**Citation:** James W. Lowry, "Document 39, 12 February 1672, translation," in *Documents of Brotherly Love: Dutch Mennonite Aid to Swiss Anabaptists* (Millersburg, OH: Ohio Amish Library), 417-21 (odd).

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**Date:**  12 February 1672

**Sender:**  Bern], [Swiss refugees from

**Sender Place:**  Palatinate

**Receiver:**  Lam, Congregation of the

**Receiver Place:**  Amsterdam, Netherlands

**Language:**  English

**Translation:**

**39. February 12, 1672.** *Dutch translation of a letter of the Swiss refugees to the Church at the Lamb, thanking them for the help received, describing their banishment from Bern, reporting that they have settled above Heidelberg, and humbly asking for more help. Five preachers and five deacons sign the letter. The letter speaks of refugees on both sides of the Rhine River.*

[recto]

Translation from Swiss

Written February 12, 1672, received the 19th of the same

With a desire for everything that is pleasant and good from God, the Almighty; much good fortune and benefit and all prosperity, whatever is needed for our and your salvation, we wish you, dearly beloved friends, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Moreover, we the undersigned ministers and elders wish to acknowledge to you, very beloved friends, that although you are unknown to us, and we therefore cannot write you by name, you have, nevertheless, thought on us in our sorrow and have shown us a work of mercy and love. Jacob Gut and his fellow ministers have communicated this to us and also are sharing with the needy among us, whom we have been maintaining through this winter among our friends in the Palatinate in the community above[[1]](#footnote-3) Heidelberg. For this support and benefit we praise and thank God greatly. We also ask that the Lord, the God who allows no drink of cold water to one of His own to go unrecompensed, will reward you in eternity. Amen.

Further, beloved friends, we accordingly should succinctly inform you a little about our dreadful condition. First, our government and lords at Bern, Switzerland, issued to us a mandate that within 14 days we should move out of the land with our [live] stock and goods. If we did not want to comply, they would confiscate our stock and goods and drive us out of the land by force. However, in this time frame very few departed. The reason that they did not depart is as follows. First, the government, in our time and also in the time of our foreparents, on several occasions, began to drive us out and also to imprison some and warn them to take up their [Reformed] belief. However, if we kept quiet and withdrew to ourselves and kept ourselves hidden as much as we could, the government relented again and had patience with us. Second, they set us so short a time that we could not get out of the country with our [live] stock and goods. Accordingly, we have hoped that it would go again as at other times and that the government would soon again have patience. Thus we preferred rather to wait and remain quietly withdrawn among ourselves, and we were willing to be oppressed and stay rather than wander in a foreign country, troubling other people and receiving help from them. Accordingly we stayed as long as we could. But the longer the government proceeded against us, the more harshly they did it, so that we could no longer hold out. We moved away and took along with us what we could; and yet we have brought few of our possessions with us out of the land.

[verso]

There are with us above Heidelberg[[2]](#footnote-4) approximately 300 persons, young and old, large and small, and there are only two to be found who have 100 rixdollars, and some have nothing. Across the Rhine below Heidelberg there are over 300 persons, and some others are still in Alsace. Among all of them are people old and physically handicapped who cannot earn their keep, and also little children who are still young. Yet now the government in the Palatinate, and also princes and noble persons, have permitted (allowed) us to settle in their country, and they have assigned to us [some] of their vineyards and lands. These farms we have accepted and rented, as far as we know, in fifteen locations. There is lacking on some farms one plow, on some two plows [are needed] and for each plow two oxen or two horses. Equipment is also lacking and other things. Consequently, with rather large expenditures, we must begin again to set up our operations.

We know of no other solution than to take God as our helper, and also, wherever we can, to approach, for help and advice, such good friends as are sympathetic with us and desire to show us mercy. And as far as this letter may come and be read, we appeal [to such persons] for help. Yet we do not wish to make a law out of it for anyone, nor demand anything other than can come from a sympathetic spirit or out of the goodness of the heart. And we pray the Almighty God that He

grant us enough grace for us to receive every benefit bestowed upon us with thanksgiving to God and to use it with proper moderation. The result will be that our affliction may conduce to, and serve for, eternal salvation to us as well as all who show mercy to us. For this may the Lord grant us all His grace and blessing. And in closing we greet you and commend you to the gracious protection of God. Amen.

Very beloved friends, since your names and places of dwelling are unknown to us and we could [not] send you our letter, we have directed this letter to Jacob Eberling to supply the heading [address] to you who have sent and demonstrated and shown benefit and support for us. And we ask you that you would excuse the simplicity of our writing. And we ministers and elders, driven out of Switzerland, as a closing of this letter have signed our names with our own hand as follows:

Ministers of the Word Deacons

Ully Seiller[[3]](#footnote-5) Ule Lacher[[4]](#footnote-6)

Durs Äbi[[5]](#footnote-7) Hans Reist

Ully Müller[[6]](#footnote-8) Hans Weinwets[[7]](#footnote-9)

Peter Gut[[8]](#footnote-10) Christian Herr[[9]](#footnote-11)

Jör Liechti[[10]](#footnote-12) Jost Engel

1. **39** 1 That is, south of. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
2. This is probably southeast of Heidelberg. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
3. Note: Compare the spelling of the family names in the English translation with that given in the original transcription on the facing pages. Where the name in the English translation differs from the transcription, then that name has been made to conform to the *Familiennamenbuch der Schweiz*. See also footnote 3 in Document 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
4. or Locher *FNS*. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
5. North American spelling, Eby. See Document 44 n. 20. Cf. Ruth, *The Earth Is the Lord’s*, pp. 86, 108, 110; Mark Furner, “Lay Casuistry and the Survival of Later Anabaptists in Bern,” *MQR* (Oct. 2001), p. 460. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
6. North American spelling, Miller. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
7. or possibly Weinmann. *FNS*. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
8. North American spelling, Good. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
9. Cf. Christian Herr at Hohenharter Hof in 1685. Guth, p.15. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
10. or Jörg or Georg; North American spelling, Lichty. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)