

*Two letters from the Prince of Orange to the Duchess of Parma, September 4, 1566*

Introduction: The Prince of Orange left Antwerp on August 18, after the outbreak of the violence known as image breaking, and returned to the city at the end of August to negotiate an end to the violence with the town consistory, which assigned three meeting places within the walls to the Calvinists. They are from E.H. Kossmann and A.F. Mellink, eds., *Texts Concerning the Revolt of The Netherlands*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1974, pp. 75-78.

Madame, all the time I have been in this town, I have been continually hindered from putting things straight. On my arrival I found everything in great disorder because those of the new religion who are so numerous in this town, had become so licentious and audacious, that they tried to subject everything to their will. Finally after several discussions and dispatches from both sides, it was considered fitting to come to an agreement with them. I send a duplicate of this to Your Highness: you will see that I did not in any way wish to go beyond the points contained in the accord made with the confederate seigniors and nobles [in accordance with the agreement which the governess reached with the delegates of the confederate nobles at the height of the image-breaking on August 23, public Protestant religious services would be tolerated at those locations where they had been held up to that moment. At the same time, the nobles would help to uphold the agreement and dissolve the Compromise and were promised immunity for their actions]. There are even several additional articles which aim to maintain and assure the religion, our ancient and Catholic faith, the service of the king, the protection and safety of the town as well as the justice and public order in it. On the other hand, Madame, the agreement allows those of the townspeople who belong to the new religion to have their services within the town. Before taking leave of Your Highness, I explained at length why it seemed to me more expedient to let them have their sermons within the town than outside. To remind Your Highness of my arguments I shall repeat them here. '

Whenever such sermons take place 18 or 20,000 persons leave the town through various gates, to listen to them. In Flanders and elsewhere trade as well as industry stagnate, so that the country is full of vagabonds and idlers. These might easily mingle with the crowd under the pretext of listening to the sermons, join them (of this we have been warned and are still being warned) and then enter the town together and pillage it. In fact they have said themselves that

this is their intention, because it is the richest and most opulent town of the whole country and the one where the most plunder is to be found. They will unite with the great multitude of workmen in this town, who cannot earn wages to sustain themselves, their wives and children because of the troubles and stagnation of trade. Although we do our utmost here, Madame, at the gates and elsewhere, to ensure that strangers do not enter in great numbers, such a lot of strangers of all sorts and conditions have all the same got in and are still inside under pretext of some trade business, that I am greatly puzzled how to get them outside so that the town may be at rest and in order. For these reasons it is easy to imagine how all these vagabonds and others may increase in number and enter with those who go outside to hear sermons. But thanks to the new agreement the latter need no longer go outside the town to attend sermons. I wanted to inform your Highness of all of this and I beg you to approve my action in making this agreement. Thanks to it all churches will be opened to celebrate mass in the usual way without any fear and this is the chief thing we should work for. Your Highness is now informed of the very great number of people belonging to the new religion in this town.

I most humbly kiss your hand, Madame, and ask God to keep your Highness in good health and to give you a very good and long life.

From Antwerp, the fourth day of September 1566

*Second letter of the prince of Orange to the duchess of Parma, 4 September*

*1566*

Madame, since my last letter of to-day I have received the letters it has pleased Your Highness to write to me, and I cannot fail to thank you very humbly for approving all I have done here so far. Regarding your order not to permit in any way those of the new religion to preach within the town, and to concede to them nothing more than the declaration given to the confederate seigniors and nobles implies, Your Highness will have seen from my last letter why I decided to come to an agreement with them and, on conditions specified in the document, to allow them to hold their sermons within the town. But, Madame, in the resolution given to the nobles it is said that the sermons should not be held in places where they were not held before.

And before this resolution was taken, those of the new religion did hold sermons here, not only within the town, but also inside the churches. I assure Your Highness that, when they expounded this to me it was very difficult for me to make them vacate all churches and monasteries but, contrary to their wishes, I have only given them permission to preach in the places mentioned in the agreement. I thought it right to do this, to avoid the grave difficulties and dangers which might otherwise arise. And about what Your Highness has written to me, that the other towns where the new religion is being preached will want to have the same licence, one town differs from another. Nowhere are there so many adherents of the new religion as well as so many strangers of all sorts and conditions as here and there is no other town which vagabonds and idlers are so eager to pillage. In the other towns it will therefore be easier to restrict oneself to the declaration given to the confederates. As far as my own provinces [the prince was Staholder in Holland, Zeland and Utrecht) are concerned, I had missives sent everywhere ordering the people to observe this resolution. I sent them a copy of it as well as of the edicts against the church-robbers, and I guarantee that, as I was charged by Your Highness, they will see that it is observed. I much regret that for the reasons and considerations mentioned in my preceding letter and to avoid greater evils and difficulties, it has been necessary to permit this here, with the restrictions specified in the agreement. I was led to do this by my great desire to conform to the will of His Majesty and Your Highness. I cannot fail to tell you that the Anabaptists are also beginning to preach not only outside this town, but in several places in the country-side. May it please Your Highness to forbid them by edict before they increase in number . . .