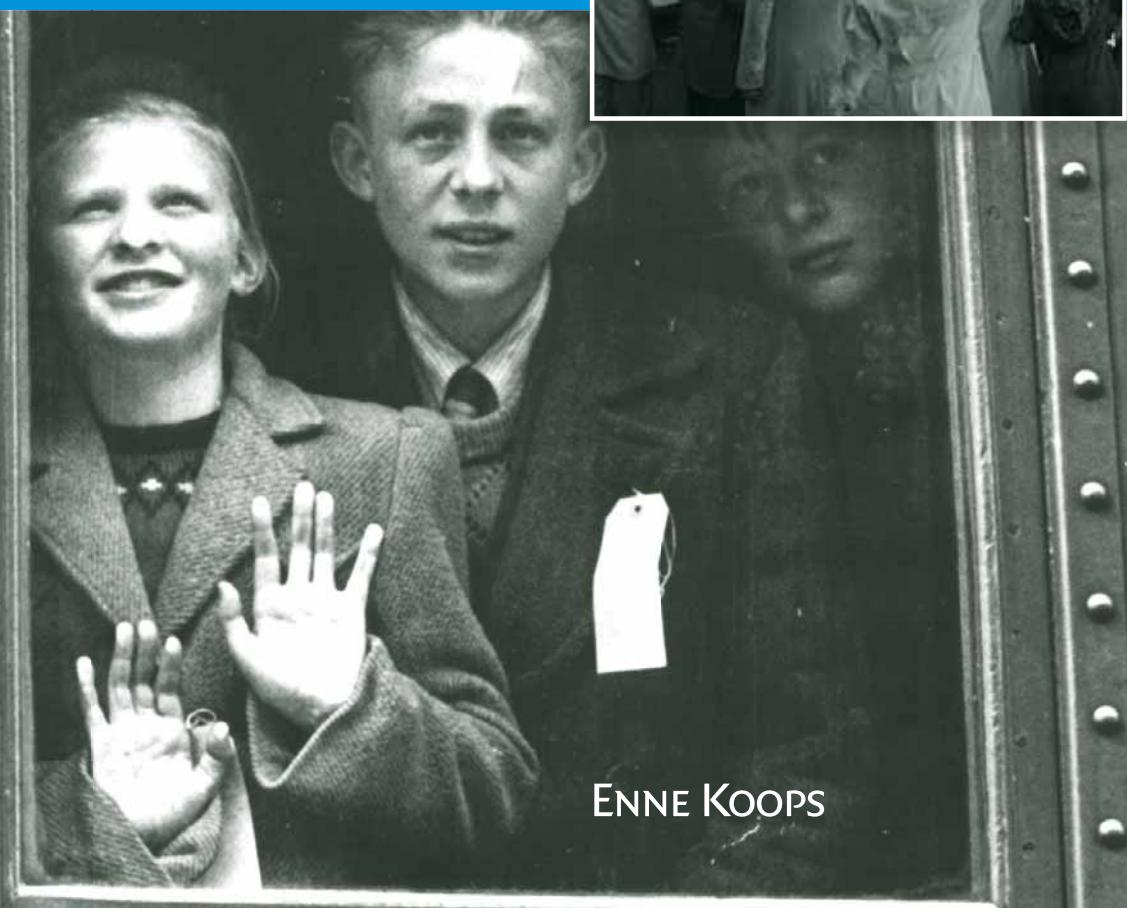


# De dynamiek van een emigratiecultuur

De emigratie van gereformeerden, hervormden en katholieken naar Noord-Amerika in vergelijkend perspectief (1947-1963)



ENNE KOOPS

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THEOLOGISCHE UNIVERSITEIT VAN DE GEREFORMEERDE KERKEN  
IN NEDERLAND TE KAMPEN

# De dynamiek van een emigratiecultuur

De emigratie van gereformeerden, hervormden en katholieken naar  
Noord-Amerika in vergelijkend perspectief (1947-1963)

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

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OP GEZAG VAN DE RECTOR, DR. M. TE VELDE,

HOOGLERAAR IN DE THEOLOGIE,

ZO GOD WIL IN HET OPENBAAR TE VERDEDIGEN

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# Summary

## Main topic

This historical dissertation is entitled *The Dynamics of an Emigration Culture. The Emigration of Calvinists, Reformed and Catholics to North America from a Comparative Perspective (1947-1963)*. The overarching theme concerns the relationship between religion and migration, which is discussed by highlighting the example of Dutch overseas emigration to North America between 1947 and 1963.

The central question of this thesis runs as follows: which religious factors encouraged or hampered Dutch emigration to Canada and the United States, and how did religion effect the integration of Dutch immigrants in North America? Because the Calvinists (*gereformeerden*) were relatively overrepresented in the postwar exodus to North America – they made up 9.7 percent of the Dutch population, but provided 30 percent of the emigrants –, this group will receive particular attention. To determine if their strong quantitative representation also had qualitative aspects, the *gereformeerden* as a group are examined per denomination: the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands), the Gereformeerde Kerken (vrijgemaakt) (Reformed Churches Liberated), the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken (Free Reformed Churches) and the Gereformeerde Gemeenten (Netherlands Reformed Congregations). The characteristics of the overseas trek from these churches will be compared with the emigration from the two largest Dutch denominations, the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church) and the Rooms-Katholieke Kerk (Roman Catholic Church), and finally – if relevant – non-church members.

## Relevance

The historiography on Dutch postwar migration to North America is extensive and offers a rich source of information to build upon. However, it has at least four shortcomings. In the first place, developments in the destination countries, Canada and the United States, have attracted far more attention than the cultural baggage the immigrants imported from the country of origin, the Netherlands.

Second, with regard to the postwar period, scholars have focused almost exclusively on the experiences of Dutch immigrants in Canada, with a strong emphasis on the province of Ontario and the postwar period. With regard to the United

States, attention has been concentrated largely on the experiences of Dutch immigrants during the nineteenth century. This has resulted in a lack of long-term comparisons between the experiences of, and the interaction between, Protestant immigrants in Canada as well as the United States.

In the third place, historical research on Dutch Calvinists in North America mainly deals with the history and theological struggles of the Christian Reformed Church in North America, its subculture and the institutions that were part of that denomination. Therefore, comparisons between the cultures of the Christian Reformed Church and smaller Calvinist denominations are almost non-existent.

Finally, many recent studies have treated the *gereformeerden* as a monolithic group regarding their emigration tradition, opinion forming, organization and the resulting size of their emigration. Available figures and other historical sources suggest that this approach is not correct.

## Method

By giving a new meaning to the concept of “emigration culture”, this dissertation aims to reach a more balanced analysis of the differences and comparisons between the emigration of Calvinists, Reformed and Catholics to North America in the first two decades after World War II. This concept offers the opportunity to chart weak and strong aspects of emigration over the long term, and allows us to compare the emigration cultures of divergent religious groups.

Emigration culture is defined as “the presence of experiences and stories about emigration within a cultural group and the transformation of those aspects into positive or negative action.” In other words: an emigration culture is embedded in past experiences of group members, survives through stories told within a specific group, and leads – or does not lead – to action: organization and mobilization, resulting in the act of emigration or staying at home. Three building blocks are used to measure the strength or weakness of an emigration culture: emigration tradition (experiences with emigration in the past), public opinion (positive or negative stories about emigration which circulate within a group and which are based upon a certain world view), and organization (action or not). Together, these factors resulted in a larger or smaller intensity of emigration. Besides this, the growth of emigration cultures is fed or hampered by what this thesis calls “general conditions”. These conditions cannot explain the differences between emigration cultures of various cultural or religious groups, but they help to outline the broader framework necessary to understand why emigration in general occurred. Push and pull factors are part of these general conditions. For instance, related to postwar Europe, conditions that moved people to cross borders were the bleak economic prospects at home, attractive destination countries, conducive government laws, an active emigration or immigration policy, and the threat of a third world war. Without these circumstances emigration would not have taken place at all.

## Structure

The first chapter of this dissertation describes the origins of a tradition of Dutch emigration to the United States. By doing this, specific conditions are revealed that led to a strong emigration culture after World War II. There were two main periods of Dutch immigration to America. The first era ranged from 1614 to 1840 and was characterized by the fact that in the Dutch Republic and United Kingdom of the Netherlands there was no strong emigration tradition to America. The second period lasted from 1840 to 1940, when – in different stages – a Dutch emigration culture came into being. General conditions, like bleak economic prospects, explain why around 1846 the Netherlands shifted from an immigration country into an emigration country. At the same time religious factors created variation in opinion forming, organization and size of emigration among religious groups which saw their members crossing the ocean: the *afgescheidenen* (Sectarians), *gereformeerden* (Calvinists), *hervormden* (Reformed), and *katholieken* (Catholics). An extra impetus for the growth of an emigration tradition was the dominant world view within the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, a church that became strongly orientated towards Neocalvinism. This body of thought laid the foundation for positive attitudes about emigration and North America – which were absent or less influential in Reformed and Catholic circles – and functioned as a source of inspiration for the Gereformeerde Emigratie Vereeniging (the GEV, Reformed Emigration Association), founded in 1927 and from 1938 onwards known as the Christelijke Emigratie Centrale (the CEC, Christian Emigration Foundation).

Chapter 2 argues that the Dutch trek to Canada, commencing in the last decade of the nineteenth century, encouraged the continuing growth of a Dutch emigration tradition aimed at North America. General conditions, opinion forming, church organization, and the concentration and spread of the Dutch subculture across Canada showed many similarities with earlier emigration to the United States. From the perspective of the church there was intensive cross-border traffic between Dutch Calvinist immigrants in both countries. On the opposite side the emigration culture of the Reformed and Catholics in Canada was less dynamic. The Calvinist Gereformeerde Emigratie Vereeniging, chiefly led by the *gereformeerden*, was the only institution that was strongly orientated towards Canada and promoted emigration to that country. In contrast, the *hervormden* and *katholieken* did little to encourage the trek abroad.

The third chapter investigates the necessary general conditions for a revival of Dutch overseas migration between 1947 and 1963. On the basis of important push and pull factors it analyzes how a dynamic emigration culture developed in the Netherlands. Significant push factors after World War II were the economic low conjuncture, the extensive housing shortage, political stress, and a series of social and psychological motives. However, push factors alone are insufficient to induce people to emigrate. Foreign countries have to exert attraction, so people actually get interested in emigration. These so-called pull factors are discussed in the second part of the chapter. Subsequently, the most striking facets of the active Dutch

emigration policy – followed by the government between 1949 and 1961 – are outlined.

Chapter 4 elucidates religious opinion forming about emigration and North America, as one of the building blocks of an emigration culture, within the most important Dutch churches and ideological groups. Successively the following Dutch denominations are discussed in this chapter: the Rooms-Katholieke Kerk, the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, the Gereformeerde Kerken (*vrijgemaakt*), the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken, the Gereformeerde Gemeenten and non-church members (socialists, communists and liberals). This chapter also examines how opinion leaders of these groups propagated or “condemned” the emigration of their flock to North America.

The organizational aspects of the overseas trek, the religious factors that aided or hampered the organizational process, and the final results of the opinion forming and organizational strength or weakness (leaving or staying at home), are the central topics of chapter 5. The first part of this chapter throws light on the actors who took the initiative for organization forming (churches, social organizations or individuals) and the pace and the actual effectiveness of these forms of organization. The second part of the chapter discusses how opinion forming – as dealt with in chapter 4 – and organization influenced the decision to leave the country. This is done from a regional perspective, by comparing the overseas migration from the Dutch province of Zeeland (where the pietistic Calvinists had a relatively large share in the population) with the journey from Drenthe (where the Neo-calvinists were dominant). In these provinces, respectively, 20 and 16 percent of the population was *gereformeerd*, but with regard to the preparedness to emigrate remarkable differences emerged between the different Calvinist blood groups. It is argued that religious features offer an explanation for the diverging emigration cultures of both groups.

Chapter 6 highlights the meaning of religion during the passage to North America. After some introductory remarks on the developments in the transport sector, religious guidance aboard emigration ships is discussed, as well as recreational and educational activities organized by shipping companies, the government and emigration organizations. One argument made is that the rise of air traffic on the transatlantic route, especially since the mid-fifties, not only contributed to a decline in the religious care offered for emigrants in transit, but also influenced the reception of newcomers by their new churches.

Chapter 7 analyzes how churches in the Netherlands and in the United States continued to exert influence on the Dutch immigrant churches in North America, especially in Canada. The immigrant churches tried to maintain influence on the newcomers by utilizing two kinds of staff: home missionaries and fieldmen. Their tasks and the results of their fieldwork are discussed at length.

The final chapter answers the question of how Christian emigration cultures in North America survived. Attention will be paid to the integration of the newcomers in North America in the receiving churches, on the level of language and via the Dutch subculture. Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on the continuing interaction between the Netherlands and North America as a result of emigration.

Finally this chapter analyzes which qualitative and quantitative effects overseas migration had for the religious culture in the sending country, specifically the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland and the Antirevolutionaire Partij (Antirevolutionary Party).

The epilogue reflects on the decline of Dutch overseas migration in the last five decades, the revival of the trek abroad in the last decade and the most important causes of these developments. By doing this, it addresses the question of whether Christian emigration cultures persist, or whether the existence of a dynamic emigration culture in the period 1947–1963 was a unique phenomenon.

### **Key conclusions**

The use of the concept of “emigration culture” in this dissertation has led to four important general conclusions about the relationship between religion, emigration and integration from the seventeenth to the twentieth century.

First, world view and opinions about the church – both closely connected to theological notions – continuously influenced opinion forming and the level of institutional completeness. A second aspect that shaped emigration cultures was the extent of homogeneity of religious groups, which facilitated or impeded group mobilisation and could lead to the birth or continuation of an emigration tradition. In the third place it appears – especially after World War II – that the contemporary self-image, which was optimistic or pessimistic about the own church and country, influenced the strength of an emigration culture. Finally, religion also directed settlement and integration, and over the long term the continuity or discontinuity of an emigration culture. It is, in short, predominantly patterns of continuity that catch the eye.

This dissertation has, besides the idea of continuity, also reached specific conclusions regarding the overseas emigration of Dutch Christians. In distinct periods, the general conditions of emigration differed for a variety of reasons, such as the economic context, means of transport, the extent of government interference, and internal and external political events. Until the mid-nineteenth century these factors hindered the birth of an emigration culture aimed at America. From 1846 this changed through a massive Dutch exodus to the United States, by which the Netherlands turned from an immigration country into an emigration country. This offered the conditions for the growth of a strong emigration culture, above all among the Seceders who settled themselves in the United States under the management of Albertus van Raalte and Hendrik Scholte, and, since the 1880s, also in and around the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. The spokesmen of both groups actively supported their flock and regulated and promoted emigration, more than Catholic or Reformed leaders did. An important ideological impetus for the growth of a dynamic emigration culture in Calvinist circles was the positive Neocalvinistic attitude towards culture. The Reformed and Catholics lacked a comparable cultural strategy that could have stimulated emigration.

Dutch emigration to Canada in the era of 1893 to 1940 in many respects displayed the same patterns as the trek towards the United States. For Dutchmen who were eager to emigrate during the twenties and thirties, Canada offered an alternative to the United States, because the latter had imposed restrictive quotas on immigration. Important for the continuity of the emigration culture in Calvinist circles was the organizational embedding of Dutch overseas migration, through the founding of the Holland Reformed Immigrant Aid Society (1926) in Canada and the Gereformeerde Emigratie Vereeniging (1927) in the Netherlands. In contrast to the Catholic and Reformed emigration institutions, these organizations were characterized by a positive vision of Canada and developed many activities. Particularly important were – also with regard to the period after World War II – continuous leadership, firm contacts with North America and the experience of the duumvirate Taeke Cnossen and Abraham Warnaar from the Christelijke Emigratie Centrale. Furthermore, Calvinists in Canada – opposed to the Catholics and Reformed – profited from the organizational support of the American branch of the Christian Reformed Church and its home missionaries from the United States, who supported them in building up a subculture. In this way, during the interwar period, the foundation was laid for a dynamic emigration culture in the first decades after World War II.

In the era of 1947 to 1963 the Netherlands saw the development of a broad, active and explicit national emigration culture, which was mainly aimed at overseas countries such as Canada, Australia and the United States. Important push factors were poor economic conditions, which were already present in the thirties and continued after World War II, the large housing shortage and, finally, a factor that has been underestimated in existing historiography, the continuing threat of a third world war. The Second World War and the decolonization of the Dutch Indies caused widespread feelings of displacement and slowly detached many Dutchmen from their homeland. The opportunities in North America contrasted sharply with the bleak prospects in the Netherlands. In addition to these factors, the active emigration policy of the Dutch administration provided an important boost to the growth of a strong emigration culture.

General conditions give only superficial explanation for the postwar emigration wave from the Netherlands: there was extensive differentiation regarding opinion forming and organization between Christian groups. One important conclusion of this dissertation is that, with regard to the first postwar decades, one could not speak of '*the* gereformeerde emigrants' (as the *sum* of Calvinists from different denominations) anymore, because the variations between the emigration culture within the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland on the one hand, and those within the smaller Calvinist denominations on the other hand, were too obvious. This resulted – as comparative research on the emigration from Zeeland and Drenthe demonstrates – in an overrepresentation of Neocalvinists in the emigration wave to North America. The most likely explanation seems to be an accumulation process, whereby the separate parts do not offer a comprehensive explanation, but only a broad overview of the situation. Four elements, discussed in chapter 4 and 5, make clear why the emigration culture within the Gereformeerde

Kerken in Nederland was so dynamic: the international vision on culture of these Calvinists, the historical situation of their church after World War II, the continuity of their emigration culture and, finally, their relatively high cultural homogeneity. The driving force behind the vital emigration culture of the *gereformeerden* was, in the first place, their international cultural strategy, based on the theology of Neocalvinism. After 1900 this strategy shaped the way its church members thought about culture. Because of its optimism and broad world view this strategy led to a greater appreciation of emigration and North America. Other Calvinist denominations, as well as the Rooms-Katholieke Kerk and the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, had a historically-based cultural vision that was more defensive. Concerning this point, good examples are the Gereformeerde Kerken (*vrijgemaakt*), the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken and the Gereformeerde Gemeenten, where the antithesis and the principle of a pure church stood far more central. Within these churches this resulted in a cautious judgement about emigration.

A second element is the lack of national and religious idealism in the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland immediately after World War II. On that level the denomination distinguished from the Rooms-Katholieke Kerk, the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerken (*vrijgemaakt*), which were aimed at rechristianization, or at least influencing the Dutch nation. Public opinion in the Gereformeerde Kerken projected church idealism on North America. Neocalvinist foremen said that the future of Calvinism lay there. This view of North America encouraged emigration and led to a relatively high share of *gereformeerden* in the trek overseas. Idealism does not offer sufficient explanation, because the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken and the Gereformeerde Gemeenten were also characterized by a relatively weak sense of national idealism, but, in contrast, the willingness to emigrate in those churches was limited.

The high degree of organizational continuity, secured in the Netherlands by the Christelijke Emigratie Centrale and in North America by the presence of immigrant churches, is a third way in which the Calvinist emigration culture differed from that of other religious groups. An examination of the organization of overseas migration shows that the *gereformeerden* were distinguished more or less from other religious groups in terms of continuity, speed and dispersal. Moreover, World War II resulted in only a temporary interruption of the activities of the Christelijke Emigratie Centrale. After World War II this institution organized itself quickly, profiting from – among others – managerial continuity and a year-long experience. The support from the Christian Reformed Church in North America – where earlier generations of immigrants played an intervening role – started almost immediately after World War II. Because of a lack of sister churches, effective institutions like the CEC or reverends in North America, immigrants of the Gereformeerde Kerken (*vrijgemaakt*) and the Gereformeerde Gemeenten could count on less support.

Finally, the lack of cultural diversity among the Calvinists, besides contributing to opinion forming, had a catalyzing effect on the emigration culture. More than, for instance, the *hervormden* or the *christelijk-gereformeerden*, the members of

the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland were a homogeneous group. They read mainly the same periodicals and newspapers, in which emigration was discussed in positive terms.

The moment of departure also had religious meaning. The spiritual guidance on emigration ships was intensive and generally had a binding effect. During the 1950s, aboard emigration ships only the *vrijgemaakte-gereformeerden* (Reformed Liberated) and Catholics organized their own exclusive religious services, separate from other Christians. Important for the reinforcement of the emigration culture in the Netherlands were the activities of a ship's chaplains, especially from the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. In their own regions and congregations they fostered enthusiasm for North America in general and specifically for emigration to that continent. An important conclusion – at present scholars have only focused on emigration by ship – is that the growth of emigration by air after World War II led to a religious caesura. The reduced travel time to North America hampered religious care. Furthermore, it appeared that it was difficult for the receiving churches to prevent immigrants from migrating to other congregations: airplanes arrived more often than emigration ships and moored in different harbors in North America.

Besides the chaplains on the ships to North America, fieldmen and home missionaries were elemental for the continuity and consolidation of the emigration culture. This was most especially the case within the Christian Reformed Church. The effectiveness of the fieldmen of the Christian Reformed Church lay in the publicity about and soliciting character of their activities. This reinforced the Calvinist emigration culture in the Netherlands and relieved the consistories and ministers in Canada. Furthermore, the presence of fieldmen determined partly the choice of the immigrants for a residence. In these respects the fieldmen were indispensable for the immigrant churches. However, with regard to maintaining their fellow believers within the church, their activities were only slightly successful. Nor did the home missionaries succeed who were responsible for founding and supporting the new immigrant churches.

A key conclusion is that a significant number of Calvinists used the opportunity of their departure to say goodbye to the church and theological struggles in, foremost, the Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland. This is an important explanation for the fact that almost half of the *gereformeerde* immigrants in Canada around 1960 had become a member of a Canadian denomination. This conclusion stands in contrast to the success story painted by existing historiography, which has been created mainly by members of the Christian Reformed Church.

In North America Dutch immigrants used not only strategies of maintenance, but also of integration. On a religious level the strategy of preservation was prevalent, with a central place for the church and around it, in circles, the schools, and social institutions. The Christian Reformed Church in Canada was, compared to the Reformed Church in America, the Roman Catholic Church and the smaller Calvinist immigrant churches, most active. Many immigrant churches urged their members to learn English quickly, but not in the same pace and to the same extent: in the Roman Catholic Church relatively quick, in the Netherlands Reformed

Congregations (in Canada) slower. Furthermore, the churches played a role in stimulating social and economic integration in North American society. After the postwar immigration, contacts between acquaintances and fellow believers in the Netherlands and the country of arrival played a role for decades, for instance through the exchange of letters, periodicals, traveling, economic contacts, tourism and through religious interaction.

For the religious cultures in the Netherlands the overseas trek meant a harm in a quantitative sense. Besides a loss of reverends because of calls from foreign churches, smaller rural churches – particularly the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Northern provinces – had to deal with a considerable decline of members, which meant a threat to their continuity. For the Antirevolutionaire Partij, postwar emigration caused an estimated drop of 10.000 votes. However, this decline is less dramatic when one realizes that the loss of votes to the so-called “Doorbraak” (“Breakthrough”) was much larger. Finally, it is far from clear that emigration led to a deterioration of quality for the churches in the Netherlands, because it was not only dedicated or concerned members that crossed the Atlantic Ocean.

This thesis has made clear that religious factors during the Dutch emigration wave between 1947 and 1963 penetrated the whole culture of emigration. This occurred in different modes and was a process which the people involved was mostly unaware of. Without realizing it, the Calvinist, Catholic and Reformed emigrants were part of various emigration cultures, which had come into existence since the nineteenth century and showed most continuity until the 1960s.

The dynamic emigration culture in Calvinist circles between roughly 1850 and 1960 was a unique phenomenon, which has disappeared almost completely in the second half of the twentieth century because of processes of individualization and *ontzuiling* (“depillarization”). However, this does not mean that the method presented in this dissertation would not be useable for research on other periods or themes. The concept of emigration culture allows us to analyze and understand emigration processes over the long term, and helps to distinguish between culture and religion. Thus, this method could not only encourage sociologists, demographists and anthropologists applying a more historical dimension to their research, but it could also be utilized for research on, for instance, Muslim migrants.

# Over de auteur

Enne Koops werd op 8 november 1978 geboren in Assen. Hij voltooide het gymnasium aan het Gomarus College te Groningen en studeerde vervolgens Nieuwste Geschiedenis aan de Rijksuniversiteit in diezelfde plaats. Tijdens zijn studie liep hij stage bij het Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie in Amsterdam, waar hij zich bezighield met de relatie tussen de moderne cultuur en de gereformeerde wereld van 1900 tot 1940. Zijn doctoraalscriptie uit 2003 – “De leeuw heeft gebruld”. Het gereformeerde gedachtegoed over de moderne cultuur voor en tijdens de Eerste Wereldoorlog (1911-1918) – vormde een verdieping van deze NIOD-stage.

In 2005 begon Koops aan een promotieonderzoek over de emigratie van gereformeerden, hervormden en katholieken naar Noord-Amerika (1947-1963), via het Roosevelt Study Center in Middelburg en de Theologische Universiteit (Broederweg) in Kampen. Dit boek is het resultaat van dat onderzoek. In deze periode publiceerde Koops artikelen over emigratie in diverse tijdschriften – zoals *Nehalennia*, *Leidschrift*, *Waardeel* en *Groniek* – en in een aantal bundels.

Na de afronding van zijn dissertatie werkte de auteur op projectbasis bij de gemeente Zwartewaterland in Hasselt, bij Van Dijk Educatie in Kampen en het Roosevelt Study Center in Middelburg. Momenteel is Koops projectcoördinator digitalisering bij het Roosevelt Study Center, web- en beeldredacteur voor het historische tijdschrift *Transparant* ([www.christenhistorici.nl](http://www.christenhistorici.nl)), freelance tekstcorrector en museumrecensent voor Geschiedenis Beleven ([www.geschiedenisbeleven.nl](http://www.geschiedenisbeleven.nl)). Met enige regelmaat houdt hij een eigen weblog bij ([www.historicus.weblog.nl](http://www.historicus.weblog.nl)).

De auteur is gehuwd met Annemiek Bouwsma. Samen hebben ze twee kinderen gekregen.