

Letter written to Count Ernst of Mansfeld,

Allstedt,

22 September 1523

To the noble and well-born Count, Lord Ernst of Mansfeld and Heldrungen, written in a Christian Spirit.

Greetings, noble, well-born Count. The castellan and Council of Allstedt have shown me your letter, according to which I am supposed to have called you 'a heretical scoundrel' and 'a curse upon the people'. This is quite true, for I am well aware – yes, it is common knowledge - that you have strictly forbidden your people with a public edict from attending my heretical Mass or sermon. To this I have said - and I will denounce you before all Christian people - that you have had the insolence to ban the Holy Gospel, and if (God forbid) you persist in such raging and insane bans, then from today onwards, for as long as my blood still pulses, I will name you on paper a damned and ignorant man - and not only before all Christendom, but I will also have my books translated into many tongues and scold you before the Turks, the Heathens and the Jews. And you should know that I do not fear you or anyone in the whole world in these great and just matters, for Christ cries murder at those who remove the key to the knowledge of God, Luke 11. For the key to the knowledge of God is this, that one should govern the people that they learn to fear God alone, Romans 13, for the beginning of true Christian wisdom is the Fear of the Lord. Now, you want to be feared more than God, as I will show in your deeds and your edict, then you are he who takes away the key to the knowledge of God and forbids the people from going to church and can achieve nothing better than that. I will prove that my new Church Service and my sermons, yes, even the very slightest thing that I say or sing, agrees with the Holy Bible. And if I do not succeed in that, then I am prepared to lose my life and limb and all that is precious in this world. And if you can only succeed in your obstruction by the use of force, then for God's sake you must desist. But if you hope to do something like that, as is rumoured, then you must consider that it will cause no end of discord. The prophet says 'There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord.' I am as much a Servant of God as you are, so take care, for the whole world must be treated with patience.

Do not pull, or the old coat will rip the way you don't want. If you force me into print, then I will deal with you a thousand times worse than Luther did with the Pope. If you act as my benevolent lord, then be ready to suffer and to bear witness; but if not, then I will let God be your judge.

Written at Allstedt, on St Maurice's Day in the year 1523.

Thomas Müntzer, a Destroyer of the Faithless.

*(Translated by Andy Drummond,
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