

Menno Simons as a Devout Disciple of the Apostle Paul

Egil Grislis, *The University of Manitoba*

Menno Simon's reticence to speak in detail about his personal life may have had several reasons. First, convinced that his calling was to proclaim Christ crucified, he may have regarded autobiographical concerns as distracting from his ministry. Second, it must be kept in mind that Menno lived under the constant threat of a violent death by torture and execution. The less anyone knew about his person, including his habits and his life-style, the less likely would he be detected. Finally, it also appears that Menno was a most private person — not timid to speak the truth but too selfless to place himself in the limelight.

At the same time, when Menno Simons did speak of himself, he often did so in a rather negative way, belittling his native gifts and accomplishments. It is quite possible that Menno's negative self-evaluation may have influenced later scholarly judgments about him. If so, then his pious humility — often expressed in the familiar phrases of the Apostle Paul — may deserve further exploration. The purpose of this study is to show that Menno's main intent was not an objective self-evaluation and autobiographical introspection, but an explicit affirmation that he was a devout disciple of Apostle Paul. Considering Paul's importance for early Christianity, Menno was therefore humbly calling attention to the ultimate significance of his own calling. In so far as Menno was not concerned merely with himself, but spoke for an entire evangelical movement, the identification with the Apostle Paul was a momentous claim.

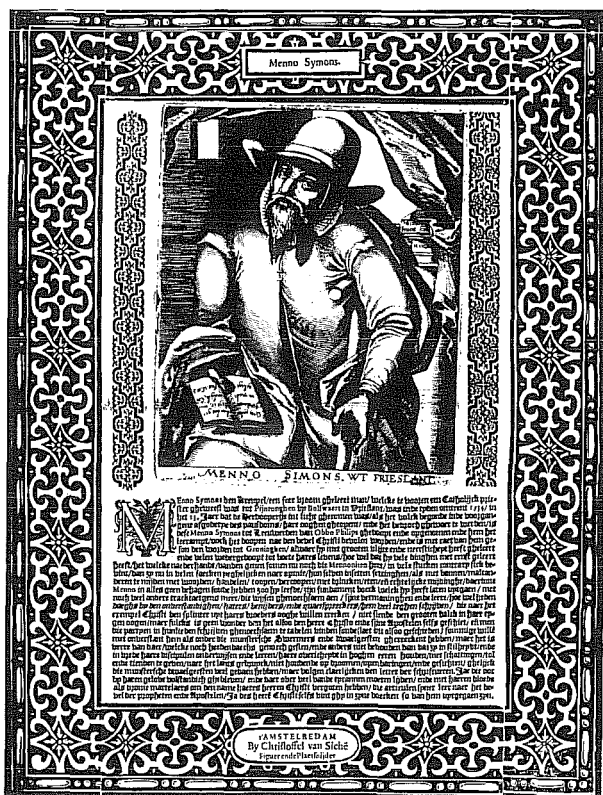
I

Menno's deeper acquaintance with Apostle Paul was preceded by his discovery of the Bible.¹ He recalled later that as a priest in the Roman Catholic Church he had begun to question the traditional doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the holy eucharist: "...it occurred to me, as often as I handled the bread and the wine in the Mass, that they were not the flesh and the blood of the Lord." He therefore proceeded to cope with the difficulty as he had been taught: "I confessed it often, sighed and prayed; yet I could not come clear of the idea." Discussions with the other two priests of the parish apparently had not been helpful, and so Menno decided to turn to the Bible. Such had been the general advice of the Northern Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation.² Apparently Menno had encountered Luther's often repeated claim "that human injunctions cannot bind unto eternal death."³ Menno recalled: "Finally, I got the idea to examine the New Testament diligently. I had not gone very far when I discovered that we were deceived...." What had occurred had not been a mere change of mind. Rather, the new insight was the result of divine intervention and a self-transforming experience: "Through the illumination and grace of the Lord I increased in knowledge of the Scriptures daily." Those who were in contact with Menno apparently were impressed, and Menno reported modestly that he "was presently considered by some (not correctly however) to be an evangelical preacher." Not satisfied with this humble disclaimer of fame, Menno added a sharply critical note: "Everyone sought and desired me; the world loved me and I loved the world."⁴ Now while arguments from silence have only a limited value, it may nevertheless be observed that in regard to his pre-Anabaptist life Menno did not mention any personal or educational limitations. In other words, before he considered himself a humble disciple of Apostle Paul, there was no need to proclaim his shortcomings.

The situation changed radically with the arrest and execution of Sicke Snijder "for being rebaptized."⁵ Totally puzzled, Menno continued to search the Bible: "I examined the Scriptures diligently and pondered them earnestly, but could find no report on infant baptism."⁶ A consultation with a fellow priest was not helpful, except that he admitted "that there was no basis for infant baptism in Scripture."⁷ Still uncertain, Menno turned to the writings of Luther, Bucer, and Bullinger.⁸ Their insights, Menno soon concluded, were not based on the Bible: "When I noticed from all these that writers varied so greatly among themselves, each following his own wisdom, then I realized that we were deceived in regard to infant baptism." Eventually the discovery was made:

And so, my reader, I obtained a view of baptism and the Lord's Supper through the illumination of the Holy Ghost, through much reading and pondering of the Scriptures, and by the gracious favor and gift of God; not by the instrumentality of the erring sects as it is reported of me.⁹

Here Menno was particularly concerned to distance himself from "the sect of Munster."¹⁰ Menno's inner turmoil increased as his compassion grew for



An engraving of Menno Simons by Christofel van Sichem (1546-1624). It appeared in a collection of portraits of well-known "heretics," published in 1608. While the historical verisimilitude is probably not too great, it is possible that the artist used an older picture for this version.

During the last years of his life Menno was crippled. The earliest portraits picture him with crutches. Menno holds a Bible opened at 1. Cor. 3:11: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The first line of the biography at the bottom reads, in English translation: "Menno Simons the cripple, a very pious learned man, was formerly a Catholic priest...." (On van Sichem see *Menn. Encl.* III, 583; IV, 522).

the unfortunates who had been misled by the violent Münsterites. A particular incident played a catalytic role: "... the poor straying sheep who wandered as sheep without a proper shepherd, after many cruel edicts, garrotings, and slaughters, assembled at a place near my place of residence called Oude Klooster" — and were mercilessly cut down.¹¹ Now inwardly alienated from the Catholic Church, encouraged by the sincerity of the misguided and unfortunate resisters at Oude Klooster, Menno despaired: "Pondering these things my conscience tormented me so that I could no

longer endure it.”¹² A later summary of this mood is couched in a broadly scriptural language,¹³ yet with a recognizable Pauline flavour reminiscent of the Damascus road setting:

My heart trembled within me. I prayed to God with sighs and tears that He would give to me, a sorrowing sinner, the gift of His grace, create within me a clean heart, and graciously through the merits of the crimson blood of Christ forgive my unclean walk and frivolous easy life and bestow His exalted and adorable name and holy Word in purity, and make known His truth to His glory.¹⁴

The account is moving. While the perhaps frequent re-telling of the experience may have polished its formulation, the original sense of despair is still evident. The next sentence witnesses to the relief which Menno experienced once grace was nearer. Or was then grace already operative? Perhaps both of these experiences were present, since Menno in his later theologizing shifted back and forth: at times he celebrated grace as the initiator, and at other times he pointed to good works in repentance and service as the necessary first step.¹⁵ Here Menno first acknowledged the presence of a certain but incomplete measure of grace:

I began in the name of the Lord to preach publicly from the pulpit the word of true repentance, to point the people to the narrow path, and in the power of the Scripture openly to reprove all sin and wickedness, all idolatry and false worship, and to present the true worship; also the true baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the doctrine of Christ, to the extent that I had at that time received from God the grace.

Eventually Menno was able to make the next step, due to the gift of grace, now apparently received in a full measure:

After about nine months or so, the gracious Lord granted me His fatherly Spirit, help, and hand. Then I, without constraint, of a sudden [op eenmaal], renounced all my worldly reputation, name and fame, my unchristian abominations, my masses, infant baptism, and my easy life, and I willingly submitted to the distress and heavy cross of Christ.¹⁶

In Protestant circles the term *theologia crucis* or the “theology of the cross” is often seen as originating with Martin Luther. Menno Simons, in his celebration of the cross of Christ, pointed to Apostle Paul. In an incisive passage, referring to Phil. 3:11, Menno stated: “I say with Paul, to serve is my desire, not with exalted words and human wisdom, for I possess and know them not. I let those seek them who desire them. My boasting, however, is with Paul to know Christ and Him crucified, for to us the knowledge of Him is eternal life.”¹⁷

Having left the Catholic Church, Menno noted, “I willingly submitted to distress and poverty under the heavy cross of Christ.” Like Apostle Paul, he diligently threw himself into the work of the Lord.¹⁸ Then, “about one year” later, Menno was approached by “some six, seven, or eight persons” who pleaded with him, as he so humbly phrases it in Pauline language, “to put to good use the talents which I, though unworthy, had received from the

Lord.”¹⁹ Was such a plea totally unexpected? Perhaps it was, yet the self-belittling Pauline tone need not prove it:

When I heard this my heart was greatly troubled. Trouble and fear were on every side. On the one hand I was sensible of my limited talents, my wickedness, perversity, and tyranny of the world, the great and powerful sects, the subtlety of many minds, and the woefully heavy cross that would weigh on me not a little should I comply. On the other hand I saw the pitifully great hunger and need of these God-fearing, pious children, for I saw plainly that they erred as do harmless sheep which have no shepherd.

Again, so it should be noted, Menno acknowledged the reality of the cross of Christ. It was experienced in terms of the “world” and also in terms of the self, since sin and weakness were not only external but also internal realities. As a new believer, Menno now discovered the need to face these difficulties, to carry his cross, and in this way to experience grace and redemption. In this way the cross was seen as a world-transforming power of grace. Soon enough it came to be actualized in Menno’s life. Again, Menno’s approach was thoughtfully Pauline at least in a broad sense of that term. Menno recalled:

At last, after much prayer, before the Lord and His church I gave these conditions: that we should pray earnestly to the Lord for a season. Then if it should be pleasing to His holy will that I could or should labor to His praise, He would give me such a mind and heart as would say to me with Paul, Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel. And if not, that He might employ means so that nothing would come of it...²⁰

The consciously shared Pauline outlook may be noted not only by the explicit quotation of I Cor. 9:16, but also by the basic orientation which once had been suggested to the apostles by the famed Pharisee Gamaliel in Acts 5:38-39 — “...if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them.” Of course, Gamaliel was not only the author of this advice, but apparently also the teacher of Apostle Paul.²¹

Observing such increasing orientation to Apostle Paul in the autobiographical section of his Works, we already need to be warned against taking too literally Menno’s fiercely humble criticisms of himself.

II

As Menno’s ministry continued, his self-criticisms increased in volume — but always in close dependence on Apostle Paul. Now the idea of patterning after and consciously imitating a worthy example was often current in the sixteenth century. Thus we are told of the famed Catholic martyr Saint Thomas More (1478-1535) that he had for some time entertained the thought of becoming a priest, but finally decided to study law and to marry. In the choice of this direction, Thomas More had looked for precedent and guidance: “The tradition of More’s family, recorded by his great-grandson Cresacre, was that when More decided to marry, ‘he propounded for himself as a pattern of life a singular layman, John Picus, Earl of Mirandula’.”²² It was

merely appropriate that Menno, so thoroughly committed to the Scriptures, would find a pattern of life in Apostle Paul.

Moreover, the significance of Apostle Paul is further enhanced by Menno's emphatic references to him by name. Here it may be noted that it was Menno's customary style to include personal names for added emphasis. At times this would be accomplished even by the use of non-biblical names, for example:

... all those who do not become acquainted with this wisdom from God, though they were as glorious as Solomon and victorious as Alexander, as rich as Croesus, as strong as Hercules, as learned as Plato, as subtle as Aristotle, as eloquent as Demosthenes and Cicero, and as expert in language as Mithridates; yes, in so great demand that the like were not seen from the beginning, nevertheless they are fools in the eyes of the Lord: this must be confessed and granted.²³

Ordinarily, however, Menno drew upon biblical examples. But here, too, the explicit emphasis on a person's name served to highlight some significant insight. Thus when observing that suffering has been the perennial lot of especially faithful people, Menno could specify:

My dear brethren in the Lord, with this I will cut short the narrative of the Old Testament, for time will not allow to relate it all — for what reason the pious Joseph also was grievously hated by his brethren and by them cast into a pit, drawn out again and sold to the Ishmaelites, was accused to be the faithless philanderer by the unchaste wife of his lord, and although innocent had to suffer his lord's wrath, imprisonment, and bonds; likewise, for what reason the noble and noted prophet and evangelist, Isaiah, under the bloody and idolatrous Manasseh, was cut in two with the saw, as the account has it; why the dear and spiritual prophet Ezekiel was stoned by those who remained of Dan and Gad; why Urijah of Kirjath-Jearim was slain with the sword of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah; why Zacharias, the son of Berechiah, was stoned between the temple and the altar; why the powerful wonder-working prophet Elijah had to retreat before the idolatrous Jezebel drunk with blood; why the three youths, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were cast into the red-hot furnace, and Daniel into the lion's den; why the venerable, pious, old scribe Eleazar and his worthy, pious wife with their seven sons were inhumanly and barbarously treated by the godless wolf of a man, Antiochus, and were tortured, roasted, killed, and murdered (II Macc. 6:18–31). You see, brethren, every Christian should be prepared for this.²⁴

Yet as the underlining of a text is meaningful only as long as certain, limited areas alone are so marked (and signifies little when the entire text is underlined), so also Menno's singling out of biblical authors had to be circumspect. As is well known, Menno's writings are completely saturated with Scriptures. There is hardly a sentence in Menno's writings which does not consist of biblical quotations and paraphrases.²⁵ When therefore in the midst of such thorough use of biblical materials Menno finally called attention to a source, it was clearly for the sake of special emphasis. Here then the significance of Apostle Paul for Menno becomes especially clear. Again and again, Menno mentions Paul by name, and, when the situation demands even greater attention, speaks of "holy Paul."

While clearly subordinated to Jesus, Paul is always viewed as in complete accord with Jesus — and as the most significant of apostles. Also, while Menno attempted to portray the life of Paul with accuracy, and did not assume that he had literally experienced the same events, Menno was aware of the overarching parallels between them. Paul's life and his own were for Menno instructive examples of God's grace in the lives of his servants.²⁶

As Paul, Menno had been selected and called by God. Menno, like Paul, did not view himself as primarily a theologian or as an administrator. He did not consider the significance of his own literary creativity or the style of his writing, but always sought to exposit the word of God. Is not the title "a prince of the holy Word" applicable to Menno as well? And certainly Menno saw himself as working among violent, cruel, and persecuting heathen. Of course, Menno had not performed miracles and did not admit to any heavenly flights, but his personal life had been staunchly unblamable. It could be said of Menno: "He had nothing of which he could be accused." And, finally, as Apostle Paul, Menno had known continuous hardships as well as unceasing persecutions. His life had also been faithful, valiant, and storm-tossed!

At the front of every one of his publications, Menno placed the same words of Paul: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 3:11." The continuous use of this motto, however, underscores more than Menno's celebration of Apostle Paul. It clearly attests to Menno's Christocentricity as well as his conservatism. Long before Menno, the Franciscan tradition had appealed to this text in describing how St. Francis of Assisi (1181/2–1226) had rebuilt the church of St. Damien:

The first work that blessed Francis undertook after he had gained his freedom from the hand of his carnally minded father was to build a house of God. He did not try to build one anew, but he repaired an old one, restored an ancient one. He did not tear out the foundation, but he built upon it, ever reserving to Christ his prerogative, though he was not aware of it, *for other foundation no one can lay, but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.*²⁷

In his own exposition of the motto, Menno, in the perspective of the sixteenth century Reformation, stressed the proclamation of the gospel and commented: "According to the doctrine of Paul, no other foundation [gront] can be laid, no other gospel preached than that which is preached to us by the apostles."²⁸ On another occasion Menno had counselled: "Beware of all innovations and doctrines not contained in the Word of Christ and His apostles, nor consistent therewith. At all times point to Christ and His Word. Let all those who would introduce anything other than what Christ teaches in His Word be anathema. For other foundation [Fondament] can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."²⁹ In other words, Menno had made it clear that his concern with Apostle Paul was not to be understood onesidedly: "Christ and Paul are one, and not divided."³⁰ Menno likewise noted that Christ and Paul agree "unanimously,"³¹ indeed, they speak in "the same words,"³² and obviously do not "differ in doctrine."³³ Of course, all the while Paul is

Christ's "servant."³⁴ However, at the same time there is no question that Apostle Paul is an authentic and therefore a significant servant; after all, "the Spirit of God speaks ... through Paul."³⁵ Therefore it should not be a surprise to be told that Paul, too, was — an Anabaptist! Menno explained as follows: "If we are Anabaptists because we repeat baptism instituted by man and administered to those who had no knowledge, how much then was Paul an Anabaptist for rebaptizing those who were of understanding minds, and were then baptized with the baptism which was from heaven and ordained of God!"³⁶

If Luther had approached Paul in terms of the doctrine of justification, Menno centered his attention on the ultimate results of justification and therefore wrote in terms of sanctification. Of course, here Paul also had led the way: "For Paul says, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."³⁷ Thus, following the example of Apostle Paul, Menno could point to the several facets of the new life. On the one hand, there was cross-bearing and a redemptive participation in Christ: "We must spend the remainder of our days not after the lusts of men, but according to the will of God, so that we may say with Paul, I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."³⁸ On the other hand, the redemptive participation in Christ was also a thoroughly joyous experience. Hence Menno witnessed: "Dearest brethren, rejoice in the Lord always. With Paul I say: Again I say, rejoice."³⁹ According to Menno, the reasons for rejoicing were weighty:

...you are called from wrath into grace, from cursings to blessings, out of death to life, not to mention the generous benefits which are daily shown you; then your hearts would blossom forth as the sweet-scented, blooming violet, full of pure love. Yes, they would leap forth as the living fountain, giving forth the sweet and pleasant waters of righteousness, and you would with the holy Paul say from your inmost soul, Who shall separate us from the love of God?⁴⁰

Such rejoicing, celebrated by a mature person, was no mere clapping of hands. The joy of faith was to be expressed in Christian service, as Apostle Paul had so clearly taught it: "... the holy Paul says, Woe is me if I preach not the gospel! ... I Cor. 9:16."⁴¹ And that had not been merely a general direction, but a personal calling, now to be concretized. This Menno explained with the assistance of Paul's idea of calling:

I have been called, although so unworthy, and clearly sound the trumpet of the holy divine Word from the walls and gates of Jerusalem, according to my small talent, and faithfully awaken the citizens of the eternal peace, joyfully to sing the lovely hallelujah through the streets with grateful, joyous hearts to the honor of God; to attire themselves before God and the world in the shining, white raiment of the saints in sincerity of heart and purity of doctrine.⁴²

At the same time Menno also subscribed to Paul's teaching, that mighty preaching⁴³ must be accompanied by a blameless life. Hence Menno confessed and challenged:

Let all your actions be wrought of God, by God and in God. Measure all your thoughts, words, and actions by the rule of the divine Word so that the wretched slanderer who so diligently watches all your words and actions may find nothing which he can fairly lay to your charge, as Paul taught and requested the church in some instances. Eph. 4:1; I Tim. 3; Titus 2.⁴⁴

And such was not merely Menno's theory of authentic Christian existence. His own autobiographical comment, although garbed in Paul's humble language, made clear that Menno knew the great accomplishments of which he had been speaking, namely: "I say with Paul [Heyligen Paulo], to serve is my desire, not with exalted words of human wisdom, for I possess and know them not. I let those seek them who desire them. My boasting, however, is with Paul to know Christ and Him crucified, for to us the knowledge of Him is eternal life."⁴⁵

Consistently and continuously, through Paul's humble language Menno emphasized that he had been both faithful and diligent. When viciously attacked, Menno defended his uprightness, and then embraced the vigorous expressions of Apostle Paul. Menno proclaimed: "I have without faltering borne scorn and cross with much misery, anxiety, tribulation, and peril. I trust by His grace that I will do so to the end, to testify with a good conscience to His holy Word, will, and ordinance with mouth, pen, life, and death as much as is in me."⁴⁶

And although Menno had not experienced as many miracles as Apostle Paul, there had also been occasions of direct divine interference in his life. Notably, some of Menno's wicked persecutors had been punished with instant death! In his *Epistle to Micron*, dated 1556, Menno recounted:

It is about eighteen or nineteen years ago that a highly esteemed man who was much respected by the world (whose name and country I will not mention) wickedly advised that they should destroy me together with the pious. His words and ungodly thoughts were hardly finished when the avenging hand of the Lord was laid upon him. He slumped down at the table and in a moment his bloodthirsty, impenitent, ungodly life was ended in a terrible way. Oh, fearful judgment!⁴⁷

A man who had planned to seize Menno had died "within eight days." The same punishment reached an officer who had prepared elaborate plans to destroy the Anabaptists: "And four or five days thereafter the bell was tolled for him and the requiem sang over him." Commented Menno: "Behold thus God the Lord annihilates the designs of the ungodly who storm this holy mount and destroy those who hate His truth and are hostile thereto."⁴⁸ Finally, after several more vivid examples, Menno concluded: "... the battle is not against me but against the truth itself, against the Father and His blessed Son, against the whole Scriptures, and against those who dwell in heaven. Therefore take heed."⁴⁹

Of course, by viewing providence in such dynamic terms, Menno was not celebrating merely his own protection. He was witnessing to the guidance of the entire believing community. But the guidance could not be manipulated by the leader, since the clues did not rest with Menno but within the Word of

God. With remarkable tact and faithful selflessness, Menno made clear that he would not be ever celebrated at the expense of the Scriptures. While a wise religious position, assuring the godly survival of his followers anchored in the Word of God, this need not be viewed as a shrewd move in terms of building his own reputation. The steadfast adherence to Apostle Paul's affirmations of unworthiness could be misunderstood as an objective self-evaluation. And even when Menno affirmed what must be accepted as an insightful and wise theological position,⁵⁰ he succeeded in formulating it in most humble terms, for example:

...I have no visions nor angelic inspirations. Neither do I desire such lest I be deceived. The Word of Christ alone is sufficient for me. If I do not follow His testimony, then verily all that I do is useless, and even if I had such visions and inspirations, which is not the case, even then it would have to be conformable to the Word and Spirit of Christ, or else it would be mere imagination, deceit, and satanic temptation. For Paul says, Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith. Rom. 12:6.⁵¹

At the same time, in close reliance on Paul, Menno was prepared to think eschatologically, and thus to envision the rapidly approaching end of the world. Menno noted: "Paul writes to Timothy saying, This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebrakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. II Tim. 3:1-5."⁵² Clearly, here Menno had not merely quoted, but also interpreted. Ethical living — or the absence of it — was now regarded as the central means for discerning eschatological future. In this way the regenerated life of the believer served as the clearest assurance of salvation in this new age. Where such are absent, divine judgment is near at hand:

Since Paul openly testifies by the Spirit of God that the falling away would come before the days of the Lord, and also shows through whom it would come, namely, through the man of sin; and since it is clearly visible that this son of perdition has placed himself in the temple of God, that is, in the hearts and consciences of men, or if you prefer, in the stead of God in the beforementioned church, and has so wholly corrupted it, has deceitfully changed it under the name of Christ from the doctrine and ordinances of God to his own doctrine and ordinances, therefore I would leave it to the attentive reader to judge whether this church, which is so completely occupied, overpowered, and destroyed, can be God's temple. If he judges that it cannot, then he judges rightly according to Scripture. Otherwise many passages of the Scriptures would be fallible and false; and it would follow that both God and the devil, both Christ and Antichrist have sat in one and the same temple and have reigned in one and the same church.⁵³

Of course, the purity of the church is never achieved automatically. Here, too, Apostle Paul had provided the necessary direction: "For Paul says, Therefore

put away from among yourselves that wicked person, that is, separate from the communion of your church him who is wicked. I Cor. 5:13.”⁵⁴ Such direction, of course, implied leadership. While not drawing the comparison too explicitly and identifying himself with Paul, the “infallible leader” [onbedriegelijke voorganger],⁵⁵ Menno had nevertheless very clearly reported where he stood: “Not a single Scripture is falsified or broken by us. Not a single gloss is made. To not one absurdity are we driven. It is the plain Scripture and its foundation which we present to the reader, as you may feel with your hands and see with your eyes.”⁵⁶ Of course, Menno’s final claim that not selfishness but love had inspired him and his followers, is not limited to a Pauline perspective, but is all-inclusive:

Consider, we pray you, that we cannot possibly seek carnal profit in this our conduct; neither gold, nor silver, no honor, nor ease, no long life on earth. For you may plainly see that we are made a prey to the world on account of it. But we are driven solely by the love of God, by an upright, fruitful faith...⁵⁷

Menno’s affinity with Paul, however, should not be seen merely in terms of the general wideness of their agreement, but also in terms of the depth of their thought. Thus Menno’s closest affinity with Apostle Paul, no doubt, is found in his celebration of the cross — both Christ’s and the individual believer’s. Sanctification is not reached by sacramental means in a liturgical setting. The arena where sanctification is acquired is faithful life itself. In confessing his reliance on Apostle Paul, Menno, of course, was prepared to accept the general headline and basic formulation of the Pauline theology of the cross. Menno wrote:

We must spend the remainder of our days not after the lusts of men, but according to the will of God, so that we may say with Paul, I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. For he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again.⁵⁸

At the same time Menno had no illusions that the sanctified life would be easy. Unlike some modern charismatics, Menno did not assume that comfort and happiness would be the sure reward for himself and his followers. The example of Jesus Christ, elucidated in the theology of Paul, had set for Menno a cruciform expectation for the Christian life. Hence Menno reported in Christian realism rather than merely in complaining:

I have without faltering borne scorn and cross with much misery, anxiety, tribulation, and peril. I trust by His grace that I will do so to the end, to testify with a good conscience to His holy Word, will, and ordinance with mouth, pen, life, and death as much as in me is.⁵⁹

Authentic faith was therefore intrinsically connected with courage. Hence Menno was prepared to assert “with the holy Paul”:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, ... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.⁶⁰

The brutality of the situation in his time assisted Menno in keeping him from shallow sentimentalism. He was continuously aware of the fact that his "life is eagerly sought."⁶¹ On several occasions Menno spelled out the harsh details of the situation:

...it was in the year 1543, if my memory serves me, that a decree was read throughout West Friesland that criminals and manslayers were promised pardon, imperial grace, and repatriation, besides one hundred imperial guilders, if they would betray me and deliver me into the hands of the executioner. About the year 1539, a householder who was a very pious man, named Tjaert Reynardson, was seized in my stead, because out of compassion and love he had received me in his house secretly. He was a few days later put on the wheel after a free confession of faith, as a valiant knight of Christ, after the example of his Lord, although even his enemies testified that he was a pious man without reproach. Also in 1545, at a place where they boast of the Word, a four-room house was confiscated, because the owner had rented one of the rooms for a short time, unknown to anybody to my poor sick wife and her little ones. What edicts have been read against some of us in some cities and countries, and what fines stipulated, what imperial mandates and condemnations of the Roman empire have been resolved against us, and how we are treated everywhere is not unknown....⁶²

In addition as if to add insult to injury, from among the followers of the magisterial Reformation there had come the accusation that Menno preaches at night. With righteous indignation and displaying notable erudition, Menno in reply supplied a lengthy paragraph, appealing to clear biblical precedent.⁶³ Here the modern reader receives particular enlightenment: the biblical mention of night-time is not so much a chronological specification as an acknowledgment of persecution, and hence insecurity as part of a lifestyle which assumed that the believers had to exist in hiding! Menno knew all this well from first-hand experiences.⁶⁴ On occasion Menno even had the unsettling experience of discovering that the so-called "evangelical" preachers had betrayed his place of residence, as "men were telling each other in the streets of Emden where Menno lived."⁶⁵ Candidly, Menno was prepared to admit that, humanly speaking, he would have preferred to live a perfectly ordinary life. Yet the deeper truth was that being "constrained by the love of God's honor and the eternal salvation of your and our souls," Menno was prepared to "risk all, and if the case requires, suffer death in sincere, genuine love."⁶⁶ Such was the life of bearing the cross of Christ. At the same, time such willingness to suffer did not exclude initiative and activity. Drawing on Paul, Menno affirmed that such a self-defense was to be purely spiritual:

...our weapons are not swords and spears, but patience, silence, and hope, and the Word of God. With these we must maintain our heavy warfare and fight our battle.

Paul says, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; but mighty through God. With these we intend and desire to storm the kingdom of the devil; and not with sword, spears, cannon, and coats of mail. For He esteemeth iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood.⁶⁷

However, it must be noted that not all of Menno's descriptions of bearing the cross sounded like trumpet calls to victory. While indeed often writing with deep personal conviction and spiritual exuberance, Menno at times spoke of his human limits — of his life under the cross and of pain. Here the language of weakness, employed by Paul, seemed very appropriate: "I am a poor, miserable sinner who must daily fight with this flesh, the world, and the devil, and daily seek the mercy of the Lord, and who with Saint Paul boasts of nothing but Christ Jesus alone and that He was crucified for us. I Cor. 2:2."⁶⁸ However, in acknowledging these ongoing battles with sin, Menno did not suggest that he was a daily loser. Rather, Menno immediately pointed to the great mercy and grace of God which had enabled such victories.⁶⁹ Menno assumed that all authentic believers fared similarly, and therefore, as members of the church, did not possess perfection. Menno explained: "Not, my dear reader, that they have already attained or become perfect, by no means; but they strive, with Paul, to follow after, if they might apprehend that for which they have been apprehended of Christ Jesus. Phil. 3:12."⁷⁰ To assert this, however, was not to deny his own uprightness. Here Menno was firm: "For although I am a poor sinner who at times am overcome by my flesh, I yet thank God for His grace that He to this day saved His poor, weak servant without any grave offense both in doctrine and in life."⁷¹ This Menno had written in 1560, a year before his death.

However, having acknowledged Menno was a faithful follower of Paul's religious thought, we also must state that the relationship was an open-ended one: Menno was an imitator of Paul, as Paul was an imitator of Christ. Just as clearly, in his obedience to divinely revealed truth, Menno did not single out Paul so as to exclude the rest of the Bible. Rather, in reading, proclaiming, and quoting from the entire Bible, Menno found his own spiritual direction as he allowed his discipleship of Christ to be shaped by the example of Apostle Paul.

III

In conclusion, we shall not lament that Menno did not write a systematic theology. The Apostle Paul, Menno's great mentor, had not written one either — nor had Aurelius Augustinus or Martin Luther, to name two other imitators of Paul. To state this, however, is not to imply that none of the above mentioned did not have a clear grasp of theology.

Menno's sense of theological coherence was characteristically distinct. This distinction hardly comes to light if one considers the objective content of Menno's thought; then one has to affirm that Menno sought to affirm the entire Bible. While a faithful and serious position, in and of itself, it is certainly not unique. Menno's personal stamp on theology, however, can be

noted if we observe how he navigated through the abundance of the biblical material. Then we observe that Menno found his bearings in close reliance on Apostle Paul. To note this has been the intent of the major part of this paper.

However, there is also an additional insight which further characterizes Menno's approach. As he followed the lead of Apostle Paul, certain ideas seemed to gain special prominence. The concern with the cross of Christ emerged early and continued to be the central emphasis. Along with it, however, the following headlines may be acknowledged.

First, between the years 1535 and 1539 Menno repeatedly contrasted flesh and spirit, that is, sinful and saved existence. For example, Menno could write:

Now Paul exhorts those who are born of the corruptible seed of flesh and blood, who are of the earth, earthy, carnal, without understanding and blind in divine things, yea, children of wrath, that they should mortify and bury the body of sin, namely, the lusts and desires of the first birth in the flesh, and then rise in the power of the heavenly seed from the sleep and death of sin, and be regenerate and walk in the newness of life, which is the first resurrection. He says: Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. So also does he admonish all newly regenerate children of God who have been changed in mind and disposition through the eternal saving seed of God, and have been regenerated and are arisen, that they should be godly, spiritual and heavenly-minded, and yearn for and desire heavenly, incorruptible things.⁷²

In this perspective, having contrasted flesh and spirit, Menno stressed the absolute necessity of repentance. Again, reliance on Paul clarified the matter at hand: "Paul says, To be carnally minded is death. The sentence is already passed: If we live according to the flesh we must die." To escape from such a dreadful destiny God has offered the way of repentance. Perhaps with the Damascus road experience in his mind, Menno could pray: "Therefore, dear Lord, do Thou draw them, rebuke them, and admonish them and teach them so that they may yet repent, acknowledge the truth, and be saved."⁷³ In such a context it was only appropriate that Menno should have listed the "bad works" of the carnally-minded in some detail. Menno accented his point by offering an entire list⁷⁴ of transgressions:

But this it is written by Paul: For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die. Adulterers, whoremongers, perverts, effeminate, unclean, idolaters, drunkards, proud, avaricious, hateful persons, betrayers, and those who shed innocent blood; thieves, murderers, and those who know no mercy, those disobedient to God in Christ, will not inherit the kingdom of God unless they repent.⁷⁵

By sharp contrast, it was the Spirit who sustained those that were saved: "As Paul says, There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom. 8:1, 2."⁷⁶

Second, without of course rejecting his earlier statements, between the years 1539 and 1550 Menno came to place a special emphasis on the significance of faith. In other word, an already present theme emerged in a more prominent way. Thus, for example, Menno now defended "evangelical believer's baptisms"⁷⁷ on the grounds of faith which preceded it. As repentance before, so also faith was seen as a gift of God:

... judge everything according to the Word of God and His Spirit. For I do not doubt but that you will confess that the faith that counts with God is a gift of God, from whence all righteousness proceeds and comes by the hearing of the divine word. Rom. 10:10. If now it comes by hearing the divine Word, as Paul teaches, how will it be found in little children?⁷⁸

It had been the lack of such a personal faith in Jesus Christ which had led Apostle Paul to view the baptism of John the Baptist "as useless."⁷⁹ Such a faith was viewed by Menno as the living source of good works.⁸⁰ Here, too, the guidance of Paul was decisive: "Through faith, says Paul, God cleanses our hearts. And so the fruits of righteousness follow out of an upright, unfeigned, pious Christian faith."⁸¹ Even when Menno quoted Paul's important — to Martin Luther most important — text, "The just shall live by faith," Menno was concerned about the dynamics of both justification and sanctification. And the accent seemed to be placed on the latter:

The just shall live by faith, say the Scriptures. For the true evangelical faith which makes the heart upright and pious before God, moves, changes, urges, and constrains a man so that he will always hate the evil and gladly do the things which are right and good."⁸²

Finally, between 1550 and 1558 Menno's attention was particularly directed to ethical issues. Here, too, Menno found Paul most helpful, since for Paul various sins and virtues had been a matter of perennial concern. Thus, for example, we find Menno regarding ethical purity as a necessary precondition for receiving the Lord's Supper.⁸³ With the assistance of Paul, Menno now thought through the doctrine of the ban.⁸⁴ Yet while Menno could be very specific in detailing the "bad works" of the unbelievers, he was sufficiently general so as to avoid mere legalism. Above all, Menno always acknowledged that the source of a good life and therefore of "good works"⁸⁵ was love, a major insight which he had learned from Paul.⁸⁶

Without a doubt, the Christian selfunderstanding which Menno proclaimed was demanding and complex. While headlines would offer some guidance, in the last analysis the imitation of Paul, as the discipleship of Jesus Christ, would have to remain somewhat incomplete in this life. Hence, on the one hand, we must note Menno's outspoken humility. On the other hand, it was clear to Menno that even a somewhat incomplete understanding still demanded obedience. Menno once put it this way: "Thank God, I have come to understand Paul well enough to know that if I should seek to please men, I cannot be Christ's servant."⁸⁷

While Menno's acknowledged and emphasized discipleship of Apostle Paul offers a certain measure of structural clarity in Menno's diligent and

detailed reliance on the Bible, it also enables a distinctively positive comment on Menno himself. Namely, Menno's wide use of Pauline language, humble and self-effacing, is not tantamount to a self-condemnation. In fact, in a thoroughly Pauline perspective, Menno had a rather positive view of himself.

While the ongoing scholarly evaluation⁸⁸ of Menno may, no doubt, continue to differ in future as well, Menno's steady reliance on Pauline expressions warns us not to build negative judgments on his own autobiographical comments taken literally — and thus misunderstood.

Notes

¹Menno Simons, *Opera Omnia Theologica* (Amsterdam: Joannes van Veen, 1681, rpr. Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1989), [subsequently referred to as *Opera*], pp. 256A–259B; John Christian Wenger, ed., *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, trans. by Leonard Verduin with a biography by Harold S. Bender (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), [subsequently referred to as *CW*], pp. 668–678. Cornelius Krahn, *Menno Simons (1496–1561)* (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider, 1936), emphasizes Menno's Christocentric understanding of Scripture, p. 107. Cf. also J.A. Oosterbaan, "The Theology of Menno Simons," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 35(1961): 190–191; Russell L. Mast, "Menno Simons and the Scripture," in Walter Klaassen et al., *No Other Foundation* (North Newton, KA: Bethel College, 1962), pp. 35–36; Egil Grisliis, "Menno Simons' Account of His Conversion and Call in the Light of the Bible," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 3(1985): 73–82.

²*Opera* 256A; *CW* 668. Cf. Albert Rabil, Jr., *Erasmus and the New Testament: The Mind of a Christian Humanist* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1972) and Cornelis Augustijn, "Erasmus and Menno Simons," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 60(1986): 497–508. Menno's roots were complex, and have only now begun to be explored, e.g., George K. Epp, "The Spiritual Roots of Menno Simons," in *Mennonite Images*, ed. by Harry Loewen (Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press, 1980, pp. 51–91; George K. Epp, "The Premonstratensian Connection of Menno Simons: Confirmations, Revisions and New Evidence," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 62 (1988): 349–355. Irvin B. Horst, "Menno Simons and the Augustinian Tradition," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 62(1988): 419–430.

³*Von Menschenlehre zu meiden, und Antwort auf Sprüche, so man führet, Menschenlehre zu stärken*, 1522 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1883 ff.) Weimarer Ausgabe 10/II:72–92; English trans. *Avoiding the Doctrines of Men*, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), Luther's Works 35:131–153. It is widely agreed, that Menno referred to this tract, cf. Cornelius Krahn, *op. cit.* p. 43; Christoph Bornhäuser, *Leben und Lehre Menno Simons'* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1973), pp. 54–55. However, it should be noted that the *sola scriptura* theme is widely present in Luther's writings.

⁴*Opera* 256A; *CW* 668

⁵*Opera* 256A; *CW* 68. According to the imperial mandate of January 4, 1528, following the precedent of Codex Justinianus, the death penalty was to be applied to Anabaptists on account of rebaptism and sedition, cf. Claus-Peter Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525–1618* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 375.

⁶*Opera* 256B; *CW* 668. Vincent G. Harding, "Menno Simons and the Role of Baptism in the Christian Life," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 33(1959): 331 points to the Pauline influence. For a general account, see Gerhard J. Neumann, "The Anabaptist Position on Baptism and the Lord's Supper," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 35(1961): 140–148 and Rollin S. Armour, *Anabaptist Baptism: A Representative Study* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1966).

⁷Opera 256B; CW 669.

⁸Cf. John S. Oyer, *Lutheran Reformers against Anabaptists* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964); Harry Loewen, *Luther and the Radicals* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1974); Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Luther and the False Brethren* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975); Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, trans. William J. Heynen (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981); Henry G. Krahn, "Martin Bucer's Strategy against Sectarian Dissent in Strasbourg," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 50(1976): 163-180; Heinold Fast, *Heinrich Bullinger und die Täufer: Ein Beitrag zur Historiographie und Theologie im 16. Jahrhundert* [Schriftenreihe des Mennonitischen Geschichtsvereins, 7], (Weierhof/Pfalz: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, 1959, pp. 51-55, 69-70).

⁹Opera 256B; CW 669.

¹⁰Opera 257A; CW 669. For a sensitive overview, cf. Hans J. Hillerbrand, "The Propaganda of the Munster Anabaptists," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 62(1988): 507-511.

¹¹Opera 257A; CW 673. Cf. James M. Stayer, "Oldenklooster and Menno," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 9(1978): 51-67, and Christoph Bornhauser, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

¹²Opera 257A; CW 670.

¹³Cf. Ftn. 1, Egil Grisliis, "Menno Simons' Account...", p. 77.

¹⁴Opera 257A; CW 671; cf. Rom. 8:26, 5:8, I Titus 1:15, and Cornelius Krahn, *Dutch Anabaptism: Origin, Spread, Life and Thought (1450-1600)*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), pp. 152 and 172.

¹⁵As Paul led the way, the insights of James were not neglected. Namely, at times Menno acknowledged the freedom of the will without informing us how it was related to grace. More often, following Paul, Menno stressed the priority of grace. Cf. my study " 'Good Works' According to Menno Simons," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 5(1987) : 129-132.

¹⁶Opera 257B; CW 671.

¹⁷Opera 73B; CW 325. Cf. Phil. 3:11.

¹⁸Opera 257B; CW 671.

¹⁹Opera 258A; CW 671.

²⁰Opera 258A; CW 672. Cf. II Cor. 11:29, Rom. 7:14-25.

²¹Acts 22:3.

²²i.e. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), R.W. Chambers, *Thomas More* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1962), p. 92.

²³Opera 73B-74A; CW 325.

²⁴Opera 142A; CW 591.

²⁵Henry Poetcker, "Menno Simons' View of the Bible as Authority," in: Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., *A Legacy of Faith: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Cornelius Krahn*, (Newton, KA: Faith and Life Press, 1972), pp. 31-54.

²⁶Opera 143B-144A; CW 594-595.

²⁷Celano, *First Life*, in: *Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies*, ed. Marion A. Habig, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), pp. 243-244.

²⁸Opera 467B; CW 513.

²⁹Opera 217; CW 947-948. "Menno Simons viewed the whole of Scriptures in terms of Christ," Russell L. Mast, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

³⁰Opera 348A; CW 473.

³¹Opera 349A; CW 475.

³²Opera 350A; CW 476.

³³Opera 305A; CW 750.

³⁴Opera 323B; CW 780.

³⁵Opera 627A; CW 43.

³⁶*Opera* 276A; *CW* 703, in reference to Acts 19:3.

³⁷*Opera* 298A; *CW* 738.

³⁸*Opera* 180A; *CW* 54, cf. Gal. 2:20.

³⁹*Opera* 74B; *CW* 326, cf. Phil. 4:4.

⁴⁰*Opera* 113A and B; *CW* 393, cf. Rom 8:35.

⁴¹*Opera* 35A; *CW* 161

⁴²*Opera* 615B–616a; *CW* 939, Cf. Rom 1:1 and 7, I Cor. 1:1–2 and 15:9.

⁴³*Opera* 233B–234A; *CW* 633.

⁴⁴*Opera* 435B; *CW* 415.

⁴⁵*Opera* 73B; *CW* 325, cf. I Cor. 2:2.

⁴⁶*Opera* 503A; *CW* 556, cf. II Cor. 12:21–33.

⁴⁷*Opera* 613B; *CW* 936.

⁴⁸*Opera* 613B; *CW* 936.

⁴⁹*Opera* 614B; *CW* 937

⁵⁰ For Luther on dreaming and seeing visions, cf. Egil Grislis, *Devotional Theology* (Bristol, IN; Wyndham Hall Press, 1987), pp. 65–68.

⁵¹*Opera* 448B; *CW* 310, cf. II Cor. 12:1–4 and Gal. 1:8.

⁵²*Opera* 227A; *CW* 625.

⁵³*Opera* 309A; *CW* 757, cf. II Thess. 2:3–12.

⁵⁴*Opera* 305A; *CW* 750–751.

⁵⁵*Opera* 143B; *CW* 594.

⁵⁶*Opera* 578B; *CW* 886.

⁵⁷*Opera* 401A; *CW* 236, cf. II Cor. 11:23–12:10, I Cor. 3:12, Acts 3:6, Matt. 16:26.

⁵⁸*Opera* 180A; *CW* 54, cf. Gal. 2:20.

⁵⁹*Opera* 503A; *CW* 556.

⁶⁰*Opera* 157B; *CW* 619, cf. Rom. 8:35.

⁶¹*Opera* 636B; *CW* 417.

⁶²*Opera* 234A and B; *CW* 634.

⁶³*Opera* 234B; *CW* 635.

⁶⁴*Opera* 356B; *CW* 789.

⁶⁵*Opera* 551B; *CW* 843.

⁶⁶*Opera* 286B; *CW* 720.

⁶⁷*Opera* 502B; *CW* 555, cf. II Cor. 10:4.

⁶⁸*Opera* 449B; *CW* 311.

⁶⁹*Opera* 463A; *CW* 506.

⁷⁰*Opera* 298B; *CW* 739.

⁷¹*Opera* 487B; *CW* 1011.

⁷²*Opera* 182A; *CW* 58, cf. Eph. 5:14.

⁷³*Opera* 166A; *CW* 67, cf. Rom. 7:14.

⁷⁴ Ethical lists, enumerating moral obligations to be followed and vices to be avoided are of both Greek and Roman as well as of Jewish heritage, and were employed in the New Testament as well. Paul's precedent is notable, e.g. Eph. 5:3–8, Col. 3:5–9, I Tim. 1:9–10, and Tit. 3:3; cf. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 3:137–139.

⁷⁵*Opera* 123B; *CW* 89–90, cf. I Cor. 6:9.

⁷⁶*Opera* 49B; *CW* 188.

⁷⁷Opera 408A; CW 249.

⁷⁸Opera 403A and B; CW 239–240.

⁷⁹Opera 427A; CW 277.

⁸⁰Egil Grislis, "The Meaning of Good works: Luther and the Anabaptists," *Word & World*, 6 (1986):175–176 and ftn. 15 above.

⁸¹Opera 80A; CW 336, cf. Rom. 10:10, Acts 15:8.

⁸²Opera 80B; CW 337,

⁸³Opera 469A and B; CW 515–516.

⁸⁴Opera 334A; CW 537.

⁸⁵Opera 334A; CW 537.

⁸⁶Opera 206A; CW 987.

⁸⁷Opera 355A; CW 787.

⁸⁸Harold S. Bender, while acknowledging Menno's "greatness," had also qualified: "He was no great theologian, although he knew how to present the plain teachings of the Bible with force and clarity. He was not even a great organizer, although he rendered a real service in the guidance which he gave to the bishops and ministers of the growing church" (*The Complete Writings*, p. 28, cf. ftn. 1). William Keeny observed that "Menno was primarily a pastor, not a systematic theologian; he was certainly not a learned scholar, and probably not even a really top-notch organizer and administrator" (*No Other Foundation*, p. 13, cf. ftn. 1). J.B. Brandsmaa summed up previous findings: "Cramer praises his inward piety and humility, Kühler his modesty. By contrast, Tolsma thinks that Menno had not been a powerful personality, but vacillating, irascible, with egocentric characteristics, lack of self-control and an inferiority complex." Brandsmaa's own spiritless defense was an indictment in its own right: "This evaluation is a little exaggerated and offers a distorted picture. Like most Friesians, Menno was of a quickly excitable disposition. Moreover, he at times experienced deep depression, which is not unusual for such types. In him one searches vainly for great gifts of intellect; as a theologian he remained on the level of a layman, his thoughts and writings address feelings rather than the mind" (*Menno Simons von Witmarsum: Vorkämpfer der Täuferbewegung in den Niederlanden*, Kassel: J.G. Oncken, 1962, p. 99; English trans. by E.G.) By contrast, more recent scholarship as exemplified by Cornelis Augustijn (cf. ftn. 2), when paying attention to Menno's sources, emerges with a more positive portrait. I suggest that Menno's reliance on Apostle Paul, when explored, contributes in the same direction.