MENNONITE LIFE

An Illustrated Quarterly

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Vol. XVI JANUARY, 1961 No. 1

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Mennonite Life is an illustrated Quarterly magazine published in January, April, July, and October by Bethel College, North Newton, Kan. Entered as second-class matter Dec. 20, 1946, at the post office at North Newton, Kan., under Act of March 3, 1879.
Menno Simons Polemics with Catholics

By HENRY POETTCKER

WHEN Luther brought Menno Simons to the realization that the refusal to accept the Roman Catholic teaching did not spell doom for him, and when the Dutch priest found himself turning to the Scriptures more and more, a horizon was broadening for him which was to open up rare and dangerous possibilities. It also brought him a countless number of unhappy experiences. His friends became his enemies; his church, whose duty it was to dispense salvation, became his persecutor and judge; and those from whom he expected further support in the great cause of religious reform became his avowed opponents.

Menno’s life, from the time after he had wrestled through to a spiritual victory in his own person, was one of religious disputation and struggle with others. Beginning with the Münsterites, who were kin to his new-found faith in a number of ways, he rubbed shoulders (often not too gently) with the Catholics, the Lutherans, the Reformed, and also with a number of radicals. It shall be the purpose of this article to see some of the controversies which Menno had with the Catholics, with an attempt to delineate the issues which were involved.

It is clear that there were two basic issues which led Menno to break with the Catholic Church—the Mass and infant baptism. When Menno began to read the Scriptures diligently, the conviction came to him that the church had betrayed him. Not only in the celebration of the Mass, not only in the practice of baptism, but in its very structure it showed unmistakable signs of unrighteousness and idolatry. From first hand experience, he wrote later of the sin and wickedness, the idolatry and false worship, the hypocrisy and the carnal life which existed within the church.1 Already in his epistle against Jan van Leyden he was convinced that “the Roman Babylon” would not escape a visitation similar to the Babylon of old.2 As he read the Scriptures, it became clear to him that the church stood condemned3 on a number of counts: On its practice of the Mass, nothing less than a denial of Christ;4 on its toleration of priests whose life and teachings revealed that they were “not of God and His word”;5 on its demands of unconditional obedience to the Pope; and on its adherence to numerous other unbiblical practices.6 How deeply Menno felt on this matter comes to the fore in the drastic comment, that concerning these things (the things which the Catholic Church practices) Christ Jesus “has not left nor commanded us a single letter.”’"

With statements such as these, it is readily apparent that those of whom they were spoken would not remain silent for long. The reaction soon came. Holland in the 1530’s, particularly in the years following the Münster episode, was a place of severest persecution, and the Catholics spared no pains to bring the heretics to the gallows. Menno writes in 1541:

And this is not yet enough, that they practice such abominations. But they go on to despise as vain and useless all the true fruits of faith, those commanded by the Son of God Himself; the genuine, pure love and fear of God, the love and service to our neighbors, and the true sacraments and worship. They also revile them as damnable and heretical, and exterminate and persecute them.8

In comparison with the polemics carried on between the Lutherans and Reformed, and the Anabaptists (which was voluminous), that between the Catholics and the Anabaptists was not too extensive. This is especially true of the Netherlands, where it appears that the Inquisition was not so much the last resort as the first resort in dealing with the heretics.9 Notwithstanding, there were those among the Roman Catholics who were concerned that the Anabaptist teachings be refuted, and expressed the wish that such writings be prepared.10

Menno’s name and his writings found their way into a number of the indices as also some of the brief sketches of the different heresies of the time, but very few Catholic writers undertook to consider his teachings in greater detail. The general attitude of the Catholic Church toward all heretics was, of course, clear, and this will no doubt have been one factor why specific writings against the Mennonites were not forthcoming for some time.

One opponent Menno found in the person of Joannes Bunderius or van den Bundere (1482-1557). Bunderius was a Flemish theologian of the Dominican Order who had studied at Louvain and then returned to Ghent, his birthplace, where he taught until shortly before the end of his life. Besides teaching, he also served as prior of the convent of Ghent for several terms, and also discharged the duties of Inquisitor General of the Tournai Diocese. In the latter capacity he dealt with Lutherans, Calvinists and Mennonites. Most of his writings were polemical in nature and of the more important ones, one was written specifically against Luther (Delectio magorum Lutheri cum declaratione veritatis Catholicae [Louvain, 1551]), and another against Menno (De vero Christi
Martin Duncanus

Menno met a second opponent in the person of Martin Duncanus or Martin Donk (1505-1590). Born near Kempen, Donk studied in Nymegen and Louvain and then served as regent of the Standonck home in Mecheln. In 1541 he went to Wormer as pastor and while there he wrote a number of works against the Anabaptists. It was here that he became acquainted with Menno, and since there were a number of Menno's followers in the area surrounding the Wormer parish, he entered into discussions with them seeking to convert them. One of Donk's biographers, Felix Ruetten, refers to these endeavors on Donk's part, saying that the latter could easily dispose of the arguments of the Anabaptists, but that he was unable to convert them. Menno's Fundamentboeck came out in 1540, but as hard as Donk tried, it was several years before he got a copy into his hands. Once he did he wrote an answer to refute Menno's teachings. His work, consisting of two volumes, was Anabaptisticae bearesos confitatio et vere Christiani baptismi ac potissimum paedobaptismatis asserio... Anverpiae, 1549. The reason for the book's being written in Latin was that Donk was not very fluent with the Dutch language. Besides dealing with baptism, it also treated with other matters such as the assurance of salvation and the true church. While it was not printed until 1549, it was ready in manuscript for two years earlier. This could mean that he may have become acquainted with other of Menno's writings before he finished this first polemic against the Frisian. While still at Wormer, Donk also wrote the tract Van rechte evangelische Avontmael, which, however, was not printed until 1567, some years after he had left Wormer to take up duties as pastor in Delft. Almost to the end of his life Donk was a prolific writer. Several of his other writings will be mentioned during the course of the further discussion.

It will be in order to look briefly at Menno's presentation in his Fundamentboeck since it was to this that Donk spoke when he prepared his refutation. While the attention in the discussion here will be directed primarily to the presentation of the Lord's Supper and infant baptism, the two which constituted the occasion for Menno's break with the Catholic Church, in a broader sweep his concept of the essence of the church will also be considered.

Mass and Lord's Supper

There were several reasons why one of the first problems which confronted Menno was that of the Mass. With the Sacramentist movement growing apace in Holland, he was brought face to face with the possibility of another interpretation, and when the struggle was over, he had come a considerable distance from the Roman Catholic view. In speaking of the Supper in the Fundament, Menno is thinking primarily of the Roman Catholic practice. His introductory remarks point to the many misunderstandings concerning this practice, misunderstandings that have come about because there is so much dispute about the outward sign (Lutheran and Zwinglian controversy). Menno's approach at this point is, "The spiritual judge all things spiritually." Four things are said about the Supper. 1) It is not right to make the visible, perishable bread and wine the Lord's actual flesh and blood. The Lord's Supper is a sign signifying a reality, an admonishing sign and a memorial to the fact that Christ Jesus delivered man from the power of the devil and from eternal death by the sinless sacrifice of His innocent flesh and blood. 2) There is no greater proof of love than that one die for another, and since the Supper is a holy sign, a memorial of His death, which latter is the greatest proof of love, we are admonished to partake of the bread and wine both to remember His death and to remember all the glorious fruits of divine love manifested toward us in Jesus Christ. 3) In the Lord's Supper the partakers are enjoined to Christian unity, love and peace; after all these true Christians strive. 4) The Holy Supper is the communion of the body and blood of Christ, 1 Corinthians 10:16.

After a moving section in which Menno expresses the meaning of Jesus' words to his disciples that last evening in the form of an extended statement (as if Jesus Himself were speaking), he concludes:

Dear readers, consider the Word of the Lord and this institution. For wherever this Holy Supper is celebrated with such faith, love, attentiveness, peace, unity of heart and mind, there Jesus Christ is present with His grace, Spirit, promise, and with the merits of His sufferings, pain, flesh, blood, cross and death; as He Himself says: Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. But where the true knowledge of Christ, active faith, new life, Christian love, peace and unity are not present, there is not the Lord's Supper, but a despising and mocking of the blood and death of Christ occurs; this is an encouragement for the impenitent, a seductive hypocrisy, a patent blasphemy and idolatry, as alas we know and see with the world.

In the preceding section Menno has spoken at some length to the meaning of Communion with Christ, and he goes on to say that those who come without the true knowledge of Christ and without faith and the new life, do not have communion and therefore cannot be guests at His table. The sum of the whole matter, Menno says a little farther on, is just this: "he who would sit at the Lord's table with the disciples and guests of Christ, be he rich or poor, high or low, must be sound in faith and unblameable in conduct and life." Then he turns to a discussion of the perversions of the Supper in the Roman Catholic Church. In the first place, to 'institute unto the destruction and corruption of the true eternal sacrifice of
Christ which alone is effective before God, changing it into a daily sacrifice for sin as is done in the Mass, is to despise the atonement of Christ and to undo what He has accomplished. It is nothing short of arrogating unto man all power in heaven and earth, for in essence this is what is implied when the bread is broken in three pieces—to reconcile God, to intercede for the world, and to pray for the souls in purgatory. This is entirely wrong, for the Word teaches that with one sacrifice He has perfected forever those who are sanctified.

In the second place, the teaching of transubstantiation, viz., that the bread and wine are made the actual body and blood of Christ, is wrong. It stems from a literal interpretation of the words, “this is my body,” and “this is my blood,” John chapter 6, where Jesus instructs plainly how His flesh is to be eaten, and how His blood is to be drunk, is the guide for the interpretation to be given to these words. The spiritual reality is the one to be emphasized here. “For the external use of the sign is nothing but a false show and hypocrisy if the thing which is invisibly represented is not presented with it.” Menno laments the fact that the world (and this includes the Roman Church) does not know what the Supper is essentially, what it symbolizes, nor who is to partake of it.

In the third place, the Roman Catholic Church is wrong in teaching that this bread is dispensed for the forgiveness of sins. Scripture teaches that there is only one way, and that is through the atonement made by Christ when He shed His blood. Menno lists a number of references, quoting several of them, references which speak of God blotting out man’s transgressions, the blood of the New Testament shed for man, etc. It is false doctrine which tends to deny the true mercy seat and erect strange Baals to be worshipped in Christ’s place. It is out of this perverted view of the Supper that the further abominations come. Men have turned away from the Creator to the creature and from the reality to the perishable signs “so that the mocking shame of the godless mass must pass for the sacrifice of the Lord, and bread and wine for His real flesh and blood.” Like Israel, they have placed in God’s stead a visible creature which they can touch and mold to their own image. Thus it is clear to Menno:

From this fountain springs all the hideous idolatry practiced with this abomination, such as carrying the bread in procession, raising it aloft for adoration, praying to it, offering incense to it, requesting it at a given place, and paying divine honor and service to it—things for which there is not a hint either in letter or in spirit in all the Scriptures. There is, therefore, only one right course for those who are genuinely born again and who are obedient to Christ—they must shun all seducing and idolatrous preachers in regard to doctrines, sacraments, and worship.

Donk and the Eucharist

What was Donk’s position with respect to the Eucharist? Interestingly enough his first writing against Menno did not deal with the Lord’s Supper. Hence it is necessary to look to later ones for his viewpoint. Christ is partaken of in the Mass not only in faith, but in essence (wesentlich); otherwise the apostles, who could not yet have faith in the broken body (before the death of Christ), would not have been able to receive the sacrament. The real presence is the faith of all the past centuries and of the present church. The sacrifice of the altar is a figure, as e.g., those under the Old Covenant, but the truth of the earlier shadows, a truth now fulfilled. Menno says that when the Mass is changed into a daily sacrifice for sin, Christ’s eternal sacrifice is corrupted and His atonement is undone. Furthermore, “All the Mosaic types and shadows, all the oracles of the prophets, promises of the angels, and the whole New Testament, are in this way denied—things that unanimously point to the one and eternal sacrifice of Christ.” Donk is sure that the real presence (to be understood in the words “this is my body”) is to be taken only in one sense as does the Roman Catholic Church, not in hundreds of different ways, as is seen in the interpretations given by the heretics. That the bread and wine are transformed is not unnatural but supernatural, and that Christ actually intended the transformation is shown clearly in the Gospel accounts by Paul. And then one notes an interesting comparison. Menno maintains that to accept the Catholic view of the presence is to arrogate to man all power in heaven and on earth—in other words, make God do His bidding. Donk says that to accept the Reformed view (with which Menno can be classed here), is to rob Christ of His omnipotence, since it discounts His power to come down from heaven, thus making man more powerful than God (according to Calvin man could bring Christ down through faith). The same charge is thus made by both, but entirely different presuppositions. For Donk, Christ through His own power is with His body in heaven and in the sacrament on earth simultaneously. That the Eucharist is a sacrifice cannot be denied, says Donk. It is closely connected with the sacrifice on the cross. But more than that, it is a special and complete sacrifice. Just as the offering in the Old Testament was not completed until the animal had not only been slaughtered but also consumed, whether by the fire or by the human partakers, even so the sacrifice of Christ was not completed when He died on the cross, but rather when His flesh is eaten in the Eucharist. In this way the Eucharist becomes the completion of the sacrifice on the cross. Against this view Menno spoke repeatedly. This was nothing less than undoing the atonement, and with such an interpretation Menno had little patience; he used rather strong statements against this position. For Donk it was clear that the priests, as they celebrated the Mass, were aiding in man’s salvation.

The Meaning of Baptism

Since this raises the question of forgiveness of sins, it is now in order to look at Donk’s view of baptism. But
again it will be best to summarize Menno’s position first. Menno’s starting point is the Great Commission. It sets forth the sequence of preach, believe, baptize. Because children are without understanding and unteachable, baptism is not to be administered to them; to do so is to pervert the ordinance of the Lord. The New Testament enjoins no ceremonies for infants because they do not have the understanding for them. Christ’s command was taught and practiced by the apostles. Christ’s example of baptism, submitting to baptism according to the will of the Father, was that he might fulfill all righteousness. If it be argued that this was the way it was at the beginning, but that after the number of Christians increased, and time passed, children were also included, Menno says no! They must be able to comprehend what is taking place. Nor can it be argued, from circumcision, that children are to be baptized.

To speak to the meaning of baptism, Menno begins with Paul’s teaching. As Christ died and was buried, so we ought to die unto ourselves and be buried with Christ in baptism. And this dying must have begun before baptism. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection . . . ." Romans 6:5ff. This dying does not mean moral perfection, "that sin is sensed no longer." Rather the Christian dies to sin so that he is no longer subject to its impure lusts. To bury our sins in baptism is of little avail unless we also rise with Christ to newness of life. Children rise to a new life as long as they are not born of God through faith, and are led into righteousness by the Spirit of God. Regeneration comes from God and His Word, and faith comes from the same source. Children cannot comprehend the Word and therefore they are not to be baptized. Against the contention that baptism is a sign of grace, Menno insists that the sign of grace is Christ Jesus alone.

The refutation of the Pedobaptist arguments by Menno may be briefly summarized. To the contention that children must be purified from original sin by baptism, Menno answers: that all men are sinners and wholly depraved is certainly true. But sins are not forgiven through baptism but by Christ — his merits, death and blood avail here. While man is to believe to appropriate this unto himself, in the case of innocent children sin is not imputed for Jesus’ sake. Life is promised them not through any ceremony, but in pure grace, through the blood of Christ, as he says, “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

To the argument that the children of the old covenant were circumcised and therefore now children ought to be baptized, Menno says, Abraham was in the Covenant before he was given the sign of circumcision, and therefore the covenant does not depend upon the sign. It is not possible to take Paul’s statement about circumcision (Romans 2:25-29) as justifying infant baptism, for Paul does not teach that external circumcision is a figure of baptism, but of inner circumcision. The knife with which the inward circumcision is performed is the Word of God. Baptism does not regenerate children, nor does it wash away original sin as is claimed. Nor does it make matters any better to say that baptism washes away original sin, not in the sense that it is no more, that it will not be counted to children as sin. This is an open blasphemy against Christ and His blood. In a similar way, the argument which says that Christ cleansed and sanctified the church with the washing of water by the Word and that since children belong to the church they must be cleansed by washing, viz., baptism, does not hold, for Paul is speaking to those who hear and believe the Word of God. Equally untenable are the arguments that infants are to be baptized because of the promise, or that the apostles baptized whole families. Promises do not necessitate baptism, and it cannot be maintained, as the opponents do, that Christ taught differently about infant baptism after His death than He did before His death.

One final comment will suffice at this point: it is quite clear that for Menno the important thing is the Word, example and teaching of Christ and the apostles. What they did is normative, nay, imperative for the believer. What they did not do is thereby forbidden.

**Infant Baptism**

In the first book of his major work on baptism, Anabaptisticae haereses confutatio, Donk undertakes to speak to Menno’s concept of baptism. According to him Menno maintains that the command to baptize is the least of all commandments and that it is wrong to say that sins are forgiven through baptism. Donk takes issue with Menno’s statement that the blood of Christ is the only means of salvation and that the new birth and the acceptance of men as children of God does not occur through baptism but prior to baptism through obedient faith. Menno, says Donk, contradicts himself in that he sometimes identifies the new birth with the receiving of the Holy Spirit, sometimes says that the receiving of the Holy Spirit follows the new birth, and sometimes says that the receiving of the Holy Spirit occurs at baptism. Nor can Donk accept Menno’s contention that the impartation of the Holy Spirit is the assurance of salvation. Furthermore, Menno’s proof that the example of Moses’ rod and the serpent in the wilderness substantiated his thesis that the new birth is not a result of baptism but of obedient faith, is seen as exactly the opposite—these Israelites who experienced the power of the rod were lacking in faith.

The second book deals particularly with infant baptism. Children are subject to original sin, and from this only baptism can cleanse them. Menno’s reference to the passage, “Suffer the little children to come unto me,” is hardly sufficient to prove that their sins are taken care of without baptism. The unknowing faith of children (Unkenntnis des Glaubens) is no deterrent for the working of baptism and the continuous practice of the church is the
justification for infant baptism. Christ’s words indicate that children too need to be baptized, and the results of baptism—the blessings of which children also may partake, even as can adults—are further justification for children being baptized. Donk’s extended refutations of the many scriptural arguments against infant baptism which Menno gives,13 point up clearly that the two operated with different presuppositions. Donk could not imagine that one could dissociate himself from the church as Menno did or that the testimonies of the Fathers were not to be taken at face value. While he attempted to argue also on scriptural grounds, since he was aware that Menno did not permit the arguments from tradition, his orientation within the Roman Catholic Church gave him little room to consider the Mennonite and Reformed emphasis.

It might be interesting to speculate whether Menno would have changed or reformulated some of his arguments if he could have read Donk’s rebuttal of his position. As it was Donk’s first writing against him was the only one which Menno could have read. The others appeared after the latter’s death. Donk was not impressed with Menno’s approach and accused him of owing much of his knowledge to Sebastian Franck.37 Certainly Donk could not have been happy with Franck’s strong invectives against the Roman Catholic Church.38 When Franck compared the church of his day with the heathen of earlier times, he saw many parallels—in fact, on occasion he deemed it better to give heathendom a higher rating than the Medieval Church.39 It must have been painful for Donk to read in the third part of Franck’s work of secten in the Roman Church, of “practices of the Roman Church against those of the first Church,” or of the “arrival of idolatry”—kissing the Pope’s feet, etc.40 What must all Catholics have thought when they read Franck’s preface to his Päpstliche Chronik:

Nun wollen wir mit Gott an die geistlich doppelwelt hin, an den Teufel, der im mittag schlecht, an die seuche und pfeil, die des tags fliegen und verderben, ja an den verlornen hauffen, der sich rein und sauber dunckt und doch nit von seinem unflatt gewaschen ist, darunter die Christen einge-mengt umfaren wie etlich koerner unter einem hauffen spreuer, wie Loth in Sodoma. . . .41

Menno certainly knew Roman Catholicism at firsthand, but it was true that he used illustrations or historical references from Franck’s work to enhance some of his own descriptions. Undoubtedly, it was also the marked aversion to this degenerated curia which determined to some extent the strong emphasis on a life of moral uprightness in Menno’s approach. This calls for a brief consideration of his concept of the church.

As Menno reflected on his past life, he had to lament every day which he had spent in the Catholic Church. The Scriptures had opened his eyes to the deep-seated evils which had wormed their way into its very foundation and from the remarks which he inserts here and there in his writings, he realized how low was the moral life of those who were designated as the spiritual guardians of God’s people. But that his eyes were opened to the message of the Scriptures meant more than just seeing the evils which were so prevalent. It meant also that there was a comforting element, for the Scriptures indicated directives so that the situation could be changed. The example of the early church presented a picture of a true Christian church.

While Menno sees the church of Christ having its beginning before the time of the Lord’s earthly sojourn, he recognized that the promises have now been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and therefore all teachings of the Old and New Testaments must be understood according to the sense and intention of Christ and His apostles, all the more because God the Father has placed only this one as the foundation-stone of Zion.42 This means further that church and daily walk (gemeente en leven) must be according to the Scriptures.43 Attention has been directed earlier to the central place, the guide and the norm, which Jesus’ words receive in Menno’s total religious outlook. It speaks to the matter of the nature of the church—composed of those who have been born again through faith in Christ and whose desire it now is to walk according to the Lord’s spirit, word and example.44 The teachings of this fellowship are derived from the Gospel of Christ—obedience to the Word of God, unfeigned brotherly love, a ready testimony for Christ, the scriptural use of the Lord’s Supper and the willingness to suffer for Christ, a suffering that will inevitably come.45 While Menno can still draw for illustrations from history and from the Fathers, these can no longer be determinative for faith in any sense of the word. Now tradition definitely takes a lesser place, and the example of the apostolic church is the guide for belief and action.

**The New Birth and Baptism**

In the practical application of this concept, there are a number of radical departures from that of the Catholic Church. To begin with Menno insists on the new birth—the conversion of sinful man who stands condemned before God—to make for a relationship of acceptance with God. Taking John 3:3,5 seriously he believes that none can enter the Kingdom of God except he be born again. This is central in the proclamation of the Gospel, and this demands a personal response. It is for that reason that Menno cannot accept the idea that baptism conveys the new birth.46 When the Word has been preached and the Word has engendered faith, then the new birth has become a reality, and hereupon baptism may follow. Baptism, as seen earlier, is the sign of obedience, commanded by Christ, by which the believer testifies that he believes the Word of the Lord, that he repents of his former life and conduct, that he desires to rise with Christ to a new life, and that he believes in the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ.

Membership within the fellowship is thus not inevitable.
as it is in the churches where infant baptism is practiced, but it depends upon a personal decision. Membership is voluntary, but for the believer it is not optional. The one who casts in his lot with Christ accepts His commands and His practices for his own life. But there is more. Each one who joins this fellowship is now duty-bound to live up to its standards—standards which are set by Christ Himself. It is not a matter of all having been done when the initial step of entrance has been taken. To fail to live according to the Spirit, Word and precepts of the Master is to incur the censure of the brotherhood, a brotherhood whose duty it is to admonish, reprimand, and if necessary excommunicate those who do not evidence the fruits of their relationship with Christ.

It was at this point that the Catholic Church was so severely criticized. Donk saw Menno’s point only too well, and in some of his writings he endeavored to speak for the ‘fruits’ of the Roman Church. Already in the one on the Eucharist he spoke to the accusation which had been made that the Roman Church had fallen. More specifically he wrote *Die Vrachten der ecclesie Christi* . . . in which he sought to depict how Catholic Christianity was spreading throughout the world. Mention is made of the work of the different Orders: Jesuits, Franciscans, etc., and citations are given from missionaries and converted Christians about the *wonderlike wonderbewyden* done through God’s grace. Following this came his work *Van die wurachtige ghemeynte Christi* . . . an apology for the Roman Catholic Church. Donk stated that here he was not so much concerned to refute the opponents, as to set forth clearly the essence of the church. If people had this knowledge, they would not be tempted to turn to the teachings of others. Donk contends that true faith is to be found only in the true church, the church visible in the Roman Catholic structure. He argues for excommunication, for the fact that the church alone may interpret the Scriptures, the heretics are to be dealt with by civil powers and that justifiably so, and that the teaching office of the church is infallible. To the problem of immortality and the charges brought against the Catholic Church because of this, he devotes an entire section dealing with the holiness of the church, and how one must understand this word.

According to Ruetten, Donk’s use of the Scripture (extensive because his opponents would not accept any other authority—not even the Church Fathers) was not always commendable. Thus, e.g., the passage “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” is seen as a justification for the sacrificial character of the Eucharist. Ruetten cannot censure Donk for this, however, because the current practice of the opponents was so very similar. Like Menno, Donk often did little more than present “proof-texts” and his discussions are most tedious to read.

It becomes evident that Donk and Menno were far apart in their religious positions. For Menno to question not only a number of the tenets of the Catholic Church, but to call into question its very structure, was an action which could not be tolerated. Donk often refers to the *Neuerer*, a term which includes Mennonites, Lutherans and/or Reformed, depending on the opponents to which he was directing himself at the moment. All alike are dangerous to the Roman Catholic position and thus guilty of heresy. There were here positions irreconcilable with the ‘true faith’ of the Catholic Church.

Menno’s evaluation of the Roman Catholic position was just as critical, and he concluded of the church from which the grace of God had rescued him that its teachings were diametrically opposed to the Scriptures. Furthermore, since the Catholics in effect negated the atonement of Christ with their celebration of the Mass and infant baptism, the indictment against them was most severe. Both on the matter of authority and on the matter of soteriology, Roman Catholicism stood condemned. While there were minor issues which necessarily became problems also, basically these two constituted the points of difference; that the character of the church was then also seen as vastly different by the Catholics on the one hand and Menno on the other is readily apparent.

**Footnotes**

12. A search in the major libraries of America and several in Europe has failed to locate a copy of this work. There also appears to be no secondary source which treats with Bunderius in any extended way. *Vide, The Catholic Encyclopedia*, III, p. 59.
13. The original sources for Donk were also not available to this writer, hence secondary sources have been used.
15. On the basis of this work a certain Alphonsus a Castro said that though many have written against the Anabaptists, none had written as comprehensively and in so scholarly a manner as Martin Donk, Ruetten, *op. cit.*, p. 9. De Hoop Sheffer said something similar—it was one of the sharpest polemics written against Menno by a Catholic, *Vos, op. cit.*, p. 304.
25. These were, *Vanz rechte evangelische Aarontmael. (Antwerp, 1568); Corte constutatie ende onderleginge van een fijnieich Boeck . . . (n.p., 1578); Van het nieuwe sacrificium des Christendoms . . . (Antwerp, 1580).*
26. *Vanz het nieuwe sacrificium, chp. 1, 2; Ruetten, op. cit.*, p. 85.
27. *Vanz het nieuwe sacrificium, chp. 6-18.*
30. *Opera*, Fol. 29b ff.
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