

A
FOUNDATION
AND
Plain Instruction

OF THE
Saving Doctrine of Our Lord Jesus Christ,

BRIEFLY COMPILED FROM THE WORD OF GOD.

TOGETHER WITH OTHER INSTRUCTIVE TREATISES,

BY

MENNO SIMON.

TRANSLATED FROM THE DUTCH INTO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

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

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TO THE READER.

PIOUS, BELOVED READER, Since I perceive that our work, called, "THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE," which I published a few years ago, has been, through the grace of God, to whom be eternal praise and thanks, productive of much good to some; and God's holy word which was obscured for such a long time, has been again a little explained, through our limited talents, and as many well disposed children, requested and entreated me, diligently to revise and correct such parts as were obscured through the negligence of the printer, and which deprived the reader of the sense, I was prevailed on, and did so. In some places I made additions; explained the obscure parts, corrected those that were defective, and omitted redundancies; the style and language I improved, in order to be better suited to aid the kind reader, and to make known and acceptable to many, the despised truth.

Not my reader, that I changed the original doctrines and contents; by no means! I have not changed, but as appears to me, improved its form, and given it more force and distinctness. Those who fear God may judge. The former, as well as this, is God's word; and all that the first teaches, this teaches also. May the Almighty, Merciful Father grant that through his grace our little work, so lightly esteemed, may produce much fruit in many thousands, Amen.

MENNO SIMON.

P R E F A C E.

NOTE.—*The following Preface shows to whom this book is addressed, and was written at the time when the errors of Munster yet prevailed.*

To those in authority and all others, of whatever condition, class or calling they be, Menno Simon wishes the illumination of the Spirit, and the pure knowledge of the kingdom of God, from our heavenly Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, who has loved us and washed us from our sins with his blood. To him be praise, honor, glory, and thanksgiving forever. Amen.

Dear Sirs, Friends and Brethren, since we learn from the scriptures, and from experience find, that the prediction of the prophets, Christ and of the apostles, concerning the terrible oppression, misery, want, persecution, danger, anxiety, and false doctrine, in these latter times is being accomplished to its full measure, Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3; 2 Pet. 2; Jude 1, and this so powerfully, that unless the merciful Father graciously shortens these days no flesh will be saved.

Therefore, we poor miserable men entreat and admonish every one, and that through the mercy of the Lord, for once candidly to read our doctrine and faith, lay it well to heart and understand it correctly, that you might know what kind of doctrine we inculcate, what kind of faith we maintain, what kind of life we lead, and how we are disposed, on account of which we have to hear and suffer so much, endure imprisonment, exile, be robbed, derided, defamed and slain as poor, innocent sheep. In order that you may sincerely lament and weep over your former bloody deeds, before God, and with greater circumspection guard and preserve yourselves from such things, and henceforth be found a more pious, sincere, yea, a more God-fearing magistracy, Ex. 18: 23; Deut. 1: 17; not afflictors and destroyers, but fathers and guardians of all miserable and

wretched; not exterminators, but defenders of righteousness; not persecutors but followers of Christ and his word. Therefore, anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see and understand which is the right way, the truth and the life: the way which is so strait and narrow and found of so few; the truth which is known to none, except those who are taught of the Spirit of the Lord, illuminated and drawn by the Father; the life which is to know God the Father as the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he sent; that you may see him whom you fiercely pierced, and that you may with holy Paul, with your whole hearts, humble yourselves before the Lord with much fasting and weeping; clothe yourselves in sack-cloth; rend your hearts and not your garments, that you may find grace in his sight. For he is long-suffering, gracious and merciful, and pardons the iniquity of all who sincerely repent and seek his grace. Be no longer like Jeroboam, Ahab and Manasseh, but like David, Hezekiah and Josiah: that you need not on account of the office entrusted to you stand confounded in the great and dreadful day of the Lord, in that day which shall burn as an oven; and all who have dealt unrighteously and used violence upon the earth, shall be burnt up as dry straw and stubble, Mal. 4.

Therefore, we most humbly entreat you, for the sake of the merits of Christ, that you

would thoroughly ponder and reflect upon our faith, doctrine and undertaking; and not esteem us to be worse than you do thieves and murderers, whom you do not condemn without having certain knowledge of their case. Our doings are not thievish, nor have we to do with perishable possessions, but with God and his word, our bodies and souls, eternal life or eternal death. Therefore do not look upon the usages and customs of the fathers, nor upon the worldly wise and the learned, for it is deeply hidden from their eyes. They were always those who, from the beginning, thrust from them the wisdom of God through their own wisdom and have trampled it under foot; for the wisdom of God, which we teach, is that wisdom which none may understand, except those who are desirous of living and walking according to the will of God; it is that wisdom, which is not to be brought from afar nor taught in colleges. It must come from above and be learned through the Holy Ghost; as Paul says, Rom. 10: 6—9. "Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (That is, to bring Christ down from above). Or, who shall descend into the deep? (That is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But, what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Therefore, look to God's word, to the testimony and example of the holy prophets, the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles. Let these be your doctors and teachers, and not the ambitious, mercenary preachers of this world; then you will soon perceive, whether we are within or without the truth. May the almighty and eternal God give you such hearts and minds. To him be honor, praise and gratitude, dominion, power and majesty for ever, Amen.

Seeing then, beloved, that satan can transform himself into an angel of light, 2 Cor. 11, and thus sow tares among the Lord's wheat, such as the sword, polygamy, secular kingdom, and kings and other like errors on account of which the innocent have to suffer much; hence we are prompted to pub-

lish this our faith and doctrine; and we desire for Jesus' sake that we might obtain so much grace, that they would not treat and judge us except according to the word of God, as is reasonable and just. But should we not obtain so much grace, we have to commend it to the Lord, who is the only helper of every one in need. We will, nevertheless, through the grace of God, abide in the word of the Lord; and comfort ourselves with the scriptures, which say, "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy one of Israel, thy Saviour," Isa. 43: 1, 3. Again: "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment and the worm shall eat them like wool." "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou that shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man which shall be made as grass?" Isa. 51: 7, 8 and 12. Christ also says: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." "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: 28, 32, 33. "With the heart," saith Paul, "man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. 10: 10.

Since then the scriptures urge us so much, both to believe and to confess, and so kindly comfort us against the raging and raving of men, therefore, we also desire to abide by the same until death. And hereby testify before you in Christ Jesus, that we neither have, nor know any other foundation, faith or doctrine, than that which may be plainly read, heard, and understood in the following, from the word of God, Amen.

MENNO SIMON.

THE DAY OF GRACE.

In the first place we teach, what Jesus, the teacher from heaven, the Oracle and Word of the Most High God himself taught, John 3: 2, that now is the time of grace, a time to awaken from the sleep of our abominable sins, Rom. 13: 11, and obtain an upright, converted, renewed, contrite and penitent heart, and sincerely lament before God, our past profligate and dissolute course of life, and in the fear of God, to crucify and mortify our depraved, sinful flesh, temper and nature, and arise with Christ into a new, righteous, and penitent life and conduct, Eph. 4: 22; Gal. 5: 24. Even as Christ says, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye and believe the Gospel," Mark. 1: 15.

The time is fulfilled, that is, the promised day of grace approaches; the time for the appearing of the promised seed; the time of redemption, the time of that offering by which all things were to be reconciled in heaven and upon earth, Gen. 3: 15; Col. 1: 19; the time for the consummation of all the literal and figurative transactions into a new, spiritual life and an abiding truth; the time for which the fathers, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, David, Daniel, &c., with all the patriarchs and prophets hoped, and which they desired with many tears, and through faith saw from afar, and drew comfort and hope therefrom, Heb. 11: 23; yea, it was to them such a great and pleasing consolation, that good old Simeon desired to live no longer, when he beheld the time and saw the Redeemer. He said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people," Luke 2: 29—31.

The time is fulfilled, the predictions of the prophets and promises of the fathers appear in their full power; the sworn oath is accomplished; Israel has received its King David,

its Prince and Chief who has arisen as a mighty one to prepare his way, Ps. 2: 7; Is. 9: 5; Jer. 30: 9; his going forth is from the heavens; the Anointed, who was the desire of all nations, has come, girded about his loins with the sword of the Spirit and valiant for battle, Mic. 5; Hag. 2; Is. 24.

He has declared the gospel of the kingdom, the word of his Father; he taught and left unto his followers, an example of pure love, and an unblemished life, Matt. 4: 17; Jn. 7: 14, 15; conquered the mighty, destroyed the power of the devil, bore our sins, abolished death, reconciled the Father, acquired for all the chosen children of God, grace, favor, mercy, eternal life, dominion and peace, Heb. 2; 1. Pet. 2; 1. Cor. 15, and has been ordained by his Eternal and Almighty Father as an omnipotent King over the holy Mount Zion, as the head of the Church, a Provider and Dispenser of heavenly blessings; yea, an Almighty Ruler over all in heaven and on earth, Is. 2; Eph. 2; and this is what Christ here declares, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand," Mark. 1: 15.

Out of compassion and a sincere heart, I exhort you with the apostle Paul, that you take heed to this day of grace, and be obedient to the word of God, which says, "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation," and with Paul let us "give no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed; but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults (understand this in relation to things which befall us), in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the

Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor, and dishonor; by evil report, and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things," 2 Cor. 6: 2—10. Oh, my beloved Sirs, Friends and Brethren, my mouth is open unto you, and my heart is enlarged towards you: for your sakes I am much grieved that you are so careless, and do not observe the people by whom these plain and intelligible scriptures were written; that you so entirely despise the word of the Lord, and suffer this precious time of grace, which God gives us all for improvement, to pass away so shamefully, and regard nothing more than to live with the whole heart, according to the impure and wicked lusts of your flesh, bowing the knees before dumb idols. Alas! it is time to awake! Remember that the angel has sworn, Rev. 10: 6, by the eternal and living God, who created heaven and earth, that after this time, there shall be time no longer. From the scriptures we cannot otherwise conclude, but that this is the last watch of the year, the last proclamation of the holy gospel, the last invitation to the marriage of the Lamb, which is to be celebrated, promulgated and sanctified before the great and terrible day of the Lord. Hereby we may learn and determine that the summer will pass away and the winter approach. Those, who, like the foolish virgins, neglect to prepare their lamps, will come too late, knock in vain and be excluded, Matt. 25: 11. Therefore comfort not one another with idle comfort and vain hope, as some do who think that the word should be taught and observed whilst they reject the cross. I mean those who know the word of the Lord, but do not live according to it. Oh, no! it is the word of the cross and will, in my opinion, remain so to the last, for it must be sustained with much suffering, and sealed with blood. The Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world, Rev. 13: 8; yea, he did not only suffer in his body, but also through the cross and

death entered into that glory, which he, for a time, had left for our sakes, Luke 24: Jn. 11: 25. If Christ then had to suffer such torture, anguish, misery and pain, how shall his servants, children and members expect peace and freedom from suffering while in the flesh? "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" Matt. 10: 25. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus," says Paul, "shall suffer persecution," 2 Tim. 3: 12.

Christ also says, "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake," Matt. 10: 22.

Therefore banish the pernicious thought, that you may hope for another time, from your hearts, and be not deceived by your vain hopes, for I have known some who waited for a more convenient season, but did not live to realize their hopes. Had the apostles and fathers thus waited, the gospel of the kingdom would not at this day have been preached, and the word of the Lord would have remained unknown.

Alas! were you christians and the people of God as you boast yourselves to be, you should be able to say with Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Rom. 8: 35. For then the flesh, the devil, sin, hell and death would all be subdued; there would then be no desire to remain long in this depraved, wicked, sanguinary world; neither would ye then boast of anything save the cross of Christ, Gal. 6: 16, and like Paul, with the whole heart desire to be delivered from this body and dwell with Christ, Phil. 1: 23.

I sincerely desire that you may awake, and not hope nor wait for a more acceptable time. If however the merciful Father will give us liberty and peace, we will gladly receive them with all thankfulness, from his gracious hands; but if he will not, his great name shall, notwithstanding, be praised forever.

We have all enjoyed the acceptable time of grace, for now is the day of salvation, Is. 49: 8. Let us therefore not be like ungrateful, disobedient, blood-thirsty Jerusalem, who with such perverted minds rejected the divine peace, the heavenly grace and merciful calling; but let us awake, with sober hearts, and give ear to the inviting

voice, and in this accepted time arise from the deep slumber of our abominable and offensive sins, for the Lord is at hand. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light, let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but

put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," Rom. 13: 12—14. Let every one be vigilant, and improve the time which God has graciously given for repentance. *Ecce nunc tempus acceptum, ecce nunc dies salutis.* "Behold, now is the accepted time, behold, now is the day of salvation," 2 Cor. 6: 2.
