14. March 15, 1710. Extract from the official register of resolutions of the States General of the Netherlands responding to a petition of Dutch Mennonites concerning their mediation at Bern on behalf of the Anabaptists there. This was accompanied by a copy of an intercession by the States General to the government of Bern on the same date, which is included as Document 15.

[folio 1 recto]

Copy Extract[[1]](#footnote-1) from the register of the record of the High and Mighty

Lords of the States General of the United Netherlands

Saturday, March 15, 1710.

The request of the delegates of the Mennonite congregations of this country was read in the assembly, containing the following: They, the suppliants, were informed, through many letters and certain reports, that their fellow believers in Switzerland, and especially those in the Canton of Bern, at present are being oppressed by very severe persecution on account of practicing their religion, so much so, that currently a great many persons, men as well as women, are locked up in various prisons, being threatened with (besides the other punishments) banishment to the galleys and even with death itself. All this is based on erroneous assumptions stated in their edicts of February 20, 22, 25 & 27, 1695, and given there specifically in three main points. The first was that they do not recognize the office of government to be from and of God, which is absolutely untrue and totally contrary to the plain text of the Mennonite confession, and the two last points, were, as it happens, that they refuse the usual allegiance with an oath and refuse to defend the country with weapons in time of distress.

This declaration was found by the High and Mighty Lords [of the Netherlands] to be satisfactory enough that it pleased their High and Mighty Lords to extend to the suppliants their protection, as indicated by the analysis attached to the request heretofore referred to. Requesting that it might please their High and Mighty Lords to be a favorable and powerful intercessor for their suppliants with the Lords of Bern in order to achieve for the suppliants’ oppressed brethren and fellow believers, whose forefathers have not only lived in Switzerland for about 200 years and are known there, but who also share the same confession with their suppliants. The presentation [of this same confession][[2]](#footnote-2) to the Gentlemen Representatives of the Court of Holland by brethren and fellow believers had pleased their High and Mighty Lords on October 8, 1626, to recognize the faith of the suppliants as a protested, yet tolerated religion of the land, and not only caused release from the execution of the edicts with which they were constantly threatened [at that earlier time], [folio 1 verso] but also served as the assurance of their safe abode, religious practice, and the welfare of so many innocent people.

Whereupon, after deliberation, it is approved and understood that a letter of intercession[[3]](#footnote-3) for the suppliants’ fellow believers shall be communicated in good form to the Canton of Bern, and the same shall be sent together with a copy of it to Secretary A. Runckel, with the request to send the original on to the Canton of Bern and to support the content of it as well as he may, wherever this may bring best results.

Agrees with the heretofore was signed

said register Randwijk

F. Fagel[[4]](#footnote-4)

[folio 2 recto: blank]

[folio 2 verso]

Copy of the

Resolution of the States

General, and letter of

intercession to the

Canton of Bern, concerning

the Mennonites.

Dated March 15, 1710.

1. 14 The following note in the minutes of the Lamist Mennonite Church immediately precedes the copy of the present document in their minutes. “Upon this favorable recommendation of our honorable Sirs, the mayors, and the request for their advice to their High and Mighty Sirs, the States General, on March 15 the Committee members delivered this following resolution made by their High and Mighty Sirs on the same day.” [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This refers to the confession of faith on the Trinity by Jacques Outerman (and others of the United Flemish, Frisian and High Germans in the province of Holland), who previously had been accused of Socinianism by the Dutch Reformed. The States of Holland & West Friesland approved this confession in a general way on October 8, 1626. ME IV, p. 98. The political and civil relevance of this acknowledgement by the government for the Dutch Mennonites, which is evident in this 1710 statement, has thus far never been recognized by church historians! The article “Netherlands States-General” does not mention this recognition by the government. ME III, 843. Cf. Karl Koop, Anabaptist-Mennonite Confessions of Faith (Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 2004), pp. 43, 106. For the confession see the Martyrs’ Mirror, pp. 1107-1108. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See the next document, Document 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. François Fagel (1659-1746), Clerk of the States-General during the years 1690-1744, champion of religious toleration, was a leader widely admired as tactful, cultivated, and wise. A. J. van der Aa, Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden. Vijfde Deel. (Haarlem: J. J. van Brederode, 1862), p. 5; Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek, III (Leiden: A. W. Sijthoffs Uitgevers-Maatschappij, 1914), p. 385; J. Heringa, “François Fagel: Portret van een honnête homme,” in Jaarboek Die Hage, (1980), pp. 43-126. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)