

Calvinism Isn't the Only Truth:  
Herman Bavinck's Impressions of the USA

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On July 22 of the year 1892 two Dutch theologians passed through customs at Rotterdam harbor. They set sail to America to make a three months trip through the United States and Canada. Both of them were professor at the Theological School of the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland at Kampen. According to their passports their names and dates of birth were: Douwe Klazes Wielenga, born August 22, 1841 and Herman Bavinck, born December 13, 1854.

They were professors, but that did not mean they belonged to the substantial citizens of the Netherlands. Bavinck and Wielenga originated from the circles of the Secession of 1834, a group of simple and at first humiliated Reformed people. Their conviction was formulated in the classical texts of the Belgic Confession of 1561, the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563, and the Canons of Dordt of 1618/1619. Their piety was linked most closely to the Scriptures. They were trained to struggle by the history and doctrines of Calvinism, and they were familiar with suppression and believed they were among the elect.

The trip of these two Reformed professors cannot be separated from the voluminous emigration of the Dutch to America in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the transatlantic ecclesiastical relationship that resulted from it. There had been contacts between the Nederlands Hervormde Kerk and the Dutch Reformed Church of America since the seventeenth century, but they were watered down. The emigration flow towards America that originated in 1846, however, had changed this situation. The old relationship revived, especially when several groups of seceders among the emigrants, who settled mainly in New Jersey, Michigan and Iowa, joined the Reformed Church.

These Dutch Afscheidenen were a special group among the millions of European immigrants, because they had outspoken religious reasons for emigration, besides the more usual economic and social motives. They came to the new world to confess their religion in freedom. They injected the old Dutch Reformed Church with fresh and strong blood and provided new ecclesiastical and theological contacts with the Netherlands. Sensitive to restrictive freedom and attached to defined religious and moral views as they were, it was not easy for the seceders to suit the old Reformed Church and to accept its traditions. As a result of this friction, in 1857 a separatist church was founded: the Christian Reformed Church. The reason and motives for this split up are not clear until today, but in assessing these it is important to take the Dutch religious background and ecclesiastical alignment into account as well.

The principle difference between both churches never became clear to the Afscheidenen churches in the Netherlands. Though in the end most of the seceder immigrants joined the Christian Reformed Church, their mother church never made a definite choice between one of the Dutch-American churches. This indecision had also to do with regular attempts to heal the split; new negotiations were going on when Bavinck and Wielenga visited America in 1892 and they preached in both churches and spoke with both parties.

Because of these ecclesiastical complications among the emigrated Afscheidenen, it was of special interest that in June 1892, only two months before our two theologians left for

America, the Dutch Afgescheiden church united with the churches of the Doleantie of 1886, that resulted from the second Reformed exodus out of the Hervormde Kerk, with Dr. Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) as their Moses. Bavinck had been one of the Afgescheiden negotiators of this church union. Not long before, in April 1892, Bavinck had written in the American theological periodical, *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, that the result of the negotiations was uncertain. But in June both Dutch parties succeeded: 'Contrary to almost universal expectation', Bavinck wrote afterwards, 'nay, notwithstanding the hopes and the avowed opposition of many from without, the union itself was concluded.'<sup>1</sup> When coming to America he brought hopes for the Reformed Americans, that notwithstanding the opposition of many from within, the miracle would occur in America as well, and, as John H. Kromminga has put it, no party would abandon the other at the altar.<sup>2</sup>

Besides the union of 1892, there were other reasons for the Reformed Americans to look at the Netherlands as an example, because as a matter of fact until 1900 they were dependent on that country both ecclesiastically and theologically. Bavinck's two American friends for example, Henry Dosker and Geerhardus Vos, both were of Dutch ancestors, and held important positions as theological professors, respectively at Western Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in America in Holland, and at the Theological School of the Christian Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. This Dutch domination was no accident. In former years Herman Bavinck's father was appointed twice as a professor in Grand Rapids. He declined the call both times, but now, in July 1892, Wielenga was appointed as the fourth professor at this School. He visited America to meet the Reformed people in Michigan and tried to find out whether he would stay in Kampen or emigrate to Grand Rapids.<sup>3</sup> Though today only Bavinck's name is well known as theologian and historical figure, a century ago it was mainly Wielenga the Christian Reformed people were interested in.

The Dutch orientation was strengthened by the revival of Dutch Calvinism in the last part of the nineteenth century led by Kuyper and Bavinck. Bavinck described this so called Neocalvinism as a movement with 'a specific character and a distinct physiognomy, not merely in its church and theology, but also in social and political life, in science and art. The root principle of this Calvinism is the confession of God's absolute sovereignty.'<sup>4</sup> This Neocalvinism was a lighthouse in a night of unbelief, not only for Reformed Dutch immigrants, but for the Presbyterians of Princeton Theological Seminary as well.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, the Dutch orientation was strengthened by the fact that the children of Calvin did not fit in the American natural culture. For Americans, protestantism was in essence a break with religious authority and the freedom to believe whatever one wanted. Because of his predestination-dogma Calvin was turned 'into an authoritarian theocrat who preached an authoritarian and despotic God. This Calvin threatened the freedom (...) Thus, Calvin became the very image of intolerance.'<sup>6</sup> The Calvin-historiography has been polluted by this caricature since the sixteenth century, which to a certain degree hindered the Christian Reformed immigrants to americanize.

Although the trip of Bavinck and Wielenga was intimately connected with the emigration of the Afgescheidenen, the real destination of Bavinck was not the emigrant circles, and he and Wielenga went along separate ways through the American continent. Bavinck visited America mainly as a delegate of the newly founded Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands to the fifth general council of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System, held in Toronto, from September 21 to September 30, 1892. On September 22 he gave a speech in

Toronto on 'The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the Moral and Religious Condition of Communities and Nations.'

Participation in this broad council was not self-evident in Reformed circles, either in the Netherlands or in the United States.<sup>7</sup> Bavinck was not blind to the dangers of the breadth of the council, and thought the ecumenical ideal of the Alliance was aimed too high. But still his conclusion was positive: 'the idea of association or community of all Reformed churches sounds fine and glorious. And that's reason enough to pay attention to this Alliance and show it our sympathy.'<sup>8</sup>

Before Bavinck attended the council, he had six weeks to explore America and the Americans. In this period he stayed three weeks with his academic friend Vos and another three weeks with his schoolmate Dosker. Bavinck knew both of them well, not in the least because of his regular correspondence in the years around 1892, that taught him much about the American state of affairs, especially in church and theology. After he had given his lecture at the Toronto council, Bavinck had another two weeks for exploring America. He admired the Niagara Falls, traveled along the Hudson River, visited Princeton Theological Seminary and Prof. Benjamin B. Warfield. In the east he met Wielenga again, and together they left New York on October 5, heading home. Back in the Netherlands Bavinck gave some lectures on his American trip. The Bavinck-archives at Amsterdam contain the text of one of them, besides some American notes.<sup>9</sup>

When we ask what impression these two months in America made on Herman Bavinck, we first have to realize what sort of person he was. As a young seceder, Bavinck studied theology in Leiden, of all places. This university was regarded as the seat of evil by his fellow-seceders and in Leiden he was the only theological student of Reformed principles. Forty years before, seceder leaders Hendrik P. Scholte and Albertus C. van Raalte had broken with this university and its theological faculty, which was celebrated since its heyday as a bulwark of modern theology. Bavinck, however, got his professional attitude there and learned to esteem opponents and different theological opinions. He stayed loyal to the seceder church and though other chairs were offered to him, in 1882 he became professor in dogmatics at the small Theological School at Kampen.

In the first ten years as a professor Bavinck collected materials for his *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, that was published in four volumes in the 1890s. It was mainly this book that made Bavinck's name, national and international. It is a standard work, used up to the present day, and is now planned to be published in English, a hundred years after its first appearance.<sup>10</sup> An alumnus of the Kampen School, the well known Christian Reformed clergyman Idzerd van Dellen, wrote about his Kampen professors in his autobiography: 'we learned from all of them. But Bavinck towered far above the others. He was *the* scholar and *the* orator.' Just as the short presence of Geerhardus Vos in the 1880s gave an impulse to academically founded Reformed theology at Grand Rapids, so Bavinck pulled up the level of the Kampen School, but with more success. Van Dellen did not claim too much when he qualified Bavinck's rectorial orations in his student years as 'a turning point in the history of the [Dutch] Christian Reformed Church.' It was a turning point for two reasons: Bavinck founded the curriculum, that was waning theologically, on a sound Reformed basis. And in doing so he tried to find, as the Dutch clergyman and pupil of Bavinck, Dr. J.J. Buskes, put it, 'a synthesis between the specific-Reformed and the common-Christian, between the specific Christian and the common-human.'<sup>11</sup>

'There is irony in the course of history', George Puchinger wrote, referring to Bavinck's work and ethos, 'but it is undeniable: the most ecumenical work of protestant dogmatics was composed in Kampen, where theology was professed in the most isolationistic way!'<sup>12</sup> Within seceder circles, Bavinck was a remarkable appearance, loved by his students, respected for his professional qualities by the church, but distrusted because he openly criticized the narrow-minded and sectarian sentiment within his circle.

So Bavinck was a scholar soundly Reformed, but at the same time open to catholic Christianity, actual cultural trends and modern life. Calvinists, he illustrated in 1894 in an article, in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, 'do not wish to re-pristiniate, and have no desire for the old conditions to return. They heartily accept the freedom of religion and conscience, the equality of all before the law (...) They strive to make progress, to escape from the deadly embrace of dead conservatism, and to take their place, as before, at the head of every movement.'<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps it was possible to fancy oneself a conqueror of the world in provincial Kampen and anyway it would not do much harm to observe modern culture obligingly from the borders of the river IJssel. But how did Bavinck fare when he was on the American continent?

In distinction to Abraham Kuyper, who would visit the United States six years later, Herman Bavinck was a modern type of traveller, who no longer took his own culture explicitly as a touchstone for his observations, mainly to spot the differences and peculiarities. Bavinck seriously tried to understand America civilization and to evaluate its own worth. This openness to cultural relativism reveals Bavinck as a modern man.<sup>14</sup> In the America-lecture that is kept in the Bavinck-archives, he respectively distinguishes the social and physical geography, the social and cultural life, and the moral and religious life.

Bavinck noticed the differences between Europe and America, just as many others had done before him. He experienced the enormous size of the continent as incomprehensible: 'One can travel on for days and nights. We don't understand this extensiveness.' As an educated and reflective European he did not appreciate frontier-culture: 'A town like New York, old and European, may be seen as a difference more or less; but the further one travels West, the more you are impressed by the new and unfinished. (...) Nothing has grown, everything has been made (...) there is no history in it or poetry.' The Hudson River reminded him of the Rhine River in Germany that he traveled with Geerhardus Vos in 1886, but 'the romantic is absent'.<sup>15</sup>

So Bavinck was astonished by, but certainly not negative, on the new world. He had, for example, a very positive impression of American houses. They were more airy, cheerful, lively and varied than Dutch houses. The American houses were fixed up economically and easy, with light colored furniture. As a result the furnishing made a much less grave and stately impression than the Dutch living rooms.

Bavinck took the rocking chair, unknown in the Netherlands in his days, as a symbol for the active but nervous trait in American culture. According to Bavinck, this trait made clear why most men were muscular, but bony and meager, and early grey. He did not meet many handsome men, but in 1892 the women apparently had much less to suffer from the unquiet traits of American culture. He described the women as beauties: 'Slim and tall, well shaped and charming, free in her movements, with a white complexion, dark brown hair, dark eyes and brows, they make an excellent figure.' Bavinck was surprised by their emancipated position in society. He wrote: 'They travel, cycle, do gymnastics, assemble, speak, preside, manage and

govern to their heart's content.' It was his impression that women, who enjoyed their freedom and prosperity, usually felt better at home in the new world than men, who lacked the coziness of intercourse and conversation.

Let's forget about the female beauty. As a theologian Bavinck was of course especially interested in the intellectual side of American life. Even in education and religion, he found out that freedom and individuality was stressed. There were many public libraries and education was open to all. But despite these positive aspects Bavinck's opinion was that the breadth of study surpassed its depth and thoroughness. It was the same with religion. It was winning among the American people and the seceder Bavinck was surprised by the respect paid to orthodox Christians. In America the orthodox believer was no pariah, or obscurantist: 'The preachers in the street are listened to in deep silence.' Despite this he noted several evident disadvantages to the popularization of knowledge and religion: 'Respect for strictly academic research is not promoted by it. There is a democracy that denies the aristocracy of the genius and the mind.' The American wants the sermon above all to be piquant, and though there were many churches and sects, the idea of the church as a community is absent. It was strange to Bavinck that the Americans had religion, but religion did not have Americans.

The pioneer mentality was typical in all American society, and included mental life as well. This explained to Bavinck that Americans did not know despair and suffering. They lived from the idea that people could influence their own fate. 'There is belief, hope, a miraculous optimism, a strong altruism', he wrote in his travel accounts. 'Everyone believes it will be different and it can be better, that every man can have a more or less good life on earth. (...) The way to a civic and respectable existence is open to everyone. The point is that so many people hinder themselves to enter that road.' This attitude explained to Bavinck the fight against alcohol and tobacco and the general presence of a strong moral feeling. This life-view not only explained the mediocre and superficial character in American culture, but also the character of American religion. It was no wonder to Bavinck that America was more open to Methodism than to Calvinism. Calvinism was fit for a people that has been saved through many difficulties, and despairing, clung to God's saving grace.<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting that Bavinck - in contrast to Abraham Kuyper - did not draw the conclusion from these observations, which was usual in his circles, that Calvinism was the superior religion, and American Christendom was inferior.<sup>17</sup> Bavinck just wondered how to think of American religion as a Calvinist? He admitted that the self-helping American was not attracted by the principle of Calvinism: the sovereignty of God. He heard no preacher spend a thought on election and rejection. Not Calvinism, but Methodism was the kind of piety that fitted almost hand in glove with the American cultural notions of freedom, progress and moral perfectability.<sup>18</sup> Neocalvinists had always had serious objections to Methodism, varying from one-sided attention for conversion to superficiality, activism and sectarianism. Bavinck had formulated his objection in 1888, when he stated that Methodism did not have a consistent theological world and life-view.<sup>19</sup> 'The calvinistic principle, however', so he explained in 1894 in an American periodical, 'is too universal and accordingly too rich and fruitful to allow its influence to be confined to the production of a specific type in the sphere of religion and theology. It produces a specific view of the world and life as a whole.'<sup>20</sup>

Notwithstanding this theological objections, Bavinck refrained from giving a negative judgment on American Christendom. Listen how he ended one of these lectures on his 1892

trip: 'Arminianism and Methodism are undeniably present in American Christendom. There is much humbug in it. But I think we do better to incorporate and imitate the good things, than to condemn it all. Having seen so much good, one hesitates to criticize. Let American Christendom develop according to its own laws. God has entrusted to America a high and great calling. Let it fulfill this, in its own way. After all, Calvinism is not the only truth.'

His audience, presumably the faculty staff of the Kampen School, must have been startled hearing these last sentences, and especially the last clause: 'After all, Calvinism is not the only truth.' If anything was clear and holy to them, and repeated unceasingly, it was that the Reformed doctrine was the truth, which implied that other doctrines were wrong. And we wonder too, we who thought we understood what Neocalvinism meant. Was this a slip of the pen of Bavinck, or do we have to look in a different direction to find the key to this conclusion?

We must not misunderstand Bavinck. The fact that he took into account the relativity of Calvinism does not mean that he was a half-hearted calvinist. Speaking on Calvinism to the Toronto-council in 1892, he was very positive about Calvinism, defending it as a moral power in the life of nations. 'Calvinism', he stated, 'is the only consistent theological view of the world and of humanity.'<sup>21</sup>

But it is less known that in the same eulogy he made some critical remarks on the practice of Calvinism as well,<sup>22</sup> just as he had done in 1888 in his rectorial address on the catholicity of Christendom and church. He than criticized the emigration of seceders to America as a sign of the separatistic tendency in his circles, to leave society to its own devices.<sup>23</sup> And though he admitted in Toronto that this 'calvinistic rigorism was born from the desire to consecrate the whole life to God', he deemed that this extremism was 'guilty of exaggeration'. 'It has often disowned and killed the natural', he fulminated, and 'sometimes nourished a hardness of sentiment, a coldness of heart, and a severity of judgment, which cannot impress favorably. The free, the genial, the spontaneous in the moral life, have often been oppressed and killed by it.'<sup>24</sup>

Bavinck chose to mention these anti-natural traits, because they were the reason for many to break with Christianity: 'Many deem religion the greatest disease and aberration of the human mind.' In this context Bavinck spoke of a serious crisis for Calvinism: 'Christianity and Calvinism are confronted with the question whether in the true sense of the word they are catholic and universal; whether they are adapted to all regions and circumstances, whether they will be able to maintain themselves over against the civilization that more and more emancipates itself from all religion; whether in the future as in the past they will prove a blessing to humanity.'<sup>25</sup> So, in discussing several weaknesses in Calvinism, he also pleaded for its good. In his opinion this cause was threatened not in the first place by modern science, Methodism or any other threat from outside, but by the inhuman and anti-natural attitude of calvinists. In his opinion, Calvinism had to be universal and catholic, or else it would not be.

Bavinck believed in the vitality of Calvinism and he was sure it would survive this crisis. But in order to survive, the weaknesses needed to be fought fiercely, and more room had to be made for pluriformity and openness for renewal within the tradition. This demand was not born from exclusivism. Bavinck did not aim to expand Calvinism in such a way that it would swallow all Christianity. Though he claimed Calvinism to be the purest religion, it 'has never pretended to be the only true Christian religion. Even in the papal church it has recognized the *religio et ecclesia Christiana*. Its broad and mild recognition of baptism shows that it has never

denied the catholicity of Christianity. Calvinism is a specific and the richest and most beautiful form of Christianity, but it is not coextensive with Christianity.<sup>26</sup> Basically, Bavinck tried to make clear that it is wrong to deny the decay in your own Christian community, as much as it is wrong to deny the traces of Christianity in other communities. This was the mature Calvinism Bavinck desired.

Why have Bavinck's impressions and thoughts about the new world been so obscure in the Neocalvinistic world and in the circles of Dutch American studies? This is all the more surprising when we realize that in our century the weakness of the catholic trait and the respect for internal differences in Neocalvinism has been condemned so often, by outsiders as well as by insiders. The main reason may be that Bavinck did not write a book on America, and Kuyper wrote two. And the negative account of the American trip of Bavinck's biographer Valentijn Hepp did no good either. As a result, no one ever did any research on this episode.<sup>27</sup>

We also have to realize that Herman Bavinck would never have given such a baffling and inspiring impression of America and of the Neocalvinism of his days as Abraham Kuyper has done. But Bavinck's views were more realistic and balanced than Kuyper's, and that is why his impressions may be more lasting. Bavinck's thoughts impress us as modern, mainly because on the issues he dealt with, he was not interested in solutions, but in the problem itself. Bavinck did not look for supporters but for conversation partners. Besides reflecting on Reformed leaders as Van Raalte, Scholte, and Kuyper, who impress us by their visions and deeds, we'd better listen to the mature thoughts and sedate judgments of Bavinck as well. The Reformed tradition would be less without him.

#### Endnotes

1. H. Bavinck, 'The Future of Calvinism', in: *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, V (January 1894) nr. 17, 2. The article was translated by Geerhardus Vos.

2. For an account of the failed attempt to unite the RCA and the CRC in the early 1890s, see: John. H. Kromminga, 'Abandoned at the Altar', in: *The Dutch and Their Faith. Immigrant Religious Experience in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Proceedings of the 8th Biennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies*, September 20 and 21, 1991, 71-84, especially 81: 'In many quarters, and particularly in the Netherlands, some old wounds were being healed and unions were taking place which would have seemed impossible a few decades earlier. The only alternative to thinking that the likes of Steffens and Beuker and Vander Werp and Keppel were cynical, scheming, or utterly naive, is to give them the honor of concluding that they yearned for the unity of believers who belonged together, took heart from the union of Afscheiding and Doleantie, and hoped against hope that some miracle would occur which would resolve their differences and end their separation.'

After Bavinck and Wielenga had returned to the Netherlands, Kuyper wrote in *De Heraut* a mitigating article on freemasonry, which according to the Christian Reformed Church should not be tolerated in the Reformed Church of America. Suspicion rose in America, that Bavinck and Wielenga had influenced Kuyper to judge more carefully on freemasonry. Because there was

more ground for some suspicion the christian reformed people asked Bavinck and Wielenga to take a clear position in the American ecclesiastical disputes. 'We need something else. We need an open and clear statement of the brethren Bavinck and Wielenga on the impressions of our ecclesiastical affairs they took home. We think we are as right here, as were the Seceders in the Netherlands. It is very painful to learn that our position is questioned by the Dutch. I was glad to see the brethren appear in the CRC as well as in the RCA, and hope grew in my heart that there might be a way to reunion. I long for it in the United States as much as I have longed for it in the Netherlands.' Letter to the editor from N. Kuiper, Grand Haven, MI; *De Bazuin*, March 24, 1893. In reaction, Wielenga declared Kuyper had given his personal opinion and that Bavinck would speak for himself if necessary. *De Bazuin*, March 31, 1893. Bavinck kept silent, however.

3. Early November 1892 Wielenga decided to decline the call, after a difficult weigh. *De Bazuin*, November 11, 1892. *De Wachter*, November 30, 1892 published the letter in which he rejected the call.

In May 1893 Wielenga was called again as professor in Grand Rapids, because of G. Vos's move to Princeton Theological Seminary. On May 26 mei Wielenga told the faculty staff and the students that he had declined this call as well, though he was committed to the needs in America. *De Bazuin*, June 2, 1893.

4. Bavinck, *Future of Calvinism*, 3.

5. George Harinck, 'Our history is not without parallels'. Reacties uit gereformeerde kring in Nederland op het ontstaan van Westminster Theological Seminary te Philadelphia', *Radix*, XXIII (March 1997) :44-50.

6. Thomas J. Davis, 'Images of Intolerance: John Calvin in Nineteenth-Century History Textbooks', *Church History*, LXV (June 1996) :246.

7. See, for example, the objections of W.J. de Haas against the sending of delegates of the Gereformeerde Kerken to the Toronto Council in *De Bazuin*, December 2, 1892.

It is interesting though, that on June 15, 1892 Dr. G.D. Matthews attended the synod of the Gereformeerde Kerken as a delegate of the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System. Bavinck was his interpreter. Matthews was the secretary of the Alliance of Reformed Churches.

8. H. Bavinck, 'Het Concilie van Presbyteriaanse Kerken te Toronto', *Stemmen voor Waarheid en Vrede*, XXX (1893) :928.

9. H. Bavinck, *Mijne Amerikaansche reis*. *Archief-H. Bavinck*, Historical Documentationcenter for Dutch Protestantism (1800-present), Free University, Amsterdam.

It is probable that Bavinck gave this speech to the Kampen faculty staff meeting of October 21, 1892. See Notulen docentencollege, 17 September 1889 - 16 June 1893, 253-254. *Archief-Theologische School van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*, Municipal Archives, Kampen.

10. Herman Bavinck, *The Last Things. Hope for this World and the Next*, (Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1997). This is the first volume of a projected translation of all four volumes of the *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, translated by John Vriend and edited by John Bolt.

It is interesting that in 1930 a similar project was announced by the young Christian Reformed clergyman W. Hendriksen and Smitter Book Company. Hendriksen had translated the second volume of Bavinck's *Gereformeerde dogmatiek*, on the *locus de Deo*, and intended to translate the other volumes as well. Due to the deteriorating economic situation the book was not published until 1951 by Eerdmans Publishing Company.

11. Dr. J.J. Buskes in: G. Puchinger, *Hervormd-gereformeerd, één of gescheiden?* (Delft, 1969) 305.

12. G. Puchinger, 'Bavinck en de volkshistorie', *Ontmoetingen met theologen* (Zutphen, 1980) 113.

13. Bavinck, *Future of Calvinism*, 13.

14. Cf. Hendrik Spiering, 'Waarom zou je naar zekerheden zoeken?' Interview with Prof. Dr. P.W. Klein, *NRC/Handelsblad*, 18 January 1997.

15. Bavinck and Vos have spoken about this subject undoubtedly. In a banquet honoring Bavinck and Wielenga, held August 23, 1892, in the Macatawa Park Hotel, Holland, Vos was announced to speak on 'The Poetry in American Life', but he was prevented to come. *De Bazuin*, 16 September 1892.

16. H.A. Oberman places the development of these dogma of election and predestination, so typical for Calvinism, in the historical sixteenth-century context of persecution, oppression, and dislodging Bavinck referred to. He also mentions the chasm between the historical and the present situation. 'On the long road of the diaspora, from Strassbourg and Geneva to Heidelberg and Dordt, to Leiden and Utrecht, to Afscheiding and Doleantie, the horizon shifted from persecution to progress. A deep chasm arose, not just by the Enlightenment or the French Revolution, but by the missionary export of the European-Christian civilization, and the founding of christian schools and universities in the homeland as well.' Heiko A. Oberman, *De erfenis van Calvijn. Grootheid en grenzen* (Kampen, 1988), 48.

17. George Harinck, 'Drie Nederlandse theologen zien Amerika', *Transparant*, VI (November 1995) :4, 34-42.

18. Davis, *Images of Intolerance*, 241.

19. J. Veenhof, *Revelatie en inspiratie. De openbarings- en schriftbeschouwing van Herman Bavinck in vergelijking met die der ethische theologie*, Amsterdam, 1968, 353-355. For Dutch reactions on Methodism, see: P.L. Schram, 'Methodistica in Nederland', in: *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800*, XIII, November 1990, nr. 33, 17-47.

20. Bavinck, *Future of Calvinism*, 5.

21. H. Bavinck, 'The Influence of the Protestant Reformation on the Moral and Religious Condition of Communities and Nations', *Proceedings of the Fifth General Council of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches Holding the Presbyterian System* (London, 1892), 50.

22. In his comprehensive reproduction of Bavinck's speech he left out these remarks. V. Hepp, *Dr. Herman Bavinck* (Amsterdam, 1921), 215-18.

23. This judgment was too negative to Dr. Henry Beets opinion. He admitted some publications of Rev. H.P. Scholte breathed a 'spirit of hopeless pessimism'. 'We do not believe, however, that this view was held by the great majority of our pioneers.' *The Banner*, 20 April 1922.

24. Bavinck, *Influence of the Protestant Reformation*, 54, 53. Bavinck gave a similar comment on Calvin, though he praised him highly. See the short sketch of Bavinck's view on Calvin, with references, in: J. Veenhof, 'Calvijn en Bavinck', *Opbouw*, III (10 July 1959), nr. 15, 122.

25. Bavinck, *Future of Calvinism*, 21.

26. Bavinck, *Future of Calvinism*, 23, 24.

27. The negative view Hepp gave of America in his chapters on Bavinck's journeys to the USA (1892 and 1908) were not appreciated by Bavinck's American friends. See: Henry Beets in *The Banner*, 20 April 1922 and 22 February 1923.

Cf. H.E. Dosker to J.A. Bavinck-Schipper, 20 March 1923: 'I am sorry that Dr. Hepp was not lucky in his fourth part of the biography. He was attracted by Bavinck's critical remarks on America, but kept silent on the things we enjoyed and appreciated.' *Archief-H. Bavinck*.

Bremmer gave only one sentence on the American journey of 1892. R.H. Bremmer, *Herman Bavinck en zijn tijdgenoten* (Kampen, 1966), 76.