

Thomas More – A Select Chronology

- 1478, Feb 7 Born in London to law student John and Agnes More
- 1485; 1487-97 End of Wars of the Roses (1455-85); revolts during Henry VII's reign (7, 9-19)
- c. 1489-1491 Page for Archbishop and Lord Chancellor Morton at Lambeth Palace (11-13)
- c. 1491-1493 Student at Oxford (13-15)
- c. 1493-1495 Pre-law student, New Inn, London; event inspiring "On His First Love" (15-17)
- 1496-c. 1501 Lincoln's Inn; called to bar; begins Greek; lectures on *City of God* (18-23)
- 1499 Meets Erasmus and introduces him to Prince Henry (21)
- c. 1503-1506 Reader at Furnivall's Inn; his father becomes a serjeant-at-law in 1503 (25-28)
- 1504 elected to Parliament; Letter to Colet; studies Latin *Life of Pico* (26)
- 1505; 1506 Marries Jane Colt; Margaret born, Lucian volume published w Erasmus (27)
- 1509 Member of Mercers' Guild; Henry VIII crowned; "Coronation Ode"; Erasmus' *Praise of Folly* written in More's home & dedicated to More (31)
- 1510-18 Undersheriff of London; 1510: elected to Parliament, *Life of Pico* (32-40)
- 1511 After Jane's death, marries Alice Middleton; Autumn Reader at Lincoln's Inn (33)
- 1512 Governor and treasurer of Lincoln's Inn; England declares war on France; More writes epigrams against Brixius' war fabrications (34)
- 1513 *Richard III*; "On Lust for Power," "On the Surrender of Tournai" [in September] Erasmus' translation of Plutarch's "Flatterer vs. Friend" dedicated to Henry VIII Colet preaches in March against war before Henry VIII (35)
- 1514 Elected to Doctors' Common; serves on sewers commission; Flanders' embassy (36)
- 1515 To Bruges and Antwerp for commercial treaties; Lenten Reader at Lincoln's Inn (37)
- 1516 *Utopia*, modeled on Plato's *Republic*, but in English & European context Erasmus' Greek New Testament and *Education of a Christian Prince* (38)
- 1517 Embassy to Calais; legal counsel to pope's ambassador in England; quells riot of Evil May Day; his father becomes judge of the Common Pleas; Luther's 95 Theses
- 1518 Joins King's service after English agree to Treaty of Universal Peace; *Epigrams*; Letter to Gonell; Poem to His Children; Letter to Oxford (40)
- 1520 Brixius' *Antimorus*; More's Letter to Brixius; Field of the Cloth of God; Luther's *Babylonian Captivity*; Henry's *Defense of the Seven Sacraments* – More's caution not to exaggerate the pope's secular authority (42)
- 1521 Knighted; undertreasurer; ambassador to Bruges and Calais; Anglo-Imperial Treaty delays war with France until May 1523 (43)
- 1522 Gives public oration welcoming Emperor Charles V; serves as Henry's secretary and cautions against war; war with France resumed; Turks capture Rhodes (44)
- 1523 Speaker of the House of Commons, gives oration defending free speech; truce with France; his father becomes judge of the King's Bench; *Response to Luther* (45)
- 1524 Moves to Chelsea; war with France resumes: "If my head could win [the King] a castle in France, it would not fail to go." Erasmus' *On Free Choice of the Will* (46)
- 1525 Appointed chancellor of Lancaster; Germany: Peasants' Revolt, Luther's "Against Murderous, Thieving Hordes," 60,000+ killed; Henry plans to lead troops against France; More helps negotiate peace; Luther's *Servitude of the Will* – vs. Erasmus (47)
- 1526 Appointed to royal council of four; Turks conquer Hungary; daughters' dispute before Henry; Tyndale's New Testament in England; Erasmus' *Shield-Bearer I* (48)
- 1527 Holbein's portrait of More family; accompanies Wolsey to France, peace treatise;

- sack of Rome; Henry consults More about divorce; Erasmus' *Shield-Bearer II* (49)
- 1528 Henry VIII declares war on Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor; London Bishop Tunstall ask More to defend the Church in English; trial in London opens about legitimacy of Henry & Catherine's marriage; *Supplication of Beggars* published (50)
- 1529 *Dialogue of Sir Thomas More, Knight*; Delegate, Peace of Cambrai; *Supplication Souls*; Letter to Alice, after Chelsea fire; appointed Lord Chancellor, calls for reform (51)
- 1530 More almost dismissed for his opposition to Henry (52)
- 1531 Henry declared by clergy Supreme Head of the Church in England, "as far as Christ's law allows" (53)
- 1532 Counters Cromwell's and St. German's attacks on the clergy; Submission of Clergy after Parliament is dismissed (May 15); More resigns his office (May 16); has epitaph for his tombstone engraved & published; gives advice to Cromwell on lions (54)
- 1533 England declared an empire (April); Anne Boleyn's coronation (June 1); *Apology* counters St. German's *Division Between the Spiritual and Temporality* (55)
- 1534 Henry asks for More's indictment; Lords refuses three times; imprisoned (illegally) for refusing oath; *A Dialogue of Comfort*; *Dialogue on Conscience* (56)
- 1535 More's interrogations; *Sadness of Christ*; trial (July 1); execution (July 6) (57)

Phase I – More and King Henry in Agreement

- 1517 – Luther's 95 Theses; 1520 burns papal bull & decretals; 1521 excommunicated, Diet of Worms
- 1518 – (Summer) More joins Henry VIII's court
- 1521 – Henry VIII's *Defense of the Seven Sacraments*, against Luther's *Babylonian Captivity* of 1520
- 1523 – At Henry VIII's request, More writes *Responsio ad Lutherum* against Luther's abusive *Against Henry*
- 1524 – Erasmus's *On Free Will*; 2nd edition of More's *Responsio ad Lutherum*
- 1525 – Luther's *Bondage of the Will*; Peasants' Revolt in Germany; May: Luther's "Against the Murderous, Thieving Hordes of Peasants" – divine right vs. "mad dogs"; 60,000-100,000 peasants killed
- 1526 – Tyndale's translation of the New Testament; Henry forbids distribution in England

Phase II – Growing Tension between More and King Henry

- 1527 – Henry's infatuation with Anne Boleyn begins (Jan); requests secret English trial to annul marriage
(May); first consults More about the marriage (late Sept; Roper 32); Sack of Rome
- 1528 – Anne gives Henry Tyndale's *Obedience of a Christian Man* (first divine right theory in English, reworked in Cranmer's *Collectanea*)
- Fish dedicates his anticlerical *Supplication of Beggars* to King Henry (Feb); London Bishop Tunstall asks More to use his mastery of English prose to defend the Church (March)
- 1529 – (June) More publishes *Dialogue of Sir Thomas More, Knight* "under royal favor"
– (July) Wolsey fails to get Henry's marriage annulled at London legatine court
- Cranmer suggests use of himself, universities & *Collectanea* to resolve marriage issue, not Rome
– (Sept) More counters Fish in *Supplication of Souls*; fire at Chelsea
– (Oct) H8 consults TM a second time on marriage (Roper 34); Wolsey dismissed;
More made Lord Chancellor & writes Erasmus: unity of Christendom at stake
– (Nov) Parliament convened & More calls for reformation of laws; "Commons' Supplication" concerning clerical grievances

1530 – Cranmer suggests royal supremacy to Henry; Cromwell sends agents to enlist Tyndale’s and Frith’s

help in the Henrician propaganda campaign; St German is already working to that end; royal agents sent to universities & private scholars to gain support for Henry’s marriage annulment (*Collectanea*)

- opening of Parliament delayed several times
- St German’s *Doctor and Student*, denying Church’s independent legislative & juridical powers
- (Sept) Henry studies *Collectanea* carefully, then uses royal prerogative forbidding exercise of foreign authority in England
- (Oct) Henry argues that his imperial power allows him to prevent appeals to foreign powers;

chief

lawyers and clerics say no; Cromwell joins king’s Council, announces *praemunire* charges against clergy

1531 – (Jan) Clerics charged with *praemunire*; Bishops pressured to recognize Henry as “Supreme Head of the Church,” but only conditionally & after Fisher inserts “as far as Christ’s law allows.”

- (March 30) More reports to Parliament the universities’ approval of royal divorce

(*Collectanea*, Roper 40)

- (Spring) Frith returns to England to hearten Protestant effort
- More publishes the second edition of *Dialogue of Sir Thomas More, Knight*
- (June) Tyndale publishes his *Answer to More*; Henry enraged; Cromwell still seeks Tyndale’s

support

- St German publishes his *New Additions* (state over Church) & completes draft of reform

legislation

1532 – (March) More publishes *The Confutation of Tyndale, Books 1-3*

- (May 14) Henry dissolves Parliament after it refuses to confirm his plans
- (May 15) A “rump” Convocation approves Submission of the Clergy
- (May 16) More resigns as Lord Chancellor, saying he is “not up to the work,” Roper 41
- (Dec) Anne Boleyn is pregnant

Phase III – More’s Final Resistance

1533 – (Feb) St German’s anonymous *Treatise on the Division* published by royal printer

– (April) More’s *Apology* is primarily a response to St German’s “accusations of greed, pride, laziness,

and the cruel, irresponsible treatment of heretics”; TM’s advice to bishop on coronation

(Roper 40)

- (May, June) Cranmer annuls Henry’s marriage; Anne is crowned queen
- (Sept) St German publishes *Salem and Bizance*; Elizabeth is born
- (Nov) More publishes *Debellation of Salem and Bizance*
- (Dec) More publishes *Answer to a Poisoned Book* and *Confutation of Tyndale books 4-8*

1534 – More begins *Treatise on the Passion*, with commentary on nature of government before the fall

- (March) Act of Succession passed
- (Apr 13) More refuses the oath
- (Apr 17) More imprisoned in the Tower of London

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