

Conference with John Feckenham

Lady Jane Grey

Anglican · Reformation · Letter

STROMATA 12

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INTRODUCTION

A disputational exchange with the Catholic priest John Feckenham, sent to reconcile Grey to Rome four days before her execution. Covers justification by faith, the number of sacraments, and the nature of the Lord's Supper. A notable example of lay theological dialogue in the Reformation period.

FECKENHAM. What thing is required in a Christian?

JANE. To believe in God the Father, in God the Son, in God the Holy Ghost, three persons and one God.

FECKENHAM. Is there nothing else required in a Christian, but to believe in God?

JANE. Yes: we must believe in him, we must love him, with all our heart, with all our soul, and all our mind, and our neighbour as ourself.

FECKENHAM. Why then faith justifieth not, nor saveth not?

JANE. Yes, verily, faith (as St. Paul saith) only justifieth.

FECKENHAM. Why St. Paul saith, if I have all the faith of the world, without love, it is nothing.

JANE. True it is, for how can I love him I trust not, or how can I trust in him whom I love not; faith and love ever agree together, and yet love is comprehended in faith.

FECKENHAM. How shall we love our neighbour ?

JANE. To love our neighbour is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and to give drink to the thirsty, and to do to him as we would do to ourselves.

FECKENHAM. Why, then it is necessary to salvation to do good works, and it is not sufficient to believe?

JANE. I deny that, I affirm that faith only saveth; for it is meet for all Christians, in token that they follow their master Christ, to do good works; yet may we not say, nor in any wise believe, that they

profit to salvation: for although we have done all that we can, yet we are unprofitable servants, and the faith we have only in Christ's blood and his merits, saveth.

FECKENHAM. How many Sacraments are there?

JANE. Two: the one the Sacrament of Baptism, and the other the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

FECKENHAM. No, there be seven Sacraments.

JANE. By what Scripture find you that?

FECKENHAM. Well, we will talk of that hereafter: but what is signified by your two sacraments?

JANE. By the Sacrament of Baptism I am washed with water, and regenerated in the spirit, and that washing is a token to me that I am the child of God: the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is offered unto me as a sure seal and testimony, that I am, by the blood of Christ which he shed for me on the cross, made partaker of the everlasting kingdom.

FECKENHAM. Why, what do you receive in that bread: do you not receive the very body and blood of Christ?

JANE. No, surely, I do not believe so: I think at that supper I receive neither flesh nor blood, but only bread and wine; the which bread when it is broken, and the wine when it is drunk, putteth me in mind how that for my sins the body of Christ was broken, and his blood shed on the cross, and with that bread and wine I receive the benefits which came by breaking of his body, and by the shedding of his blood on the cross for my sins.

FECKENHAM. Why but, madam, doth not Christ speak these words: take eat, this is my body: can you require any plainer words: doth he not say, that it is his body?

JANE. I grant he saith so; and so he saith likewise in other places, I am the vine, I am the door, it being only but a figurative speech: doth not St. Paul say that he calleth those things which are not as though they were? God forbid that I should say that I eat the very natural body and blood of Christ: for then either I should pluck away my redemption, or confess there were two bodies, or two Christ's: two bodies, the one body was tormented on the cross, and then if they did eat another body, how absurd: again, if his body was eaten really, then it was not broken upon the cross, or if it were broken upon the cross (as it is doubtless) then it was not eaten of his disciples.

FECKENHAM. Why, is it not as possible that Christ by his power could make his body both to be eaten and broken, as to be born of a woman without the seed of man, and as to walk on the sea having a body, and other such like miracles, which he wrought by his power only?

JANE. Yes, verily, if God would have done at his last supper a miracle, he might have done so: but I say he minded nor intended no work or miracle, but only to break his body, and shed his blood on the cross for our sins: but I beseech you answer me to this one question; where was Christ when he said, take, eat, this is my body: was not he at the table? When he said so he was at that time alive, and suffered not till the next day; well, what took he but bread? And what broke he but bread? And what gave he but

bread? Look what he took he brake, and look what he brake he gave, and look what he gave that did they eat, and yet all this while he himself was at supper before his disciples, or else they were deceived.

FECKENHAM. You ground your faith upon such authors as say and unsay, both with a breath, and not upon the church, to whom you ought to give credit.

JANE. No, I ground my faith upon God's word, and not upon the church: for if the church be a good church, the faith of the church must be tried by God's word, and not God's word by the church: neither yet my faith: shall I believe the church because of antiquity? Or shall I give credit to that church which taketh away from me a full half part of the Lord's Supper, and will not layman receive it in both kinds, but the priests only themselves, which thing if they deny to us part, they deny us part of our salvation? And I say, that it is an evil and no good church, and not the spouse of Christ, but the spouse of the devil, which altereth the Lord's Supper, and both taketh from it, and addeth to it: to that church I say God will add plagues, and from that church will he take their part out of the Book of Life: you may learn of St. Paul, how he did administer it to the Corinthians in both kinds, which since your church refuseth, shall I believe it? God forbid!

FECKENHAM. That this was done by the wisdom of the church, and to a most good intent to avoid an heresy, which then sprung in it.

JANE. O, but the church must not alter God's will and ordinances, for the colour or gloss of a good intent: it was the error of King Saul, and he not only reaped a curse, but perished thereby, as it is evident in the Holy Scriptures. To this M. Feckenham gave me a long, tedious, yet eloquent reply; using many strong and logical persuasions, to compel me to have leaned to their church: but my faith had armed my resolution to withstand any assault that words could then use against me. Of many other articles of religion we reasoned, but these formerly rehearsed were the chiefest and most effectual.

Jane Dudley.

Source: <https://archive.org/details/memoirsremainsof00grey/page/5/mode/2up>

These texts are drawn from *Memoirs and Remains of Lady Jane Grey*, a compilation of her letters, prayers, disputations, and scaffold writings. The Internet Archive copy used here is available at <https://archive.org/details/memoirsremainsof00grey>. The compilation was first published in the nineteenth century; the letters to Bullinger were originally in Latin and appear here in English translation (translator unattributed in this edition). The translations are themselves pre-1900 and are public domain. Original spelling has been lightly modernised in places by the nineteenth-century editors; the texts are otherwise presented as found. No independent transcription has been made against manuscript sources.

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