

A

VERY HUMBLE SUPPLICATION

OF THE

POOR, DESPISED CHRISTIANS,

TO ALL THE PIOUS, KIND AND REASONABLE MAGISTRATES; CONCERNING
THE ABOMINABLE CHARGES, UPBRAIDINGS, BACK-BITINGS AND
CLAMOR OF THE LEARNED, WHEREBY THEY ARE, ON
EVERY HAND, SLANDERED AND TROUBLED, AS
MAY BE HEARD AND SEEN.

BY

MENNO SIMON.

"If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him," "He shall be
unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself," Levit. 19 : 33, 34.

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To all the pious, kind and reasonable magistrates, lords, princes, regents and commanders, we, poor, despised and scattered children wish eternal happiness, a happy reign, and every blessing of God our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, Amen.



"Amend your ways and your doings;" "For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt, then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever," Jer. 7: 3, 5—7.

"Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning," Isaiah 58: 7, 8.

A VERY HUMBLE SUPPLICATION

OF THE POOR, DESPISED CHRISTIANS.

It is well known to many persons, noble, honorable and kind lords, that many are more diligent and zealous to execute the law of Theodosius (although this law was formerly forced from the good emperor by the blood thirsty bishops), the mandate of Charles the fifth, and the decree of the Roman empire, passed against those whom they call anabaptists (issued in our times), than they are, to have the word of God obeyed; never minding that these laws and decrees were made, not on account of baptism itself, but on account of the ungodly errors and abominations which were committed by the doctrine and doings of the baptized; for, if the beforementioned law, mandate and decree were issued on account of baptism, and not on account of the crimes committed at different times by those that were baptized, then were also Christ Jesus, the apostles, Cyprian the Martyr, all the African bishops, the Nicene concilion, and besides the great apostle, Paul, thereby adjudged as public criminals. This is incontrovertible.

Since we are opposed to the Donatists, Circumcelliones, Munsterites, and to the errors, abuses and abominations of all uproarious sects, committed in our times (on account of which, formerly the law of Theodosius was passed, and in our times the imperial mandate and the condemnation of the empire, were issued); also were opposed to them from the beginning of our doctrine and faith; and, since we, before God and his angels, seek nothing upon earth but that we may, humbly and obediently follow the express and clear word, Spirit, example, command, prohibition, usage and ordinance of the Lord, according to which we should judge every thing pertaining to

the kingdom and church of Christ, if we would please God, as is testified and shown on every hand, by our tribulation, oppression, misery, anxiety and blood—therefore it is, before God and man, unchristian, nay, manifestly wrong and detestable, to impose the same penalty and punishment on us that is imposed on the Circumcelliones, on account of the baptism, alone, which we have maintained in conformity with the word of God, with the apostolic doctrine and usage, and against all human philosophy and inventions. To treat us, I say, the same as they did the Circumcelliones, who, according to history, committed such detestable, cruel tyrannies, and also the same as they treated the Munsterites, who, contrary to the word of God, to all the evangelical Scriptures, and, also, contrary to sound policy, established a new kingdom, rebellion, polygamy, and such like things; all of which we unflinchingly oppose and reprove, as may be seen by our open actions and doings.

We would, therefore, in the first place, for the sake of Christ humbly beseech your Excellencies, and honorable Wisdom, to consider, in pity and paternal solicitude, how lamentably your miserable subjects, who are created, with you, of one God, and were purchased with the same treasure, and who will at last appear with you before the same judgment, are, without their faults, belied, derided and slandered of the whole world, and especially of the preachers; and how, in many places, they are pitilessly and unmercifully destroyed as the worst criminals upon earth, and are given as food to the fowls of the air; how they are (as our predecessor, Christ), with the criminals, put to the stake and on the wheel; and how

many of us, with our wives and little children, are driven from our country and possessions, must roam in foreign countries, naked and destitute; and all this for no other reason, God knows, than that we do not agree with the inordinate way of living of this world, and do not commune with the preachers who oppose the word of the Lord by their doctrine, sacraments and life; that we rightly use baptism and the Lord's Supper, shun all idolatry, self-righteousness and abuses, according to the Scriptures; and that we would gladly, in our weakness, fear the Lord, and follow in righteousness.

We beseech your Excellencies and Honors to consider, in the fear of God, what he requires of you, namely, That you shall rightly judge between man and man, without all respect of persons, and that you shall deliver the oppressed from the hands of the oppressor, The Lord says, "Execute judgment between a man and his neighbor;" "Oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood." Consider this; that your despised servants and miserable subjects, who fled from the roaring lions, may, in peace and quiet, serve the Lord, and earn their bread according to the Scriptures, under your paternal care and merciful protection, Jer. 7: 6, 7; 22: 17; Isaiah 59.

Secondly, we desire that your Excellencies and Honors would weigh, with the infallible word of God, with the living example of Christ, and with the pious, unblamable life of the saints, how a true christian should be disposed according to the Scriptures. If reading, singing, water, bread, wine, name and boasting, would constitute true christianity, then there would be a great number of christians. But no, beloved lords, no. The word of God knows no christians but those who are born anew in Christ of the living seed of God, through the pure doctrine of Jesus Christ, which, being preached in the power of the Spirit, is accepted in true faith, by the grace of God and through the operation of the Holy Spirit; who, by virtue of this birth, bury the old sinful life, and arise with Christ in newness of life; who, in their weakness, gladly obey the holy will, word, example,

ordinances and commands of the Lord, and who sincerely die unto every thing contrary thereto; who diligently combat all licentious, vain thoughts, and besetting sins which flow from the inherited Adamic nature; and who daily sigh and mourn before the Lord, on account of their human weakness, errors and short comings, with an humble, broken heart; who are prepared to take upon themselves the cross of Christ, and to forsake father, mother, husband, wife, children, possessions and self, for the sake of the testimony of his holy word, when the honor and praise of God require it. In short, they are minded as Christ Jesus; are in Christ and Christ in them; they are led by his Spirit; and they abide immutably in the word of the Lord, through true faith, firm confidence, and a living hope, in all temptations and perils, Rom. 6: 4; Col. 2: 12; Gal. 3: 27; 2 Tim. 3; Matt. 10: 38; Luke 14: 27; Phil. 2: 3.

Inasmuch as it is found in fact that our faithful brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus, the beloved companions in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, Rev. 1: 9, so sincerely fear and love the Lord, their God, that they would rather give their reputation and money, goods, flesh and blood, and every thing of which human nature is desirous, as a prey to the blood-thirsty, than willfully and knowingly to speak a false word or to act hypocritically, contrary to the word of God; therefore we would beseech your Excellencies and Honors to consider whether they are such pernicious and dangerous people as, alas, they are called by many, and adjudged by all. Yea, dear lords, all their pleasure is in the word of the Lord. Their mouths flow with wisdom, their love smells like the precious ointment on the head of Aaron, their prayers are as the noble incense before the ark of God; their life enlightens as the golden candlesticks in the temple of the Lord, and they seek nothing on this earth, but, that they may serve the whole world unto righteousness, both with body and spirit, and that they may deliver many from the destruction of their souls, and win them unto Christ, through the grace, Spirit, power and word of the Lord; and, that they may thus, with the gracious help of God,

improve the short time of their earthly existence, in Christ Jesus, to the praise of God, and to the service of their neighbors, and be eternally saved, Jer. 17: 8; John 1: 8; Ps. 133: 2.

If this is heresy and devilish deceit, as the preachers cry, then the Son of God, Christ Jesus, together with all the prophets, apostles and testimonies of God, were open heretics; and then all the Scriptures which teach nothing but reformation, and point us to Christ, are nothing but deceit; this can not be denied; for they, in their weakness, conform in all their doings, to the word, Spirit, life, command, prohibitions, ordinances and usages of the Lord, as their open actions testify before all the world, Isa. 1: 17; Luke 9: 35; Dent. 18: 15.

Since, then, they and we walk in unity of spirit, and, before God, seek nothing in Christ Jesus, but that we, in our weakness, would gladly follow Christ, as has been said, and we also trust, by the grace of the Lord, that your excellencies will never perceive anything else in your poor servants (we write of those who are united with us in faith and life), therefore, we beseech your Excellencies and Honors, again, for Christ's sake, to discard all prejudice against us miserable orphans, to believe us to be sincere in our profession, and never think that we have any other intentions, if we should become as numerous as the spears of grass upon the fields, or as the sands on the sea shore (something which will never be verified, since the way is narrow and the gate is strait); for Christ, whose name we bear, has taught so with his own mouth; his holy apostles have preached it unto all the world, and have testified it with the holy gospel, and have promulgated it at the peril of life, Matt. 7: 13; Mark 16: 15; Rom. 10: 18.

Thirdly, we desire that your Excellencies and Honors would earnestly consider how the Scriptures are being verified in regard to those who boast themselves christians; how mortally the sword of wrath cuts on every side, and how the hand of divine punishment is laid upon us; great and many are our sins; great and severe is the punishment of the Lord; the fire of wrath is enkindled; unless the Lord in his grace, quench it, it will devour both the green

and dry trees, according to the word of the prophet. The prophecy of Christ concerning the latter days; also, of Daniel and of the apostles, are fast fulfilling. The flesh-consuming sword of the Lord glitters every where, and his bloody darts are flying in every country; one kingdom has risen against another; one principality against another; one city against another, and one neighbor and friend against another. Some are put to the sword, some are imprisoned; cities and villages are leveled and destroyed; the poor, despised people who are, in part, innocent, are exhausted, profaned, taxed, burned and ruined, without mercy; numbers are rendered adulterers and rogues; one pestilence and epidemic follows another; and one panic another. Storms, hurricanes, misery and tribulation sweep over land and water. In short, the continual severe punishment show that the Lord is angry; notwithstanding the wicked world does not reform, but yet daily degenerates more and more, Dent. 32: 23—35; Ezek. 21: 1—6; Matt. 24: 4.

All of them, in general, boast themselves to be christians, and that they have God's word, although their seeking and doings are quite contrary to Christ and his word. For, if we turn to the magistrates, whom we should reasonably expect to know the ways and judgments of the Lord, as Jeremiah says, we find that they have broken the yoke and rent asunder the bands. If we turn to the preachers, we find there the envy of Cain to all those who fear the Lord, an insatiable love of money, a Balaamitic avarice, a light minded, easy doctrine, idolatrous sacraments, and a lustful, vain, careless life, as may be openly seen. If we turn to the common people, there we find extortion, hoarding, drinking, carousing, lying, cheating, cursing and swearing; some commit adultery and fornication, others are marauders, pillagers, thieves and murderers, nay, they lead, alas, such a life that we may well, in anguish, sigh with Hosea, that "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land; by swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood," Hosea 4: 1, 2; with Paul, "They are all gone out of the way; they are

together become unprofitable," "and the way of peace have they not known," Rom. 3: 12, 17, and, that their sins have reached unto heaven, Rev. 18: 5. O, dear Lord, how long will this dreadfully great blindness, blasphemy, deceit, abomination, blood-thirstiness and recklessness continue!

Noble lords, reform; do works meet for repentance, such as can stand before the Lord; humble yourselves with the king of Nineveh; take off the ungodly, tainted coat of sin; repent in sackcloth and ashes; cry out unto the Lord with a broken heart; rend your hearts and not your garments, as the prophet says; let the pious Josiah be your pattern, who turned himself unto the Lord, with all his heart, and soul and strength, as soon as the law of God was read to him, from the book which was again found, John 3: 7; 2 Kings 22: 11.

Dear lords, seek, fear, and serve God with all your strength; do justice unto the widows, orphans, strangers, and all the forsaken; cleanse your hands of blood, rule your countries in wisdom and peace, and let all your thoughts, words and actions be conformed to the crucified Christ Jesus; follow his footsteps; for "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live," Isaiah 1: 18; Ezek. 33: 11; 18: 32.

Inasmuch as those who boast themselves the church, are so estranged from Christ, that they are no more than nominal christians; and, inasmuch as the salt, which is the preachers, has wholly lost its savor, that it does more injury than good, for they flatter more than they reprove, if they can make some earthly gain thereby, and do not seek the praise of the Lord; by which they all, both preacher and hearer, are led upon the broad road which leads to destruction, and since there are, alas, none to stop them in their career, as the prophet complains, and, since we, God knows, would gladly see all men awaken, fear the Lord, sincerely repent and be saved, that thus the fallen city, which is the church, may again be built upon her old founda-

tion, that is, upon the firm foundation of the apostles, and upon the pure doctrine of Christ Jesus, and that such repentance may be verified unto the world by a pious, penitent, christian life, according to the Scriptures; behold, therefore we are so hated of the learned, that by their slanderous crying and clamoring, we are often robbed of our possessions, and our bodies given to the executioner. Some of us, through necessity, are forced to seek refuge in foreign lands, on account of their persecution, as has been said. Therefore we, poor, miserable outcasts, pray your Honors and Excellencies the third time, earnestly to reflect upon this matter, for Christ's sake, and faithfully compare the doings of the preachers and the tenor of the following writing addressed to them, and the matters and things therein set forth, that our apology may be rightly understood, and the truth explained according to the word of the Lord; and that the guilty may no longer be protected in their unrighteousness. Yea, beloved lords, if this was impartially done, in the fear of God, you would soon find, by the grace of God, in great clearness, with whom the truth or falsehood is; and that the doctrine, sacraments and life of the preachers are not in accordance with the Scriptures, but that they are deceitful and contrary to the word of God.

O, beloved, noble lords, we beseech you not to despise our reasonable and christian prayer, but to consider it in love; for it concerns the praise of the Almighty God, his eternal word and truth, and the eternal salvation of all our souls, which are so much desired and so dearly purchased with his precious blood. O, consider the difference, to live eternally with Christ Jesus in the kingdom of heaven, or eternally to die with all the devils in the abyss of hell.

Dear lords, we are in great anxiety and tribulation, and are terrified in two ways. For, if we follow the truth, which we ever intend to do in our weakness, by the grace of God, then we are made a prey to all the world. If we deviate, and again enter into the broad way, from which the merciful Father save us, then we fall into the hands of God and must bear his eternal punishment. The salvation of our souls is worth

more than man can comprehend. The sweet-sounding, precious word will once be heard: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you;" and also the fearful word which is threatened to all who are disobedient to Christ, which pierces body and soul, if well realized: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Happy they, who are awake at that time, who have their lamps prepared, and saved their wedding garments. Yea, blessed are they who are called to the Lord's Supper.

Dear, noble lords, it is no flattery nor vain display of words; but that which we write, we mean, as our sore persecutions testify.

The merciful, great Lord, Jesus Christ, who is Lord of lords, and King of kings, grant that your Honors may acknowledge the truth, faithfully act in accordance therewith, and that you may rule the people, cities and countries entrusted to your reign, in peace and prosperity, to the praise of your God, and to the salvation of many souls. This is our sincere desire. Amen.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." Be merciful, as your Father is merciful. "Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me," Matt. 5: 7; 25: 45. The humble and obedient subjects of your Excellencies and Honors, in all things, we can do according to the will of God by his grace.

A LETTER OF CONSOLATION, ADDRESSED TO AN AFFLICTED WIDOW.

GRACE and peace be unto you, and kind greeting, sincerely beloved sister in the Lord, whom my soul loves. The merciful Lord having called you to widowhood, my paternal and faithful admonition to you is, as a father to his children, to bear with your lot as becomes holy women, and to serve the Lord, with the pious Hannah in the holy temple, that is, in his church, or a new and upright conscience, with fasting and prayer, night and day; treat, at all times, the needy saints, as the virtuous widow of Sarepta in Zidon, treated the faithful Elijah, at the time of the drouth and panic, when she received him in her house, and fed him with her handful of meal and a little oil; and the meal of the holy, divine word, from the measure of your conscience, and the joyous oil of the Holy Spirit shall not be withheld from you. And, if the new son of your spiritual birth, do sicken a little and lose his breath for a time, through the weakness to which a widow is naturally subject—yet our true Elias, Jesus Christ, will again animate him through his grace, and again restore you to cheerfulness; for, as the Scriptures teach, you receive, love and serve him in his members.

Beloved sister, understand me aright.

I speak of the needy saints, and no further. Those who have enough of their own, do not need your aid and services. True christians should not put each other to unnecessary expenses. Faithful sister, walk prudently; fear your God sincerely; crucify your flesh and its lusts; withstand the enemy and all his enchantments; bear every thing piously; do not imprudently cause anybody trouble; diligently attend to your occupation, household and children; carefully shun all unchastity, vain babbling, pomp and splendor; earnestly avoid being led by the temptations of the flesh, that you do not become like the widows who lost their first faith, and followed after the devil, as Paul says; from which may the merciful Father ever save you. Receive in love, this, my brief greeting, written to you in true, paternal affection, and reflect upon it diligently. The saints here, greet you. Greet all pious friends. Pray for me. The eternal, saving power and fruit of the precious blood of Christ, be with my chosen much beloved sister, in eternity, Amen.

Your loving and well wishing brother,

MENNO SIMON.

May 18th.