108. January 4, 1711. Letter from Bendicht Brechtbühl at Mannheim. He advises against the draining of the swamps because of the high costs and has received a report from Switzerland that the Mennonites will never be exiled to Prussia voluntarily. He asks for release from his promise that he would never return to Switzerland, says that he has already requested a passport at Bern, and wants to bring his wife and children without yet knowing where he will settle. He asks again for the three martyr books promised him by Steven Cramer at Deventer, but which he has not yet as of today received.

[recto]

Mannheim dated the 4th of January 1711.

Beloved brother in Christ,

I wish you a very blessed new year, rich in peace and joy from God, and also I kindly thank all the friends for all the trouble, expense, and work employed on our behalf. May the bountiful God Almighty[[1]](#footnote-1) be your rich

rewarder.

With this I want to report that I received your last letter gladly about two months ago and also have discerned in it your favorable intent and love which you have yet toward me. I have also seen that your compassion toward the prisoners becomes evident in what you have given expression to through Mr. Runckel; [I] also inform the friends that I received a letter some time ago from the ministers and elders in Switzerland concerning the removal to Prussia, that they[[2]](#footnote-2) write that they do not want to move as a free choice but want to trust confidently in the mercy of God and want to remain in the country as long as can be. Those who were on the ship, also in a friendly and hearty manner thank you for all the great faithfulness and love shown to them.

I understand also from the letter that the brotherhood in Switzerland does not consider it good on my part that I do not help build the little flock of Christ on account of human commands. They suppose that I should not abandon the little flock. But I have not yet previously considered it seasonable; yet in the spring I want to travel up to fetch my children. For this purpose some time ago I wrote the Canton of Bern to ask if it would be possible to take me up in their grace and favor, or at the least they would grant me a pass for a limited time to enter the country.

However, while we were in The Hague last spring, I promised the friends on the Committee that I would not travel up [to Switzerland] without their knowledge and approval. So with this, I request that the friends would grant me their assent. For I cannot readily have someone else fetch my children and possessions left behind. Accordingly, it is my friendly desire to write the friends [asking] what is their determination for me. To report concerning the rest, I am quite content that I can earn my living with my own hands. Yet I do not know of any place where I can live with my little flock. Nevertheless, I have the hope that the Lord does not abandon his own, so far as they apply themselves to do His will, but that He is preparing a place for me to live.

I recently became aware that the government at Bern has proposed to the prisoners that if they are willing to promise to appear again when [the government] so desires, they would let them out. But what happens only time will tell.

To report on what concerns the two swamps, I hear from a good source that it would run up utterly impossible expenses [verso] to make it fruitful.

Concerning that, I do not know anything else to write, nor as concerning the undiminished love about which I might write much to the friends. Yet since I have nothing else special to write, I close with this short report and commit the friends together with their whole families to the gracious protection of the Almighty. I remain

with this your devoted,

friend and brother in Christ,

Bendicht Brechtbühl

Note: Some time ago I sent a letter to the beloved friend Herman ten Kate[[3]](#footnote-3) concerning three martyr books,[[4]](#footnote-4) which friend Steven Cramer[[5]](#footnote-5) at Deventer had promised to send us. I have wanted to learn how the matter stands. For if he had sent them in the hope that we should have received them and no response were written to him, that would be improper. So I ask once again to investigate and to write me how matters stand. It is not my intention that Steven Cramer should be reminded of his promise, but only how there is a hindrance and to let me know that. I want to await the time. Greet for me all the good friends with whom I have become acquainted. I think often and much on all of you. If the passage of time brings yet again the opportunity to see and speak with you, it would be a joy to me.

1. 108 The Froschauer translation at Genesis 17[:2] gives the name of God as “GOtt Schadai.” A photograph of a page of a 1531 Froschauer Bible, which belonged to Bendicht Brechtbühl with his initials is shown on page 104 of Die Froschauer-Bibeln und die Täufer: The Froschauer Bibles and the Anabaptists by Urs B. Leu (Herborn: Sepher Verlag, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Brechtbühl writes “sei” for the German sie, “they.” See explanation in the introduction to Document 51 and footnote. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Persons from the ten Cate (also ten Kate) family have been members of the Mennonite church in the Netherlands since about 1600. ME I, 525. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This is probably the 1685 edition of the Martelaersspiegel. In document 1306, dated February 2, 1711, the Committee says that they will not send the requested martyr books until a definite place of residence has been established. It would be interesting to know if any copies of this book with Bendicht Brechtbühl’s name have turned up. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Steven Abrahams Cramer (b. 1660), member of the (Gronigen) Old Flemish Mennonites and of the Committee for Foreign Needs, lived at Deventer and later helped settle Swiss Mennonites at Kampen and Deventer. ME I, 739; II, 595-596. See also note in Document 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)