

Title: To Comfort the Afflicted and Upset the Secure: Jacobus Arminius and the Roots of the Leiden Debate Over the Assurance of Salvation

Author: Keith D. Stanglin

Date: 2006 Degree: Ph. D., Calvin Theological Seminary

Supervisor: Richard A. Muller

External Reader: Wim Janse

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an examination of the doctrine of the assurance of salvation in the thought of Jacobus Arminius (1559-1609). Although scholarship has treated, on the one hand, some aspects of Arminius's theology, and on the other hand, the doctrine of assurance in the Reformed theologies of early Protestant orthodoxy, nevertheless proper attention has not been given to the intersection of these topics, Arminius's doctrine of assurance.

This study seeks to demonstrate that the debate over the assurance of salvation in early Reformed orthodoxy was one of the decisive factors driving Arminius's dissent from Reformed theology. For Arminius, the purpose of the doctrine of predestination is to establish a healthy assurance of salvation; therefore, any doctrine of salvation that undermines healthy assurance, in Arminius's judgment, needs revision. Arminius developed a doctrine of salvation and assurance that sought to avoid the pitfalls he perceived in Reformed soteriology, namely, the opposite problems of security and despair. This essay analyzes Arminius's doctrine of assurance and compares it with the doctrine of assurance taught by his Reformed contemporaries.

Part 1 of this study places Arminius in his academic and theological context at Leiden. In order to understand Arminius's thought, one must first be familiar with the environment in which he worked, as well as the context of theological curriculum and genre in which he expressed his ideas.

Before discussing the problem of assurance itself, part 2 treats the ontological question of salvation, that is, how a person is justified before God. This exposition of the contours of Arminius's doctrine of salvation surveys the general topics dealing with the doctrine of salvation, including some controversial topics relating directly to the life of sanctification and assurance.

Once the general groundwork of Arminius's soteriology is laid, part 3 then addresses the epistemological question of salvation, that is, how a person can actually know that he himself stands

justified before God. This section discusses the danger posed to healthy assurance that Arminius perceived in the Reformed doctrine of salvation, and then seeks to discover the basis of assurance according to Arminius's alternative system. Throughout the dissertation, Arminius's thought is compared with that of his colleagues for the purpose of seeing more clearly their vast similarities as well as their unmistakable differences.