

A Godly Instruction [on How to Treat Those Who Wrong Us], c. 1534

A godly instruccion, written by syr Thomas More knight,
within a whyle after he was prisoner in the
towre of London, in the yere of our Lorde
.1534.

Beare no malice nor euill will to no man liuing. For eyther the man is good or noughte. If he be good, & I hate him, than am I nought.

If he be nought, eyther he shall amende and die good, and goe to God: or abyde nought, and die noughte and goe the Deuyll. And than lette mee remembre, that if he shal be saued, he shall not faile (if I be saued to, as I trust to be) to loue me very hertely, and I shall then in likewise loue him.

And why shoulde I now than, hate one for this while, which shal hereafter loue me for euermore, and whye shoulde I be now than enemy to him, with whom I shal in time comming, be coupled in eternal frendshippe. And on the other side, if he shall continue nought and be dampned, than is there so outrageous eternall sorow towards him, that I maye well thinke my selfe a deadly cruell wretche, if I woulde not nowe rather pytie hys payne, than maligne hys person. If one wold say that we may wel with good conscience wish an euil man harme, lest he should do harme to such other folke as are innocent & good, I wyl not now dyspute vpon that pointe, for that roote hath moe branches to be wel waied & considered then I can now conueniently write, (hauing none other pen then a cole.) But verely thus will I say, that I wil giue counsayl to euery good frende of mine, but if he be put in such a roume, as to punishe an euill man lieth in his charge, by reason of his office, els leaue the desire of punishyng vnto god and vnto such other folk, as are so grounded in charitye, and so faste cleaue to God, that no secrete shrewde cruell affeccion, under the cloke of a iuste and a verteous zeale, can crepe in and vndermine them. But let vs that are no better than men of a meane sort, euer pray for suche mercifull amendement in other folk, as our owne conscience sheweth vs that we haue nede in our selfe.

The critical edition of this text can be found in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 13 (Yale University Press, 1976), p. 207.