

The Dutch Reformation

Sources

C. V. Wedgwood, *William the Silent* (1944)

K. W. Swart, *William of Orange and the Revolt of the Netherlands, 1572-84* (2003)

Carl Bangs, *Arminius: Study in the Dutch Reformation* (1971)

W. Robert Godfrey, *Saving the Reformation: The Pastoral Theology of the Canons of Dort* (2019)

I. Background

A. Political Situation: A possession of the Habsburgs

B. Religious Situation

1. Division of “Spanish Netherlands”

a. North: Netherlands or “Holland”—Protestant

b. South: Flanders (modern Belgium)—Catholic

2. Entrance of Protestantism

a. Initially a strong Anabaptist influence (wiped out)

b. Eventual dominance of Reformed teaching

1) Became “Dutch Reformed Church”

2) Guido de Bres and Belgic Confession (1561)

II. Dutch War for Independence

A. Onset: Not initially seeking “independence” but liberties under Habsburgs

B. Conflict

1. Trouble emerges w/ rule of Philip II of Spain

2. Duke of Alba (Alba)

a. Total power to eradicate heresy and enforce royal will

b. Reflects Philip II’s “no compromise” policy w/ heresy

3. Dutch led by House of Orange under William the Silent

C. Course

1. Dutch superior at sea; Spanish on land

2. Truce from 1609 to 1621

3. Dutch independence recognized in Peace of Westphalia

III. Rise of the Dutch Republic

A. Nature

1. Nation formed by the Reformation

2. Government: A federal republic of united provinces

B. Economic strength

1. Secret of success: seafaring

2. Colonial Development (e.g., Dutch East India Company)

C. Religious policies

1. State church: Officially recognized Dutch Reformed Church

2. Practiced relative tolerance

a. Freedom of conscience & practical freedom of worship but not legal religious equality (K.H.D. Haley)

b. Examples: Pilgrims, Anabaptists (esp. Mennonites), Jews

IV. Calvinist-Arminian Controversy

A. Background

1. Major Figures

- a. James Arminius
- b. Franciscus Gomarus—leader of Calvinist traditionalists
- 2. Arminian Position
 - a. Offer five-point “Remonstrance” (“protest,” hence Arminians = “Remonstrants”)
 - b. Arminians sought government intervention on their behalf
- B. Synod of Dort (1618-19)
 - 1. Central Issues
 - a. Calvinists: God’s sovereignty in salvation
 - b. Arminians: Man’s free will in salvation
 - 2. Points of Controversy: TULIP (González, 232-33)
 - 3. In many ways, a Reformed “ecumenical council” (representatives from Reformed churches across Europe, not just Netherlands)
- C. Aftermath
 - 1. Condemned & repressed Arminian teaching
 - 2. Yet Netherlands remained relatively tolerant religiously