

*Request of those of the new religion to the nobles confederated in the Compromise, 1567*

Introduction; The document below was a request from the Calvinist consistories to the few remaining nobles of the Compromise, who added it to their third petition to Margaret of Parma of February 8, 1567. She rejected their appeal. The document is from E.H. Kossmann and A.F. Mellink, eds., *Texts Concerning the Revolt of The Netherlands*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974, pp. 81-83.

To the confederated seigniors and nobles,

My lords, because of the ardent desire we have always cherished to see the service of God and of the king in these Low Countries well and firmly established so that his obedient and faithful vassals and subjects might enjoy the state of prosperity they have so long been waiting for, we greatly rejoiced when we noticed that thanks to the agreement of 23

August [1566] such felicity had begun to be realised. We hoped then that this excellent measure, inspired--as it has pleased you to declare to us--by order of Her Highness and promises of the seigniors knights of the Order [the knights of the Golden Fleece, the prince Orange, and the Counts of Egmond, and Hoorne] might be kept inviolate to the prosperity of the country and the satisfaction of His Majesty's subjects. But to our very great regret we have found for a long time now and are finding every day more and more through clear, pernicious and very dangerous experiences, that the assurance which was given to us by you, seigniors, served only to make us stop our activities and to lull us, while means were being prepared and set in train to ruin and overwhelm us completely. We thought, according to the promises which it pleased you to give us, that it was the intention of the king and Her Highness that the inquisition and the execution of the religious edicts should cease and that public preaching (by which, it was declared, was meant the entire practice of our religion) should be permitted until such time as His Majesty and the States General of these Low Countries, legitimately assembled, would make some other resolution.

However, now, contrary to our expectations - which were based on your promises - we have seen that the edicts have been rigorously executed, and that some people who refused to swear to persevere forever in the faith of the Roman Church have been imprisoned and banished. The ministers of God's word have been persecuted, some even hanged, others have had their

beards torn off, harquebuses were fired and discharged at them, and some, who were standing close by, were mortally wounded. The assembled crowd was assaulted, some were miserably killed for attending services, others for chanting psalms when they returned from services, some were banished for having had their children baptised in the reformed church, and the children of others, baptised in this church, were seized and rebaptised forcibly in public by people who behaved in this respect as Anabaptists rather than adherents of the ancient canons. Letters were sent throughout the country prohibiting on pain of death all practise of the religion. The result was not only that in several places preaching was stopped but also that several of his Majesty's faithful subjects abandoned the country, their wives and their children because of these menaces. Hatred of the religion which we profess has also caused the people of Valenciennes and the whole country around, to be more grievously afflicted than they ever were by the avowed enemies of the country in the recent wars [the French, with whom war had been waged until 1559]. And it is beyond doubt that, if defeated, the same fate immediately awaits all the other churches. In Gelderland, Friesland and elsewhere, similar attacks daily take place and in several parts of this country attempts are being made to extirpate the practise of our religion not only by secret tricks and practices through the magistrates and the provincial States but also openly and by force. The country is swarming with armed men, by whom those of the religion in several towns and villages have been and still are more roughly treated than ever before by foreign enemies. They are outraged, pillaged, ravaged, their wives and daughters raped and many other intolerable outrages which need not be specified, are regularly committed.

All this is, as your seigniors know, directly contrary to your petition of 5 April and to the promises and assurances you have so often made to us. And though it is true that some professing the religion may have gone too far after your promises had been made, this was before there were any negotiations with them, and it ought not to be an excuse for punishing the others who very much regret those excesses. Moreover after negotiations had started, they willingly submitted to reason. If it is found that one of us does something that cannot be permitted, we accept, as is reasonable, that he be duly punished. It has always been our ardent desire and our intention to behave unpretentiously and unobtrusively, to practise all due obedience, and to perform all other normal duties because this is the way a just citizen must act

and also because we hope that leave to practise our religion freely will be continued. Your seigniors may now ask themselves if we who thought ourselves safe thanks to your promises but find ourselves so outrageously afflicted, have reason to complain of being abused, and, so to say, led to the slaughter house, and, under the pretence of obtaining liberty, rendered utterly miserable.