

*The true patriot to the good patriots, 1578*

Introduction: This pamphlet is attributed to Peter Beutterich, chief counsellor of Count John Casimir of the Palatinate who in October 1578 arrived in Ghent with his troops paid for by Queen Elizabeth of England. It contains an apology—a written defense or plea of their position--by the Ghent Calvinists directed to the Duke of Anjou. Anjou, who had become the heir to the French throne in 1576, was seen as a supporter of toleration for French Huguenots and in 1579 would be offered the sovereignty of the Netherlands by the Prince of Orange. The text is from E.H. Kossmann and A.F. Mellink, eds., *Texts Concerning the Revolt of The Netherlands*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974, pp. 159-63.

We must discover what is hidden under the cloak of the one and only Roman Catholic religion considered to be guaranteed by the Pacification of Ghent. The Pacification is held in such esteem that some of the most patriotic-minded and the greater part of the simple, honest people are blinded by the subterfuges and pretexts based on it. Their zeal for the common liberty subsides and comes completely to an end, and they dare not undertake anything against the tyranny for fear of burdening their conscience by harming the Roman Catholic religion in however small degree. This scruple, though small, these champions of the one and only Roman Catholic religion put on a par with the highest mountains.

Maintaining the one and only Roman Catholic religion in this country and maintaining tyranny there, comes to the same thing. I say that maintaining the one and only Roman Catholic religion in this country and maintaining a tyranny greater than that which prevails among the Barbarians and Turks, is one and the same thing. The Turks tyrannise over the body, and leave the conscience free, the champions of the one and only Roman Catholic religion want to tyrannise over both body and mind. To maintain the one and only Roman Catholic religion means the reintroduction of the penalty of banishment and confiscation, the rekindling of the stakes, the re-erection of the gallows in all parts of these provinces, the reintroduction of the inquisition and finally the resurrection from hell of those horrible and cursed edicts, at the remembrance of which all good patriots are filled with horror and abomination, when they call to mind the shedding of Belgian blood spilled by so many different martyrs on account of this sole pretext: the one and only Roman Catholic religion.

In this way it would be in vain and to your cost, patriots, to have taken so much trouble,

to have undergone such exertions, to have incurred such expenses, to have exhausted your means, and, as it were, to have taken the bread out of your own and your children's mouths. In vain have you overcome so many dangers, surmounted so many difficulties, and been shipwrecked so many times to attain full liberty. In this way you would turn yourselves into the most miserable, contemptible, even abominable beings who have ever lived on earth.

Will the world always be so blind? Is it possible that the Netherlands should once again be so mad and frantic as to bring even greater ruin on itself in order to maintain the Roman Catholic superstition? To establish the Roman Antichrist? Will parents, friends, confederates and allies, fellow citizens, fathers, mothers, children, brothers, sisters, discard patriotism and love to maintain the one and only Roman whore? Have not all disasters in Christianity, all wars and all that is connected with them, been planned by and taken their source in Rome, to be spread everywhere through the most flourishing kingdoms and provinces, all this to maintain the one and only Roman Catholic religion?

The poor world has been so blinded that to establish the reign of the Roman Antichrist it has tried to ruin the reign of Jesus Christ. Let us be Christians, let us be good patriots and fellow-citizens, let us be good parents, friends and allies to each other. Let us establish our liberty by such means as God has given us in hand. Let us leave to the Pope and to his helpers elsewhere the care of establishing his Roman religion in Rome. This however should not be done at our expense nor should it ruin us and our offspring.

True liberty and the maintenance of the one and only Roman Catholic religion are incompatible. Maintenance of the Roman Catholic religion and restoration of the Spanish tyranny amounts to the same thing. There is no difference between the aim of the Roman Catholics and the Spaniards. The latter want the establishment of the one and only Roman Catholic religion, and so do the former. The latter want people to render the king his due obedience, and so do the former. We do not deny that due obedience must be rendered to the king and sovereign lord, we avow it in our hearts and say it publicly. But there is a great difference between the obedience we owe to our sovereign and that which those champions of the one and only Roman Catholic religion require from us. In their view rendering the sovereign due obedience does not mean obeying him according to law, justice and equity, and to the

privileges and old customs; in their opinion it amounts to doing everything the tyrant commands, without uttering a word, without challenging it, without resisting; properly speaking, it amounts to being a serf and slave.

This is the end which these petty tyrants, the champions of the one and only Roman Catholic religion, have in view; this has been the aim of the Spaniards. How much have Holland and Zeeland suffered because they would not submit to the yoke of the Roman Catholic religion! What hardships they have endured! We [the other provinces of the Netherlands, such as Flanders and Brabant] who have achieved some degree of liberty thanks to the constancy and courage of Holland and Zeeland, but since the Pacification have not yet greatly exerted ourselves, do we shrink back, do we bow to the mere bragging of these Roman Catholics? ...

As to the other point, that the Flemish and particularly the inhabitants of Ghent want to organise themselves in the manner of Swiss cantons, it is clear that some of those who talk about leagues and Swiss cantonments, do not know that Ralph of Habsburg (King Rudolph of Hapsburg (1273-91)] from whom the whole present house of Austria is descended, was the protector and defender of the liberty of the Swiss, when they established it against the tyranny of their seigniors, as history bears witness. But not to enlarge upon this, if these calumniators think that holding one's own and protecting oneself from the tyranny and violence of the Spaniards and their adherents and the like, implies entering into an alliance in the Swiss way, we will concede that they are indeed concluding an alliance in the Swiss way. If they mean that allying themselves in the Swiss way implies that the towns and provinces promise to help each other and to oppose by all-possible means those who want to introduce the same tyranny as that of the Spaniards, under whatever pretext, is it not something commendable, worthy of all good patriots, not only to ally themselves in the Swiss way but even to wish to do all they can to ensure that all the provinces and towns in this country join? This would be the only true antidote to the Spanish poison and those who bestow this boon on the fatherland would merit perpetual praise from posterity. But if allying themselves in the Swiss way is thought to imply the abolition of all obedience, all duties, all respect due to the magistrates, who will be able to prove that they have ever felt inclined to ally themselves in the Swiss way? They know that the Word of God admonishes, exhorts and commands obedience to the laws, decrees and ordinances of the

sovereign magistrate, paying him tributes, taxes and other duties and bearing with a good grace the yoke of subjection, even if the sovereign should be an infidel, provided that the sovereign authority is kept inviolate and that the conscience of the inhabitants is not subject to tyranny. For in that case, one should follow St Peter's rule, that one should rather obey God than men. It is not necessary to embark upon a discussion of the duty of the subject to his sovereign magistrate, for this is not only a somewhat delicate matter but it carries us too far. It would also take the good patriots too long to reply to the calumnies and the fabricated lies of their enemies.