

## More's Letter to His Daughter Margaret, 2 or 3 May 1535

2 or 3 May 1535  
Tower of London

Our Lord bless you. My dearly beloved daughter,

I doubt not but by the reason of the Councilors resorting hither, in this time (in which our Lord be their comfort) these fathers of the Charterhouse and Master Reynolds of Sion that be now judged to death for treason, whose matters and causes I know not, may hap to put you in trouble and fear of mind concerning me, being here prisoner, specially because it is not unlikely but that you have heard that I was brought also before the Council here myself. I have thought it necessary to advertise you of the very truth, to the end that you neither conceive more hope than the matter giveth, lest upon other turn it might grieve your heaviness, nor more grief and fear than the matter giveth of, on the other side. Wherefore shortly you shall understand that on Friday the last day of April in the afternoon, Master Lieutenant came in here unto me, and showed me that Master Secretary would speak with me. Whereupon I shifted my gown and went out with Master Lieutenant into the gallery to him. Where I met many, some known and some unknown in the way. And in conclusion coming into the chamber where his Mastership sat with Master Attorney, Master Solicitor, Master Bedill and Master Doctor Tregonwell, I was offered to sit with them, which in no wise I would.

Whereupon Master Secretary showed unto me, that he doubted not, but that I had by such friends as hither had resorted to me seen the new statutes made at the last sitting of the Parliament. Whereunto I answered: "Yes, verily. Howbeit for as much as being there, I have no conversation with any people, I thought it little need for me to bestow much time upon them, and therefore I redelivered the book shortly and the effect of the statutes I never marked nor studied to put in remembrance." Then he asked me whether I had not read the first statute of them, of the King being Head of the Church. Whereunto I answered, "Yes." Then his Mastership declared unto me, that since it was now by act of Parliament ordained that his Highness and his heirs be, and ever right have been, and perpetually should be Supreme Head in the earth of the Church of England under Christ, the King's pleasure was that those of his Council there assembled should demand mine opinion, and what my mind was therein. Whereunto I answered that in good faith I had well trusted that the King's Highness would never have commanded any such question to be demanded of me, considering that I ever from the beginning well and truly from time to time declared my mind unto his Highness, and since that time I had, I said, unto your Mastership Master Secretary also, both by mouth and by writing. And now I have in good faith discharge my mind of all such matters, and neither will dispute King's titles nor Pope's, but the King's true faithful subject I am and will be, and daily I pray for him and for all his, and for you all that are of his honorable Council, and for all the realm, and otherwise than thus I never intend to meddle.

Whereunto Master Secretary answered that he thought this manner of answer should not satisfy nor content the King's Highness, but that his Grace would exact a more full answer. And his Mastership added thereunto, that the King's Highness was a prince not of rigor but of mercy and

pity, and though that he had found obstinacy at some time in any of his subjects, yet when he should find them at another time conformable and submit themselves, his Grace would show mercy. And that concerning myself, his Highness would be glad to see me take such conformable ways, as I might be abroad in the world again among other men as I have been before.

Whereunto I shortly (after the inward affection of my mind) answered for a very truth, that I would never meddle in the world again, to have the world given me. And to the remnant of the matter, I answered in effect as before, showing that I had fully determined with myself neither to study nor meddle with any matter of this world, but that my whole study should be upon the passion of Christ and mine own passage out of this world.

Upon this I was commanded to go forth for a while, and after called in again. At which time Master Secretary said unto me that though I was prisoner and condemned to perpetual prison, yet I was not thereby discharged of mine obedience and allegiance unto the King's Highness. And thereupon demanded me whether I thought that the King's Grace might exact of me such things as are contained in the statutes and upon like pains as he might of other men. Whereto I answered that I would not say the contrary. Whereto he said that likewise as the King's Highness would be gracious to them that he found conformable, so his Grace would follow the course of his laws toward such as he shall find obstinate. And his Mastership said further that my demeanor in that matter was of a thing that of likelihood made now other men so stifle therein as they be.

Whereto I answered, that I give no man occasion to hold any one point or the other, nor never gave any man advise or counsel therein one way or other. And for conclusion I could no further go, whatsoever pain should come thereof. I am, said I, the King's true faithful subject and daily beadsman and pray for his Highness and all his and all the realm. I do nobody harm, I say none harm, I think none harm, but wish everybody good. And if this be not enough to keep a man alive, in good faith, I long not to live. And I am dying already, and have since I came here been divers times in the case that I thought to die within one hour, and I thank our Lord I was never sorry for it, but rather sorry when I saw the pang past. And therefore my poor body is at the King's pleasure; would God my death might do him good.

After this Master Secretary said: "Well, you find no fault in that statute, find you any in any of the other statutes after?" Whereto I answered, "Sir, whatsoever thing should seem to me other than good, in any of the statutes or in that statute either, I would not declare what fault I found, nor speak thereof." Whereunto finally his Mastership said full gently that of anything that I had spoken, there should none advantage be taken, and whether he said further that there be none to be taken, I am not well remembered. But he said that report should be made unto the King's Highness, and his gracious pleasure known.

Whereupon I was delivered again to Master Lieutenant, which was then called in, and so was I by Master Lieutenant brought again into my chamber, and here am I yet in such case as I was, neither better nor worse. That which shall follow lies in the hand of God, whom I beseech to put in King's Grace's mind that thing that may be to his high pleasure, and in mine, to mind only the weal of my soul, with little regard of my body.

And you with all yours, and my wife and all my children and all our friends both bodily and ghostly heartily well to fare. And I pray you and all them, pray for me, and take no thought whatsoever shall happen me. For I verily trust in the goodness of God, seem it never so evil to this world, it shall indeed in another world be for the best.

Your loving father,

Thomas More, Knight

From *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters*, Ed. Elizabeth Rogers, Yale University Press, 1961, Letter #63, pp. 245-248.