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Published in:
Church History and Religious Culture

DOI:
[10.1163/18712428-bja10002](https://doi.org/10.1163/18712428-bja10002)

Published: 01/01/2020

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Moehn, W. H. T., & Veerman, P. (2020). Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: earliest Dutch sermons on Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 127. *Church History and Religious Culture*, 100(1), 43-59. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18712428-bja10002>

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CHURCH HISTORY AND
RELIGIOUS CULTURE 100 (2020) 43–59

Church History
and
Religious Culture
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Lead Us Not into Temptation, but Deliver Us from Evil

Earliest Dutch Sermons on Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 127

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Abstract

This article investigates the three earliest sermons in the Dutch language (1588–1676) on Q&A 127 of the *Heidelberg Catechism* (HC). It provides insight into the early reception of a catechism from which generations of believers in the Netherlands received instruction. The authors analyze how and to what extent these sermons incorporate the text, theology, and spirituality of the Palatinate textbook for believers who (only) speak the vernacular. They note that this is done in an independent and creative way. Contrary to the HC, the selected sermons thoroughly explore the concept of temptation. The intended audience clearly influences the sermons. Theological distance from the HC arises at some important points. Now and then the influence of changing times is visible.

Keywords

Heidelberg Catechism – Dutch sermons – Lord's Prayer – reception history – sixth petition

1 Introduction

The Lord's Prayer, together with the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments, is one of the basic texts in traditional Christian teaching. From the time of the early church through the Middle Ages, the prayer that Jesus Christ taught belonged to the catechetical curriculum of the church.¹ In the time of the Reformation, catechetical training with the Lord's Prayer received a new impulse. The catechisms of Luther and Calvin and the *Heidelberg Catechism* (HC; 1563) all devoted considerable attention to the explanation of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

Question and Answer (Q&A) 127 of the HC gives an explanation of the sixth petition, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."² It also offers a prayer for weak believers in times of temptation.³ A number of theological and spiritual features of HC prayer instruction are clearly present in this short explanation.⁴ Through sermons, generations of Reformed Christians in the Netherlands came into contact with this catechism question and answer.⁵ Today, catechetical training based on classical basic texts has a difficult time in the context of the mainstream Dutch protestant churches.⁶ Nevertheless, we

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- 1 See for the Early Church: Karlfried Froehlich, "The Lord's Prayer in Patristic Literature," in *A History of Prayer: The First to the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Roy Hammerling (Leiden, 2008), 59–77. For the Middle Ages: Paul W. Robinson, "Sermons on the Lord's Prayer and the Rogation Days in the Later Middle Ages," in *ibid.*, 441–462.
 - 2 According to the Reformed division of the Lord's Prayer this is the sixth petition. They follow in this the Oriental church. Roman Catholics and Lutherans divide this petition in a sixth and seventh one.
 - 3 Q&A 127 "What does the sixth petition mean? A. 'And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one' means: By ourselves we are too weak to hold our own even for a moment. And our sworn enemies—the devil, the world, and our own flesh—never stop attacking us. And so, Lord, uphold us and make us strong with the strength of your Holy Spirit, so that we may not go down to defeat in this spiritual struggle, but may firmly resist our enemies until we finally win the complete victory." CRC–RCA–PC(USA) Translation of the *Heidelberg Catechism* (2011), <https://www.crcna.org/welcome/beliefs/confessions/heidelberg-catechism>.
 - 4 Pieter Veerman, *Bidden leren. Vergelijkend onderzoek naar het eigen karakter van het gebeds-onderwijs in de Heidelbergse Catechismus* (Zoetermeer, 2016). For Q&A 127 in particular 85–89.
 - 5 See W.J. op 't Hof, "De Heidelbergse Catechismus in prediking en catechese," in *Het troostboek van de kerk. Over de Heidelbergse Catechismus*, ed. W. van 't Spijker et al. (Houten, 2005) and W.J. op 't Hof, "De prediking van de Heidelbergse Catechismus," in *Handboek Heidelbergse Catechismus*, ed. Arnold Huijgen et al. (Utrecht, 2013), 97–108.
 - 6 Cf. Maarten Wisse, *De Bijbel in het midden. Het geloofsgesprek te midden van verschillen* (Utrecht, 2019), 20–22.

also see initiatives to give catechetical training boost. An example of this is the recent edition of the Common Catechism.⁷

In the light of the tradition, in which the text of the Lord's Prayer is used to teach the congregation, we analyze in this article the three earliest catechism sermons in the Dutch language on Q&A 127.⁸ These sermons were published between 1588 and 1676.⁹ We will discuss successively the Dutch translation (published 1590) of Balthasar Copius's *Vier und fünfftzig Predigten*, the Dutch translation (published 1616) of Philip Lansbergen's *Catechesis religionis christianae*, and the collection of sermons from Peter Van der Hagen (1676). The last work appeared originally in Dutch. All authors present their sermons as an explanation of the HC. We examine how Q&A 127 is explained to believers in the Netherlands in the earliest catechism sermons. We ask ourselves to what extent they incorporate the text, theology, and spirituality of the Palatinate catechism. How do they respond to changing times? We describe this early part of the HC's reception history in the Netherlands by means of a textual comparison.¹⁰ Until the eighteenth century, when many printed sermon collections on the HC appeared, the three sermons we are exploring were unique. We have only these at our disposal. Since oral preaching sources are not available to us, this is the material from which we can study early catechetical preaching.

First, we summarize some of the most important findings of previous scholarship on catechetical sermons. Haemig and Kolb concluded that sermons on Luther's Small Catechism were provided to strengthen church members in the foundations of faith.¹¹ Preachers integrated Luther's teaching into their own

7 Theo Pleizier et al., *Gewone Catechismus. Christelijk geloof in 100 vragen en antwoorden* (Utrecht, 2019).

8 Catechetical training through the spoken word was important in the churches of the Reformation. See Alex Fogleman, "Iconoclasts of the Imagination? Image and Memory in Sixteenth-Century English Catechesis," *Church History and Religious Culture* 99 (2019), 1–20, there 20.

9 Only three printed books with sermons on the HC are known from this period. Comments that are closely related to these sermons, such as Jeremias Bastingius, *Verclaringe op den catechisme* (Amsterdam: Cornelis Claesz, 1591) and Cornelis Corstens *Uutlegghinge* (Leiden: Henrick Haestens, 1598), we do not take into consideration in this article.

10 In this article we methodically align ourselves with recent research by Bierma that is leading in the field of research. He compares contemporary writings with the HC to gain insight into theological sources. We use this method when researching HC's reception history. Cf. Lyle D. Bierma, *The Theology of the Heidelberg Catechism. A Reformation Synthesis* (Louisville, 2013).

11 Mary Jane Haemig and Robert Kolb, "Preaching in Lutheran Pulpits in The Age of Confessionalization," in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture, 1550–1675*, ed. Robert Kolb (Leiden, 2008), 130.

situations.¹² After some time, catechetical instruction was expanded with new topics. The sermons became more complex. This was an indication that basic knowledge was now being assumed.¹³ Haemig and Kolb underlined that sermons in the Lutheran tradition were not only meant to convey knowledge. The general purpose of these sermons was to preach the gospel.¹⁴

Little research has been done on the reception of the HC in sermons. This applies in particular to the section on prayer. However, this scholarship has yielded a number of findings. Baars offered a homiletic examination of catechetical sermons.¹⁵ Van Deursen focused on the content of sermons. He concluded in his research on catechism preaching on the Ten Commandments that these sermons show a clear picture of the times.¹⁶ The sermons deal with current situations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Op 't Hof concluded also that later preachers kept the content of the sixteenth-century textbook up to date.¹⁷ De Wildt observed in sixteenth-century commentaries and sermons on HC 53 that “content seems to differ less than method.”¹⁸ He suspected that authors strongly influenced one another, probably even using the same sources. In his description of the reception history of HC 1, Verboom came to the conclusion that there have been two lines of interpretation in the explanations of this Lord's Day.¹⁹ According to the first line, the catechism expresses the faith of the community. The second line assumes that the answers in the HC are given by an assured Christian.²⁰ Verboom's research underscores that major theological shifts can take place in sermons related to the same source text. Finally, Beeke emphasized the experiential nature of HC 127. He concluded that experiential preaching can easily be connected with the HC.²¹

12 Gerhard Bode, “Instruction Of The Christian Faith By Lutherans After Luther,” in *Lutheran Ecclesiastical Culture*, ed. Kolb (see above n. 11), 161.

13 *Ibid.*, 189 and 191.

14 Haemig and Kolb, “Preaching in Lutheran Pulpits” (see above, n. 11), 130.

15 Cf. A. Baars, *De eenvoudige Heidelberger ...! Een korte geschiedenis van de catechismuspreek in Nederland* [Apeldoornse Studies 59] (Apeldoorn, 2012).

16 A.Th. van Deursen, *Rust niet voordat gy ze van buiten kunt. De Tien Geboden in de 17e eeuw* (Kampen, 2004).

17 W.J. op 't Hof, “De prediking van de Heidelbergse catechismus” (see above, n. 5), 108.

18 Kees de Wildt, “Interpreting the Heidelberg Catechism in the Sixteenth Century,” in *The Spirituality of the Heidelberg Catechism Papers of the International Conference on the Heidelberg Catechism Held in Apeldoorn 2013*, ed. Arnold Huijgen [Refo500 Academic Studies (R5AS) 24] (Göttingen, 2015), 80.

19 W. Verboom, *Kostbaar en breekbbaar. Zondag 1 in catechismuspreken door de eeuwen heen* (Zoetermeer, 2015).

20 *Ibid.*, 247–248.

21 Joel R. Beeke, “Holding Firmly to the Heidelberg: The Validity and Relevance of Catechism Preaching,” in *A Faith Worth Teaching, The Heidelberg Catechism's Enduring Heritage*, ed. John D. Payne and Sebastian Heck (Grand Rapids, 2013), 58–59.

In the following section we describe briefly eight theological and spiritual features of HC 127 and then demonstrate how the sermons process these eight features.

2 *Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 127*

The first thing we note with regard to the text, theology, and spirituality of the HC is that each section of the Lord's Prayer is in the form of a prayer.²² This form makes clear that this instruction is not just about theoretical knowledge. A prayer is placed on the lips of the congregation. The second point we note is the reference to human weakness. A main theme from the whole HC is brought forward in this. The infirmity of humanity is linked in HC 127 to the power of the Holy Spirit. The explicit attention to pneumatology is the third feature of HC 127. The fourth characteristic is closely related to this. Prayer and a daily life according to God's commandments belong together in the spirituality of the HC. In the Heidelberg textbook there is a strong connection between the section on the law and prayer instruction.²³

The fifth feature that stands out in HC 127 is the reference to three deadly enemies: the devil, the world, and one's own flesh. The catechism ensures believers of the final victory. This eschatological orientation is the sixth focus of HC 127. The terms "finally" and "complete" are strongly eschatological. The seventh feature that we mention is not specific to HC 127, but applies to virtually the entire instruction of the HC. Bible texts consistently accompany the explanation. Finally, the consistent use of the plural is significant. The spiritual battle is waged by "Christians" who need prayer. Before we analyze the content of the sermons and compare them with the text, theology, and spirituality of HC 127, we will present a brief introduction of the authors and translators of the sermons.

3 **The Authors and Translators of the Sermons**

The oldest collection of catechism sermons in the Dutch language has its roots in the Palatinate. In 1585 Balthasar Copius (?–1595), a minister in Neustadt, published his *Vier und funfftzig Predigten*.²⁴ They were translated into Dutch by

²² See also Q&A 122, 123, 124, 125, 126 and 128.

²³ See Bierma, *Theology of the Heidelberg Catechism* (see above, n. 10), 109–110.

²⁴ Balthasar Copius, *Vier und funfftzig Predigten* (Neustadt: Mattheus Harnisch, 1585). For

Johannes Gerobulus under the title *Vier ende vijftich predicatien, over den christelijcken ende in Gods woort ghegronden catechismum* [Fifty-four Sermons on the Christian Catechism Based on God's Word] in 1590.²⁵ Two years earlier, in 1588, another version was published by an author with the initials G.N.M.²⁶ But Gerobulus was not satisfied with the quality of that work.²⁷ Using the former translation he produced a new version. Given that the translation of Gerobulus was reprinted several times, the collection of sermons can be seen as influential in this early stage of Reformed instruction in the Netherlands.²⁸ In the 53rd sermon, Copius explains the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer. The primary focus of the sermon is on a simple explanation of the petition. The first part "Lead us not into temptation" makes up most of the sermon.

The second collection of catechism sermons came from Philip Lansbergen, minister in Goes. He is better known as an astrologer than as a theologian.²⁹ Lansbergen was born in Ghent in 1561 and died in Middelburg in 1632. Besides his works on physics he published in 1594 a complete series of catechism sermons in Latin.³⁰ In this language they were particularly useful for colleagues in the preparation of catechism sermons. The sermons were translated into Dutch in 1616 by Johannes Gys, minister in Streefkerk. The title of this work is

more of Copius and his sermons, see Wim Verboom, "Een proeve van vroege catechismusprediking," in *Godsvrucht in geschiedenis*, ed. E.A. de Boer et al. (Heerenveen, 2015), 323–337.

- 25 Balthasar Copius, *Vier ende vijftich predicatien, over den christelijcken ende in Gods woort ghegronden catechismum*, trans. Johannes Gerobulus (Amsterdam: Laurens Jacobsz, 1590). See for Gerobulus P.H.A.M. Abels, "Gerobulus (Oudraerd), Johannes," in *Biografisch lexicon voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse protestantisme*, ed. D. Nauta et al., 6 vols. (Kampen, 1978–2006), 5: 199–202.
- 26 See front page http://repository.uvu.vu.nl/digitalcollection/stcn/STCN_056757409_01.jpg [accessed 26 June 2019].
- 27 Gerobulus says in the preface: "Not translated so well." That is the reason we use the text of 1590 for this article. This text is reprinted several times.
- 28 See W.J. op 't Hof, "De Heidelbergse Catechismus in prediking en catechese" (see above, n. 5), 223.
- 29 For more on Lansbergen, see Steven M. Roode, "Lansbergen, Philip," in *Biographical Encyclopedia of Astronomers* (New York, 2014), 1278–1279, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-9917-7_824 (consulted 25 May 2018). He was the first Dutch preacher who was convinced of a moving earth and sun-centered system. As a follower and early defender of Nicolaus Copernicus, he wrote different books on astronomy. For more on this topic and titles of his physics books, see Rienk Vermij, "Waarom werd Philips Lansbergen Copernicaan?," in *Scientiarum Historia* 24 (1998), 39–64, <http://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/293651> (consulted 6 July 2018).
- 30 Philip van Lansbergen, *Catechesis religionis christianae, quae in Belgij & Palatinatus ecclesijs docetur, sermonibus lii. explicata* (Middelburg: Richard Schilders, 1594).

Den Catechismus ofte Onderwijsinge inde Christelijke Religie [The Catechism or Instruction in the Christian Religion].³¹ This translation clearly satisfied a need, and was reprinted twice in 1627 and 1645.³² The Latin version became popular in Germany, and was reprinted in the Palatinate in 1595 and subsequently in 1620 and 1621. When Lansbergen was deposed in 1613 as a minister in Goes, this was not because of his Copernican ideas.³³ His strong Calvinistic views on the relationship between church and government brought him into conflict with the magistrates.³⁴

The first collection of catechism sermons originally published in Dutch was from Petrus van der Hagen (1641–1671). His *De Heydelbergsche Catechismus* became very popular.³⁵ The author was a pastor in Leidschendam, Leiden, and finally Amsterdam. He died at the age of only thirty years. His sermons on the HC were published some years after his death in 1676. The title of this book of sermons is *De Heydelbergsche catechismus, verklaert in twee-en-vyftigh predicatien, met vier inleydings predicatien* [The Heidelberg Catechism, Explained in Fifty-two Sermons, with Four Introductory Sermons].³⁶ They were reprinted five times in the last half of the seventeenth century. The many reprints show their popularity. The appearance in the vernacular language made the work accessible to a wider audience. Another probable explanation for the broad appeal of his sermons is the mild Cocceian approach. Van der Hagen combined this approach with a Voetian ethic. Both Voetians and Cocceians, two major factions in the Dutch Reformed Church of those days, could recognize themselves in the way the substance was treated. In the next two sections we describe how the three sermons processed the content of the HC in an independent and creative way.

31 Philip van Lansbergen, *Den Catechismus, ofte Onderwijsinghe inde christelijke religie, dewelcke soo inde Nederlandsche als Paltzsche kercken ghepredickt ende gheleert wort: In LII. predicatien weer grondich uytgheleyt ende verklaert*, trans. Johannem Gys (Amsterdam: Cornelis Lodewijckz van der Plas, 1616).

32 Willem Heijting compiled a list of 27 protestant bestsellers in the Dutch Republic around the middle of the seventeenth century. He sets the lower limit on ten printings for a best-seller. The number of reprints of the sermons studied by us is far behind this level. See W. Heijting, "Protestantse bestsellers in de Republiek rond het midden van de zeventiende eeuw," *De zeventiende eeuw* 13 (1997), 283–292.

33 Cf. Vermij, "Philips Lansbergen" (see above, n. 29), 40.

34 *Ibid.*, 41.

35 Petrus Van der Hagen, *De Heydelbergsche Catechismus, verklaert in twee-en-vyftig predikatiën, met vier Inleidings Predikatiën* (Amsterdam: Johannes van Someren, 1676). For the popularity of this work cf. W.J. op 't Hof, "Petrus van der Hagen," in *Encyclopedie Nadere Reformatie*, ed. W.J. op 't Hof et al., 2 vols. (Utrecht, 2015–2016), 1: 315.

36 Compare for the edition of 1678 <https://books.google.nl> (27 June 2019). For this article we use this edition.

4 Three Sermons for a Dissimilar Audience

Although the three sermons all present themselves as explanations of the HC, they differ in their degree of connectedness with the catechism. The opening pages of the sermons immediately reveal how the explanation relates to the text of HC 127. We first look at Copius's sermon. There we notice a discrepancy between the title page and the opening of the sermon. The title page of Copius's fifty-four sermons suggests that the HC is closely followed. This front sheet tells us that the book contains sermons on the catechism used in the Netherlands and the Palatinate. A closer look at the sermon on HC 127, however, gives a different picture. Below the title of Copius's 53rd sermon and the text of the petition follows a full quotation of James 1,13. In this verse the apostle speaks about temptation. The text of the HC is not at all mentioned in the opening of the sermon. This dedication is decisive for the rest of the sermon. The link with the text of the HC appears to be quite loose. Copius affords himself the freedom of independent choices. He addresses various issues that HC 127 omits. For example, he explains why he considers the two parts of the sixth petition as a unity.³⁷ He also extensively discusses the concept of temptation. Certainly one tenth of the sermon is devoted to the explanation of the concept of evil or the devil.

The above makes clear that Copius's explanation is a general catechetical sermon on the sixth petition. With the sermon, Copius gives the congregation an explanation of a part of the Lord's Prayer. This explanation is intended for ordinary church members. In a short word to the readers, prior to the sermons, they are told that they should not be bothered by a Latin word here and there.

In the 52nd sermon of Lansbergen the difference with Copius is immediately visible. Lansbergen starts with a complete quotation of HC 127. After a short introduction the first part of the sermon closely follows the text of the catechism. About the catechism he says:

The sixth and final petition explains the catechism as follows: (...) that is because we are so weak of ourselves. In it, he proposes two things to us, namely, the necessity of this petition and its intention.³⁸

The sermon is clearly recognizable as an explanation of Q&A 127. The difference between both sermons can be explained from the origins and purpose.

37 Copius, *Vier ende vijftich predicatien* (see above, n. 25), fol. 310r.

38 Lansbergen, *Den Catechismus* (see above, n. 31), fol. 441v.

The sermon by Copius is a translation from another vernacular, namely German. From the beginning, this sermon is aimed at a wider audience. The original version of the sermon by Lansbergen was written in the scholarly language of Latin. So this sermon was especially suitable for the Latin-trained pastors who needed an explanation of the text to make their own sermons. This goal required a closer connection with the text of the HC.

In the third sermon we again notice the influence of the intended audience. Van der Hagen's sermon opens with a Bible text from Matthew 6. This is a quotation from the sixth petition with the doxology. Starting with scripture is customary for Van der Hagen. Bible texts are also explicitly mentioned as the topic at the beginning of the previous sermons. Van der Hagen offers in his sermon much more than a simple explanation of the sixth petition and the text of the HC. The opening words of the sermon are pastoral in tone. The preacher shows that he is familiar with the spiritual struggle of believers. Van der Hagen is not only concerned with the transfer of knowledge. The involvement of the heart is important for him as well.³⁹ As already mentioned, Beeke emphasized the experiential nature of HC 127. The influence of this HC experiential spirituality can be seen in the sermon by Van der Hagen. Human weakness remains a recurring theme in the sermon.⁴⁰ The sermon focuses mostly on the inward spiritual battle of believers. Apart from the examples from the Bible texts, little attention is paid to matters that occur outside the heart.

The audience that Van der Hagen has in mind is clearly different from that of Lansbergen. The sermons seek to connect more with the spiritual questions of ordinary believers. The extensive attention to spiritual application is a peculiarity of this sermon. We also note that Van der Hagen speaks critically about the church. He sees the evil one clearly working in the church. We observe that the three sermons process the text of the HC in an independent manner. Major differences between them have to do with a different audience.

5 Lack of Focus on Current Events

The difference in intended audience is not really reflected in a strong commitment to the time in which the sermons were given. We observe in Copius and Lansbergen little explicit attention to the everyday life of believers and current events. Specific points, such as time-bound sins or actual questions for believ-

39 Van der Hagen, *De Heydelbergsche Catechismus* (see above, n. 35), 556.

40 Ibid., 553.

ers are missing. In Lansbergen the intended audience of pastors, who must be able to give a faithful explanation of the HC, takes priority over direct questions from the contemporary context.

Although Van der Hagen mainly focuses on the inner struggle, yet there are a few direct references to the context of the late seventeenth century. The first thing we observe is his horror at church schism.⁴¹ His attention to the explanation of the word “our” from the text of the Lord’s Prayer is related to this. With this word Van der Hagen emphasizes that we pray for the whole church.⁴² We noted earlier that Van der Hagen occupies a theological position in between the Voetian and Coccaian movements in the church of his time. In this sermon he also reveals himself as a peace-loving pastor. He uses the text of the Lord’s Prayer to emphasize the theme of unity. Van der Hagen complains about people who deny the existence of demons, which is also related to the time in which he lives. This theme became prominent in the second half of the seventeenth century due to the debate about the existence of devils.⁴³ We observe here that the debates of the time had some influence on the catechism sermons. The debate about devils is not present in the sermons of Copius and Lansbergen. The presence of devils was not a contentious issue for the authors of the HC as well.

Apart from what was mentioned above, the three sermons on the sixth petition deal little with concrete current themes. The applications to the practice of faith have a fairly timeless character. With regard to the sermons on HC 127 we come to a different conclusion than Van Deursen in his research on the catechism preaching on the Ten Commandments. The sermons that he investigated show a clear picture of the times.⁴⁴

This lack of focus on current events is not evident in other explanations of the Lord’s Prayer. We think of Luther’s explanation of the Lord’s Prayer at the time of the Peasant War (1525) in Germany.⁴⁵ This sermon contains clear references to the events of his day. The same also applies to a contemporary sermon by the seventeenth century Remonstrant preacher Kaspar Brandt.⁴⁶ He preached in the last half of the seventeenth century about the sixth peti-

41 Ibid., 556.

42 Ibid., 555.

43 Ibid., 557. Cf. Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), 6.

44 Cf. Van Deursen, *Rust niet* (see above, n. 16), 9.

45 See Georg Nicolaus, *Die pragmatische Theologie des Vaterunsers und ihre Rekonstruktion durch Martin Luther* (Leipzig, 2005), 167–170.

46 Kaspar Brandt, *Het Onze Vader: of Uitbreiding over 't volmaakste gebed onses Heeren, uitgesproken in tien predikaten* (Amsterdam: Pieter Visser, 1705).

tion. The theological and social background of this sermon is immediately clear from the opening paragraph where several times he uses the word “freedom.” Brandt argues that freedom is a great thing that people should be careful with.⁴⁷ His remarks clearly have to do with the disadvantaged position of the Remonstrants since the Synod of Dordrecht 1618/1619. He refers in the sermon also to the persecution of the Huguenots in France and the flow of exiles. The difference with the catechism sermons is evident. The three early Dutch catechism sermons do not reveal such a clear connection with current events in their time.

6 Temptation Exhaustively Elaborated

An agreement between the three sermons is the thorough elaboration on the concept of temptation. They distinguish two types of temptations, namely, those of God and those of the devil. HC 127 does not make this distinction. We see in HC catechetical sermons the same movement as Haemig and Kolb. They observe for the Lutheran tradition that the catechetical instruction is expanded. We already mentioned temptation with regard to Copius's sermon. He underlines that the goal of the divine trial is positive.

When God tempts us, he does it so that we get to know ourselves well. He investigates whether there is a true belief in his omnipotence and mercy in our hearts. And when we have that, it becomes known and public in the eyes of other people. This is an example for them.⁴⁸

According to Copius the sixth petition is not directed at this form of testing. The last petition of the Lord's Prayer is involved with the attacks of the evil one. The devil does not want to test believers in a good way. He has a completely different purpose. He wants to plunge people into misery. Later in the sermon, Copius raises a third form of request. People must be careful not to tempt God by running after sin.⁴⁹

In his sermon Lansbergen also distinguishes between good and bad temptations. The good reveal the weaknesses of a believer. The bad ones come from Satan. We notice the same distinction in the sermon by Van der Hagen. According to him, in the first place it is the Lord who tests believers. The purpose of this testing is positive. God tests his children to reveal who they are. With the use of

⁴⁷ Ibid., 149.

⁴⁸ Copius, *Vier ende vijftich predicatien* (see above, n. 25), fol. 311r.

⁴⁹ Ibid., fol. 313v.

a biblical image Van der Hage says: “So God left Hezekiah, when the envoys of Babylon came, to know all the things of his heart (2 Chron. 32:31).”⁵⁰ The other kind of temptation provokes sin and comes from the devil. About the devil he says:

He goes around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Petr. 5:8). He lurks in the church like a deceitful fox. He is full of cunning diversions. He comes to us with prosperity and adversity, and with all kinds of cunning and violence. He wastes no time doing this. He passes by no opportunity to lead us to sin and destruction.⁵¹

The similarities between the three sermons confirm De Wildt’s observation. He suspected that they influenced one another.⁵² We ascertain that there is also influence from a broader contemporary context. The three early Dutch catechism sermons are not alone in their exhaustive elaboration of the concept of temptation. The theme also receives much attention in contemporary sermons on the sixth petition, such as the sermons by the Reformed preacher Guilielmus Bucanus.⁵³ Bucanus also makes a distinction between temptations from God and from the devil. The main focus of the petition is on temptations that come from the devil.⁵⁴ The devil uses them to destroy and damn.

The contemporary Roman Catholic preacher John de Groot also devotes ample attention to the distinction between temptations that show someone’s virtue and evil temptations.⁵⁵ De Groot’s Roman Catholic background is expressed in the use of the term “bekoring” (test, charm in a negative way) instead of temptation.⁵⁶ The word test involves bad temptations.⁵⁷ It is the devil

50 Van der Hagen, *De Heydelbergsche Catechismus* (see above, n. 35), 551.

51 *Ibid.*, 552.

52 Cf. De Wildt, “Interpreting the Heidelberg Catechism” (see above, n. 18).

53 In 1605 the Dutch translation of Bucanus’s sermons on the Lord’s prayer was printed in Leiden. The original French edition was printed in Geneva a year earlier. Guilielmus Bucanus, *XXIII. predicatien over het ghebedt des Heeren* (Leiden: Andries Clouck, 1605). See for Bucanus: Irene Dingel, “Bucanus, Wilhelm,” in *Religion Past and Present*. Consulted online on 14 March 2019 http://dx.doi.org.vu-nl.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/1877-5888_rpp_SIM_02462, first published online: 2011. See also Sung-Jai Cho, *Trinitarische theologie bij Guilielmus Bucanus († 1603)* (Ph.D. diss., Theologische Universiteit Apeldoorn, 2013).

54 Bucanus, *XXIII. predicatien* (see above, n. 53), 262.

55 Jan de Groot, *Zeven sermoenen over de zeven vraagen van het gebed des Heere* (Antwerpen: for Nicolaas Braau in Haarlem, 1690).

56 *Ibid.*, 101–102.

57 *Ibid.*, 95.

who leads in the test. The way in which these two sermons deal with the concept of temptation corresponds to the sermons associated with the HC.

7 Reception of Theological Concepts

The extensive attention to the concept of temptation does not alter the fact that there is theological and spiritual connection with the HC in the sermons on other points. Especially Van der Hagen gives the human weakness a clear place in his sermon. He hereby closely follows the premise of HC 127. The first lines of the sermon speak about the theological place of the sixth petition within the threefold structure (misery, deliverance, and gratitude) of the HC. A believer must stand firm after receiving salvation from misery. Van der Hagen says about the believer, “He must ensure that he does not fall into the old pool of disaster again.”⁵⁸ The sermon emphasizes that sin lurks in the believers. There is a permanent weakness in a believer’s life. They run the risk of collapsing again. Within the well-known triad, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, human flesh in his opinion leads to “the heaviest struggle.”⁵⁹

Lansbergen, as already mentioned, closely follows the text of the HC. He tells that the sixth petition is necessary because of “our weakness.”⁶⁰ This he underlines with words from 1 Cor. 10,12: “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”⁶¹ When Copius explains why this request is necessary, he starts by mentioning the devil who goes around like a roaring lion. The image of spiritual struggle used by the HC is not really elaborated on in Copius’s sermon.

All three sermons bring up the three deadly enemies. Several times Copius mentions the three hostile elements, the world, the flesh, and the devil.⁶² Most attention goes to the devil, who uses the flesh and the world.⁶³ Using various biblical texts as illustrations, Lansbergen describes the power of Satan.⁶⁴ Believers do not have a battle against flesh and blood. No human force can overcome the devil. He goes around like a roaring lion, and he is equipped with very strong weapons. In close connection with the devil Lansbergen discusses the opposition of the world and our own flesh.⁶⁵ The latter according to him is

58 Van der Hagen, *De Heydelbergsche Catechismus* (see above, n. 35), 550.

59 Ibid., 552.

60 Lansbergen, *Den Catechismvs* (see above, n. 31), fol. 441v.

61 Ibid., fols. 441v–442.

62 Copius, *Vier ende vijftich predicatien* (see above, n. 25), fols. 310v, 311v, 312v.

63 Ibid., fol. 312v.

64 These references are Eph. 6,12; Gen. 3,1; 1 Pet. 5,8; John 8,44; 2 Cor. 11,14.

65 Lansbergen, *Den Catechismvs* (see above, n. 31), fol. 443r.

bound to the devil. The triad, the devil, the world, and own flesh plays a prominent role in the sermon. The outcome of the struggle is certain. The final victory will come anyway. The promise that the God of peace will crush the devil under the Christian's feet is certain. We clearly recognize the theological topics of the catechism when Lansbergen speaks about spiritual struggles, the three deadly enemies, and the perspective of victory. Van der Hagen also gives a place in the sermon to the triad.⁶⁶

The sermons from the tradition of the HC are not unique by naming the three deadly enemies. Late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sermons from different traditions such as the aforementioned Roman Catholic, Remonstrant, and Reformed, deal with these enemies.⁶⁷ We conclude from this that the three enemies belong to the ideas of preachers in different traditions.

The three enemies are in sharp contrast with the Spirit. HC 127 clearly points to the power of the Holy Spirit in favor of believers in the spiritual battle. This attention to pneumatology is not visible in all of the three early catechism sermons. In the sermon by Copius the strong pneumatological dimension is completely absent. Only once does he mention the Holy Spirit. This is when he talks about lying against the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸ In the sermon by Van der Hagen the third Person of the Trinity also has a fairly limited role. He points to the work of the Spirit only once.⁶⁹ With Verboom we conclude that in some parts HC sermons strongly deviate from the theology of the HC.⁷⁰ Van Lansbergen's pneumatology is more in line with the HC. At the beginning of the sermon he explains that the sixth petition is a prayer for support from God the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit.⁷¹ He also mentions the power of the Spirit in other places in the sermon.⁷² The Holy Spirit is necessary so that believers do not perish in the spiritual battle. Believers are not alone in their praying to the Father for the support of the Spirit. Christ also prays that the Father will keep the faithful. On this point, the sermon takes a Trinitarian approach. Lansbergen shows that the believers cannot stand without the help of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Based on the three sermons we can conclude that two of the three sermons are reserved in speaking about the Holy Spirit.

66 Van der Hagen, *De Heydelbergsche Catechismus* (see above, n. 35), 556.

67 Guilielmus Bucanus, *XXIII. predicatien* (see above, n. 53), 248–249, 266 and 273; Brandt, *Het Onze Vader* (see above, n. 46), 153; De Groot, *Zeven sermoenen* (see above, n. 55), 100.

68 Copius, *Vier ende vijftich predicatien* (see above, n. 25), fol. 31v.

69 Van der Hagen, *De Heydelbergsche Catechismus* (see above, n. 35), 555.

70 Cf. n. 19.

71 Lansbergen, *Den Catechismus* (see above, n. 31), fol. 441v.

72 *Ibid.*, fol. 443v–445v.

The absence of the work of the Holy Spirit is striking when we compare the three sermons with the contemporary sermon of the Reformed preacher Bucanus on the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer. In this sermon we find robust attention to the work of the Holy Spirit. He explicitly speaks several times about the action of God's Spirit in favor of believers. This Spirit ensures that believers are softened, bent, and formed unto obedience.⁷³ God rules people through the Spirit so that they love good and hate evil.⁷⁴ The complete victory over Satan, the world, and the flesh is given to them by the power of the Spirit.⁷⁵

Finally the HC points out the prospect of final victory. Believers pray with the promise of triumph. The sober but clear eschatology of the HC is heard in the sermon by Lansbergen.⁷⁶ He speaks of the promise of victory whereby the devil will be trampled under the feet of the believers.⁷⁷ Copius and Van der Hagen omit the prospect of future victory in their explanation of HC 127.

8 Conclusions

We asked ourselves at the beginning to what extent the three earliest Dutch catechism sermons (1588–1676) incorporate the text, spirituality, and theology of HC 127. Through the analysis of the sermons we have gained a clear insight into this part of the early reception history of the HC. We made the observation that the text and theology of HC 127 are not closely followed in all the sermons. They are only more or less connected to the HC. The audience in mind determines to a large extent the use of the HC. The sermon by Lansbergen is textually and theologically the most closely connected to HC 127. We conclude that this has to do with the intended readers of the original Latin sermon. They were pastors in need of an explanation of the catechism. Lansbergen faithfully follows the text of the HC in his sermon.

Copius and Lansbergen focus primarily on catechetical knowledge. In the late sixteenth century and in the first half of the seventeenth century material was needed that increased catechetical knowledge in the Reformed sense. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century there was more opportunity to pay

73 Guilhelmus Bucanus, *xxiii. predication* (see above, n. 53), 249.

74 *Ibid.*, 263.

75 *Ibid.*, 263–264.

76 The weakly elaborated eschatology is seen sometimes as a disadvantage of the catechism. Yet prayer instruction is eschatological in orientation. See Arnold Huijgen, "Practicing Gratitude. The Spirituality of Prayer in the Heidelberg Catechism," in *The Spirituality* (see above, n. 18), 218–222.

77 Lansbergen, *Den Catechismvs* (see above, n. 31), fol. 446r.

attention to the experiential nature of HC 127 and application to the spiritual life of believers. We see this movement clearly in the sermon by Van der Hagen.

In all the sermons we notice an extensive explanation of the concept of temptation. On the one hand, the temptation by God for the purpose of testing believers is addressed. On the other hand, there are the evil temptations by the devil. In the HC there is no distinction between different types of temptation. Here we notice a striking difference with the HC. The prayer instruction of the catechism often ignores the interpretation of concepts. This distinction can be explained by the difference in genre between a catechism and a sermon. But there are also catechisms that pay more attention to the elaboration of concepts. A more plausible explanation can be found in contemporary sermons on the sixth petition. They also work out the concept of temptation thoroughly. The preachers of the catechism sermons are in line with this. Their own context takes precedence over the HC. The somewhat more explanatory style makes the sermons less focused than HC 127 on the act of praying. The printed HC sermons do contain an incentive to pray, but they do not put prayers on the lips of the congregation.

We find the triple enemy, the devil, the world, and our own flesh in all of the sermons. A comparison with contemporary sermons makes clear that the catechism commentators do not need direct HC inspiration for this. The connection between these three and the explanation of the sixth petition is made in various confessional traditions.

We observed that most of the sins mentioned in the sermons, such as quarrelling and drunkenness, have a timeless character. The sermons on the sixth petition are not so connected to their environment and actual themes. Van der Hagen casually discusses the denial of the existence of demons and church divisions. In their timeless character the sermons correspond with the HC.

With regard to pneumatology, we observed a remarkable distance between two sermons and the HC. Only Lansbergen pays serious attention to pneumatology. The contemporary sermon by Bucanus contains a clear focus on the work and the person of the Holy Spirit. On the basis of the sermons studied, we find that attention on the independent work of the Holy Spirit in favor of believers is a characteristic that is found both in the HC and in a sermon from the Geneva Reformed tradition. We find traces of this tradition in the sermon by Lansbergen, which follows the HC closely. The work of the Holy Spirit in favor of believers is not explicitly reflected by Copius and Van der Hagen in their sermons on HC 127.

With regard to the eschatological expectation there is also a distance between the catechism sermons and the HC. In line with what was observed above, we see that only Lansbergen pays attention to this theme in his sermon. In

both Copius's and Van der Hagen's sermons there is no explicit eschatological expectation. The latter underscores that the authors of the early Dutch catechism sermons make independent choices. The sermons are primarily related to the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer. In this respect, they are texts that are an exponent of the long Catholic tradition in which the congregation receives instruction from the prayer that Jesus taught to his disciples.

The above conclusions are based on the analysis of three sermons on the sixth petition. With this we have taken a step that provides insight into the rich reception history of the HC in the Netherlands. In that way we have also highlighted a facet of the long Christian tradition in which knowledge of faith is transmitted through catechetical texts such as the Lord's Prayer. Further research is needed to get a complete picture of the reception history of the HC in sermons. This research should then focus on other parts of the HC and the traces of this catechism in sermons.