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Abraham Kuyper and the Holland-America Line of Liberty

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A distinguished-looking, somewhat portly Dutch visitor came to Grand Rapids, Michigan, one hundred years ago and on October 26, 1898, gave an inspirational address to an enthusiastic crowd of some 2000 Dutch-American immigrants praising the American experiment in ordered liberty.¹ Standing on a stage draped with both the American and Dutch flags he told his audience:

I am glad...to stand as I do between these two flags, both the emblem of sturdy liberty (and) loving sentiment. The flag at my left is my flag, yours no longer. The stars and stripes on my right hand is your flag (applause). This is your flag and you should love it and defend it with your life, if called upon, with the same devotion that your Holland ancestors were willing to defend their *liberty* and their *religion*. As Hollanders a few centuries ago, we freed ourselves from oppression and brought the proud Spaniard to his knees suing for peace after 80 years of hard fighting. What it took us 80 years to do you accomplished in 80 days and we on the other side rejoice with you and admire your greatness.²

He then called on his hearers to “make this great land your fatherland indeed,” noting that “the Dutch blood and the American blood are so nearly akin that it should mingle without difficulty.” Then followed this grandiloquent historical prophecy: “America is destined in the providence of God to become the most glorious and noble nation the world has ever seen. Some day its renown will eclipse the renown and splendor of Rome, Greece and the old races.” Rhetorically, he asked, “How do I know this?” He answered first in general terms: “I believe that America’s greatness is due to a great extent under the providence of God, to the broadening process of all

the different nations of the world into one great and overwhelming nation." In other words, America's greatness is linked to what another European, the French emigré farmer, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, called the "new man" of the American melting pot.³ But even more important, the speaker linked America's present and future greatness as the land of liberty to the stand it took on religion. Here our Dutch guest made the claim that America's national success "is due to Calvinistic principles and doctrines." Referring to the Pilgrim Fathers and to Puritanism, he contended that America, "more than any other is a religious Calvinistic nation" and that this religious genius was the fountainhead of its liberty.

The Dutchman was Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), a leader of reform in the National Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederlands Hervormde Kerk*), theologian-educator and founder of a new independent Christian University, the Free University of Amsterdam in 1880, politician-statesman who served as Dutch Prime Minister from 1901 to 1905, and above all, journalist par excellence.⁴ By 1898 his list of accomplishments was already remarkable and his growing international reputation as leader of a significant neo-Calvinist theological and sociocultural revival (paralleling in a minor key the international neo-Thomist revival within late nineteenth-century Roman Catholicism) had earned for him an invitation from Princeton University to receive an honorary Doctor of Laws and deliver the prestigious Stone Lectures for that year.⁵ In the afterglow of his Princeton appearance Kuyper went on a whirlwind lecture tour of the American Midwest, paying particular respect to the several colonies of nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed immigrants in Western Michigan, Chicago, and Iowa who listened enthusiastically to his speeches and fêted him as royally as if he was in his native land.⁶

There is much about Kuyper's Grand Rapids visit that is interesting, but my primary concern is to focus on Kuyper's visit to America more broadly,⁷ and to his understanding of liberty and the crucial role of religion in the American experiment of ordered liberty. I shall provide a summary of Kuyper's views from several different though complementary vantage points,⁸ reflect on the nature of his visit as a "pilgrimage," briefly indicate the evaluation given by others of Kuyper's reading of the American experiment, particularly his emphasis on the "Dutch connection," suggest some "lessons" to be learned from this, and conclude with a few comments on the press reception of his address in Grand Rapids. Kuyper, of course, was not the first to make such claims about the linkage of religion and liberty in America⁹ and so I shall also include a few comparisons between his views

and those of two other and earlier nineteenth-century European pilgrims¹⁰ to the American shrine of liberty: The Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville who visited the United States in 1831 and whose *Democracy in America*, in the judgment of many, remains “the most brilliant and searching account of America ever written,”¹¹ and the great English Victorian-era historian and political thinker, Lord John Acton, who crossed the Atlantic in 1853.¹² Tocqueville’s framework is central to this discussion since both Acton¹³ and Kuypers¹⁴ read and used Tocqueville’s interpretation of revolution and of the American experiment.

Calvinism and American Liberty

From the outset it needs to be noted that America already had a special place in Kuypers’s heart early in his public career¹⁵ and that his vision of America was an important part of his overall public theology. His biographer put it this way:

The new republic of the United States drew Kuypers’s heart and head more than old Europe. To a large extent his ecclesiastical and political exertions were even based on what he judged to be the situation in America. He confessed a “near fanatic sympathy for the life now full-blown in America,” since the “free life of free citizens” appeared to him as the fruit of Calvinism.¹⁶

In a recent study of Kuypers’s Princeton Stone Lectures on Calvinism, the occasion for his visit to the United States, Peter Heslam observes that “primarily in his role as editor of [the daily newspaper] *De Standaard*, Kuypers had demonstrated a sustained and active interest in American affairs and had developed over several decades an image of American history and culture which was inextricably linked to his perception of Calvinism.”¹⁷

As Kuypers told the story of human liberty in its development,¹⁸ it was Calvinism with its emphasis on divine sovereignty and human dignity that gave birth to political freedom. The Calvinist seed, planted in Switzerland and transplanted to the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, had initially flourished there but then had its growth stunted by compromises forced on the Calvinists, first by the Remonstrant-inspired desire for tolerance,¹⁹ and finally by the atheistic *ni dieu, ni maitre* worldview of the French Revolution that transformed Dutch life during the French-dominated Batavian Republic from 1795 to 1806. Kuypers had a passionate distaste for the spirit of the French Revolution. Much like Edmund Burke²⁰ he recognized its profound history-shaping significance and at the same time considered it to be the single most important source of all the political maladies that followed in

its wake. "The history of our times," he contended, "starts from the *unbelief* of the French Revolution:"²¹

Voltaire's mad cry, 'Down with the Scoundrel,' was aimed at Christ himself, but this cry was merely the expression of the most hidden thought from which the French Revolution sprang. The fanatic cry of another philosopher, "We no more need a God," and the odious shibboleth, "No God, no Master," of the Convention;—these were the sacrilegious watchwords which at that time heralded the liberation of man as an emancipation from all Divine Authority. And if, in His impenetrable wisdom, God employed the Revolution as a means by which to overthrow the tyranny of the Bourbons, and to bring judgment on the princes who abused *His* nations as *their* footstool, nevertheless the principle of that Revolution remains thoroughly *anti-Christian*, and has since spread like a cancer, dissolving and undermining all that stood firm and consistent before our Christian faith.²²

In sharp contrast, the American Revolution, Kuyper told his American audience at Princeton University in 1898, was signally different; its liberty was not grounded in atheistic rebellion against God but in an appropriate, Calvinist-inspired rejection of tyranny. Liberty was a political good, hard-won by Dutch Calvinists in their struggle against Spain as well as by Americans from Great Britain. This liberty and the political experiment that ordered it was a beacon for the future of world history. Providentially-led world history had, in Kuyper's view, a clear and certain telos and its world-stream, for the most part fed by the religious springs of Calvinism, was to follow a clearly marked channel:

There is but one world-stream, broad and fresh, which from the beginning bore the promise of the future. This stream had its rise in Middle Asia and the Levant, and has steadily continued its course from East to West. From Western Europe it has passed on to your Eastern States, and from thence to California. The sources of this stream of development are found in Babylon and in the valley of the Nile. From thence it flowed on to Greece. From Greece it passed on to the Roman Empire. From the Romantic nations it continued its way to the Northwestern parts of Europe, and from Holland and England it reaches at length your continent.

What Kuyper adds at this point is particularly striking from our vantage point at the close of the twentieth century and its developments (recall, he is writing this in 1898):

At present that stream [of world history] is at a standstill. *Its Western course through China and Japan is impeded; meanwhile no one can tell what forces for the future may yet lie slumbering in the Slavic races which have thus far failed of progress.* But while this secret of the future is still veiled in mystery, the course of this world stream from East to West can be denied by none.²³

The American experiment in ordered liberty, in other words, is holy, the providentially-destined and inevitable “end of history.”

The Antirevolutionary American Revolution: The End of History?

If it had been possible for Kuyper to see the world-shaking political events of 1989, especially the Chinese student demonstration in Tiananmen Square where a 33-foot, white, plaster replica of the Statue of Liberty, named the “Goddess of Democracy” by demonstrators, provoked the brutal suppression by Red Army tanks, he would undoubtedly have felt his vision vindicated. The forces of repression singled out America as the ultimate symbol of the spirit of human liberty they so much feared, and a replica of America’s great icon of liberty became the occasion for rolling out the tanks into Tiananmen Square.²⁵

In reflecting on the French Revolution and the events of 1989, the temptation to follow Kuyper and draw universal, meta-narrative historical conclusions is almost irresistible. Two revolutions, two hundred years apart, symbolizing a defined era. With 1789 representing the initial triumph of atheistic, secular, totalitarian and bloody ideology, 1989 then represents its pathetic end and the ideological, if not yet fully political, triumph of the American experiment. This conclusion in fact has been drawn in the realm of speculative philosophy of history,²⁶ as well as in more sober, empirical, historical accounting of the twentieth-century’s trajectory.²⁷

For Kuyper the “revolutions” of 1989 would have represented the triumph of “American” *antirevolutionary* principles. It was the *antirevolutionary* character of the American revolution that led him, in sharp contrast to the atheistic French Revolution, to judge *its* spirit of liberty as Christian, as Calvinist.²⁸ As Kuyper read it, in America a genuine antirevolutionary, truly democratic political vision of liberty was brought across the Atlantic by the Pilgrims (after their stay in the Netherlands), developed into full bloom under the leadership of Washington, and, so Kuyper claimed, was exemplified in the eventual victory of Alexander Hamilton’s principles over those of Thomas Jefferson. Kuyper, unafraid to intrude himself into American as well as Dutch national mythology, repeatedly appealed to what he judged as an important conflict of principles embodied in the clash between these

two iconic American founders, linking Jefferson in favor of and Hamilton in opposition to atheistic French revolutionary principles.²⁹ Here Kuyper clearly oversimplified an important and complex American constitutional debate.³⁰ Focusing singularly on Jefferson's enthusiasm for the French Revolution led him to ignore features of the two men's thought that could easily have led to the opposite conclusion. For example, Kuyper's own profound sympathy for regional, local, smaller units of government power and his strong disaffection for centralized government power made him on this level far more Jeffersonian than Hamiltonian. In fact, one of the places where Kuyper's own political understanding comes remarkably close to the genius of the American system is in the tenth article of the Dutch *Antirevolutionary Party Program* of 1879, where the strong bias against centralized government and the devolution of power to local units is similar in intent to Article 10 of America's *Bill of Rights*:

ARP Platform, art. 10

It is the desire [of the ARP] that local and municipal autonomy be restored by means of decentralization, insofar as this does not conflict with the requirements of national unity nor violate the rights of individual persons.³¹

U. S. Bill of Rights, art. 10

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

Furthermore, though Kuyper surely had a valid concern about the revolutionary sympathies of a Jefferson who said that "the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure," he could have taken sides with a more amenable American founding father in Jefferson's lifelong intellectual sparring partner and friend John Adams,³² rather than with the man who died in a duel with the rascally Aaron Burr.³³ Nonetheless, Kuyper was actually in good company here since Jefferson and Hamilton often served as symbols of a key American political polarization.³⁴ Jefferson biographer Alf J. Mapp, Jr. observes that "popular opinion for generations would make them the simplistic symbols of opposing philosophies so that through history they would ride a seesaw of public esteem... Because many Northerners were wont to blame secession on Jeffersonian democracy, the Virginian's reputation 'merely survived' the Civil War whereas that of Hamilton, the strong advocate of centralized government 'was remade by it.'"³⁵ Kuyper's simplistic intrusion

into American constitutional historiography was thus neither singular nor altogether eccentric. As we shall see later on in this essay, Lord Acton also appealed to the Hamilton-Jefferson clash of principles in his assessment of the American civil war.

What we must take note of here is that even before he came to visit in 1898 Kuyper already had definite ideas about America's founding and future.³⁶ He shared the view of those visitors described by another important late nineteenth-century visitor, James Bryce, who, upon observing the fascination of America's institutions to visitors, called attention to the belief that American political institutions were seen as a "new type...an experiment in the rule of the multitude, tried on a scale unprecedentedly vast, and the results of which everyone is concerned to watch. And yet they are something more than an experiment, for they are believed to disclose and display the type of institutions toward which, as by a law of fate, the rest of civilized mankind are forced to move."³⁷ Similarly, Alexis de Tocqueville, in the introduction to his *Democracy in America*, judged the American model to be the inevitable wave of the historical future:

A great democratic revolution is taking place in our midst; everybody sees it, but by no means everybody judges it the same way. Some think it a new thing and, supposing it an accident, hope that they can still check it; others think it irresistible, because it seems to them the most continuous, ancient, and permanent tendency known to history.

Tocqueville's own choice between these two views is clear: "The gradual progress of equality is something fated."³⁸ It is the strength of Kuyper's own conviction about the course of liberty and America's role in world history, a conviction that predated his actual visit, that makes it appropriate to think of Kuyper's 1898 visit to America as a pilgrimage to the political shrine of liberty, as an opportunity to experience the *novus ordo seclorum* first hand.

Pilgrims to the Shrine of Liberty: The Transformation of "Sacred Space"

The many nineteenth-century European travelers, including Kuyper, Tocqueville, and Acton, who came to see the new American experiment in liberty and recorded their impressions for posterity were hardly the first chroniclers of travel tales in human history. The appeal of the remote and the exotic has always encouraged the adventurous to travel and has stimulated the production of travel tales as well as visual images³⁹ to satisfy the curiosity of the more timid. "Man has always been an inquisitive animal.

Lands beyond the horizon have never ceased to intrigue him. From the days of Herodotus onward, traveler's tales have always found a ready audience."⁴⁰ These accounts of faraway places served different purposes. Some purport simply to be descriptive and historical and others have a more obvious moral or political didactic purpose, while still others are imaginative constructs intended in the first place to delight and entertain or perhaps satirize.⁴¹ In addition, the travel metaphor serves a more religious, even mythic function in "pilgrim" stories. Pilgrim narratives as old as Homer's *Odyssey* and the *Gilgamesh Epic*, as well as more recent ones such as those of Dante and Bunyan, serve as archetypal, sacred journey and return myths. However interpreted, the pilgrimage symbol is profoundly universal among the world's cultures and religions.⁴² All religions have therefore some sense of "sacred space," the place where the "sacred" can be experienced most intensely.⁴³ To understand how America itself became a "sacred space," we need to take note of a significant development that took place during the Protestant Reformation.

The Protestant Reformation, among other things, had a profound impact on the notion of pilgrimage and sacredness. In addition to the spiritual critique of pilgrimage abuses (wonderfully catalogued by Chaucer as well as Erasmus in *The Praise of Folly*), the Reformers also criticized the very idea of pilgrimage on theological grounds. The heart of the believer was said to be the sacred place where God's spirit dwelled. "The important thing was not to leave one's country but one's self. Emphasis was laid upon the value of dying with Christ, of undergoing the crucifixion of the self, rather than on actively assuming a cross and travelling to the earthly Jerusalem."⁴⁴ Luther's point of view was clearly articulated in his *Letter to the Christian Nobility*:

All pilgrimages should be stopped. There is no good in them: no commandment enjoins them, no obedience attaches to them. Rather do these pilgrimages give countless occasions to commit sin and to despise God's commandments.⁴⁵

But, apart from Protestant concern about what was judged to be the spiritual abuses in pilgrimage practice, including opportunity for immorality, idolatrous devotion to relics and images, and the general meritoriousness of the act of pilgrimage itself, the Reformation's *indirect* undermining of the very idea of sacred space is equally important. It is not accidental that Luther, in the same address where pilgrimages are denounced, also vigorously opposes the notion of all restricted, sacramentally set-apart sacred-

ness. Priestly or episcopal consecration does not sanctify and set apart, says Luther, only baptism. “For whoever comes out of the water of baptism can boast that he is already consecrated priest, bishop, and pope, although of course it is not seemly that just anyone should exercise such an office.”⁴⁶

The egalitarian implication of this notion of universal priesthood rooted in baptism is transparent: “It follows from this argument that there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. *They are all of the spiritual estate, all are truly priests, bishops and popes.* But they do not all have the same work to do...Christ does not have two bodies, one temporal, the other spiritual. There is but one Head and one body.”⁴⁷ Similarly, Calvin also desacralizes church buildings while at the same time sanctifying all space devoted to Christ. There is a “lawful use of church buildings” for prayer and worship, Calvin says, but “we in turn must guard against either taking them to be God’s proper dwelling places, whence he may more nearly incline his ear to us—as they began to be regarded some centuries ago—or feigning for them some secret holiness, which would render prayer more sacred before God. For since we ourselves are God’s true temples, if we would call upon God in his holy temple, we must pray within ourselves.”⁴⁸

The thoroughness of Calvin’s sanctification of worldly callings is clear when he refers not to the sacred ministry of the word but to civil magistracy as a “calling, not only holy and lawful before God, but also *the most sacred and by far the most honorable of all callings* in the whole life of mortal man.”⁴⁹ When this conviction about the holiness of politics is combined with viewing the public, corporate life of the people as the locus of the sacred, the Calvinist tradition paves the way for *political* pilgrimages, journeys to places where Christ’s reign was enshrined by means of a *text*—originally simply scriptural law—governing an earthly polis. Visitors such as Scotland’s John Knox thus came to Geneva to see Calvin’s “school of Christ” in the city-state as well as the church.⁵⁰ Thus, America—a nation where a holy experiment in ordered liberty is enshrined by devotion to a text—understandably became an object of political pilgrimage, an enacted, embodied shrine of liberty. Furthermore, the phenomenon of political pilgrimage, such as the visits of Tocqueville, Acton, and Kuyper to America in the nineteenth century, must also be viewed in light of a specific type in the broader genre of travel literature, namely “golden age” and utopian works.⁵¹ The reports of visitors to America came to fit the pattern of this genre of literature perfectly; they had, after all, been to the “new world.”

In many respects America was a “new world” myth waiting to be born. “Before America could be discovered, it had to be imagined. Columbus knew what he hoped to find before he left Europe. Geographically, America was imagined in advance of its discovery as an arboreal paradise, Europe’s dream of verduous luxury.”⁵² This “new world” dream came from a long line of storytellers beginning with the Greeks and including Hesiod, Ovid, and Horace. “In the beginning,” noted the seventeenth-century British political philosopher John Locke, “all the world was America.”⁵³ Europeans looked at the new world, found there what they were looking for—proof for both Rousseau’s “noble savage” and Hobbes’ “brute beast” in the “nasty” state of nature—and used the data for European political ends.⁵⁴ From this it can be seen that Kuyper’s expectations, concerns, and motivations for visiting and writing are best understood in the light of a long tradition of travel and travel literature that definitively shaped the European vision of America.

As a father recognizes both his own past and future in his son, so Europe was able to see her own past as well as her future in her transatlantic daughter. It is precisely by means of this double perspective that America was able to function again and again as the perfect screen on which could be projected the discussions about European culture.⁵⁵

Abraham Kuyper, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Lord John Acton on American Liberty

It is clear that Abraham Kuyper thought of himself as a pilgrim to a new and exciting experiment in liberty, the wave of the future. He begins his first Stone Lecture by describing himself as “a traveller from the old European Continent,” overwhelmed by having arrived “on the shore of this New World.” The contrast felt by such a pilgrim is that between “the eddying waters of your new stream of life” and the “almost frostbound and dull” old stream. The newly arrived pilgrim begins to realize “how so many divine potencies, which were hidden away in the bosom of mankind from our very creation, but which our old world was incapable of developing, are now beginning to disclose their inward splendour, thus developing a still richer store of surprises for the future.”⁵⁶

This opening passage of the Stone Lectures warrants the judgment that, in addition to the organic metaphor favored by the Romantic tradition,⁵⁷ Kuyper had what could fairly be called a romantic, or at least an idealized,

view of America, including its glorious future. America was the home of liberty in a way that Europe had not yet achieved. "America," said Kuyper,

lacks no single liberty for which in Europe we struggle. In America there is absolute liberty of conscience; liberty of trade and commerce; free participation by the citizens in all matters of public interest; a government which is responsible in all things; a small army; few onerous taxes; liberty of organization; liberty of the press; liberty of public worship; liberty of thought. The administration of justice is quick and cheap. No such thing as a privileged class is known. There is common equality before the law without reservation. In America modern liberties flourish without limitation."⁵⁸

Kuyper's enthusiasm is only mildly muted by his accompanying complaint about "too much liberty" as well as the "Yankee spirit in the seaport towns and among the money kings." But even here, he notes, the fact that America "is still very young," has "had to receive within itself the degraded elements of other climes," and has a "vast extent of territory" that exposes it "to a degeneration of its national character,"⁵⁹ should lead one to be forgiving of these excesses.

These observations of Kuyper are not singular; similar comments and lists of liberties can be found in Tocqueville and Acton. Where Kuyper does stand out, at least in terms of both the degree and intensity of his passion, is in his insistence that American liberty is the fruit of Calvinism, even particularly *Dutch* Calvinism.⁶⁰ "As a political name," he contends, "Calvinism indicates that political movement which has guaranteed the liberty of nations in constitutional statesmanship; first in Holland, then in England, and since the close of the last century in the United States."⁶¹ Kuyper appeals to "authorities" who "acknowledge that Calvinism has liberated Switzerland, the Netherlands, and England, and in the Pilgrim Fathers has provided the impulse to the prosperity of the United States."⁶² Since, in Kuyper's judgment, "the sun of freedom over America first rose over the low countries of the Old Netherlands," he notes with appreciation that the nineteenth-century descendants of early Dutch American immigrants who travel to Europe include the Netherlands on their itinerary. This reverse pilgrimage, he says, has as its high point a visit to the Delft harbor, departure point of the Pilgrim Fathers on the *Mayflower*. According to Kuyper, for such visitors Delft is a "sort of Mecca, sanctified by holy tradition."⁶³

The superiority of the American project in ordered liberty as well as the uniqueness of America's achievement had been noted earlier in the century by Tocqueville⁶⁴ and Acton.⁶⁵ Both men also emphasized its fragility.⁶⁶ None-

theless, it is important to note key differences in the *context* of the three men's assessment of America. Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* was written only a half-century after America's constitutional settlement, within one generation of the Second Great Awakening—"the most influential revival of Christianity in the history of the United States,"⁶⁷—and during the expansionist period of Jacksonian populism. His impressions thus come from what is generally regarded in most respects as the apex of America's antebellum history.⁶⁸ Though Tocqueville acknowledged that the social habit of Christian moral practice could lead to an abundance of hypocrisy, he judges that "nonetheless, America is still the place where the Christian religion has kept the greatest real power over men's souls; and nothing better demonstrates how useful and natural it is to man, since the country where it now has the widest sway is both the most enlightened and the freest."⁶⁹

What was remarkable about this high level of religious activity, as Tocqueville saw it, was the support that the Christian religion provided for liberty. He recalls that the secularizing *philosophes* of the Enlightenment had predicted the inevitable waning of religion. "Religious zeal, they said, was bound to die down as enlightenment and freedom spread." It was precisely this dogma that Tocqueville's American experience contradicted. "The first thing that struck me on arrival in the United States," he says, was "the religious atmosphere of the country... In France, I had seen the spirits of religion and of freedom almost always marching in opposite directions. In America I found them intimately linked together in joint reign over the land."⁷⁰ From this Tocqueville concluded that "for Americans the ideas of Christianity and liberty are so completely mingled that it is almost impossible to get them to conceive of the one without the other."⁷¹ Careful examination of this American conviction led Tocqueville to a more general principle of human affairs. All who "sincerely wish to prepare mankind for liberty" should encourage religious faith among citizens; when instead they

attack religious belief, they obey the dictates of their passions, not their interests. Despotism may be able to do without faith, but freedom cannot. Religion is much more needed in the republic they advocate than in the monarchy they attack, and in democratic republics most of all. How could society escape destruction if, when political ties are relaxed, moral ties are not tightened? And what can be done with a people master of itself if it is not subject to God?⁷²

Apart from his more specific and intense reference to Calvinism, Kuyper almost seems to be quoting Tocqueville when he draws the contrast between the European and American approach to liberty: "If with us it has

every appearance that the liberty of the people must be purchased at the sacrifice of the faith, there it is Calvinism which, according to the general conviction, offers the surest safeguards for the continued possession of those liberties." Separation of church and state in America, Kuyper concludes, does not come "from the desire to be released from church duties; on the contrary, it starts from the consciousness that the welfare of the church and the progress of Christianity demand this freedom and independence." Christianity's influence in America is potent. Of the freest country in the world, it is asserted by the man who knew it well "that the domestic morals there are much stricter than in Europe, and that Christianity reigns without opposition and is the common heritage of all."⁷³

America As Ideal and Reality

As each of our three pilgrims experienced America in the nineteenth century, to what extent did the experiment in liberty actually measure up to its own ideal? It is here that Lord Acton's observations are the most important for our purposes because he alone addresses the serious crisis brought about by the Civil War; Tocqueville, of course, could not and Kuyper did not.⁷⁴ Acton, however, in an 1866 address, did so directly.⁷⁵ Prior to the Civil War, he observes, "the United States had become an object of anxiety or of envy to many, of wonder and curiosity to all mankind."⁷⁶ Unlike many other British travelers to America—Frances Trollope and Charles Dickens are good examples—Acton does not snobbishly look down on American cultural accomplishments. "In literature at least," he says, "I entirely dissent from the opinion which denies to Americans an honourable place beside European nations." Though languishing in certain arts such as poetry and painting, Americans are equals to Europeans "in political eloquence and philosophy," and "they surpass us as writers on the history of the continent and on the art of government."⁷⁷ The great American accomplishment is political:

In practical politics they had solved with astonishing and unexampled success two problems which had hitherto baffled the capacity of the most enlightened nations: they had contrived a system of federal government which prodigiously increased the national power and yet respected local liberties and authorities; and they had founded it on the principle of equality, without surrendering the securities for property and freedom.⁷⁸

It is this balance of ordered liberty, of equality with security that "is necessarily an impressive lesson to England. Our institutions as well as our na-

tional character spring from the same roots, and the fortunes they encounter must serve as a beacon to guide us or as a warning to repel.”⁷⁹

Up to the time of the Civil War, in Acton’s judgment, America’s example overwhelmingly disproved the prevailing political dogma, reflecting “the verdict of history,” namely, “that complete equality is the ruin of liberty, and very prejudicial to the most valued interests of society, civilization, and religion.”⁸⁰ Thanks to her actual achievement of ordered liberty America was justifiably the hope of the millions who crossed the ocean, as well as additional millions “whose hearts and hopes are in the United States, to whom the rising sun is in the West, and whose movements are controlled by the distant magnet, though it has not drawn them away.”⁸¹ But, in 1866, this is no longer true. “The time has come,” says Acton,

for all men to perceive that these judgments were premature. Five years have wrought so vast a change, that the picture which I have faithfully given of the United States as I found them under President Pierce could not be realized in the awful realities of the present day...The Union which was founded and sustained by the attachment of the people has been restored by force, and the Constitution which was the idol of Americans is obeyed by millions of humbled and indignant men, whose families it has decimated, whose property it has ravaged, and whose prospects it has ruined for ever.”⁸²

The legacy of the Civil War leads Acton to ask Lincoln’s question whether “a nation so conceived can long endure,” whether the ideal itself as set forth in the Constitution is not flawed. In particular, the question is whether the will of the majority as the absolute and final law—Tocqueville’s “tyranny of the majority”⁸³—is at odds with the concern to protect the rights of the minority by established law. Acton cites Alexander Hamilton: “There are certain conjunctures when it may be necessary and proper to disregard the opinions which the majority of the people have formed. There ought to be a principle in government capable of resisting the popular current. The principle chiefly intended to be established is this, that there must be a permanent will.”⁸⁴ Over against this is the Jeffersonian conviction that there is to be no “perpetual Constitution, nor even a perpetual law” since “the earth belongs always to the living generation.” Thus, “every people may establish what form of government they please; the will of the nation being the only thing essential.”⁸⁵ The tension between these two viewpoints came to a head in the struggle between the North and the South, but, according to Acton, is rooted in a tension built into the very fabric of the American political structure, a tension that he, like Kuyper and many others later,

viewed as a straightforward debate between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton:

But it seems clear to me that if slavery had never existed, a community divided by principles so opposite as those of Jefferson and Hamilton will be distracted by their antagonism until one of them shall prevail; and that a theory that defines liberty with a single right, the right of doing all that you have the actual power to do, and a theory which secures liberty by certain unalterable rights, and founds it on truths which men did not invent and may not abjure, cannot both be formative principles in the same Constitution. Absolute power and restrictions on its exercise cannot exist together.⁸⁶

The “one decisive contrast between Europe and America” that exacerbates the problem is that in America “society is cut adrift from the traditions and influence of an ancient civilisation.”⁸⁷ In America, “nothing is safe that is not supported by popular favour. The ideas of past generations and of civilised contemporaries are not permitted to share or to limit the absolute authority of the present moment. The revolutionary principle which Jefferson introduced cuts them off from one as completely as the Atlantic separates them from the other.” While “history is filled with records of resistance provoked by the abuse of power” and in Europe “the people produce the remedy, in America they produce the cause of the disease. There is no appeal from the people to itself.”⁸⁸

Acton’s prognosis is not a happy one. A “degenerate republicanism terminates in the total loss of freedom,” and he notes that this has been “prophesied” about America.⁸⁹ The only protection against the tyranny of a centralized federal state is the division of powers into several states and their legal freedom to join in confederacies with other states. The combination of Acton’s constitutional sympathies for the Confederacy along with distaste for slavery leads him to this conclusion: “Slavery was not the cause of secession, but the reason of its failure. In almost every nation and every clime the time has come for the extinction of servitude.” However, in his judgment, the Americans failed to carry out the needed emancipation with proper safeguards against “incurable evils of another kind,” namely, moderating “the effects of sudden unconditional change,” saving “those whom they despoiled from ruin, and those whom they liberated from destitution.” The emancipation of the American slave was “an act of war, not of statesmanship or humanity” in which the slave owner was treated as an “enemy” and “the slave [used] as an instrument for his destruction.” In sum, “if, then, slavery is to be the criterion which shall determine the sig-

nificance of the civil war, our verdict ought, I think, to be, that by one part of the nation it was wickedly defended, and by the other as wickedly removed.”⁹⁰

In Acton’s judgment, something precious in the human quest for liberty was lost and replaced by a

spurious liberty...that is twice cursed, for it deceives those who it attracts and those who it repels. By exhibiting the spectacle of a people claiming to be free, but whose love of freedom means hatred of inequality, jealousy of limitations to power, and reliance on the State as an instrument to mould as well as to control society, it calls on its admirers to hate aristocracy and teaches its adversaries to fear the people. The North has used the doctrines of Democracy to destroy self-government. The South applied the principles of conditional federation to cure the evils and correct the errors of a false interpretation of Democracy.⁹¹

Evaluation of Kuyper’s Portrait of America

I have sketched Acton’s assessment of post-bellum America, particularly his evaluation of the constitutional consequences and costs of the Union victory, to point to a serious lacuna in Kuyper’s portrait—his remarkable oversight of the Civil War, a fact undoubtedly affected by the geographical limitations of his visit to Northern and Midwestern sites during the period of Gilded Age boom. This oversight also strengthens the view that Kuyper’s primary purpose for providing a travel account of his pilgrimage with its heavy emphasis on the “Dutch connection” and idealization of American liberty (the Holland-America line of liberty) was political. The Christian-historical imagination⁹² that fueled Kuyper’s own political vision for the Netherlands could not rest on utopian dreaming; Kuyper needed a working model of a political order that was Christian in its moral sensitivity and ordering at the same time that it was free from the constraints and intolerance of a Constantinian, confessional state-church alliance, a *volkskerk*.⁹³ Following Tocqueville’s lead, he believed America had achieved this goal and, again like Tocqueville, wanted to use the American example to emancipate a group of Dutch coreligionists less free than their American counterparts. The story of Kuyper’s success in this venture will have to be told elsewhere, but we need to acknowledge both the limits and the value of Kuyper’s reading of the American experiment.

To begin with, the correctness of Tocqueville’s and Kuyper’s linkage of religion and liberty, while still contentious, is even more strongly defensible as we stand at the close of the twentieth century. Here the direct in-

volvement as well as the written work of Pope John Paul II⁹⁴ in the quest for liberty is powerful evidence. By now Tocqueville's epigrammatic conclusion seems incontrovertible: "Despotism may be able to do without faith, but freedom cannot."⁹⁵ Kuyper's reading of history, too, though flawed in key details, is however not altogether without merit. As James Bratt has observed, "subsequent historiography has made some of his contentions stronger now than they were then. Puritanism did have strong shaping influence upon America, the War for Independence was not an anticlerical Revolution, and Christianity commanded high public respect in the United States still—perhaps especially—at the end of the nineteenth century."⁹⁶ Even at his nationalist best (or worst)—celebrating the Dutch connection—Kuyper was correct in calling attention to the close and friendly links between the United States and the Netherlands, a linkage decidedly rooted in a common love of liberty (as well as commerce).⁹⁷

Kuyper erred by at the same time being too specific and too global in his vision. The unnuanced specificity of tying himself to Alexander Hamilton in order to refute Jefferson's infatuation with the French Revolution was more than compensated by his uncritical acceptance of the grand heliotropic myth of history's inexorable westward journey.⁹⁸ There are two mistakes commonly made by those who, with vested interest, discuss the role of religion in American life, particularly in relation to its political order: understatement and overstatement. Secular cynics understate, or, more often, simply deny the important role of religion in establishing or maintaining a free and prosperous society,⁹⁹ while religious zealots may overstate the case for a "Christian America."¹⁰⁰ Kuyper leans toward the second camp and his mistakes—unnuanced use of key iconic figures and dependence on a grand historical myth—serve as warning to those who wish to set forth a case for the necessity of religion for a free polis: Make such claims carefully and modestly. At the same time it is important to call the bluff of the hyperscrupulous—those who point to errors of historical detail in order to dismiss altogether the case set forth by Kuyper and others about the role of the Christian religion in the founding of American institutions in efforts to be inclusive, or (stated more pejoratively) politically correct. This also distorts historical truth at significant cost to the possibility of maintaining a free and prosperous society.

We now conclude briefly on a more lighthearted note that nonetheless illustrates the last point: the press reception of Kuyper's Grand Rapids address on October 26, 1898. Both Grand Rapids newspapers—the Republican-leaning *Herald* as well as the *Grand Rapids Democrat*—carried news

reports of the visit and lecture on October 27. The former included in its headline Kuypers's advice "not to vote the Democrat ticket" with the report of an interview in which Kuypers is reported to have said that "he is a democrat himself, but that he is one in the Holland sense of the word, not in the sense that it is popularly considered in America." The latter failed to acknowledge this nuance and simply announced in its headline, "He is a Democrat," adding that the "distinguished Liberal Holland leader" was thus "not bigoted or narrow." This proved too much for its rival and led to *The Herald* throwing down this political gauntlet in its headline: "Is not a Democrat... Misrepresentations... Hollanders are Indignant... Insult." The skirmish came to a close when *The Democrat* published a letter from Kuypers reiterating the difference between being a "Holland democrat" and an "American Democrat," along with a weak apology from the paper's editor that included the claim that if Kuypers "could study American politics for six months he would be the hottest kind of Democrat." Kuypers's own polemical/journalistic heart must have felt at home and a grand Grand Rapids tradition was inaugurated: "A true Calvinist (if not God himself) is a Republican!" "No! A Democrat!" *Plus ça change...* The joys of a third way had not yet been discovered.

Notes

¹ A translated transcription of the address appeared in *The Grand Rapids Herald*, October 29, 1898. The citations that follow are taken from this transcription.

² The reference is to "the splendid little war" (John Hay), the Spanish American War, that was concluded some three short months after it began in April 1898.

³ J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1986 [1792]), 69-70.

⁴ From 1872 until a few years before his death in 1920 Kuypers edited a daily newspaper, *De Standaard* (*The Standard*) as well as a weekly, *De Heraut* (*The Herald*). There is thus a certain fitting poetic symmetry to the publication of his Grand Rapids address by *The Grand Rapids Herald* though the "other" daily Grand Rapids newspaper, *The Democrat*, did, as we shall see later, try to claim Kuypers for its own.

⁵ These were published as *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1931); this volume is still in print.

⁶ Press accounts of his visits, in characteristic nineteenth-century journalistic fashion, paid special attention to the lists of important people who had served as preparation committees for the great man's visit. See, for example, the report in *The Grand Rapids Democrat*, October 27, 1898.

⁷ On Kuypers's visit to the United States, see his own reflections in A. Kuypers, *Varia Americana* (Amsterdam and Pretoria: Hóveker & Wormser, n.d.); cf. C. A. Admiraal, "De Amerikaanse reis van Abraham Kuypers," in C. A. Admiraal et al., eds., *Historicus in het spanningsveld van theorie en praktijk* (Leiderdorp: Leidse Onderwijsinstellingen, 1985), 110-65; Dirk Jellema, "Kuypers's Visit to America in 1898," *Michigan History* 42 (1942): 227-36; James D. Bratt, "De erfenis van

Kuyper in Noord-Amerika," in C. Augustijn et al., eds., *Abraham Kuyper: Zijn volksdeel, zijn invloed* (Delft: Meinema, 1987), 203-8; idem., "Abraham Kuyper, American History, and the Tensions of Neo-Calvinism," in George Harinck and Hans Krabbendam, eds. *Sharing the Tradition: The Dutch-North American Exchanges, 1846-1996* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1996), 97-114; J. Stellingwerf, *Kuyper en de VU* (Kampen: Kok, 1987), ch. 7, "De reis naar America," 227-52; M. L. Mooijweer, "Een voorlijke erfgenaam van Nederland: Abraham en Henriëtte Kuyper over Amerika," in K. van Berkel, ed., *Amerika in Europese Ogen: Facetten van de Europese beeldvorming van het moderne Amerika* ('s-Gravenhage: SDU Uitgeverij, 1990), 40-53; Peter Somers Heslam, "Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism: An Historical Study, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1995 (forthcoming from Eerdmans).

⁸ First by a general perspective, second via the contrast with the French Revolution, third from Kuyper's understanding of the constitutional debate between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton.

⁹ Nor was he singular as a European visitor who came to observe and write about the "new world" for an "old world" audience. In addition to Alexis de Tocqueville and Lord John Acton (see notes 11 and 12 below) the phenomenon of European visitor/commentators on American life was significant enough to generate a scholarly industry all its own. On the genre of American travel narratives see Robert B. Downs, *Images of America: Travelers from Abroad in the New World* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987); K. Van Berkel, ed., *Amerika in Europese Ogen* ('s-Gravenhage: SDU uitgeverij, 1990); Robert Lemelin, *Pathway to the National Character 1830—1861* (Port Washington, NY; and London: Kennikat, 1975); Henry T. Tuckerman, *America and Her Commentators* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1864); Allan Nevins, *America Through British Eyes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948); Max Berger, *The British Traveller in America, 1836—1860* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1964). The reverse phenomenon—Americans travelling to Europe to observe, study, learn, and write about it—should not be overlooked and is discussed by Foster Rhea Dulles, *American Abroad: Two Centuries of European Travel* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1964).

¹⁰ I have chosen the term *pilgrim* deliberately, rather than *traveler* or even *tourist*, to underscore the religiously committed character of Kuyper's visit. Another Dutchman, the Americanist historian J. W. Schulte Nordholt provides a helpful distinction between different sorts of visitors to foreign places: "The purpose of the tourist is to escape from reality, to find peace in some dreamlike landscape, some Shangri-La. The traveler, on the other hand, is on a voyage of discovery; it is not a dream that he is looking for, but a new reality. The tourist wants to comprehend his world, encompass it, store it somewhere, preferably in his camera. The traveler is overwhelmed; he sees only a part, his quest never ends. The tourist wants to recognize, the traveler to discover. The tourist sails on a lake, the traveler on the ocean. The tourist looks for the past, the traveler for the future." ("Dutch Travelers in the United States: A Tale of Energy and Ambivalence," in J. W. Schulte Nordholt and Robert P. Swierenga, eds. *A Bilateral Bicentennial: A History of Dutch-American Relations, 1782-1982* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, and New York: Octagon, 1982), 251. In Scholte Nordholt's estimation "American travelers in Holland were mostly tourists, but Dutch tourists in the United States were travelers. In America there was something to be discovered" (251). Under these terms Kuyper is best considered a traveler but the term *pilgrim* suits him still better. Pilgrims are already committed and do not travel so much to discover but to be confirmed and renewed in their larger pilgrimage of life. As we shall discover, Kuyper had a definite view of America before his visit in 1898; he came and confirmed that image, among other reasons, also for his own political purposes in the Netherlands.

¹¹ Sanford Kessler, *Tocqueville's Civil Religion: American Christianity and the Prospects for Freedom* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), xi; the twentieth-century British economist Harold Laski claimed that Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* was "the best book on one country ever written by a citizen of another (cited by R. Kroes, "Alexis de Tocqueville en James Bryce over de Amerikaanse democratie," in K. van Berkel, ed. *Amerika in Europese Ogen*, 33). According to Kroes this honor should go to Bryce. I will be using the Mayer/Lawrence

translation of *Democracy in America*: Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed., J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper Perennial, 1988 [1966]).

¹² See *Acton in America: The American Journal of Sir John Acton*, ed. S. W. Jackman (Shepherdstown, WV: Patmos, 1979). Acton's journal was written when he was only 20 and is incomplete. His mature reflections on America are thus more significant in any full comparative discussion. Though there are other nineteenth-century authors, notably James Bryce, whose travel reflections invite comparisons with those of Kuyper (e.g., Bryce's notes on city politics and Kuyper's concluding section of his *Varia Americana* on "Boss Politics"), our concern in this essay is with the three writers whose interpretive framework is dominated by the notion of liberty; Bryce's treatment is predominantly descriptive and thus dated while Tocqueville, Acton, and Kuyper remain valuable for contemporary considerations of the *idea* of America. There are also sound chronological reasons for taking three writers whose visits take place and whose reflections arise, respectively, on the three one-third segments of the nineteenth century (1831, 1853, 1898).

¹³ See David Mathews, *Lord Acton and His Times* (Birmingham, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1968), chap. 7, "Tocqueville."

¹⁴ See Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism: The Origin and Safeguard of our Constitutional Liberties," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 52 (1895): 385-410, 646-75.

¹⁵ The important essay on Calvinism and constitutional liberty (note 14 above) dates from an address given in 1873, long before Kuyper became a significant political actor in the Netherlands and prior to any notion of a visit to America in such a capacity. Whatever one can say about Kuyper's later motives in idealizing America for his Dutch reading and political public, his early attitude toward America was consistent with this and therefore must be said to reflect genuine conviction on his part.

¹⁶ P. Kasteel, *Abraham Kuyper* (Kampen: Kok, 1938), 289. For a lengthy list of places in his writings where Kuyper speaks positively about America, see note 417 on the same page.

¹⁷ P. Heslam, "Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*, 15.

¹⁸ This following synopsis is taken from the following works of Kuyper: *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1931); "Calvinism, the Origin and Safeguard of Our Constitutional Liberties," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 52 (1895): 385-410, 646-75; *Antirevolutionaire Staatskunde* 2 vols. (Kampen: Kok, 1916), *passim*. For an alternative reading of the history of liberty, see John E. E. D. Acton *The History of Freedom* (Grand Rapids, MI: The Acton Institute, 1993).

¹⁹ For a discussion of the battle for the theological soul of the Dutch Reformed Church and religious-political character of the Dutch nation in the seventeenth century, see Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 421-546.

²⁰ Kuyper's own mentor on this matter is not Burke in the first place but the Dutch historian and political writer Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876), whose most important work is *Unbelief and Revolution (Ongeloof en Revolutie, 1847)*. An English translation is available: Harry Van Dyke, *Groen van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution* (Jordan Station, ONT: Wedge, 1988).

²¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures in Calvinism*, 25; block quotation that follows is from p. 10.

²² The note of divine judgment should not be overlooked; some of the lines here remind one of Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural:

The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly

do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-men's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said" the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

(Daniel J. Boorstin, *An American Primer* [New York: Meridian, 1995 (1966)], 442-43).

²³ A. Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 32, 25 (emphasis added).

²⁴ Jonathan Mirsky, "The Empire Strikes Back," *The New York Review of Books* 37 (February 1, 1990): 22-23.

²⁵ It was at this point [when the "Goddess of Democracy" was rolled into the square], when "it must have looked to [Chinese leader] Deng as if the demonstrations would never stop... [that] it was decided to order the army to clear out the square." The official loudspeaker broadcasts directed at the students in the square called it "a foreign thing," and, "calling attention to the Goddess's resemblance to the Statue of Liberty," proclaimed: "This is China, not America" (ibid.). The significance of the American connection was underscored five years later at the unveiling, in a small park at the edge of San Francisco's Chinatown, of a bronze statue modeled after the original Goddess of Democracy. On that occasion Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi said:

The world witnessed the brutal suppression of individual freedom and liberty in Tiananmen Square. The brave men and women who demonstrated did so in the spirit of our forefathers. They quoted Thomas Jefferson, and built a Goddess of Democracy fashioned after our own Statue of Liberty.

(*The New York Times NATIONAL*, Sunday, June 5, 1994, p. L, 38).

²⁶ Most famously by Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

²⁷ In an example of the latter, political historian David Fromkin summarizes the conclusion of his work as follows, along with appropriate cautionary notes about premature closure on history's end:

It was a fast and unexpected finish. Coming only a half-century after the United States seemingly solved the problems of German and Japanese expansionism, and less than forty years after America helped to push the countries of Western Europe into releasing their overseas colonies, the sudden and dramatic collapse of the last remaining empire—that of the Soviet Union—was so tidy and satisfying as an ending that it is tempting to think it was one; that history is a novel, and this is its last page. For someone trying to make sense of what happened, the challenge is to tell what the plots and subplots were, in other words, that led to the end of empires and the emergence, for the time being, of the United States as the sole global power.

(David Fromkin, *The Time of the Americans: FDR, Eisenhower, Marshall, MacArthur—The Generation that Changed America's Role in the World* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995], 537).

²⁸ The Dutch Christian political party organized by Kuyper in 1879 was called the Anti-Revolutionary Party and in his detailed exposition of the party's platform Kuyper clearly links his antirevolutionary platform (i.e., anti-French Revolution) with that of the American political tradition. See A. Kuyper, *Ons Program*, 4th ed. (Amsterdam and Pretoria: Hōveker & Wormser, 1897), 29-30.

²⁹ See in addition to his Grand Rapids address of October 26, 1898, A. Kuyper, *Antirevolutionaire Staatskunde*, I, 711.

³⁰ For a thoughtful critique of Kuyper's use of this linkage, see James D. Bratt, "Abraham Kuyper, American History, and the Tensions of Neo-Calvinism," 100-106.

³¹ "Zij wil dat de gewestelijke en gemeentelijke autonomie, voor zover deze niet strijdt met de eischen der staatseenheid en de rechten van de enkele personen niet onbeschermd laat, door decentralisatie worde hersteld." (Abraham Kuyper, *Ons Program*, 4th ed. [Amsterdam &

Pretoria: Höveker & Wormser, 1897], xvii, 158.) Kuyper's commentary on the way a revolutionary state-principle denies self-governance and the initiative of the people because of its excessively centralized government (ibid., 162) reminds one of the warnings found in *The Federalist Papers* of James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay; see e.g., "Federalist # 62," (Madison).

³² See Merrill D. Peterson, *Adams and Jefferson: A Revolutionary Dialogue* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1978 [1976]).

³³ James Bratt suggests Patrick Henry or Samuel Adams as more fitting "Christian founders" though he notes that Kuyper, for his purposes, needed figures who were both "bearers of lasting power" as well as "Christian popular agitators," and Henry and Adams were "revolutionaries of 1776, not nation-builders of 1787...When forced to choose in the American case, he went for power" (James D. Bratt, "Abraham Kuyper, American History and the Tensions of Neo-Calvinism," 105).

³⁴ For a broad historical perspective on the role of the division in American national mythology symbolized by the two men, see Claude G. Bowers, *Jefferson and Hamilton: The Struggle for Democracy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1925).

³⁵ Alf J. Mapp, Jr., *Thomas Jefferson: A Strange Case of Mistaken Identity* (New York: Madison Books, 1987), 283; cited phrases within the quotation are from Merrill D. Peterson, *The Jefferson Image in the American Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 222.

³⁶ See notes 14 and 15 above.

³⁷ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 2 vols. (New York: MacMillan, 1911), I, 1.

³⁸ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 9, 12.

³⁹ For a richly illustrated introduction to the visual portraits of America, see Hugh Honour, *The European Vision of America* (Cleveland: The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975); idem, *The New Golden Land: European Images of America from the Discoveries to the Present Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975).

⁴⁰ Max Berger, *The British Traveller*, 6.

⁴¹ Finally, in yet another category are travel accounts that are written *deliberately* to deceive. See Percy G. Adams, *Travelers and Travel Liars 1600-1800* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962).

⁴² See Simon Coleman and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage Past and Present in the World Religions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

⁴³ Diane Apostolos-Cappadona, "Religion and Sacred Space," in William Scott Green and Jacob Neusner, eds., *The Religion Factor: An Introduction to How Religion Matters* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 214; cf. J. G. Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today: Why? Where? How?* (London: SCM Press, 1988), 1-2.

⁴⁴ J. G. Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today*, 86.

⁴⁵ Cited by Davies, *Pilgrimage Yesterday and Today*, 98-99; on the decline of pilgrimage in the Reformation period see Philip M. Soergel, *Wondrous in his Saints: Counter Propaganda in Bavaria* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1993), esp. ch. 2. "The Reformation Decline of Pilgrimage."

⁴⁶ "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," in J. M. Porter, ed., *Luther: Selected Political Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 41.

⁴⁷ Ibid., emphasis added.

⁴⁸ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, *Library of Christian Classics*, vol. 20, 21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), III.xx.30.

⁴⁹ Ibid., IV.xx.4; emphasis added.

⁵⁰ The twentieth century is witness to horrid secular examples of formally similar pilgrimages by political pilgrims who journeyed to Moscow, Beijing, Havana, Hanoi, and Managua to see and report back on the latest version of a "leftist" paradise in action; see Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

⁵¹ Of the vast literature on utopia and golden age/new world/paradise, the following selection

was useful in preparing these paragraphs: Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979); Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750-1900*, revised and enlarged edition translated by Jeremy Moyle (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973); John Ferguson, *Utopias of the Classical World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1975); Harry Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance* (Bloomington, IN and London: Indiana University Press, 1969); J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing, 1516-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Krishan Kumar, *Utopian and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Kenneth M. Roemer, *The Obsolete Necessity: America in Utopian Writings, 1888-1900* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1976); Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from Utopia to The Tempest* (Berkeley: Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1992); Krishan Kumar and Stephen Bann, eds., *Utopias and the Millennium* (London: Reaktion, 1993).

⁵² Peter Conrad, *Imagining America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3.

⁵³ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 1690.

⁵⁴ See particularly the essays in Van Berkel, *Amerika in Europese Ogen*.

⁵⁵ Van Berkel, *Amerika in Europese Ogen*, 25.

⁵⁶ Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 9.

⁵⁷ On Kuyper as a "Romantic," see J. Stellingwerf, *Abraham Kuyper en de VU* (Kampen: Kok, 1987), ch. 8, "Kuyper en de Romantiek"; Edward E. Ericson, "Abraham Kuyper: Cultural Critic," *Calvin Theological Journal* 22 (1987): 210-27; James D. Bratt, "In the Shadow of Mt. Kuyper," *Calvin Theological Journal* 31 (1996): 55-57.

⁵⁸ Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism: The Origin and Safeguard of our Constitutional Liberties," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 52 (1895): 391. The Dutch essay was published in 1874.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Tocqueville, though he sees the Puritans as the crucial shapers of the American character, lauds the reformer Martin Luther and fails "to recognize the importance of Calvinism in shaping Puritan belief and practice" (Sanford Kessler, "Tocqueville's Puritans: Christianity and the American Founding," *Journal of Politics* 54/3 [1992]: 790). For a careful historical assessment of the role of American Dutch Reformed clergy in the War of Independence see James Tanis, "The Dutch Reformed Clergy and the American Revolution," in W. Balke, C. Graafland, H. Harkema, eds., *Wegen en Gestalten in het Gereformeerd Protestantisme* (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1976), 235-56. The Dutch Reformed of the Middle Colonies were already divided along ecclesiological lines between supporters of the experimental, pietist Calvinism of Theodore Frelinghuysen and his followers (*coetus*) and ecclesiastical traditionalists (*conferentie*). "With the outbreak of the Revolution...those committed to experimental religion were numbered among the Whigs; those embracing orderly traditionalism were found among the Tories" (237). For the Patriot Whigs, "the Dutch tradition of political and religious struggle [against Spain] was a constantly invigorating factor" (239). Tanis concludes: "Fortunately, for the cause of independence, the preponderance of the Reformed clergy, supported by faithful laymen, were to be found among the Whigs. The Calvinist traditions of individual sacrifice and personal liberty were a major factor in holding the Middle Colonies in the Revolutionary camp and preserving there a bulwark against the British drive to divide the colonies" (255).

⁶¹ Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 14.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 14-15; Kuyper cites here Conrad Busken Huet, *Het Land van Rembrandt*, 2 vols, 2nd ed. (Haarlem: H. D. Tjeenk Willink, 1886), and includes Dutch historians R. Fruin and R. C. Bakhuisen Van Den Brink as well as Americans such as George Bancroft as allies in this claim; cf. idem., *Varia Americana* (Amsterdam and Pretoria: Höveker & Wormser, n.d.), 61-65 where Kuyper emphasizes the importance of the sixteenth-century Dutch revolt against Spain as the fountain of modern and American political liberty. For a helpful, balanced treatment of Kuyper's historiography with respect to America, see James D. Bratt, "Abraham Kuyper, American History, and the Tensions of Neo-Calvinism."

⁶³ Kuypers, *Varia Americana*, 63-64. Kuypers does not make the claims about the Dutch factor on his own authority but appeals to such historians as Motley, Campbell, Prescott and Griffis,

⁶⁴ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 18, 30, 39, 43, 112-72.

⁶⁵ See, *inter alia*, John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton, "The Civil War in America," in *Historical Essays and Studies*, ed. John Neville Figgis and Reginald Vere Laurence (London: MacMillan, 1907), 123-42.

⁶⁶ See particularly Joshua Mitchell, *The Fragility of Freedom: Tocqueville on Religion, Democracy, and the American Future* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁶⁷ Mark A. Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 166.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Sidney E. Mead, "When 'Wise Men Hoped': An Examination of the Mind and Spirit of the National Period," in *The Lively Experiment: The Shaping of Christianity in America* (New York, Evanston and London: Harper & Row, 1963), 90-102.

⁶⁹ *Democracy in America*, 291; this citation is better known in the version of Henry Reeves's translation: "There is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America."

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 295.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 293.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 294.

⁷³ Kuypers, "Calvinism: The Origin and Safeguard of our Constitutional Liberties," 396-97; the quotation is not documented, though since the original Dutch version cites the concluding clause in French, it is likely from Tocqueville. Kuypers cites Tocqueville directly eight times in this essay.

⁷⁴ Though Kuypers did briefly and sympathetically address the sad economic lot of former slaves in America (*Varia Americana*, 9-11), ironically (and even tragically, one might add), his genuine emancipatory sympathies, even in his reflections on the American visit, regularly came to expression in concerns about the Dutch in America and especially in South Africa.

⁷⁵ John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton, "The Civil War in America: Its Place in History," a lecture to the Literary and Scientific Institution, Bridgworth, on January 18, 1866, in *Essays in the History of Liberty, Selected Essays of Lord Acton*, vol. 1 (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1985), 263-79.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 264-65.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 265.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 266-67.

⁸³ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 246-76.

⁸⁴ John Emerich Edward Dalberg Acton, "The Civil War in America," 269.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 278.

⁹² "Christian-historical" was the alternate name for the nineteenth-century Dutch Calvinist antirevolutionary political movement. The term was intended to emphasize a combination of political transformational passion with continuity to national and Christian traditional values. It was thus used in sharp contrast to a radical, revolutionary-ideological, or utopian imagination. In my forthcoming book on Abraham Kuypers's public theology I deal with Kuypers's Christian-historical imagination in some detail in the introductory chapter, "Let My People Go: Abraham

Kuyper's Emancipatory Christian-Historical Imagination." For a further discussion on the contrast between a utopian and nonutopian or traditional political vision, see Russell Kirk, *The Politics of Prudence* (Bryn Mawr, PA: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1993); Michael Oakeshott, *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*, new and expanded edition (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press, 1991); Stanley Parry, "Reason and the Restoration of Tradition," in *What Is Conservatism?* ed. Frank S. Meyer (New York, Chicago, San Francisco: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1965), 107-32; Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: William Morrow, 1987). The elitist, gnostic character of contemporary, socially ameliorative utopianism is neatly described in Sowell's *The Vision of the Anointed: Self-Congratulation As a Basis for Social Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

⁹³ See H. J. Langman, *Kuyper en de Volkskerk: Een Dogmatisch-Ecclesiologische Studie* (Kampen: Kok, 1950).

⁹⁴ Even to pick only one papal encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, would practically prove the point.

Adding *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae* to the list seals the case.

⁹⁵ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 294.

⁹⁶ James D. Bratt, "Abraham Kuyper, American History, and the Tensions of Neo-Calvinism," 100. Bratt refers here to the historical work of Sidney Ahlstrom, Robert Handy, Winthrop Hudson, and Martin Marty, and later in the essay to that of Perry Miller, Quentin Skinner, and Michael Waltzer.

⁹⁷ In addition to the essay cited in note 61, see the essays in J. W. Schulte Nordholt and Robert P. Swierenga, *A Bilateral Bicentennial: A History of Dutch American Relations, 1782 and 1982*.

⁹⁸ For a full discussion of this myth, including Kuyper's own nineteenth-century antecedents, see J. W. Schulte Nordholt, *The Myth of the West: America As the Last Empire*, trans. H. Rowen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995).

⁹⁹ A remarkable about-face can be found in Guenther Lewy, *Why America Needs Religion: Secular Modernity and Its Discontents* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996). Professor Lewy started out with the intention of writing a book that would refute the claims of those who linked religion and a free, moral, and prosperous society, but he reports that he could not avoid concluding that the evidence pointed the other way: a free society like America needs religion.

¹⁰⁰ For a balanced treatment see Nathan Hatch, George Marsden, and Mark Noll, *Searching for Christian America* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1983).