143. March 13, 1711. A letter from Jan Beets at Hamburg to Cornelis Beets at Amsterdam to accompany a draft of a contract drawn up by Jan Elias Münster. This is to serve as an agreement between the King of Prussia and the Swiss Anabaptists, whose colonization in Prussia Beets strongly recommends. He especially emphasizes that a formal contract should be maintained and that every appearance that it is a matter of generosity or favor on the part of the King be avoided.

[recto]

Hamburg, March 13, 1711

Brother Cornelis Beets[[1]](#footnote-1)

Dear brother,

I have been assigned to send you the enclosed copies, of which the originals have been communicated to us by the Envoy of Prussia. Our general opinion tends toward the view that our fellow believers of Switzerland will not get a better option than in the territory of His Majesty of Prussia. The Envoy recommends strongly that we establish beforehand which prerogatives and privileges would preferably be negotiated on our part. This will need to be established in detail by you and communicated to the Swiss brothers ahead of time. Jan Elias Münster[[2]](#footnote-2) has already written up the enclosed [proposal] and is communicating it to the friends for correction by their better judgment, there being room for improvement in the document.

We have been informed that we should not treat the contract as if it were a Royal grace, but that it should be [understood as] a contract to which the King binds and commits himself. The reason given for this was that in the case of the Peace of Westphalia, the free exercise of the Protestant religion was negotiated with the Emperor in the words “allowed by imperial grace,” and this was afterwards interpreted by the Imperial Court [verso] to mean that grace is not an obligation, and [allowed] “by grace” is but a favor which can be reversed without doing an injustice or harm.

Remaining, after sincere greetings,

Your affectionate brother,

Jan Beets

1. 143 Jan Beets was a brother of Cornelis according to Roosen, Geschichte der Mennoniten-Gemeinde zu Hamburg und Altona, II, pp. 25, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jan Elias Münster was a deacon in the Hamburg congregation. Roosen, Geschichte, I, p. 75; II, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)