

Date sent: 23 December 1555

Date received:

Writer: Christopher Goodman

Recipient: John a Lasco

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Destination: ? Frankfurt

Original language: Latin

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Transcript of Later copy/English translation of copy

Other Versions: None

[53] Christopher Goodman to Dominus A Lasco¹

If we had any doubt at all concerning either the greatness of your piety or even the services afforded by your humanity, most distinguished man and most esteemed father, there would be need of a longer excuse, by which we might render some account to your excellence of our silence of such long duration – you whose weighty counsel and singular zeal for piety (not without great solace and advantage for all of us) we have experienced. As indeed we would confess that this was received by us with the greatest

eagerness and readiness of spirit and to be such as

[54] ought to be consigned to forgetfulness by no one but the most ungrateful of all, thus also do we hope that this our dutiful service – such as it is – not seem to your prudence to have been omitted for so long a time save for strong reasons. But, that you might receive some taste of our plans, we have decided [???] ² your piety this, which it no less concerns you to know than us to report. The letters which

you most graciously wrote in our favour when we were still with you at Frankfort to D[ominus] P. Martyr at Argentina [*Strasbourg*] and D[ominus] Doctor Marbach at Basle

¹ John à Lasco (Jan Laski) – another example of one of Goodman’s Continental contacts who had spent a substantial amount of time in England.

² If I have not misread the MS (which is possible: *non* – if that’s what it is -- is unusual in that the final *n* doesn’t have the usual serif), something has dropped out. One possibility would be *non <ignorare> decrevimus* = ‘we have determined that your piety not be unaware of this’.

we delivered to each, as was proper. To them they were both most welcome and most longed for, and they were received with the attitude of mind with which it is fitting that the letters of so great a man be received. But, as we have no doubt of this concerning D[ominus] P. Martyr, thus in the case of Dominus Marbach we perceived it in very fact – we, to whom for this reason alone he with great graciousness gave shelter,³ promising all his effort and zeal

that he might oblige your excellence and faithfully promote our cause, which you warmly commended to him. Nor did he only promise, but he was most ready to fulfill the promise in very fact. And he would assuredly have fulfilled it more often, had not the mixed response of our people – then with you – pulled us back, contrary to what we had decided in our mind, from pressing the man. Therefore, when our business,

impeded, as you know, by a change of plans, furnished no opportunity of testing his disposition further and we had no certain knowledge of what he would do in our cause or whether we would need his help hereafter, we were not indeed able in such changing circumstances of events and of attitudes to write anything certain to your excellence – as had been our intention. But afterwards, upon the arrival of our people from Frankfort, whom we had earlier expected at Basle,

when it was decided by the judgement of all of us, after common counsel was taken, that we leave Basle – which also seemed advisable to you – and set out together for Geneva, so great was the haste for the journey, that not even then indeed were we able conveniently to write to you. You know that this excuse, such as it is, is true. But in fact we do not profess that it is such as would be able absolutely to defend so long a delay in our duty toward you.

Therefore, whatever beyond this is still wanting in us – and not a little is wanting – forgive in accordance with your serious-mindedness and directness. And, though advising you of this should now seem late and untimely, yet, lest the very great kindness which that man furnished to us for your sake alone should utterly escape you, we have decided that it should be done, late rather than never, that you might understand better what his disposition toward you is like

and that he in turn might perceive the more easily, when the occasion presents itself, that you are not unaware of this. But now, hear briefly how our affairs are going at Geneva. As far as pertains to the city itself, we perceive that it is most peaceful; that all things are disposed, established, and administered with great order and tranquillity; that the worship of God is pure and most religiously observed; that the ministers exert no mean effort; that the magistrates

show singular reverence toward God and a splendid zeal for the advancement of those who are zealous for it. By them – not many days after our arrival – we were with great kindness at the behest and at the intercession of Dominus John Calvin, a man of rare piety and learning, coopted into the number of citizens. Afterwards they spontaneously

³ Or, more weakly, 'whom ... he received'.

offered a temple – which they had promised before -- most suitable for our purpose and situated in a very convenient place

and which we, when we were asked, shared with the Italians, to whom it is equally satisfactory. Moreover, as is entirely right, we honour Dominus Calvin in the role of a most kind father, and we freely make use of his friendship as often as there is need. He in turn – such is his modesty – acknowledges us like sons. May God be praised⁴ that the justice of our cause is of more concern to him than are the letters of certain of our people – men, perhaps, of greater reputation than piety – letters festering with reproaches

and stuffed with false accusations. To attack us and tear us to pieces as they please with foul words was not enough for them, unless they reviled quite abusively this most holy man too, who has deserved most well of the church of God,

[55] reviling him as the patron of subversive people and the sole fan of blind gladiators⁵ – for so they write – because he did not despise us in the way that they do and because he allowed us some place here – us, whom those people judge unworthy of fellowship with them. But I would advise them that they extinguish the bile that has been rashly kindled and quickly set a limit to their rage, lest when by their own misfortune they find out how hard it is to

kick against the pricks and to resist known truth or lest when in vain they strive to harm those whom they ought to embrace with fraternal charity and proceed to cling more tenaciously to their own dreams than to the divine oracles, they at length accomplish nothing more than to expose themselves to the whole world and to betray what the champions of the true Church are like in England, the members of which they now persecute with such vigour and hostility in Germany. If

the strife which is unwelcome to us quite pleases them, why do they not move away from the brethren, who wish them well, and rather prepare themselves and draw themselves up against the Papists? Or if this is less pleasing to them, at least let them openly join forces with those whose part they now so strongly take, and let them not be ashamed of the name of those whose role they so readily take. May God the greatest and best⁶ grant them a sounder mind and may he direct our efforts toward his honour alone –

a thing which we long for – he who sees our thoughts as well and is the uncorrupt judge of each side. The liturgy which our people despised at Frankfort is permitted to us here with the approval and judgement of Dominus Calvin. It now rushes to press so that all might at last see what the efforts of our people were like. Dominus Knox has not yet come back to us from Scotland, yet we daily expect his arrival.

⁴ ‘May God be praised’ is in parentheses in the MS, but *sit* has to be taken as the main verb of the clause, on which the following accusative and infinitive construction depends. This may suggest that the parentheses are editorial and represent some less drastic punctuation in the original.

⁵ An *andabata* was a gladiator made to fight in a helmet without any eyeholes.

⁶ *Deus O[ptimus] M[aximus]* echoing the standard Roman designation *IOM = Juppiter Optimus Maximus*.

We have good hope that we will see him soon, because a letter recently came to us from him. May the Lord Jesus, the fount of life and welfare, preserve you as long as possible alive and well for the upbuilding of his Church. 23 December (1555). In Geneva.

Most zealous for you, Christopher Goodman.