

Archbishop Hamilton's attempt to persuade the 4th earl of Argyll to hand over John Douglas [aka Grant] a former friar who was accused of preaching heresy, 25 March 1558.

John Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland ed W C Dickinson, II Append IV 246-54

The Letter of John Hamilton, Archbishop of St Andrews, to Archibald, Earl of Argyll; and Argyll's answers thereto

The Bishop's Letter to the Old Earl of Argyll

My Lord, After most heartly commendation: This is to advertise your Lordship, we have directed this bearer, our cousin, toward your Lordship, in such business and affairs as concerns your Lordship's honour, profit, and great weal; like as the said bearer will declare [to] your Lordship at more length. Praying your Lordship effectuously to advert thereto, and give attendance to us, your Lordship's friends, that ave has willed the honour, profit, an utter wealth of your Lordship's house, as of our own; and credit to the bearer. And Jesu have your Lordship in everlasting keeping.

Of Edinburgh, the xxv day of March, Anno 1558.

(Sic subscribitur)

Your Lordship's at all power,

J. SAINT ANDREWS

FOLLOWS THE CREDIT – MEMORANDUM TO SIR DAVID HAMILTON, TO MY LORD EARL OF ARGYLL, IN MY BEHALF, AND LET HIM SEE AND HEAR EVERY ARTICLE.

In primis To repeat the ancient blood of his house, how long it has stood, how notable it has been, and so many noble men have been earls, lords, and knights thereof; how long they have reigned in those parts, ever true and obedient both to God and the Prince without any smote to these days in any manner of sort: and to remember how many notable men are come of his house.

Secondly, To show him the great affection I bear towards him, his blood, house, and friends, and of the ardent desire I have of the perpetual standing of it in honour and fame, with all them that are come of it: which is my part for many and divers causes, as ye shall show.

Thirdly, To show my Lord, how heavy and displeasing it is to me now to hear that he, who is and has been so noble a man, should be seduced and abused by the flattery of such an infamed person of the law and mensworn apostate that, under the pretence that he gives himself forth as a preacher of the Evangel and verity, under that colour sets forth schisms and divisions in the Holy Kirk of God, with heretical propositions, thinking under his maintenance and defence to infect this country with heresy, persuading my said Lord and others his bairns and friends that all that he speaks is Scripture, and conform thereto, albeit that many of his propositions are many years past condemned by General Councils and the whole estate of Christian people.

4. To show to my Lord how perilous this is to his Lordship and his house, and decay thereof, in case the Authority would be sharp, and would use [itself] conform both the civil and canon [law], and also your own municipal law of this Realm.

5. To show his Lordship, how wa I would be either to hear, see, or know any displeasure that might come to him, his son, or any of his house, or friends, and especially in his own time and days; and also how great displeasure I have else to hear great and evil bruit of him, that should now, in his age, in a manner vary in his faith; and be altered therein, when the time is that he should be most sure and firm therein.

6. To show his Lordship, that there is a delation of that man, called Douglas or Grant, of sundry Articles of heresy, which lies to my charge and conscience to put remedy to, or else all the pestilentious doctrine he sows, and suchlike all that are corrupted by his doctrine, and all that he draws from our faith and Christian religion, will lie to my charge before God, and I to be accused before God for over seeing of him, if I put not remedy thereto, and correct him for such thing he is delated of. And therefore that my Lord consider, and weigh it well, how highly it lies both to my honour and conscience : for if I thole him, I will be accused for all them that he infects and corrupts in heresy.

7. Herefore, I pray My Lord, in my most hearty manner, to take this matter in the best part, for his own conscience, honour, weal of himself, house, friends and servants. And suchlike for my part, and for my conscience and honour, that considering that there are divers Articles of heresy to be laid to him that his is delated of, and that he is presently in my Lord's company, that my Lord would, by some honest way, depart with this man, and put from him and from his son's company; for I would be right sorry that any being in any of their companies should be called for

such causes, or that any of them should be bruited to hold any such men. And this I would advertise my Lord, and have his Lordship's answer and resolution, ere any summons passed upon him, together with my Lord's answer.

8. If my Lord would have a man to instruct him truly in the faith, and preach to him, I would provide a cunning man to him, wherefore I shall answer for his true doctrine, and shall put my soul therfor, that he shall teach nothing but truly according to our Catholic faith.

Of Edinburgh this last of March, 1558.

(Sic subscribitur),

J. Saint Andrews

9. Attour, your Lordship shall draw to good remembrance, and weigh the great and heavy murmer against me, both by the Queen's Grace, the Kirkmen, Spiritual and Temporal Estates, and well given people, meaning, crying and murmuring me greatly, that I do not my office to thole such infamous persons with such perverse doctrine within my Diocese and this Realm, by reason of my Legacy and Primacy. Which I have rather sustained and long suffered, for the great love that I had to your Lordship and posterity, and your friends, and your house; also believing surely your Lordship's wisdom should not have maintained and melled with such things that might do me dishonour or displeasure, considering I being ready to have put good order thereto always: but has allanerly abstained, for the love of your Lordship and house foresaid, that I bear truly, knowing and seeing the great scathe and dishonour and lack apparently that might come therethrough, in case your Lordship remedy not the same hastily, whereby we might both be quiet of all danger, which doubtless will come upon us both, if I use not my office, ere that he be called, the time that he is now with your Lordship, and under your Lordship's protection.

(Subscribed again)

J. Saint Andrews

By these former Instructions, thou may perceive, Gentle Reader, what was the care that this pastor, with his complices, took to feed the flock committed to their charge (as they allege), and to gainstand false teachers. Here is oft mention of conscience, of heresy, and such other terms that may fraythe ignorant, and deceive the simple. But we hear no crime in particular laid to the charge of the accused; and yet he is damned

as a mensworn apostate. This was my Lord's conscience, which he learned of his fathers, the Pharisees, old enemies to Christ Jesus, who damned Him before they heard Him. But who ruled my Lord's conscience when he took his eme's wife, Lady Gilton? Consider thou the rest of his persuasion, and thou shalt clearly see that honour, estimation, love to house and friends, is the best ground that my Lord Bishop has, why he should persecute Jesus Christ in his members.

We though good to insert the Answers of the said Earl which follow:

MEMORANDUM – THIS PRESENT WRITING IS TO MAKE ANSWER PARTICULARLY TO ELVERIK ARTICLE, DIRECTED BY MY LORD OF SAINT ANDREWS TO ME, WITH SIR DAVID HAMILTON; WHICH ARTICLES ARE IN NUMBER NINE, AND HERE REPEATED AND ANSWERED AS I TRUST TO HIS LORDSHIP'S CONTENTMENT

1. The First Article puts me in remembrance of the ancianity of the blood of my house, how many earls, lords, and knights have been thereof; how many Noble men descended of the same house, how long it continued true to God and the Prince, without smot in their days, in any manner of sort.

[ANSWER]

True it is, my Lord, that there is well long continuance of my house, by God's providence and benevolence of our Princes, whom we have served, and shall serve truly next to God: And the like obedience towards God and our Princes remains with us yet, or rather better (praised be the Lord's name), neither know we any spot towards our Princess and her due obedience. And if there be offence towards God, He is merciful to remit our offences; for "He will not the death of a sinner". Like as, it stands in his Omnipotent power to make up houses, to continue the same, to alter them, to make them small or great, or to extinguish them, according to his own inscrutable wisdom; for in exalting, depressing, and changing of houses, the laud and praise must be given to that one eternal God, in whose hand the same stands.

2. The Second Article bears the great affection and love your Lordship bears towards me and my house; and the ardent desire ye have of the perpetual standing thereof in honour and fame, with all them that come of it.

[ANSWER]

Forsooth it is your duty to wish good unto my house, and unto them that come of the same, not allanerly for the faithfulness, amity, and society, that has been betwixt our

forebears, but also for the late conjunction of blood that is betwixt our said houses, if it be God's pleasure that it have success; which should give sufficient occasion to your Lordship to wish good to my house, and perpetuity with God's glory, without which nothing is perpetual, unto whom be praise and worship for ever and ever. Amen.

3. Thirdly, your Lordship declares how displeasing it is to you, that I should be seduced by an infamed person of the law, and by the flattery of a mensworn apostate that, under pretence of his forth giving, makes us to understand that he is a preacher of the Evangel, and therewith raises schisms and divisions in the whole Kirk of God; and by our maintenance and defence, would infect this country with heresy; alleging that to be Scripture which, these many years bygone, has been condemned as heresy by the General Councils and whole estate of Christian people.

[ANSWER]

The God that created heaven and earth, and all that therein is, preserve me from seducing; and I dread many others under the colour of godliness are seduced, and think that they do God a pleasure, when they persecute one of them that professes his name. What that man is of the law we know not: we hear none of his flattery: his mensworn oath of apostasy is ignorant to us. But if he had made an unlawful oath, contrary to God's command, it were better to violate it than to observe it. He preaches nothing to us but the Evangel. If he would otherwise do, we would not believe him, nor yet an angel of heaven. We hear him sow no schisms nor divisions, but such as may stand with God's word, which we shall cause him confess in presence of your Lordship and the Clergy, when ye require us thereto. And as to it that has been condemned by the General Councils, we trust ye know well that all the General Councils have been at diversity amongst themselves, and never two of them universally agreeing in all points, in samekle as they are of men. But the Spirit of verity that bears testimony of our Lord Jesus has not, neither cannot, err, "for heaven and earth shall perish or a jot of it perish". By this, my Lord, neither teaches he, neither will we accept of him, but that which agrees with God's sincere word, set forth by Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Evangelists, left to our salvation in his express word. And so, my Lord, to condemn the doctrine not examined is not required; for when your Lordship pleases to hear the confession of that man's faith [and] the manner of his doctrine, which agrees with the Evangel of Jesus Christ, I will cause

him to assist to judgment, and shall be present thereat with God's pleasure, that he may render reckoning of his belief and our doctrine, to the superior powers, according to the prescription of that blood of the eternal Testament, sealed by the immaculate Lamb, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen

4. The Fourth article puts me in remembrance how dangerous it is if the authority would put at me and my house, according to civil and canon laws, and our municipal laws of the Realm, and how it appeareth to the decay of our house.

[ANSWER]

All laws are (or at least should be) subject to God's law, which law should be first placed and planted in every man's heart; it should have no impediment: men should not abrogate it for the defence and upsetting of their own advantage. If it would please Authorities to put at our house, for confessing of God's word, or for maintenance of his law, God is mighty enough in his own cause. He should be rather obeyed nor man. I will serve my Princess with body, heart, goods, strength, and all that is in my power, except that which is God's duty, which I will reserve to himself alone : that is, to worship him in truth and verity and, as near as I can, conform to his prescribed word, to his own honour and obedience of my Princess.

5. The Fifth Article puts me in remembrance how wa your Lordship would be to hear, see, or know any displeasure that might come to me, my son, or any of my house, and specially in my time and days, and also to hear the great and evil bruit of me that should now in my age in a manner begin to vary from my faith, and to be altered therein, when the time is that I should be most sure and firm therein.

ANSWER

Your Lordship's goodwill is ever made manifest to me in all your Articles, that would not hear, see, or know my displeasure, for the which I am bound to render your Lordship thanks, and shall do the same assuredly. But as for wavering in my faith, God forbid that I should so do; for I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Saviour. My Lord, I vary not in my faith; but I praise God that of his goodness now in my latter days [He] has of his infinite mercy opened his bosom of grace to me, to acknowledge him the Eternal Wisdom, his Son Jesus Christ, my omnisufficient satisfaction, to refuse all manner of idolatry, superstition, and ignorance, wherewith I have been blinded in

times bygone, and now believe that God will be merciful to me, for now he has declared his blessed will clearly to me, before my departing of this transitory life.

6. The Sixth Article declared that there are delations of sundry points of heresy upon that man, called Douglas or Grant, which lies to your charge and conscience to put remedy to, or else that all the pestilentious doctrine he sows, and all whom he corrupts with his seed, will be required at your hands, and all whom he draws from your Christian faith. And if ye should thole him, that ye will be accused for all them whom he infects with heresy; and therefore to regard your Lordship's honour and conscience hereinto.

[ANSWER]

What is his surname I know not, but he calls himself Douglas; for I know neither his father nor his mother. I have heard him teach no Articles of heresy; but that which agrees with God's word; for I would maintain no man in heresy or error. Your Lordship regards your conscience in the punishment thereof. I pray God that ye so do, and examine well your conscience. He preaches against idolatry: I remit to your Lordships conscience if it be heresy or not. He preaches against adultery and fornication: I refer that to your Lordship's conscience. He preaches against hypocrisy: I refer that to your Lordship's conscience. He preaches against all manner of abuses and corruption of Christ's sincere religion: I refer that to your Lordship's conscience. My Lord, I exhort you, in Christ's name, to weigh all these affairs in your conscience, and consider if it be your duty also, not only to thole this, but in like manner to do the same. That is all, my Lord, that I may vary in my age, and no other thing, but that I knew not before these offences to be abominable to God, and now knowing his will by manifestation of his word, abhors them.

7. The Seventh Article desires me to weigh these matters in most heartly manner, and to taken them in best part, for the weal of both our consciences, my house, friends, and servants, and to put such a man out of my company, for fear of the cummer and bruit that should follow thereupon, by reason he is delated of sundry heresies : and that your Lordship would be sorry to hear any of our servants delated or bruited for such causes, or for holding of any such men; and that your Lordship would understand my answer hereinto, ere any summons passed thereupon.

8. The Eighth Article propones to me that your Lordship would take the labour to get me a man to instruct me in your Catholic faith, and to be my preacher, for

whose doctrine ye would lay your soul that he would teach nothing but truly conform to your faith.

[ANSWER]

God Almighty send us many of that sort, that will preach truly, and nothing but one Catholic universal Christian faith, and we Highland rude people has mister of them. And if your Lordship would get and provide me such a man, I should provide him a corporal living, as to myself, with great thanks to your Lordship; for truly, I and many more has great mister of such men. And because I am able to sustain more than one of them, I will request your Lordship earnestly to provide me such a man as ye wrote; "for the harvest is great and there are few labourers".

9. The Last and Ninth Article puts me in remembrance to consider what murmur your Lordship tholes, and great bruit, at many men's hands, both Spiritual and Temporal, and at the Queen's Grace's hand, and other well given people, for not putting of order to these affairs; and that your Lordship has abstained from execution hereof, for love of my house and posterity, to the effect that myself should remedy it, for fear of the dishonour might come upon us both for the same; which being remedied, might bring us out of all danger.

[ANSWER]

My Lord, I know well what murmur and indignation your Lordship tholes at [your] enemies' hands of all estates, for non-pursuing of poor simple Christians; and I know, that if your Lordship would use their counsel, that would be blood-shedding and burning of poor men, to make your Lordship serve their wicked appetites. Yet your Lordship knows your own duty, and should not fear the danger of men, as of Him whom ye profess. And verily, my Lord, there is nothing that may be to your Lordship's relief in this behalf, but I will use your Lordship's counsel therein, and further the same, God's honour being first provided, and the truth of his eternal word having liberty. And to abstain, for my love, from pursuit, as your Lordship has signified, I am indebted to your Lordship, as I have written divers times before. But there is one above, for whose fear ye must abstain from blood-shedding, or else, my Lord, knock on your conscience. Last of all, your Lordship, please to consider, how desirous some are to have sedition amongst friends; how mighty the Devil is to sow discord; how that many would desire no better game but to hunt us at other. I pray your Lordship beguile them: we will agree upon all purposes, with God's pleasure,

standing to his honour. There are dicers houses in Scotland by us, that profess the same God secretly. They desire but that ye begin the bargain at¹ us; and when it begins at us, God knows the end thereof, and who shall bide the next put. My Lord, consider this : make no preparative of us. Let not the vain exhortation of them that regard little of the weal and strength of both our houses, stir up your Lordship, as they would to do against God, your own conscience, and the weal of your posterity for ever. And therefore now, in the end, I pray your Lordship weigh these things wisely; and if ye do otherwise, God is God, was, and shall be God, when all is wrought that man can work.

¹ open the question with