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CHRISTIAN MISSIONS AND ISLAM: THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA AND THE ORIGINS OF *THE MOSLEM WORLD*

by

CHRISTOPHER CLEVELAND MONTROSE

Under the Direction of Mohammed Hassen Ali

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the historical background of missionary attitudes toward Islam within the framework of the mission emphasis of the Reformed Church in America between the 1880s and 1911. It argues that the historical experience of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands produced a sense of pride and destiny that was transplanted by Dutch emigration to North America and maintained in the relationships of the Reformed Church in America with other nationalities and missions. That sense of pride ad destiny prepared the church to stand on its convictions in the face of opposition, which it drew upon itself when it began mission work among Muslims previously neglected by the modern missionary movement. Finally, this thesis shows that Dutch American

missionaries sought to change western perceptions of Islam by creating an awareness of the advance of Islam that may pose a threat to Christianity.

INDEX WORDS: Mission and Empire, Reformed Church in America, Dutch Reformed Church, missionary attitude, Western views of Islam, Arabian Mission, Zwemer, Muslim, Islam

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CHRISTOPHER CLEVELAND MONTROSE

Major Professor: Mohammed Hassen Ali
Committee: Ian Fletcher

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements……... iv

Illustrations……. vi

Introduction……..... 1

Chapter

1 The Dutch Reformed Church: A Sense of Destiny..…….. 14

2 The Dutch Reformed Church in Empire and Missions..... 39

3 Zwemer and Motivations of a Christian Journal…….….. 62

Conclusion…..…….. 88

Bibliography…….. 96

ILLUSTRATIONS

Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire……...…..……. 16

Ulrich Zwingli……...……. 22

Martin Bucer……...……. 22

William Carey at his desk with his Brahman pundit……..…….. 57

Rev. Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte…….…….…… 67

Rev. Dr. Samuel Marinus Zwemer…….……. 80

Introduction

The ascent of Western civilization to global prominence during the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century was a direct consequence of the efforts of Western nations to minimize the importance of non-western cultures. The undermining of non-western cultures, including those of the New World, was a prominent factor in the dissemination of European ideals in Africa, the Near and Far East and the Americas. Proselytizing through the Church was one means by which Europeans attempted, with varying degrees of success in specific regions, to cultivate the rest of the world. To accomplish this, and thus successfully achieve full mastery of the process of colonization, Western Christianity entered into fierce competition with African and American traditional religions and various forms of Eastern religious observances, including Islam.

One consequence of the rivalry between Western Christianity and Islam is an accumulation of materials that resulted from various studies conducted by Christian scholars with intent to challenge the legitimacy of Islam. A study of Christian-oriented polemic on Islam shows that while some believed that Islam came about because of the failure of Christianity to properly conduct its mission of proselytizing among all peoples of the world, others believe that Islam's claim to religious legitimacy was totally unfounded. Many of the attacks against Islam came in the form of criticisms against the Prophet Muhammad. Christian polemicists argued that his lifestyle, particularly after his migration to Medina in

A.D. 622, reveals by Christian standards that he fell short of the moral requirements of a prophet and therefore could hardly be regarded as the founder of a major world religion. Of course in Islam, Prophet Muhammad is never regarded as the founder of that religion. It should be noted that Muslims believe that Islam started with Adam, the first man.

Although many learned treatises on Islam were published before the nineteenth century, ignorance about Islam, its adherents, their lifestyles and even their perceptions of the West, persisted among the general population of the Western world. This lack of knowledge may account for the fear with which the West regarded Islam as it attempted to seemingly stop the process of European colonialism in the East and intensify resistance against European domination. It also fueled curiosities that resulted in adventurous undertakings by Christian missionary societies. By the mid-nineteenth century, a number of Protestant denominations in the West, including some in the United States of America, undertook missionary efforts in Islamic countries. From the 1890s, one such organization, the Reformed Church in America - originally the Dutch Reformed Church in America - became a front-runner in the production of missionaries for service in the Islamic world.

A history of the Reformed Church in America goes back to 1624 when some members of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands migrated to America and established the Dutch colony of New Netherland. The Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands had a mutual relationship with the East India Company, organized by Dutch merchants in 1602, and the West India

Company, organized in 1624. There was an understanding that merchant ships would not sail without the presence of a clergyman on board. Through both companies the ability to spread the Gospel to foreign lands around the world were numerous and quite favorable to the missionary aspirations of the Dutch Reformed Church.

The Reformed Church in America, galvanized by the conviction that it is God's design that the Gospel should be preached to every creature, labored to produce an educated ministry which led to the founding of Rutgers College in 1766, the first Theological Seminary in America in 1784, now located in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and Union College in 1795.

In 1889, James Cantine, Philip Tertius Phelps and Samuel Marinus Zwemer, all students of the New Brunswick Seminary of the Reformed Church in America, chose to go as missionaries to the Muslim world – first to Syria, then to Egypt. By 1891 Cantine and Zwemer had explored the possibilities of evangelizing southwestern Arabia, from Yemen and moving northward through Basra to Baghdad. In 1911 Zwemer began editing and publishing *The Moslem World,* a journal dedicated to the work of Protestant missionaries to Muslims and the education of Westerners on Muslim beliefs and lifestyle. These writings, and others of the turn of the century, must have been of some effect in the formation of modern Western views of Islam.

This thesis attempts to consider the impact of Protestant missionaries upon the development of modern Western views of Islam. It would be pertinent to ask the following questions: (1) How did missionaries define religion? (2) Did

that definition influence their attitude toward non-Western religions? (3) Were missionaries to Muslims motivated in part by fear of strong Muslim resistance against European colonial enterprise and its impact on other parts of the world? If so, recognizing the closeness, or lack thereof, of their acquaintance with Islam, (4) did missionaries use their positions to create and/or fortify negative stereotypes of Islam? Finally, (5) what part did Protestant missionaries play in the advance of colonialism in the Muslim world? The importance of the answers to these questions is essential in view of the obvious resurgence of Islam as a possible world system during the last half of the twentieth century and the recent accelerated activities of radical Islamists. Moreover, the fact that Islam has become a topic of global interest also brings to the fore the obvious fear and ignorance with which it is regarded by many. Such fear and ignorance in more recent years might be, on the one hand, an unintended consequence of missionary reports at the beginning of the twentieth century pertaining to the difficulties they experienced in Islamic lands. On the other hand, Western apprehensions might be the result of a deliberate attempt to perpetuate negative views of Islam in order to forward an assumption of the rightness of Western capitalist globalization.

The proposed time frame for this study, 1880s to 1911, is not accidental. The 1880s represent the beginning of a new phase of European - more precisely, British and French - imperialist expansion into lands beyond those that were the traditional interests from the centuries immediately following the age of discovery to the modern era. Egypt was an open door to the Middle East for European

expansion, and was therefore among the first to be exposed to European attempts at modernizing the Middle East. The French occupation of Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century was an omen of increasing modern European influence in the Middle East. In 1882, the British occupied Egypt in an attempt to stem a tide of financial mismanagement that threatened to envelope the territory.[1] It was in fact an opportunity for Europeans to further their imperialist agenda. It was also a most opportune moment for growing missionary societies, both in Europe and America, to send missionaries into the Middle East under the protection and, in some cases, cooperation of European authorities. The close of the 1880s also saw the beginning of efforts that led to the establishment of the Arabian Mission by John G. Lansing, James Cantine, Philip T. Phelps and Samuel M. Zwemer in Basrah, Muscat, and Bahrain.

1911, the end of the time frame for this project, represents the first year of publication of *The Moslem World.* This quarterly journal which is still being published today under the name *The Muslim World* is the brainchild of Samuel Zwemer, a man who distinguished himself as having an unquenchable passion for missionary, not just for the traditional targets of the modern missionary movement, but more specifically for Muslims. Zwemer's enthusiasm was driven by his love for a people who represented one seventh of the world's population, but who were unconscionably neglected in the plans and strategies of missionary societies in the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century.

This thesis will explore the connection between Protestant missions and the advance of colonialism in Muslim lands. The geographical focus for this

[1] James Jankowski, *Egypt: A Short History* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000), 70-103.

study will be the area of western Asia, commonly known as the Middle East in a general sense, but the primary emphasis will be given to Arabia - the cradle of Islam - and its immediate geographical borderlands. The choice of this particular region is based primarily upon the interest and intrigue that existed among colonial European powers, which promoted the exploitation of these lands in order to solidify their positions as pertinent players in an arena of competitive domination among themselves. It also represents the major area of operation for missionaries of the Reformed Church in America.

Within recent years, attention has focused upon Islam as a religion and its relation to the politics of its peoples as well as its relationship with the Western world. From the earliest polemics to more recent publications, Western writers have created a full spectrum of views of Islam. A variety of positions on Islam have been taken; from attempts to explain its existence, admire its growth in the face of much opposition, and praise its intellectual and moral contributions to the world, to outright denial of its legitimacy, and condemnation of its methods. Along with these are debates pertaining to the position and influence of missionaries in colonial enterprise. These debates in many ways reflect the wide spectrum of Western views of Islam.

In his essay, “Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity,” Ussama Makdisi provides pertinent insight into a delicate balance in the relationship between missionaries and the secular colonial authorities in Syria in early to mid-nineteenth century. At the earliest consideration, missionaries tried to dissociate themselves from the governing

authorities on the basis of their abhorrence of secularism. Nevertheless, missionaries often took advantage of the protection provided by said secular authorities. It was a relationship of convenience. Missionaries used religion as a means to prove a difference of character and intent from the colonial authorities in order to gain the confidence of the locals. But whenever they raised the ire of the locals, they sought their protection through the iteration of their Western identity.[2]

David R. Blank and Michael Frassetto edited *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, a compilation of essays that explores Western attitudes toward Islam and the development of negative Western stereotypes of Muslims. Blank and Frassetto posit that while attempting to comprehend European historical attitudes to Islam and the East, modern scholars face many difficulties because European attitudes fluctuated primarily for the purpose of European self-examination. From legends of barbaric Arab mercenaries of pre-Islamic times to the veneration of the "Noble Saracen" in Renaissance literature, the image of "other" was an outcome of shifting motives in the creation of European images of self. The animosities that Europeans held for Muslims, and which prompted the era of the crusades, were to some extent a consequence of the recognition of the military might of Muslims in the context of the assertion of a European identity in its infancy.[3] Europe also benefited from Muslim scholarship in its own development. It would be erroneous, therefore, to

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[2] Ussama Makdisi, "Reclaiming the Land of the Bible: Missionaries, Secularism, and Evangelical Modernity," *American Historical Review,* 102, 3 (1997): 680-713.
[3] David R. Blanks and Michael Frassetto, eds., *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 1-8.

conclude that Western attitudes toward Islam were uniformly negative throughout their co-existence.[4]

James Thayer Addison came very close to addressing the question of Western stereotypes of Muslims in *The Christian Approach to the Moslem*. He does not deal specifically with Western attitudes, but his own views hint at the existence of a more general condescending attitude of the author as he writes. In a synopsis of Islamic historical relations with Christianity, Addison shows that the formation of Islam was highly influenced by Christianity. While he offers tacit recognition of the accomplishments of Islam, Addison frames the positives of Islamic scholastic developments within the influence of Christianity. He argues that Islam was an attempt at the creation of a legitimate religious structure among Arabs in the presence of the more superior religion of Christianity. About the development of Islam, he states:

> Not only was secular culture transmitted to the Mohammedan through a Christian medium, but the older religion had a direct effect upon the newer. The thought of Christian theologians and the life of Christian monks made a notable impression on the plastic religious substance of Islam.[5]

Addison recognized that the religion of Islam played a major part in the societies of its adherents, but he refused to believe that Islam had any original redeeming qualities within its history. As far as he was concerned, Islam was a false religion attempting to gain legitimacy by borrowing from Christianity.

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[4] One other important aspect in the consideration of *Western Views* is the historical fact that by the nineteenth century, the Muslim Turkish Ottoman Empire, which had dominated Eastern Europe since the fifteenth century, was in decay. Napoleon defeated the Ottoman army in Egypt in July 1798 in half a day, dramatically demonstrating the empire's weakness by then.

[5] James Thayer Addison, *The Christian Approach to the Moslem* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 23.

Addison's view of Islam in the 1940s reflects a continuation of a condescending attitude among many Protestant Christians. Other earlier Protestant Christian writers adopted a mode of criticism and minimization of Islam in the spread of information among other Christians. One such writer, Samuel M. Zwemer, recorded his impressions of Islam received during his tenure as a missionary to Arabia. His book, *Islam: A Challenge to Faith,* is a study of the development of the religion of Islam and the challenges it presents for Protestant missionaries.[6] Zwemer was very concerned that Islam had succeeded in the delusion of a great many people. He was convinced of the erroneous nature of Islam, and was burdened by the thought of countless number of individuals who were in the clasp of evil, while the knowledge of Christianity – the true religion – was being slighted. Zwemer wrote with a sense of urgency, and attempted to inspire missionary zeal among his readers in order to "save" Muslims from the great fallacy that was promoted by Islam's Prophet, Muhammad.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* covers a much broader view of Western attitude toward the East than is intended by this thesis. However, Said focuses on some issues that are very pertinent to this study. He looks at Orientalism as a discursive and ideological framework that comes out of Western thought as it relates to the East (Orient). As used by Europeans, "Orient" is an expression that purports to describe so-called Eastern lands, peoples and cultures with an exotic ambience in relation to Western existence. It is not real, but a perception

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[6] Samuel M. Zwemer, *Islam, A Challenge to Faith: Studies on the Mohammedan Religion and the Needs and Opportunities of the Mohammedan World from the Standpoint of Christian Missions* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1907).

created by writers in the West. In a geographic sense, Orientalism is the innate comprehension that regards the West as centrally located; all other lands, peoples and cultures exist in relation to the West and are considered peripheral and inferior. Western culture does not take into consideration the fact the "Orientals" themselves might have similar views of the West.

Said argues that the West's purported knowledge of the Orient was a strategic part of its exercise of power over the region. His citing of Lord Arthur James Balfour's June 13, 1910 speech in the British House of Commons epitomizes the superiority complex with which Europeans regarded the so-called Orient. Pertaining to British success in Egypt, Balfour celebrated the high level of oriental knowledge cleverly acquired by the British. In Balfour's words, "We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it further back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it."[7] Said also exposes the contempt with which Europeans regarded the Eastern others. According to both Balfour and Lord Cromer, an outstanding British governor of Egypt from 1882-1907, "There are Westerners, and there are Orientals. The former dominates; the latter must be dominated, which usually means having their land occupied, their internal affairs rigidly controlled, their blood and treasure put at the disposal of one or another Western power."[8] Here is an example of Western paternalism - the belief that Orientals were incapable of managing their own affairs and that it became the duty of the West to intervene for the sake of the other peoples they ruled. A convenient

[7] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 32.
[8] Said, 36.

consequence of this belief was the effort to “develop” the resources of colonial and semi-colonial countries supposedly for mutual benefit but in large part to the advantage of imperialist countries.

Said’s discussions of orientalism brings into focus the self-image of European/Western superiority that is obvious in the writings of Addison and Zwemer. The unconscious thought is that the West is right; that its accumulated knowledge and power demonstrated a higher world status and imposes upon it the responsibility to bring “others” into the fold of “rightness.”

The magnitude of the totality of Christian missiology is beyond the ability of this writer to fully satisfy all possible inquiries. While the interest of this writer is extensive, it is impossible to fit all conceivable investigations of Christian missions and Islam in a limited project of this kind. As such, the following chapters focus upon the missiology of one denomination within the ecclesiastical spectrum of Christianity. The first chapter gives an overview of the history of the Reformed Church in America. This account chronicles the struggle of the Dutch provinces of northern Europe against Spanish and Roman Catholic dominance over their civil and religious lives, the intimate relationship of the Church with the push for independence and the creation of the nation state of the Netherlands, its internal schisms in the early years, and its attempts to grapple with organizational challenges in America.

Chapter two inquires into the relationship between Protestant missions and Western imperialist ambitions. It tries to answer the question of what significance to the colonial enterprise during the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries was the involvement of Protestant Christian missionaries. This chapter attempts to determine whether Protestant missionaries were aware of their part in the colonial enterprise in the Levant thus making missionaries active perpetrators of Western paternalism, or were missionary interests in those "others" a truly altruistic endeavor.

The final chapter examines the establishment of the Arabian Mission on by members of the Reformed Church. It also looks at the attitude of the Christian world in terms of its historical response to, and deliberate neglect of Muslims by Christian missionary organizations. From 1911 *The Moslem World,* a journal established and edited by Samuel Marinus Zwemer, was published specifically for the purpose of informing the American church and the rest of the Protestant Christian world of the state of the Muslim world and its need to be evangelized. Like many other individuals of the early twentieth century with missionary experience in the Levant, Zwemer viewed Islam as a Christian problem that should not be ignored. He believed that Islam had no redeeming benefits for Muslims and therefore it was the duty of Protestant missionaries to give Muslims a chance at conversion to Christianity. This chapter examines some of Zwemer's writings, and editorials and articles in the early editions of *The Moslem World* to determine the true motivation of the publication.

In light of a growing awareness in the West of the existence of peoples with very different cultures and societies, Westerner should seek understanding on the basis of respect for difference and diversity. There is no absolute standard that governs the thoughts and imaginations of everyone occupying the

planet, which, on account of the free flow of information, has rapidly become smaller and more interconnected. This study takes a critical look at the ideas and motivations of those who purported to be concerned about the welfare and safety of their supposedly less fortunate fellows who by some quirk of circumstance were at a disadvantage simply by being born outside of the so-called West.

Chapter One

The Dutch Reformed Church: A Sense of Destiny

When Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses on the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany, an act which marked the beginning of the Reformation in 1517, he opened a door of opportunity for many communities of peoples in Europe that led to a struggle for self-determination in the face of a stranglehold held by the Roman Catholic Church. This revolutionary act liberated the minds of the people and led them to a new way of thinking in terms of relations with Roman Catholicism. As it were, the Roman Catholic Church was not only a religious organization, but it served as the supreme arbiter or controller of society and polity during the Middle Ages. It would be quite naïve to believe that such control over faith and power was universally accepted without any covert dissent. In hindsight, had the Church been separate domination and rule, it could have avoided being associated with the evils of power and wealth. This was not the case with the scattered communities of Northern Europe that coalesced to form the Netherlands. The fervency and commitment that these communities brought to play in the spread of the Reformation might be regarded as a microcosm of hopes, intents and attitudes reflective of the whole Protestant movement in Europe, and later in the establishment of free religious communities in North America.

The history of the modern Netherlands is inextricably connected to the spread of the Reformation in Northern Europe, but for a better perspective, we need to briefly revisit earlier times. According to David Demarest, the area of Northern Europe that came to be known as the Netherlands was, before the fall of the Roman Empire, marshlands and islands at the mouths of the Rhine, Meuse and Schelde "…occupied by barbarous tribes, of whom the Batavi a brave and warlike people were the most prominent, and they were never conquered by the Romans but became their most efficient allies." The Batavi were eventually replaced by other barbaric tribes who, from the late seventh century, were assimilated into Christendom, thereby setting "…the foundations of civilization and freedom…" in Europe.[1] After the death of Charlemagne in the early ninth century, the various provinces of the Netherlands tolerated successive governments of various nobles who "…were continually involved in wars, and the provinces were often torn by internal dissensions…." until the ascendancy of Charles the Bold, Duke of Normandy in the fifteenth century, which ushered in a period of political stability. Charles' son, Philip the Fair married Joanna, daughter of Isabelle and Ferdinand of Spain, and from this union came Charles V who became King of Spain in 1516 and Holy Roman Emperor of German lands in 1519. Thus the inhabitants of the Netherlands became the subjects of Spain.[2]

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[1] David D. Demarest, *The Reformed Church in America* (New York: Board of Publication of the Reformed Church in America, 1889), 1.
[2] Demarest, 2-3.

Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire

Charles V was almost immediately faced with the challenge of reformed theology, which aimed at the very foundations of the Roman Catholic Church and its control over Europe. This new threat to church authority represented the complete annulment of papal power, not just in areas of spiritual life, but it also threatened to bring about a degrading effect upon civil authority which was closely aligned to, and legitimated by the papacy. An enthusiastic defender of

the papacy, Charles issued a number of edicts with the express purpose of discouraging the spread of the Reformation in the Netherlands and other areas under his rule. Under these edicts, tens of thousands of his Dutch subjects were put to death for their faith. The persecution of adherents of reformed theology in the Netherlands, however, did not erode Charles' popularity with the Dutch; in fact, he remained a favorite son of the Netherlands. In 1555, Charles V abdicated his throne, thereby placing the monarchy in the hands of his son Philip II. With the ascent of Philip to the throne, the effects of religious persecution upon the populace of the Netherlands brought forth a vastly different reaction. While Charles V might have been regarded as a benevolent persecutor of Protestants, Philip became known for his cruelty and mean-spiritedness, and the fact that he was a Spaniard by birth did much to alienate him from the Dutch. Instead of driving the Dutch into submission, his excessive efforts only emboldened their resistance, and led to the rise of a Dutch deliverer in the person of William of Orange. Open revolution against the Spanish crown broke out in 1572, and in 1581, Dutch "…allegiance to Spain was renounced, independence was formally declared, and Philip was deposed." By 1584, the provinces of Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Gelderland, Overijessel and Groningen "…became a *de facto* republic," although full independence from Spain was not achieved until 1608.[3]

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[3] Demarest, 8-28; W. Stanford Reid, ed., *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 101-103.

The Dutch revolt of the sixteenth century was a multi-faceted struggle for both religious freedom and political autonomy in the Netherlands. The Dutch Reformed Church engendered patriots of the Fatherland, and played a vital part in the formation of the Dutch Republic. Throughout the Dutch revolt, it was typical for the church to be involved because the enemy was not just a monarch in a foreign country who sought to impose his authority upon the inhabitants of the Low Countries, but a monarch who also championed the cause of a religion now recognized as having for centuries enslaved the minds of ordinary people who now sought spiritual liberation and was assisted by foreign sympathizers. Paul Arblaster states:

> The revolt quickly bore the appearance of a religious war, although it was never entirely that. Foreign mercenaries from all over Europe served in the Low Countries, and sometimes carried confessional militancy home with them. The Privy Council of Scotland, for instance, in 1573 licensed John Adamson to go to the Low Countries with 130 fully equipped soldiers of fortune 'for serving in the defence *[sic]* of God's true religion, against the persecutors thereof', stipulating a fine of 5000 marks if they were found to have served 'with papists against the protestants'. There were to be Scots in Dutch service until 1782. Englishmen, Frenchmen and, most importantly, Germans also fought alongside the rebels as well as, in smaller numbers, for the King of Spain. As far as the royal pikemen from Spain and Italy were concerned, the war was a crusade against heretics.[4]

Arblaster's idea of a religious connection to the Revolt is in agreement with Andrew Pettegree's essay, "Religion and the Revolt" in which he puts forward the idea that the outbreak of the Revolt was initiated unexpectedly by

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[4] Paul Arblaster, *A History of the Low Countries* (Hampshire, UK and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 123.

"…a rush of organized dissent of a type unprecedented in the Netherlands."[5] This dissent fermented in groups that were already organized in religious indignation against the Catholic Church.

With the religious divide within Dutch communities being the precipitator of the Revolt fully established, and the fact that the Dutch Reformed Church was one of the opponents of the state which was a defender of the Catholic Church, it is no surprise then that the Reformed Church became, in the duration of the Dutch Republic, recognized as the church of the new state. This designation does not mean that the Reformed Church was in control of state policy, but many citizens within the leadership of the state were either members of the Church, or gave it some form of mild recognition. It must be understood that the Dutch Revolt of 1572 created quite a paradox in terms of the relation of the people with the church – hereby designated both Catholic and Reformed. The historian, Jonathan Israel, makes it clear that in spite of the fact that religion played a major part in the Dutch Revolt, it was not overly embraced by the general populace in that the Reformed Church benefited from an anti-Catholic mood, but did not exactly become the popular church as would have been expected by its role in the Revolt.[6] Of the initial effects of the Revolt and the then official attempts, Israel states:

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[5] Andrew Pettegree, "Religion and the Revolt," in *The Origins and Development of the Dutch Revolt,* ed. Graham Darby (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 67.
[6] Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 361.

> On the outbreak of the great Revolt, in 1572, the States of Holland had made no attempt to curb Protestantism but, initially, did try to ensure that both the old Church, and the Reformed, would be tolerated….However, the mood of the militias and populace was strongly anti-Catholic and official efforts to protect Catholic worship, clergy, and images had little chance of succeeding.[7]

He goes on to relate the effects of the Revolt on the fortunes of the Catholic Church, "….In all places held by the rebels, churches were seized, the Catholic clergy fled, or were driven off, and within a short time, without significant protest, Catholic worship was forbidden."[8] The misfortunes faced by the Catholic Church, it would seem, should have produced a natural preference for the Reformed Church, but, as Israel points out, "…Reformed preachers now faced what, for them, was a frustrating paradox. The people rejected the old Church. Yet, at the same time, there was but a tepid response to the new."[9] In fact, one of the factors responsible for the slow development of interest in the Reformed Church was a fall-out of the rebellion against the Catholic Church. Israel explains, "…the weak early response to the Reformed Church was a lack of confessional zeal and the widespread noncommittal attitude bred by decades of heavy-handed official insistence on Catholic allegiance."[10] The Revolt had liberated the people from the dominating control of religion, and they were reluctant to endorse any resemblance of the same regardless of its label. The Reformed Church rebounded only slowly from this rebuff.

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[7] Israel 361.
[8] Israel, 362.
[9] Israel, 362.
[10] Israel, 362.

As the Revolt continued, it became clear that the destruction of the Catholic churches and symbols created a vacuum that was unsatisfactory. Israel contends that, "It was clear, by the 1580s, that what had happened was less the replacement of one church by its successor than the shattering of the old and its replacement, in large part, with an ecclesiastical vacuum." [11] Circumstances slowly changed in favor of the Reformed church with the progress of the Dutch Republic. Israel explains:

> Thus, during the early years of the Republic neither the old Church, nor the new, commanded the allegiance of most of the populace. Nevertheless, the Reformed Church enjoyed two great advantages over its displaced rival. Firstly, it had more, and more militant, support amongst the people than Catholicism, which enabled it to mobilize popular and militia pressure, and demonstrations, against Catholic worship whereas (even in the towns where Catholic support was strongest) it was weak to mount counter-pressure. Secondly, the Reformed Church was now the public church, which meant that it had the backing of the State, and civic authorities, under the terms of the Particular Union of Holland and Zeeland, of 1575, and under provincial legislation.[12]

By the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century, it may be said that the Dutch Reformed Church was well on its way to being recognized as the ecclesiastical authority of the society.

A theological controversy in the Reformed Church during the early 1600s produced divisions within the church and delayed its consolidation, but later became the catalyst for the development of its polity and worship. It should be

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[11] Israel, 363.
[12] Israel, 363.

noted that, doctrinally, the Dutch reformation was heavily influenced by Martin Bucer[13], John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli. The faith of the Reformed Church

Ulrich Zwingli

Martin Bucer

[13] Martin Bucer, a little known figure in the story of the Reformation, was the leading Reformer in the strategic German city of Strassburg, capital of the territory of Alsace. He had a lifelong dedication to union and cooperation among the Christian churches. His organizational ability was shown in his development of an effective Protestant structure of church government, a structure used by Calvinist churches throughout the world. In 1518 while serving in the Dominican cloister at Heidelberg, Bucer heard Luther explain his new teachings before officials of the Augustinian order. He was converted to Luther's belief in "salvation by faith alone" and withdrew from his order in 1521. Soon thereafter he married, becoming one of the first Protestant ministers to take such a radical step. Excommunicated, he sought refuge in Strassburg in 1523. Bucer's teachings on the Holy Spirit, on discipline as a vital part of church polity, and on the need for lay participation in church affairs all became an integral part of the Calvinist message. Calvin learned much from Bucer during a three-year (1538–1541) stay in Strassburg. Bucer's last three years were spent at Cambridge University in England, where his ideas had a powerful impact on the developing Church of England, influencing the revision of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer.

was in accordance with the Belgic Confession of 1561[14] and the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563[15]. These documents held to the religious creed of Calvinism. But while Calvinism became the doctrinal core or foundation of the Church, it appears that the ministry had no organizational structure through which it could maintain uniformity in doctrinal teachings. Demarest states:

> It has been said from the beginning of the Reformation to the Synod of Dort, there was no uniformity of doctrine required of the ministers and churches in the Netherlands, but that during this period young ministers came from the school of Calvin and Beza into the country, who taught the peculiar doctrines of that school, and endeavored to impose them on their brethren, who for the most part, held the more moderate sentiments of Zwingli or Melancthon.[16]

Such an arrangement, or lack thereof, within a body striving for legitimacy in society would sooner or later lead to controversy; and it did.

In 1602, Jacobus Arminius, a pastor in the city of Amsterdam, was called to fill a professorship in the University of Leiden. Arminius had previously been noted for his particular variation of Reformation teaching, but, when questioned by university officials about his ideas, he assured them "…that he would teach nothing at variance with the received doctrines of the Church." He broke his promise over a period of a few years by subtly impressing upon his students doctrines contrary to Church standards, and this subtlety was eventually abandoned in favor of open debate with his colleagues at the university.

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[14] Arthur C. Cochrane, ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, n.d.), 185-219.
[15] Cochrane, 304-331.
[16] Demarest, 31.

Arminius' teachings soon led to a call for a National Synod to look into and decide on their acceptability. This action meant the involvement of the States, for the Church could not to convene a synod without the States' permission. This was the result of a rather unusual relationship between the civil authorities and the Reformed Church. P.L. Price clarifies it thus:

> The situation or the Reformed Church was an unusual one for early modern Europe in that it was the official church of the state, but not the state church in the normal sense of the term as the inhabitants of the Dutch state were not required to be members of the new church, or even to attend its services. In most of Europe – in theory at least – the political and religious communities were coterminous, and membership of one implied membership of the other; this identity of political and religious communities was, as we have seen, absent in the Republic from the beginning. This situation was in part a consequence of the religious diversity of the northern Netherlands in the early years after the Revolt, but during the years of persecution the Reformed Church had seen itself as a gathered church of saints, and the desire to continue as a disciplined and pure community of believers continued into the seventeenth century and made it somewhat ambivalent to the possibility of becoming a church for the whole community if this was at the cost of watering-down the quality of its membership. However, the Reformed Church did become the official church of the new state, and this link was important for both the church and the state.[17]

The States, wary of the possible political power of the Church, delayed the Synod for awhile, even though authority had already been granted through the States-General. Meanwhile, Arminius had accumulated a following among his students and his teachings were spread throughout many Reformed congregations. The controversy continued after his death in 1609, and the

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[17] J.L. Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 89.

Synod of Dordrecht (Dort), which addressed his teachings, finally convened nine years later in1618.[18]

The National Synod of Dort convened in November 13, 1618 and lasted for more than six months.[19] It was a meeting primarily to settle, once and for all, the issue of Arminianism[20] (advocated by Remonstrants) versus Calvinism[21] (supported by Contra-Remonstrants), and to chart a uniform theology for the Reformed Church. As it were, the Synod of Dort threw out Arminian theology, and officially adopted Calvinism as the faith of the Church. This decision in some way benefited the Reformed Church in that, according to Charles H. Parker, Reformed membership flourished. Parker states, "The National Synod of Dort in 1618-1619 affirmed that orthodox Calvinism would be the faith of the public church, and membership levels in the Reformed Church grew from 20 percent of the total population in 1620 to around 50 percent by 1650."[22]

It is generally agreed, however, that Dort did not really solve the Arminian question for the Reformed Church; no agreement was met between the two camps. The Synod of Dort "…condemned Arminianism and the States of Holland banned its partisans…", but the controversy continued. Dort, by its stance for Calvinism, removed the perception of theological confusion within the

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[18] Demarest, 32-38.
[19] Demarest, 38.
[20] Reid, 105. Remonstrants believed that all believers are the Elect, not just the individual; that faith is a gift of God that is resistible; that Christ died for all men.
[21] Opposed to Arminianism, Calvinism holds to the predestination of the Elect.
[22] Charles H. Parker, "To the Attentive, Nonpartisan Reader: The Appeal to History and National Identity in the Religious Disputes of the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands," *The Sixteenth Century Journal,* 28 (spring, 1997): 57.

Church. But the Remonstrants were not easily deterred, and they continued their campaign of condemnation of the Contra-Remonstrants, using every means they could to spread their message.[23] This eventually led to their complete expulsion from the Church, a circumstance which Demarest reasons would not have been necessary had their response to Dort been as was expected. He states, "If the Arminians had peaceably withdrawn from the Church when they found that they could not teach her received doctrines, they would doubtless have been tolerated as a new sect."[24] Almost immediately following the Synod of Dort, some members of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands emigrated and planted the church in North America.

Dutch emigration to America began at a time when there were apparently no need for a popular movement to do so, because the people of the Netherlands, in general, fared much better than the rest of Europe. The successes of the Dutch struggle for religious freedom and the preservation of civil liberties, from the 1570s through the early years of the seventeenth century, encouraged rapid expansion in trade and industry. Conditions in the Netherlands not only work for the benefit of the elite class, but, according to Bertus Harry Wabeke, "The condition of the peasant population, too, was more favorable on the whole than in other parts of Europe."[25] These fortunes attracted many people

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[23] Parker, 57-58.
[24] Demarest, 42.
[25] Bertus Harry Wabeke, *Dutch Emigration to North America, 1624-1860: A Short History* (Freeport, New York: Books For Libraries Press, 1970), 15.

from neighboring nations, such as France and Belgium. Life was good in the Netherlands, and as such, there seem to be no pressing need to seek relief anywhere else; especially as far away as North America. Why, then, did the Dutch come to America? The answer may be found in the contemplation of the expansion of the Dutch colonial empire.

In 1609, eleven years before the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, the Dutch East India Company sent Henrick Hudson in search of a north western route to the East Indies. Consequently, Hudson navigated his ship to the east coast of North America, sailed up the river that now bears his name, and returned to the Netherlands. By 1614 the Dutch had established trading posts up the Hudson River at Fort Orange – now Albany - and on the island of Manhattan, and by 1623, the colonization of New Netherland – now the states of New York and New Jersey – had begun in earnest under the West India Company which was founded in 1621.[26] The colonization of New Netherland was accomplished by ordinary people who, neither persecuted nor oppressed, probably thought to acquire some form of temporal satisfaction by voluntarily embarking on the expansion of the Dutch colonial empire. By 1645 the West India Company had consolidated the management of Dutch holdings in both North and South America and in Africa; controlling the fur trade of North America, the sugar industry of South America and the slave trade in Africa. With its success in empire-building came challenges from competing European countries who

[26] Demarest, 44.

themselves sought to create, maintain or expand their colonial power. The Dutch, not being a strong military power, lost many of their gains in South America and Africa by the late 1640s, but maintained control in New Netherland until they were eventually ousted by the British in 1664.[27]

Between 1624 and 1664, emigration to New Netherland was slow. As was noted before; there was no strong motivation in the Low Countries to encourage emigration to America. Although the West India Company had built up a lucrative trading industry, security of the colony in the face of possible threats from other colonial powers was not at the top of its list of priorities. At the same time, the conduct of the general populace left much to be desired in terms of upholding the moral standards of the church. As Gerald F. De Jong notes:

> Other records of New Netherland also show that many of its residents were far from being model citizens….Drunkeness *[sic]*, street brawls, name-calling, and the like were quite common, as was fornication with the Indians, although the latter was prohibited by law….Even the ministers were victims of crime.[28]

It would be well to note at this time that the moral caliber of the ordinary citizens of New Netherland was not an indictment of the moral standards held by the members of the Reformed Church. As it were in the early days of the Revolt in the Netherlands, when the populace seemed to desire to throw off the trappings of religion, so it was in New Netherland; the early colonists were not

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[27] Israel, 934-936.
[28] Gerald F. De Jong, *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies,* The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, no. 5 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), 42.

overly religious. Religious contemplations were almost exclusively the social mores of the elite members of society and those aspiring to be such.

Along with the general lawlessness in society, ministers were encountering personal financial difficulties. The West India Company which controlled the civil affairs of New Netherland was more and more unable to meet its obligation to the church in terms of ministerial remunerations. Consequently, some ministers returned to Europe leaving much of the religious education of the young to the abilities of schoolmasters.[29] With such lack of discipline and control in the early Dutch colonial society, it would have been foolish to mount a defense against the British in 1664. It is no wonder that Peter Stuyvesant, then Governor of New Netherland, who at first was "…determined to fight to the bitter end…", was persuaded to surrender the town of New Amsterdam, thus turning the colony of New Netherland over to the British.[30]

The capitulation of New Netherland brought about many problems for the Dutch Reformed Church. British rule now meant that the church could no longer bring to bear with the new rulers the same influence it exercised upon the displaced Dutch civil authority. Whether it was an official designation or an obvious unstated fact, the Church of England took the place of the Dutch Reformed Church and became the church of the state. Fortunately, the British were content to pursue a policy of religious toleration. This, to some extent, was

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[29] De Jong, *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies,* 44.
[30] De Jong, *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies,* 46.

an advantage enjoyed by members of the Dutch Reformed churches, who for many years maintained a majority in many communities in New York, and this advantage made for a majority of Dutch representation in politically elected entities. De Jong states:

> A recent study of the make-up of the New York City Common Council, based on such matters as the occupational, family, and religious background of its members, shed considerable light on the favorable representation that the Dutch Reformed Church sometimes had in political bodies elected by the people. During the period 1689-1733, one hundred twenty-three individuals were elected as councilmen, and each had an average length of service of about four and a half years. An examination of the religious background of these men shows that thirty-nine (39%) were lay officials in the Dutch Reformed Church, the major denomination in the city at this time, whereas only nineteen (19%) held positions in the Anglican Church, the second most important denomination.[31]

But the advantages of that position dwindled as the influence of the Episcopalian Church increased. This was due in part to the fact that Dutch immigration, according to Donald A. Luidens and Roger J. Nemeth, "…had begun to fall long before the English takeover, and it would not rebound until the middle of the nineteenth century,"[32] a fact equally supported by De Jong, who takes the argument even further and actually accredits the fall of New Netherland to the small number of Dutch settlers. He states, "The fall of New Netherland in 1664 was due to several causes, but the lack of settlers was a fundamental

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[31] De Jong, *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies,* 49-50.
[32] Donald A. Luidens and Roger J. Nemeth, "Dutch Immigration and Membership Growth in the Reformed Church in America: 1830-1920," in *The Dutch-American Experience: Essays in Honor of Robert P. Swierenga,* eds. Hans Krabbendam and Larry J. Wagenaar (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 2000), 169.

weakness. As a consequence, it became only a matter of time before the more numerous English annexed the colony."[33]

Episcopalian influence within the new government was cause for concern for the ministry of the Dutch Reformed Church. While the English overtly tolerated the religious practices of their Dutch subjects, it would appear that they did not always try to make life easy for them either. One particular example that illuminates this point shows that in the late 1600s, an act of Assembly was passed which in effect levied a tax upon the residents of New York, Westchester, Queens and Richmond for the support of ministers chosen primarily by Episcopalians to serve as parish ministers. The law did not disallow the choice of Dutch Reformed ministers, but the political system ensured that Episcopalian ministers were always chosen. Thus, the Dutch were forced to financially support Episcopalian ministers as well as those of their own denomination.[34] These and other circumstances reflect the state of the Dutch Reformed Church in America in the seventeenth century. It would seem that the future of the church was very bleak, but this, as we will observe, was just a period of respite in the American experience of the Dutch and the Dutch Reformed Church in America.

Social stratification within society also impacted negatively upon the judgments of the Dutch ministry in America, and consequently upon the church

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[33] Gerald F. De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, G.K. Hall and Company, 1975), 46.
[34] Demarest, 59.

itself. De Jong gives a clear illustration of this by highlighting the Leisler Troubles of 1688-1691. He states:

> When the news reached the English colonies that William of Orange had landed in England in 1688 for the purpose of deposing the Catholic king James II, the citizens Boston arrested the governor of the Dominion of New England, Edmund Andros, an appointee of James II. The province of New York was also affected by the arrest because it was a part of the Dominion…in June 1689, Francis Nicholson, Andros' young and inexperience lieutenant-governor in New York, fled the country. In the absence of any legal government, Jacob Leisler, a captain in the militia in New York, was appointed as a kind of *pro tem* governor by a citizen's committee. Not everyone acknowledged Leisler, and the province of New York soon became divided into two antagonistic factions….the aristocrats and more wealthy elements among the population opposed Leisler, while the lower classes supported him in the hope that a more representative government would be established….When the government in England finally dispatched a new governor to New York in 1691, Leisler hesitated in relinquishing his authority. He was thereupon arrested, found guilty of treason, and executed on May 16, 1691.
> The Leisler Trouble had a bearing on the Dutch Reformed Church because of the strong support given to the anti-Leislerian faction by the clergy…This action frequently brought the wrath of Leisler's government down upon the clergy. The attitude of the ministers also caused disharmony within the congregations because of the support Leisler enjoyed among lay people. Some of the latter went so far as to withhold their financial support from the churches.[35]

There were three reasons why ministers refused to support Leisler. First, many rumors, which they did not believe, were spreading; one of which being that there was "…a Catholic plot to take over the colonial government." Secondly, they "…questioned Leisler's executive ability. Judging from some of his actions they must have thought that he lacked several qualifications for office,

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[35] De Jong, *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies,* 54-55.

including experience as well as tact and tolerance." Finally, the ministers numbered themselves among the "aristocrats and people of influence." As such, it was beneath them to support a so-called ordinary person as Leisler, who, ironically, happened to be a deacon in the Dutch church.[36]

From the beginning of the colonization of New Netherland, the Reformed Church was faced with a number of challenges that threatened its connections with its ecclesiastical authority in the Netherlands. Dutch settlers understandably tried to create, as close as possible, conditions in the church that closely resembled those of the congregations of the Netherlands. To accomplish this, allegiance to the church leadership in the Netherlands was maintained in that all ministers were appointed by the Classis of Amsterdam, the governing body of the Dutch Reformed Church. There was no provision in America for training and ordaining ministers. The consistory, a local governing body that was subordinate to the Classis of Amsterdam, had no authority to ordain ministers, and anyone from within the congregations who aspired to become a minister had to be trained and examined in the Netherlands in order to serve the church in America. This arrangement was time-consuming, and as the needs for a qualified ministry expanded much faster than the authorities in the Netherlands could produce ministers, many congregations in America were forced to function without ministers for some time.[37]

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[36] De Jong, *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies,* 55.
[37] Demarest, 66-68.

After the British took New Netherland, the American church's relationship with the Classis of Amsterdam became very strained. It must be noted, however, that in spite of many negating variables, this relationship lasted until the time of the American Revolution. By then, however, Dutch Reformed congregations in America numbered about one hundred, but there were less than forty ministers in service. In 1737, a few minister met in New York City to devise a plan to satisfy the needs of the local churches. At this meeting, which convened with the blessings of the Classis of Amsterdam, was formed the foundations for the organization of a "Coetus." With some misgivings within the Classic, the Coetus was allowed to function with limited powers from 1747, and indeed it did create problems for the Classis. Demarest states:

> This body, called the Coetus, organized in 1747, had no ecclesiastical authority, but was merely advisory. Consequently all the evils that we have mentioned continued to exist, and indeed were felt more keenly than ever. I a few cases the Coetus was at first permitted by the Classis to ordain ministers. This tended to open the eyes of the ministers and people to see that the churches in this country were competent to do their own work, and that there was no reason why they should not be allowed to do it. They saw, also that the ministers who had been taught and ordained in America were no less able and useful than many who had come from Holland.[38]

It also encouraged division within the Church in America; for one side, who called themselves the "Conferentie," sought to maintain loyalty to Amsterdam while the other – the Coetus - argued for the organization of an independent American classis. One fear of the Conferentie, who were mostly "…older ministers who

[38] Demarest, 69.

had been born and educated in Holland, and who still regarded it as their home…" was that the "…Church in America would be unable to support an institution that would meet the requirements, and so she would lose her learned and respected ministry." The Conferentie proposed to set up a professorship of divinity at an already established college, but the Coetus aimed for an independent Reformed institution. In 1766, William Franklin, Governor of New Jersey, granted the Coetus a charter for the establishment of Queen's College to be located in New Brunswick, New Jersey.[39] The college, known today as Rutgers University, was eventually established under a revised charter in 1770 for "the education of youth in the languages, liberal and useful arts and sciences, and especially in divinity; preparing them for the ministry, and other good office."[40]

The use or non-use of Dutch as the language of the churches was another issue that threatened conflict in the Church. On one hand, the use of English as the language of the society became more and more acceptable, especially by young people, that Dutch quickly became an unknown tongue to them. There was also the hybridization of both languages that in many instances made communication very difficult for those who wished to maintain the purity of their mother tongue. On the other hand, the leaders of the church expressed concern about the matter of parents neglecting to pass on the mother tongue to their

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[39] Demarest, 72.
[40] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 78.

children and the spiritual disadvantages such neglect engendered. De Jong declares:

> The declining use of Dutch by the colonists had long been a source of concern to the leaders of the Reformed Church. As early as 1726, the consistory of New York City had expressed alarm about this matter. Although the reverend body acknowledged the need for Dutchmen to learn English "in order properly to carry on one's temporal calling," it declared that parents should not neglect any opportunity for teaching the ancestral language to their children because "the true doctrine of comfort in life and death is preached in the clearest and most powerful manner, in the Dutch tongue."[41]

This statement clearly demonstrates a prejudicial attitude towards the English language by those who favored Dutch. The English language, however, prevailed even in the church that in 1763 a request was made of the Classis of Amsterdam to have an ordained English-speaking minister appointed to the consistory of New York City. In 1764, "…the Reverend Archibald Laidlie, a Scot, who had been serving an English congregation at Vlissingen in the southern part of the Netherlands," arrived and "…was assigned to the New Dutch Church on Nassau Street…" in New York City.[42] Other congregations gradually followed the lead of New York City, and by 1794 church manuals and scripture readings, even the Heidelberg Catechism, were translated into English and "the General Synod, the denomination's highest judicatory body, began keeping its minutes in English,

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[41] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 103.
[42] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 103-104.

at which time it may be said that English replaced Dutch as the official language of the Church."[43]

The history of the Dutch Reformed Church is the history of the spread and foothold of Reformation in the Netherlands. It also illustrates the desires of peoples and their push to maintain specific identities which in turn promoted a sense of destiny and pride in their existence. There is no denying of the bold tenacity of the Dutch as conditions and circumstances influenced by the Reformation produced opportunities that liberated them from the stranglehold of the Roman Catholic Church on their spiritual destiny as well as ignite a national vivacity to depose Spanish monarchy and create local leadership. But even in the process of these early developments, the Dutch, as in their toleration of Charles V and their repulsion of Philip II, showed favor for their own even though theirs was about as bad as the rejected one.

Two centuries later, the issue of the annexation of New Netherland by the British brought forth a similar attitude in the response of the Dutch to English rule. It is obviously quite normal for members of a subordinate class to reluctantly participate in seemingly inequitable programs imposed by a ruling class, as was the case involving conscripted support for Episcopalian ministry, but in this the Dutch demonstrated an attitude of restraint and cooperation while attempting to maintain pride in their heritage in their resistance to language change in their religious services.

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[43] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 104-105.

Internally, the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church struggled successfully, in the Arminian controversy, to maintain purity in the Calvinist creed of the Church. This attitude of tenacity is also evident in the struggle of the American church for independence from the Mother Church in the Netherlands. Such a struggle was inadvertently supported by a growing dissatisfaction among the English colonists with the directions of their English overlords in Europe as they pertained to America. Is it coincidental then, that as circumstances of the Reformation in Europe also worked for the formation of the Dutch Reformed Church, that circumstances of the American Revolution worked for the independence of the Dutch Reformed Church in America? Or was it all an act of divine favor? Whatever is our conclusion, the tenacity and strong convictions of the leaders and members of the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands and in America most certainly suggests that the Dutch felt in their existence and struggle a powerful sense of destiny.

Chapter Two

The Dutch Reformed Church in Empire and Missions

As Protestant Christianity spread beyond the geographical boundaries of Europe so did the idiosyncrasies of life in Europe itself. Wherever Europeans went they took with them their accustomed patterns and styles of life. While they of necessity adapted to natural and climactic conditions in the lands of their conquest, they attempted with much success, in transforming those lands into a resemblance of Europe itself. One writer calls this the creation of Neo-Europes in foreign lands.[1] One of the patterns of European life transplanted to colonial territories was the integration of religion in almost every aspect of social organization. To understand why religion played such a large part in the life of settlers it is necessary to examine the relationship of religion with life in general in Europe and some of the effects of the Protestant Reformation on that relationship.

Life in Europe prior to the early 1500s was fully engulfed by the trappings of Roman Catholicism. The papacy was the supreme authority for the people of Europe. The power of the office of the Pope was so extensive that even the rulers of some countries were sometimes forced to pay homage to its occupant. Any act or policy of a particular monarch that was counter to the dictates of the papacy would often result in the marginalization and eventual humiliation of that

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[1] Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2-7.

monarch. And because it was regarded as the sole custodian of eternal destiny, the Catholic Church held sway over every aspect of life - and death. Separation from the Church and its dictates was unimaginable. But a separation did occur when a priest of the Church became aware of the unscriptural practice of penances and indulgences. Martin Luther, galvanized by his spiritual convictions, set off a revolution that changed the face of religion in Europe.

The Protestant Reformation successfully challenged the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and changed the way people regarded religious authority. It also, inadvertently, made it possible for the contemplation of secularism as a form of government in many countries; a possibility which has become a reality in many instances. Nevertheless, one thing stands out: the presence of the Christian religion and the fervor with which it was impressed upon the native peoples was evident wherever Europeans went. Europeans may have reduced the status of the Catholic Church, but they could not shake the centuries-old habit of associating religion - in whatever new denominational form they created – with most everything in their lives.

It would be very difficult to contemplate a history of European empire-building without recognizing the uses of religion and missions in accomplishing the purposes of colonization. Whether intended or not, from the discovery to the post-colonial era in the twentieth century, there was a definite partnership between religion and empire.

In the sixteenth century, patterns of religious partnership with empire may be seen in the subjugation of the natives of the New World by Spanish

conquerors in collusion with the Roman Catholic Church. These patterns seem to follow very specific forms which were repeated throughout the eras of conquest and missions. As ships left the Old World, they were often accompanied by one or more members of the clergy whose duty was to provide spiritual liturgy and guidance for the sailors and other adventurers aboard. Upon reaching their destination in the New World, it became the responsibility of the minister to encourage the development of amicable relationships between the settlers and the natives. Such relationships might have developed from a desire on the part of the minister to try to convert the natives, whom he generally regarded as heathens in need of salvation, i.e. conversion to Christianity. Conversions of this sort always benefited the settlers in that the natives could be more easily subordinated as a ready source of labor in the colonists quest for wealth.

But Christian conversions often resulted in the relegation of the natives to a status of inferiority in relation to that of the settlers. Of course, there were instances where the natives seemingly accepted their delegated positions, but maintained their pre-colonial identity through the incorporation of their own customs and folklore into those that were taught to them by Europeans. One example of this was the power play between the Spanish and the natives of New Spain. Spanish Christianity introduced the idea of a controversy between a perfect God on the one hand, who is the epitome of all that is good and demands total allegiance from his devotees, and a most malevolent being who is antithetical to the former, on the other hand, the worship of whom is totally

forbidden. The obligation to give complete allegiance to one of these deities exclusively seemed counterproductive to the natives of New Spain. Native religion was characterized by the inclusion of opposing forces of good and evil, which created a perfect balance necessary for continuous, if not harmonious, existence in life. The Spanish, as the conquerors, seem to have succeeded by force of arms in subjugating the natives, but the natives, while exhibiting outwardly a semblance of assimilation, utilized the Spanish religious concepts to reinforce the dualism of their old religious observances.[2] The use of religion by the Spanish to subjugate the natives, and their attempt to wean them from their so-called paganisms resulted in unintentional continuance of the dualistic characteristic of native religion.

Another example would be the celebration of Corpus Christi in colonial Cuzco, Peru. The festival was, in fact, a celebration of the triumph of Christianity over Inka paganism. Natives were involved in the festival as players would be in a stage production. They would be given marginal parts to play which highlighted their relegated position in their relationship with their conquerors. The marginal inclusion of natives in the festival did not signify acceptance through conversion of the natives into the Christian family. On the contrary, it signified the triumph of the colonizers over the colonized. Thus the natives were cast in a manner that depicted the superiority of the Spanish and the continued inferior position of the natives. Notwithstanding, while the Inkas accepted their

[2] Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World: The Impact of Diabolism in the New World* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994).

marginal role in the celebration of the triumph of Corpus Christi, they took the opportunity to highlight native royal history which they incorporated into the celebration, and thereby adapted the celebration and its meaning to their own purposes. A celebration originally meant to manifest the success of Spanish agency in Peru not only achieved its intended purpose, but also was appropriated by the natives to tell their own historical story of triumph.[3]

These examples show that agents of the Catholic Church, to an extent, were aware of their role in the process of colonization prior to the nineteenth century. It raises the question, however, of what significance to the colonial enterprise during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the involvement of Protestant Christian missionaries.

The people of the Netherlands owed much to the Protestant Reformation for it enabled them to overthrow papal power and eventually achieve independence from Spanish rule. During the Dutch Revolt, religion in national life was quite an uncertainty. Both the Roman Catholic and the Dutch Reformed Churches suffered from a lack of public interest. The idea of being free from the confines of Catholicism was accompanied by a wariness of anything that bore a resemblance to religion. However, the conditioning of centuries of religious imposition could not be denied, and the Dutch Reformed Church gradually overcame the threat of secularism to become the church of the state of the Dutch Republic.

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[3] Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru* (London: Duke University Press, 1999).

The Dutch colonial empire had its beginnings in the last decade of the sixteenth century. In spite of its struggle with Spain, preconditions for entrance of the Dutch Republic into global maritime competition with other European countries proved favorable. Israel posits:

> These preconditions were a secure home base for long-term investments, a large accumulation of merchant capital, political support at both civic and provincial level, detailed knowledge about routes and conditions in the Indies, a transferable surplus of naval and military power at home, and, finally, favourable *[sic]* circumstances for breaking into the hotly contested European pepper, spice, and sugar market.[4]

By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Dutch Republic was poised to take over leadership of European trade traffic. In 1602 the United East India Company (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnin) was chartered to administer Dutch trade and establish commercial colonies along the coastlands of central and southern Asia. Under the charter, which was renewable upon review by the States General after twenty-one years, the powers of the East India Company were very extensive. Under the authority of the States General, the Company was empowered to "…maintain troops and garrisons, fit out warships, impose governors upon Asian populations, and conduct diplomacy with eastern potentates, as well as sign treaties and make alliances."[5]

The original charter of the Dutch East India Company did not include any obligation on its part to promote missionary work among the non-Europeans within its jurisdiction, but, as long as its commercial enterprises remained

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[4] Israel, 318.
[5] Israel, 322.

profitable, the company worked with the State Church to promote missionary endeavors in the East.[6] Through the Dutch East Company and with the cooperation of the government, the Dutch Reformed Church labored to provide Christian ministers for "…*Ceylon, Sumatra, Java, Amboyna, Heresoria, Isles of Banda, Coromandel, Surat, China, Formosa, Siam, and Japan*. In all these countries, or dependencies, churches and school houses were built by the combined action of the company, the government, the church at home and the colonies."[7]

It must be noted that the evangelization of colonized natives were subordinate to the commercial motives of the Dutch East India Company, and although the Dutch Reformed Church was very successful in its missions among the natives of the East, especially in India, missionary work was not a priority of the company. Van Der Merwe observes:

> The spirit of materialism naturally caused the mission work of the D.E.I.C. to be conducted on a cheap and often superficial basis. It also explains the decrease in missionary fervour *[sic]* as soon as its business undertakings were no longer yielding large profits. In spite of an ecclesiastical resolution to the contrary, it seems as if the best type of ministers were not always sent out to the East. Very often there was a lack of ministers, partly because the D.E.I.C. would not spend more money for religious work, partly because the clergy refused to serve an organization which kept both the colonial church and its ministers in a state of utter subordination.[8]

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[6] Willem Jacobus Van Der Merwe, *The Development of Missionary Attitudes in the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa* (Cape Town, South Africa: Nasionale Pers BPK, 1936), 11-15.
[7] Charles E. Corwin, *A Manual of the Reformed Church in America, 1628-1922,* 5th ed., revised (New York: Board of Publication and Bible-School Work of the Reformed Church in America, 1922), 179.
[8] Van Der Merwe, 12-13.

The East India Company was decommissioned in 1795, but throughout its existence, the Dutch Reformed Church enjoyed some degree of privilege and preference in its work in the East through its association with it.

Around 1607, the successes of Dutch trade in the western hemisphere generated calls for a Dutch West India Company. The Netherlands, however, was still in conflict with Spain over the issue of independence. Spanish embargoes on the naval movements of the Netherlands in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Baltic and the North seas almost halted Dutch trade. As such, it was necessary to delay official state efforts to govern Dutch holdings in the west. The East India Company escaped this fate because its sphere of operation was not in conflict with Spanish interests, as well as the fact that it not only focused on trade between Europe and the east, but it had developed a vibrant trade exercise among the countries of the east itself. Nevertheless, the tenacity of the Dutch carried the day in the west, and in 1621 a charter was given for the organization of the West India Company (Westindische Compagnie), which was actually accomplished in 1624.[9]

The West India Company governed a vast expanse of territory. Its jurisdiction included much of the coastlands washed by the Atlantic Ocean.

> By 1648 the company had three groups of colonies. In North America it possessed New Amsterdam, on the Hudson river, and Long Island, which traded in furs with the Indians, and was developing into an agricultural settlement; and also Delaware, founded in 1623 and extended in 1655 by the conquest of the neighbouring *[sic]* Swedish colony of New Sweden. A second group consisted of trading bases on both sides of the Atlantic.

[9] Israel, 326, 478.

> Arguin, Portendic, Goree, Elmina, Sao Tome and Loanda in West Africa were conquered from Portugal as slaving centers; Curacao, St Eustacius, Tobago and other Caribbean islands from Spain for contraband trade with Spanish colonies. Finally the company occupied much of Brazil and the previously unsettled region of Guiana.[10]

Under the auspices of the West India Company the first Dutch settlers came to Manhattan in 1624, and the colony of New Netherland was organized.[11] In 1628, the Company brought the Reverend Jonas Michelius to found the first church to serve the religious needs of the settlers of New Netherland. During his sojourn in New Netherland, Michelius was often in disagreement with Peter Minuit, an elder of the church and director general of New Netherland.[12] "In a letter to a friend in Holland, Michelius accused Minuit and members of his council of scandalous conduct and dishonesty." Upon his return to Holland around 1632, he reported to the consistory of Amsterdam where he was warmly received, but because of his criticisms of Company officials in New Netherland, the Company refused acquiescence to three subsequent requests for another opportunity to return to New Netherland.[13]

The account of the 1628 arrival of Michelius in New Netherland and the late 1630s multiple refusals by the West India Company to allow him to return there after a stay in Holland is important to note because it highlights the change in the status of religion and the Church in the affairs of the Dutch. In pre-

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[10] D.K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1967), 50-51.
[11] Robert P. Swierenga, ed., *The Dutch in America: Immigration, Settlement, and Cultural Change* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press,1985), 175.
[12] Noel Leo Erskine, *Black People and the Reformed Church in America* (Reformed Church Press, 1978), 17.
[13] De Jong, *The Dutch Reformed Church in the American Colonies,* 17-19.

reformation times, the Catholic Church exercised complete control over the state; it would have been inconceivable of the state not to give in to the desires of the Church. In this case, however, we see a complete reversal of status between church and state, and a confirmation of the subordinate status of the Dutch Reformed Church in relation to the state. In spite of this, however, the relationship between the Church and the State was one of mutual necessity. While the State held sway over the Church in some ways, it was imperative for them to maintain a relationship of cooperation in order to further the prospects of national unity, colonial expansion and security against foreign imposition. The early lessons of the Dutch revolt were well learnt. The question that rises at this point is: how much more control over the Church did the state exercise and did those exercises include the activities of missionaries in empire-building and government?

Developments on the America coast, however, soon brought drastic changes to the status of New Netherland and to the Dutch Reformed Church in America. After the transfer of civil authority to the English at the annexation of New Netherland in 1664, the Reformed Church lost its limited influence in the government of the colony and for many years fought to prevent the Anglicization of the Church. Even though the Dutch populace was more numerous in places such as New Amsterdam (renamed New York by the English), and those numbers meant for a greater Dutch representation in political elected offices than the English themselves, the futility of such a struggle was inevitable. From the capitulation down through the American Revolution, the Church underwent a

painful process of Americanization. Its hopes for perpetuation in America meant that it had to undergo internal transformations with an eventual administrative separation from the Netherlands. Once these changes were made by the end of the eighteenth century, the Reformed Church in America was well integrated into the American landscape.

The American Revolution brought upon the Reformed Church a myriad of challenges that led it to become an American church. Dutch attitudes toward the Revolution were varied: "Some sided with the Patriots, others joined the Loyalists, and still others attempted to remain neutral."[14] It is not surprising that the Dutch were on one side or the other of the issue. After all, there was still some "resentment toward England because of her 'treacherous attack' on New Netherland in 1664." By the same token, Patriots, who themselves were mostly British subjects did not convince all the Dutch of the benefits of American liberty and independence. The Dutch were concerned with freedom to carry on their commercial activities than with self-government. Research shows, however, that most Dutch residents of America at the time of the Revolution preferred a posture of neutrality and to focus their attention on personal and family preservation. De Jong concurs:

> Contemporary views about the attitude of the colonists toward the Revolution frequently indicate that many Dutchmen preferred remaining neutral in the conflict. Samuel Curwen, a Loyalist writer from Massachusetts, wrote on May 4, 1775, shortly after the battles of Concord and Lexington, that the 'Quakers and Dutchmen…from their former experience, have too great a regard for ease and

[14] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 109.

> property to sacrifice either, at this time of doubtful disputation, on the altar of an unknown goddess, of rather doubtful divinity.[15]

The effects of neutrality on Dutch colonists were not always welcomed during the war for American Independence. A neutral stance was difficult to keep because the war encroached upon Dutch families and properties of local Dutchmen. "Among the Dutch of Bergen County, for example, 'division of loyalty within families was not uncommon. Several of a family served the King and others the patriot cause.'"[16] But whether they supported one side of the conflict or the other, the primary focus of most Dutch colonists was their desire to continue their efforts in their traditional vocation of commerce.[17]

On the missionary front, work continued in Dutch colonies around the world governed by both the Dutch East India Company and the West India Company until the late 1790s when both companies lost their charters. After that, the work of missions was continued under the supervision of a number of missionary societies organized by several denominations working together to spread the Gospel. By this time, churches operated independently of territorial governments. They were no longer given financial support from the government and except for permission to enter various territories; they operated without their home government's approval. Their apparent independence negated the need for such approval.

It is not quite clear when modern Christian missions began. Some writers put the inception of missionary societies in the 1790s, but of course evidence

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[15] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 109-110.
[16] DeJong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 119
[17] DeJong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 110-111.

shows that Protestant ministers worked among non-European peoples throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Missionary work was undertaken by ministers of the church almost immediately upon the settlement of Dutch colonies in the New World.

> The Church of Holland also, through the West India Company (1621-1664) did something for the Indians in America, including the West Indies and Brazil. The American ministers often alluded in their correspondence to the sad condition of the natives, and the necessity of evangelizing them; and in the calls of these ministers there are sometimes stipulations that they should not neglect the natives.[18]

In 1643, work "among the Mohawk Indians living near what is now called Albany," New York, was started by Reverend Johannes Megapolensis followed three years later by John Eliot among the Indians of Roxbury, Massachusetts. Megapolensis' work among the Indians was very successful:

> Large numbers of the Mohawk attending the preaching of Megapolensis, who had become quite a fluent speaker in their language. Many of tem were truly converted, baptized, and received into the fellowship of the Reformed Church of Albany. The baptismal register of that church contains the names of these converts, of whom the greater proportion were of adult years.[19]

These developments were probably a rapid change of attitude of the ministry of the Reformed Church toward the natives of America. The attitude portrayed by the first minister of the Reformed Church, Dominie Jonas Michelius, was not in any way complementary of the native Indians, and suggests a rather aloof stance on his part. In a letter to the Classis of Amsterdam in 1628, Michelius wrote:

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[18] Corwin, 180.
[19] Corwin, 180.

> As to the natives of this country, I find them entirely savage and wild, strangers to all decency, yea, uncivil and stupid as garden ples, proficient in all wickedness and godlessness; devilish men, who serve nobody but the devil, that is, the spirit, which is their language they call 'menetto.[20]

These words seem to suggest that Michelius was a man of a very blunt disposition who was not concerned with the use of diplomacy. It is no wonder that he fell out of favor with the West India Company. In spite of his impressions about the Indians, however, Michelius is thought by some to have worked with the Indians, putting his emphasis on the Christian education of their children.[21] The fact that the Reformed Church did accept converted natives into its membership just a decade after the return of Michelius to Holland, however, shows that the church was open to the evangelization of non-European peoples.

Mission work among peoples of Black African decent also began before the initiation of missionary societies. There is some confusion pertaining to the origins and nature of missionary work in South Africa. Charles E. Corwin states, "Through the West India Company…the Church of Holland sent many ministers to Cape Colony, and the negroes of the vicinity were not forgotten."[22] Willem Jacobus Van Der Merwe suggests, however, that it was the Dutch East India Company that actually begun mission work in South Africa. He affirms, "It was the missionary spirit as found in the Netherlands and breathed in the circles of the D.E.I.C. *(Dutch East India Company)* during the first half of the 17th Century

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[20] Howard G. Hageman, *Lily Among the Thorns* (New York: The Half Moon Press, 1953), 60.
[21] Van Der Merwe, 10-11.
[22]Corwin, 181. The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa did not undertake mission work among Black people of South Africa, only few Cape slaves and colored population were converted to Christianity.

that the Dutch came to the Cape."[23] The discrepancies of these two statements arise from the fact that both companies had jurisdiction over Cape Colony at one time or another. The territory was once the southernmost outpost of the Dutch East India Company, but an examination of the jurisdiction of the West India Company shows also the inclusion of the southern tip of Africa. A reasonable conclusion of this matter lies in the statements themselves. In Corwin's statement, ministers sent to Cape Colony through the West India Company could mean that the territory was already colonized at the time of those ministerial appointments and that those appointments were a continuation of work that had already started, probably by the Dutch East India Company. The fact that Corwin does not actually mention the beginnings of mission work among South African natives also legitimates Van Der Merwe's assertion. This perspective removes any confusion pertaining to the chronological frame of reference of both statements as well as jurisdictional conflicts.

The Dutch Reformed Church was embroiled in so many internal issues that threatened its continued existence on the American religious landscape in the eighteenth century that it was unable to give much attention to the development of an organized mission structure. Consequently, it did not become involved in missionary societies until the 1790s. Other Protestant denominations, however, began organized missionary endeavors as early as 1701 when a

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[23] Van Der Merwe, 14. See also Henno Cronje, *Facing the Challenges: The Role of the Dutch Reformed Church – Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk – in South Africa* (Pretoria, South Africa: The General Commission of the Synod, n.d.), 6; and Jonathan N. Gerstner, "A Christian Monopoly: The Reformed Church and Colonial Society Under Dutch Rule," in *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History,* ed. Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1997), 16.

charter was issued in England for the formation of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts. This organization might be considered the forerunner of modern missionary societies. But although some work was done among the Indians, this society existed primarily for "the support of Episcopal clergymen in the colonies."[24] In Scotland, the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge was formed in 1709, "and in 1741 a Board of Christian Knowledge was formed in New York," which helped to finance the work of independent missionaries to the Indians of Long Island, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.[25]

In England, a revival of consciousness of Christian duty was initiated in the form of Methodism by John Wesley and George Whitefield in 1738. With the contribution of Jonathan Edwards, they sowed the seeds of missionary enterprise that blossomed and energized men with a passion for heathen souls in foreign lands.[26] In 1793, William Carey, a Baptist minister, met with eleven others in a poor widow's back parlor to consider the prospects of foreign missions. The story is told that Carey, a cobbler by trade, made a globe out of leather, and crying over the need for missionaries to take the Gospel to foreign lands, he randomly pointed to a spot on the globe and vowed to go to the country indicated by his finger. That country was India. That day the Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen was formed, and with it the era of modern missions was born. Several missionary societies followed. In 1795 the "London

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[24] Corwin, 182.
[25] Corwin, 182.
[26] Marvin Hoff, *The Reformed Church in America: Structures For Mission,* The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America, no. 14 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 18.

Missionary Society[27] was speedily organized, composed of Independents, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians…Societies were formed in Edinburgh and Glasgow."[28] In November, 1796, members of the Presbyterian, Baptist and Reformed Dutch denominations formed the New York Missionary Society with Reformed minister, Dr. John H. Livingston as its Vice-President. This was followed in January, 1797 with the formation of the Northern Missionary Society in Albany, New York with Dr. Theodoric Romeyn, minister of the First Reformed Church of Schenectady, serving as its first President.[29] In 1799, the Church Missionary Society was organized in England under the leadership of the Reverend John Venn.[30] Other missionary societies were formed in Connecticut, New Jersey, Massachusetts and New Hampshire with a vision to evangelize the Indians in America and heathens in countries around the world.

At its inception, the foreign focus of the Church Missionary Society was mainly upon Africa, but in a few years its focus included territories of western Asian, which would today be considered the Middle East, and, according to Nemer, "The Society…had become 'The Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East' in 1812…."[31] Its demographic target in the Middle East, however, was not necessarily Arabs or followers of Islam. The formation of the London

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[27] It was the London Missionary Society that started the first serious missionary work among Black people in South Africa shortly after 1800.
[28] Corwin, 183.
[29] Hoff, 27; see also Laurence Nemer, *Anglican and Roman Catholic Attitudes on Missions: A Historical Study of Two English Missionary Societies in the late Nineteenth Century (1865-1885)* (St Augustin: Steyler Verlag, 1981), 17.
[30] Nemer, 17;see also Demarest, 111-112; and Corwin, 182-183;
[31] Kenneth Cragg, "Being Made Disciples – The Middle East," in *The Church Mission Society and World Christianity, 1799-1999,* eds. Kevin Ward and Brian Stanley (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, England: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 2000), 121; seealso Nemer, 17.

Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews reminds us of the religioue diversity of the Middle East. Meanwhile, on the American side of the Atlantic, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions was formed in 1810, and "in 1816 the

Female Society for the Promotion of Christianity amongst the Jews was founded in Boston and the vicinity."[32]

The formation of missionary societies at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries indicated a true cessation of active official involvement of local government in the missions of the American churches. It might be said that the American Revolution brought about dramatic change in the relationship between civil and religious entities, but, in the case of the Reformed Church in America, such changes were already underway by the time of Independence. But that was not the case with the English societies. Both Nemer and Tibawi agree that English missionary organizations were active participants in the spread of British colonialism throughout the world.[33] The Church of England, of which the Church Missionary Society was a part, was still a state church headed by the monarch of England. In America, church and state was separate and American missionary societies were not direct instruments of American imperial goals on the frontier or overseas.

Missionary launchings from American shores were strikingly increased in the nineteenth century. In 1816, the United Foreign Missionary Society was

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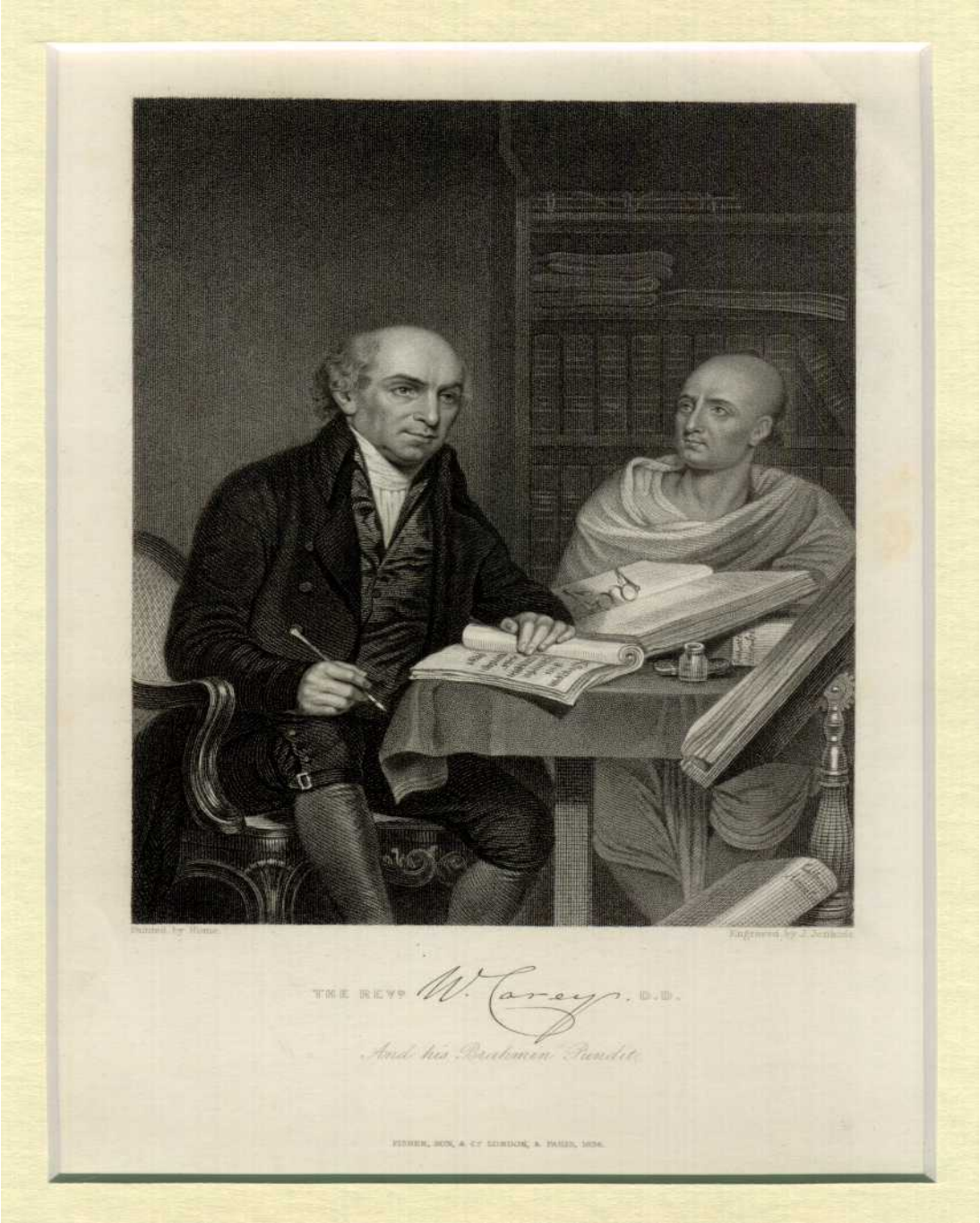
[32] A.L. Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800-1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 9.
[33] Nemer, 18-20; Tibawi, 9-13.



William Carey at his desk with his Brahman Pundit

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formed, and in 1826 it was absorbed by the American Board of Commissioners fro Foreign Missions. By 1832, missionaries from the Reformed Church in America were sent out by the American Board. Financial contributions for the work were gathered by the local congregations and deposited into the treasury of the American Board. This arrangement lasted for approximately twenty-five years, after which "a separation was effected, in the most pleasant manner, in 1857…" and the Reformed Church in America began sending out missionaries under it own auspices. One of the first Reformed missionaries of the nineteenth century was John Scudder, a medical doctor who went to Ceylon in 1819 as a missionary with the American Board. He was ordained in 1821 and transferred to Madras. He died in 1855 on a recruitment trip to South Africa. David Abeel went to China in 1829. Cornelius V.A. Van Dyck, another Reformed physician, went to Syria in 1839. In 1836, Elbert Nevius, William Youngblood, Jacob Ennis, Elihu Doty, Azubah C. Condict, Frederick B. Thomson and William J. Pohlman went to Java and established mission stations on the island of Borneo. In 1844, Doty and Pohlman left Borneo and joined David Abeel to establish the Amoy mission in China. Dr. S.R. Brown and Reverend Guido F. Verbeck established the Japan Mission in 1859.[34] American missionizing was global in scope.

Missionary work in the East also focused on the establishment of schools and other education institutions. In 1869 Reverend Henry Stout went to Nagasaki, Japan. There he taught in the government schools. At the mission house, his wife "began a school for girls." Soon, a school building was erected in

[34] Demarest, 112-113.

the mission compound. In 1881 Reverend Booth started a school for boys where students were given theological instructions. By 1887, the Jonathan Sturges Seminary was opened to train indigenous ministers for work in the Japanese field.[35] By this time, interest in missions in the Middle East was rising among students of the New Brunswick Seminary in New Jersey. In 1888, three students, James Cantine, Philip T. Phelps and Samuel M. Zwemer discussed their missionary interests with a Professor Lansing. As a result of this consultation, the students decided to enter the mission work on behalf of Muslims. Thus began a chapter of outstanding missionary service in the life of Samuel M. Zwemer, the first missionary of the Reformed Church in America to the Muslim world.[36]

It is interesting that the modern missionary movement, started by William Carey, quickly became an enterprise in which Americans sought involvement. America, at that time, was a fairly new country just coming into its own as a sovereign nation, yet there was much sharing and cooperation across the Atlantic. This condition hints of a disconnect between religion and imperial enterprise, but that might not be truly so. There is no denying that, especially on the European side, religion was still an integral part of state business. Lewis R. Scudder III posits:

> It has been clear to the indigenous population of any foreign mission field that their western missionaries represented not only the power of the gospel but, willy-nilly, the power of the governments of their nations as well. The latter was something far

[35] Corwin, 214-215.
[36] Corwin, 215; see also Lewis R. Scudder, *The Arabian Mission's Story: In Search of Abraham's Other Son* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 136-139.

> more concrete (not to say intimidatingly persuasive) than the former. Foreign missions have found it virtually impossible to unambiguously illustrate the "other worldly" power of the gospel except in the lives of a few pioneer missionaries (Henry Martyn, for instance) and proto-missionaries (of the ilk of the explorer, Charles Doughty) who, through force of circumstances or deliberate choice, laid aside the special privileges and immunities to which their western nationalities entitled them.[37]

Scudder hints at the association of missions to colonial enterprise by indigenous peoples, but the view of the cooperation of Christian missions with the furtherance of business ventures of the colonial authorities might have been unintentional on the part of the missionaries. About this cooperation in the British Empire, Elizabeth Elbourne states:

> In the early nineteenth century, missions played a critical if ambivalent role both in Britain's imperial expansion and in the local power struggles and social relations which accompanied the growth of empire. From the late 1790s onward, Christian missionary activity preceded large-scale white colonization in many areas of the empire, including South Africa. Missions did not cause white colonization, and many individual missionaries opposed settler and trading interests. Nonetheless, by the latter part of the nineteenth century, missions had come to be seen by many in Britain as emblematic of some larger national imperial project.[38]

Many, if not all, missionaries were used by the authorities in the accomplishment of secular goals, but missionaries often found themselves in positions where they were guided by their own sense of superiority. Scudder speaks to the issue:

> There has always been an economic and political aspect to the work of the church. Modern Protestant mission is no exception. The use of the word "Heathen" in the very title of Carey's book *(An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the*

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[37] Scudder, 15

[38] Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground: Colonialism, Missions, and the Contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 13.

> *Conversion of the Heathen)* is indicative: The term "heathen bespeaks a darkened pagan world beyond the bounds of the scientifically enlightened, industrial, and Christian West. "Heathen" describes people who are not only non-Christian but whose knowledge is primitive, whose politics are tribal or feudal, and whose culture and social practices are very nearly barbaric. The word "mission," too, reflects this attitude. The missionary was "sent out," emitted from one place to some place *else* bearing a gift or a message which is not there available. Through over a century and a half the word "missionary would be understood simply as a contraction of "foreign missionary." ….There was arrogance in it. There was condescension too.[39]

The overall interest of Christian missions, however, was fueled by a genuine "compassion that most missionaries felt and their concern for the human dignity of those to whom they were sent."[40]

[39] Scudder, 7-8.
[40] Scudder, 8.

Chapter Three

Samuel Zwemer and the Motivations of a Christian Journal

In January, 1911, the first issue of a journal was published with the express purpose of educating the western world about the history of the religion of Islam, its effects upon the lives of its adherents and those who lived within its influence and the need for aggressive measures by Christendom to stop its alarming spreading at an alarming rate. Published in London by the Christian Literature Society for India and the Nile Mission Press, *The Moslem World,* originally entitled "A Quarterly Review of current events, literature, and thought among Mohammedans, and the progress of Christian Missions in Moslem lands," was the brainchild of Samuel Marinus Zwemer, a minister of the Reformed Church in America who had, for many years, labored in the establishment of a mission in Arabia, the cradle of Islam. According to a 1952 biography of Samuel Zwemer, he was very devoted to the publication of *The Moslem World,* so much so that J. Christy Wilson states anecdotally:

> Recalling the story about the wounded soldier of Napoleon who had no anaesthetic *[sic]* and as they probed for the bullet remarked, "Be careful, because a little deeper and you will strike my heart, and the Emperor is there." So Samuel Zwemer might have said if his heart were opened, "*The Moslem World* is there."[1]

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[1] J. Christy Wilson, *Apostle to Islam: A Biography of Samuel M. Zwemer* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1952), 179.

These words are apt for the description of Zwemer's passion and devotion to the dissemination of knowledge of Muslim religion and culture among missionaries. His passion in this endeavor might be dubbed an obsession.

To comprehend Zwemer's deep concern for the work among Muslims, and his attitude toward Islam, it would be judicious to examine some historical processes that came together in a seemingly providential way to create that sense of urgency for him during the early twentieth century. To accomplish this, it is necessary to look in retrospect beyond the beginning of the modern missionary movement to an era of expanded Dutch emigration to America.

After the fall of New Netherlands to the English in 1664, Dutch emigration to America practically ceased. The Dutch trade, along with its commercial successes in its colonial empire, placed the Netherlands in a lonely category of being the richest of European nations. Life was good. There were few "push" or "pull" forces prompting emigration from the Netherlands.

The French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic domination of Europe during the 1790s and the first decade of the nineteenth century brought about drastic changes in the economy of the Netherlands. The state church was neglected by the government. "Ministers salaries were not paid, or were inadequately paid, because government support was cut off and the people had yet to become accustomed to the idea of voluntary church support." The defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815 confirmed the return of sovereignty to the Netherlands. By that time, William I had already been proclaimed King of Holland, and among his first official tasks as ruler, he set about to reorganize the

church. His actions only served to produce another schism in the church because the authority which he took to himself in relation to the church was, according to the order of the church as set forth by the Synod of Dort, reserved for a National Synod. Indeed, William I maintained all of the old forms of church authority, but effectively made the state the supreme authority over the church:

> This despotic re-organization of the church, however, aroused but little protest. Most of the clergy were only too glad to get their salaries again, and were not disposed to bite the hand that fed them. Here and there objections were voiced, particularly by the Classis of Amsterdam and in the province of Zeeland, but the overwhelming majority of both ministers and membership accepted the new order readily enough, and may be said by this acquiescence to have given its *ex post facto* consent.[2]

Under this new arrangement, the National Synod met in 1816, and decided to replace the old psalms traditionally used in worship with a new book of hymns. This action was resisted by church members who refused to participate in the singing of these hymns by donning their hats or leaving the services for the duration of the hymns. The National Synod also created a provision that forced a particular interpretation of the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort in relation to the Scriptures upon ministers, and attached their ordination to the ministry to their acceptance of that provision. This action resulted in debate and subsequent confusion. Wabeke relates the inevitable results:

> Finally in 1834 Hendrick de Cock, minister at Ulrum in the province of Groningen, who himself had been “converted” only a few years earlier – partly through conversations with his own parishioners -

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[2] Albertus Pieters, “Historical Introduction,” in *Classis Holland: Minutes 1848-1858* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1943), 10-11.

> seceded publicly with his entire congregation after he had been suspended from the ministry for baptizing children from neighboring congregations. His example was followed in the same year by Ds. *[sic]* Hendrick Peter Scholte of Doeveren, North Brabant.[3]

Henrick Pieter Scholte was a student at the University of Lieden. There, he and other students met regularly as a group for prayer and discussion. The group became known as the "Scholte Club," after its obvious leader. Upon their ordination to the ministry, Scholte and several members of the group "became determined opponents of the Church Reorganization Law of 1816. They included, besides Scholte, the reverend Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte and Anthony Brummelkamp."[4] Van Raalte soon joined Scholte in what was then the beginning of secession from the state church. "By 1835, sixteen congregations had seceded from the state church."[5]

The government of William I began a systematic persecution of Seceders. The 1814 Constitution of Holland guaranteed religious freedom, but the government argued that the privilege of religious meetings only applied to existing churches at that time; that new groups were excluded from such guarantee. The Seceders were forced to conduct their meetings, in secret, in private home, but that too was risky because the government took steps to monitor the movements of known Seceders. Many were arrested and charged for holding religious meetings without permission. "Fines were imposed, and refusal or inability to pay sometimes resulted in imprisonment." These conditions lasted until 1840 when William I abdicated the throne in favor of William II who, to

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[3] Wabeke, 87.
[4] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 130.
[5] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 131.

some extent, eased the persecution of the Seceders and in fact offered a compromise in which the Seceders were to abandon their affiliation to the established church and apply for recognition as a new religious organization. Some Seceders objected to this, claiming that their fight was not with the established church, but with the imposition of government in church affairs. However, Scholte accepted the government's proposal. Others followed his lead, and gradually peace was restored in the Netherlands.[6]

The religious controversy took a heavy toll upon the membership of the Church. Many were tired of it, and along with the economic hardships that were visited upon the entire population which resulted from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, they were open to the idea of finding a better life in another place. Thus, the change of the government's position in the religious controversy had little effect in preventing the mass emigration that was to follow. De Jong affirms:

> The relaxation of laws against Seceders came too late for many who, in the meantime, had decided to "become the salt of the earth in some new settlement in America." By the time persecution had diminished, a kind of emigration psychosis had taken such a firm hold on the minds of many Hollanders that it would have been difficult to reverse the trend.[7]

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[6] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 131; Wabeke, 88-89; Pieters, 14-15. See also Arnold Mulder, *Americans From Holland,* The Peoples of America Series, ed. Louis Adamic (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott, 1947), 109-117.
[7] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 132

Rev. Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte

Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte, who himself was party to the compromise, regretted his decision, and, attracted by the thought of making a better life with full religious freedom, left with a large number of followers for America in 1846, and established a settlement in Michigan named after the homeland, Holland. His group was not the first to undertake the trip to America. Wabeke tells of an incident that served to convince him of a brighter future in America. He states:

> From Gelderland, too, the movement was already well under way when a schoolmaster from the village of Neede, A. Hartgerink, for the first time drew the attention of the Rev. Anthony Brummelkamp to the opportunities which America offered to the needy "Christians" – as the Seceders frequently styled themselves. The teacher brought along some letters from emigrants who had recently gone

> to America. Brummelkamp was deeply moved by what he read, and immediately sent for Van Raalte.[8]

Wabeke quotes Brummelkamp:

> "Both of us had known the writers as extremely poor people, and these lines told of an abundance such as could no longer be imagined in the home country. We were speechless. A light dawned upon us amidst the gloom of parochial relief. God opened our eyes, and we saw that in our troubles we resembled the builders of Babel's tower. Like those tower builders, we were crowding each other out. Whenever a farm was to be let or sold, twenty to forty people would bargain for it. If a house had to be built, twenty carpenters wanted the job, for they would otherwise be without work. Now we realized there is still room on God's earth; only move up a little!"[9]

Shortly, Brummelkamp, too, left the Netherlands and helped establish a settlement in the state of Iowa. America was not just a haven of religious freedom; it was a place wherein one could have a complete economic renewal.[10] The Great Migration of the 1840s had begun. And in this migration is where we make acquaintance with the Zwemer family.

In 1849, Adriaan Zwemer was one of about one hundred and fifty Hollanders, led by Reverend H. G. Klyn, who immigrated to America. He settled in Rochester, New York where he served as an elder in the Holland Presbyterian Church. In 1853, the church became a part of the Reformed Church in America, and in 1855, at the age of thirty-two Zwemer enrolled in the Holland Academy to study for the ministry. He was ordained in 1858, and served in the ministry of several churches in Michigan, Wisconsin, New York, and Iowa until his retirement

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[8] Wabeke, 113.
[9] Wabeke, 113-114.
[10] Wabeke, 113-114.

in 1898. For the rest of his life he resided in Holland, Michigan, where he died on March 17, 1909.[11]

Shortly after he landed in New York in 1849, Adriaan Zwemer married Catharina Boon who had traveled under the chaperonage of Rev. Klyn on the same ship from Holland. On their way to Michigan, they had a sudden change of mind and decided to set up home in Rochester, New York, where the family grew with the birth of four children, "one of whom died in infancy." Prior to leaving the Netherlands, Adriaan had been recommended by the church to study for the ministry; a recommendation of which he was unaware even as he made plans to emigrate to America. Nevertheless, his calling to the ministry soon became evident while he was in Rochester, and eventually the family left for Holland, Michigan where he enrolled at the Hope Academy and College. In 1857, Zwemer received a call to serve as minister of a church at Vriesland, Michigan. During his tenure there, "Samuel Marinus Zwemer was born April 12, 1867."[12]

The Zwemer home was one of deep faith and piety. Prayer and reading were encouraged at every opportunity. All major decisions were made "after seasons of prayer, and there was a constant feeling of fellowship with Christ and Divine guidance in the family." As the family moved to satisfy his fathers call to various congregations, Samuel was, in a word, stricken with wanderlust, from which he never recovered. While the Adriaan ministered in Graafschap, Michigan from 1876 to 1886, Samuel completed preparatory school and

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[11] Samuel M. Zwemer, foreword to *Genealogy and History of the Zwemer-Boon Family* by Adrian Zwemer (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Nungesser Printing Company, 1932), 7-8. See also Wilson, 19-22.
[12] Wilson, 20-21.

successfully pursued an Associate degree at Hope College. On August 25, 1886, Cathrina Boon-Zwemer died. Among her last words to her son was a reminder that as a baby she had prayed over his cradle that he might become a missionary. It is not clear if his mother's last words were the motivating factor in his decision to become a missionary, but Zwemer's interest in missions began to show before he graduated from Hope College. During his senior year in college, Zwemer joined the Student Volunteer Movement. That same year, he worked as a colporteur with the American Bible Society. In 1887, he graduated from Hope College, and in spite of the persuasions of his brothers, Frederick J. Zwemer, a graduate of McCormick Seminary in Chicago and a noted pioneer home missionary to the Dakotas, and James F. Zwemer, a professor at Western Seminary, Samuel chose to enter ministerial training at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey. There he met Dr. John Gulian Lansing, a professor who nourished and encouraged his desire to enter mission work.[13]

At New Brunswick, Zwemer flourished as a student. His favorite place on the campus was the Gardner-Sage Library, and throughout his period of study, he developed a strong friendship with the librarian, John Van Dyck. Zwemer was a focused student. Whatever he undertook to do at the Seminary seemed to be in preparation for missionary life. Wilson states:

> In preparation for the mission field he began this same month, October, 1887, a special study of medicine. He read Gray's *Anatomy* and a manual on therapeutics and other medical texts. At a later period in his course he went on weekends to New York where he worked in Dr. Dowkontt's clinic with a young doctor

[13] Wilson, 26-31.

> named Wanless who was doing graduate work but later became Sir William Wanless of India and one of the best known missionary physicians in the world. Wanless gave him lessons in medicine and Zwemer acted as assistant and druggist….This study of medicine was later to create openings for the Gospel in Arabia.[14]

Zwemer did not become a physician, but was intent on serving in missions regardless of the capacity. The prayer over his cradle seemed to have been a strong motivation for him. The young man was singularly driven by his desire to enter mission work. He was also a strict adherer to the principles and doctrines of the church. This is illustrated in his decision in November, 1888 to break with the family tradition of casting votes for Republicans, and vote instead for candidates of the Prohibition Party. He felt that the Republicans were secretly touting "rum power."[15]

Zwemer's acquaintance with Professor Lansing gave specific geographical direction to his missionary aspirations. Lansing was born in Syria in 1851 to missionary parents, and grew up in Cairo, Egypt. He was sent to the United States for his higher education, and in 1875 he graduated from Union College in Schenectady, New York where he became a member of the Reformed church. After his graduation, he spent a year in Egypt, after which he returned to America and entered the New Brunswick Theological Seminary where he was allowed to complete his degree in just one year. Due to health problems, Lansing was unable to return to the Middle East. "From 1877 he served as pastor to two churches in New York State. At the age of thirty three, in 1884, he

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[14] Wilson, 30.
[15] Wilson, 30.

joined the faculty of New Brunswick Seminary as its first full-time professor of Old Testament." Being the only member of faculty below the age of sixty, it is easy to understand his close association with the students, and his transference to them of his passion for the people of the land of his birth. Although his health prevented him from entering active missionary work, he was able to encourage others into laboring for Muslims in the Middle East.[16]

Sometime during the 1888-1889 school-year, Dr. John G. Lansing was approached by three seminary students. James Cantine, a final year seminarian, Philip Tertius Phelps, also a senior, and Samuel Marinus Zwemer, in his second year, demonstrated their desire to enter the mission field. Naturally, under Lansing's influence, they chose to go to the Mohammedan world. They met often thereafter and made plans to establish a mission in Arabia.[17]

The decision to go to the Middle East was the first, and probably the simplest obstacle, the trio had to face in the establishment of the mission. Upon presenting their plans to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed church, and the General Synod, they were informed that the financial commitments of the church to missions in India, China, and Japan made it impossible for them to receive any such support for Arabia. The Board, however, gave its approval of the project, but financially "declined to assume responsibility in the matter."[18]

It would be pertinent to mention at this point the fact that missionaries were already in the Muslim world, and that they had been there for many years.

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[16] Scudder, 135-136.
[17] Corwin, 215.
[18] Scudder, 141-142.

The *New York Times* records a 1879 address on "Missions in the Ottoman Empire" made by Reverend Dr. Nathaniel Clark at a general Missionary Conference in Chicago:

> Christians in the United States, said Dr. Clark, in 1818 sent Fiske and Parson to Jerusalem. Fiske died in Beyrout and Parsons in Alexandria. In 1831 the Ottoman Empire stretched from the Danube to the Euphrates, and had 35,000,000 of people. The Americans undertook alone to Christianize this mass. Part of them were Armenians, part Catholics, and the remainder Mohammedans, who maintained a terrible despotism….The Moslems abound in prevailing numbers in the large cities. On this territory and among this people the Americans commenced work in 1831. They found the nominal Christians, the Armenians, more corrupt morally than the Turks. First, they tried to revive pure Christianity among these people. Father Goodeil was at first gladly received, but when purity of life was required, they objected. Ultimately, it was found necessary to organize a separate Protestant community. The Missionaries were even persecuted until their civil rights were finally recognized. In 1839 the Sultan issued an order for the expulsion of the missionaries, but they were not to be expelled. The succeeding Sultan favored the missionaries and Christian churches were established in Constantinople and elsewhere. Now the whole country, continued Dr. Clarke, is honeycombed by Christian institutions, and missionary newspapers, printed in four different languages, are circulated everywhere. The Presbyterians are now in charge of Syria and Persia, which were given up to them by the Congregational American Board. Mention was made of the Bible House in Constantinople, from which Bibles, religious books, and religious newspapers in several languages are issued and circulated. Reference was also made to the Robert College – a Christian institution….Then at Scutari, near Constantinople, in the heart of Moslemism stands a Christian college and home for women. Then there are female seminaries at Beyrout, Sidon, Aintab, Marsovan, Erzeroum, Bitlis, and other places, 20 schools in all, conducted by 100 Christian American women, who have 1,000 young women in their charge.[19]

[19] *New York Times,* August 5, 1879, 5.

This address speaks to the early American missionary presence in the Muslim world, a fact reinforced by John Lansing's acquaintance with *that part* of the world through *his* missionary parents. However, Scudder introduces an interesting point in terms of the ethno-religious focus of missionaries in the Muslim world in the late nineteenth century:

> Within Christian circles in the West at the end of the nineteenth century, there was never a serious question whether Islam as a religion was the proper object of a major Christian evangelism offensive. In Christian and western scholarly circles, it was accepted as a matter of course that Islam was a corrupt and demeaning religion which diverted its followers from the path of true salvation and stood in the path of human progress generally. Under its sway, it was held, the indigenous Christian population had been corrupted and subverted from its true evangelical calling. What was raised as an objection to such a campaign was the matter of the obstinacy of Muslims in rejecting the Christian message. This obstinacy, and the fact that Muslim law and society were far from tolerant toward a Muslim who chose to become a Christian, caused some to advise that Islam as a whole should be left to wend its own way to perdition unhindered by Christian missionary efforts.[20]

At first glance, it seems as though Scudder's statement negates Clark's address. But a closer look at both statements shows that the focus of American, and generally western, missionaries in the Muslim world during the nineteenth century was more on the return to Christian purity of eastern Christian communities in those lands than it was on the conversion of Muslims to Christianity. Of the 35,000,000 people of the Ottoman Empire which the Americans "alone" undertook to Christianize, Clark does not stipulate the ethno-religious focus of American missionaries. It is therefore highly probable that

[20] Scudder, 143-144.

Clark was saying the same thing that Scudder so clearly articulated more than a century later. Scudder went on to say that, "All western Protestant missionary efforts in the Arabic-speaking world, except the Ion Keith-Falkoner Mission in Aden, focused upon the ancient Christian populations of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Persia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt."[21]

This attitude of missionaries in the nineteenth century was perhaps unique to the Muslim world. Although the progress of Christianity among peoples of other cultures were often dangerous, missionaries to other non-Muslim parts of the world hardly faced the strong religious antagonism that missionaries to Muslim lands faced.[22] Lansing, Cantine, Zwemer, and Phelps chose to accept the challenging task that most of their contemporaries, for obvious reasons, declined to do. Scudder states, "From the outset the mission was dedicated to 'direct Muslim evangelism,' an enterprise viewed as audacious if not foolhardy by the more experienced missionaries the two men [Cantine and Zwemer] later met in Lebanon and Egypt."[23]

With the blessings, but not the financial support, of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed church, the Arabian Mission was "inaugurated independently on April 1, 1889." It had to raise its own finances, and was given

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[21] Scudder, 145.
[22] The original papers of Gertrude R. Hance, missionary to South Africa (1872-1880), Charles Minot and Elva R. Griffith, missionaries to South America (1895-1906), and Walter Anderson Hearn, missionary to Japan (1891-1935) all show that their work was directly with the indigenous peoples of the countries in which they served. And while they faced many hardships, it was always their focus to Christianize through medical, educational and religious ministry the people of the land.
[23] Scudder, 145.

the status of non-denominational so that it might raise funds outside the Reformed Church.[24]

James Cantine set sail for Beirut on October 16, 1889, and arrived in Lebanon – formerly western Syria – the following month. Zwemer remained in the United States to raise funds and complete his seminary degree. On June 28, 1890 Samuel Zwemer, accompanied by his father and older brother, left New York for Britain and the Netherlands. Leaving his father and brother in Europe, he arrived in Beirut on August 7, 1890, where, for the next few months, he and James Cantine immersed themselves in learning the Arabic language. Together, they left Beirut before the end of 1890, and undertook the task of seeking an appropriate place in Arabia in which to locate the proposed mission. Many trips along the Red Sea coast of Arabia, as well as the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf, produced no good prospects until Cantine received an invitation from Dr. M. Eustace, "acting…resident physician for the British Community in Basrah," to look into the possibility of starting the mission in Basrah, "about sixty miles above the Persian Gulf on the Shatt-el-Arab, which is the great river formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates." In August, 1891, the mission station opened. Though not really on the Arabian Peninsula, Basrah served as the perfect place from which launch other stations in the port city of Muscat, and the islands Bahrain, both on the west coast of the Peninsula.[25]

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[24] Corwin, 216.
[25] Wilson, 39-46.

The young missionaries soon realized that one of the most convenient ways of interaction with the indigenous peoples of Arabia was through the presentation of medical services to the communities, and Zwemer's limited medical skills acquired during seminary training came very handy in his early efforts to ingratiate himself and the mission with the people they served. Cantine and Zwemer also found that there was a thirst for knowledge of Christianity among the local populace, which was very much contrary to general missionary expectation. Of course, their efforts to disseminate such knowledge was not without the expected risks of antagonism from the more fanatical Muslim factions of the societies, who employed much persuasive pressures upon the local authorities in order to disrupt the operations of the Mission. At the beginning of the Mission in Basrah, the young men resided with Dr. Eustace. When Eustace was reassigned by the Church Missionary Society to Quetta in Baluchistan, Wilson explains,

> They moved…to a small house in the Arab part of town but when the lease expired they encountered great difficulty in getting another place. It was finally ascertained that an order had been issued by the government forbidding anyone to rent them property. At last they obtained a house, built for them by a contractor who was a member of a nominal Christian group. Later they found that this man had placed a small bribe with the proper authorities and had the building and rental contract ratified. It turned out – to their dismay – that the bribe had been a case of whiskey![26]

Wilson relates another incident in which the death of a mission worker was deemed suspicious:

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[26] Wilson, 44.

> Kamil Abdul Messiah had come over from Syria, and this convert from Islam had proven a Godsend in the pioneer work of the Mission. "His work, however, was soon done, for within six months, and after a very short illness of only two days, he passed to his reward June 24, 1892. It was then, and always has been suspected, that his sudden death was not wholly the result of natural illness, as his success as a Christian teacher made him many enemies among the more fanatical Moslems. The promptness with which he was buried by the Moslems with the rites of their religion, in spite of the protest of his fellow missionaries, and the refusal to allow his Christian friends to have any of his effects or make any examination to ascertain the cause of death was also very suspicious.[27]

With his death, Kamil Abdul Messiah became the first casualty of the Arabian Mission.[28]

These negative circumstances, and many that followed, neither discouraged Cantine or Zwemer, nor reduce their enthusiasm for the salvation of Muslims. They refused to be dissuaded from their purpose by the actions of a faction. And so the Mission continued – first independently operated, and then taken over in 1894 by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America. Zwemer's brother, Peter, joined them in 1892 to work with the station at Muscat; Samuel eventually made the Bahrain station his permanent residence, while Cantine remained in Basrah.[29]

There were some good times in the personal life of Samuel Zwemer during his early work in the Arabian Mission. In 1896, he married Amy Elizabeth Wilkes, a pioneer missionary from Australia who was sent to Baghdad by the Church Missionary Society. Their first child, Katharine, was born in 1897, while

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[27] Wilson, 45.
[28] Wilson, 45.
[29] Scudder, 164-165; See also Corwin, 216-217.

they were on furlough in Spring Lake, Michigan. Meanwhile, Peter Zwemer started a school in Muscat for eighteen boys who had been rescued from a slave ship off the east coast of Arabia. In 1898, however, Peter Zwemer died in the United States, where he had returned due to failing health. The mission grew with the addition of new missionaries upon the return of the Zwemers in August, 1898. But tragedy struck again in 1904 when, within one week in July, two of the Zwemers daughters, seven-year-old Katharine and four-year-old Ruth, died at the Bahrain station. These tragedies, however, did nothing to change Samuel's passion and commitment to do all in his power to let Muslims know of the eternal benefits of the Christian religion.[30]

Samuel Zwemer was motivated by the desire to not only evangelize Muslims, but also to awaken the Protestant Christian missionary movement at the turn of the twentieth century to take a new approached to the Muslim world. The successes of the Arabian Mission were not sufficient to quench his enthusiasm for expanded work among Muslims, which he had inherited from John G. Lansing during his days as a student at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. His was the desire to see the beginnings of a determined Protestant offensive against Islam. This self-imposed task was a challenge, but Zwemer had already proven, through the establishment of the Arabian Mission, that he was undaunted when it came to realizing a particular goal.

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[30] Corwin, 217; see also Scudder, 168-171;and Wilson, 47-49.

Rev. Dr. Samuel Marinus Zwemer

Samuel Zwemer harbored no love for the religion of Islam, and he respected it only for the fact that it was "the greatest of all the non-Christian religions." He reserved his affection entirely for the people who came under its seemingly strangulating influence. He states:

> Islam, the greatest of all the non-Christian religions is not of divine but of human origin, altho *[sic]* so widely extended, and it is wholly inadequate, in spite of much that is true, to meet man's needs intellectually, spiritually, or morally, as proved by its own history; therefore the present condition of Moslem lands, with their

> unprecedented opportunities and crises, and the work which has already been accomplished, are a challenge to evangelize the whole Mohammedan world in this generation.[31]

Zwemer lamented the historical attitude of Christendom to Islam and Muslims. From the inception of Islam, Christianity seemed to be in competition with it. Islam is not excused, for its history demonstrates a reciprocal attitude that resembled that of Christianity. Zwemer understood the reason for the animosity that existed between the two religions, but his concern was for the true casualties of the said animosity: ordinary people who, from his own experience in Arabia, needed Christianity as much as the other heathens to whom Christendom had given its focus. He was convinced that Christianity had allowed itself to be side-tracked or distracted from its duty to put the salvation of these people, who were trapped within the confines of Islam, above its own political self-preservation, and he was very concerned that that attitude should not be continued indefinitely.

It was not that Christians had totally neglected the evangelization of Muslims; evidence shows that some missionary work was done among Muslims as far back as the early fourteenth century by Raymund Lull. After Lull's death in 1315, until Henry Martyn's arrival "in India in 1806 as a chaplain of the East India Company," nothing was done to further the cause of Christianity among Muslims.[32] This period of neglect only made the prospects of success, not impossible, but much more difficult. Zwemer affirms, "Had the spirit of Raymund Lull filled the Church throughout those long centuries of neglect, we would not

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[31] Samuel M. Zwemer, *Islam, A Challenge to Faith*, viii.
[32] Zwemer, *Islam, A Challenge to Faith,* 195.

now speak of more than two hundred million unevangelized Moslems."[33] By the beginning of the twentieth century it was glaringly obvious that such historical neglect had inadvertently created a bigger problem within the sphere of missions among pagans and nominal Christians – the very groups that were the primary focus of the modern missionary movement. The spread of Islam was impeding the work of Christian missionaries among them.

To bring an awareness of the problem of Islam and to examine possible solutions to the problem, two missionary conferences – the Cairo Conference (1906) and the Lucknow Conference (1911) - were convened through the direct efforts of Samuel Zwemer. According to J. Christy Wilson, Zwemer had a "zeal…for participating in and organizing of Christian conferences" since his days as a seminary student. His thirst for conferences increased over the years as he became more and more absorbed in his passion for Muslims. Wilson observes, "There were times during the visits to America and Great Britain, as well as in the Continental Countries of Europe and in the Moslem mission fields when he went from one conference to another in rapid succession."[34] Zwemer holds the distinction of organizing "the first General Conference for work among Moslems" which met, amid apprehensions of religious tumult, on April 4 to 9, 1906 in Cairo, Egypt. The conference went on without any negative incident, with sixty-two delegates from twenty-nine missionary societies and sixty visitors in attendance.

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[33] Zwemer, *Islam, A Challenge to Faith,* 185.
[34] Wilson, 169.

The program attempted to cover a wide area of considerations of missionary prospects in the Muslim world.[35] Wilson states:

> The program was divided into three main sections. I. The Scope of Missions to Moslems. II. Methods of Work among Moslems. III. The need for Prayer and Sacrifice in this Work. Under the first heading notable papers were read describing Islam in the various fields, many were contributed by names now famous as pioneers in the Islamic mission field. The papers on the second team were no less noteworthy as to content or in the names of those who wrote the addresses. The spiritual need of the Mohammedan world and actual means of training workers and converts was finally considered.[36]

On January 23, 1911, Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer presided over the second missionary conference on Islam held in Lucknow, India. In his opening address, Zwemer gave a survey of the Muslim world and the circumstances Christian missionaries ought to be aware of as they work to evangelize Muslims. His address covered four sub-topics: 1. Statistics, 2. Politics, 3. Social and Intellectual Movements, and 4. The Change of Attitude of the Home Church to the Moslem World.[37] The Lucknow Conference lasted until January 28, 1911. Zwemer featured prominently in other conferences which followed, but, according to his biographer, "Lucknow… was no doubt the zenith of his great conference

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[35] Wilson, 171.
[36] Wilson, 172.
[37] Wilson, 174; See also Samuel M. Zwemer, "An Introductory Survey," in *Islam and Missions: Being Papers Read at the Second Missionary Conference on Behalf of the Mohammedan World at Lucknow, January 23-28, 1911* eds. E.M. Wherry, S.M. Zwemer and C.G. Mylrea (New York, Chicago, Toronto, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1911), 9-42; and Samuel M. Zwemer, "A General Survey of the Moslem World," *The Moslem World: A Quarterly Review of Current Events, Literature, and Thought Among Mohammedans, and the Progress of Christian Missions in Moslem Lands,* 1, no. 4 (October, 1911): 403-430.

career and together with Cairo, 1906, must remain as one of the major accomplishments of his life."[38]

It must be noted here that Samuel Zwemer played an important role in the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in June, 1910. That conference, attended by over one thousand missionaries, met to consider surveys and studies on global mission fields that had accumulated over a period of about two years. The aim of the Conference was to develop a comprehensive view of mission work as it was at that time, and to seek practical answers to questions and difficulties faced by missionaries around the world. To accomplish this, eight Commissions presented reports on their findings. Charles R. Watson observes that there was some disappointment due to the fact that the subject of Islam did not employ the attention of a separate Commission. He, however, explains:

> As the plans of the Conference became better known, it was seen that this omission was not due to any lack of sympathy with work for Moslems nor to any failure to appreciate the stupendous missionary task which Islam presents. It was simply due to the fact that the view-point of the Edinburgh Conference was that of the non-Christian world as a whole and of missions as a unified world enterprise. From this point of view all non-Christian religions were necessarily only parts of a world problem, and all countries were but sections of one great battlefield.[39]

Obviously, the issue of the Muslim work was considered, especially in the cases of the Asian and African continents, where Islam was spreading rapidly and in

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[38] Wilson, 176.
[39] Charles R. Watson, "The World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh and Islam," *The Moslem World,* 1, no. 1 (January, 1911): 59.

many ways coming between Christian missionaries and their attempts to evangelize pagans.[40]

The Moslem World occupied the attention of Samuel M. Zwemer for a period of thirty-five years. In 1947, at the age of eighty, Zwemer handed the reins of editorship of his beloved journal over to Dr. Edwin E. Calverly who had served as co-editor since 1938.[41] Under his editorship, Zwemer made good on his word to ensure that the magazine maintain its original purpose as stated in his own words:

> Its aim is to represent no faction or fraction of the Church, but to be broad in the best sense of the word. Its columns are open to all contributors who hold the 'unity of the faith in the bond of peace and righteousness of life.' It is not a magazine of controversy, much less of compromise. In essentials it seeks unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity. We hope to interpret Islam as a world-wide religion in all its varied aspects and its deep needs, ethical and spiritual, to Christians; to point out and to press home the true solution of the Moslem problem, namely, the evangelization of Moslems; to be of practical help to all who toil for this end; and to awaken sympathy, love and prayer on behalf of the Moslem world until its bonds are burst, its wounds are healed, its sorrow removed, and its desires satisfied in Jesus Christ.[42]

A superficial reading of *The Moslem World* gives an impression of the magazine being another addition to the long list of Christian polemics on Islam and its Prophet Muhammad. The superiority of Christianity is touted to the extent that Islam turns out to be an imposter or a weak usurper of the status that only Christianity can claim; not that Christianity deserves such a claim. The threat of

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[40] W.H.T. Gairdner, *Edinburgh 1910: An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier for the Committee of the World Missionary Conference, 1910), 68-92.
[41] Wilson, 184.
[42] Samuel M. Zwemer as quoted in Wilson, 180.

Islam to the success of Christianity was a constant focus. The boldness of Zwemer's statements on the weaknesses of Islam seemed to show an excitement to discredit one's enemy. In an editorial, he states, "The character of Mohammed and not the character of his message in the Koran *[sic]* has determined Islam, because the system is based not only upon the Koran *[sic]*…but upon tradition (Wadi gheir el Matlu), which is the revelation of God's will for man by the example of the perfect prophet."[43] He berates Muslims for their apparent gullibility in their veneration of Muhammad:

> It is important to remember that the apotheosis of Mohammed, based on later tradition and giving him an almost divine character, compels all Moslems to defend *every* episode in his life, or to eliminate and ignore those of which they are ashamed. In the Koran and in earlier sources Mohammed is thoroughly human and liable to error. No Moslem prays to him, it is true, but every Moslem prays for him in endless repetition daily. He dwells in the highest heaven; he is the only powerful intercessor on the Day of Judgment; he holds the keys of salvation, and is the sole hope of the dying. Every detail of his life, therefore, must be attributed to divine command, and the faults of his character transformed into special permissions, which are his glory and the sign of his superiority.[44]

This statement shows some evidence of Zwemer's zeal in his quest to discredit Islam. It also demonstrates his limited knowledge of Islam. The fact is that, in Islam, it is Jesus who is the most powerful intercessor on the Day of Judgment; Muhammad is never deified.

Zwemer's opening address at Lucknow gives a picture of the extent of the global advances of Islam, and is accompanied by an alarming sense of the

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[43] Samuel M. Zwemer, "Editorial," *The Moslem World,* 1, no. 4 (October, 1911): 353.
[44] Zwemer, "Editorial," 354-355.

imminent doom of Christianity; an event of which he tries to warn the rest of the modern missionary movement in order to galvanize it into action against this impending foe. A closer look at his life, his work and the writings of himself and others in *The Moslem World*, however, reinforced by a knowledge of his missionary passion and love for Muslims and for the evangelization of the world and all its peoples without exception, presents a different picture; a picture that shows the bleeding heart of a man born to be a missionary.

Conclusions

The influence of the Dutch on world trade and empire in the colonial era has been much lauded in the western hemisphere. A student of New World history must unavoidably navigate the accounts of Dutch exploits in western Africa, and on the continents of North and South America. Historical landmarks and inscriptions speak of a time of Dutch glory that has long been forgotten. But apart from that, stories of Dutch influence on life in general in America have been few. Instead, emphasis is placed in America's English heritage. Hardly any thought is given to the efforts of those Netherlanders who, from the beginning of the Protestant Reformation to the First World War, took their lives into their own hands, and pioneered in many ways to change the status quo. In doing so, they opened minds and created opportunities that made the western world a different place than it would have otherwise been. It is interesting, therefore, through this project, to encounter the many areas of western life that has been touched by the historic influence of the Dutch.

From the early years of the Protestant Reformation, the people of the Netherlands demonstrated unshakeable tenacity for freedom of thought, and religious and territorial integrity. Living in the servitude of the Spanish crown, the Netherlands took the opportunity presented by the Reformation to successfully agitate for the freedom of religion, thereby creating the Reformed Church and subsequently breaking free of Spanish rule in the early 1600s. The deposition of the Roman Catholic Church paralleled in time by the rise of the Reformed

Church, the action of wresting their sovereignty from Philip II of Spain, and their quest for easier ways to increase their national wealth led them to the eastern shores of America in 1609, when Henrick Hudson navigated the waters of the river that now bears his name.[1]

At the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618-1619, in an attempt to quell the Arminian controversy, the Dutch Reformed Church adopted the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort as the official doctrinal cornerstones of the Church. These creeds remain the doctrinal foundation of the Reformed Church in America to this day.[2]

The Dutch began rapid colonial expansions in the East and the West, ably managing their holdings by the establishment and empowerment of the Dutch East India Company in Asia and the South Pacific and the West India Company in the Atlantic. Through these companies, the Reformed Church sought to undertake the maintenance of Calvinistic religious discipline among its members, many of whom were appointed to lead the new colonies controlled by the Netherlands. In response to a divine commission, missionary work began among the native peoples of those colonies.[3]

These advances, however, could not be insulated from the intrigue that prevailed among European nations; all of whom were fiercely competing for the ability to control the largest share of territory in the world. Many countries changed hands as England, France, Spain, Holland and Portugal struggled to

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[1] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 10-11.
[2] De Jong, *The Dutch Reformed Church in The American Colonies,* 7.
[3] Van Der Merwe, 11-13.

keep their gains while trying to wrest control of other territories from one another. In that intrigue, the English took New Netherlands in 1664, and that old Dutch tenacity that flared during the Reformation was again evident in the Reformed Church in America as they struggled to maintain their Dutch identity in a rapidly Anglicizing society.

Through the years following the capitulation of New Netherlands, the Reformed Church fought to keep its dignity in the face of changing fortunes. It was no longer the favored religious denomination, having had to relinquish that status to the Episcopalian Church. The lack of financial support from the ruling authorities for the ministry resulted in a shortage of ministers, but it also revealed the need for a ministry indigenous to America. Focus was placed in the production of such a ministry, and several colleges were opened to train ministers. Questions arose pertaining to the empowerment of American trained ministers. The power of the Classis of Amsterdam, and the fact that ministers could only have been trained and ordained in the Netherlands forced the formation of a local Coetus in1738. Connections with the Netherlands were becoming strained. It was, therefore, necessary for the Reformed Church to become an American church.

The American Revolution crept upon the church right about the time it was evolving into an American church. Many of its members chose to be neutral in the conflict because they wanted to ensure the security of their commercial enterprises. In some cases, active involvement became inevitable, but generally

the Dutch were not as interested in government as they were in the freedom to carry on their commercial activities.[4]

The attitude of the Dutch, in every difficult circumstance, was to try to maintain the status quo as long as it did not threaten a disintegration of their identity. Their affinity to the Netherlands was one of pride. They cherished their heritage, but they cherished freedom more. It is seen that whenever a choice had to be made, they chose to let go of whatever restricted their freedom. Only one thing was maintained regardless of controversies and schisms: the arduous adherence to the idea of the purity of the church.

While the American Church was focused on its internal struggles, a religious awakening was taking place in Europe. John Wesley and George Whitefield started a movement that aroused Christians to their duty to the so-called heathens of the world. This led to the founding of the modern missionary movement in 1793 with the formation of the Society for Propagating the Gospel Among the Heathen by William Carey and a group of concerned Christians in London, England. Other missionary societies were formed, mostly through the cooperation of several Christian denominations working together, in Europe and America. About the same time, the Dutch commercial trading companies were decommissioned leaving the church without a vehicle of influence to continue its work in the colonies. The missionary societies filled the gap by raising funds independently to support missionaries in what they characterized as heathen lands.

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[4] De Jong, *The Dutch in America, 1609-1974,* 109-110.

The missionary movement inadvertently developed a relationship with European colonial enterprise that was unintentional. Due to their nationality, missionaries were seen by many colonized peoples as an extension of European imperialism, or as a source of information which might "be used to protect societies against imperial incursions." While the missionary movement did not set out to become a part of the process of colonization, missionaries were often used as liaisons between imperial and settler governments.[5] It is also true that on the field many missionaries regarded natives with some degree of condescension. Regardless of their ad hoc roles, however, the motivation of most missionaries was their love and genuine compassion for the people they served, and to whose salvation they dedicated their lives.

The fall of New Netherlands practically stopped Dutch immigration to America. Meanwhile, the French Revolution and the rise of Napoleon had some very negative effects on the Netherlands. The Napoleonic Empire reduced the authority of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands. The church was neglected by the state. After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in 1815, Dutch sovereignty was regained. In 1816, William I reorganized the Reformed Church into a true state church. His methods, however, backfired when he infringed upon church authority to the extent that the National Synod, controlled by his government, required ministers to accept a particular interpretation of the creeds of the church. As a result, many ministers and congregations seceded from the Reformed Church.

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[5] Elbourne, 13.

Religious persecutions and the realities of an economic depression in the Netherlands forced many Netherlanders to consider immigrating to America. Reports from America indicated that previously poor people who had left the Netherlands for the United States of America were making a life there that was impossible in the Netherlands. In the 1840s, many people chose to emigrate; among them was Adriaan Zwemer who later became the father of Samuel Marinus Zwemer, the first official American missionary to Islam.

From infancy, Samuel Zwemer was surrounded by influences that determined his eventual vocation. His father was a minister, and so were his brothers, Frederick, James, and Peter. Samuel attended the New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey where he met Dr. John G. Lansing, a native of Syria born to American missionary parents. Under Lansing's influence, he developed a strong desire to become a missionary to a people previously neglected by the modern missionary movement in general. Zwemer, James Cantine, and Peter Phelps chose to work for the salvation of Muslims.

The typical story of Islam, its so-called restrictive hold on its adherents, and the views of western Protestant Christianity, bolstered by romantic tales of Arabian Nights on the one hand and conversely maligned by reports of inhuman acts of cruelty meted out upon its victims on the other hand, have produced a picture that reeks of a demonic character that imposes upon the Christian observer a feeling of superior moral quality. That, and its fierce resistance to Christian evangelism among its people, prompted reactions of indifference and inattention within the modern missionary movement. Missionaries to Muslim

lands preferred to work with nominal Christians and those considered to be heathens or pagans. Samuel Zwemer and James Cantine were determined to change that. With a sense of purpose and strong tenacity set to the task, they were able to successfully establish the Arabian Mission.

Through their experiences with Muslims, they were able to dispel the romanticism of the western world and regard Muslims as people with identical needs as those in the West. In spite of the hardships they endured and the losses they suffered, they toiled to present what they believed was the only means of salvation to a people they came to love.

Zwemer, however, was not content to maintain things as they were in the missionary movement. With untiring effort, born from an inheritance of centuries of Dutch tenacity, he sought to correct the attitude of missionaries and have the Muslim work brought under favorable consideration. The partial truths contained in western perceptions of Islam, to some extent, were used to convince the western world of the urgency to include Muslims as candidates for conversion to Christianity. The fact that Islam was spreading at a seemingly alarming rate was brought to bear on its effect upon missionary efforts for believers of traditional religions in Africa and western Asia. The reasoning was that if Protestant Christians continued to ignore Muslims, then Islam would continue to spread impede the work of those missionaries seeking to enlarge Christianity's sphere of influence.

While he respected Islam for its numerical and geographical progress, Zwemer firmly believed that it was not a true religion; that it maintained the

traditions of a defective prophet; and that it held no redeeming possibility for its adherents. Through the Cairo Conference of 1906 and the Lucknow Conference of 1911, Zwemer tried with untiring effort to bring the cause of Muslims to a position of central focus, and to keep it ever on the table of evangelistic consideration, he published *The Moslem World.* Zwemer was committed to the reduction of ignorance of the knowledge of Islam in the western world, and he was convinced that through the dissemination of information about the Muslim world by those who served in and studied about it that there would be such a revival within Christianity that Islam's disintegration would become inevitable. To this end, he devoted thirty-five years of his life, without any remuneration, to the publication of *The Moslem World.*

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