157. May 7, 1711. Mennonite elder Bendicht Brechtbühl, now a refugee in the Palatinate but originally from Switzerland, writes to Jan Willink and other members of the Committee for Foreign Needs in Amsterdam. His three children have arrived safely from Switzerland, but they report that the churches there have a so great desire for him to come that he wants to fulfill this and asks for the earliest possible release from his promise not to return. See Document 108.

[recto]

Rohrhof[[1]](#footnote-1) the 7th of May 1711.

Besides a friendly greeting and a wish for spiritual and physical health to the worthy friends in Amsterdam and elsewhere, I want to inform the friends that yesterday my three children arrived from Switzerland, and they are all fresh and healthy. This brought great joy home to me, but also in addition a great sadness has fallen upon me in this: The brotherhood in Switzerland is troubled on my behalf and many hot tears have been shed, the reason being that I have not come and visited them, for the sake of the love they have had to me and indeed still have, if only I would still go to them.

If the friends had released me from the promises, I would have traveled with certain of the friends from the Palatinate under the protection of the Most High. For they were of those [originally] imprisoned with me who went up and fortunately returned again to this land. [Might] I ask the friends before God to release me from my promises and to write me with the first mail after the reception of this—

Further I understand that the Swiss friends have not resolved to move away (except for those released on security); for they hope that the Lord will yet cause the waves of persecution to die down. If, however, after the expiration of the deadline, [the opponents] begin again with chasing and imprisoning, they will so resolve, some [will so resolve] for it is a very sad matter, because the Reformed marriage partners will not move away. I would have more to write, but since the time is now too short, I will save it for a better opportunity. Only, once more, only my plea to the worthy friends is for that which is written above. For if such a message comes again to me as before, then I will be quite downcast. With this I close and

commend the friends of the Committee and the others into the protection of the Most High and myself into their favor and affection.

Remaining your willing servant,

friend, and brother in the Lord

Bendicht Brechtbühl[[2]](#footnote-2)

When the friends write, make

the address first to Hans Jacob Schnebely

in Mannheim, a merchant,

and then to me.

[verso: Address]

To the highly honored, beloved Sirs:

Messrs. Jan Willink Janszoon,

Jacob Vorsterman,

Cornelis Beets, merchants[[3]](#footnote-3)

in Amsterdam

1. 157 Rohrhof, an estate in the district of Schwetzingen, near Mannheim. ME IV, 353. Ernst Müller refers to this letter on p. 286 of his book. Jecker further notes that Rohrhof belongs to Brühl, 6 miles (less than 10 kilometers) south of Mannheim. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In the original signature in this letter only he separates his last name into two parts, brächt and bûl, even writing the second part on a separate line. (Valentine Hütwohl, Mennonite minister of the Palatinate, usually signs his last name in two parts.) This signature gives support to Brechtbühl’s being the translator of the German Wandlende Seele. The only indication of the translator is given on the title page of the first German edition, published at Speyer in 1717, which says, “Anjetzo aber in die Hoch-Teutsche Sprach übersetzet Durch B. B. B.” So this would be Bendicht Brecht Bühl. He left Europe for America in 1717. Visser, I, 360-363, 464; II, 247; Ruth, Earth Is the Lord’s, p. 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The first addressee is Jan Jansz Willink, deacon of the Lamist Mennonite church; the second is Jacob Vorsterman (?-1729), deacon of the Amsterdam Zonist church; and the third is Cornelis Beets, deacon of the Amsterdam Zonist church, all members of the Committee for Foreign Needs. ME, IV, 958; IV, 854; I, 262-263. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)