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**Date:**  [07 January 1672]

**Sender:**  Toren, Congregation of the and Lam, Congregation of the

**Sender Place:**  Amsterdam

**Receiver:**  Congregations, Amsterdam

**Receiver Place:**  Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Language:**  English

**Translation:**

**36. January 7**[?]**, 1672.** *This is an announcement to be made in both the Church at the Lamb and the Church at the Tower in Amsterdam, this being the copy from the Lamb. (These two Mennonite churches had united in 1668.[[1]](#footnote-3)) The announcement proposes a general collection to be made at both churches on January 20 for financial aid to Swiss Anabaptist refugees arriving in the Palatinate and quotes extensively from Valentine Hütwohl’s letter of December 17, 1671. At the end of this document a notice is added about the meetings where money is to be collected for the relief work.[[2]](#footnote-4)*

[folio 1 recto]

We trust that many of our brothers and sisters may have heard about the severe persecutions of the Mennonites living in Switzerland, which have occurred the last couple of years; about how some of them have been kept in prison for a long time, others expelled from the country, several corporally punished, transported to Italy, and now banned to the galleys as slaves and serfs. For this reason they had been advised several times before that they should leave Switzerland in order to live and settle preferably somewhere else.[[3]](#footnote-5) They could hardly agree to this for various important reasons. However, finally it appears that the severe distress has pressed in such a way, and the fire has been made so hot for them, that they could no longer stay in the country.

Now we have received a clear message that they have arrived in large numbers among our brothers, the Mennonites, who live in the Palatinate—having left behind home and farm, and some of them man or wife, others parents and children, brothers, sisters, friends and relatives, outwardly in a sad and miserable state. Many of them lack short-term food supplies, others brought along very little[[4]](#footnote-6) during this cold wintertime. Recently we received several letters from there, written by our brothers, the preachers of the Mennonite congregation in the Palatinate, in which we are informed about the sad situation of those being persecuted. One of them writes on this subject, dated last December 17, as follows:

“First,[[5]](#footnote-7) about 70 persons arrived here by land, afterwards 62 by ship, and shortly thereafter 60, then again 108, subsequently 30 more, then another 40, and finally another 60 persons.[[6]](#footnote-8) Also in between times some more have arrived, with the result that we think that no less than 450 souls in all have arrived here with us. These are distributed near or with fellow believers all over the country in a circle of about twelve miles. Among these are people who walk with a cane, being 70, 80, even 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 in particular they also have little bedding, so little that we hardly know how to protect them from the cold. Thus far we have provided food for them. There are some people among us who feed[[7]](#footnote-9) seven, eight, or nine souls, in such a manner that a part of us have hardly a bit of cheese and butter and other food in the kitchen anymore.

“It is now highly necessary at this time of the year to rent and obtain some places,[[8]](#footnote-10) in order that they and their children might have something to do and earn their own bread. When one talks about this, these people begin to sigh, wishing that they already might have some rented properties with house and land, but they do not dare to get any for rent because they do not have the means for it. Likewise these people lack household effects and things which are necessary to cultivate the land, such as a horse, cart, plow and other necessary items, cows, etc. They also have to wait a year and a half before[[9]](#footnote-11) 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 who has twelve children and his father and mother, so that there are sixteen of them who go to the table.

“It would be desirable if some compassionate hearts could witness the whole situation and condition of the Swiss brothers themselves and help advise what is best for them. For from what the eyes see and the ears hear, one can understand best and consider accordingly the requirements of the situation. [folio 1 verso] 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 expectant women. Likewise children who have separated from their father and mother and subsequently have left brothers and sisters. How such separations occur, I suggest for the consideration of every good-hearted and compassionate mind.”

And the Mennonites of the Palatinate generally are people of small means, who probably have barely enough to meet their own needs and therefore will be heavily burdened by such a great number of persecuted and expelled people. So our preachers[[10]](#footnote-12) here have found it most advisable to report this great need to our brothers and sisters, as well as to all lovers of the truth who are accustomed to attending our church meetings,[[11]](#footnote-13) and at the same time to make the announcement that the preachers intend to make a general collection, in both our meeting places, both at the Tower and at the Lamb, to be precise, on this coming Wednesday,[[12]](#footnote-14) January 20, being a day which has been set aside as a [national] Day of Prayer by our highest government authorities.[[13]](#footnote-15) Then the deacons will stand at the doors of our meeting places in the morning, afternoon, and evening after preaching in order to receive such alms or voluntary donations as each shall kindly give in accordance with his means to comfort and support the earlier mentioned persecuted and expelled persons, and so meet their needs.

And since this need is of such extraordinary proportions, and since it concerns so many persons who should be helped in some way to function again, a rather large amount is required in order to enable them to earn their own bread in the future. We therefore will hope and trust that everyone of our brothers and sisters, and all others who are devoted to the truth, will also show their commitment to this [cause], not only bearing in mind that we are taught to remember prisoners, just as if we were prisoners with them ourselves, and also the ones who are badly treated, just as if we were ill treated in our own body.[[14]](#footnote-16) But also our Lord Jesus Christ Himself in Matthew, chapter 25, has spoken of feeding the hungry, refreshing the thirsty, clothing the naked, lodging the homeless, etc., and immediately afterwards states in explicit words: all that you have done to one of the least of these my brothers, that you have done to me. And we—in accordance with both our Confession [of Faith] and the nature of love—cannot doubt that these present-day oppressed [people] suffer for the sake of righteousness and [that they] are for that reason brothers and sisters of our Lord Jesus Christ. So may everyone personally readily understand to what extent this occasion ought to urge us to charity.

Especially in light of our own present circumstances[[15]](#footnote-17) such a heavy cloud of distress and sadness hangs over our own heads, and the inhabitants of these our lands apparently are being threatened with such heavy hardships of war and destruction.[[16]](#footnote-18) Against such [danger], according to the witness of the Holy Scripture, no more powerful means can be employed (apart from a demonstration of true contrition and immediate renunciation of all our sins and iniquities, of which true repentance and conversion consist) [folio 2 recto] than that all of us try to be reconciled with the Lord our God[[17]](#footnote-19) by demonstrating charity to the wretched ones.

Formerly it was the advice that the prophet Daniel gave to King Nebuchadnezzar, saying: O King, let my counsel please you and break off your sins through righteousness and your iniquities by showing mercy to the wretched ones in order that there might be a lengthening of your peace.[[18]](#footnote-20) For which also the apostle urges so gravely in his letter to the Hebrews, saying: Do not forget to do good and to share, because God has a delight in such sacrifices.[[19]](#footnote-21) Yes, one should keep in mind that thus far the Lord has so graciously saved and preserved these [our] lands, because, among other reasons, they have offered an asylum and shelter to many distressed people on various occasions.

To[[20]](#footnote-22) the congregation[[21]](#footnote-23) it is announced that on this coming Wednesday, being a Day of Prayer, the morning sermon will be in both meeting places, and that in the afternoon the sermons will be arranged as follows: at 2 o’clock the sermon will only be in the meeting place at the Tower and at 5 o’clock only in this place [the Lamb], and this will continue similarly the next Sunday and all winter long, by turns in the one and the other place.

It is further announced that four weeks from today will be the time for communion, and, in case some persons present themselves with a good testimony fourteen days before that, for baptism.

[back cover]

Letters and copies

concerning the Swiss brothers.

1. **36** 1 *ME* I, 104; Zijlstra, p.424. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
2. This notice is attached to the end of only one copy (3) of A 1059b. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
3. Another copy (2) expands this with a synonym. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
4. Another copy (2) omits this phrase. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
5. With this word begin the selected quotations from Valentine Hütwohl’s letter (Document 34). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
6. Here another copy (3) adds “which altogether comes to 430 persons.” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
7. Another copy (3) reads “6, 7, 8 or 9 souls to shelter and feed.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
8. farms [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
9. Another copy (3) gives a synonym. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
10. In context this means the church board, including deacons. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
11. adults who attended meetings but were not members. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
12. See notice added to the end of this document. Another copy (2) adds here “of this month.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
13. At this time threats of war and danger in the Netherlands gave an extra dimension to the appeal for charity for the Swiss. These troubles had begun a little earlier with the secret Treaty of Dover between King Charles II of England and Louis XIV of France in June 1670, aiming at a joint attack on the Netherlands, in order to weaken the international political and commercial supremacy of the Dutch Republic. This caused great fear among the Dutch as well as political and military disquiet, with a possible end of social stability and economic prosperity, and even a possible attack on religious liberties. The year 1672 became known in Dutch history as the year of disaster (“rampjaar”). Piet Visser pointed out the connection between this document and contemporary Dutch history. Cf. “Dutch Wars,” *Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago, 1972), VII, p. 803; D. J. Roorda, *Het Rampjaar 1672* (Bussum, 1971). Nesca A. Robb, *William of Orange* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1962), I, pp. 212-288. Jan IJntema, “The Mennonites of the Netherlands,” *MQR* (Jan. 1937), p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
14. Heb. 13:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
15. Copy (2) reads “now.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
16. In December 1671, the bishops of Münster and Cologne joined the French and the British coalition in their offensive plans against the Dutch; the Dutch, in response, asked Spain for support, while the remnants of the Dutch army were being mobilized. This is the threatening national situation at the moment when this appeal for charity went to Amsterdam church members. The following March and April the French and British, with the German bishops’ coalition, declared war on the Dutch Republic. Within the country the Orangist and Republican parties strove against one another to dominate governmental positions, culminating in the first political murder in the Netherlands, the lynching of the grand pensionary De Witt and his brother, in August 1672. For sources, see preceeding note 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
17. Reformed officials in Switzerland complained that Anabaptists there made this argument in rejecting the use of weapons: the best protection against war was amendment of life. See Document 32, p. 349. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
18. Dan. 4:27. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
19. Heb. 13:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
20. Here begins a special notice. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
21. literally “meeting.” [↑](#footnote-ref-23)