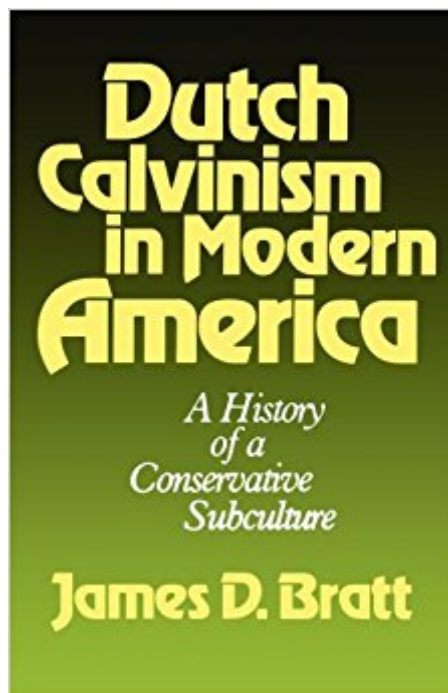




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Dutch Calvinism In Modern America: A History Of A Conservative Subculture



Synopsis

In this scholarly yet entertaining book, James D. Bratt takes a look at the Dutch in America from the late 19th century to the present. A comprehensive study of an ethnic subculture, the book is in large part a study of the group's religious history as well, since, as Bratt points out, the contours of the Dutch presence in America have been overwhelmingly shaped by the church and its subsidiary organizations. / Although the book is extensively and scrupulously documented, Bratt has infused his scholarship with a considerable amount of anecdote that is by turns poignant and tragic and hilarious. / In Bratt's analysis of the fitful progress of Americanization that this close-knit religious community has undergone, we are treated to the sharp insights of a bemused and sometimes disaffected insider. Included is a chapter on novelists Arnold Mulder, David Cornel DeJong, Frederick Manfred, and Peter DeVries – four sons of the Dutch who fled the subculture only to reflect upon it almost obsessively from the outside. / Well written, scholarly, and highly readable, Dutch Calvinism in Modern America will have wide appeal among both academic and general readers

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Professor of history at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

A well-documented history of the RCA, CRC, and related Dutch Calvinist churches in the USA. It traces social, political, economical, and doctrinal factors, from the 1834 Secession and Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands to the influences of American "evangelicalism" in the 1970s. If you look for

a hagiography of church leaders, or a celebration of the glorious Dutch Calvinist heritage, this is not the book for you. Bratt brings out the many fights and the silliness that tends to plague a church community. He does so soberly, with occasional dry humor. For instance, the last line, about the prospect of the RCA/CRC after the 1970s, reads: "Only the destination is clear: this way lies the full measure of freedom and banality that is the promise of American life." All in all, Bratt strikes a good balance. He has the insight of an insider, the detachment of a scholar. Four stars, not five, because the book is a bit dry at points.

At 66, I was looking forward to going back to my formative years in a Dutch Calvinist community to examine with some years of perspective a better understanding of how my mind and heart became what they are (were). Simply depressed me that a people with a rich cultural and theological heritage could have wasted so much time and energy, and caused so much inter-personal/inter-denominational pain over so many non-essentials. We had the gospel to share with the world, and we chose to spend the time, energy, and money savaging fellow believers over basically trivial, reasonably-debatable doctrinal issues where liberty and variety should easily prevail for the cause of Christ's Church!

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