

Date sent: 1 May 1555

Date received:

Writer: John Knox¹

Recipient: William Williams,² Thomas Wood,³ Anthony Gilby,⁴ ?Thomas Huyck⁵

Location of origin: Geneva

Destination: Frankfurt

Original language: English

Ref: Denbighshire Record Office, Plas Power MSS, DD/PP/839 45-47

Transcript of Later copy

Other Versions: None

To his most assured and wealbeloved brethern Mr Williams, Mr Wood, Mr Gilby, Mr Eelk or to any of them att Franckfoord⁶

Dominus prope est: et ideo fidens non festinabit

S.P. I have received yo(u)r letters ryght dearly beloved brethern the last of Aprile⁷
[p.46] remaininge at Geneva. The contents wherof war somewhat dolorus to me not onlie for you whome I understand to be in no small anguissie, but mor for those who

¹ John Knox, Garrett 214; ODNB. This letter from Knox is not found in his *Works* and has not previously been known. It demonstrates how he kept in close touch with his supporters in Frankfurt and helps to date Knox's departure from Geneva during the summer of 1555.

² William Williams, Garrett 335-6; ODNB

³ Thomas Wood, Garrett 343; ODNB

⁴ Anthony Gilby, Garrett 161-2; ODNB

⁵ 'Mr Eelk' is probably Thomas Huycke/Huick/Duwick who had published an English translation of the Genevan liturgy, *The forme of prayers* (London, 1550) check. Fines H. 38, Garrett 149-50. ?ODNB

⁶ In addition to the named individuals this is addressed to all those remaining at Frankfurt who had previously supported Knox and his views on the liturgy.

⁷ The letters from Frankfurt are not extant. They had arrived in Geneva on 30 April.

blinded by effections cannot espy thare manifest impietie.⁸ God illuminat thare eis to his glory. Amen. Dear brethren be not discouraged albeit in a iust caus you be vincust,⁹ suche hath bein the condition of Goddes elect from the begyn(n)einge. The veritie hath never triumphed till first it appeared to be trodden under foot. Suyr I am that man, aungell, nor deivill ar not able to improve this conclusion. No religion pleaseht¹⁰ god except y(a)t which his awen wourd doht assure. For albeit the vauvn vitt of man or the malicious craft of the deivill can in presence of man have many apparent reassons to the contrarye, yit when acomptes shall be maid befor that Judge who for bearing vitnes to the veritie was dampned by wrongus iudgement, hie shall not be found to varie from theise his wourdes already plainly pronunsed. In vaine do thei worship me teaching the doctrines, preceptes of men etc. To whose iustice seat & iudgement in that casse we boldlee may appeall, nothing fearing the corrupt iudgement of man. By whome albeit we be now dampned as Schismatickes I dowbt not but that day we shall be absolved to thare confusion, onles God call them schortlie to repentaunce. The mater is lyght in the eis of man, but in godes sighte it is somewhat, to truble by tyranny (thei shall never be able to avoid it) two or thre gaddered together in Christes name. But this matter I may not now prosecute. nethar yet can I write any thing according to your expectation, being impeaded no less by trouble of mynde then corporall seiknes. I perceave by yo(u)r letters that at the writing therof ye had understaund nothing of my mynd, nor travails at Basill¹¹ which I repent. For I iudge that the knowledge therof myght have saved my brother

⁸ Knox's colourful language refers to the success of the opposite or 'Coxian' party in the disputes at Frankfurt, something which had upset him.

⁹ Probably a variation of 'vanquished'.

¹⁰ The transposition of the 'h' and the 't' is characteristic of Knox's letters.

¹¹ Knox had sent another letter, now lost, to Frankfurt and had been in negotiations with Basle most probably seeking a refuge for those who wished to leave Frankfurt.

Whittingham moche travell.¹² I suppon ye have received the letters already,¹³ and therefore in two wourdes will I conclude the same. God will never leave his afflicted flocke without some comfort. My brother Mr Whittingham was not cumed att the writing of these presentes which amonges otheres cares partlie troubles me. Yf necessitie compell me to depart befor his cuming wherof I wold be verrey sory, then will I leave in memoriall¹⁴ what I think expedient with Mr Calvyn to whom the contrary have written partelee excusing themself yat thei have put ordre to there maters without his counsell asked, partlee rejosing that the mest part of you ar brought to thare opinion.¹⁵ Thei specifye in there letter certaine thinges which thei have omitted in thare book¹⁶ but no mention is maid that thei bracke the promesse & ordinaunce of the churche.¹⁷ And it may appear that thei iudged it no churche befor ther order sett,¹⁸ for thus thei write. We have placed a Pastor, two ministers, four seinours, and two deacons, and we have cawsed the hole churche (a few excepted) subscribe the englishe articules etc.¹⁹ Mr Sampson hath also written to Mr Calvyn,²⁰ who in on parte of his letter mackes mention that some of you not contente with

¹² One of the other main protagonists in the Frankfurt Troubles and a keen supporter of Knox, William Whittingham, Garrett 327-30; ODNB, was currently on a tour of cities to find a refuge. His trip was mentioned in the Frankfurt secession group's letter to Sulerius at Basle, 6 June 1555, DD/PP/839 48; and mentioned *Troubles* 1.

¹³ The letters now lost which Knox had written to Frankfurt since his expulsion from the city 28? March 1555.

¹⁴ Since Knox is planning to leave Geneva shortly for his trip to marry Marjorie Bowes, he intends to put down his version of the Frankfurt events and leave it with Calvin for Whittingham to collect when he finally arrives in Geneva. This memorial might be the origin of Knox's 'Narrative' of the events of March 1555, *Works* IV 41-9.

¹⁵ The letter of Richard Cox et al to Calvin, 5 April 1555, [English translation] *O.L.* II 753-5; Latin from original at Geneva, *Calv. Op.* 15 No 2178 cols 551-4.

¹⁶ The Book of Common Prayer and the source of much of the Frankfurt controversy.

¹⁷ As his 'Narrative' demonstrates, Knox regarded the breach of promise as a major source of controversy, a rather different emphasis from the one expressed in the *Troubles*.

¹⁸ An interesting ecclesiological point as to when the Frankfurt congregation became a 'true church'. Knox is assuming that his opponents were justifying their actions on the basis that they were 'establishing' an English exile church at Frankfurt which had not hitherto existed when they introduced their 'order' and a full ministerial team.

¹⁹ This is a direct quotation from the 5 Apr letter from Cox et al. which Calvin must have shown Knox and possibly allowed him to take a copy.

²⁰ Although concerning the Frankfurt Troubles, the letter from Thomas Sampson, Garrett 279-81; ODNB, to Calvin, 23 February 1555, *O.L.* I 170-2, does not seem to fit this description. There was probably another letter written c. April which has not survived.

ordoures tacken intend to seperat your selves from the church, which he cannot excuse on your part. Notwithstanding, Mr Calvyn so far as I can perceave thinks quiet seperation mor expedient then unquiet assemble.²¹ God knoweht what is most expedient for Christes poore flocke, & his providence is not suddandlye espyed by our rude and dull witts. My old diseases do so truble me that with great paine I may looke on my booke which is the cause that I write so slenderly att this present.²² The god of comfort & consolation by Jesus Christe perfourme in you the sam good work that of his [p. 47] meare mercy hee hath begun to thadvancement of his most holee name, and yo(u)r ioy everlasting. Amen. And the mighty Spreit of our Lord Jesus assist & comfort, governe & defend you in all the actions of this wreched lief. My most unfened com(m)endations to all those that will accept the sam in good part.²³ I byd you hartlie well to fayr. The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus rest with you all. Amen. att Geneva the first of may 1555.

Your brother with trubled hart

Johne Knox²⁴

²¹ According to Knox, Calvin, who had long experience of disunity amongst different Protestant groups, was advocating the pragmatic view that major disruption within a congregation was worse than a quiet separation of one group.

²² After his spell in the French galleys, Knox suffered chronic health problems. He is apologising for the brevity of his letter.

²³ After the recent disputes, not everyone in the Frankfurt congregation would be prepared to accept Knox's best wishes.

²⁴ The 18th-century copyist [probably Thomas Lloyd] has attempted to reproduce a signature which suggests he had the original letter in front of him.