



'A Broadsheet from Prague' ¹

25 November 1521

I, Thomas Müntzer, born in Stolberg and resident in Prague, the town of the dear and saintly fighter Jan Hus, propose to fill the resounding and moving trumpets with the new praise of the Holy Spirit. With my whole heart I bear witness, complaining bitterly to all the churches of the Elect, and to the whole world, wherever these words may reach. Christ and all the Elect, who have known me from my youth, strengthen such a resolve. I give my uttermost pledge that I have made the most considerable and utmost efforts to reach a higher understanding than other men of how the holy, invincible Christian faith was founded. I make so bold as to declare truthfully that no absolved priest and no monk appearing to have the Spirit has ever been able to show the basis of faith in even the smallest point. And very many people have complained to me that, because they suffer under intolerable and real burdens and deceits, they have never once been comforted or been certain that all their desires and works have been guided by faith, but rather that they had to work things out for themselves. Neither have they been able to discover the healing trials or the profitable abyss which empty the predestined spirit, nor is it likely that they will ever do so. For they have not been possessed by the spirit of the fear of God, which is the only solid ground and goal of the Elect, who will be soaked and drowned by such a flood as the world cannot endure. In short, every man must be possessed of the Holy Spirit seven times over, for otherwise he will neither hear nor understand the living God.

¹ Since it was never printed, this work has no title in the original. The common descriptor is (in German) *Prager Manifest* – The Prague Manifesto. As such it is translated by Peter Matheson (The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer, Edinburgh 1988). However, considerable debate surrounds the actual intended audience of the work, and hence its 'proper' title.

The work exists in four handwritten forms – the first, dated 1 November, is a fairly short version in German; the second, dated 25 November, is a much-extended German version. The third is in Czech, and the fourth in Latin, both free translations of the longer German version. The shorter German version was written on a large piece of paper, measuring about 42cm by 33cm. This present translation is of the longer German version.

I state freely and briskly that I have not heard one donkey-farting doctor whisper the least fraction or trace of the order of God and all creatures, let alone proclaim it out loud. Even the most illustrious Christians (by which I mean the priests who are firmly rooted in Hell) have never once had an inkling of the whole and undivided perfection of it all, for what is distributed in equal portions is greater than the whole, 1 Corinthians 13, Luke 6, Ephesians 4, Acts 2, 15 and 17. Ever and again have I heard them spouting mere Scripture which they have stolen archly from the Bible like spiteful thieves and horrible murderers. They will be cursed by God himself for this thievery, as he says in Jeremiah 23: Behold, I am against the prophets that steal my words every one from his neighbour, for they deceive my people; I never spoke unto them, but they usurp my words and make them taste rotten on their stinking lips and in their whoring throats. For they deny that my spirit speaks with people. They stab with mocking spiteful words. For they say that the Holy Spirit gives them an invincible testimony, that they are the children of God, Romans 8, Psalm 132. Is it at all surprising that these damned men are so openly and insolently opposed, for Jeremiah says like them in the above-mentioned chapter: 'For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? Who hath marked his word and heard it?' In this time of ours, God will pour his insurmountable anger over such proud, wooden men, who are impervious to all good, Titus 1:7, for they deny the basic healing of faith, even though they ought to be the ones who march forwards as an iron wall to defend the Elect from the attacks of the blasphemers, as Ezekiel says in the third chapter etc. But so it is with them, for there is nothing in their hearts, minds and mouths than mockery of such things. Is there any man who could say that these people are the true servants of God, to bear witness to God's word? Or that they are the steadfast preachers of divine grace, when they are anointed by the Papal Nimrod with the oil of sinfulness, Psalm 141, which seeps down from the head to the feet, polluting and poisoning all the Christian churches. That is as much as to say that they have their origins in the Devil, who has in every way corrupted their hearts, as is written in the fifth Psalm, for they are vain and are not possessed by the Holy Spirit. That is why they are consecrated by their own father, the Devil who, like them, refuses to hear the true living word of God, John, Isaiah 24, and Hosea 4. And Zachariah, too, in his eleventh chapter, says they are like scarecrows among the peas.

So, to sum up: they are condemned men, John 3, damned long ago. Yes, they are not insignificant, they are greatly damned villains who have existed in all the world since the

beginning, here to plague the poor people who are thus so unenlightened. They have no claim either before God or before men, as Paul says quite clearly in Galatians, where he described two kinds of men. Therefore, as long as Heaven and Earth remain standing, these self-same villainous, treacherous priests can be of no use whatsoever to the churches, for they deny the voice of the bridegroom, which is the sure and certain sign that they are simply devils. How can they be servants of God, bearers of his words which they themselves unashamedly deny with their whore-mongering countenances? For all true priests need to have revelations, in order that they can be sure of their message, 1 Corinthians 14. But because they speak with hardened hearts, this is impossible. So – since they imagine that they have gobbled up all of the Bible – they should now be struck down, as if by thunder and lightning, as witnessed by St Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 3, where he distinguishes between the Elect and the Damned. For some, the gospel and the holy scripture is just a closed book, Isaiah 29, and 22 concerning the key of David and the closed book, Revelations 5. Ezekiel ate up a rolled-up book. Christ says, in Luke 11, that the priests have stolen the key to this book which is locked, they close up the scripture and say that God does not speak in person to men. Where the seed falls on good ground, that is in the heart which is full of the fear of God, that is then the paper and parchment upon which God writes the real spiritual word, not with ink, but with His living finger, and this is what bears witness to the corporeal books of the Bible.

And there is no more certain testimony which proves the Bible than God's living word, which the Father speaks to the Son in the hearts of men. All the Elect can read this word if they seek to profit from their talents. But the damned will fail in this, for their hearts are harder than a flint from which the chisel of the master rebounds, in all eternity. That is why they are called stones by our dear Lord, on which the seed falls but brings forth no fruit, however much they welcome the dead word with joy, great joy and praise. There are, upon my soul, people other than students and priests and monks who take their truth from books, with heartfelt flattery and pomp. But if God wants to write upon their hearts, there is no people under the sun more inimical to the living word of God than these. And they will suffer no trials of faith in the spirit of the fear of God, for they are chased into the lake where the false prophets will be tortured by the Antichrist for ever and ever, amen. Neither do they wish to be frightened by the spirit of the fear of God. That is why they always mock the trials of faith, for these are the people of whom Jeremiah spoke in the 8th chapter: for

they have no experience of their own to call on to explain the holy scripture. They have no other way of writing than that of the hypocrite who throws away the true words, even although they use those same words which they will never truly understand in all eternity. For God only speaks through the willingness of creatures to suffer, which is what the faithless lack. And so they become ever more obdurate. For they neither can nor want to become emptied, for they have slippery ground under their feet and they shudder at the touch of their Owner. That is why they will fall away in the time of trials, they will shrink away from the word which is become flesh. The faithless man will in no way become one with Christ in his suffering, he only wants to achieve that with honey-sweet thoughts. Therefore such damned priests who take away the key and say that such a way to salvation is fantastical, mere tomfoolery, and announce that it is all completely impossible - these same men are now condemned to eternal damnation, hair and skin and all, so why should I not damn them also, John 3? They are not sprinkled with the spirit of the fear of God on the third day, so how then can they be purified on the seventh, Numbers 19? For they will be cast down into the abyss of the pit.

But I have no doubts in the common people. Oh, you poor, pitiable little band, how you thirst after the word of God ! For it is quite clear that no one or almost no one knows where they stand or what group they should join. They really want to do the very best and yet they have no knowledge. For they know not how to behave or how to submit to the testimony which the Holy Spirit speaks in their hearts. And so they are frightened by the spirit of the fear of God to such a degree that in them is truly come to pass what was prophesied by Jeremiah: "The young children ask for bread and no man breaketh it unto them". Oh, oh, no man broke it ! There were plenty of money-grabbing knaves who threw before the poor, poor, poor people the papish, unexperienced texts of the Bible, just as one tosses bread to the dogs. But they did not break it for them in the knowledge of the Holy Spirit, that is, they did not open their understanding so that they could recognise the Holy Spirit inside them. For all the priests put together in a room could not instruct a single person in the wisdom of how to prepare for the eternal life. What more is there to say? Those are the men who only eat like gluttons and drink like drunkards and enjoy themselves, who scheme day and night to feed themselves and make good livings, Ezekiel 34. They are not like Christ, our dear Lord, who compares himself to a hen which keeps her brood warm. And they give no milk to the hopeless abandoned people from the inexhaustible well of

God's guidance. For they have never been tested by faith. They are like the stork which fishes up frogs in meadows and swamps and then feeds them quite raw to its young ones in the nest. So also are the usurious and tithe-stealing priests, who swallow the dead words of the Scriptures and then disgorge the letter and the unexperienced faith (which is not worth one louse) over the truly poor, poor people. In this way, they ensure that no one is sure of his soul's salvation. For these very same Beelzebub-ish knaves bring only a single broken-off bit of the Bible to market.

Aye, a man does not know whether he is worthy of the hatred or the love of God. This same poison comes bubbling up from that abyss which is made by every whoring priest who bows to the all-deceitful and all-evil princes of the Devil, as is evidenced by the Revelations of John. They have so scattered the sheep of God, that none is seen in the churches any more. For there is no one there who can distinguish the good people from the reckless mob, who remain unknown. And there is no distinction between the sick and the healthy, that is, no one cares that the church has been corrupted root and branch by such damned men. For the sheep do not know that they should hear the living voice of God. That is, they should all have revelations, John 2 and David in the 88th Psalm. The office of the real shepherd is this, to lead all the sheep thither and to refresh them with the living voice, for knowledge of God is taught by a master, Matthew 23. That such a thing has not happened for a very long time has led to the Elect being very much like the damned in many things, or have indeed been swallowed up. So almost the whole world thought that it was not necessary for Christ himself to preach his own gospel to the Elect.

I affirm and swear by the living God: whoever does not hear the real living word of God from the mouth of God, and does not distinguish between Bible and Babel, he is nothing more than a dead thing. But God's word, which penetrates heart, brain, skin, hair, bone, marrow, juice, strength and power, must come to us differently, and not in the way our foolish, scrotal doctors babble about. No one can be saved in any other way, and no one can be found. The Elect must clash with the damned and his strength will drain away before him. There is no other way to hear what God is. For whoever once receives the Holy Spirit in the way that he should can never again be damned, Isaiah in the 54th chapter and the 60th, and John 6. Oh woe, woe unto the preachers who teach like Balaam, who speak the word in their snouts but whose hearts are more than one thousand times one thousand miles away. And so the people live without any true shepherds, for the experience of faith is never taught

to them. The Jewish and heretical priests might well say that such sharp tools are not at all necessary. They say that one can escape the wrath of God by carrying out good works or having expensive virtues. But they learn from all this nothing about how to experience God, or what the correct faith is, or what good works are after coming to God. It would no great marvel if God brought us all, Elect and damned together, to dust and ruin in body and soul with a far worse Deluge than before; and it would be no marvel if he were to condemn everyone who had yielded to the temptations of the damned. For our faith is more in the image of Lucifer and Satan; and it is coarser than wood and stone. I do not think it fortuitous that all other nations call our faith a burlesque, for it is undeniable that the faithless have charged us a fat fee. We have given them an answer from our hen-coop, proudly scribbled great books full of blots and scorings-out, saying: we have written this and that in our law, and Christ said this, Paul wrote that, the Prophet predicted such and such, such and such was decreed by the mother (in the brothel), the Holy Church, oh yes the Holy Nero, our utterly wooden Pope and night-pan in the Roman coal-shed has ordered such and such a great thing, and truly he has sent out an excommunication which, as our little straw doctors tell us, cannot be ignored for the sake of our conscience.

Good reader, just try to set out the words in some other way, but you will not succeed in proving the Christian faith with the dead words of the Bible, however much you chatter about it. Oh murder, murder, woe, woe, woe upon the hellish, Asmodean priests who openly seduce the people ! Even today no faithless man will see or understand, if such arguments are adduced for our faith. Do you think that they haven't got a brain in their heads? They may well think to themselves what kind of proof is this, from books, what if the people who wrote the books were lying? How are we to know whether it is true? Without the shadow of a doubt, the Turks and Jews would like to hear our incontestable arguments, and many of the Elect would as well. But the Devil's priest turn up their noses and are quick to condemn it, but do not have the right to, since they deny that any man has such a faith. They say, with mere words: 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.' They can only offer this firmly-established justification to their opponents, and nothing else. The only reason that I can think of is that they are so mad and foolish and senseless that they try to explain the faith so badly to the enemy. We should throw out such an explanation like a pile of old rags and hurl it into the abyss of Hell along with its supporters. For it is madder even than madness itself. Who can lament or deplore it enough? Do we

have no blood in our body or being that things are as mad and stupid as this? Can we not sense a tiny spark somewhere which will suddenly will flare up into a fire? Yes, we can feel it, and I feel it too. I have felt very bitterly that the Christian church has been so greatly crushed that God himself could not punish it worse if he wanted to snuff it out altogether – which he will not do except to the runny-shitters who have taught them to pray to Baal; they truly deserve to be sawn apart, as Daniel says, for they have not carried out the judgements of God.

I have read here and there in the old histories of the fathers of the church, and found that, after the death of the Apostles, the untainted virginal church soon became the whore of the debauching priests. For the priests have always wanted to sit up top, as Hegesippus and Eusebius and others testify. Because the people allowed the right to choose their own priests to be abandoned, from that point onwards it became impossible to summon a proper council. If someone did call for one, it ended up as the devil's work, for nothing else was dealt with in the council or in discussions than childish things like bell-ringing, chalices and cowls, lamps and locums and the holding of masses: on the subject of the true living word of God not once, not once, did anyone open their mouth nor even thought about the order of things. Such errors had to happen so that the works of all men, Elect and Damned together, could come to pass, until this our own time, when God will separate the tares from the wheat and when men shall see in the bright light of noon who has been seducing the church all this time. All villainry must urgently be brought to light. Oho ! how ripe are the rotten apples ! Oho ! how ripe are the Elect ! The time of the harvest is here ! For this, God has sent me to his harvest. I have made my sickle sharp, for my thoughts are eager for truth and my lips, skin, hands, hair, soul, body and life curse the faithless.

So that I can do this correctly, I have come into your country, my dearest Bohemians. I ask of you no more than that you should apply yourselves to the study of God's word from the very mouth of God, by which you will yourselves see, hear and understand how the whole world has been deceived by the deaf priests. Help me, for the sake of the blood of Christ, to fight against these arch-enemies of faith. For in your country the new apostolic Church will arise, and then everywhere else. I will be ready when people ask questions of me in the pulpit and I will give a satisfactory answer to each. If I cannot prove myself with such knowledgeable mastery then let me suffer a temporal and an eternal death. I can make no

greater pledge. Whoever despises this advice is already in the hands of the Turks. And then the raging heat of the true Antichrist will reign, he who is the real opponent of Christ; Christ will shortly give the kingdom of this world to his Elect for all eternity.

Written in Prague, on St Catherine's Day, *anno domini* 1521.

Thomas Müntzer wishes to pray to no dumb God but to a speaking God.

*(Translated by Andy Drummond,
April 2015)*