



**AN OPEN LETTER TO THE HONOURABLE AND
WISE MAYOR, COUNCIL AND WHOLE
COMMUNITY OF THE TOWN OF MÜHLHAUSEN**

Martin Luther

[21st] August 1524

To the honourable and wise Mayor, Council and whole community of the town of Mühlhausen, my dear sirs and good friends.

The mercy and peace of Jesus Christ our saviour be with you. Honourable, wise, dear sirs, after it has been reported that a man named Master Thomas Müntzer is intending to make his way to your town, several good friends have asked me to write this letter to advise you truly and warn you to safeguard yourselves from his teachings, which he claims to receive from the spirit of Christ. As my Christian loyalty and duty advise, I have of course undertaken this; I was even willing and inclined to come and visit you personally, since I was in your neighbourhood. But my printing affairs in Wittenberg did not leave me enough time or opportunity to do this. I therefore ask you to take care with this false spirit and prophet, who goes around in sheep's clothing but is underneath a ravening wolf. For in many places, especially in Zwickau and recently in Allstedt, he has proven what kind of tree he is, for he brings forth no other fruit than murder and rebellion, and calls for the shedding of blood, all of which he openly preached, wrote and sang in Allstedt. The holy spirit does not sing its own praises, but rather performs great deeds before being praised. But this spirit has now for three years been boasting about himself and exalting himself, and yet has not achieved one tiny thing up until now, nor borne any fruit, except that he wishes to murder, as you will be able to learn from Zwickau and Allstedt. And he sends out envoys who were not sent by God (for they cannot prove that) nor have been called by men, but come at his command and do not step in through the front door. And they act as Christ once said of these same people, John 10: "All who have come before me are thieves and murderers". On top of that, they are not willing to stand before anyone in the light of day and give answers,

unless it be to one of their own. Anyone who listens to them or follows them will be named the chosen son of God; whoever does not listen will be called godless and will be killed. It would take a long time to tell you just how mad their teachings are. But this will shortly be revealed. But if my advice does not sway you, then do what you need to do and delay a decision, until you learn what kind of children these are. For it has started and will not long remain in darkness. Truly, God knows that I am serious with you, and I really want to protect you from danger and damage, God willing, so I hope that you will give me a good hearing. For I can swear by Christ that my teaching and advice has never done or wished anyone any harm, unlike this spirit. Rather, I have been comforting and helpful to everyone; so you should not lightly reject my advice. But if you do reject it, and accept this prophet, and misfortune comes from it, then I am innocent of your injury, for I have warned you in a Christian and friendly manner. He should be brought before an honourable council and before the whole community (if that is possible) and asked who sent him to you or called upon him to preach, for certainly it was not the honourable town-council. If he then says that God and his spirit have sent him, like the Apostles, then tell him to prove that with signs and miracles, or else prevent him from preaching. For when God wishes to change things in an orderly manner, then he will always provide miracles. I have never preached, nor do I ever want to preach, where I am not called upon and invited by men. For I cannot boast that God has sent me directly from heaven, as they do boast, and run around as they do, uninvited and uncalled for (as Jeremiah writes). And so they can never do anything good.

May God give you his grace, so that his will may be truly recognised and carried out.

Written at Weimar, on the Sunday of the Assumption of Mary.

*(Translated by Andy Drummond,
October 2015)*