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two principles: the normativity of Scripture in its entirety and the Christo-centric approach to the Old Testament.

In a similar way there is today a need for a proper balance in the approach to the Old Testament as both salvation history and the spoken Word of God. Too often the OT is just regarded as history—even as salvation history—but then not very relevant since it belongs to the past. But this history becomes relevant as one listens to the Word of God spoken to Israel and mankind in and through history, and when one is made part of this history through the word. For this reason we also chose to deal at some length with the question of Christ and Torah—both ‘words from God’ par excellence, but words which belong to the history of the people of God’s Kingdom as it breaks its way through the world.

We started off with a note concerning the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. Certainly, the importance of the OT for the life of the Church also points to the importance of the encounter with the synagogue in this respect. We have had opportunity to see how the Early Church was dependent upon the synagogue and upon rabbinic traditions as they developed their new understanding of the OT and how they transformed the lectionary of the Synagogue in their own reading of the OT. In today’s encounter with the synagogue we are once more made aware of these roots, and this encounter may help us to let the OT in its breadth and its dynamic content throw light on Christ and the New Testament and bring richness to the life of the Church. But then the Church may also talk meaningfully with the synagogue and the Jewish People about Christ and the Torah, giving witness to the Word that came into the world with life and light.

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Imaginary Faith

Thomas Müntzer

*Translation and Introduction by James M. Stayer (abridged) Reprinted
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pp.99–130.*

Imaginary Faith (*von dem getichten glauben*) was written in 1524.

Today when theologies of revolution are demanding greater attention from Christians, the following translation by James Stayer of Thomas Müntzer’s protest will be found to be surprisingly relevant to our times, especially after the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s birth with the renewal emphasis on the great Reformer’s stand on sola fide. Müntzer ought not to be read uncritically yet Stayer’s introduction and translation reveal that the issues at the time of the Reformation are still ours and so can be studied with profit. Müntzer was both a theologian and a revolutionary. An explanation is needed about the system of footnotes in this article. There are two kinds of footnotes, one given by Stayer in numbers (1, 2, 3 etc.) and another by Müntzer himself in alphabets (aa, bb, cc, etc.). The alphabets are shown in the text, as in the German original, both at the beginning and at the end of the

passage in the text to which the footnote refers; thus one 'a' is at the beginning and the other 'a' at the end of the passage, while in the footnotes it is written as 'aa'. Heavy technical footnotes have been omitted.

Müntzer gave only chapter references in the Bible, as versification had not yet been adopted.

(Editors)

Thomas Müntzer was Martin Luther's most prominent and deadly enemy from within the Reformation camp, a good deal more threatening than Andreas Carlstadt, far more learned than Nicholas Storch, and much closer home than Ulrich Zwingli. He was also by much the most important Reformation theologian to pay with his life for his support of the rebels in the Great German Peasants' War of 1525 (the Anabaptists' Balthasar Hubmaier was probably the second most prominent individual of that description). These distinctions have earned him the extensive attention of Lutheran, and other, church historians, and Marxist, and other, students of early modern revolution. However many disagreements remain, Müntzer is now acknowledged as fully and truly theologian and revolutionary. And those two natures are p. 203 generally acknowledged to subsist in the one person without any essential contradiction.¹

Thomas Müntzer was also the addressee of the 'programmatic letters' (actually a letter and a long postscript) of September 5, 1524, from which we learn most about the religious views of Conrad Grebel and his associates in the months prior to the first believers' baptisms of the Reformation era.² The Grebel letter contains substantial criticism of Müntzer based on an awareness of his liturgical innovations, which the Zurich group regarded as making too many concessions to tradition and falling short of their own radical obedience to the Word of God.³ It also, in the postscript, makes a brief, but categorical, rejection of Müntzer's rumoured readiness to resort to violence in pursuit of a radical Reformation.⁴ These demurrers indicate that Carlstadt's was a greater authority than Müntzer's among the Zurich radicals, for Müntzer seemed in some respects to fall under Carlstadt's condemnation of the 'sparing of the weak' and the Zurich dissenters shared the attitude toward violence expressed by the congregation of Orlamünde when it refused to associate itself with Müntzer's Covenant for defence of the Gospel.⁵ p. 204

¹ It is an irony of historiography that an approximate consensus on Müntzer's character as theologian and revolutionary has been reached between the established Western church historians and the established Marxist-Leninist historians of the East bloc. In so doing they have occupied the ground of a once-despised, and still officially rejected, 'outsider', Ernst Bloch, and revised their own classics, Karl Holl on the one side, and Friedrich Engels and M. M. Smirin on the other. Ernst Bloch, *Thomas Müntzer als Theologe der Revolution* (Munich: Kurt Wolff, 1921); Karl Holl, 'Luther und die Schwärmer', *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, I: *Luther* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1932), 420–67; Friedrich Engels, *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, VII (Berlin: Dietz, 1973), 327–413; M. M. Smirin, *Die Volksreformation des Thomas Münzer und der grosse Bauernkrieg* (Berlin: Dietz, 1956). See the concluding historiographical essays in Abraham Friesen and Hans-Jürgen Goertz, eds., *Thomas Müntzer, Wege der Forschung*, CDXCI (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), 447–536.

² John C. Wenger, ed., *Conrad Grebel's Programmatic Letters of 1524* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald, 1970), contains both the Swiss German text and Wenger's translation cited below.

³ *Ibid.*, 18–27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 38–39. This passage and the one cited in n.3 were the ones stressed by Harold S. Bender, *Conrad Grebel, 1498–1526. Founder of the Swiss Brethren* (Goshen, Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 1950), 110–19, 171–83, in his interpretation of the letter.

⁵ Carlstadt's influence on the Zurich radicals was treated by Walther Köhler, 'Die Zürcher Täufer', in Christian Neff, ed., *Gedenkschrift zum 400jährigen Jubiläum der Mennoniten oder Taufgesinnten, 1525–1925*

However, the proto-Anabaptists of Zurich expressed the confident hope that Müntzer and Carlstadt were ‘of one mind’, and the opinion that the two of them were ‘doing more than all preachers of all nations’. ‘We regard you and Carlstadt as the purest proclaimers and preachers of the purest Word of God’, they wrote.⁶ This praise and feeling of solidarity with Müntzer was based on the Zurichers’ reading of Müntzer’s ‘two books on the spurious faith’, which were the immediate cause of their letter to him. Elsewhere they indicated that they had been confirmed in their own views by his ‘writing against spurious faith and baptism’, and that, besides being pleased with what he had to say, they wanted further instruction from him on the subject of baptism.⁷ The works referred to by Grebel and his associates were the *Protestation or Demonstration* (*Protestation odder empietung*) and *On the Imaginary Faith* (*Von dem getichten glauben*), written in quick succession in late 1523 and issued early in 1524.

In the *Protestation* and *Imaginary Faith* the social and political views that would mark Müntzer’s three later and larger theological writings go unexpressed. Hence they were completely unobjectionable to the ripening nonresistance of a Grebel and Mantz. The polemic against Luther, though mild and indirect in comparison with the later writings, is clear enough to lead the Zurichers to associate Müntzer’s pamphlets with Carlstadt’s literary campaign against ‘the sparing of the weak’.⁸ The critique of infant baptism in the *Protestation* must be regarded as an occasional topic in the context of Müntzer’s theological writings,⁹ but it touched the sorest point in the ripening opposition between Zwingli and the Zurich radicals. Hence these works were made to order for the somewhat superficial and ephemeral impact of Müntzer upon early Swiss Anabaptism (Müntzer’s legacy had a much stronger p. 205 influence on early Anabaptism in South and Central Germany and Austria¹⁰).

Nevertheless, indirect light is shed on the piety of the future Swiss Brethren by these two theological works of Müntzer, which (unlike his liturgical experiments and his political activism) they appear to have approved uncritically. At the same time their relative detachment from the day-to-day politics of the Allstedt Reformation and the clarity and sobriety of their anti-Wittenberg polemic gives us a more or less unclouded glimpse into the theological mind of Thomas Müntzer. The *Protestation* and *Imaginary Faith* show us the framework that received all the rich, experiential matter of his later

(Ludwigshafen 1925), 48–64, and most recently and conclusively by Calvin A. Pater, ‘Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt as the Intellectual Founder of Anabaptism’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard Divinity School, 1977).

⁶ Wenger, 24–25, 32–35.

⁷ Ibid., 14–17, 28–29.

⁸ Ibid., 16–17, 38–39. Carlstadt’s tract against sparing was published in late 1524 in Basel with the assistance of the Zurich radicals. For the German text see Erich Hertzsch, ed., *Karlstadts Schriften aus den Jahren 1523–1525* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1956), I, 73–97. An excerpted English translation appears in Ronald J. Sider, ed., *Karlstadt’s Battle with Luther. Documents in a Liberal-Radical Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), 49–71.

⁹ See Wolfgang Ullmann’s introduction to the *Protestation* in Siegfried Bräuer and Wolfgang Ullmann, eds., *Thomas Müntzer. Theologische Schriften aus dem Jahr 1523* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1975) (hereafter Bräuer and Ullmann), 25–27. Ullmann comments that seemingly opposed comments on infant baptism in Müntzer’s writings show ‘... dass für Müntzer hier keine zentrale Frage vorlag’.

¹⁰ Gottfried Seebass, ‘Müntzers Erbe: Werk, Leben und Theologie des Hans Hut (gestorben 1527)’, unpublished Habilitationsschrift, Erlangen University, 1972; Werner O. Packull, *Mysticism and the Early South German-Austrian Anabaptist Movement 1525–1531* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald, 1977).

career—the name-calling denunciations of Luther, the rejection of secular authority, the apocalyptic messianism.¹¹

In March, 1523 Müntzer began his pastorate in Allstedt and on the Easter immediately following he had introduced his German liturgy. By the fall he had clashed with the neighbouring Catholic prince, Ernst of Mansfeld, who resisted his subjects' desire to visit Müntzer's sermons and services. Theological differences with the Wittenberg Reformers had already been the object of letters by Müntzer to Melancthon and Luther; and now Luther was suggesting that the Allstedt pastor present himself for an examination of his doctrinal soundness. From November 4 to 14 the Electoral Saxon court was in Allstedt underway to the Nuremberg Reichstag. Luther at this juncture initiated a two-day doctrinal discussion between Johann Lang, who came from Erfurt for the purpose, and the Allstedt pastors, Müntzer and Simon Haferitz. In the context of this discussion Müntzer decided to compose and publish a work outlining his critique of the Wittenberg Reformation. Thus the *Protestation*, through which he aimed 'to bring the teaching of the evangelical teachers into a better form, and at the same time not to despise our slow, backward Roman brothers', was prepared with a view to publication shortly after the New Year, 1524. Also on the occasion of the Saxon court's stay in Allstedt, and probably p. 206 in connection with the theological discussion with Lang, Georg Spalatin, court preacher and Luther's friend, presented Müntzer with eleven concise, Latin questions about his understanding of the meaning and substance of 'faith'. Müntzer responded with a written statement which he transmitted to Spalatin through Hans Zeiss, commander of the Allstedt castle. The statement, together with a letter to Zeiss, dated December 2, 1523, was published as the *Imaginary Faith*. It was a tighter exposition of many of the themes of the *Protestation* and covered some new ground as well. About half the size of the *Protestation*, it was apparently the more popular; we know that it went through three printings in 1524. Müntzer seems to have written the *Imaginary Faith* with a finished draft of the *Protestation* already before him. There is extensive overlapping in their content.¹²

ON THE IMAGINARY FAITH

On the Imaginary¹³ Faith, with Reference to the Recent 'Protestation'
Issued by Thomas Müntzer,

¹¹ Certainly there is a hint of apocalyptic messianism in Müntzer's marginal reference to [Malachi 3](#) at the beginning of the *Protestation*, and, of course, it permeated the Prague Manifesto of 1521. See Walter Elliger, *Thomas Müntzer. Leben und Werke* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 395. It should be noted, however, that Elliger explains the significance of Müntzer's citation of [Malachi 3](#) with a reference to the last verse of [Malachi 4](#)!

¹² This view of the priority of the *Protestation* to the *Imaginary Faith* is based on Elliger, 394–416. Bräuer and Ullmann placed the *imaginary Faith* first, but Bräuer, 'Müntzerforschung von 1965 bis 1975', *Lutherjahrbuch*, XLIV (1977), 133, n.18, reversed this stance and acknowledged himself in agreement with Elliger's position. Spalatin's questions appear in Elliger, 404, and in English translation in Gordon Rupp, *Patterns of Reformation* (London: Epworth, 1969), 190–91. Bräuer has contributed the most detailed and recent account of the emergence of the two writings, discovering new sources not previously used by Müntzer scholars: Siegfried Bräuer, 'Die Vorgeschichte von Luthers "Ein Brief an die Fürsten zu Sachsen von dem aufrührerischen Geist"', *Lutherjahrbuch*, XLVII (1980), 47–51.

¹³ Ullmann suggests that the title, *Gedichtete Glauben*, was fashioned from the Vulgate version of [2 Timothy 1:5](#), in which real faith is described as *fide non ficta*. Hence the *gedichtete* faith is the opposite of real faith. Following Ullmann's rendering of the title as *Vom eingebildeten Glauben*, and given the relatively gentle polemic of this tract, I think 'imaginary faith' is a nuance apter than 'spurious', 'false', 'fictitious', or 'phoney' faith. See Bräuer and Ullmann, 16.

Pastor at Allstedt. 1524.
Against the imaginary Faith of Christendom

^aChristian faith is a sure reliance, a casting oneself upon the word and promise of Christ.^a
^bIf someone is to hear this word with an honest, unfeigning heart, his ear must be cleaned for hearing—from the wax of anxieties and pleasures.^b ^cFor just as little as a field can yield a large [p. 207](#) harvest without going under the plow, so little can someone say that he is a Christian if he has not previously, through his cross, been receptively awaiting the word and work of God.^c ^dThrough that kind of anticipation the elect friend of God submits himself to the Word.^d ^eHe is not one of those imaginary hearers¹⁴ but a zealous pupil of his Master, whom he studies with unsparing diligence, so as to be like him in every respect, according to the limit of his capacities.^e

II

^fWhen a person hears or sees something that points him to Christ, he should accept it as a marvellous witness with which to chase out, kill and crush his unbelief. To this extent he views the entire Holy Scripture as a two edged sword.^f ^gFor everything that is therein is always there for the purpose rather of killing us than of making us alive.^g ^hAn untested person who wants to brag about the Word of God will not produce anything other than vanities.^h ⁱAn elect friend of God cannot come to faith so easily, because God has tempted his elect to the uttermost from the very beginning, not sparing his only Son,ⁱ ^jso that he could be the proper goal of salvation and point to the single narrow way which can eternally not be found by the debauched scribes.^j ^kThe people who boast about it so much are fraudulent in their faith and full of imaginings,^k ^lunless indeed they can give an account of the origin of their faith as occurred with all the figures about whom we read in the

^a [Is. 53](#); [Rom. 10](#).

^a [Is. 53](#); [Rom. 10](#).

^b [Mt. 13](#); [Lk. 8](#); Mk4.

^b [Mt. 13](#); [Lk. 8](#); Mk4.

^c [Lk. 9](#) [12](#); [1 Tim. 1](#); [Ps. 130](#).

^c [Lk. 9](#) [12](#); [1 Tim. 1](#); [Ps. 130](#).

^d [Jas. 1](#); [Mt. 23](#).

^d [Jas. 1](#); [Mt. 23](#).

^e [Lk. 6](#); [Jn. 13](#); [Eph. 4](#); [Rom. 8](#).

¹⁴ getichten zuhörer: the reference is to Luther's stress on hearing the preached Word.

^e [Lk. 6](#); [Jn. 13](#); [Eph. 4](#); [Rom. 8](#).

^f [Jn. 1](#); [Ps. 19](#); [Rom. 5](#); [Heb. 4](#).

^f [Jn. 1](#); [Ps. 19](#); [Rom. 5](#); [Heb. 4](#).

^g [2 Cor. 3](#); [Deut. 32](#); [1 Sam. 2](#).

^g [2 Cor. 3](#); [Deut. 32](#); [1 Sam. 2](#).

^h [Eccl. 34](#); [Ps. 1](#).

^h [Eccl. 34](#); [Ps. 1](#).

ⁱ [Prov. 25](#); [1 Pet. 1](#); Book of [Wisdom 3](#), [Rom. 8](#).

ⁱ [Prov. 25](#); [1 Pet. 1](#); Book of [Wisdom 3](#), [Rom. 8](#).

^j [1 Pet. 2](#); [Mt. 7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [23](#).

^j [1 Pet. 2](#); [Mt. 7](#) [8](#) [9](#) [23](#).

^k Book of [Wisdom 5](#); [1 Pet. 1](#) [3](#); [Eccl. 19](#).

^k Book of [Wisdom 5](#); [1 Pet. 1](#) [3](#); [Eccl. 19](#).

^l [1 Tim. 3](#); [2 Tim. 3](#): *Voluptatum amatores corrupti sensu* (lovers of pleasure are corrupted in judgement. See [2 Tim. 3:4](#)).

Bible.^l ^mIt is impossible to call such mad and arrogant persons rational heathens, let alone Christians. We must be as wary of people like these, who disguise themselves as angels of light, as of the Devil himself.^m **P. 208**

III

ⁿGod let Abraham become miserable and forsaken, so that he would rest his security on no creature but on God alone. Therefore he was tormented with God's promise.ⁿ ^oJust as [forsakeness] begins immediately before the promise, he was tormented by having to wander into a strange land with a farfetched consolation,^o which seemed far removed according to the light of nature—^pas St. Stephen cast it up to the delicate, pointy-fingered scribes in the Acts of the Apostles.^p ^qDamned persons always want to be extremely self-centred and nevertheless to comprehend the utterly forsaken Christ.^q [Genesis 12](#) must be seen in the context of [Genesis 10](#) and [11](#). There, taking the three chapters together, it is shown how Abraham after great trouble and misery became worthy to see the day of Jesus Christ. ^rFrom the beginning on God has used the same method. If the light of nature was so severely extirpated in Abraham, what then must happen within us?^r

IV

^sMoses, who demonstrates the recognition of the false light of nature through the Law, did not want to believe the living promise of God.^s For he first had to gain a very sharp recognition of the unbelief within him, ^tso that he might rely upon God without imaginings and know with certainty that the Devil was not pulling the wool over his eyes. Moses would have been able to take God for a devil had he not recognized the cunning of the creature and God's simplicity,^t ^uin line with the order established in God and the

^l [1 Tim. 3](#); [2 Tim. 3](#): *Voluptatum amatores corrupti sensu* (lovers of pleasure are corrupted in judgement. See [2 Tim. 3:4](#)).

^m [Rom. 15](#) [:4]: *Quecunque* (Whatever ...); *Comparatio* (for comparison, see [Jer. 31](#); [2 Cor. 2](#)).

^m [Rom. 15](#) [:4]: *Quecunque* (Whatever ...); *Comparatio* (for comparison, see [Jer. 31](#); [2 Cor. 2](#)).

ⁿ [Rom. 4](#); [Gen. 12](#), [13](#), [14](#), 22; *per totam scripturam* (throughout the Scripture).

ⁿ [Rom. 4](#); [Gen. 12](#), [13](#), [14](#), 22; *per totam scripturam* (throughout the Scripture).

^o [Ps. 36](#), [119](#).

^o [Ps. 36](#), [119](#).

^p [Acts 7](#).

^p [Acts 7](#).

^q Book of [Wisdom 2](#); [Phil. 3](#); [Eph. 3](#); Judas preached Christ and had the money bag around his neck: [Jn. 12](#).

^q Book of [Wisdom 2](#); [Phil. 3](#); [Eph. 3](#); Judas preached Christ and had the money bag around his neck: [Jn. 12](#).

^r [1 Cor. 2](#); [Lk. 2](#), 22; [Ps. 1](#); [Mt. 5](#); [Jn. 8](#).

^r [1 Cor. 2](#); [Lk. 2](#), 22; [Ps. 1](#); [Mt. 5](#); [Jn. 8](#).

^s [Rom. 7](#).

^s [Rom. 7](#).

^t *Jn. ultimo; Zacharias, Elizabet, Maria, omnes difficiles ad credendum* (Zacharias, Elizabeth and Mary all had difficulties in coming to faith).

^t *Jn. ultimo; Zacharias, Elizabet, Maria, omnes difficiles ad credendum* (Zacharias, Elizabeth and Mary all had difficulties in coming to faith).

^u [Gen. 1](#).

creatures.^{u 15} ^vEven when the whole world accepts something as from God, it cannot quiet the poor in spirit unless he comes to know it after tribulation.^v **P. 209**

V

^wLet every pious, upright elect person take a brief look at the Bible^w ^xunmoved by any particular personal objective.^x ^yHe will find that all the fathers, the patriarchs, prophets, and particularly the apostles, have come with great difficulty to faith.^y ^yNone wanted to burst into it like our crazy, debauched swine, who are terrified in the face of the hurricane, the roaring waves and the whole water of wisdom.^y ^aFor their consciences mark well that they ultimately will go down to destruction in such a storm.^a ^bThus with all their promises they are like a foolish man who builds upon a sand foundation. Then all structures collapse.^b

VI

^cThe messengers of God had heard the bearer of the Gospel himself; and Christ told Peter that neither flesh nor blood revealed [that] to him, but God himself.^c ¹⁶But they could not hold fast to a single promise without becoming deeply embarrassed and disgracefully falling, so that their unbelief could be probed so deeply. ^dFor when he arose all of them together would not believe that it was he. They thought it was a ghost or a deception.^d ^eAnd we untested men think so much of ourselves that we have recourse to an imaginary faith and to contrived mercifulness, and take a natural promise or commitment and want to storm heaven with it.^e ^fOh no, dearest Christians, let us use the Bible for the purpose for which it was made, to kill, as we said above, and not to make alive like the living Word

^u [Gen. 1.](#)

¹⁵ ordnung, die in Got und creaturn gesatzet ist; see Hans-Jürgen Goertz, 'The Mystic with the Hammer', *MQR*, L (1976), 96–98.

^v [Lk. 4](#); [Is. 66](#).

^v [Lk. 4](#); [Is. 66](#).

^w [1 Cor. 10](#).

^w [1 Cor. 10](#).

^x [Eph. 2](#).

^x [Eph. 2](#).

^y [Mt. 8](#), [11](#).

^y [Mt. 8](#), [11](#).

^y [Mt. 8](#), [11](#).

^y [Mt. 8](#), [11](#).

^a [Eccl. 8](#).

^a [Eccl. 8](#).

^b [Prov. 10](#); [Mt. 7](#).

^b [Prov. 10](#); [Mt. 7](#).

^c [Mt. 16](#).

^c [Mt. 16](#).

¹⁶ [Matt. 16:17](#).

^d Lk. *ultimo* [[Lk. 24](#)].

^d Lk. *ultimo* [[Lk. 24](#)].

^e [Job 15](#); [Eccl. 10](#); [Is. 61](#).

^e [Job 15](#); [Eccl. 10](#); [Is. 61](#).

^f [2 Cor. 3](#); [Ps. 119](#).

when an empty soul hears it.^f ^gLet us not take a piece from here, another one from somewhere else, but bring everything together into a unity according to the teaching of the Spirit and not of the flesh, which must be awaited in all **P. 210** parts of the Scripture, so that it might console and terrify.^g ^hWhere the fraudulent faith is not uncovered to its very bottom, people always accept the outer Word, but in the storm the fool finds it wanting.^h ⁱThus people must be brought to the point that they are absolutely perplexed and awestruck, if they are to be freed from their imaginary faith and properly instructed in the upright faith.ⁱ

VII

^jTo a preacher who has experienced justification the words of God are not put into his mouth with honied sweetness and hypocrisy.^j ^kRather they come with a burning inward earnest zeal to uproot, to break and to scatter the imaginary Christians, to destroy every bit of their villainous faith, which they know from hearsay or have stolen from the books of men like spiteful thieves.^k

VIII

^lSo long as the poor, miserable, pitiful, woebegotten Christendom does not recognize her hurt, she is not to be helped.^l ^mSo long as she will not permit the genuine faith to strip away her imaginary faith like a veil, she is neither to be counselled nor helped.^m ⁿThe inadequacy of everybody in this realm is that no one wants to be like Turks, heathen, Jews and all other unbelievers in the origin of his faith.ⁿ ^oRather everyone crowns¹⁷ himself and dresses himself up with his faith and works, and yet knows the foundation and basis of neither the one nor the other. ^oHence our coarse, loutish fathers committed the whole world, excepting only themselves, to the Devil, rendering account to no one and thereby giving rise to all sorts of sects and schisms.^o ^pFor people became divided mostly over the

^f [2 Cor. 3](#); [Ps. 119](#).

^g [Is. 28](#); [1 Cor. 2](#); [Lk. 2](#); [1 Sam. 2](#).

^g [Is. 28](#); [1 Cor. 2](#); [Lk. 2](#); [1 Sam. 2](#).

^h [Lk. 8](#).

^h [Lk. 8](#).

ⁱ [Mt. 13](#); [Mk. 4](#); [Ps. 119](#).

ⁱ [Mt. 13](#); [Mk. 4](#); [Ps. 119](#).

^j [Jer. 1](#); [Jn. 2](#); [Ps. 67](#).

^j [Jer. 1](#); [Jn. 2](#); [Ps. 67](#).

^k [Jer. 23](#).

^k [Jer. 23](#).

^l [Jn. 9](#).

^l [Jn. 9](#).

^m [Is. 6](#); [Lk. 8](#); [Mt. 13](#); [Mk. 4](#).

^m [Is. 6](#); [Lk. 8](#); [Mt. 13](#); [Mk. 4](#).

ⁿ [Mt. 9](#), [18](#), [35](#) [*sic!*]; [Lk. 19](#); [1 Pet. 3](#).

ⁿ [Mt. 9](#), [18](#), [35](#) [*sic!*]; [Lk. 19](#); [1 Pet. 3](#).

¹⁷ 'nutzet' in the original print. *Müntzer Schriften*, 221: 'nutzet', in which case the translation, according to Bräuer and Ullmann, 20, should be 'exerts' ('strengt sich an').

^o [1 Tim. 1](#); Rom. *passim*; [Lk. 18](#); [Acts 10](#).

^o [1 Tim. 1](#); Rom. *passim*; [Lk. 18](#); [Acts 10](#).

^p [Rom. 11](#).

rites and ceremonies of the Church, regardless of whether the faith was imaginary or genuine.^p **P. 211**

IX

^qTo help miserable, coarse Christendom out of such an offensive abomination, it will first be most important to hearken to an earnest preacher, who with John the Baptist sends his cries of pity and complaint into the desolate, mad, raging hearts of men.^q ^rHe seeks that they should learn the manner of the work of God as they become receptive to the Word of God after repeated stirrings. Then the wellspring of salvation is proclaimed,^r ^sthe Son of God, like a mild lamb that opens not its mouth as it is slaughtered and thus has borne the sins of the world.^s ^tThus we should realize that we, like him, as sheep of our slaughter all the day long,^t ¹⁸ ^udo not grumble and growl in our suffering like whimpering dogs, but behave like the sheep of his pasture, whom he admits with the salt of his wisdom in suffering and in no other way.^u

X

^vThe sheep are poisoned through bad pasture but nourished through the salt. That a sweet Christ is preached to the fleshly world is the strongest poison to be given to sheep of Christ since the beginning.^v ^wFor to the degree that the person imbibes this poison he wants to be godlike, while at the same time the very last thing that he wants and desires is to become Christlike.^w ^xMoreover, he is least of all like himself, but, like a salamander or a leopard, inconstant in everything that he undertakes.^x ^yFor this reason Christ pointedly said, 'My sheep hear my voice and do not follow the voice of strangers'.^y ¹⁹ ^zHe is a stranger who allows the path to eternal life to become overgrown, lets the thorns and thistles

^p [Rom. 11](#).

^q [Ps. 63, 119](#); [Jn. 3](#); [Is. 40](#).

^q [Ps. 63, 119](#); [Jn. 3](#); [Is. 40](#).

^r [Ps. 30, 36, 69](#); [Jn. 4](#).

^r [Ps. 30, 36, 69](#); [Jn. 4](#).

^s [Is. 53](#); [Jn. 1](#).

^s [Is. 53](#); [Jn. 1](#).

^t [Rom. 8](#); [Ps. 44](#).

^t [Rom. 8](#); [Ps. 44](#).

¹⁸ schaff unsers todtschlaens den gantzen tag durch und durch; see Müntzer to Luther, July 9, 1523, in *Müntzer Schriften*, 390: *ovis occisionis tota die*; [Ps. 44:22](#) and [Rom. 8:36](#). See Wenger, 28: 'Rechte gleubige Christen sind ... schaff der schlachtung ...'.

^u [Is. 5](#); [Mt. 20](#); [Ps. 95](#).

^u [Is. 5](#); [Mt. 20](#); [Ps. 95](#).

^v [Ezek. 34](#); [Is. 5](#): *dicunt amarum dulce* (they call the bitter sweet ... See [Is. 5:20](#)).

^v [Ezek. 34](#); [Is. 5](#): *dicunt amarum dulce* (they call the bitter sweet ... See [Is. 5:20](#)).

^w *oppositum* (contrary); [2 Cor. 1](#).

^w *oppositum* (contrary); [2 Cor. 1](#).

^x *pardus* (panther or leopard): [Jer. 13](#), etc.

^x *pardus* (panther or leopard): [Jer. 13](#), etc.

^y [Jn. 10](#).

^y [Jn. 10](#).

¹⁹ See [John 10:5, 27](#).

^z [Prov. 10](#); Book of [Wisdom 5](#).

remain^z and says 'Believe, believe, hold firm, firm, with a strong, strong faith, so that you have something secure to hang onto'.^a **P. 212**

XI

^bYou may not climb in the window, may have no other foundation of faith than the whole Christ and not the half.^b ^cWhoever does not want to take the bitter Christ will eat himself to death on honey.^c ^dChrist is a cornerstone: just as the Master Workman polished him, so he must do the same with us, so that we are made suitable for the true edifice of life.^d ^eNot even the smallest portion²⁰ may be lacking in the whole life,^e ^fso that each Christian must have the appearance [of Christ] through and through²¹ and develop the greatest likeness to him, according to his talent and capacity.^f ^gFor whoever does not die with Christ cannot rise with him. How can he, then, live in truth, if he never, ever, has stripped off the old coat?^g ^hHence those who console before they bring distress are thieves and murderers; they want to accomplish something before Christ comes and don't know what they are affirming or denying.^h

XII

ⁱNo more rapturous love did Christ, unchangeably [one] with his Father, show to his elect that that he diligently strove to make them like sheep, suitable for the kitchen,ⁱ in contrast to the damned, who can only brood about how they will be driven away, killed and their memory extirpated from the earth. ^jAnd whoever contemplates the Lamb in this way, and how it takes away the sins of the world, will say: 'I have heard with my own ears how the old fathers of the Bible dealt with God and God with them. No one became one with God until he had triumphed through his suffering, assigned to him from eternity'.^j ^kThus one

^z [Prov. 10](#); Book of [Wisdom 5](#).

^a [Prov. 9](#).

^a [Prov. 9](#).

^b [Jn. 10](#); [1 Cor. 1](#), [2](#).

^b [Jn. 10](#); [1 Cor. 1](#), [2](#).

^c [Prov. 5](#).

^c [Prov. 5](#).

^d [Ps. 118](#); [Mt. 21](#); [Eph. 2](#).

^d [Ps. 118](#); [Mt. 21](#); [Eph. 2](#).

^e [Mt. 5](#).

²⁰ nicht ein meytlin (a *Meit* is the smallest copper coin).

^e [Mt. 5](#).

^f [Rom. 8](#).

²¹ ein ider crist durch und durch anzusehen werde; see Bräuer and Ullmann, 21: 'ein jeder Christ durch und dutsch [wie Christus] anzusehen werde'. The context of the sentence suggests an omission.

^f [Rom. 8](#).

^g [Rom. 5](#); [Lk. 6](#).

^g [Rom. 5](#); [Lk. 6](#).

^h [Jn. 10](#); [1 T\[im?\]](#) [1](#).

^h [Jn. 10](#); [1 T\[im?\]](#) [1](#).

ⁱ [1 Jn. 33](#) [sic!]; [Rom. 8](#); Book of [Wisdom 2](#); [Ps. 44](#).

ⁱ [1 Jn. 33](#) [sic!]; [Rom. 8](#); Book of [Wisdom 2](#); [Ps. 44](#).

^j *Canticum electorum* (song of the elect); [Gen. 32](#); *Finis cantici* (end of the song).

^j *Canticum electorum* (song of the elect); [Gen. 32](#); *Finis cantici* (end of the song).

^k [Ps. 54](#).

attains God's radiance, in the light, to the light.^k ^lThe Lord is **P. 213** referring to this when he says, 'No one can snatch out of my hand the sheep whom my Father has given to me'.^l ^{22 m}The interpretation of this passage is the pasture of the sheep, which is written down in heaven.^m ⁿFor after all the slaughtering it says, 'Oh, Lord, awake. Why do you turn your face away from me? Help me for your name's sake, so that my feet are grounded upon the rock. Then I will say: You did it alone. Then I will not permit my lips to be bound shut from proclaiming in your great Church the righteousness which began with you alone'.ⁿ

XIII

^oThe genuine Christendom which is foreknown for eternal life is built on such a foundation,^o ^pso that one can learn to be on guard and do away with the leaven of the villainous men of learning, who make the pure Word of God into a leaven with their worm-eaten belly-aching.^p ^qFor all their teaching brings it about that people brag falsely and presumptuously with untested faith and think that they are manly enough to face all tribulations with their promises, but they do not teach how someone can arrive at such a point.^q

XIV

Look carefully, you elect brother, at [Matthew 16](#) in all its words. ^rThere you will find that no one can believe in Christ unless he first becomes like him.^r ^sMoved through the unbelief which he discovers, the elect man forsakes his entire imaginary faith,^s ^teverything that he has learned, heard or read through the Scriptures. For he sees that an external witness can produce nothing real²³ in him, rather it merely serves the purpose for which it was created.^t ^uTherefore he does not turn to all the talk of inexperienced men, rather he is eager for revelation,^u ^vto say like Peter, who ventures forth before everyone, 'I know **P.**

^k [Ps. 54.](#)

^l [In. 10.](#)

^l [In. 10.](#)

²² [John 10:29.](#)

^m [Ps. 119;](#) [Lk. 10.](#)

^m [Ps. 119;](#) [Lk. 10.](#)

ⁿ [Ps. 40;](#) [Is. 26.](#)

ⁿ [Ps. 40;](#) [Is. 26.](#)

^o [Eph. 2;](#) [Rom. 9.](#)

^o [Eph. 2;](#) [Rom. 9.](#)

^p [Mt. 7, 16, 23;](#) [2 Cor. 2.](#)

^p [Mt. 7, 16, 23;](#) [2 Cor. 2.](#)

^q [Ps. 49.](#)

^q [Ps. 49.](#)

^r [In. 12.](#)

^r [In. 12.](#)

^s [Mt. 7;](#) [Jer. 8.](#)

^s [Mt. 7;](#) [Jer. 8.](#)

^t [Rom. 8 \[:16\]:](#) *Spiritus reddet testimonium etc.* (the Spirit bears witness ...).

²³ kein wesen machen; see Bräuer and Ullmann, 23.

^t [Rom. 8 \[:16\]:](#) *Spiritus reddet testimonium etc.* (the Spirit bears witness ...).

^u [2 Cor. 3;](#) [Mt. 7;](#) [2 Pet. 2.](#)

^u [2 Cor. 3;](#) [Mt. 7;](#) [2 Pet. 2.](#)

^v [Mt. 14, 16.](#)

214 for a fact that Christ is the Son of the living God'.^{v24} ^wThen the unbelief concealed in my flesh and blood is overcome [although] very partially, through the desires, which eat their way through and permeate the mustard seed and the good leaven and break through unbelief everywhere.^w ^xA person must have undergone despair and the very deepest contradiction. He must first have suffered hell if he is to guard himself against the deception of the devouring gates [of hell].^x ^yThe damned and the elect do not accept the same thing.^y ^zThe godless man is grateful beyond measure to accept the Scriptures.^z Where somebody else suffers for him, there he builds a strong faith. But if it is necessary to take a good look at the Lamb who opens up the book, then he doesn't want to lose his soul, doesn't want to become like the Lamb, but wants in his sensual manner to make do with clear texts. That is false.

Even if the whole Scripture would be explained in a human sense to the learned man, he couldn't cope with it, even if he burst apart. ^aHe must wait until it is opened up to him with the key of David on the wine-press, where all his assumed manner is crushed.^a ^bThus he becomes so dispirited that he can find no faith within him, except that he would like to believe rightly. That, then, is the faith which becomes as small as a mustard seed. Then the man must see to it, as he endures the work of God, that he²⁵ grow from day to day in the knowledge of God.^b ^cThen the man is taught solely by God, alone together with him, and by no creature.^c What all creatures know is for him bitter gall, for this reason, because it is a perverted way, from which may God preserve and save all his elect, once they have fallen into it. Let Christ grant that. Amen.

To his dear brother, Hans Zeiss, commander of the Allstedt castle: One thing, dear brother was forgotten in my answer to the contention that suffering should be attributed to Christ alone, as if we would not need to suffer anything, now that he has truly suffered for our sins. It is worth observing out of what sort of delicacy such unseemly rest and **p. 215** unjustified passivity is revealed to us. ^dAdam is a model of Christ for harm, Christ the opposite.^d ^eThe disobedience of the creatures is made up for by the obedience of the Word, which becomes flesh in a natural sense, just as our fleshly nature in the part, through the effect of faith, must in part fall away, as it happened to the whole Christ, our head.^e ^fTherefore Christ expiated the entire harm of Adam so that the parts should cleave to the

^v [Mt. 14, 16](#).

²⁴ See [Matt. 16:16](#).

^w [Mt. 7](#) [*sic*; should be [Mt. 17](#)]; [1 Sam. 2](#).

^w [Mt. 7](#) [*sic*; should be [Mt. 17](#)]; [1 Sam. 2](#).

^x *Contrarium* [Ps. 24](#); take special notice.

^x *Contrarium* [Ps. 24](#); take special notice.

^y [Ps. 49](#).

^y [Ps. 49](#).

^z [Is. 29](#).

^z [Is. 29](#).

^a [Ps. 40](#); [Is. 22](#).

^a [Ps. 40](#); [Is. 22](#).

^b [Lk. 4, 17](#); [Is. 61](#); [2 Cor. 4](#).

²⁵ I am assuming, like Bräuer and Ullmann, 23, that the 'es' in the original text is a misprint for 'er'.

^b [Lk. 4, 17](#); [Is. 61](#); [2 Cor. 4](#).

^c [Is. 54](#); [Jn. 6](#).

^c [Is. 54](#); [Jn. 6](#).

^d [Rom. 5](#).

^d [Rom. 5](#).

^e [Eph. 2](#).

^e [Eph. 2](#).

^f [Col. 1](#).

whole, as the holy messenger of God says clearly: 'I fulfil that which is still lacking to the sufferings of Christ; the Church suffers as his body'.^f ²⁶Paul could not suffer for the churches except as a member awaiting his duty. ^gWe must all follow in the footsteps of Christ, armed with such thoughts.^g ^hHere no gloss helps men who think to overcome the works righteous in a material way,^h ⁱand in fact poison the world still worse with imaginary faith than did the others with loutish works.ⁱ ^jHence, because they are incapable of making proper distinctions, they are still *neophiti* (untested persons)^j ^kwho should not be pastors of souls but still for a good long while remain *chatecumini* (diligent pupils of the work of God) and not teach until they themselves are taught by God.^k

This writing of mine is still unsuitable for showing to the mad world. I must still think to explain this writing in all its chapters with my [citation of] Scripture chapters, for the ruination of the fleshly scribes. For among them the imaginary flesh has permitted all sorts of knavery.^l Therefore it cannot now be printed, because this would amount to sending it out unprotected against those who are, in their own opinion, well armed. You should know, too, that they attribute this teaching to Abbot Joachim and with great mockery call it an 'Eternal Gospel'. I hold Abbot Joachim in great respect. I have read him only on Jeremiah. But my teaching is much superior. I accept it not from him but from the utterance of God, as I want to prove at an appropriate time on the basis of the whole Bible. Let the matter rest for the moment [p. 216](#) and let us at all times faithfully preserve copies of our writings. Given, the Wednesday after St. Andrew's²⁷ in 1523.

Thomas Müntzer, your brother in the Lord.

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Is There Ancestor Worship in the Old Testament?

Andrew Chiu

^f [Col. 1.](#)

²⁶ See [Col. 1:24.](#)

^g [1 Pet. 2, 4.](#)

^g [1 Pet. 2, 4.](#)

^h [Rom. 4.](#)

^h [Rom. 4.](#)

ⁱ [Mt. 5;](#) [1 Tim. 1;](#) [2 Tim. 1.](#)

ⁱ [Mt. 5;](#) [1 Tim. 1;](#) [2 Tim. 1.](#)

^j [Is. 5.](#)

^j [Is. 5.](#)

^k [In. 6;](#) [Is. 54;](#) [Jer. 31.](#)

^k [In. 6;](#) [Is. 54;](#) [Jer. 31.](#)

^l [1 Cor. 2;](#) [Mt. 7.](#)

^l [1 Cor. 2;](#) [Mt. 7.](#)

²⁷ December 2.