

Date sent: 15 December 1554

Date received:

Writer: Jean de St André¹

Recipient: William Whittingham

Location of origin: Geneva

Destination: Frankfurt

Original language: Latin

Ref: Denbighshire Record Office, Plas Power MSS, DD/PP/839 43-4

Transcript of Later copy/English translation of copy

Other Versions: None

To the most illustrious Dominus William Whittingham, a man of no common piety and learning, most sound brother and friend. At Frankfort.

Greetings. Since we are caught between a sacred duty and a rock,² we have not omitted to ask anyone returning from your England what has happened about our beloved brother Whittingham. Behold – most opportunely, though belatedly, your letter is delivered to us.³ From it we received great consolation, certainly – all the greater to the extent that your silence had left us in longer and more lasting suspense, especially when your affairs are in such great confusion and when too the tyranny of that blood-thirsty Jezebel rages

¹ Jean de Saint André was a pastor in Geneva from 1552 till his death in 1557 and was Secretary of the Company of Pastors.

² The equivalent of 'between a rock and a hard place'.

³ During his previous travels in Edward VI's reign Whittingham had stayed in Geneva and made many friends there. Whittingham's letter from Frankfurt to his Genevan friends [not now extant] which had only recently reached Geneva gave the first news of his safe escape from England. Although Whittingham had probably intended to return to Geneva he felt called to stay with other English exiles in Frankfurt because of the offer of a church.

so fiercely against all the pious. Your arrival would without doubt have been most pleasing to us. But because the Lord calls you elsewhere and girds you for a work most useful to his Church, who are we to prefer our feelings – though they flow from friendly and Christian association – to his will and the preservation of his flock? Far be this from us. But rather do we give thanks to God, who has imparted such a spirit to you that you regard all things as secondary in comparison with the calling of Christ and the strengthening of your brethren. Happy, thrice happy is Frankfort, which our Lord Jesus Christ established as host for his unwearied soldiers, which he gave as a place of asylum for his fugitives and afflicted ones. Only let there be no disagreeableness. We have seen the liturgy.⁴ We found nothing in it alien to the order which we observe here in our church, apart from communicating the Supper in the private homes of the sick and the provision⁵ for a funeral and an address commending the life of the deceased. From those things we hold back, since we are fearful of superstition.⁶ Otherwise we will willingly accept it if it were fully permitted. I do not see what there is in that liturgy to be severely censured. I do not know whether this is the one about which you speak. It was brought to us from the most recent Frankfort fair⁷ by Nicolaus Barberius, confirmed by the subscription of the minister, the dean, and many others, and among the English who subscribed, your name too has a place. As far as the liturgy observed in England goes, so

⁴ It is not clear which liturgy is meant here. In his letter, Whittingham appeared to have been complaining about the *Book of Common Prayer* but later in the letter St André referred to 'the liturgy observed in England' which Calvin had not seen and which was distinct from the liturgy mentioned here. The liturgy circulating at the Frankfurt book fair in the autumn of 1554 was the *Liturgica Sacra* written by Valerand Poullain for the French exile congregation in Frankfurt. Whittingham and the other English exiles who had first arrived in Frankfurt had signed the *Liturgica Sacra, Troubles* vi-vii.

⁵ Or 'pomp'.

⁶ Saint André's two criticisms of the liturgy were the provision for communion for the sick and a funeral service and sermon; these were regarded by Geneva as 'superstitious'.

⁷ *Nundinae* has consistently been translated as 'fair' or 'market' (and *nundinarii* on its one appearance as 'market people') rather than 'festival'. Here is meant the famous Frankfurt book fair.

far is it from being the case that the Dominus Calvin approved it with his own verdict that he has not ever seen it.⁸ But how the people can in a lowered tone of voice follow – without confusion – the minister as he prays in the pulpit⁹ and takes the lead, we do not see. And that Frankfort liturgy of yours does not seem to indicate this. For it says ‘follow me *by yourselves* in these words as I take the lead’ – which seems to me to sound as if the minister were saying, ‘follow my words *in your heart*’. But as far as putting up with or avoiding the keeping of a custom with Jews goes,¹⁰ though you should find few, indeed scarcely one, who was not inflexibly stubborn – in this matter it does not seem to be our job to make a pronouncement, nor are we able to prescribe limits for anyone. But each one must seek a spirit of discrimination, judgement, fortitude, and steadfastness. Instructed by this, he would be able to discern with whom it was permitted for him to associate and to what extent, and armed with this he would be able to convict the rebellious and to check the stubborn and to stop the mouth of those who speak evil. But too great familiarity is by all means to be avoided, save with those – if there are some at hand – who hold out some promise of a sounder mind. But I am declaring freely and familiarly what I would do if I were with you, my friend and my brother. I will await your judgement on this matter. All the brethren greet you in return. The Dominus Calvin greets you, to whom I showed your letter. Likewise our Raimond, his wife, my sister Maldonatius’s widow, my wife, Rachel, Jacob, and Daniel, finally all our families greet you. After your departure, the Lord increased our family with one Elizabeth.

⁸ The Latin Summary of the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* was only sent by Whittingham and Knox on 11 Dec 1554 [DD/PP/839 65-8; *Troubles* xxviii-xxxiii; *Calv. Op.* No 2059] and could not have reached Geneva by the time Saint André wrote.

⁹ *Suggestus*, a raised platform, is attested by Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List*, in the meaning ‘pulpit’. The phrase *in suggestu* could also mean ‘at his prompting’.

¹⁰ Whittingham's charge that 'Jewish' ceremonies were being used was also picked up by John Bale who refuted it, see Bale's Memo on the Catharytes, IT Petyt MS 538/47 fos 473r-v.

Maldonatus, that holy man, your host, left us – to enjoy better good things, certainly, and he encountered a death which is happier than any happiness of this life. Greet the Dominus Knox the Scot, who set out recently from here to you.¹¹ I do not doubt but that he has described to you the condition of our families – inasmuch as he lived on familiar terms with us, in accordance with his humanity – and the whole network of the church. [44] Greet all the brethren who labour there faithfully in the work of the Lord. May the Lord be with all of you in his Spirit, and may he bless your pious and holy undertakings. I do not know whether the Dominus Thomas Lever¹² the Englishman has come to you – a man notable, to be sure, both for piety and erudition. He lived with us in our house for some months, then set out to Tigurum [*Zurich*] to your people when he was called by them. If the Lord has perhaps added him to your band, greet him lovingly, I pray, in my name. And do not omit the Lady Hooper.¹³ May the Lord strengthen and console her. Her condition will be judged most wretched by this blind world, but before God and his angels more excellent than all excellence. Fare well, and keep us continually in mind. In Geneva, 15 December 1554.

Yours from my heart with all zeal,

St Andre

¹¹ Knox probably arrived in Frankfurt around the third week in November 1554.

¹² Garrett no. 271 219-21.

¹³ Anne, the wife of Bishop John Hooper who was in prison awaiting execution for heresy.