

What is the base of religious leadership and how has it changed over the centuries? This volume presents a range of actors, both men and women, who, in a variety of historical contexts, claimed to be the living voices or intermediaries of God. The essays analyse the foundation of their authoritative claims and ask how and how far they succeeded in securing obedience from the Christians to whom they addressed their message. Religious authority is not understood as a monolithic entity but as something derived from many sources and claims. Whatever the national background, whether ordained or supposedly appointed through divine intervention, the histories of the people portrayed underline the long-term manifestations and multifaceted nature of Christian identity.

Jan Wim Buisman (1954), Leiden University, is Lecturer of the History of Christianity at Leiden University. Moreover, he is Editor-in-Chief of the academic journal *Church History and Religious Culture*. He has published widely on the relations between Enlightenment and Christianity.

Marjet Derks (1958), Radboud University Nijmegen, is Assistant Professor of Cultural History. She has published on religious women, conversion movements, and gender in the religious sixties, including 'Changing Lanes: Dutch Women Witnessing the Second Vatican Council,' *Trajecta* 22 (2013), 81-102.

Peter Raedts (1948), Radboud University Nijmegen, is Emeritus Professor of Medieval History. His last publications are *The Discovery of the Middle Ages. History of a Delusion* (2011) and *The Invention of the Roman Catholic Church* (2013), both in Dutch.