# Contents


**1 Introduction** **10**
- 1.1 The infrared absorption of water . . . 11
- 1.2 Vibrational pump–probe spectroscopy . . . 13
  - 1.2.1 Absolute magnitude of the pump–probe signals . . . 16
- 1.3 Outline of this thesis . . . 16

**2 Experimental details** **18**
- 2.1 Three-wave mixing as an infrared source . . . 18
  - 2.1.1 Parametric generation and amplification . . . 19
- 2.2 Pulse generation for pump–probe experiments . . . 20
  - 2.2.1 Titanium-sapphire amplifier . . . 20
  - 2.2.2 Topas: a BBO-based OPG/OPA device . . . 20
  - 2.2.3 Pulse generation ($\sim$3 $\mu$m) for one-color experiments . . . 20
  - 2.2.4 Pulse generation ($\sim$3 $\mu$m) for two-color experiments . . . 21
  - 2.2.5 Pulse generation at $\sim$4 $\mu$m . . . 22
- 2.3 Sample . . . 22
- 2.4 Pump–probe setup . . . 23
  - 2.4.1 Two-color setup . . . 24
  - 2.4.2 One-color polarization-resolved setup . . . 25
- 2.5 Pulse characterisation . . . 26
- 2.6 Refinements of the pump–probe signal description . . . 27
- 2.7 Noise suppression . . . 30
  - 2.7.1 Uncorrelated noise . . . 30
  - 2.7.2 Time-correlated noise . . . 32
- 2.8 Thermal effects in the sample . . . 33

**3 Generation of mid-infrared pulses by $\chi^{(3)}$ difference frequency generation in $CaF_2$ and $BaF_2$** **36**
- 3.1 Introduction . . . 36
- 3.2 Experiment . . . 37
- 3.3 Results . . . 38
- 3.4 Conclusions . . . 40

**4 Vibrational relaxation in HDO: $D_2O$** **41**
- 4.1 Introduction . . . 41
- 4.2 Experiment . . . 41
- 4.3 Results . . . 42
- 4.4 Intermediate-state model . . . 43

4.5 Discussion . . . 47
4.6 Conclusions . . . 49

**5 Isotope effects on vibrational relaxation and hydrogen-bond dynamics in water 50**
5.1 Introduction . . . 50
5.2 Experiment . . . 51
5.3 Results . . . 51
5.4 The Brownian-oscillator model . . . 53
5.5 Thermalization and fits . . . 55
5.6 Discussion . . . 56
5.7 Conclusions . . . 58

**6 Dynamics of water molecules in an alkaline environment 59**
6.1 Introduction . . . 59
6.2 Experiment . . . 61
6.3 Results . . . 62
6.3.1 Transient spectra . . . 62
6.3.2 The OH band as a distribution of Brownian oscillators . . . 63
6.3.3 Dynamics at small delays . . . 65
6.3.4 Fit details . . . 67
6.4 Discussion . . . 68
6.5 Conclusions . . . 71

**7 Orientational relaxation of HDO: $D_2O$ as an activated process 73**
7.1 Introduction . . . 73
7.2 Experiment . . . 75
7.3 Results . . . 75
7.4 Activated reorientation and spectral diffusion . . . 76
7.4.1 Model . . . 76
7.4.2 Discussion of the model . . . 79
7.4.3 Comparison with other studies . . . 81
7.5 Conclusions . . . 82
7.6 Appendix: mathematical details . . . 82
7.6.1 Rotational diffusion . . . 82
7.6.2 Spectral diffusion . . . 83
7.6.3 Anisotropy decay at large delays . . . 84
7.6.4 Numerical implementation . . . 85

**8 Spectral diffusion and mechanism for autodissociation 86**
8.1 Introduction . . . 86
8.2 Experiment . . . 87
8.3 The equilibrated transient spectrum . . . 87
8.3.1 Quantum-mechanical Lippincott-Schroeder model . . . 88
8.3.2 Calculation of transient spectra . . . 91
8.4 The dynamics of the transient spectra . . . 93
8.4.1 Spectral diffusion . . . 93

8.4.2 Inertial dynamics . . . . . 95
8.5 Autodissociation of water . . . . . 97
8.5.1 Transition state . . . . . 98
8.5.2 Mechanism . . . . . 100
8.6 Conclusions . . . . . 100

**Appendix: The $cm^{-1}$ unit** **102**

**Bibliography** **103**

**Summary** **113**

**Samenvatting** **115**

**Nawoord** **119**

**Curriculum Vitae** **121**

**Index** **122**

**Colophon** **125**