TENSIONS WITHIN INTERNATIONAL CALVINISM:
THE DEBATE ON THE ATONEMENT AT THE SYNOD OF DORT, 1618-1619

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES

OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

William Robert Godfrey

May 1974

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Lewis W. Spitz

(Principal Adviser)

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Wilhelm Pauck

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Carolyn C. Lougee

Approved for the University Committee on Graduate Studies:

Dean of Graduate Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

INTRODUCTION

Historians of the Reformation have had a vital interest in Calvinism in the central decades of the sixteenth century. They have investigated Calvinism as a movement with broad political, social, and cultural consequences as well as religious, theological, and ecclesiastical ones. On the other hand, until recently, historians have tended to regard Calvinism in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries merely as a movement in decline. With the exception of England, where a hybrid form of Calvinism remained active, Calvinism was seen as an increasingly reactionary movement whose waning energies were devoted to clarifying and codifying the fine points of theology. Historians of the seventeenth century concentrated upon movements that were 'waves of the future': the rise of absolutism and nationalism, and the development of modern science and philosophy. The 'arid scholasticism' of Reformed (or Lutheran) orthodoxy generated little historical interest or enthusiasm.

Recently scholars have demonstrated renewed interest in the development of Protestant orthodoxy and have realized that this orthodoxy was very different from A. C. McGiffert's characterization of it as a movement where "the importance

of a particular doctrine came to depend upon its place in the system rather than upon its practical relation to life."[1] Scholars such as Robert Scharlemann, Robert Preus, J. A. O. Preus, Eugene F. Klug and others for Lutheran orthodoxy[2] and Brian Armstrong, John Bray, Otto Gruendler, Walter Kickel, Klaus Sturm and others for Reformed orthodoxy[3] have worked to show the significance of this theological movement as an elaboration of Reformation themes. Otto Weber has rightly observed: "Die orthodoxe Dogmatik ist aus der reformatorischen

---

[1] A. C. McGiffert, Protestant Thought Before Kant (New York, 1962) (first edition 1911), p. 145, cited in Robert P. Scharlemann, Thomas Aquinas and John Gerhard (New Haven, 1964), p. 7.

[2] Scharlemann, op. cit.

Robert D. Preus, The Inspiration of Scripture: a study of seventeenth century Lutheran dogmaticians, second edition (Edinburgh, 1957).

_____, The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism (St. Louis, 1970).

Martin Chemnitz, The Two Natures of Christ, translated by J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis, 1970).

Eugene F. Klug, From Luther to Chemnitz; on Scripture and the Word (Grand Rapids, 1971).

Symposium on Seventeenth Century Lutheranism (St. Louis, 1962).

[3] Brian G. Armstrong, Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy (Madison, 1969),

John S. Bray, Theodore Beza's Doctrine of Predestination, Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1971.

Otto Gruendler, Die Gotteslehre Girolami Zanchis und ihre Bedeutung fuer seine Lehre von der Praedestination (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1965).

Walter Kickel, Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Theodor Beza (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1967).

Klaus Sturm, Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermiglis waehrend seines ersten Aufenthalts in Strassburg 1541-1547 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1971).

hervorgewachsen . . .,"[4] because

> die Reformation wurde ihrerseits dogmatisch. . . . Jedoch waere nichts verkehrter, als wenn wir die Dogmatik der Orthodoxie lediglich als protestantischen Aristotelismus verstehen wollten. Man wuerde damit ihre Intention verfehlen. Diese ging naemlich darauf, den inzwischen zum ueberlieferten Erbe gewordenen Ansatz der Reformation zu wahren und alles Denken um ihn zu ordnen.[5]

At least three competing orthodoxies developed in Europe. "Die Reformation war in eine neue, aber in eine gegensaetzliche Dogmenbildung ausgemuendet: Tridentium, Konkordienformel und (nur teilweise vergleichbar:) Dordrechter Canones markieren die Endepunkte. Die Kirche ist 'konfessionell' geworden."[6] These orthodoxies, however, mark more than just a stage in the history of theology. They had a profound impact on the whole of European life. This confessionalism not only broke definitively the universality of the Church as an institution, but also divided the Protestant cause.

When the Synod of Dort convened in November, 1618, it was not clear to contemporaries, as it is to modern historians, that the territorial configuration of the different confessions was largely fixed. The Reformed community

---

[4] Otto Weber, Grundlagen der Dogmatik (Neukirchen, 1955), I, 128.

[5] Ibid., p. 129.

[6] Ibid., p. 130.

of Europe continued to hope fervently for an expansion of Protestantism into the Roman Catholic areas of Europe and for a reconciliation with Lutherans that would create a united Protestant front in Europe. The period 1600-1620 seemed to promise much for the future of Calvinism. James I, who prided himself on being a Reformed king and a theologian, had replaced the politique Queen Elizabeth. The French Huguenots had secured their right to survive and would perhaps again flourish. The most prestigious Electorate of the Empire, the Electorate Palatine, was held by a militant Calvinist. Jean Diodati, professor of theology at Geneva, had been invited to preach the Gospel in Venice. The Elector of Brandenburg and the Landgrave of Hesse had become Calvinists, and Prince Maurice of Orange had come to the aid of orthodox Calvinism in the Netherlands. The future of Calvinism seemed bright if its unity and the 'truth of the Gospel'--its own clear orthodoxy--could be maintained and strengthened.

This study is concerned with the apogee of this early seventeenth-century Calvinism: The National Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church which met at Dordrecht, Holland, 1618-1619. This assembly, more commonly known as the Synod of Dort, gathered to confront what Walter Rex has called "the greatest crisis in dogma since the age of the first reformers."[7] The Synod faced a severe attack on the veracity

---

[7]Walter Rex, Essays on Pierre Bayle and Religious

of received Calvinist orthodoxy and, in deflecting this attack, found its own unity critically tested. The Canons of Dort, a widely accepted and revered statement on crucial points of Reformed dogma, were the result of this conflict.

Brian Armstrong has noted[8] how strange it is that the history of this great Synod has not been exhaustively studied. No intellectual history has been written of the historical context from which and to which the Canons of Dort spoke. Most historians, except the Dutch, have been content simply to generalize that the Canons were an expression of strict and rigid Calvinist scholasticism.

Certain aspects of the history of the Synod have been studied.[9] For example, the Arminians or Remonstrants,

---

Controversy (The Hague, 1965), p. 80.

[8]Armstrong, op. cit., p. xvii.

[9]Most of the important scholarly work on the Synod of Dort was done in the early part of this century or before. For full bibliographies on this work, see:

H. H. Kuyper, De Post-Acta of Nahandelingen van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht in 1618 en 1619 Gehouden (Amsterdam, 1899).

Hendrik Kaajan, De Pro-Acta der Dortsche Synode in 1618 (Rotterdam, 1918).

_____, De Groote Synode van Dordrecht in 1618-1619 (Amsterdam, 1918).

J. Reitsma, Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederlanden, vierde, herziene druk, besorgd door J. Lindeboom (Utrecht, 1933).

For more recent bibliography, see:

Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden, Deel VI, "De Tachtigjarige Oorlog, 1609-1648," onder redactie van J. A. Van Houtte, J. F. Niermeyer, J. Presser, J. Romein, H. van Werveke (Utrecht, 1953).

whose doctrine was judged at the Synod, have been of interest as a link between Dutch Renaissance humanism and the Enlightenment. A second area of interest has been the Canons themselves as a theological document. Since the Canons still govern several Reformed Churches, they are studied by theologians as an ecclesiastical and theological standard.

A third aspect--precisely the area to which Armstrong alluded--remains relatively uninvestigated. Little has been written on the variety of opinions among the members of the Synod--the orthodox Calvinists--and the tensions expressed among them as they worked to formulate the Canons. These real and important disagreements were so well known that they warranted a word in the "Praefatio, ad Reformatas Christi Ecclesias" of the Acta Synodi:

> It is not to be doubted, but that the prudent reader will discover in these judgments, the highest and most admirable agreement. . . . If perhaps in less matters a certain diversity appear; even this will be an argument, that a due liberty of prophesying and judging flourished, in this venerable convention; but that all, notwithstanding, by concording opinions, agreed in the doctrine expressed in the canons of this Synod.[10]

Jan den Tex, Oldenbarnevelt (Haarlem, 4 Deele, 1960-1970).

[10]Acta Synodi Nationalis, In nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi, Authoritate D.D. Ordinum Generalium Foederati Belgii Provinciarum, Dordrechti habitae Anno MDCXVIII et

One such tension has been admirably studied by Klaas Dijk in his work, De Strijd over Infra- en Supralapsarisme.[11] He investigated the debate among the Orthodox on the question of how the historical event of man's fall into sin is related to the eternal decree of predestination. The precise issue was whether the decree of the Fall preceded the decree of election and reprobation (Infralapsarianism) or succeeded it (Supralapsarianism). The issue was significant because the Supralapsarians maintained that only their position adequately defended the omniscience and omnipotence of God and only their approach to theology had a properly teleological methodology. The Infralapsarians, on the other hand, argued that only their position adequately defended the righteousness of God and protected Reformed theology from the charge that it made God the author of sin.

Another tension at the Synod, which has never been investigated, was much more heatedly debated and provided a greater threat to the 'admirable agreement' of the Orthodox. The disagreement over the extent of Christ's atonement disrupted the Synod and nearly destroyed the Calvinist consensus.

MDCXIX, Dordrechti, Typis Isaaci Ioannidis Canini, 1620, from the "Praefatio, ad Reformatas Christi Ecclesias," p. (xxxviii). This translation is from Thomas Scott, The Articles of the Synod of Dort . . . (Utica, 1831), p. 75.

[11] Klaas Dijk, De Strijd over Infra- en Supralapsarisme in de Gereformeerde Kerken van Nederland (Kampen, 1912).

This debate was whether Christ, in his redeeming death, intended to provide salvation for the elect alone, or whether his death was intended in some sense for all men. The aim of this study will be to clarify the nature of the disagreement on the extent of Christ's atonement, and to trace the historical factors that surrounded the Synod, motivated the members, and influenced the opposing positions. Such a narrowly focused investigation will illuminate broader issues and displace the stereotype description of early seventeenth-century Calvinism as a rigid, monolithic movement. Further, this inquiry will contribute to an understanding of the diversity and moderation, indeed, the "limited spirit of compromise"[12] that existed at Dort. Finally, the investigation will demonstrate that the theologians at the Synod were concerned about the doctrines debated precisely because they had such an important "practical relation to life."

The first of the five chapters in this study traces the political and ecclesiastical developments in the United Provinces that necessitated the calling of the Synod and made it an international concern. The second chapter investigates the history of Christian thought on the extent of the atonement as that thought serves as the background

---

[12] Rex, op. cit., p. 87.

for the debate at the Synod. The third chapter presents an overview of the work of the Synod and details the growing tension on the question of the death of Christ. The fourth chapter examines the exact nature of the theological differences among the Orthodox delegates as they are revealed in their Judicia and supplementary documents. The fifth and final chapter examines the historical factors that motivated the delegates to adopt and defend so passionately their respective understandings of the extent of the atonement, and that eventually led them to a compromise.

CHAPTER ONE

POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSY IN THE UNITED PROVINCES TO 1618

A great convulsion seized the Dutch state and church in 1618. The state was shaken when Jan van Oldenbarnevelt, the man who had directed Dutch statecraft for over thirty years, was arrested and finally executed in 1619. His close associates were either imprisoned or exiled, and the real power of government passed to Maurice, Prince of Orange, the instigator of the coup d'etat. Years of trouble in the church were climaxed by the calling of a national synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, the first national synod to meet in over thirty years. The Synod roundly condemned the Arminian theology taught by a minority of the clergy and led to their expulsion from the church.

This convulsion resulted from congenital weaknesses in the Dutch state and church. These central institutions, born in the midst of a desperate struggle with Spain, developed out of the needs of the moment rather than from carefully balanced constitutional ideas. These pragmatic forms contained many tensions and ambiguities which were to plague the Netherlands continually.

This Dutch upheaval in 1618 was precipitated by a long theological struggle within the church over the teachings of Jacobus Arminius. This theological struggle polarized Dutch society, clearly revealing the congenital lines of tension within Dutch institutions. In 1617 Dudley Carleton, the English ambassador to the Netherlands, foresaw the convulsion accurately: "The original cause of this disorder is easily discovered to be Arminianism: the effects will be faction in the state, and schism in the church. . . ."[1]

The first chapter of this study is an overview of the origins of tensions within the Dutch state and church and will trace the development of the theological struggle which polarized Dutch society. These political and ecclesiastical developments and the intellectual climate which they created among the Calvinists in the Netherlands are a necessary background to an understanding of the Synod of Dort.[2]

---

[1]Dudley Carleton, Letters from and to Sir Dudley Carleton, Knt. during His Embassy in Holland from January 1615/6, to December 1620, edited by P. York (London, 1757), p. 88.

[2]The literature in Dutch on this foundational period in Dutch history is almost limitless. The basic works that have been most useful for this study are:

Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden, edited by J. A. Van Houtte, J. F. Niermeyer, J. Presser, J. Romein, H. Van Werveke: Volume 4: "De bourgondisch Hapsburgse monarchie, 1477-1567" (Utrecht, 1952); Volume 5: "De

The Dutch State to 1603

In the middle of the sixteenth century the Low Countries were seventeen separate provinces ruled by a common sovereign, Charles V. Charles was the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and the King of Spain, but neither of these titles had conferred on him the sovereignty of the

---

tachtigjarige Oorlog, 1567-1609" (Utrecht, 1952); Volume 6: "De tachtigjarige Oorlog, 1609-1648" (Utrecht, 1953).

J. Reitsma, Geschiedenis van de Hervoming en de Hervormede Kerk der Nederlanden, fourth edition, edited by J. Lindeboom (Utrecht, 1933).

Jan den Tex, Oldenbarnevelt, four volumes (Haarlem, 1960-1970).

Cornelius van der Woude, Sibrandus Lubbertus; Leven en Werken, in het bijzonder naar zijn correspondentie (Kampen, 1963).

G. P. Van Itterzon, Franiscus Gomarus ('s-Gravenhage, 1930).

P. J. Wijminga, Festus Hommius (Leiden, 1899).

There are also a number of valuable works in English on this period:

Carl Bangs: Arminius: A Study in the Dutch Reformation (Nashville, 1971).

Petrus Johannes Blok, A History of the People of the Netherlands, Volume 3, "The War with Spain," translated by Ruth Putnam (New York, 1900).

Peter Y. DeJong, Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in commemoration of the great Synod of Dort, 1618-1619 (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1968).

Pieter Geyl, The Revolt of the Netherlands (1555-1609), translated by S. T. Bindoff (London, 1932).

Pieter Geyl, The Netherlands Divided (1609-1648), translated by S. T. Bindoff (London, 1936).

A. W. Harrison, The Beginnings of Arminianism to the Synod of Dort (London, 1926).

John Lothrop Motley, The Rise of the Dutch Republic, three volumes (New York, 1855).

John Lothrop Motley, The History of the United Netherlands, four volumes (New York, 1866-1868).

C. V. Wedgwood, William the Silent (New York, 1968).

Charles Wilson, Queen Elizabeth and the Revolt of the Netherlands (London, 1970).

Netherlands. These possessions had been either inherited from his Burgundian forebears or conquered by his own force of arms. He was sovereign as duke or count of each province.

Charles was a popular ruler. He had been born and raised in the Netherlands, and he understood the people and their institutions. The Dutch trusted Charles as one of their own. Even his passionate persecution of heretics and increased taxation did not alienate popular affections.

In 1555 age and fatigue caused Charles to abdicate. His son became King Philip II of Spain and sovereign of the Low Countries. While Philip had been born in the Netherlands, he was raised at court in Spain. He spoke only Spanish and was unfamiliar with the customs and ancient privileges of his Dutch subjects.

Philip's policies in the Netherlands soon alienated the nobility who felt that he ignored their traditional rights. The nobility were insulted because Philip passed over them in his choices for governor of the provinces. They were threatened by his proposal to reform the ecclesiastical jurisdictions which they had long used to provide for younger sons. The common people were embittered by the increasingly heavy taxation and Philip's more rigorous religious persecution. By the early 1560s a small but militant band of Dutch Calvinists began to urge the people

to throw off the Spanish yoke. In but a few years Philip had convinced many parts of Dutch society that he was a foreign oppressor.

The first stirrings of rebellion began in 1566 when widespread iconoclasm throughout the Low Countries signaled growing dissatisfaction with Philip's persecution. In that same year the lesser nobility entered into a league calling upon Philip to restore ancient privileges and to end the religious oppression. These noblemen were dubbed "beggars" by one of Philip's arrogant advisors and from that time the rebels proudly bore the name.

In response to these developments Philip sent the Duke of Alva with Spanish troops in 1567 to quell the opposition to his policies. Fighting broke out in 1568 and Alva was victorious in this first skirmish. In 1572, however, the revolt began in earnest. The Sea Beggars captured the ports of Brill and Flushing. William of Orange, the head of the most prestigious Dutch noble family and the leader of the insurgents in 1568, had hoped to gather money and support for the revolt before another campaign. The Sea Beggars' premature capture of the ports, however, forced William into immediate action.

William's goals for the revolt were clear. He wanted Philip to restore the ancient privileges of the nobility and to permit the free, private exercise of religion.

William's methods were equally clear. He wanted to create a united front of all the Dutch nobility to fight the Spanish troops until Philip was forced to grant their demands. In order to organize the nobility as a cohesive force, he realized that the revolt had to be a political and not a religious movement. This meant that he must not allow the Calvinists, who were the most militant and devoted supporters of the rebellion,[3] to turn the war into a Protestant crusade. If the revolt became a holy war, the nobility who were still largely Roman Catholic would be quickly alienated.

The first concern that William confronted was the problem of allies, a problem that was to haunt the Dutch throughout their revolt. Moral support for the revolt was readily available because Spain had few real friends among the nations of Europe. Spain, however, was feared as well as hated, and most nations felt that it was only a matter of time until Spain crushed the Dutch. Potential allies would happily look on while the Dutch attracted all of Spain's energies and attention, but they did not want to be too closely involved when the inevitable happened.

As early as 1567 William looked to Germany for aid. His family was German, ruling Nassau-Dillenburg, and his

---

[3]Wedgwood, op. cit., pp. 110-111.

wife, Anne, belonged to the family of the Elector of Saxony. William hoped that the German Protestant princes would be willing to oppose the Hapsburgs. The German princes, however, would only provide aid on the basis of a union grounded in the Augsburg Confession, a condition which was unacceptable to William's Calvinist and Roman Catholic supporters.[4] The only concession granted to William was the right to recruit mercenaries in Germany.

William turned next to France where his brother Louis was representing the rebel cause and playing upon the old French hatred of Spain. In 1572 events in France seemed to take a fortuitous turn for the Dutch. Admiral Gaspard Coligny, the Huguenot leader, was becoming more influential with the young King Charles IX and Coligny received permission to raise an army to aid the Dutch. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre intervened, however, to end William's hope of massive French aid and a quick end to the revolt.

Only one potential ally, England, remained. Elizabeth was quick with advice and verbal encouragement, but very slow with financial and military aid. She did not formally commit herself to the Dutch until the Treaty of Nonsuch was signed on August 10, 1585. By then William had died at an assassin's hand, the revolt had taken on a

---

[4] Ibid., p. 98.

religious nature alienating the Roman Catholic nobility, and William's dream of holding all seventeen provinces together for common action and victorious action had dissolved.

Beyond the search for allies and behind the quest for Dutch unity, another concern emerged from the revolt: the problem of sovereignty. Philip was clearly the legitimate sovereign of the Netherlands, and for years the revolt labored under the fiction that it was not directed against him but against his Spanish advisors. The Dutch made an effort to legitimize this contention and to broaden support for the revolt by seeking a governor of Burgundian blood for the provinces. This title was conferred on Archduke Matthias of Austria in 1578 and was then transferred to Duke Francis of Anjou in 1579.[5] These governors, however, brought only further confusion to the rebel leadership without bringing any real help.

As the revolt lengthened, this fiction became untenable. Finally on July 26, 1581 the States General formally abjured Philip as their sovereign, and William was temporarily made the head of state. He refused the offer of permanent sovereignty, however, because he believed the Dutch needed a sovereign who could provide real protection from Philip's military power. Dutch diplomats

---

[5] Ibid., pp. 186, 199.

approached Elizabeth of England several times, but she consistently refused their offer. When Elizabeth's marriage to Anjou seemed imminent in the early 1580s, the Dutch conferred sovereignty upon Anjou. The marriage, however, never occurred and Anjou died in 1584, leaving the Dutch without a sovereign again.

When Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, came to the Netherlands to lead the English troops promised under the Treaty of Nonsuch, he was made Governor-General, and the Dutch even considered conferring the sovereignty on him. Elizabeth was not at all flattered by this honor for her favorite and instead flew into a jealous rage. The Dutch quickly abandoned their interest in Leicester.

Leicester's partisan tendencies and chaotic leadership were the last step in convincing the Dutch that a foreign sovereign was not the solution to their problems. The sovereignty devolved by default on the States General.

The States General of the United Provinces had been created in 1579 when seven provinces (Holland, Zealand, Utrecht, Friesland, Gelderland, Overijssel, and Groningen) entered into the Union of Utrecht. The Union was basically a loose confederation knit together by a commitment to continue the revolt against Spain. Each province insisted on maintaining its autonomy and at the States General all questions of importance were decided by a unanimous vote

of all the provinces. The delegates to the States General were not free to vote as they wished, but they were bound by the instructions they received from the States of their own province.

The States General was hardly suited to perform the executive functions of government. In normal circumstances executive duties would have passed to the Council of State, which had been the center of power before William's death in 1584. The Treaty of Nonsuch, however, required that two Englishmen be seated on the Council, and as Dutch disillusionment with the English "aid" grew, the powers of the Council declined. By 1590 all the Council's executive powers had been transferred to the States General,[6] which remained in permanent session after 1593 to exercise its new authority.

Only the strong leadership of Jan van Oldenbarnevelt in the States General and the continuing external pressure of the war with Spain enabled this unwieldy political system to prove workable. Oldenbarnevelt, who had been a close associate of William of Orange, had become Advocate of Holland in March, 1586. As Advocate, he represented the patrician oligarchs of Holland, the most prominent province, in the States General. Holland in the late sixteenth and

---

[6]Blok, op. cit., p. 238.

early seventeenth centuries dominated the Union as the most densely populated, the most secure militarily, and the wealthiest of the provinces. Oldenbarnevelt's leadership and Holland's influence were able to neutralize the potential tensions between provincial concerns and the interests of the central government at least temporarily.

Another significant ambiguity that emerged when the sovereignty passed to the States General and the United Provinces became a de facto republic was the position of the stadtholder. The office of stadtholder was a remnant of Burgundian times, when the stadtholder had served as the governor of a province in the absence of the ruler. Under the Hapsburgs the governorship was no longer vested in the stadtholder. His function became advisory and his title honorary. Charles V had great respect for William of Orange, and the stadtholderships of various provinces were conferred on him and members of his family. During the early years of the revolt more provinces conferred this honor on William, and it gave him official status as a leader.

When William died and the United Provinces moved toward a republican government, the need for a stadtholder became questionable. As with the problem of sovereignty, the Dutch reached a pragmatic and functional solution rather than a principial one. In 1586 the second son of

William, Maurice, (the eldest son, Philip William, was held for years as a hostage in Spain) was made stadtholder, governor, captain-general and admiral of Holland and Zealand at the instigation of Oldenbarnevelt. Oldenbarnevelt wanted Maurice to become a figurehead and a focus for national leadership to counter-balance the growing prominence of Leicester and English influence.[7] By 1591 Maurice had also become stadtholder of Utrecht, Overijssel, and Gelderland, and his cousin, William Louis, was stadtholder of Friesland and Groningen.

Maurice soon revealed himself to be a popular leader and a great military strategist. He took charge of the armed forces of the United Provinces and led them to significant victories over Spain. In the popular mind military leadership became linked to the office of stadtholder and Maurice's prowess strengthened the popular attachment to the House of Orange which had begun with his father, William.

The emergence of Maurice as a great military hero and popular figure provided a potential threat to the leadership of Oldenbarnevelt on behalf of the Holland oligarchs. While the pressure of Spanish opposition remained strong and while Maurice showed little interest in the administration of the government, no real problems

---

[7] Ibid., p. 208.

developed. In 1600, however, a real clash did occur between Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt over the advisability of an invasion of Flanders. Maurice opposed the idea of an invasion, but Oldenbarnevelt had the States General order Maurice to undertake the campaign. The clash was not severe, but was a sign of problems to come.[8]

Toward the end of the sixteenth century Europe showed signs of fatigue over a war that had already dragged on for thirty years. In 1598 Henry IV of France, who had been allied with the Dutch since 1595, made peace with Spain.[9] James I succeeded Elizabeth in 1603, and though he shared her sympathy for the Dutch cause, he also shared her fear of Spain. In 1604 James made peace with Spain and urged the Dutch to negotiate a settlement that would finally end the war. The question of peace was to be the next open disagreement between Oldenbarnevelt and Maurice and a complicating factor in the theological struggle which lasted from 1603 to 1618.

By 1603 a new Dutch state emerged--a state born of the revolt against Spain and fraught with internal tensions that threatened to destroy the newborn republic. Not only had the Netherlands faced a lengthy and debilitating war

---

[8] Ibid., p. 285.

[9] Ibid., p. 254.

with only sporadic support from vacillating allies, but the Dutch had also tried with limited success to resolve urgent domestic political problems. In the absence of a hereditary ruler and under the pressure of an unpopular English governor-general, executive authority and sovereignty passed to the unwieldy States General where any one province could block action. Although two strong leaders, Oldenbarnevelt and Maurice, shared real power, neither one could claim legitimate constitutional authority. If questions of power were unresolved, national goals were also ambiguous. Should the Netherlands continue the revolt to liberate the provinces still under the Spanish yoke or should the Dutch seek peace to consolidate the fruits of the revolt and be resigned to a permanent division of the Low Countries? When religious turmoil touched a national atmosphere already charged with political insecurity and indecision, the inevitable lightening struck at the very heart of Dutch society.

The Dutch Church to 1603

After Martin Luther electrified Germany in 1517 with his startling theses, the Reformation soon began to attract the interest of Germany's European neighbors. The Low Countries had long been zealous for reform in the Church. The Dutch concern for religious renovation had sparked the Devotio Moderna and inspired the great humanist,

Desiderius Erasmus. As early as 1518 Luther's works were being circulated in the Netherlands. By early 1520 his teachings were sufficiently well-known to draw the official condemnation of the theological faculty at the University of Louvain and to provoke the ire of the Roman Catholic sovereign, Charles. The politics of the Holy Roman Empire frustrated Charles from fully persecuting the opponents of the Roman Church there and so he turned his religious passion on the Low Countries. In 1522 he established a state inquisition and on July 1, 1523 two Augustinian monks in Brussels became the first martyrs of the Reformation.

The progress of the Reformation in the Netherlands divides into four distinct stages.[10] The first half of the 1520s belonged to the Lutherans, although Lutheranism as a movement never gained wide popularity in the Netherlands. The Sacramentarian movement which was the next stage in the Dutch Reformation did not take hold either. The Sacramentarians were Protestant humanists, an intellectual elite which accepted Luther's critique of the Roman Church, but did not agree with his Eucharistic theology. In fact one member of this group, Cornelius Hoen, wrote a treatise that was to shape the Eucharistic theology of Ulrich Zwingli. Anabaptism, which followed the Sacramentarians, was the

---

[10] Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden, IV, chapters 10 and 11.

first really popular expression of the Reformation in the Netherlands. The Anabaptist movement, widespread and well-organized, dominated the Dutch Reformation in the 1530s. Members of the movement ranged in their commitments from the social revolutionary to the pacifist and quietist, although after the fall of Muenster in 1535 the movement became more quietistic. The Anabaptists remained popular long beyond the 1530s in the Netherlands, but they lacked the political goals and international connections necessary to become a decisive factor in Dutch life in future decades.

The period from 1540 to 1570 marked the fourth stage of the Dutch Reformation, the emergence and growth of the Reformed or Calvinistic movement in the Netherlands. The origin and spread of Dutch Calvinism remains an historiographical problem, for the rigor of the inquisition conducted by Charles and Philip obliterated much of the record. Historians have debated whether Dutch Calvinism was born of direct contact with Calvin and Geneva or whether it grew from association with the French Reformed Church. Clearly several of the early leaders of Dutch Calvinism, such as the influential Pierre Brully who suffered martyrdom in 1545, had known Calvin while he was in exile in Strassburg. Brully and his associates encouraged many of their followers to look to Geneva for the truth. On the other hand, it is also evident that the early inroads of Calvinism were all

in the southern part of the Netherlands where the cultural affinity for and contact with France was the greatest. Calvinism was not distinguishable in the northern provinces of the Netherlands until after 1560.[11] Yet in spite of great persecution Dutch Calvinism was able to grow, organize, and develop international contacts even before the Revolt against Philip broke out.

Philip's unrelenting pressure on Protestantism made Calvinism a quasi secret movement--a reality which prevented the strict supervision of doctrine which characterized the Reformed Church of Geneva and France. Laxity in the supervision of doctrine is the key to one of the most vexing historiographical problems of the period: what was the real nature of the early Reformed Church in the Netherlands? Historians from the seventeenth century have differed considerably on this question--often along confessional lines.

Some historians have argued that in reality the church in this early period was a "nationaal Gereformeerde" church. The church, it is argued, was a uniquely Dutch phenomenon, emerging from the Sacramentarian movement, Erasmian humanism, and the gentle Reformed spirit of Heinrich Bullinger. This church, historians claim, was far from accepting the full system of Calvin, especially his doctrine of predestination. This argument by extension

---

[11] Ibid., IV, 285.

suggests that Arminius was the true inheritor of an indigenous movement and was simply trying to preserve the uniqueness of the Dutch Reformed Church, a uniqueness that he feared would be gradually extinguished by the intrusion of foreign, Genevan Calvinism.[12]

Protagonists for another viewpoint, however, have insisted that from its genesis the Dutch Reformed Church was a faithful follower of Calvin, accepting his whole theology. These historians believe that when the pressures of persecution were neutralized, Calvinists in the Netherlands set about reforming the churches, insisting on sound preaching and pure doctrine. According to this thesis Arminius was the real innovator in the Dutch Reformed Church.[13]

Neither of these reconstructions is entirely adequate, however. The Reformation in the Netherlands was a varied movement. Lutheranism, Sacramentarianism, and Anabaptism all continued to exist along with Roman Catholicism after the rise of Calvinism. Within the dominant

---

[12]This notion is attractive to Carl Bangs in "Dutch Theology, Trade, and War: 1590-1610," Church History, XXXIX (1970), 478: ". . . a representative of the older Dutch Reformed theology, Jacobus Arminius," and p. 482, "Thus there is a real sense in which the high Calvinists introduced something which had not been essential to the earliest Dutch Reformed Church."

[13]For example, H. H. Kuyper, Calvijn en Nederland (Utrecht, 1909), p. 10.

Reformed Church many proponents of Protestantism had a closer affinity with these earlier traditions than with Calvinism.[14] Yet the majority in the Reformed Church held to Genevan Calvinism.[15]

After the days of persecution had ended and the new Dutch state was emerging, fundamental divisions with the Dutch Reformed Church manifested themselves in several ways. The Reformed Church debated the authority of the Belgic Confession and of the Heidelberg Catechism in the church. The relationship between the church and the state --particularly the right of the church to hold its own synods and to discipline its own ministers--was also a source of tension.[16]

Both the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism were written by staunch Calvinists. Guido de Bres wrote the Belgic Confession in 1561 after the model of the French Confession of 1559 and Calvin's Genevan Confession. Zacharius Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, who wrote the Heidelberg Catechism, were Palatinate theologians and

---

[14] Blok, op. cit., p. 398.

[15] Reitsma, op. cit., p. 233.

[16] Ibid., p. 198: "Het gansche kerkelijk-staatkundige geschil in deze ingewikkelde periode van onze geschiedenis kan worden herleid tot twee hoofdpunten: de bepaling der verhouding van de kerk tot den staat en de bepaling van het gezag der belijdenisschriften, derhalve over kerkorde en confessie."

followers of Calvin. Yet both of these documents were moderate statements of the Calvinist position. For example, only one article in the Confession dealt with predestination and the Catechism devoted no question to that doctrine.

Despite their moderation, these documents were not acceptable to some members of the Dutch Reformed Church. The first National Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church held at Emden in East Friesland in 1571, adopted the Belgic Confession as the doctrinal standard of the church.[17] Yet this was not done without opposition. A group labeled Libertines[18] by the strict Calvinists mounted significant resistance at the Synod to forestall adoption. The action of the third National Synod held at Middelburg in 1581 reflected continuing trouble on this subject. The Synod ordered all church servants to sign the Confession.

> De geest in deze synode was reeds een voorteeken van den kerkelijk-politieken strijd, die weldra het geheele land zou beroeren. De eisch tot onderteekening van de Confessie werd weder uitgebreid: theologische professoren, predikanten, ouderlingen, diakenen, en schoolmeesters werden daartoe verplicht.[19]

When Arminius raised his own challenge to these confessional

---

[17] Blok, op. cit., p. 58.

[18] Enno Conring, Kirche und Staat nach der Lehre der niederlaendischen Calvinisten in her ersten Haelfte des 17. Jahrhunderts (Neukirchen, 1965), p. 27.

[19] Reitsma, op. cit., p. 199.

statements, he was continuing a longstanding problem.

The exercise of discipline in the Church in the 1580s and 1590s also revealed basic conflicts within the Reformed community. Various Classes and Synods suspended ministers that these church courts judged to deviate significantly from Calvinist orthodoxy. These disciplined ministers were not a united group, but did share common roots in the Dutch tradition of humanistic theology.[20] Many of the deviants looked to Erasmus and Castellio for their inspiration; Dirck Volkertsz Coornhert, one of William of Orange's advisors, belonged to this group. His writings were very influential with the dissidents.

Five particularly famous discipline cases illustrated the problem that the Dutch Church faced in trying to control its ministers.[21] Huibert Duifhuis, a popular minister at Utrecht, was roundly attacked by the orthodox. Charged with holding to many Roman Catholic doctrines, he escaped discipline when he died in 1581. Two other ministers were tried for their doctrine. Caspar Jansz Coolhaes, who was a minister at Leiden, rejected the doctrine of predestination, and in 1582 he was removed from office and excommunicated by the Holland Provincial Synod meeting at

---

[20] Ibid., p. 213.

[21] Ibid., pp. 214-230.

Haarlem. Cornelius Wiggertsz, a minister at Hoorn, was similarly suspended in 1593. Franciscus Gomarus and Johannes Uytenbogaert, who were later to become enemies over several issues including discipline, were among those active in securing this particular suspension. This case was not easily settled, however, because the city authorities refused to recognize the suspension and bound Wiggertsz to his post. The dispute was only resolved in 1596 when the States of Holland removed him from the ministry. The cases of Henricus Bulkius and Herman Herbertsz revealed even more the potential problems in the matter of discipline. Bulkius, a minister at Montfoort, was suspended in 1583 as a Pelagian, but in his case the States of Holland ruled that he could not be removed. The same happened in the case of Herbertsz at Gouda. He was suspended by the church in 1591, but was kept in his post by the city authorities.

Dutch civil authorities clearly did not recognize the right of the church to discipline its own clergy. From time to time the state would permit the exercise of discipline. Usually this was in response to popular pressure and not to any recognition in principle of the independent authority of the church.[22]

The Calvinist vision of the ideal relationship between

---

[22]Blok, op. cit., p. 399.

church and state was not the complete independence of the church from the state. Rather Calvinists longed for a mutually supportive and harmonious cooperation between church and state to order all of society by the standard of God's Word. The church had allied itself with the Revolt against Spain from the beginning and recognized its duty of obedience to the new government. Yet the Calvinists also felt that in certain matters the state had a duty to support and enforce the decisions of the church. The right of the church to call its own synods, particularly national synods, was one such matter for the Dutch Calvinists.

When the Union of Utrecht brought the United Provinces into existence in 1579, the church was drawn into the tension inherent in the Union between central authority and provincial authority. Article Thirteen of the Union of Utrecht declared that religion was a provincial matter, and the Reformed Church was given preferred status only in Holland and Zealand. William hoped that this article would attract the Catholic nobles in the south to join the Union.[23] While the Calvinists were disturbed by this provision, they were confident that in time they could win preferred status in all the provinces. They did not anticipate that this article would be used both to subordinate their organiza-

---

[23]Reitsma, op. cit., p. 202.

tional structure to the provincial States and to prohibit the calling of national synods.

The organization of the Dutch Reformed Church into consistories, classes and synods had occurred before the Union of Utrecht. The Reformed Church had called two national synods before the Union and there can be little doubt that the Calvinists expected to continue holding synodical meetings after the Union.

Despite the potential difficulties of the Union's thirteenth article, national synods did meet in 1581 at Middleburg and in 1586 at The Hague. The National Synod at The Hague met under the protection of the Earl of Leicester who was at that time Governor-General of the United Provinces. Leicester had identified himself closely with the strict clergy. With such a powerful protector the Calvinists met eagerly to draw up a church order that finally would clarify their rights in relation to the state. The church order composed at The Hague clearly established the church on a national foundation, declared extensive rights of self-government, and ordered national synods to be held every three years.[24] For a brief, triumphant moment it appeared that the orthodox had accomplished most of their goals:

---

[24]Wijminga, op. cit., p. 45.

> Altijd, vanaf het kerkelijk convent gehouden in 1568 te Wesel, tot de nat. synode van 1618, hebben de gereformeerde leiders in hoofdzaak aangedrongen op bepaalde rechten: vrije benoeming van predikanten, ouderlingen en diakenen door den kerkeraad, onder goedkeuring van de gemeente en van de overheid; vrije vergadering van den kerkeraad, van classes, van provinciale en nationale synoden op gezette tijden; handhaving van de eenigheid van geloof en van de eenvormigheid der bediening door examinatie, door verplichte onderteekening der formulieren en, desnoods, door censuur en afsnijding der afvalligen.[25]

This victory was far from decisive, however. Leicester's presence had polarized Dutch society. Leicester, the English troops, the strict clergy, and the "people" lined up against Oldenbarnevelt, Maurice, the nobility, the merchant oligarchs, and the moderate clergy.[26] Oldenbarnevelt and his supporters opposed any attempt to grant the church the measure of self-government suggested by the new church order, and in 1587 when Leicester departed in disgrace from the Netherlands, the government simply ignored the church order of 1586.

Oldenbarnevelt desired to create a new church order and to consider the matter in 1591 he formed a committee which included as members Arminius and Uytenbogaert. The

---

[25] Reitsma, op. cit., p. 200.

[26] Blok, op. cit., p. 233.

church order proposed by this committee was quite Erastian in nature, and relegated the church to complete dependence on the state for consent to call synods and to discipline its members. Oldenbarnevelt's church order was so radically Erastian that it was unacceptable to the church as a whole and could not be implemented. The resulting impasse left the question of the right to call national synods unsettled along with the issues of the authority of the Confession and the right to discipline the clergy. Until the struggles concerning the theology of Arminius forced a reconsideration of all these problems, a pragmatic modus vivendi was followed with real power exercised by the state.

The Polarization of Dutch Society, 1603-1618

In the early seventeenth century the war in the Netherlands seemed to be a stalemate. Spain was making no progress in its efforts to reduce the United Provinces to their former feudal obedience and the United Provinces were having no success in recapturing the southern part of the Low Countries. In 1604 James of England concluded a peace treaty with Spain leaving the United Provinces without any allies in the war. James, however, did not intend to ignore the United Provinces and used his influence with the Dutch to urge them to make their peace with Spain.

The advice of James was well received in the province

of Holland. A cessation of hostilities would increase Holland's wealth in two ways. It would permit a greater volume of commerce and free trade and it would end the financial drain of supporting the Revolt. Oldenbarnevelt, a faithful servant of his province, was moved by these considerations. He began to investigate the possibilities of a peace treaty.

For Maurice, however, an end to the conflict with Spain was not so desirable. To negotiate a peace treaty with Spain meant that the Dutch would be obliged to recognize the permanent division of the Low Countries. Maurice shared his father's dream of a reunited country. Not only did the House of Orange have extensive land holdings in the south, but Maurice, along with the strict clergy, saw the war with Spain as a holy war. To make peace with Spain was to consign a part of their country to the bondage of Rome. Beyond this, peace would seriously reduce Maurice's power in the state. His reputation and power were grounded in the army and the prestige his victories carried in the minds of the people. Both would be diminished if a peace treaty were signed.

The conflicting interests of Oldenbarnevelt and Maurice had far reaching consequences as the relationship between these two men deteriorated. Their disagreement over the future course of the Dutch Revolt, however, was not the

central factor that divided Dutch society. A question of theology, a struggle within the church, proved the great catalyst that polarized the United Provinces. Storm clouds within the church were forming even before James had made peace with Spain, but the lightning that touched off the tumult was the teaching of Jacobus Arminius.

Arminius had been born and raised in Amsterdam. He studied theology at Geneva and Basle and was considered a very promising student. He returned from Switzerland with a letter of recommendation from Theodore Beza and was ordained to the ministry in Amsterdam. As a minister there he was occasionally accused of deviating from Calvinist orthodoxy. Although his aristocratic patrons smoothed over his troubles, some of his more rigorous ministerial colleagues continued to harbor suspicions.

Arminius' suspected deviance required new consideration in 1603. In that year Franciscus Junius and Lucius Trelcatius, two professors of theology at the University of Leiden, died of the plague. Franciscus Gomarus was the only remaining member of the theological faculty there. Lucius Trelcatius, Jr., whose orthodoxy was unquestioned, was proposed for one of the vacancies and was quickly approved. Arminius was proposed for the other position. Petrus Plancius, a minister in Amsterdam, objected vehemently to this appointment, because Arminius' opinions were questionable. Plancius observed that Leiden had become one of

the foremost Reformed universities in Europe and that the University was obliged to preserve strict orthodoxy to keep faith with Reformed communities of Europe that had sent their students to Leiden.

Despite these objections the Regents of the University remained adamant about Arminius' appointment. Gomarus then requested permission to examine Arminius and to report on his findings. After the interview with Arminius, Gomarus expressed his satisfaction with Arminius' orthodoxy and Arminius was installed as professor of theology at Leiden.

All was peaceful at the University for a time, but soon criticism began to circulate about the nature of Arminius' lectures, the opinions of his students, and the kind of reading material that he recommended his students use. Gomarus became alienated as it became clear that Arminius rejected both of the dominant Reformed understandings of predestination: supralapsarianism and infralapsarianism. Gomarus was convinced that Arminius was teaching that election was grounded on God's foreknowledge of one's faithful response to the Gospel. For Gomarus this was a serious deviation from Reformed orthodoxy, which taught that election was grounded in the good pleasure and free choice of God alone.

As the dispute between Gomarus and Arminius became

more open and more bitter, both men attracted followers. The names of these two groups of followers are something of a historiographical problem in themselves. Some historians refer to them simply as the Gomarists and the Arminians. Others prefer Arminians and Calvinists or Arminians and strict Calvinists. Some Dutch historians[27] refer to the groups as the precise and the liberal parties.

These differences in terminology often conceal conflicting confessional and historiographic attitudes toward what was happening in the Dutch church. The contrast between Arminians and Calvinists in this period may imply that the Arminians had no right to consider themselves as a proper expression of the Reformed community and therefore had no right to remain in the Dutch church. The contrast between Arminians and Gomarists may imply that there was only a clash of personalities[28] or an academic squabble. It may also imply the acceptance of the thesis that Arminius was only reacting to Gomarus' strong statement of Supralapsarianism and that they therefore represented only warring factions within the Reformed community.[29]

---

[27] Ibid., p. 414.

[28] Van Itterzon, op. cit., p. 189 has shown that the clash was not just one of personality, but of principle.

[29] This seems to be implied by Carl Bangs, "Arminius and the Reformation," Church History, XXX (1961), 159, 163.

Part of this confusion results from the ambiguity in the words "Reformed" and "Calvinist." Arminius had a clear right to call himself Reformed. His teachings had some legitimate appeal to the moderate teachings of Heinrich Bullinger[30] and to others like Duifhuis who had been tolerated in the Dutch church. The word "Calvinist" is often equated with "Reformed" in that sense. "Calvinist" is sometimes restricted to one who holds to the basic system of Calvin, which Arminius clearly did not do in the matter of predestination.

Whatever terminology is adopted, it is important to remember that the differences between Arminius and Gomarus were much more than an academic squabble over Supralapsarianism. Gomarus' prime concern was not Arminius' doctrine of predestination, but the way in which his thoughts on predestination by extension had undermined the Reformed doctrine of justification.[31] This concern was not just a rhetorical one designed to smear Arminius. In fact many infralapsarian Calvinists, who rejected Gomarus' Supralapsarianism, supported him solidly in his opposition to Arminius. In 1609 the infralapsarian Reginaldus Donteclock wrote a pamphlet in which he stated that the issue was more justification

---

[30]Walter Hollweg, Heinrich Bullingers Hausbuch (Neukirchen, 1956), pp. 294-337.

[31]Van Itterzon, op. cit., p. 123.

than predestination,[32] and that on this issue the battle lines formed--Arminius against the Church.[33]

As word of the disagreements within the theological faculty at Leiden spread, the strict Calvinist clergy, who constituted a clear majority in Holland, began to call for some disciplinary action against the Arminians. In 1605 the Synod of South Holland[34] demanded that all ministers sign the Confession and Catechism[35] and began an investigation of the University of Leiden.[36] In that same year all the provincial synods of the United Provinces appealed to the States General to call a national synod.

The Arminians were enraged by the charges against them, but they recognized that in the courts of the church, they were completely outnumbered. They appealed, therefore, to the States of Holland for protection. This appeal proved

---

[32] Ibid., p. 157.

[33] Ibid., p. 155.

[34] Because the province of Holland had a large Reformed population, the organization of the Church was slightly different there than in the other provinces. Like the other provinces, each local community had its own consistory and each area its own classis. But in Holland the provincial synod was not the next step in the ecclesiastical organization. Instead there were two particular synods, one for the north and one for the south, that conducted most synodical business. The full provincial synod met only occasionally.

[35] Blok, op. cit., p. 402.

[36] Wijminga, op. cit., p. 44.

to be very effective because the powerful leaders of Holland, including Oldenbarnevelt, were eager to increase their supervision of church matters and were unsympathetic to the strict Calvinists. The political leaders were more tolerant in their approach to religion. They felt that the Arminians were not teaching anything too heinous and that they deserved protection. Their initial move was to declare that Arminius could only be judged by a provincial or national synod, not by a classis or particular synod. The States of Holland then promptly refused to call a provincial synod.

Oldenbarnevelt adopted a different but equally effective procedure in the States General to prevent a national synod. He knew that there had been calls for a national synod since 1589 and that as early as 1597 the States of Holland had agreed in principle to calling a national synod. In 1606 Oldenbarnevelt persuaded the States General to call a national synod, but the synod was to have only one item on its agenda: the revision of the Confession and the Catechism. The strict Calvinists found this entirely unacceptable because such a synod could not discuss their main concern, namely Arminius, and would imply by its very agenda that the Confession and Catechism were not authoritative. Hence no synod was held.

Oldenbarnevelt assumed that this maneuver would

defuse the calls for a synod, but he had misjudged the potential explosiveness of the issue. "He believed that the present controversy could be tided over by patience and tact; there was no knot which diplomacy could not unravel. Here Barnevelt was profoundly mistaken. . . ."[37] He proceeded to organize several conferences between Gomarus and Arminius where the issues would be debated before civil authorities. He hoped these would settle the matter. Two such conferences were held in 1608 and 1609. Both revealed the increasing bitterness of the dispute and the impossibility of a negotiated settlement. Gomarus accused Arminius of moving toward Jesuit and Pelagian positions[38] and corrupting his students by encouraging them to read Roman Catholic and Socinian authors,[39] along with such disreputable Protestants as Coornhert and Castellio. In the Conference of 1609 Gomarus continued to maintain that the main point at issue was the doctrine of justification.[40]

After each conference the States of Holland declared that the issues involved were not vital to the well-being of the Church and that the best solution was for each side

---

[37]Harrison, op. cit., p. 104.

[38]Van Itterzon, op. cit., p. 131.

[39]Ibid., p. 178.

[40]Wijminga, op. cit., p. 68.

to be tolerant of the other. The Calvinists opposed this solution and declared that the issues were critical for the church and that in any case the matter should be judged by a church court and not by the civil government.

In 1609 two significant events, Arminius' death and the signing of the Twelve Year Truce with Spain, raised hopes for an era of peace. Negotiations had been proceeding for several years with Spain, but neither side would make the concessions necessary for a final peace treaty. Nevertheless, both the Spaniards and the Dutch were so eager for relief from the war that a temporary truce was easily reached and the terms were very favorable to the United Provinces. Prince Maurice had been reconciled grudgingly to this truce. Some may have hoped that the new truce and the death of Arminius might produce a decade of peace and stability for the Dutch republic. They were to be profoundly disappointed. By this time Arminius had many followers who were often more radical in their theology than he had been. His disciples were not prepared to abandon his concerns and the Calvinists were certainly no more ready to tolerate them. Moreover, with their new freedom from the restraint imposed by the external Spanish threat, both groups pursued their goals with new determination and vigor.

The growing theological struggle reached a new plateau early in 1610. Uytenbogaert, then court preacher

at The Hague, called some forty-two Arminian ministers to meet with him at Gouda to articulate their position. They formulated a statement of their beliefs, framed in careful moderate terms. The document became known to history as the Remonstrance. They submitted this declaration to Oldenbarnevelt, asking him to secure protections for their beliefs and a judgment of toleration from the States of Holland. This Remonstrance was stated in five articles, which treated respectively election, the extent of atonement, the need for grace, the resistibility of grace and perseverance. These five articles so shaped the entire course of the debate that the Canons of Dort were written in five Heads of Doctrine. This study focuses on the "Second Article": the extent of the atonement.[41]

In December 1610 Festus Hommius, a Calvinist minister at Leiden, objected to the Arminian Remonstrance before the States of Holland and the States called another conference to consider the issues. This conference, the Collatio Hagiensis, met at The Hague in March 1611. Hommius led the Calvinist delegation, and prepared the Contra-Remonstrance,[42] a declaration of their views on the

---

[41]The Remonstrance of 1610 is printed in English in DeJong, op. cit., pp. 207-209.

[42]The Contra-Remonstrance of 1611 is printed in English in DeJong, op. cit., pp. 209-213.

theological questions raised in the Remonstrance.[43] From these two documents, the Remonstrance and the Contra-Remonstrance, the two opposing parties within the church derived their names after 1611--the Remonstrants and the Contra-Remonstrants.

The States of Holland held the Collatio so that the Calvinists and the Arminians might be called "om in de vergadering der Staten of voor hunne gedeputeerden 'in vrundlycke Conferentie' te treden op deselve vijf Poincten' en te zien, of 'sij met den anderen daerrine moogen verdraagen' of zoo niet, 'te maaken statum quaestionis.'"[44] The Collatio did indeed clarify the status quaestionis more than the earlier conferences between Gomarus and Arminius had.[45] No progress, however, was made towards peace between the two factions. In fact, after 1611 the situation continued to deteriorate.

As the Calvinists clamored more loudly for a national synod, Oldenbarnevelt emerged more clearly as the protector of the Arminians. He encouraged Uytenbogaret in 1610 to write a tract on Church Order. This tract, Tractaet van 't ampt ende Authoriteyt eener Hoogher Christelicker

---

[43] Wijminga, op. cit., p. 108.

[44] Ibid., p. 105.

[45] For a detailed analysis of the Collatio's discussions on the extent of the atonement, see below, Chapter Two.

Overheyt in kerckelicke saeken, developed and defended a completely Erastian system of government.[46] With this treatise by a churchman, Oldenbarnevelt began to pressure the Church to accept the Church Order of 1591 and at his urging the States of Holland passed repeated resolutions of toleration in the matters debated at the Collatio.[47]

New attempts at a settlement made by another conference held at Delft in 1613 proved no more successful than previous efforts, and the frustration of the Calvinists continued to mount. The Calvinists found that they were not only forced by civil authorities to tolerate the Arminians, but they also increasingly felt that they themselves were not treated with toleration. In Alkmaar, Adolf Venator was removed from the ministry in 1608 for Arminian views by his classis. The States refused to allow this suspension, and the Calvinists refused to worship in his church.[48] In 1611 at Rotterdam[49] and 1615 in The Hague,[50] as at Alkmaar, the Calvinists found themselves unable to accept the doctrines preached by some members of the clergy, and these

---

[46]Wijminga, op. cit., p. 89.

[47]Wijminga, op. cit., pp. 144-145, 211; Blok, op. cit., p. 426.

[48]Reitsma, op. cit., pp. 260-261.

[49]Ibid., pp. 267-268.

[50]Ibid., pp. 274-275.

Calvinists were not permitted separate places of worship. They were forced to worship in nearby towns or hold clandestine gatherings that they called 'Kruiskerken,' Churches under the Cross, the name for the secret gatherings held by Protestants in the days of the Spanish persecution.

Calvinist bitterness reached such a level that in 1615 a secret synod was organized in Holland. This synod met several times, and its original function seems to have been mainly to improve communications and to promote a unified front among the Calvinists. As time went on, and the Arminian group continued to enjoy their protected status, some Calvinists even talked of separation from the Church.[51]

While theological issues were polarizing Dutch society internally, growing international interest in the United Provinces became evident. This revived interest related both to the theological problems in the Netherlands and to the political potential of the Netherlands as an important factor in the European balance of power.

In the years of Truce there was a growing awareness in Europe that the United Provinces were a power to be reckoned with. "It hardly ranked as an independent state in the beginning of the Truce; at the end it enjoyed an

---

[51]Wijminga, op. cit., pp. 217-220.

honourable place among the European powers."[52] Because of its wealth and the brilliance of its military leader, Maurice, the United Provinces were sought out as allies. On May 6, 1613 the United Provinces signed a 15-year treaty of mutual assistance with the Protestant Union.[53] There were also alliances with Venice and Savoy in this period. In 1616 the United Provinces negotiated the return of the cautionary towns held by England.[54] Dutch aid was also sought by French insurgents in 1614. When the advisors of Louis XIII presented open opposition to the government of the Regent, Marie de Medici, the French Huguenots joined in the opposition and looked to the Netherlands for military help. Maurice was eager to send aid, but Oldenbarnevelt, who had worked closely with the Regent's government since 1610, refused to aid the opposition. Oldenbarnevelt's action helped avert a civil war in France,[55] and the United Provinces had clearly become an important force in Europe.

Interest in the Netherlands was not limited to political and military matters, however. The troubles

---

[52]Blok, op. cit., pp. 375-376.

[53]Samuel R. Gardiner, History of England from the Accession of James I to the Outbreak of the Civil War, 1603-1642 (London, 1904), II, 162.

[54]Blok, op. cit., pp. 368, 371, 373.

[55]Ibid., p. 366.

within the Dutch Church also became a matter of international interest. The Reformed Churches of Europe had long enjoyed close international connections.[56] Reformed theologians made it a practice to study in many different universities throughout Europe, a practice which kept communication open among the Churches in the European Reformed community. Beyond this affinity and natural interest, both the Arminians and Calvinists in the Netherlands promoted international involvement by appealing for help to their German, French and English neighbors.

Both Hommius[57] and Sibrandus Lubbertus,[58] as defenders of the Contra-Remonstrants, were in communication with friends throughout Europe explaining their position. After the Collatio Hagiensis Uytenbogaert had written in Dutch a defense of the Remonstrant position. In a letter to Lubbertus, Hommius contemplated a response to Uytenbogaert's

---

[56]The interest of the international Reformed community in theological disputes had manifested itself before the Dutch controversy arose. When bitter wrangling broke out in France between Pierre DuMoulin and Daniel Tilenus over the teachings of Piscator on justification, concern was expressed all over Europe. At the French Synod at Tonneins in 1614 letters were received from King James of England, from the Church of Geneva, from the Elector Palatine and the Duke de Bouillon urging a peaceful solution to these problems. This point is made in W. Brown Patterson, "James I and the Huguenot Synod of Tonneins of 1614," Harvard Theological Review, 62 (1972), 250.

[57]Wijminga, op. cit., p. 167.

[58]Harrison, op. cit., pp. 90-93.

statements: "Et deliberamus an non expediat idem scriptum non tantum Belgice sed etiam Latine edere, ut externae Ecclesiae totum huius dissidij fundamentum recte intelligant."[59] In another letter a few weeks later Hommius expressed his hopes of informing the international Reformed community of the serious deviations of the Arminians: "In responsione nostra ad Libellum Utenbogardicum hac editione saepius utemur, ut ostendamus quantopere illi homines ab orthodoxa de justicatione sententia dissentiant et quam manifeste ad Socinianismum defecerint."[60] While Hommius never wrote this response, a Latin edition of the written documents discussed at the Collatio was printed in 1615. This edition circulated in Europe and seems to have fulfilled the desires Hommius expressed in his letters. This edition was cited extensively by foreign delegations at the Synod of Dort and was also cited by Pierre DuMoulin in his writings of 1618.

A classis of Zeeland also propagandized the Contra-Remonstrant cause by publishing Epistola Delegatorum Classis Walachrinae ad Externarum Ecclesiarum Reformatos Doctores, Pastores, Theologos in 1617.[61]

---

[59] Hommius to Lubbertus, August 24, 1612, in Wijminga, op. cit., p. 123.

[60] Hommius to Lubbertus, October 12, 1612, in Ibid.

[61] A Dutch translation of this letter is published in Jakobus Leydekker, Eere van de Nationale Synode van

German interest in these theological problems was expressed in several ways. When Conrad Vorstius was appointed to succeed Arminius as professor of theology in 1610, the Calvinists appealed to the theological faculty of Heidelberg where Vorstius had studied. The Heidelberg theologians replied that in their opinion Vorstius had Socinian leanings.[62] This German interest was expressed again in 1613. In that year, the Elector Palatine, Frederick V, passed through the Netherlands as he returned from his marriage to Elizabeth, the daughter of James I. His court preacher and theologian, Abraham Scultetus, was personally responsible for the convocation in 1613 of the Conference of Delft[63] to resolve differences between Calvinists and Arminians. In 1615 Johan Piscator, a theologian at Herborn, wrote a treatise against an Arminian, Responsio ad Apologeticum P. Bertii: in qua orthodoxos de divina praedestinatione doctrina a sophismatis illius vindicatur et assertiur.

French Huguenots were also deeply interested in the

Dordrecht, voorgestaan en bevestigd tegen de beschuldigingen van G. Brandt., II, 458-485, as "Brief van de Classis van Walcheren aan Uitheemse Godgeleerde."

[62] Wijminga, op. cit., p. 129.

[63] Ibid., p. 151, and Harrison, op. cit., p. 192.

Dutch situation. As early as 1605[64] and 1607[65] the great Huguenot leader Philip DuPlessis Mornay had expressed concern about the conflict between Gomarus and Arminius. Pierre DuMoulin, in his plan for the reunion of Christendom written for James in 1615, showed a knowledge of the Dutch theological problems, although he did not seem to assign them great significance.[66] By 1618, however, DuMoulin had changed his mind when he wrote The Anatomy of Arminianism which adamantly attacked the Remonstrants. The French were no doubt also informed by Gomarus himself, who served as professor of theology at Saumur from 1615 to 1618.[67]

The strict Calvinists were not the only ones who kept lines of contact open with France. Oldenbarnevelt had always looked to France as the Netherlands' principal ally and he no doubt tried to convince Protestant leaders there that the reports of the religious struggles were exaggerated. Louise de Coligny, the widow of William of Orange and daughter of Admiral Coligny, had also kept in touch with her countrymen. As protector of the Arminians, she wrote late in 1617 to Mornay, begging for his help as she feared

---

[64]Blok, op. cit., p. 403.

[65]Harrison, op. cit., p. 83.

[66]Gerhard Brandt, The History of the Reformation, two volumes (London, 1722), II, 153-154.

[67]Van Itterzon, op. cit., p. 207.

not only the collapse of the Remonstrant cause, but also the "destruction" of the State.[68]

English interest in Dutch political and theological problems was perhaps the most significant because it was led by King James himself. Historically, James had an interest in the United Provinces through the political alliance that he had inherited from Elizabeth and his political concern continued even after he made his separate peace with Spain in 1604. Despite the English treaty with Spain English troops remained in the Netherlands. Economic interest was kept alive by the large debts the Dutch owed the English for past military aid. In the vexing matter of international trade the English were obliged to pay attention to their vigorous Dutch competitors. Beyond these political and economic ties, it seems clear that James had a generous, paternal sympathy for the Dutch who had the misfortune to lack a king. The peace-loving king[69] was obviously dismayed with the growing theological unrest in the Netherlands, which grew after the Dutch signed their truce with Spain in 1609.

As a theologian James' interest was drawn to the Netherlands by the peculiar circumstances surrounding

---

[68]Blok, op. cit., p. 447.

[69]Maurice Lee, Jr., James I and Henri IV; an essay in English foreign policy, 1603-1610 (Urbana, 1970), p. 184.

Arminius' replacement on the theological faculty at Leiden. The opening on the faculty at Leiden was claimed by both the Calvinists and the Arminians. The Calvinists earnestly maintained that it was time to restore peace and orthodoxy to the University. The Arminians argued vigorously that since there was already one strict Calvinist on the faculty, an Arminian should be appointed for balance. The Regents who supported the Arminians proposed Uytenbogaert, but he refused the appointment. The Regents then offered the position to Conrad Vorstius, who was then teaching at Steinfurt.

Vorstius' own theological credentials were in some ways very good. He had studied at Heidelberg, and Piscator had considered him one of his best students. In the course of his studies he had become interested in Socinianism, but this in itself was not a great problem. Many other Reformed theologians had become interested in the Socinian critique of catholic Christianity and had become involved in vigorous polemics against the Socinians. Vorstius' involvement with Socinian dogma, however, showed too much sympathy to certain aspects of Socinianism. For example, he once said that he had learned truly to do theology from the Socinians.[70] He was also the editor of certain Socinian works. On the eve of his appointment to Leiden he had published a study, De

---

[70] J. C. Van Slee, De Geschiedenis van het Socinianisme in de Nederlanden (Haarlem, 1914), p. 69.

Deo. Some Reformed theologians viewed his strong distinction between the essence and will of God as a Socinian intrusion into his theology. This Socinian suspicion combined with this Remonstrant patronage rapidly made Vorstius anathema to the strict Calvinists in the Netherlands.

A strange incident drew King James into this theological turmoil. The Racovian Catechism of 1605, the key summary statement of Socinianism, was translated into Latin and published in 1609. This 1609 edition was dedicated to James of England.[71] Nothing could have been more offensive to James, who prided himself on his purity and catholicity.

The Jesuit polemicist, Martin Becanus, who had published a treatise in 1610 linking James and Vorstius, charging them both with Arianism and even atheism, seized on this dedication to reiterate his charges. Becanus' accusations enraged James for political and theological reasons.[72]

Politically James was concerned because he had achieved a good modus vivendi with his Roman Catholic subjects. He did not want to see this entente disturbed by

---

[71]Herbert John McLachlan, Socinianism in seventeenth-century England (London, 1951), p. 18.

[72]The analysis of James' relation to Vorstius is based upon the fine study of Frederick Shriver, "Orthodoxy and Diplomacy: James I and the Vorstius Affair," English Historical Review, CCCXXXVI (1970), 449-474.

an accusation that he was guilty of a classical heresy. He knew full well that for Roman Catholics heresy could dissolve oaths of allegiance between sovereign and subjects. This concern alone might have been enough for him to attack Vorstius as a Socinian and thereby to establish his own orthodoxy. However, James also had a sincere theological concern. He took seriously his title as Defensor Fidei and believed that a sovereign was responsible for maintaining the purity of the religious belief of his people. He was proud of his theological learning and of his own catholicity in doctrine. He certainly could not tolerate being called a Socinian. James could also not tolerate the spread of Socinianism in the Netherlands. He saw himself as standing as the leader of Reformed Europe. He must protect other peoples as well as his own.

Latter-day Anglican apologists sometimes obscure Great Britain's membership in the Reformed community during the early part of the seventeenth century. James personally was committed to the Calvinism that had been instilled in him by his Scottish Presbyterian tutors. Although in the course of his reign he at times prohibited public controversy on the 'mysteries' of predestination, he personally accepted this part of the Calvinist system of theology. He also rejected the traditional Calvinist form of Church government when he ascended the English throne. He believed

that appointed bishops were more compatible with his majesty and supportive of his sovereignty than independent presbyters. This difference over Church polity was hardly enough to remove England from the community of Reformed churches when Calvin himself had agreed that episcopacy was an acceptable form of church government.

The Church of England viewed itself as a Reformed Church. When Ambassador Dudley Carleton wrote to Secretary Naunton on the eve of the Synod of Dort in 1618, he referred to the Church of England as "the most flourishing reformed church of Europe."[73] George Abbot, who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1610 to 1632, was a convinced Calvinist, and he frequently communicated with Reformed leaders on the continent and repeatedly interceded with the King on behalf of the Calvinists in the United Provinces. Cambridge University was then part of the circuit of Reformed universities --along with Geneva, Heidelberg and Leiden--that many continental theological students visited in the course of their studies. Johann Bogerman, Franciscus Gomarus and Jean Diodati, who were important figures at the Synod of Dort, had all studied at Cambridge.

James manifested his concern with Dutch religious affairs in his repeated advice to the States General of

---

[73]Carleton, op. cit., p. 303.

Holland to prohibit the appointment of Vorstius and in his publication of his Declaration condemning Vorstius. James' involvement in the Vorstius embroglio determined his future relations with the Arminians. Before the Vorstius affair arose, the Arminians had worked to convince James that the strict Calvinists were the Dutch version of the English Puritans. They pointed out that it was the Calvinists who were demanding the greater independence of the presbyterian polity from the government. The strict Calvinists, the Arminians contended, were the ones who were troubling the state. The Arminians hoped through this appeal to James' theological concerns over church government to marshall his political influence for their defense. The Vorstius affair marked the beginning of James' alienation from the Arminians. James began to think that the Arminians were supporting a Socinian in Vorstius. Vorstius' Arminian partisans lent credibility to the Dutch Calvinist charge that the Arminian teachings tended toward the heresies of Socinianism and Pelagianism.

Beyond this theological alienation political and economic tensions with Oldenbarnevelt widened the breach between James and the supporters of Arminius. Oldenbarnevelt and the leaders of the Dutch government had been negotiating with James on the matter of the Dutch loans and the Far East trade. These negotiations had revealed a Dutch

unwillingness to concede to the English on every point. This stubbornness offended James and strengthened his conviction that a state could not be properly managed by merchant oligarchs. Prince Maurice reinforced this conviction when he joined the opposition to Vorstius. James increasingly identified himself with the interests of Maurice and the strict Calvinists for both religious and political reasons.

Oldenbarnevelt tried to reach a compromise on the Vorstius issue to save the situation. He refused to capitulate to the Calvinists by revoking Vorstius' appointment, but in 1612 he did order Vorstius to remain at Gouda and did not allow him actually to teach at Leiden.[74] Though he did not teach there, Vorstius was officially a professor of theology at Leiden until he was removed by the Synod of Dort.

James was not satisfied with the temporary settlement of the Vorstius affair and his keen interest in Dutch theology continued. In 1613 Grotius secured a letter from the King urging the right of the government to intervene in theological matters to maintain the peace.[75] This caused consternation among the Contra-Remonstrants, who had already

---

[74]Harrison, op. cit., pp. 186-189.

[75]Blok, op. cit., p. 423.

come to look at the King as an ally. James soon reversed himself, however, and declared that the only possible solution in this case was the calling of a national synod.

The polarization of Dutch society by 1616 had reached a critical point. The Arminians and the Calvinists were nearly ready to go to war with one another. Maurice and Oldenbarnevelt were alienated from one another. And the Netherlands' powerful ally, England, sided with Maurice and the Calvinists against Oldenbarnevelt and the Arminians. Only one element was missing to make the polarization complete--an alliance between Maurice and the Calvinists to oppose the tacit alliance already existing between Oldenbarnevelt and the Arminians. The 'people' had always been attached to the House of Orange and to the Calvinist clergy. If Maurice with his troops should choose to stand at the head of a popular movement against the regent class, he would be indominable. Maurice approached a confrontation very slowly and cautiously. He knew the horrors of civil war, and he had little interest in the administration of the government. Until late in 1616 he also showed little concern in the theological aspects of the struggle swirling around him.

Maurice was influenced to awake from his apathy by his friend and cousin, William Louis, who was a staunch Calvinist. William Louis argued that the Contra-Remonstrants

were being suppressed in the name of tolerance and that the only proper way to settle the religious dispute was to call a national synod to which provincial synods would be free to send their own delegates. This appeal had its effect, and Maurice began to press for such a national synod to judge the validity of the Remonstrants' case.[76]

Domestic peace deteriorated in 1617, when riots led by the Contra-Remonstrants broke out, and significantly Maurice refused to use his troops to keep order. In May four provinces urged the States General to call a national synod, but Oldenbarnevelt and Holland continued to thwart these appeals. On Sunday, July 23, 1617 Maurice refused to worship in the Court Church at The Hague where Remonstrant leader, Uytenbogaert, was the preacher. Maurice worshipped instead with the Contra-Remonstrant congregation in The Hague.

Maurice's commitment to the Contra-Remonstrants impressed on Oldenbarnevelt that desperate measures were needed to save the Remonstrant cause, himself, and the power of the patricians. On August 5 he persuaded the States of Holland to pass the famous "Scherpe Resolutie," a resolution which reasserted Holland's provincial right to prevent the States General from calling a national synod, declared that

---

[76] Ibid., p. 432.

cities were empowered to raise additional municipal troops to keep order, and finally directed all civil officials and members of the army to take an oath of allegiance to their municipal authorities and to the States of Holland.[77] Maurice correctly read these resolutions as an attempt to dissolve the bond of allegiance his soldiers owed him and, if that failed, to raise other troops to oppose him.

Maurice and the Contra-Remonstrants turned to the States General as the forum for expressing their demands. In November, 1617 a majority of the States General finally voted to call a national synod. The resolution was supported by Zeeland, Friesland, Groningen and Overijssel, but was opposed by Holland, Utrecht and Gelderland. Holland claimed that the resolution was not legally binding, insisting that according to the Union of Utrecht unanimous consent of the several provinces was required for the passage of such a resolution. Holland's claim evoked a power struggle to see which side could impose its interpretation of the resolution's legitimacy.

Maurice saw clearly that Holland was the backbone of the opposition and that to break her he must first isolate her. With a few troops he set out to visit the recalcitrant areas of the United Provinces to gain their

---

[77] Ibid., pp. 440-441.

support by capitalizing on his immense prestige and popular following. He went first to Gelderland, where he encountered little opposition and installed Contra-Remonstrants as regents in Nijmegen. He then proceeded to Overijssel, where he solidified his support. Maurice led his band of troops in the direction of Utrecht, Holland's only remaining ally. Oldenbarnevelt had not been idle, however. He, too, appreciated his need for allies, and he had visited Utrecht himself to rally support for Holland. When Maurice arrived in late July, 1618, Utrecht staunchly determined that Maurice would not enter the city, and civil war did seem inevitable. Suddenly, however, Utrecht thought better of its decision. The regents realized that their hastily recruited troops would be no challenge to Maurice's seasoned veterans, and in August Maurice entered the city of Utrecht. Word spread quickly through Holland, and the armed opposition there was disbanded.

Some observers hoped that the crisis had passed, but Maurice was determined to pursue his advantage. On August 29 Oldenbarnevelt, Grotius and other close associates were arrested. Other prominent leaders such as Cornelius van der Myle, Oldenbarnevelt's son-in-law, and Uytenbogaert fled the country.

Maurice gained complete control of the Netherlands, and the tensions that had threatened to tear the Dutch state

apart were at least resolved for a time. The popular, centralizing forces headed by Maurice had triumphed, and this political resolution opened the way for a resolution of the religious tensions as well. The States General's decree of November, 1617 was immediately implemented and the National Synod was called to meet at Dordrecht in November, 1618.

The Synod was not to be a purely national matter. The resolution of November, 1617 declared that foreign Reformed theologians were also to be invited to insure a fair and catholic decision on the issues in question. After the coup Maurice and the strict Calvinists were especially concerned to have foreign delegates so that the Synod could not be dismissed by its detractors as a vindictive and partisan assembly. When invitations were sent to the Reformed community throughout Europe, those who had watched developments in the Netherlands with great concern eagerly accepted. The Synod of Dort, if not quite an ecumenical council, was surely an international synod.

Intellectual Climate among the Orthodox on the Eve of the Synod

The political and theological struggles of the United Provinces had shaped the attitudes of the Dutch Calvinists as they assembled for the Synod of Dort. Long years of political repression had planted seeds of bitterness in the

hearts of many of the Dutch Calvinists. The bitterness festered and took the form of charges and counter-charges. In 1618 incendiary pamphlets appeared accusing Oldenbarnevelt of engineering a plot to restore in the Netherlands the Spanish yoke and the bondage of Popery.[78] In retrospect the inflammatory charges were obviously absurd, but fanned by the frustrations of the time, the allegations did not seem unlikely to many Calvinists.

Patriotic concerns were linked to real fears about the direction Dutch theology had taken. The Calvinists had long felt that the Arminians were undermining the very foundations of the faith. Arminius was accused of distorting the doctrine of justification, and his followers were accused of leading the church down the path of Pelagianism and of Socinianism.

These charges were not mere rhetorical smears, but were taken very seriously by the Calvinists. Socinianism was viewed as a growing threat to orthodox Christianity. As early as 1604 Lubbertus, the professor of theology at Franeker, and Gomerus had corresponded about the dangers of Socinianism.[79] Lubbertus published the first Dutch refutation of Socinianism, De Jesu Christo Servatore, in 1611.[80]

---

[78] Ibid., pp. 449-450.

[79] Van Itterzon, op. cit., pp. 103, 116, 392, 396.

[80] Van der Woude, op. cit., p. 597.

In 1612 he published his Epistolica Disceptatio in which he "shows that he has felt the spiritual relationship between Socinianism, Arminianism, and Roman-Catholicism concerning the justification."[81] The Vorstius affair had certainly raised the Socinian issue again. In 1616 the accusation of Socinianism had been made against Simon Episcopius[82] and in 1617 Venator, long protected by the Arminians, published a shocking book:

> Venator, de welbekende remonstantsche predikant an Alkmaar, had in 't begin van 1617 zijn geschrift, Theologia vera et mera . . . een fondamentboeck, uitgegeven, waarin hij o.a. loochende de Godheid van Christus en de noodzakelijkheid van den Christelijken godsdienst, leerend dat men ook buiten het Christendom also Jood of Heiden levend, mits men maar God eerde en zijne geboden Volbracht, het eeuwig leven kon verwerven.[83]

Venator was removed from office for this book and later recanted, but all of the worst fears of the orthodox were confirmed by its assertions.

An even more frequent accusation raised against the Arminians was the charge of Pelagianism or at least Semi-Pelagianism. The glory of Calvinism was its absolute statement that every step of faith and all of salvation was a

---

[81] Ibid., p. 598.

[82] Wijminga, op. cit., p. 197.

[83] Ibid., p. 238. The same point is made by Van Slee, op. cit., p. 94.

gift of God's grace, a transformation in which man did not and could not cooperate. The Arminian retreat from this prime tenet of Calvinism was seen as nothing less than a return to Romanism and Pelagianism.

The years of angry debate had hardened the Calvinists to the Arminian attempts to defend themselves. The Arminians claimed that their position was biblical, consistent with Christian antiquity, the early Reformers and the Lutherans, and that it was the strict Calvinists, not they, who were introducing novelties into the Church.[84] The Calvinists rejected these contentions and declared that the new and divergent doctrines were all introduced by the Arminians. The orthodox were suspicious of appeals to Christian antiquity and Lutheran theology. These suspicions bore significant consequences at the Synod of Dort, where the foreign delegates proved to be less suspicious of such appeals.

Calvinist zeal for doctrinal purity was linked with Dutch patriotism. As the Dutch delegates came to the Synod, they expected a clear and adamant affirmation of Calvinist orthodoxy and an uncompromising rejection of Arminianism. Some of the foreign delegates were removed from the bitterness of the Dutch struggle, and they came with rather

---

[84]Wijminga, op. cit., pp. 235-236.

different expectations and perspectives. The foreign delegates and the Dutch delegates who came to the synod were far from united on their goals for this meeting of the European Reformed community. The differences in assumptions, expectations, and backgrounds of the delegates who traveled to Dordtrecht led to several tensions at the Synod and even threatened to disrupt it.