

**Letter written to Friedrich ‘the Wise’,
written from Allstedt, 3 August 1524**

This letter was written just after Müntzer had returned from an interrogation at Weimar, and shortly before his departure from Allstedt. He urges the prince to defend the gospel and to permit Müntzer to continue his activity. It did no good.

To the assiduous father, Lord Friedrich, Electoral Prince of the dear land of Saxony.

Instead of my greeting, I give you the pure and righteous fear of God, and the invincible spirit of divine wisdom. Necessity now urgently demands that we prepare for and face up to every type of unbelief which has until now covered itself with the clothes of the Christian church, now presenting itself in the deceitful appearance of fleshly and fraudulent benevolence; it is therefore commanded by God that I should stand as a firm wall to protect poor decaying Christianity, as Ezekiel says, not merely to punish it, as some maintain, but also to pull it out completely by the roots, just as God has done before in various places when it was fitting. But now Satan is driving the godless scholars to their downfall, just like the monks and priests before them; their rascality peeps forth when they turn the holy spirit of Christ into the most despised buffoon, condemning the spirit as a devil when it appears in many of the elect, as that lying man Luther now does in his shameful letter about me to the dukes of Saxony¹; he barges in so terribly and hatefully like some mighty tyrant, without any brotherly warning at all. So I ask you, for the sake of God, to consider seriously what kind of farce would arise if I were to respond to his slanderous drivel. I do not intend to do that : but it will be difficult to leave it without reply, because of the offence it has caused many pious people who have heard my teaching in other places and towns.

Therefore I entreat you loyally that your assiduous benevolence should not prevent or forbid me from preaching and writing to further the piety of poor Christianity. This would avoid any further danger that Christians might turn against the aforementioned Luther, which would later be difficult to settle in an amicable way.

¹ This is Martin Luther's *Letter to the Princes of Saxony Concerning the Rebellious Spirit*, which appeared in June 1524.

Finally, this is my earnest opinion: I preach such a Christian belief as does not agree with that of Luther's, but which is present in all the hearts of the elect, the same across the whole world, Psalm 67 [68].² And even if someone was born a Turk, still he will have the beginning of this same belief, which is the movement of the holy spirit, as was written in Acts 10 about Cornelius. And so if I am to be heard before Christians, then a summons must be sent out, an announcement and invitation to all the nations of mankind, all those who, for their faith, have ever suffered unassailable temptations, who have found despair in their hearts and by that are constantly meditating on it. I would accept such people as my judges. In this way I wish to avoid being questioned in a corner somewhere, as the scholars urge me to do. Christ did not want to incriminate himself before Annas, but said: "Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard my teaching." Thus he referred the godless ruler to the people. But am I now supposed to cast pearls before swine, those people who openly mock and slander the holy spirit? As Christ himself said, they are born of the devil. How am I then to trust them in some hidden corner? How could I let them use my own patience to act as a cover to their own shame? It would be exactly as they now say: Christians should suffer, and allow themselves to be martyred and not defend themselves. But that would be such a great boon to the tyrants, allowing them to carry out their shameful deeds under such a cover.

I made a promise to your brother, the dear lord Duke Johann, that I would present my books to him before printing³; but I will not permit only the poisonous and pompous judgement of the scholars to be considered, but also require the views of those who have come to a contrite heart through the beginning of faith. So if you wish to be my gracious lord and prince, then I will spread my aforesaid Christian faith in the bright light of day to the whole world, both orally and in writing, and I will expound it with complete honesty. But if such an offer does not meet with your benevolent wish, then you must reflect that the common people will feel dread and hopelessness towards you and others like you. For the people have a great expectation in you, and God has given you, before all other lords and princes, a great deal of understanding. But if you misuse this respect, then it will be said of you: see, there goes the man who did not want God as his shield, but relied instead on

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 67, for example, we should consult Psalm 68; and so on. Müntzer's original numbering has been retained in this translation.

³ This was done just a couple of days previously, in Weimar.

worldly ostentation. That is why I sent to your brother, through our castellan here ⁴, my written explanation of the Gospel of Luke ⁵, which explains how to deal with any future insurrection in a godly manner. It is my hope that you will be guided by it, for the world still holds you in high esteem; but if not, the words of Joshua 11 will be fulfilled, which speak of the man who despises the advice of the needy, whose comfort is God himself. May God preserve you and your household, according to his most loving will.

Written from Allstedt on the day of the Finding of St Stephen's Relics, in the year of our Lord 1524.

Thomas Müntzer, a sincere servant of God.

*(Translated by Andy Drummond,
February 2016)*

Original German text available at pages 330-335 of:
Thomas Müntzer: Briefwechsel,
edited by S. Bräuer and M. Kobuch, Leipzig 2010

⁴ That is, Hans Zeiss.

⁵ This document was shortly afterwards expanded to become Müntzer's pamphlet *The Explicit Exposure of the False Faith* (Aussgetrückte emplössung des falschen Glaubens). It was sent to Zeiss so that it could subsequently be assessed by Duke Johann's censors.