institutional place at state universities.
3. Ideological trench warfare between religious studies and theology has been detrimental to the pursuit of multidisciplinary research into religion(s) on a high level of reflection and expertise.
4. Independent historical and systematic research that is carried out in the field of theology should be regarded as academic scholarship and thus as part of the academic study of religion. Those aspects of theological research and education that are directly linked to, and are dependent on, confessional presumptions, or that are mainly devoted to the education of professional religious practitioners, should be offered at universities and seminaries with a clear confessional vision. Theological universities and public universities can collaborate fruitfully as independent units, without giving up their respective identities.
5. It is advisable that the few remaining large research units for the study of religion in the Netherlands (particularly Groningen as the only state university with an independent Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies; to a lesser degree also Radboud University Nijmegen, VU University Amsterdam, and the University of Humanistic Studies Utrecht) find a way of collaboration that is a strong contribution to the sustainability of the field in the Netherlands. This includes a close collaboration with the theological institutions (particularly the Protestant Theological University [PThU], but also the Theological University of the Reformed Churches [TUK] and the Theological University Apeldoorn [TUA]), in a way that confessional universities and seminaries form a network of smaller partners in which their independence is assured.

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