

PREFACE

Colloquia and conferences devoted to the commemoration of historical events or figures are intended to encourage the progress of scholarship. The commemoration means that the event or figure in question receives concentrated scholarly attention, that a connection is established with recently developed views on kindred subjects, that new information is revealed, new questions are formulated, and so on. In short, the old image is renewed and comes into focus, the event or figure in question moves out of the dark and is inserted in the stream of contemporary research. Such commemorations often lead to new initiatives, like the publication of critical editions, and sometimes to new discoveries.

The discovery of Hugo Grotius' *Meletius* is an example. When the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences decided to organise an international colloquium in 1983 in order to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Grotius' birth I had the honour of being invited to read a paper. As I was preparing it I immersed myself in Grotius' letters and works and it then occurred to me that, at the beginning of the Twelve-Year Truce, he had composed a theological treatise entitled *Meletius* which was believed to have been lost. I therefore experienced a 'shock of recognition' when I came across the title in an old manuscript catalogue early in 1984. After some strenuous weeks spent transcribing and comparing I could conclude that the manuscript was indeed by Grotius and that I had discovered his earliest theological treatise.

As a theologian and church historian I did not feel particularly qualified to edit such a work. Grotius himself had a peculiar, not to say wayward, quality as a theologian and a religious thinker. A typical Christian humanist, he was an 'irregular' theologian who sought out and followed a path of his own. His approach to the subject was conditioned by classical antiquity which he regarded as the normative period and of which he possessed an unparalleled knowledge owing both to his education and his genius. For these and other reasons I soon had to rely on the assistance of professional classicists in preparing an edition of the *Meletius*, and I now take the opportunity of thanking them for their ready support at all stages of my labours.

With his already legendary precision, knowledge, and severity my colleague H. J. de Jonge read the first draft of my work and rightly made a large number of remarks, some of them highly critical. He provided me with important supplementary information and elucidations, and, in a word, showed me how a text should be edited. For this, and the promptness of his help, I am deeply grateful.

When the newspapers reported the discovery of Grotius' *Meletius* my colleague J. H. Waszink spontaneously offered me his assistance, for which I am most grateful. I have made good use of his learned comments, his technical advice, and his practical help in preparing the Latin text and the commentary. I hope that what the work has now become will give him more satisfaction than my mediocre performance when I had the privilege of being taught Classics by him at the Municipal Grammar School in Utrecht during the war.

I gratefully acknowledge the valuable assistance on various levels I have received from the staff of the Grotius Institute in The Hague, H. J. M. Nellen, E. Rabbie and A. C. G. M. Eyffinger, now staff-member of the Library of the Peace Palace in The Hague. I also want to thank my friends and colleagues C. H. Beelaerts van Blokland, J. A. H. G. M. Bots, S. Dresden, R. Feenstra, R. A. V. van Haersolte and J. Trapman. They all read the whole, or parts, of my manuscript and I am indebted to them for their comments and suggestions.

As to the numerous scholars who have assisted in the English translation, the first to be mentioned is Mrs Therese Heesterman-Visser of the Theological Institute in Leiden. After having supported me at all stages of my labours she finally translated the entire work into English with the utmost dedication. Her work in this respect was much facilitated by the meticulous Dutch translation of the Latin text by A. J. van Duyvendijk, former rector of the Gymnasium Haganum. For his selfless contribution, now hidden in the English translation, I take the opportunity to thank him warmly. The English translation of the notes and the introduction was further improved by A. G. H. Bachrach and A. Hamilton, while the English translation of the Latin text was thoroughly checked by J. M. van Ophuysen of the Department of Classics in Leiden, by the Patristic scholar J. S. Alexander and the Church historian James K. Cameron, both of St Mary's College at St Andrews. To all these fine scholars I extend my profound thanks.

I gladly recognize the assistance of members, and former members, of the Department of Ecclesiastical History in Leiden: Mrs Joke Spaans, Miss Marthe de Vries, Mrs Ernestine van der Wall, J. van der Meij and J. P. Heering (who was particularly helpful in compiling the indexes).

Finally, I wish to record my thanks to the Leids Universiteits-Fonds for providing a subsidy for the translation, to my friend Heiko A. Oberman for inviting me to publish this book in his prestigious series, and to the firm of Brill for the pleasant cooperation and the great care taken of the edition.

This book is dedicated to the memory of a dear friend of my youth whose good humour, noble-mindedness and wisdom I shall never forget.

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G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes

When this book was already in the press I discovered in the Remonstrant collection of *Grotiana*, deposited with the University Library in Amsterdam, a number of autographic items (drafts, sketches, annotations etc.) which, apparently, belong to an earlier stage of the *Meletius*. Being unable to make use of this interesting material for this edition I intend to devote a separate publication to it in the near future.