

**Date sent: 18 March 1556**

**Date received:**

**Writer: Lawrence Humphrey**

**Recipient: Christopher Goodman**

**Location of origin: Basle**

**Destination: Geneva**

**Original language: Latin**

**Ref: Denbighshire Record Office, Plas Power MSS, DD/PP/839 60**

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

**Other Versions: None**

To Dominus Christopher Goodmann, most dear brother  
At Geneva.

[in Hebrew letters] *MSIH*[with a dot under it] *YHWH* [= the anointed of the Lord]<sup>1</sup>  
in the year 1556. 18 March.

Greetings in Christ our Lord. I do not doubt but that you take in good part my silence, which I have employed hitherto. I know that you will attribute it to the presses and the drudgery<sup>2</sup> by which I am overwhelmed and tossed about, not to my own fault. The leisure which I have now found from the vexations of printing -- that I will bestow on my friends, and I will apply a great part of it to writing letters. I wished to at other times, but I was not able to do as I wished. – But what, you will say, was so serious? It is a serious matter, my Goodmann, to greet you, to converse with you,

even if there were nothing besides that. It is a serious matter to give applause to our<sup>3</sup> very fine undertakings. For I see the foundations of the church which you have laid. I pray

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<sup>1</sup> I am taking this, with the following *a*<sup>o</sup>, to be a rather pretentious equivalent of *anno Domini*.

<sup>2</sup> It's difficult to be quite sure what is literal and what is metaphorical in this moan. The second term, *pistrinum*, is literally a bakery or a mill for grinding corn; it was often a place of punishment for slaves and came to be used as a type or metaphor of hard labour or drudgery. The first term, *prelum*, is a wine-press, but is also, by this time, the normal word for a printing-press, which I take to be the referent here.

<sup>3</sup> The MS seems clearly to read *nostris*. It might be tempting to emend to *vestris* (or *vostris*) on the grounds that the original could easily have been misread, but, on the other hand, the sequel goes on to talk about the foundations which 'you' singular, rather than 'you' plural, laid, so it is probably better to retain the inclusive *nostris*.

God that our Lord Jesus Christ might be the corner stone, that the Genevan church might emerge as the pillar of truth and the house of God. I do not doubt that it will be so, if the top corresponds to the foundation. It is your task, my Goodmann, to take care that this happen – you who, I hear, labour faithfully and

diligently in the cultivation of this vineyard. May God give the increase. – There will be a time, someday -- if resources<sup>4</sup> will permit, if the money is at hand, if God wills – that I come to you [*plural*], that I renew the friendship which was of old, and that I praise God our Father with you [*plural*] with conjoined prayers. In the meantime, pray [*plural*] – pray [*singular*], Goodmann, for I do not have the time. Find out if you are able to be of help in any way to our brother Roland, once a printer at Froben's.<sup>5</sup> Farewell in Christ.

Your. Laurence Humphrey.<sup>6</sup>

Greet Dominus Pilkington,<sup>7</sup> a good man and one who loves me. Love him, for he is pious and learned. May the charity of our Lord, poured out in your hearts, bring forth lovely fruit to the glory of Christ. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> This could mean 'fortune', 'fate', 'destiny', but *fortuna* in the plural often means wealth and the 'fate' or 'destiny' sense may be a little pagan for a character like Humphrey.

<sup>5</sup> The great printing house founded by Johann Froben at Basle in 1497 was managed after his death (in 1527) by his son and son-in-law. The author of the letter, Laurence Humphrey, is said by Garrett to have studied at Basle for a year from the autumn of 1555 and 'after his year of study there was over ... to have stayed on with Froben the printer' (Garrett, p. 193). The reference here would suggest that his contacts with Froben's began earlier. He is not known by Garrett to have been at Geneva before 28 April 1558, so whatever the 'our' (*nostris*) discussed above means, it cannot mean that Humphrey is claiming some of the credit for the venture in Geneva and, according to Garrett, 'he apparently never went to Frankfort' (p. 193).

<sup>6</sup> Garrett no. 219.

<sup>7</sup> James Pilkington = Garrett no. 321; she doesn't know of his presence in Basle (which seems to be implied by this letter) before the autumn of 1556 (p. 251).