**34. December 17, 1671.** V*alentine Hütwohl, Mennonite minister in the Palatinate, reports in a letter to the Mennonite churches in the Netherlands the great need that the Palatine churches have as a result of the arrival of 430 destitute refugees from Switzerland. This letter, which had a strong impact on Dutch Mennonite efforts to help the Swiss, has survived in four seventeenth-century copies. The* Martyrs’ Mirror *refers to this immigration,[[1]](#footnote-1) but does not directly quote Hütwohl’s letter. Hütwohl’s original German letter is no longer available, and all of the copies are of the Dutch translation. The footnotes to this document give the significant alternative readings presented by the copies.*

Copy

From the letter of Valentine Hütwohl,[[2]](#footnote-2) being a minister of the Mennonite congregation in the Palatinate, dated December 17, 1671. (Omitting what was not relevant) he thus describes the arrival of the Swiss brothers from the Bern territory, in Switzerland, and the situation of the same (agreeing with[[3]](#footnote-3) what others write) as follows:

First 70 have arrived here by land; subsequently 62 by ship; and shortly thereafter 60; then again 108; then 30 more, then another 40; finally another 64 persons; all together[[4]](#footnote-4) 430. Also between [the large groups] yet a few others have arrived; accordingly, we think that no less than 450 souls have arrived here.[[5]](#footnote-5) These are distributed near or with fellow believers all over the countryside in a circle of about twelve miles. Among these people are found some who walk with a cane, being 70, 80, 90 years old. They are very simply dressed and have not brought much

more with them than [what they need] to go and stay [on a short visit], and likewise in particular they have little bedding, so little that we hardly know how to protect them from the cold. Thus far we have provided them with food. There are people among us who feed and host six, seven, eight, or nine souls. We have gotten to the point that some of us have hardly a bit of cheese and butter and a little other food in the kitchen anymore.

Thus far I have given food and lodging in my house to George Leüthen[[6]](#footnote-6) (their most important minister) who has been ill for fourteen days as well as an old woman of over 80 years, who most of the time during the day lies in bed, and also a man and wife, and a servant and a girl of 16 years.

It is now highly necessary at this time of the year to rent and obtain some places,[[7]](#footnote-7) in order that they and their children might have something to do and earn their own bread. When one talks about this, then these people begin to sigh, wishing that they already might have some places,[[8]](#footnote-8) but they do not dare to accept those for rent, because they do not have the means for it. Nevertheless, we are trying to obtain some vineyards for them, just as already has been done above Heidelberg.[[9]](#footnote-9) Likewise these people have a lack of household effects and of things which are necessary to cultivate the land, such as a horse, cart, plow, and the other necessary items, cows, etc. Further, they will have to wait a year and a half before[[10]](#footnote-10) they can enjoy the fruits of what they have grown, and yet during that

time they must have food to sustain their lives. There is a man across the Rhine[[11]](#footnote-11) who has twelve children and his father and mother, so that there are sixteen of them who go to the table.[[12]](#footnote-12)

It would be desirable if some compassionate[[13]](#footnote-13) hearts personally could witness the whole situation and condition of the Swiss brothers and then help advise what is best for them,[[14]](#footnote-14) since from what the eyes see and the ears hear one can understand best, and consider accordingly the requirements of the situation. For there are men who have left their wives and children, as well as women, both old and young, who have left behind husband and children, others who have brought only a part of their children with them, while leaving another part with their husband; as well as expecting women. Likewise children have been separated from their father and mother, and subsequently have left brothers and sisters. How such separations occur, I suggest for the meditation of every good-hearted and compassionate mind.

We have some letters on the same topic from yet others, who are also ministers in the Palatinate, also some that were written earlier, all from the Palatinate who also write in a similar vein, adding to this that these Swiss brothers in their own country were mostly cattle farmers and herdsmen, who earned their living with agriculture; that their number

has been 100 households, or a few more, who were living in the Bern area, of whom many, or most, with their entire households have come into the Palatinate, but also many families are separated, as is also reported here, of whom some still sojourned in their country or in Alsace.[[15]](#footnote-15)

1. **34** 1 *Martyrs’ Mirror*, pp. 1126-1127; *Martelaers Spiegel,* (1685) II, pp. 828-829. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Valentine Hütwohl was from Kriegsheim. *ME* II, 850. See Franklin D. Heatwole, “Hutwohl/Heatwole Families of North America,” *PMH* (Oct. 2000), pp. 35-36. The name Hütwohl is probably not Swiss. No variant was found in the *Familiennamenbuch der Schweiz* (Zürich: Schulthess Polygraphischer Verlag, Third Edition, 1989). For Valentine Hütwohl in 1664, 1685, etc., see Guth, pp. 10, 12, etc. See also Friedrich Egli (1939), “Namensverzeichnisse von Wiedertäufern aus den Aktenbänden,” G.L.A. 65, No. 11716, pp. 5, 192, Generallandesarchiv, Karlsruhe, Germany.

   The spelling Hütwohl is used in the translation, modified slightly from his own signature, Huet Wohl, in Document 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A 1406 gives a synonymous alternative reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. A 1406 (2) replaces this word with “which totals in all.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A 1406 adds here “with us.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. or Leichten. [North American spelling, Lichty.] [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [farms]. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The rough copy adds here “rented house and land.” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. He probably refers to the Kraichgau around Sinsheim. Cf. Ruth, *The Earth*, p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. A 1406 replaces this with a synonym of “before.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. East of the Rhine in the Kraichgau. This might be Ully Seiler at Ittlingen. Document 35, p. 381. Document 42, p. 435. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Here A 1406 (1) adds, but then cancels: “Concerning the external aid which has come thus far, it is as follows: Jacob Eberling has received from you honorable sirs 200 rixdollars, from Hans Vlamingh 100 rixdollars, from Maastricht 75 rixdollars, from Bortschet 50 rixdollars, and furthermore we have heard that there still is something in reserve with Hans Vlamingh. Last Sunday we also received a bill of exchange with 200 rixdollars from Utrecht and about 40 rixdollars from you honorable sirs.” For Jacob Eberling see *Martelaers spiegel* (1660) II, p. 828, *Martyrs’ Mirror*, p. 1126; *ME* II, 274, IV, 110; *ML* I, 180; Diefenbacher, p. 200. Although Jacob Eberling’s name is often spelled “Everling,” he signs his own name in Document 44 as “Eberling.” This spelling is used in the English translation. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. A 1406 (1) replaces with “good-hearted.” [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The rough copy gives a synonymous alternative reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. On the back of the last folio A 1406 (1) adds (probably a list of Mennonite congregations to which this letter was sent): “Haarlem, Leiden, Rotterdam, Sardam [Zaandam], De Koog, Krommenie, De Rijp, Jisp, Medemblik, Nierop [Niedorp], Alkmaar, Hoorn, Monnickendam, Utrecht, Uithoorn, Aalsmeer, Harlingen, Emden, Groningen, Leeuwarden, Blokzijl, Sneek, Middelburg, Vlissingen, Zierikzee, Giethoorn, Land of Cadzand, Emmerich, Rees, Kampen Zwolle, Goch, Nijmegen.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)