

# Menno Simons' Account of His Conversion and Call in the Light of the Bible

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All of Menno's writings reflect his deep learning and love for the Bible.<sup>1</sup> Quotations of entire verses or portions thereof are intermingled with biblical phrases, paraphrases and ideas. While this has been well known and appreciated in regard to Menno's theological insights, it has not been sufficiently reflected upon in reference to this autobiographical statements. This brief study claims that Menno can be better understood, if the scriptural foundations of his autobiographical observations are clearly noted.

As it has not been established just which edition of the Bible Menno used most often, it is assumed that over the years he was influenced by several versions — not excluding the liturgical language of the Catholic Church, the hymnody, and the religious writings which Menno had read.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is useful to keep in mind that the Bible does not state each insight only once, but with a divine generosity offers the major themes in a rather overlapping manner. Therefore, when seeking to identify specific quotations and paraphrases, it is possible to point only to some of them.<sup>3</sup>

Menno's large tract entitled *Reply to Gellius Faber*, published in 1554, contains his most detailed account of his conversion and has repeatedly served as a major source for generations of Menno's biographers.<sup>4</sup> Yet it is intriguing to note that in telling his personal history Menno reports it in a way that reveals little about his personality. What we have before us is not comparable to a section of Martin Luther's *Table Talk*, but rather to one of the penitential psalms. This, clearly, was Menno's intention! Already in his Meditation on the *Twenty-fifth Psalm*, written ca. 1537, he admitted: "O dear Lord, I did not know myself until I viewed myself in Thy Word."<sup>5</sup> As a result, while Menno's autobiographical account does supply several references to actual events, these are few in number. The main concern remains to inform the reader what has been

accomplished by the grace of God. A similar approach can also be noted in regard to his other autobiographical references elsewhere in his writings.

Menno reflected on his life as a Catholic priest by way of a familiar Scripture text and wrote: "I was as a whited sepulcher. Outwardly before men I was moral, chaste, and liberal, and none reprov'd my conduct. But inwardly I was full of dead men's bones, stench and worms. My cup was clean on the outside, but within it was full of robbery and excess."<sup>6</sup> And in describing his former leadership role as a priest, Menno drew on the close parallels with the prosperous Job: "I had the first place at feasts and in synagogues. I was pre-eminent among men, even above aged men. Everyone revered me. When I spoke they were silent. When I beckoned they came. When I waved them away they went. What I desired they did. My word was final in all matters. The desire of my heart was granted."<sup>7</sup> Most colourful, however, is Menno's joint reference to the Apostle Paul and the prodigal son.<sup>8</sup>

As may be expected from such a hermeneutical approach, Menno's autobiographical account presents to the reader a veritable litany of sins, transgressions, moral flaws and weaknesses. Menno speaks of "the lusts of my youth"<sup>9</sup> and "impure, sensual [vleeschelijk], unprofitable [sonder alle vrucht] life."<sup>10</sup> He acknowledges that he lived merely "in appearance of godliness."<sup>11</sup> Insofar as Menno was particularly fond of Paul's vivid vocabulary, he certainly indicted himself thoroughly. Yet Menno's colorful generalizations ought not to mislead the reader to any easy conclusions. A good case in point is the matter of sexual transgressions. Some of Menno's statements in this regard could be understood as pointing to a life of promiscuity.<sup>12</sup> Yet in fact Menno had never broken the vow of celibacy. This he acknowledged himself, although in a penitential and self-condemning manner: "I sought nothing but the friendship and love of this world; therefore I did not commit adultery, fornication, and such abominable sins before men, merely because I feared to lose their favor and my reputation, and not because I feared Thee."<sup>13</sup> Without a doubt, Menno's stinging portrait of a typical priest of his day is not autobiographical.<sup>14</sup>

Another example of Menno's readiness to recognize his weakness by looking into the mirror of Scripture is the occasion where Menno declares himself guilty of "unlearnedness."<sup>15</sup> The reference is totally misunderstood, if it is interpreted as referring to Menno's formal education. Rather, the intent of Menno's statement must be decoded by consulting passages like Ephesians 4:17-18 and I Peter 1:14, where sinful men are characterized as being completely without understanding and totally ignorant. In penitential retrospect Menno indeed saw his former life as void of divine wisdom — and bravely confessed his past failure. But such was no longer the situation when grace had been received and a new life

in Christ begun. Therefore, when later in his believing years Menno was denigrated and called "altogether ignorant,"<sup>16</sup> he did not meekly accept the charge. Menno's most spirited and eloquent response is in reply to Jan a Lasco: "As to my unlearnedness, the thing which he so bitterly hurls at me, I am not only ignorant, but altogether unlearned; and not, or only slightly, proficient in languages. Yes, reader, I say with Socrates, very freely, that as far as human wisdom is concerned, I know but one thing, and that is that I do not know. But as to the heavenly wisdom, I am by God's grace in so far taught of God that I confess from the heart that my Saviour and Redeemer, Christ Jesus, is God's only begotten and first-born Son and that he who believes in Him has everlasting life (John 3:18); that a liar is of the devil (John 8:45); that he who hates his brother is a murderer (1 Jn. 3:15); that he who does not repent, must die in his sins (Luke 13:4); that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23)."<sup>17</sup>

In answering a similar charge by Martin Micron, Menno with quiet dignity pointed to Jesus Christ as the source of all wisdom — and thus, again, by implication rejected the charge of being ignorant: "It may be that I am grossly unlearned and a not too brainy person as you have described me. I have never in my life boasted of great intellectuality, learning, cleverness, and brains. But I do boast that I in my weakness seek the praise of the Lord and the salvation of my soul, and that I have learned so much in the school of God by His grace, that I know that the whole, undivided Christ is God's first- and only-begotten and true Son, and that those who contradict this are the spirits of Antichrist . . ."<sup>18</sup> While such protests obviously do not determine the extent of Menno's scholarly learning, their remarkable eloquence warns against any facile and out-of-context assumption that Menno was unlearned "and said so."

In this context it may be appropriate to consider the possibility that Menno's frequently used taunting expression "the learned ones" has been misunderstood when seen as a depreciation of formal learning. The Dutch word for the scribes so frequently and so very critically mentioned in the New Testament is "Schriftgeleerde." Critical of the magisterial reformers and their followers of his own day, Menno spoke of them as of the scribes and Pharisees of old. But in opposing worldly learning one does not thereby oppose authentic scriptural learning.

Always desirous to praise God for his conversion, Menno consistently underscores what God has done, and pays little attention to his own personal feelings and experiences. Thus Menno speaks of the "illumination [verlichtinge] of the Holy Ghost" which had occurred through his reflections on the Bible as a result of "the gracious favor [genadige gunste] and gift [gave] of God."<sup>19</sup> Here Menno is apparently thinking not only of a general illumination which results in moral courage, as in Hebr. 10:32, but also of transmitting specific insight, as, e.g., in Eph. 1:18: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is

the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." The finding of favour, is, of course, an often used biblical expression, as, for example, in Luke 1:30: "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour [genade] with God."

Menno also prays for "the gift of His grace" and echoes Ps. 51:10: "create within me a clean heart."<sup>20</sup> Within a period of nine months his prayer is answered — "the gracious Lord granted me His fatherly Spirit, help, and hand (Kracht en Handt)."<sup>21</sup> For Menno the gift of the Holy Spirit is a major scriptural theme, marking the beginning of a new life in faith. The prophet Isaiah proclaims in virtue of the gift of the Spirit, cf. 61:1; the virgin Mary conceives in Lk. 1:35, Elizabeth is filled, Lk. 1:41; and after baptism Jesus receives the Holy Spirit in Mt. 3:16. It is the characteristic way for the beginning of a Christian life as well as its full fruition. Also Menno's further service in reclaiming the lost is seen as enabled by God. He writes: "I dealt with the erring [verkeerden], and through the help and power of God with His Word, reclaimed [ontlost] them from the snares of damnation and gained them to Christ."<sup>22</sup>

Menno's autobiographical account makes it rather clear that his existential concern is with sanctification rather than justification. Russell L. Mast has observed correctly: "So from faith Menno moved to following, from decision to discipleship, from the new birth to the new life. For this reason Menno could never bask in the security of his personal experience of salvation, because that experience must be 'evidenced' in his daily walk. It was, therefore, through obedience in daily life that he came to know the Scriptures."<sup>23</sup> By contrast, Luther's tribulations led him to a continuous search for a merciful God; it was in justification — in the challenge to believe and to trust the goodness of God in the face of experienced evil — that Luther repeatedly found the confirmation of his faith. Although Menno had known the tribulations of justification, his autobiographical account points to a very distinctive series of experiences in anguish, wherein he, an already justified believer, struggled for the courage to realize his convictions by way of the public act of joining the fellowship of true believers and potential martyrs. Thus Menno is "much troubled"<sup>24</sup> on account of his authentic compassion, and recognizes that compassion, in order to be genuine, must have the courage to live to the extent of one's faith. Subsequently Menno confesses the despair of a faith which is as yet not active in love: "My soul was troubled and I reflected upon the outcome, that if I should gain the whole world and live a thousand years, and at last have to endure the wrath of God, what would I have gained?"<sup>25</sup> The insight is deeply scriptural. The 1681 edition of Menno's writing records in the margin: "Mt. 16:16" — "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Menno's further statements reflect the various steps which his

spiritual growth had taken. Initially he experienced the trembling of his heart: "My heart trembled [sitterte] within me."<sup>26</sup> So it once had for Job 37:1 and Isaiah 21:4, which in Luther's translation of 1545 reads: "*Mein hertz zittert.*" From this Menno moves to the quest for the full measure of truth: "I prayed to God with sighs and tears that He would give to me, a sorrowing sinner [bedroefde Sondaer], the gift of His grace, create within me a clean heart, and graciously through the merits of the crimson blood [rooden Bloeds] of Christ forgive my unclean walk and frivolous easy life and bestow upon me wisdom, Spirit, courage [vrymoedigheyd], and a manly spirit [gemoed] so that I might preach His exalted and adorable name and holy Word in purity [onvervalscht], and make known His truth to His glory."<sup>27</sup>

Here, too, the story is told through many interwoven scriptural references. Menno prayed like Christ "with strong crying and tears" (Hebr. 5:7 KJ), but with the humility of the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Lk 18:13). His goal, no doubt, was the same as that of the Apostle Paul: ". . . I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power" (Eph. 3:7, cf. Rom. 5:15). Hence Menno cited Ps. 51:10: "Create in me a clean heart." The term "crimson blood" echoes Isaiah 1:18, christocentrically interpreted, and central to the entire New Testament (e.g. Mt. 26:28, Jn. 6:53-56, Acts 20:28, Rom 5:9, Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14 and 20, Hebr. 9:12, 14, and 20, as well as 13:21, I Pt. 1:2 and 19, 1 Jn. 1:7, and Rev. 5:9). Menno's expression "unclean walk" echoes I Pt. 4:3 and II Thess. 3:6. His concern with courage may be seen as a search for the imitation of Christ (cf. Lk 2:40 and Jn. 16:33). The "exalted and adorable name" of God is reminiscent of Isaiah 25:1: "O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name . . ."

Menno's inner struggle is accompanied by the outward expression of his quest. He notes that he has begun "to preach publicly (opentlijk) from the pulpit,"<sup>28</sup> no doubt mindful of the example of the Apostle Paul: ". . . I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house" (Acts 20:20).

Menno's call is to "true repentance,"<sup>29</sup> in accordance with the intimate conjunction of repentance and belief, as noted in the New Testament. Pointing to the "narrow path"<sup>30</sup> echoes Mt. 7:14: "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life . . ." That Menno is now able "in the power of the Scripture openly to reprove all sin and wickedness"<sup>31</sup> is his witness to the scriptural insight that the truth of God's word proceeds with immense power (e.g. Mt. 22:29, I Cor. 4:20, Hebr. 4:12). At the same time, acknowledging his evangelical and peaceful understanding of the Gospel, Menno explicitly opposes the violence that had occurred in Münster: "I also faithfully warned everyone against the abominations of Münster, condemning king, polygamy, kingdom, sword, etc."<sup>32</sup> It is in the midst of such activity that Menno receives the gift

of the Holy Spirit which we have already noted above.<sup>33</sup> The road, clearly, has not been easy. Forthrightly and without sentimentality Menno admits that he now "submitted to distress and poverty under the heavy cross of Christ"<sup>34</sup> — a familiar Anabaptist reference to suffering and, on occasion, even death. Here also one may note echoes of the Apostle Paul's vision of Christ's way: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye though his poverty might be rich" (II Cor. 8:9). The invitation to bear the cross, of course, was Christ's own: "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Mt. 10:38, cf. 16:24, and Gal. 6:12).

Menno continued his encounters with the obdurate who rejected the Gospel message.<sup>35</sup> But, since the miracle of grace had occurred, Menno now possessed the inner resources to continue his work: "And so you see, my reader, in this way the merciful Lord through the liberal goodness [*milde gunste*] of His abounding grace took notice of me, a poor [*ellendige*] sinner, stirred in my heart at the outset, produced in me a new mind [*gemoedt*], humbled me in His fear, taught me to know myself in part, turned me from the way of death and graciously called me into the narrow pathway of life and the communion [*Gemeenschap*] of His saints [*Heyligen*]."<sup>36</sup> During this time of spiritual growth Menno was soon asked to assume the role of leadership.<sup>37</sup> New inner struggles followed.<sup>38</sup> It was in the midst of a life of prayer<sup>39</sup> that Menno was finally "enlightened"<sup>40</sup> to the new way of life which was, simultaneously, a "high and heavy service" to Christ.<sup>41</sup>

Certainly, the way upward was not linear but resembled a spiral. While in reading Menno's story it may seem that he is merely retelling it several times over, the inward progress is not to be overlooked. As he grew in grace, Menno came to experience more and more grace.

While observing Menno's detailed reliance on the Bible, it is in order to note that such a use must necessarily be selective. Assessing Menno's writings in general, Henry Poettcker has made the following observation about his use of scriptures:

In the New Testament there is a fairly even distribution between Gospels and Paul's letters. The Gospels are used a bit more often, although if one adds Hebrews (which Menno held to have been written by Paul) to the Pauline letters, one gets a higher number for Paul than for the Gospels. Matthew is the most frequently used of the Gospels, with John next in line. Matthew is used four times as often as Mark, and more than twice as often as Luke. Unlike Marpeck, who used Johannine writings most, Menno used the Synoptics most, with both agreeing in the prominence given to Paul when citing from the epistles. In the Old Testament the Pentateuch and the Prophets are used about the same number of times (417 and 440 respectively), with Genesis being highest of those in the Pentateuch (157 refer-

ences) and Isaiah highest of the prophetic books (168 references). Menno cites or alludes to at least eight apocryphal books, with a total of 100 references in the five books counted. This would certainly not indicate that Menno considered the apocryphal books as less significant than other Old Testament books, nor does he make any comments that he considers them less canonical than the other books. By far the majority of quotations or citations are given from the New Testament. When compared with the number taken from the Old Testament the ratio is about 3:1.<sup>42</sup>

Menno's autobiographical writings pursue a specific theme which often serves as the common denominator of his scriptural quotations. This theme is *imitation*.<sup>43</sup> It appears, namely, that Menno has predominantly sought out such scriptural passages that reflect both the anguish of sin and the joy of salvation which he had personally experienced. Of course, Menno did not proceed in a wooden and unimaginative fashion by merely quoting texts and then applying them to his life situation. Rather, as has been observed in the preceding sections of this paper, Menno's manner of writing was to weave a statement from appropriately selected biblical texts, joining direct quotations, paraphrases, allusions, general ideas — and allowing the reader to discover the imitation theme rather than explicitly calling attention to it. Such a task could be accomplished well only because Menno's knowledge of the Bible was both profound and detailed.

Thus in describing his own concerns for the souls of the people misled by the Münsterites, Menno declares: "My soul was much troubled [droef heyt]." <sup>44</sup> The context and the wording convey a similarly intense and deeply sorrowful concern as in the words of Jesus: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?" (Jn. 12:27). When reporting on how he had countered the Münsterites — "I did what I could to oppose [tegen gestelt] them by preaching and exhortations." <sup>45</sup> — the reference is reminiscent of the Apostle Paul's opposition to Peter: "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed" (Gal. 2:11). Menno spoke of his success in opposing the Münsterites: "The report spread that I could silence [de mond fijn stoppen konde] these persons beautifully" <sup>46</sup> and his report echoes Mt. 22:34: "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Saducees to silence [de mond gestopt], they were gathered together" (cf. Tit. 1:11, and 1 Pt. 2:15). Like Job 29:7-25 in his pre-suffering days, Menno, too, still young and unrepentant, was the main support of his community: "Everybody defended himself by a reference to me, no matter who. I saw plainly that I was the stay and defense on the impenitent who all leaned on me." <sup>47</sup> Yet, in reality, Menno came to recognize with the Apostle Paul that he was a wretched man. Menno asked: "I thought to myself — I, miserable [ellendige] man, what am I doing?" <sup>48</sup> This is similar to Paul who had stated: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most

miserable [ellendigste]" (I Cor. 15:19), as well as exclaimed: "O wretched [ellendig] man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24). Like Jesus, Menno prayed in true anguish: "I prayed to God with sighs and tears . . ." (cf. Hebr. 5:7). Like Peter, Menno preached true repentance: "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ . . ." <sup>49</sup> (Acts 2:38). Eventually, like the disciples of Jesus, Menno left everything: "[all] of a sudden, [I] renounced all my worldly [goed] reputations [geruchte], name and fame" <sup>50</sup> (cf. Lk. 5:11). Menno then took up the cross in obedience to Jesus: "[and] willingly submitted to distress [Ellenden] and poverty under the heavy [druckende] cross of Christ." <sup>51</sup> He thus consciously fulfilled the injunction of Jesus: "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Mt. 10:38, cf. 16:14 and Gal. 6:12). Nevertheless, like the disciples, Menno still feared. He admitted: "In my weakness, [zwackheydt] I feared God." <sup>52</sup> Menno, like Ruth, appreciated that the Lord "took notice of me, a poor [ellendige] sinner" <sup>53</sup> (see Ruth 2:10). Yet salvation was not a merely private experience — it was the humble and courageous use of the talents that he had been given. Menno noted: "They urged me to put to good use the talents [Pondt] which I, though unworthy, had received from the Lord." <sup>54</sup> Here it is clear that Menno had not only read, but experienced the meaning of texts like Mt. 15:15-30 and Lk. 17:10. It was in such moments of a clear choice for the direction of his life that Menno's heart was again deeply troubled. <sup>55</sup> Here there are several possible analogies. Was Menno thinking of the blessed Virgin (Lk. 1:19), the disciples (Jn. 14:1), the Apostle Peter (Acts 10:17), or of all three of them as well as of many others?

By making use of such analogies Menno did not seek to exalt himself. But, being aware of having become a disciple of the Lord, he sought to share the life-style of the Lord and of His followers. At no point did Menno suggest that such an imitation could be initiated by one's own will and power apart from grace. Consistently Menno pointed to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit who had enabled him to be a true believer. Yet at the same time Menno took very seriously his new-found freedom in grace, and hence the authentic responsibility to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, the example [Voorbeeld] <sup>56</sup> of all believers.

In this way Menno Simons' brief autobiographical account both disappoints and enriches the reader. It certainly does not provide us with many autobiographical data. <sup>57</sup> A very private person, Menno Simons has preferred not to write a detailed autobiography. On the other hand, Menno has been quite open and eloquent. He has assumed that it is grace that etches the clearest profile — and therefore he has drawn significant parallels with the biblical men of faith. In this way he has elucidated the meaning of his personal discovery. The historian may be disappointed in reading the autobiographical accounts of Menno Simons. But then Menno did not write for historians but for the edification of fellow believers



who were to be challenged to draw parallels between their own lives and the eternal paradigms reported in Scriptures.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Henry Poettcker, "Menno Simons' View of the Bible as Authority," in Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., *A Legacy of Faith: The Heritage of Menno Simons*. A sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Cornelius Krahn, (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1962), pp. 31-54. Russell L. Mast, "Menno Simons and the Scripture," in *No Other Foundation: Commemorative Essays on Menno Simons*, by Walter Klaassen et al. (North Newton, Kansas: Bethel College, 1962), pp. 35-41.

<sup>2</sup>"Before 1560 the Mennonites of Holland, like the Reformed and Lutherans, used a Low German Bible, which was based on the old Cologne translation from the Vulgate, and was published by the famous printer, Jacobus van Liesveldt . . . , in Antwerp in 1526. Menno Simons and his coworkers apparently used the East Frisian edition of the Luther translation prepared by Bugenhagen (1545); in addition they consulted the Erasmus translation of the New Testament (published in Delft in 1524) and the High German Strasbourg and Zürich editions . . ." *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 1:30a. Cornelius Krahn, however, has noted that at the time of his conversion Menno Simons may very likely have used the Catholic Vulgate edition — which he may have continued also later on in addition of utilizing other translations as well. *Menno Simons (1496-1561): Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Theologie der Taufgesinnten* (Karlsruhe: Heinrich Schneider), 1936, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Poettcker, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>*Opera Omnia*, 1681, pp. 256<sup>b</sup>-258<sup>b</sup>; *Die vollständigen Werke*, 1926, pp. 9-12; *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons*, ed. by John Christian Wenger (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1956), pp. 669-672.

<sup>5</sup>*The Complete Writings*, p. 70.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 77, cf. Mt. 23:27 and 25 — "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess." K J version — as in all other citations.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 71; cf. Job 29:21-25 — "Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain. If I laughed on them, they believed it not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down. I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners."

<sup>8</sup>I Tim. 1:15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; to whom I am chief." I Cor. 15:9: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Lk. 15: 18-19: "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." Cf. *The Complete Writings*, p. 69, lines 27-29.

<sup>9</sup>*The Complete Writings*, p. 669, line 26.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 669, lines 26-27.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 670, line 22.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. ftn. 9-10.

<sup>13</sup>*The Complete Writings*, p. 77; cf. James 4:4 and I Jn. 2:15.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 672, line 3 "groote ontgeleertheyt"; rather than merely "unlearnedness" should be translated "great unlearning".

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 839.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 791. Menno's statement is, of course, based on I Cor. 1:17-25 and offers remarkably effective use of Paul's insights.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 927.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 669, lines 30-31.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, lines 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, lines 15-16.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, lines 22-24; Cf. J. A. Oosterbaan, "Grace in Dutch Mennonite Theology," in Cornelius J. Dyck pp. 69-85; Hans. J. Hillerbrand, "Menno Simons - Sixteenth Century Reformer," *Church History*, 31,4 (1962); Alvin J. Beachy, *The Concept of Grace in the Radical Reformation* (Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1976), p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> *No Other Foundation*, p. 40.

<sup>24</sup> *The Complete Writings*, p. 669, line 41.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 670, lines 7-8 and 9-12.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, line 1.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, lines 1-7.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, line 8.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, line 9.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, line 9.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, lines 9-10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, lines 14-15.

<sup>33</sup> cf. ftn. 21.

<sup>34</sup> *The Complete Writings*, p. 671, lines 19-20.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, lines 24-25.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, lines 26-31.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, lines 32-38.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 672, lines 1-8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 672, lines 10-14.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 672, lines 28-29.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 672, line 30.

<sup>42</sup> Henry Poetcker, pp. 48-49.

<sup>43</sup> The concept was familiar in devotional literature. The most widely read was, no doubt, Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*.

<sup>44</sup> *The Complete Writings*, p. 669, line 41.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 669, line 42 — p. 670, line 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 670, line 5.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 670, lines 5-7.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 670, line 30.

<sup>49</sup> cf. ftn. 29.

<sup>50</sup> *The Complete Writings*, p. 671, lines 17-18.

<sup>51</sup> cf. ftn. 34.

<sup>52</sup> *The Complete Writings*, p. 671, line 20.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, line 27.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 671, lines 42-43.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 672, line 1.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 670, line 17.

<sup>57</sup> On some aspects of Menno's life and early education, see G. K. Epp, "The Spiritual Roots of Menno Simons," in *Mennonite Images: Historical, Cultural, and Literary Essays Dealing with Mennonite Issues*, ed. by Harry Loewen (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press Limited, 1980), pp. 51-59.

19-8-1865