

**Date sent: n.d. aft. 28 March 1555 [1st letter]**

**Date received:**

**Writer: Christopher Goodman**

**Recipient: Peter Martyr Vermigli**

**Location of origin: ? Frankfurt**

**Destination: Strasbourg**

**Original language: Latin**

**Ref: Denbighshire Record Office, Plas Power MSS, DD/PP/839 50-52**

**Transcript of Later copy/English translation of copy**

**Other Versions: None**

A copy of a letter from Mr Christopher Goodman to P. Martyr

I would now have to write much, most holy father and most esteemed teacher, if either I were to render worthy thanks now for your singular humanity towards me and for so many benefits which I have now received over a long period of time and which I experienced in sufficient abundance either from dwelling with you sweetly or spending time with you usefully in your house or I were to describe at length, in keeping with the nature of the affairs and their novelty, all the things which are happening here and which you would especially want to know about. But those things I will omit, since your

modesty was never in the habit of being concerned about them, provided it was clear what was happening to the souls of those who owe you the most, and I will keep those things in mind which I ought also to display in a letter. But as for these affairs or uproars at Frankfort which Satan has recently aroused among the English, with great risk for the whole church and very great trouble for souls, lest they grow together in pure religion and Christian concord – with them I would wish your piety to be fully

acquainted, not only so that you might know for certain the condition of this church, but also so that you might understand that not everything is as it is said to be and as it was reported to you and that neither is this straightforwardness in the conduct of affairs to be found among those who wish and desire to seem to be so. But a still incomplete

knowledge of events and plans will not permit me to report everything the way I should like to. I will nevertheless report a few things of those matters which have been sufficiently examined and are well known to me.

When I was still with you a number of false rumours were being spread about certain brethren here to the effect that they despised our little English book<sup>1</sup> [*libellus*] and regarded it as impious and condemned. I know indeed that these rumours filled the ears of your piety – and mine, especially during my journey and on the road, through the lies of certain people who met us and would have set out for Argentina [*Strasbourg*] with letters if they had not happened to meet up with us. For they reported these and other things far

worse, deeds of the same sort and stitched up lies, as I discovered without doubt when I came here. For there is no one of all those who long from the heart for the true and simple worship of God, with superstitions cut out, who used such words or wanted the little book to be rejected with any feeling of contempt for it. Indeed, all in these parts<sup>2</sup> with whom I have spoken to date (for I have met many if not all) recognize and declare openly

that it was a singular gift of God that they extracted this little book against the wishes of the Papists and in the midst of so many enemies hostile to true piety and religion who opposed our people and caused trouble in this English reformation. And they seek and have always sought that those things in it which are superstitious and impure and which do not benefit churches properly set up – that those things be taken away and that in their place there be substituted things which can be recommended and defended by the word of God. In this matter

they did not follow the counsels of real lightweight or ignorant people – as it pleases some folk to babble on in the spirit of a lie rather than the truth – but the counsels of Calvin and others whose letters I have read and whose judgement I cannot but approve. By them in the beginning of establishing a church which still seems to be free most careful thought was taken that nothing superstitious or impure be admitted, though our adversary the devil always has such tares at hand to be scattered into the field of the Church and he is far more ready and more skillful at pouring them out than we are able or careful at fending them off. One group, led by their counsel and by other just arguments,

**[51]** reckoned that the little book was not to be taken up again unless it was cleaned up. But another group judged that it was quite perfect and pure and had no need to be cleaned up. But at last it was agreed between the two groups – and that, as I hear, on the advice of Dominus Lever<sup>3</sup> – that our people (for I wish rather to be counted in their number) should put together some form of words to be retained in church for common prayers and other rites and those of the other group should get their form of words together.

---

<sup>1</sup> Though it is slightly over-translating, I am representing *libellus* as ‘little book’, to make a distinction with *liber*. Goodman can in fact use the two words interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> *Harum partium* could also mean ‘who belong to these groups’.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Lever = Garrett no. 271.

When our people had studiously done this – not without hard work and the expenditure of time – a copy, as it had been agreed, was displayed for examination by the whole church. And none found fault with it when it had been so displayed. Our people kept asking in turn that the other group should show a copy of their collection. Then Dominus Lever snatched our book and read from it and from nothing else the things he wanted to be observed and retained. The book was in no way changed,

nor did he extract the things he wanted or reduce them to order, nor did he want the things that had been torn out and extracted in this way to be printed in any one book to avoid confusion on the part of the readers. Since this business did not satisfy the expectation of the majority nor was any concession made, a greater disturbance arose – so much so that one of the magistrates heard this dispute and entered the sacred sanctuary where our people had at that time come together, and, when the matter had been thoroughly investigated,

forced upon them the French liturgy, which many of our people found fault with. But it had been approved and recommended by Dominus Cox, and, that they might at last put an end to their quarrels, he instructed all not to use any other; otherwise he would bring it about that those for whom he had before opened a temple would find it shut as they quarrelled with each other, nor would any place in the city be left for them. Meanwhile, that good man and pious preacher and minister

of our people, as you know, since he had very often said in preaching that many things still remained to be corrected in this our little book – some impure and superstitious things which a church that was well and piously set up could not admit without offence and scandal – and that he was prepared to demonstrate this to anyone, this their own pastor, whom they had before called to themselves in a letter subscribed with their own hand, they accused before the magistrate

of treason against the Emperor and Mary. And at last things reached the point that had not the wisdom of the magistrate, which sniffed out the malice of the accusers, come into play, he would certainly have undergone the risk of capital punishment and would not now have had any place to escape to that was granted by them. This matter offended the spirits of all who have some judgement or piety left as nothing else has. Indeed some are afraid of experiencing the same cruelty

from these defenders of superstitions that the Papists now practice in England. But enough about this, since the present messenger will reveal to your prudence everything in order. But as to what is to be hoped for now from our arrival here, yesterday's meeting is able to show. For our people who came here – for you must be told the truth – cling so tenaciously to the little book that no concord nor any end to the quarrels is

to be hoped for. For they want to concede nothing apart from vestments, genuflections at the reception of the sacrament, and the position of the priest at the north end and any other things there might be which neither the magistrates themselves nor the custom of the place permit. So that it is to be feared that as long as we live here we be forever

subjected to an imposed French liturgy. Therefore, in order to check this obstinacy of theirs, since they allege nothing apart from the authority and esteem

of those good men by whose work this book saw the light and an obstacle lest others flock together here and your opinion, which was, as our people report, displeased at the booklet in only the three matters which I enumerated, and since these things do not seem so great to wise men that other superstitious things in it should be retained or

[52] many good people who are here should either leave this city and flee to another or pass by so great an opportunity to correct or avoid superstition, I would ask your piety to take care lest through their persuasion you should seem, either to the learned now or to posterity hereafter, to have been the patron of any superstition.<sup>4</sup> Farewell.

---

<sup>4</sup> In this final, very complicated sentence, Goodman turns rather harshly on Peter Martyr. The supporters of the BCP adduce only three arguments in support of their position: (1) the authority of those who compiled it (presumably all the greater now that Cranmer is a martyr); (2) the obstacle that rejecting the BCP would put in the way of building up the exile community in Frankfort; and (3) the fact that Peter Martyr is said to have objected to only three things in the Book. It is the last point which is the real issue here. To *prudentes viri* these three arguments do not seem sufficiently strong to justify either (1) – in general – the retention of the other elements of superstition in the BCP (which Peter Martyr has missed if the report is true) or (2) – in particular – putting *boni multi* in Frankfort in the position of being forced to choose between (a) abandoning Frankfort and finding another place of refuge or (b) losing a golden opportunity to purge the liturgy of superstition. The conclusion Goodman draws from all that is that he must try to take out the third argument of the supporters of the BCP by warning Peter Martyr against being taken in: his reputation – both now and for future generations – is on the line.