

Cornelius Vander Meulen: Founder or Follower?

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In the fall of the centennial year 1876 the Dutch communities in Western Michigan lost both their pioneering leaders: Albertus C. Van Raalte and Cornelius VanderMeulen. Just as fifty years before Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died on the same Fourth of July, it must have been symbolic for the Hollanders in the West that the first generation had really passed away, and the pioneering phase was past. The Dutch settlers were attached to their leaders and commemorated them as Dutch incarnations of OT prophets as Moses and Elijah. But were they really of equal stature. Can VanderMeulen stand in the shadow of Van Raalte? Is it an exaggeration to honor him as the founder of Zeeland, or is closer to the truth to see him as the follower: first of the Rev. Scholte, who educated him, secondly of Van Raalte, who emigrated first and designed the model settlement of Holland, or perhaps of Jannes VandeLuyster, pioneer and forest financier? Was he a pioneer in his own right, or was he more of a consolidator?

In this paper I will argue, that though Van Raalte deserved the title of founding father of the Dutch settlements in the Midwest, VanderMeulen was more than a follower. Van Raalte's background and responsibilities for the entire colony created a distance between him and the common people. VanderMeulen was really one of them and proved a real asset to the colony, who created the much needed stability.

Origins

Cornelis was born at the threshold of a new century, on December 15, 1800 in the town of Middelharnis, on the island of Flakkee, close to Rotterdam. It was a typical small town, built along a dyke, with a population of 3,000 living from farming, growing wheat, modder, and potatoes, and its fishing. It had a small-town civilization with an expanded city hall (perhaps built by VanderMeulen, who was a contractor who worked for the city), a local chapter of the Society for the General Well-Being, which ran a library, a large public school, and a couple of churches. While the Hervormden dominated the village, small minorities of Jews (50), and Roman Catholics (100) could be found. One hundred families received assistance in meals during the winter months, so not everyone prospered here.¹

Cornelis' father, Jacob van der Meulen, was born in 1760 and married Anna de Rijke at age 25. This marriage brought forth nine children, but only two brothers reached adulthood: Eliza, born in 1793 and his brother Cornelis, seven years later. Death took a high toll in this family. Cornelis' mother died in 1805, leaving behind two infant sons and a husband, who never remarried. In 1826, one year before Cornelis was married his father died. Both his brother and he, were confronted frequently with death. The brother lost three children and his wife, before he died at age 56. Cornelis' own marriage resulted in twelve children, of whom he had to bury all but three. These events made Cornelis' family circle very small.²

In an autobiographical sermon in 1872 he identified his parents as 'gereformeerd', and his father as a wise, gifted man who knew the truth.³ Cornelis' wife Elizabeth Geertrui

van de Roovaard, came from Stad aan 't Haringvliet, close to Middelharnis. Her father was a sea captain. One of her relatives, Jacob, was a wagon maker and became the leader of the Seceders in Stad aan 't Haringvliet.⁴

Before Cornelis experienced a conversion, he lived rather light-heartedly, working hard, dressing well, and making his fiancée pregnant before their wedding -- the child died within six months. In the following years, three sons were born, one of whom did not survive the first year.⁵ During these years Cornelis worked as laborer, contractor, and trader. In the spring of 1833 he moved to Rotterdam, where he represented the interests of some citizens of Flakkee. Such moves from small Dutch towns to the booming economy of Rotterdam were quite common, but Cornelis' stay was short because of a tragedy in July 1833. On one and the same day his two remaining sons, aged four years and fifteen months, died in the first cholera epidemic of Rotterdam.⁶ This disaster triggered important decisions. Cornelis returned to Middelharnis, closed his business association and collected Dfl. 944 in the following two years. Moreover, he became serious about matters of life and death, he bent his knees and begged for grace, as he recalled.⁷

In the years following 1834 the Secession movement spread over the Netherlands. Very few people joined the Seceders on Overflakkee. Only four adults had officially levered ties with the Hervormde kerk. They were considered poor, but of a moral kind, and causing no disorder.⁸ The recently converted Cornelis sympathized with them. He recognized a similar state of mind and heart, which put religion at the center of ones life. In 1835 he became a charter member and was soon the leading elder of his congregation, reading sermons, teaching children catechism lessons, representing his group at synods, while continuing his work as contractor.⁹

Characterizing the early years of Cornelis VanderMeulen, we find a rather independent man, with a small circle of relatives, an entrepreneur taking risks, but also a man whose life was profoundly shaken by domestic distress and who found God in a crisis. He took the consequences of his conversion seriously and dared to stand alone as a Seceder. He was definitely no mere follower.

The education of a pastor

Soon after this fundamental change in his life, Cornelis set the first steps on the road to the ministry by giving edifying impromptu meditations, not only in Middelharnis, but also in the larger region.¹⁰ Itinerant Seceded ministers, such as Henry P. Scholte, attracted crowds of 200-300 listeners when they visited Middelharnis. Their charisma was sufficient to start a new congregation, but more was needed to establish a viable permanent institution, they needed a consistory and, if possible, a pastor. Scholte installed VanderMeulen and others in a consistory and advised the congregation that the provincial synod of the Seceders would examine the candidates, who had to prepare themselves with self-study. He was willing to offer assistance and found four candidates for the ministry in this region. All of them were familiar with God's grace and desired to gain training in pastoral care and teaching in the doctrines and practice in delivering sermons.¹¹ VanderMeulen had gained some reputation for edifying talks and was a promising candidate. Scholte sent him money to bring his entire family to Utrecht, where he had found living quarters for them. With official papers confirming his good behavior from the city and the classis, VanderMeulen

arrived in Utrecht in December 1838 after a forty-eight hour boat trip with an inexperienced crew, who got lost several times.¹²

The family moved to a second story apartment: a three-month old baby, a boy of four and a girl of two, and two boarders, who also studied with Scholte. While they had formerly enjoyed a decent income, they now had to live on a bare five guilders a week.¹³ To gain experience VanderMeulen became part of the consistory of Utrecht and was frequently asked to preach by Scholte, not only to help alleviate Scholte's tasks, but also to make congregations familiar with the candidate.¹⁴ VanderMeulen learned by doing and made a special study of church order, discipline, and history, while he also worked to improve his command of the Dutch language.¹⁵

Within a year he had made sufficient progress to be examined by Scholte. On November 22 and 23, 1839 VanderMeulen was asked questions till two o'clock in the morning by a consistory meeting at Utrecht with other members of the classis present, and delivered a sermon (about Nehemiah 2:20). Though the examinations were elaborate and satisfied the board, this was technically illegal because no other ministers had participated. The Seceded church was in the midst of a nasty controversy about the church order. Scholte resented the formalities and was ousted.¹⁶ He confirmed VanderMeulen immediately, who started his ministry in the congregations of Middelharnis and Rotterdam without delay.¹⁷ It took a year before the synod of the Seceders accepted VanderMeulen as regular minister.¹⁸ Meanwhile VanderMeulen had started with enthusiasm in his new profession, despite the regular fines for his illegal worship services in the Southwestern part of the Netherlands.¹⁹ Soon after VanderMeulen had passed his exams the Seceders in Zeeland started to approach him to become their pastor.²⁰ In March 1841 he was called by twelve congregations of Zeeland. The dispersed situation of these small churches convinced him to accept their request and the VanderMeulen family moved to Goes. His home situation was troublesome with an almost perpetual pregnant or nursing wife and poor living conditions, first in church buildings and narrow dwellings. But after some years the situation improved.²¹ With a salary of Dfl. 1,000, official recognition by synod and state, the future looked promising in 1841.²² VanderMeulen's six-year term in the province of Zeeland proved a highly successful one. In three years the conditions changed from meetings outdoors or in barns to regular church buildings and thriving congregations. In this pioneer situation VanderMeulen was always on the road, visiting each congregation in turn, starting to keep regular minutes, and celebrating the Lord's Supper, often for the first time. He went where needs and new chances were.

In the meantime he also contributed to the development of the denominational organization. The Zeeland Seceders stood somewhat aside of the Seceder organization. Though they did not reject the Church Order of Dordrecht, they resented attempts to force it upon all congregations.²³ Cornelis also wanted to prevent the rules from obstructing the growth of the churches: he wrote an elaborate paper on the procedure of calling ministers. The official rule was that only with consent of the old congregation and the classis a minister was allowed to accept a call. VanderMeulen argued that the congregation should let its pastor go when it benefitted the expansion of the church.²⁴ He also resisted the prescription that ministers should wear recognizable clothing: a cocked hat and knee-breeches; because it fanned superstition and resembled the garbs of roman catholic clergy. He successfully

occupied his position, provided clear leadership, and tightened the dispersed churches with friendly authority. He was a committed Seceder, but maintained friendly relations with the Hervormde clergy, he was no hardliner. He gave priority to bringing the gospel, and found regulations secondary.²⁵

Frequently Jannes van de Luyster, a rich farmer in Borssele and a pillar of the Secession in Zeeland, accompanied VanderMeulen when he preached around. Every Tuesday night the consistory met and discussed the matters of the congregation, sometimes nothing had passed. The presence of a minister made the congregations more attractive and many new members joined. VanderMeulen received colleagues in the Wolphaartsdijk (W. Gardenier) and Nieuwdorp to alleviate his burden (C. Steketee).

In the first decade as a minister, VanderMeulen proved himself a dedicated pastor, an able organizer, and a realist. Though he was a friend and trainee of Scholte and shared his resistance against formalities and overzealous features of piety, he differed with his master in investing in communion and coherence. He frequently tried to reconcile the small factions in the denomination. In church life he was a pioneer and an itinerant preacher in Zeeland, which proved valuable assets in his future as an emigrant leader.

Emigration

While the situation of the Seceders improved, the general economic situation in Zeeland deteriorated in the 1830s and 1840s, as is shown by the doubling of the percentage of paupers from 6 till 12 percent. The situation in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen was even worse. According to monitors of the Zeeland economy twice as many laborers were employed parttime compared to those with a permanent position. They saw no signs of improvement, because education was lacking and dependency on welfare and unwillingness to work seemed to increase. The sudden outbreak of the potato blight in July 1845 worsened an already depressing situation. The wet summer of that year proved a perfect condition for rapid infection by *phytophthora infestans*, a fungus destroying 75 percent of the total crop. The following year few potatoes were planted and a very dry summer caused the harvest to be minimal. Moreover, substitution with other food was impossible because wheat and rye suffered from the drought, while the international demand for food rose. With prices tripling within a year, the common man could not sustain himself anymore. The situation reached an alarming state in early 1847 when the winter proved severe.²⁶

VanderMeulen was not pleased with the emigration ideas resulting from this emergency. He had fundamental and practical objections against leaving the country: God had a covenant with the Netherlands and emigration was a sign of desparation and therefore a denial of God's promises. Moreover, leaving Zeeland would increase the burden on those who stayed behind. He strongly suspected worldly and material motives for emigration. It was probably around Christmas 1846 that VanderMeulen gave up his resistance against emigration.²⁷ Scholte had published a justification refuting these reservations and in the fall of 1846 the first emigrants had in fact left. Now VanderMeulen started to emphasize the positive aspects of emigration, as a way to obey God's command to fill the earth and spread the gospel. Moreover, he must have felt that the emigration movement was unstoppable. Especially, when VandeLuyster's conscience was liberated and he publicly stated that he would go, the emigration fever broke loose among the Seceders and two-thirds of his

congregation announced it would join the farmer. Still VanderMeulen thought through the consequences of the emigration and told VandeLuyster that the entire congregation of Borssele should get the chance to leave, especially the poor, and that provisions should be made for those who stayed behind. He invited VandeLuyster to publish his plans, so that others could join him.²⁸

On February 1, 1847 VanderMeulen opened a special meeting of the consistory with prayer and proposed to sing Psalm 119:17 asking for God's guidance. A committee was formed to receive money from prospective emigrants. Soon they had accumulated Dfl 22.847,50 and asked the pastor to join them as their minister, to which he readily consented. After they had met with Scholte to discuss the details of emigration over a meal, they placed advertisements in local newspapers and started their preparations.²⁹ Clearly, they had had access to the plans of Van Raalte and Scholte, and they followed the basic outline of Scholte, stating exact prices and obligations, but also introduced significant innovations. The Zeeland regulation was more democratic and contained explicit assurances to assist the poor and needy and to form a Christian congregation.

The number of emigrants was too large to leave as one party. VanderMeulen took his party to Rotterdam, on April 8, but had to find a ship suitable for his one hundred and fifty emigrants. They embarked the *Princess Sophia* and soon sailed to Hellevoetsluis to depart. There they had to resolve a business disagreement, to find an additional ship for the surplus passengers, before an East-Southeastern wind enabled them to leave after a six week delay.³⁰ The desparation on board can hardly be imagined. The uncertainty about the departure and the destination, the unsanitary conditions, the lack of food, and especially the measles which took the lives of twenty children and one young woman before the company had even left the Dutch harbor. The lack of resources and the rule that they could not touch their provisions forced VanderMeulen to apply for funds and love offerings from neighboring congregations, even from the cities of Middelburg and Rotterdam. The minister preached wherever he could and money and food poured in, even a bottle of wine for the sick.³¹ VanderMeulen felt like a mediator between God and his people. When one of the companions died, despite fervent and frequent prayer, he blamed himself and was willing to sacrifice himself and his family to save the group, if a sin had to be punished. He found comfort in remembering God's words to Moses that only those who sinned would be erased from His book and in Da Costa's hymns.³²

On July 2, 1847 after 33 days at sea they arrived in New York, where they were met with letters from Scholte and Van Raalte. They took a steamer to Albany, but arrived in Troy. Disappointed about the misleading deals, VanderMeulen had to return to New York to reclaim the fares. In Albany they received VandeLuyster's message that the earlier parties had eventually decided to go to Michigan to join Van Raalte. They continued with a canal boat to Buffalo, and arrived by steamer at Black Lake, after a journey of five days, in early August. Because the settlement in Holland lacked facilities to accomodate the stream of new arrivals, part of the group proceeded to Grand Haven encountering many difficulties, but also generous sharing of clothing and food from other immigrants, who were grateful for relief of their loneliness.³³

In reviewing the emigration experience, we conclude that VanderMeulen was not the initiator of the decision to leave, but he acted as the conscience of the group, evaluating the

religious and social aspects of this important decision and securing the interests of the poor. During the trip he executed a moral and practical leadership which was crucial for the perseverance when the high expectations clashed with staggering disappointments.

Settlement

Meanwhile VandeLuyster had laid out the boundaries of the settlement and purchased the sections where the town for the Zeelanders was founded. VanderMeulen did not intend to found an exclusively Zeeland colony. He had proposed to baptize the town as 'Brothertown', because so many different people from different provinces lived together in peace. However, a Dutch-American from Grand Rapids, advised the name Zeeland, which they adopted.³⁴

VanderMeulen experienced all the hardships of the other pioneers. On July 19 he bought 20 acres for \$ 25 from VandeLuyster who sold his land to the original inhabitants of Zeeland. He barehandedly built his own log cabin before he brought his family over. He suffered from malnutrition, when the diet existed of monotonous bread and bacon, with occasional eggs and butter. During the first winter the pastor and the financier went to Grand Rapids to buy provisions, one hundred barrels of flour, sixty bushels of potatoes, ink, pencils, raisins and sugar, in addition to construction materials.³⁵ In fact the second winter was worse when the resources from the old country were exhausted before the new land rendered its fruits. VanderMeulen was the rubbing post for everyone to complain.

In matters of the church, the circumstances were familiar to VanderMeulen, who had also worshipped in the open field in the Netherlands, but the circumstances in Michigan were especially grim. However, VanderMeulen and his colleagues were also free to develop their own way of organizing church and society. VandeLuyster started the building of the church in November 5, when it was too cold to worship outside VanderMeulen's log cabin.³⁶ In May 1848 the church was finished. The organization needed to be adapted to the new situation. The emigrant society had left as a congregation and every man who was an office bearer in the Netherlands was one in the new settlement. This led to an enormous consistory with 20 members. In July 1849 the number of church officers was reduced to four elders and two deacons.³⁷

Around 1850 the first hurdle of the colonization was taken: the basic needs were met, and the contours of the community were visible.³⁸ In 1855 the church envisioned to be self sustaining in short time. In that year about 160 families were connected with the church, which counted 291 full members.³⁹ The consistory dealt with acceptance of new members, but also with conflicts between the citizens, marital problems, disputes about ownership, inheritances, and employment problems.

On April 23, 1848 the first Classical meeting was held in Zeeland with four churches present. With few exceptions the regional churches met in Zeeland, since it was the center of the early colony. The classical meetings were considered a feast and many citizens refrained from working to follow the sessions and listen to the debates.⁴⁰

VandeLuyster was kept in high esteem in the community. His opinion was sought, but not always followed. The farmer wanted clear rules and formal agreements, the pastor was more lenient. VandeLuyster resisted the periodical resignation of the elders, but the others (among them VanderMeulen) wanted rotation. Nevertheless, VandeLuyster was

always reelected. He sometimes led the worship service when the pastor was unable to do so, but this was not appreciated.⁴¹ Notwithstanding these differences the relationship with the pastor was excellent: together they visited newly arrived to examine their spiritual condition, they went to neighboring towns to solve conflicts, they traveled to the RCA synod in New Brunswick in 1855. But he also let others benefit from his possessions, for instance he freely loaned his books with sermons of Zeeland pietists such as Smytegelt to vacant congregations, and the inspirational writings of Abraham van der Velde and Johannes Fruytier to private persons.⁴²

Van Raalte was the undisputed representative of the colony, who primarily dealt with the outside contacts, but VanderMeulen was his secundus. Being close to the people and spending more time in the homes of his parishioners, he sensed the needs and desires of the settlers. He shared their burdens and in combination with his reassuring sermons, really helped the settlers to go on.⁴³ He chose texts that literally dealt with the current situation. Perhaps this shocks contemporary listeners, but to the people living in mid-nineteenth century this approach proved wholesome. For instance, when Adriaan van de Laare died after he was hit by branch off a tree, VanderMeulen preached about the text from Is.53:10: "It pleased the Lord to break him in pieces."⁴⁴ And in his memorial address celebrating the 25th anniversary of the colony in 1872 he preached on "Hitherto has the Lord helped us," I Sam. 7:12.⁴⁵ Frequently, he reports that his audience was moved to tears, he knew how to move their hearts.⁴⁶

VanderMeulen was less tied to the settlement than VanRaalte, whose interests in the colony and its institutions were considerable that it was difficult to leave.⁴⁷ VanderMeulen also possessed considerable tracts of land and had intimate relations in Zeeland, yet he felt the liberty to move on.⁴⁸ At the end of the 1850s the Zeeland settlement was firmly established. Therefore, he decided to serve the young congregation of Chicago in 1859, followed by Second Reformed of Grand Rapids (the first was a non-Dutch church) in 1861. Both were congregations in need: Chicago consisted mainly of day laborers, only a sixth in size compared to Zeeland, and many Dutch were not connected with the church. In Grand Rapids a considerable part had defected because of the 1857 Secession. His life shows a consistent line of serving the places that were needy. In this respect he showed a lot of initiative, independence, and flexibility, which made him more than a follower.

In his personal life he experienced much suffering in the passing away of family members. In 1849 nine-year old Anna died and in February 1857 two other daughters, aged five and twelve deceased from scarlet fever. But also in these dark hours, he could discover positive things, like the serious experience of a revival in Zeeland.⁴⁹ Twelve years later, in 1869 his wife died during a worship service in their own church. She had been a quiet, pious woman.⁵⁰ To recuperate from this loss, his church granted the old pastor a vacation of several weeks, followed by his selection as official representative of the Reformed churches to the important synod of the Seceders in Middelburg. Rejuvenated by this joyful reunion, VanderMeulen remarried a widow, Frouke VanderPloeg, in February 1870 and continued to work until 1873, when he retired. Apart from the hardships there were also very satisfying events in his life. He saw to it that his two sons were educated at Holland Academy and subsequently at Rutgers and that they became respected ministers as did a number of men from his flock in the old country: James Moerdijke, A. Cz. Kuiper, W.P. de Jong,⁵¹ H.

Uiterwijk, and J. de Pree. He loved his job and continued to preach till the very end. He died peacefully in Grand Rapids in August 1876, mourned by the entire colony.

VanderMeulen was a congenial, practical, down-to-earth, and committed pastor, who supported the weak and needy. He was determined, but tolerant, peaceful, forceful and forgiving, and critical of himself.⁵²

He did not contribute anything to theological development and his sermons have served and exhausted their purpose for the immediate listeners. Though not a founder in the restricted sense of the word as the first and foremost initiator, he was more than a mere follower. He shaped Zeeland and made it a stable and supportive community. He reduced the tensions in the colony and supported the initiatives to develop its potential. Can VanderMeulen stand in the shadow of Van Raalte? Yes, he could and he felt comfortable in that position, from which he could do much for the Dutch community at large. He was not preoccupied with his standing and could relativize his own role, as the following example of his humor shows. The minister used to make his visits with a small wagon pulled by two worn-out ponies. When he had returned from a visit to Grand Rapids, he asked at Beaverdam whether someone could watch his ponies. In response to the question whether he was afraid they would run away, he answered: "No, but if no one is watching them they may fall down."⁵³

Endnotes

1. A. J. van der Aa, *Aardrijkskundig woordenboek der Nederlanden* (Gorinchem: Jacobus Noorduyn, 1846), 7:920-927.
2. Julian H. VanderMeulen, "Genealogy VanderMeulen family," chart 1, Herrick Public Library, Holland, MI. This genealogy is not fully reliable and has some dates wrong, such as the birth date of Annetje Elizabeth (correct is February 20, 1828) and hte death of Anna (correct is March 8, 1849). The wedding date of Jacob and Anna is May 8, 1785.
3. *Ter nagedachtenis van Rev. Cornelius van der Meulen* (Grand Rapids: De Standaard Drukkerij, 1876), 10.
4. C. Smits, *De Afscheiding van 1835* 9 vols. (Dordrecht: J.P. van den Tol, 1982) 5:250. Jacob van de Roovaard ran into difficulties because he had pressed himself upon his congregation as a teaching elder. VanderMeulen had mediated in the conflict and brought him to a confession of sin. He was not a brother, but a distant cousin to Elizabeth.
5. Algemeen Rijksarchief Den Haag, Burgerlijke Stand, Middelharnis.
6. Gemeente Archief Goes, VanderMeulen Archief, inv. 1. (hereafter quoted as GAG, VDMA) Henk van Dijk, *Rotterdam 1810-1880. Aspecten van een stedelijke samenleving* (Schiedam: Interbook International, 1976), 211 shows that migrant to Rotterdam came from

the Zuid-Holland islands and especially from the smaller cities. Many immigrants in Rotterdam had an orthodox hervormde background, 242-243. Cornelis finds young men who want to stay out of military service by paying a substitute the sum of Dfl. 700. Gemeente Archief Rotterdam, Nieuw Noterieel Archief, inv. 124 f 507, April 25, 1833; also 123 f 1070, April 16, 1832. Gemeente Archief Rotterdam, Death Records 2821 and 2822; Van Dijk, *Rotterdam*, 177-186.

7. GAG, VDMA, inv. 2., Akte van Volmacht, 5 August 1833; *Nagedachtenis*, 12.

8. Smits, *Afscheiding*, 7: 27-33.

9. *Handelingen en verslagen van de algemene synoden van de christelijk afgescheidene gereformeerde ker* (1836-1869) (Houten/Utrecht: Den Herton, 1984), 83 (28 september-11 oktober 1837). At this synod also J. van de Luijster was present, 180 (6 and 7 March 1840).

10. *Nagedachtenis*, 12 mentions Middelburg in 1837.

11. The confirmation of the consistory happened on July 29, 1835, Smits, *Afscheiding*, 7:107; Scholte to congregation of Middelharnis and VanderMeulen, June 25, 1838, GAG, VDMA inv. 8; H.P. Scholte to H. de Cock, December 7, 1838, Smits, *Afscheiding*, 3:113.

12. *Nagedachtenis*, 31.

13. Smits, *Afscheiding*, 5:205.

14. Scholte to VDM November 28, 1838 and December 5, 1838, GAG, VDMA, inv. 9.

15. He prepared himself with reading translations of Merle d'Aubigné and Joseph Millner, an Episcopal theologian in Hull. *Nagedachtenis*, 33; J. Wesseling, *De Afscheiding van 1834 in Zeeland*, 2 vols. (Barneveld: De Vuurbaak, 1989) 1:102. Smits, *Afscheiding*, 5:205.

16. Smits, *Afscheiding*, 4:155. See C. Veenhof, *Kerkgemeenschap en kerkorde. Kort overzicht van de strijd, gevoerd in de Afgescheiden Kerken tussen 1836 en 1840 over de Kerkgemeenschap en Kerkorde* (Amsterdam: Buijten en Schipperheijn, 1974).

17. The more formal brethren in the Seceded denomination considered this a break of the agreement that at examinations of candidates at a Provincial meeting at least three ministers needed to be present. They requested another examination, but VanderMeulen thought that preposterous, since they had no objection to his life or doctrine. Smits, *Afscheiding*, 5:130-131.

18. The Synod of the Seceders met in Amsterdam from November 17 - December 3, 1840. Encouraged by his Rotterdam consistory VanderMeulen attended the meetings and showed an open attitude, asking for any questions about his views or service (but not an examination) and was accepted. VanderMeulen to Scholte, December 3, 1840, in Smits, *Afscheiding*, 3:188. *Handelingen en verslagen*, 235.

19. Smits, *Afscheiding*, 7:109 and 144; 1:127-129; Wesseling, *Afscheiding van 1834 in Zeeland*, 1:307-308; GAG, VDMA, inv. 15 and 26. Court order April 21, 1840 and receipt of lawsuit dated June 4, 1842.
20. Pieter Geerske to VanderMeulen, May 7, 1840, GAG, VDMA inv. 11. Minutes Classis Goes, January 6, 1841, GAG, Archives Particuliere Synode GKN, inv. 2.
21. *Nagedachtenis*, 36.
22. *Nagedachtenis*, 14; Minutes Classis Goes, March 5 and April 21, 1841, GAG, Archief Particuliere Synode Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, inv. 2; Wesseling, *Afscheiding van 1834 in Zeeland*, 1:109-111.
23. Twice they saw their minister being ousted by national synods (Budding and Scholte), and twice they had a minister fired because they did not want to cooperate with the followers of Scholte (P.M. Dijksterhuis and S.O. Los), Smits, *Afscheiding*, 7:69 and 79.
24. Manuscript in GAG, VDMA, inv. 101; Wesseling, *Afscheiding in Zeeland*, 2:61.
25. *Nagedachtenis*, 35-36; Concept letter about the clerical costume GAG, VDMA, inv.7. Wesseling, *Afscheiding in Zeeland*, 2:64.
26. M. Bergman, "The Potato Blight in the Netherlands and its Social Consequences (1845-1847)," *International Review of Social History* 12 (1967): 390-431.
27. C. van der Meulen, *Opwekking tot het houden van eenen algemeen dank- vast en bededag op Woensdag, den 25sten Februarij 1846*.
28. Minutes Particular Synod, January 6, 1847; GA Goes, Archives Part. Syn. GKN, inv. 3.
29. Consistory Minutes Goes, GA Goes, Archief Christelijk Afscheiden gemeente, inv. 1, February 16, 1847; Diary Van de Luyster, part 4, p. 2-3, p. 113-115, Joint Archives of Holland (hereafter cited as JAH).
30. *NRC*, May 28, 1847. The captain was J.H. Pellenwessel, and according to the newspaper the ship was headed for Baltimore.
31. Wesseling, *Afscheiding in Zeeland*, 2: 68; *Nagedachtenis*, 54, 167.
32. *Nagedachtenis*, 58.
33. *Nagedachtenis*, 62-66.
34. D. Versteeg, *De Pelgrim-Vaders van het westen* (Grand Rapids: C.M. Loomis, 1886), 52.

35. Diary VandeLuyster, book 1, 19 January 1848. JAH.
36. VandeLuyster Archives, box 1., JAH.
37. "The consistory minutes (in Dutch and English) from February 21, 1849 - December 31, 1856 of the First Reformed Church, Zeeland, Michigan," Translations by the Rev. Richard Van Farowe.
38. In November 1851 VanderMeulen became president of the trustees of the church to deal with civic business. All trustees were members of the consistory. Church Records, Zeeland, 7 november 1851.
39. Report from the Rev. Cornelius VanderMeulen to the Board of Domestic Missions of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, Archives of the RCA, New Brunswick, NJ, Correspondence of the Board of Domestic Missions, box 14, file "Reports of Aided Churches." Courtesy of dr. Elton Bruins.
40. Versteeg, *Pelgrim vaders*, 189.
41. Church Records Zeeland, 21 June 1849.
42. "Brievenboek," VandeLuyster collection, box 1, Register van geleende boeken", JAH.
43. See for instance the testimonies of Kasper Lahuis, Cornelius Van Loo, and Grietje van de Bosch, in Henry S. Lucas, ed., *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs and Related Writings*, 2 vols., (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 1: 113, 251, and 249.
44. Lucas, *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs*, 1: 167.
45. Ibid., 1:185.
46. *Nagedachtenis*, 5-10. Letter C. van der Meulen to John Garretson, May 9, 1859, Board of Domestic Missions, RCA Archives, Courtesy Elton J. Bruins.
47. Jeanne M. Jacobson, Elton J. Bruins, and Larry J. Wagenaar, *Albertus C. van Raalte: Dutch Leader and American Patriot* (Holland: Hope College, 1996), 153-155.
48. Vander Meulen is recorded to have sold land for \$1,757 in 1849. The 1870 census showed he had done well, with \$5,000 in real estate and \$2,000 in possessions.
49. *Nagedachtenis*, 87-88.
50. Ibidem, 128-138.
51. Lucas, *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs*, 2:413-414, 420-422; *Nagedachtenis*, 93-94, respectively from Rotterdam and Goes.

52. *Nagedachtenis*, 44 and 158.

53. Frans van Driele, "First Experiences;" Lucas, *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs*, 1:337.