HUGO GROTIIUS (1583-1645): JURIST, PHILOLOGIST, AND THEOLOGIAN. A CHRISTIAN HUMANIST, HIS WORKS, AND HIS CORRESPONDENCE

JAN BLOEMENDAL

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Hugo de Groot, or Grotius for his humanist friends, was a polymath: jurist, poet, dramatist, philologist, historian, politician, diplomat, and theologian. And a European. Maybe reluctantly, but a European: born
in Holland, living for a long time in Paris and for some time in the German countries, serving the Swedish crown. Moreover, 'on 17 July 1608 he even found the time to marry a girl from Zealand, Maria van Reigersberch' as the editors of De Hollandse jaren (The Dutch Years) write, not without a sense of humour. In this review the beginnings and the final years of Grotius are brought together. The beginnings: the years in Holland until he was arrested and went into exile. The end: the final four volumes of the monumental series of the Briefwisseling (Correspondence). And even beyond: his De imperio was published only after his death. In short, now is the moment to draw some tentative conclusions on Grotius' life and works. In this review emphasis will be laid on Grotius as a theologian. No more than a rough outline will be sketched. One of the two editors of the correspondence, Nellen, is the right person to write a full account. Actually, he will do that in a forthcoming biography of this great humanist.

The beginnings of Grotius' life, education and career were promising. These conclusions can be drawn from De Hollandse jaren. The fifteen contributions to this fine volume are clustered in four themes: law in the beginning of the seventeenth century; scholars and men of letters; towards a Republic; theology during the Truce. The aspects of De Groot's life that are discussed are so diverse that for purposes of review only a few will be singled out, especially from the fourth section.

The 'Delft miracle' (the infant prodigy who would become the 'Delft oracle') is the subject of the contribution by Ridderikhoff, who sheds light on Grotius' academic studies and, among other things, quotes Brandt and Van Cattenburgh: 'From his earliest youth he showed clear signs of his high-flying genius, noble character and indefatigable diligence' ('In zijn eerste kintsheit gaf hij klaere proefstukken van zijn overvliegend vernuft, edelen inborst en onvermoeide nijverheit...'). Grotius' studies were successful and he took his doctoral degree at Orleans University. Ridderikhoff convincingly demonstrates that this was a genuine degree and that Grotius did not 'buy' it, something that was not uncommon in Orleans. Egmond discusses the networks of De Groot, father and son, and Hugo's self-fashioning, as she calls it, as a vexed scholar. Van Dam, who describes him as a philologist with a good understanding of the value of manuscripts and as an excellent poet, gives a shrewd characterisation of De Groot, who 'always stayed a philologist, also as a theologian and jurist; and besides a homo retoricus, an advocate who rather defends a position than has an opinion of his own.'