

## 93. ALL SEEMS TO BE LOST

An oppressive calm followed the Iconoclasm like the stillness after a violent storm. But it was not a relaxing, beneficial calm. The people held their breath and tensely awaited the consequences. What would the government do?



Margaret of Parma.  
Painter Willem Key

The government was at its wits' end! They no longer knew *what* to do. The governess was close to panic and wanted to flee. Her carriages in Brussels stood ready. Margaret of Parma wished to escape to the strong fortress of Mons in Hainaut (Belgium). She would be safe there. But the governors, such as

Orange, Egmont and Hoorn, strongly discouraged her and persuaded her to stay. Very reluctantly, the governess remained in Brussels. She was afraid that the people in Brussels would soon revolt!

In her mind, she already saw the churches destroyed, her palace plundered, with herself a prisoner of people filled with hatred. In her anxiety, she agreed to a sort of religious peace. She abolished the placards, so the persecution stopped. Protestant preaching was permitted wherever it had taken place before. Also, some cities released a few church buildings to the Reformed people. The people rejoiced because they hoped and expected that it would always stay like that. Finally, finally, the shedding of blood would stop!

But they were mistaken because very dark times were coming. The Roman Catholic nobles were furious and no longer wanted anything to do with the Protestants. The League of the Nobles, where Protestants and Roman Catholics worked together, broke up because of the Iconoclasm.

When the governess noticed that the riot did not spread further, her fear disappeared. She had feared it would become a total civil uprising. However, that did not happen.

When the news of the Iconoclasm reached Spain, Philip II became almost insane with rage. He swore by his father's soul that he would get even with the Dutch people. They would all have to pay for this! The Protestants because they had done it, and the Roman Catholics because they had not stopped it. He only had one thought: 'Vengeance'!

He would avenge that deed!

It would have been better for the two Dutch nobles, Berghen and Montigny, who had travelled to Spain to speak with the king, to have stayed home. They never returned to their native country. Spain treated them like prisoners. Berghen died of homesickness, and at the command of Philip II, they murdered Montigny. If only they had never gone to Spain! King Phillip II hypocritically told the Dutch that Montigny had become ill and succumbed to his sickness despite careful nursing. But that was a big lie. They murdered him! That became known later from the king's secret letters.



Philip II, king of Spain.  
Wikipedia

### THE DUKE OF ALVA

Philip II thought it better that his sister Margaret of Parma did not lead the retaliation against the Dutch. He had someone else in mind who, according to him, was much better qualified for such a task. His sister would not tackle that job with enough force. After all, she was only a woman! He would send the Duke of Alva with a powerful army to the Netherlands. This duke had received the nickname 'The Iron Duke'. He was just the man Philip II needed for this.



*Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, better known as Alva, the Iron Duke.*

Alva<sup>1</sup> was not very honoured with that commission. Yet he accepted it. He would knead those *people of butter*!

Granvelle, the former chairman of the Privy Council, who knew the Dutch better than Alva, said casually:

"You'd better watch out those people of butter don't slip through your fingers!"  
He was right because he knew what the Dutch people were like.

### **MORE PERSECUTION AND THE ARMY OF BEGGARS**

In the meantime, the governess had recovered from her fright and took strong measures. She changed the conditions in The Netherlands back to what they had been, and violent persecution raged again.

In his province, Count Egmont persecuted the Reformed with fire and sword. He killed them with unmerciful cruelty. We usually think too well of Count Egmont. We consider him a martyr because a few years later, at the command of Alva, he was beheaded in Brussels. But we must never forget that he stained his hands with the blood of hundreds of God's children. He boldly persecuted the Church of the Lord. He was *too* obedient to the commands of his king!

Guido de Bres, the author of the Belgic Confession of Faith, and another preacher were also put to death during that time. When we



*William, Prince of Orange*

remember this, we need not honour Count Egmont. Only the Prince of Orange kept the terms of the religious peace which Margaret had promised them. The Protestants received three church buildings

in Antwerp to hold their religious services. The Prince refused to persecute the people in his province for their faith.

But dark clouds gathered overhead for the Protestants. The League of the Nobles had fallen apart. The Alliance of the Merchants offering three million florins to the king if he would stop the persecution did not accomplish anything. The king hadn't paid any attention to their offer. Only the Alliance of the Consistories still existed. That alliance was under the leadership of Marnix of St. Aldegonde.



*Marnix of Saint Aldegonde*

When the governess began to assemble troops to punish the rebels severely, the allied consistories also began recruiting a small army. Soon there was an 'Army of Beggars' of three thousand men. They asked the Prince of Orange if he would be their commander. He refused. After that, they asked Hoorn, but he did not dare tackle it. Finally, Henry of Brederode became their commander, though inexperienced and untrained.



*Henry of Brederode*

The army of Beggars assembled in the little town of Austruweel, close to Antwerp. They hoped for support from Antwerp and Zeeland. Count Egmont immediately warned the governess. Without delay, she sent her army after them. On 13 March 1567, Margaret's army suddenly attacked the Army of Beggars at Austruweel and totally defeated them within a few hours. The commander, Henry of Brederode, just happened to be away. They cut down hundreds and drove hundreds more into the Scheldt River, where they

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQJr4XhhW\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQJr4XhhW_w)





*Margaret of Parma's army defeats the army of Beggars at Austruweel. Drawing by Frans Hoyerberg. Wikipedia*

drowned miserably. Six hundred others fled into a building. The troops of the governess set fire to that building (as pictured, top-right), and all the Beggars perished in the flames. Only a few escaped that slaughter. What a sad end that was to the army of Beggars. And it all happened near the powerful commercial city of Antwerp. Although thousands of citizens in Antwerp stood ready to assist them, the Prince of Orange ordered the gates closed. He wanted to spare the city against the vengeance of the governess.

Was that the right thing to do? I don't know. Perhaps it would have turned out differently if the Prince of Orange had immediately chosen the side of the Reformation. But that did not happen, which meant the destruction of the Army of Beggars at Austruweel.

The South Netherlands city of Valenciennes, which had closed its gates to Margaret's troops after a desperate defence, was captured by the governess's soldiers, who then almost completely massacred its inhabitants. Five out of every six inhabitants fell at the hands of Rome's murdering

soldiers. We shall not mention the Roman Catholic soldiers' further atrocities in that poor city. They are too gruesome and cruel. Some things are better left unsaid. One day the Judge of heaven and earth shall pronounce His sentence on those horrific actions, and His sentence will be just.

But now, the people were angry with the Prince of Orange. They had trusted him, but he had shamed that trust. Many viewed this as 'treason' against the good cause. No doubt, the Prince had acted this way with good intentions. He wanted to spare the city of Antwerp against the vengeance of the governess.

*If* the gates of Antwerp had not been closed, and the tens of thousands of Calvinists had been able to hurry to help the Beggar's army at Austruweel then...

*If* Orange had placed himself at the head and taken the lead - he was a capable general...

*If* the thousands from Zeeland had joined in ...

*If* ...

But it did not happen. God's counsel determined differently. God's ways are higher than our ways.

We cannot understand God's ways. Yet everyone remains accountable for their deeds.

Also in this, we see the golden thread of *God's* rule running through history.

Encouraged by the victory at Austruweel, the soldiers of the governess destroyed the opposition of the Beggars everywhere. The persecution raged again in all its cruel violence.

The year 1566, which began so hopefully, ended so darkly for the cause of God's church. Everything was broken. The cooperation between the Roman Catholic and Protestant nobles no longer existed. And Alva was closing in! The greatly feared Alva, who would execute the king's vengeance, was approaching with an army of over ten thousand men. His soldiers were the best trained in Europe. He would straighten things out in The Netherlands. Properly!

The governess, who was not at all pleased with the coming of the Iron Duke, wrote to her brother Philip II that it was no longer necessary for Alva to come. She had restored peace already. It didn't help. The dreaded duke and his forces were already marching.



*A statue of Prins William of Orange in front of the place where the castle of Dillenburg once stood.*

The Prince of Orange left the country and fled to his ancestral castle, The Dillenburg. He knew very well what was coming. Alva had his and several other prominent nobles' death sentence in his pocket. The private secretary of King Philip had prepared two lists of those condemned to death. Alva received one copy, and the other he forwarded to.... William of Orange! So he knew exactly what awaited him. The name of Egmont was also on that list! The Prince warned him, but Egmont refused to flee. He answered the Prince:

"I have always served the king faithfully; why should I flee? I have done nothing wrong."

And that was also true! Indeed, he had served the king faithfully. *Too* faithfully! He had shed the blood of many of God's children!

So Egmont stayed. He even travelled quite a distance to meet and welcome Alva. Alva received him very graciously, and side by side, they rode through the gates of Brussels.



*Count Egmont.  
Painting by Lamoral*

But the Prince of Orange was wiser and left before it was too late.

The Prince was not the only one who fled; many others did not wait for Alva to come either. They feared the worst. Tens of thousands fled the country. The roads were full of fugitives who only took the bare minimum with them. Altogether more than one hundred thousand inhabitants left the country! Many fled to the German city of Embden, which for that reason, was called the 'Ship of Christ.' Many settled in other German cities. Others crossed the North Sea and fled to England. And those who remained trembled! What would the future bring?

On 22 August 1567, Alva and his excellently well-provided-for army marched through the gates of Brussels. Soon after, the governess, Margaret of Parma, left the country. There



was no place for her. Alva had come to take over her task.

She was angry.

She was offended.

She received Alva very coldly at her palace, but it didn't help. Even though she trembled with impotent rage, she went!

## WILLIAM OF ORANGE



*Juliana of Stolberg*

Before we go any further, we must tell you something about William of Orange.

William was born in 1533 in the castle of Dillenburg in Germany. He was the son of William de Rijke and Juliana van Stolberg.

Historians tell us that she was a God-fearing woman. William had four other brothers: John, Louis, Henry and Adolph. These are all well-known from Dutch history. William also had several sisters. William de Rijke and Juliana van Stolberg had a large family. When he was eleven years old, his cousin Rene de Chalons died. He had appointed William as his heir. Young William inherited the principality of Orange in the South of France. Since William would now become one of the country's wealthiest and most influential nobles, Charles V demanded that he be educated at the imperial court. So at 12, the young Prince of Orange departed for Brussels, where he received an excellent education. But - it was a strictly Roman Catholic education!

You may be sure his pious mother, Juliana of Stolberg, let him go with fear in her heart. He would leave *her* upbringing and watchful eye, and the only thing she could do for her child was - *pray!*

In Brussels, William accepted the Roman Catholic religion. He had to. He became a highly respected man and the friend and confidant of Emperor Charles V.

Because of his great wealth, he could live in luxury and excess. He held one party after another. During those years, he did not worry much about

religion. Outwardly he was a member of the Roman Catholic Church, but he lived very indifferently. He disliked the placards and hated the persecution. He loathed the stakes. Why, why should Rome so horribly persecute those who think differently? He thought that was terrible.

Philip II, the son of Charles V, intensely disliked William of Orange. He hated him, but he could not ignore him. Not even when his father had abdicated, and he had become king of Spain and lord of the Netherlands. When Philip II departed for Spain, William of Orange became governor of Holland, Zeeland and Utrecht, while he was very influential in Antwerp. With the other governors, he assisted Governess Margaret in ruling the country.

The Lord had a special task in store for this man. In God's time, he would rescue the oppressed and downtrodden people of the Netherlands. William would become the life and soul of the resistance against Spain.

In 1566 William left the Roman Catholic Church and became Lutheran. In 1573 he joined the Calvinists. Finally, in 1584, he lost his life when the deadly lead of Balthazar Gerard's gun fatally struck him.



*Prince William of Orange. The photo shows the Bullet holes caused by Balthazar Gerard's gun.*

He did not have an easy life. He experienced many setbacks and grief, but this saying is true for him: 'He was sanctified through suffering!'

He sacrificed everything for the cause of the oppressed people of The Netherlands — his inheritance, his brothers and his life! His enemies feared and hated him. They slandered and

maligned him from all sides. Many times his friends did not understand him and were suspicious of him. True, he had his faults, but God wanted to use him as the founder of Dutch liberty.

In the beginning, the struggle against mighty Spain seemed to be hopeless. When the city of Haarlem fell, one of his friends wrote:

"If you haven't made a covenant with a powerful monarch, you may as well give up the struggle".

His answer was:

"I have made a firm covenant with the Potentate of all potentates."

The word Potentate means monarch or king.

Prince William trusted the King of Kings. That gave him strength in the most challenging circumstances. That kept him standing when everything seemed to go wrong. That gave him faith that God could turn all things for good.

God Himself forged the bond between The Netherlands and the House of Orange. The Lord has been pleased to use the house of Orange to deliver that country and its people from Roman Catholic oppression. They have been a blessing to His church in The Netherlands. The House of Orange had a place in God's great plan. Today, a



*The four brothers of Prince William of Orange: John, Louis, Henry, and Adolf.*

descendant of the House of Orange still reigns over The Netherlands. Let the people never despise or trample on the House of Orange because it was a gift of God. They should be thankful they still have a dynasty. They should never revile that dynasty, but *pray* for it to continue to defend the true faith!

### QUESTIONS

1. How did the governess react to the violence that occurred?
2. Why was the League of the Nobles dissolved?
3. How did the king react to the news?
4. List some of the changes made by the king regarding the following:
  - a. treatment of the Dutch nobles who had come with the petition
  - b. the leadership of The Netherlands
5. What did Granvelle mean when he said: "You'd better watch out that those people of butter don't slip through your fingers"?
6. How did the first army of Beggars fare? What were some of the army's weaknesses?
7. Why were the people disappointed with the Prince of Orange?
8. Why did William of Orange flee?
9. Why did Egmont refuse to flee?
10. Give some background of William of Orange.
11. What did William mean when he stated that he had made a "firm covenant with the Potentate of all potentates"?
12. What is the significance of the House of Orange for The Netherlands?

### FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Prove that the Iconoclasm bore bitter fruits for the church.
2. Give possible reasons why Prince William of Orange hesitated before joining the side of the Beggars. Was he hesitant and wavering in later years? Prove your answer.