

Second Letter to Henry Bullinger

Lady Jane Grey

Anglican · Reformation · Letter

STROMATA 09

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INTRODUCTION

Written by a teenager who would be queen for nine days before her execution at sixteen, this letter belongs to a brief correspondence between Lady Jane Grey and the Zurich reformer Heinrich Bullinger, conducted partly so that she might practice her Hebrew under his direction. The deference here is not a pose: Bullinger was among the most respected Protestant divines in Europe, and Jane was a serious student of the Reformed faith who would soon die for it. What survives is a small window onto the intellectual formation of English Protestantism in its most precarious decade, when learned piety and political danger were inseparable. Read it slowly, as one reads a letter, attending to the cadence of a mind being shaped for a death it does not yet foresee.

Accomplished man! I cannot do otherwise than thank you for your many acts of kindness to me. Were I to neglect this duty, I should be chargeable with the greatest ingratitude, and might seem forgetful of your goodness and unworthy of your favours. However, I engage in the task with diffidence, for the friendship which you desire to exist between us, and the many favours which you have conferred on me, demand some better return than mere thanks: and I cannot, to the satisfaction of my own mind, discharge by my vain words, the debt of gratitude which I owe you. Moreover, when I direct my thoughts to addressing a letter to a person of your eminence, the consideration of my unfitness for the office not a little disquiets my mind. Nor, indeed, should I wish or presume to trouble your gravity with my trifles and puerilities, or blend my barbarisms with your eloquence, were I not persuaded that I have no other means of gratifying you, and had I not largely experienced your courtesy.

With respect to the letter I have lately received from you — after I had read it once and again (for one perusal seemed insufficient), I appeared to derive such benefit from your excellent and truly divine precepts, as I have scarcely obtained from a daily perusal of the best writers. You exhort me to cherish a genuine and sincere faith in Christ my Saviour. I shall endeavour to comply with the exhortation as fully as God may enable me to do; but as I perceive faith to be his gift, I cannot promise more than he may enable me to perform. However, I shall not cease, with the Apostle, to pray, that God will of his goodness, increase my faith daily. To faith I shall, as you recommend, and with the divine blessing, add holiness of life — that measure of it, at least, which my too feeble powers may enable me to produce. Do you, in the mean time, in the spirit of piety, make daily mention of me in your prayers. I shall

engage in that method of studying the Hebrew, which you have so clearly pointed out. Farewell! May God regard you in the task you have undertaken, and prosper you eternally.

Your most religiously obedient,

Jane Gray.

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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