159. May 11, 1711. Copy of a letter of Daniel Rychen from Neuchâtel, to Steven Cramer, Alle Derks, and Jan Freriks. This is a report of his going back to Switzerland for claiming the possessions left behind by the Mennonites and giving great praise for the zeal of Runckel and a lament about the deceptive methods of the Bernese authorities. They have held back more than 10,000 rixdollars and, what is more critical, they will not allow the children, who have some of the possessions, to travel along out of the country. The ships lie ready, but the Hans Reist people do not show up in order to travel along. He himself hopes to settle near Groningen with his group, which consists of twelve families, in order to earn his living as a farmer with cattle.

[page 1]

Translated Copy

The peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.[[1]](#footnote-1) Amen.

Having given you the sincere wishes of my heart, by this let it be made known to you, Steven Cramer, Alle Derks, and Jan Freriks,[[2]](#footnote-2) that we did receive your letter through Hans and Peter; and because we have seen, through the letters, the great work and expense bestowed upon us, we thank you heartily.

Also let it be known to you that Mr. Runckel sent some printed authorizations a while ago and wrote asking me to send them on, that is, to Montbéliard, Sundgau, Alsace, Lorraine, Zweibrücken, and the Palatinate. Along with that he said that we should go to the Bern area to hunt up our possessions. This I did, being sent to Bern along with other brethren to hunt up the people and the possessions, which we also have done. The officials wanted to help us get our possessions, but since the authorization was not clear enough, they requested a receipt from the Anabaptist Commission and sent us back to Bern. However, the gentlemen of this Commission refused to let us take the possessions, as well as the under-age children with many possessions, and those possessions which had not yet been placed among the church possessions.[[3]](#footnote-3) Concerning this, Mr. Runckel became

really fervent, seeing that the authorization had not been kept, and we were being delayed at great cost, which was also using up our other money. At this point he delivered a memorandum to the Council and Citizens. In response to this the Commission made a decree, decided before Council and Citizen[s], that they had at one time specified more than 10,000 rixdollars for us in accordance with the authorization. So we could see it in no other way than that it is going as it has often gone at other times—that it has the name, and in actuality is nothing.

However, in spite of this, we are preparing ourselves for the trip, accepting the spoiling of our goods with joy[[4]](#footnote-4) and comforting ourselves with the unspotted inheritance that never fades,[[5]](#footnote-5) hoping to receive it 100 fold hereafter.[[6]](#footnote-6) However, letting the children grow up in the midst of this evil world hurts the parents terribly.

I cannot write the number of those in the Bern area, being greatly hindered because they did not allow the possessions to follow. I trust there will be enough of our people in the Bern area for approximately one ship. I cannot say that the Hans Reist people[[7]](#footnote-7) are making any preparations for the trip except for the prisoners. Mr. Runckel is also perplexed with them because they do not show up.

I gave Mr. Runckel some money, but not all of it. He says that the friends in Amsterdam have written concerning 1000 rixdollars and that you have written of 900 rixdollars—please give me further explanation about this.

Mr. Ritter has ordered the ships [to be made], that is, five. However, I told Mr. Runckel that I felt it was too many.

For those living outside of Switzerland, who have taken such a long, dangerous journey at such great expense in response to the authorization, it [page 2]

is very difficult to have everything refused them again. Still, patience is always needed.

I and my people, consisting of twelve households, are inclined to settle in Groningen. Our main occupation is to work in grasslands.[[8]](#footnote-8) I don’t know yet how much money will need to be transferred. Whatever is in the Bern area is still very uncertain. A person has to gather the information in secret.

I am planning to make a transfer to Amsterdam through Mr. Schuffelbergen and Mr. Ammiot. Please pick it up there in my name and put it on interest. Once you have received it, please write me to say if everything is in order, so that we can transfer the rest in the same way. Mr. Schuffelbergen wants to help us transfer all of it in this way.

The gentlemen from the [Anabaptist] Commission in Bern didn’t want to allow me and those sent with me in the land. They said we are preachers, testimony-givers, and exiles, and therefore were not allowed to take our possessions with us. Because Mr. Runckel strongly resisted them, they sent some away, but he did not want to let me go. So they finally allowed me to look up the people, but they have denied us our possessions.

Mr. Runckel said it is therefore no less urgent for us to leave, for we all can expect nothing but disfavor. He also said he wouldn’t have believed, had he returned to Schaffhausen, that they would treat us this way, although one hundred Anabaptists had already come and told him such things. So we can see that the promises written in the authorization concerning the Anabaptists exist only in words and not in deed.

But it is better, if it is God’s will, to suffer the injustice done to the body, and leave it to Him who will judge righteously.[[9]](#footnote-9)

The ships are being made to order and, as I understood, cost 30 rixdollars a piece. For lack of time I want to close and commit you, along with us, to the protection of the Almighty and His merciful hand, who will keep us together in one spirit and give us the victory, that when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building built of God.[[10]](#footnote-10) Now [let] us go outside the city with Christ and help bear His reproach,[[11]](#footnote-11) and, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from all fleshly lusts,[[12]](#footnote-12) and live moderately, purely, and godly in this world, waiting for the blessed hope.[[13]](#footnote-13) Since the mail is being held up I must quit. Hearty greetings from myself, my wife, and my brother Martin with thanksgiving for all good things, and remember us before the Lord for good in your fiery prayers to God. Dated 11 May 1711 from Neuchâtel.

Also greet those who know me and ask about me.

Your humble friend, ready to serve,

Daniel Rychen.

1. 159 Phil. 4:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Jan Freriks [Freriksen]. See Document 205. ME II, 394. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This may mean possessions which will be confiscated by the state church. Fritz Blanke terms the government sponsored church “Staatskirche,” Brüder in Christo, pp. 19, 24, etc. Strübind sets the Anabaptists in contrast to the state church as being transnational, as not bound to one national ecclesiastical organization connected with a certain state. The documents of the present volume abundantly demonstrate this international character of Anabaptism. Strübind, p. 290 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Heb. 10:34. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. I Pet. 1:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Matt. 19:29. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Jecker points out that the difference between Amish willingness to leave and Reistian determination to stay in Switzerland was also a difference in adherence to the Dordrecht Confession. Hanspeter Jecker, “Das Dordrechter Bekenntnis und die Amische Spaltung,” in Les Amish: origine et particularismes 1693-1993: The Amish: Origin and Characteristics 1693-1993, ed. by Lydie Hege and Christoph Wiebe, Ingersheim: A F H A M, 1996, p. 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. pasture for animals rather than crop farming. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. I Pet. 2:23. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. II Cor. 5:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Heb. 13:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. I Pet. 2:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Tit. 2:12-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)