

**Letter written to the Town Council of Sangerhausen,
Allstedt, 15 July 1524**

In July 1524, Duke Georg of Saxony instructed the town-council of Sangerhausen to take action against the growing band of followers of Müntzer, led by the preacher Tilo Banse. Sangerhausen lies about 12 kms north of Allstedt. Refugees soon started arriving in Allstedt from Sangerhausen, prompting Müntzer to direct several letters; this one is addressed to the town-council of Sangerhausen

The true pure fear of God, and the peace which is an enemy of the world, be with you, dear gentlemen.

Jesus Christ, the son of God, said quite unequivocally: whosoever shall be ashamed of my word before men, of him will I myself be ashamed before God my father and his angels, Luke 9. I will keep this in mind, and will accept whatever may happen to me and to all the servants of the true word, aye, all that may befall a righteous servant of God. Since all members of a group must give protection and assistance to a fellow, and not desert him when trouble strikes, then I must say to you on my honour: if you do any harm to Master Tilo Banse ¹, then I will write against you, and sing and read aloud, and do to you the worst things which I can think of, just as David did to his godless persecutors. Psalms 17 [18]. ² I have said that I will pursue my enemies, that I will catch hold of them, I will not cease until they have paid in sin and in shame. They will fall beneath my feet, be they ever so mighty bigwigs. Is it not enough that I have had to listen to you through this entire year, how you slanderously called my teaching heretical and forbade the people from coming to hear me and have put them in prison? And now I have to stand and watch while you slander and defame your own preachers. You dig out some stupidity and use it as a smoke-screen ³ so that no one might see that you are worshippers of Man. I know that there is no one in this

¹ Tilo Banse, one-time Augustinian monk, was a reformed preacher active in the Allstedt area (Niederröbblingen) who took refuge in the town of Sangerhausen – not far from Allstedt – after a minor uprising in Quedlinburg. He was also a member of the Allstedt ‘League’. He is reported to have been killed at some later date, having been set astride an ass and pelted with stones and dung.

² In the original text, the numbering of Psalms follows the Vulgate version of the Bible; in modern times, we are more used to the Hebrew-Masoretic numbering version. As a general rule, from Psalm 9 and 10 onwards, the numeration is one different: where Müntzer cites Psalm 17, for example, we should consult Psalm 18; where he cites 18, we should check 19; and so on. Müntzer’s original numbering has been retained in this translation.

³ ‘*Grubet und nemet ewren tulpel czum schandedecker*’ – literally: ‘you dig and take your stupidity as a fig-leaf’. The ‘stupidity’ most probably relates to the edicts of Duke Georg and Emperor Charles V, in respect of maintaining the religious status quo.

country more idolatrous than you. Leave off your raging, recognise what you are doing, or else nothing good will come of it for you. Just bear that in mind. Take my friendly warning to heart – I will not do you any more favours than this. Do you really wish to forbid God's word and yet remain Christians? Aye, that's a fine trick ! I tell you with hand on heart: if you do not improve yourselves, then I will no longer hold back those people who wish to make trouble for you. You must choose one of two things: either accept the gospel; or admit that you are heathens. The choice is cast in iron. I will complain to the whole world that you are like the bluebottle which fouls the ointment of the holy spirit, Ecclesiastes 10. Exert yourselves in favour of the holy spirit, not against it, amen. May it lighten your darkness.

Written from Allstedt in the year of Christ 1524, on the day of the Dispersion of the Holy Apostles of God.

Thomas Müntzer, a servant of God.

*(Translated by Andy Drummond,
March 2016)*

Original German text available at pages 281-285 of:
Thomas Müntzer: Briefwechsel,
edited by S. Bräuer and M. Kobuch, Leipzig 2010