

## THOMAS MÜNTZER IN PRINT

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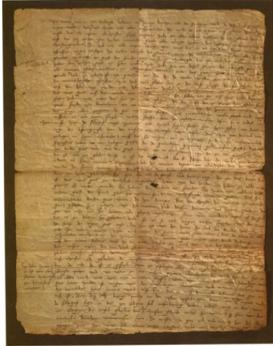
Thomas Müntzer has always been a controversial figure in German Reformation history, and the number of articles and studies dedicated to unravelling the mystery or setting up a graven image of him can be counted in many hundreds: up until the present day, there have been well over 3200 studies, half of which have appeared since 1965 <sup>(1)</sup>. The upsurge in interest since 1945 was due in no small way to the argument which raged between East and West Germany, on whether Müntzer was a revolutionary leader of the oppressed in the period of the 'Early Bourgeois Revolution' or whether he was a theologian whose fantastic ideas led to misguided actions during the 1525 peasant uprising. This argument in fact led to a division of labour, with the East concentrating on the historical aspects and the West on the theological aspects - which was by no means satisfactory, since Müntzer's activities cannot and must not be separated from his theological principles.

The interest in Müntzer is not only reflected in the number of studies, biographies and even fictional writings on him, but also in the number of editions of his individual or collected writings. In addition to the 3000 works on Müntzer so far identified, some 140 editions of his works have appeared. As Steinmetz has pointed out <sup>(2)</sup>, the waves of interest in Müntzer and the Peasant War have closely followed specific patterns of German history: between the defeat of the peasantry in 1525 and the repercussions of the 1789 French revolution, there was almost a total silence on the subject, except where some theological debate or local heresy demanded the recall of the bogeyman of the Lutheran church; the period leading up to 1848 produced a crop of works, followed again by silence until the unification of Germany after 1870, when there appeared a torrent of studies from the dozens of local history societies. A further boost was given around the 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Peasant War in 1975. Although the ratio of editions to studies on Müntzer has not always been stable, editions have followed much the same pattern. The history of these editions, particularly those which appeared during Müntzer's lifetime, is an interesting one, rewarding the student with some insight into his intentions and ideas.

In 1517, printing was still a relatively new trade, but one that was blooming: the number of printers in Europe in 1500 has been estimated at as many as 1120, producing editions of up to 40,000 different works <sup>(3)</sup> although this may be an over-estimation. The printers themselves were often men of liberal and even radical ideas, open to new ways of thought and new political trends, and these were men who seized upon the ideas of the religious reforms with earnest greed. It is no accident that the majority of printers in Germany openly or covertly sided with the reformers - Lutherans or their more radical colleagues - and that the number of Catholic pamphlets or diatribes trailed far behind, with, of course, regional variations. The leaflet (*Flugblatt*) was a propaganda device used to perfection mostly by the reformers. Some of the printers were themselves actively revolutionary: Johann Hergott of Nürnberg, for example, who had produced works by Müntzer and Karlstadt, as well as some by Luther and other reformers of Wittenberg, in 1527 printed his own Utopian invective 'On the New Change of a Christian Life' <sup>(4)</sup>, which violently criticised both the State and the Lutheran reformers: for his pains, he was promptly tried and executed by the Catholic Duke Georg of Saxony. After 1525, many of the more radical printers turned to the emergent 'Anabaptist' movement in opposition to the approved Lutheran Reformation. While those who printed, and often personally hawked, pro-Reformation works usually had to contend with some punitive or censorial measures from the Catholics, the position of those who dealt with the works of the radicals was doubly precarious, since the Lutherans were often only too happy to see such print-shops closed down. The fate of Müntzer's print-shop in Allstedt in 1524 was just one example of this double opposition.

In his attitude to the medium of printing, Müntzer was a man of his times, fully awake to the possibilities and the urgency of spreading his ideas on a national scale. One of his main purposes was the education of the people. As he wrote in 1521: "The children have asked for bread, but no one was there to break it to them.' Oh, oh, no one broke it to them." <sup>(5)</sup> And again in 1524: the academics "say: 'Christ says one should not throw pearls to pigs. What can the poor crude man make of such high and spiritual teachings? They should be reserved only for the scholars.'" <sup>(6)</sup> He firmly rejected any disputation with Luther in Wittenberg, stating: "My only reason for avoiding some hole and corner hearing is that our case demands this. Christ himself shunned the breed of adders, the biblical scholars... He

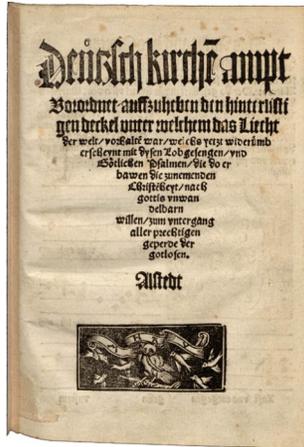
said quite clearly: 'Why ask me? Ask those who heard me.'<sup>(7)</sup> Throughout his career as a reformer, his first priority was education rather than disputation, and for this he needed to spread his works both orally in his parish and in print across Germany.



Müntzer's first major work, and one of his most famous, was not printed at all. This was the so-called 'Prague Manifesto' of 1521, also called the 'Protestation on the Bohemian Cause'<sup>(8)</sup> – neither printed, nor actually a 'manifesto'. The theology expounded in this remarkably vivid manuscript was the result of his theological development in Zwickau in 1520-21, his study of the mystics Tauler and Suso previous to that, his contacts with the Hussite-Taborite heresy of the mountains and valleys of the Erzgebirge, and his bitter feud with the Humanist-Lutheran preacher Egranus. His stay in Prague between July and December 1521 brought him directly into contact with official Hussitism and its radical offshoot Utraquism. He stayed with the Utraquist leader Burian Sobek for several weeks, and in July found himself in a procession in memory of Hus, which seems to have turned into a demonstration by the Utraquists; such activities soon made Müntzer a *persona non grata* in the eyes of law-abiding citizens; in November he was prompted to compose - if this had not already been done - and attempt to publish his 'Manifesto'. This work is extant in no fewer than four different versions: A - a short German version; B - a longer German version; C - a version in Czech; D - a version in Latin. For a long time it was accepted that at least one of these four - (A) which is handwritten on a large piece of paper - was posted up, like the Theses of Luther, in some prominent place in Prague, and that this led to his expulsion in late November or early December of 1521. But on the manuscripts available, there is no evidence of any pin-marks; nor is it likely that Müntzer would have spurned the use of the available technology of printing, preferring to revert to the tedious business of hand-copying; finally, the dating of the first version suggests that no hammers or nails were involved: A is dated 'All Saints Day' (1<sup>st</sup> November), which would have left a good three weeks for the municipal authorities to react to it - which they appear not to have done, which in turn left plenty of time for Müntzer to prepare the longer version. Version B was set out in pamphlet form over several pages. Versions C and D are free translations of B, with C breaking off about two-thirds of the way through.

The fact, however, remains: none of these four versions of Müntzer's first written declaration of his beliefs and principles was actually printed, quite possibly because the authorities expelled him from Prague before he had the opportunity to find a printer.

His first printed work, then, did not appear until May or June 1523. By then Müntzer had spent a year travelling in Saxony, being implicated in riot and disorder, and declared (March 1522) his independence from Wittenberg, before being installed as preacher in the



market-town of Allstedt in March 1523. This first work was one whose significance in Church history has perhaps not yet been fully appreciated <sup>(9)</sup> -the 'German Church Service' (*'Deutsch Kirchen ampt'*). <sup>(10)</sup>. As one of the first printed German masses, fully integrated with its music, this work was lengthy and complex, running to over 200 pages of quarto, and containing the Gregorian musical accompaniment to Müntzer's original German translations of texts. Although the name 'Müntzer' is not recorded in the original editions (some eight of which survive, in

varying completeness), it is clear that the structural, musical and textual unity must be the work of one man; and there is no evidence at all to suggest the participation of any other. Müntzer said in the introduction to his later 'German Evangelical Mass' that the 'Church Service' was produced 'at my request' (*'durch mein anregen'*), but in this period the word 'anregen' suggested actual participation. The music is undoubtedly based on specific Gregorian examples, as Honemeyer points out, and Müntzer's career until then had given him a good education in choral and musical matters.

There are five main parts to this work, each corresponding to the main divisions of the Church year - Advent, Christmas, Passion, Easter, Whit. Franz, the editor of Müntzer's collected works in 1968, supposed that the five parts were delivered to the printer at the same time; Elliger and Honemeyer, however, suggest that the work emerged in two stages: firstly, the offices for Passion, Easter and Whit, which Müntzer would have been working on for his congregation in the first months of 1523 (and indeed there is a contemporary report of his work on a Mass in Halle in the previous winter, as well as a Latin Mass written by him in 1516); and then, in August or September, the offices for Advent and Christmas were

delivered. The idea of two batches is very probable, since inner-textual references suppose the existence of the first before the second, and since the pagination of precisely these two batches is of a different format - 'a.i' to 'h.iii' and 'A.i' to 'S.iv.' within the same banding (the introduction is paginated in Arabic numerals!) - but the dating of either batch cannot be exact. One interesting aspect of the printing of the 'Church Service' might give a clue as to the date: in late 1524. in his diatribe against Luther, the 'Highly Called-For Speech of Defence', Müntzer wrote the following:

"All the roads [to Allstedt] were full of people from all over wanting to know how the Church office in Allstedt was. arranged for singing and preaching the scriptures. And he [Luther], even if he were to burst, could not do the same in Wittenberg.... Luther was so annoyed that he tried first of all to get his princes to stop the printing of my Church Office, when the ordinance of the Wittenberg pope was not heeded he thought: Wait. I'll arrange this and destroy this weekly pilgrimage." <sup>(1)</sup>

We know that, in September 1523. Count Ernst of Mansfeld did try to stop the 'weekly pilgrimage', although there is no evidence of Luther's role. But if Luther really did try to suppress the printing, it can only have been after the first batch was either printed or well-known and it must have been before September 1523. Such an intervention was not impossible, since, for reasons theological, political and personal, Luther never forgave Müntzer for organising a German Mass; and since, in March 1523 in his 'Order of the Divine Service in the Congregation', Luther had still not rejected the Latin Mass.

The printer used by Müntzer then and for most of his later works was one Nikolaus Widemar. Widemar was the apprentice to Jakob Stöckel, the son of the printer Wolfgang Stöckel of Leipzig, who had firmly sided with the Humanist and Lutheran causes, for which, in 1522, Duke Georg placed a ban on the printing of Lutheran works in Leipzig by Stöckel. Stöckel then moved this part of his business to Eilenburg. Widemar's role in the enterprise seems to have been one of providing a name to cover Stöckel's semi-legal printing, and several Lutheran works published by Stöckel had the name of Widemar emblazoned on the covers. In the matter of Müntzer's works, it appears that Widemar provided the labour and the type, while Stöckel senior provided the finance. Perhaps the most miraculous aspect of the business of printing was that of the musical notation, which would have had to be cut on over 700 separate wooden blocks, a long and fraught exercise in printing craftsmanship.

This liturgy certainly had durability. After Müntzer's execution, it was reprinted in Erfurt - in 1525 under the title 'The Service in German' (*Die verdeutschten Fesl*) and in 1526 under the title 'German Church Office' (*Teutsch Kirchen ampt*), although in each, the printer Johann Loerfeld liberally re-arranged the structure, added portions of Luther's services and, for quite sound reasons of self-preservation, did not mention Müntzer's name <sup>(12)</sup>. Sections of the 'Service' often appeared in other Offices. During the Church inspection of March 1533 it was discovered that Allstedt was still using the 'Office': this was immediately replaced by the Wittenberg psalter. Sections of the liturgy even appeared, unattributed, in an edition of 1614.



Shortly after this 'Service' came an explanatory pamphlet, the 'Order and Explanation of the German Service in Allstedt' (*Ordnung und berechnung* etc) <sup>(13)</sup>, which provided the theological reasoning behind the reformed Mass, and gave an insight into Müntzer's motivations and his conception of the meaning of 'Letter' and 'Spirit', God and His Elect. Again, this was printed by Widemar, very probably in June or July 1523. This turned out to be Müntzer's most popular tract, since it was reprinted twice in 1523. On the basis of the copy held by the British Library <sup>(14)</sup> it may be permitted to speculate that the last of these reprints dates from December, when another work, the 'Protestation or Proposition' (*Protestation odder empietung*), was being printed: the B.L. copy has the same woodcut on the cover, with the date 'MDXXIII'. Of the ten pages ('A.i' to 'C.ii') of the 'Order and Explanation, only the first four are actually those of the pamphlet announced on the cover, while the last six are in fact those of the 'Protestation or Proposition', which would indicate that some sheets became mixed up during the binding process – which need not have taken place at the printer's.



In July 1523 came the printing of an open letter, 'A Serious Epistle to His Dear Brothers in Stolberg to Avoid Mischievous Riot' (*Ein ernster Sendebrieff*) <sup>(15)</sup>. This exhortation to his followers to bide their time and improve themselves in the work of the spirit was apparently intended by Müntzer to act as a general statement of policy. There are two editions

extant: Franz believes that the first was a proof-copy, since it contains the date ‘1529’ which at some point was changed by an unknown hand to ‘1526’. It was also less uncompromising and shorter than the second, which has the actual Biblical references as marginalia and is more expansive on several points. If the first was indeed a proof-copy, then Müntzer must have made many amendments and improvements before the final print-run by Widemar took place. Unfortunately, the original ms. no longer exists.



In December 1523 and January 1524, Widemar must have been a busy man. In addition to the third edition of the ‘Order and Explanation’, he had set up type for a new work, dedicated to the new year — ‘Are you listening, World? I preach to you – as the New Year begins – Jesus Christ, he who was crucified, and you and me with him’ <sup>(16)</sup> — which was entitled ‘Protestation or Proposition of Thomas Müntzer of Stolberg in the Harz, now Pastor at Allstedt’ (*Protestation oder*

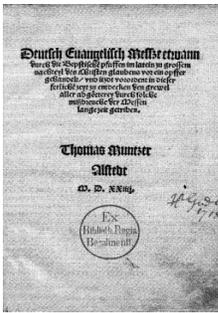
*empietung*) <sup>(17)</sup> This was probably written in November or December, and is basically a collection of twenty-two articles of belief, ranging across the spectrum of revelation, Election, an attack on ‘invented belief’ and a defence of the doctrine of the primacy of the experienced faith of the Spirit over the reported faith of the Bible.



At the same time, but slightly after the ‘Protestation’, Widemar printed Müntzer’s pamphlet ‘On the Invented Belief’ (*Von dem getichten glauben*) <sup>(18)</sup> which, like the other two of this festive period, bears the date 1524 and the Allstedt coat-of-arms as its woodcut. The contents of this pamphlet were apparently intended as a reply to some questions posed by a rather concerned Luther in the autumn of 1523 <sup>(19)</sup>. These questions were put to

Müntzer in Allstedt in early November by Prince Friedrich’s secretary Georg Spalatin as the princely procession passed through the town en route to the Imperial Diet in Nürnberg. Müntzer had written a letter to Luther in July, suggesting an agreement to differ, but Luther had not answered; these questions were most probably a prelude to polemic, as the year 1524 was to demonstrate. They covered the most basic points of faith - what was Christian faith, how did it arise, how did one learn its essence, how could it save? The ‘Invented Belief’ was the reply, a praise of faith through spiritual suffering and recognition, a manifesto

of the Elect. Appended to this, perhaps simply to use up the spare paper, but nevertheless a significant appendix, was a letter written by Müntzer to the electoral Prince's official in Allstedt, Hans Zeiss, who (frequently with hesitation) supported the reforms in the town; this letter reiterated all the doctrines set out in the preceding declaration. The whole pamphlet was reprinted (in Allstedt?) at some later date in 1524, possibly in July.



Widemar's last contract with Müntzer was for the words and music of Müntzer's 'German Evangelical Mass' (*Deutsch Evangelisch Messbꝛuch*)<sup>(20)</sup>. This shorter Mass, "hitherto [made] in Latin and treated by the papalist priests as a sacrifice, to the great detriment of Christian faith. Now in these critical times, it has been reformed, thus exposing the abominable idolatry so long perpetrated by such abuses of the Mass"<sup>(21)</sup>, probably had its origins before Luther's *Formula Missae* appeared in late 1523, although

Luther suspected piracy. The printing of this Mass began in the first half of 1524, but the printing was interrupted by Widemar's sudden cessation of operations in Eilenburg in early 1524, due to a hostile intervention by Duke Georg. All the relevant materials were then transported back to Allstedt, and the printing was completed there, probably in August of that year. The whole thing was shorter than the 'Church Office', running to only 88 pages (11 sheets of quarto). Nonetheless, the fact that it was printed at all, in these circumstances, is praiseworthy.

The first of Müntzer's three major tracts of the summer of 1524 was the 'Explanation of the Second Chapter of Daniel the Prophet' (*Ausslegung des andern unterschydts Danielis*)<sup>(22)</sup>, otherwise known as the 'Sermon Before the Princes'<sup>(23)</sup>. The genesis of this work is interesting as are the circumstances which followed on from the sermon itself.

Events in the first half of 1524 - the destruction of the Mary chapel at Mallerbach, the formation of a league of defence in Allstedt - finally provoked the regional authorities to discover for themselves what was afoot in Allstedt. Luther, too, was worried, writing to the princes of Saxony in June to ask them to examine Müntzer very thoroughly and to beware of his 'rebellious spirit'. With this end in mind, the Duke Johann, Prince Johann Friedrich and their entourage stopped at Allstedt on 1<sup>st</sup> July and made it known that, on their return from

Halberstadt on 13<sup>th</sup> July, Müntzer was to preach before them in the castle: this was, in effect, his trial (inaugural) sermon, if a trifle belated.

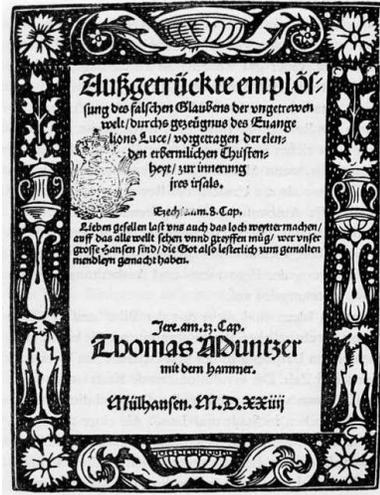
In June, Müntzer appears to have set up 'his own print-shop in Allstedt and hopes to print anything he pleases, notwithstanding that we do not know whether good or bad, and not supervised by any learned or professional person', and on 9<sup>th</sup> July Prince Friedrich proposed to Johann that 'whatever Thomas Müntzer intends to write or print should first be sent to your lordship or myself for examination' <sup>(24)</sup>. We know that this print-shop had been set up in Allstedt, probably in the Spring, after Widemar's operation was closed down: what we do not know is whether it was being managed and operated by Widemar, or whether someone else with sufficient technical skills had stepped into the breach. One interpretation is that it was anew venture, and that the printer was a man named Hans Reichart. But the evidence for this is in fact very slender, based on one sentence in one of Müntzer's letters relating to the disturbances in the nearby town of Sangerhausen, from which some of Müntzer's followers had fled following a clampdown: on 22 July, Müntzer wrote to Zeiss that, just after having discovered that the fugitives were to be handed over to the authorities – "I met Hans Reichart coming out of the printers." <sup>(25)</sup>. Hans Reichart had previously appeared as one of the leaders of the league of defence. It is, however, unclear whether this Reichart emerging from the print-shop was a printer. In addition, as Bensing and Bräuer have pointed out <sup>(26)</sup> to emerge from does not mean to be the owner of, and Reichart may have been doing nothing more than emerging from a print-shop. There was, moreover, a tradition that Müntzer's printer in Allstedt in this period was one Matthäus Dachs, but this tradition has no documentary support. Bensing and Bräuer question the possibility that Reichart was the printer, on the basis that a Hans Reichart was still a citizen of Allstedt in the autumn of 1525, when anyone connected with Müntzer had vanished voluntarily or involuntarily; and as we shall see, the identity of the printer was known to the authorities. On the other hand, although in August 1524, Müntzer heaped curses upon the head of Hans Reichart along with the 'arch-Judas' Rückert - who had evidently withdrawn their support from his cause - in his confession of May 1525, Reichart is not mentioned, when Rückert is: was this an attempt to protect Reichart from the wrath of the princes? A third, related, problem is raised in a letter of 27<sup>th</sup> April 1525, just before the disastrous battle at Frankenhausen, when Müntzer wrote: "My printer is coming in the next few days, I've just been told." <sup>(27)</sup>. Now, we know from his own confession in 1527, that Hans Hut, the

Anabaptist leader, was present at the battle, and we also know that in October 1524, Hut arranged the printing of one of Müntzer's pamphlets in Nürnberg (but was not himself a printer): was this man in Müntzer's letter Hans Hut? Or Reichart? Dachs? Widemar? Or another? There is a frightening lack of documentation on this question, and one can only speculate on the mercurial figure of Reichart and on the identity of Müntzer's last printer in Allstedt. But we do know that this print-shop was one of the many things which worried the princes of Saxony in July 1524.

The text of Müntzer's sermon before the princes is readily available to English readers, and is one of his most famous in Germany, so we shall not discuss the content here. Müntzer had had a good deal of time to prepare his text, not only for the princes, but, following his own principles, for public consumption. So it is quite conceivable that he gave the ms. of the sermon to his printer immediately after - if not before - the 13<sup>th</sup> July. The printing must have been completed before the end of July, before Müntzer's interview with Duke Johann at Weimar on 1<sup>st</sup> August, since a decision was reached there to close down the print-shop altogether.

Müntzer's interview in Weimar had two immediate and related consequences for the printing of his works. Firstly, agreement was reached that, according to Friedrich's wishes, Müntzer would submit his works to the censor before printing them, although Müntzer fought hard to retain his own control. In a letter to Friedrich the Wise on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, he wrote: "I promised our beloved lord, Duke Johann, your brother, that I would submit my books for examination before having them printed, but I am not willing to thole the exclusive judgement of the poisonous and pompous biblical scholars... I will broadcast my aforesaid Christian faith to the whole world by word and writing: I will do this in the bright light of day and explain it in all frankness." (28). And indeed he had prepared his next pamphlet, the 'Express Revelation', in ms. form ('Witness of the First Chapter of Luke') (29) precisely for submission to Johann. But the authorities had obviously laid other plans, and had taken a second, secret decision, that "the book-printer, since matters are as they are, should remove himself" (30). However, the town-council had apparently invested 100 gulden of taxpayers' money in the printing of the 'Evangelical Mass', which was still being prepared for publication; the council begged that printing should be permitted to complete. Remarkably, permission was granted. On 7<sup>th</sup> August, Müntzer saw that the situation was

turning sour, and that several of his more influential supporters (Rückert, Reichart) had taken the side of the princes, so he left Allstedt and headed for Mühlhausen.



His next work was the ‘Express Revelation’ (*Ausgetruckte emplöpfung*)<sup>(31)</sup> which was printed in Nürnberg in October 1524.

Here there is another knotty problem to be solved: the manuscript, we know, was taken to Nürnberg by Hans Hut, a bookseller from the village of Bibra. But three possibilities exist as to how and when the ms. was given to Hut:

1. that it was given to him in Bibra while Müntzer was travelling from Allstedt to Mühlhausen;
2. that it was given to him while he and Müntzer were in Mühlhausen, and Hut was a member of the ‘Eternal

Covenant of God’ there;

3. that it was given to Hut in Bibra in late September, while Müntzer was travelling from Mühlhausen to Nürnberg.

To clarify this problem, we must remember that Bibra lies about 80km. south of Allstedt, and Mühlhausen about 40km. south-west of Allstedt, so that Bibra is both very much off the road from Allstedt to Mühlhausen, and very much en route from Mühlhausen to Nürnberg. For that simple reason, we shall discount the first possibility, which people such as Hinrichs have chosen<sup>(32)</sup>. Hut himself later confessed that “Müntzer, when he was expelled, was at his house in Bibra for a day and a night, and gave him a pamphlet, the first chapter of Luke, for printing.”<sup>(33)</sup> Müntzer was ‘expelled’ from Mühlhausen, but he left Allstedt of his own free will. As for the second possibility, Bensing and Elliger<sup>(34)</sup> suggest that Hut was in Mühlhausen in August or September 1524, and that the statement in his confession about the manuscript was simple dissimulation, trying to hide the fact of his stay in Mühlhausen. But by that time Hut had little to lose, since the rest of his confession was death-warrant enough, and although he may have been in Mühlhausen, it is equally possible that the ms. was given to him in Bibra. Nevertheless, given the fact that Hut and Müntzer both travelled to Nürnberg for the same purpose, the ms. may have been given to Hut before Müntzer found himself expelled and compelled to travel the same route.

So the ‘Express Revelation’, begun in Allstedt, was expanded and improved in Mühlhausen between the 8 August and the 27 September, with the new situation in mind: the changes in mood between the ‘Witness of Luke’ and the ‘Express Revelation’ are startling. As soon as this new pamphlet was completed, Müntzer started on his most powerful denunciation of Luther, the ‘Highly Called-For Speech of Defence and Answer to the Spiritless Easy-Living Flesh in Wittenberg’ etc (*Hoch verursachte Schutzrede*)<sup>(35)</sup>. This was completed after 24<sup>th</sup> August, since it refers to Luther’s visit to Karlstadt’s Orlamünde on that date, and may indeed have been completed in Nürnberg after 27<sup>th</sup> September.

It is interesting to note that the cover of the printed ‘Express Revelation’ bears the words ‘Mühlhausen MDXIII’, while the later ‘Speech of Defence’ is dated ‘Alstedt MDXIII’: this gives support to the view that the ‘Express Revelation’ left Müntzer’s hands while he still thought himself based in Mühlhausen, while the second reflects the last well-known address of an exile.

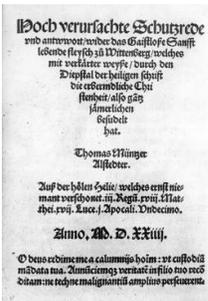
After his expulsion from Mühlhausen on 27 September along with his comrade Heinrich Pfeiffer, Müntzer travelled to Nürnberg, en route to the south-west, where the peasant uprising was just beginning. In a letter of late November, he wrote: “Many of the folk of N. urged me to preach, but I answered that I had not come to do that, but to testify to my faith in print.”<sup>(36)</sup> His sojourn in Nürnberg is the subject of some debate; there are even suggestions that he never actually stayed there at all. However, all the circumstantial evidence suggests that he did indeed spend several weeks there, but that he kept a very low profile.<sup>(37)</sup>

Here was now an interesting situation: Müntzer, Pfeiffer and Hut were all in the city – possibly three of the most dangerous radicals in the whole of middle Germany. Two at least looking for printers, the third one doing Heaven knows what. Surprisingly, however, the city authorities seemed quite relaxed about it.

Hut had assumed the name ‘Heinrich von Mellerstadt’ for this task — Mellrichstadt being a village not far from Bibra —and he handed the ‘Express Revelation’ to the assistants of Johann Hergott, apparently while the master-printer was away travelling. However, immediately after the printing was completed on 29<sup>th</sup> October, Hut and the four assistants were arrested after a raid on the print-shop; 400 copies of the work were confiscated. A hundred copies had, however, been despatched to Augsburg. Curiously, Hut and his

accomplices were released; more curious still, Hut, before being expelled, was compensated for the confiscated copies.

Meanwhile, Pfeiffer pursued his task under his real name Schwertfeger, rather than his *nom-de-guerre* Pfeiffer. But the authorities had their eye on him after he had preached in public, and after his expulsion at the end of October, they asked the Lutheran Andreas Osiander to report on two manuscripts written by Pfeiffer. The original pamphlets are no longer traceable, but Osiander's report was not a positive one: 'I have read them and, in short, I have found nothing good anywhere in them.'<sup>(38)</sup>



Another printer, Hieronymus Höltzel, a man who had printed works by Karlstadt, Luther 'and similar', and who was later to produce an edition of the famous 'Twelve Articles' of the Swabian Peasantry in 1525, undertook to print the 'Speech of Defence'. When later questioned by the authorities, Höltzel admitted to having received the manuscript from a a 'travelling peddler' – '*Landfabrer*'. It is possible that Höltzel, either ignorantly or deliberately, thereby hid Müntzer's identity; there is a strong

argument for this person being a radical preacher, recently expelled from Jena, named Martin Reinhart; Reinhart was demonstrably in the city at the time, and was expelled on 17 December – the very day that Höltzel was arrested and interrogated. The printing of the 'Speech of Defence' probably did not begin until November, by which time Hut and Pfeiffer had failed in their tasks, and Müntzer had probably completed the polishing of his ms. By an unfortunate twist of fate, shortly after the printing was finished, the authorities, looking for copies of Karlstadt's 'On the Unchristian Abuse of the Bread and Chalice of the Lord', stumbled across the 'Speech of Defence'; for his involvement in that publication Höltzel was imprisoned, and the work confiscated.

One final point of interest emerges from these transactions in Nürnberg: in January 1525, the trial of the 'three godless painters' took place, those three apprentices to Albrecht Dürer accused of selling copies of works (unspecified) by Karlstadt and Müntzer. Also named in this trial was Hans Denck, the later Anabaptist leader, at whose house Müntzer had stayed, and on whose suggestion he left Nürnberg for Basel to stay with Denck's former teacher, Johann Oekolampad.

With the double failure in Nürnberg ends Müntzer's series of works intended for print. Between then and his execution in May 1525, the leadership of the uprising demanded all of his time, and his writing was devoted to letters of immediate tactical interest and exhortations to steadfastness. The time for theory was past. There is an intriguing note by Müntzer in his letter to Allstedt, dated 26 April 1525, in which he says that "My printer is coming in the next few days, I've just been told." <sup>(39)</sup> But who the printer was, and what he was to do in Mühlhausen does not appear in the historical record.

The next time anything written or signed by him appeared in print, it was for a quite different purpose than he himself would have liked. The confession signed by him on 16<sup>th</sup> May <sup>(40)</sup> was published by no fewer than five Lutheran printers - ironically, one of these was Wolfgang Stöckel of Leipzig. Luther, in his post-mortem pamphlet, "A Terrible History and Judgment of God on Thomas Müntzer" of June 1525, printed Müntzer's famous letter to Allstedt and the miners of Mansfeld, of 27<sup>th</sup> April, with some rather liberal editing - the phrase "the peasants of Klettgau and Hegau and the Black Forest have risen, three times one thousand strong" was multiplied to "three times one *hundred* thousand", while "do not let the sword grow cold" was expanded to "grow cold *with blood*". Some other letters of an earlier period, more theological in content, were printed by Johann Agricola, interspersed with critical commentary, in 'The Explanation of the 19th Psalm' <sup>(41)</sup> in the summer of 1525.

Between 1526 and 1931, the editions of Müntzer's works were restricted almost entirely to the publishing of individual letters. On several occasions, the 'Prague Manifesto' came to light - for example, in a delightful and often bizarre catalogue of motley heretics of 1702, the '*Pantheon Anabaptisticum et Enthusiasticum*', which contained a parallel text of the Latin version and the editor's German translation, the original German not being available; again in 1732, a German translation of the 'Manifesto' was published. Between 1716 and 1855, a half a dozen letters were published. In 1855, Wackernagel published the introductions to Müntzer's 'German Church Office' and the 'German Evangelical Mass' and in 1870, a selection of hymns extracted from these liturgies <sup>(42)</sup>. In the period of florescence of local historians, several more letters came to light, and in 1901 an edition of the 'Express Revelation'.

But the first real step towards a complete edition came with Böhmer and Kirn's 'Thomas Müntzer's Correspondence' in 1931 <sup>(43)</sup>, which brought together all the letters

available, and added to them the four versions of the 'Prague Manifesto', and two or three unpublished manuscripts. All that was now needed were the printed works, since the Böhmer-Kirn edition had done the most valuable service in collecting virtually all that had not been published before 1526. But this task took a full 37 years to complete. Günther Franz, collaborating with Kirn, assembled all the material for this task; but, although this was ready in 1942, the material went missing during the war, and it was not until 1968 that his 'Complete Critical Edition' appeared. This work also leaned quite heavily on the work done by Carl Hinrichs who in 1950 edited the 'Political Writings' of Müntzer <sup>(44)</sup>, containing the full annotated texts of Müntzer's last three pamphlets, as well as the 'Witness of the First Chapter of Luke'. After the Böhmer-Kirn edition, this constituted the most important work in Müntzer research since 1931.

Franz' edition, although virtually complete (it omits the Czech and Latin versions of the "Manifesto", and the biographical and bibliographical sections are sadly patchy), has several organisational failings, which do not however detract from its overall value: it filled a gap as the most complete edition until more recent years. <sup>(45)</sup> Peter Matheson published his translations of Müntzer's complete works (omitting the texts and music of the liturgies and with only the German versions "Prague Manifesto") in 1988. It was not until the start of the new century that a long-mooted new and complete edition finally started to appear – the "Kritische Gesamtausgabe", which was published in three volumes (in reverse order) between 2004 and 2017. Volume I covers all the printed works, the unprinted manuscripts and other notes written by Müntzer; Volume II contains the correspondence; and Volume III is a very useful 'Quellen' (sources) volume, collecting in one place a large number of third-party reports on Müntzer's life and actions. It is an invaluable edition. <sup>(46)</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>(1)</sup> For a complete bibliography see: Marion **Dammaschke** and Günter **Vogler**, *Thomas-Müntzer-Bibliographie (1519-2012)*, Baden-Baden 2013. For a partial one, see the on-line one available at [www.andydrummond.net/muentzer/muentzerbiblioselect.html](http://www.andydrummond.net/muentzer/muentzerbiblioselect.html)

<sup>(2)</sup> Max **Steinmetz**, *Das Müntzerbild von Martin Luther bis Friedrich Engels* (Berlin 1971).

<sup>(3)</sup> Wilhelm **Friedrich**, *Der Buchführer Johann Hergott. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Buchwesens* (II) (Leipzig 1966), pp. 7-31.

<sup>(4)</sup> Johann **Hergott**, *Von der neuen wandlung eynes Christlichen Lebens; Neudrucke dt. Literaturwerke des 16 und 17 Jhs.* (322) (Halle 1953) pp.46-65.

- (5) Where possible, all citations from Müntzer are taken from Peter **Matheson**, *The Collected Works of Thomas Müntzer* (Edinburgh 1988 and 1994). These will be identified in the footnotes simply as “**Müntzer**”. Here, **Müntzer**, p.367.
- (6) **Müntzer**, p.206.
- (7) **Müntzer**, p.264.
- (8) **Müntzer** pp.352-379. See also: Hans-Jürgen **Goertz**, ‘Lebendiges Wort’ und ‘Totes Ding’. Zum Schriftverständnis Thomas Müntzers im Prager Manifest; *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* (67) (Gutersloh 1976) pp.153-178.
- (9) See: Karl **Honemeyer**, *Thomas Müntzer und Martin Luther. Ihr Ringen um die Musik des Gottesdienstes.* (Berlin 1974)
- (10) Günther **Franz**, *Thomas Müntzer: Schriften und Briefe - Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, (Gutersloh 1968), pp.25-156.
- (11) **Müntzer**, p.339.
- (12) See: Johann **Smend**, *Die evangelischen deutschen Messen bis zu Luthers deutscher Messe* (Göttingen 1896) pp.94-111.
- (13) **Müntzer**, pp.170-179.
- (14) Catalogue no. C.95.C.1 (1)
- (15) **Müntzer**, pp.60-64
- (16) **Müntzer**, p.188
- (17) **Müntzer**, pp.183-189
- (18) **Müntzer**, pp.210-223.
- (19) **Müntzer**, p.454f
- (20) **Franz**, pp.157-206
- (21) **Müntzer**, p.180.
- (22) **Müntzer**, pp. 230-252
- (23) Other English translations are available in: G.H.**Williams**, *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (London 1957); Michael **Baylor**, *Revelation and Revolution: basic writings of Thomas Müntzer* (Bethlehem, PA, 1993); Wu **Ming**, *Wu Ming presents Thomas Müntzer : Sermon to the Princes* (London 2010); and on-line at [www.andydrummond.net/muentzer/PDFs/sermonbeforeprinces.pdf](http://www.andydrummond.net/muentzer/PDFs/sermonbeforeprinces.pdf)
- (24) Karl **Förstemann**, *Zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges* (*Neue Mittheilungen aus dem Gebiet hist.-antiq. Forschungen*, 12) (Halle 1869) p.170.
- (25) **Müntzer**, p.99
- (26) Martin **Bensing**, *Idee und Praxis des ‘christlichen Verbündnisses’ bei Thomas Müntzer* (in: *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl-Marx-Univ. Leipzig*, 14) (Leipzig 1965) pp.450-471; Siegfried **Bräuer**, *Hans Reichart, der angebliche Allstedter Drucker Müntzers* (in: *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 85) (Stuttgart 1975) pp.389-398.
- (27) **Müntzer**, p.142.
- (28) **Müntzer**, p.112
- (29) **Müntzer**, pp.261-323
- (30) **Förstemann**, p.185
- (31) **Müntzer**, pp.253-323
- (32) Carl **Hinrichs**, *Luther und Müntzer* (Berlin 1956)
- (33) Gerhard **Zschäbitz**. *Zur mitteldeutschen Wiedertäuferbewegung* (Berlin 1958) p.30
- (34) Walter **Elliger**, *Thomas Müntzer: Leben und Wirken* (Göttingen 1975)
- (35) **Müntzer**, pp.324-350. See also: Hans-Joachim **Hillerbrand**, *Thomas Müntzer’s Last Tract Against Martin Luther* (in: *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 38) (Goshen, Indiana 1964) pp.20-36.

(36) **Müntzer**, p.136

(37) See Günter **Vogler**, Thomas Müntzer und Nürnberg (in: G.Vogler, Thomas Müntzer und die Gesellschaft seiner Zeit) (Mühlhausen 2003) pp.105-125.

(38) See: Gerhard **Müller** & Gottfried **Seebass** (eds) : Andreas Osiander – Schriften und Briefe, Vol.I, Gütersloh 1974, pp.261-266

(39) **Müntzer**, p.455.

(40) **Müntzer**, pp.433-440.

(41) For the text of this, of Luther's 'History' and other contemporary pamphlets on Müntzer. see: Ludwig **Fischer**, Die lutherischen Pamphlete gegen Thomas Müntzer (Tübingen 1976)

(42) Philipp **Wackernagel**, Bibliographic zur Geschichte des deutschen Kirchenliedes, Frankfurt 1855), pp.531ff (Das deutsche Kirchenlied, III) (Leipzig 1970)

(43) Heinrich **Böhmer** and Paul **Kirn**, Thomas Müntzers Briefwechsel (Leipzig 1931)

(44) Carl **Hinrichs**, Thomas Müntzer: die politischen Schriften (Halle 1950)

(45) The only complete German edition prior to 2004 has been Günther **Franz**, Thomas Müntzer - Schriften und Briefe - Kritische Gesamtausgabe, (Gutersloh 1968)

(46) The three-volume edition is now available: Volume 3 is Wieland **Held** and Siegfried **Hoyer's** Quellen zu Thomas Müntzer (Leipzig 2004); Volume 2 is Siegfried **Bräuer** and Manfred **Kobuch**, Thomas Müntzer: Briefwechsel (Leipzig 2010); Volume 1 is Eike **Wolgast** and Gottfried **Seebass**, Thomas Müntzer: Schriften, (Leipzig 2017)