

The True Interests and Political Maxims of the Republic of Holland, 1669

Pieter de la Court

Introduction: Pieter de la Court (1618-1685) was the son of a wealthy textile merchant from Flanders who moved to Leiden in the Dutch Republic in about 1613 in order to be able to freely practice his religion and to profit from the rapid expansion of the cloth trade, which made the city the most important cloth manufacturing center in Europe during the seventeenth century. He studied at Leiden University, travelled widely through Europe and, with his brother, established one of the most important cloth manufacturing businesses in Leiden. Despite his immigrant background, he was able to penetrate the social elite of the Republic. De la Court was an advocate for a secular republican form of government and a severe critic of the political roles of the aristocracy, monarchical forms of government, and the state established religion. He sought political support for his controversial views and his major work, *The Interest of Holland*, first published in 1662, benefitted from Johan de Witte's comments. De Witt was the *de facto* political leader of the Republic between the death of William II, the Prince of Orange and Stadholder, in 1650 and 1672, when Prince William III became Stadholder.

De la Court's book was an explanation of the Republic's economic success, which he ascribed to Holland's policy of promoting relatively free competition, republican government and religious toleration. The book was an immediate success in the Republic but its author was widely criticized and persecuted by conservatives. The Reformed Church, the state church, condemned and barred him from membership and supporters of the Princes of Orange vilified him for his critique of all aristocratic and monarchical government. In 1672, the year the Dutch call the *rampjaar*, the year of disaster, Louis XIV of France invaded the Republic while England's Charles II's naval forces attacked it at sea. When the Republic seemed unprepared to defend itself to the onslaught, Johan de Witt not only fell from power, but also was lynched by a mob, while the Prince of Orange, William III, (who would invade England in 1688 and become its king) reestablished the power of the Stadholder in the Republic. Fearing for his life, de la Court fled to Antwerp. He returned in 1673 and lived his life in Holland. His *Interest van Holland* was translated into English and became popular among European advocates of religious toleration, free competition, free trade and republican government. De la Court's work became an important part of what Jonathan Israel has called *The Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (2002).

The excerpts below are based upon the 1746 translation by John Campbell of the 1669 expanded edition, *Aanwijzing der heilsame politike gronden en maximen van de republike van Holland*.

Chapter I

Wherein are laid down the general political maxims which tend to the prosperity of all countries: and some reasons to make it evident, that the same do aptly agree to Holland and West-Friesland.

That we may not abruptly speak of the true interest and political maxims of *Holland* and *West-Friesland*, nor yet surprise the reader with unknown matters, I judge it necessary to begin with a general discourse of the universal and true political maxims of all countries: that the reader being enlightened by such reasoning, may the better comprehend the true political maxims of *Holland* and *West-Friesland* And seeing that almost all the people in *Europe*, as the *Spaniards, Italians, French, &c.* do express the same by the word *interest*, I shall often have occasion to use the same likewise here for brevity sake, in the same sense that they do; *viz.* seeing the true interest of all countries consists in the joint welfare of the governors and governed; and the same is known to depend on a good government, that being the true foundation whereon all the prosperity of any country is built; we are therefore to know, that a good government is not that where the well or ill-being of the subjects depends on the virtues or vices of the rulers; but (which is worthy of observation) where the well or ill being of the rulers necessarily follows or depends on the well or ill being of the subjects. For seeing we must believe that in all societies or assemblies of men, self is always preferred; so all sovereigns or supreme powers will in the first place seek their own advantage in all things, tho' to the prejudice of the subject. But seeing on the other hand true interest cannot be compassed by a government, unless the generality of the people partake thereof; therefore the publick welfare will ever be aimed at by good rulers. All which very aptly agrees with our *Latin* and *Dutch* proverb, that, *Tantum de publicis malis sentimus, quantum ad privatas res pertinet*; i.e. We are only sensible of publick afflictions, in so far as they touch our private affairs; for no body halts of another man's sore.

Whereby it clearly follows, that all wise men, whether monarchs, princes, sovereign lords, or rulers of republicks, are always inclined so to strengthen their country, kingdom, or city, that they may defend themselves against the power of any stronger neighbour. The rulers welfare therefore does so far necessarily depend on the welfare of the subject; else they would soon be conquer'd by stronger neighbouring princes, and be turn'd out of their government. Those monarchs and supreme powers, who by bad education, and great prosperity, follow their pleasures, suffer their government to fall into the hands of favourites and courtiers, and do commonly neglect this first duty; the said favourites in the mean time finding themselves vested with such sovereign power, do for the most part rule to the benefit of themselves, and to the prejudice, not only of such voluptuous and unwary chief magistrates, but also of their subjects;

and by consequence to the weakening of the political state; so that we have often seen revolutions of such monarchies by the ill government of favourites. But such princes as are wise, and do not entrust their power in other mens hands, will not omit to strengthen their dominions against their neighbours as much as possible. But when monarchies, or republicks are able enough to do this, and have nothing to fear from their neighbouring states or potentates, then they do usually, according to the opportunity put into their hands by the form of their government, take courses quite contrary to the welfare of the subject.

For then it follows as truly from the said general maxims of all rulers, that the next duty of monarchs, and supreme magistrates, is to take special care that their subjects may not be like generous and mettlesome horses, which, when they cannot be commanded by the rider, but are too headstrong, wanton, and powerful for their master, they reduce and keep so tame and manageable, as not to refuse the bit and bridle, I mean taxes and obedience. For which end it is highly necessary to prevent the greatness and power of their cities, that they may not out of their own wealth be able to raise and maintain an army in the field, not only to repel all foreign power, but also to make head against their own lord, or expel him. And as little, yea much less may prudent sovereign lords or monarchs permit that their cities, by their strong fortifications, and training their inhabitants to arms, should have an opportunity easily, if they pleas'd, to discharge and turn off their sovereign. But if herein a sovereign had neglected his duty, there's no way left for him, but to wait an opportunity to command such populous cities and strongholds by citadels, and to render them weak and defenceless. And tho' *Aristotle* says, that it very well suits an oligarchical state to have their cities under command of a castle, yet this is only true of a great and populous city, that hath a prince over it, and not of a city that governs itself, or hath a share in the supreme government; for in such a republick, the governor of that citadel would certainly be able to make himself master of that city, and to subjugate or overtop his rulers. And we see that this reason is so strong and clear, and confirm'd by experience, that the history of all former ages, as well as the age we live in, teach us, that the rulers of republicks, whatever they are, have wisely forbore erecting citadels, and do still continue to do so. So that it appears that the said maxim tending to the overthrow of great and populous cities, may be attributed to monarchs and princes at all times, but never to republicks, unless when they have inconsiderately subdued great cities; and tho' not willing to demolish them, yet are willing to keep them distinct from the sovereign government. But if the inconsiderate reader be

so far prepossess'd in favour of monarchy and against common freedom, that he neither can nor will submit himself to this way of reasoning, nor to the venerable and ancient lessons of old and renowned philosophers, then let him know, that the christian and invincible monarch *Justinian* has for ever established the said monarchical maxim by form of law in the *corpus juris*, now become the common law-book of all civiliz'd people, and especially of Christians.

For the said emperor having by his captain general of the east, *Belisarius*, reconquer'd from the *Goths* that part of *Africa* which he had formerly lost, and brought it under his subjection, gave him no order that the inhabitants of great cities should be better disciplin'd and provided with arms, or strengthened by good walls, that they might jointly with ease defend themselves, and their great and populous cities, against the assaults of those barbarous people: but on the contrary, he commands the said captain general *Belisarius* (and consequently, according to the *Roman* laws, all his other governors of provinces) to make such provision, that no city or strong hold lying on the frontiers be so great as it could not be well kept; but in such cases so to order them to be built, that they may be well defended with few soldiers, and particularly such as were in pay, and depended only on the emperor of *Rome*.

And tho' weak, voluptuous, dull and sluggish monarchs neglect all these things, yet will not the courtiers who govern in their stead, neglect to seek themselves, and to fill their coffers whether in war or in peace: and thus the subjects estates being exhausted by rapine, those great and flourishing cities become poor and weak And to the end that the subject should not be able to hinder or prevent such rapine, or revenge themselves, those favourites omit no opportunities to divest those populous cities of all fortifications, provision, ammunition of war, and to hinder the exercising of the commonalty in the use of arms. Since it appears from the said maxims, that the publick is not regarded but for the sake of private interest; and consequently, that is the best government, where the chief rulers may obtain their own welfare by that of the people. It follows then to be the duty of the governours of republicks to seek for great cities, and to make them as populous and strong as possible, that so all rulers and magistrates, and likewise all others that serve the publick either in country or city, may thereby gain the more power, honour and benefit, and more safely possess it, whether in peace or war: and this is the reason why commonly we see that all republicks thrive and flourish far more in arts, manufacture, traffick, populousness and strength, than the dominions and cities of monarchs: for where there is liberty, there will be riches and people.

To bring all this home, and make it suit with our state, we ought to consider that *Holland* may easily be defended against her neighbours; and that the flourishing of manufactures, fishing, navigation, and traffick, whereby that province subsists, and (its natural necessities or wants being well considered) depends perpetually on them else would be uninhabited: I say the flourishing of those things will infallibly produce great, strong, populous and wealthy cities, which by reason of their convenient situation, may be impregnablely fortified: all of which to a monarch, or one supreme head, is altogether intolerable. And therefore I conclude, that the inhabitants of *Holland*, whether rulers or subjects, can receive no greater mischief in their polity, than to be governed by a monarch, or supreme lord; that on the other side, God can give no greater temporal blessing to a country in our condition, than to introduce and preserve a free commonwealth government.

But seeing this conclusion opposeth the general long-continued prejudices of all ignorant persons, and consequently of most of the inhabitants of the *United Provinces*, and that some of my readers might distaste this treatise upon which I have already said, unless somewhat were spoken to obviate their mistakes, I shall offer them these reasons.

Altho' by what hath been already said, it appears, that the inhabitants of a republick are infinitely more happy than subjects of a land governed by one supreme head; yet the contrary is always thought in a country where a prince is already reigning, or in republicks, where one supreme head is ready to be accepted.

For not only officers, courtiers, idle gentry, and soldiers, but also all those that would be such, knowing that under the worst government they use to fare best, because they hope that with impunity they may plunder and rifle the citizens and country people, and so by the corruption of the government enrich themselves, or attain to grandeur, they cry up monarchical government for their private interest to the very heavens: altho God did at first mercifully institute no other but a commonwealth government, and afterwards in his wrath appointed one sovereign over them. Yet for all this, those blood-suckers of the state, and, indeed of mankind, dare to speak of republicks with the utmost contempt, make a mountain of every molehill, discourse of the defects oft hem at large, and conceal all that is good in them, because they know none will punish them for what they say: wherefore all the rabble (according to the old wants being well considered) depends perpetually on them at large, and conceal all that is good in them, because they know that none will punish them for what they: wherefore all the rabble,

(according to the old *Latin* verse) being void of knowledge and judgment, and therefore inclining to the weather or safe side, and mightily valuing the vain and empty pomp of kings and princes, say *amen* to it; especially when kept in ignorance, and irritated against the lawful government by preachers, who aim at dominion, or would introduce an independent and arbitrary power of Church government; and such (God amend it) are found in *Holland*, and the other *United Provinces*, insomuch, that all virtuous and intelligent people have been necessitated to keep silence, and to beware of disclosing the vices of their princes, or of such as would willingly be their governors, or of courtiers and rude military men, and such ambitious and But seeing this conclusion opposeth the general and long-continued ungovernable preachers as despise God, and their native country.

Nay there are few inhabitants of a perfect free state to be found, that are inclinable to teach others, how much better a republick is than a monarchy, or one supreme head, because they know that no one will reward them for it; and that on the other side, kings, princes, and great men are so dangerous to be conversed with, that even their friends can scarcely talk with them of the wind and weather, but at hazard of their lives; and kings with their long arms can give heavy blows. And altho' all intelligent and ingenuous subjects of monarchs, who have not, with lying sycophantical courtiers, cast off all shame, are generally by these reasons, and daily experience, fully convinced of the excellency of a republick above a monarchical government; yet nevertheless, many virtuous persons, lovers of monarchy, do plausibly maintain, that several nations are of that temper and disposition, that they cannot be happily governed but by a single person, and quote for this the examples of all the people in *Asia* and *Africa*, as well as *Europe*, that lie southerly. They do also alledge, that all the people who lie more northerly, are more fit to be governed by a single person, and with more freedom; as from *France* to the northward, all absolute monarchical government ceaseth; and therefore maintain or assert, with such ignorant persons as I mentioned before, that the *Hollanders* in particular are so turbulent, factious, and disingenuous, that they cannot be kept in awe, and happily governed, but by a single person; and that the histories of the former reigns or government by earls, will sufficiently confirm it.

But on the other side, the patriots, and lovers of a free-state will say, that the foregoing government by earls is well known to have been very wretched and horrid, their reigns filling history with continual wars, tumults, and detestable actions, occasioned by that single person. And that on the contrary, the *Hollanders*, subsisting by manufactures, fishing, navigation, and

commerce, are naturally very peaceable, if by such a supreme head they were not excited to tumults. Whether this be so or not, may be learned and confirmed too in part from those histories.

But here it may be said, that things are much altered within these 100 years last; for *Holland* then subsisted mostly by agriculture, and there were then no soldiery, treasure, or fortified places to be at the earl's disposal. But when he had wars, it was with the help of his homagers and tenants, only subsidies or money being given him at his request by the states of the country: And moreover, the cities of *Holland*, and castles of the nobility were (according to the then method of war) so strong, that they could not be taken by the said earls, without great forces employed against them; that the states of *Holland* in their assemblies, have boldly contended for their rights against the earl's encroachments. Therefore these earls, on the other side, by reason of their dignity, had many adherents that depended on them, which must needs make that government by earls every way unsteady, weak and tumultuous.

To this an approver of monarchical government may further add, that *Holland* now wholly subsists by traffick, and that one supreme head, captain-general, or stadtholder, would have his own life-guards at the *Hague*, the place of assembly, and likewise the assistance of a great and well-paid army, and of all the preachers, and by them the love of the whole populace; and that at his pleasure he may dispose of all the impregnable frontier towns of those provinces that have no suffrages or voices in the state, tho' he should not increase his strength by any foreign alliances, or by collusion and flattery with the deputies of the other provinces of the generality; insomuch that the states of *Holland* would not dare not, in their assemblies, to open their mouths against the interest of such a supreme head, or if they did, he would order his soldiers to take them by the collar, and might easily overpower most of the cities of *Holland*, the people being unaccustomed to arms, and moreover divided, fortifications but slight and mean in comparison of the present way of fortifying: so that one may truly say, that the *Hollanders* by setting up one supreme head over themselves, may now with ease, and without tumult, be govern'd like sheep, by an irresistible sovereign, against whom they durst not speak one word, when he should think fit to sheer flay or devour them.

Now what there is in this, and whether the *Hollanders* would be happy in such a condition, I shall at large hereafter give you my judgment.

But as to the stupidity of the *Hollanders*, whether that be so great, as that they have not

wit enough to form a free commonwealth; and having found that precious jewel of freedom, would, with *Esop's* cocks, prefer a grain of corn before it: This is what hath not been judged so hitherto, but on the contrary. Which that it may be evident to the reader, he may be pleas'd to observe the prudent conduct of the states of *Holland*, at their great assembly in the years 1650 and 1651, as also seriously to ponder and weigh the manifold reasons and examples produced to this end in their *deduction* of the year 1654. All this is yet further confirmed by that unanimous resolution of the 23^d of *January* 1657, wherein the states of *Holland* unanimously declared, after consulting the general assemblies, or common-halls of the respective cities in that province, to hold for a fundamental and certain maxim, "That to place a perpetual head, chieftain, or general over the army, is not only needless, but likewise exceeding prejudicial, and that accordingly in this province all things shall be thus directed; that whenever in a time of war, and pressing necessity, the states of *Holland*, with the other provinces, shall think fit to proceed to elect a general for the army, or that upon any other occasion a captain-general should be chosen, then not to choose such a chieftain as shall have a perpetual commission, but for such an expedition, campaign, or occasion only as may happen, &c." And moreover, you may there see, that these, and other vigorous resolutions of the like nature, were taken with this special proviso, "that the said resolution shall not be dispensed with, but by the unanimous consent of all the members of the said assembly."

By this you may perceive, that the supposition of the *Hollanders* being phlegmatick and dull, and of a slavish nature, is altogether groundless; for seeing they became not free but by the death of the last stadtholder and captain general [William II], and that it was unseasonable and imprudent before that time, for them to show their commendable zeal for their freedom, and their skill in point of government: and seeing it is evident, that a generation of men that are in freedom, must be overcome, before we can pass a right judgment thereof, and stop the mouths of opposers; we must therefore, leave it to God and time: and if such as like monarchical government, and those base and slavish opposers of liberty survive those times, they will then be able to discern which of the two governments is founded on best reason.

It shall not satisfy me to have said thus much in general; for seeing the states of *Holland* in their *deduction*, *Chap. 6. Art. 29.* declare, that they will not lose their freedom, but with their lives; I shall therefore presume to give my opinion of the political maxims of *Holland*, hoping that my sincere zeal and uprightness to express the same for the benefit of the publick, will be so

acceptable to our lawful rulers, that tho' I may have failed in some things, and by stating the true interest of my country, have been necessitated to reflect on persons, who seek their advantage to the prejudice of *Holland*, as it is now governed; the said rulers, and true lovers of their native country, will so favour this work, and its author, against the said malevolent persons, that it shall never repent him to have been the first generous and bold undertaker of so commendable a work. But howsoever things happen, or times oppose it, *recte flicisse merces est, & ipsa sui pretium virtus*; (*i.e.* to do good is a reward of it self, and virtue carries its own recompense along with it) I shall then, having done my duty as an honest man, good citizen, and upright christian, that may not bury his talent, be able to take comfort in my sincere endeavours: and posterity, into whose hands these writings may fall, will, in spite of all the present powers that oppose it, be able to judge impartially, and that with a sound judgment; because by that time they will have learned, by joyful or sad experience, whether *Holland's* interest can be settled upon any other foundation or maxims than those herein exprest; and whether these reasons of mine will not be confirmed by the experience of following ages.

Chapter IX

That the inhabitants of Holland, being in a state of freedom, are by a common interest wonderfully linked together; which is also shew'd by a rough calculation of the number of inhabitants, and by what means they subsist.

We are moreover well to consider, that fishing is not the sole cause of traffick, nor fishing and traffick the cause of manufactory; as also that these three together do not always give occasion for the shipping that is to let out to freight, which is meant by navigation: but that fishing flourishes much more in those parts, because traffick, navigation and manufactures are settled among us, whereby the fish and oil taken may be transported and consumed. Likewise that more than the one half of our trading would decay, in case the trade of fish were destroyed, as well as all other sorts of commodities about which people are employed in *Holland*, · besides that, by consequence the *inland consumption* of all foreign goods being more than one half diminished, the traffick in those parts would fall proportionably.

It is also certain, that of necessity all sorts of manufactures would be lessened more than

a moiety [half], if not annihilated, as soon as this country should come to be bereft of fishing, and of trading in those commodities which are spent abroad. And concerning owners of ships let out to freight, it is evident that they wholly depend on the prosperity or success of fishing, manufactory, and traffick: for seeing our country yields almost nothing out of its own bowels; therefore the ships that lie for freight, can lade nothing but what the merchants or traders put on board them of fish, manufactory, or merchandize. And as little would foreign ships carry goods to *Holland*, in case no fishermen, merchants, or traders dealing in manufactory dwelt there. And contrariwise it is certain, that our fishers, manufacturers and traders, find a mighty conveniency and benefit in our great number of freight-ships, which continually lie for freight in all parts of the world, and are ready to carry the same at an easy rate to any place desired. So that the *English* and *Flemish* merchants, &c. do oft times know no better way to transport their goods to such foreign parts as they design, than to carry them first to *Amsterdam*, and from thence to other places, especially when our admiralties, according to their duty, take care to convoy and defend our merchant ships, with men of war, against all pirates, or sea-robbers whatsoever. It is also evident, that the husbandmen, or boors of *Holland*, can very well sell all the product or profit of their land, cattle, firing, &c. to the inhabitants that are fishers, manufacturers, traders, navigators, and those that depend on them; which is a great advantage beyond what all other boors have, who for the most part have their commodities spent abroad, and consequently must bear the charges of freight, and the duties outwards and inwards, and must also allow a double gain to the merchants and buyers. So that this great number of people, that are not husbandmen, are I think the only cause that those country boors, tho' heavily taxed, are able to subsist. And seeing all the said inhabitants have need of meat, drink, clothing, housing, and of the gain gotten by foreign consumption that is needful to support it; it is evident, that all the other inhabitants depend and live upon the aforesaid fishers, traders and navigators.

And how remarkable it is, that all rulers and others, who for any service depend on them, have a benefit by their great numbers, is so clear, that there needs no more to be said for proof for when there were but few inhabitants in this country, within less than 100 years, the most eminent offices of burgomaster, and *schepens* or sheriffs, were even in the principal cities so great a burden as not to be born without much charge; whereas it is now become profitable to be but a city messenger, or undertaker to freight ships, seeing men are thereby enabled to maintain their families.

Furthermore, having a mind to convince the reader, not only by my reasoning, but by his own experience, that the prosperity of *Holland* is built upon the foresaid means of subsistence, and on no other; I find myself obliged to make a calculation of the number of people in *Holland* that are fixed inhabitants, or depend upon them; and at the same time, as far as I am able, to reckon in what proportion those people are maintain'd by the means of subsistence before mentioned. In order to this I shall on the one hand consider, that Sir *Walter Raleigh*, endeavouring to move king *James* of *England* to advance the fishing trade, manufactures, and traffick by sea, hath possibly exceeded in his account of the profits arising from it, and augmented the number of the people that live upon it somewhat above the truth.

And on the other hand I shall consider what *Gerard Malines* saith, in his *Lex Mercatoria*, *Ann.* 1622. that in *Flanders* there were then counted one hundred and forty thousand families; which being reckoned, one with another, at five persons each, they would amount to seven hundred thousand people. I shall likewise consider that in *Holland* that same year, the states laid a poll-tax upon all inhabitants, none excepted save strangers, prisoners, and vagrants, and those that were on the other side the line; yet were there found in all *South-Holland* that same wise no more than four hundred eighty one thousand nine hundred thirty and four: altho' the commissioners instructions for that end were very strict and severe, to prevent all fraud and deceit. However that we may make the better guess whether this was a faithful account, I shall give you the particulars of it as registered in the chamber of Accounts.

Dort with its villages,	40523
Haerlem with its villages,	69648
Delft with its villages,	41744
Leyden and Rynland,	94285
Amsterdam and its villages,	115022
Goude and its villages,	24662
Rotterdam with its villages,	28339
Gornichem with its villages,	7585
Schiedam with its villages,	10393
Schoonhoven with its villages,	10703
Briel with its villages,	20156
The Hague,	17430

Heusden. 1444
481934

And supposing that West-Friesland might yield the
fourth part of the inhabitants 120483
of South Holland, it would amount to in all 602417

But because possibly none but intelligent readers, and such as have travelled, will believe, what we see is customary in all places, that the number of people in all populous countries is excessively magnified, and that the common readers will think, that since many would be willing to evade the poll-tax, there was an extraordinary fraud in the number given in: I shall therefore follow the common opinion, and conclude, that the number of people was indeed much greater, and that these countries are since that time much improved in the number of inhabitants; and accordingly I shall give a guess as by vulgar report, that the whole number, without excluding any inhabitants whatsoever, may amount to two millions and four hundred thousand people, and that they maintain themselves as followeth, *viz.*

By the fisheries at sea, and setting them out with ships, rigging, cask, salt, and other materials, or instruments, and the traffick that depends thereon, 450000.

By agriculture, inland-fishing, herding, hay-making, turf-making, and by furnishing those people with all sorts of materials as they are boors, or husbandmen, 200000.

By making all manner of manufactures, shipping, works of art, mechanick or handicraft works, which are consumed abroad; as likewise by trade relating to the said manufactures, 650000.

By navigation or sailing for freight and trade jointly, by which I mean carriage into foreign parts for selling and buying; as also carrying to and from Holland all such wares and merchandise as relate not to our fishing and manufactory, nor depend thereon: and lastly, I include herein also all inhabitants that are anyways serviceable to such traders, and ships let out to freight, amounting in all to.

250000.

By all these inhabitants, as being men, women, and children, that must be provided, and

by working about what is spent in this country, as food, drink, clothing, housing, and by making or selling household stuff, and all other things for art, ease, pleasure, or ornament.

650000.

By the labour and care of all the above-mentioned persons, being gentry without employment or calling, civil magistrates and officers, those that live upon their estates or money, soldiers, the poor in hospitals, beggars, &c.

200000.

In all 2400000

And tho' this calculation, whether considered as to the number of the inhabitants, or their proportionable means of subsistence, is very rough and uncertain; yet I suppose it to be evident, that the eighth part of the inhabitants of Holland could not be supplied with necessaries out of its own product, if their gain otherwise did not afford them all other necessaries: so that *homo homini deus in statu politico*, one man being a god to another under a good government, it is an unspeakable blessing for this land, that there are so many people in it, who according to the nature of the country are honestly maintain'd by such suitable or proportionable means, and especially that the welfare of all the inhabitants (the idle gentry, and foreign soldiers in pay excepted) from the least to the greatest, does so necessarily depend on one another: and above all, it is chiefly considerable, that there are none more really interested in the prosperity of this country than the rulers of this aristocratical government, and the persons that live on their estates.

For fishers, boors, or country people, owners of ships let to freight, merchants and manufacturers, in a general destruction of a country, could easily transport themselves into foreign parts, and there set up their fishing, agriculture, or husbandry, shipping, merchandize and manufactures: But such as have lands, or immovable estates cannot do this; and supposing they could, and should sell their estates and remove into other countries, yet would they there have no calling to subsist by, much less can they expect to be made use of in the government, or procure any office or advantage depending upon it.

However, this excellent and laudable harmony and union may be violated, even to the ruin of all the inhabitants, none excepted but courtiers and soldiers, and that by one sole mistake in government, which is the electing one supreme head over all these inhabitants, or over their armies. For seeing such a single person for the increase of his grandeur, may curb and obstruct *Holland's* greatness and power, by the deputies of the lesser provinces of the generality, who also

may in their course check the great and flourishing cities in their own provincial assemblies, by the suffrages or votes of the envious gentry. And the lesser cities, and the great persons, courtiers and soldiers being all of his party, and depending on him, must needs prey upon the industrious or working inhabitants, and so will make use of all their power for their own benefit, and to the detriment of the commonalty. And to the end they may receive no let from the great and strong cities of *Holland*, it follows that they would either weaken or lessen all such cities, and impoverish the inhabitants, to make them obedient without control. Which if so, we have just cause continually to pray, *A furore monarcharum libera nos Domine*; God preserve *Holland* from the fury of a monarch, prince, or one supreme head. But what there is of reality in this, shall be handled hereafter in a chapter apart.

Chapter XIV

That. freedom or toleration in, and about the service or worship of God, is a powerful means to preserve many inhabitants in Holland and allure foreigners to dwell amongst us.

In the first place it is certain, that not only those that deal in manufacturing, fishing, traffick, shipping, and those that depend on them, but also all Civilized people must be supposed to pitch upon some outward service of God as the best, and to be averse from all other forms; and that such persons do abhor to travel, and much more to go and dwell in a country, where they are not permitted to serve and worship God outwardly, after such a manner as they think fit. And also that as to freedom about the outward service of God, during the troubles, and shortly after; when the manufacturies, trading, and navigation for freight began to settle in *Holland*, the magistrate was so tender and indulgent, that there were very few useful inhabitants driven thence by any rigour or hardship, much less any foreigners: so that it brings that maxim into my mind, that the surest way to keep any thing, is to make use of the same means whereby it was at first acquired.

And among those means, comes first into consideration the freedom of all sorts of religion differing from the Reformed. For in regard all our neighbours (except *Great Britain* and the *United Provinces*) and for the most part all far remote lands, are not of the reformed religion; and that the clergy under the papacy have their own jurisdiction: and seeing, if not all

those that are called *spiritual*, yet the clergy at least that differ from us have in all countries a settled livelihood, which depends not on the political welfare of the land: we see that through human frailty, they do in all these countries think fit to teach and preach up all that can have a tendency to their own credit, profit, and ease, yea, tho' it be to the ruin of the of the whole country; and moreover, when the doctrine, counsel, and admonition of these men is not received by any of their auditors, these clergymen do then very unmercifully use to prosecute them *odio theologico*.

Whereas nevertheless all christian clergymen ought to rest satisfied, according to their master's doctrine, to enlighten the minds of men with the truth, and to show them the way to eternal life, and afterwards to endeavour to persuade, and turn such enlightened persons in all humility and meekness into the path that leads to salvation. It is evident that all people, especially Christians, and more particularly their publick teachers, ought to be far from compelling, either by spiritual or bodily punishment, those that for want of light and persuasion are not inclined to go to the publick church, to do any outward act, or to speak any words contrary to their judgment; for *potestas coercendi*, the coercive power is given only to the civil magistrate; all the power and right which the ecclesiasticks have, if they have any, must be derived from them, as the same is excellently and unanswerably shown by *Lucius Antistius Constans*, in his book *de Jure Ecclesiasticorum* lately printed.

Indeed the essential and only difference between the civil and ecclesiastical power is this, that the civil doth not teach and advise as the other doth, but commands and compels the inhabitants to perform or omit such outward actions, or to suffer some certain punishment for their disobedience; so that they have dominion over the subject, *sive volentes, sive nolentes*, whether they will or no. Whereas on the other side, the duty of christian teachers is to instruct and advise men to all christian virtues, as trusting in God our Saviour, the hope of possessing a future eternal blessed life, and the love of God and our neighbour. Which virtues consisting only in the inward thoughts of our minds, cannot be put into us by any outward violence or compulsion, but only by the enlightening and convincing reasons of ministers, who to effect this, must on all occasions comply with the state and condition of their hearers, and be the least amongst them: and thus making themselves the least, and thereby converting most, and bringing forth most good fruits, they shall be the first in the kingdom of heaven. *Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant*. And besides, it is well known that our Lord Christ

pretended to no other kingdom or dominion on earth (*his kingdom not being of this world*) than that every one being convinced of this his true doctrine, and wholesome advice, and of his holy sufferings for us, should freely be subject to him, not with the outward man only, to do or omit any action, to speak or be silent, but with the inward man *in spirit and truth*, to love God, himself, and his neighbour; to trust in that God and Saviour in all the occurrences of our lives, and by his infinite wisdom, mercy and power, to hope for a blessed and everlasting state for our souls. So that it became not his disciples, or followers, and apostles, much less our present publick preachers, to set themselves above their spiritual lord and master, to lord it over others. *The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; but ye shall not be so.* The gospel also teacheth us, that they should not lord it over the people, but ought to be their servants, and ministers of the word of God. But notwithstanding all this, we see, that by these evil ambitious maxims of the clergy, almost in all countries, the dissenters, or such as own not the opinion of the publick preachers, are turned out of the civil state and persecuted; for they are not only excluded from all government, magistracies, offices and benefices (which is in some measure tolerable for the secluded inhabitants, and agrees very well with the maxims of polity, in regard it is well known by experience in all countries to be necessary, as tending to the common peace, that one religion should prevail and be supported above all others, and accordingly is by all means authorized, favoured, and protected by the state, yet not so, but that the exercise of other religions at the same time be in some measure publickly tolerated, at least not persecuted) but are so persecuted, that many honest and useful inhabitants, to escape those fines, banishments, or corporal punishments, to which by adhering to the prohibited service of God they are subject, abandon their own sweet native country, and, to obtain their liberty, chose to come and sit down in our barren and heavy tax'd country.

Yea, and which is more, in some countries these churchmen will go so far, as by an inquisition to inquire who they are that differ from the opinion of the authorized preachers; and first by admonition and excommunication, bereave them of their credit, and afterwards of their liberty, estate or life. And as heretofore the *Romish* clergy were not satisfied with obstructing the divine service of those that dissented from them, but laboured to bring the inquisition into all places; so would it be a great wonder if the ecclesiasticks in *Holland* should not follow the same worldly course, to the ruin of the country, if they conceiv'd it tended to the increase of their own profit, honour, power and grandeur. At least we see it in almost all countries, where the best and

most moderate, yea even where the reformed clergy bear sway, that dissenting assemblies are prohibited. And seeing that the publick divine worship is so necessary for mankind, that without it they would fall into great ignorance about the service of God, and consequently into a very bad life; and since man's life is subject to many miseries, therefore every one is inclined in this wretched state to nourish or comfort his soul with the hope of a better: and as men hope very easily to obtain the same by a free and willing attention to a doctrine they think to be built on a good foundation; so every one may easily perceive how impossible it is to make any man by compulsion to hope for such advantage, in that which he cannot apprehend to be well grounded; and accordingly the dissenting party clearly discover⁴ the vanity of all manner of force in matters of religion.

Moreover, seeing all matters of fact, and likewise of faith, must in some measure be proved by testimony of good credit, such as is irreproachable, or beyond exception; and that all that are thus persecuted, whether by excommunication, fines, banishment or corporal punishments, reproach and hate their persecutors, to wit, the publick authorised preachers, as their enemies; it is evident that those persecutors lose all their weight to persuade people in matters of faith by means of their publick authority, which otherwise would be great among the common people. And besides, we see, that all persecuted people continually exercise their thoughts upon any thing that seems to confirm their own judgment, and oft-times out of mere stomach fullness and animosity will not ponder and sedately consider their enemies reasons: so that the persecuted people being wholly turn'd aside from the truth of God's worship by such violence and compulsion, become e in their error. By this means manifold wars, miseries and removals of habitations have been occasioned since the reformation: and the like actions will still have the like effects. How prejudicial such coercive practices are, especially in rich trafficking cities, *Lubeck*, *Collen*, and *Aix la Chapelle* may instruct us, where both the rulers and subjects of those lately so famous cities have since the reformation lost most of their wealth, and chiefly by such compulsion in religion; many of the inhabitants being thereby driven out of their respective cities, and strangers discouraged from coming to reside in them. And tho' according to clear reason, and holy writ, the true glory and fame of all rulers consists in the multitude of their subjects, yet do these churchmen (forgetting their credit, their country, and their God, which is a threefold impiety) continue to teach, that it is better to have a city of an orthodox or sound faith, ill stocked with people, than a very populous, and godly city, but tainted with

heresy. Thus it is evident that to allow all men the exercise of their religion with more freedom than in other nations, would be a very effectual means for *Holland* to allure people out of other countries, and to fix them, that are there already; provided such freedom be not prejudicial to our civil state and free government. For, as on the one side those of the *Romish* religion have their spiritual heads, and the K. of *Spain* (heretofore Earl of *Holland*) for their neighbour, who may help the *Romanists* in the time of intestine division; so on the other side it is manifest, that our own government by length of time is enlarged, and the *Spanish Netherlands* become weak; and that notwithstanding the renunciation of the said superiority over *Holland* we are in peace with them, it is also certain that by persecuting the *Romanists* we should drive most of the strangers out of our country; and the greatest number of the dissenting old inhabitants, viz. the gentry, monied-men and boors, who continue to dwell amongst us, would become so averse to the government, that in time it would be either a means to bring this country into the hands of our enemy, or else drive those people out of the country: which cruelty would not only be pernicious, but altogether unreasonable in the rulers and reformed subjects, who always us'd to boast that they fought for their liberty, and constantly maintain'd, that several publick religions may be peaceably tolerated and practised in one and the same country; that true religion hath advantage enough when it's allowed to speak, *errantis poena doceri*, and that there is no greater sign of a false religion (or at least of one to the truth of which men dare not trust) than to persecute the dissenters from it. So that it appears that toleration and freedom of religion is not only exceeding beneficial for our country in general, but particularly for the reformed religion, which may and ought to depend upon its own evidence and veracity.

Chapter XV

A second means to keep Holland populous, is a plenary freedom for all people that will cohabit with us, to follow any occupation for a livelihood.

Next to a liberty of serving God, follows the liberty of gaining a livelihood without any dear-bought city-freedom, but only by virtue of a fixed habitation to have the common right of other inhabitants: which is here very necessary for keeping the people we have, and inviting strangers to come among us. For it is self-evident that landed-men, or others that are wealthy, being forced by any accident to leave their country or habitation, will never chose *Holland* to dwell in, being

so chargeable a place, and where they have so little interest for their money. And for those who are less wealthy, it is well known, that no man from abroad will come to dwell or continue in a country where he shall not be permitted to get an honest maintenance. And it may be easily considered how great an inconveniency it would be in this country, for the inhabitants, especially strangers, if they should have no freedom of choosing and practising such honest means of livelihood as they think best for their subsistence; or if, when they had chosen a trade, and could not live by it, they might not chose another. This then being evident, that strangers without freedom of earning their bread, and seeking a livelihood, cannot live amongst us: and as it is certain, that our manufacturies, fisheries, traffick and navigation, with those that depend upon them, cannot without continual supplies of foreign inhabitants be preserved here, and much less augmented or improved; it is likewise certain, that among the endless advantages which accrue to Holland by strangers, and which might accrue more, our boors may be likewise profited. For we see that for want of strangers in the country, the boors must give such great yearly and day-wages to their servants, that they can scarcely live but with great toil themselves, and their servants live rather in too great plenty. The same inconveniencies we are likewise sensible of in cities amongst tradesmen and servants, who are here more chargeable and burdensome, and yet less serviceable than in any other countries.

It is certain, that in all cities, tho' they invite strangers to cohabit with them, the ancient inhabitants have advantage enough by the government and its dependencies. And it is evident, that the old inhabitants, who live by their occupations, have a great advantage over the new comers, by their many relations, customers and acquaintance, most of the old manufactures, and great inland consumption: all which particulars yield the old inhabitants certain gain. But new comers leaving their own country upon any accident, and besides their moveable goods, bringing with them the knowledge of what is abounding, or wanting in their native country, and of all sorts of manufactures; they cannot live in Holland upon the interest of their money, nor on their real estates: so that they are compelled to lay out all their skill and estate in devising and forming of new fisheries, manufactures, traffick and navigation, with the danger of losing all they have. For he that sits idle in Holland, must expect to get nothing but certain and speedy poverty; but he that ventures may gain, and sometimes find out and meet with a good fishery, manufacture, merchandize or traffick: and then the other inhabitants may come in for a share in that new occupation, which is also very needful, because the old handicraft works being beaten down

lower and lower in price, yield less profit. And therefore it is necessary that all strangers that are masters, journey-men, consumptioners, merchants, traders, &c. should live peaceably amongst us, without any disturbance, let, or molestation whatever, and use their own estates and trades as they shall judge best.

And tho' this will be ever detrimental to some old inhabitants, who would or other exclude them from their trade; and therefore will alledge, that a citizen ought to have more privilege than a stranger; yet all inhabitants who have here a certain place of abode, or desire to have it as they are then no strangers, but inhabitants, so ought they to be permitted, as well as the burghers, to earn their necessary food, seeing they are in greater want than their opposers. And it is notorious, that all people, who to the prejudice of the common good would exclude others, that are likewise inhabitants of this land, from the common means of subsistence, or out of the respective cities, and for that end would have some peculiar favour from the rulers beyond the rest, are very pernicious and mischievous inhabitants: it is also certain, that a state which cannot subsist of itself, ought not to deny that strangers should live amongst them with equal freedom with themselves, under pretence of privilege and right of cities; nor should they exclude any strangers, but endeavour continually to allure in new inhabitants; else such a state will fall to ruin. For the great dangers of carrying on new designs, of being robb'd at sea, of seeing their goods by factors to unknown people, on twelve months credit, and at the same time running the hazard of all revolutions by wars and monarchical governments against this state, and of losses among one another, are so important (yet all to be expected) that many inhabitants concerned in the fisheries, traffick, manufactory, and consequently in ships set out to freight, will give over their trade, and depart the country when they have been so fortunate as to have gained any considerable estate, to seek a securer way of living elsewhere. On the other hand, we are to consider, that there will ever be many bankrupts and forsaken trades, both by reason of the dangers of foreign trade, and intolerable domestick taxes, which cannot be denied by any that knows that in Amsterdam alone there are yearly about three hundred abandoned or insufficient estates registered in the chamber of accompts of that city; and therefore there are continually many inhabitants, who finding the gain uncertain, and the charge great, are apt to relinquish it. So that it is ever necessary that we leave all ways open for people to subsist by, and a full liberty, as aforesaid, to allure foreigners to dwell among us. Moreover, tho' it be not convenient in general for strangers (i.e. such who, tho' they dwell in Holland, and have continued there some

considerable time, are not natives) to partake of the government, yet is it very necessary, in order to fix them here, that we do not exclude them by laws.

Chapter XVI

That monopolizing companies and guilds, excluding all other persons from their societies, are very prejudicial to Holland.

Much less ought we to curb or restrain our citizens and natives, any more than strangers, from their natural liberty of seeking their livelihoods in their native country, by select and authoriz'd companies and guilds: for when we consider, that all the trade of our common inhabitants is circumscribed or bounded well nigh within Europe, and that in very many parts of the same, as France, England, Sweden, &c. our greatest trade and navigation thither is cramped by the high duties, or by patent companies, like those of our Indian societies; as also how small a part of the world Europe is, and how many merchants dwell in Holland, and must dwell there to support it; we shall have no reason to wonder, if all the beneficial traffick in these small adjacent countries be either worn out, or in a short time be glutted with an over-trade. But we may much rather wonder, why the greatest part of the world should seem unfit for our common inhabitants to trade in, and that they should continue to be debarred from it, to the end that some few persons only may have the sole benefit of it. It is certainly known that this country cannot prosper, but by means of those that are most industrious and ingenious, and that such patents or grants do not produce the ablest merchants. But on the other hand, because the grantees, whether by burghership, select companies, or guilds, think they need not fear that others, who are much more ingenious and industrious than themselves, and are not of the burghership, companies and guilds, shall lessen their profits; therefore the certain gains they reap make them dull, slow, unactive, and less inquisitive. Whereas on the other side, we say that necessity makes the old wife trot, hunger makes raw beans sweet, and poverty begets ingenuity. And besides, it is well known, now especially when Holland is so heavily taxed, that other less burdened people, who have no fisheries, manufactures, traffick and freight ships, cannot long subsist but by their industry, subtilty, courage, and frugality. In a word, these patent companies and guilds do certainly exclude many useful inhabitants from that trade and traffick. But those that possess

those privileges with sufficient knowledge and fitness, need not fear that others that are more industrious and ingenious than themselves, shall prevent them of their profit by the exercise of the like abilities and parts; neither can it be so fully carried on and improved for the common benefit of the country, by a small number of people, as by many: so that in the mean time other people that we cannot exclude from that traffick or manufacture by means of our grants and guilds, have a great opportunity of profitably improving that which so foolish, and with so much churlishness is prohibited to our common inhabitants. Whereas otherwise, the provident and industrious Hollanders would easily draw to them all foreign trade, and the making of incredibly more manufactures than we now work on. That which is objected against this is, that the Hollanders are a people of such a nature, that if the trade were open into Asia, Africa, and America, they would overstock all those countries with goods, and so destroy that trade to the prejudice of Holland; which is so far from the truth, and all appearance thereof, that it is hardly worth answering. For first, so great and mighty a trade by the Hollanders, in those vast and trafficking countries, would be the greatest blessing to them that could be wished for upon earth; would to God any of us could ever see Holland so happy. And next it cannot be denied, that even in this small Europe, the overstocking of countries with goods may indeed lessen the gains of some particular merchants; but yet after such a manner that the said overstocking with the said goods really is, and can be no other than an effect or fruit of a present overgrown trade of this country, in proportion to the smallness of those countries with which we are permitted to traffick. And thirdly, it is evident, that the Hollanders by such overstocking have never yet lost any trade in any country or place of Europe, nor can they lose it so long as that trade remains open, because that superfluity of goods transported is soon spent, and that same trade is by the same or some other of our merchants immediately reassumed and taken up, so soon as by a following scarcity in those countries there is any appearance of making more profit by those, or other commodities.

But supposing it to be true, that the Dutch merchants by overstocking those trading countries should run a risque of losing that trade in some parts; yet considering the smallness of those lands, it would then be doubly necessary to prevent the same by setting open the trade to Asia, Africa and America, for all the merchants of Holland. But on the other side, it is certain that the licensed monopolizing companies, by the unfaithfulness, negligence, and changeableness of their servants, and by their vast, and consequently unmanageable designs, who are not willing

to drive any trade longer than it yields excessive profit, must needs gain considerably in all their trade, or otherwise relinquish and forsake all countries that yield it not, which nevertheless would by our common inhabitants be very plentifully carried on.

In this respect it is worthy observation, that the authorized Greenland company made heretofore little profit by their fishing, because of the great charge of setting out their ships, and that the train-oil, blubber and whale-fins were not well made, handled, or cured; and being brought hither and put into warehouses, were not sold soon enough, nor to the company's best advantage. Whereas now that every one equips their vessels at the cheapest rate, follow their fishing diligently, and manage all carefully, the blubber, train-oil, and whale-fins are employed for so many uses in several countries, that they can sell them with that conveniency, that tho' there are now fifteen ships for one which formerly sailed out of Holland on that account, and consequently each of them could not take so many whales as heretofore; and notwithstanding the new prohibition of France, and other countries, to import those commodities; and tho' there is greater plenty of it imported by our fishers, yet those commodities are so much raised in the value above what they were whilst there was a company, that the common inhabitants do exercise that fishery with profit to the much greater benefit of our country, than when it was (under the management of a company) carried on but by a few. It is besides very considerable, that for the most part all trades and manufactures managed by guilds in Holland, do sell all their goods within this country to other inhabitants who live immediately by the fisheries, manufactories, freight ships, and traffick: so that no members of those guilds, under what pretext soever, can be countenanced or indulged in their monopoly, or charter, but by the excluding of all other inhabitants, and consequently to the hindrance of their country's prosperity. For how much soever those members sell their pains or commodities dearer than if that trade or occupation was open or free, all the other better inhabitants that gain their subsistence immediately, or by consequence by a foreign consumption, must bear that loss. And indeed our fishermen, dealers in manufactures, owners of freight-ships, and traders, being so burdened with all manner of imposts, to oppress them yet more in their necessity by these monopolies of guilds, and yet to believe that it redounds to the good of the land, because it tends to the benefit of such companies, is to me incomprehensible. These guilds are said indeed to be a useful sort of people; but next to those we call idle drones, they are the most unprofitable inhabitants of the country, because they bring in no profit from foreign lands for the welfare of the inhabitants of Holland.

Esop hath well illustrated this folly by a cat, who first lick'd off the oil from an oiled file, and continued licking, not observing that she had by little and little lick'd her tongue thorough which was given her to sustain her life, and carry nourishment into her body, nor that she fed not on a file which did not consume, but on her own blood before her tongue was totally consumed.

On the contrary, I can see no good, nor appearance of good, which the guilds in Holland do produce, but only that foreign masters and journeymen artificers, having made their works abroad, and endeavouring to sell them to our inhabitants, thereby to carry the profit out of our country into their own, are herein check'd and opposed by our masters of guilds or corporations. But besides that this is more to the prejudice than advantage of the country, since by consequence our fishers, manufacturers, traders, and owners of ships let to freight, are thereby bereft of the freedom of buying their necessaries at the cheapest rate they can; it is also evident, that this feeding of foreigners upon the Hollander would be more strenuously and profitably opposed and prevented, in case all handicraft work and occupations were permitted to be made, sold and practised by all, and no other people, except such as have their settled habitations in this country.