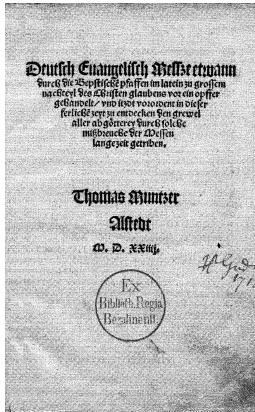


A GERMAN EVANGELICAL MASS



This work was prepared during 1523 and 1524 and was finally published sometime in August of 1524. Printing may have been undertaken by Nikolaus Widemar – but that remains uncertain – but at all events it took place in Allstedt. The cost of printing seems to have been partly subsidised by Allstedt town-council. It shows some signs of being a rushed job – there is a lack of any decorative woodcuts, such as those included at the start of each ‘office’ for the earlier ‘German Church Office’ (although placeholders for these decorations are visible); and page-breaks between each office are sometimes omitted. There are just over three pages of introductory text – the text provided below – and 82 pages for the words and music.

A German Evangelical Mass,
until now Conducted by the Papist Priests in Latin as a Sacrifice,
to the Great Disadvantage of the Christian Faith,
and now Reformed in these Dangerous Times
in Order to Lay Bare all the Abominable Idolatry
Caused by these Long-standing Abuses of the Mass.

Thomas Muntzer

Allstedt

1524

I, Thomas Muntzer, a servant of God, wish all the elect friends of God grace and peace in the pure and honest fear of God. Recently, several church offices and hymns in German were issued at my urging; these had for a long time been conducted in Latin by the Papist priests and monks, to the disadvantage of the Christian faith. Several learned men have been greatly annoyed at me, from hateful envy, and have busied themselves in trying to prevent these reforms; indeed, they have even decided – and accused me - that I was trying to revive and justify the old Papist ceremonies, Masses, Matins and Vespers – which was in my opinion never the case. For my intention was rather to save the poor, miserable, blind consciences of men for a short period, with those things which had once been sung and read in

Latin by deceitful false priests, monks and nuns in churches and cloisters. Among the poor mass of lay-people, this led to the collapse of the faith and the gospel and the word of God, and prevented the clear bright teaching of the holy apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 14. Therefore it is still my firm intention today to assist poor, downtrodden Christianity with German offices, be they Masses, Matins or Vespers, so that any good-hearted man can see, hear and understand how the desperate Papist evil-doers have stolen the holy scriptures from poor Christianity, to its great injury, and have prevented true understanding. And at the same time these priests have been wickedly gobbling up the possessions of the poor people, as Christ said of them in Matthew 25 and St Paul in 2 Timothy 3, aye, even the holy apostle Peter talks of their dishonest behaviour in 2 Peter 2, as do all the dear prophets. But because the poor common man has now built his faith upon mere mummery, aye, on idolatrous ceremonies in the churches with singing and reading and all the Papist necromancy, it is only right and proper that – as even the evangelical preachers themselves admit – the weak should be spared, 1 Corinthians 3. There is no better or more appropriate way of showing consideration than by having these same hymns in German, so that the poor, weak minds are not overcome by dizziness or cloyed with any easy-going new-fangled ditties. On the contrary, we will translate the Latin into German, with psalms and songs carrying the word of God and a true understanding of the Bible, together with the opinion of the good fathers of the Church who established these liturgies to build up the faith in its very beginnings. Aye, and such songs and psalms will wrest the mask from the face of the church, and lead the people to the word of God as it is contained in the Bible, and not leave them as coarse and slow-witted as a butcher's block.

No one should be annoyed that I have only issued five offices. It is my hope that people will shorten or lengthen these as occasion demands. The same with the hymns, whether it is the *in terra* [*Gloria*] or the *patrem* [*Our Father*], which sometimes grow tiresome because they drone on – people can adopt these or leave them out, as required; I do not intend to bolster up or resurrect the Papist outrages. Anyone can add or remove the things which are instituted by men; but not the things laid down and commanded by God; so here, anyone can do what they like with the hymns and the music. Similarly, they can use an office for any of the feasts as long as they like,

for example from Whitsun until Advent, from Advent until Christmas, from Christmas until the Purification of Mary [*February*], from the Purification of Mary until the Passion or Easter, from Easter until Whitsun – for as long as people see fit. The only requirement is that the psalms should be sung and read out clearly to the poor lay-folk; for that is where the working of the holy spirit is to be found, and how one should behave towards God and how one arrives at the beginning of the true Christian faith. Indeed, also how the faith should be maintained in the face of many temptations – all of that is quite clearly explained by the holy spirit in the psalms. That is why St Paul taught us to discipline ourselves and find gladness in spiritual songs of praise and psalms, Ephesians 5. But that means that the tender priests are obliged to start bothering their heads for the good of the poor people, or else they should abandon their priestly duties. Or are they supposed to laze about all week like Junkers and only on Sundays give a sermon? No, certainly not ! But I know full well that they will turn up their noses and scoff at this idea. Nevertheless, it is true. They should not be allowed to find any excuse. Poor, coarse Christianity cannot immediately be set on its feet again, if we cannot use German hymns to root out hypocrisy from the rude, uncomprehending people. People can say what they like. Therefore the common man should not turn to those lazy rascals, the priests, who want to protect their delicate nature and suggest that they should only offer milk at first. Aye, dragon's milk is what they give. They fear the flesh and yet claim to be preachers of the faith and of the gospel. So when will their faith be tested like gold in the fire, 1 Peter 1 ? A priest should be ready to follow Christ, teaches St Paul, just as he himself followed him, 1 Corinthians 11. Aye, he should pay no heed to the raging of the tyrants, but rather administer the testimony of Christ openly, and sing and explain in German, so that men will become formed like Christ, Romans 8. And only then will all the greed and the usury and the deceitful trickery of the priests, monks and nuns - who behind their good appearance obstruct the faith - collapse and then be uprooted. God help us all in this task.

Amen.

*(Translated by Andy Drummond,
November 2015)*