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Rediscovering Van Raalte's Church History: Historical Consciousness at the Birth of Dutch American Religion¹

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The leader of a nineteenth-century Dutch migration to the United States, the Reverend Albertus C. Van Raalte, stood at the center of religious debates both in the Netherlands and in the United States. In his home country, Van Raalte was denied candidacy in the Hervormde Kerk, after which he joined the orthodox Seceder church that formed in the “Afseheid,” or secession, of 1834. In 1850, three years after arriving in the United States, Van Raalte helped organize a successful union between Dutch Calvinist immigrants and the Reformed Church (having been established by Dutchmen in colonial New York in 1628). Tensions within that union, however, led to another secession in 1857 that resulted in the birth of the Christian Reformed Church. Van Raalte’s legacy and the meaning of his life and work has long been debated by partisans on all sides of these ecclesiastical divides.

In Dutch American Calvinist circles, in particular, Van Raalte’s name was used as an appeal to authority when arguing doctrinal and theological issues. Five full biographies of Van Raalte that have appeared since his death in 1876 shape a larger discourse that weaves through hundreds of articles in Dutch American periodicals such as *De Grondwet* and *De Wachter*.² Views

¹ The author would like to thank George Harinck, James Eglinton, Melis te Velde, Elton Bruins, and Lydia Ingram, and two anonymous reviewers for comments and criticisms on earlier drafts of this article.

² Debates on the life and ideas of Van Raalte have been shaped by five biographies: Anthony Brummelkamp, “Dr. Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte” in *Zalsman’s Jaarboekje* (...) (1877; repr., Kampen: n.d.), 91–116; Henry E. Dosker, *Levensschets van Rev. A. C. Van Raalte*, *D.D.* (Nijkerk: C. C. Callenbach, 1893); J. A. Wormser, *Een Schat in Aarden Vaten: Twee Werelddeelen. Het Leven van Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte* (Nijverdal: 1915); Albert Hyma, *Albertus C. Van Raalte: His Dutch Settlements in the United States* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947); Jeanne M. Jacobson, Elton J. Bruins, and Larry J. Wagenaar, *Albertus C. Van Raalte*:

on Van Raalte have varied tremendously, with historians and theologians painting him with various hues such as a modern-day Moses, a Napoleon figure, an aristocrat and a democrat, a reluctant secessionist and the cause of religious division, and an opponent of the Christian Reformed Church and a supporter of its principles.³ A general consensus on the meaning of Van Raalte's life and works may never be met, but a growth in available, relevant primary source material—particularly since the founding of the A. C. Van Raalte Institute in 1994—and the gradual move toward open-access policies at archival institutions since the 1970s have allowed contemporary scholars to present a much clearer, more nuanced, and less ideologically driven view of this well-known Dutch American.

Despite an abiding interest in Van Raalte's life and a persistent search for his letters and sermons, American scholars have not yet discovered his longest single written work. The municipal archives of the city of Kampen holds a 434-page handwritten manuscript that is a copy of Van Raalte's lecture notes for a church history course he taught in the early 1840s. Although the manuscript is not in Van Raalte's hand, it is clear from an inscription on the first page that it is based on an original by Van Raalte. This manuscript is Van Raalte's only known full-length book.

Only two Dutch scholars have encountered this manuscript in their research, and neither made a thorough study of it. The first was H. Reenders, who, in a 1984 long, well-footnoted article on Van Raalte's life in the Netherlands (still the best work on the subject) cited this document among other sources in his footnote number 517.⁴ Reenders called it an "afschrift" [copy] of a *Handboek voor de kerkgeschiedenis* [*Handbook for Church History*]. American scholars can be forgiven for having missed this single footnote, in Dutch, in a seldom-cited publication. A second Dutch scholar, Melis te Velde, encountered the manuscript, also in the 1980s, during research for his biography of Van Raalte's brother-in-law, Anthony Brummelkamp, and referenced it more directly in a recent article on Van

Dutch Leader and American Patriot (Holland, Mich.: Hope College, 1996). Many other works deal with Van Raalte at length but are not full biographies. For example, William O. Van Eyck, *Landmarks of the Reformed Fathers; or What Dr. Van Raalte's People Believed* (Grand Rapids: Reformed Press, 1922) argues for a legacy partial to the views of the Reformed Church in America.

³ Recent articles demonstrate how Van Raalte became a figure of religious, civil, and cultural controversies in popular press: Michael J. Douma, "Memory and the Myth of Van Raalte: How Holland, Michigan Remembers Its Founding Father," *Michigan Historical Review* 36, no. 2 (2010): 37–62; George Harinck, "De herinnering aan Albertus C. van Raalte (1811–1876)," *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na de negentiende eeuw* 75 (2011): 3–13.

⁴ H. Reenders, "Albertus C. van Raalte als leider van Overijsselse Afgescheidenen" in 'Van scheurmakers, onruststokers en geheime opruivers...' *De Afscieding in Overijssel*, ed. Freek Pereboom, H. Hille, and H. Reenders. (Kampen: IJsselakademie), 375.

Raalte's teaching experiences in the Netherlands. In the summer of 2013, I spent a month as a fellow at the Theological University in Kampen, where Dr. te Velde shared with me his research notes. It was then that I encountered a photocopy of the first page of Van Raalte's forgotten or passed-over writing, the original of which I traced to the municipal archives in Kampen.

According to an inscription in its preface, the *Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript* is a copy of a “compendium” written by Van Raalte and used in Ommen, Overijssel, where he trained ministers in the Seceder church. Historians know that Van Raalte taught ministerial candidates first in Ommen from 1839 to 1844 and then in Arnhem where he and Anthony Brummelkamp formed an early Seceder theological school from 1844–1846.⁵ By linking the manuscript to this range of dates, Van Raalte's text becomes one of the earliest known historical works written within the *Afscheiding*. The further provenance of the manuscript can be partially determined from the signature of its transcriber and the markings of a later owner. Van Raalte must have left his course notes behind when he sailed for the United States in 1846. Five years after Van Raalte's departure, Henri Wilhelm Jan van Baalen (1830–1920) acquired the notes and copied them by hand. Van Baalen, it can be confirmed from other sources, was from Goes, in the province of Zeeland, and studied under Brummelkamp in Arnhem.⁶ Although the binding of the manuscript has fallen apart, no pages appear to be missing in this transcription of Van Raalte's original text, nor does it appear that anything but a single-page preface has been added in van Baalen's copy. The preface to van Baalen's copy, meanwhile, is in another hand, namely that of Adriaan de Bruijne (1810–1878), a minister from Goes.⁷

A study of this manuscript can tell us much about Van Raalte, including his view of history, his perspective on particular historical events, and his preference for certain kinds of writers, historians, and historical figures. In some places in the text, Van Raalte states explicitly his opinions on certain doctrinal and theological matters (on the depravity of the

⁵ Melis te Velde, *Anthony Brummelkamp (1811–1888)* (Barneveld: Vuurbaak, 1988), 41 and 158.

⁶ Van Baalen also married Anthony Brummelkamp's daughter. Kees de Kruijter and Huib Uil, “Jonkheer Johan Louis de Jonge. Een Zeeuws politicus tussen Afscheiding en Doleantie,” in *De Kerk en de Nederlanden: Archieven, instellingen, samenleving*, ed. E. S. C. Erkelens-Buttinger (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997), 355.

⁷ De Bruijne signed his name “Adr. de Bruijne, v.d.m” [*verbi divini minister*, Minister of the divine Word]. Van Baalen's copy stayed within the de Bruijne family as attested by an inscription showing that in 1920 Adriaan de Bruijne's youngest son G. [erritje] A. [driaan] de Bruijne of Leiderdorp gave the book as a gift to the Theological School of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. For further information on van Baalen and De Bruijne, see: Joh. de Haas, *Gedenkt Uw Voorgangers, Deel I* (Haarlem: Vijlbrief, 1984), 19, 60.

Catholic Church, for example, or the hand of God in Luther's work). Much else, however, can be learned from considering the implicit meaning in Van Raalte's choice of contents, for example, or his chronology, periodization, or focus. A close reading of the manuscript's text demonstrates that Van Raalte viewed history as a record of the struggle to preserve the church, an unfolding of events in which God's hand intervened to direct historical persons. Struggle and conflict was common in his view. Christian churchmen, he taught through this text, should cooperate in councils and in synods to restore the church to its original principles and to root out heresies. Van Raalte's history notes therefore were more than a lesson in history—they reflected his developing ideas about church order and doctrine in the Netherlands. Lectures based on these notes taught candidates for the ministry that they faced the most recent reincarnation of the struggles of the Christian church.

Through an investigation of this newly rediscovered manuscript and the context in which it was written, I argue that historical awareness was a key feature of the *Afscheiding* and that historical memory played a strong role in the doctrinal and theological debates that followed in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands and the United States. Calvinists, of course, have always been interested in history for what it can contribute to a proper reading of Scripture and for its demonstration of the beliefs and actions of the early Christian church. For Van Raalte and Orthodox Dutch Reformed thinkers of his generation, historical narrative played an additional role in justifying the action of secession. Dutch Seceders were well aware of Reformed history, particularly the Synod of Dordt, which symbolized for them the foundation of Dutch Reformed doctrine. Van Raalte was interested in history for the role it could play in justifying church order and doctrine, and his church history text demonstrates that the early Seceder theological school perpetuated this Reformed historical awareness in the classroom.

For Dutch Americans, migration to the United States strengthened the need for historical understanding to ground and shape religious and cultural identity. To justify religious doctrines, Dutch Americans in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) alike followed in the mold of Van Raalte and the early Seceders by treating historical events as essential points of argument in ecclesiastical matters. Van Raalte's church history text therefore provides a rare glimpse inside the mind of a man who played a central role in the birth of Dutch American Calvinism.

Historical Context

The Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript is an artifact of the first decade of the Dutch Seceder church, a body formed in 1834, which cited the growing liberalism of the Netherlands Reformed Church. The Seceders had in their earliest years an acute demand for "dominees." In fact, in the late 1830s,

the Seceder church was served by only a handful of traveling ministers who preached over a wide region, sometimes as large as an entire province. So-called “oefenaars” or unelected, unordained lay preachers sometimes preached in their stead, or elders read written sermons by accepted, orthodox writers. Opposition to this later practice, especially from the minister Simon Van Velzen in Friesland, caused the Seceders to look toward immediate training for new ministers.⁸ At first, each provincial church division was responsible for educating its own candidates. Van Raalte must have taken on the educator’s role with some reluctance because it distracted him from pastoring his congregations (in the plural, since he was then responsible for preaching throughout Overijssel and sometimes in adjacent provinces). Becoming a teacher also meant that Van Raalte had to focus on writing lectures as well as writing sermons. Van Raalte took his role seriously, however. In fact, Brummelkamp complained in 1844 that Van Raalte was too strict with the students and needed to avoid treating them like schoolchildren.⁹

The Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript is a condensed form of Van Raalte’s lectures, a textbook or study guide that was likely available for students to read from or copy. It is unlikely that Van Raalte read directly from these notes in class, but used them only in preparation for the course lectures. I argue this because Van Raalte is known to have written detailed sermon notes, but he preached extemporaneously and taught his students to do likewise.¹⁰ From the account of a student who visited the school in Ommen in 1844 we also know that Van Raalte’s church history lectures were each scheduled for one hour.¹¹ The text of his notebook, however, is not divided into sections appropriate for one-hour lectures. The frequent use of abbreviations in the text also shows that Van Raalte was unlikely to be preparing a work for publication.

The Purpose of History

The manuscript, furthermore, represents an original work by Van Raalte and not a copy of a preexisting text, although Van Raalte did draw on a number of published sources and established ideas. Certainly a powerful

⁸ Melis te Velde, “The Ministerial Education by Albertus C. Van Raalte in Ommen (1839–1844) and Arnhem (1844–1846) and Its Significance for the Seceder Church” (forthcoming in a volume on the 200th anniversary of Van Raalte’s birth).

⁹ Te Velde, *Anthony Brummelkamp, 1811–1888*, 161.

¹⁰ Eugene Heideman, “The Reverend Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte, Preacher and Leader, as Reflected in His Sermons” (forthcoming in a volume on the 200th anniversary of Van Raalte’s birth).

¹¹ Abraham Cornelis Tris to Rev. Cornelius van der Meulen, 16 January 1844, referenced in te Velde, *Anthony Brummelkamp*, 158n.

influence on Van Raalte during his years as a student in Leiden, 1832–1835, was N.[icholaas] C.[hristiaan] Kist (1793–1859), professor of church history at the University of Leiden. Kist, like many of the professors in Leiden at that time, supported “rational supernaturalism,” the combination of Enlightenment rationalism and traditional orthodoxy that Isaac Da Costa labeled the “Geest der Eeuw,” the “Spirit of the Age.” Kist was a capable and industrious historian, the cofounder of the first Dutch church history journal. As a scholar, Kist was interested in the progress of the mind, or the intellect of man. He believed the study of history had a pragmatic purpose in that it was to be used to promote general progress.¹² In short, Kist’s liberal perspective and optimistic view of man would not have appealed to the orthodox Van Raalte, with his fixed belief in the depravity of man and salvation by grace alone.¹³ Despite their ideological differences Van Raalte respected Kist for supporting his freedom to believe and preach as he pleased.¹⁴ Van Raalte and his brother-in-law, Anthony Brummelkamp (also a student of Kist), must have respected their teacher’s particular lessons as well. In a letter from September 1, 1842, for example, Brummelkamp asked Van Raalte if the latter would be so kind as to lend him his notes from Kist.¹⁵

Van Raalte learned from Professor Kist that history could be used for a pragmatic purpose. Instead of seeing history as a guide for the progress of man, or as an indicator of some teleological end, the young minister hoped to use history as an inspiration for the growth of the church. In fact this was his ultimate purpose in teaching church history: to prepare Christian ministers to lead congregations. Van Raalte, in the opening of his text, explains quite clearly the reasons for studying church history. He gives four reasons in particular.

1. The study of church history serves to build the kingdom of God on earth.

¹² N. C. Kist, “De Geschiedenis van de Leer des Christendoms in betrekking tot Kerkelijke Geschiedenis en Geschiedenis der Leerstellingen voorgesteld als afzonderlijk vak der Godgeleerde Historische Wetenschap,” *Archief voor Kerkelijke Geschiedenis Inzonderheid van Nederland* 3 (1833): 3–80. Kist also wanted to establish church history as an independent discipline focused on the history of institutions and teachings and no longer subservient to the discipline of systematic theology.

¹³ Arie L. Molendijk, “Een Hoogstbelangrijke Wetenschap”: De beoefening van de Kerkgeschiedenis in Nederland in de negentiende eeuw (Groningen: Universiteit Groningen, 2000); H. Florijn, “N. C. Kist, bezield maar niet bezielend” (*Reformatorisch Dagblad*, 24 Dec. 2009).

¹⁴ “Handelingen van Het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur bij het examen van den candidaat A.C. Van Raalte” in *Komplete Uitgave van de Officiele stukken betreffenden den uitgang uit het Nederl. Herv. Kerkgenootschap, Second Volume*, ed. S. Van Velzen (Kampen: S. Van Velzen, 1863), 330–31.

¹⁵ November 1, 1842. Source cited in te Velde, *Anthony Brummelkamp*, 158n. I read a copy of this letter in the personal research papers of Melis te Velde.

2. The study of church history teaches Christians the fear of God and how to defend attacks on the Christian religion.
3. The study of church history acquaints “us” [i.e., Reformed Christians] with the holy and wise men of the church by showing us their actions and helping us distinguish the actions of man from those of God, by showing us the rise and fall of the knowledge of God and the godliness and moral development among the people thereof, and by showing us the discovery of the causes of many developments in the civil world.
4. It promotes the correct translation of the Holy Scripture, teaching [Reformed Christians] to discern the orthodox and the heretical in order to defend and strengthen the faith for the good of the congregation.

All four of Van Raalte’s reasons for studying history are connected to the growth of the church. History is in this view not only a source of doctrine but also an inspiration for Christian behavior.

Like other Dutch historians of the nineteenth century, Van Raalte promoted a nationalist concept of history that explicitly and implicitly linked Dutch national history with providential history. Indeed, Van Raalte grew up in an age of Dutch national history writing, which became a popular style in the years after the overthrow of the French, when the Kingdom of the Netherlands formed as a connected union of provinces.¹⁶ A common, national history that looked back to the Dutch Golden Age of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries promised to bind the new nation together. Accordingly, in the 1820s and 1830s, history writing in the Netherlands began to appear more commonly in the Dutch vernacular rather than in Latin. The Dutch poet Willem Bilderdijk’s posthumous “Geschiedenis des Vaderlands” (History of the Fatherland), which appeared in volumes from 1832 to 1835, was an exceptionally influential example of a national narrative written to promote a concept of history friendly to the Dutch royal family, to the House of Orange, and to the Calvinist origins of the modern nation. The names of Van Raalte’s brother-in-law Simon Van Velzen and his fellow Seeder minister Hendrik Scholte stand in the list of roughly nine hundred “intekenaaren” (subscribers) who purchased the first edition of Bilderdijk’s history.¹⁷ Van Raalte was certainly aware of Bilderdijk’s work, as he referenced the revered figure in his church history text. Just like Bilderdijk, Van Raalte knew Latin but wrote entirely in Dutch except when preserving the Latin form of proper names.

¹⁶ G. J. Schutte, ed., *De Geschiedenis aan het volk verteld: Populaire protestants-christelijke geschiedenisbeschrijving in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2008), 10-12.

¹⁷ Willem Bilderdijk, *Geschiedenis des Vaderlands* (Amsterdam: P. Meyer Warnus) [uitgegeven door Prof. H. W. Tydeman] (1832).

Although Van Raalte's church history text covers events in the Near East, the Mediterranean, the British Isles, and mainland Europe, it is a nationalist history in the sense that the foreign content is presented as a prologue toward understanding the modern Netherlands. Additionally, while Van Raalte deals with world history, he is rather unconcerned with a universal explanation of history. That is to say, Van Raalte was no Abraham Kuyper with a "worldview," nor was he a Herman Bavinck who carefully balanced providential history and Hegelianism.¹⁸ In fact, Van Raalte came of age in perhaps the last generation that could write honest, serious history without wrestling with the explicit universal historical theories. Van Raalte did not seek universal patterns or predictability in history. His understanding of history, his theory if you will, paralleled his reading of the Bible: Men are fallible and prone to divisiveness and sin, and only God can show a path to salvation.

Van Raalte, of course, was not the only Dutchman in this period to concern himself with the relationship among history, faith, and the state. In fact, education debates of the 1820s and 1830s were a primary cause of the *Afscheiding*, because orthodox Calvinists argued that Christian teachings were being removed from schools in favor of new liberal thought. It was in this context that the Reformed politician Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer published his *Kort overzigt van de geschiedenis des vaderlands* [Short Overview of the History of the Fatherland] in 1841 and *Vaderlandse zangen* [Patriotic Songs] in 1842, both of which reached a broad audience in the Netherlands. While these two works were written in simple language designed for a youth audience, Groen's *Handbook on the History of the Fatherland* (1841–1846) was more thorough and scholarly, and it served as a powerful weapon in a national debate about the role of education in the Dutch nation-state. Groen, in a sense, drew Orthodox Calvinism into his historical writing to fight for the freedom of religious education. Van Raalte worked the other way around, using history to help enlighten faith. Groen, the aristocratic politician and man of letters, remained in the Hervormde Kerk, but he sympathized with the ranks of the Seceders. After all, Groen recognized that he and Seceder leaders such as Van Raalte had similar goals in promoting national unity and pride, alongside reinvigorating orthodox religion. Groen's national history focused on conflicts, with the Reformation serving as the point of departure for understanding national identity. This is all to say that Groen and Van Raalte wrestled with the same issues and came to similar conclusions about the role of God in his chosen Dutch nation. Van Raalte's history can be seen as a parallel commentary on the Dutch state and religion.¹⁹

¹⁸ Adam Eitel, "Trinity and History," in *Five Studies in the Thought of Herman Bavinck. A Creator of Modern Dutch Theology* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 2012).

¹⁹ Jasper Janes, "Groen van Prinsterer: Vaderlandse geschiedenis voor het onderwijs," *Leidschrijft: Historisch Tijdschrift* 25 (2010): 115–124; A. J. van Dijk, "Groen van Prinsterer en

Historical Influences

In developing his view of history, Van Raalte drew from a rather wide and varied list of influences. He read Latin, Dutch, and German works, particularly from Protestant historians and apologists, but he was also aware of Catholic writings and historians from Catholic countries. The works of Joseph Milner, an eighteenth-century English evangelical, were likely a strong influence on Van Raalte in shaping both his perspective on history and the structural organization of his notes. Not only did Van Raalte cite Milner as an authority in his text, but Brummelkamp, who worked closely with Van Raalte, is known to have assigned his students Milner's ten-part church history. Beloved among English evangelicals, Milner's history was popular internationally and had been translated into German, among other languages. The book remained in popular use for decades, despite shortcomings and criticisms. For example, in 1834 the Anglican historian S.[amuel] R.[offey] Maitland noted that "the sources of information respecting ecclesiastical history, which some, even of the clergy, think it necessary to provide, are so limited, that many readers may possibly have no other book than Milner's *History of the Church of Christ*."²⁰

Maitland's criticism of Milner's uncritical historical method could apply as well to Van Raalte, since he also presented history as a set of ordered, uncontested facts. Van Raalte was in this sense an heir of Vossius, the seventeenth-century Dutch humanist and historian who defended providential history and compiled a similarly condensed list of basic historical facts in his *Historiae universalis epitome* (written in 1622 but not published until 1699).²¹ Of Milner and by extension his type of chronicled history, Maitland wrote,

it is of no consequence whether the *facts* are true or false—whether the writer went to "original records," or "modern historians"—whether the citations are correct, or incorrect—whether the authorities referred to were understood by their author and rendered intelligible to the reader, or not—whether it was A. or B. who was martyred, or made a bishop, at a certain time, and place, if only somebody was martyred, at some time, and somebody made a bishop somewhere, so as to give occasion for pious and edifying reflections.²²

Professional historical method, the critical weighing of evidence, was introduced into the Netherlands only in the second half of the nineteenth

de Amerikaanse Revolutie," in *Groen van Prinsterer in Europese context*, ed. J. De Bruijn and George Harinck (Hilversum: Verloren, 2004), 70.

²⁰ S. R. Maitland, *A Letter to the Rev. Hugh James Rose, B.D., Chaplin to His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury; with Strictures on Milner's Church History* (London: J.G. & F. Rivington, 1834), 1.

²¹ Nicholas Wickenden, *G. J. Vossius and the Humanist Concept of History* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993).

²² S. Maitland, *A Letter to the Rev. Hugh James Rose, B.D.*, v.

century. Even so, Van Raalte was relatively uninterested in debating specific historical facts because the larger picture of history was more important than any particular controversy.

Van Raalte may have appreciated Milner's text because it celebrated piety and the positive developments in the church. Indeed, Milner's text was so designed to replace the works of the German Lutheran, J. [ohan] L. [orenz] Mosheim, whose church history focused mainly on schisms and heresies.²³ Mosheim's text was frequently used in the United States in the early nineteenth century as well, even though his work was not always liked. For example, at Princeton Theological Seminary, Samuel Miller used Mosheim while disparaging him as an antipietical Arminian.²⁴ Van Raalte likely had the same concerns with Mosheim, but he still cited the latter's work and reproduced Mosheim's focus on ecclesiastical struggles.

In his list of influential Dutch church historians, Van Raalte also included Herman Venema (1697–1787) who taught at the University of Franeker as well as “Alten” Spanheim, or the “older” Friedrich Spanheim (1600–1649), a Calvinist theology professor in Leiden. Van Raalte may have confused the elder Spanheim for his son Friedrich Spanheim the Younger (1632–1701) who also taught in Leiden and who wrote a significant church history text. Mosheim and Milner had structured their church histories with chapters for each century. Venema also used centuries to serve as the units of measurement. Contrastingly, Spanheim the Younger's church history was not set up in a chronological fashion but was instead organized around thematic “verschillen” (disagreements) with sections, for example, on Papists, Anabaptists, Arminians, and Lutherans.²⁵ Whether history should be structured chronologically or thematically was then an important discussion, with normative implications. Venema's structuring of history, for example, was illustrative of a larger trend to find meaning or pattern in the past. Venema's historical structure was divided into five time periods, as follows:

²³ D. Bruce Hindmarsh, “Milner, Joseph (1745–1797),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, May 2010 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18792>, accessed 9 June 2013].

²⁴ Elizabeth A. Clark, *Founding the Fathers: Early Church History and Protestant Professors in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 76–77.

²⁵ Friedrich Spanheim, *Een Historisch en Godsgeleerd Register...* (Amsterdam: Joannes and Gilles Janssonius van Waesburg, 1692).

Herman Venema's "Teleological" Historical Structure
Jesus–300 A.D.
300–700 A.D.
700–1100 A.D.
1100–1600 A.D.
The Reformation

Venema was prophetic about the meaning of his structure. He claimed that the world was in the fifth period, with two more to come in the history of the world.²⁶ Venema's history was therefore clearly teleological. A final influence of note for Van Raalte was Herman Muntinghe's *Christelijke Godsdienst en Kerkgeschiedenis* [*Christian Religion and Church History*] appearing first in Latin in 1818, then in Dutch in 1828. This work established a chronological framework of four divisions, choosing Constantine, Charlemagne, and Luther as the mileposts, thus the divisions:

Herman Muntinghe's "Chronological" Historical Structure
1–306 A.D.
306–800 A.D. (Constantine)
800–1517 A.D. (Charlemagne)
1517–present A.D. (Luther) ²⁷

Historical Periodization and Focus

In the last section, I introduced structures of historical organization as background to demonstrate that Van Raalte, while influenced by these other writers, established an apparently unique and quite idiosyncratic arrangement for organizing church history. Van Raalte preferred to organize church history in a chronological rather than a thematic fashion, with five time periods or "tijdvakken." In his text, he remarks that historians Mosheim and Schrok had four divisions, Spitzler six, and Henke eight.²⁸

²⁶ J. C. de Bruine, *Herman Venema, Een Nederlandse Theoloog in de Tijd der Verlichting* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1973), 138.

²⁷ Herman Muntinghe, *Christelijke Godsdienst en Kerkgeschiedenis*, trans. J. Muntedam (Groningen: J. Oomes, 1828).

²⁸ Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript/Kerkgeschiedenis, 11. (Author: This document has yet no official name, but I am calling it The Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript, which is also a Church History or "Kerkgeschiedenis." It is to be found in the original at the Kampen Municipal Archives.)

Van Raalte's primary division is between "old" and "new" church history, with old standing for everything from the first century A.D. to 1517, and new from 1517 to the end of the seventeenth century. This division was quite common. Van Raalte's text spends much more time on old church history (253 pages) than new (166 pages) probably because Van Raalte, like other Reformed thinkers, was trying to read back and recover from the ancients what would be useful to answer contemporary problems. Van Raalte's further subdividing of old history into four time periods is uncommon and follows a pattern according to his view of the church's development. Van Raalte's four-part division of old history is as follows:

Van Raalte's "Chronological/Thematic" Old History
1–308 (Birth of Christianity to Constantine)
308–590 (Constantine to Gregory I)
590–1073 (Gregory I to Gregory VII)
1073–1517 (Gregory VII to Luther)

Although these divisions were bookended by important historical figures, they are, Van Raalte tells us, in fact thematic divisions as well as chronological. The first period was a time when the church was a "maatschappij" (society) with no political recognition and Christians suffered for their faith. The second phase, from Constantine, was when the church gained political control, and the faith was simple but spread brilliantly. The third period, from Gregory I to Gregory VII, was marked by the great spread of Christianity across Europe and the centralized control of the Pope. The fourth period was a time of "tegenstrijdigheid" [contradictions], which led to the Reformation.

Van Raalte's decision to divide history in this way enabled him to show patterns of church organization, growth, and decline. Van Raalte idealizes the first two centuries after Jesus, which, he says, were marked by the "purity of their [Christian] life, the power of the followers, the wonderful perseverance of the martyrs, and brotherly unity."²⁹ He begins, however, in ancient history with anthropological descriptions of Greek, Roman, and Jewish civilization. As Van Raalte explained it, the Pax Romana, the widespread use of the Greek language in the ancient period, and the Jewish diaspora all prepared the way for the gospel. He also mentions commonly referenced figures in the history of the church such as Tacitus, Flavius Josephus, Irenaeus, and Eusebius, but gives them little attention. He is most interested in the spread of the church and in the roles of Peter and

²⁹ Translation of: "zuiverheid van hun leven, de kracht hun vervolging, de wonderlijke standvastigheid der martelaren, de broederlijke vereeniging," Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript/Kerkgeschiedenis, 1.43.

Paul particularly. He covers church planting in Africa, Greece, and Rome, and rhetorically asks: “What was the reason for the growth of the Church?” His answer: “God works!”³⁰

Moving on from a study of the ancients, Van Raalte chose popes Gregory I and Gregory VII as historical markers so that he could define periods in church history according to the influence of Rome. For example, Gregory I, Van Raalte tells us, spread papal authority beyond all borders, while the “shrewd” Gregory VII was responsible for bringing all civil and religious authority under the pope’s command. It probably does not come as a surprise that Van Raalte’s history notes challenged the validity of the Catholic Church; for example, he cites the early church fathers to argue that the pope held an illegitimate position of power. “Peter was in Rome,” Van Raalte wrote, “but they [the church fathers] do not say that he was there as bishop, nor as a general bishop over all.”³¹ Likewise, Van Raalte later cites Cyprian, who wrote that “nobody is bishop of the bishops.”³²

In his coverage of the Middle Ages and the medieval period, Van Raalte also challenges the Catholic Church. He argues, for example, that some of its practices were invented: “the honoring of Mary had not been thought of previously,” and the church at times “spread more the authority of the pope than the Christian religion.”³³ Van Raalte’s most consistent theme about Catholicism, in fact, is that the “bishop of Rome” was a despot and that in Catholicism superstition reigned.³⁴ To reinforce this point, Van Raalte cites Machiavelli, who “believed that Christianity was doomed to fade because he had noticed that the closer one lived to Rome, the more distant one was from religion. From this came the saying: the closer to Rome, the worse the Christians.”³⁵ For Van Raalte, those who held onto Catholicism held onto superstition and false authority. For this reason, he particularly liked the Scottish Reformation. “The English loved much of their old religion,” he writes, “the Scots, on the other hand, rejected all of the Romish foundations & institutions, which is why the Scottish Reformation has many similarities with the Dutch.”³⁶

³⁰ Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript/Kerkgeschiedenis, 1.42.

³¹ Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript/Kerkgeschiedenis, 1.35.

³² Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript/Kerkgeschiedenis, 1.129.

³³ Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript/Kerkgeschiedenis, 1.135 and 1.176.

³⁴ Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript/Kerkgeschiedenis, 2.23.

³⁵ Translation of “geloofde dat het Chr.dom aan zijnen ondergang gekomen was omdat hij had opgemerkt dat de Chr. hoe nader zij bij Rome leefden, zij des te vreemder van de Godsd. waren. Van daar het spreken: hoe naderbij Rome hoe slechter Christen.” Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript/Kerkgeschiedenis 2.26.

³⁶ Translation of “De Engelsen behielden veel van de oude Godsd. De Schotsen daarentegen verwierpen al de Roomsche beginselen & instellingen, van waar de Schotsche

The Reformation plays a crucial role in Van Raalte's history, not only as the marker for the division between old and new history but also as a device for redirecting Van Raalte's focus from the Mediterranean to Northern Europe, thus moving closer to home. "Through the Reformation the seat of Christian religion went over from the Latins to the Germans," wrote Van Raalte.³⁷ Van Raalte spent more time discussing Martin Luther than any other figure. About Luther and Zwingli, he wrote that the hand of the Lord was behind their actions.³⁸ Van Raalte worked toward the Synod of Dordt, the codification of Dutch Protestantism, and defended the legitimacy of the Synod of Dordt by noting the presence of a large number of theologians, professors, and politicians present at the gathering.³⁹ Van Raalte's view of the Synod of Dordt gave the Dutch church more direction and established modern Dutch Protestantism. It makes sense that Van Raalte, as an orthodox Dutch Calvinist, would work toward the Synod of Dordt, and that the historians he appreciated, such as Spanheim and Vossius, were Dordtians. In Van Raalte's mind, Dordt gave the Dutch Reformed faith direction.⁴⁰

After Dordt, Van Raalte mentioned Descartes and Spinoza and the birth of a rationalist direction in Dutch theology. His analysis of these two seminal philosophers is limited in the case of Descartes and nonexistent for Spinoza. Van Raalte's text ends abruptly with a short paragraph on a seventeenth-century Cartesian theologian, Herman Alexander Röell. It may be the case that a conclusion to the book is missing, or perhaps was not written, but it is fitting that Van Raalte ended with Röell, a primary carrier of rationalism in Dutch theological circles who had long been a target of orthodox Calvinist polemics.⁴¹ Rationalism, after all, was the true historical enemy of faith.

Hervorming met de Nederlandsche veel overeenkomst had," Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript / Kerkgeschiedenis, 2.128. Van Raalte also covers Catholic Counter-Reformation violence, such as at the St. Bartholomew Day Massacre in France and the "Irish Murder of 1641" as he calls it, when he states that Catholics killed 200,000 Protestants in a one-sided attack.

³⁷ Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript / Kerkgeschiedenis, 1.37.

³⁸ Translation of "die de Heere daartoe als middelen in Zijne hand gebruikte" (Van Raalte, Kerkgeschiedenis, 1.31).

³⁹ Including 28 foreign theologians, 64 professors, preachers and elders from the Dutch church and 18 politicians, who stayed until the 145th sitting.

⁴⁰ Translation of "een meer bepaalde rigting" in Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript / Kerkgeschiedenis, 2.161.

⁴¹ Spykman explains that Van Raalte's sermon notes also tend to come to an abrupt end. Van Raalte avoided topical preaching and orations from the pulpit on recent church history. Gordon Spykman, *Pioneer Preacher* (Grand Rapids: Calvin College Heritage Hall Archives, 1976), 33.

Selection in Van Raalte's Church History

What precisely did students learn in Van Raalte's church history course? What does it mean that Van Raalte left out important figures, such as Aquinas, for example, or that he neglected the "oude schrijvers" that other Seceders admired? We could interpret every omission as a dismissal of a thinker's importance, and conversely we could interpret every inclusion of a historical event as a demonstration of Van Raalte's interests. There is a real risk of over-interpretation, but all historical reasoning is to some degree informed speculation from an imperfect and fragmentary record. Strong historical theses integrate a variety of material with an established context. People act or avoid acting for a reason. In short, I think that something concrete and useful can be said about Van Raalte's choice of content insofar as it demonstrates what concerned his mind at the time he wrote the text. The text demonstrates that Van Raalte was not primarily concerned with dogma or philosophy. In fact, it is interesting how many times Van Raalte avoids arguments altogether or presents only a single simple rebuttal. He presents various doctrinal differences not always to paint them as heretical.

Van Raalte's history notes were written while the young "dominee" was looking to "find and explicate his own theological direction."⁴² To some extent, he must have been repeating what he had heard in class in Leiden, but by 1841, at thirty years of age, Van Raalte had had plenty of time and opportunity to form his own opinions on religious matters. He was by then also married and a father of three, as well as a man of responsibility in the church—a man whose faith and resolve had been tested as a student in Leiden and as a pastor in Overijssel. Van Raalte, it appears, was confident in his knowledge and in his role of educating new ministers. His students were young candidates for the ministry, mostly from rural, provincial backgrounds and from congregations that desperately needed new ministers. Why would they benefit from the study of ancient history? After all, instead of a history of dogma, Van Raalte presented a list of historical figures, heavily weighted toward ancient history with a focus on popes, synods, and the early Reformers of the church. Why then did Van Raalte choose the topics that he did? My hypothesis is that Van Raalte's selection of history was intended to benefit his students in at least three ways: (1) By focusing on a history of persecution and conflict in the church, Van Raalte taught young candidates to understand that ecclesiastical conflicts like the *Afscheiding* were not new, and that they, as ministers, could persevere as had others true to the faith. (2) By focusing on individual personalities as the carriers of history, Van Raalte wanted to show the role that individuals could play. In fact, names are underlined in the text, but not countries or other proper nouns. In particular, Van Raalte focused on the life of Luther

⁴² Te Velde, "The Ministerial Education by Albertus C. Van Raalte."

to a much greater extent than to Calvin. (3) By giving attention to synods, Van Raalte demonstrated the importance he placed in church organization and order, which inspired students to do likewise.

For a second text to support this three-part hypothesis, one could look to the fall of 1840 when Van Raalte coauthored with the Seceder ministers Anthony Brummelkamp and Simon Van Velzen a *Kerkelyk Handboekje* [*Church Handbook*] designed to justify the historical legitimacy of the new church. The *Church Handbook* consisted primarily of a record of national synods held in the Netherlands between 1567 and 1721. These synods, particularly the Synod of Dordt, established the government and order of the church and its congregations. The authors' goal with this handbook was to reconfirm the doctrines of Dordt and justify church organization more generally, thereby demonstrating the historical foundation of the Seceder church. The authors based their arguments on biblical texts and on the historical precedents as recorded by early church fathers. As in Van Raalte's church history text, the authors of the handbook found their inspiration in ancient history.⁴³

Furthermore, what the Kampen Manuscript shows is that Van Raalte was better acquainted with historical studies than scholars have previously recognized. He was strongly bound to the church of his father and he hesitated to join the secession. He opposed asking for state recognition for the new church because he wanted to reform the old, and he did not want to give up the title of "Reformed" church to a national body that he felt had fallen away from its Reformed principles.⁴⁴ Van Raalte was interested in the organization of the church. He believed that synods, councils, and organizations were important. His ideal was not equality in the church but an organizational structure formed from equal powers. He located this ideal among the apostles and wrote, "There was no apostle above another."⁴⁵

Historical Understanding and the *Afscheiding*

There is more here beyond what the text tells us about Van Raalte. I believe it also teaches us something about the nature of the *Afscheiding*. Van Raalte placed present struggles within a deeper chronology, set the Netherlands in a wider geography, and explained the church struggles as part of an ongoing conflict in the world of men. The choice to teach church history courses was not an obvious one. Church history had become an independent exam field for ministerial candidates in the Hervormde

⁴³ Albertus C. Van Raalte, Anthony Brummelkamp, and Simon Van Velzen, *Kerkelyk Handboekje, zynde een kort uittreksel van de voornaamste acten der Nationale en Provinciale synoden betrekkelijk de zuiverheid der Leer, Rust der Kerk, enz...* (Amsterdam: N. Obbes, 1841).

⁴⁴ Reenders, "Albertus C. van Raalte als leider van Overijsselse Afgescheidenen," 149.

⁴⁵ Van Raalte Kampen Manuscript/Kerkgeschiedenis, 31–32.

Kerk only in 1815,⁴⁶ but Van Raalte valued church history as a central topic of study. In a reading of Van Raalte's sermons, Spykman agrees that "the organized church holds a central and large place in Van Raalte's view of the Christian life" and that, in Van Raalte's vision—the common Reformed view—power was best placed not in a single figure such as the pope but shared among officials in the church.⁴⁷ Van Raalte in this way also taught the importance of cooperation. Tensions within the *Afscheiding* threatened to pull the movement apart, and in America the Dutch Calvinists would be divided not only because of theological controversies, but also because of competing historical visions of the nature of church organization and doctrine.

This later point requires some clarification. Historical memory and the desire to remain true to a Reformed heritage has been at the core of Dutch American religious identity. To be clear, the Christian Reformed Church, was formed in 1857 for several reasons. First, a group of seceders in the Midwest opposed giving up local control to a synod in New York because they feared a repeat of the situation in the Netherlands, where provincial churches had been controlled by policies determined in the more liberal west part of the country. Second, parallel to historical disagreements with certain practices in the Netherlands, there was opposition to American religious influence such as hymn-singing and open communion.⁴⁸ Third, the CRC was formed and grew because Dutch immigrants were turned away by the RCA's casual acceptance of members who belonged to secret societies, again a topic that had posed a substantial threat to religious life in the Netherlands.⁴⁹ Fourth, of all the reasons for secession, the consistory of Graafschap (the body that led the secession) declared that the most grievous cause of discord was the necessity or timeliness of the *Afscheiding* of 1834.⁵⁰ In short, differences of opinion on historical matters were at play. Furthermore, historical memories, alliances, and understandings,

⁴⁶ Arie Molendijk, "Kerkgeschiedenis aan een openbare instelling voor hoger onderwijs," in *Trends in de Groninger Theologie. 'You Need a Busload of Faith to Get By'*, ed. Ed Noort and Hetty Zock (Delft: Eburon, 2002), 155.

⁴⁷ Spykman, *Pioneer Preacher*, 57–58.

⁴⁸ J. H. Kromminga, "Our First Hundred Years," in *One Hundred Years in the New World: The Story of the Christian Reformed Church from 1857 to 1957* (Grand Rapids: Centennial Committee of the Christian Reformed Church, 1957), 34.

⁴⁹ H. Zwaanstra, *Reformed Thought and Experience in a New World: A Study of the Christian Reformed Church and Its American Environment 1890–1918* (Kampen: Kok, 1973); Robert P. Swierenga and Elton J. Bruins, *Family Quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Churches in the Nineteenth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

⁵⁰ Classis Holland Minutes, 1848–1858, cited in John Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Church: A Study in Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1949), 33–34.

carried here from the Netherlands, played a role in separating the two Dutch American churches.⁵¹

In the discourse of conflict in Dutch American circles, from Van Raalte's days through much of the twentieth century, leading figures of the RCA and CRC appealed to historical precedents when debating ecclesiastical issues. For example, every time the CRC held a commemoration, it recalled its foundation through secession from the RCA.⁵² The CRC argued that the union of 1850 was "onkerkrechtelijk" [against church order] and "onwettig" [illegal] because the classis of Holland (Michigan) had never deputized or authorized any representative to enter into an agreement with the RCA.⁵³ The point is, this was a historical argument, rooted perhaps in a more universal theological position about church order, but historical and, in the philosophical sense, accidental nonetheless. The RCA leaders have also been quick to claim their own version of historical events, arguing in one example that the CRC's fiftieth year commemorative memorial book presented an entirely new version of rewritten history.⁵⁴ The historical debates between the RCA and CRC peaked in the first decade of the twentieth century. In an article from 1901, Nicholas Steffens (RCA) remarked on how well Dutch Americans knew the history of their internal religious debates: "I think, that after the days of A.D. 1857 and A.D. 1882, we know where we stand, especially in regards to ecclesiastical positions. Who does not yet know it, shall never know it."⁵⁵ In the CRC, Henry Beets continued in the early twentieth century to champion the study of denominational history, and like Van Raalte, Beets saw the hand of God leading important men to shape history.⁵⁶

Certainly there are normative implications in how one chooses to read history, divide it into periods, and focus on particular people and events.

⁵¹ Robert P. Swierenga, "Local-Cosmopolitan Theory and Immigrant Religion: The Social Bases of the Antebellum Dutch Reformed Schism," *Journal of Social History* 14, no. 1 (1980): 113–35.

⁵² See for example: *The Banner*, 22 June 1916.

⁵³ *Gedenkboek van het Vijftigjarig Jubileum der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* (Grand Rapids: Semi-Centennial Commission, 1907). Henry Beets, writing in 1923, maintained that the union of 1850 had been illegal. (Henry Beets, *The Christian Reformed Church* [Grand Rapids: Eastern Avenue Bookstore, 1923], 25–42.) The early CRC maintained this point, while John Kromminga in 1949 argued that while the union of 1850 was formally legal, the property and wisdom of the union are the real questions in dispute. Kromminga, *The Christian Reformed Church: A Study in Orthodoxy*, 35.

⁵⁴ *The Leader*, 7 Aug. 1907.

⁵⁵ *De Wachter*, 18 Sept. 1901. Translation of "Mij dunkt, dat wij na de dagen van A.D. 1857 en A.D. 1882 wel weten waar wij staan, wat het bijzonder Kerkelijk standpunt aangat. Wie het nog niet weet, zal het wel nooit te weten komen."

⁵⁶ Beets, *The Christian Reformed Church*, 9–11.

Van Raalte's historical periodization was original, and it allowed him to see history as a record of struggle, growth, decline, and reform. He chose his own chronological set-up and his own list of important figures because he felt that a particular type of historical understanding was necessary for his students. He could not replicate Milner or Mosheim's histories because they did not focus enough on the Netherlands, and their strict century-by-century chronological organization did not allow for interpretation of larger periods and themes. He chose historical figures not at random, but for their relevance to the Dutch scene. Therefore, certain philosophical figures well-known in Europe in general receive short-shrift if they had little impact on thought in the Netherlands.

Van Raalte's historical views paralleled and reinforced his theological perspective. In a broad study of Van Raalte's sermons, Eugene Heideman concludes that "Van Raalte did not aspire to be a creative theologian providing new insights in the articulation of the Christian faith."⁵⁷ Instead, Van Raalte focused on personal piety and the practical teachings of the confessional statements. Heideman found in Van Raalte's sermons a similar insistence on providential action and personal piety. Van Raalte generally avoided naming his opponents, but in one sermon he directly mentioned the "Groninger School" of Hofstede de Groot, Muntinghe, and Van Heusde, whom he claimed were the modern carriers of the heresy of Arianism. Van Raalte, recognizing that life was short, focused his preaching on topics of personal salvation by encouraging his congregation to consider the consequences of a life without Christ. In this sense, Van Raalte's practical preaching style paralleled his views laid down in his church history text.

Van Raalte recognized the legitimacy of secessions, but in his heart he yearned for church order not formulated and controlled from a central power such as the pope or the Dutch government but based on Christian leaders who, through synods, agreed on fundamental principles. These two themes, secession and union, have been at conflict in Dutch American history. Paradoxically, calls for secession and yearnings for cooperation can exhibit themselves simultaneously in a group of people. The desire for secession and independence is rooted in the belief that another association of churchmen has gone wrong in their understanding of doctrine, theology, or church order. The desire for association or union, meanwhile, is not always a yearning to look past differences but a hope to come to an agreement on fundamentals. Divisiveness among a group of people, then, is not necessarily a sign of weakness but a reflection of a serious attitude toward religious beliefs.

⁵⁷ Eugene Heideman, *The Reverend Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte, Preacher and Leader, as Reflected in His Sermons* (forthcoming).

Van Raalte's shadow loomed large over the Dutch American churches. The generation of 1900, like that of 1850, found its identity in history. Dutch Americans were sometimes too good at remembering, or at least too unwilling to forget. Old rivalries and conflicts carried on, arguments continued, and historical understanding played a strong part in providing the framework to shape theological, doctrinal, and organization concerns. Historians of the Dutch in America need to study collective historical memory further. A recent work in the Netherlands demonstrates the fruits of such a labor. In speaking about Reformed circles in the Netherlands, this work states that "Without Reformed memory the Reformed world is incomprehensible."⁵⁸ Likewise, it is impossible to understand Dutch American religiosity without a historical context because religious history has played such a decisive and divisive role.

We can now say, for the first time, that Van Raalte had a theory of history. Although not a thoroughly worked out, systematic theory, it is a consistent approach and a useful perspective on the purpose of history for Christians. By theory I do not mean a grand scientific explanation but rather a rational, generalized explanation that fits the data as he viewed it. Van Raalte viewed the past as a scene of conflict, with God's will being played out through historical actors who shaped the church. This vision of the past, in a general sense, was common to the Seceders as well as to early leaders in the Reformed and Christian Reformed churches. Historical understanding today remains vital in thinking about theology and church order. In his 2002 monograph, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism*, Philip Benedict argues that "no history [of Calvinism] can neglect the ways in which the various Reformed churches were shaped by the conditions of their birth and the intellectual formation of their early leaders." "Beliefs make history," he continues "but not under circumstances of their own choosing. They are also themselves the products of history."⁵⁹ Church history should teach Dutch Americans that our choice of what we study has potentially as much impact on us as how we study it. The study of historical documents, to borrow a phrase from Gordon Spykman, teaches us "how we got to be the way we are."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Translation of "zonder het gereformeerde *geheugen*, valt de gereformeerde *wereld* niet te begrijpen." In *Het Gereformeerde Geheugen: Protestantse Herinneringsculturen in Nederland, 1850–2000*, ed. George Harinck, Bart Wallet, and Herman Paul (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2009), 12.

⁵⁹ Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), xxii.

⁶⁰ Spykman, *Pioneer Preacher*, 29.