

PREFACE

The original Dutch version of this book was published privately in 1991, with the support of the Paul Hazard Fund, as a thesis for the degree of doctor in the Faculty of Letters at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. After I had completed my studies of Dutch language and literature at that university, Professor Hans Bots, director of the Pierre Bayle Institute of Studies of Intellectual Relations between the West-European Countries in Early Modern Times, introduced me to the history of Protestantism in France. He drew my attention to the remarkable figure of La Milletière, who had, as it were, emerged from the shadows of the past in the correspondence of André Rivet and Claude Sarrau, edited by Professor Bots and Dr. Pierre Leroy. I was fascinated by the motives of this headstrong theologian, and his enthusiasm, spirituality and unreliability. My research led me to various French libraries, where I was able to reconstruct the discussions he provoked.

Apart from Professor Bots, I owe my sincere thanks to Professor G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes of Leiden. He saw to it that the presentation of the intellectual heritage of the Protestant theologians in this book was not too seriously distorted by the way in which La Milletière sometimes caricatured them, while Professor Bots watched over the Roman Catholic patrimony.

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I would like to add a special word of thanks to my wife, Annemie Knibbeler, with whom, then as now, I have been able to share sorrows and joy, and to my parents, who taught me the concepts which are so bitterly disputed in this book. I dedicate this book to them.

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