15. March 15, 1710.[[1]](#footnote-1) Contemporary translation of the intercession of the States General of the United Provinces of the Netherlands[[2]](#footnote-2) to the Canton of Bern on behalf of the Anabaptists there. The archaic English of this document, explained in the footnotes, contributes to the authenticity of the communication as received by English-speaking contemporaries, with whom it was also probably shared as part of the appeal to the English Queen Anne.[[3]](#footnote-3)

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a Copy[[4]](#footnote-4) To the Canton of Bern the 15th of March 1710

Worthy, etc.

The Mennonites, living within ye[[5]](#footnote-5) jurisdiction of our

State, have acquainted us with sadness, that by letters

& certain information they have understood that their

fellow believers in Switzerland, & especially in your

laudable Canton, are oppressed by a hard persecution,

because of living up to their Religion, in as much yt5 at

present a great number of persons, both men & women,

are shut up in several prisons, who, besides lesser pu-

nishments are, threatened also with confinements to galleys;

nay wth5 death itself. Wherefore they have desired our

intercession for their brethren, who agree wth them in

the point of ye worship of God, that they may be re-

lieved of their oppressions & safely stay in their dwelling-

places, keeping to ye exercise of their Religion.

We for ye space of many years have looked upon ye

Mennonites, & by experience found them to be good

& faithful inhabitants of ye contry [sic], leading a quiet

& honest life, & medling[[6]](#footnote-6) onely with their own domestick

affairs, & no further; wherefore we could not supersede[[7]](#footnote-7)

nor refuse to such good subjects our intercession for

their fellowbelievers, with you. We with you do esteem

the Christian Reformed Religion to be the best & true

Religion; and wee could wish that ye Mennonites both

here & those wth you could be brought over to ye same:

but we are of opinion yt no other means ought to be employed

for yt purpose, then [sic] those of reason and persuasion; and yt

means of constraint never may nor ought to be used

in metters of conscience, over wch5 God allone hath kept

the power to himself, to whom every man in due time

must give an account of his tenets, and of his deeds

& omissions. And whereas you as well as we and other

Protestants, making profession of the true Reformed Re-

ligion, have so often wth great & very well grounded

reason complaint & been grieved, because of the perse-

cution of our fellow believers in those countrys, where

an intolorable Heirarchy prevails, it seemed not at all

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suitable to run in ye same way of persecuting those

that differ wth us in some points & never the less admit ye word

of God as ye rule of their doctrine and life: but it is far

more advisable to use in their regard a christian toleration,

lest any cause be given to ye enemies of ye Reformed

Churches to justify their hard & cruell persecutions of our

Fellow believers, wth exemples of a like persecution, used

by a Reformed Magistrate against those that differ from

them in persuasion. We look upon it as a hard case

to punish any one wth exile, imprisonment, gallys, and

even wth death, because of his persuasion in metters of

worship of God, from wth he thinks his everlasting salvation

to depend; and we believe that every one therein ought to be

left at liberty; provided that those, who dessent from ye

established Religion in a country or commonwealth: do

nothing that may tend in prejudice thereof, and in

this respect we think there is less to be feared from ye

Mennonites then from any other persuasions: since they

yield obedience & submission to their Superiours in all things

that are not contrary to ye word of God, according to their judg-

ment; & in generall they behave themselves stil & quiet.

For though they are, as we are informed, chargrd wth you wth

three points [fi]rst yt the[y] won’t acknowledge the magis-

tracy to be of God, and consistent with Christianity; that

they deny swearing, & that they refuse to defend their

country in case of need: yet the first seems not to agree

wth their confession of Faith, whereof the XIII th article[[8]](#footnote-8) is an-

nexed to this, & whereby it appears that they have quite

an other & better opinion concerning the Supreme magis-

tracy: & as to the oath, since they think it forbidden by

the word of God & that their declaration upon the truth

of a man, hath ye same effect as an oath[[9]](#footnote-9) wth others,

it follows from thence, that this their opinion concer-

ning swearing, can’t be of any prejudice to the Common-

wealth. We also think that the third point is stretched

too far; since they don’t absolutely refuse to be helpfull

in protecting and defending of their country, but thinking

that the use of weapons for revenge is unlawfull to them,

they judge it sufficient to pay taxes & impositions, by

wch a Commonwealth is also helped and defended.

Wherefore it is our kind request that you will be pleased

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to make a favorable reflection on ye condition of the

fore mentioned Mennonites, & not onely release ye im-

prisoned, & cause all further penalties to cease: but

also to suffer them to live quietly as good subjects

under your protection. We judge that thereby you

will do no dammage to your own state, to which

we wish all good, but that it will prouve beneficiall

& that and that in this case ye rule ought to take place, of

not to do to others, what we would not have done to us.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Besides it will be verry acceptable to us, when we come

to understand yt our intercession has procured to these

grieved people the relief they hope for; and we will

acknowledge it in all occasions that may occur.

1. 15 Municipal Archives Rotterdam, Mennonite Church Inventory No. 40 Swiss…Documents,   
   pp. 5-7. This is a translation of the intercession of Rotterdam to the Canton of Bern March 15, 1710, the original on the facing page of the present volume (the document preceding in the record of the Rotterdam archives). The characteristic Dutch hand (the same as for Document 34) reveals the very strong probability that this copy was made in Holland. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The five eighteenth-century copies of this document surviving (four in Dutch and one in English) indicate the importance the Dutch Mennonites assigned to it. Only the Dutch and English originals from Rotterdam are included in the present volume. From the De Hoop Scheffer Inventaris, A 1758, a copy in Vorsterman’s Relaes, that is A 1392, and the copy enclosed with A 1759 are omitted here since they are duplicates. Gulik also reproduces a copy from the Rijksarchief. DB (1909), pp. 132-135. Schijn in his Geschiedenis I, pp. 366-371, also reproduces a copy of the original Dutch document. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For this appeal see Document 33, dated April [20,] 1710. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Yet another version of this letter from The Daily Courant of July 22, 1710, is given by Sandra Yelton and Andreas Mielke, in “Bern’s Mennonite Persecution of 1710 in English Newspapers,” PMH 37(Jan, 2014), pp. 17-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. ye = the; yt = that; wth = with; wch = which. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. “taking part” in a good sense (obsolete). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. “postpone” (obsolete). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The Dordrecht Confession of Faith, Article 13, The Office of Civil Government, which says, “God has instituted civil government....” Cf. Karl Koop (ed.), Confessions of Faith in the Anabaptist Tradition 1527-1660 (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2006), p. 303. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. Hermannus Schijn, “Concerning the Nonswearing of Oaths,” edited and translated by James W. Lowry, MQR 61 (Apr. 1987), pp. 228-235. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. [Tobit 4:16.] [↑](#footnote-ref-10)