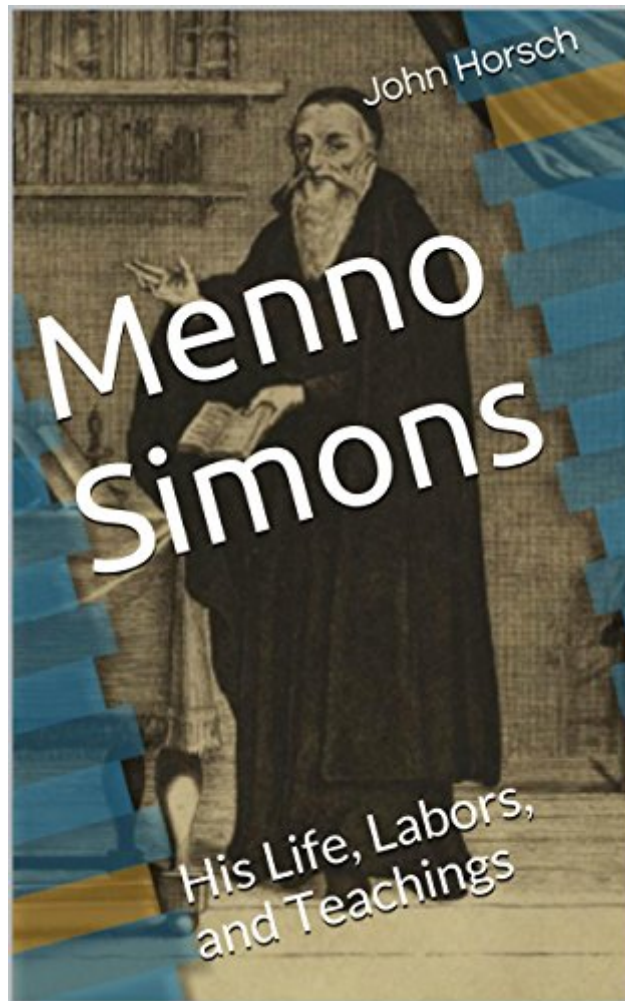


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Menno Simons: His Life, Labors, And Teachings



Synopsis

Menno Simons is perhaps the most well known of the early Anabaptists. His life was contemporaneous with John Calvin's. Simons was a converted priest. Educated and fiery, he defended the Anabaptist movement against all detractors. What comes as a surprise to some is that Menno Simons, being an Anabaptist, was extremely well-versed in Scripture. His writings abound with quotations. His life was not without controversy either. This book, written from the perspective of an Anabaptist sheds much light on this somewhat enigmatic character, and reveals to us not only his strengths but also his flaws. Showing us the humanity of a great man of God. Here's a contemporary review of the book: Alive to the singular neglect with which Menno Simons has been treated by biographers and translators, the writer has undertaken to tell the story of the reformer's life, and to elucidate the principles which he maintained, in a style educative and attractive to the young people of America. His purpose does not seem to have been to minister in any way to scholars, but rather to give a popular presentation that may be of service to the more thoughtful young people. The author is to be commended for the dispassion with which he sets forth events and issues which have been storm centers of controversy. As much may be said for the dignified manner in which he represses all hero-worship. In the space of two brief pages he interprets the significance of Simons. He was not the founder of a church, but the most noteworthy religious leader of the Netherlands in the Reformation period. His writings are an indispensable source of information concerning the principles, aims, and life of one of the strongest religious parties of Reformation times. While in the affairs of the world he was by no means so prominent as the Reformers who represented the state-church Reformation, he was as an advocate of pure evangelical principles more than the equal of these men. The principle that the Scriptures are the only foundation for the doctrine and practices of the church he upheld more steadfastly than the leading Reformers. He understood the great missionary commission of the Lord to be valid for all time. He insisted on strict church discipline. In contrast to Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, he advocated the voluntary principle, rejecting the thought of a national church. The foregoing represents the author's interpretation of Menno's significance. Chapters that deviate somewhat from the course of biography are "The Anabaptists" (iii), "Menno Simons' Relation to the State Church Reformation" (ix), "Menno's Attitude to Rationalism" (x), "Menno on Church Discipline" (xi), "Simons' Attitude toward the Munsterites" (xiii), and "The Battenburgers and the Davidites" (xiv). About one-third of the volume is devoted to excerpts from Menno's teachings. The selection has been made so wisely that the student possesses in this brief compass a representative body of Menno's principles. One section catalogues Menno's writings. An exhaustive bibliography is attached. The documentation is

thorough. One could wish that such a fine-spirited, well-balanced, and informing biography had found expression in style a little more polished and animated. P. G. M. T

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