

A FUNDAMENTAL
AND
CLEAR CONFESSIO
OF THE
POOR AND DISTRESSED CHRISTIANS

CONCERNING

JUSTIFICATION, THE PREACHERS, BAPTISM, THE LORD'S SUPPER, AND
THE SWEARING OF OATHS; ON ACCOUNT OF WHICH WE ARE
SO MUCH HATED, SLANDERED, AND BELIED, FOUNDED
UPON THE WORD OF GOD.

BY

MENNO SIMON.

A. D., 1552.

“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my
Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I
also deny before my Father which is in heaven,” Matt. 10 : 32, 33.

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,”
1 Cor. 3 : 11.

ELKHART, INDIANA:
PUBLISHED BY JOHN F. FUNK AND BROTHER.

1871.

A TRUE knowledge of the divine word, a fruitful faith in Christ Jesus, unfeigned love, and a pious, penitent, unblamable life I sincerely wish to all those who shall see, read or hear this our confession, of God our heavenly Father through Christ Jesus our Lord, who has loved us and cleansed us of our sins with his blood. To him be the honor, praise, kingdom, power and glory, forever and ever, Amen.

Christ says, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it," Matt. 7: 24—27.

P R E F A C E.

HONORED reader, the reason why we write is this: Because we and our ancestors, for many centuries, have sought the light in obscurity, the truth in falsehood, life in death, and the way among the deceivers; and have wandered about like a flock of sheep without a shepherd; and, alas, there was none who pointed us to the way of life and led us into the pasture of the Lord. The accursed doctrine of anti-christ had so drawn the shameful smoke of deceit from the bottomless pit; had so obscured the glorious dazzling of the divine word, nay, the just judgment of God was come upon this reckless world, on account of its sinfulness, so that, alas, there was neither true doctrine nor true knowledge of God and Christ, nor faith, baptism, Supper, ban in accordance with God's word, nor love, nor righteousness found among men, and of which very little is found as yet; for all over the world we find false teachers, hypocritical deceivers, and enemies of the cross, who diligently serve their own bellies, who by their tickling, erring doctrine proclaim peace to those who know of no peace, and thus strengthen the hands of the wicked so that none converts himself from his wickedness, as the prophet says.

Yea, they have carried on their wrangling, writing and preaching so far that they adjudge the Lord's express ordinances of baptism, Supper and ban, as commanded by him, and as taught, practiced and testified to by his holy apostles, not only as heretical, but also fiend-like, they upbraid and persecute those who keep them, as may be plainly seen; and have instituted a new baptism, which the Scripture knows not, which is more pleasing to the flesh than the baptism of Christ; a new Supper which is a false consolation to the ungodly; also a ban which serves for nothing but the de-

struction of the pious, and which is not founded on anything reasonable; for if they are not banished from city and country, they are sentenced to the stake or water; nor is it practiced sparingly upon the pious in many places.

In short, they have so led the common world from God, and so estranged them by their carnal doctrine and false sacraments, and led them into such unbelief and heathenish life, that all heaven must be afflicted and ashamed thereat. Say reasonable reader, who can enumerate the accursed, ungodly pride, pomp, adultery, fornication, idolatry, Roman and Spanish abominations, unfaithfulness, fraud, avarice, usury, unrighteousness, debauchery, luxury, hatred, envy, murder, thefts, robbery, incendiarism, treason, blood-shed, unmannerly, obscene words, the terrible lying, shameful diseases, lameness, suffering and wounds, which are found with this wicked, reckless world. Yet they claim to be the church of Christ. Yea, every thing is in such a condition that we may well say with the prophet Hosea, "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land; but swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood," Hosea 4: 1, 2; with Jeremiah, that "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land," Jer. 5: 30; with John, that "The whole world lieth in wickedness," Jn. 5: 19; and with John the divine that their "sins have reached unto heaven," Rev. 18: 5. O, faithful reader, it is worse than I can express. Whosoever is reasonably disposed may realize the truth.

Inasmuch as the brightness of the sun has not shone for so many years; as heaven and earth have been as copper and iron; as the brooks and springs have not run, nor the dew dropped from heaven; as the

beautiful trees and verdant fields have been dry and barren (I mean spiritually); but, inasmuch as, in these latter days, the gracious, great Lord, by the rich treasures of his love, has again opened the windows of heaven, and let drop the dew of his divine word, so that the earth once more produces its green branches and plants of righteousness, as before, which bear fruit unto the Lord and glorify his adorable name; and inasmuch as the holy word and sacraments of the Lord again lift up their heads from the ashes, by means of which the blasphemous deceit and abominations of the learned are made manifest—therefore all the infernal gates are opened in opposition; foam and rave, and that with such subtle deceit, blasphemous falsehood and tyranny that if the strong God did not interpose with his gracious power, no man could be saved. But they will never wrest from him his chosen ones.

Inasmuch as they so fearfully teach and strive against the truth, weigh out dross for

silver, and, besides, accuse us of all manner of shame, blasphemy, roguery and profanity, as they did from the beginning to all those who fear the Lord—therefore we are forced, and constrained by the true love of the divine word and the salvation of your souls, to explain briefly to you according to the word of the Lord, the sure, divine foundation, and the pure, immutable truth of Justification, of the Preachers, of Baptism, of the Supper, and of the swearing of oaths, on account of which we are so much hated and slanderously belied by every person, and especially of the learned, that you may thereby acknowledge what the Holy Scriptures clearly teach us in regard to these articles; and to show whether we are such useless, ungodly people, as the learned incessantly cry against us and tell the people. If you have ears to hear, then hear the word of the Lord; and if you have understanding hearts, take heed, and follow the truth.



A FUNDAMENTAL AND CLEAR CONFESSION OF THE POOR, AFFLICTED CHRISTIANS.

HONORED reader, it is plain and manifest that Adam and Eve, the father and mother of us all, were, in the beginning, created after the image of God by Christ, pure, good, without sin, righteous and incorrupt, as the Scripture teaches, Gen. 1: 27; 5: 1; 2: 7; Acts 17: 24; Eccl. 17: 9. And that they remained pure and righteous until they sinned against their Creator's word and commandment. For God had said unto them, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" as also it happened. For as soon as Adam and Eve, deceived by the serpent, ate of the forbidden fruit they became impure, unrighteous, corrupt, of sinful nature, children of death and of the devil; and thus, by their disobedience they lost their being children of God, and the purity in which they were created; and must have forever remained, with all their descendants, in sin, under the curse and servitude of death and devil, if God, the merciful Father whose love endures forever, had not again comforted and raised them up by the promise of Christ whom he promised to send in the future to bruise the Serpent's head; for whose sake he would be gracious unto them, would forgive their transgression, would show them mercy and favor, so far as they should believe.

When Adam and Eve heard these glad tidings of grace, the gospel of peace, from the mouth of the Lord, they joyfully accepted and believed it as the immutable truth of God, anxiously cleaved to it, and consoled themselves therewith as a sure foundation of salvation. And thus Adam and Eve were again accepted of God through Christ Jesus, justified and delivered from

the eternal death and curse; for they, according to the promise of God, believed and trusted in him and looked for him in latter days as the Conquerer, Savior and means of grace to eternal reconciliation.

But had they despised this means and not accepted it by faith, they would have suffered eternal death; this is incontrovertible, as Christ himself says, "He that believeth not, is condemned already;" again, John the Baptist says, "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him," Jn. 3: 18, 36.

As Adam and Eve, then, were bitten and poisoned by the infernal serpent, and became of sinful nature, and would have been subject to eternal death if God had not again accepted them in grace through Christ Jesus, so we, their descendants, are also born of sinful nature of them, poisoned by the serpent, inclined to evil, and by inherent sin, children of hell, of the devil and everlasting death; and cannot be delivered therefrom (we speak of those who have come to years of understanding, and hence to sinful works) unless we accept Christ Jesus the only and eternal means of grace, by true and unfeigned faith, and thus conscientiously look upon the brazen serpent which is erected by God, our heavenly Father, as a sign of salvation: for without him there is no help for our souls, no reconciliation nor peace; but disgrace, wrath and eternal death can only be expected, as was said before. But those who accept this Christ by a true faith which, according to the doctrine of Paul, was given us of the Father for the purpose of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and deliverance, are

in grace for Christ's sake, and God is their Father; for by faith they are born of him; he forgives them all their sins; has compassion on all their human failings and weaknesses; turns them from the curse, wrath and eternal death; accepts them as his beloved children, and gives them Christ Jesus, together with all his merits, fastings, prayers, tears, sufferings, tribulation, cross, blood and death; besides, also, his Spirit, inheritance, kingdom, glory, joy and life; not, we say, by our own merits and works, but by grace through Christ Jesus, as Paul says, "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loves us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved); and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them," Eph. 2: 4—10.

Behold, kind reader, thus we do not seek our salvation in works, words or sacraments, as do the learned, although they blame us therefor, but we seek them alone in Christ Jesus and in no other means in heaven or earth. In this only means we rejoice and in no other. We trust, by the grace of God, to abide therein unto death.

But that we abhor the carnal works and desire to suit ourselves to his word and commandment, according to our weakness, we do because he has so taught and commanded us. For, whosoever does not walk according to his doctrine, proves in fact, that he does not believe on him nor knows him, and that he is not in the communion of the saints, 1 Jn. 3: 10; 5: 10; 2 Jn. 1: 6.

All those, now, who accept this means of divine grace, Jesus Christ, with believing hearts, and enclose him in their consciences, believe and confess that their sins are forgiven through his sacrifice, death, and blood; that his wrath and damnation will not be upon them forever; that he accepts them as

his beloved sons and daughters, and gives them life eternal. All such become of peaceable and joyous spirit, and give thanks to God, with renewed hearts; for the power of faith quickens and changes them into newness of life, and they walk thus, by the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit in the power of their new birth, according to the measure of their faith, in obedience to their God who has shown them such great love; they diligently watch lest they fall from the grace and favor of God by licentiousness and ungodliness. They acknowledge by the Scriptures that Adam and Eve, the antediluvian world, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the patriarchs in the wilderness were severely punished of God on account of their sins; that the wages of sin is death; and that, also, Christ Jesus, the innocent Lamb of God who knew no sin, was so deeply humiliated and tortured on account of our sinfulness, Gen. 3: 7; 19: 9, 10; Lev. 10: 1—4; Rom. 6: 23; 1 Pet. 1: 19.

Inasmuch as they believe the word of the Lord which says, that to be carnally minded is death—if thou livest according to the flesh thou shalt die—adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, the avaricious, proud, liars, &c., shall not inherit the kingdom of God—and besides, believe that God is truth; that none can be saved contrary to his word; that he will judge in accordance with his word, because he is truth and cannot lie, as the Scriptures testify, Rom. 8: 6, 13; 1 Cor. 5: 10; 6: 10; Gal. 5: 21; Eph. 5: 5; Rev. 22: 15; therefore it is that they sincerely fear the Lord, and by fear die unto their flesh, crucify their lusts and desires, and shun and abhor the unclean, ungodly works which are contrary to the word of the Lord.

Besides this they acknowledge the abundant grace, favor and love of God towards us, as shown in Christ Jesus, and therefore, in return they love their God, for he first loved us, and stand prepared by this love to obey, in their weakness, his holy word, will, commandments, advice, doctrine and ordinances, according to the talent received; and thus they show, in fact, that they believe, they are born of God, and are spiritually minded; they lead a pious, unblamable life before all men; suffer themselves to

be baptized according to the commandment of the Lord, as proof that they bury their sins in the death of Christ, and are prepared to walk with him in newness of life; they break the bread of peace with their beloved brethren as proof and testimony that they are one in Christ and his holy church and that they have, or know no other means of grace and remission of their sins, neither in heaven nor in earth, than the innocent flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ alone, which he once, by his eternal Spirit in obedience to the Father, sacrificed and shed upon the cross for us poor sinners; they walk in all love and mercy, and serve their neighbors. In short, they suit themselves, in their weakness, to all words, commandments, ordinances, Spirit, rule, example and measure of Christ, as the Scripture teaches; for they are in Christ and Christ is in them; and therefore they live no longer in the old life of sin after the first earthly Adam (weakness excepted), but in the new life of righteousness which comes by faith, after the second and heavenly Adam, Christ; Paul says, I do not now live, "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," Gal. 2: 20. Christ says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," Jn. 14: 15.

Think not beloved reader, that we boast of being perfect and without sins. Not at all. I for myself confess that often my prayer is mixed with sin and my righteousness with unrighteousness; for by the grace of God I feel, by the unction which is in me, when I compare my weak nature to Christ and his commandments, what kind of a flesh I inherited from Adam. Yea, if God should judge us according to our worthiness, righteousness, works and merits, and not according to his great goodness and mercy, then I confess with holy David that no man could stand before his judgment, Ps. 143: 2; 130: 3. Therefore it should be far from us that we should console ourselves with any thing but the grace of God through Christ Jesus; for it is he, alone, and none other, who has perfectly fulfilled the righteousness required by God. We are also aware, by the grace of God, that all saints, from the beginning, have lamented the corruption of

their flesh, as may be seen by the writings of Moses, David, Job, Isaiah, Paul, James and John.

But for Christ's sake we are in grace; for his sake we are heard; and for his sake our failings and transgressions, which are committed involuntarily, are remitted. For it is he who stands between his Father and his imperfect children, with his perfect righteousness, and with his innocent blood and death; and intercedes for all those who believe on him and who strive by faith in the divine word, to turn from evil, follow that which is good and who sincerely desire, with Paul, that they may attain the perfection which is in Christ, Phil. 3: 12.

Mark, beloved reader, that we do not believe nor teach that we are to be saved by our merits and works, as the envious accuse us of without truth; but that we are to be saved solely by grace, through Christ Jesus, as has been said before. By grace man was created, through Christ Jesus, Gen. 1: 27.

By grace he was again accepted through Christ when he was lost. By grace Christ was sent to us of the Father, Jn. 3: 34. By grace he has sought the lost sheep, Luke 15: 4, taught them repentance and remission of sins. Died for us when we were yet ungodly, and enemies, Rom. 5: 6; by grace we receive faith. By grace the Holy Ghost was given us, in the name of Jesus, Jn. 14: 16. In short, by grace we receive eternal life through Christ Jesus, Rom. 6: 8.

Behold, kind reader, this is, concerning this article of our faith and confession, namely: That we can not obtain salvation, grace, reconciliation nor peace of the Father, otherwise than through Christ Jesus, as he himself says, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me," Jn. 14: 6. Peter also says, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" than the name of Jesus; and that all those who accept this grace in Christ, preached by the gospel and accepted by a firm faith, and cordially adhered to by the power of the Holy Ghost through faith, and become new men, born of God; changed in their hearts, renewed and of a different mind; yea, transferred from Adam unto Christ; and thus walk in newness of life, as obedient

children, in the grace which is manifested unto them; for they are renewed; have become humble minded, meek, merciful, compassionate, peaceable, patient, hungry and thirsty after righteousness; they strive firmly by good works after eternal life, for they are believing, born of God, are in Christ and Christ in them; they are partakers of his Spirit and nature, and thus live according to the word of the Lord by the power of Christ which is in them. And this is, according to Scripture, to be believing; to be a christian; and to be in Christ and Christ in us.

Again, that all those who disregard this preached grace and do not accept Christ Jesus by faith; who reject his holy word, will, commandments and ordinances, and hate and persecute them; who live according to their lusts and licentiously, are lost, and that it will avail them nothing before the Lord to boast of their faith, new creature, Christ's grace, death and blood; for they do not believe; they remain in their first birth, namely, unchanged in their earthly, corrupted nature, impenitent, carnally minded, nay, utterly without Spirit, Word and Christ; and therefore are children of death, as Scripture teaches; for they know not Christ in whom is life, as John says, "This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life," 1 Jn. 5: 11, 12.

Behold, worthy reader, this now is our

foundation and confession of justification, as you have here read. Judge for yourself whether the preachers act rightly in so slanderously belying us, saying that we expect to be saved by our merits and works: and that we boast to be without sin.

May the Lord forgive them that they so fiendishly belie us with such shameful lies. O, that these miserable men would once take to heart that the backbiters, slanderers and liars are of the devil and worthy of death; that God abhors all liars; that they shall have no part in his kingdom; and that a lying mouth killeth the soul, Jn. 8: 44; Rom. 1: 32; Ps. 5: 7; Rev. 21: 27; 22: 15.

This, I say, is our foundation, and, by the grace of God, it will ever remain our foundation, for we truly know and confess that it is the invincible word and truth of the Lord; therefore we testify before you and before all the world that we do not agree with those who teach and institute a dead faith, which they gather from profane history: First, that without change, there can be Spirit, power and fruits. Secondly, that we can be saved by our own merits and works, for reasons above stated.

May the merciful, gracious Father, through his beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord, grant us all the gift of his Holy Spirit, that we may sincerely believe and confess this beforementioned grace in and through Christ; and that we may walk and abide therein firmly and faithfully unto the end, to the eternal praise and glory of God, Amen.

HEARING THE PREACHERS.

It is a well known fact, kind reader, that, on account of this article, principally, we are so hated and persecuted by the learned, and that all the world cries against us and complains, That we will not hear God's word. Therefore we are necessarily impelled, inasmuch as it concerns the praise of God and the salvation of our souls, to assign the reason according to the word of God (which we would gladly omit if we

were not required by Scripture), to assign the reason why we do not hear them, and conscientiously dare not listen to them; on account of which we have to suffer so much pain and tribulation. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God." Paul also says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," and John says, "Whosoever

transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God," Jn. 3: 3; Rom. 8: 9; 1 Jn. 1: 9.

Honored reader, consider the word of the Lord. That the preachers of the world are not born again and have not the Spirit of Christ, and do not abide in his word, their fruits abundantly prove; for it is manifest that they pitiably adulterate the word of the Lord and walk according to the flesh, as will be clearly shown in the following:

First, I am convinced that you never saw that the preachers, who are one with their church, have ever converted an avaricious person from his avarice; a drunkard from his inebriety or a proud person from his pride and luxury, which are plainly works of the flesh, and, according to Scripture punishable with eternal death, if not repented of. Inasmuch as they convert none as it appears, therefore it is plain that their doctrine is nothing but vain prattle without power and fruit; which, alas, is clearly shown and proven by all the world by their unbecoming life.

Secondly, the reckless people are chained to and consoled in their unbelief and licentious, carnal life by their light minded doctrine, sacraments and easy life; for they preach and teach you, "There are none that can truly believe; we are all sinners—therefore none can rightly keep the commandments of God. In your baptism (they say) you became a regenerated christian and received the Holy Ghost. Although you could not understand the word; although you have no faith in Christ Jesus nor knowledge of good or evil, nor any change or renewing of heart, because you were an unconscious child, and like false consolations." You hear their absolutions, and receive their bread, as if that were sufficient; and never mind that you are yet an impenitent, avaricious, proud, drunken, unclean, envious and idolatrous man. We will leave you to judge whether these can be called preachers of peace who make arm cushions and pillows for the people and preach such things as are pleasing to them, Deut. 1: 39; Ezra 13: 18.

Inasmuch as none are made better by their doctrine and sacraments but are more and more comforted in unrighteousness—

therefore it must be acknowledged that they strengthen you in your evil doing, shut unto you the kingdom of heaven, lead you into the ditch, and rob and murder your souls, Jer. 23: 14; Matt. 15: 14.

O, kind reader, they have so enchanted the ignorant people who so gladly walk upon the broad road, with their light minded doctrine that we may well exclaim with Jeremiah, that "No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" Jer. 8: 6; or who enquires after a pious, penitent or godly life? What is worse, they have carried it so far, that alas, those must be called *work-saints* and *heaven-stormers* who, with faithful hearts hear, believe, fear, love, and, according to the measure of their faith, obey the word of the Lord. Behold, thus entirely has the smoke of the pit darkened the sun and sky, Rev. 9: 2.

As to their sacraments, it is manifest that they do not have the sacraments of Christ; but self-begotten abominations and idols, only a semblance of the Lord's sacraments. For they baptize infants; of which Christ has not taught nor commanded a single word in the whole New Testament, and are therefore called christians, notwithstanding that such baptized persons generally, walk in perverse ways all their lives, and not only not confess Christ Jesus together with his holy word, but also hate him and oppose the word.

Again, their supper must be called the Lord's flesh and blood; while the Scripture, at many places testifies that he ascended up to heaven, Mark 16: 19; Luke 24: 51; Acts 1: 9; Eph. 4: 8; and is seated at the right hand of his Father, while common sense, besides the Scripture, teaches us that he cannot be chewed with teeth nor consumed by the stomach. Besides, it is administered by some as for the remission of sins. Behold they have so entirely forsaken the Lord who has purchased them with his blood, that they have changed his praise and honor into such a weak creature. If this cannot be called serving Baal and moulding calves you may judge according to Scripture.

Lastly, How they conform their lives according to the doctrine of Paul you may

best deduce from their fruits and life. That they do not walk in humility of heart before the Lord, their looks and names prove. They suffer themselves to be greeted as lords and masters; notwithstanding it is forbidden by the mouth of the Lord. Say kind reader, did you ever hear or read that the holy apostles and prophets were covetous of such high, vain names as are the learned and the preachers of the world. It is true the word Rabbi or Master was applied to the ambitious Scribes and Pharisees, but not to the apostles and prophets. For we do not read of Doctor Isaiah, of Master Ezekiel and of Lords Paul and Peter. No, no. All those who have rightly taught the word of the Lord, were in their time not honored with such high-sounding names. This I write that you may know that such ambitious, proud spirits can never rightly teach you the humble word of the cross.

Besides, also, consider their avarice, and solicitude for their appetite; for they do not preach nor render services without pay, as if the office of a preacher and shepherd were a profession or trade. Jude says, They honor the persons for the sake of profits. Where there are no liens and rents there we find no preachers; but where liens and rents are abundant there is no want of preachers.

Again, they are in part usurers, in part fornicators or adulterers; greedy, liars, irascible, proud, hateful, lustful, vain, and lazy, envious, cruel, treacherous and rebellious toward all those who sincerely seek and fear God. In short, if you rightly confess the Lord and his word, then you must acknowledge that the best and most pious of them are yet far outside of Christ and his word in regard to doctrine, sacraments and also to their walk.

Inasmuch as all of them, in doctrine, sacraments and walk are so diametrically opposed to the Spirit, word and walk of the Lord, as appears, and inasmuch as Christ says, "Every tree is known by his own fruit," Luke 6:44; therefore it is plainly proven that they see not the kingdom and glory of God; are not of the Lord, and have not God, as was said before.

If they see not the kingdom of God as

Christ speaks, how, then, can they rightly preach it and teach it to others?

If they have not the Spirit of the Lord and are not of him (as appears), how then, can they be true ministers and servants of the spiritual office?

And if they have not God, how can they, then, rightly teach and point out his precious word unto righteousness? Inasmuch as it is well known to all theologians that they do not understand the kingdom of God and his glory; are not of the Lord, and have no God, as was said, therefore we conclude therefrom, and that truly, that their sending, calling, office and service is not of God and his word; but they are of the bottomless pit, and of the dragon and beast, Rev. 9:2. By this we do not mean this one, or that one; but all preachers in general who do not act according to the word of God; no matter of which denomination or sect. We do not judge according to their boasting and appearance, but truthfully, according to doctrine, sacraments, fruits and life; for we are sure that the high and holy office, which should be filled in the power of the Spirit, can never be filled by the avaricious; neither by the proud and unrighteous, the carnal and earthly minded, nor by drunkards and the lustful who serve their appetites before their God, as Paul says; nor by slanderers nor by vain prattlers, nor liars, nor soothsayers, nor hirelings, nor by those who adulterate, hate and oppose the Spirit, will, word, ordinances and commandments of the Lord, and who are ignorant and blind in all spiritual and evangelical matters; for the Spirit and word of God do not know such shepherds and teachers, but the Scripture portrays them with many terrible names and calls them profane, blind watchmen and greedy dogs, blind leaders, consumers of souls, false daubers, fools who seek not the Lord, preachers of peace, of whom it is written, "The prophets prophesy lies in my name; I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them; they prophesy unto you false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart," Jer. 23:11; Matt. 15:14; Ezek. 13:10; Jer. 10:8; 14:14. In short, they are the teachers against whom the word of the Lord has faithfully warned

us. Read here and there in the prophets, particularly Jer. 23: 13; Matt. 7: 15; 15: 14; 16: 12; 24: 11; Mark 12: 38; Luke 12: 1; 20: 45.

Say, kind reader, did you ever read in the Scriptures of any proud, avaricious, unclean, lying, inebriated and idolatrous prophets, apostles and shepherds who were pleasing unto the Lord? Or of such who, to please the world, have adulterated, changed and abused the word, ordinances and commandments of the Lord? Or, of such who said to cities, districts or towns, If you will care for our necessities of life; or, if you will give us so much money or income, we will teach you the word of the Lord? O no, reader, no. It never was nor never will be the way of the holy prophets, apostles or servants of Christ. Of this we are sure.

The teachers and preachers who are sent of God are born of God, are of godly nature, and are prompted by the Spirit of the Lord; they acknowledge the kingdom of heaven; are forced into the vineyard of the Lord by pure, unfeigned love of God and of their neighbors; seek not the gifts of Balak, nor the tables of Jezebel; but they seek the praise of God and the salvation of your souls and commend their carnal cares to him, who, according to the word of his promise, furnishes the necessities of life to all creatures upon earth, Matt. 13: 25; Num. 22: 28; 2 Pet. 2: 16.

They teach the word of the law in the power of the Spirit, to the remission of sins and the denial of all flesh by the gospel of grace to the consolation, peace and joy of all the godfearing, pious hearts, who before disregarded the law and so greatly feared the wrath and judgment of the Lord.

They reprove and shun all false doctrine, deceit, abuse, idolatry and licentious reckless life, which is of the flesh and contrary to the word of the Lord; they use baptism, Supper, ban and all the ordinances of God as is commanded them by the word of the Lord, be it unto life or death; they admonish lords and princes, learned, unlearned, male and female, so far as they possibly can, if they are favored with a hearing; for the word of God excuses neither emperor nor king, doctor nor master, rich nor poor; all must follow the word of the Lord who

wish to be saved, Matt. 28: 19; Acts 2: 38; 9: 6.

They lead their lives in the fear of the Lord; they daily die, with holy Paul, for the sake of their brethren; they are pointed at by all the world; are slandered, persecuted and deemed the sap and substance of all knaves and rogues, notwithstanding they are ever ready to show their love and faithfulness to all, as was formerly the case with Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah the son of Berechiah, John the Baptist, the apostles and Christ himself; and how the pious are thanked and rewarded at the present time, for their love and services, the burning, the sword, the stake and the wheel show, 1 Cor. 15: 32. Carefully observe and understand me, kind reader. Since the sending, calling, doctrine, sacraments and life of the preachers do not conform to this beforementioned rule, and are therefore not of God, as was said; for they, generally, do not enter but to destroy, steal and murder, as the Lord says; to adulterate and garble the precious word and the holy sacraments, to gratify their appetites; to exclude the word of God and institute their own; to kill the souls which would have eternal life; and promise life to those that will die the eternal death; and for the sake of a handful of barley and a mouthful of bread, as the prophet says; rule but do not serve; deceive but do not lead; corrupt but do not teach; weaken but do not cure; scatter but do not gather; shut the kingdom of heaven against man and freely lead all poor souls to hell. Behold, therefore it is that we do not hear them, neither can we conscientiously hear them; for the word of the Lord every where admonishes and commands us that we should be aware of them, flee and shun them, and not hear them, as was said before, Ezek. 13: 14; 34: 1; Jer. 5: 26; Phil. 3: 17; 1 Tim. 6: 4; Tit. 3: 8; 2 Jn. 1: 8.

Judge now, kind reader, whether these reasons are not sufficient to shun the preachers. We have not here presented to you philosophical words, garbled flatterings, nor falsehood; but we have pointed you to such facts as you may daily observe and hear of among your preachers. This is what our much beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus—fellow-partakers of the

tribulation, kingdom and obedience of Christ, the faithful children of God, have for many long years, so frankly confessed, and so heroically asserted before this idolatrous, bloody world, in excessive measure of poverty, by preaching and writing, at the peril of life, property, blood, prison, banishment, water, fire, chains, gallows, wheels and the stake; but preachers remain preachers and the world remains the world. They, as appears, will never be converted. They, so firmly adhere to their idolatry, that they do not suffer themselves to be converted, Jer. 8.

Honored reader, we pray you for Christ's sake that you will rightly understand this our confession; do not think that we have written this out of bitter feelings or hatred, inasmuch as it so openly reproves, discovers and points out the shame of the preach-

ers. O, no. We testify before you and before the Lord who has created us, that there is no hatred or bitterness in our hearts; for we know and confess that they are works of the flesh and will be rewarded by death. But we have written in purity of heart, as before him, who tries the hearts and reins, to the service of you and all mankind, no matter whether they be our opponents or not, learned or unlearned; to the service of all those who seek the truth; that we may so discover the judgment of the Babylonian whore, the covert wiles of the learned, by such expositions, that you and all godfearing hearts, by such exposition, may tire of the inhuman abominations, and so understand the word and truth of the Lord, and with all your hearts seek and obey the same, that you may be saved, Rom. 1: 32; Gal. 5: 21; 1 Cor. 6: 10; Eph. 5: 5; Rev. 17: 1.

OF BAPTISM.

CONCERNING baptism we believe and confess that it is the institution, word, ordinance and command of the Lord; and therefore a holy, divine sacrament or sign by which faith and its powers, fruits and mysteries are gloriously represented and portrayed when rightly administered according to the ordinance of God and not after our own choice, namely: To the believing, and not to infants.

We teach and administer baptism upon the confession of faith, for these reasons: First, because Christ himself has commanded so, for he says, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved," Mark 16: 15; Matt. 28: 19.

Secondly, because the holy apostles have taught and administered it upon the confession of faith, according to the commandment of God, and not to infants, Acts 2: 38; 8: 37; 10: 47; 16: 15; 18: 8; 19: 5. Thirdly, because the effect, or the signification, that is, that which is represented by baptism, is found with the believing and not with infants, Rom. 6: 4; Col. 2: 12; 1 Cor. 12: 13; Eph. 4: 4; 1 Pet. 3: 21; Gal. 3: 27.

Inasmuch as the Wisdom and Truth himself has commanded that we should baptize the believing; and as his faithful witnesses, the holy apostles, have not otherwise taught and administered it than according to the commandment of their Lord; and as the signification is only applicable to the believing and not to infants as remarked; and as, by the grace of the Lord, we acknowledge from the Scriptures that Moses and the prophets, yea, the Father himself, point us to Christ, that we shall hear him; and as, according to the doctrine of Paul, there can be laid no other foundation, nor other gospel preached but that preached to us by the apostles—behold—therefore it is that we teach, receive, assert and maintain baptism upon the confession of faith, at the cost of so much misery, even at the peril of property and life; for we truly confess, and that in accordance with the Scripture, which is the true light of our feet, that it is the institution, word, ordinance and command of the Lord, Jer. 23: 33; Matt. 17: 5; Mark 9: 6; Luke 9: 30; 1 Cor. 3: 11; Ps. 119: 105.

INFANT BAPTISM.

IN regard to infant baptism we hold and confess, first, that it is a self-begotten rite and human righteousness; for in all the New Testament there is not a word said or commanded about baptizing infants, by Christ nor by the apostles.

Secondly, that it is a breaking and tearing to pieces of the ordinance of Christ; for he has commanded that the gospel should be preached and that those should be baptized who believe, Matt. 28: 19; Mark 16: 15. But here they baptize without divine command, without the preaching of the word, without knowledge, faith, repentance, new life, and without all consciousness and knowledge, yet it is called by the learned a holy, glorious work and a christian baptism and sacrament.

Thirdly, that it is a vain consolation and boasting of all the unrighteous; for, although they do not understand the word of God, do not know the truth and lead a licentious, carnal life, yet they boast themselves to be baptized christians.

Since infant baptism is such a pernicious superstition that it entirely destroys the Lord's baptism, and as the poor, blind world suffer themselves to be misled and consoled therewith, and as, besides, there is connected with it such fearful blasphemy, hypocrisy, adjuration, witchcraft and abuse of the glorious name of God that a godfearing heart may well be astounded thereat, therefore it is that we so strenuously oppose infant baptism, and openly confess that it is not of God or of his word but of anti-christ and of the bottomless pit.

Luther writes in a book on "Human doctrine" that that which is not commanded of God in religious matters of faith, is forbidden." Again, concerning the 12th chapter

of Genesis he says, "That we should not accept any doctrines without certain reasons from the divine word."

Daniel writes, "Worship, without the word of God, is idolatry."

Philip Melancthon, in a book on the *Jurisdiction and authority of the church*, says, "That all worship which is not instituted of God by his express word, is false and wrong, let it be glozed over ever so much."

Here Luther and Melancthon have rightly expressed themselves according to the Scripture, although alas, they did not practice upon it. For if we read and well consider the Scriptures then we clearly find how pointedly God has commanded us that we shall not institute a religion of our own choice, but that we should do as he has commanded. On account of self-righteousness and self-chosen religion, Israel was severely visited and punished of the Lord.

Say not, beloved reader, as the ignorant do, that we thereby condemn our children because we do not suffer them to be baptized. O, no. For the Scripture does not connect the kingdom to words and water, but to the election and grace of the Father, in the merits of the death and blood of Christ.

Christ has promised the kingdom to small children, without baptism, Matt. 19: 14; Mark 10: 14; Luke 18: 16. On account of this promise we are exceedingly rejoiced, and give thanks unto the Lord for the grace shown our children. Therefore, take heed, and mistake not; for to connect the election, grace, favor and kingdom of God to words, works, signs and the elements, is quite contrary to the merits, death, blood and word of the Lord; yea, open deceit, abomination and idolatry.

THE LORD'S HOLY SUPPER.

In the same manner we believe and confess concerning the Lord's Holy Supper, that it is a holy sacramental sign, instituted of the Lord himself, in the shape of bread and wine; and left to his own remembrance of him, Matt. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; 1 Cor. 11; which was also thus taught and administered by the apostles among the brethren, according to the commandment of the Lord, by which, first, the Lord's death is proclaimed, 1 Cor. 11; and also to remember how he offered his holy flesh and shed his precious blood for the remission of our sins, Matt. 26: 27; Mark 14: 24; Luke 22: 19.

Secondly, it is an emblem of christian love, of unity and of peace in the church of Christ. Paul says, "For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread," 1 Cor. 10: 17. For as a loaf being composed of many grains, is but one bread, so we, also, being composed of many members, are but one body in Christ; and as the members of a natural body are not disunited but are in every respect united and peaceable among themselves, so it is with all those who in Spirit and faith are true members of the body of Christ; and for this reason this same supper was called by Tertullian a brotherly meal, or supper of love.

Thirdly it is a communion of the flesh and blood of Christ, as Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" 1 Cor. 10: 16; which communion is, that Christ has accepted us in his great love and we are become partakers of him, as Paul says, "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the

beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," Heb. 3: 14.

Inasmuch as it is a sign, which is left us of Christ, in such power that it is to represent and admonish us of his death, the love, peace and unity of the brethren and also the communion of his flesh and blood, as was said, therefore none can rightly partake of this Supper, according to Scripture, but he that is a disciple of Christ, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, who seeks the reconciliation and remission of sins in no other means than, alone, in the merits, sacrifice, death and blood of Christ, who walks in unity, love and peace with his brethren, and who leads a pious unblamable life in Christ Jesus, according to the Scriptures.

Here you have the true Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ together with what it represents, briefly stated, which the mouth of the Lord has left and taught you by his holy word. If you would be a becoming guest at the Lord's table, and would rightly enjoy his bread and wine then you must also be his true disciple, that is, you must be an upright, pious and godly christian. Therefore, prove yourself according to the doctrine of Paul, 1 Cor. 11: 27, before you eat of this bread and drink of this cup; for before God no feigning avails. He did not institute this ceremony with the intention that God would be pleased in the mere eating of the bread or drinking of the wine. O, no. But he instituted it that thereby you should observe and faithfully conform yourself to that which is represented and admonished by this sacrament. For not the ceremony itself, but the meaning represented by it, rightly understood and fulfilled in actions, constitutes a sincere christian.

THE SUPPER OF THE PREACHERS.

In regard to the supper of the preachers we hold and confess, first, that it is a false and idolatrous consolation and sign of peace to all those who delight in walking upon the broad way, such as, greedy, covetous, avaricious, usurious, adulterous, lying, deceiving, proud, unrighteous persons. For, as it is represented to them, by their preachers, as being a means of the remission of their sins, they console themselves and think that if they partake of it they are the people of the Lord. O no. The ceremony makes no christian: for, so long as they do not convert themselves, and become new men, born of God, of spiritual mind, it is a vain baptism and a vain supper, even, if it were administered by either Peter or Paul. Paul says, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love," Gal. 5: 6, the new creature; and the keeping of the commandments of God, 1 Cor. 7: 19; Matt. 18: 4; Jn. 3: 3-5; 2 Pet. 1: 3.

Secondly, we assert that it is openly a feigned work, although it is acknowledged by few. For Christ instituted it in remembrance of his death, as a sign of christian peace, and as a communion of his flesh and blood; while the common world partake of the supper in semblance, as if they believed thus and were thus minded; and, yet, they seek the remission of their sins and their salvation in infant baptism, absolutions, and in bread and wine, as is manifest.

Besides, their fruits openly show that they are not the body of peace: for they make use of such tricks and perfidy amongst each other in buying and selling; some, also, commit adultery, lie and cheat; the one slanders, defames and robs the other, that it may be truly said of them that they do not acknowledge christian peace which is of God, and that they are not in the communion of Christ, but that they are in the communion of him, of whom John says, "Little children, let no man deceive you," "He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the

devil sinneth from the beginning," 1 Jn. 3: 7, 8.

Thirdly, we say, that it is a horrible blasphemy, abomination and adultery, nay a new calf and Moaz; for the blind, reckless world sees plainly that it is a perishable fruit of earth which they have planted, cut, pressed and baked with their own hands, and which again returns to earth; that it must be taken care of by man lest the worms and age consume it—and yet it is called by many the imperishable precious flesh and blood of Christ, and worshipped and honored as the true Son of the living God, which we also with our ancestors have done these five hundred years, and which is yet done in many large kingdoms, principalities, cities and districts, as was in bygone times the case with Israel in the worship of the brazen serpent, which was afterwards broken in pieces by Hezekiah, king of Judah, 2 Kin. 18: 4.

Behold, to such rude idolaters and deceivers has the apocalyptic Apollyon rendered the scribes of this world, that they have, by their own wisdom, doctrine and council, erected such a powerless, earthly cereal and fruit as being, or filling the place of the true Son of the Almighty and eternal God; behold, thus entirely has the noble Sun of righteousness lost its brightness and the Egyptian darkness covered the entire land, Rev. 9: 2; Exod. 10: 22.

Faithful reader, by this our exposition and confession of the preachers and their baptism, supper and envious hearts toward all the pious, learn the judgment of the finely attired woman, seated upon the scarlet colored beast, Rev. 17: 3. Mark: The beast upon which the woman was seated, is full of names of blasphemy; understand the spiritual sense. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color—in celebrations, churches, bells, choirs, organs, baptism and supper. The cup in her hand was of gold. They boast of the word of God—but are filled with abominations and filthiness of their fornication and have made all the world drunk therewith; and the name was

written upon her forehead and may be read by all who have spiritual eyes, and is called, "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

And although she is so finely arrayed that all kings commit fornication therewith, yet she is called a whore by the angel, and of such an inhuman and wolfish nature that she is "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

John, the holy man of God, saw this in the Spirit, and was astounded thereat. Yea, kind reader, whosoever rightly understands the abominable power, idolatrous array, spiritual enchantment and fornication, inhuman abominableness and fearful bloodthirstiness and tyranny of the woman may well be astounded thereat. Therefore, fear God and learn wisdom. We have, by the grace of God, thoroughly shown her, exposed her shame and diligently and in faithful love warned you against her.

THE SWEARING OF OATHS.

David says, who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation," Ps. 24.

These words of David are full of spirit and wisdom, yet not regarded by the world. For every where we find guilty hands, unclean hearts, false doctrine, faithlessness and but little truth. Yea, it has come to this, among the children of men that the precious *yea* and *nay* which was commanded of the Lord himself can no longer be trusted. But nearly everything which is transacted before the magistracy, must be affirmed by an oath, although the Lord has so plainly forbidden the swearing of oaths to all christians, Matt. 5: 34.

The Scripture teaches that we should hear Christ, for he is the king in Jacob, Isa. 9: 7, the king of righteousness, the Teacher and Prophet promised of God, who hath taught us the word of the Father, and his word is truth, his commandment eternal life, Deut. 18: 15; Matt. 17: 5; Mark 9: 7; Isa. 9: 7; Jer. 23: 6; 33: 16; Deut. 18: 15; Acts 3: 26; Jn. 3: 17; 5: 46; 17: 17; 12: 50.

Inasmuch as we thus confess and cordially believe, and besides, confess that no emperor or king may rule or command contrary to his word, since he is the Head of all princes, Eph. 1: 21; Col. 2: 10; and is

the King of all kings, Rev. 1: 5; 19: 16; and that unto him every knee shall bow which is in heaven, in earth or under the earth, Phil. 2; and as he has plainly forbidden us to swear, and pointed us to *yea* and *nay*, alone, therefore it is that we swear not, by the fear of God, nor dare swear, though we must hear and suffer so much on that account from the world.

Since throughout the world they act so fearlessly contrary to the word of God, in regard to this article; and as sometimes some of the godfearing are thereby put into difficulty, therefore I will, by the grace of God, show the kind hearted reader, from the word of God what the Holy Scriptures at different times teach and imply concerning the swearing of oaths.

First, the reader should observe that swearing was not always practiced uniformly among the people of the Lord. Before the law the holy fathers had a custom to lay their hands under the thighs, and thus swore to others, as may be read in the case of Abraham and his servant, Gen. 24: 3; and in the case of Jacob and his son Joseph, Gen. 47: 29—31. Joseph also swore by the life of Pharaoh, Gen. 42; and it seems that such swearing was customary among the Egyptians.

Secondly, the reader should observe, that Israel was bound by the law to swear by the name of the Lord and to keep their oath, as Moses says, "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt

thou profane the name of thy God. I am the Lord, Lev. 19: 12; and this oath settled all dispute among Israel, Ex. 22: 11;" Heb. 6: 16. Thirdly, It should be observed, that Christ Jesus does not in the New Testament, point his disciples, in regard to swearing, to the law, as in the imperfect, which allowed swearing—but he points us now from the law to *yea* and *nay*, as in the perfect, and speaks thus, "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time (that is, to the fathers under the law, by Moses), Thou shalt not foreswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths (that is, thou shalt swear truly and fulfill thine oath): but I (Christ) say unto you (my disciples), Swear not at all (that is, neither truly nor falsely); neither by heaven; for it is God's throne; nor by the earth; for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil." Here you have Christ's own doctrine and ordinance concerning swearing, Matt. 5: 35—37; Jas. 5: 12; Ex. 20: 7.

Behold, beloved reader, before these words of Christ all human laws and regulations concerning swearing must stand back and be abolished; such as *Juramentum Calumniae*. *Jerumentum de veritate dicenda*, or *Fede*; no matter how they be performed; be it by words, or by raising your hand, or holding your hands upon your breast, or upon a cross, or upon the New Testament, &c. And the truthful yea and nay, ordained of the Lord himself must be restituted, if the magistrates and subjects do not want licentiously to transgress the word of the Lord and reject it as vain; for, whatsoever is more than yea and nay (says Christ) cometh of evil. This same the holy James also teaches, "Above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: (understand, such as, *By God's word—By the Lord's cross—By the salvation of your soul*); but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay (and not *So help me God, So help me God and all the saints*, as is alas, the

custom in many places); lest ye fall into condemnation," Jas. 5: 12.

We are aware that the magistracy claim and say, *We are allowed to swear when justice is on our side*. This we simply answer with the word of the Lord. To swear truly was allowed to the Jews under the law; but the gospel forbids this to christians. As Christ does not allow us to swear, and as the magistracy, notwithstanding, proceed according to their rule, although contrary to the Scriptures, and as the Scriptures may not be set aside by man, what shall now the conscientious christian do? If he swear, he falls into the hands of the Lord; but if he does not swear he will have to bear the disfavor and punishment of the magistracy.

O, ye beloved lords! if we, now, had christian eyes and could see and sincerely acknowledge what it is, according to the justice of God, licentiously to despise and transgress the word of God, we would rather die than weaken or break the precious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the ordinance of the eternal God, by temporal statutes and policies.

Nor would we, even, think of asking more than yea and nay, particularly of the pious, godfearing hearts, who, by the fear of their God, dare not speak anything but the truth; who esteem every word which comes from their mouths as an oath, and keep their yea and nay unto death; while, now, alas, they dare force them to swear to a trifle, as concerning some temporal goods or something of the kind, even with their fingers raised to heaven or with their hands upon the New Testament, by the God of heaven and by his living word.

O, ye beloved lords! how pitiably your teachers and leaders lead you upon the way which tends to damnation, who ever console you by saying that we should obey the magistracy (as is, also, becoming so far as is not contrary to God's word); as if the magistracy may act and rule against the Lord, at pleasure.

O, no, beloved lords, no! We warn you in faithful love. Repent, wake up and take heed. Your preachers deceive you. With God there is no respect of person. If you do not repent, are not born of God, become like unto children in malice, do not in

love execute your office and service agreeably to the will of God, do not act justly to the poor and miserable, and do not walk obediently to the word of the Lord with godly, humble hearts, you will find your judge at the judgment day. Beloved lords, take to heart this saying, "Mighty men shall be mightily tormented," Wis. 6: 6.

Again, ye learned, you who by your flatterings and errors assert and maintain it, how dare you so flatly contradict the eternal wisdom and truth of God and say, Thou sayest: thou shalt not swear; but we say; *Thou mayest swear when the love, profit and need of thy neighbor require it.* We will leave it to your judgment whether that is not teaching contrary to Christ; as it is so plain that it was allowed to the Jews under the law, to swear sincerely; but to us, christians, it is forbidden and as it is very plain that, according to the New Testament, no love of neighbors nor kinsmen nor peril of life is any excuse to strain or break the word of the Lord, Matt. 10: 37; Mark 8: 38.

Therefore, worthy reader, if you fear the Lord and if it should happen that you are asked to swear, then pray the Most High for wisdom, courage and strength; do not listen to the flatterings of the learned, for they deceive you; do not look to numbers lest you follow in their evil ways, as Moses says, Respect no flesh in this matter, no difference who, what or where they be, but admonish them in a becoming manner and in love when they ask of you more than the Scriptures command; abide in the Lord's word which so plainly has forbidden you to swear; and let your yea and nay, be your oath, as was commanded, whether life or death be your lot, that you, by your courage and firm truthfulness, may admonish and reprove unto righteousness the useless, fruitless, vain world (who, in their faithlessness respect nothing less than the word of the Lord) by your truthful yea and nay; that some might yet be converted from their unrighteousness and thereby more deeply study the truth, and be saved, Matt. 5: 37; Phil. 2: 12.

It is better to incur the disfavor, scorn and slander of man and remain in the truth, than to be the favorite of man and sin

against God. The good John Huss* confessed when he was asked to swear and said, *I am pressed on all sides. If I swear, I have eternal death; and if I do not swear, I will fall into your hands. But I would rather fall into your hands, without swearing than to sin in the face of God.* Thus considerably this worthy man weighed the oath.

Also read Hieronymus, Theophilact, Chrysostom, Erasmus of Rotterdam in their annotations; Philip Melancthon's Treatise on the fifth Chapter of Matthew. Heymon's Treatise on the Tenth Chapter of Revelations and also Origen, and you will find that in this article they agree with our foundation, faith, doctrine and confession. This is our foundation and understanding in regard to this article. Inasmuch as the Lord has forbidden us to swear at all (understand in temporal matters) neither sincerely nor falsely, as was said; and has commanded that our yea shall be yea and our nay, nay, Matt. 5: 37; as Paul and James, also, testify to this, 2 Cor. 1: 18; Jas. 5: 12; and as we know that no man, nor commandment of man may supersede God and his commandment, therefore it is that we, in temporal matters, dare not affirm to truth with more than yea or nay, as the case may be; for thus the word of the Lord teaches us.

Reader, mark. We say, *In temporal matters*, and for this reason: Because Christ sometimes in his teachings makes use of the word, *verily*, Matt. 18: 18; Jn. 3: 3, 5; 8: 34; 10: 1; and because Paul called upon the Lord as a witness of his soul. For this reason some think that swearing is allowable; not observing that Christ and Paul did not do this in speaking of temporal matters, as in a matter of flesh or blood, or money or property; but as an affirmation of the eternal truth, to the praise of God and to the salvation and edification of their brethren.

We hereby pray all lords and magistrates, for Jesus' sake, to fear the Lord sincerely, and to conform their policy, in this matter of swearing, to the word of the Lord,

*John Huss was condemned by the Papists, at their council, at Constance, to be burned, in 1415.

and to consider why they require the oath, namely: That that shall be fulfilled to which one swears. Inasmuch as we deem our yea and nay to be no less than an oath, why require any further affirmation at our hands than the word of the Lord teaches and allows; for, by the grace of God, we trust, inasmuch as we are partakers of the Lord, and adhere to the word in which yea is amen—that it will be found with us that it is yea where it should be yea, and nay where it should be nay; much more so than with the world under strong oaths. But in case that a man's yea and nay is not kept,

let him be punished as a perjurer. That it is yea and amen with all true christians, is sufficiently proven by those who, in our Netherlands, are so tyrannically visited with imprisonment, confiscation and torture; besides, with fire, the stake and the sword; while with one word they could escape all these if they would but break their yea and nay; but as they are born of the truth, therefore they walk in the truth and testify to the truth unto death, as may be abundantly seen in Flanders, Brabant, Holland, West Vriesland, and other places.

CONCLUSION.

It is manifest, honored reader, that the world is so degenerated that it esteems every thing wrong which God teaches, commands and desires, and hates it with envious hearts persecutes and destroys it. On the contrary, all that which God hates, accurses and esteems as an abomination, it looks upon as good, and diligently asserts and maintains; and yet they want to be the holy, christian church and the people of God, as if we could be such by the merename; by baptizing children &c.; without faith, the new birth, and the Spirit and obedience of God. O, no, reader, no. Take heed. Your consolars deceive you and corrupt the way you should go, Isa. 3: 11.

Inasmuch as the world is so entirely degenerated, as was said, and as our opponents so shamefully lie and war against us, that we cannot answer for ourselves, as is manifest, therefore we have written this our confession, that every one who may read, hear or see it, may know why and whereby we seek to be saved—why we do not hear the preachers, and why we so strictly administer baptism to the believing and oppose infant baptism; what is represented by the Lord's Holy Supper and what abominations are implied in the baptism of the learned; and that it is not allowed to a true christian to swear in temporal matters, but only affirm by yea and nay. And by so doing we have compared truth

with falsehood, light with darkness and white with black, as you will perceive. If you do not want to be willfully blind, you have here a good eye-salve. Yea, we have presented it so plainly and clearly that you must acknowledge it to be the truth; or else reject it in perverseness, and say, No, I do not want to believe it thus. What kind of a christian you are you may consider for yourself.

Kind reader, do not associate with those who say unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job 21: 14. Nor with those who are intent upon blood, for their reward will be death, Rom. 1: 32; Rev. 21: 27. Behold, this is our foundation, as you here have read. If, now, you are of a pious mind and not led by the blind spirit of the spiritual whoredom, then judge our cause according to the word and truth of the Lord. If you do not understand it then fear God and pray. All those who are born of God and inclined to the word of the Lord, must acknowledge that our doctrine is of God and that truth is on our side; whosoever accepts them and abides in them unto the end, has eternal life; but whosoever rejects them does not reject us, but Christ Jesus himself who has thus taught from the mouth of his Father and sealed it with his blood, Rev. 1: 5; 1 Pet. 1: 19; Acts 20: 28. The gracious Father, through his beloved Son, Jesus Christ

our Lord, enlighten you and all hungry hearts by the gift of his Holy Spirit, and lead you by his strength into his eternal, saving truth, Amen.

To the praise of God and the service of all mankind.

MENNO SIMON.

A. D. 1552.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

QUESTION 1. Is separation a command or is it a counsel of God?

Answer. Let every one weigh the words of Christ and of Paul, referred to above, and he will discover whether it is a divine commandment or whether it is a counsel. Every thing which Paul says in regard to separation he generally speaks in the imperative mode; that is, in a commanding manner. *Expurgo*, that is, Purge, 1 Cor. 5: 7. *Profligo*, that is, drive out. *Sejungere*, that is, withdraw from, 1 Tim. 6: 5; *Fuge*, that is, flee, Tit. 3: 9. Again, "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," 2 Thess. 3: 6. I think, brethren, these Scriptures show that it is a command; and if it even were not a command but an advice of God, Should we not diligently follow such advice? If my spirit despise the counsel of the Holy Spirit, then I truly acknowledge that my spirit is not of God. And to what end many have come who did not follow God's Spirit, but their own, may be read in many passages of sacred history and may be seen in many instances, at the present time.

QUESTION 2. If any person should not maintain this ban and yet be pious otherwise, should such an one be banned on that account?

Answer. Whoever is pious will show his piety in obedience, and not knowingly or willfully despise and disregard the word, commandment, will, counsel, admonition and doctrine of God. For if any one willfully keeps *commercium* (intercourse, company) with such whose company is forbidden in Scripture, to be kept, then we must come to the conclusion that he despises the word of God, yea, is in open rebellion and refractoriness (I speak of those who well know and acknowledge, and yet do so). "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry," 1 Sam. 15: 23.

Since the Scriptures admonishes and commands, That we shall not associate with such, nor eat with them, nor greet them, nor receive them into our houses, &c.; and yet if some body should say, I will associate with them, I will eat with them, I will greet them in the Lord and receive them into my house—he would plainly prove that he did not fear the commandment and admonition of the Lord. but that he despised it, rejected the Holy Spirit and that he trusted, honored and followed his own opinion rather than the word of God. Now judge for yourself what kind of a sin it is not to be willing to hear and obey God's word. Paul says, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us;" again, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed," 2 Thess. 3: 6, 14. Inasmuch as the ban was so strictly commanded by the Lord, and practiced by the apostles, Matt. 18: 17; therefore we must also use it and obey it, since we are thus taught and enlightened by God, or else we should be shunned by the church of God. This must be acknowledged.

QUESTION 3. Should husband and wife shun each other on account of the ban—as also parents and children?

Answer. First, that the rule of the ban is a general rule, and excepts none; neither husband nor wife, nor parent nor child. For God's judgment judges all flesh with the same judgment and knows no respect of persons. Inasmuch as the rule of the ban is general, excepts none, and is no respecter of persons—therefore it is reasonable and necessary to hear and obey the word of the Lord in this respect; no mat-

ter whether it be husband or wife, parents or children, Rom. 2: 11; Gal. 6: 1; Eph. 6: 9; Col. 3: 25; Jas. 2: 4; 1 Pet. 1: 17.

Secondly we say, That separation must be made by the church; and therefore the husband must consent and vote with the church, in the separation of his wife; and the wife in the separation of her husband. If the pious consort must give his consent, then it is also becoming that he also shun her, with the church; for what use is there in the ban when the shunning and avoiding are not connected with it, 1 Cor. 5: 3.

Thirdly we say, That the ban was instituted to make ashamed unto reformation. Do not understand this shame as the world is ashamed; but understand as in the conscience, and therefore let it be done in all discretion, reasonableness and love. If, then the husband or wife, parent or child is judged in the church, in the name of Christ and by virtue of Christ, to be banned, it becomes us (inasmuch as the evangelical ban is unto reformation) according to the counsel of the Holy Spirit, to seek the reformation of our own body, namely, of our consort, and also of our nearest kinsfolk as parent or child; for spiritual love must be preferred to any thing else; aside from this I would care for them and provide the temporal necessities of life, so far as it would be in my power.

Fourthly we say, That the ban was given, that we should not be leavened by the leaven of false doctrine or of unclean flesh, by the degenerated. And as it is plain that none can corrupt and leaven us more than our own consorts, parent, &c., therefore the Holy Spirit counsels us to shun them, lest they leaven our faith and thus make us ashamed before God. If we love husband or wife, parent or child more than Christ Jesus, we cannot possibly be the disciples of Christ, Matt. 10: 37; Luke 14: 26.

Some object to this, saying, that there is no divorce but by reason of adultery. This is just what we say; and therefore we do not speak of divorce; but of shunning, and that for the beforementioned reasons. To shunning Paul has decidedly consented, 1 Cor. 7: 10; although this is not always coupled with adultery; but not to divorce. For divorce is not allowed by the Scripture

only by reason of adultery, Matt. 5: 32; Luke 6: 18; therefore we shall never consent to it for other reasons.

Therefore we understand it that the husband should shun his wife, the wife her husband, parents their children and the children their parents when they apostatize. For the rule of the ban is general. They must consent, with the church, to their sentence, they must seek their scriptural shame unto reformation and diligently watch, lest they be leavened by them, as said above.

Beloved in the Lord, I would here sincerely pray you that you would make a difference between commandment and commandment and not consider all commandments as equally hard. For adultery, idolatry, shedding blood, and the like shameful and abominable works of the flesh will be punished more severely than a misunderstanding in regard to the ban, and particularly when not committed willfully and perversely. Therefore beware, that in this matter of matrimony, you press none farther than he is taught of God, and that he in his conscience can bear, and thus seethe the kid in his mother's milk, Ex. 23: 19; 34: 26; Dent. 14: 21. On every hand the Scriptures teach that we should bear with the weak. Brethren, it is a delicate matter. I know too well what has been the result of pressing this matter too far by some in my time, Rom. 15: 1; Gal. 6: 4. Therefore I advise you to point all to the sure and certain ground. And those consciences that are through the Scripture, and the Holy Spirit, free and unencumbered, will freely, without the interference of any one, by the unction of the Holy Spirit and not by human encouragement, do that which he advises, teaches and commands in the Holy Scripture,⁶ if it should be that either consort should be banned. For verily I know that whoever obeys the Holy Spirit, with faithful heart will never be made ashamed.

QUESTION 4. Should we greet one that is banned, with the common, every day greeting, or return our respects at his greeting? Since John says, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds," 2 Jn. 10, 11.

Answer. Mildness, politeness, respectfulness and friendliness to all mankind be-

comes all christians. If, then, an apostate should greet me with the common greeting of *Good Morning*, or *Good Day* and I should be silent; if he should be respectful to me and I should turn my face from him, and bear myself austere and unfriendly toward him, I might well be ashamed of myself, as Syrach says. For how can such an one be convinced, led to repentance, and be moved to do better, by such austerity? The ban is not given to destroy but to build up. If it should be said, That John has forbidden such greeting, I for myself would say, That, before my God, I can not understand that John said this in regard to the every day greeting. But that he says, That if some deceiver should come to us who has left the doctrine of Christ that we should not receive such an one into our houses, lest he deceive us; and that we should not greet him as a brother lest we have communion with him. But not so with the worldly greeting. For if the worldly greeting have such power in itself that it causes the communion of the vain works of those whom I greet, then it must follow that I would have communion with the adultery, fornication, drunkenness, avarice, idolatry and blood shed of the world, whenever I should greet a worldly man with the common greeting or return his compliment. O no. But the greeting or kiss of peace signifies the communion. Yet if one should have conscientious scruples in this matter, with such an one I do not dispute about it. For it is not worth contending about. But I would much rather see all scruples in regard to this matter, removed, and have christian discretion, love, politeness and respectfulness practiced, to the building up, and not unbecoming stubbornness, unfriendliness, malice and unmercifulness to the destruction of our fellow man. Brethren, beware of discord. The Lord grant every godfearing person a wholesome understanding of his holy word, Amen.

QUESTION 5. Are we allowed to show the banned any charity, love and mercy?

Answer. Every one should consider, first, the exact meaning of the word *commercium* (intercourse, communion).

Secondly, for what reason and purpose

the ban was ordained by the Holy Spirit, in the Scriptures.

Thirdly, how a true, regenerated christian is minded.

Fourthly, how the merciful Father himself acts with those who are already worthy of his judgment and wrath.

All those who can rightly see into these will doubtlessly not deny charity, love and mercy to the banned. For the word *commercium* does not forbid these, but it forbids daily company, conversation, society and business as was explained above. The ban is also a work of divine love and not of perverse, unmerciful, heathenish cruelty. A true christian will serve, aid and commiserate with every body; yea, even with his most bitter enemies. Austerity, cruelty, and unmercifulness he sincerely hates. He has a nature like his Father of whom he is born, "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." If I, then, be of a different nature, I show that I am not his child.

Therefore I say with our faithful brother Dietrick Philip that we should not *practice* the ban to the destruction of mankind (as the Pharisees did their Sabbath) but to their improvement; and thus we desire to serve the bodies of the fallen, in love, reasonableness and humility, with our temporal goods when necessary, and their souls with the spiritual goods of the Holy Word; and should rather show mercy to the wounded, with the Samaritan, than to pass by him with the priest and Levite. James says, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy, and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." "Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful." "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy," Jas. 2: 13; Luke 16: 36; Matt. 5: 7. In short, if we understand the true meaning of the word *commercium*; understand for what reason and purpose the ban was instituted; how a true christian is and should be minded; and conform ourselves to the example of Christ and of God, then the matter is clear. And if we have not this grace we will shamefully err in this ban and be cruel, unmerciful christians; from which error and abomination may the gracious

Father eternally save all his beloved children.

Brethren, I tell the truth and lie not when I say that I sincerely hate such unmerciful and cruel mindedness. Nor do I wish to be considered a brother of such unmerciful, cruel brethren, if there should be such, unless they desist from such abomination, and discreetly follow, in love and mercy, the example of God and Christ. For my heart cannot consent to such unmerciful action which exceeds the cruelty of the heathen and Turks; and by the grace of God I will fight against it with the sword of the Lord unto death. For it is against the doctrine of the New Testament, and contrary to the Spirit, mind and nature of God and Christ, according to which all the Scriptures of the New Testament should be judged and understood. All those who do not understand it thus are already in great error.

But in case my necessary service, charity, love and mercy should become a *commercium*, or that my soul should thereby be led into corruption, then we confess (the Lord must be glorified), that our daily intercourse is forbidden in the Scripture, and that it is better to leave off our charity, love and mercy, than to ensnare our souls thereby and lead them into error. The unction of the Holy Spirit will teach us what we should best do in these premises.

QUESTION 6. Are we allowed to sell to, and buy of the apostates, inasmuch as Paul says that we should not have intercourse with them; and yet the disciples bought victuals in Sychar, and the Jews dealt with the Gentiles? Jn. 4:5.

Answer. That the apostles bought victuals in Sychar proves nothing at all; for many of the Samaritans were a remnant of the ten tribes, as we have sufficiently shown above, from the Holy Scripture. But we do not deny that the Jews dealt with the Gentiles, yet they shunned their *commercium*, that is, their daily association, company and conversation, and did not eat nor drink with them, as the writings of the evangelist sufficiently and plainly show in many scriptural passages.

And inasmuch as Christ points us to the Jewish ban or shunning, namely, That as they shunned the gentiles and sinners, so we should likewise shun an apostate chris-

tian; and as the Jews had dealings with them, although they shunned their daily intercourse in company, association and conversation; therefore we say that we can not maintain, either by the Jewish example to which Christ points or by any explicit Scripture, that we should not in any manner deal with the apostate, if no such daily intercourse arises therefrom. For such intercourse with the apostate is strictly prohibited by Scripture; and since it is prohibited, it is manifest that a pious, godfearing christian could have no apostate as a regular buyer or seller. For as I have daily to get my cloth, bread, corn, salt, &c., and exchange for it my grain, butter, &c., it can not fail but that intercourse will arise therefrom. But with a trading which is conducted without such intercourse this is not the case.

And because such merchandizing, which is carried on without intercourse can not be avoided by virtue of the Scripture, as was said, therefore we would pray all godfearing brethren and sisters in the Lord, for the sake of God and of love, to act in this matter, as in all others, as reasonable, good, discreet, wise and prudent christians, and not as vain, reckless, self-conceited, proud, obdurate and offensive boasters; for a true christian should always strive after that which is the best and the surest, and follow the pure, unfeigned love, lest he abuse the freedom which he seems to have, to the injury and hindrance of his own soul, to the affliction and destruction of his beloved brethren, to the scornful boasting of the perverse, and to the shameful blemishing of the Holy word and the afflicted church of Christ. Besides, I pray and desire in like manner, that none will thus in the least be offended at his brother and mistake and judge him by an unscriptural judgment; as he has in this case no reproving example among the Jews nor forbidding word [in the Scriptures.]

O my sincerely beloved brethren! let us sincerely pray for understanding and wisdom, that all misunderstanding, error, jealousy, offense, division and undue reports may once be exterminated, root and branch; that a wholesome understanding, doctrine, friendship, love, edification and opinion

may be restituted and prevail. Let every one look with pure eyes and impartial hearts to the example to which Christ points, and to the wholesome, natural meaning of the holy apostles, and let true, christian love ever prevail, and he will know, by the grace of God, how he should act in this matter.

QUESTION 7. Are we allowed to be seated with an apostate in a ship or wagon, or to eat with them at the table of a tavern?

Answer. The first part of this question, namely, to be seated with an apostate in a ship or vehicle, when the captain or driver is no apostate, we deem childish and useless, since this so often happens without intercourse, and must needs happen. As to the second part, namely, to eat at the table with an apostate, while traveling, we can point the questioner to no surer ground and answer than this, namely, We advise, pray and admonish every pious christian, as he loves Christ and his word, to fear God sincerely, and follow the most certain way, that is, not to eat by or with him; for thereby none can be deceived; and if perchance some godfearing brother might do so, then let every one beware, lest he sin against his brother by an unscriptural judgment; for none may judge unless he have the judging word on his side.

Whosoever fears God, whosoever desires to follow after his holy word, with all his strength; loves his brother; seeks to avoid all offense and desires to walk in the house of God in all peace and unity, will act justly in all things and will not offend or afflict his brethren.

QUESTION 8. Who, according to Scripture, should be banned or excommunicated?

Answer. Christ says, Matt. 18:15—17,

If thy brother trespass against thee, &c., and will not hear thee nor the witnesses, nor the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. And Paul, "If any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat," 1 Cor. 5:11; Jer. 16:8. To this class also belong perjurers, thieves, violent persons, haters, fighters and all those who walk in open, well known, damnable works of the flesh, of which Paul enumerates a great many, Rom. 1:29; Gal. 5:19; 1 Cor. 6:9; Eph. 5:5. Again, disorderly persons, working not at all, but which are busy bodies; such as do not abide in the doctrine of Christ and his apostles and do not walk therein, but are disobedient, 2 Thess. 3:11, 14. Again, masters of sects. Again, those who give offense, cause dispute and discord concerning the doctrine of Christ and of his apostles.

In short, all those who openly lead a shameful, carnal life, and those who are corrupted by a heretical, unclean doctrine, Tit. 3:10, and who will not be overcome by the wine and oil of the Holy Spirit, but remain, after they have been admonished and sought to be regained in all love and reasonableness, obdurate in their corrupted walk and opinion. They should, at last, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that is, by the binding word of God, be reluctantly but unanimously separated from the church of Christ, and afterward, according to the Scriptures, be shunned in all divine obedience, until they repent, Rom. 16:16; Gal. 5:16; 1 Tim. 5:24; 6:3.

CONCLUSION.

Most beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord, as we have hinted in the beginning of this admonition, and as you are all aware that for some years there have been much division and discord concerning the ban by which christian love has been and is yet much retarded; therefore I have endeavored

(while I see that this is carried on without the foundation of the word, without reason and discretion, and without the nature of Christ Jesus and his holy gospel, both as to stringency or leniency, to the ensnarement of many consciences; as every one asserts and follows his own view as the best,

to advise all my beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord who seek the amiable peace and unity, not to seek more nor less than the Scriptures teach, show and require), to write this explanation of the ban or separation, compiled with the greatest care from the Holy Scriptures and to the promotion of the peace of all the pious children of God; and trust, before God, that this will satisfy all humble, peaceable consciences; for, behold, I seek nothing, before God through Christ Jesus, but that these unscriptural proceedings and mournful disputations concerning the ban, both as to stringency and leniency, may be thereby ended, and that the noble, glorious peace and unity in Christ Jesus may remain unbroken and undamaged.

Although I have written this out of pure love and upheld the peace according to the true nature and direction of the Holy Word, as before my God who shall judge me at the last day; yet I know that by some I will not be thanked; for to some it will be too stringent, and too lenient to others; but I must bear with this, as I have done these fifteen years. Still, I would pray you, for the sake of the merits of the precious blood of my Lord Jesus Christ, that if any one should find fault with this my treatise, be it on account of mildness or stringency, not to do so otherwise than by authority of the Word, Spirit and life of the Lord, and not recklessly and without thought, lest he mistake. Whatsoever any person can advance and prove thereby I will gladly hear and be obedient thereunto; but I dare not go higher nor lower, more stringent nor lenient than the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit teach me; and that out of great fear and anxiety of my conscience, lest I again burden the godfearing hearts who now have renounced the commandments of men, with those commandments. Self-conceit and human opinions I hate, nor do I desire them; for I know what tribulation and affliction they have caused me for many years.

Sincerely beloved brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus! Understand my writings rightly, and faithfully follow this my ad-

vice, explanation, understanding and admonition, and you will doubtlessly find great peace and joy (so far as regards separation) among all the brethren; but whosoever rejects them, let him take heed, for he will one day meet his Judge.

In short, it is my inward and outward faith, foundation and confession of the separation which I never before wrote and published with such clearness and minuteness. But now necessity urges me; and with this my faith, foundation and confession, which I thus had from the beginning, I desire to die in Christ Jesus and to appear before the throne of God; for I am aware that it is the most important showing of the separation which can be explained and taught to the godfearing consciences, from the Holy Scriptures. Therefore I ask of all my brethren and sisters in the Lord to leave me at peace about this matter and not to trouble me farther; for, by the grace of God, there will be nothing heard from my lips but that which my writings teach and imply.

Let every brother seek the wholesome understanding of the word of Christ and of his apostles, with a humble spirit, in brotherly love and in christian peace, and he will, doubtlessly, drive back all unscriptural dispute and discord and sincerely follow the true god-pleasing unity.

May the Almighty, merciful Father, through his blessed Son Christ Jesus, grant all brethren and sisters the heavenly gift of the Holy Spirit that there may become an end to this sad dispute and discord, and thus become a sound body with the perfect bond of unfeigned, christian love, bound together in becoming, steady peace in Christ Jesus, Amen.

Beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord, I pray you by the bloody wounds of my Lord Jesus Christ to beware of dispute and discord, and that you may receive this my labor with affectionate hearts, for in true christian love I have written it to your service, as before God in Christ Jesus.

MENNO SIMON.

A. D. 1550.

