

evidence that Luther ever retracted the statement made to Erasmus, yet, the church which bears his name has strenuously advocated the universality of the atonement, and the conditionality of the decrees; and indeed such was the change in the mind of Melancthon, that he went so far as to expurgate his famous "Loci Communes," striking out every passage which could favour the error of absolute predestination, either as respects the elect or the reprobate. The "Augsburg Confession," the product of his elegant and accurate pen, is silent on the doctrine of predestination.

Such, then, was the position of the dogma, when John Calvin disinterred the Augustinian and Gootschalkian doctrine, and constructed it into a theological system, with all its consequences, to the elucidation and propagation of which, he devoted his life. His relation to the college at Geneva, and his influence upon its teaching, tended to infuse his peculiar sentiments throughout the Protestant churches of the continent of Europe. Under this influence Arminius had been educated at the very feet of Beza, yet the fallacies of the system could not be concealed from his keen strong intellect; and, when after much study and examination, his mind was fully made up, and his system of theology, compared with the scriptures and the writings of the early church, "he found to his satisfaction everything peculiar to Calvin was but an innovation upon the long established faith of the church, a mere human interpolation, a galvanic revivification of a defunct monkish notion which had many a year before disturbed the French church for a few months, but which had not found a single unequivocal advocate for seven hundred years."

To the work assigned him by his Presbytery, Arminius now devoted himself. He commenced the examination of the tract, but soon found so many difficulties in the way from which he was not able to extricate himself, that he relinquished the refutation, and betook himself to the careful inspection of the dogma in the light of holy scripture. Slowly and cautiously he proceeded to give expression to his enlarged views of the Divine economy in the salvation of sinners, enjoying much success and popularity in his ministry,—but at the same time meeting with opposition, and reproach from many,—and to such an extent was the opposition carried, that very often an accusation was brought against him in the council concerning the sense he gave to some passages in the Epistle to the Romans; but these he always silenced, by contending that he held forth nothing contrary to the sacred Scriptures, and the confessions of the church. About this time, another work was assigned him by the Synod of Southern Holland,—the refutation of the Anabaptists; but having discovered the intention of those who were most urgent in the request to be—not so much a refutation of their errors, as that they might draw out of his refutation his opinion concerning other dogmas, and especially be able to criminate him on the views he set forth on predestination and free-will, he proceeded slowly with the work, and finally abandoned it.

In 1602, upon the death of Francis Junius, the theological professor in the University of Leyden, an invitation was extended to Arminius to occupy the position. This proposal met with a good deal of opposition from some of the ministers of Amsterdam, and especially from Gomarus, professor of theology, and Richlinus, regent of the theological college.