

James Arminius, was born in Oudwater, a small town near Utrecht, in Holland, in the year 1560. The year in which the constitution of the states of Holland was violated, by Phillip the Second, in the appointment of Anthony Perrenot, Arch-bishop of Mechin, to a position in the civic government, which increased the dissatisfaction already existing, and was one among the numerous causes from which issued the Dutch Republic.

His father, who was a cutler, died shortly after the birth of Arminius, leaving him with a brother and sister to the care of their widowed mother. A pious clergyman of Utrecht, took the charge of his education until he was in his fifteenth year, when death deprived him of his patron. At this early age he exhibited traits of uncommon genius and piety; he had made some proficiency in the sciences, and excelled in the rudiments of the Latin and Greek languages. In a short time after the death of his first friend, he secured the regard and favor of Rudolph Snellus, a native of Oudwater, but at that time a resident of Marpur in Hesse, at whose invitation and under whose patronage Arminius repaired to the University in that town. This place had already become famous in church history as the scene of a Conference, to which, Phillip Landgrave, of Hesse, had invited Luther and Zuingli in the expectation that a compromise might be effected, which would settle their disputes.

He had been there but a short time, when his studies were interrupted by the news of the sack of Oudwater, by the Spaniards. This occurred on the 19th July, 1575. The town, after a resistance of eighteen days, was carried by assault, and the usual results followed; men, women and children were murdered in cold blood, and almost every house in the town was burnt to the ground. Arminius now returned to Holland, only to find his worst fears realized; his mother, sister and brethren, were among the victims of the indiscriminate slaughter which had taken place. He was now in his sixteenth year; with a heavy heart he returned to Marpur, performing the journey on foot.

Shortly after his return to his patron, he learned that the new University, at Leyden, was formed under the auspices of William I, Prince of Orange. He at once prepared to return to Holland, and enter as a student. He remained at Leyden six years, and acquired such a high reputation, that the merchants of Amsterdam adopted him as their foster-pupil, and undertook to bear the expenses of his further studies, upon the condition that he would devote himself to the service of the church in that city. He accepted the offer, and gave a bond to the magistrates to the effect, that, he considered himself bound to them during the rest of his life, and that he could devote himself to no other church, in any city, or town, without their consent.

In 1582, he went to Geneva, to perfect his studies in the colleges of that city. The College of Geneva, was founded by John Calvin, about thirty years previous, with a view to make Geneva the mother,—the seminary of all the Reformed churches—as Rothenburg was of all the Lutheran communities; and in this design he was very successful. Men from England, France, Italy and Germany, repaired to Geneva, being attracted by the fame of Calvin and Beza, with other distinguished masters of science and theology. Here, as in all the public schools, the doctrines of Christianity were reduced to the form of a Peripatetic science, and placed