

Date sent: 3 December 1554

Date received:

Writer: Frankfurt congregation

Recipient: English exiles in Strasbourg

Location of origin: Frankfurt

Destination: Strasbourg

Original language: English

Ref: Denbighshire Record Office, Plas Power MSS, DD/PP/839 41-2

Transcript of Later copy

Other Versions: *Troubles* xxiii-vi.

To our louing bretherne & Countremen at Straszburg¹

Grace, mercy & peace. As it is² ever most true, so at this present we feel most sensibly that wheresoeuer god laithe the foundation to buylde his glorie, ther he continueth till he bring the same to a perfect work.³ All praise & thankes be to him⁴ therefore, that hath so moved yo[u]r hartes, that in no point you seme⁵ to forslow yo[u]r diligence to the fortherance of the same. And as this worke⁶ is of most excellencie, so thadversiarie

¹ Not in *Troubles* which begins with 'Grace mercy and peace, &c'. This letter was carried to Strasbourg by Edmund Grindal and Richard Chambers, *Troubles* xxiii. It has a distinctly sharper tone than the previous letters from the Frankfurt congregation which might have been linked to the arrival of John Knox who was the first to sign.

² *Troubles* has 'was'.

³ *Troubles* has 'present worke'.

⁴ *Troubles* has 'All thanks and praise be vnto him'.

⁵ *Troubles* has 'so as in no point ye seeme'.

⁶ *Troubles* has 'the worke'.

ceaseth not⁷ most craftelye tundermyne it, or at lest throghe false reportes & defacing of the worke begon[n]e to stave the labourers whiche sholde travell in the finishing therof. But truthe euer cleaveth it self: & as the son[n]e consumeth the clowdes, so misreports by triall ar confounded. Our bretherne sent from you can certefie you at lenghe[sic] touchinge the particulars of yo[u]r letters⁸, to whom we have in all things agreed which semed expedient for the state of this congregation. As for certeyne ceremonies which thorder of the contrie will not beare necessarelie we omitt⁹ with as littell alteration as is possible (which in yo[u]r letters you require¹⁰) so that no adversarie is so impudent, that dare either blame our doctrine of imperfection, or els us of mutabilitie¹¹, except he be altogether willfull ignorant, rather sekeing how to finde fault then to amende.¹² Neither do we dissent from them which lie at the raunson of their blood¹³ for the doctrine, wherof they have made a most worthie confession. And yet we think not that any godly man will stand to the death in the defence of indifferent ceremonies (which as the book specifieth)¹⁴ upon iust causes may be altered & changed. And if the not full using of the book cause the godly to dowte in that trueth wherin before they were persuaded, & to staie their com[m]ing hither according as thei purposed: either it signifieth that they were

⁷ *Troubles* has 'the aduersaries cease not'

⁸ *Troubles* has 'letter'. A reference to the Strasbourg letter of 23 Nov. 1554, *Troubles* xxii-iii, brought by Grindal and Chambers.

⁹ *Troubles* has 'we necessarily omit'. At this stage the Frankfurt congregation were employing the excuse that some 'ceremonies' from the *Book of Common Prayer* were omitted because they were not acceptable to their host city.

¹⁰ *Troubles* has 'ye require'.

¹¹ *Troubles* has 'or vs of mutabilitie'. One of the reasons for not making any changes to the *Book of Common Prayer* given by Strassburg in their letter of 23 Nov 1554.

¹² *Troubles* has 'finde faultes, then to amend them'.

¹³ *Troubles* has 'raunsome of their blouds'. One of the reasons for not making any changes to the *Book of Common Prayer* given by Strasbourg in their letter of 23 Nov 1554

¹⁴ *Troubles* has 'in the defence of ceremonies, whiche (as the booke specifieth)'. The description of ceremonies as 'indifferent' and the assertion that, if necessary, they could be altered, marked a shift in tone.

slenderly taught,¹⁵ which for breche of a ceremonie will refuse such a singular benefitt: or els that you haue heard them misreported by some false bretherne, who to hinder this worthie enterpryse spare not to sowe in every place [42] store of such poor reasons. Last of all it remayneth, that you writ¹⁶, that ther first of Februarye next ye will come¹⁷ to help to set in ordre & establishe this churche accordingly. Which thing as we most wishe for yo[u]r companies sake & for that ye might see our godly ordre here observed¹⁸: so we put you out of doubt, that for to appoint a iorney for thestablishing of any ceremonies¹⁹ shulde be more to your charges & pains than any generall profett²⁰, except ye were determynd to remayne with us lenger then tow[sic] monthes, as you writ to our countrimen of Disborogh²¹ & Emden. Which letters notwithstanding ar now staid, & as appeareth, we never the nere.

We referr the rest to oure bretherne Mr Chambers and Mr Grindall²², who by their diligent inquisition have learned so farr of our state, as we writt to you²³ in our former letters. That is that we haue a churche freely graunted, to preache godes worde purely, to minister the sacramentes sincerely, & to execute discipline truelie.²⁴ And as touchinge our booke we will practise it so farr as Godes worde doth assure it & the state of this

¹⁵ *Troubles* has 'very slenderly taught'. A further tonal shift was made here when objections were dismissed as arising from ignorance or misrepresentation.

¹⁶ *Troubles* has 'ye write'. At this point the Frankfurt congregation moved onto the offensive regarding the offer that the Strasbourg exiles would come to Frankfurt on 1 Feb 1555.

¹⁷ *Troubles* has 'yow will come'.

¹⁸ *Troubles* has 'oure godly orders alreadie here obserued'.

¹⁹ *Troubles* has 'off Ceremonies'.

²⁰ *Troubles* has 'your charges then anie generall profit'. This was a stark warning that the Frankfurt congregation would not accept the imposition of 'ceremonies' by the other exiles.

²¹ *Troubles* has 'Densborow'. Duisburg. These letters from Strasbourg to Duisburg and Emden are not extant. The suggestion that the other exiles should stay two months, long enough to establish the 'ceremonies', and then leave, offended the Frankfurt congregation.

²² *Troubles* has 'Maister Chambers and maister Grindall'.

²³ *Troubles* has 'wrote vnto yow'

²⁴ Discipline was explicitly included as a third mark by which a true church could be recognised, compared to the two marks in John Scory's letter, 3 Sept 1554, DD/PP/839 31-2.

countrey permitt.²⁵ Fare ye well. From then glishe congregation at Franckford²⁶ this 30
Decemb. (1554)

Your loving brethrne²⁷

[1st column] John Knoxe

John Foxe

John Mackebray

John Bale

Tho(mas) Wood

Will. Williams

[2nd column] John Stanton

John Hollingam

Tho(mas) Kent

Geo(rge) Whetenhall

Tho(mas) Whetenhall

[3rd column] Michael Gill

William Walton

John Sanford

Edmund Sutton

William Whittingham

²⁵ This formulation turns round the more conciliatory phrasing at the start of the letter by saying that the *Book of Common Prayer* will be followed where it has the assurance of God's Word and the permission of the host city.

²⁶ *Troubles* only has 'At Franckf.'

²⁷ *Troubles* has 'louinge frinds' and the list in a different order which also includes William Kethe.