The English Correspondence of Sir Thomas More

The letter and line numbers correspond to the 1947 Rogers edition (Princeton UP).
The English spellings have been standardized for this edition and its concordance by Andrea Frank.

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Thomas More’s English letters, following 1947 Rogers numbering

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Unto his right entirely beloved sister in Christ, Joyce Leigh, Thomas More greeting in our Lord.

It is, and of long time hath been, my well beloved sister, a custom in the beginning of the New Year friends to send between presents or gifts as the witnesses of their love and friendship and also signifying that they desire each to other that year a good continuance and prosperous end of that lucky beginning. But commonly, all those presents that are used customably all in this manner between friends to be sent be such things as pertain only unto the body, either to be fed or to be clad or some otherwise delighted, by which it seemeth that their friendship is but fleshly and stretcheth in manner to the body only. But forasmuch as the love and amity of Christian folk should be rather ghostly friendship than bodily, since that all faithful people are rather spiritual than carnal. For as the apostle saith we be not now in flesh but in spirit if Christ abide in us.

I therefore, mine heartily beloved sister, in good luck of this new year have sent you such a present, as may bear witness of my tender love and zeal to the happy continuance and gracious increase of virtue in your soul; and whereas the gifts of other folk declare that they wisheth their friends to be worldly fortunate, mine testifieth that I desire to have you godly prosperous.

These works more profitable that large were made in Latin by one John Picus, Earl of Mirandola, a lordship in Italy of whose cunning and virtue we need hear nothing to speak forasmuch as hereafter we peruse the course of his holy life rather after our little power slenderly, than after his merits sufficiently. The works are such, that truly, good sister, I suppose of the quantity there cometh none in your hand more profitable, neither to the achieving of temperance in prosperity, nor to the purchasing of patience in adversity, nor to the despising of worldly vanity, nor to the desiring of heavenly felicity, which works I would require you gladly to receive, nay were it that they be such that for the goodly matter (howsoever they be translated) may delight and please any person that hath any mean desire and love to God. And that yourself is such one
as for your virtue and fervent zeal to God cannot but joyously receive anything that meanly soundeth either to the reproach of vice, commendation of virtue or honor and laude of God, who preserve you.

11. Tunstall, Sampson, More to the Council. Bruges, 9 July 1515

Liketh it your good lordships to understand, that as touching the state of our business here, forasmuch as we doubt not but that our letters, in which we have written thereof at large to the King's Grace, shall by his Highness come to your hands, we therefore trouble not at this time your good lordships with the repetitions of the same, but the only cause of our present writing to your good lordships is to beseech the same to have us so in your favorable remembrance, that we may have by the means of your good lordships more money sent unto us. For as your lordships well remember of 60 days, for which we received our money before the hand, and spent also a good part thereof before the hand, there be naught remaining past 3 or 4 days, from the 12th day of May last at which day we took our journey. And as your good lordships well know, that we had so short warning of this journey that our time was very little and scarce to prepare ourselves and our company forward. And no time had we to make shift and provision for any substance of our own hither with us, by reason whereof we have been at some pain hitherto. And if we should make farther shift here, it would be our farther pain and loss also. Wherefore we beseech your good lordships, that as your wisdoms perceive that we be like here to abide, so it will like you to order that we may have money sent us. In which doing, your lordships shall bind us to owe you our poor service and our prayer. As knoweth our Lord, whose grace long preserve your good lordships. From Bruges the 9th day of July.

By your humble beadsmen
Cuthbert Tunstall.
Richard Sampson.
Thomas More.

From the Ambassadors being in Flanders for the Intercourse.

Nono Iulii.
To the honorable and their singular good lords, the Lords of

the King's most honorable Council.

12. Tunstall, More, Clifford to Henry VIII. Bruges, 21 July 1515

Liketh it your Highness to understand that whereas
we by our other letters dated the 9th day of July, which as
we verily trust be come unto your gracious hands,
have written unto your Highness at length the order of our
business until the said day of the same our letters written.

To wit, that soon after at such time as we by writing did
again reply to their answer, given in to us, by the advice
of their Prince and his Council, of which their answer we
made mention unto your Grace in our said letters.

The said commissioners, upon the receipt of our explication,
desired respite again, until the time that they might
send our explication to the Prince and his Council, and from
thence have advice again in such wise as they did upon the
receipt of our other writing before, without whose advice
again had, they would no farther proceed. Whereupon at that
time we departed. And afterward by the space of 10 days, they
gave us knowledge that they had word from the Prince desiring
us to assemble with them on the morrow, at which our
meeting, when we trusted to have received some writing, they
showed us a letter directed unto them from the Prince, by
which he gave them in commandment to resort unto him
and his Council to Mechlin, where he intended to be himself
within few days, at which their resorting to his presence they
should have on his behalf a full and a perfect knowledge of his
pleasure concerning our business. Wherefore they required us to
have patience till their coming again, at which they thought
to bring us a final determinate answer, whereunto for a conclusion
we should stand.

Whereupon we answered that we verily trusted in the equity
of the Prince and his Council, that they should bring us a
better answer and more equal than we yet had. And they
answered plainly that they look for none other but such as
they before had showed us, that the Prince would never stand to
the treatise that we rest upon.

We have written in everything the state of our business to
your ambassadors here, by whose means whether the Prince
shall happen to change his mind therein or not, we be not
sure, but verily we have no great hope therein, we have had so
plain words of the commissioners here. Wherefore, as we by our
other letters have written unto your Highness, we beseech the
same, since we have perused the effect of our instructions, that
we might have farther knowledge of your high pleasure, which
had we shall to the best of our powers endeavor ourselves to the
accomplishment of the same. As knoweth our Lord, whose grace
long preserve your most noble Majesty. From Bruges the 21st
day of July.

By your most humble servants and subjects
Cuthbert Tunstall.
Thomas More.
John Clifford.


Pleaseth it your Grace to understand that since the
writing of our last letters, sent unto your Grace by M. Forest,
we have treated with the Easterlings as oftentimes as we might
conveniently bring them thereunto. But by reason of certain
delays that they have taken, we be not yet come to any final
determination in our matters, trusting verily that by the end
of this week, if they put no further delays in this business
than we think verily that they will do, to know the uttermost
that they can say for defense of the abuse of their privileges, and
whether they will submit themselves to reformation of the same
or no. And this known we shall certify your Grace with all
diligence, most humbly beseeching your Grace to remember us
with some money towards our debts.

And thus blessed Trinity preserve your Grace. At Bruges this
first day of October.

Your most humble beasdmens and orators
William Knight. Thomas More.

To my Lord Cardinal's Grace.

49. Wingfield, Knight, More to Wolsey and the Council. Calais, 13 October 1517
Pleaseth it your good lordships to understand, that
the 12th day of this present month, John Hamon, proctor for
Henry de la Fontaine and Nicholas de Chiffraulle of Dieppe in
Normandy, hath put unto us a complaint against Robert Bemounde
and Nicholas Voullet of the town of Southwold in the county
of Suffolk. Whose complaint shall appear to your lordships
by the tenor of the supplication which we send to your lordships
in these letters enclosed, according to our instructions, to the end
that the said Robert Bemounde and Nicholas Voullet by some order
by your lordships to be taken, being thereof admonished, may
by themselves, or their sufficiently instructed proctor, appear here
before us in the King's town of Calais the 12th day of November
next ensuing, for the defense of the same. At which day we
have adjourned the complaint, to return again unto us with
the certification of the warning for the further prosecution
of his said complaint, in which upon the appearance of both
parties, or contumacy of the one, we intend to proceed to the
discussion and final direction of the cause according to right and
good justice, as far forth as our wits and learning will extend.

And in case this bearer shall happen either of negligence or
fraud so long to retain these our letters in his custody that
he leave no time sufficient for the monition of the said defendants
to be executed in due time, that then it may like your good
lordships to provide that we may be thereof ascertained, to
the end that the remiss dealing of the one party turn not the
other to prejudice. And thus Almighty Jesus preserve your good
lordships. Written at Calais the 13th day of October.

Your most humble servants

Wingfield R., Kt.
William Knight
Thomas More.

51. Wingfield, Knight, More to Wolsey and the Council. <Calais?, c. October 1517>
certain quarrels - - - - - sundry complaints upon
either party, forasmuch - - - - - resorted as well to
them as to us for the redress - - - - - other injuries committed
before the last peace concluded between the King's Grace
and the French King Louis, to the - - - controversies
our authority stretcheth not.  We - - - parties either
to remit the subjects of other - - - - ordinary for
their such matters and that with - - - - on either side if
the parties require them, to which - - - - condescended at
the request of the French ambassadors - - - - seem to refuse
such courtesy towards their prince - - - - in like case had
used already towards the King our master - - - We entered
also in communication with them according to our instructions
- - - - provisions to be devised for the eschewing of pirates
- - - - , also for judges to be appointed for the speedy redress
of - - - - damified hereafter from time to time as any such
should hap to fall in either of the prince's dominions.  Whereunto
that both those points were provided for already by - - -
the amity concluded between both princes, in which they - - - for
either part appointed.  And also provision made that no men
of war shall go forth of any haven of either prince without
sureties found, that they shall do no harm to the subjects of
the other.  Whereunto we answered that those provisions* *
And * and unto great value as - - - - - -
- - complaints, of which as yet we - - - - - -
they further showed unto us, that the French - - - -
surety of all people to be in safeguard from - - hath of
late provided diverse good ordinances sufficient for the avoiding
of the same.  Which ordinances - - - - cause surely to be kept
throughout his dominions - - which also they have promised to
send unto us to London - - advise to the end that if those ordinances
seem in any - - - - unto we might add thereunto between
us - - - - break with us also of the articles that were provided
- - - - between the ambassadors of either prince which
articles Thomas More took out of the King's exchequer by
command of my Lord of Durham.  Howbeit of that treaty
they - - - us incidentally in other communication not by way
of - - - same device, which treaty seemeth unto us very
- - - - we rested in this, that we would see and advise the
- - - - made by their prince and thereupon enter further
with - - - - that point, which ordinances, when they shall be
come to our hands, we shall with diligence send unto your good lordships to the end that we may be by your wisdoms instructed
- - - - points.

The French ambassadors make much semblance of towardness in doing justice to the - - - - of our party, but that notwithstanding we dare make no warranties of them, till we see what speed and - - - - they make therein, for many hath begun and yet - - - - many complaints in the book for the pursuit.

* * *

Your most humble beadsmen

Wingfield R., Kt.
William Knight.
Thomas More.

To the most Reverend Father in God the Lord Cardinal of York etc. and the Lords of the King's most honorable Council.

53. Wingfield, Knight, More to Wolsey. Calais, 4 <Nov>ember <1517>

* * * sending - - - - - - - - - - - -
- - - - - - - - - - their wrongs done by the French - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
- - - - - - - - - - William Sabin which for his own - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
- - - - - - - - - - and hath also been present and interpreter - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
of many that hath long sued and yet sue - - - - - - - - self known but slow speed which have - - - - - - - - unto us, the said Sabin can and will, if it please you to enquire of him, show unto you at length - - - - - - - - - - of the matters hath hitherto proceeded. - - - - - - - - may soon conjecture the rest that is to come in which - - - - - - - - advises with soliciting the commissioners for them - - - - - - - - nor shall fail any that resorteth to us therefore. We sent unto your lordships in the last month the - - - - - - - - between the commissioners of the King's most noble - - - - - - - - - - the late King Louis of France concerning provision - - - - - - - - - - the eschewing of piracies and reformation of the same - - - - - - - - - - when they fortuned between the subjects of either prince - - - - - - also sent unto your good lordships the ordinances that the - - - - - - that now us hath lately made. Which ordinances the - - - - - - here account sufficient with the articles contained in - - - - - - by which certain judges be already appointed for the eschewing of pirates from time to time committed, and provision - - - - - - sureties to be
taken of such ships of war as depart out - - - - port. We think, saving your more prudent advices, - - - - - - pirates in time coming either to be eschewed or redressed, - - - - - - said treaty renewed would do very well, but we - - - - - - by the French commissioners that they tender not greatly the renewing of the same,
the cause why this bearer can inform your good - - - * * *
not so soon as we - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
we come unto our hands - - - - - - - - would suffer.
In which things at such - - - - - - as your good lordships shall like, it may percase - - - - - - advertise us of your pleasure. Which known we will endeavor ourselves to the accomplishment of the same with - - - - - - of our powers. As knoweth our Lord God who preserve your good lordships.
At Calais this 4th of November.

Your most humble beasmen,
Wingfield R., K.
William Knight
Thomas More

77. To Wolsey. Woking, 5 July <1519>

To My Lord Legate's Grace.

It may like your good Grace to understand, that yesternight the King's Grace commanded me to deliver unto your servant Forest a supplication put unto his Grace by men of Waterford in the name of the city, by which they complain against the town of New Ross in Ireland for disturbing the city of Waterford in the use of a certain grant of prise wines, made and confirmed unto them, as they allege, by the King's progenitors. Wherein the King's Grace commanded me to advertise your Grace that he calleth to mind that the city of Waterford in all such rebellions as hath happed in Ireland hath always abided firmly in their allegiance and oftentimes done very good and faithful service to the King his father and other his progenitors. For which, he saith, he beareth them, as your Grace well knoweth, very special favor. His Grace saith also that he knoweth well, and your Grace also, that there is much bearing against them in Ireland, and that the city standeth so in the danger of the wild Irish people that they cannot without great jeopardy resort for the pursuit of their right into such places of
Ireland as the Laws be ministered in. Wherefore his Grace commanded
me to write unto your Grace that he requireth your
Grace that it may like you either in the Star Chamber to examine
the matter of the said city, or else to commit the same to the
examination of some justices, or other such as your Grace shall
think convenient, so that they may have expedition with such
lawful favor, as it may be a comfort to them to see that their
ture service is by the King and his council in England considered,
whereby the King's grace thinketh that other cities and
Lords also in Ireland shall be encouraged unto the like.

Sir, if it like your Grace, at my return when I spoke with the
King, his Grace was very joyful, that notwithstanding your so
continual labors in his matters (in which he said ye have many
more than appear to them that see you but at Westminster or with
the council) your Grace is so well in health, as he heareth by
diverse, and he saith that ye may thank his counsel thereof, by
which ye leave the often taking of medicines, that ye were wont
to use, and while ye so do he saith ye shall not fail of health, which
our Lord long preserve. At Woking the fifth day of July.

Your most humble servant and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More

To my Lord Legate's Grace.

78. To Wolsey. Woking, 6 July <1519>

It may like your good Grace to understand that the
King's Grace hath commanded me to advertise your Grace that
the Ambassador of the King of Castile hath this present Wednesday
spoken with his Grace and declared unto him such news
on the behalf of his master the King of Castile as your Grace
knoweth of. For which the King's Grace requireth your Grace that
there may be such letters of gratulation devised unto the said
King of Castile as your politic wisdom shall think most
convenient.

The King's Grace hath also commanded me to show your
Grace that the Ambassador hath required his Grace to send his
advice to the King of Castile concerning the matter of the last
Diet, in which the Great Master of France deceased, in which
thing the Ambassador desireth to have letters of credence of the
King's Grace, by which he might himself declare to his master
by mouth the King's advice concerning the premises. Howbeit
the King’s Grace thinketh it much better that his whole advice
be written at length by letters devised by the prudent cast of your
Grace.

The King’s Grace commanded me further to write unto
your Grace that among other communications had with the Ambassador,
his Grace remembered unto him that he had always been
a very hearty friend unto the King of Castile, and during his life
so intended to persevere, and would of none earthly thing be more
loath, than if any occasion should fall (which he trusted should never
fall) whereby he might be constrained unto the contrary, for
the avoiding whereof, his Grace advised the Ambassador that he
should in anywise counsel his master that he nothing attempt
hereafter that should extend to the breech of any article comprised
in the amity concluded between his Grace, and the King of Castile
and the French King, which if he did, his Grace should think himself
bound to regard the friendship of none earthly man so
highly as his oath given to God for the observation of the said
amity and liege.

The Ambassador is ridden from the court now after dinner and I
think he will be with your Grace very shortly. And thus our Lord
long preserve your Grace in honor and health.

At Woking the sixth day of July.

Your most humble servant and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More

79. To Wolsey. Woking, 9 July <1519>

It may like your good Grace to understand that the
King’s Grace hath commanded me to write unto your Grace
that he giveth you hearty thanks for your diligent advertisement
of all such things as your Grace hath written unto him in your
latter letters; touching the contents whereof his Grace hath commanded
me to show you that he very well liketh your politic
order taken with Hesdin the King of Castile his Orator, which
his Grace thinketh very good and honorable.

And as touching the overture made by my Lord of Chièvres for
the marriage of my Lord of Devonshire the King is well content,
and as meseemeth, very glad of the motion, wherein he requireth
your Grace, that it may like you to call my Lord of Devonshire
to your Grace and to advise him secretly, to forbear any further
treaty of marriage with my Lord Mountjoy, for a while staying
the matter, not casting it off, showing him that there is a far better offer made him, of which the King would that he should not know the specialty before he speak with his Grace.

As touching the demeanor of the Cardinal Sedunensis concerning the trust that the King's Grace did put in him, his Grace commanded me to show your Grace that he mistrusted the same himself before, and that he so showed your Grace at Richmond. And though he be not glad of the Cardinal's delaying, yet is he glad, he saith, that your Grace may see that he foresaw it, whereby he thinketh your Grace will be the better trust his conjecture hereafter.

I send unto your Grace by your servant, this bearer, certain writing which the King's Grace commanded me to send unto your Grace, to take such order in the same, as your most politic wisdom shall think convenient. And thus our Lord long preserve your good Grace in honor and health.

At Woking this present Saturday the ninth day of July.

Your most humble servant and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More

98. Knight, More, Wilsher, Sampson, to Wolsey. Bruges, 15 September <1520>

Pleaseth it your Grace to understand that all the Ambassadors of the Haunz that be deputed for this present diet did assemble at Bruges the 12th day of this month. And the next day ensuing we did meet together at the place accustomed. Where we showed unto them the King's benevolent mind in form and manner as is contained in our instructions, and that done did exhibit our commissions which were thought by either of both parties ample and sufficient.

After this we showed unto them that there hath been great and many complaints made unto the King's Highness and your Grace of robberies, despoils and other injuries done unto the King's subjects, which complaints we did aggravate both by estimation of great sums and also by exhibiting certain books and many bills of complaints, saying that in consideration that the said complainants doeth daily desire justice, and that there be also many particulars on their part.

We thought good first to devise some order how and by what means the said despoils might be conveniently redressed and then to enter communication upon the generals and in this the
said orators desired respite to take deliberation till the next
day, saying that if we would in the meantime think what way
were most convenient, they would do likewise on their part,
and at the next meeting, the devices of both parties known, that
way should be taken that were thought by both parties most
ready and expedient.

The 14th day we returned and purposed unto them that that
we thought good to induce them to our intent and in conclusion
brought them to this point, that they desired that we
would treat upon the generals and particulars together, because
many of the particulars dependeth upon the generals, and this
doing we follow the contents of your gracious instructions.

Immediately upon the aforesaid agreement we required the orators
of the Haunz to specify unto us by writing the number and names
of the cities and towns that made the body of the Haunz at the
first time of the grant of the owed privileges. They answered that
they marveled that we would demand any like thing of them,
which was never put in doubt at any diet before this, and moreover
that it was not unknown to the King and his council, and
though it were likewise well known to diverse of the chief
cities of the Haunz, yet that notwithstanding they might probably
be ignorant in the same, promising that though it could not be
done at this time by them without great difficulty, they would
do their best to give us knowledge.

We replied that the declaration of this point was very necessary
to be known marveling that they would affirm themselves
to be orators for the body of the Haunz and could
now show what members made the said body, protesting that
though we made digression from this doubt at this time and
entered communication upon other matters, we would at time convenient
return unto the same. We use and shall use such daily
diligence for the brief expedition of this diet that your Grace
shall briefly know what towardness is in the said orators.

Most humbly beseeching your Grace that where it is so that
we your most bounden beadsmen have been at great charges
and must daily continue in the same and moreover that the days
of our diets be passed and expired it may please your
Grace to command some provision to be made for us, and we
shall daily pray for the continual increase of your Grace's honor.

Thus the blessed Trinity preserve your Grace. At Bruges
this 15th day of September.
Your most humble orators and beadsmen
William Knight Thomas More
John Wilsher K. Richard Sampson
To my Lord Legate's Grace

100. To the Deputy Chamberlains of the Exchequer <c. May 1521>

To The Chamberlain's Deputies of the Knight's Exchequer

The ratification of the perpetual pax taken between
King Henry the 7th and King James of Scotland deceased.
Item the Treaty for reformation of attemptates concluded between
the said Kings with the commission of the King of Scots
for the same, and an Indenture of the said two Kings' Ambassadors.

Deliver these parcels to this bringer, Mr. Udale to be brought
in all haste to my Lord Legate to the More.
Thomas More
Undertreasurer

109. To Wolsey, Newall, 14 September <1522>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that
this day I received your Grace's letters dated yesterday, and with
the same letters devised by your Grace and addressed to certain
noble men of the Emperor's army, which I do send unto your
Grace at this present time, signed as your Grace commanded.

It may like your Grace further to be advertised that yesterday
the King's Grace received a letter from my Lord of Shrewsbury,
whereof your Grace shall perceive the contents by the letter self
which I do send unto your Grace with these presents. And forasmuch
as the same bare date the 8th day of this present month,
at which time his Grace perceiveth nothing done but such as
he was advertised of before by letters of my said Lord sent unto
his Grace by yours; his Grace therefore esteemed the letters the
less, saving that inasmuch as it appeared by the same, that in
consideration that the King's ordinance could not pass over
Staines Moor towards Carlisle, it was therefore by my said Lord
and the King's council there thought good that my Lord with
his company should advance themselves unto the east marshes, and
there, if they might have all things requisite, enter into Scotland
and so to proceed forward in doing the hurt that they could till
such time as they should meet with the Duke in his return from the west borders towards Edinburgh, unless they were by necessity forced to repair to my Lord Dacre toward Carlisle for his relief. Howbeit they reckoned that he should not need, for he should have with him upon 20,000 men which my Lord Steward thought were resorted unto him, in convenient time.

In that point the King’s Grace commanded me to write unto my Lord Steward that his Grace thought great doubt therein as well for that if it should happen my Lord Dacre to be distressed with his company, then my Lord Steward and his company might peradventure come over late to their relief, as also for that his Grace’s army being so divided either of the both parties should be compelled to encounter with the entire army of his enemies. Wherefore his Grace thought it best that my Lord Steward should advance forth and bring his whole army as near together as he might in such wise as every part against their enemies might help other. And then if God give them the victory, after that they had defended this land, advance farther and do what damage they could in Scotland.

Thus much the King’s Grace commanded me to write unto my Lord Steward of his opinions in that point leaving nevertheless the final order thereof to my Lord Steward and his Grace’s council there if their wisdoms should perceive that it were better for surety and furtherance of the affairs to pursue their said device or any other that should upon the circumstances considered be seen more available. As touching the lack of money mentioned in my said Lord’s letter he was answered that the King’s Grace doubted not but by this time the 10,000 L was come to him and knowledge also of the 6500 L by your Grace sent after, which with that that should rise of the loan in those parties should be such furniture for him that the King’s Grace verily trusteth that he was by this time well advanced forward, considering that his Grace was sure that my Lord Steward had given knowledge to the country that the money was in the way coming before it came at him and then his Grace thought his loving subjects would not let to advance forward a day's journey or twain being by him ascertained that their money should be paid them ere ever they should be far gone on. And especially since their advancing forward should be in the defense of their country against their mortal enemies, against whom some of those countries have been used both to defend and make invasions at their own
cost and charge, forasmuch as they have been and yet be for that consideration discharged of taxes and other charges universally born through the remnant of the realm.

Finally, the King's Grace caused me to write him further that it should be provided that upon his advertisement from time to time he should have money sent in time convenient so that he should not need to stop or let therefore. Thus much I remember of the letter written unto my Lord Steward which the King's Grace caused me when his Grace had read it to deliver it forthwith to my said Lord's servant tarrying and incessantly calling upon it. So that I could not write it out again to send your Grace the copy, as knoweth our Lord whose grace long preserve yours in honor and health.

At Newhall the 14th day of September.

Your humble orator and daily bounden beadsman.

Thomas More

To my Lord Legate's good grace.

110. To Wolsey, Newall, 21 September <1522>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised, that yesterday in the morning I received from your Grace your honorable letters written unto myself, dated the 19th day of this present month and with the same as well the letters of congratulation with the minute of a letter to be written with the King's own hand to the Emperor and the instructions to the King's Ambassador there as also those letters which your Grace received from Master Secretary, with the letters by your Grace also devised for the expedition of the gentleman of Spruce.

Which things with diligence I presented forthwith unto the King's Grace the same morning, and to the intent that his Grace should the more perfectly perceive what weighty things they were that your Grace had at that time sent unto him and what diligence was requisite in the expediting of the same, I read unto his Grace the letters which it liked your Grace to write to me. In which it much liked his Grace that your Grace so well allowed and approved his opinion concerning the overtures made by the French King unto the Emperor. After your Grace's said letter read, when he saw of your Grace's own hand that I should diligently solicit the expedition of those other things, forasmuch as your Grace intended and gladly would dispatch the
premises this present Sunday, his Grace laughed and said,

'Nay by my soul that will not be, for this is my removing day
soon at Newhall. I will read the remnant at night.'

Whereupon after that his Grace was come home hither and
had dined, being 6 of the clock in the night, I offered myself
again to his Grace in his own chamber, at which time he was
content to sign the letters to the Emperor and the other letters
for the expedition of the gentlemen of Spruce, putting over all
the remnant till this day in the morning.

Whereupon at my parting from his Grace yesternight I received
from your Grace a letter addressed unto his, with which I forthwith
returned unto his Grace in the Queen's chamber, where his
Grace read openly my Lord Admiral's letter to the Queen's
Grace, which marvelously rejoiced in the good news and especially
in that that the French King should be now toward a tutor and
his realm to have a governor.

In the communication whereof which lasted about one hour,
the King's Grace said that he trusted in God to be their governor
himself, and that they should by this means make a way
for him as King Richard did for his father. I pray God if it be
good for his Grace and for this realm that then it may prove
so, and else in the stead thereof I pray God send his Grace one
honorable and profitable peace.

This day in the morning, I read unto his Grace as well the instructions
most politicly and most prudently devised by your
Grace and thereto most eloquently expressed, as all the letters of
Mr. Secretary sent unto your Grace, to whom as well for your
speedy advertisement in the one, as for your great labor and
pain taken in the other, his Grace giveth his most hearty
thanks.

In the reading of the instruction among the incommodities that
your Grace there most prudently remembereth if the Emperor should
leave the estate of Milan up to the French King, the King's Grace
said that the Emperor should besides all those incommodities sustain
another great damage, that is to wit the loss of all his
friends and favorers in Italy without recovery forever which
should be fain to fall wholly to the French King, utterly despairing
that ever the Emperor leaving the Duchy when he had it
would after labor therefor when he had left it. Which consideration
his Grace would have planted into the instructions with
his own hand, saving that he said your Grace could, and so
he requireth you to do better furnish it or set it forth.

As touching Mr. Secretary's letters his Grace thinketh as your Grace most prudently writeth, that they do but seek delays till they may see how the world is, wherein he much alloweth your most prudent opinion that they should be with good round words to their Ambassador and other quick ways pricked forth.

And forasmuch as your Grace toucheth an order, that no Venetians should be suffered to ship any of their goods out of the realm, and that it is now showed unto his Grace that one Deodo a Venetian is about to ship, pretending himself to be denizen, which is his pretense whether it be true or not his Grace knoweth not, and also thinketh that he shall under the color of his own send out of the realm the goods of others his countrymen, for which causes his Grace requireth yours to have a respect thereto and cause it to be ordered as to your Grace's wisdom shall seem expedient.

Forasmuch as the King's Grace hath not yet written of his own hand the minute to the Emperor which I delivered his Grace in this morning, therefore I suppose that this letter written this present Sunday the twenty-first day of September in the night cannot be delivered to the post till tomorrow about - - -, as knoweth our Lord, who long preserve your Grace in honor and health.

Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More.

To my Lord Legate's good Grace.

115. To Wolsey, Easthampstead, 26 August <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised, that the King's Highness yesterday received a letter from his Vice Admiral, dated on the sea the 14th day of August; which letter your Grace shall receive with these presents.

And forasmuch as the valiant acquittal of Mr. Fitzwilliam and his company singularly well contenteth the King's Highness, as a thing much redounding to the honor of his Grace and his realm, with high reproach and rebuke of his enemies he requireth your Grace therefore, that as well his Vice Admiral, as other gentlemen of his company, such as your Grace shall think convenient, may have sent unto them letters of thanks, by
which they may to their comfort and further courage understand how acceptable their good service is unto his Highness.

Furthermore as touching the two ships which your Grace hath devised to be sent unto Sir Anthony Poyntes, albeit that Mr. Vice Admiral, as your Grace may perceive by his letter, moveth three things which he thinketh would be considered therein, yet since your Grace hath had a politic foresight to the provision of the victual, which is the greatest thing that his Grace regardeth, his pleasure is according to your most prudent advice that for to put the matter in the more surety, the said two ships shall in any wise go forth and that they shall there continue till half the month of September be passed, after which time his Grace thinketh it good that Sir Anthony Poyntes and his company, should be discharged, for after that time his Grace believeth that the Duke of Albany either shall not go into Scotland, or else shall go too late to do either them good or us hurt, and therefore it seemeth to his Grace good that he should after the mids of this next month discharge himself of that cost.

In the meanwhile his Highness requireth your Grace that those ships may be so speedily and sufficiently victual for the whole time of their abode upon their enterprise there, as he doubteth not but your Grace hath and will provide therefore, that no lack of victual hinder or impeach their purpose.

It may further like your good Grace to understand that the King's Grace much alloweth your prudent answer made unto the Emperor's Ambassador upon the safe conduct. For his Grace thinketh it a great hindrance to the common affairs that the Emperor should grant any such safe conduct, whereby there should be any mutual intercourse between his subjects and their common enemies, and the commodities of France having vent and utterance, the enemy thereby the better furnished of money, should be the more able the longer to maintain the war. And so shall it be the longer ere he shall incline to any reasonable conditions of peace. Wherefore his Grace for his part according to your Grace's politic advice is as yet in mind neither to ratify that safe conduct, nor to grant any like, and is glad that your Grace so showed unto the Emperor's ambassador.

It may further like your good Grace to be advertised that one Thomas Murner, a frère of Saint Francis' order, which wrote a book against Luther in defense of the King's book, was out of Almaine sent into England by the means of a simple person,
an Almain naming himself servant unto the King's Grace and affirming unto Murner that the King had given him in charge to desire Murner to come over to him into England, and by the occasion thereof, he is come over and hath now been here a good while. Wherefore the King's Grace pitying that he was so deceived and having tender respect to the good zeal that he beareth toward the Faith and his good heart and mind toward his Highness, requireth your Grace that it may like you to cause him have in reward one hundred pounds, and that he may return home where his presence is very necessary, for he is one of the chief stays against the faction of Luther in that parts, against whom he hath written many books in the Almain tongue and now since his coming hither he hath translated into Latin the book that he before made in Almain in defense of the King's book. He is Doctor of Divinity and of both Laws and a man for writing and preaching of great estimation in his country.

It may like your Grace further to wit that the same simple person which caused Murner to come into England is now come to the Court and hath brought with him a baron's son of Almaine, to whom he hath also persuaded that the King's Grace would be glad to have him in his service. He hath also brought letters from Duke Ferdinand unto the King's Grace, which letters I send unto your Grace, wherein he desireth the King's Highness to take into his service and to retain with some convenient yearly pension Duke Mecklenburg, of which request the King's Grace greatly marvelleth and verily thinketh that this simple fellow which brought the letters, likewise as he caused Murner to come hither and persuaded the baron's son that the King would be glad to have his service, so hath, by some simple ways brought the Duke of Mecklenburg in the mind that the King's Grace would at the contemplation of Duke Ferdinand's letters be content to retain the Duke of Mecklenburg with a yearly pension. The fellow hath brought also from the Duke of Mecklenburg letters of credence written in the Dutch tongue. He bore himself in Almaine for the King's servant and boasted that he had a yearly pension of his Grace of fifty marks and that the King had sent him thither to take up servants for him. And now he saith he is servant unto the Emperor's Majesty and is going into Spain with letters to him and indeed he hath diverse letters to his Majesty, and so was it easy for him
to get, if he intend to deceive and mock, as the King's Grace
thinketh that he doth. For his Grace never saw him before, but
he understandeth now that before this time he was in England
when the Emperor was here and slew a man and escaped his way.
Wherefore his Grace requireth yours to give him your prudent
advice as well in a convenient answer to be made both to Duke
Ferdinand and the Duke of Mecklenburg as also in what
wise it shall be convenient to order this simple fellow, that so hath
deceived men in the King's name.

Furthermore it may like your good Grace to understand that
at the contemplation of your Grace's letters, the King's Highness is
graciously content that besides the 100 L for my fee, for the office of the
speaker of his Parliament, to be taken at the receipt of his Exchequer,
I shall have one other hundred pounds out of his coffers,
by the hands of the Treasurer of his Chamber, wherefore in most
humble wise I beseech your good Grace that as your gracious
favor hath obtained it for me so it may like the same to write
to Mr. Wyatt that he may deliver it to such as I shall send for
it, whereby I and all mine, as the manifold goodness of your
Grace hath already bound us, shall be daily more and more bounden
to pray for your Grace, whom our Lord long preserve in
honor and health. At East Hampstead the 26th day of August.

Your humble orator and most bounden beardsman

Thomas More

To my Lord Legate's good Grace.

115. To Wolsey

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that
according to your Grace's commandment, given me by your
letters dated the 30th day of August, I have showed unto the
King's Grace the bill devised for Sir Richard Wingfield, subscribed
by your Grace, and the old bill, also advertising his Grace
of such things as your Grace in the new bill caused to be left
out for the advantage of his Highness, which points I showed his
Grace cancelled in the old bill and omitted in the new, for which
his Highness, with hearty thanks to your Grace for your labor
taken therein, hath signed the new, which I have delivered to him
of whom I received it.

And thus our Lord long preserve your good Grace in honor and
health. At Woking the first day of September.
117. To Wolsey, Woking, 1 September <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that I have received your Grace's letters directed to myself dated the last day of August with the letters of my Lord Admiral to your Grace sent in post and copies of letters sent between the Queen of Scots and his Lordship concerning the matters and affairs of Scotland with the prudent answers of your Grace as well to my said Lord in your own name as in the name of the King's Highness to the said Queen of Scots. All which letters and copies I have distinctly read unto his Grace. Who hath in the reading thereof substantially considered as well the Queen his sister's letter with the letters againward devised and sent by my Lord Admiral to her and his letters of advertisement to your Grace as your most politic devices and answers unto all the same among which the letter which your Grace devised in the name of his Highness to the Queen his sister his Grace so well liked that I never saw him like thing better, and as help me God in my poor fantasy not causeless, for it is for the quantity one of the best made letters for words, matter, sentence and couching that ever I read in my life.

His Highness in your Grace's letter directed to my Lord Admiral marked and well liked that your Grace touched my said Lord and my Lord Dacre in that that their opinions had been to the let of the great rood, which if it had been ere this time made into Scotland, as by your prudent advice it had, if their opinions with other had not been to the contrary, it should as by the Queen's letter appeareth have been the occasion of some great and good effect.

His Highness also well allowed that your Grace noteth not only remiss dealing but also some suspicion, in that the Lord Dacre so little esteemed the mind and opinion of the King's sister whereof he had by his servant so perfect knowledge.

Finally his Highness is of the mind of your Grace and singularly commendeth your policy in that your Grace determineth for a final way that my Lord Admiral shall set forth his enterprises without any longer tract of time not ceasing to press them with all the annoyance possible till they fall earnestly and effectually
to some better train and conformity. And verily his Highness
thinketh as your Grace writeth that for any lack of those things,
which as he writeth are not yet come to him, he should not have
needed to forbear to have done them with smaller roods as the
least way some annoyance in the mean season.

I read also to his Highness the letter of Mr. Doctor Knight
written unto your Grace, with your Grace's letter written to myself,
by the tenor whereof his Grace well perceiveth your most
prudent answer devised and made, as well to his said Ambassador
as to the Ambassador of the Emperor, concerning the disbursing
of such money as his Highness should lay out for the *entretènement*
of the 10,100 lance knights, wherein his Grace highly well approveth
as well your most politic foresight so wisely doubting
lest this delay of the declaration might happen to be a device,
whereby the Emperor might spare his own charge and *entretient*
the Almains with the only cost of the King's Grace, as also your
most prudent order taken therein by which his Highness shall be
bound to no charge except the Duke first pass the articles
sent by Sir John Russell and that the 10,000 Almains be levied and
joined with the Duke and he declared enemy to the French King.

I read, also, to his Highness the copy of your Grace's letter devised
to Mr. Doctor Sampson and Mr. Jerningham; wherein his Highness
well perceived and marked what labor and pain your Grace
had taken as well in substantial advertising his said Ambassadors
at length of all occurrents here, with the goodly rehearsal of the
valiant acquittal of his army on the sea not only there done but
also descending on the land whoso his preparations and armies
set forth and furnished as well toward France as Scotland as also
in your good and substantial instructions given unto them for
the semblable advancing of the Emperor's army and actual invasion
to be made on that side for his part.

His Highness hath also seen and signed the letters by your
Grace devised in his name as well to Don Ferdinando and to the
Duke of Meckelenburg in answer of their late letters sent unto his
Grace as also to the Duke of Ferrara in commendation of the
King's orators in case the Duke accept the Order.

In the reading and advising of all which things his Highness
said that he perceived well, what labor, study, pain and
travail your Grace had taken in the device and penning of so
many, so great things, so high, well dispatched in so brief time,
when the only reading thereof held him about two hours; his
Highness, therefore, commanded me to write unto your Grace
that for your labor, travail, study, pain and diligence, he giveth
your Grace his most hearty and not more hearty than highly well
deserved thanks. And thus our Lord long preserve your good
Grace in honor and health. At Woking the first day of September.

Your humble Orator and most bounden beadsman

Thomas More

To my Lord Legate's good Grace.

118. To Wolsey, Woking, 3 September <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that I
have received your Grace's letter to me directed, written the 2nd
day of September, and with the same the letters congratulatory by
your Grace devised in the King's name to the Duke of Venice.
Which I read unto his Grace, who much commending your substantial
draft and ornate device therein, hath signed and with
his hearty thanks remitted the same unto your Grace again.

I read also to his Highness your said letters written to me which
his highness very gladly heard and in the reading said that your
Grace was worthy more thanks than he could give you. And as
touching the venison which he sent your Grace, he was very
glad that it liked your Grace so well and would that it had
been much better. And thus our Lord long preserve your good
Grace in honor and health. At Woking the 3rd day of September.

Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More.

119. To Wolsey, Woking, 5 September <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that I
have received as well your Grace's letters written to myself
dated the 4th day of this present month, as also the letter of my
Lord of Suffolk directed unto the King's Highness, with a letter
of my Lady Margaret unto my said Lord. All which letters I
have read unto the King's Grace, who most heartily thanketh
yours, not only for your speedy advertisement, but also for your
substantial provision for the victual of his army, and your prudent
advice concerning the demur or marching of the same, which
your politic counsel his Grace in every point well pondered,
and the same so well liked, that saving for the plague raining at Calais and in the March of the same, whereto your Grace hath also right special regard, his Highness would be the less minded to make haste in the removing of his army out of his own pale, into the frontiers of his enemies.

But now the danger of the plague standing though it were in his town and marshes right remiss, which is as his Highness is informed very fervent, yet ere his Grace would enjeopard his people in the infection thereof, somewhat would he rather remove them thence toward their enemies, as your Grace in the end of your letter for the same cause politically concludest. Wherein his Grace requireth yours that my Lord of Suffolk with condign thanks for his good endeavor may be advertised of his opinion and yours, so that he may with diligence march out of the English pale into some more wholesome place upon the frontiers of the enemy, providing that he neither march further than he may march and abide surely, nor any such way, as the enemy thereby may perceive, what place he specially purposeth to invade, so that after the Burgundians joined with them, which thing he requireth your Grace with your letters to my Lady Margaret in your prudent manner to accelerate, they may the less looked for and thereby the less provided for, suddenly turn to Boleyn, where our Lord send them good speed.

Where it liketh your good Grace so thankfully to accept my poor devoir in doing right small part of my bounden duty, ye show your accustomed goodness and bind me that that in my service lacketh, in my poor prayer to supply. And thus our Lord long preserve your good grace in honor and health. At Woking the fifth day of September.

Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More.

119. To Wolsey, Woking, 12 September <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that yesternight late after his supper I presented unto the King's Grace as well my Lord of Suffolk's letter written to your Grace with the copy of the Lord Ysselstein's letter to the same and his letter directed to the King, as also your Grace's letter written to myself dated the 11th day of this present September and as touching the consultation of the siege to be laid to Boleyn or abandoned,
his Highness hath commanded me to write unto your Grace that notwithstanding the reasons of the Lord Ysselstein, with the mind of my Lady Margaret and the Emperor too, his Grace is for the prudent reasons mentioned in your Grace's letter determinately resolved to have the said siege experimented, whereof, as your Grace writeth, what may hap to fall who but God can tell. And all the preparations purveyed for that way to be now suddenly set aside or converted where they cannot serve, sending his army far off into the enemy's land, where we should trust to their provision of whose slackness and hard handling proof hath been had ere this. And yet no proof had of the Duke's fastness, his Highness verily thinketh as your Grace hath most prudently written that there were no wisdom therein. And his Grace saith that your Grace hit the nail on the head where ye write that the Burgundians would be upon their own frontiers to the end our money should be spent among them and their frontiers defended and themselves resort to their houses.

Howbeit as touching the defense of the Low Countries his Grace saith that they shall not if all things be well ordered on their part so greatly need to fear as well for the reasons prudently mentioned in your Grace's letter as also for that the country contributeth unto an aid for their own defense whereof this company either is, or as his Grace thinketh should be, none but of the Emperor's charge besides, so that if the one matter eat not up the other his Highness saith they should be sufficiently furnished for both.

Finally his Grace for your substantial counsel and prudent advice in this point his most affectionate thanksgiving to your Grace, heartily requireth the same that as well my Lord of Suffolk as the Lord Ysselstein may be with diligence advertised of his Grace's resolute pleasure and yours. And thus our Lord long preserve your good Grace in honor and health. At Woking the 12th day of September about midnight.

The letter for the Ambassador of Venice I shall send unto your Grace, as soon as it shall please the King's Highness to take the leisure to sign it which I trust his Grace will do tomorrow.

Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More

To my Lord Legate's good Grace.
It may like your good Grace to be advertised that I have received from your Grace a packet containing, as well your Grace's letter directed to myself, dated the 12th day of this present September, as two letters of Sir John Russell, one to the King's Grace, another to yours, with the copy of the letter of Chastel, servant of Monsieur de Beaurain, directed to the Emperor's Ambassador here, all which I have presented and read unto the King's Grace, who most affectionately thanketh your Grace for your speedy advertisement and especially for your studious consideration of the same so diligently declaring by your most prudent letters such things of weight and substance as to your high wisdom seemed worthy to be noted.

All which his Grace well and deeply considering, thinketh in every point as your Grace taketh it, that the Duke neither could otherwise do than dissimule his purpose for the while, nor is at this day nor hereafter likely to be in any hearty peace or concord with the French King. But all the danger and harm is as your Grace well noteth that it is likely to be so long ere he declare himself enemy. His Highness is glad that he is deceived in his fear that he conceived lest the French King had haply by some means somewhat perceived of this practice. Which his Grace now perceiveth well he doth not, for if he had he would either not have come in his house or not so departed thence. But his Grace greatly feareth that since this matter is now in somewhat more men's mouths than it was in the beginning, lest it will not long be kept so secret, but that the French King may be well likely to come to the suspicion thereof, which if he should happen to do, the Duke thinking the contrary, he should not fail to be suddenly distressed as his Grace thinketh, and all this conclusion quailed; which were to the common affair so great a lack that his Grace thinketh the eschewing thereof a thing right deeply to be considered and thought upon. Wherein his Grace's opinion is, if your Grace think it good, that your Grace should by your high wisdom devise some godly way by which Sir John Russell might whoso diligence convenient to be used advertise the Duke on the King's behalf, that his Grace perceiveth, that in Flanders and other places more folk know of this matter than were likely long to keep it close, the knowledge whereof the King's Grace fearing lest by some means coming to the French King, ere the Duke suspect it, might put him in danger and peril, hath of his
tender zeal to the Duke's safeguard thought it necessary to advertise him thereof, giving him his friendly loving counsel either to declare himself or at the least wise in the mean season to make no less provision for his own safeguard and surety than he would do if he were by undoubted means ascertained that the French King knew his purpose. By some such manner advertisement his Grace esteemeth that the Duke shall either be moved to declare himself the sooner or at the least wise to keep himself the surer. And thus hath his Grace in this point commanded me to write unto your Grace of his opinion, remitting the further consideration of the same to your high prudence.

His Grace liketh not that the Emperor setteth on so slowly, for he thinketh that if the Emperor enter in it would give good courage to the Duke to declare. And as for the intelligence that the Emperor writeth of to his Ambassador here, that he hath in Guyen with hope to attain certain towns whereof he feareth the loss by stronger garnisons to be sent in to them, in case his army descended ere he have them; the King's Grace saith he hath small trust in that matter, esteeming it an excuse of their unforwardness. And thus our Lord long preserve your good Grace in honor and health. At Guildford the 13th day of September late in the night.

His Highness persevereth in your Grace's opinion that for any solicitation of the Emperor or my Lady no money be debursed till the declaration be made.

I eftsoons most humbly thank your good Grace that it liked your Grace in so goodly wise to give thanks to the King's Highness for his bounteous liberality at the contemplation of your Grace's letters used unto Mr. Tuke and me. Whom your Grace hath by your manifold benefits before and thereby newly bounden to continue your perpetual beadsman.

Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman

Thomas More.

To my Lord Legate's good Grace.

122. To Wolsey, Easthampstead, 17 September <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that the King's Highness this night going to his supper called me to him secretly and commanded me to write unto your Grace that whereas it hath pleased our Lord to call to his mercy Mr. Mirfine,
late Alderman of London, his Grace very greatly desireth for the special favor which he beareth toward Sir William Tyler that the same Sir William should have the widow of the said late Alderman in marriage. For the furtherance whereof his Highness considering your Grace's well approved wisdom and dexterity in the achieving and bringing to good pass his virtuous and honorable appetites commanded me with diligence to advertise your Grace that his Highness in most hearty wise requireth your Grace that it may like you at the contemplation of this his affectionate request by your high wisdom to devise, put in ure and pursue the most effectual means, by which his Grace's desire may in this matter best be brought about and goodly take effect, wherein his highness saith that your Grace shall do him a right special pleasure and bind the said Sir William during his life to pray for your good Grace.

Thus much hath his Grace in this behalf commanded me to write yours whom both our Lord long preserve in honor and health together. At East Hampstead the 17th day of September.

Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More.

To my Lord Legate's good Grace.

123. To Wolsey, Abingdon, 20 September <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that the King's Highness by the hands of his servant Sir John Russell, of whose well achieved errand his Grace taketh great pleasure, hath received your most prudent letter containing your wise and substantial counsel and advice concerning the siege of Boleyn to be left off at this present time, and his army, with proclamations of liberty and forbearing to burn, to proceed and march forward unto the places devised by the Duke of Bourbon, which places, as your Grace upon credible report from all parties is informed, shall easily be taken without any resistance, wherein your Grace perceiveth great appearance of winning some great part of France or at the least wise all that is on this side of the water of Somme, which should be as honorable and beneficial unto his Grace and also more tenable than all Normandy, Gascone, and Guyen, requiring his Highness therefore that your Grace might whoso possible diligence be advertised of his mind and pleasure in the premises to the end that ye might advertise my Lord of Suffolk of the
And that it would like his Grace to take in good part your aforesaid advice and opinion without areting any lightness to your Grace though the same were of another sort now than was contained in your late letters addressed unto me, forasmuch as this declaration of the Duke of Bourbon and his council thereupon given with the good semblance and grounds and considerations thereof causeth your Grace to change your opinion. The King's Highness also commanded me to write unto your Grace first concerning this point, that his Highness not only doth not aret the change of your Grace's opinion to any lightness but also right well considereth that it proceedeth of a very constant and unchangeable purpose to the furtherance and advancement of his affairs. And as his Highness esteemeth nothing in counsel more perilous than one to persevere in the maintenance of his advice because he hath once given it, so thinketh he that counselor very commendable, which, though there were no change in the matter, yet forbeareth not to declare the change of his own opinion, if he either perceive or think that he perceiveth the contrary of his former counsel more profitable. Wherefore in the change of your Grace's opinion in this matter his Highness not only seeth no manner likelihood of lightness but also perceiveth, commendeth and most affectionately thanketh your faithful diligence and high wisdom so deeply pondering and so substantially advertising his Highness of such considerations as (the matter so greatly changed) move your Grace to change your opinion and to give your prudent advice to the changing of the manner and fashion of his affairs.

His Highness hath further commanded me to write to your Grace that as touching the resolution of his mind and pleasure upon your consultation, your Grace hath alleged so many good and substantial reasons on the one part and yet those notwithstanding, some considerations so move him to the other, that his Highness hath though it convenient - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - himself first to communicate his said considerations with your Grace to the end that those things by your high wisdom well weighed and pondered, his Highness may upon your further advertisement take with your Grace's good advice and counsel such final determination as may God willing be best and most conducible to the desired end and effect of his purposed enterprise.

First his Highness in the abandoning of the siege and sending
his army forward into France, is not so much retarded and
letted in his opinion for the hope of the good that he thinketh
could be now done at the siege, as for the doubts that rise unto his
Highness of the marching to the places devised and in the manner
mentioned. For as for the siege, albeit his Grace yet despaires
not but that if it were experimented as late as it is, some good
might yet with God's Grace grow thereof, yet hath he much the
less trust thereunto forasmuch as a great part and the best part
of the time in which his Highness reckoned that it should have
been in doing is now and needs must be by the slackness of the Burgundians'
 provision passed and consumed ere they can begin. By
whose only remiss dealing, his Highness reckoneth the good that
of that siege might have grown at this time, hindered, impeached
and in manner lost. Wherefore the case so standing albeit that his
Grace seeth not now so much hope of any great effect of the
siege as might have grown if their promises had been kept, yet
some considerations move him to think that of the marching forward

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
little profit with
more charge danger and peril than of the siege.

First his Grace findeth the time of the year as far passed for the
good to be done in the marching forward as in the lying at the
siege, and yet by reason of wet weather and rotten ways rather
more incommodious to that feat in which they should sometimes
lie still and sometimes march than to that feat in which they
should only place themselves and lie still. Especially his Highness
thinketh that the wetness of the country upon the river's side shall
not suffer his army to march with artillery either gross enough
for battery or sufficient for the field, without which his Grace
thinketh it were a great unsurety to send them thither as they
may be percase constrained to strike battle with a more puissant
host than is reckoned on.

His Grace saith also Corbie or Compiègne or other towns upon
the river of Somme be not so facile and easy to be taken as some
men make them that would gladly bring us from Boleyn, or as
the Burgundians make them, being desirous to bring us to
them. In whose report what trust there is, his Grace saith they
made a proof the last summer at Hédin, which was in their
mouths very weak till they came at it and in their eyes very
strong till they got from it. And if these towns happen to
prove like, so that without long siege and great battery they will
not be won, then the ground being over soft to carry so
gross artillery as a full battery would require, his army shall, as he saith of necessity - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - 
- and not without peril, such towns and garnisons left behind them as may distress their victuals.

And on the other side, if the towns be so easy to be won as the Burgundians and other make it, then thinketh his Grace that after his army withdrawn and discharged, they will be as easy to be lost, if the French King approach them with an army rial, which is more easy for him to do in his own realm than for the King's Grace to rescue them with a like army through another prince's land, though he be his friend. And if he were otherwise, then might his army never come at them but by force and fight ere they come to them. And his Highness thinketh that it were not so much honor shortly to win them as it would be dishonor shortly to leese them.

Whereas your Grace thinketh that by the means of this manner of marching with the seas well guarded, Montreuil, Therouenne, Hédin, and Boulogne should be secluded utterly from victuals, and thereby constrained of necessity to render themselves either some part of this winter or by the entry of a mean army into France in the beginning of the next summer, the King's Grace saith that he would of this thing be most joyous if it might in such wise come to pass; but his Highness in the let thereof doubteth two things, one that it would be right hard for him to find the money that should suffice to the continual keeping of his army so long both by sea and by land, namely so great as the obtaining of the towns should require, the other, that it would be impossible except the towns aforesaid were continually besieged to withstand it else but that they should always now and then either by land or sea be revictualed, considering that they be so furnished already that keeping therein but the ordinary or little above (as they would keep no more without constraint of a siege with right small refreshing they should endure right long).

His Highness also much bendeth upon a substantial reason alleged by your Grace in your late letters addressed to me, which yet seemeth to his Grace sore sounding to the danger and peril of his host in case they should march forward as is devised, that is to wit the doubt of their victualing. For whereas your Grace right prudently answereth the doubt which ye made before of the interception if it should be conveyed to other place than Boleyn, the Duke not having declared himself nor the French King's
army sent out of his realm. Which victual your Grace esteemeth
to more be now conveyed from Calais after the army, since the French
King’s puissance is passed and the Duke declared enemy against
whom namely purposing to invade with the 10,000 Almains
and his own power, the French King shall be forced to convert
all the power he can make.

The King’s Highness in this point findeth two difficulties, one
that since the conveyance of victual with artillery and other things
in the marching further forward must needs require double the
carriage that it should need the army lying at the siege still, where
fewer carts by half might sooner and more safely come and go
in that way shorter and less dangerous, seeing the Burgundians
whoso the diligent soliciting that can be made have not yet or
scantly yet provided that carriage that were sufficient for the siege,
his Highness sore doubteth that his army should be right hardly
bestead in their victual and carriage ere the Burgundians provided
sufficiently for the residue. Wherefore his Grace thinketh if they
should march far, there would be great difficulty in the victualing;
for our own, he thinketh, would not well follow so far and our
friends how we may trust therein we have had experience, then in
our enemy is yet much more unsurety.

The other difficulty that his Highness findeth is this. His
Grace thinketh that the French King is not unlikely to do as his
Highness would himself if he were in (as our Lord keep him
out of) the like case. Then would he appease his own realm
ere he would invade another. So if the French King do (as he hath
of likelihood already done ) revoke the puissance of his army, being
yet at the time of the declaration not passing six days journey from
him, if they were so far, and with them joining the 5000
Almains with the 200 men of armies whom he hath with him
already about Lyons, he might haply invade the Duke before
the 10,000 Almains were joined with him, or peradventure be
too strong for him when they were joined with him or else if
he suddenly upon the first sure knowledge of the matter unite the
5000Almains and the 200 men of armies with such other power
as he could shortly make at hand, he was not unlikely, the
King thinketh, to distress the Duke ere he should assemble power
sufficient to withstand it. Then if by any of these ways it should
mishap or be by this already mishappened that the Duke be oppressed,
then should the French King, as he may easily march in
his own realm, come down and convert his whole power against
the King's army and the same being far entered into the bowels of his realm he should have, the King's Grace thinketh, good opportunity with great number of his horsemen to cut off our victual at our backs.

For which causes it seemeth to the King's Grace that ere ever his army should march far off, since it can neither join with the Duke to make him the stronger, nor come so near as they might relieve his overthrow, if he so mishapped, nor the French King of likelihood will not divide his power but with his whole power encounter first the one, it were therefore, his Grace thinketh, expedient somewhat to perceive first how the Duke were able himself with the aid already given him to sustain the impression of the enemy.

Finally where the Duke adviseth that the King's army shall in the marching proclaim liberty, sparing the country from burning and spoil, the King's Highness thinketh that since his army shall march in hard weather with many sore and grievous incommodities, if they should also forbear the profit of the spoil, the bare hope whereof, though they got little, was great encouraging to them, they shall have evil will to march far forward and their captains shall have much ado to keep them from crying, Home! Home!

The King's Highness, albeit he well considereth that the year being so far passed, there is no time to be lost, but all the celerity to be used that conveniently may, yet since his army will in the meanwhile be somewhat doing, hath deemed it requisite these considerations that move him to signify to your Grace, to the intent that the same by your high prudence advised and considered, such final determination may be taken by his Grace and yours as shall with God's grace bring his affairs to good and honorable effect.

His Grace is very glad and right heartily thanketh yours that ye have provided by commandment sent to Mr. Knight, that the money shall be paid out of hand for the month's wages of the 10,000 Almains and the remnant at times and place convenient, for else he thinketh now for lack of that money the conclusion might all quail.

After that his Grace had read and reformed the minute of this present letter, he commanded me to write unto your Grace on his behalf that it might like you to take the pain to devise a good round letter unto my Lady Margaret in your own name to
stir them forward in the provision of such things as their slackness hitherto much hath hindered the common affairs. His Highness saith that such dealing so often used and never otherwise, may well give him cause hereafter better to be advised ere he enter into a charge again for their defense if this be not amended. And so he required your Grace to write unto her. And thus our Lord long preserve your good Grace in honor and health. At Abingdon the 20th day of September.

Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More

To my Lord Legate's Good Grace

Master More 20 Septembris.

124. To Wolsey, Woodstock, 22 September <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that I have this night, after that the King's Grace had supped, presented and distinctly read unto his Highness as well your Grace's letter dated the 21st day of this present September addressed unto myself, as the 4 letters of the Queen of Scots directed twain to the King's Grace and the other twain to my Lord of Surrey. And also the two letters by your good Grace in the King's name most politically devised unto the said Queen of Scots for which your labor, pain, travail, diligence, and study therein used his Grace giveth unto yours his most affectionate thanks. And forasmuch as in the reading of my Lord of Surrey's letter directed unto your Grace, the King noted that my said Lord had already written unto the Queen of Scots answer unto both her said letters, his Grace requireth yours that it may like you to send him the copies which his letter specifieth to have been sent unto your Grace.

His Grace also thinketh it right good that the Humes and Douglas be received upon convenient hostages, and that as well the Chancellor as the other lords mentioned in the Queen's letter should be attempted by promises, gifts and good policy to be won from the Duke and his faction.

And forasmuch as his Grace much desireth in these things to be advertised of your most politic advice and counsel, which he thinketh your Grace intendeth to declare by way of instructions to be given unto my said Lord of Surrey, his Highness
therefore heartily requireth your Grace, that it may like the same to send unto him the said instructions that his Grace may by the same be learned of your Grace's prudent advice and counsel in the premises.

His Highness thinketh it very necessary not only that my Lord of Surrey were in all possible haste advertised of the declaration of the Duke of Bourbon but also that the same were insert within the letter which the Queen of Scots shall show to the Lords with good exaggeration of the tyranny for which he renounceth the French King and of the harm and ruin that is likely to fall to France thereby.

His Highness also requireth your Grace to peise and consider the clause of the Queen's letter by which she desireth with her trusty servants to be received into his realm and how your high wisdom thinketh good that matter to be ordered or answered. And to the intent in all these things your Grace may the more conveniently send him your most prudent advice he hath commanded me with these presents to remit all the said writings unto your good Grace to be by your good Grace again sent unto his Highness with your most politic counsel thereupon. And thus our Lord long preserve your good Grace in honor and health. Written at Woodstock, the 22nd day of September at midnight.

Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman,

Thomas More

To my Lord Legate's good Grace.

Master More 22 Septembris.

125. To Wolsey, Woodstock, 24 September <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that I have this night received and presented unto the King's Grace as well your Grace's letter written to myself dated this present day as also the copies of my Lord of Surry's letters written to the Queen of Scots with the copy of your Grace's former letter written and sent unto my said Lord and your letter of new devised at this time to be sent, by all which his Highness well perceiveth not only your Grace's high policy in the devising and ordering of his affairs and business comprised in the same but also your marvelous diligence and celerity in the expedition and speed of the same, for his Highness seeth all such things as he
commanded me to put your Grace in remembrance of on his behalf by your high diligence anticipated and already done ere his Grace thought thereon. Wherefore his Highness with most hearty thanks unto your Grace for your great labor, pain and diligence used therein hath signed the letters in his name by your Grace devised unto his sister the Queen of Scots, commanding me forthwith to dispatch the post again unto your Grace with the same. And thus our Lord long preserve your good Grace in honor and health. At Woodstock the 24th day of September.

Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More

126. To Wolsey, Woodstock, 26 September <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that I have this night, after the King's Grace had supped, presented and read unto his Highness, as well your Grace's letter written unto me dated yesterday, as the letters of the Queen of Scots written to my Lord of Surrey with the letters of his Lordship as well answering her Grace as advertising yours. The King's Highness is glad that my Lord of Surrey now beginneth savorly to perceive that the Lords of Scotland intend but only to drive over the time of their annoyance and much would his Grace have been gladder that my Lord had savored it before, for then his Grace thinketh that as well the feat that shall now be done, or is by this done, might have been long since done, and peradventure much more. His Highness also liketh not all the best, that my Lord of Surrey in his letter written to the Queen, which he would she should show to the Lords of Scotland, appointeth them the time and place where they shall send to him, to Jedburgh. For his Grace thinketh the time and place so certainly known, it shall be a good occasion to the Scots the more surely to withstand his enterprise. Howbeit his Grace trusteth in God it shall be or is by this time well enough.

His Highness is very sorry of the plage and the fervent agues fallen in his army to so great diminishing of the same for the remedy and reinforcing whereof his Highness thinketh nothing more profitable than for the causes in your Grace's letters most prudently remembered that the places of them that are departed to God, or sent back to Calais to be cured, should be and so is he content they shall be supplied with as many horsemen of those
parties. And thereof his Grace requireth yours that my Lord of Suffolk may be advertised.

Finally that it liketh your good Grace so benignly to accept and take in worth my poor service and so far above my merits to commend the same in that letter, which of mine accustomed manner your Grace foreknew the King's Grace should see, whereby his Highness should have occasion to accept it in like wise and so liked your Grace in one letter both give me your thanks and get me his. I were my good Lord very blind if I perceived not, very unkind if ever I forgot, of what gracious favor it proceedeth, which I can never otherwise reanswer than with my poor prayer, which, during my life shall never fail to pray to God for the preservation of your good Grace in honor and health. At Woodstock the 26th day of September.

Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More

To my Lord Legate's good Grace.

126. To Wolsey

127. To Wolsey, Woodstock, 30 October <1523>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that I have presented and read unto the King's Grace your Grace's letter written unto myself, dated the 27th day of this present month with the letter of my Lord Admiral, directed unto the King's Highness, dated at Newcastle the 24th day of this month. And two copies of your Grace's letters, one answering the said letter of my Lord Admiral to the other addressed unto my Lord of Suffolk, which letters forasmuch as his Highness well considered by your high wisdom so singularly well devised, that except his only thanks unto your Grace for your labor, pain and study for the same, which his Highness in his most hearty manner giveth unto your Grace, there required no further advertisement, he being then ready to ride, deferred the answer of the same until the morrow at his coming to Woodstock, at which he thought he should peradventure receive some new letters, as he hath indeed.

For this day came the post with your Grace's letter written unto me, dated the 29th day of this present month with the letter of my Lord of Suffolk, dated in the camp at Campien, with diverse other letters and copies contained in the same packet, all which I remit unto your good Grace again with these presents. After the receipt whereof forthwith this night, I read
all the same distinctly to his Highness, whereby he perceived not only the goodly victory that his army hath had against the enemies at Ancre and Bray, and winning the passage over the water of Somme, with free entry into the bowels of France without appearance of any great resistance with demonstration and good likelihood of the attaining of his ancient right and title to the coronet of France to his singular comfort and eternal honor, but also the marvelous diligence and inestimable industry of your good Grace by your high policy, labor, travail and study not only providing for the reinforcement of his said army, being by sickness, death and otherwise diminished and enfeebled, but also for the sufficient furniture as well of money as other necessaries for the same, which saving for your high prudence and politic provision his Highness would not well have thought feasible wherefore his Highness for your accustomed fervent zeal and goodness giveth passed the King's high and great matters, so much depending upon his honor, surety and reputation on all parties, being in so good train with such appearance of notable effect to ensue, that it might please his highness to resort unto some place and there establish himself, where your Grace might conveniently have often recourse and repair to the same for the better furtherance and advancement of his affairs, which as your Grace most prudently writeth, may be more perfectly communicate and more speedily set forth by groundly consultation in presence, than by letters in absence, his Highness ensuing the most prudent advertisement of your Grace, proceeding of special tender zeal to the furtherance of his affairs, intendeth as soon as he shall have heard of the good and prosperous end of his affairs against Scotland, which, God willing, he trusteth shall be shortly, then forthwith to repair to Windsor and there to demur until his Grace and yours deliver and determine further. Whom both our Lord send well and shortly together and long preserve you both in health and much honor.

At Woodstock the Friday before All Hallows' Eve.
Your humble orator and most bounden beadsman.
Thomas More
To my Lord Legate's good Grace.

136. To Wolsey, Hertford, 29 November <1524>
It may like your good Grace to be advertised that yesternight at my coming unto the King's Grace's presence, after that I had made your Grace's recommendations and his Highness showed himself very greatly glad and joyful of your Grace's health; as I was about to declare further to his Grace what letters I had brought, his Highness perceiving letters in my hand prevented me ere I could begin and said, "Ah! Ye have letters now by John Joachim and I trow some resolution what they will do." "Nay verily, Sir," quoth I, "my Lord hath yet no word by John Joachim nor John Joachim, as far as my Lord knew, had yet no word himself this day in the morning when I departed from his Grace." "No had?" quoth he, "I much marvel thereof for John Joachim had a servant come to him two days ago." "Sir," quoth I, "if it like your Grace this morning my Lord's Grace had nothing heard thereof, for yesterday his Grace at afternoon dispatched me to your Grace with a letter sent from Mr. Doctor Knight and the same night late his Grace sent a servant of his to mine house and commanded me to be with his Grace this morning by eight of the clock, where at my coming he delivered me these other letters and advertisements sent unto him from Mr. Pace, commanding me that after that your Highness had seen them, I should remit them to him with diligence, as well for that he would show them to other of your Grace's Council as also to John Joachim, for the contents be such as will do him little pleasure." "Marry," quoth his Grace, "I am well apaid thereof."

And so he fell in merrily to the reading of the letters of Master Pace and all the other abstracts and writings, whereof the contents as highly contented him as any tidings that I have seen come to him, and thanked your Grace most heartily for your good and speedy advertisement; and forthwith he declared the news and every material point, which upon the reading his Grace well noted unto the Queen's Grace and all other about him who were marvelous glad to hear it. And the Queen's Grace said that she was glad that the Spaniards had yet done somewhat in Italy in recompense of their departure out of Provence.

I showed his Highness that your Grace thought that the French King passed the mountains in hope to win all with a visage in Italy and to find there no resistance and his sudden coming upon much abashed the countries putting each quarter in doubt of other and out of surety who might be well trusted, but now
since he findeth it otherwise, missing the help of money, which
he hoped to have had in Milan, finding his enemies strong
and the fortresses well manned and furnished and at Pavia, by
the expugnation whereof he thought to put all the remnant in fear
and dread, being now twice rejected with loss and reproach, his
estimation shall so decay and his friends fail, his enemies confirmed
and encouraged, namely, such aid of the Almains of new
joining with them, that like as the French King before wrote
and boasted unto his mother that he had of his own mind passed
into Italy, so is it likely that she shall have shortly cause to write
again to him that it had to be much better and more wisdom for
him to abide at home than to put himself there where as he
standeth in great peril whither ever he shall get thence. The
King's Grace laughed and said that he thinketh it will be very
hard for him to get thence, and that he thinketh he matters
going thus the Pope's Holiness will not be hasty neither in peace
nor truce.

Upon the reading of Mr. Knight's letter his Grace said not
much, but that if Buren come to his Grace he will be plain with
him. And if he do not, but take his dispatch thereof your Grace,
which thing I perceive his Highness would be well content he did,
except he desire to come to his presence, his Grace requireth
yours so to talk with him as he may know that his Grace and
yours well perceive how the matters be handled by the Emperor's
agents in the enterprise.

The King's Grace is very glad that the matters of Scotland be
in so good train and would be loath that they were now ruffled by
the Earl of Angwish and much his Highness alloweth the most
prudent mind of your Grace minding to use the Earl of Angwish
for an instrument to wring and wrest the matters into
better train if they walk awry, and not to wrestle with them
and break them when they go right.

It may like your Grace also to be advertised that I moved
his Grace concerning the suit of Mr. Broke in such wise as your
Grace declared unto me your pleasure, when Mr. Broke and I
were with your Grace on Sunday. And his Grace answered me
that he would take a breath therein, and that he would first once speak
with the young man and then his Grace departed, but I perceived
by his Grace that he had taken the young man's promise not to
marry without his advice, because his Grace intended to marry him
to some one of the Queen's maidens. If it would like your good
Grace in any letter which it should please your Grace hereafter to
write hither, to make some mention and remembrance of that
matter, I trust it would take good effect. And thus our Lord long
preserve your good Grace in honor and health.

At Hertford the 29th day of November.

Your Grace's humble orator and most bounden beadsman.

Thomas More

To my Lord Legate's good Grace.

145. To Wolsey, Stony Stratford, 21 September <1526>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that I
have presented and read unto the King's Grace your honorable
letters directed unto myself and written the 17th day of September,
whereby his Highness very greatly rejoiced the valiant
acquittal and prosperous success of the Earls of Angwish and
Arran against their enemies and the disturbers of the peace
and quiet of Scotland, daily devising such enterprises as should, if
they mote have obtained their intent and purpose, have extended
in conclusion to the great peril and jeopardy of the young
Prince his nephew, not without some busyness and inquietness
also to this realm.

Wherefore his Highness much approveth your Grace's most prudent
device concerning the said Earls to be entertained with some
good letters and pleasures from his Grace with good advice and
counsel to be given unto them for such good, virtuous and
politic order to be taken and used by them for the good
bringing up of the young King, to the weal and surety of his
noble person and commodity of his realm, that he and his realm
may hereafter be glad and daily more and more delight and rejoice
in their late good chance and victory against them that late
were assembled against their King present in the field; and the
King's Highness thinketh that since the said Earls have now sufficient
open proof that the Archbishop of Saint Andrew's putteth
all his possible power to procure their destruction and to rare
broilery, war, and revolution in the realm, to the no little peril
of the young King their master, it were good that they were
advised in this their victory so substantially to provide for the
safeguard of their King and themselves by the effectual repressing
of their adversaries, that the said Archbishop and his adherents
in any time to come should not be able either by crafty practices
to deceive them, or open rebellion to distress them, but
without any trust or credence to be given to the blandishing of
the said Archbishop which this adverse chance shall peradventure
drive him to use for the while with purpose and intent of
revenging when he may find occasion, they provide and see so
substantial order taken for the surety of the King, the realm and
themselves that none evil weed have power to spring up too high.
And thus much the King's Highness hath commanded me to
write unto your good Grace concerning this matter, giving to
your Grace his most affectionate thanks for your diligent advertisement
of those good tidings with your labor taken in the letter
by your Grace devised in his name to the Chancellor of Poland.
His Highness also thinketh that it were neither honorable to his
Grace nor to the French King that the Emperor's Ambassador should
be detained in France, and it seemeth to me that the King's Grace
somewhat doubteth whether he be there detained against his will
or not, but his Grace greatly alloweth and thanketh yours in the
soliciting of his enlarging.
I remit unto your Grace the letters of Mr. Magnus and Sir
Christopher Dacre, and shall in like wise send unto your Grace
the letter to the Chancellor of Poland as soon as the King's Grace
shall have signed it. As knoweth our Lord whose goodness long
preserve your good Grace in prosperous health and honor.
At Stony Stratford the 21st day of September.
Your Grace's humble orator and most bounden beadsman.
Thomas More

150. To the University of Oxford, Richmond, 11 March <1527>

Right Worshipful Sir in my most hearty wise I recommend
me unto you.

Signifying unto you the King's pleasure is that for
certain considerations moving his Highness, ye shall forthwith
upon the sight of these my letters send up to me on Henry the
manciple of White Hall, in so sure keeping that he do not escape,
and that ye shall by your wisdom handle the matter so closely
that there be of his apprehension and sending up as little knowledge
abroad as may be. And this his Grace's commandment,
his high pleasure is that he shall whoso diligence and dexterity
put in execution as ye intend the continuance of his Grace's favor
towards you and that his University, the privileges whereof, his Grace of his blessed mind intendeth to see conserved. And for that intent his Highness hath ordered that ye shall send up the said Henry to me being Steward of that his University. And thus heartily fare ye well, at Richmond the 11th day of March.

Assuredly your own

Thomas More

161. To Wolsey, Windsor, 16 March <1528>

It may like your good Grace to be advertised that yesternight the King's Highness commanded me to advertise your Grace that his servant Michael the Geldrois delivered him a letter from Monsieur d'Ysselstein which his Grace hath sent unto yours in such manner couched that it seemeth to his Highness to have proceeded not without the advice of my Lady Margaret and the Council there. And forasmuch as the letter mentioned credence to be given to the bringer in the declaring of the same he showed unto his Highness on the behalf of Monsieur d'Ysselstein that my Lady and all the Council there, and among other himself especially were very sorry for this war intimated unto the Emperor and marvelous loath and heavy would be that any war should arise between them. And that it were to great pity and a thing highly declaring our Lord sore displeased with Christian people if the three greatest princes of Christendom coming to so near points of peace and concord should in so near hope and expectation of peace suddenly fall at war, beseeching the King's Highness graciously to persevere in his godly mind and appetite of peace, and howsoever it should hap to fall between him and Spain, yet to consider his ancient amity and to continue his good and gracious favor toward Flanders and those Low Countries which of all folk living loathest would be to have any enmity with his Grace or his people. Adding thereunto, that if his Highness had of his high wisdom any convenient means by which his Grace thought that the peace might yet be trained and come to good point that thing known he would not doubt to come over himself to his Grace with sufficient authority to conclude it.

Whereunto the King's Grace answered that no creature living, prince nor poor man, was more loath to have come to the war than he, nor that more labor and travail had taken in his mind
to conduce the peace, which he had undoubtedly brought to pass, if with the Emperor either reasonable respect of his own honor, profit and surety or any regard of the common weal of Christendom might have taken place. And since it was without his fault and against his mind come to this point now, his Grace must and would with other his friends and help of God defend his and their good cause and the common state of Christendom against such as by their immoderate sore dealing show themselves utterly set upon a purpose to put all in their own subjection. And that as touching the Low Countries he had for the old friendship and amity such favor to them that, as it hath well appeared by his acts since the intimation, he hath not been hasty to do them harm nor at the least wise to break any clause of their old intercourse albeit every clause had not been kept toward him. Wherein his Grace said that somewhat they had now begun to look unto and he doubted not but more they would for their honor. And whereas Monsieur d'Ysselstein upon the hope had of any good ways of peace offered himself to come over with sufficient authority, his Grace said, that both for is great wisdom and good zeal toward peace and old friendly mind toward his Grace of long time well known, and for the acquaintance between them with the favor that his Grace hath for his well deserving merits long born unto him, no man should be to his Grace more welcome, nor none could there come thence to whom his Grace could find in his heart more largely to declare his mind. In which he had conceived such things that he doubted not, if he came over with sufficient authority from the Emperor, either he should conclude the peace or plainly perceive and confess himself that the Emperor's immoderate hardness should be the only let and default.

Upon this the said Michael said that Monsieur d'Ysselstein would be glad to know what those devices were, which known he might see what hope he might have of any fruit to come of his coming. Whereunto the King's Highness answered that since his Grace had made the intimation it would not well stand with his honor, after such a sleight fashion to make any overture of such points. But if Monsieur d'Ysselstein came in such sufficient manner authorized by the Emperor, he should not fail to find his Grace such, that having so good zeal and desire to the peace, he should have cause to be glad of his journey. And thus much the King's Highness commanded me to advertise your Grace concerning...
the communication had between his Grace and the said Michael, desiring your Grace of your high wisdom to consider what were further to be devised or set forth concerning the said overture of Monsieur d'Ysselstein.

After this when I was gone from his Highness, it liked him to send again for me into his privy chamber about 10 of the clock and then commanded me to advertise your Grace further that he had considered with himself how loath the Low Countries be to have any war with him and that himself and your Grace, if it may be avoided, would be as loath to have any war with them. And for that cause his Grace thinketh it good that albeit he would there were no slackness in putting of my Lord Sandys, and his company in a readiness, yet they should not over hastily be sent over, lest those Low Countries being put in more doubt and fear of his Grace's intent and purpose toward them for some exploit to be done by land, might be the rather moved to retain and keep still the goods of his merchants and to begin also some business upon the English pale, which thing the matter thus hanging without further fear or suspicion added, his Highness verily thinketh that they will not attempt, but rather in good hope of peace accelerate the delivery of his merchants' goods, namely perceiving the discharge of the Spaniards whom by your Grace's most prudent advice his Highness hath condescended shortly to set at liberty and free passage.

And his Grace also thinketh that if my Lord Sandys with his company were at Guisnes they should be sore pressed by the French party to join with them in some exploit upon the borders of Flanders, which thing either they should stiffly refuse to do and thereby peradventure move grudge and suspicion, or join in the doing. And thereby some hurt done unto Flanders upon the frontiers might not only exasperate the matter and hinder the peace causing the goods of his merchants to be retained but also give occasion to have some broilery made upon the English pale in which his people might percase take more harm than they should infer. And when I was about to have showed his Highness somewhat of my poor mind in the matter, he said this gere could not be done so suddenly but that his Grace and yours should speak together first and in the meanwhile he commanded me thus much to advertise your grace of his mind.

Furthermore, his Highness desireth your Grace at such time as ye shall call the Spaniards before you to give them liberty to depart,
it may like you in such effectual wise to declare unto them what favor his Highness beareth to the nation of Spain and how loath his Grace would have been to have any war with them, that the opinion of his gracious favor toward them comprobate and corroborate by their discharge and frank deliverance being by them reported in Spain may move the nobles and the people there to take the more grievously toward the Emperor that his unreasonable hardness should be the cause and occasion of the war.

His Highness hath also commanded me to write unto your Grace that there is an hospital in Southwark whereof his Highness is informed that the Master is old, blind and feeble, and albeit that the hospital is in the gift of the Bishop of Winchester, yet his Grace is informed that your Grace may as Legate give the Master in this case a coadjutor. Which if your Grace conveniently may, then his Highness very heartily requireth your Grace that it may like you to appoint for his coadjutor his Grace's chaplain Mr. Stanley, which to desire of your Grace he saith that 2 things move him, the one that he would the man were provided for being a gentleman born and his Grace's chaplain, the other is that his Grace being thereby rid and discharged of him might, as he shortly would, have a better learned man in his place.

It may like your Grace to receive with this presents such letters as the King's Grace hath yesterday received out of Ireland, which after that I had by his Grace's commandment read and reported unto his Grace, he commanded me to send them unto your Grace to be by your high wisdom further considered and answers to them to be devised such as to your high prudence shall be seen convenient. And thus our Lord long preserve your good Grace in honor and health. At Windsor this 16th of March.

Your Grace's humble orator, and most bounden beadsman,

Thomas More

To my Lord Legate's good Grace.

170. Tunstall, Hackett, <More> to Henry VIII. <Cambrai, 2 August 1529>

*** lest they
saying that the obligations
and not revived nor renewed in any
albeit we told them not so, we intend if
some clause for your debts between them and us in
payment by the French King for any cause aforesaid,
howbeit we shall have much to do to bring them thereto.

After this we talked of your indemnity and of the sums
of money to your Grace owed by the Emperor and to reckon
how much it might amount unto. Whereof they made with us
none other sticking but that it could be longer to endure
the payment thereof than unto the intimation of the war unto
the Emperor. And after a great sum made, thereupon they
told us that the Frenchmen and they were agreed and fully
accorded that the French King should discharge the Emperor
of that indemnity, how great soever it were, willing us to
treat with the Frenchmen thereupon who, they were sure, would
satisfy us as they were bound to do, hereupon to demand
the penalty of breach of the marriage. Whereupon we had and
likewise of the demand of Tournai. And after much reasoning
on both sides of those two matters, nothing agreeing in any
point either in one or the other, put over those two matters until
we should have command of the intercourse. And after
overture made by us was before the
war they said that that
and
many of their subjects did complain and it
he must be heard in it, as well upon the one side as on the
other and that my Lady in that matter had no sufficient commission
but must advertise the Emperor, wherefore that matter must
be put in a surseance until his pleasure be here known. Whereunto
we answered that we had great marvel that they should make
sticking or make any question therein, wherein if they would stick
it were as much as to tell us that they should have
none amity at with your Grace.

As for particular matters we were not against, but that they
might be either remitted to justice, in the place where they pretend
themselves to be wronged, or else to be ordered at some
diet by both the princes to be appointed, howbeit the general
treaties of intercourse concerning the intercourse of the subjects
of either side could not in any wise be deferred but that it
must of necessity be ordered now with the treaty of peace and
amity, whereof the intercourse is a great part, for there could be
no good peace nor amity between the princes, if their people
were left in such case as they might not or wist not in what wise each of them to meddle with other; they might write to the Emperor and matter to be reasonably and indifferently ordered by the princes therefore. Whereunto after a little consultation among us, we gave them a short and plain answer; disposed to renovel the intercourse as well as the amity and in such case as it was before the war, your Highness, for the great zeal you bear unto peace, had sent us to conclude it. And on the other side for anything of the intercourse we had no commandment of your Grace to agree to neither. Whereupon they said they would make further vehement words to the Lady Margaret and thereupon give us further knowledge of her pleasure on the morrow.

Whereupon forthwith we showed unto the Chancellor of France what we had done and at what point we were at, who thought their motion very unreasonable and said he trusted they would come to some better point on the morrow. This morning at our meeting again, we found all the Imperials assembled that treated with us except only Monsieur de Berghes, which was as they said by reason of rainy weather somewhat acrazed and diseased. And there the Lord declared unto us that he and other of the council had made relation to move unto us that he would other of the amity and in such case as it was before the war, your Highness, for the great zeal you bear unto peace, had sent us to conclude it. And on the other side for anything of the intercourse we had no commandment of your Grace to agree to neither. Whereupon they said they would make further vehement words to the Lady Margaret and thereupon give us further knowledge of her pleasure on the morrow.

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for a resolute answer, and the Lord of Hochstrate said yea, for it was the answer whereupon she had resolved herself with the council.

Whereunto we told them that we much marveled that the Lady Margaret should think it strange that we should stick for 

* * * part of that - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
- - - - - - - when they might not be freely - - - - - - - - - - - -
- - - - - - - after that accustomed manner. And as touching the - - -
- - - - - - - thereof will as well bear the matter as it would - - -
- - - - - - - - - - - - of the peace concluded between the French
- - - - - - - And over that we showed them that at our first coming unto the Lady Margaret we did among other things as well mention unto her the intercourse as the peace and amity. So that she needeth not now so marvelously think it strange to hear speak of the intercourse nor to lay the fault upon the commission, in which if they had found any such faults they would have told unto us in the beginning and not have kept us here a month for naught.

Whereunto they answered that forasmuch as, after their demand and question asked us, we showed them that we could not conclude any peace with them, but if the French King had - - - - - - - also, therefore they determined no further to common with us, until the Frenchmen and they were accorded, and that therefore they had forborne to tell us this matter before. And they said that since the Emperor was as well King of Spain as Lord of these Low Countries, it should be peradventure his pleasure not to conclude any * * * the one part to take a - - - - - - - - - - - - at large; whereupon it was answered - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - for the Emperor never did nor - - - - - - - - - - - - your Grace and your people one treaty of intercourse for the - - - - - - and customs being so diverse the one from the other - - - - - - self, neither as King of Spain having any authority in these Low Countries, nor as Lords of any of the Low Countries having any authority in Spain. Besides this, that for Spain he can make none intercourse but such as must be concluded as well in his mother's name as in his own.

Then they said that the Lady Margaret was not advertised before that any man for your Grace's part should come to this diet which if she had been she might have provided a commission therefore, whereof she is now destitute and utterly cannot
treat thereof. We showed unto them that I, John Hackett, gave them warning thereof at Valenciennes, and that her commission as good enough, which might be further helped with a clause de rato and a covenant of a confirmation. Whereunto they said that she might not so covenant, considering that the privileges were forfeited by the intimation of war, and that your Grace and the French King had done all that ye could  

- - - - - - the morrow being the - - - - - - - - - -

Council and we met together again. At - - - - - - a

article in writing concerning the intercourse - - - -

- - - - that the Lady Margaret by deliberation taken by - - - resolved herself upon as the utterest and final point which she could condescend unto, which article was indeed such as the same would, if it had been agreed, have stood your subjects in little stead - - - - - - thereupon after long debating they condescended in conclusion that the French Council should see that article of their making, and the article also which we had devised;, and that thereupon we should further experiment whether we could come to any nearer point.

Whereupon since that time we have had diverse meetings, as well in presence of the French Council as apart, and the Imperials have brought in concerning the intercourse diverse changes, and ever the longer the worse. Whereupon we had such business with them, and found them so stiffly set upon the sore impairing of the intercourse, that surely, for aught we can perceive, we could never have taken any reasonable end with them but they would plainly have broken with us for - - - - * * *

Post scripta. As we were about to have folded up these letters, the Chancellor, the Great Master and the French Council sent for us, and at our coming showed unto us, that the Great Master had informed my Lady Regent of the manner of the departing between the Emperor's Council and us and that himself had thereupon, by her commandment, spoken with the Lord Hochstrate in her name showing him expressly that without an end taken in this contention there should nothing go forward, which had been accorded between them, but that the French King would rather give up the peace, and never have his children home, than take and have his peace without agreeable end by us taken for your Highness. He showed us further that the Lord Master had answer again
from the Lord Hochstrate that the Lady Margaret was minded
to take *** old intercourse
--- they should break of in like wise
--- Whereof we most heartily thanked them on your behalf
and departed. And in this case standeth the affairs at present,
unless God better them, as we trust he shall. Howbeit, in case
it fortune that this diet should break up without peace concluded,
we propose to depart with the Lady Regent and come
home by France, and we intend not, if peace be not concluded,
to come home by Flanders.

Please it your Highness also to understand, that the Chancellor,
the Great Master and the French Council have diverse
times been in hand with us again for some capitulation to be
made between them and us for the mutual concurrence of your
Grace with your good brother the French King, in case the Emperor
should not perform his covenants nor deliver his
children; whereunto we have always made them fair and courteous
answers, without any reasoning that there were no cause remaining
why your Grace should so do, because we were not in
surety what need we might hap to have them, as it now
seemeth to hap indeed, but we have showed them that we
doubt not but that your good brother shall find your Grace
as willing as he can wish. As we shall see the matters proceed
we shall further *** three months and
--- the space of that three months in
--- together.

Whereunto we answered that --- be
taken, the matter could be little amended for
whereunto said the Lord Fiennes that the truce
--- three parties, and they concluding peace with France
--- the parties, the truce were dissolved, seeming
thereby that they would make us a demonstration, and a fear
that France and they should conclude without us. We answered
them that if peace were made by one, it breaketh not the truce
between the remnant; howbeit, whether they should make,
break, or conclude, we neither could nor would conclude one or
other, except the articles which we first proposed, that is to
wit, the amity, the debts, and the intercourse whole and unchanged.

Now after our departing from them, we went this afternoon
to the Chancellor, the Great Master, and the French
Council, recounting unto them all the premises at length, whereupon they made us answer that they would make report unto my Lady Regent, and that they were sure that she would common with the Lady Margaret thereof, whereupon they trusted * * * - - - - - - - would make a peace with us worse - - - - - - - - - - - - - - intimation, our people and theirs have - - - - - - - - - - - - - were before by the space of two year which - - - - - - - - - - - - - - peace they would that they should never be again - - - - - - - - - six months; which surseance of six months though they should make it a surseance for six years, and for six hundred years after, yet we had no power to conclude it nor to limit it to any day, nor - - - - - - concerning the intercourse any other thing to do than to renovel it, and put it in the former terms without one syllable changed; wherefore, since they had given this unto us for a resolute answer, that they might not meddle with the intercourse, they should if they would stand - - - - - thereby take this for our resolute answer again, that we could not meddle their amity, whereof we desired them to advertise the Lady Margaret, and that if she would give us none other answer, that then we might know her pleasure, whether she would admit us to her presence to take our leave at her, which, if it liked her not, we desired them to make our humble recommendations unto her; which they said they would, and that they would also send us word the * * * Gueldres to make - - - - - - - - - - - - - - he had said he could show by your - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - Whereunto we answered that as touching the - - - - - your Grace had not done it but upon great consideration - - - - - - - - - - - - - - of such treaties as your Grace had made with the - - - - - - - for the observing of your part had been at immeasurable charge, hurt and travail of your people, yet was - - - - - - part almost never of one article nor appointment kept, whereof we might well at large enter into many a great speciality, were it not that your Highness had sent us hither for the furtherance and aid of peace, and not to enter into the requiting of any displeasance or exprobation of your gratuity and kindness; and yet all this notwithstanding your Grace never intimated the war but for a godly purpose for conducing the peace, as hath well appeared by your Grace in proceedings after the intimation made, which if the Lords well esteemed, they should well find not so much - - - - - - - to the Emperor's
harm as to the saving of his and their countries, howsoever it
liked the Duke of Gueldres thus to lie for his - - - - - as
ever any of us had heard we durst well * * *

171. Tunstall, More, Hackett to Henry VIII. Cambrai, <c. 4> August <1529>

Please it your Grace, by the French King - - - - -
- - - - - - every payment six months after other - - - - - -
- - - - - of November after the delivery of their children
- - - - - shall be in March next in every payment to be paid
- - - - - Crowns of the Sun for three first payments, the fourth
to be thirty thousand Angelots, or the value in
Crowns of the Sun, the fifth payment to be all the residue, that
is to say, ten thousand Angelots - - - - - thirty-five thousand Crowns,
or the value in Crowns of the Sun. And as for your Fleur-de-lis,
that ye have in pledge, we have left it to be accorded by your
Grace to put what days of payment ye shall think convenient,
but surely we think they will make great instance in alleging
necessity at this time, which we think to be unfeigned. Albeit in
discourse here late of their matters with the Imperials they bragged
that they were - - - - - - so rich to maintain their estate, but
the contrary doth appear - - - - - - they cannot furnish the
money to be paid before March next - - - - - - should take
money by exchange of merchants paying them - - - - -
which if they should do, considering the dearth and scarceness
- - - - - - now being in the world, would make the French
King's ransom - - - - - that pledge your Grace's - - - - -
- - - - - - ye will, the longer ye give the more - - - - -
- - - - - - and in the shorter the more strain them.

After our last letters were closed and gone with the post, we
found - - - - - half a leaf to have been left out for haste of
the writer, which he was so hasty to write the part of post scripta
that he left out a piece of - - - - - of our letter of the 2nd of
August, wherein was contained our advertisement and advice
in a matter moved unto us by the French Council, like as it
hath been diverse times, and we always have kept us within
the terms of our answer at that time given, the whole advertisement,
whereof only the beginning and yet that imperfect,
was in our said letter, is this that followeth.

Pleaseth it your Highness also to understand that the Chancellor,
the Great Master and the French Council have diverse
times been in hand with us again for some capitulation to be
made between them and us for the mutual concurrence of your
Grace with your good brother the French King, in case the Emperor
should not perform his covenants - - - - - - - - - - - - should so
do because we were - - - - - - - - - - - - to have of
them as it now seemeth to hap - - - - - - - - we showed them
that we doubt not but that your good brother will find your
Grace as willing as he can wish to anything that he may require
as he hath already of your Grace's manifold gratuities - - - - 
experience, and we showed them according to your Grace's most
- - - - - - - - instructions what peril might insurge if any capitulation
of concurrence of the war should be mentioned or spoken
of here, and that what were requisite to be done concerning such
concurrence was more - - - - - - - - after the pax concluded and
this diet absolved to be treated by - - - - - - abiding each with
other, with which our answer the Chancellor and the
French Council appeared but meanly satisfied, for the Chancellor
answered somewhat warmly, that by this means they
should leese force of the - - - - - de bello offensivo; at which
words the Great Master and other of the council communed
secretly with him; and after that the Great Master said that
there was no doubt of your Grace's goodness, and that your
brother the French king understood that by the good hearty
- - - - - - - - - your said good brother - - - - - - - - -
to your Grace, which, as we here say, - - - - - - - - - and
what other message that he shall have - - - - - - - - - - - part
of his errand shall be for the aforementioned - - - - - -
whereof we have thought it necessary to advertise your Grace
- - - - - - - that using your accustomed prudence ye neither put them
at the - - - - - despair of your concurrence, nor enter presently
to any treaty, whereof you might wish afterwards to be discharged.
As we shall see the matters proceed, we shall further
advertise your Grace with all diligence. And thus Almighty
God preserve your Grace to his pleasure. From Cambrai the 2nd
day of August.

Thus have we redintegrated our letter late sent unto your
Grace, in the place where it was at that time by oversight of the
writer forgotten, and which we have the rather now repeated
unto your Grace, because your Highness may perceive therein,
that your good brother the French King intendeth of likelihood,
still to press upon your Grace for capitulation to be made between
you for mutual concurrence in the war in case the

*de bello offensivo* standeth

trust and think the contrary, yet made but

that we had not the words of the treaties we thought

it not good to fall into any such disputations with them, lest it

should appear unto them that we reckoned your Grace discharged,
or that your Grace gladly so would be.

Pleaseth it your Grace further to understand, that we have

taken leave of the Lady Margaret who dismissed us with very

good and great demonstration of very good and hearty

affection unto your Grace and a full determination to endeavor

herself for *l'entretènement* of the pax and amity between

your Grace and the Emperor. And afterward, when we were

tarrying the French King coming to Cambrai, forasmuch as it

was showed unto us that he intended to come secretly and not

to have his being here known, the Lady Regent desired us to

tarry unto the coming of her son, for she knew he would be

glad to speak with us. Whereupon this day we have him,

who gave us very hearty thanks for our good and

erred with us and thus to your

Highness in very benign manner.

*when we took our leave of the Lady Regent*

in and most humbly recommended

her unto your Grace, with very great testification of your singular

goodness, both showed unto the King her son in his

captivity and often since from time to time renewed, and

now specially at this present diet well showed

servants fastly concurring with the King her son and his

Council for the concluding of the pax and deliverance of the

King's children, which else she recognized and said had not

been brought to so good a point but she said she reckoned,

and so did the King her son also, that your Grace was

the cause first of his own deliverance and now shall be by God's

grace the deliverer of his children also, which shall ever,
as they grow more and more in age, so more and more acknowledge

themselves deeply bounden and beholden unto you. And

with these words and such other, in very benign manner, she

bade us farewell.

And thus therefore tomorrow, God willing, or else as soon after

as we can get a carriage for our stuff, which is here at this time
very hard to get, we intend to take our journey homeward         171. To Henry VIII
towards * * * folding up this letter, the Lady
Margaret sent us word by a gentleman of her chamber that
the Emperor - - - - - - - - - - - - - - which God turn,
if it be true, to the wealth and commodity - - - - - -

By your Grace's most humble subjects, servants, and
beadsmen,

Cuthbert London
Thomas More
John Hacket

- - - - - at the diet of Cambrai, - - - - - August.

172. Tunstall, More, Hacket to Henry VIII. Cambrai, 5 August 1529

- - - - - they have in - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
- - - we have put the treaties of their - - - - - - - -
effect such as it had before the war begun - - - - - - - -
- - - - - almost as much to do to get any clause whereby your
Grace - - - - - your desires again of the Emperor in case your good
brother the French King, for lack of delivery of his children,
should not be bounden - - - - - howbeit at length with much
work and with the first - - - - - French Council, we
have a clause that for lack of deliverance of his children, restoreth
your obligations to their former strength - - - - - the
indiction of the war. So that finally your Grace hath the peace
with the intercourse in manner abovesaid and sealed and sworn
this day, the fifth day of August, with very honorable and
solemn - - - - - as your good brother the French King is peace
with the Emperor likewise is at the same time in the Cathedral
church of this town of Cambrai, of which our Lord send
good and long continuance.

As touching your Grace's debts, we have had communication
with the French Council, in which, albeit they desire much
longer day - - - - - whole sum in six payments,
yet forasmuch as your good brother shall not be content - - - -
of the deliverance of his children - - - - - not
be before March next coming; therefore for your - - - - of
payment we were fain to give them the half - - - - - to
be paid at such time as your Grace's half year's pension must be
paid. Howbeit this end have we agreed unto but only for so
much as the Emperor's obligations do amount unto. For as
touching the thousand Crowns for the which your Grace hath the Fleur-de-lis in pledge, and which Fleur-de-lis your good brother hath expressly bound himself to quit out and deliver unto the Emperor's Orator at the deliverance of his children, we refused to meddle withal but have remitted them for that parcel to make means to your Grace because that we showed them that we had not that jewel here. And thus have we done to the intent that we would leave it to the liberty of your Grace's pleasure, whether ye would compel them for that pledge to pay ready money in hand, or else of your Grace's benignity to give them further days. For which we perceive your good brother driven to forbear their - of money sooner to furnish the pay which he must pay at their deliverance and Council and we accorded, howbeit the writings be us. And yesterday they were in doubt because we them for the jewel whether they will covenant with us for any - by their orators make their covenants with your Grace and your Council for all your whole debts. And if they hap to return again to that Grace can take no loss thereby. And as touching the indemnity according to our instructions, put it off to be further considered at of your Grace and of your good brother. And as touching the restitution of Tournai and the penalty of the marriage, forasmuch as after we could nothing obtain thereof we have in conclusion let it slip in any of our writings. And thus after the writings once made between the French Council and us for the Emperor's obligations due to your Grace, if they will conclude with us, or else after the remitting of them Grace and your Council there for the same; we thus having once departing and homeward and give attendance upon as we suppose that your good brother shall dispatch some gentleman of his chamber unto who by reason thereof is likely to be with your Grace before humbly beseech your Grace that it may like you to let him know. done our duty in advertising your Grace of the very fast and hearty concurrence of the Lady Regent and the Council here, specially of the Grand Master, which hath done for the furtherance
of your Grace's affairs here so much that in the matters of their own master they could do no more.

And thus almighty Jesus preserve your Grace to his pleasure and yours with increase of much honor. From Cambrai the fifth day of August.

By your Grace's most humble subjects, servants, and beadle.

Cuthbert London
Thomas More
John Hackett

173. Tunstall, More, Hackett to Wolsey. Cambrai, 10 August 1529

Please it your Grace to understand, that forasmuch as we have here finished all such things as were given us in charge, and that the French King, who this night banqueteth and feasteth the Lady Margaret, intendeth tomorrow to depart, and both the ladies on the morrow after, we have therefore taken our leave as well of the French King as of the both ladies. All who in very affectionate manner desired us to make their cordial recommendations unto your Grace, as we shall more plenarily declare unto your Grace by mouth at our repairing unto the same, which shall be, God willing, with as good speed as we can conveniently make, advertising your Grace further that the Lady Margaret hath sent us word by a gentleman of her chamber that the Emperor is arrived in Genoa.

Please it your Grace to understand that the Lord Hochstrate desired us to make his most humble recommendation unto your Grace, requiring us further to write unto your Grace that one Rayner Cossyn, bourgeois of Middleborough, was spoiled and robbed of his ship and goods upon the coast of Flanders not long ago, by a galleon of Biscay, of the haven of Armew, whereof was captain one John de Rycanera, which brought the said ship and goods into the haven of Southampton as a French prize, whereas the goods indeed belonged unto the said bourgeois of Middleborough, being the Emperor's subject. And forasmuch as the same goods be in the hands of diverse the King's subjects at Hampton, of the delivery of the said Spaniard, the Lord Hochstrate humbly beseecheth your Grace, that the said merchant of Middleborough, at such time as he shall come into England and make his humble suit therefor, may have your Grace's favor in his
expedition, according to right and justice. And thus almighty God preserve your Grace to his pleasure and yours. From Cambrai the 10th day of August.

By your Grace's most humble beadsmen.

Cuthbert London
Thomas More
John Hackett

To my Lord Legate's Grace.

174. To Lady More, Woodstock, 3 September <1529>

Sir Thomas More was made Lord Chancellor of England in Michaelmas term in the year of our Lord 1529, and in the 21st year of King Henry the VIII. And in the latter end of the harvest then next before, Sir Thomas More, then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, being returned from Cambrai in Flanders (where he had been Ambassador for the King) rode immediately to the King to the Court at Woodstock. And while he was there with the King, part of his own dwelling house at Chelsea and all his barns there full of corn suddenly fell on fire and were burnt and all the corn therein by the negligence of one of his neighbor's carts that carried the corn, and by occasion thereof were diverse of his next neighbors' barns burnt also. Upon which news brought unto him to the Court, he wrote to the lady his wife this letter following.

The copy of the letter.

Mistress Alice, in my most hearty wise I recommend me to you.

And whereas I am informed by my son Heron of the loss of our barns and our neighbors' also whose the corn that was therein, albeit (saving God's pleasure) it were great pity of so much good corn lost yet since it hath liked him to send us such a chance, we must and are bounden not only to be content but also to be glad of his visitation. He sent us all that we have lost and since he hath by such a chance taken it away again his pleasure be fulfilled; let us
never grudge thereat but take in good worth and heartily thank him as well for adversity as for prosperity and peradventure we have more cause to thank him for our loss than for our winning, for his wisdom better seeth what is good for us than we do ourselves. Therefore I pray you be of good cheer and take all the household with you to church and there thank God both for that he hath given us and for that he hath taken from us and for that he hath left us, which if it please him he can increase when he will and if it please him to leave us yet less, at his pleasure be it.

I pray you to make some good ensearch what my poor neighbors have lost and bid them take no thought therefor, for and I should not leave myself a spoon there shall no poor neighbor of mine bear no loss by any chance happened in my house. I pray you be with my children and your household merry in God and devise somewhat with your friends what way were best to take for provision to be made for corn for our household and for seed this year coming, if ye think it good that we keep the ground still in our hands, and whether ye think it good that we so shall do or not, yet I think it were not best suddenly thus to leave it all up and to put away our folk of our farm, till we have somewhat advised us thereon, howbeit if we have more now than ye shall need and which can get them other masters ye may then discharge us of them but I would not that any man were suddenly sent away he wot ne'er whither. At my coming hither I perceive none other but that I should tarry still with the King's Grace but now I shall, I think, by cause of this chance get leave this next week to come home and see you, and then shall we further devise together upon all things what order shall be best to take.

And thus as heartily fare you well whoso our children as ye can wish, at Woodstock the 3rd day of September by the hand of

Your loving husband

Thomas More Kg.

182. To Sir John Arundell, Chelsea, 5 April <1530>

Master Arundell, in my right hearty wise I recommend me unto you.
And whereas I understand that ye be one of the coparishioners of the manor of Sharshell Barton in the parish of Steeple Barton in the county of Oxford and the farm of Darneton in the same county, and that your part of the same manor and farm amounteth by year to 4 marks or thereabout, so it is that a servant of mine, one Edward Jones, a man right honest and whom I especially favor, hath obtained of my Lord South and other your partners their good wills and grants for a lease of their parts in the same. Wherefore and forasmuch as the said manor and farm cannot be well occupied but by one tenant without great unquietness of either part if it were occupied by diverse, I therefore heartily require you to be good unto my said servant, which shall be as good a tenant unto you as any other shall, and as much to your profit, of which I will not for any friend of mine require any part of your loss. And in being thus good unto my said servant for my sake, ye shall bind him to pray for you, and me to do for any friend of yours any such lawful pleasure as shall lie in my power. And thus heartily fare you well.

At Chelsea the 5th day of April.

Your assured lover,


To the right worshipful Sir John Arundell, Knight

In my most hearty wise I recommend me to you, and send you by this bringer the writing again which I received from you, whereof I have been offered since a couple of copies more in the meanwhile, as late as ye wot well it was, whereby men may see how greedily that these new named brethren write it out, and secretly spread it abroad. So that whereas the King's gracious Highness like a most faithful Catholic prince, for the avoiding of such pestilent books as sow such poisoned heresies among his people, hath by his open proclamations utterly forbidden all English printed books to be brought into this land from beyond the sea, lest our English heretics that are lurking there might there imprint their heresies among other matters and so send them hither unsuspected, and therefore unperceived till more harm were felt then after were well remediable: the devil hath now taught his disciples, the devisers
of these heresies, to make many more short treatises, whereof their scholars may shortly write out copies, but in their treatises to put as much poison in one written leaf, as they printed before in fifteen, as it well appeareth in this one writing of this young man's making, which hath, I hear say, lately made diverse other things, that yet run in huckermucker so close among the brethren, that there cometh no copies abroad.

And would God for his mercy that since there can nothing refrain their study from the devise and compassing of evil and ungracious writing, that they could and would keep it so secret, that never man should see it, but such as are already so far corrupted, as never would be cured of their canker. For less harm were it if only they that are already bemired, were as the Scripture saith mired on more and more, than that they should cast their dirt abroad upon other folks' clean clothes. But alack this will not be. For as Saint Paul saith, the contagion of heresy creepeth on like a canker. For as the canker corrupteth the body further and further, and turneth the whole parts into the same deadly sickness: so do these heretics creep forth among good simple souls, and under a vain hope of some high secret learning, which other men abroad either willingly did keep from them, or else could not teach them, they daily with such abominable books corrupt and destroy in corners very many before those writings come unto light, till at the last the smoke of that secret fire beginneth to reek out at some corner, and sometimes the whole fire so flameth out at once, that it burneth up whole towns, and wasteth whole countries, ere ever it can be mastered, and yet never after so well and clearly quenched, but that it lieth lurking still in some old rotten timber under cellars and ceilings, that if it be not well waited on and marked, will not fail at length to fall on an open fire again, as it hath fared in late years at more places than one, both the one fire and the other. And therefore I am both sure and sorry too, that those other books as well as this is now of this young man's, will once come unto light, and then shall it appear wherefore they be kept so close. Howbeit, a worse than this is, though the words be smooth and fair, the devil, I trow, cannot make. For herein he runneth a great way beyond Luther, and teacheth in few leaves shortly, all the poison that Wycliff, Huyskyn, Tyndale, and Zwingli have taught in all their long books before, concerning the blessed sacrament of the alter, affirming it to be not only very bread
still as Luther doth, but also as those other beasts do, saith it is nothing else, and that there is neither the blessed body of Christ, nor his blood, but for a remembrance of Christ's passion only bare bread and wine. And therein goeth he so far in conclusion, that he saith it is all one unto us in a manner whether it be consecrated or unconsecrated. And so that blessed sacrament that is and ever hath in all Christendom been held of all sacraments the chief, and not only a sacrament but the very self thing also which other sacraments betoken, and whereof all other sacraments take their effect and strength: he maketh in manner (taking the consecration so sleight and so light) no manner sacrament at all, wherein he runneth yet beyond Tyndale and all the heretics that ever I remember before.

And now the matter being of such a marvelous weight it is a great wonder to see upon how light and sleight occasions he is fallen unto these abominable heinous heresies.

For he denieth not nor cannot say nay, but that our savior said himself. My flesh is verily meat, and my blood is verily drink.

He denieth not also that Christ himself at his last supper taking the bread into his blessed hands, after that he had blessed it, said unto his disciples, 'Take you this and eat it, this is my body that shall be given for you.' And in like wise gave them the chalice after his blessing and consecration, and said unto them, 'This is the chalice of my blood of the new testament, which shall be shed out for many, do you this in remembrance of me.'

The young man denieth not nor can deny, but that our Savior here himself said that it was his own body, and said that it was his own blood, and there ordained that it should be in remembrance of him continually consecrated. So that he must needs confess, that all they which believe that it is his very body and his very blood indeed, have the plain words of our Savior himself upon their side, for the ground and foundation of their faith.

But now saith this young man against all this, that our Savior in other places of Scripture, called himself a very vine, and his disciples very branches. And he calleth himself a door also, not for that he was any of these things indeed, but for certain properties for which he likened himself to those things. As a man for some properties saith of his neighbor's horse, this horse is mine up and down, meaning that it is in everything so like.
And like as Jacob built an alter, and called it the God of Israel, and as Jacob called the place where he wrestled with the angel the face of God, and that the pascal lamb was called the passing by of the Lord, with infinite such other phrases as he saith not for that they were so indeed, but for certain similitudes in the properties: so saith this young man, that Christ though he said by his plain words, 'This is my body,' and 'this is my blood,' yet for all that he meant not that it was his body and his blood indeed, no more than that he meant that himself was a very door or a very vine indeed, though for certain properties he called himself both. And he saith that Christ meant in like wise here, not that it was or should be his own body and his blood indeed, but that it should be to them and us as a remembrance of him in his absence, as verily as though it were his very body and his very blood indeed, as the pascal lamb was a token and a remembrance of the passing by of the Lord, and as a bridegroom giveth his bride a ring if he hap to go into a far country from her, for a remembrance of him in his absence, and as a sure sign that he will keep her his faith and not break her his promise.

In good faith it grieveth me very sore, to see this young man so circumvented and beguiled by certain old limbs of the devil, as we now see that he is, when he is fain for the defense of this error, to flit in conclusion from the faith of plain and open Scripture and so far fall to the newfangled fantasies of foolish heretics, that he will for the allegory destroy the true sense of the letter, in maintenance of a new false sect, against the whole true catholic faith so fully confirmed and continued in Christ's whole Catholic Church this 1500 year together. For these dregs hath he drunk of Wycliff and Ecolampadius, Tyndale and Zwingli, and so hath he all that he argueth here besides; which 4 what manner folk they be, is meetly well perceived and known, and God hath in part with his open vengeance declared. And ever hath God and ever will, by some way declare his wrath and indignation against as many as fall into such damnable opinions against the blessed body and blood of his only begotten Son. From which perilous opinion and all his other errors, the great mercy of our sweet Savior call home again, and save this young man in time.

As for his allegories I am not offended with, nor with similitudes neither where they may have place, though he take one of
his neighbor’s horse as he doth, and another if he list of his own
cow. Provided always for a thing which he list to call like,
he misconstrue not the Scripture, and take away the very thing
indeed as he doth here.

Now his example also of his bridegroom’s ring, I very well
allow. For I take the blessed sacrament to be left with us for a
very token and a memorial of Christ indeed. But I say that
whole substance of the same token and memorial, is his own
blessed body, whereas this man would make it only bread.

And so I say that Christ hath left us a better token than this man
would have us take it for, and therein fareth like a man to whom
a bridegroom had delivered a goodly gold ring with a rich
ruby therein, to deliver over to his bride for a token, and then he
would like a false shrew, keep away that gold ring, and give
the bride in the stead thereof a proper ring of a rush, and tell
her that the bridegroom would send her no better, or else like one
that when the bridegroom had given such a gold ring to his
bride for a token, would tell her plain and make her believe that
the ring were but copper or brass, to diminish the bridegroom’s
thanks.

If he said that the words of Christ might besides the literal
sense be understood in an allegory, I would well agree with
him. For so may every word almost thorough the whole Scripture,
calling an allegory every sense, whereby the words be
translated unto some other spiritual understanding, besides the
true plain open sense that the letter first intended. But on the
other side because that in some words of Scripture is there none
other thing intended but an allegory, to go therefore and in
another place of Scripture to take away with an allegory, the
very true literal sense as he doth here, this is the fault that we
find in him, which if it may be suffered, must needs make
all the Scripture as touching any point of our faith, of none
effect or force at all. I marvel me therefore much that he is not
afraid to affirm that these words of Christ, of his body and his
blood, must needs be understood only by way of a similitude
or an allegory as the words be of the vine and the door.

Now this he woteth well, that though some words spoken by
the mouth of Christ written in Scripture, be to be understood
only by way of a similitude or an allegory: it followeth not thereupon
that of necessity every like word of Christ in other places
was none other but an allegory.
For such kind of sophistication in arguing, was the very cavillation and shift that the wicked Arians used, which like as this young man taketh away now from the blessed sacrament the very body and blood of Christ, by expounding his plain words with an allegory under color of some other places where such allegories must needs have place, and were none otherwise meant: so did they take from Christ's blessed person his omnipotent Godhead, and would not grant him to be equal with almighty God his father, but the plain texts of Scripture which proved his Godhead, they expounded wrong and frowardly, not only by some other texts that seemed to say otherwise, but also as this young man doth here by some allegories, affirming that he was called God and the son of God in Holy Scripture, by such manner of speaking, or as this young man calleth it, by such a manner of phrase as the Scripture for some property calleth certain other persons gods and God's sons in other places. As where God saith to Moses, I shall make thee the god of Pharaoh. And where he saith, thou shalt not backbite the gods.

And where he saith, I say you be gods and the sons of the high God be you all.

And thus against that that Christ was God and the Son of God, such cavillations these Arians laid in expounding the plain places with false allegories, resembling them to other places in which like allegories must needs have place, as this young man by the necessary allegories of Christ's words, used in the vine and in the door, would in like wise with like cavillations as the Arians used against Christ's Godhead, pull away the true literal sense of Christ's words concerning the truth of his very body and blood in the blessed sacrament.

And surely if this manner of handling of Scripture may be received and brought in ure, that because of allegories used in some places every man may at his pleasure draw every place to an allegory, and say the letter meaneth nothing else, there is not any text in all the Scripture, but a willful person may find other texts against it, that may serve him to trifle out the truth of God's words, with cavillations grounded upon God's other words, in some other place, wherein if he may be heard as long as he list to talk be it but a woman: yet shall she find chat enough for all an whole year. And so did those old Arians, of whom God forbid that this young man should follow that evil example.
If every man that can find out a newfound fantasy upon a 

If every man that can find out a newfound fantasy upon a
text of Holy Scripture, may have his own mind taken, and
his own exposition believed, against the expositions of the old
holy cunning doctors and saints; then may ye surely see that
none article of the Christian faith can stand and endure long. For
as holy saint Jerome saith of himself, if the exposition of other
interpreters and the consent of the common Catholic
Church, were of no more strength, but that every new man might
be believed that could bring some texts of Scripture for him
expounded as it pleased himself, then could I, saith this holy
man, bring up a new sect also, and say by Scripture that no
man were a true Christian man nor a member of the Church that
keepeth two coats. And in good faith if that way were allowed, I
were able myself to find out fifteen new sects in one forenoon,
that should have as much probable hold of Scripture as
this heresy hath. Against which, besides the common faith of all
Catholic Christian regions, the expositions of the old holy doctors
and saints be clear against this young man's mind in
this matter, as whole as against any heresy that ever was hitherto
heard of. For as for the words of Christ of which we speak
touching the blessed sacrament, though he may find some old
holy men that besides the literal sense doth expound them in an
allergy, yet shall he never find any of them that did as he
doeth now after Wycliff, Ecolampadius, Tyndale, and Zwingli,
deny the literal sense, and say that Christ meant not that it was
his very body and his very blood indeed, but the old holy doctors
and expositors besides all such allegories, do plainly
declare and expound, that in those words our Savior as he expressly
spoke, so did also well and plainly mean, that the thing
which he there gave to his disciples in the sacrament, were in
very deed his very flesh and blood. And so did never any of the
old expositors of Scripture expound any of those other places
in which Christ is called a vine or a door. And therefore it appeareth
well, that the manner of speaking was not like. For if it had,
then would not the old expositors have used such so far unlike
fashion in the expounding of them.

And over this, the very circumstances of the places in the
Gospel, in which our Savior speaketh of that sacrament, may
well make open the difference of his speech in this matter and
of all those other, and that as he spoke all those but in an allegory,
so spoke he this plainly meaning that he spoke of his very body
and his very blood besides all allegories. For neither when our
Lord said he was a very vine, now when he said he was the
doors, there was none that heard him that anything marveled
thereof. And why? for because they perceived well that he meant
not that he was a material vine indeed, nor a material door
neither. But when he said that his flesh was very meat, and
his blood was very drink, and that they should not be saved but
if they did eat his flesh and drink his blood, then were they
all in such a wonder thereof, that they could not abide. And
wherefore? but because they perceived well by his words and his
manner of circumstances used in the speaking of them, that Christ
spoke of his very flesh and his very blood indeed. For else the
strangeness of the words would have made them to have taken
it as well for an allegory, as either his words of the vine or of
the door. And then would they have no more marveled at the
one than they did at the other. But now whereas at the vine
and the door they marveled nothing, yet at the eating of his
flesh and drinking of his blood, they so sore marveled, and
were so sore moved, and thought the matter so hard, and the
wonder so great, that they asked, how could that be, and went
almost all their way, whereby we may well see, that he spoke
these words in such wise, as the hearers perceived that he meant
it not in a parable nor an allegory, but spoke of his very flesh
and his very blood indeed.

Many other plain proofs might a man gather upon the circumstances
of the very texts, where this thing is spoken of in the
Scripture, but that it is not my purpose now to stick in argument
of this matter, that is of itself so clear out of all question,
but only a little to touch it, that ye may see how little pith and
substance for his matter is in all those examples of allegory,
which Wycliff, Ecolampadius, Tyndale, and Zwingli have
brought out against the blessed sacrament, and wherewith those old
shrews have with their false similitudes piteously deceived,
either the simplicity or the lightness of this seely young man,
which might if he had not either of lightness overrun himself,
or of simpleness been deceived, or of pride and high mind
in putting forth heresies willingly beguiled and blinded, easily
have perceived himself, that the more such allegories that he
found in the Scripture in like manner of phrases or speech, the
worse is his part, and the more clear is it that these places speaking
of the blessed sacrament, were plainly meant as they were spoken,
besides all such allegories. For else had never both the hearers
at the time, and the expositors since and all Christian people
besides this 1500 year, taken only in this one matter the plain
literal sense being so strange and marvelous that it might
seem impossible, and decline from the letter for allegories in all
such other things, being as he saith and as indeed they be,
so many far in number more.

Howbeit as for this point that an allegory used in some place,
is not a cause sufficient to make men leave the proper significations
of God's word in every other place, and seek an allegory
and forsake the plain common sense and understanding of the
letter, this perceived the young man well enough himself. For
he confesseth that he would not so do save for necessity, because
he seeth as he saith that the common literal sense is impossible.
For the thing he saith that is meant thereby, cannot be true, that
is to wit that the very body of Christ cannot be in the sacrament,
because the sacrament is in many diverse places at once,
and was at the Maundy, that is to wit in the hands of Christ
and in every of his apostles' mouths, and at that time it was
not glorified.

And then he saith that Christ's body not being glorified,
could no more be in two places at once, than his own can. And
yet he goeth after further, and saith that no more it can neither
when it is glorified too. And that he proveth by the saying of
Saint Augustine, whose words be as he saith, that the body with
which Christ rose, must be in one place, and that it continueth
in heaven, and shall do till he shall come to judge both quick
and dead. And yet at the last he proveth that the body of Christ
cannot be in many places at once. For if it might be in many
places at once, then it might, he saith, be in all places at once.
But in all places at once he saith it cannot be, and thereof he concludeth
that it cannot be in many places at once. And thus for
this impossibility of the thing that riseth upon the common
literal sense of Christ's words, he is, he saith, of necessity
driven to fall from it unto some allegory, which he confesseth
that he would not do, if the plain literal sense were possible.

But alas for the dear mercy of God, if we should leave the letter
and seek an allegory with the destruction of the literal sense,
in every place where we find a thing that reason cannot reach
unto, nor see which way it were possible, and therefore would
take it for impossible: fain would I wit what one article of
all our faith this young man could assign me spoken of in the
Scripture, from which his reason shall not drive away the
strength of his proof in making him leave the literal sense,
wherein his proof should stand and send him to seek an allegory
that may stand with reason and drive away the faith, where
he should believe the letter and make his reason obedient unto faith.

I marvel me very much why the consideration of this impossibility,
should of necessity drive this young man from the plain
open literal sense of Christ's words spoken of the blessed sacrament,
since so many good and holy men so long together this 1500
year, have believed the literal sense well and firmly, and
could not be driven from it for any such consideration of such
impossibility, and yet being as natural men, as wise men, as
well learned men, as studious in the matter, and men of more age,
and more sure, sad and substantial judgment, than this
young man is yet, and men at the least as likely to see what were
possible and what were impossible as this good young man is.
And therefore as for all his reasons grounded upon impossibility,
since I may be bold to think as all those old holy men have
thought, and as all wise men I ween yet think, that nothing
is impossible to God: I esteem all those reasons very little worth.

Howbeit one thing he bringeth in by the way, that I would
he had showed in what place we might find it, that is to
wit the saying of Saint Augustine. For why to seek out one line
in all his books, were to go look a needle in a meadow. But surely
if we may see the place where the young man found it, we shall
I doubt not make a clear answer to it. And yet even as himself
hath rehearsed it, the saying maketh nothing for the proof of his
purpose. For Saint Augustine saith no more but that the body in
which Christ arose, must be in one place, and that it continueth
in heaven, and shall do till the day of doom. As help
me God except this young man in these words of Saint Augustine
see further with his young sight, than I can see with mine old
eyes and my spectacles, I marvel me much that ever he would
for his purpose once bring them in. For when Saint Augustine
saith that the body in which Christ arose, must needs be in one
place, he might mean by those words for anything that here
appeareth to the contrary, not that his body might not be in two
diverse places at once, but that it must be in one place, that is to
say in some place one or other, or that he must have one place
for his special place, and that place must be heaven, as we say
God must be in heaven, and angels must be in heaven. He speaketh nothing of the sacrament, nor saith not his body with which he rose must needs be so in one place, that it can by no possibility be in any more.

Also this word (must), which is in the Latin tongue called oportet, which word Saint Augustine here useth as this young man reheareth him, doth not always signify such a necessity, as excludeth all possibility of the contrary. For our Savior said himself to the two disciples, Nonne haec oportuit pati Christum, et ita intrare in gloriem suam? was it not so that Christ must die, and so enter into his glory? And yet himself said also, that he might for all that have chosen whether he would have died or no. For himself saith that to depart with his soul and to take his soul again, both twain were things put in his own power. And the prophet Isaiah saith of him, He was offered up because he so would himself. And therefore this Latin word oportet, which Saint Augustine hath in that place, is many times in the Latin tongue taken not for full and precise necessity, but for expedient and convenient. And therefore it is translated also into English, not only by this word (must) which yet signifieth not always an impossibility of the contrary, but oftentimes by this word (it behooveth) which word signifieth that it is to be done for our behoof and commodity, and not that it can in no wise be avoided but that it must needs be. And therefore since all that driveth this young man from the literal sense, is as he saith the impossibility of Christ's body to be at once in diverse places, and proveth that thing impossible by the words of Saint Augustine, that saith no more but that it must be in one place, and saith not that it may be in no more but one, nor speaketh not of any such necessity whereof he putteth the contrary for impossible, nor speaketh no word at all thereof the sacrament; since Saint Augustine I say saith no further than this, I marvel much in mine heart, what thing this young man seeth in his words, worthy the bringing in for any proof of his purpose.

And that ye may the more clearly see that Saint Augustine speaketh here of no necessity, he not only saith that the body of Christ with which he rose must be in one place, but also he determineth that one place in which he must be, if this young man rehearse him right, that is to say in heaven, there to continue still unto the day of doom.

But now I trow this young man thinketh not, that Saint Augustine
for all his determining that Christ's body in which he
rose must be still in the one place, that is to wit in heaven
until the day of doom, he meaneth for all that it is so fast
bound to abide only there, but that he may when it pleaseth
him in the selfsame body, be beneath here in earth an hundred
times before the day of doom. And good stories are there, testifying
that he so hath been diverse times ere this, since the
time of his Ascension.

And therefore this young man may perceive plainly, that Saint
Augustine in those words, though he say that Christ's body with
which he rose must be in once place, that is to wit in heaven, yet
he meant no such precise necessity as should drive this young
man from the literal sense of Christ's words unto the allegory.
He meant not by this word, it must be in one place, that is to
say in heaven, that it must so be in that once place till doomsday,
that it might in the meanwhile be in none other besides, and
that it must be so of an immutable necessity by no power
changeable, whereof the contrary were by no power possible. And
therefore as for these words of Saint Augustine to this purpose
here, I marvel much in good faith, but if he show more hereafter,
that ever this young man would speak of them.

Now as for his natural reasons be not worth the reasoning.
For first that the body of Christ unglorified could no more
be in two places at once than his own can, because he is a
natural body as Christ's was, and Christ's body a natural body
as his is; I will not examine any comparisons between their two
bodies. But if Christ would tell me that he would make each
of both their bodies to be in fifteen places at once, I would
believe him I, that he were able to make his word true in the
bodies of both twain, and never would I so much as ask
him whether he would glorify them both first or not. But I
am sure glorified or unglorified, if he said it he is able to do it.
When our Savior said, that it was as possible for a camel or a
great cable rope to enter through a needle's eye, as for a rich
man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, and after told his apostles
that though those two things were both impossible to men,
yet all-thing was possible to God: I think that he meant that
neither the example nor the matter was to God impossible. Now
since then at the least wise that it is not impossible for him to
convey the camel or the cable rope through the needle's eye, what
shall me need to study now whether he can bring them through
such as they be, or else must of fine force be fain to glorify the camel or the cable first, as this young man saith of his body that it were impossible for God to bring about to have it in two places at once such as it is now, because it is yet somewhat gross and unglorified, and then by the comparison of his own, he argueth the like of the blessed body of Christ, being like his at his Maundy no more glorified than he. But I say yet again of their bodies both twain, if he said the he would do it, I would not doubt but he could do it. And if he could not do it but if he glorified them first, then were I sure that he would glorify them both. And therefore if it were true, that he could not make his own body to be in two places at once at Maundy, but if it were then glorified, then since I am sure that he there did it, I am thereby sure also that he then for the time glorified it. For that thing was in his own power to do as often as he would, as well before his death as at his resurrection, and yet to keep his glorification from perceiving, as he did from his two disciples, which for all his glorified body took him but for a pilgrim. And therefore as I say, if Christ said unto me that he would make both his body and this young man's too, each of them to be in a thousand places at once, I would put no doubt therein, but that by some manner means he were able enough to do it.

But here would this young man peradventure say, ye say very well if God so said, and by his so saying so meant indeed. But ye wot well I deny that he so meant though he so said. For I say that in so saying he meant but by an allegory, as he did when he called himself a vine and a door. But now must this young man consider again, that himself confesseth that the cause for which himself saith that Christ in so saying did not so mean, is because that if he should have meant so, it was impossible for God to bring his meaning about, that is to say that Christ's body might be in two places at once. And therefore but if he prove that thing impossible for God to do, else he confesseth that God not only said it, but also meant it indeed.

And yet over this, if Christ had never said it, yet doubt I nothing but that he is able to do it, or else were there somewhat that he could not do, and then were God not almighty.

Now if this young man will say that to make one body to be in two places, doth imply repugnance, and that God can do no such thing: I dare be bold to tell him again, that many things may seem repugnant both to him and me, which
things God seeth how to make them stand together well enough.

Such blind reasons of repugnance induceth many men into great error, some ascribing all-thing to destiny without any power of man's free will at all, and some giving all to man's own will, and no foresight at all unto the providence of God, and all because the poor blind reason of man cannot see so far, as to perceive how God's presence and man's free will can stand and agree together, but seem to them clearly repugnant.

And surely if the seeming of our own feeble reason, may drive us once to think that one man to be at once in two places, is a thing so hard and so repugnant, and therefore so impossible that God himself can never bring it about, the devil will within a while set us upon such a trust unto our own reason, that he will make us take it for a thing repugnant and impossible, that ever one God should be three persons.

I wot well that many good folk have used in this matter many good fruitful examples of God's other works, not only miracles written in Scripture, but also done by the common course of nature here in earth, and some things made also by man's hand, as one face beheld in diverse glasses, and in every piece of one glass broken into twenty, and the marvel of the making of the glass itself such matter as it is made of, and of one word coming whole to an hundred ears at once, and the sight of one little eye present and beholding an whole great country at once, with a thousand such other marvels more, such as those that see them daily done and therefore marvel not at them, shall yet never be able, no not this young man himself, to give such reason by what means they may be done, but that he may have such repugnance laid against it, that he shall be fain in conclusion for the chief and the most evident reason to say, that the cause of all those things is because God that hath caused them so to be done is almighty of himself and can do what him list. And also I cannot see why it should be more repugnant that one body may be by the power of God in two places at once, than that two bodies may be together in one place at once. And that point I think this young many denieth not. And I verily think there is unto man's reason neither more semblance of difficulty nor of repugnance, neither in the being of one body be it never so gross and unglorified in twenty diverse places at once, than in the making of all that whole world, in which all the
bodies both glorified and unglorified have all their rooms and places, to make, I say, all that whole world of right naught. Which article of our faith we shall find folk within a while not greatly force to deny, if men fall to this point, that for impossibilities of nature, they think the things impossible also to God that is the master and the maker of nature, and that they will upon that imagination do as this young man doth, flee from the literal sense of the Scripture, and seek some allegory in the stead, and say they be driven thereto by necessity, by cause of the impossibility of the matter. For thus shall as ye may well see, by this means none article of our faith stand.

Now his last argument with which he proveth it impossible for one body of Christ to be in two places at once is this. You can, saith he, show no reason, why he should be in many places at once and not in all. But in all places he cannot be, wherefore we must conclude that he cannot be in many places at once. This is a marvelous concluded argument. I am sure a very child may soon see that this consequent can never follow upon those two premises of his antecedent. For he can no further conclude upon them, but that we can show no reason why he should be in many places at once. Now if I should grant him that no man could show a reason why he should be in many places at once, what had he won by that? might he then conclude thereupon that he could not be in many places at once, as though that it were not possible for God to make his body in two places at once, but if we were able to tell how, and why, and whereby, and show the reason? Now in this argument he beginneth with “should” in the major, and then in the minor and the conclusion turneth into “can” and so varieth his extremities, that the argument can never be good if it were but for that. If he would induce the conclusion which he concluseth here, he must have rather have argued thus. If it might be in many places at once, then might it be in all places at once. But in all places at once it cannot be, and therefore it cannot be in many places at once. Thus or in some such manner must he argue, if he will aught prove. But here now both the parties of his antecedent be very weak. The first is this, that if the body of our Savior may be in many places at once, it may be in all places at once. Though I would grant this causal proposition for the truth of the second part, yet would I deny it him for the form. For though I grant it to be true, yet the first part is not the proof of the second, but rather contrariwise
the second inferreth well the first. For the reason is good: he may be in all places, ergo he may be in many. But argue the contrariwise as this young man argueth, and then is the form very faint. For this hath little strength: he may be in many places, ergo he may be in all, many men run, ergo all men run, men run in many places, ergo men run in all places, but if the matter maintain the argument, either by the possibility of the antecedent or by the necessity of the consequent, as one man is a stone, ergo all men be stones, one man is a living creature, ergo all men be living creatures. But let this first proposition pass and come now to the second, upon which all his argument hangeth, that is, that the body of Christ cannot be at once in all places. This he saith, but how doth he prove it? If he will bid me prove the affirmative, I may answer that I need not, for it is not the thing that we have in hand. For we do not say that he is in all places, for the sacrament is not at once in all places. And we be not bound for this matter to go any further, and the point for so far I prove by the gospel that saith it is so. And therefore this young man that saith it cannot be, let him prove that it may not be. For if it may be, he then confesseth that the words of Christ do prove that it must be. But because it cannot be, saith he, therefore he is driven to construe these words by any allegory. And now that it cannot be in many places, he proveth by that that he cannot be in all places, and therefore must he prove that, of else give over the argument.

Howbeit as for me though I be not bound to it, I am content yet to prove that God may make the body of Christ to be in all places at once.

And because this young man coupleth the proposition with the other, so will I do, too. And I prove therefore that God can make his body be both in many places at once, and in all places at once, by that he is almighty, and therefore can do all-thing. And now must this young man tell us either that this is nothing, or else deny that God can do all-thing. And then must he limit God's power how far he will give God leave to stretch it. But when this young man shall come to that point, every wise man will, I ween, suppose and think in themselves that this young man hath yet it his youth gone too little while to school, to know all that God can do, but if he bring good witness that he hath learned up the uttermost of all God's cunning, which thing the apostle Paul for all that he was ravished up into the third
heaven, reckoned yet so far above his reach, that he cried out,
"Oh the altitude of the riches of the wisdom and the cunning
of God."

But yet this young man goeth about to prove that point by
Scripture. For except we grant him that point to be true,
he saith that else we make the angel a liar, that said he is not
here, and also that else we make as though Christ's body in his
ascension did not go up in the cloud into heaven from the
earth, but only hid himself in the cloud, and played bo-peep
and tarried beneath still.

I am in good faith sorry to see this young man presume so far
upon his wit, so soon ere it be full ripe. For surely such
liking of themselves maketh many wits wax rotten ere
they wax ripe. And verily if it do decrease and go backward
in this fashion, it may not last long. For even here in the
end he forgotteth himself so foul, that when he was a
young sophister he would, I dare say, have been full sore
ashamed so to have overseen himself at Oxford at a parvis.
For ye wot well that thing which he saith and which he
must therefore prove, is that the body of Christ cannot be in
every place at once, by no means that God could make. And
the texts that he bringeth in for the proof, say no further but
that he was not in all places at once, and say not that by no
possible power of his Godhead it could not be in every place
at once. And therefore this point is as ye see well of this young
man very youngly handled. And therefore ought every man
abhor as a plain pestilence, all such unreasonable reasons
made for nature by more than natural follies, against the possibility
of God's almighty power. For we may know it
verily, that against these follies hath especially a place the
good ghostly counsel of Saint Paul, where he warneth us
and saith, Beware that no man beguile you by vain philosophy.

God forbid that any man should be the more prone and ready
to believe this young man in this great matter, because he saith in
the beginning that he will bring all men to a concord and
a quietness of conscience. For he bringeth men to the worst
kind of quietness that can be devised, when he telleth us
as he doth, that every man may in this matter without peril
believe which way he list. Every man may in every matter
without any counsel of his, soon set himself at rest, if
he list to take that way to believe as he list himself and
care not how.

But and if that way had been sure, Saint Paul would never have showed that many were in peril of sickness and death too, for lack of discerning reverently the body of our Lord in that sacrament, when they came to receive him.

And against this doctrine of this young brother, is the plain doctrine of the old holy Fathers interpreters of the Scripture. And what fashion is this to say that we may believe if we list that there is the very body of our Lord indeed, and then to tell us for a truth that such a faith is impossible to be true, for God himself can never bring it about to make his body be there.

I am very sure that the old holy Doctors which believed Christ's body and his blood to be there, and so taught other to believe, as by their books plainly doth appear, if they had thought either that it could not be there, or that it was not there indeed, they would not for all the good in this world have written as they have done. For would those holy men, ween you, have taught that men be bound to believe that the very body and blood of Christ is there, if themselves thought they were not bound thereto? Or would they make men honor and worship that thing as the very body and blood of Christ, which themselves thought were not it? This gere is too childish to speak of.

Yet one great pleasure he doth us, in that he putteth us all at liberty, that we may without peril of damnation believe as we believed before, that is to wit that in the blessed sacrament the whole substance of the bread and the wine is transmuted and changed into the very body and blood of Christ. For if we may without peril of damnation believe thus as himself granteth that we may, then granteth he that we may also without peril of damnation believe that himself lieth, where he saith the truth of that belief is impossible.

And therefore I shall therein conclude with him, as our sovereign lord the King's Highness in his famous book of Assertion of the Sacrament concludeth in one place against Luther, which in his Babylonica confesseth that though men in the sacrament of the alter believed after the common faith as they did before, there was no peril therein. Well then said the King's Grace, ye do yourself grant that in our belief is
no peril. But all the church believeth that in your way is undoubted damnation. And therefore if ye will as wisdom would ye should, deal surely for yourself, ye should rather leave your unsure way which ye believe, and come yourself and counsel all other whom ye would did well, to believe as we do. Lo this reason of the King's Grace clearly conclueth this young man upon his own confession, and plainly proveth that except he leave his belief which all good Christian folk hold for damnable, and come home again to his old faith the common faith of all the Church, in which as himself agreeeth there is no peril, I will not for courtesy say he is stark mad, but surely I will say that for his own soul, the young man playeth a very young wanton pageant.

Now whereas for another quietness of every man's conscience, this young man biddeth every man be bold, and whether the blessed sacrament be consecrated or unconsecrated (for though he most especially speaketh for the wine yet he speaketh it of both) and biddeth care not but take it for all that unblessed as it is, because the priest, he saith, cannot deceive us nor take from us the profit of God's institution, whether he alter the words or leave them all unsaid, is not this a wonderful doctrine of this young man? We wot well all that the priest cannot hurt us by his oversight or malice, if there be no fault upon our own part. For that perfection that lacketh upon the priest's part, the great mercy of God doth as we trust of his own goodness supply. And therefore as holy Saint Chrisostom saith, no man can take harm but of himself. But now if we see the thing disordered our own selves by the priest, and Christ's institution broken, if we then wittingly receive it unblessed and unconsecrated, and care not whether Christ's institution be kept and observed or no, but reckon it is as good without it as with it, then make we ourselves partners of the fault, and leese the profit of the sacrament, and receive it with damnation, not for the priest's fault but for our own. Howbeit as for his belief that taketh it no better but for bare bread and wine, it maketh him little matter consecrated or not, saving that the better it is consecrated the more is it ever noyous unto him that receiveth it, having his conscience cumbered with such an execrable heresy, by which well appeareth that he putteth no difference between the body of our Lord in the blessed sacrament, and the common
bread that he eateth at his dinner, but rather he esteemeth it less,
for the one yet, I think ere he begin if he lack a priest
he will bless it himself, the other he careth not as he saith
whether it be blessed or no. From which abominable heresy
and all his other, our Lord for his great mercy deliver him,
and help to stop every good man's ears from such ungracious
incantations as this man's reasons be, which are
unto such simple people as will be with the wind of every
new doctrine blown about like a weathercock, much more
contagious a great deal, than was that evil doctrine which
Saint Paul so sore reprouveth, with which the false prophets
had bewitched the Galatians. But as for those that are good and
fast faithful folk, and have any grace or any spark of any
reason in their heads, will (I verily think) never be so far
overseen as in this article (the truth whereof God hath himself
testified by as many open miracles as ever he testified
any one) to believe this one young man upon his barren
reasons, against the faith and reason, both of all old holy
writers, and all good Christian people this 1500 years. All
which without any doubt or question, believed against his doctrine
in this blessed sacrament, until Berengar began to fall
first unto this error, which when he better considered he
fell from it again and forsook it utterly, and for because he had
ones held it, the good man did of his own good mind uncompelled
great penance willingly all his life after, as ye
may read in *Cronica cronicatorum* the 190th leaf. And also Frère
Barnes, albeit that, as ye wot well, he is in many other things
a brother of this young man's sect, yet in this heresy he
sore abhorreth his heresy, or else he lieth himself. For at
his last being here, he wrote a letter to me of his own hand,
wherein he writeth that I lay that heresy wrongfully to his
charge, and therein he taketh witness of God and his conscience
and showeth himself so sore grieved therewith, that
any man should so repute him by my writing, that he saith he
will in my reproach make a book against me, wherein he will
profess and protest his faith concerning this blessed sacrament.
By which book it shall, he saith, appear, that I have said
untruly of him, and that he abhorreth this abominable heresy,
which letter of his I forbear to answer till the book come.
By which we may see since he forsaketh this heresy, what faith
he will profess, whether the true faith or some other kind
of heresy. For if he will profess the very Catholic faith, he and I shall in that point be very soon agreed, and I shall then make him such answer therein, as he shall have cause to be well contented with.

But in the meantime, it well contenteth me that Frère Barnes being a man of more age, and more ripe discretion and a Doctor of Divinity, and in these things better learned than this young man is, abhorreth this young man's heresy in this point, as well as he liketh him in many other.

And so I trust will every wise man, and not be so enchanted with such childish reasons as his be, that they would thereby do as the hearers of Christ did, that for marvel of this matter as this young man doth now, refused our Savior and went their way from him, but will rather let them go that will go, and abide themselves with our Savior still, as will him that hath in the stead of this young man's vain childish philosophy, not false apparent sophistry, but the very words of eternal life. Which words I beseech our Lord give this young man the grace, against his own froward fantasies to believe, and to the same life bring him and us both, where we shall without the veil or covering of any manner sacrament, behold our blessed Savior face to face, and in the bright mirror of truth, the very one Godhead of the three like mighty and each almighty persons, clearly behold and perceive both that it may and indeed is, and also how it may be, that Christ's one body may be in many places at once. Which thing many that will not come thereof foolish frowardness affirm to be plain impossible.

Lo instead of a letter have you almost a book, longer than I trust good Christian folk shall need in so clear an article of the faith, and to all fast faithful people so far out of all doubt, saving that in sending you your copy again, me thought I must needs write you somewhat what I myself thought of his writing. In which when I once began, albeit not very well at ease, the abomination yet of that pestilent heresy and the peril of his colorable handling, drew me forth further and further, and scant could suffer me now to make an end, but that I was half in mind to have touched also the schism of the Bohemians, which he setteth forth here in his writing, saving that it requireth some length, and that I am in mind to make answer once in that matter unto Frère Barnes, which hath made therein,
ye wot well, an whole treatise, wherein I wonder if himself ween
he have said well.

And as for that holy prayer that this devout young man as a
new Christ, teacheth to make at the receiving of the blessed sacrament
all his congregation, I would not give the paring of a pear
for his prayer though it were better than it is, pulling away
the true faith therefore as he doth. Howbeit, his prayer there is
such devised, and penned, and painted with leisure and study,
that I trust every good Christian woman maketh a much better
prayer at the time of her housel, by faithful affection and
God's good inspiration suddenly. For she besides God's other
goodness, thanketh him, I think, for his high singular benefit
there presently given her, in that it liketh him to accept
and receive her so simple and so far unworthy of herself, to sit
at his own blessed board, and there for a remembrance of his
bitter passion suffered for her sin, to suffer her receive and eat
not bread, though it seem bread, but his very own precious
body in form of bread, both his very flesh, blood and bones, the
selfsame with which he died and with which he rose again,
and appeared again to his apostles, and eat among his disciples,
and with which he ascended into heaven, and with which he
shall descend again to judgment, and with which he shall
reign in heaven with his Father and their Holy Spirit in eternal
glory, and all his true faithful believing and loving people
with him, whom as the mystical members of his glorious body
he shall then, and from thenceforth forever pleasantly nourish
and feed and satiate their insatiable hunger with the beholding
of his glorious Godhead, whose hunger to heavenward he comforteth
and feedeth here by hope, and by the sure token and sign
of salvation, the giving of his own very blessed body under the
sign and likeness of bread to be eat and received into our
bodies, that our souls by the faith thereof, and our bodies by
the receiving thereof, may be spiritually and bodily joined and
knit unto his here in earth, and with his holy soul and his blessed
body, and his Godhead both with his Father and their Holy Spirit,
gloriously live after in heaven.

This, lo, in effect though not in words, Christian women
pray, and some of them peradventure express it much better too.
For God can, as the prophet saith, make not only women that
have age, faith, and wit, but the mouths also of infants and
young sucking children, to pronounce his laud and praise, so that
we need not this young man now to come teach us how and what
we shall pray, as Christ taught his disciples the Paternoster. Frith
is an unmeet master to teach us what we should pray at the receiving
of the blessed sacrament, when he will not acknowledge
it as it is, but take Christ's blessed body for nothing but bare bread,
and so little esteem the receiving of the blessed sacrament, that
he forceth little whether it be blessed or not. I pray God bless
these poisoned errors out of his blind heart, and make him
his faithful servant, and send you heartily well to fare. At Chelsea
the 7th day of December by the hand of
more than all your own,
Thomas More Knight.

192. To Elizabeth Barton, Chelsea, Tuesday <1533>

Good Madam, and my right dearly beloved sister in our
Lord God.

After my most hearty recommendation, I shall beseech
you to take my good mind in good worth, and pardon me
that I am so homely as of myself unrequired, and also without
necessity, to give counsel to you, of whom for the good inspirations,
and great revelations that it liketh Almighty God
of his goodness to give and show, as many wise, well learned, and
very virtuous folk testify, I myself have need, for the comfort
of my soul, to require and ask advise, for surely, good
Madam, since it pleaseth God sometimes to suffer such as are
far under and of little estimation, to give yet fruitful advertisement
to other as are in the light of the Spirit, so far above
them, that there were between them no comparison; as he suffered
his high prophet Moses to be in some things advised and
counselled by Jethro, I cannot for the love that in our Lord I
bear you refrain to put you in remembrance of one thing,
which in my poor mind I think highly necessary to be by
your wisdom considered, referring the end and order thereof, to
God and his holy Spirit, to direct you.

Good Madam, I doubt not, but that you remember that in
the beginning of my communication with you, I showed you
that I neither was, nor would be, curious of any knowledge of
other men's matters, and least of all of any matter of princes or
of the realm, in case it so were that God had, as to many good
folks beforetime he hath any things revealed unto you such things, I said unto your ladyship, that I was not only not desirous to hear of, but also would not hear of. Now, Madam, I consider well that many folk desire to speak with you, which are not all peradventure of my mind in this point; but some hap to be curious and inquisitive of things that little pertain unto their parts; and some might peradventure hap to talk of such things, as might peradventure after turn to much harm, as I think you have heard how the late Duke of Buckingham moved with the fame of one that was reported for an holy monk and had such talking with him as after was a great part of his destruction and disheriting of his blood, and great slander and infamy of religion. It sufficeth me, good Madam, to put you in remembrance of such thing, as I nothing doubt your wisdom and the spirit of God shall keep you from talking with any persons especially with lay persons, of any such manner things as pertain to princes' affairs, or the state of the realm, but only to common and talk with any person high and low, of such manner things as may to the soul be profitable for you to show and for them to know.

And thus my good Lady, and dearly beloved sister in our Lord, I make an end of this my needless advertisement unto you, whom the blessed Trinity preserve and increase in grace, and put in your mind to recommend me and mine unto him in your devout prayers. At Chelsea this Tuesday by the hand of Your hearty loving Brother and Beadsman, Thomas More, Kt.

194. To Thomas Cromwell, Chelsea, 1 February <1533/4>
your Mastership of your goodness showed him, that it hath been reported, that I have against the book of certain articles (which was late put forth in print by the King's honorable Council) made an answer, and delivered it unto my said cousin to print. And albeit that he for his part truly denied it, yet because he somewhat remained in doubt, whether your Mastership gave him therein full credence or not, he desired me for his farther discharge to declare you the very truth, sir, as help me God neither my said cousin nor any man else, never had any book of mine to print, one or other, since the said book of the King's Council came forth. For of truth the last book that he printed of mine was that book that I made against an unknown heretic which hath sent over a work that walketh in over many men's hands named the *Supper of the Lord*, against the blessed sacrament of the alter. My answer whereunto albeit that the printer (unaware to me) dated it Anno 1534, by which it seemeth to be printed since the Feast of the Circumcision, yet was it of very truth both made and printed and many of them gone before Christmas. And myself never espied the printer's oversight in the date, in more than three weeks after. And this was in good faith the last book that my cousin had of mine. Which being true as of truth it shall be found, sufficeth for his declaration in this behalf.

As touching mine own self, I shall say thus much farther, that on my faith I never made any such book nor never thought to do. I read the said book once over and never more. But I am for once reading very far off from many things, whereof I would have meetly sure knowledge, ere ever I would make an answer, though the matter and the book both, concerning the poorest man in a town, and were of the simplest man's making too. For of many things which in that book be touched, in some I know not the law, and in some I know not the fact. And therefore would I never be so childish nor so play the proud arrogant fool, by whomsoever the book had been made, and to whomsoever the matter had belonged, as to presume to make an answer to the book, concerning the matter whereof I never were sufficiently learned in the laws, nor fully instructed in the facts. And then while the matter pertaineth unto the King's Highness, and the book professeth openly that it was made by his honorable Council, and by them put in print with his Grace's license obtained thereunto, I verily trust in good faith that of your good mind toward me, though I never wrote you word thereof, yourself will both think and say so.
much for me, that it were a thing far unlikely, that an answer
should be made thereunto by me. I will by the grace of Almighty
God, as long as it shall please him to lend me life in this world,
in all such places (as I am of duty to God and the King's
Grace bound) truly say my mind, and discharge my conscience,
as becometh a poor honest true man, wheresoever I shall be by his
Grace commanded. Yet surely if it should happen any book to
come abroad in the name of his Grace or his honorable Council,
if the book to me seemed such as myself would not have given
mine own advice to the making, yet I know my bounden duty,
to bear more honor to my prince, and more reverence to his
honorable Council, than that it could become me for many
causes, to make an answer unto such a book, or to counsel and
advise any man else to do it. And therefore as it is a thing that I
never did nor intended, so I heartily beseech you if you shall happen
to perceive any man, either of evil will or of lightness, any such
thing report by me, be so good master to me, as help to bring us
both together. And then never take me for honest after, but if ye
find his honesty somewhat impaired in the matter.

Thus am I bold upon your goodness to encumber you with my
long rude letter, in the contents whereof, I eftsoons heartily beseech
you to be in manner aforesaid good master and friend unto
me: whereby you shall bind me to be your beadsman while I live:
as knoweth our Lord, whose special grace both bodily and ghostly
long preserve and keep you.

At Chelsea in the Vigil of the Purification of our Blessed
Lady by the hand of
Assuredly all your own,
Thomas More, Knight.

195. To Thomas Cromwell, Chelsea, Saturday, <February-March> 1533/4

Another letter written by Sir Thomas More to Master Tho
Cromwell in February or in March in the year of our Lord
God 1533, after the computation of the Church of England,
and in the twenty-fifth year of the reign of King Henry the Eighth.
[EW 1423]

Right Worshipful.

After right hearty recommendation, so it is that I am
informed, that there is a bill put in against me into the higher house before the Lords, concerning my communication with the Nun of Canterbury, and my writing unto her: whereof I not a little marvel, the truth of the matter being such as God and I know it is, and as I have plainly declared unto you by my former letters, wherein I found you then so good, that I am now bold eftsoons upon your goodness to desire you to show me that favor, as that I might the rather by your good means, have a copy of the bill. Which seen, if I find any untrue surmise therein as of likelihood there is, I may make mine humble suite unto the King's good Grace, and declare the truth, either to his Grace or by his Grace's commandment, wheresoever the matter shall require. I am so sure of my truth toward his Grace, that I cannot mistrust his gracious favor toward me, upon the truth known, nor the judgment of any honest man. Nor never shall there loss in this matter grave me, being myself so innocent as God and I know me, whatsoever should happen me therein, by the grace of Almighty God, who both bodily and ghostly preserve you. At Chelsea this present Saturday by the hand of

Heartyly all your own,

Thomas More, Knight.

197. To Thomas Cromwell. <March? 1534>

Right Worshipful,

After my most hearty recommendation, with like thanks for your goodness in the accepting of my rude long letter, I perceive that of your further goodness and favor toward me, it liked your Mastership to break with my son Roper of that, that I had had communication, not only with diverse that were of acquaintance with the lewd Nun of Canterbury, but also with herself; and had, over that, by my writing, declaring favor toward her, given her advice and counsel; of which my demeanor, that it liketh you to be content to take the labor and the pain, to hear, by mine own writing, the truth, I verily heartily thank you, and reckon myself therein right deeply beholden to you.

It is, I suppose, about 8 or 9 years ago since I heard of that huswife first; at which time the bishop of Canterbury that then was, God assoil his soul, sent unto the King's Grace
a roll of paper in which were written certain words of hers,  
that she had, as report was then made, at sundry times spoken  
in her trances; whereupon it pleased the King's Grace to  
deliver me the roll, commanding me to look thereon and afterward  
show him what I thought therein. Whereunto, at another  
time, when his Highness asked me, I told him, that in good  
faith I found nothing in these words that I could anything  
regard or esteem, for saving that some part fell in rhyme, and  
that, God wot, full rude, else for any reason, God wot, that I  
saw therein, a right simple woman might in my mind, speak  
it of her own wit well enough, howbeit, I said, that because  
it was constantly reported for a truth, that God wrought in her,  
and that a miracle was showed upon her, I durst now nor would  
not, be bold in judging the matter. And the King's Grace, as  
me thought, esteemed the matter as light as it after proved  
lewd.

From that time till about Christmas was twelvemonth,  
albeit that continually, there was much talking of her, and of her  
holiness, yet never heard I any talk rehearsed, either of revelation  
of hers, or miracle, saving that I had heard sometimes  
in my Lord Cardinal's days, that she had been both with his  
Lordship and with the King's Grace, but what she said either to  
the one or to the other, upon my faith, I had never heard any  
one word.

Now, as I was about to tell you, about Christmas was twelvemonth,  
Father Risby, Friar Observant, then of Canterbury,  
lodged one night at mine house; where after supper, a little before  
he went to his chamber, he fell in communication with me of  
the Nun, giving her high commendation of holiness, and that  
it was wonderful to see and understand the works that God  
wrought in her; which thing, I answered, that I was very  
glad to hear it, and thanked God thereof. Then he told me  
that she had been with my Lord Legate in his life and with the  
King's Grace too, and that she had told my Lord Legate a revelation  
of hers, of three swords that God hath put in my Lord  
Legate's hand, which if he ordered not well, God would lay it  
sore to his charge, the first he said was the ordering of the  
spirituality under the Pope, as Legate, the second the rule that he  
bore in order of the temporality under the King, as his Chancellor.  
And the third, she said was the meddling he was put  
in trust with by the King, concerning the great matter of
his marriage. And therewith all I said unto him that any revelation of the King's matters I would not hear of, I doubt not but the goodness of God should direct his highness with his grace and wisdom, that the thing should take such end, as God should be pleased with, to the King's honor and surety of the realm. When he heard me say these words or the like, he said unto me, that God had especially commanded her to pray for the King; and forthwith he broke again into her revelations, concerning the Cardinal that his soul was saved by her mediation; and without any other communication went into his chamber. And he and I never talked any more of any such manner of matter, nor since his departing on the morrow, I never saw him after to my remembrance, till I saw him at Paul's Cross.

After this, about Shrovetide, there came unto me, a little before supper, Father Rich, Friar Observant of Richmond. And as we fell in talking, I asked him of Father Risby, how he did? and upon that occasion, he asked me whether Father Risby had anything showed me of the holy Nun of Kent? and I said yea, and that I was very glad to hear of her virtue. I would not, quod he, tell you again that you have heard of him already, but I have heard and known many great graces that God hath wrought in her, and in other folk, by her, which I would gladly tell you if I thought you had not heard them already. And therewith he asked me, whether Father Risby had told me anything of her being with my Lord Cardinal? and I said yea. Then he told you, quoth he, of the 3 swords; yea verily, quod I. Did he tell you, quoth he, of the revelations that she had concerning the King's Grace? Nay, forsooth, quoth I, nor if he would have done I would not have given him the hearing; nor verily no more I would indeed, for since she hath been with the King's Grace herself, and told him methought it a thing needless to tell the matter to me, or any man else. And when Father Rich perceived that I would not hear her revelations concerning the King's Grace he talked on a little of her virtue and let her revelations alone; and therewith my supper was set upon the board where I required him to sit with me, but he would in no wise tarry, but departed to London. After that night I talked with him twice, once in mine own house, another time in his own garden at the Friars', at every time a great space, but not of any revelation touching the King's Grace, but only of other mean folk, I knew not
whom, of which things some were very strange and some were very childish. But albeit that he said that he had seen her lie in her trance in great pains and that he had at other times taken great spiritual comfort in her communication, yet did he never tell me she had told him those tales herself; for if he had I would, for the tale of Mary Magdalene which he told me, and for the tale of the host, with which, as I heard, she said she was houseled, at the King's Mass at Calais; if I had heard it of him as told unto himself by her mouth for a revelation, I would have both liked him and her the worse. But whether ever I heard that same tale of Rich or of Risby or of neither of them both, but of some other man since she was in hold, in good faith I cannot tell. But I wot well when or wheresoever I heard it, me thought it a tale too marvelous to be true, and very likely that she had told some man her dream, which told it out for a revelation. And in effect, I little doubted but that some of these tales that were told of her were untrue; but yet since I never heard them reported, as spoken by her own mouth, I thought nevertheless that many of them might be true, and she a very virtuous woman too; as some lies be peradventure written of some that be saints in heaven, and yet many miracles indeed done by them for all that.

After this I being upon a day at Syon talking with diverse of the Fathers together at the grate, they showed me that she had been with them, and showed me diverse things that some of them disliked in her and in this talking, they wished that I had spoken with her and said they would fain see how I should like her; whereupon, afterward, when I heard that she was there again, I came thither to see her and to speak with her myself. At which communication had, in a little chapel, there were none present but we two. In the beginning whereof I showed that my coming to her was not of any curious mind, anything to know of such things as folk talked, that it pleased God to reveal and show unto her, but for the great virtue that I had heard for so many years, every day more and more spoken and reported of her, I therefore had a great mind to see her, and be acquainted with her, that she might have somewhat the more occasion to remember me to God in her devotion and prayers, whereunto she gave me a very good virtuous answer that as God did of his goodness far better by her than such a poor wretch was worthy, so she feared that many folk yet
besides that spoke of their own favorable minds many things
for her, far above the truth, and that of me she had many such
things heard, that already she prayed for me, and ever would,
whereof I heartily thanked her.

I said unto her, 'Madam, one Helen, a maiden dwelling
about Totnam, of whose trances and revelations there hath been
much talking, she hath been with me late and showed me
that she was with you, and that after the rehearsal of such visions
as she had seen, you showed her that they were no revelations, but
plain illusions of the devil and advised her to cast them out
of her mind, and verily she gave therein good credence unto you
and thereupon hath left to lean any longer unto such visions
of her own, whereupon she saith, she findeth your words true,
for ever since, she hath been the less visited with such things
as she was wont to be before.' To this she answered me, 'Forsooth,
Sir, there is in this point no praise unto me, but the goodness
of God, as it appeareth, hath wrought much meekness in her
soul, which hath taken my rude warning so well and not
grutched to hear her spirit and her visions reproved.' I liked
her in good faith better for this answer, than for many of those
things that I heard reported by her. Afterward she told me,
upon that occasion how great need folk have, that are visited
with such visions, to take heed and prove well of what spirit
they come of, and in the communication she told me that of
late the devil, in likeness of a bird, was fleeing and flickering
about her in a chamber, and suffered himself to be taken; and
being in hands suddenly changed, in their sight that were
present, into such a strange ugly fashioned bird, that they were
all afraid, threw him out at a window.

For conclusion, we talked no word of the King’s Grace or any
great personage else, nor in effect, of any man or woman, but
of herself and myself, but after no long communication had
for ere ever we met, my time came to go home, I gave her a
double ducat, and prayed her to pray for me and mine, and
so departed from her and never spoke with her after. Howbeit,
of truth I had a great good opinion of her, and had in her great
estimation as you shall perceive by the letter that I wrote unto
her. For afterward because I had often heard, that many right
worshipful folks as well men as women used to have much
communication with her, and many folk are of nature inquisitive
and curious, whereby they fall sometimes into such talking,
as better were to forbear, of which thing I nothing thought
while I talked with her of charity, therefore I wrote her a
letter thereof, which since it may be peradventure, that she broke
or lost, I shall insert the very copy thereof in this present letter.

Good madam and my right dearly beloved Sister in our
Lord God. - - -

[quotation of letter to Elizabeth Barton]
At the receipt of this letter she answered by servant that she
heartily thanked me. Soon after this there came to mine house the
proctor of the Charterhouse at Sheen and one brother William
with him, which nothing talked with me but of her and of the
great joy that they took in her virtue, but of any of her revelations
they had no communication. But at another time brother
William came to me, and told me a long tale of her, being at
the house of a Knight in Kent, that was sore troubled with temptation
to destroy himself; and none other thing we talked of
nor should have done of likelihood, though we had tarried together
much longer. He took so great pleasure, good man, to
tell that tale with all the circumstances at length. When I came
again another time to Syon, on a day in which there was a profession,
some of the fathers asked me how I liked the Nun? And I
answered that, in good faith, I liked her very well in her talking;
'howbeit,' quoth I, 'she is never the nearer tried by that,
for I assure you she were likely to be very bad, if she seemed
good, ere I should think her other, till she happed to be proved
naught;' and in good faith, that is my manner indeed, except I
were set to search and examine the truth upon likelihood of
some cloaked evil; for in that case, although I nothing suspected
the person myself, yet no less than if I suspected him
sore, I would as far as my wit would serve me, search to find
out the truth, as yourself hath done very prudently in this
matter; wherein you have done, in my mind, to your great
laud and praise, a very meritorious deed in bringing forth to
light such detestable hypocrisy, whereby every other wretch
may take warning, and be feared to set forth their own
devilish dissimulated falsehood, under the manner and color of the
wonderful work of God; for verily, this woman so handled
herself, with help of the evil spirit that inspired her, that after
her own confession declared at Paul's cross, when I sent word
by my servant unto the Proctor of the Charterhouse, that she was
undoubtedly proved a false deceiving hypocrite; the good man
had had so good opinion of her so long that he could at the first scanty believe me therein. Howbeit it was not he alone that thought her so very good, but many another right good man besides, as little marvel was upon so good report, till she was proved naught.

I remember me further, that in communication between Father Rich and me, I counseled him, that in such strange things as concerned such folk as had come unto her, to whom, as she said, she had told the causes of their coming, ere themselves spoke thereof; and such good fruit as they said that many men had received by her prayer, he and such other as so reported it, and thought that the knowledge thereof should much pertain to the glory of God, should first cause the things to be well and surely examined by the ordinaries, and such as had authority thereunto; so that it might be surely known whether the things were true or not, and that there were no lies intermingled among them or else the lies might after hap to aweigh the credence of those things that were true. And when he told me the tale of Mary Maudlin, I said unto him, "Father Rich, that she is a good virtuous woman, in good faith, I hear so many good folk so report her, that I verily think it true; and think it well likely that God worketh some good and great things by her. But yet are, you wot well, these strange tales no part of our creed; and therefore before you see them surely proved, you shall have my poor counsel not to wed yourself so far forth to the credence of them, as to report them very surely for true, lest that if it should hap that they were afterward proved false, it might diminish your estimation in your preaching, whereof might grow great loss. To this he thanked me for my counsel, but how he used it after that, I cannot tell.

Thus have I, good Mr. Cromwell, fully declared you, as far as myself can call to remembrance, all that ever I have done or said in this matter, wherein I am sure that never one of them all shall tell you any further thing of effect; for if any of them, or any man else, report of me as I trust verily no man will, and I wot well truly no man can, any word or deed by me spoken or done, touching any breach of my loyal troth and duty toward my most redoubted sovereign and natural liege lord, I will come to mine answer, and make it good in such wise as becometh a poor true man to do; that whosoever
any such thing shall say, shall therein say untrue; for I
neither have in this matter done evil nor said evil, nor so much
as any evil thing thought, but only have been glad, and
rejoiced of them that were reported for good; which condition I
shall nevertheless keep toward all other good folk, for the
false cloaked hypocrisy of any of these, no more than I shall
esteem Judas the true apostle, for Judas the false traitor.

But so purpose I to bear myself in every man's company,
while I live, that neither good man nor bad, neither monk, friar
nor nun, nor other man or woman in this world shall make me
digress from my truth and faith, either toward God, or toward
my natural prince, by the grace of almighty God; and
as you therein find me true, so I heartily therein pray you to continue
toward me your favor and good will, as you shall be sure
of my poor daily prayer; for other pleasure can I none do you.
And thus the blessed Trinity, both bodily and ghostly, long
preserve and prosper you.

I pray you pardon me, that I write not unto you of mine own
hand, for verily I am compelled to forbear writing for a
while by reason of this disease of mine, whereof the chief occasion
is grown, as it is thought, by the stooping and leaning on
my breast, that I have used in writing. And thus, eftsoons, I
beseech our Lord long to preserve you.

198. To Henry VIII. Chelsea, 5 March <1534>

It may like your Highness to call to your gracious
remembrance, that at such time as of that great weighty room
and office of your Chancellor (with which so far above my
merits or qualities able and meet therefore, your Highness had of
your incomparable goodness honored and exalted me), ye were so
good and gracious unto me, as at my poor humble suit to discharge
and disburden me, giving me license with your gracious
favor to bestow the residue of my life in mine age now to come,
about the provision for my soul in the service of God, and to
be your Grace's beadsman and pray for you. It pleased your Highness
further to say unto me, that for the service which I before had
done you (which it then liked your goodness far above my deserving
to commend) that in any suit that I should after have unto
your Highness, which either should concern mine honor (that
word it liked your Highness to use unto me) or that should
pertain unto my profit, I should find your Highness good and gracious lord unto me. So is it now gracious Sovereign, that worldly honor is the thing, whereof I have resigned both the possession and the desire, in the resignation of your most honorable office; and worldly profit, I trust experience proveth, and daily more and more shall prove, that I never was greedy thereon.

But now is my most humble suit unto your excellent Highness, partly to beseech the same, somewhat to tender my poor honesty, but principally that of your accustomed goodness, no sinister information move your noble Grace, to have any more distrust of my truth and devotion toward you, than I have, or shall during my life, give the cause. For in this matter of the wicked woman of Canterbury I have unto your trusty Counselor Mr. Thomas Cromwell, by my writing, as plainly declared the truth, as I possibly can, which my declaration, of his duty toward your Grace, and his goodness toward me, he hath, I understand, declared unto your Grace. In any part of all which my dealing, whether any other man may peradventure put any doubt, or move any scruple of suspicion, that can I neither tell, nor lieth in mine hand to let, but unto myself is it not possible any part of my said demeanor to seem evil, the very clearness of mine own conscience knoweth in all the matter my mind and intent so good.

Wherefore most gracious Sovereign, I neither will, nor well it can become me, with your Highness to reason and argue the matter, but in my most humble manner, prostrate at your gracious feet, I only beseech your Majesty with your own high prudence and your accustomed goodness consider and weigh the matter. And then if in your so doing, your own virtuous mind shall give you, that notwithstanding the manifold excellent goodness that your gracious Highness hath by so many manner ways used unto me, I be a wretch of such a monstrous ingratitude, as could with any of them all, or with any other person living, digress from my bounden duty of allegiance toward your good Grace, then desire I no further favor at your gracious hand, than the loss of all that ever I may leese in this world, goods, lands, and liberty and finally my life withall, whereof the keeping of any part unto myself, could never do me pennyworth of pleasure, but only should then my recomfort be, that after my short life and your long, (which with continual prosperity to God's pleasure, our Lord for his mercy send you) I should once meet with your Grace again in heaven, and there be merry with you, where among mine other pleasures
this should yet be one, that your Grace should surely see there
then, that (howsoever you take me) I am your true beadsman now
and ever have been, and will be till I die, howsoever your pleasure
be to do by me.

Howbeit, if in the considering of my cause, your high wisdom
and gracious goodness perceive (as I verily trust in God
you shall) that I none otherwise have demeaned myself, then
well may stand with my bounden duty of faithfulness toward
your royal Majesty, then in my most humble wise I beseech your
most noble Grace, that the knowledge of your true gracious persuasion
in that behalf, may relieve the torment of my present
heaviness, conceived of the dread and fear (by that I hear such
a grievous bill put by your learned Council into your high
Court of Parliament against me) lest your Grace might by some
sinister information be moved anything to think the contrary,
which if your Highness do not (as I trust in God and your great
goodness the matter by your own high prudence examined and
considered, you will not) then in my most humble manner, I
beseech your Highness further (albeit that in respect of my
former request this other thing is very slight) yet since your
Highness hath here before of your mere abundant goodness,
heaped and accumulated upon me (though I was thereto very
far unworthy) from time to time both worship and great honor
too, and since I now have left off all such things, and nothing
seek or desire but the life to come, and in the meanwhile pray
for your Grace, it may like your highness of your accustomed
benignity somewhat to tender my poor honesty and never suffer
by the means of such a bill put forth against me, any man to take
occasion hereafter against the truth to slander me; which
thing should yet by the peril of their own souls do themselves
more hurt than me, which shall, I trust, settle mine heart, with
your gracious favor, to depend upon the comfort of the truth
and hope of heaven, and not upon the fallible opinion or soon
spoken words, of light and soon changeable people.

And thus, most dread and dear sovereign Lord, I beseech
the blessed Trinity preserve your most noble Grace, both
in body and soul, and all that are your well willers, and amend all
the contrary among whom if ever I be or ever have been one, then
pray I God that he may with mine open shame and destruction
declare it. At my poor house in Chelsea, the fifth day of March,
Your most humble and most heavy faithful subject and
beadsman,

Thomas More. Kg.

199. To Thomas Cromwell. Chelsea, 5 March <1534>

Right Worshipful

After my most hearty recommendation, it may please you to understand that I have perceived by the relation of my son Roper (for which I beseech almighty God reward you) your most charitable labor taken for me toward the King's gracious Highness, in the procuring at his most gracious hand, the relief and comfort of this woeful heaviness in which mine heart standeth, nether for the loss of goods, lands, or liberty, nor for any respect either, of this kind of honesty that standeth in the opinion of people and worldly reputation, all which manner things (I thank our Lord) I so little esteem for any affection therein toward myself that I can well be content to jeopard, leese, and forgo them all and my life therewith, without any further respite than even this same present day, either for the pleasure of God or of my prince.

But surely good Master Cromwell, as I by mouth declared unto you, some part (for all could I neither then say nor now write) it thoroughly pierceth my poor heart, that the King's Highness (whose gracious favor toward me far above all the things of this world I have evermore desired, and whereof both for the conscience of mine own true faithful heart and devotion toward him, and for the manifold benefits of his high goodness continually bestowed upon me, I thought myself always sure), should conceive any such mind or opinion of me, as to think that in my communication either with the nun or the friaries, or in my letter written unto the nun, I had any other manner mind, than might well stand with the duty of a tender loving subject toward his natural prince, or that his Grace should reckon in me any manner of obstinate heart against his pleasure in anything that ever I said or did concerning his great matter of his marriage or concerning the primacy of the Pope. Never would I wish other thing in this world more lief, than that his Highness in these things all three, as perfectly knew my dealing, and as thoroughly saw my mind, as I do myself, or as God doth himself, whose
sight pierceth deeper into my heart, than mine own.

For, Sir, as for the first matter, that is to wit my letter or communication
with the nun (the whole discourse whereof in my
former letter I have as plainly declared unto you as I possibly
can), so pray I God to withdraw that scruple and doubt of my
good mind, out of the King's noble breast and none other wise,
but as I not only thought none harm, but also purposed good,
and in that thing most, in which (as I perceive) his Grace conceiveth
most grief and suspicion, that is to wit in my letter
which I wrote unto her. And therefore Sir, since I have by my writing
declared the truth of my deed, and am ready by mine oath
to declare the truth of mine intent, I can devise no further thing
by me to be done in that matter, but only beseech almighty God
to put into the King's gracious mind, that as God knoweth
the thing is indeed, so his noble grace may take it. Now touching
the second point concerning his grace's great matter of his marriage,
to the intent that you may see cause with the better conscience to
make suit unto his highness for me, I shall as plainly declare
you my demeanor in that matter as I have already declared you
in the other, for more plainly can I not.

Sir, upon a time at my coming from beyond the sea, where I
had been in the King's business, I repaired as my duty was
unto the King's Grace being at that time at Hampton Court. At
which time suddenly his Highness walking in the gallery, broke
with me of his great matter, and showed me that it was now perceived,
that his marriage was not only against the positive laws
of the Church and the written law of God, but also in such wise
against the law of nature, that it could in no wise by the Church
be dispensable. Now so was it that before my going over the sea,
I had heard certain things moved against the bull of the dispensation
concerning the words of the Law Levitical and the Law
Deuteronomical to prove the prohibition to be de iure divino
but yet perceived I not at that time but that the greater hope of
the matter stood in certain faults that were found in the bull,
whereby the bull should by the law not be sufficient. And such comfort
was there in that point as far as I perceived a good season,
that the Council on the other part were fain to bring forth a
brief, by which they pretended those defaults to be supplied, the
truth of which brief was by the King's Council suspected, and
much diligence was there after done, for the trial of that point,
wherein what was finally found, either I never knew, or else I
not remember.

But I rehearse you this to the intent you shall know that the first time that ever I heard that point moved, that it should be in such high degree against the law of nature, was the time in which as I began to tell you the King's Grace showed it me himself, and laid the Bible open before me, and there read me the words that moved his Highness and diverse other erudite persons so to think, and asked me further what myself thought thereon. At which time not presuming to look that his Highness should anything take that point for the more proved or unproved for my poor mind in so great a matter, I showed nevertheless as my duty was at his commandment what thing I thought upon the words which I there read. Whereupon his Highness accepting benignly my sudden unadvised answer commanded me to commune further with Mr. Fox, now his Grace's Almoner, and to read a book with him that then was in making for that matter. After which book read, and my poor opinion eftsoons declared unto his Highness thereupon, his Highness like a prudent and a virtuous prince assembled at another time at Hampton Court a good number of very well learned men at which time as far as ever I heard there were (as was in so great a matter most likely to be) diverse opinions among them. Howbeit I never heard but that they agreed at that time upon a certain form in which the book should be made, which book was afterward at York Place in my Lord Cardinal's chamber read in the presence of diverse bishops and many learned men. And they all thought that there appeared in the book, good and reasonable causes, that might well move the King's Highness being so virtuous a prince to conceive in his mind a scruple against his marriage, which, while he could not otherwise avoid, he did well and virtuously for the quieting of his conscience to sow and procure to have his doubt decided by judgment of the Church.

After this the suit began, and the Legates sat upon the matter, during all which time I never meddled therein, nor was a man meet to do, for the matter was in hand by an ordinary process of the spiritual law, whereof I could little skill. And yet while the Legates were sitting upon the matter, it pleased the King's Highness to send me in the company of my Lord of London now of Durham in embassy about the peace that at our being there was concluded at Cambrai, between his Highness and the Emperor and the French King. And after my coming home his Highness
of his only goodness (as far unworthy as I was thereto) made me, as you well know, his Chancellor of this realm, soon after which time his Grace moved me again yet eftsoons, to look and consider his great matter, and well and indifferently to ponder such things as I should find therein. And if it so were that thereupon it should hap me to see such things as should persuade me to that part, he would gladly use me among other of his councilors in that matter, and nevertheless he graciously declared unto me that he would in no wise that I should other thing do or say therein, than upon that that I should perceive mine own conscience should serve me, and that I should first look unto God and after God unto him, which most gracious words was the first lesson also that ever his Grace gave me at my first coming into his noble service. This motion was to me very comfortable and much I longed beside anything that myself either had seen, or by further search should hap to find for the one part or the other, yet especially to have some conference in the matter with some such of his Grace's learned Council as most for his part had labored and most have found in the matter.

Whereupon his Highness assigned unto me the now most reverend fathers Archbishops of Canterbury and York with Mr. Doctor Fox now his Grace's Almoner and Mr. Doctor Nicholas the Italian frère, whereupon I not only sought and read, and as far forth as my poor wit and learning served me, well weighed and considered every such thing as I could find myself, or read in any other man's labor that I could get, which anything had written therein, but had also diligent conference with his Grace's councilors aforesaid, whose honors and worships I had nothing mistrust in this point, but that they both have and will report unto his Highness that they never found obstinate manner or fashion in me, but a mind as toward and as conformable as reason could in a matter disputable require.

Whereupon the King's Highness being further advised both by them and myself of my poor opinion in the matter (wherein to have been able and meet to do him service I would as I then showed his Highness have been more glad than of all such worldly commodities as I either then had or ever should come to) his Highness graciously taking in gree my good mind in that behalf used of his blessed disposition in the prosecuting of his great matter only those (of whom his Grace had good number) whose conscience his Grace perceived well and fully persuaded upon that
part, and as well myself as any other to whom his Highness
thought the thing to seem otherwise, he used in his other business,
abiding (of his abundant goodness) nevertheless gracious
lord unto any man, nor never was willing to put any man in ruffle
or trouble of his conscience.

After this did I never nothing more therein, nor never any
word wrote I therein to the impairing of his Grace's part neither
before nor after, nor any man else by my procurement, but
settling my mind in quiet to serve his Grace in other things I
would not so much as look nor wittingly let lie by me any book
of the other part, albeit that I gladly read afterward diverse
books that were made on his part yet, nor never would I read the
book that Mr. Abell made on the other side, nor other book
which were as I heard say made in Latin beyond the sea, nor never
gave ere to the Pope's proceedings in the matter.

Moreover whereas I had found in my study a book that I had
before borrowed of my Lord of Bath, which book he had made
of the matter at such time as the Legates sat here thereupon, which
book had been by me merely gently cast aside, and that I showed
him I would send him home his book again, he told me that
in good faith he had long time before discharged his mind of that
matter, and having forgotten that copy to remain in my hands
had burned his own copy that he had thereof at home, and because
he no more minded to meddle anything in the matter he
desired me to burn the same book too. And upon my faith so
did I.

Beside this diverse other ways have I so used myself, that
if I rehearsed them all, it should well appear that I never have had
against his Grace's marriage any manner demeanor, whereby his
Highness might have any manner cause or occasion of displeasure
toward me, for likewise as I am not he which either can, or
whom it could become, to take upon him the determination or
decision of such a weighty matter, nor boldly to affirm this
thing or that therein, whereof diverse points a great way pass my
learning, so am I he that among other his Grace's faithful subjects,
his Highness being in possession of his marriage and this noble
woman really anointed Queen, neither murmur at it, nor dispute
upon it, nor never did nor will, but without any other manner
meddling of the matter among his other faithful subjects faithfully
pray to God for his Grace and hers both, long to live and
well and their noble issue too, in such wise as may be to the pleasure
of God, honor and surety to themselves, rest, peace, wealth and
profit unto this noble realm.

As touching the third point, the primacy of the Pope, I nothing
meddle in the matter. Truth it is, that as I told you, when
you desired me to show you what I thought therein, I was myself
sometime not of the mind that the primacy of that See
should be begun by the institution of God, until that I read in that
matter those things that the King's Highness had written in his
most famous book against the heresies of Martin Luther,
at the first reading whereof I moved the King's Highness either
to leave out that point, or else to touch it more slenderly for
doubt of such things as after might hap to fall in question between
his Highness and some pope as between princes and popes
diverse times have done. Whereunto his Highness answered me,
that he would in no wise anything diminish of that matter, of which
thing his Highness showed me a secret cause whereof I never had
anything heard before. But surely after that I had read his Grace's
book therein, and so many other things as I have seen in that point
by this continuance of these 10 years since and more have found
in effect the substance of all the holy doctors from Saint Ignatius,
disciple to Saint John the Evangelist, unto our own days both
Latins and Greeks so consonant and agreeing in that point, and
the thing by such general councils so confirmed also, that in
good faith I never neither read nor heard anything of such effect
on the other side, that ever could lead me to think that my conscience
were well discharged, but rather in right great peril if I
should follow the other side and deny the primacy to be provided
by God, which if we did, yet can I nothing (as I showed
you) perceive any commodity that ever could come by that
denial, for that primacy is at the least wise instituted by the corps
of Christendom and for a great urgent cause in avoiding of schisms
and corroborate by continual succession more than the space of a
thousand years at the least for there are passed almost a thousand
years since the time of holy Saint Gregory.

And therefore since all Christendom is one corps, I cannot perceive
how any member thereof may without the common assent of
the body depart from the common head. And then if we may not
lawfully leave it by ourselves I cannot perceive (but if the thing were
a treating in a general council) what the question could avail
whether the primacy were instituted immediately by God or
ordained by the Church. As for the general councils assembled
lawfully, I never could perceive, but that in the declaration of the
truths it is to be believed and to be stood to, the authority
thereof ought to be taken for undoubttable, or else were there in
nothing no certainty, but throw Christendom upon every
man's affectionate reason, all things might be brought from day
to day to continual ruffle and confusion, from which by the
general councils, the spirit of God assisting, every such council
well assembled keepeth and ever shall keep the corps of
his Catholic Church.

And verily since the King's Highness hath (as by the book
of his honorable council appeareth) appealed to the general
council from the Pope, in which council I beseech our Lord
send his grace comfortable speed, methinketh in my poor mind
it could be no furtherance thereunto his Grace's cause, if his
Highness should in his own realm before, either by laws making
or books putting forth, seem to derogate and deny not only
the primacy of the see apostolic, but also the authority of the
general councils too, which I verily trust his Highness intendeneth
not, for in the next general council it may well happen, that
this Pope may be deposed and another substituted in his Rome,
with whom the King's Highness may be very well content, for
albeit that I have for mine own part such opinion of the Pope's
primacy as I have showed you, yet never thought I the Pope
above the general council nor never have in any book of mine
put forth among the King's subjects in our vulgar tongue,
advanced greatly the Pope's authority. For albeit that a man may
peradventure somewhat find therein that after the common manner
of all Christian realms I speak of him as primate yet never
do I stick thereon with reasoning and proving of that point.
And in my book against the Masquer, I wrote not I wot well five
lines, and yet of no more but only Saint Peter himself, from
whose person many take not the primacy, even of those that
grant it none of his successors, and yet was that book made,
printed and put forth of very truth before that any of the books
of the council was either printed or spoken of. But whereas I
had written thereof at length in my confutation before, and for
the proof thereof had compiled together all that I could find
therefore, at such time as I little looked that there should fall between
the King's Highness and the Pope such a breech as is fallen
since, when I after that saw the thing likely to draw toward
such displeasure between them I suppressed it utterly and never
put word thereof into my book but put out the remnant without it, which thing well declareth, that I never intended anything to meddle in that matter against the King's gracious pleasure, whatsoever mine own opinion were therein.

And thus have I, good Mr. Cromwell, long troubled your Mastership with a long process of these matters, with which I neither durst, nor it could become me to encumber the King's noble Grace, but I beseech you for our Lord's love, that you be not so weary of my most cumbrous suit, but that it may like you at such opportune time or times as your wisdom may find, to help that his Highness may by your goodness be fully informed of my true faithful mind, and that in the matter of that wicked woman there never was on my part any other mind than good, nor yet in any other thing else never was there nor never shall there be any further fault found in me, than that I cannot in everything think the same way that some other men of more wisdom and deeper learning do, nor can find in mine heart otherwise to say, than as mine own conscience giveth me, which condition hath never grown in anything that ever might touch his gracious pleasure of any obstinate mind or misaffectionate appetite, but of a timorous conscience rising haply for lack of better perceiving, and yet not without tender respect unto my most bounden duty toward his noble Grace, whose only favor I so much esteem, that I nothing have of mine own in all this world, except only my soul, but that I will with better will forgo it than abide of his Highness, one heavy displeasant look. And thus I make an end of my long troublous process, beseeching the blessed Trinity for the great goodness ye show me, and the great comfort ye do me, both bodily and ghostly to prosper you, and in heaven to reward you. At Chelsea the 5th day of March by

Your deeply bounden,

Thomas More. Kg.

200. To Margaret Roper. <Tower of London, c. 17 April 1534>

Sir Thomas More, upon warning given him, came before the King's Commissioners at the Archbishop of Canterbury's place at Lambeth (the Monday the thirteenth day of April in the year of our Lord 1534, and in the latter end of the twenty-fifth year of the reign of King Henry the XIII): where he
refused the oath then offered unto him. And thereupon was he delivered to the Abbot of Westminster to be kept as a prisoner: with whom he remained till Friday following, and then was sent prisoner to the Tower of London. And shortly after his coming thither he wrote a letter and sent unto his eldest daughter Mistress Margaret Roper, the copy whereof here followeth. [EW 1428]

When I was before the Lords at Lambeth, I was the first that was called in, albeit, Master Doctor the Vicar of Croydon was come before me, and diverse others. After the cause of my sending for, declared unto me (whereof I somewhat marveled in my mind, considering that they sent for no more temporal men but me) I desired the sight of the oath, which they showed me under the great seal. Then desired I the sight of the Act of Succession, which was delivered me in a printed roll. After which read secretly by myself, and the oath considered with the act, I showed unto them, that my purpose was not to put any fault either in the act or any man that made it, or in the oath or any man that swore it, nor to condemn the conscience of any other man. But as for myself in good faith my conscience so moved me in the matter, that though I would not deny to swear to the succession, yet unto the oath that there was offered me I could not swear, without the jeoparding of my soul to perpetual damnation. And that if they doubted whether I did refuse the oath only for the grudge of my conscience, or for any other fantasy, I was ready therein to satisfy them by mine oath. Which if they trusted not, what should they be the better to give me any oath? And if they trusted that I would therein swear true, then trusted I that of their goodness they would not move me to swear the oath that they offered me, perceiving that for to swear it was against my conscience.

Unto this my Lord Chancellor said, that they all were sorry to hear me say thus, and see me thus refuse the oath. And they said all that on their faith I was the very first that ever refused it; which would cause the King's Highness to conceive great suspicion of me and great indignation toward me. And therewith they showed me the roll, and let me see the names of the lords and the commons which had sworn, and subscribed their names already. Which notwithstanding when they saw that I refused to swear the same myself, not blaming any other man that had
sworn, I was in conclusion commanded to go down into the
garden, and thereupon I tarried in the old burned chamber,
that looketh into the garden and would not go down because
of the heat. In that time saw I Master Doctor Latimer come
into the garden, and there walked he with diverse other doctors
and chaplains of my Lord of Canterbury, and very merry I saw
him, for he laughed, and took one or twenty about the neck so
handsomely, that if they had been women, I would have weened
he had been waxen wanton. After that came Master Doctor Wilson
forth from the lords and was with two gentlemen brought
by me, and gentlemanly sent straight unto the Tower. What time
my Lord of Rochester was called in before them, that cannot I
tell. But at night I heard that he had been before them, but where
he remained that night, and so forth till he was sent hither, I
never heard. I heard also that Master Vicar of Croydon, and all
the remnant of the priests of London that were sent for, were
sworn, and that they had such favor at the council's hand,
that they were not lingered nor made to dance any long attendance
to their travail and cost, as suitors were sometimes
wont to be, but were sped apace to their great comfort, so far
forth that Master Vicar of Croydon, either for gladness or for
dryness, or else that it might be seen (quod ille notus erat pontifici)
went to my Lord's buttery bar, and called for drink, and drank
(valde familiariter).

When they had played their pageant and were gone out of the
place, then was I called in again. And then was it declared unto
me, what a number had sworn, even since I went aside, gladly,
without any sticking. Wherein I laid no blame in no man, but
for mine own self answered as before. Now as well before as then,
they somewhat laid unto me for obstinacy, that whereas before,
since I refused to swear, I would not declare any special part of that
oath that grudged my conscience, and open the cause wherefore.
For thereunto I had said to them, that I feared lest the King's Highness
would as they said take displeasure enough toward me for
the only refusal of the oath. And that if I should open and disclose
the causes why, I should therewith but further exasperate his
Highness, which I would in no wise do, but rather would I abide
all the danger and harm that might come toward me, than give
his Highness any occasion of further displeasure, than the offering
of the oath unto me of pure necessity constrained me. Howbeit when
they diverse times imputed this to me for stubbornness and obstinacy
that I would neither swear the oath, nor yet declare the causes why, I declined thus far toward them, that rather than I would be accounted for obstinate, I would upon the King's gracious license or rather his such commandment had, as might be my sufficient warrant, that my declaration should not offend his Highness, nor put me in the danger of any of his statutes, I would be content to declare the causes in writing; and over that to give an oath in the beginning, that if I might find those causes by any man in such wise answered, as I might think mine own conscience satisfied, I would after that with all mine heart swear the principal oath, too.

To this I was answered, that though the King would give me license under his letters patent, yet would it not serve against the statute. Whereto I said, that yet if I had them, I would stand unto the trust of his honor at my peril for the remnant. But yet it thinketh me, lo, that if I may not declare the causes without peril, then to leave them undeclared is no obstinacy.

My Lord of Canterbury taking hold upon that that I said, that I condemned not the conscience of them that swore, said unto me that it appeareth well, that I did not take it for a very sure thing and a certain, that I might not lawfully swear it, but rather as a thing uncertain and doubtful. But then (said my Lord) you know for a certainty and a thing without doubt, that you be bound to obey your sovereign lord your King. And therefore are ye bound to leave off the doubt of your unsure conscience in refusing the oath, and take the sure way in obeying of your prince, and swear it. Now all was it so, that in mine own mind me thought myself not concluded, yet this argument seemed me suddenly so subtle and namely with such authority coming out of so noble a prelate's mouth, that I could again answer nothing thereto but only that I thought myself I might not well do so, because that in my conscience this was one of the cases, in which I was bound that I should not obey my prince, since that whatsoever other folk thought in the matter, (whose conscience and learning I would not condemn nor take upon me to judge) yet in my conscience the truth seemed on the other side. Wherein I had not informed my conscience neither suddenly nor slightly, but by long leisure and diligent search for the matter. And of truth if that reason may conclude, then have we a ready way to avoid all perplexities. For in whatsoever matters the doctors stand in great doubt, the King's commandment given upon
whither side he list assoileth all the doubts.

Then said my Lord of Westminster to me, that howsoever the matter seemed unto mine own mind, I had cause to fear that mine own mind was erroneous, when I see the great council of the realm determine of my mind the contrary, and that therefore I ought to change my conscience. To that I answered, that if there were no more but myself upon my side, and the whole Parliament upon the other, I would be sore afraid to lean to mine own mind only against so many. But on the other side, if it so be, that in some things for which I refuse the oath, I have (as I think I have) upon my part as great a council and a greater too, I am not then bound to change my conscience, and confirm it to the council of one realm, against the general council of Christendom. Upon this Master Secretary (as he that tenderly favoreth me), said and swore a great oath, that he had liefer that his own only son (which is of truth a goodly young gentleman, and shall I trust come to much worship) had lost his head, than that I should thus have refused the oath. For surely the King's Highness would now conceive a great suspicion against me, and think that the matter of the nun of Canterbury was all contrived by my drift. To which I said that the contrary was true and well known, and whatsoever should mishap me, it lay not in my power to help it without peril of my soul. Then did my Lord Chancellor repeat before me my refusal unto Master Secretary, as to him that was going unto the King's Grace. And in the rehearsing, his Lordship repeated again, that I denied not but was content to swear to the succession. Whereunto I said, that as for that point, I would be content, so that I might see my oath in that point so framed in such a manner as might stand with my conscience.

Then said my Lord: 'Marry, Master Secretary, mark that too, that he will not swear that neither, but under some certain manner.' 'Verily no, my Lord,' quoth I, 'but that I will see it made in such wise first, as I shall myself see, that I shall neither be foresworn nor swear against my conscience. Surely as to swear to the succession I see no peril, but I thought and think it reason, that to mine own oath I look well myself, and be of council also in the fashion, and never intended to swear for a piece, and set my hand to the whole oath. Howbeit (as help me God), as touching the whole oath, I never withdrew any man from it, nor never advised any to refuse it, nor never put, nor will, any scruple in any
man's head, but leave every man to his own conscience. And methinketh in good faith, that so were it good reason that every man should leave me to mine.’

201. To Margaret Roper. Tower of London, <April-May? 1534>

* A letter written with a coal by Sir Thomas More to his daughter Mistress Margaret Roper, within a while after he was prisoner in the Tower. [EW 1430]

Mine own good daughter,

Our Lord be thanked, I am in good health of body, and in good quiet of mind: and of worldly things I no more desire than I have. I beseech him make you all merry in the hope of heaven. And such things as I somewhat longed to talk with you all, concerning the world to come, our Lord put them into your minds, as I trust he doth, and better too, by his Holy Spirit: who bless you and preserve you all. Written with a coal by your tender loving father, who in his poor prayers forgettest none of you all, nor your babes, nor your nurses, nor your good husbands, nor your good husbands’ shrewd wives, nor your father's shrewd wife neither, nor our other friends. And thus fare you heartily well for lack of paper.

Thomas More, Knight.

Our Lord keep me continually true faithful and plain, to the contrary whereof I beseech him heartily never to suffer me live. For as for long life (as I have often told thee Meg) I neither look for, nor long for, but am well content to go, if God call me hence tomorrow. And I thank our Lord I know no person living that I would had one fillip for my sake: of which mind I am more glad than of all the world besides.

Recommend me to your shrewd Will and mine other sons, and to John Harris my friend, and yourself knoweth to whom else, and to my shrewd wife above all, and God preserve you all, and make and keep you his servants all.


* Within a while after Sir Thomas More was in prison in the Tower, his daughter Mistress Margaret Roper wrote and sent
unto him a letter, wherein she seemed somewhat to labor to persuade him to take the oath (though she nothing so thought) to win thereby credence with Master Thomas Cromwell, that she might the rather get liberty to have free resort unto her father (which she only had for the most time of his imprisonment) unto which letter her father wrote an answer, the copy whereof here followeth. [EW 1431]

Our Lord bless you all.

If I had not been, my dearly beloved daughter, at a firm and fast point, (I trust in God's great mercy) this good great while before, your lamentable letter had not a little abashed me, surely far above all other things, of which I hear diverse times not a few terrible toward me. But surely they all touched me never so near, nor were so grievous unto me, as to see you, my well beloved child, in such vehement piteous manner labor to persuade unto me, that thing wherein I have of pure necessity for respect unto mine own soul, so often given you so precise answer before. Wherein as touching the points of your letter, I can make none answer, for I doubt not but you well remember, that the matters which move my conscience (without declaration whereof I can nothing touch the points) I have sundry times showed you that I will disclose them to no man. And therefore daughter Margaret, I can in this thing no further, but like as you labor me again to follow your mind to desire and pray you both again to leave off such labor, and with my former answers to hold yourself content.

A deadly grief unto me, and much more deadly than to hear of mine own death, (for the fear thereof, I thank our Lord, the fear of hell, the hope of heaven and the passion of Christ daily more and more assuage), is that I perceive my good son your husband, and you my good daughter, and my good wife, and mine other good children and innocent friends, in great displeasure and danger of great harm thereby. The let whereof, while it lieth not in my hand, I can no further but commit all unto God. Nam in manu Dei, saith the scripture, cor regis est, et sicut divisiones aquarum quocunque voluerit, impellit illud, whose high goodness I most humbly beseech to incline the noble heart of the King's Highness to the tender favor of you all, and to favor me no better than God and myself know that my faithful heart toward him and my daily prayer for him, do deserve. For surely if his Highness
might inwardly see my true mind such as God knoweth it is, it would (I trust) soon assuage his high displeasure. Which while I can in this world never in such wise show, but that his Grace may be persuaded to believe the contrary of me, I can no further go, but put all in the hands of him, for fear of whose displeasure for the safeguard of my soul stirred by mine own conscience (without insectacion or reproach laying to any other man's) I suffer and endure this trouble. Out of which I beseech him to bring me, when his will shall be, into his endless bliss of heaven, and in the meanwhile, give me grace and you both in all our agonies and troubles, devoutly to resort prostrate unto the remembrance of that bitter agony, which our Savior suffered before his passion at the Mount. And if we diligently so do, I verily trust we shall find therein great comfort and consolation. And thus my dear daughter the blessed spirit of Christ for his tender mercy govern and guide you all, to his pleasure and your weal and comforts both body and soul.

Your tender loving father,

Thomas More, Knight.

203. From Margaret Roper. <May? 1534>

To this last letter Mistress Margaret Roper wrote an answer and sent it to Sir Thomas More her father, the copy whereof here followeth. [EW 1432]

Mine own good Father,

It is to me no little comfort, since I cannot talk with you by such means as I would, at the least way to delight myself among in this bitter time of your absence, by such means as I may, by as often writing to you, as shall be expedient and by reading again and again your most fruitful and delectable letter, the faithful messenger of your very virtuous and ghostly mind, rid from all corrupt love of worldly things, and fast knit only in the love of God, and desire of heaven, as becometh a very true worshiper and a faithful servant of God, which I doubt not, good father, holdeth his holy hand over you and shall (as he hath) preserve you both body and soul (ut sit mens sana in corpore sano) and namely, now when you have abjected all earthly
consolations and resigned yourself willingly, gladly and fully for his love to his holy protection.

Father, what think you hath been our comfort since your departing from us? Surely the experience we have had of your life past and godly conversation, and wholesome counsel, and virtuous example, and a surety not only of the continuance of the same, but also a great increase by the goodness of our Lord to the great rest and gladness of your hearth devoid of all earthly dregs, and garnished with the noble vesture of heavenly virtues, a pleasant palace for the Holy Spirit of God to rest in, who defend you (as I doubt not, good father, but of his goodness he will) from all trouble of mind and of body, and give me your most loving obedient daughter and handmaid, and all us your children and friends, to follow that that we praise in you, and to our only comfort remember and common together of you, that we may in conclusion meet with you, mine own dear father, in the bliss of heaven to which our most merciful Lord hath bought us with his precious blood.

Your own most loving obedient daughter and beadswoman, Margaret Roper, which desireth above all worldly things to be in John Wood’s stead to do you some service. But we live in hope that we shall shortly receive you again, I pray God heartily we may, if it be his holy will.

204. To All His Friends. Tower of London, <1534>

Within a while after Sir Thomas More had been in prison in the Tower, his daughter Mistress Margaret Roper obtained license of the King, that she Mistress resort unto her father in the Tower, which she did. And thereupon he wrote with a coal a letter to all his friends, whereof the copy followeth.

[EW 1432]

To all my loving Friends

Forasmuch as being in prison I cannot tell what need I may have, or what necessity I may hap to stand in, I heartily beseech you all, that if my well beloved daughter Margaret Roper (which only of all my friends hath by the King’s gracious favor license to resort to me) do anything desire of any of you, of such thing as I shall hap to need, that it may like you no less to
regard and tender it, than if I moved it unto you and required it of you personally present myself. And I beseech you all to pray for me, and I shall pray for you.

Your faithful lover and poor beadsman,

Thomas More, Knight, prisoner.

204. To His Friends

205. Alice Alington to Margaret Roper. 17 August 1534

In August in the year of our Lord 1534 and in the xxvi year of the reign of King Henry the eight, the Lady Alice Alington, (wife to Sir Giles Alington Knight, and daughter to Sir Thomas More's second and last wife) wrote a letter to Maistres Margaret Roper, the copy whereof here followeth.

[Sister Roper, with all my heart I recommend me unto you, thanking you for all kindness.

The cause of my writing at this time is to show you that at my coming home within two hours after, my Lord Chancellor did come to take a course at a buck in our park, the which was to my husband a great comfort that it would please him so to do. Then when he had taken his pleasure and killed his deer he went unto Sir Thomas Barmeston to bed, where I was the next day with him at his desire, the which I could not say nay to, for me thought he did bid me heartily, and most especially because I would speak to him for my father.

And when I saw my time, I did desire him as humbly as I could that he would, as I have heard say that he hath been, be still good lord unto my father. And he said it did appear very well when the matter of the nun was laid to his charge. And as for this other matter, he marveled that my father is so obstinate in his own conceit, as that everybody went forth with all save only the blind Bishop and he. And in good faith, said my Lord, I am very glad that I have no learning but in a few of Aesop's fables of the which I shall tell you one. There was a country in the which there were almost none but fools, saving a few which were wise. And they by their wisdom knew, that there should fall a great rain, the which should make them all fools, that should be fouled or wet therewith. They seeing that, made them caves under the ground till all
the rain was past. Then they came forth thinking to make the fools to do what they list, and to rule them as they would. But the fools would none of that, but would have the rule themselves for all their craft. And when the wise men saw they could not obtain their purpose, they wished that they had been in the rain, and had defoiled their clothes with them.

When this tale was told my Lord did laugh very merrily. Then I said to him that for all his merry fable I did put no doubts but that he would be good lord unto my father when he saw his time. He said I would not have your father so scrupulous of his conscience. And then he told me another fable of a lion, an ass, and a wolf and of their confession. First the lion confessed him that he had devoured all the beasts that he could come by. His confessor assoiled him because he was a king and also it was his nature so to do. Then came the poor ass and said that he took but one straw out of his master's shoe for hunger, by the means whereof he thought that his master did take cold. His confessor could not assoil this great trespass, but by and by sent him to the bishop. Then came the wolf and made his confession, and he was straightly commanded that he should not pass the 6d at a meal. But when this said wolf had used this diet a little while, he waxed very hungry, insomuch that on a day when he saw a cow with her calf come by him he said to himself, I am very hungry and fain would I eat, but that I am bound by my ghostly father. Notwithstanding that, my conscience shall judge me. And then if it be so, then shall my conscience be thus, that the cow doth seem to me now but worth a groat, and then if the cow be but worth a groat then is the calf but worth 2d. So did the wolf eat both the cow and the calf.

Now good sister hath not my lord told me two pretty fables? In good faith they please me nothing, nor I wist not what to say for I was abashed of this answer. And I see no better suit than to Almighty God, for he is the comforter of all sorrows, and will not fail to send his comfort to his servants when they have most need. Thus fare ye well mine own good sister.

Written the Monday after Saint Lawrence in haste by Your sister Dame, Alice Alington

205. To M. Roper

206. Margaret Roper to Alice Alington, <August 1534>
When I came next unto my father after, me thought it both convenient and necessary, to show him your letter. Convenient, that he might thereby see your loving labor taken for him. Necessary, that since he might perceive thereby, that if he stand still in this scruple of his conscience (as it is at the least wise called by many that are his friends and wise) all his friends that seem most able to do him good either shall finally forsake him, or peradventure not be able indeed to do him any good at all.

And for these causes, at my next being with him after your letter received, when I had a while talked with him, first of his diseases, both in his breast of old, and his reins now by reason of gravel and stone, and of the cramp also that diverse nights grippeth him in his legs, and that I found by his words that they were not much increased, but continued after their manner that they did before, sometimes very sore and sometimes little grief, and that at that time I found him out of pain, and (as one in his case might), meetly well minded, after our 7 psalms and the litany said, to sit and talk and be merry, beginning first with other things of the good comfort of my mother, and the good order of my brother, and all my sisters, disposing themselves every day more and more to set little by the world, and draw more and more to God, and that his household, his neighbors, and other good friends abroad, diligently remembered him in their prayers, I added unto this: 'I pray God, good Father, that their prayers and ours, and your own therewith, may purchase of God the grace, that you may in this great matter (for which you stand in this trouble and for your trouble all we also that love you) take such away by time, as standing with the pleasure of God, may content and please the King, whom ye have always found so singularly gracious unto you, that if ye should stiffly refuse to do the thing that were his pleasure, which God not displeased you might do (as many great wise and well learned men say that in this thing you may) it would both be a great blot in your worship in every wise man's opinion and as myself have heard some say (such as yourself have always taken for well learned and good) a peril unto your soul also. But as for that point (Father) will I not be bold to dispute upon, since I trust in God and your good mind, that ye will look surely thereto. And your learning I know for such, that I wot well you con. But one thing is there which I and other your friends find and perceive abroad, which but if
it be showed you, you may peradventure to your great peril, mistake and hope for less harm (for as for good I wot well in this world of this matter ye look for none) then I sore fear me, shall be likely to fall to you. For I assure you Father, I have received a letter of late from my sister Alington, by which I see well that if ye change not your mind, you are likely to lose all those friends that are able to do you any good. Or if ye leese not their good wills, ye shall at the least wise leese the effect thereof, for any good that they shall be able to do you.'

With this my father smiled upon me and said: 'What, mistress Eve, (as I called you when you came first) hath my daughter Alington played the serpent with you, and with a letter set you a work to come tempt your father again, and for the favor that you bear him labor to make him swear against his conscience, and so send him to the devil?' And after that, he looked sadly again, and earnestly said unto me, 'Daughter Margaret, we two have talked of this thing ofter than twice or thrice, and that same tale in effect, that you tell me now therein, and the same fear too, have you twice told me before, and I have twice answered you too, that in this matter if it were possible for me to do the thing that might content the King's Grace, and God therewith not offended, there hath no man taken this oath already more gladly than I would do: as he that reckoneth himself more deeply bound unto the King's Highness for his most singular bounty, many ways showed and declared, than any of them all besides. But since standing my conscience, I can in no wise do it, and that for the instruction of my conscience in the matter, I have not slightly looked, but by many years studied and advisedly considered, and never could yet see nor hear that thing, nor I think I never shall, that could induce mine own mind to think otherwise than I do, I have no manner remedy, but God hath given me to the straight, that either I must deadly displease him, or abide any worldly harm that he shall for mine other sins, under name of this thing, suffer to fall upon me. Whereof (as I before this have told you too) I have ere I came here, not left unbethought nor unconsidered, the very worst and the uttermost that can by possibility fall. And albeit that I know mine own frailty full well and the natural faintness of mine own heart, yet if I had not trusted that God should give me strength rather to endure all things, than offend him by swearing ungodly against mine own conscience, you may be very sure I would not have come
here. And since I look in this matter but only unto God, it maketh
me little matter, though men call it as it pleaseth them and say it
is no conscience but a foolish scruple.

At this word I took a good occasion, and said unto him thus:

'In good faith Father for my part, I neither do, nor it cannot
become me, either to mistrust your good mind or your learning.
But because you speak of that that some call it but a scruple, I
assure you you shall see my sister's letter, that one of the greatest
estates in this realm and a man learned too, and (as I dare say
yourself shall think when you know him, and as you have already
right effectually proved him) your tender friend and very
special good lord, accounteth your conscience in this matter, for
a right simple scruple, and you may be sure he saith it of good
mind and layeth no little cause. For he saith that where you say
your conscience moveth you to this, all the nobles of this realm
and almost all other men too, go boldly forth with the contrary,
and stick not thereat, save only yourself and one other man:
whom though he be right good and very well learned too, yet
would I ween, few that love you, give you the counsel against
all other men to lean to his mind alone.'

And with this word I took him your letter, that he might see
my words were not feigned, but spoken of his mouth, whom he
much loveth and esteemeth highly. Thereupon he read over your
letter. And when he came to the end, he began it afresh and read
it over again. And in the reading he made no manner haste, but
advised it leisurely and pointed every word.

And after that he paused, and then thus he said: 'Forssooth, daughter
Margaret, I find my daughter Alington such as I have ever
found her, and I trust ever shall, as naturally minding me as you
that are mine own. Howbeit, her take I verily for mine own
too, since I have married her mother, and brought up her of a child
as I have brought up you, in other things and learning both,
wherein I thank God she findeth now some fruit, and bringeth
her own up very virtuously and well. Whereof God, I thank him,
hath sent her good store, our Lord preserve them and send her
much joy of them and my good son her gentle husband too,
and have mercy on the soul of mine other good son her first;
I am daily beadsman (and so write her) for them all.

'In this matter she hath used herself like herself, wisely and
like a very daughter toward me, and in the end of her letter,
giveth as good counsel as any man that wit hath would wish,
God give me grace to follow it and God reward her for it. Now daughter Margaret, as for my Lord, I not only think, but have also found it, that he is undoubtedly my singular good lord. And in mine other business concerning the seely nun, as my cause was good and clear, so was he my good lord therein, and Master Secretary my good master too. For which I shall never cease to be faithful beadsman for them both and daily do I by my troth, pray for them as I do for myself. And wh ensever it should happen (which I trust in God shall never happen) that I be found other than a true man to my prince, let them never favor me neither of them both, nor of truth no more it could become them to do.

But in this matter, Meg, to tell the truth between thee and me, my lord's Aesop's fables do not greatly move me. But as his wisdom for his pastime told them merrily to mine own daughter, so shall I for my pastime, answer them to thee, Meg, that art mine other daughter. The first fable of the rain that washed away all their wits that stood abroad when it fell, I have heard often ere this: It was a tale so often told among the King's Council by my Lord Cardinal when his Grace was chancellor, that I cannot lightly forget it. For of truth in times past when variance began to fall between the Emperor and the French King, in such wise that they were likely and did indeed fall together at war, and that there were in the Council here sometimes sundry opinions, in which some were of the mind, that they thought it wisdom, that we should sit still and let them alone: but evermore against that way, my Lord used this fable of those wise men, that because they would not be washed with the rain that should make all the people fools, went themselves into caves, and hid them under the ground. But when the rain had once made all the remnant fools and that they come out of their caves and would utter their wisdom, the fools agreed together against them, and there all to beat them. And so said his Grace that if we would be so wise that we would sit in peace while the fools fought, they would not fail after, to make peace and agree and fall at length all upon us. I will not dispute upon his Grace's counsel, and I trust we never made war but as reason would. But yet this fable for his part, did in his days help the King and the realm to spend many a fair penny. But that gere is passed and his Grace is gone, our Lord assoil his soul.

'And therefore shall I now come to this Aesop's fable, as my Lord full merrily laid it forth for me. If those wise men, Meg, when
the rain was gone at their coming abroad, where they found all men fools, wished themselves fools too, because they could not rule them, then seemeth it, that the foolish rain was so sore a shower, that even through the ground it sank into their caves, and poured down upon their heads, and wet them to the skin, and made them more noddies than them that stood abroad. For if they had had any wit, they might well see, that though they had been fools too, that thing would not have sufficed to make them the rulers over the other fools, no more than the other fools over them: and of so many fools all might not be rulers. Now when they longed so sore to bear a rule among fools, that so they they so might, they would be glad to leese their wit and be fools too, and the foolish rain had washed them meetly well. Howbeit, to say the truth, before the rain came, if they thought that all the remnant should turn into fools, and then either were so foolish that they would, or so mad to think that they should, so few rule so many fools, and had not so much wit as to consider, that there are none so unruly as they that lack wit and are fools, then were these wise men stark fools before the rain came. Howbeit daughter Roper, whom my Lord taketh here for the wise men and whom he meaneth to be fools, I cannot very well guess, I cannot well read such riddles. For as Davus saith in Terence (Non sum Oedipus) I may say you wot well (Non sum Oedipus, sed Morus) which name of mine what it signifieth in Greek, I need not tell you. But I trust my Lord reckoneth me among the fools, and so reckon I myself, as my name is in Greek. And I find, I thank God, causes not a few, whereof I so should in very deed.

'But surely among those that long to be rulers, God and mine own conscience clearly knoweth, that no man may truly number and reckon me. And I ween each other man's conscience can tell himself the same, since it is so well known, that of the King's great goodness, I was one of the greatest rulers in this noble realm and that at mine own great labor by his great goodness discharged. But whomsoever my Lord meaneth for the wise me, and whomsoever his Lordship take for the fools, and whomsoever long for the rule, and whosoever long for none, I beseech our Lord make us all so wise as that we may every man here so wisely rule ourselves in this time of tears, this vale of misery, this simple wretched world (in which as Boethius saith, one man to be proud that he beareth rule over other men, is much
like as one mouse would be proud to bear a rule over other mice in a barn) God, I say, give us the grace so wisely to rule ourselves here, that when we shall hence in haste to meet the great Spouse, we be not taken sleepers and for lack of light in our lamps, shut out of heaven among the 5 foolish virgins.

'The second fable, Marget, seemeth not to be Aesop's. For by that the matter goeth all upon confession, it seemeth to be feigned since Christendom began. For in Greece before Christ's days they used not confession, no more the men then, than the beasts now. And Aesop was a Greek, and died long ere Christ was born.

But what? who made it, maketh little matter. Nor I envy not that Aesop hath the name. But surely it is somewhat too subtle for me. For whom his Lordship understandeth by the lion and the wolf, which both twain confessed themselves, of ravin and devouring of all that came to their hands, and the one enlarged his conscience at his pleasure in the construction of his penance, nor whom by the good discrete confessor that enjoined the one a little penance, and the other none at all, and sent the poor ass to the bishop, of all these things can I nothing tell. But by the foolish scrupulous ass, that had so sore a conscience, for the taking of a straw for hunger out of his master's shoe, my Lord's other words of my scruple declare, that his Lordship merrily meant that by me: signifying (as it seemeth by that similitude) that of oversight and folly, my scrupulous conscience taketh for a great perilous thing toward my soul, if I should swear this oath, which thing as his Lordship thinketh, were indeed but a trifle. And I suppose well, Margaret, as you told me right now, that so thinketh many more besides, as well spiritual as temporal, and that even of those, that for their learning and their virtue myself not a little esteem. And yet albeit that I suppose this to be true, yet believe I not even very surely, that every man so thinketh that so saith. But though they did, Daughter, that would not make much to me, not though I should see my Lord of Rochester say the same, and swear the oath himself before me too.

'For whereas you told me right now, that such as love me, would not advise me, that against all other men, I should lean unto his mind alone, verily, Daughter, no more I do. For albeit, that of very truth, I have him in that reverent estimation, that I reckon in this realm no one man, in wisdom, learning and long approved virtue together, meet to be matched and compared with him, yet that in this matter I was not led by him, very well and
plainly appeareth, both in that I refused the oath before it was
offered him, and in that also that his Lordship was content to
have sworn of that oath (as I perceived since by you when you
moved me to the same) either somewhat more, or in some other
manner than ever I minded to do. Verily, Daughter, I never intend
(God being my good lord) to pin my soul at another
man's back, not even the best man that I know this day living;
for I know not whither he may hap to carry it. There is no man
living, of whom while he liveth, I may make myself sure. Some
may do for favor, and some may do for fear, and so might they
carry my soul a wrong way. And some might hap to frame himself
a conscience and think that while he did it for fear God
would forgive it. And some may peradventure think that they
will repent, and be shirven thereof, and that so God shall remit
it them. And some may be peradventure of that mind, that if
they say one thing and think the while the contrary, God more
regardeth their heart than their tongue, and that therefore their
oath goeth upon that they think, and not upon that they say, as a
woman reasoned once, I trow, Daughter, you were by. But in good
faith, Marget, I can use no such ways in so great a matter: but
like as if mine own conscience served me, I would not let to do
it, though other men refused, so though other refuse it not, I dare
not do it, mine own conscience standing against it. If I had (as I
told you) looked but lightly for the matter, I should have cause
to fear. But now have I so looked for it and so long, that I purpose
at the least wise to have no less regard unto my soul, than
had once a poor honest man of the country that was called Company,'%

And with this, he told me a tale, I ween I can scant tell it you
again, because it hangeth upon some terms and ceremonies of
the law. But as far as I can call to mind my father's tale was
this, that there is a court belonging of course unto every fair, to
do justice in such things as happen within the same. This court
hath a pretty fond name, but I cannot happen upon it, but it beginneth
with a pie, and the remnant goeth much like the name of a
knight that I have known, I wis, (and I trow you too, for he hath
been at my father's often ere this, at such time as you were there,) a meetly tall black man, his name was Sir William Pounder.
But, tut, let the name of the court go for this once, or call it if
ye will a court of pie Sir William Pounder. But this was the matter
lo, that upon a time at such a court held at Bartholomew
fair, there was an escheator of London that had arrested a man that was outlawed, and had seized his goods that he had brought into the fair, tolling him out of the fair by a train. The man that was arrested and his goods seized was a northern man, which by his friends made the escheator within the fair to be arrested upon an action, I wot ne'er what, and so was he brought before the judge of the court of pie Sir William Pounder, and at the last the matter came to a certain ceremony to be tried by a quest of 12 men, a jury as I remember they call it, or else a perjury.

Now had the clothman by friendship of the officers, found the means to have all the quest almost, made of the northern men, such as had their booths there standing in the fair. Now was it come to the last day in the afternoon, and the 12 men had heard both the parties, and their council tell their tales at the bar, and were from the bar had into a place, to talk and common, and agree upon their sentence. Nay let me speak better in my terms yet, I trow the judge giveth the sentence and the quest's tale is called a verdict. They were scant come in together, but the northern men were agreed, and in effect all the other too, to cast our London escheator. They thought they needed no more to prove that he did wrong, than even the name of his bare office alone. But then was there then as the devil would, this honest man of another quarter, that was called Company. And because the fellow seemed but a fool and sat still and said nothing, they made no reckoning of him, but said, we be agreed now, come let us go give our verdict.

Then when the poor fellow saw that they made such haste, and his mind nothing gave him that way that theirs did, (if their minds gave them that way that they said) he prayed them to tarry and talk upon the matter and tell him such reason therein, that he might think as they did: and when he so should do, he would be glad to say with them, or else he said they must pardon him. For since he had a soul of his own to keep as they had, he must say as he thought for his, as they must for theirs. When they heard this, they were half angry with him. 'What good fellow' (quod one of the northern men) 'where wone thou? Be not we eleven here and you but one all alone, and all we agreed? Whereto shouldst you stick? What is thy name good fellow?' 'Masters' (quod he) 'my name is called Company.' 'Company,' quod they, 'now by thy truth good fellow, play then the good companion, come thereon forth with us and pass even for good company,'
'Would God, good masters,' quod the man again, 'that there lay no more weight thereby. But now when we shall hence and come before God, and that he shall send you to heaven for doing according to your conscience, and me to the devil for doing against mine, in passing at your request here for good company now, by God, Master Dickenson, (that was one of the northern men's name) if I shall then say to all you again, masters, I went once for good company with you, which is the cause that I go now to hell, play you the good fellows now again with me, as I went then for good company with you, so some of you go now for good company with me. Would ye go, Master Dickenson? Nay nay by our Lady, nor never one of you all. And therefore must ye pardon me from passing as you pass, but if I thought in the matter as you do, I dare not in such a matter pass for good company. For the passage of my poor soul passeth all good company.'

And when my father had told me this tale, then said he further thus: 'I pray thee now, good Marget, tell me this, wouldst you wish thy poor father being at the least wise somewhat learned, less to regard the peril of his soul, than did there the honest unlearned man? I meddle not (you wot well) with the conscience of any man, that hath sworn, nor I take not upon me to be their judge. But now if they do well, and that their conscience grudge them not, if I with my conscience to the contrary, should for good company pass on with them and swear as they do, when all our souls hereafter shall pass out of this world, and stand in judgment at the bar before the high Judge, if he judge them to heaven and me to the devil, because I did as they did, not thinking as they thought, if I should then say (as the good man Company said) mine old good lords and friends, naming such a lord and such, yea and some bishops peradventure of such as I love best, I swore because you swore, and went that way that you went, do likewise for me now, let me not go alone, if there be any good fellowship with you, some of you come with me: by my troth Marget I may say to thee, in secret council, here between us twain (but let it go no further, I beseech thee heartily). I find the friendship of this wretched world so fickle, that for anything that I could treat or pray, that would for good fellowship go to the devil with me, among them all I ween I should not find one. And then by God, Marget, if you think so too, best it is I suppose that for any respect of them all were they twice as many more as they be, I have myself a
respect to mine own soul.'

'Surely, Father,' quod I, 'without any scruple at all, you may be bold I dare say for to swear that. But Father, they that think you should not refuse to swear the thing, that you see so many so good men and so well learned swear before you, mean not that you should swear to bear them fellowship, nor to pass with them, for good company: but that the credence that you may with reason give to their persons for their aforesaid qualities, should well move you to think the oath such of itself, as every man may well swear without peril of their soul, if their own private conscience to the contrary be not the let: and that ye well ought and have good cause to change your own conscience, in confirming your own conscience to the conscience of so many other, namely being such as you know they be. And since it is also by a law made by the parliament commanded, they think that you be upon the peril of your soul, bound to change and reform your conscience, and confirm your own as I said to other men's.'

'Marry, Marget' (quod my father ag ain), 'for the part that you play, you play it not much amiss. But Margaret first, as for the law of the land, though every man being born and inhabiting therein, is bound to the keeping in every case upon some temporal pain, and in many cases upon pain of God's displeasure too, yet is there no man bound to swear that every law is well made, nor bound upon the pain of God's displeasure, to perform any such point of the law, as were indeed unlawful. Of which manner kind, that there may such hap to be made in any part of Christendom, I suppose no man doubteth, the general council of the whole body of Christendom evermore in that point except: which (though it may make some things better than other, and some things may grow to that point, that by another law they may need to be reformed, yet to institute anything in such wise, to God's displeasure, as at the making might not lawfully be performed, the spirit of God that governeth his church, never hath it suffered, nor never hereafter shall, his whole catholic church lawfully gathered together in a general council, (as Christ hath made plain promises in Scripture).

'Now if it so hap, that in any particular part of Christendom, there be a law made, that be such as for some part thereof some men think that the law of God cannot bear it, and some other think yes, the thing being in such manner in question, that through diverse quarters of Christendom, some that are good men and
cunning, both of our own days and before our days, think some one way, and some other of like learning and goodness think the contrary, in this case he that thinketh against the law, neither may swear that law lawfully was made, standing his own conscience to the contrary, nor is bound upon pain of God's displeasure to change his own conscience therein, for any particular law made anywhere, other than by the general council or by a general faith grown by the working of God universally through all Christian nations: nor other authority than one of these twain (except special revelation and express commandment of God) since the contrary opinions of good men and well learned, as I put you the case, made the understanding of the Scriptures doubtful, I can see none that lawfully may command and compel any man to change his own opinion, and to translate his own conscience from the one side to the other.

'For an example of some such manner things, I have I trow before this time told you, that whether our Blessed Lady were conceived in original sin or not, was sometime in great question among the great learned men of Christendom. And whether it be yet decided and determined by any general council, I remember not. But this I remember well, that notwithstanding that the feast of her conception was then celebrated in the Church (at the least wise in diverse provinces) yet was holy St. Bernard, which as his manifold books made in the laud and praise of our Lady do declare, was of as devout affection toward all things sounding toward her commendation, that he thought might well be verified or suffered, as any man was living, yet (I say) was that holy devout man against that part of her praise, as appeareth well by an epistle of his, wherein he right sore and with great reason argueth thereagainst, and approveth not the institution of that feast neither. Nor he was not of this mind alone, but many other well learned men with him, and right holy men too. Now was there on the other side, the blessed holy bishop, St. Anselm, and he not alone neither, but many well learned and very virtuous also with him. And they be both twain holy saints in heaven, and many more that were on either side. Nor neither part was there bound to change their opinion for the other, nor for any provincial council either.

'But like as after the determination of a well assembled general council, every man had been bound to give credence that way, and confirm their own conscience to the determination of the
council general, and then all they that held the contrary
before, were for that holding out of blame, so if before such decision
a man had against his own conscience, sworn to maintain
and defend the other side, he had not failed to offend God very
sore. But, marry, if on the other side a man would in a matter
take away by himself upon his own mind alone, or with some
few, or with never so many, against, an evident truth appearing
by the common faith of Christendom, this conscience is very
damnable, yea, or if it be not even fully so plain and evident, yet
if he see but himself with far the fewer part, think the one
way, against far the more part of as well learned and as good,
as those are that affirm the thing that he thinketh, thinking
and affirming the contrary, and that of such folk as he hath no
reasonable cause wherefore he should not in that matter suppose,
that those which say they think against his mind, affirm the
thing that they say, for none other cause but for that they so
think indeed, this is of very truth a very good occasion to
move him, and yet not to compel him, to confirm his mind
and conscience unto theirs.

'But Margaret, for what causes I refuse the oath, the thing (as
I have often told you) I will never show you, neither you nor
nobody else, except the King's Highness should like to command
me. Which if his Grace did, I have ere this told you
therein how obediently I have said. But surely, Daughter, I have
refused it and do, for more causes than one. And for what causes
soever I refuse it, this am I sure, that it is well known, that of
them that have sworn it, some of the best learned before the oath
given them, said and plain affirmed the contrary, of some such
things as they have now sworn in the oath, and that upon their
troth, and their learning then, and that not in haste nor suddenly,
but often and after great diligence done to seek and find out the
truth.'

'That might be, Father' (quod I), 'and yet since they might
see more, I will not' (quod he), 'dispute, daughter Margaret,
against that, nor misjudge any other man's conscience, which
lieth in their own heart far out of my sight. But this will I say,
that I never heard myself the cause of their change, by any
new further thing found of authority, than as far as I perceive
they had looked on, and as I suppose, very well weighed before.
Now of the selfsame things that they saw before, seem some
otherwise unto them now, than they did before, I am for their
sakes the gladder a great deal. But anything that ever I saw before, yet at this day to me they seem but as they did. And therefore, though they may do otherwise than they might, yet, Daughter, I may not. As for such things as some men would haply say, that I might with reason the less regard their change, for any example of them to be taken to the change of my conscience, because that the keeping of the prince's pleasure, and the avoiding of his indignation, the fear of the losing of their worldly substance, with regard unto the discomfort of their kindred and their friends, might hap make some men either swear otherwise than they think, or frame their conscience afresh to think otherwise than they thought, any such opinion as this is, will I not conceive of them, I have better hope of their goodness than to think of them so. For if such things should have turned them, the same things have been likely to make me do the same, for in good faith I knew few so fainthearted as myself. Therefore will I, Margaret, by my will, think no worse of other folk in the thing that I know not, than I find in myself. But as I know well mine only conscience causeth me to refuse the oath, so will I trust in God, that according to their conscience, they have received it and sworn.

'But whereas you think, Marget, that they be so many more than there are on the other side that think in this thing as I think, surely for your own comfort that you shall not take thought, thinking that your father casteth himself away so like a fool, that he would jeopard the loss of his substance, and peradventure his body, without any cause why he so should for peril of his soul, but rather his soul in peril thereby too, to this shall I say to thee, Marget, that in some of my causes I nothing doubt at all, but that though not in this realm, yet in Christendom about, of those well learned men and virtuous that are yet alive, they be not the fewer part that are of my mind. Besides that, that it were ye wot well possible, that some men in this realm too, think not so clear the contrary, as by the oath received they have sworn to say.

'Now this far forth I say for them that are yet alive. But go we now to them that are dead before, and that are I trust in heaven, I am sure that it is not the fewer part of them that all the time while they lived, thought in some of the things, the way that I think now. I am also, Margaret, of this thing sure enough, that of those holy doctors and saints, which to be with God in
heaven long ago no Christian man doubteth, whose books yet at
this day remain here in men's hands, there thought in some such
things, as I think now. I say not that they thought all so, but
surely such and so many as will well appear by their writing,
that I pray God give me the grace that my soul may follow theirs.
And yet I show you not all, Margaret, that I have for myself in
the sure discharge of my conscience. But for the conclusion, daughter
Margaret, of all this matter, as I have often told you, I take
not upon me neither to define nor dispute in these matters, nor I
rebuke not nor impugn any other man's deed, nor I never wrote,
nor so much as spoke in any company, any word of reproach in
anything that the Parliament had passed, nor I meddled not with
the conscience of any other man, that either thinketh or saith he
thinketh contrary unto mine. But as concerning mine own
self, for thy comfort shall I say, Daughter, to thee, that mine
own conscience in this matter (I damn none other man's) is
such, as may well stand with mine own salvation, thereof am I,
Meg, so sure, as that is, God is in heaven. And therefore as for
all the remnant, goods, lands, and life both (if the chance
should so fortune) since this conscience is sure for me, I verily
trust in God, he shall rather strengthen me to bear the loss, than
against this conscience to swear and put my soul in peril, since all
the causes that I perceive move other men to the contrary, seem
not such unto me, as in my conscience make any change.'

When he saw me sit with this very sad, as I promise you,
Sister, my heart was full heavy for the peril of his person, for
in faith I fear not his soul, he smiled upon me and said: 'how
now daughter, Marget? What how mother Eve? Where is your
mind now? sit not musing with some serpent in your breast, upon
some new persuasion, to offer father Adam the apple yet once
again?' 'In good faith, Father,' quod I, 'I can no further go, but
am (as I trow Crisseyde saith in Chaucer) come to Dulcaron, even
at my wits end. For since the example of so many wise men
cannot in this matter move you, I see not what to say more, but
if I should look to persuade you with the reason that Master
Harry Patenson made. For he met one day one of our men, and
when he had asked where you were, and heard that you were in
the Tower still, he waxed even angry with you and said, "Why?
What aileth him that he will not swear? Wherefore should he
stick to swear? I have sworn the oath myself." And so I can
in good faith go now no further neither, after so many wise men
whom ye take for no example, but if I should say like Mr. Harry,
Why should you refuse to swear, Father? for I have sworn myself.'

At this he laughed and said, 'That word was like Eve too, for she
offered Adam no worse fruit than she had eaten herself.' 'But
yet Father,' quod I, 'by my troth, I fear me very sore, that this
matter will bring you in marvelous heavy trouble. You know
well that as I showed you, Mr. Secretary sent you word as your
very friend, to remember, that the Parliament lasteth yet.' 'Margaret,'
quod my father, 'I thank him right heartily. But as I showed
you then again, I left not this gere unthought on. And albeit I
know well that if they would make a law to do me any harm,
that law could never be lawful, but that God shall I trust
keep me in that grace, that concerning my duty to my prince,
no man shall do me hurt but if he do me wrong (and then
as I told you, this is like a riddle, a case in which a man may leese
his head and have no harm), and notwithstanding also that I
have good hope, that God shall never suffer so good and wise a
prince, in such wise to requite the long service of his true faithful
servant, yet since there is nothing impossible to fall, I forget
not in this matter, the counsel of Christ in the gospel, that ere
I should begin to build this castle for the safeguard of mine
own soul, I should sit and reckon what the charge would be. I
accounted, Marget, full surely many a restless night, while my
wife slept, and weened that I had slept too, what peril was possible
for to fall to me, so far forth that I am sure there can come none
above. And in devising, Daughter, thereupon, I had a full heavy
heart. But yet (I thank our Lord) for all that, I never thought to
change, though the very uttermost should hap me that my
fear ran upon.'

'No, Father (quod I), it is not like to think upon a thing that
may be, and to see a think that shall be, as ye should (our Lord
save you) if the chance should so fortune. And then should you
peradventure think, that you think not now and yet then peradventure
it would be too late.' 'Too late, Daughter,' (quod my father),
'Margaret?' I beseech our Lord, that if ever I make such a change,
it may be too late, indeed. For well I wot the change cannot be
good for my soul that change I say that should grow but by
fear. And therefore I pray God that in this world I never have
good of such change. For so much as I take harm here, I shall
have at the least wise the less therefore when I am hence. And if
so were that I wist well now, that I should faint and fall, and for fear swear hereafter, yet would I wish to take harm by the refusing first, for so should I have the better hope for grace to rise again.

'And albeit (Marget) that I wot well my lewdness hath been such: that I know myself well worthy that God should let me slip, yet can I not but trust in his merciful goodness, that as his grace hath strengthened me hitherto, and made me content in my heart, to leese good, land and life too, rather than to swear against my conscience, and hath also put in the King toward me that good and gracious mind, that as yet he hath taken from me nothing but my liberty (wherewith (as help me God), his grace hath done me so great good by the spiritual profit that I trust I take thereby, that among all his great benefits heaped upon me so thick, I reckon upon my faith my imprisonment even the very chief) I cannot, I say, therefore mistrust the grace of God, but that either he shall conserve and keep the King in that gracious mind still to do me none hurt, or else if his pleasure be, that for mine other sins I shall suffer in such a case in sight as I shall not deserve, his grace shall give me the strength to take it patiently, and peradventure somewhat gladly too, whereby his high goodness shall (by the merits of his bitter passion joined thereunto, and far surmounting in merit for me, all that I can suffer myself) make it serve for release of my pain in purgatory, and over that for increase of some reward in heaven.

'Mistrust him, Meg, will I not, though I feel me faint, yea, and though I should feel my fear even at point to overthrow me too, yet shall I remember how St. Peter, with a blast of wind, began to sink for his faint faith, and shall do as he did, call upon Christ and pray him to help. And then I trust he shall set his holy hand unto me, and in the stormy seas, hold me up from drowning. Yea and if he suffer me to play St. Peter further, and to fall full to the ground, and swear and foreswear too (which our Lord for his tender passion keep me from, and let me leese if it so fall, and never win thereby:) yet after shall I trust that his goodness will cast upon me his tender piteous eye, as he did upon St. Peter, and make me stand up again and confess the truth of my conscience afresh, and abide the shame and harm here of mine own fault.

'And finally Marget, this wot I well, that without my fault he will not let me be lost. I shall therefore with good hope commit
myself wholly to him. And if he suffer me for my faults to perish, yet shall I then serve for a praise of his justice. But in good faith Meg, I trust that his tender pity shall keep my poor soul safe and make me commend his mercy. And therefore mine own good daughter, never trouble thy mind for anything that ever shall hap me in this world. Nothing can come but that that God will. And I make me very sure that whatsoever that be, seem it never so bad in sight, it shall indeed be the best. And with this, my good child, I pray you heartily, be you and all your sisters and my sons too comfortable and serviceable to your good mother my wife. And of your good husbands' minds I have no manner doubt. Commend me to them all, and to my good daughter Alington, and to all my other friends, sisters, nieces, nephews, and allies, and unto all our servants, man, woman, and child, and all my good neighbors and our acquaintance abroad. And I right heartily pray both you and them, to serve God and be merry and rejoice in him. And if anything hap me that you would be loath, pray to God for me, but trouble not yourself: as I shall full heartily pray for us all, that we may meet together once in heaven, where we shall make merry forever, and never have trouble after.'

207. To Dr. Nicholas Wilson. Tower of London, 1534

A letter written and sent by Sir T. More to Master Doctor Nicholas Wilson (then both prisoners in the Tower of London) in the year of our Lord God 1534, and in the xxvi year of the reign of King Henry the eight. [EW 1443]

Our Lord be your comfort and whereas I perceive by sundry means that you have promised to swear the oath, I beseech our Lord give you thereof good luck. I never gave any man counsel to the contrary in my days nor never used any ways to put any scruple in other folks' conscience concerning the matter. And whereas I perceive that you would gladly know what I intend to do you wot well that I told you when we were both abroad that I would therein neither know your mind nor no man's else nor you nor no man else should therein know mine, for I would be no partaker with no man nor of truth never I will but leaving every other man to their own conscience myself will with good grace follow mine. For
against mine own to swear were peril of damnation and
what mine own shall be tomorrow myself cannot be sure and
whether I shall have finally the grace to do according to mine
own conscience or not hangeth in God's goodness and not in
mine, to whom I beseech you heartily remember me in your
devout prayers and I shall and daily do remember you in
mine, such as they be, and as long as my poor short life shall
last, anything that I have, your part shall be therein.

207. To Dr. Wilson

Another letter written and sent by Sir Thomas More to Master
Doctor Wilson (then both prisoners in the Tower) in
the year of our Lord, 1534, and in the xxvi year of the
reign of King Henry the eight. [EW 1443]

Master Wilson in my right hearty wise I recommend
me to you.

And very sorry am I to see you besides the trouble that you
be in by this imprisonment with loss of liberty, goods, revenues
of your livelihood and comfort of your friends' company,
fallen also into such agony and vexation of mind through doubts
falling in your mind, that diversely to and fro toss and trouble
your conscience to your great heaviness of heart as I (to no little
grief of mine own mind for your sake) perceive. And so much
am I for you good Mr. Doctor the more sorry for that it lieth not
in me to give you such kind of comfort as meseemeth you
somewhat desire and look for at mine hand.

For whereas you would somewhat hear of my mind in your
doubts, I am a man at this day very little meet therefore. For
this you know well, good Mr. Doctor, that at such time as the
matter came in such manner in question as mine opinion was
asked therein amongst other and yet you made privy thereunto
before me, you remember well that at that time you and I many
things talked together thereof. And by all the time after by which
I did at the King's gracious commandment both seek out
and read and common with all such as I knew made privy
to the matter to perceive what I might therein upon both sides
and by indifferent weighing of everything as near as my poor wit
and learning would serve to see to which side my conscience could
incline, and as my own mind should give me so to make his Highness report which way myself should hap to think therein. For other commandment had I never of his Grace in good faith, saying that this knot his Highness added thereto that I should therein look first unto God and after God unto him, which word was also the first lesson that his Grace gave me what time I came first into his noble service and neither a more indifferent commandment nor a more gracious lesson could there in my mind never King give his counselor or any his other servant.

But as I began to tell you by all this long time, I cannot now tell how many years, of all those that I talked with of the matter and with whom I most conferred those places of Scripture and of the old holy Doctors that touched either the one side or the other, with the councils and laws on either side, that speak thereof also, the most, as I trow you wot well, was yourself. For with no man communed I so much and so often thereof as with you, both for your substantial learning and for your mature judgment, and for that I well perceived ever in you that no man had or lightly could have, a more faithful respect unto the King's honor and surety both of body and soul than I ever saw that you had.

And yet among many other things which I well liked in you, one specially was that I well perceived in the thing that the King's Grace did put you in trust with, your substantial secret manner. For where I had heard (I wot not now of whom) that you had written his Highness a book of that matter from Paris before, yet in all those years of our long acquaintance and often talking and reasoning upon the thing, I never heard you so much as make once any mention of that book. But else (except there were any other things in that book that you peradventure thought not on) I suppose that all that ever came to your mind, that might in the matter make for the one side or the other comprised either in the Scripture or in the old ancient Doctors, I verily think in my mind that you did communicate with me and I likewise with you and at the least wise remember well, that of those points which you call now newly to your remembrance there was none at that time forgotten.

I remember well also by your often conference in the matter that by all the time in which I studied about it, you and I
were in every point both twain of one opinion and remember well that the laws and councils and the words of Saint Augustine \textit{De civitate Dei} and the epistle of Saint Ambrose \textit{Ad paternum} and the epistle of Saint Basil translated out of Greek and the writing of Saint Gregory you and I read together and over that the places of the Scripture self both in Leviticus and in the Deuteronomy and in the Gospel and in Saint Paul's epistles and over this in that other place of Saint Augustine that you remember now and besides that other places of his, wherein he properly toucheth the matter expressly with the words of Saint Jerome and of Saint Chrysostom too, and I cannot now remember of how many more. But I verily think that on your part, and I am very sure that on my part albeit that it had been peradventure overlong to show and read with you every man's book that I read by myself whereto the parties peradventure that trusted me therewith gave me no leave to show their books further as you peradventure used the like manner with me, yet in good faith as it was of reason my part in that case to do, you and I having both one commandment indifferently to consider the matter, everything of Scripture and of the Doctors I faithfully communed with you and as I suppose verily so did you with me too, so that of me, good Master Doctor, though I had all the points as ripe in mind now as I had then and had still all the books about me that I then had, and were as willing to meddle in the matter as any man could be, yet could you now no new thing hear of me, more than you have, I ween, heard often before, nor I ween I of you neither. But now standeth it with me in far other case. For afterward when I had signified unto the King's Highness mine own poor opinion in the matter which his Highness very graciously took in good part and that I saw further progress in the matter wherein to do his Grace service to his pleasure I could not, and anything meddle against his pleasure I would not, I determined utterly with myself to discharge my mind of any further studying or musing of the matter and thereupon I sent home again such books as I had saving that some I burned by the consent of the owner that was minded as myself was no more to meddle of the matter, and therefore now good Master Doctor I could not be sufficient and able to reason those points again though I were minded thereto since many things are out of my mind which I never purpose to look for again nor though
I would were never like to find again while I live. Besides this, all that ever I looked for was, you wot well, concerning two or three questions to be pondered and weighted by the study of scripture and the interpreters of the same, save for somewhat that hath been touched in the same by the cannon laws of the Church.

But then were there at that time in the matter other things more, diverse faults found in the bull of the dispensation, by which the King's Council learned in the spiritual law reckoned the bull vicious, partly for untrue suggestion, partly by reason of insufficient suggestion. Now concerning those points I never meddled. For I neither understand the doctors of the law nor well can turn their books. And many things have there since in this great matter grown in question wherein I neither am sufficiently learned in the law nor full informed of the fact and therefore I am not he that either murmur or grudge, make assertions, hold opinions or keep dispicions in the matter, but like the King's true poor humble subject daily pray for the preservation of his Grace, and the Queen's Grace and their noble issue and of all the realm, without harm doing or intending, I thank our Lord, unto any man living.

Finally as touching the oath, the causes for which I refused it, no man witteth what they be for they be secret in mine own conscience, some other peradventure, than those that other men would ween, and such as I never disclosed unto any man yet nor never intend to do while I live. Finally as I said unto you, before the oath offered unto us when we met in London at adventure I would be no partaker in the matter but for mine own self follow mine own conscience, for which myself must make answer unto God, and shall leave every other man to his own, so say to you still and I dare say further that no more never intended you neither. Many things every man learned woteth well there are, in which every man is at liberty without peril of damnation to think which way him list till the one part be determined for necessary to be believed by a general council and I am not he that take upon me to define or determine of what kind or nature everything is that the oath containeth, nor am so bold or presumptuous to blame or dispraise the conscience of other men, their truth nor their learning neither, nor I meddle with no man but of myself, nor of no man's conscience else will I meddle but of mine own. And in mine own
conscience, I cry God mercy, I find of mine own life, matters enough to think on.

I have lived, methinks, a long life and now neither I look nor I long to live much longer. I have since I came in the Tower looked once or twice to have given up my ghost ere this and in good faith mine heart waxed the lighter with hope thereof. Yet forget I not that I have a long reckoning and a great to give account of, but I put my trust in God and in the merits of his bitter passion, and I beseech him give me and keep me the mind to long to be out of this world and to be with him. For I can never but trust that who so long to be with him shall be welcome to him and on the other side my mind giveth me verily that any that ever shall come to him shall full heartily wish to be with him ere ever he shall come at him. And I beseech him heartily to set your heart at such rest and quiet as may be to his pleasure and eternal weal of your soul and so I verily trust that he shortly shall and shall also if it be his pleasure incline the King's noble heart to be gracious and favorable to you and me both, since we be both twain of true faithful mind unto him, whether we be in this matter of one mind both, or of diverse. Sicut divisiones aquarum, ita cor regis in manu Domini, quocunque voluerit, inclinabit illud. And if the pleasure of God be, on any of us both otherwise to dispose, I need to give you no counsel nor advice.

But for myself I most humbly beseech him to give me the grace in such wise patiently to conform my mind unto his high pleasure therein that after the troublous storm of this my tempestuous time his great mercy may conduct me into the sure haven of the joyful bliss of heaven, and after at his further pleasure (if I have any) all mine enemies too, for there shall we love together well enough and I thank our Lord for my part so do I here too. Be not angry now though I pray not like for you, you be sure enough I would my friends fare no worse than they, nor yet they, so help me God, no worse than myself.

For our Lord's sake, good Mr. Wilson, pray for me for I pray for you daily and sometimes when I would be sorry but if I thought you were asleep. Comfort yourself, good Mr. Doctor, with remembering God's great mercy and the King's accustomed goodness, and by my troth I think that all his Grace's Council favoreth you in their hearts. I cannot judge in my mind any one of them so evil as to be of the mind that you
should do otherwise than well. And for conclusion in God is all. *Spes non confundit*. I pray you pardon my scribbling for I cannot always so well endure to write as I might sometimes. And I pray you when ye see time convenient at your pleasure, send me this rude bill again. *Quia quanquam nihil inest mali, tamen preptor ministrum nolim rescire*.

209. From Margaret Roper. 1534

*A letter written and sent by Mistress Margaret Roper, to her father Sir Thomas More then shut up in close prison in the Tower, written in the year of our Lord God 1534, and in the xxvi year of the reign of King Henry the eight, answering to a letter which her father had sent unto her. [EW 1446]*

_Mine own most entirely beloved Father._

I think myself never able to give you sufficient thanks, for the inestimable comfort my poor heart received in the reading of your most loving and godly letter, representing to me the clear shining brightness of your soul, the pure temple of the Holy Spirit of God, which I doubt not shall perpetually rest in you and you in him. Father, if all the world had been given to me, as I be saved it had been a small pleasure, in comparison of the pleasure I conceived of the treasure of your letter, which though it were written with a coal, is worthy in mine opinion to be written in letters of gold.

Father, what moved them to shut you up again, we can nothing hear. But surely I conjecture that when they considered that you were of so temperate mind, that you were contented to abide there all your life with such liberty, they thought it were never possible to incline you to their will, except it were by restraining you from the Church, and the company of my good mother your dear wife and us your children and beadsfolk. But Father this chance was not strange to you. For I shall not forget how you told us when we were with you in the garden, that these things were like enough to chance shortly after. Father, I have many times rehearsed to mine own comfort and diverse others', your fashion and words ye had to us when we were last with you: for which I trust by the grace of God to be the better while I live, and when I am departed out of this frail life, which, I pray God, I
may pass and end in his true obedient service, after the wholesome
counsel and fruitful example of living I have had (good
Father) of you, whom I pray God give me grace to follow: which
I shall the better through the assistance of your devout prayers,
the special stay of my frailty. Father, I am sorry I have no longer
leisure at this time to talk with you, the chief comfort of my
life, I trust to have occasion to write again shortly. I trust I have
your daily prayer and blessing.

Your most loving obedient daughter and beadswoman Margaret
Roper, which daily and hourly is bound to pray for you, for
whom she prayeth in this wise that our Lord of his infinite
mercy give you of his heavenly comfort, and so to assist you with
his special grace that ye never in anything decline from his
blessed will, but live and die his true obedient servant. Amen.

210. To Margaret Roper. Tower of London, 1534

A letter written and sent by Sir Thomas More to his daughter
Mistress Roper answering her letter here next before. [EW 1446]

The Holy Spirit of God be with you.

If I would with my writing, (mine own good daughter)
declare how much pleasure and comfort, your daughterly
loving letters were unto me a peck of coals would not suffice to
make me the pens. And other pens have I (good Margaret)
none here: and therefore can I write you no long process, nor
dare adventure, good daughter, to write often.

The cause of my close keeping again did of likelihood grow of
my negligent and very plain true word which you remember.
And verily whereas my mind gave me (as I told you in the
garden) that some such thing were likely to happen, so doth
my mind always give me, that some folk yet weened that I was
not so poor as it appeared in the search, and that it may therefore
happen, that yet eftsoons oftener than once, some new sudden searches
may hap to be made in every house of ours as narrowly as is
possible. Which thing if ever it so should hap, can make
but game to us that know the truth of my poverty, but if they
find out my wife's gay girdle and her golden beads. Howbeit I
verily believe in good faith, that the King's Grace of his benign
pity will take nothing from her.
I thought and yet think, that it may be that I was shut up again, upon some new causeless suspicion, grown peradventure upon some secret sinister information, whereby some folk haply thought, that there should be found out against me some other greater things. But I thank our Lord whensoever this conjecture hath fallen in my mind, the clearness of my conscience hath made mine heart hop for joy. For one thing am I very sure of hitherto and trust in God's mercy to be while I live, that as often I have said unto you, I shall for anything toward my prince, never take great harm, but if I take great wrong, in the sight of God I say, howsoever it shall seem in the sight of men. For to the world, wrong may seem right sometimes by false conjecturing, sometimes by false witnesses, as that good Lord said unto you, which is I dare say my very good lord in his mind, and said it of very good will. Before the world also, my refusing of this oath is accounted an heinous offence, and my religious fear, toward God, is called obstinacy toward my Prince. But my Lords of the Council before whom I refused it, might well perceive by the heaviness of my heart appearing well more ways than one unto them, that all sturdy stubbornness whereof obstinacy groweth, was very far from my mind. For the clearer proof whereof, since they seemed to take for one argument of obstinacy in me, that refusing of the oath, I would not declare the causes why, I offered with a full heavy heart, that albeit I rather would endure all the pain and peril of the statute than by the declaring of the causes, give any occasion of exasperation unto my most dread Sovereign Lord and Prince, yet rather than his Highness should for not disclosing the causes, account me for stubborn and obstinate, I would upon such his gracious license and commandment as should discharge me of his displeasure and peril of any statute, declare those points that letted my poor conscience to receive that oath; and would over that be sworn before, that if I should after the causes disclosed and declared find them so answered as my conscience should think itself satisfied, I would thereupon swear the oath that I there refused. To this, Master Secretary answered me, that though the King's Grace gave me such a license, yet it could not discharge me against the statutes, in saying anything that were by them upon heinous pains prohibited. In this good warning he showed himself my special tender friend. And now you see well Margaret, that it is no obstinacy to leave...
the causes undeclared, while I could not declare them without peril. But now is it accounted great obstinacy that I refuse the oath, whatsoever my causes be, considering that of so many wiser and better men none stuck thereat. And Mr. Secretary of a great zeal that he bore unto me, swore there before them a great oath, that for the displeasure that he thought the King's Highness would bear me, and the suspicion that his Grace would conceive of me, which would now think in his mind that all the Nun's business was wrought and devised by me, he had liefer than I should have refused the oath, that his own only son (which is a goodly young gentleman of whom our Lord send him much joy) had had his head stricken off. This word Margaret, as it was a marvelous declaration of Mr. Secretary's great good mind and favor toward me, so was it an heavy hearing to me, that the King's Grace my most dread Sovereign Lord, were likely to conceive such high suspicion of me, and bear such grievous indignation toward me, for the thing, which without the danger and peril of my poor soul, lay not in my hand to help, nor doth.

Now have I heard since, that some say that this obstinate manner of mine, in still refusing the oath, shall peradventure force and drive the King's Grace to make a further law for me. I cannot let such a law to be made. But I am very sure, that if I died by such a law, I should die for that point innocent before God. And albeit (good daughter) that I think, our Lord that hath the hearts of kings in his hand, would never suffer of his high goodness, so gracious a Prince, and so many honorable men, and so many good men as be in the Parliament to make such an unlawful law, as that should be if it so mishapped, yet lest I note that point unthought upon, but many times more than one revolved and cast in my mind before my coming hither, both that peril and all other that might put my body in peril of death by the refusing of this oath. In devising whereupon, albeit (mine own good daughter) that I found myself (I cry God mercy) very sensual and my flesh much more shrinking from pain and from death, than me thought it the part of a faithful Christian man, in such a case as my conscience gave me, that in the saving of my body should stand the loss of my soul, yet I thank our Lord, that in that conflict, the Spirit had in conclusion the mastery, and reason with help of faith finally concluded, that for to be put to death wrongfully for doing well (as I am
very sure I do, in refusing to swear against mine own conscience, being such as I am not upon peril of my soul bound to change whether my death should come without law, or by color of a law) it is a case in which a man may leese his head and yet have none harm, but instead of harm inestimable good at the hand of God.

And I thank our Lord (Meg) since I am come hither I set by death every day less than other. For though a man leese of his years in this world, it is more than manifold recompensed by coming the sooner to heaven. And though it be a pain to die while a man is in health yet see I very few that in sickness die with ease. And finally, very sure am I that whensoever the time shall come that may hap to come, God wot how soon, in which I should lie sick in my deathbed by nature, I shall then think that God had done much for me, if he had suffered me to die before by the color of such a law. And therefore y reason showeth me (Margaret) that it were great folly for me to be sorry to come to that death, which I would after wish that I had died. Besides that, that a man may hap with less thanks of God, and more adventure of his soul to die as violently, and as painfully by many other chances, as by enemies or thieves. And therefore mine own good daughter I assure you (thanks be to God) the thinking of any such albeit it hath grieved me ere this, yet at this day grieveth me nothing. And yet I know well for all this mine own frailty, and that Saint Peter which feared it much less than I, fell in such fear soon after, that at the word of a simple girl he forsook and foreswore our Savior. And therefore am I not (Meg) so mad, as to warrant myself to stand. But I shall pray, and I pray thee mine own good daughter to pray with me, that it may please God that hath given me this mind, to give me the grace to keep it.

And thus have I mine own good daughter disclosed unto you, the very secret bottom of my mind, referring the order thereof only to the goodness of God, and that so fully, that I assure you Margaret on my faith, I never have prayed God to bring me hence nor deliver me from death, but referring all-thing whole unto his only pleasure, as to him that seeth better what is best for me than myself doth. Nor never longed I since I came hither to set my foot in mine own house, for any desire of or pleasure of my house, but gladly would I sometimes somewhat talk with my friends, and especially my wife and you that
pertain to my charge. But since that God otherwise disposeth, I commit all wholly to his goodness and take daily great comfort in that I perceive that you live together so charitably and so quietly: I beseech our Lord continue it. And thus, mine own good daughter, putting you finally in remembrance, that albeit if the necessity so should require, I thank our Lord in this quiet and comfort is mine heart at this day, and I trust in God's goodness so shall have grace to continue, yet (as I said before) I verily trust that God shall so inspire and govern the King's heart, that he shall not suffer his noble heart and courage to requite my true faithful heart and service, with such extreme unlawful and uncharitable dealing, only for the displeasure that I cannot think so as other do. But his true subject will I live and die, and truly pray for him will I, both here and in the other world too.

And thus mine own good daughter have me recommended to my good bedfellow and all my children, men, women and all with all your babes and your nurses and all the maids and all the servants, and all our kin, and all our other friends abroad. And I beseech our Lord to save them all and keep them. And I pray you all pray for me, and I shall pray for you all. And take no thought for me whatsoever you shall hap to hear, but be merry in God.

211. To Margaret Roper. Tower of London, 1534

*Another letter written and sent by Sir Thomas More (in the year of our Lord, 1534 and in the 26 year of King Henry the eight) to his daughter Mistress Roper, answering a letter which she wrote and sent unto him.* [EW 1449]

*The Holy Spirit of God be with you.*

Your daughterly loving letter, my dearly beloved child was and is, I faithfully assure you, much more inward comfort unto me, than my pen can well express you, for diverse things that I marked therein but of all things most especially, for that God of his high goodness giveth you the grace to consider the incomparable difference, between the wretched estate of this present life, and the wealthy state of the life to come, for them that die in God, and to pray God in such a good Christian
fashion, that it may please him (it doth me good here to rehearse your own words) 'of his tender pity so firmly to rest our love in him, with little regard of this world, and so to flee sin and embrace virtue, that we may say with St. Paul, *Mihi vivere Christus est et mori lucrum. Et illud, Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo.*'

I beseech our Lord, my dearly beloved daughter, that wholesome prayer that he hath put in your mind, it may like him to give your father the grace, daily to remember and pray, and yourself as you have written it, even so daily devoutly to kneel and pray it. For surely if God give us that, he giveth us and will give us therewith, all that ever we can well wish. And therefore good Marget, when you pray it, pray it for us both: and I shall on my part the like, in such manner as it shall like our Lord to give me poor wretch the grace, that likewise as in this wretched world I have been very glad of your company and you of mine, and yet would if it might be (as natural charity bindeth the father and the child) so we may rejoice and enjoy each other's company, with our other kinsfolk, allies and friends everlastingly in the glorious bliss of heaven: and in the meantime, with good counsel and prayer each help other thitherward.

And where you write these words of yourself, 'But good father, I wretch am far, far, farthest of all other from such point of perfection, our Lord send me the grace to amend my life, and continually to have an eye to mine end, without grudge of death, which to them that die in God, is the gate of a wealthy life to which God of his infinite mercy bring us all. Amen. Good Father strengthen my frailty with your devout prayers.' The father of heaven mote strengthen thy frailty, my good daughter and the frailty of thy frail father too. And let us not doubt but he so will, if we will not be slack in calling upon him therefor. Of my poor prayers such as they be ye may be bold to reckon. For Christian charity and natural love and your very daughterly dealing *funiculo triplici, ut ait scriptura, difficile rumpitur,* both bind me and strain me thereto. And of yours I put as little doubt.

That you fear your own frailty Marget, nothing misliketh me. God give us both twain the grace, to despair of our own self, and whole to depend and hang upon the hope and strength of God. The blessed apostle St. Paul found such lack of strength in himself, that in his own temptation he was fain thrice to call and cry out unto God, to take that temptation from him. And
yet sped he not of his prayer, in the manner that he required. For God of his high wisdom, seeing that it was (as himself saith) necessary for him to keep him from pride, that else he might peradventure have fallen in, would not at his thrice praying, by and by take it from him, but suffered him to be panged in the pain and fear thereof, giving him yet at the last this comfort against his fear of falling (Sufficit tibi gratia mea). By which words it well seemeth, that the temptation was so strong (whatsoever kind of temptation it was) that he was very feared of falling, through the feebleness of resisting that he began to feel in himself. Wherefore for his comfort God answered (Sufficit tibi gratia mea) putting him in surety, that were he of himself never so feeble and faint, nor never so likely to fall, yet the grace of God was sufficient to keep him up and make him stand. And our Lord said further, (Virtus in infirmitate proficitur). The more weak that man is, the more is the strength of God in his safeguard declared. And so St. Paul saith (Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat).%

Surely Meg a fainter heart than thy frail father hath, canst you not have. And yet I verily trust in the great mercy of God, that he shall of his goodness so stay me with his holy hand, that he shall not finally suffer me to fall wretchedly from his favor. And the like trust (dear daughter) in his high goodness I verily conceive of you. And so much the more, in that there is neither of us both, but that if we call his benefits to mind, and give him often thanks for them, we may find tokens many, to give us good hope for all our manifold offences toward him, that his great mercy, when we will heartily call therefor, shall not be withdrawn from us. And verily, my dear daughter, in this is my great comfort, that albeit, I am of nature so shrinking from pain, that I am almost afeard of a filip, yet in all the agonies that I have had, whereof before my coming hither (as I have showed you ere this) I have had neither small nor few, with heavy fearful heart, forecasting all such perils and painful deaths, as by any manner of possibility might after fall unto me, and in such thought lain long restless and waking, while my wife had weened I had slept, yet in any such fear and heavy pensiveness (I thank the mighty mercy of God) I never in my mind intended to consent, that I would for the enduring of the uttermost, do any such thing as I should in mine own conscience (for with other men’s I am not a man meet to take upon
me to meddle) think to be to myself, such as should damnably cast me in the displeasure of God. And this is the last point that any man may with his salvation come to, as far as I can see, and is bound if he see peril to examine his conscience surely by learning and by good counsel and be sure that his conscience be such as it may stand with his salvation, or else reform it. And if the matter be such, as both the parts may stand with salvation, then on whither side his conscience fall, he is safe enough before God. But that mine own may stand with my own salvation, thereof I thank our Lord I am very sure. I beseech our Lord bring all parts to his bliss.

It is now, my good daughter, late. And therefore thus I commend you to the holy Trinity, to guide you, comfort you and direct you with his Holy Spirit, and all yours and my wife with all my children and all our other friends.

Thomas More, Knight.

212. Lady More to Henry VIII. <c. Christmas 1534>

In lamentable wise, beseech your most noble Grace your most humble subjects and continual beadfolk, the poor miserable wife and children of your true, poor, heavy subject and beadsman Sir Thomas More Knight, that whereas the same Sir Thomas being your Grace's prisoner in your Tower of London by the space of eight months and above, in great continual sickness of body and heaviness of heart, during all which space notwithstanding that the same Sir Thomas More had by refusing of the oath forfeited unto your most noble Grace all his goods and cattles and the profit of all his lands, annuities and fees that as well himself as your said beadswoman his wife should live by, yet your most gracious Highness of your most blessed disposition suffered your said beadswoman, his poor wife, to retain and keep still his moveable goods and the revenues of his lands to keep her said husband and her poor household with.

So it is now, most gracious Sovereign, that now late by reason of a new act or twain made in this last past prorogation of your Parliament, not only the said former forfeiture is confirmed, but also the inheritance of all such lands and tenements as the same Sir Thomas had of your most bountiful gift, amounting to the yearly value 60 L, is forfeited also. And
thus (except your merciful favor be showed) your said poor beadswoman his wife, which brought fair substance to him, which is all spent in your Grace's service, is likely to be utterly undone and his poor son, one of your said humble suppliants, standing charged and bound for the payment of great sums of money due by the said Sir Thomas unto your Grace, standeth in danger to be cast away and undone in this world also. But over all this the said Sir Thomas himself, after his long true service to his power diligently done to your Grace, is likely to be in his age and continual sickness, for lack of comfort and good keeping, to be shortly destroyed, to the woeful heaviness and deadly discomfort of all your said sorrowful suppliants.

In consideration of the premises, for that his offence is grown not of any malice or obstinate mind, but of such a long continued and deep rooted scruple, as passeth his power to avoid and put away, it may like your most noble Majesty of your most abundant grace to remit and pardon your most grievous displeasure to the said Sir Thomas and to have tender pity and compassion upon his long distress and great heaviness, and for the tender mercy of God to deliver him out of prison and suffer him quietly to live the remnant of his life with your said poor beadswoman his wife and other of your poor suppliants his children, with only such entertainment of living as it shall like your most noble Majesty of your gracious alms and pity to appoint him. And this in the way of mercy and pity, and all your said poor beadfolk shall daily during their lives pray to God for the preservation of your most Royal estate.

213. To Master Leder. Tower of London, Saturday, 16 January 1534/5

A letter written by Sir Thomas More to one Master Leder
a virtuous priest the 16 day of January in the year of our Lord 1534 after the computation of the church of England, and in the 26 year of the reign of King Henry the 8.

The tale that is reported, albeit I cannot but thank you though you would it were true, yet I thank God it is a very vanity. I trust in the great goodness of God, that he shall
never suffer it to be true. If my mind had been obstinate indeed
I would not let for any rebuke or worldly shame plainly to
confess the truth. For I purpose not to depend upon the
fame of the world. But I thank our Lord that the thing that I
do is not for obstinacy but for the salvation of my soul, because I
cannot induce mine own mind otherwise to think than I do
concerning the oath.

As for other men's consciences I will be no judge of, nor I
never advised any man neither to swear nor to refuse, but as for
mine own self if ever I should mishap to receive the oath
(which I trust our Lord shall never suffer me) ye may reckon
sure that it were expressed and extorted by duress and hard
handling. For as for all the goods of this world, I thank our
Lord I set not much more by, than I do by dust. And I trust
both that they will use no violent forcible ways, and also that
if they would, God would of his grace and the rather a great
deal through good folks' prayers give me strength to stand.

Fidelis Deus (saith St. Paul) qui non patitur vos tentari supra id
quod potestis ferre, sed dat cum tentatione proventum ut possitis
sustinere. For this I am very sure, that if ever I should swear it,
I should swear deadly against mine own conscience. For I
am very sure in my mind that I shall never be able to change
mine own conscience to the contrary, as for other men's I
will not meddle of.

It hath been showed me that I am reckoned willful and
obstinate because that since my coming hither I have not written
unto the King's Highness and by mine own writing made some
suit unto his Grace. But in good faith I do not forbear it of
any obstinacy, but rather of a lowly mind and a reverent,
because that I see nothing that I could write but that I fear me
sore that his Grace were likely rather to take displeasure with me
for it than otherwise, while his Grace believeth me not that my
conscience is the cause but rather obstinate willfulness. But surely
that my let is but my conscience, that knoweth God to whose
order I commit the whole matter. In cuius manu corda regum sunt.

I beseech our Lord that all may prove as true faithful subjects
to the King that have sworn, as I am in my mind very sure
that they be, which have refused to swear.

In haste, the Saturday the 16th day of January by the hand
of your beadsman,

Thomas More, Knight and prisoner.
A letter written and sent by Sir Thomas More to his daughter Mistress Roper, written the second or third day of May, in the year of our Lord 1535 and in the 27 year of the reign of King Henry the 8. [EW 1451]

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 Syon 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 my being here prisoner, especially for that 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 aggrieve your heaviness, nor more grief and fear than the matter giveth of, on the other side. Wherefore shortly ye shall understand that on Friday the last day of April in the afternoon, Mr. Lieutenant came in here unto me, and showed me that Mr. Secretary would speak with me. Whereupon I shifted my gown, and went out with Mr. 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 Mr. Attorney, Mr. Solicitor, Mr. Bedyll and Mr. Doctor Tregonwell, I was offered to sit with them, which in no wise I would.

Whereupon Mr. 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: ye verily. Howbeit forasmuch as being here, 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 statues 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 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 Mr. Secretary also, both by mouth and by writing. And now I have in good faith discharged my mind of all such matters, and neither will dispute Kings' titles nor Popes', 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 Mr. Secretary answered that he thought this manner 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 confirmable and submit themselves, his Grace would show mercy. And that concerning myself, his Highness would be glad to see me take such confirmable 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 Mr. 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 that 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. Whereeto I
answered that I would not say the contrary. Whereo 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 stiff
therein as they be.

Whereo I answered, that I give no man occasion to hold any
point one or 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, quoth 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 Mr. Secretary said: well ye find no fault in that
statute, find you any in any of the other statutes after? Whereo
I answered, Sir, whatsoever thing should 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 Mr. Lieutenant, which
was then called in, and so was I by Mr. Lieutenant brought
again into my chamber, and here am I yet in such case as I
was, neither better nor worse. That that shall follow lieth 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 other 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

215. Lady More to Thomas Cromwell. May 1535

Right Honorable, and my especial good Master Secretary

In my most humble wise I recommend me unto your
good Mastership, acknowledging myself to be most deeply bounden
to your good Mastership, for your manifold goodness, and loving
favor, both before this time, and yet daily, now also showed
towards my poor husband and me. I pray Almighty God continue
your goodness so still, for thereupon hangeth the greatest
part of my poor husband's comfort and mine.

The cause of my writing, at this time, is to certify your especial
good Mastership of my great and extreme necessity; which,
on and besides the charge of mine own house, do pay weekly
15 shillings for the board wages of my poor husband, and his
servant; for the maintaining whereof, I have been compelled, of
very necessity, to sell part of mine apparel, for lack of other
substance to make money of. Wherefore my most humble petition
and suit to your Mastership, at this time, is to desire your
Mastership's favorable advice and counsel, whether I may be
so bold to attend upon the King's most gracious Highness. I
trust there is no doubt in the cause of my impediment; for the
young man, being a ploughman, had been diseased with the ague
by the space of three years before that he departed. And besides this,
it is now five weeks since he departed, and no other person diseased
in the house since that time; wherefore I most humbly
beseech your especial good Mastership (as my only trust is, and
else know not what to do, but utterly in this world to be undone)
for the love of God to consider the premises; and thereupon, of
your most abundant goodness, to show your most favorable help

to the comforting of my poor husband and me, in this our great
heviness, extreme age, and necessity. And thus we, and all ours,
shall daily, during our lives, pray to God for the prosperous success
of your right honorable dignity.

By your poor continual Oratrix,
Dame Alice More.

To the Right Honorable, and her especial good Master, Master
Secretary.

216. To Margaret Roper. <Tower of London, 3 June 1535>

Another letter written and sent by Sir Thomas More to his
daughter Mistress Roper, written in the year of our Lord
1535, and in the 27 year of the reign of King Henry the 8.
[EW 1452]

Our Lord bless you and all yours.

Forasmuch, dearly beloved daughter, as it is likely
that you either have heard or shortly shall hear that the Council
was here this day, and that I was before them, I have thought
it necessary to send you word how the matter standeth. And
verily to be short I perceive little difference between this time
and the last, for as far as I can see the whole purpose is either
to drive me to say precisely the one way, or else precisely the
other.

Here sat my Lord of Canterbury, my Lord Chancellor,
my Lord of Suffolk, my Lord of Wiltshire and Mr. Secretary.
And after my coming, Mr. Secretary made rehearsal in what
wise he had reported unto the King's Highness, what had been
said by his Grace's Council to me, and what had been answered
by me to them at mine other being before them last. Which
thing his Mastership rehearsed in good faith very well, as I
acknowledged and confessed and heartily thanked him therefor.
Whereupon he added thereunto that the King's Highness was
nothing content nor satisfied with mine answer, but thought
that by my demeanor I had been occasion of much grudge and
harm in the realm, and that I had an obstinate mind and an
ever toward him and that my duty was, being his subject, and
so he had sent them now in his name upon mine allegiance

215. To Cromwell
to command me to make a plain and terminate answer
whether I thought the statute lawful or not and that I should
either acknowledge and confess it lawful that his Highness should
be Supreme Head of the Church of England or else to utter
plainly my malignity.

Whereto I answered that I had no malignity and therefore I
could none utter. And as to the mater I could none other answer
make than I had before made, which answer his Mastership
had there rehearsed. Very heavy I was that the King's
Highness should have any such opinion of me. Howbeit if
there were one that had informed his Highness many evil things
of me that were untrue, to which his Highness for the time gave
credence, I would be very sorry that he should have that opinion
of me the space of one day. Howbeit if I were sure that other
should come on the morrow by whom his Grace should know
the trough of mine innocence, I should in the meanwhile
comfort myself with consideration of that. And in like wise
know though it be great heaviness to me that his Highness have
such opinion of me for the while, yet have I no remedy to
help it, but only to comfort myself with this consideration
that I know very well that the time shall come, when God shall
declare my truth toward his Grace before him and all the
world. And whereas it might haply seem to be but small
cause of comfort because I might take harm here first in the
meanwhile, I thanked God that my case was such in this
matter through the clearness of mine own conscience that though
I might have pain I could not have harm, for a man may in
such case leese his head and have no harm. For I was very sure
that I had no corrupt affection, but that I had always from the
beginning truly used myself to looking first upon God and
next upon the King according to the lesson that his Highness
taught me at my first coming to his noble service, the most
virtuous lesson that ever prince taught his servant, whose Highness
to have of me such opinion is my great heaviness but I
have no means as I said to help it but only comfort myself
in the meantime with the hope of that joyful day in which
my truth towards him shall well be known. And in this matter
further I could not go nor other answer thereto I could not
make.

To this it was said by my Lord Chancellor and Master Secretary
both that the King might by his laws compel me to make
a plain answer thereto, either the one way or the other.

Whereunto I answered I would not dispute the King's authority, what his Highness might do in such case, but I said that verily under correction it seemed to me somewhat hard. For if it so were that my conscience gave me against the statutes (wherein how my mind giveth me I make no declaration) then I nothing doing nor nothing saying against the statute it were a very hard thing to compel me to say either precisely with it against my conscience to the loss of my soul, or precisely against it to the destruction of my body.

To this Mr. Secretary said that I had ere this when I was Chancellor examined heretics and thieves and other malefactors and gave me a great praise above my deserving in that behalf. And he said that I then, as he thought and at the least wise Bishops did used to examine heretics, whether they believed the Pope to be head of the Church and used to compel them to make a precise answer thereto. And why should not then the King since it is a law made here that his Grace is Head of the Church here compel men to answer precisely to the law here as they did than concerning the Pope.

I answered and said that I protested that I intended not to defend any part or stand in contention, but I said there was a difference between those two cases because that at that time as well here as elsewhere through the corps of Christendom the Pope's power was recognized for an undoubted thing which seemeth not like a thing agreed in this realm and the contrary taken for truth in other realms whereunto Mr. Secretary answered that they were as well burned for the denying of that, as they be beheaded for denying of this, and therefore as good reason to compel them to make precise answer to the one as to the other.

Whereto I answered that since in this case a man is not by a law of one realm so bound in his conscience, where there is a law of the whole corps of Christendom to the contrary in matter touching belief, as he is by a law of the whole corps though there hap to be made in some place a law local to the contrary, the reasonableness or the unreasonableness in binding a man to precise answer, standeth not in the respect or difference between heading or burning, but because of the difference in charge of conscience the difference standeth between heading and hell.
Much was there answered unto this both by Mr. Secretary and my Lord Chancellor overlong to rehearse. And in conclusion they offered me an oath by which I should be sworn to make true answer to such things as should be asked me on the King’s behalf, concerning the King’s own person.

Whereunto I answered that verily I never purposed to swear any book oath more while I lived. Then they said that was very obstinate if I would refuse that, for every man doth it in the Star Chamber and everywhere. I said that was true but I had not so little foresight but that I might well conjecture what should be part of my interrogatory and as good it was to refuse it at the first, as afterward.

Whereunto my Lord Chancellor answered that he thought I guessed truth, for I should see them and so they were showed me and they were but twain. The first whether I had seen the statute. The other whether I believed that it were a lawful made interrogatory or not. Whereupon I refused the oath and said further by mouth, that the first I had before confessed, and to the second I would make none answer.

Which was the end of the communication and I was thereupon sent away. In the communication before it was said that it was marveled that I stuck so much in my conscience while at the uttermost I was not sure therein. Whereunto I said that I was very sure that mine own conscience so informed as it is by such diligence as I have so long taken therein may stand with mine own salvation. I meddle not with the conscience of them that think otherwise, every man suo domino stat et cadit.

I am no man’s judge. It was also said unto me that if I had as lief be out of the world as in it, as I had there said, why did I not speak even out plain against the statute. It appeared well I was not content to die though I said so. Whereunto I answered as the truth is, that I have not been a man of such holy living as I might be bold to offer myself to death, lest God for my presumption might suffer me to fall, and therefore I put not myself forward but draw back. Howbeit if God draw me to it himself, then trust I in his great mercy, that he shall not fail to give me grace and strength.

In conclusion Mr. Secretary said that he liked me this day much worse than he did the last time, for then he said he pitied me much and now he thought that I meant not well, but God and I know both that I mean well and so I pray God do by
me.

I pray you be you and mine other friends of good cheer whatsoever fall of me, and take no thought for me but pray for me as I do and shall do for you and all them.

Your tender loving father,

Thomas More Kg.

217. To Antonio Bonvisi, Tower of London, 1535

Sir Thomas More a little before he was arraigned was condemned (in the year of our Lord 1535, and in the 27 year of the reign of King Henry the eight) being shut up so close in prison in the Tower that he had no pen nor ink, wrote with a coal an epistle in Latin to Master Anthony Bonvisi (merchant of Luke and then dwelling in London), his old and dear friend, and sent it unto him, the copy whereof here followeth. [EW 1455]

The translation into English of the Latin epistle next before.

Good Master Bonvisi of all friends most friendliest, and to me worthily dearly beloved, I heartily greet you.

Since my mind doth give me (and yet may chance falsely but yet so it doth), that I shall not have long liberty to write unto you, I determined therefore while I may, to declare unto you by this little epistle of mine, how much I am comforted with the sweetness of your friendship, in this decay of my fortune. 5

For before (right Worshipful Sir) although I always delighted marvelously in this your love towards me, yet when I consider in my mind, that I have been now almost this forty years, not a guest, but a continual nursling in master Bonvisi house, and in the mean season have not showed myself in requiting you again, a friend, but a barren lover only my shamefastness verily made, that that sincere sweetness, which otherwise I received of the revolving of your friendship somewhat waxed sourish, by reason of a certain rustic shame as neglecting of my duty toward you. But now I comfort myself with this, that I never had the occasion to do you pleasure. For such was always your great wealth, that there was nothing left, in which I might be unto you beneficial. I therefore (knowing that I have not been unthankful
to you by omitting my duty toward you, but for lack of occasion and opportunity, and seeing moreover all hope of recompense taken away, you so to persevere in love toward me, binding me more and more to you, ye rather so to run forward still, and as it were with a certain indefatigable course to go forth, that few men so fawn upon their fortunate friends, as you favor, love, foster and honor me, now overthrown, abjected, afflicted, and condemned to prison) cleanse myself both from this bitterness (such as it is) of mine old shamefastness, and also repose myself in the sweetness of this marvelous friendship of yours.

And this faithful prosperity of this amity and friendship of yours towards me (I wot not how) seemeth in a manner to counterpoise this unfortunate shipwreck of mine, and saving the indignation of my Prince, of me no less loved than feared, else as concerning all other things, doth almost more than counterpoise. For all those are to be accounted amongst the mischances of fortune. But if I should reckon the possession of so constant friendship (which no storms of adversity hath taken away, but rather hath fortified and strengthened) amongst the brittle gifts of fortune, then were I mad. For the felicity of so faithful and constant friendship in the storms of fortune (which is seldom seen) is doubtless a high and a noble gift proceeding of a certain singular benignity of God. And indeed as concerning myself, I cannot otherwise take it nor reckon it, but that it was ordained by the great mercy of God, that you good master Bonvisi amongst my poor friends, such a man as you are and so great a friend, should be long before provided, that should by your consolation, swage and relieve a great part of these troubles and griefs of mine, which the hugeness of fortune hath hastily brought upon me. I therefore my dear friend and of all mortal men to me most dearest, do (which now only I am able to do) earnestly pray to Almighty God, which hath provided you for me, that since he hath given you such a debtor as shall never be able to pay you, that it may please him of his benignity, to requite this bountifulness of yours, which you every day thus plenteously pour upon me. And that for his mercy sake he will bring us from this wretched and stormy world, into his rest, where shall need no letters, where no wall shall dissever us, where no porter shall keep us from talking together, but that we may have the fruition of the eternal joy with God the Father, and with
his only begotten Son our Redeemer Jesu Christ, with the holy spirit of them both, the Holy Ghost proceeding from them both. And in the mean season, Almighty God grant both you and me good Master Bonvisi and all mortal men everywhere, to set at naught all the riches of this world, with all the glory of it, and the pleasure of this life also, for the love and desire of that joy. Thus of all friends most trusty, and to me most dearly beloved, and as I was wont to call you the apple of mine eye, right heartily fare ye well. And Jesus Christ keep safe and sound and in good health, all your family, which be of like affection toward me as their master is.

Thomas More: I should in vain put to it, yours, for thereof can you not be ignorant, since you have bought it with so many benefits. Nor now I am not such a one that it forceth whose I am.

218. To Margaret Roper. Tower of London, 5 July 1535

Sir Thomas More was beheaded at the Tower hill in London on Tuesday the sixth of July in the year of our Lord 1535, and in the 27 year of the reign of King Henry the eight. And on the day next before, being Monday and the fifth day of July, he wrote with a coal a letter to his daughter Mistress Roper, and sent it to her, (which was the last thing that ever he wrote). The copy whereof here followeth.

Our Lord bless you good daughter and your good husband and your little boy and all yours and all my children and all my godchildren and all our friends. Recommend me when you may to my good daughter Cecily, whom I beseech our Lord to comfort, and I send her my blessing and to all her children and pray her to pray for me. I send her an handkerchief and God comfort my good son her husband. My good daughter Daunce hath the picture in parchment that you delivered me from my Lady Coniers, her name is on the backside. Show her that I heartily pray her that you may send it in my name to her again for a token from me to pray for me.

I like special well Dorothy Coly, I pray you be good unto her. I would wit whether this be she that you wrote me of. If not I pray you be good to the other, as you may in her affliction and to my good daughter Joan Aleyn to give her I pray you
some kind answer, for she sued hither to me this day to pray
you be good to her.

I cumber you good Margaret much, but I would be sorry, if
it should be any longer than tomorrow, for it is St. Thomas
eve, and the utas of Saint Peter and therefore tomorrow long
I to go to God, it were a day very meet and convenient for
me. I never liked your manner toward me better than when you
kissed me last for I love when daughterly love and dear charity
hath no leisure to look to worldly courtesy.

Farewell my dear child and pray for me, and I shall for
you and all your friends that we may merrily meet in heaven.
I thank you for your great cost.

I send now unto my good daughter Clement her algorism
stone and I send her and my good son and all hers God's
blessing and mine.

I pray you at time convenient recommend me to my good
son John More. I liked well his natural fashion. Our Lord
bless him and his good wife my loving daughter, to whom I
pray him be good, as he hath great cause, and that if the
land of mine come to his hand, he break not my will concerning
his sister Daunce. And our Lord bless Thomas and Austen
and all that they shall have.