

Letter of Conrad Grebel et. al. to Thomas Müntzer

Peace, grace, and mercy from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord be with us all, Amen.

Dear Brother Thomas.

For the sake of God, please do not let it surprise you that we address you without title and ask you as a brother henceforth to exchange ideas with us by correspondence, and that we, unsolicited and unknown to you, have dared to initiate such future dialogue. God's Son, Jesus Christ, who offers himself as the only Master and Head to all who are to be saved and commands us to be brethren to all brethren and believers through the one common Word, has moved and impelled us to establish friendship and brotherhood and to bring the following theses to your attention. Also the fact that you have written two booklets on phony faith has led us to write to you. Therefore, if you will accept it graciously for the sake of Christ our Savior, it may, if God wills, serve and work for the good. Amen. . . .

March forward with the Word and create a Christian church with the help of Christ and his rule such as we find instituted in Matthew 18 and practiced in the epistles. Press on in earnest with common prayer and fasting, in accord with faith and love without being commanded and compelled. Then God will help you and your lambs to all purity, and the chanting and the tablets will fall away. There is more than enough wisdom and counsel in the Scripture on how to teach, govern, direct, and make devout all classes and all men. Anyone who will not reform or believe and strives against the Word and acts of God and persists therein, after Christ and his Word and rule have been preached to him, and he has been admonished with the three witnesses before the church, such a man we say on the basis of God's Word shall not be put to death but regarded as a heathen and publican and left alone.

Moreover, the gospel and its adherents are not to be protected by the sword, nor [should] they [protect] themselves, which as we have heard through our brother is what you believe and maintain. True believing Christians are sheep among wolves, sheep for the slaughter. They must be baptized in anguish and tribulation, persecution, suffering, and death, tried in fire, and must reach the fatherland of eternal rest not by slaying the physical but the spiritual. They use neither worldly sword nor war, since killing has ceased with them entirely, unless indeed we are still under the old law, and even there (as far as we can know) war was only a plague after they had once conquered the Promised Land. No more of this.

On the subject of baptism, your writing pleases us well, and we ask for further instruction from you. We are taught that without Christ's rule of binding and loosing, even an adult should not be baptized. The Scriptures describe baptism for us, that it signifies the washing away of sins by

faith and the blood of Christ (that the nature of the baptized and believing one is changing before and after), that it signifies one has died and shall (die) to sin and walks in newness of life and Spirit and one will surely be saved if one through the inward baptism lives the faith according to this meaning, so that the water does not strengthen and increase faith and give a very great comfort and last resort on the deathbed, as the scholars at Wittenberg say. Also that it does not save, as Augustine, Tertullian, Theophylact, and Cyprian taught, thus dishonoring faith and the suffering of Christ for mature adults and dishonoring the suffering of Christ for unbaptized infants. . . . we hold that all children who have not attained the knowledge to discern between good and evil and have not eaten of the tree of knowledge are surely saved through the suffering of Christ, the new Adam, who has restored the life that has been distorted, because they would have been subject to death and damnation only if Christ had not suffered, not afterward risen to the infirmity of our broken nature, unless it can be proved to us that Christ did not die for children. . . . We beg you not to use or adopt the old rites of the antichrist, such as sacrament, mass, signs, etc. Hold to the Word alone and administer' as all emissaries should, especially you and Carlstadt and you will be doing more than all the preachers of all nations.

Consider us your brethren and read this epistle as our expression of great joy and hope toward you through God. Admonish, comfort, and strengthen us as you are well able. Pray to the Lord God for us that he will come to the aid of our faith, for we are very ready to believe. And if God grants it to us to pray, we too will intercede for you and for all that we may all walk according to our calling and commitment. May God grant us this through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen. . .

Conrad Grebel, Andreas Castelberg(er), Felix Mantz, Hans Ockenfuss, Bartlime Pur, Heinrich Aberli, and your other brethren (God willing) in Christ. Until another communication, we who have written this to you wish for you and all of us and all your flock the true Word of God, true faith, love, and hope, with all peace and grace from God through Christ Jesus, Amen.