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A LETTER.

Most beloved in Christ Jesus. Grace and peace. Dear, faithful sister in the Lord. My inmost soul is grieved in your behalf. More so than I can write; for I understand from our beloved brethren, that you can hardly acquiesce in the desire and prayer of the afflicted and pastorless church in regard to your beloved husband. I cannot

severely reprove you for your action if I look at it in a carnal, and not in a spiritual light. I also understand from the words of Lenart and Helmicht, that you hoped that Lenart would be excused from serving, by me. Most beloved sister in Christ Jesus, I trust that I, by the grace of God, sincerely love you with divine love in God; and that I am prepared to serve you and all pious people, even, with my blood if so required. But, beloved sister, who am I that I should resist the Holy Spirit? You are aware that not I, but the church, has called him to this service, unknown to me. As the church so imploringly desires him; and as he perhaps can not conscientiously deny them, how could I then oppose it? as I can find nothing in Lenart for which I could scripturally oppose his being called. Dear sister, I am sorry that I can not aid you in this matter; for the sorrow and fear of your flesh pierces my heart as often as I think of it; but above all, we must act in love to God and our brethren. You are called of the Lord, and by the operation of your faith you have committed yourself to the service of Jesus Christ and of your brethren as long as you live; and I trust that you will willingly fulfill it even at the risk of money, possessions and life. You certainly comprehend how needful it is. Therefore, be mindful of the days of your enlightenment, and obediently and resignedly fulfill that which, willingly and without constraint, you have promised the Most High.

O, beloved sister, look at the abandonment and misery of your beloved brethren. The spiritual fathers are become betrayers of souls; the watchmen, blind leaders, and the shepherds, wolves. The walls of Jerusalem are laid waste; the stones of the sanctuary are trampled upon at the corners of every street. Great is the plague of Israel. With Jeremiah and Ezra we may well bitterly sigh and weep, and let our tears flow over our cheeks, nay, our inmost soul must be grieved at the need of our beloved brethren, when we take to heart the very great hungering and thirsting of many pious hearts, the accursed deceiving of evil spirits, and dissensions, sects and all like evils. Inasmuch, then, as the merciful Lord

has gifted our beloved brother with his divine knowledge, has enlightened him with his Holy Spirit and gifted him with speech and wisdom, so that the brethren are pleased with him, sincerely love him and desire his talent; and if you, for the sake of your flesh and blood should oppose this and not acquiesce therein, would seem to me as being nothing else than that if you should see your brethren in imminent danger of life, should see them in fire or water, suffering, want and misery, you would not assist them at your own peril. Dear sister, love your brethren as Christ Jesus has loved us. If, for the sake of your brethren, you should be deprived of your property, remember that Christ has, for a time, left the glory of his Almighty Father and the company of angels, that we might obtain an eternal inheritance in heaven. So long as we live we shall have enough of the necessities of life, if we fear God, depart from evil and do righteously.

Yea, sister, be of good cheer. The eternal Truth has promised us salvation if we seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness. The necessities of life will be provided for us. If then you are solicitous for your husband's flesh, remember and believe that our life is measured by spans; that life and death are in the hands of the Lord; that not a hair falls from our heads without the will of our Father. He protects us as the apple of his eye.

Elias, David, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Peter and Paul, have all evaded the hands of the tyrant, and none could injure a single hair of their heads so long as the appointed day and hour was not come. For so long as the Lord has more pleasure in our life than in our death, they cannot injure us; but when our death is more pleasing to the Lord than our life, we can not escape from their hands. O, beloved sister, if our beloved brother should not serve our brethren, yet he has years ago, already committed himself to danger of death, tribulation, misery, scorn, persecution, anxiety, robbery, water, fire and sword; and if he had not committed himself to the cross by baptism, nay, if he could pass through all cities, countries, and nations unmolested, you know not at what

moment he would have to put off the tabernacle of clay and appear before his God. Therefore, beloved, faithful sister, be strong in the Lord; be of good cheer; commend yourself to the Most high God, who holds heaven and earth in his hand; who has given you and your husband body and soul; who has called you in the word of his grace; who has purchased and delivered you with the blood of his blessed Son; who has washed, sanctified and cleansed you with his Holy Spirit. His mercy is above all his works; he knows your going out and coming in; your setting down and rising up. Yea, you were before him before you were formed in your mother's womb; he it is who searches the hearts and reins; he knows what our brethren seek. Beloved sister strengthen your husband, and do not weaken him; for it is required of us that if we love God we should also love our brethren. In short, prove yourself to be to your neighbor what Christ has proven to

be to you; for by this only, sure and immutable rule must all christian actions be measured and judged. Behold, worthy, faithful sister, as the church calls our beloved brother to the office and service, I cannot conscientiously interfere; or else I should love flesh, your flesh, more than Christ Jesus my Lord and Savior, and my sincerely beloved brethren.

May the Almighty, merciful Father act in this measure according to his divine pleasure, and guide the heart of my beloved sister so as to be resigned to his holy will. I sincerely thank my beloved sister for the gift of your love you have sent me. The Lord repay you the heavenly riches of eternal glory. My consort greets you with the peace of the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ be forever with my most beloved friend and sister, Amen.

Your brother in the Lord,

MENNO SIMON.

A. D. 1553.