

Fear in the Life and Writings of Thomas More

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Catherine Donner

ABSTRACT

Fear in the Life and Writings of Thomas More.

No academic study on fear in all its aspects in the works of Thomas More has been undertaken, despite many scholars noting the topic in articles and numerous short references. This thesis aims, through the study of More's writings and correspondence, to rectify this omission. Its primary findings are that: fear occurs with steady repetition throughout Thomas More's writings beginning with his early *Life of Pico* and continuing to his final work, *A Devout Prayer*, composed between his condemnation and execution. The basic fear of God is inextricably linked to all the others (apart from his fear for his family); death held no fear for More but the fear of hell is so profoundly terrifying because of its eternal nature that More's decisions and actions reflect his determination to avoid this fate at all costs. This thesis explores these themes, as well as personal fears such as pain, and rectifies the lack of academic study into fear which More considers an indispensable element of the Christian faith.

Fear in the Life and Writings of Thomas More

Table of Contents

Introduction	6
Review of Literature	25
Methodology	30
Chapter 1 Fear of God	34
Chapter 2 Fear of Sin	57
Chapter 3 Temptation & the devil	91
Chapter 4 Fear of Hell	109
Chapter 5 Death: Physical & Spiritual	128
Chapter 6 More's Personal Fears in the Tower	140
Chapter 7 In the Tower: Health, Comparisons & the Challenge of Martyrdom	178
Chapter 8 Prayer: An Antidote to Fear	206
Chapter 9 To Godward	233
Conclusion	262
Glossary	268
Bibliography	296

Abbreviations

CCTM	<i>The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More</i> , (ed) George M Logan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
Correspondence	<i>The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More</i> , (ed) Elizabeth Frances Rogers, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947.
CW	<i>The Complete Works of St Thomas More</i> , New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963-1997.
CWE	<i>The Collected Works of Erasmus</i> , Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1974-.
EA	<i>Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More</i> , (eds) R S Sylvester & G P Marc'hadour, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon: Books, 1977.
EETS	<i>Early English Text Society</i> .
EW	<i>The English Works of John Fisher</i> , (ed) John E B Mayor, London: Early English Text Society, (Extra Series No XXVII), 1876.
Harpfield	Nicholas Harpfield, <i>Life of More</i> , (eds) E V Hitchcock & R W Chambers, London: Early English Text Society, 1932.
Hatt	John Fisher, <i>English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, (1469-1535)</i> , (ed) Cecilia A Hatt, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
Imitation	Thomas a Kempis, <i>Of the Imitation of Christ</i> , (trans) Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1955.
LP	James Gairdener, (arr), <i>Letters & Papers Foreign & Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> , London: Longmans & Co, 1862-1932.
Roper	William Roper, <i>The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore, Knight</i> , (ed) E V Hitchcock, London: Early English Text Society, 1935.
SL	<i>St Thomas More: Selected Letters</i> , (ed) Elizabeth Frances Rogers, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961.
Stapleton	Thomas Stapleton, <i>The Life of Sir Thomas More</i> , (ed) E E Reynolds, London: Burns & Oates, 1966.
TMPB	<i>Thomas More's Prayer Book</i> , (eds) Louis L Martz, & Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969.
TMSB	<i>A Thomas More Source Book</i> , (eds) G B Wegemer & Stephen W

Smith, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America,
Press, 2004.

Fear in the Life and Writings of Thomas More

Introduction & Review of Literature

Fear occurs with steady repetition throughout Thomas More's writings beginning with his early *Life of Pico* and continuing to his final work, *A Devout Prayer*, composed between his condemnation and execution.¹ This thesis will examine and discuss More's various fears in the many different guises in which they are found, especially in relation to More's religious beliefs. In particular, this thesis will show that the fear of God is one of the foundational tenets of More's faith.² This basic fear of God is inextricably linked to all the others (apart from his fear for his family, which would exist even in the absence of any religious fear). Fear is a recurrent leitmotif throughout More's writings, although it is understandably more prominent in his Tower works. Although the different aspects of fear are divided here into chapters on the fear of God, the fear of sin, the fear of hell, etc, these topics are not only connected but examine different angles of More's central fear, namely the fear of God. More's personal fears, of pain, for his family and of his own weakness and frailty are aspects of the central fear of God viewed through the lens of his own life.

The lack of academic study in relation to fear both hinders research and renders this present exploration of the topic a necessity. It is a puzzling and surprising omission given the prevalence of both references to fear in More's canon as well as in secondary literature. This begs the question: why has this subject not been tackled in its own right? The answer perhaps lies in the nature of the subject matter. Fear of its nature is frightening and sustained thought about fear certainly cannot be described as congenial. Considering More's fears, in particular the fear of God, the fear of hell and the fear of pain, is emotionally and spiritually challenging. Sustained consideration of serious pain, of being hanged, drawn and quartered or of the eternal torments and torture that endures for ever is demanding and unsettling. More

¹ Thomas More, *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, CW1, *Life of Pico*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997; 1997, 51-75; CW13, *A Treatise upon the Passion*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 228-231. For the first entry in each chapter, the volume will be given as CW plus the number of the volume, the full title and date of publication. For subsequent entries, the volume number and page references will be given [eg CW12, page/line numbers]. For volumes containing more than one work, for the first reference I shall, for example, put CW1, *The Last Things* or CW1, *Life of Pico*; subsequent references will be identified in a shorter manner eg CW1, *Last Things* or CW1, *Pico*. Full information is given in the Bibliography on all works referenced in this thesis.

² Fear occurs 683 times in More's works; when its cognates are added, the total is 839 times. Dread and terror also appear in More's works, but to a lesser extent.

Introduction

considers both of them, both before and especially during his imprisonment; his fear of pain, especially the pains of execution, is particularly challenging. The emotionally and spiritually difficult aspects of studying fear, especially different facets of religious fear, is perhaps suggestive of why a study such as this has not previously been undertaken.

The rationale for this inquiry is, quite simply, that no academic study on fear in all its aspects in the works of Thomas More has been undertaken, despite many scholars noting the topic in articles and numerous short references.³ The life of Thomas More can be approached from a number of different angles, the historical, religious, literary, legal, public or polemical viewpoint. This analysis will adopt a predominantly religious and spiritual angle, but includes references to historical events and contemporary figures such as Bishop John Fisher and Erasmus, their literary works, and some medieval literature.⁴ The emphasis is on More's approach to his faith, through analyzing his attitude to fear; the focus in this thesis is concerned with More's fear in relation to his faith and how he lives that faith and how these govern his actions and shape his destiny. More's actions and decisions that led him to face the executioner's axe on Tower Hill were formed and informed by his faith.

Abbé Germain Marc'hadour writes '*Spirituality* is... conditioned by the believer's cultural, social, and even physical circumstances.'⁵ 'Spiritual' and 'spirituality' in this context will mean where doctrine and theology meet the practical. More's spirituality operates within the context of the doctrines and practices of faith; in More's case this means the Catholic faith and the rich medieval legacy that was his inheritance and which formed his background and moulded his outlook. How More's fears relate to his faith and its practice is the subject of this inquiry. Understanding this connection allows an insight into both how these fears influenced his life and his decisions that ultimately led him to the scaffold. More's various fears exist throughout his writings and reveal the consistency of his outlook.

³ See Review of Literature below.

⁴ See Methodology below.

⁵ Germain Marc'hadour, 'Thomas More's Spirituality' in *St. Thomas More: Action and Contemplation*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972, 125. As with Thomas More's works, subsequent citations of a book will give Author's surname with relevant page number/s.

In order to explore More's various fears analytically, it is necessary to discover the exact nature of his fears?⁶ While no dictionary definition encompasses the entirety of every conceivable fear or different levels of fear, in More's works fear is predominantly related to the pivotal and basic fear of God which is based on the biblical fear of God. This primary fear of God includes dread and reverence; it is the most fundamental fear for God is both Almighty and Creator and has the power to send our souls to hell. More's fear of God includes awe, but fear and dread go beyond awe, which is more akin to reverence. The fear of God is the foundational fear for the others are mostly connected to it and are consequent to it.⁷ The fear of offending God results in the fear of sin because sin leads away from God.⁸ More's fear of the devil is related to his fear of both sin and hell, for it is the devil who tempts men to sin, ultimately leading them away from God, and who wishes our damnation.⁹ The fear of hell is directly connected to the fear of sin, but it exists on a different level far exceeding the fear of sin as it encompasses the prospect of an eternity of torments that follows from disobedience to God in serious sin. The fear of hell is therefore something so profoundly serious that More's decisions and actions reflect his determination to avoid this fate at all costs. The fear of physical death is examined, largely to show that More's was not afraid of death, although he was afraid of dying, especially its attendant pains.¹⁰

Although More's fear of pain is a personal fear, it contains a spiritual quality in so far as it represents a temptation to forsake his faith for a temporary postponement of pain and/or death.¹¹ His fear for his family represents an intensely personal as well as a completely understandable human fear, given his deep love for them.¹² During his imprisonment in the Tower More was a sick man and chapter seven looks at his ill-health and his use comparisons to rise to the challenge of his impending martyrdom.¹³ One of the ways in which More finds assistance in his predicament is his life of prayer. It is an antidote to fear and is examined to show how his lifelong practice of prayer both prepared and sustained him in the Tower.¹⁴ The final examination of More's fear during imprisonment is called simply 'To Godward' and

⁶ The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* defines fear in Middle English as 'a state of alarm or dread' and 'the state of fearing (something); especially a mingled feeling of dread and reverence towards God'. The dictionary also includes 'solicitude, anxiety for the safety of a person or thing' as well as 'ground for alarm'.

⁷ cf Ch 1: The Fear of God: its Importance and Necessity.

⁸ cf Ch 2: The Fear of Sin.

⁹ cf Ch 3: Temptation and the devil; Ch 4: The Fear of Hell.

¹⁰ cf Ch 5: Death: Physical and Spiritual.

¹¹ cf Ch 6: Personal Fears.

¹² cf Ch 6: Personal Fears.

¹³ cf Ch 7: In the Tower: Health, Comparisons & the Challenge of Martyrdom.

¹⁴ cf Ch 8: Prayer.

Introduction

shows how his longing for God allied to trust and the detachment that properly leads to the transformative death that allows him to complete his spiritual journey.¹⁵

Regarding the problem of fear, John Guy correctly states that during his imprisonment ‘More came to realize that his greatest battle wasn’t so much with the more tangible threats and dangers presented to him by Henry, but with fear itself’.¹⁶ Another acknowledgement of More’s fear is given by Veronica Lyter who states that More experiences ‘an inner struggle with fear’.¹⁷ However, neither Guy nor Lyter ask ‘fear of what or whom’? Lyter also writes that More ‘shows a turn in his soul from fear to confidence’.¹⁸ In his months in the Tower, More certainly overcomes his fear, but as this thesis will show it is not confidence that replaces fear, but faith and trust in God. Geoffrey Elton suggests that More reacts to his predicament and fear through the ‘furious activity’ of his writing and that this saved his sanity as well as his soul.¹⁹ If this theory is correct it assumes that More’s writing is predominantly determined by the negative element of displacement activity to create an occupation that only works on the level of distracting him mentally from his situation. It ignores the positive reasons of seeking to clarify his own thoughts and, very importantly, to fortify himself against his various fears as well as to explain to his family and the wider world both the reasons for his stand as well as to offer help with their own situation.

As this thesis will show, the importance of fear is not solely related to the frequency with which More comments on it, although its recurrence certainly indicates its significance. More’s persistent and repeated comments underline his understanding of fear as an essential, inherent and integral element in the Christian faith.²⁰ It is the frequency of More’s comments along with this perception of fear as essential, inherent and integral to the Christian faith that makes this ignored topic an important theme to investigate. The different aspects of fear (the theological fears of God, of sin, of hell) and More’s understanding of them individually and how they relate to each other, as well as those relating more directly to him is the subject of

¹⁵ cf Ch 9: To Godward; ie with a focus upon God.

¹⁶ John Guy, ‘Thomas More and Tyranny’ in *Moreana*, Vol 49, 2012, 181.

¹⁷ Veronica Lyter, “‘Brave and Prudent Soldiers’: The Virtue of Courage in *The Sadness of Christ*’ in *Moreana*, Vol 53, 2016, 53.

¹⁸ Veronica Lyter, 53.

¹⁹ G R Elton, ‘Review of ‘The Complete Works of St. Thomas More. Vol. 12: *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, ed. Louis L Martz and Frank Manley. Vol. 13: *Treatise on the Passion, Treatise on the Blessed Body, Instructions and Prayers*, ed. Garry E Haupt. Vol. 14 (2 parts): *De Tristitia Christi*, ed Clarence E Miller’ in *English Historical Review*, Vol 93, No 367, April, 1978, 400.

²⁰ More’s frequent citations of Scripture underscore this and serve to connect the fear of God with the fears of sin and of hell.

this thesis. Although fear is a fundamental and prominent leitmotif recurring throughout More's entire works, there is no work by him entitled fear.

The exceptions are the headings of just three chapters in his Tower work, *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*.²¹ The first example concerns the worldly fear of uninterrupted wealth.²² The second example concerns suicide.²³ The third and final example concerns the fear of a shameful and painful death.²⁴ A further example does not mention fear, but uses the word horror in his discussion of bodily pain.²⁵ More's fear of pain and fear for his family are the only two fears that have been addressed in secondary literature.²⁶ More's fear of pain is recognized and receives more scholarly attention than his fear for his family which is mentioned only briefly.

Fear is a recurrent theme throughout More's works. Its first occurrence in a theological or spiritual sense is found in More's early translation during the 1500's of some letters and other writings of Pico, Earl of Mirandula, an Italian nobleman.²⁷ More entered the King's service (1518), having become a Privy Counsellor the previous year, and began to gain Henry's favour, receiving a knighthood (1521). It was c1522 when More composed his devotional work *The Last Things*,²⁸ the next work in which fear appears. In the following year (1523) he became Speaker of the House of Commons and wrote the first of his polemical works, the *Responsio Ad Lutherum*²⁹ at the request of King Henry VIII.³⁰ More's theological fears,

²¹ CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, (eds) Louis L Martz & Frank Manley, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976.

²² CW12, 40/14-19: 'That a man ought to be comfortable to hymself & haue good hope & be ioyfull also in tribulacion, aperith well by this that a man hath greate cause of [fere &] hevines, that continueth alwey still in welth discontinued with no tribulacion'.

²³ CW12, 122/1-4: 'A nother kynd of the nightes feare, a nother doughter of pusillanimitie, that is to wyt that horrible temptacion by which some folke are temptid to kyll & destroy them selfe'.

²⁴ CW12, 280/15: 'The feare of shamfull & paynfull dethe'; cf Ch 6, Personal Fears.

²⁵ CW12, 244/22-24: 'Of bodely payne, and that a man hath no cause to take discomfort in persecution, though he fele hym selfe in an horroure at the thinkyng vppon bodely payne'; cf Chapter 6 below.

²⁶ The Review of Literature [cf below] sets out the few references in secondary literature to More's fear of pain. His fear for his family has been noted in an even more cursory manner, than his fear of pain. See Chapter 6, Personal Fears for an analysis.

²⁷ cf CW1, *Life of Pico*, 51-123. More translated, or rather paraphrased, the *Life of Pico*, written by his nephew Gianfrancesco, as well as a number of Pico's other writings, including letters, a commentary on Psalm 15 and some verses, both omitting from as well as adding to the originals. The exact date of More's translations of Pico is uncertain. They were certainly published c1510 although an earlier date has been suggested; cf CW1, xxxvii-xxxix; cxx-cxii. For Pico's influence on More, cf n48 below.

²⁸ CW1, *The Last Things*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997.

²⁹ CW5, *Responsio ad Lutherum*, (ed) John M Headley, (trans) Sr Scholastica Mandeville, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996.

Introduction

namely the fear of God, of sin, of hell, of the devil and of temptation appear in both his polemical and devotional works of the 1520's and 1530's. In 1526 More's next polemic, the *Letter to Bugenhagen* replied to Bugenhagen's *Epistola ad Anglos* of 1525.³¹ In 1528 the Bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, asked More to defend the Catholic Church against heresy in English.³² The result was More's next polemical work, *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies* appearing in June 1529, followed almost immediately by *The Supplication of Souls* in September 1529,³³ both of which provide a number of relevant references. In October 1529, More reached the pinnacle of his career and the highest position in the realm under the monarch, that of Lord Chancellor, a position he held until his resignation in May 1532.

During his tenure as Lord Chancellor, More wrote no devotional or polemical works. After his retirement, he again entered the polemical fray and wrote *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* (1532-33).³⁴ Further polemical writings followed very quickly, including *The Apology of Sir Thomas More* (1533), *The Debellation of Salem and Bizance* (1533) and *The Answer to a Poisoned Book* (1533).³⁵ While these three works do produce occasional references to fear, none is other than a confirmation of More's attitudes found elsewhere. In 1534, More turned again to devotional writing. Before his imprisonment in April 1534, More

³⁰ In 1521, Henry had written his *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* addressed to Pope Leo X. Luther replied with his *German Response to the Book of King Henry*. Henry, as king, was unable to reply to this strident and vulgar diatribe, and asked More to do so on his behalf. More used the pseudonym William Ross; cf Henry VIII, *His Defence of the Faith (Assertio Septem Sacramentorum)*, London: Fisher Press & Ducketts Booksellers, 2008; CW7, *Letter to Bugenhagen* (eds) Frank Manley, Germain Marc'hadour, Richard Marius & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, xx-xxi; Gerard B Wegemer, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, Princeton: Scepter Publishers, 1995, repr 1997, 100-101; James Monti, *The King's Good Servant but God's First*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997, 129-130.

³¹ CW7, *Bugenhagen*, 12-105. This letter was not printed until 1568; cf 105. For Bugenhagen's *Epistola ad Anglos*, cf CW7, Appendix A, 393-405.

³² It should be noted that all More's polemical works, with the possible exception of his *Letter to Bugenhagen*, were written at the request of Henry VIII or of Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall. For Bishop Tunstall's licence of 7th March, 1528 to More permitting him to keep and read heretical books in order to refute in English the heresies contained in them, cf Charles Sturge, *Cuthbert Tunstall*, London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1938, 135-36, Appendix XI, 362-364. There seems to be some discrepancy as to the spelling of Tunstall.

³³ CW6, *Dialogue against Heresies*, (eds) Thomas M C Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour & Richard C Marius, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981; CW7, *The Supplication of Souls*, (eds) Frank Manley, Germain Marc'hadour, Richard Marius & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 109-228. *The Supplication of Souls* was More's Response to Simon Fish's *A Supplication for the Beggars* which attacked the doctrine of purgatory and probably appeared in early 1529; cf CW7, Appendix B, *A Supplicacyon for the Beggars*, 409-422.

³⁴ CW8, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, (eds) Louis A Schuster, Richard C Marius, James P Lusardi & Richard J Schoeck, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973.

³⁵ CW9, *The Apology*, (ed) J B Trapp, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979; CW10, *The Debellation of Salem and Bizance*, (eds) John Guy, Ralph Keen, Clarence H Miller & Ruth McGugan, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987; CW11, *The Answer to a Poisoned Book*, (eds) Stephen Merriam Foley & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985.

began his devotional *A Treatise upon the Passion*, which remains unfinished,³⁶ and *A Treatise to Receive the Blessed Body*, a devotional work on the reception of Holy Communion.³⁷ This includes a personal fear of himself in the form of his own weakness and unworthiness. In *A Treatise upon the Passion*, More employs most of his different theological fears, those of God, of sin, of hell and a fear of death, not of itself but insofar as its manner and time are unknown and thus the necessity for death, personified as the all-powerful and dreadful ‘myghti mesanger’ of God.³⁸ Fear runs throughout his works and demonstrates that his views did not fundamentally alter and his focus from his youth to the scaffold remains centred and focussed upon God. His personal fears, of pain and forsaking the faith appear predominantly and prominently in his devotional works, but most especially and understandably, in his Tower works, including his letters.³⁹

³⁶ CW13, *A Treatise on the Passion*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 3-177. This work is often described as one of More’s Tower writings. It is now accepted that much, if not all of it, was written prior to his imprisonment and probably datable to c1533-1534. The *Treatise* was left unfinished due, most probably, to his arrest and imprisonment. cf Louis L Martz, ‘Thomas More: The Tower Works’ in *St. Thomas More: Action and Contemplation*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for St John’s University, 1972, 59-60; Garry E Haupt, CW13, Introduction, xxxvii-xli; Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *St Thomas More: Selected Letters (SL)*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961, 186-188 for the letter to John Harris; Louis L Martz, ‘Thomas More: the Sacramental Life’ in *Thought*, No 52, 1977, 305 for the homiletic and patiently instructive nature of the work, which exhibits no urgency or threat of persecution or death which are so powerful in both *A Dialogue of Comfort* and *De Tristitia*; cf CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, (ed) Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976.

³⁷ CW13, *A Treatise on the Blessed Body*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 191-204.

³⁸ CW13, *Passion*, 67/21-22; cf CW1, *The Lamytacyon off Quene Elyzabeth*, (ed) Anthony S G Edwards, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 10/20; CW12, 268/3-15 for the power of Death personified. [myghti: mighty; mesanger: messenger]

³⁹ In this work, fear is viewed as either directly religious and theological, through More’s faith in God, his fear of sin or his fear of hell, or it is viewed as personal, how he takes his religious fears and relates them to his life and circumstances. These personal fears are his fear of his weakness, his frailty, giving in to temptation or his fear of pain. Exceptions include his fear for his family and his fear of civil disorder. There are also doubtless other approaches to this topic, such as through a psychological perspective. Although this could a very interesting study, it is outside the parameters of this work which seeks to present and understand More’s approach, perspective and reactions by scrutinizing his works. It seeks to let More speak rather than to study More from any modern approach. Only one of the books could be viewed as relevant: it is entitled *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions 600-1700*, by Barbara Rosenwein, Cambridge, 2015. Rosenwein’s work covers the 16th century only very briefly and although none of the references relates to religious or theological fear, (which is this writer’s concern here) it could provide some useful material for different approaches to this subject. There are a number of other books that fall well outside the framework of this work, mostly because they do not cover the 16th century. In alphabetical order of authors, these are Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History*, London: Virago Press, 2005; Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category*, Cambridge, 2003; Ute Frevert et al, *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700-2000*, Oxford, 2014; Thomas Kehoe and Michael Pickering (eds), *Fear in the German Speaking World, 1600-2000*, London, 2020; Lisa Perfetti (ed), *The Representation of Women’s Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2005; Jan Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*, Oxford, 2017; William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*, Cambridge, 2008.

Introduction

One of More's works intentionally omitted above is *Utopia*. It has been suggested that in *Utopia* 'fear... is a key aspect of More's fiction'.⁴⁰ Ismael del Olmo observes that in *Utopia* the difference between superstitious, that is, human fear, and the religious fear that is vital both to society and for the salvation of the individual soul.⁴¹ The consequence of belief in an afterlife is that religious fear is an inducement 'to civic virtue and thus to the salvation of the soul'.⁴² With regard to More's own Christian beliefs, it is important to ask how much *Utopia* really reflects More's deepest convictions? That fear is found in Utopian religion should not be a surprise for fear is pervasive in More's canon. But *Utopia* means Nowhere, thus there is the impossibility of creating or re-creating the perfect society, a society which is found Nowhere.⁴³ *Utopia* has been described as many things and it can be argued that it is a case of 'many a true word is spoken in jest'. Susan Bruce's article 'Reason, Belief and Mortality in Thomas More's *Utopia*' shows the internal contradictions of Utopian religion, a religion which can only ever work 'Nowhere'.⁴⁴ This type of difficulty with *Utopia* has also been noted by Michael Foley. Foley writes that 'More's declaration of wishing to avoid falsehood ostensibly concerns his report on the correct length of the bridge at Amaurotum, but, since his statement is in a letter that prefaces a fabulous tale about a fictitious island, it is difficult not to be suspicious of this profession of scrupulous veracity'.⁴⁵ *Utopia* should not be regarded as a reliable source for More's views unless those views are repeated elsewhere in his works.

More's various different fears should be viewed positively. Fear works as an excellent motivator, acting as an impetus to seek and love God and refraining, in so far as it is possible, from sin in order to arrive at the destination of heaven.⁴⁶ More quotes Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*.⁴⁷ More's use of Pico is interesting, for Pico abandons the world for a life of prayer, while More, around the time of his translations of Pico, makes the decision to marry rather than become a monk. Their mutual interests are spiritual; they share orthodox belief as well as contempt for earthly things. Their attitudes to virtue and sin, death and doom as well

⁴⁰ Ismael del Olmo, 'Outsiders of Hagnopolis: unbelief, fear, and religion in Thomas More's *Utopia*' in *Moreana*, Vol 54, 2017, 70.

⁴¹ Olmo, 67.

⁴² Olmo, 68.

⁴³ CW4, *Utopia*, (eds) Edward Surtz, SJ & J H Haxter, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965, 251/13-21.

⁴⁴ Bruce, Susan, 'Reason, Belief and Mortality in Thomas More's *Utopia*' in *Philological Quarterly*, Vol 75, 1996, 267-282.

⁴⁵ Michael Foley, 'The difference theology makes: a reflection on the first margin note in Thomas More's *Utopia*' in *Moreana*, Vol 54, 2017, 72.

⁴⁶ cf CW8, 955/25-30; CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, 215/7-10. cf Ch 1, n97.

⁴⁷ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 76-84.

as temporary pleasure versus everlasting joy are also shared.⁴⁸ Pico reminds his nephew that the goal is heaven, exhorting him with a contrast never to forget ‘these .ii. thinges: y^t both y^e son of god died for the & y^t thou shalt also thi self dye shortly liue thow neuer so longe. With these twayn as with two spurrys y^t one of fere y^t othir of loue spurre forth thin hors thorow the short waye of this momentary life to y^e reward of eternall felicite’.⁴⁹ Fear, combined with love encourages the pursuit of faith, hope and charity and virtue. It should impel us to rely on God rather than ourselves. Many of the fears about which he writes during his imprisonment reveal something else: trust. Fear and its counterpart of trust are linked to the virtue of hope with the focus upon God and heaven and the way to reach it. This, from his earliest writings, is More’s perennial goal.

The climax of More’s writings on fear is undoubtedly found in his Tower writings, especially *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* and *De Tristitia Christi*. Both of these provide abundant examples of his different fears, as does his Tower correspondence. The annotations of his Prayer Book, almost certainly made in the Tower, reveal that a proper understanding of fear is anything but negative, and the focus and spur is always on God and heaven.

The tangible world in which we live is full of contrasts, such as tall and short, round and square, hot and cold, day and night. Likewise the spiritual world contains the contrasts of good and evil, virtue and vice and ultimately heaven or hell. Because life in this world is short, More compares and contrasts the momentary, transitory nature of life in this world with either eternal happiness in heaven or eternal misery in hell. Likewise he compares and contrasts fear and dread with hope and trust. Argument and counter-argument were an ingrained habit resulting from More’s professional training as a lawyer and are found throughout his writings.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ For Pico’s influence on More, cf Vittorio Gabrieli, ‘Giovanni Pico and Thomas More’ in *Moreana*, Vol IV, No 15, 1967, 43-57. Gabrieli views Pico’s influence on More to be a spiritual one, rather than an exemplar for life. They shared orthodox belief and principles, and shared an approach to virtue/sin, death/doom, temporary pleasure/everlasting joy (Gabrieli, 46-47, 50) rather than intellectual convictions or way of life (47).

⁴⁹ cf CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/14-19. This is the only place in which More uses ‘spurs’ in this way; cf John E B Mayor (ed), *English Works of John Fisher*, London: Early English Text Society, (Extra Series No XXVII), 1876, 114/7-9. [hereafter *EW*] [.ii.: two; thinges: things; y^t: that; shalt: shall; y^e: the; the: thee; thi self: thyself; dye: die; liue: live; thow: thou; neuer: never; twayn: two; spurrys: spurs; fere: fear; othir: other; loue: love; spurre: spur; thin: thine; hors: horse; thorow: through; waye: way, path; felicite: felicity]. Each glossed word will appear in a footnote within square brackets. See Glossary which sets out the rationale for the inclusion and omission of words. cf n50 below; Ch 1, nn116, 123 & 171; Ch 9, n23.

⁵⁰ cf Maureen Purcell, ‘Dialogue of Comfort for Whom?’ in *Essays on the Icon*, (eds) Damian Grace & Brian Byron, Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1980, 101.

Introduction

While More's early translations of Pico may represent his first use of comparisons, that of fear and love acting together as two spurs.⁵¹ More's *Fortune Verses*, written in the same decade as his translations of Pico, also employ the comparison of opposites as a device.⁵² Such comparisons and contrasts are a recurrent feature of More's writings, including his Tower works. An excellent example of this is found in *A Dialogue of Comfort* in which More urges that the Christian man with the light of faith 'will not thynke onely vppon his bare comyng hether & his bare goyng hens agayne, but also vppon the dredfull iugment of god, & vppon the ferefull paynes of hell, and the inestimable ioyes of hevyn'.⁵³ Death is followed by judgement and a final destiny of heaven or hell; the fearful pains of hell should be contrasted with the inestimable joys of heaven. It is the comparison of the one with the other, rather than probing each separately that heightens the magnitude of both. Heaven becomes more beautiful and desirable while hell becomes more truly terrible.

Such a use of comparisons not only provides the ability to heighten the magnitude of opposites, but also allows a greater insight into the subjects being compared. One illustration of this is 'A praiour of Picus Mirandula vnto god',⁵⁴ which begins 'O holy god of dredefull magestee'⁵⁵ and is contrasted in the last lines when his soul will meet God with 'In thi lordship not as a lorde: but rather / As a very tendre louing fathir'.⁵⁶ Some of the different comparisons used by More include the temporal versus the eternal, life as a pilgrimage versus a permanent home in heaven and temporal earthly pain versus eternal pain in hell, eternal bliss or eternal torment, lesser pains versus more bitter ones and spiritual versus carnal pleasure. More's employs the concept of life as a stage-play to compare transience with eternity.⁵⁷ A play is always short and fictional and this life is also short while the true reality is eternity. This idea of life as a play is not original to More; its origins are classical and it also appears in the works of More's contemporaries, Bishop John Fisher and Erasmus.⁵⁸

⁵¹ cf CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/16-17. cf n48 above; Ch 1, nn116, & 171; Ch 9, 23.

⁵² cf CW1, *The Fortune Verses*, xxviii. These verses were definitely composed before 1509, and possibly, even probably before 1505. They could, therefore, easily precede More's translations of Pico, although the exact is unclear. For possible sources, other than Pico, cf CW1, xxx-xxxi.

⁵³ CW12, 163/28-164/2. cf Ch 4, n27; Ch 7, n208. [thynke: think; onely: only; vppon: upon; comyng: coming; hether: hither; goyng: going; hens: hence; agayne: again; dredfull: dreadful; iugment: judgement; ferefull: fearful; paynes: pains; ioyes: joys; hevyn: heaven]

⁵⁴ CW1, *A Prayer of Pico*, 120/12-123/12. [praiour: prayer; vnto: unto]

⁵⁵ CW1, 120/13. cf Ch 1, n48. [dredefull: dreadful; magestee: majesty]

⁵⁶ CW1, 123/10-11. cf Ch 1, n56. [thi: thy; very: truly; tendre: tender; louing: loving; fathir: father]

⁵⁷ cf CW1, *The Last Things*, 156/15-22; CW2, *The History of King Richard III*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963, 81/1-2. cf Ch 2, n113; Ch 7, nn34 & 37; Ch 9, n214.

⁵⁸ For classical examples, cf Seneca (c4BC-65AD) *Epistles*, Vol II, (ed) Jeffrey Henderson, (trans) Richard M Gummere, Cambridge, Mass; London England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 1920, *Epistle*, 77.20;

Comparisons such as these are found throughout More's works, from the early poems and translations of Pico to those works written in the Tower.

HERESY

The focus of this thesis is on More's fears, his theological fears connected to his faith and beliefs and his personal fears which relate to his practice of that faith. Although heresy is not directly related to either his theological or personal fears that comprise this thesis, his fear of heresy is plays an important part in his life and thinking so it will be examined now.⁵⁹ It is also worthy of more scholarly attention than it has so far received.

Two distinct elements comprise More's fear of heresy. It is spiritual fear in so far as it relates to More's fear of hell but also a worldly fear in so far as it is intimately connected to his fear of civil disorder. He believes that heresy always leads to sedition and civil disorder and is thus a grave danger to society.⁶⁰ It acts like a contagious infection and so constitutes an equally grave peril to the salvation of the souls of those individuals who adopt heretical beliefs and to those they influence.⁶¹ His view that violence is directly related to heresy appears to be more frequently mentioned in his works, but the second danger to the souls of heretics and of their ability to influence others through heretical writings also occurs within his writings. Heresy was condemned not only by the church but also by the state and it was against the law at this period.⁶² More's view reflects both its temporal and spiritual gravity: 'And yet were heresy well worthy to be as sore punished as any other faute, syth there is no

Lucian (c115-after 180AD) 'Menippus' in CW3.1, *Translations of Lucian*, (ed) Craig R Thompson, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974, 37/20-39/9, 176-77; cf Marcus Aurelius (121-180AD), *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, (ed & trans) C R Haines, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition) Bk XII, 36. Erasmus asks 'what else is the whole life of man but a sort of play?'; cf 'Moriae Encomium' (Praise of Folly) in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol 27, (ed) A H T Levi, (trans) Betty Radice, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1986, 103 [hereafter *CWE* 27]. More's contemporary, Bishop John Fisher describes 'the joys of this world, be like midsummer games, and Christmas games or plays'; cf 'Two Fruitful Sermons' in *English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester*, Cecilia A Hatt (ed), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 240. [hereafter cited as Hatt]. William Shakespeare made it universally famous with 'All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players:' cf *As You Like It*, London: J M Dent & Sons, 1919, Act II, Sc 7, line 139ff. (Erasmus' works will be listed hereafter as *CWE* plus volume number.)

⁵⁹ The notes to this section are intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

⁶⁰ cf More's fear of public disturbance or disorder is not confined to heresy; he thinks that while it is right to be compassionate to the distressed and afflicted, he is sorry that it is necessary 'to put malefactours to payne' rather than let them escape punishment to rob at will and cause the state to deteriorate, cf CW12, 162/18-22.

⁶¹ cf CW8, 911/14-22; cf CW8, 18/30-32; CW9, 167/36-168/4.

⁶² The act *De Heretico Comburendo* had been enacted under Henry IV in 1401 and expanded under Henry V. Henry VIII repealed this act in 1534 and re-enacted the earlier one from 1382. The act of 1401 was revived under Mary and repealed in the first Parliament of Elizabeth I.

Introduction

faute that more offendeth god.’⁶³ It was ‘the consequences to the salvation of men and nations, if such perverted doctrines should prevail’,⁶⁴ and therefore the duty of all men, especially princes and rulers, to defend the country against enemies in war and particularly against those who would corrupt souls and send them to eternal damnation.⁶⁵ If More’s fear of social unrest or worse is coupled with his fear for men’s eternal souls is recognized, it is easier to comprehend his horror and repugnance of heresy.⁶⁶

The crux for More is the link between heresy and violent disorder and sedition; he views such civil strife as its natural and inevitable consequence.⁶⁷ If schism and heresies are allowed to develop, there will always be dissension and trouble for heresy is inherently divisive.⁶⁸ Because it encompasses both religious rebellion and civil strife, it is all the more dangerous.⁶⁹ Therefore heresy must be stamped out and punished for ‘fear of these outrages & myscheues to folow’.⁷⁰

More’s belief that heresy breeds violence and destruction can only have been confirmed by the Peasants’ Revolt of 1525 in Germany⁷¹ that led to widespread destruction and a massive loss of life.⁷² Some contemporary estimates give a figure of some 70,000 dead.⁷³ When Rome was sacked in 1527 with accompanying atrocities by (as More believed) Lutherans, it reaffirmed to More the connection between heresy, unbridled license and violence.⁷⁴

⁶³ CW6, 407/15-17. [sore: harshly, severely; faute: fault; syth: since]

⁶⁴ Gordon Rupp, *Thomas More: The King’s Good Servant*, London: Collins, 1978, 40.

⁶⁵ cf CW6, 415/11-26; cf Alistair Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983, 163-64.

⁶⁶ cf E E Reynolds, ‘The Fame of St Thomas More’ in *Moreana*, Vol 16, No 62, 1979, 31-40; cf CW8, Introduction by Richard Marius, 1342-46 for an analysis of these attitudes. He notes that they sound grim, but it is necessary to attempt to understand More’s reasoning on his terms.

⁶⁷ cf eg CW8, 29/21-29 & 56/3-31. More’s view on the connection between heresy and violence has been noted by numerous writers, including for example, cf Marius, *Thomas More*, 302, 306-307 & CW8, Introduction: II *Thomas More’s View of the Church*, 1341; Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1998, 273; R W Chambers, ‘Martyrs of the Reformation: 1 Thomas More’ in *Man’s Unconquerable Mind*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1939, 179; Reynolds, *The Fame of Thomas More*, 32-33; Wegemer, *Thomas More*, 123-124: Wegemer particularly notes the fear of war in More’s evaluation of Luther’s and Tyndale’s reforms.

⁶⁸ cf CW8, 29/21-29; cf Richard Marius, CW8, Introduction, 1342-43.

⁶⁹ cf CW7, *The Supplication of Souls*, 166/5-27; cf CW8, 31/15-22.

⁷⁰ CW6, 406/4. [myscheues: evil doings, harm; folow: follow]

⁷¹ cf CW5, 691/34-693/3; CW8, 11/36-12/1; cf Marius, 326: he notes that More’s Letter to Bugenhagen shows that the Peasants’ Revolt confirmed to More that his earlier predictions that Luther’s doctrines led to sedition.

⁷² cf CW7, *Bugenhagen*, 16/16-25 & 22/18-24/4 & 98/18-23; CW8, 485/9-14.

⁷³ cf CW7, *Bugenhagen*, 102/1, 101; cf CW7, *The Supplication of Souls*, 166/19: More states here the figure of 60,000; cf Wegemer, 104; Fox, 138, 140. Whatever the true number of deaths, the figure was enormous given the size of the contemporary population.

⁷⁴ cf CW6, 370/28-372/20 for a description of the Sack of Rome; cf Richard Marius, CW6, Appendix C, 773-777 for an evaluation. Marius points out that More blamed the Lutherans; in fact the perpetrators were mostly

Violence begins against the church and ends with the bloodshed of nobles and finally ordinary men,⁷⁵ and if heresy is allowed to grow, first the clergy and afterwards the temporality, will be persecuted.⁷⁶ He perceives the final result of heresy: the destruction of the church and the faith of the people. He hopes to prevent the same violence and loss of life that occurred in Germany from happening in England by the seizure of heretical books and the silencing and/or punishing heretics.

While heresy inevitably breeds violence, its consequences do not necessarily begin with bloodshed. More directly pinpoints famine as one consequence of heresy,⁷⁷ explicitly stating that ‘so is yt to be fered that for the receypte of these pestilent bokes, our lorde sendeth vs some lakke of corne and catayle for a begynnyng’⁷⁸ and predicts that worse will occur if men do not mend their ways.⁷⁹ More also connects heresy to both illness and plague and wishes to suppress heresy to prevent the contagion spreading,⁸⁰ and the punishment of heretics as perilous to others is to stop them spreading their heresies like an infection.⁸¹

More particularly rejected the reformers’ denial of the doctrine of free will in the Christian economy of salvation for, along with the doctrine of predestination, it removes any responsibility for the actions of its individual adherents.⁸² This doctrine of liberty along with ‘faith alone’ without works leads in More’s estimation to ‘a full fredome and lybartye discharged of all gouernours and all maner lawys spyrytuall or temporall’⁸³ with one

imperial troops along with some Spanish troops. We are here concerned with More’s undoubtedly genuine belief, and it confirms to him the horrors of the Peasants’ Revolt, for which he holds Luther responsible; cf CW6, 775 n1. Such civil strife is spurred on by greed and envy, cf eg CW5, 691/26-693/3; CW6, 369/14-27 & 405/17-31.

⁷⁵ cf CW6, 369/10-27; cf CW7, *Supplication*, 149/16-18 & 167/3-31 & 168/3-21.

⁷⁶ cf CW8, 832/10-13.

⁷⁷ cf CW8, 3/2-4 & 3/8-10.

⁷⁸ CW8, 5/35-6/1. [fered: feared; receypte: receipt, reception, receiving; pestilent: destructive, injurious, pernicious, deadly; bokes: books; lakke: lack; catayle: cattle; begynnyng: beginning]

⁷⁹ cf CW8, 6/2-12; cf Lev 26.15-19.

⁸⁰ cf CW7, *Letter against Frith*, (eds) Frank Manley, Germain Marc’hadour, Richard Marius and Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 233/33-234/3; CW8, 28/22-23; CW9, 53/30-36; CW10, 71/9-15; CW11, 4/34-37; cf 2 Tim 2.17; Fox, 119.

⁸¹ cf eg CW9, 167/36-168/4; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 479/6-8; Louis L Martz, *The Search for the Inner Man*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 48-49.

⁸² cf Brendan Bradshaw, ‘The Controversial Sir Thomas More’ in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 36, No 4, October 1985, 535-569, 365-366.

⁸³ CW6, 368/29-31. [fredome: freedom; lybartye: liberty; discharged: relieved from an obligation; gouernours: governors; all maner lawys: any kind of law; spyrytuall: spiritual; temporall: temporal, secular, worldly; lawes: laws]

Introduction

inexorable conclusion ‘therefore all lawes they sette at nought’.⁸⁴ But such absolute liberty ends not with freedom, but servitude.⁸⁵

Heresy kills souls by sending them to everlasting damnation.⁸⁶ In order to understand More’s sometimes vituperative polemical writings against Luther, Tyndale and other heretics, it is vital to understand both his desire to see souls saved rather than damned and his passionate hatred of civil strife.⁸⁷ More is not alone in this attitude; in his second sermon against Luther, Bishop Fisher attacks his doctrine stating that it is evil and corrupt, blinding men’s hearts and mind and extinguishes the true faith and destroys their souls and comes from the devil.⁸⁸ More’s concern applies especially to those who he describes as ‘good symple soulys’⁸⁹ and his primary efforts at eradicating heresy are not directed to the ordinary innocent people whose souls he believes are in danger of hell-fire through heretical beliefs. He writes that there should be ‘lytell rygoure and moche mercy shewed where symplenes appered, and not hyghe harte or malyce’.⁹⁰ While More’s hatred is directed at heresy rather than heretics: ‘as touchynge heretykes, I hate that vyce of theirs and not theyr persones’,⁹¹ and writes that ‘very fayne wolde I that the tone were destroyed, and the tother saued’.⁹²

Heresy initially spreads slowly,⁹³ and its suppression and punishment should halt its spread while the number of heretics remains small.⁹⁴ The punishment of heretics is intimately

⁸⁴ CW6, 403/32-33; cf CW8, 405/16-31; CW8, 32/37-33/2. [sette at nought: set at naught]

⁸⁵ cf CW6, 369/29; CW5, 691/26-693/3; CW7, *Bugenhagen*, 102/2, 103.

⁸⁶ cf eg CW6, 372/3-8; CW8, 3/4-8 & 11/36-12/2 & 28/30-31 & 515/8-13 & 955/22-23; CW9, 113/18-25 & 167/36/38.

⁸⁷ More was born before the end of the Wars of the Roses and his father was born in the middle of them. More’s *History of King Richard III* provides his stark warnings as well as his insights into tyranny, cf CW2; cf also Dermot Fenlon, ‘Thomas More and Tyranny’ in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 32, 1983, 453-476. On the necessity to understand the danger to heretics of falling into hell; cf Arthur I Taft, *The Apology of Sir Thomas More, Knyght*, London: Early English Text Society, 1930, Introduction, lxiii, lxxxii.

⁸⁸ cf Hatt, 162, 172-73; Bishop Fisher preached this sermon on 11th February, 1526 at St Paul’s.

⁸⁹ CW7, *Frith*, 234/2; cf eg CW7, *Supplication*, 114/31; CW8, 3/7 & 12/1-2, 12/6-7 & 515/12-13 & 955/18-19; CW9, 113/24-25. [symple: unsophisticated, uneducated, innocent, honest; soulys: souls; sely: pitiable, helpless]

⁹⁰ CW6, 416/24-26; cf Chambers, *Man’s Unconquerable Mind*, 179. [lytell: little; rygoure: rigour, severity; moche: much; shewed: shown; symplenes: gullibility; appered: appeared, was evident; hyghe harte: pride; malyce: malice]

⁹¹ CW9, 167/19-20. Alistair Fox entirely discounts this distinction; cf Fox, 119. More works for the amendment of the heretic and his return to the Catholic faith. [touchynge: concerning; heretykes: heretics; vyce: vice; theyr: their; persones: persons]

⁹² CW9, 167/20-21; More explicitly states that he would be glad to work for John Frith’s repentance and amendment; cf CW9, 122/23-28; he also states that he had spent time trying to work for the amendment of Thomas Philips before he handed him over to the ordinary, cf CW9, 126/17-19; cf Christopher Hollis, *Sir Thomas More*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1937, 168-169. [very: truly; fayne wolde I: earnestly/gladly would I have it; tone...tother: the one...the other; saued: saved]

⁹³ cf CW9, 54/3-4; CW10, 81/33-82/2; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 359/4-11. More notes how people can be led from hatred or dislike of something, to acceptance and then to praise and end with the rejection of their previous

connected with the salvation of the heretic's soul,⁹⁵ and fear of the stake may encourage the recantation, and therefore the salvation, of the heretic. More regards heretics as malicious, obstinately proud and inevitably seditious.⁹⁶ A man is designated obstinate and malicious by the maintenance of heretical beliefs, and it was for this that he was excommunicated.⁹⁷ More claims that the arrangement of abjuration, absolution and penance for the first-time offender on admission or conviction of heresy both saves the life of the heretic and gives him as charitable a warning as such a crime could allow given its gravity.⁹⁸ If the person relapsed, it was at their second conviction that he was excommunicated and handed over to the secular authorities and they decreed the punishment for burning at the stake.⁹⁹ Punishing heretics also protects the unlearned from the infection found in heretical books and from the punishment that inevitably follows, and also offers a timely warning to others to avoid it.¹⁰⁰ The church did not desire the death of heretics for they are welcomed back after abjuration. They are excommunicated and abandoned by the church only when they persist. It is the temporal authorities who execute heretics as dangerous to the maintenance of civil order and, as well as endangering their own immortal souls. Therefore there is no difference between executing a heretic and executing any other violent individual who presents a threat to society.¹⁰¹ If a man was burned at the stake, he had therefore to have displayed a certain determination to maintain his heretical beliefs. Indeed, the relapsed heretic could repent and be absolved and received again into the church at the time of his execution, although he would not be reprieved from his sentence of death.¹⁰² Even in More's attitude, there remains hope until the very end.

beliefs. Here the example is the Turk; cf CW12, 192/1-9. Roper records More's use of the same argument in relation to his decision not to attend the coronation of Queen Anne Boleyn. When the Bishops of Durham, Bath and Winchester attempted to persuade him to attend, he notes that attendance will be followed by the requirement to preach and then to write books in its defence; cf Roper, 57/20-59/17.

⁹⁴ cf CW6, 416/5-9; CW8, 3/28-31; CW9, 161/8-11; CW10, 125/22-24.

⁹⁵ cf CW8, 483/4-5; cf 1 Tim 1.18-20; CW8, 954/34-955/25: More notes that St Augustine was against the bodily punishment of heretics, but that he later changed his mind; cf note to 955/8-25, 1699.

⁹⁶ cf eg CW6, 315/4-8 & 409/4-8; CW8, 29/27-29 & 956/5-11; CW9, 167/36-168/4; cf CW8, Introduction by Richard Marius, 1341-42; Fox, 118-119; Ackroyd, 291; R W Chambers, *Thomas More*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1938, 282.

⁹⁷ cf CW6, 194/4-7 & 205/30.

⁹⁸ cf CW10, 70/10-15 & n266. John Guy notes that it was only obstinate heretics who were punished; cf Guy, *Thomas More*, London: Arnold (Reputations Series), 2000, 220; cf CW6, 410/7-28; CW10, 117/16-18.

⁹⁹ cf CW6, 410/3-6, 21-28.

¹⁰⁰ cf CW9, 155/34-156/2: More notes how heresy spreads by default both with the association of ideas through heretical writings and by association with people first frequented for 'good company'; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 353/5-6. More also observes another association leading people astray: 'From the example of bad priests the contamination of vice spreads easily among the people'; cf CW9, 449/21-24: More also believes that it was Tyndale's intention to introduce heresy into England bit by bit.

¹⁰¹ cf Frank Manley, CW7, Introduction, 1; cf CW6, 410/7-31.

¹⁰² cf CW8, 410/28-31.

Introduction

The overall scheme of the thesis is as follows, Chapter 1 is entitled The Fear of God: Its Importance and Necessity and covers the pivotal nature of More's fear of God which is his primary and fundamental one. This topic includes fear of God's power as well as the positive aspects of fear which covers its motivating force as an impetus both to fidelity towards God as well as to the acquisition of virtue. The fear of God leads to the fear of sin because sin leads the soul away from God and ultimately to everlasting death and eternal torment in hell.

Chapter 2, entitled The Fear of Sin, looks at More's awareness of sin, the differences between venial and mortal sin and examines other sins, especially pride and presumption and their connection to sins such as envy, anger, covetousness and gluttony. It also notes More's view of the importance of repentance. More's writings display his acute awareness of sin and its dangers from his earliest works to his final prayers written in the Tower. Fearing sin is a positive thing for it displays a realistic attitude to man's fallen sinful nature, and the everlasting danger to the soul of each individual. Chapter 3, entitled Temptation and the devil, looks at More's view of the ever present role of the devil in temptation. It is the devil who tempts men to sin in order to lead them away from God and ultimately to hell. For this the main source is *Thomas More's Prayer Book*.¹⁰³ *Demonēs*¹⁰⁴ appears frequently in the marginalia; *demonēs* did not only mean devils and fallen angels, but also wicked men who are his human agents or dangerous situations and anything that conspires to tempt men to sin and divert the just man from the righteous way that leads to God. But More did not discover fear of the devil in the Tower; imprisonment did, however, concentrate his mind. More's fears in relation to the activities of *demonēs* is acknowledged but also countered by his trust in God. This chapter also examines More's legendary silence, its temporary and spiritual reasons and connects the spiritual ones to Christ's silence.

Chapter 4, entitled The Fear of Hell, examines More's fear of hell and its relation to both the fear of God and the fear of sin and it notes his repeated insistence of the eternal nature of hell and its torments. The connection between the fear of God and the fear of hell is highlighted

¹⁰³ cf *Thomas More's Prayer Book*, (transcription and translation) Louis L Martz & Richard S Sylvester, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1969.

¹⁰⁴ The Yale Prayer Book translates *demonēs* as demons. This has been criticized by H W Donner who points out that in *A Dialogue of Comfort* More uses the word devil or devils in English. More does not use demon in English, but only in Latin and translates it as devil. Donner observes that while More also uses *diabolus* in Latin, which has been translated as 'the devil', he argues that 'demon' had no place in More's English vocabulary. cf H W Donner, 'Review of Thomas More's Prayer Book', in *Studia Neophilologica*, Vol 42, 1970, 225-226. I shall follow my late cousin and translate *demon/demonēs* as 'devil/devils'.

by More's frequent use of the biblical phrase 'And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell'.¹⁰⁵ God is all powerful and men, as His creatures, are not. More views fear as necessary because it is commanded by God and important for it is a reminder the sinful nature of man and his judgement before God as well as his eternal destiny. More's fear of eternal death in hell from which there is no escape is enhanced by his awareness of the fleeting and transitory nature of life as compared with the permanence of either heaven or hell.

Chapter 5, entitled Death, concerns More's attitude to death and, perhaps surprising, his lack of fear. More use of the phrase 'fear of death' is related to the fear of dying, whether through disease or by execution. The phrase the fear of death can therefore be misleading, so it would be both more accurate and more appropriate to ask the question: the fear of which death? Erasmus posits four types of death:¹⁰⁶ first, the natural or physical death at the separation of the soul from the body which was caused by the sin of Adam;¹⁰⁷ second, the spiritual death which separates the soul from God through sin; third, eternal death in hell, when the death of the body and the death of the soul are combined; fourth and last, the transformative death by which 'we are transformed from the image of the old Adam into the image of the new Adam'.¹⁰⁸ This transformative death is nothing less than the participation in the Christian life of faith so that it is possible to say with St Paul 'And I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me'.¹⁰⁹ The first of Erasmus' four deaths, that is the natural death when the soul separates from the body, held no real fear for More.

Chapter 6, entitled More's Personal Fear in the Tower, discusses his personal fears including his preparations for imprisonment prior to his arrest and the fears that are so dominant in both

¹⁰⁵ Matt 10.28: 'And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.'; cf Lk 12.4, 5: 'And I say to you, my friends: Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

But I will show you whom you shall fear: fear ye him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you: Fear him. These biblical verses appear both in More's polemical and Tower works. cf Ch 1, nn37-40; Ch 4, nn4, 83 & 160; Ch 6, n195.

¹⁰⁶ Erasmus, *De Praeparatione ad Mortem* (Preparing for Death) in *CWE* 70, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 411. This work was written for Thomas Boleyn, Earl of Wilshire and Ormond (Anne Boleyn's father); the dedicatory letter is dated 1 December, 1533. It is unlikely that More would have known this work, as it first appeared in print in early 1534 and More was imprisoned in April, 1534. cf Ch 6, n9; Ch 8, n103.

¹⁰⁷ cf CW13, *A Treatise on the Passion*, 29/2-3.

¹⁰⁸ Erasmus, *De Praeparatione*, 411. Only the first of these fears will be examined in this Introduction; spiritual death, as sin, will be examined in Ch 2, the Fear of Sin; eternal death in Ch 4, the Fear of Hell; and transformative death will be examined in Ch 9, To Godward.

¹⁰⁹ Gal 2.20. More does not appear to have used this biblical verse in his writings.

Introduction

his Tower writings and letters. These include his fear of pain, his fear of himself and his weakness, fear of forsaking the faith and being damned as the consequence. The fear of pain is not a spiritual fear in itself, nor is the fear of himself and his weakness. However, More links these two together and relates them to his fear of throwing himself into hell for all eternity through forsaking the faith. This section also includes his fear for his family whom he loved so very dearly, and, in particular, More's fear that they would suffer for his stand, which they did. Two minor fears are included here: the fear of men and the fear of the crowd. Although these two fears do not directly apply to More, he does examine them and they are indirectly, hence their inclusion here.

Chapter 7, entitled In The Tower concerns More's ill health and how he rises to the challenge of both imprisonment and impending martyrdom is the focus of chapter 7. More's health deteriorates in the Tower, and he was probably a sick man even before his arrest. This chapter addresses how More deals with the various fears that so dominate both his Tower writings and letters. His main method of handling his fears is through comparison. He uses comparisons to contrast opposing ideas such as the eternal reality of heaven versus the eternal reality of hell. He also uses more practical contrasts such as the temporal versus the eternal, especially in relation to temporary pain versus eternal pain.

Chapter 8, entitled Prayer, looks at prayer as More's antidote to fear and how he uses it in the Tower during his imprisonment to bring comfort and relief in the form of hope in his situation. This covers the focus and purpose of prayer and its benefits. This chapter looks at More's life of prayer from his youth onwards and his view of its proper focus. It considers the role of the Passion of Christ found in More's works, especially Christ's example in the Garden of Gethsemane. It discusses the importance and connection between prayer and trust and the importance of bodily posture during prayer. This section also considers what can be discovered from More's writings about his own life of prayer and discover the tantalizing glimpses that are to be found in More's writings of his own experience of prayer.

Chapter 9, entitled To Godward, examines More's spiritual focus concentrating on More's longing for God and encompasses his trust in God and the spiritual detachment that leads to transformative death. It looks at his prayer life during the months approaching his execution and his last words on the scaffold.

Fear in the Life and Writings of Thomas More

It could be tempting to ignore More's numerous fears for they are uncomfortable to modern ears; it would be easy to dismiss them as purely medieval, but it would be a mistake for they are all relevant and More's rich thought and deep spiritual insight has much to offer every generation.

The Conclusion is the final section. A bibliography and glossary will be included at the end. The Review of Literature is placed at the end of this Introduction, due to the scarcity of secondary material related to the theme of fear.

Review of Literature

Numerous biographies of Thomas More exist and a number which go beyond strictly biographical material and examine, for example, his writings. In addition there is a great deal of secondary literature, covering all aspects of his life, thought and writings.

This thesis will use the early biographies, such as those of Roper, Harpsfield, Stapleton and the anonymous Ro: Ba:¹ for these were written, with the exception of Ro: Ba: by those who knew More or his family. Originally published in 1599, much of Ro: Ba: is based on Harpsfield just as Harpsfield is based on, but expands, Roper.² One other sixteenth century work, although not a biography, that deserves to be mentioned is the portrait of More in Erasmus' letter to Ulrich von Hutten³ for this provides insights into More's character, attitudes and, for example, his prayer life from a friend. The biographies of Harpsfield, Stapleton and Ro: Ba: contain information not found in the others.⁴

In addition to the early biographies of Roper, Harpsfield, Stapleton and Ro: Ba:, some standard biographical works will be used when they include material relevant to this thesis. These are primarily Bernard Basset's biography *Born for Friendship: The Spirit of Sir Thomas More*,⁵ the revisionist works of Alistair Fox's *Thomas More: History and Providence*⁶ and the revisionist biography *Thomas More* by Richard Marius.⁷ Peter

¹ William Roper (ed E V Hitchcock), *The Life of Sir Thomas Moore, Knighte*, London: Early English Text Society, 1935; Nicholas Harpsfield, *Life of More*, (eds) E V Hitchcock & R W Chambers, London: Early English Text Society, 1932; Thomas Stapleton *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, (ed) E E Reynolds, London: Burns & Oates, 1966. Stapleton was born in the year More died and published his biography in 1588, the year of the Spanish Armada. Ro: Ba: *The Life of Syr Thomas More*, London/New York/Toronto: Early English Text Society, 1950.

² Roper wrote his 'biography' as notes for Harpsfield's work.

³ P S Allen and H M Allen (eds), *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami* (Letters of Erasmus), Vol IV, Oxonii: Typographeo Clarendoniano, 1922, *Epistle* 999, 12-23; cf *CWE*, Vol 7, (trans) R A B Mynors, Toronto/London: University of Toronto Press, 1987, *Epistle* 999, 15-25. This letter was written in July 1519. Another short sketch is found in Richard Pace's *De Fructu*; cf *De Fructu qui ex Doctrina Percipitur* (The Benefit of a Liberal Education), (eds) Frank Manley and Richard S Sylvester, New York: The Renaissance Society of America, 1967, 103-107. It was written in 1517.

⁴ Other relatively early biographies include Cresacre More's *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore*, Menston: Scolar Press, 1971 [facsimile edition of original edition of 1630] and Thomas More's *Life of Sir Thomas More, Kt*, London: James Woodman and David Lyon, 1726. Both Cresacre More and Thomas More were great-grandsons of More. Cresacre was the youngest son of Thomas More II, youngest son of John More. Thomas More identifies himself on the title page as a grandson of More. Neither biography has original material.

⁵ Bernard Basset, *Born for Friendship: The Spirit of Sir Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1965.

⁶ Alistair Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence*, Yale University Press, 1983.

⁷ Richard Marius, *Thomas More*, London: Collins, 1986.

Ackroyd's *The Life of Thomas More* is strictly biographical, but provides relevant and useful insights and comments.⁸ Although of a slightly earlier date, T E Bridgett's *Life and Writings of Blessed Thomas More* and its companion volume of extracts from More's writings, *The Wisdom and Wit of Blessed Thomas More*,⁹ provide some useful material.

Several further works with a biographical element, are useful for this thesis; the first is Louis Martz's *Thomas More: The Search for the Inner Man*¹⁰, while three others focus on understanding how More's life harmonizes with his beliefs. The first two of these works are James Monti's *The King's Good Servant but God's First: The Life and Writings of St Thomas More*¹¹ and Gerard Wegemer's *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*,¹² which could most aptly be described as a spiritual biography. The final one, Peter Berglar's *Thomas More: A Lonely Voice Against the Power of the State*¹³ again looks beyond the mere biographical facts of More's life and career. John Guy's revisionist work *Thomas More*¹⁴ follows a biographical outline while questioning many assumptions connected with More's reputation. Bassett, Fox, Monti and Wegemer all search for their understanding and conclusions about More at a deeper level than just the biographical and provide useful material and insights. While Marius' and Ackroyd's works are traditional biographies, they offer useful comments relevant to this work. Some of the standard biographies are used on an occasional basis¹⁵ while others have nothing on fear and will not be used in this thesis.¹⁶ Another useful work

⁸ Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1998.

⁹ T E Bridgett, *Life and Writings of Blessed Thomas More*, London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd, 2nd edn 1898, repr 1924; *The Wisdom and Wit of Blessed Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates Ltd, 1892.

¹⁰ Louis L Martz, *Thomas More: The Search for the Inner Man*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1990.

¹¹ James Monti, *The King's Good Servant but God's First: The Life and Writings of St Thomas More*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997.

¹² Gerard B Wegemer, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, Princeton: Scepter, 1997.

¹³ Peter Berglar, *Thomas More: A Lonely Voice Against the Power of the State*, New York: Scepter, 1999.

¹⁴ John Guy, *Thomas More*, London: Arnold, 2000; Reputations Series.

¹⁵ eg E M G Routh, *Thomas More and His Friends*, London: Oxford University Press, 1934; R W Chambers, *Thomas More*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1935; E E Reynolds, *The Field is Won: The Life and Death of St Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1968; John Guy, *Thomas More*, London: Arnold (Reputations Series), 2000.

¹⁶ Biographies in this category include, in chronological order, E E Reynolds original biography *Saint Thomas More*, London: Burns Oates, 1953; this was revised in *The Field in Won*. Reynolds also published three other works: *Margaret Roper*, London: Burns & Oates, 1960; *The Trial of St Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1964, repub Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke, 1974 and *Thomas More & Erasmus*, London: Burns & Oates, 1965. A further biography includes Jasper Ridley, *The Statesman and the Fanatic: Thomas Wolsey and Thomas More*, London: Constable, 1982.

There are a number of other biographies, including, in alphabetical order of the authors, those by A Cecil, *A Portrait of Thomas More*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1937; Henri Brémond, *Thomas More*, London: R & T Washbourne, 1920; John Farrow, *The Story of Thomas More*, London: Collins, 1956; W H Hutton, *Sir Thomas More*, London: Methuen & Co, 1895; Anthony Kenny, *Thomas More*, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1983; Rt Hon Sir James Mackintosh, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, London: Longman,

on More's life and writings is the compilation entitled *A Thomas More Source Book*, edited by Gerard B Wegemer and Stephen W Smith.¹⁷

Secondary literature on Thomas More is enormous and it would be impractical to list every work here. The majority are irrelevant to this thesis. There are a number of compilations of articles in a single volume, reflecting different aspects of More's life or writings or which originate from a particular conference and also numerous individual articles in academic journals. One of the most important of the various compilations of articles on More is *Essential Articles for the study of Thomas More*.¹⁸ Another book that contains a series of addresses is *The Fame of Blessed Thomas More*.¹⁹ Two others should be mentioned; the first is *Quincentennial Essays on St Thomas More* and the second, *Thomas More: Essays on the Icon*; both compilations come from conferences on Thomas More. The first contains of thirteen essays and the second, six; however only one article from each book pertains to this thesis. A more recent compilation *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*,²⁰ edited by George M Logan contains three articles pertinent to the present study: one on More's last years and two on More's Tower Works, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* and *De Tristitia Christi*.

Two other useful sources provide information for checking quotations and references. The first is Germain Marc'hadour's *The Bible in the Work of St Thomas More* which gives a reference for all More's scriptural quotations throughout his works.²¹ The other source the Center for Thomas More Studies, online at www.thomasmorestudies.org, which has an

Brown, Green and Longmans, 1844; James McConica, *Thomas More*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1977; Leslie Paul, *Sir Thomas More*, London: Faber & Faber, 1953; G R Potter, *Sir Thomas More*, London: Leonard Parsons, 1925; Daniel Sargent, *Thomas More*, New York: Sheed & Ward, 1933; and C E Shebbeare, *Sir Thomas More*, London: The Ambrosden Press, 1930, all of which have more or less disappeared without trace and are only extremely rarely, if ever, used in academic studies. They will, therefore, not be used in this thesis and will not be included in the bibliography.

¹⁷ Gerard B Wegemer and Stephen W Smith (eds), *A Thomas More Source Book*, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America, 2004.

¹⁸ R S Sylvester and G P Marc'hadour (eds) *Essential Articles for the study of Thomas More*, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977.

¹⁹ Chambers, R W (ed), *The Fame of Blessed Thomas More, being addresses delivered in his honour in Chelsea, July 1929*: London: Sheed and Ward, 1929. This contains eight talks, with an introductory essay by Professor R W Chambers.

²⁰ George M Logan (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

²¹ Germain Marc'hadour (compiler), *The Bible in the Works of St Thomas More*, 5 vols, Nieuwkoop: B de Graaf, 1969-1972.

exhaustive concordance of all More's writings, including his letters. These results producing little relevant material highlights the scarcity of secondary literature.

One of the problems related to the scarcity of material on fear is that while it is sometimes mentioned, it is rarely found in any index. Of the biographies mentioned above there are a few exceptions; Berglar has fear in the index; Ackroyd and Wegemer both include fear in the section on More; Marius and Monti both include fear under death, while Monti also has it under pain with references to the same pages. None of the rest includes fear in the index,²² and some indexes only contain proper names, places and, sometimes, writings.²³

Another problem connected to the scarcity of material on fear is that while fear occurs frequently in the secondary literature, it is often confined to a single sentence or paragraph, with just three exceptions. These exceptions are Bernard Basset's *Born for Friendship* which contains one section within a chapter entitled 'More's scruples and fears' and Gerard Wegemer's *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage* which examines how More overcame his fears. While Wegemer's two chapters are entitled 'The Power of Artful Conversation II: From Cowardice to Courage' and 'Spiritual Handbook III: The Last Word on Statesmanship', neither includes fear in the title. The final example is from the Introduction to Leland Miles' edition of *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*,²⁴ but the relevant section is entitled 'Purposes in Writing' and its focus is not primarily on fear.

There are five articles which deal with fear in more than a cursory manner. In chronological order, they are Kenneth Flegel's *Thomas More: Was a sick man beheaded?*²⁵ examines fear in the context of More's health and illnesses; Clarence H Miller's *The Heart of the Final Struggle: More's Commentary on The Agony in the Garden*²⁶ focuses on *De Tristitia Christi*; Louis Schuster's *The Tower of London: More's Gethsemane*²⁷ studies More's fear of pain in his Tower works and Howard Norland's *Comfort Through Dialogue: More's Response to*

²² eg the biographies of Chambers, Fox or Guy.

²³ eg Basset, Bridgett, Harpsfield, Martz, Reynolds, Ridley, Ro: Ba:, Roper, Routh or Stapleton.

²⁴ Leland Miles, (ed), *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1965, xxvi-xxx.

²⁵ Kenneth M Flegel, 'Thomas More: Was a sick man beheaded?' in *Moreana*, XIII, No 49, 1976, 15-27.

²⁶ Clarence H Miller, *The Heart of the Final Struggle: More's Commentary on The Agony in the Garden*, in *Quincentennial Essays on St Thomas More*, (ed) Michael J Moore, Boone, North Carolina: Appalachian State University, 1978, 108-123.

²⁷ Louis A Schuster, 'The Tower of London: More's Gethsemane' in *Moreana*, XIX, No 74, 1982, 39-45.

*Tribulation*²⁸ primarily considers More's *Dialogue of Comfort* and is only secondarily on fear. There is one final article on fear; it is Giovanni Santinello's *Thomas More's 'Expositio Passionis'*.²⁹ This deals with the same subject as Clarence Miller's *The Heart of the Final Struggle: More's Commentary on The Agony in the Garden*, which looks at More's final work: Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane. These examples do not cover the themes of fear of God, of sin, of hell; although these themes are occasionally mentioned in some secondary literature, they appear in an almost accidental manner, and there is no study, of which I am aware, of any of these themes. A good example of a casual reference to fear is found in John Guy's *Thomas More and Tyranny*, in which he says that More realizes that his most important battle in the Tower was not with the king or his threats 'but with fear itself'.³⁰ But Guy fails to develop this and does not ask what More's fear embraces.³¹ Similarly Elizabeth McCutcheon's article on Boethius and Thomas More mentions More's 'fear – fear of pain, fear of suffering, and fear of betraying Christ and one's faith' but again she does not develop it.³² To be fair to her otherwise excellent article, she is looking at Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and More's *Dialogue of Comfort*, rather than More's fears. However, this confirms the point: More's fears, with the exception of his fear of pain and fear for his family, have been mentioned very occasionally but not developed.

There are also four useful articles, all written by Germain Marc'hadour on Thomas More. although they are not primarily concerned with fear they are all relevant to this thesis in different ways. The first three are all concerned with More's spirituality, which is intimately connected to fear. They are first, *Obedient Unto Death: A Key to St Thomas More*,³³ secondly, *St Thomas More*,³⁴ and finally, *Thomas More's Spirituality*.³⁵ The last of

²⁸ Howard B Norland, 'Comfort Through Dialogue: More's Response to Tribulation' in *Moreana* XXIV, No 93, 1987, 53-66.

²⁹ Giovanni Santinello, 'Thomas More's 'Expositio Passionis'' in *Essential Articles for the study of Thomas More*, (eds) R S Sylvester and G P Marc'hadour, Hamden Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977, 455-461.

³⁰ John Guy, 'Thomas More and Tyranny' in *Moreana*, Vol 49, 2012, 181.

³¹ cf nn15 & 16 above.

³² McCutcheon, Elizabeth, McCutcheon, Elizabeth, 'Wings and Crosses: Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and More's *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* and Other Writings' in *Moreana*, Vol 50, 2013, 186.

³³ Germain Marc'hadour, 'Obedient Unto Death: A Key to St Thomas More' in *Spiritual Life*, Vol 7, Fall 1961, 205-221.

³⁴ Germain Marc'hadour, 'St Thomas More' in *The Month* (New Series) No 29, Jan-June 1963, 69-84.

³⁵ Germain Marc'hadour, (ed) Richard Sylvester, 'Thomas More's Spirituality' in *Action and Contemplation*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for St John's University, 1972, 125-152.

Marc'hadour's articles is *On Death and Martyrdom: St Thomas More*, which is self-evidently relevant to More in the Tower.³⁶

While all the writings listed here are helpful pointers and provide some useful ideas, this summarizes the entirety of secondary literature on More and death of which I am aware. The absence of secondary literature is consistent with the lack of any study exclusively devoted to this theme and so leaves a large gap in Morean studies that should be remedied and is the reason and the necessity for this thesis. The Review of Literature is placed here in the Introduction because of the sheer scarcity of pertinent material.

Methodology

The absence of any academic study on fear in the works of Thomas More necessitates that the methodology employed will focus and investigate, and rely primarily, on More's own canon. *The Complete Works of St Thomas More* published by Yale University Press, is the authoritative edition to date and will be the one used almost exclusively in this thesis.³⁷ In addition, *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*³⁸ and *Selected Letters of St Thomas More*;³⁹ both edited by Elizabeth Frances Rogers,⁴⁰ will also be an important source, especially for More's Tower letters. A further source is *Thomas More's Prayer Book*, a facsimile edition which reproduces those pages annotated by More.⁴¹ The Review of Literature above demonstrates the sheer paucity of secondary literature on fear.

This thesis will concentrate largely on More's devotional works for it is these that reveal More's own theological and personal fears. These are primarily, but not exclusively, the Tower Works, especially *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, *De Tristitia Christi*, the

³⁶ Germain Marc'hadour: 'On Death and Martyrdom: St Thomas More' in *The Portrayal of Life Stages in English Literature, 1500-1800: Infancy, Youth, Marriage, Aging, Death, Martyrdom*. Essays in Honor of Warren Wooden, (eds) Jeanie Watson & Philip McM Pittman. Studies in British History, Vol 10, Lewiston/Lampeter/ Queenston: The Edward Mellen Press 1989, 203-224.

³⁷ The *Complete Works of St Thomas More*, Yale University Press, 1963-1997 comprises fifteen volumes in twenty-one books. This work may occasionally refer to other editions, but it is the Yale edition that provides the vast majority of quotations.

³⁸ Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947.

³⁹ Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *Sir Thomas More: Selected Letters*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1961.

⁴⁰ A more recent compilation of More's letters is *For All Seasons: Selected Letters of Thomas More*, (ed) Stephen Smith, New York: Scepter, 2012. This includes some previously unpublished letters, but none of these is relevant to this thesis.

⁴¹ Louis L Martz & Richard S Sylvester (eds), *Thomas More's Prayer Book*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1969.

Catena,⁴² the prayers and meditations written in the Tower, the *Imploratio*⁴³ which contains some psalms copied out by More, his Tower letters and the annotations to be found in his Prayer Book. Two other works are also of immense value; both remain unfinished. The first is *The Last Things* written c1522 which reveals many similar themes to the Tower works, while the second is *A Treatise upon the Passion*, a devotional work almost certainly interrupted by his imprisonment. All these devotional works illustrate More's practical spirituality and his fears, both theological and personal will explored in this work.

While there is inevitably some natural overlap between More's devotional and polemical writings, his polemical works are not a principal source for this thesis as they set out More's criticisms of the reforms of Luther and Tyndale and the dangers they represent as he saw them. They are not therefore directly related to More's own fear, although they provide a useful demonstration of the consistency of More's thought throughout his life in all its different aspects. More's polemical works and quotations from them will therefore mostly feature only indirectly. The polemical works that do contain useful references to fear include *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*⁴⁴ and *The Supplication of Souls* (both 1529).⁴⁵ The *Dialogue* notes the dangers of not fearing God and mentions the fear of sin, of the devil as well as the consequences of heresy,⁴⁶ while the *Supplication* has references to the theological fear of sin and of the devil especially in relation to the fear of both purgatory and hell.⁴⁷

When fear features in More's polemical works, it often relates, not to More, but to someone else. In his polemical, *Responsio Ad Lutherum*, fear only features occasionally and is not relevant to this thesis for the references only concern Luther.⁴⁸ The *Responsio* appeared in

⁴² cf CW14, Introduction, 696, 743-44. It would appear that the *Catena* was appended to the manuscript of the *De Tristitia*, but was independent of it. The *Catena*, comprises scriptural sentences and short paragraphs, which although overlapping with the *De Tristitia*, are primarily concerned and related to More's personal plight in the Tower.

⁴³ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 214-225. Its full title is *Imploratio diuini auxiliij contra tentationem; cum insultatione contra daemones, ex spe & fiducia in deum*; it is known as the *Imploratio*. It ends abruptly with Psalm 66. Germain Marc'hadour asks 'why'? but does not suggest any answers. This suggests either that the remainder is now lost or that More had not completed it when his books were removed; cf *Praying with St Thomas More*, (eds) Germain Marc'hadour and Jocelyne Malhomme, Angers: Amici Thomæ Mori, 1998, 27. cf Ch 3, n6; Ch 9, n39.

⁴⁴ cf CW6, *Dialogue against Heresies*.

⁴⁵ cf CW7, *The Supplication of Souls*, 111-228.

⁴⁶ cf CW6, for the consequences of not fearing God: cf 386/12-15; for the fear of sin: cf 141/26-28; for fear of the devil: cf 126/34-127/2; for the consequences of heresy: cf 427/26-428/14.

⁴⁷ cf CW7, *Supplication*, for the advantages of fearing purgatory (keeps men from sin): cf 175/27-31; for the disadvantages of not fearing purgatory (leads to hell): cf 113/12-13.

⁴⁸ cf CW5, for Luther's fear of offending the laity: cf 66/4-5 & 67/5; 354/30 & 355/37-38; for Luther's own fears: cf 410/15-16 & 411/18-19; 418/10-12 & 419/12; 648/9 & 649/10.

1523 at the request of King Henry VIII,⁴⁹ while the remainder, with the possible exception of his *Letter to Bugenhagen*, all post-date Bishop Tunstall's request to More to refute the writings of heretics.⁵⁰ More's criticisms in his *Letter to Bugenhagen* centre mostly on the dangers of heresy to society as a whole, noting the consequences of heresy in different types of violence, the rejection of doctrine and practice, and on faith, good works and free will.⁵¹ Both the *Responsio Ad Lutherum* and *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* are mostly concerned with More's anxiety and fear of the impact of heresy, particularly the social consequences of heresy as well as the consequences to individual souls; especially when heresy lacks the fear of sin, purgatory or hell and when this reveals itself as boldness of sin or presumption of salvation.⁵² The remaining polemical works, namely *The Apology of Sir Thomas More* (1533), *The Debellation of Salem and Bizance* (1533) and *The Answer to a Poisoned Book* (1533) provide only very occasional, and almost incidental, quotations related to fear.

There are many modern editions of More's work but this thesis relies primarily on *The Yale Edition of The Complete Works of St. Thomas More* which was published between 1963-1997. There is also a much more recent and useful work entitled *The Essential Works of Thomas More*; it modernizes the spelling and contains many, but not all, of More's works.⁵³ Some of the works included are only given as a selection of the original. However, its publication was too late for it to be beneficial for writing this thesis.

This thesis will also include occasional references to some medieval literature and to works by authors contemporary to More. Such references will be cited to demonstrate that More's attitudes and beliefs were shared by many of his contemporaries as well as being part of the

⁴⁹ cf n33 above.

⁵⁰ CW7, *Letter to Bugenhagen*, 12-105. It was composed between December, 1525 and February, 1526. At the time More was acting as Henry VIII's secretary; it is therefore possible that Henry asked More to reply, but there is no evidence for this. For Bishop Tunstall's request to More to reply to heretical writings; cf n31 above.

⁵¹ cf CW7, *Bugenhagen*. For different types of violence: cf eg 16/16-25, 17; 22/21-24/4, 23-25; for the rejection of doctrine and practice: cf eg 16/25-34, 17; for faith, good works and free will: cf 62-91 where these themes appear repeatedly. All the three themes occur repetitively throughout More's letter.

⁵² For the social consequences of heresy, cf nn59, 66-75 & 86 above. For More's different theological fears: for heresy killing souls, cf eg CW8, 3/6-7; for doubts that heresy can sow, cf eg CW8, 883/31-884/5; for belief in purgatory as an aid to avoid sin and hell, cf eg CW8, 289/6-22, 290/4; for lack of fear of pain in purgatory leads to boldness in sin, cf eg CW8, 211/15-16; boldness with regard to God's forgiveness leads to lack of fear of purgatory, cf eg CW8, 289/30; for trust without fear leading to boldness in sin, cf eg CW8, 488/15-16; for fear being necessary as no one can be sure of salvation and God's mercy should be balanced with fear of his justice to guard against presumption and carelessness in sin, cf eg CW8, 425/37-426/6.

⁵³ Gerard B Wegemer & Stephen W Smith (eds), *The Essential Works of Thomas More*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2020.

religious outlook of the world in which he lived. These include three medieval works that More describes as being ‘englysshe books as moste may norysse and encrease deuocyon’.⁵⁴ The first is *The Imitation of Christ* which had first been printed in England since c1502.⁵⁵ The second is Nicholas Love’s *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*,⁵⁶ a free translation of Pseudo-Bonaventure’s *Meditations on the Life of Christ*.⁵⁷ Despite the inaccuracies of Love’s paraphrase of the *Meditations*, it is used here as it is the one More would have known. More’s third recommendation is Walter Hilton’s *The Scale of Perfection*.⁵⁸ This work was often printed with Hilton’s *Mixed Life*, so it is probable that More knew this as well.⁵⁹ Erasmus and Bishop John Fisher will also be mentioned as contemporaries and both are important for they knew More personally. Other medieval works and some other contemporary works may occasionally be mentioned, such as Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*⁶⁰ (again mentioned by More) and quotations from Dean John Colet,⁶¹ who was More’s spiritual adviser. The decision to limit references to medieval literature known by More is aimed at containing, within reasonable bounds, a body of work that is too vast to be addressed as a whole.

Biblical references abound in More’s works and it was the Vulgate that More knew, used and loved. As the most accurate translation of the Vulgate, the Douai edition will be used throughout this thesis. Occasional references will also be made to the Sarum Missal as again, it was the one which More knew.

⁵⁴ CW8, *The Confutation of Tyndale Answer*, 37/28-31. [englysshe: English; norysse: nourish; encrease: increase; deuocyon: devotion]

⁵⁵ Thomas A Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, (trans) Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1st pub 1952, 2nd impression 1955. The *Imitation* was first printed in English from c1502; cf Roger Lovatt, ‘The *Imitation of Christ* in late Medieval England’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th Series, Vol 18, 1968, 100. The third edition of the *Imitation* appeared in 1531 and Lovatt posits that it is this edition to which More refers; Lovatt, 98.

⁵⁶ Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, (ed) Michael G Sargent, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004.

⁵⁷ Isa Ragusa & Rosalie B Green, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961. For an example of Love’s free paraphrase, cf Ragusa & Green, xxv.

⁵⁸ Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, (trans) John P H Clark and Rosemary Dorward, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press (Classics of Western Spirituality), 1991. Walter Hilton, an Augustinian canon, died in March 1396. The first known printed edition of *The Scale of Perfection* is in Latin and possibly printed before 1400; cf Scale, 13, 18. It was printed in English by Wynkyn de Worde in 1494, cf Dorothy Jones (ed), *The Minor Works of Walter Hilton*, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd, 1929, xx, xxxviii.

⁵⁹ Walter Hilton, *Mixed Life*, Oxford: Fairacres Publication 138, 2001. It is not known for certain if More knew the *Mixed Life*, but this work was printed with *The Scale of Perfection* by Wynkyn de Worde, c1494, 1519, 1525 and 1533; cf Dorothy Jones, *The Minor Works of Walter Hilton*, xx.

⁶⁰ Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (The Consolation of Philosophy), (trans) H F Stewart, E K Rand and S J Tester, London: William Heinemann Ltd and Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1973.

⁶¹ J H Lupton, *A Life of Dean Colet*, London: George Bell and Sons, 1909.

Chapter 1: The Fear of God: its Importance and Necessity

The fear of God is the central foundation and pivot of all More's various fears. All his spiritual fears and some of his personal fears are derived from or connected to this fundamental fear. It will become evident that More views fear as necessary because it is both commanded, indeed demanded, by God and is an important reminder that He is almighty; that He is omnipotent. All power lies in His hands, and not man's. An important aspect of the fear of God is that it is a universal command by Him and such fear is allied to faith for it recognizes God's omnipotence. The fear of God is also allied to His omniscience, hence the psalmist's acknowledgement 'whither shall I go from thy spirit, & whither shall I flee from thy face'.¹ Spiritual fears, such as the fear of sin, or hell, or the temptations of the devil, are all derived from this fundamental fear of God. As fear is commanded by God and is intended to be universal, it is therefore necessary. It produces beneficial and positive results, both practical and spiritual. Fear is integral and necessary for faith for it comes from faith and concerns seeking God and attaining salvation. Fear is integral and necessary for it comes from faith. St Paul reminds the Romans of the necessity of fear and its connection to faith, and More quotes this in his polemical works, writing: 'But thou standest by fayth: be not proude therof but fere'.² Fear is a part of faith and even 'the devils fear and tremble' as More reminds his readers in *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*.³ Erasmus, too, considers that fear comes from faith. It is not a lack of trust in God's promises or a lack of belief in any aspect of the faith, but a product of an awareness of our own frailty.⁴ The importance of fear is because it is positive and good: 'the fear of the Lord is holy enduring for ever and ever' says the psalmist.⁵

¹ Ps 138.7; cf CW1, *The Last Things*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 157/9-10.

² Rom 11.20; cf CW8, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, (eds) Louis A Schuster, Richard C Marius, James P Lusardi & Richard J Schoeck, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973, 431/9-10. [fayth: faith; therof: thereof]

³ CW6, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, (eds) Thomas M C Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour & Richard C Marius, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, 386/11-12; Jas 2.19; cf CW6, 388/7-8; CW7, *Letter to Bugenhagen*, (eds) Frank Manley, Germain Marc'hadour, Richard Marius & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 60/17-18, 61; CW8, 785/17-18 & 787/34.

⁴ Erasmus, *De Praeparatione ad Mortem* (Preparing for Death) in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol 70, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 426.

⁵ Ps 18.10; cf Erasmus, *De Praeparatione ad Mortem*, (Preparing for Death) in *CWE 70*, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 424. cf n61 below; Introduction, n106.

Fear of God

The origin of the fear of God is found even in Paradise even prior to the Fall, although it was a fear more akin to awe and respect. More's interpretation of its purpose is that its aim was to prevent Adam and Eve from falling into sin and so God 'graciously fenced and hedged in theyr harts wyth feare' to aid and protect them with His grace.⁶ Thus this cautionary fear provides both a protective quality as well as an impetus to virtue. More explains its protective quality for Adam and Eve: 'for the farther sauegarde of their persons from pride, he gaue them precepts and commaundementes, wherby thei shuld remember & consider them self to be but seruauntes'.⁷ It is the filial fear of children towards their father, because they love him and do not wish to offend him.⁸ Following the Fall, the fear experienced by Adam and Eve is that of guilt and shame so that they hid themselves from God in the trees of Paradise.⁹ This illustrates the servile fear felt by those who dread God as their master and who only abstain from sin through the fear of pain, rather than the filial fear of children, who do not wish to hurt the father they love.¹⁰ These two examples show the difference that the fear of God can be either the filial fear of the son or the servile fear of the slave.

Fear is commanded by God in both the Old and New Testaments. The dreadful nature of the fear of the Lord is found in the psalms. The Lord is described as a great king and his name and his position,¹¹ his counsels¹² and his works¹³ are all presented as terrible. The Lord is to be feared and His name is Holy.¹⁴ More annotates the psalmist's phrase 'He looketh upon the earth and maketh it tremble:' with the words *maiestas dei* aligning both the power and the majesty of God.¹⁵ More writes in the Tower 'He is the king of kings and the lord of lords, a

⁶ CW13, *A Treatise on the Passion*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 13/13. [graciously: through divine grace/benevolently; fenced: fenced; harts: hearts; wyth: with]

⁷ CW13, *Passion*, 12/26-28. cf Ch 2, n63. [sauegarde: safeguard; wherby: whereby; thei: they; shuld: should; seruauntes; servants]

⁸ cf Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, (ed) Michael Sargent, University of Exeter Press, 2004, 225; cf Ps 30.20. More uses filial fear in *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, cf CW8, 756/14-19.

⁹ Gen 3.8-10. More uses the fear that follows sin in his portrayal Richard III following the murder of the two princes in the Tower and prior to his death on the battlefield around two years later. More says Richard 'spente in much pain and trouble outward, much feare anguish and sorow within' and following 'this abhominable deede, he neuer hadde quiet in his minde, hee neuer thought himself sure'; cf CW2, *The History of Richard III*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963, 87/8-9, 11-12. cf Ch 2, n185.

¹⁰ cf Love, 224.

¹¹ cf Ps 98.3: Let them give praise to thy great name, for it is terrible and holy; cf Ps 110.9: Holy and terrible is his name; Ps 46.3: For the Lord is high, terrible: a great king over all the earth; cf Ps 75.8, 12-13; Ps 88.8.

¹² cf Ps 65.5: Come and see the works of God: who is terrible in his counsels over the sons of men.

¹³ cf Ps 65.3: Say unto God: How terrible are thy works, O Lord!; cf Ps 105.22; Ps 144.6.

¹⁴ cf Ps 95.4: For the Lord is great, and exceedingly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods; cf *Thomas More's Prayer Book*, (eds) Louis L Martz & Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969 [hereafter *TMPB*], 156, 201.

¹⁵ Ps 103.32; cf *TMPB*, 166, 202.

terrible king who daunts the hearts of princes'.¹⁶ The psalmist's words 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God'¹⁷ not only illustrate the connection between fear and approaching God, but reveal that fearing God is a requirement in order to approach and hear God. The psalmist says 'Come, children, hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord',¹⁸ indicating that the fear the Lord is right. The comprehensiveness of this command to fear is shown again by the psalmist's words: 'Let all the earth fear the Lord: and let all the inhabitants of the world be in awe of him',¹⁹ a command confirmed by the fifth penitential psalm in the phrase 'And the Gentiles shall fear thy name, O Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory'.²⁰ This last verse reflects God's universal command of fear and it would have been very familiar to More for he prayed the seven penitential psalms daily;²¹ he would also have known the penitential psalms as they were recited in their entirety in the liturgy for Ash Wednesday.²²

In the Old Testament, the Ten Commandments were given with audible and visible manifestations of God's power including voices, flames, trumpets sounding, terror and those present were struck with fear.²³ More states that these wonders were given by God so that they might understand that both the commandments and the visible signs came from God and the fear they caused makes them 'haue the more drede to transgresse theym'.²⁴ More likewise endorses the idea that fear aids the fulfilment of God's commands, observing that after Moses received the Ten Commandments and to ensure the fulfilment of these commands, God 'gawe them a great hepe of the lawes, and ceremonyes mo, to kepe them in straytely for strayenge abrode in ryot'.²⁵ Bishop John Fisher also likens these manifestations

¹⁶ CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, (ed & trans) Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976; 549/1-2; cf Ps 75.12-13: To him that is terrible: even to him who taketh away the spirit of princes.

¹⁷ Ps 65.16. Thomas More does not use this verse. It was read on the second Sunday after Epiphany as the Offertory verse; cf F H Dickinson (ed), *Missale ad usum Sarum*, Oxonii et Londonii: J Parker & Soc, 1861-1883, col 97; F E Warren (trans), *The Sarum Missal in English*, London: De La More Press, 1911, Vol I, 132.

¹⁸ Ps 33.12.

¹⁹ Ps 32.8. More penned a marginal line in his psalter covering verses 5-19; cf *TMPB*, 63-64.

²⁰ Ps 101.16.

²¹ cf Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas Moore, knighte*, (ed) E V Hitchcock, London: Early English Text Society, 1935, 25/16-18; Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, 515/17-18.

²² cf Dickinson, cols 123-130; Warren, 143. Ps 101.16 was also used as the Gradual for the third Sunday after Epiphany, cf Dickinson, col 100; Warren, Vol I, 133 and for the Gradual for the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, cf Dickinson, col 509; Warren, Vol I, 390.

²³ cf Ex 20.18; cf John E B Mayor (ed), *English Works of John Fisher*, London: Early English Text Society, (Extra Series No XXVII), 1876, cf 164/32-166/6, esp 164/33-34, Sermon on Psalm 101, the fifth penitential psalm.

²⁴ CW6, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, 141/27-28. [haue: have]

²⁵ CW6, 141/23-26; cf Ex 31.18; 34.1-26. The sixteenth century language here is not straightforward; the Scepter edition gives the following, that God "gave them a great heap more of laws and rituals to keep them tightly restrained in, from wildly straying abroad"; cf St Thomas More, *Dialogue concerning Heresies*, (ed)

of God's power to a warning that 'by cause of so grete fere & drede, the people sholde be the more ware to breke the lawe gyuen vnto them'.²⁶

Fear is not only commanded by God, it is also commended by God, who praises Job as 'a simple and upright man, and fearing God, and avoiding evil'.²⁷ Job's reverent fear of God provides an excellent example of the filial fear of God; it is also a lesson for every man because Job understands the truth of fear. Job's words are 'I feared all my works, knowing that thou didst not spare the offender'.²⁸ Job understands that 'the stars are not pure, in his [God's] sight' leads to a recognition of God's total purity and man's lack of it.²⁹ However, satan asks God: 'Doth Job fear God in vain?'³⁰ and seeks and receives permission from God allows.³¹ Job's reverent fear enables him to praise and trust God both in prosperity and despite numerous calamities, trials and tribulations. These include the death of his children, the slaughter of his servants and his livestock.³² Job's reaction to developing an ulcer is: 'If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil? In all these things Job did not sin with his lips'.³³ Job's fear is connected to the avoidance of evil and a simple, upright life combined with a complete acceptance of his situation: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. As it hath pleased the Lord so is it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord'.³⁴ His trust in God enables him to overcome the devil.³⁵ Job's good life along with his fear is abundantly rewarded by God, even in this life and he is rewarded by God with twice as much as he possessed previously.³⁶

The fear of God in the New Testament is not so pervasive or dominant. Its centrality and importance in More's thought can be ascertained by his frequent use of Christ's injunction

Mary Gottschalk, New York: Scepter, 2006, 169. [gaue: gave; theym: them; hepe: heap; ceremonies: ceremonies; mo: more; kepe: keep; straytely: straightly, strictly; for: from; strayenge: bridling, controlling; abrode: abroad; ryot: riot]

²⁶ *EW*, 165/33-35. Fisher repeats this saying that it is intended 'ye sholde be aferde and not fall in to synne'; cf *EW*, 166/2-3; cf Ex 20.20. [grete: great; sholde: should; ware: aware; breke: break; gyuen: given]

²⁷ This description of Job comes at 1.8; cf 1.1; 2.3.

²⁸ Job 9.28; cf Erasmus, *De Praeparatione* 424.

²⁹ Job 25.5; cf Erasmus, *De Praeparatione* 424. cf n66 below.

³⁰ Job 1.9; cf Erasmus, *De Praeparatione* 424.

³¹ cf Job 2.3-8.

³² Job had seven sons and three daughters; cf Job 1.2. For the death of his servants and livestock: cf Job 1.14-15; for the death of his children and loss of his home: cf Job 1.18-19.

³³ Job 2.10.

³⁴ Job 1.21.

³⁵ cf Job 1.9-12; cf CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, (eds) Louis Martz & Frank Manley, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 74/17-27.

³⁶ cf Job 42.10-13.

found in both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. Matthew records Christ's words 'And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell'.³⁷ Luke also reports these words but in his version, Christ adds 'Yea, I say to you, fear him',³⁸ using repetition to ensure that the apostles understood him correctly.³⁹ This teaching appears no less than thirteen times in both More's polemical and Tower works.⁴⁰ Fear is needed to set men on the course to heaven, the thought of too many heavenly joys make us slothful while the concentration on too much on the torments of hell can lead to despair. In *A Dialogue of Comfort*, More corrects this imbalance. He writes 'Our affeccion toward hevenly ioyes waxith wonderfull cold, yf drede of hell were as far gone, very few wold fere god'.⁴¹ In order to fear God, therefore, the fear of hell is required; it is only in alignment with a fear of hell, that an appreciation of and affection towards heavenly joys becomes possible. Then the fear of God is transformed into the love of God.

In the New Testament, Christ reveals God's power in all his various different miracles, but in the tale of the resurrection of the only son of the widow of Naim, it also records the reaction of the witnesses.⁴² Telling the young man to arise, Christ gave him back to his mother. The witnesses recognize God's power, believing a prophet to be among them and 'there came a fear upon them all: and they glorified God'.⁴³ Fear in the form of awe is the reaction of the crowd in the face of this demonstration of divine power.⁴⁴ When God demonstrates the reality

³⁷ Matt 10.28: 'And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell'.

³⁸ Lk 12.4-5: 'And I say to you, my friends: Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

But I will show you whom you shall fear: fear ye him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you: Fear him'. cf Introduction, n105; Ch 4, nn4, 83 & 160; Ch 6, n195.

³⁹ More would also have known both Gospels from the liturgy. For Matt 10.28, cf Dickinson, *Common of a Martyr, Gospel*, col 676*; Warren, Vol II, 14. For Lk 12. 4-5, cf Dickinson, *Common of Many Martyrs, Gospel*, col 692*; Warren, II, 24.

⁴⁰ The figures are nine times in his Tower Works, CW12, 109/2-7 & 298/9-12 & 303/5-15 & 303/20-22; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 53/5-7 & 135/1-5 & 267/6-269/1 & 607/9-609/3; CW14, *Catena*, 635/12-16; three times in his polemical works, CW8, 544/26-29 & 955/29-32; CW9, *The Apology*, (ed) J B Trapp, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979, 109/30-34; and once in his early translation of Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, CW1, 92/16-17.

⁴¹ CW12, 83/23-24. cf Ch 4, n131. [affeccion: mental inclination, disposition, state of mind; hevenly: heavenly; ioyes: joys; waxith: becomes, grows; yf: if]

⁴² Lk 7.11-16.

⁴³ Lk 7.16; cf Matt 9.8. More does not use either verse in his works, but Lk 7.11-16 was read as the Gospel for 16th Sunday after Trinity; cf Dickinson, col 509; Warren, I, 390. cf n44 below for Matt 9.1-8.

⁴⁴ cf eg Matt 9.1-8 for the story of the man sick of the palsey. Following the cure, the Gospel relates (verse 8): 'And the multitude seeing it, feared, and glorified God that gave such power to men'. More does not refer to this passage in his works, but it was read as the Gospel for 19th Sunday after Trinity; cf Dickinson, col 517; Warren, I, 395.

of his power, it is not always in relation to fear. The Transfiguration records an instance of the fear of God relating to His glory.⁴⁵ In this example, Matthew records that Peter, James and John ‘fell upon their face and were very much afraid’ when they heard the voice of God speaking to them from a bright cloud⁴⁶ indicating how fearful they found the voice of God, although he adds that ‘Jesus came and touched them and said to them: Arise, and fear not’.⁴⁷

More reveals an awareness of God’s omnipotence and power and its connection to fear at the beginning of his translation of *A praiour of Picus Mirandula vnto god*: ‘O holy god of dredefull magestee’.⁴⁸ The recognition of God’s majesty and power leads to the fear of God as our judge as the psalmist recognizes in the cry ‘Pierce thou my flesh with thy fear; for I am afraid of thy judgments’.⁴⁹ The fear of God as a judge recognizes God’s omnipotence and power and is reflected in the cry of the psalmist: ‘If thou, O Lord wilt mark iniquities: Lord, who shall stand it?’⁵⁰ This verse is taken from the *De Profundis*, which More recited with his household each evening.⁵¹

To fear God as a judge is, in part, an appreciation of the reality of His majesty and power. The idea that it is necessary to fear God as our judge can be viewed as a medieval commonplace for it is found in the *Imitation* where the reader is told to ‘Fear the judgements of God’.⁵² The *Imitation* clearly states that fear results from sin ‘for he that loves God with his whole heart, fears neither death, nor punishment, nor judgement, nor hell; ...but no wonder that the man who still delights in sin, should fear both death and judgement’.⁵³ Pico

⁴⁵ Matt 17.1-9; cf Mk 9.1-8; Lk 9.28-32. Neither Mark nor Luke includes the fact that the disciples fell on their face in fear in his account. Peter attests to the truth of the Transfiguration in the *Second Epistle of St Peter*, cf 2 Pet 1.16-18. More refers to the Transfiguration only twice in his works; in neither case is it connected to fear, only to glory; cf CW13, *Passion*, 134/31 & 135/29-30.

⁴⁶ Matt. 17.6, 5. St Paul refers to the fact that the sight of God’s glory is overwhelming; cf 2 Cor 3.7. In Exodus Moses face is described as ‘horned’ [shining, sending forth rays of light like horns] after receiving the Ten Commandments and caused fear in Aaron and the children of Israel; cf Exod 34.29-30.

⁴⁷ Matt 17.7.

⁴⁸ CW1, *A praiour of Picus Mirandula vnto god*, (*A Prayer of Pico*), 120/13: More’s translation is a paraphrase; cf CW1, 378/16, 379 for the literal translation: ‘O bountiful God, terrible in the height of your majesty,...’. cf Introduction, n56.

⁴⁹ Ps 118.120; More does not appear to have used this verse.

⁵⁰ Ps 129.3; CW1, *A Prayer of Pico*, 120/20-22. Ps 129 is the sixth penitential psalm.

⁵¹ Thomas Stapleton, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, (ed) E E Reynolds, London: Burns & Oates, 1966, 88-89. Roper notes the nightly devotions of More’s household, but does not say which psalms were recited; cf Roper, 25/19-22.

⁵² Thomas A Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, (trans) Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1952, Bk III, Ch 4, No 4; cf Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, (trans) John P H Clark and Rosemary Dorward, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press 1991, Bk 2, Ch 16, 219; cf Ps 37, the third penitential psalm, *EW*, 69/8.

⁵³ *Imitation*, Bk I, Ch 24, No 7. cf nn62 & 109 below; cf Ch2, n244; Ch 4, n159.

notes in his *Prayer unto God* that if God's rigorous judgement was to weigh our sin in an exact scale, it would be hard for anyone to bear His punishments.⁵⁴ Although God's power and majesty demand fear and God's mercy and gracious indulgence reveal our offences, God's 'rigorous iudgement' is balanced by the 'mighti loue'⁵⁵ that drew God from heaven and shows the goodness and pity of the heavenly king who is not a lord but 'a very tendre louing fathir'.⁵⁶

Fear allied to justice is found, if only indirectly, in the words of the prophet Malachi: 'But unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise,...'⁵⁷ – a prophetic reference to Christ as the Messiah, and that justice is for those who fear God's name. St Peter also connects the necessity to fear with God's role as Judge: 'And if you invoke as Father him who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every one's work: converse in fear during the time of your sojourning here'.⁵⁸ Although he does not use the word 'fear', the same idea is found in Pico's advice to his nephew Gianfrancesco to 'regarde *only* the iugement of god which shal yeld euery man aftir his owne warkis...'⁵⁹ [my emphasis]. This counsel follows a warning to heed God and not men, to ignore worldly advice and criticism and ends with an admonition to fear God who can cast the soul into hell.⁶⁰ The fear of God thus directs the focus towards virtuous living, aimed at receiving admission to the glories of heaven. More's choice to translate Pico reveals his awareness of the fear of God and of His judgements early in his life.

⁵⁴ CW1, *Prayer of Pico*, 120/20-22; cf Ps 129.3 the sixth penitential psalm; Ps 142.2, the seventh penitential psalm.

⁵⁵ CW1, *Prayer of Pico*, for 'rigorous iudgement': 120/20; for 'mighti loue': 122/15; cf CW1, 378-81: More has paraphrased Pico's original very loosely. [iudgement: judgement; mighti: mighty]

⁵⁶ CW1, 123/11; cf CW1, 380/77; 381 for the literal translation: '...not a lord but a fathir'. cf Cecilia A Hatt (ed), *English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester: Sermon and Other Writings 1520-1535*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, Appendix 2, 421-425. Fisher addresses God in a prayer almost certainly composed in the Tower as 'my very loving father', Hatt, 424; cf also E E Reynolds, *Saint John Fisher*, Wheathampstead: Anthony Clark Books, 1972, 260; Appendix C, 319-321. cf Introduction, n56.

⁵⁷ Mal 4.2. More uses this quotation indirectly in *De Tristitia Christi*: 'They (Judas and the cohort of soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane) carry smoking torches and dim lanterns so that they might be able to discern through the darkness of sin the bright sun of justice, not that they might be enlightened by the light of Him who enlightens every man that comes into this world, (cf Jn 1.9) but that they might put out that eternal light of His which can never be darkened'; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 365/6-10. For a further reference for More linking the sun of justice to Christ, cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 371/5-10.

⁵⁸ 1 Pet 1.17.

⁵⁹ CW1, Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 92/7-8. [iugement: judgement; shal: shall; yeld: yield; euery: every; aftir: after; warkis: works]

⁶⁰ cf CW1, Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 90/14-92/17. cf nn37-40 above; Introduction, n105; Ch 4, nn4 & 83 & 160; Ch 6, n195.

The fear of God as our judge is not fear just for its own sake, but a healthy and positive fear intended to restrain men from sin and to learn to love God. The fear of God as judge is an important aspect in the recognition of man's weakness and frailty in his sinfulness. On fear and frailty, Erasmus claims that it is 'too great to be fully understood by us'.⁶¹ The *Imitation* reveals its significance and states unequivocally that 'the man that lays aside the fear of God, will not be able to persevere in good, but will very soon fall into the snares of the devil'.⁶² More's spiritual director, Dean Colet echoes the sentiment that it is right to fear God as a judge, but balances it with honour and love. Colet writes 'Fyrste and principally, honour God as thy maker, loue hym as thy redemer, feare hym as thy iudge'.⁶³ The psalmist prays that 'O Lord, I will be mindful of Thy justice alone: Thou hast taught me, O God, from my youth: and unto old age and gray hairs, O God, forsake me not'.⁶⁴ The youthful More translated Pico's admonition to regard only the judgement of God and towards the end of his life during his imprisonment, More confirms the psalmist's prayer writing in *A Dialogue of Comfort* that the judgement of God is to be feared and that it can be 'dredfull', 'hevy' or 'terrible'.⁶⁵

More's understanding of God's judgement is linked to man's sinfulness and lack of purity, even in those who seek to worship and follow Christ. Fear is also useful in appreciating God's generosity for 'good workes to god ward worketh no man without god worke with hym'.⁶⁶ Indeed, it is God who gives a man everything needed in order to do good.⁶⁷ More's writings reveal his understanding that everything comes from God and is aimed at stifling the sin of presumption. All the good a man achieves should be seen as God's gift of grace and should not be seen as his own achievement for More notes Christ's words that 'no man cometh to me but yf my father drawe hym,' indicating the importance of God's primary role in any man's salvation,⁶⁸ reflected in another of Christ's counsel that 'without me you can do nothing'.⁶⁹ More attributes presumption in sin or negligence in striving to acquire virtues to a

⁶¹ Erasmus, *De Praeparatione*, 426. cf n4 above.

⁶² *Imitation*, Bk I, Ch 24, No 7. cf n53 above; n109 below; Ch 4, n159.

⁶³ Colet, 306. cf nn53 & 62 above; n109 below. [fyrste: first; iudge: judge]

⁶⁴ Ps 70.16-18. More did not use this verse, but it was used as the Communion verse on 16th Sunday after Trinity and on the Thursday following the 4th Sunday in Lent; cf Dickinson, cols 509, 228; Warren, Vol I, 391, 201. Warren refers to the psalm as 71.14-16 and renders justice [justitiae] as righteousness. [hast: haste, have]

⁶⁵ cf eg CW12, 61/10 & 164/1 & 235/10 & 268/18. [hevy: grievous, burdensome]

⁶⁶ CW12, 39/9-10; cf Job 25.5; Erasmus, CWE 70, *De Praeparatione* 424. cf n29 above. [to god ward: towards god, with a focus upon God.]

⁶⁷ cf CW8, 841/25-30.

⁶⁸ Jn 6.44; CW8, 841/7-8. [but yf: unless]

⁶⁹ Jn 15.5.

faith that is very faint and feeble.⁷⁰ On the other hand, a sure and certain faith possesses both dread and love of God and this combination acts as a restraint from sin and provides a clear direction on the path of virtue.⁷¹ More reminds his readers that it is God's 'owne lyberall goodnes worketh our saluacyon.'⁷² This is because 'no good work can be done wythout helpe of goddes grace, nor no good worke of man worthy the rewarde of heuen but by the lyberall goodnesse of god'.⁷³ God will reward good deeds but this is due to his 'lyberall goodnesse'. More uses the expression 'the lyberall goodnesse of god' several times, especially in his polemical work *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*.⁷⁴ In this work, More expresses a certain astonishment that while 'no meryte of man can be suffycyent to deserue heuen, but the greatnesse of that rewarde cometh of goddes mere lyberall goodnes, that lyst to gyue so great a pryce for so symple a thyng'.⁷⁵ In the Tower, More re-iterates this yet again, stating no good work is done without faith, and no good work gains reward in heaven of itself but 'through the mere goodnes of god that list to set so high a price vppon so pore a thyng'.⁷⁶ The reason that men's works are poor and simple is the imperfection and sinfulness of the human condition.⁷⁷ More observes that 'in all our dedes we be so vnperfyte, y^t eche man hath good cause to fere for hys owne parte, leste his beste be badde'.⁷⁸ More comments that although 'god wyll rewarde them for theyr good dedis, yet put not theyr trust in them self and theyr own dedys'.⁷⁹ The reason is that 'though euery man maye well fere that the workes which hym selfe hath done semed they neuer so good, were yet for some lacke vppon hys parte in y^e doynge, so vnperfyte in the depe secret sight of god, that they were vnworthy to serue hym or be any thyng rewarded, and also that were they neuer so pure & perfyte, they were not yet worthy suche rewarde but of goddes lyberall goodnesse'.⁸⁰ Even 'whan they haue done all they can do, we be but vnprofytable seruauntes, we haue done but our dutye'.⁸¹ Every man

⁷⁰ cf CW6, 393/34-396/1.

⁷¹ cf CW6, 394/2-4.

⁷² cf CW8, 106/15-16. [lyberall: liberal, generous; saluacyon: salvation]

⁷³ CW8, 580/25-27. [wythout: without; goddes: God's]

⁷⁴ cf eg CW8, 54/12-13 & 402/33-34 & 580/27 & 633/38-634/1 841/9-10 & 841/24-25; cf CW6, 380/19; CW12, 39/6.

⁷⁵ CW8, 841/8-11; cf CW8, 54/12-15. [meryte: merit; suffycyent: sufficient; lyst: chooses, wishes; gyue: give; symple: honest, innocent, unsophisticated]

⁷⁶ CW12, 39/6-7. [pore: poor]

⁷⁷ cf CW8, 634/3-4 & 841/16; cf CW8, 28-34.

⁷⁸ CW8, 580/29-31; cf CW12, 186/17-19. [vnperfyte: imperfect; y^t: that; eche: each; leste: lest]

⁷⁹ CW6, 380/17-18. [dedis, dedys: deeds; theyr: their]

⁸⁰ CW8, 402/27-34. [hym selfe: himself; semed: seemed; neuer: never; vppon: upon; y^e: the; doynge: doing; depe: deep; vnworthy: unworthy; perfyte: perfect; secret: hidden, inmost]

⁸¹ Lk 17.10; CW6, 380/20-23; cf eg CW5, 530/30-532/2 & 531/34-533/2; CW7, *Bugenhagen*, 52/35-37 & Rogers, *Correspondence*, 343/678-679 & 88/20-22 & Rogers, *Correspondence*, 358/1248-1249; CW8, 53/37-54/3 & 401/6-7 & 841/22-24; CW12, 39/3-13; CW15, 'Letter to a Monk' in *In Defense of Humanism: Letters to*

should realize that ‘all the good that he doth or can do is a greate deale to litle but yet for all that fere, let hym dwell therwith in the faythfull hope of godes helpe’.⁸² Fear must always be tempered with hope; ‘comfort in hope of his grace’ should be balanced by ‘some feare of our own fraylty’.⁸³ However, while men should fear their own imperfection, the goodness of God will supply what we lack.⁸⁴ This is trusting at its deepest; trusting in God’s help, in His grace with the faith given by Him, and in a heavenly reward due in no part to ourselves but solely to Him with our goodwill working with His will. Thus More maintains a careful balance between fear of our unworthiness and hope and trust in God’s goodness and help. The remedy is not to trust ourselves but to trust God,⁸⁵ and to ‘dwell therwith in the faythfull hope of godes helpe’.⁸⁶

Fear helps men avoid and overcome sin and this should also act as an invitation to foster virtue with the ultimate goal of holiness and heaven. More reveals the connection of fear with the importance of encouraging probity in *Utopia*, for even his pagan Utopians,⁸⁷ in the upbringing of their children, think that ‘developing a religious fear of the gods,... is the greatest and almost the only incitement to virtue’.⁸⁸ Thus the close connection between the fear of God and the desire to seek virtue is a positive one. It leads to hope, love, purity and humility – with all these different aspects being focussed on God. In his *Letter to a Monk*, More reflects both the book of Proverbs and the *Imitation of Christ*, linking the fear of God

Dorp, Oxford, Lee, and a Monk, (ed) Daniel Kinney, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986, 304/2-4 & Rogers, *Correspondence*, 204/1475-1477. [whan: when; vnprofytable: unprofitable]

⁸² CW12, 186/17-19; cf CW8, 580/25-31. [litle: little; therwith: therewith, by that means]

⁸³ CW12, 247/24-25; cf CW12, 198/19-20; 1 Cor 10.12. cf n104 below; Ch 2, n8; Ch 4, nn144 & 145; Ch 6, n70. [fraylty: frailty, moral weakness]

⁸⁴ cf CW8, 634/2-7.

⁸⁵ cf eg CW1, 105/23-106/2: This example of trusting God rather than ourselves is taken from More’s early expansion of Pico’s *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle* [the fifth rule]; cf CW12, 186/18-19; CW12, 316/19-20: This example is found in his prison work, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*; it is a sentiment appears frequently in More’s works, but is especially prominent in his prison letters. For an analysis of More’s trust in God in the form of God knows best; cf Chapter 7.

⁸⁶ CW12, 186/17-19; CW8, 580/25-31.

⁸⁷ The amount of time that passed between More’s translations of Pico and his composition of *Utopia* appears to be either around a decade or around four to six years. The date of the translations of Pico are debatable, being either 1504-05 at the earliest or just before their publication in 1510; cf CW1, Introduction, xxxvii-xxxix. There is less doubt, however, about *Utopia* and its composition. It was begun some time in 1514 and completed by early September, 1516 when More sent the manuscript to Erasmus; cf CW4, *Utopia*, (eds) Edward Surtz, SJ and J H Hexter, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965, Introduction, xv-xxiii.

⁸⁸ George M Logan (ed), *Utopia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 105; cf CW4, 235/7-8; J H Lupton (ed) *Utopia*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895, 293. Lupton puts ‘god’ in the singular. More’s writes *superos*.

with faith, hope and charity and humility.⁸⁹ Germain Marc'hadour notes this and states that God's commands, the theological virtues and 'humility and the fear of God constitute an ideal so high that nothing can be added to it'.⁹⁰ However Marc'hadour does not expand on his observation, particularly in relation to the fear of God. The quotation from More, along with Marc'hadour's comment, reveals that fear operates not only as a restraint from sin, but as an important and positive impetus to virtue. This cautionary aspect of fear both confirms the frailty of man and his total dependence upon God.

Fear can therefore be understood as a consequence of sin but it also acts as a restraint from sin; however, overmuch fear can lead to scrupulosity. The fear of falling must not lead to too much fear which is 'perilouse, & draweth toward the mistrust of godes gracious helpe'.⁹¹ It leads those with a scrupulous conscience to have twice the fear that they should have, and sometimes to be afraid where there is no cause.⁹² More cautions them 'let them be well ware as I said, that the devil for werines of the tone, draw them not into the tother, & while he wold fle fro *scilla* dreve hym into *charibdis*',⁹³ but his advice is entirely practical and compassionate. The man should seek the assistance of someone known for his learning and virtue, and especially in the sacrament of confession where God will quieten his mind. The scrupulous person needs to be shown that 'he not onely fereth more than he nedeth, but also fereth where he nedeth not'⁹⁴ although ultimately it is a question of hope. The sufferer should follow the advice he is given and should 'thinke for a while lesse of the fere of godes iustice, & be more mery in remembraunce of his mercie, & percever in prayour for grace, & abyde & dwell faythfully in the sure hope of his helpe'.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, More warns that however

⁸⁹ CW15, *Letter to a Monk*, 281; cf Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *St Thomas More: Selected Letters*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961, 130; it is dated c1519-1520. cf Prov 22.4; *Imitation*, Bk III, Ch 15, No 2.

⁹⁰ Germain Marc'hadour, 'Thomas More's Spirituality' in *St Thomas More: Action and Contemplation*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for St John's University, 1972, 143.

⁹¹ CW12, 162/7.

⁹² cf CW12, 113/10-11.

⁹³ CW12, 120/10-12. Scylla, from Greek myth, originally human but turned into a monster with six heads, who lived in a cave by the Straits of Messina between Sicily and Italy. Opposite was Charybdis, the whirlpool. Sailors had to avoid being eaten by Scylla or being caught in the whirlpool. To be 'between Scylla and Charybdis' is to be between two dangerous or impossible situations; cf *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, (ed) M C Howatson, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed, 1989; cf Homer's *Odyssey*, (trans) Walter Shrewing, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980, Ch 12. [werines: weariness; wold: would; fle: flee; fro: from; dreve: drive; scilla: Scylla; charibdis: Charybdis]

⁹⁴ CW12, 153/8-9. [fereth: fears; nedeth: needs]

⁹⁵ CW12, 121/20-22; cf CW12, 121/14-26. [iustice: justice; mery: merry; remembraunce: remembrance; mercie: mercy; percever: persevere; prayour: prayer; abyde: abide; faythfully: faithfully]

painful and troublesome a scrupulous conscience is to the sufferer, ultimately it does less harm than a lax conscience that bends itself to every personal whim.⁹⁶

Fear also acts as a corrective for those who ‘by fere & force begynne a good thyng in trouble and aduersyte, fall after by grace encreased, into the loue of y^e goodnes whyche in theyr wanton welth they hated, for vexacyon giveth vnderstandynge, and the begynnyng of wysdome is the feare of god’.⁹⁷ Trouble and adversity make men turn to God, for ‘fear of danger makes us grow fervent in prayer when prosperity has made us cold, especially when it is a question of bodily danger – for most of us are not very warmly concerned about the danger to our souls’.⁹⁸ But it is all a question of balance, for either too much fear or too little fear are both to be avoided, especially with regard to religious devotion. More explains this ‘For as yt is a vyce & some fawte to be in the seruyce of god superstycouse in stede of religyouse, ouer dredefull & scrupulous in stede of deuoute & dylygent, so ys yt a mych more fawte to be theryn recheless & neglygent. For accursed ys he as holy scripture sayth, y^t doth the work of god neglygently’.⁹⁹ The danger is that in matters of religion too much fear and scrupulosity can be the work of the devil with the intention of creating such weariness that a man will abandon all his prayers,¹⁰⁰ or even into the worse fault of ‘a false spirituall libertie’.¹⁰¹

The answer to these two extremes is moderate fear. Moderate fear should lead to the recognition of man’s frailty and sinfulness. Such fear must not lead to scrupulosity and should be countered with hope and the help of God’s grace. Moderate fear is also salutary helping us to appreciate our weakness and dependence on God. More observes that the fear of falling is painful to good men who fear God.¹⁰² In *A Dialogue of Comfort* More connects the prophet’s counsel that ‘well done it is to stand in moderate feare always wherof the scripture sayth: *Beatus homo qui semper est pauidus*: Blessid is the man that is alway ferefull’,¹⁰³ with

⁹⁶ cf CW12, 119/31-120/6.

⁹⁷ CW8, 955/25-30. cf nn141 & 150 below; Ch 4, n7. [begynne: begin; aduersyte: adversity; encreased: increased; goodnes: goodness; whyche: which; wanton: undisciplined, foolish, frivolous; welth: prosperity; vexacyon: trouble, vexation; vnderstandynge: understanding; wysdome: wisdom]

⁹⁸ CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, 215/7-10; cf CW12, 20/5-14.

⁹⁹ CW6, 259/8-13; cf Jer 48.10. [fawte: fault, seruyce: service; superstycouse: superstitious; in stede: instead; religyouse: devout; ouer: over; deuoute: devout; dylygent: diligent; ys: is; mych more: much greater; theryn: therein; recheless: reckless; neglygent: negligent; scripture: scripture; sayth: says; neglygently: negligently]

¹⁰⁰ cf CW6, 257/25-258/2; CW12, 113/26-29; CW8, 149/6-12 & 426/3-4.

¹⁰¹ CW12, 114/8-9. [libertie: liberty]

¹⁰² cf Prov 28.14; cf CW12, 51/15-16, 27-28.

¹⁰³ CW12, 162/3-5; Prov 28.14. [wherof: whereof; blessid: blessed; alway: always; ferefull: fearful]

St Paul's words that '*Qui stat videat ne cadat*, 'he that standeth, let hym loke that he fall not'.¹⁰⁴ Here More notes the dangers of 'the mistrust of godes gracious helpe'¹⁰⁵ and 'immoderate fere and faynt hart'¹⁰⁶ which is forbidden by the scriptural injunction *Noli esse pusillanimis*,¹⁰⁷ rendered by More as 'be not feble hartid or timerouse'.¹⁰⁸ More's interpretation reflects the *Imitation*: 'For, indeed, the man that lays aside the fear of God, will not be able to persevere in good, but will very soon fall into the snares of the devil'¹⁰⁹.

It is not only fear that is necessary, but fear combined with hope and a strong faith. The fear that comes from faith produces an impetus to virtue and combines the discouragement of sin with the encouragement of virtue. The fear that results from faith also necessarily encompasses hope and love, which links fear to the three theological virtues. More, in his *Letter to a Monk*, exhorts his correspondent that it is necessary to 'live not without hope but yet always in fear, not just of falling hereafter,... but of having fallen long before now,...'¹¹⁰ In this letter More combines fear and hope with a realistic appreciation of human frailty. Faith alone, however strong, will never overcome a predilection to sin.¹¹¹ The reason lies in the fact that 'fayth or byleue ys not contrary to eury synne',¹¹² as the sin of both Adam and king David demonstrate. For 'Adam byleued the wordys of god, & yet he brake hys commaundement. And I thynke that kyng Dauyd fell not from his fayth though he fell fyrst in adoutry and efte in manslaughter'.¹¹³ While faith and sin are therefore to some extent compatible,¹¹⁴ only fear and love together are able to overcome sin and encourage virtue. Hope and fear should be correctly balanced so that, as Bishop John Fisher says, with sinners

¹⁰⁴ CW12, 162/5-6; cf 1 Cor 10.12; Prov 28.14. cf n83 above; Ch 2, n8; Ch 4, nn144 & 145; Ch 6, n70. 1 Cor 10.12: 'Wherefore, he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall'. This is a verse that More uses in both his polemical and devotional works as well as his correspondence; cf CW8, 430/34-36 & 438/10-11; CW11, 86/16-19; CW12, 162/5-6; CW15, *In Defense of Humanism: Letters to Dorp, Oxford, Lee, and a Monk*, (ed) Daniel Kinney, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986; cf *Letter to a Monk*, 300/20, 301. Bishop Fisher uses this biblical verse at least twice; the first time in his sermon on Ps 129 in which he links it to the first two verses: *De profundis clamaui ad te domine: domine exaudi vocem meam* [Out of the depths I have cried to thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice] cf *EW*, 208/32-209/1; Fisher's second instance is in his Sermon for the Funeral of King Henry VII where he links it to the necessity of dying in a state of grace and the dangers of presumption: cf *EW*, 286/24-28. [loke: look]

¹⁰⁵ CW12, 162/7.

¹⁰⁶ CW12, 162/8. [faynt: faint]

¹⁰⁷ Ecclus 7.9: Be not fainthearted in thy mind.

¹⁰⁸ CW12, 162/9. [feble: feeble, weak; hartid: hearted; timerouse: timorous]

¹⁰⁹ *Imitation*, Bk I, Ch 24, No 7. cf nn53, 62 & 63 above; Ch2, n244; Ch 4, n159.

¹¹⁰ CW15, *Letter to a Monk*, 301; cf 1 Cor 10.12; Rogers, *SL*, 140.

¹¹¹ cf CW6, 393/35-394/6.

¹¹² cf CW6, 393/22. [byleue: belief; synne: sin]

¹¹³ CW6, 394/14-18; Gen 3.6. cf Ch 2, n299. [byleued: believed; wordys: words; brake: broke; kyng: king; Dauyd: David; fyrst: first; adoutry: adultery; efte: afterwards]

¹¹⁴ cf CW6, 393/23: More gives two exceptions to this: infidelity and lack of belief.

‘whan hope is myxed with drede and drede with hope, so that by ouermoche hope of forgyuenes the mynde be not lyft vp in to presumpcyon, & by ouer moche fere it be not put downe in to dyspayre’.¹¹⁵

Thus fear (or dread) needs to be balanced with hope. In his first letter to his nephew, Gianfrancesco, Pico describes fear and love as two ‘spurrys’ urging us on in this short earthly life to the goal of ‘eternal felicitie’.¹¹⁶ His second letter concerns the temptations of the world, the avoidance of sin, virtuous living and the necessity of prayer, fear and love are again found together in the valedictory phrase ‘Farewell and loue god whom of olde thou hast begonne to fere’.¹¹⁷ More makes this connection between hope and dread or fear in his earliest writings based on Pico’s short list of the *Twelve Properties of a Lover*.¹¹⁸ These verses are invented by More; each property consists of two verses, the first addressed to a human lover and the second to the lover of God. In the eleventh property, the heart of the earthly lover veers between ‘plesaunt hope now drede and greuouse fere’ which is contrasted with ‘parfite blis ... bittir sorow’ and ‘very Ioy’ when the happy pair are together.¹¹⁹ This is contrasted with ‘aduersite’ when they are apart.¹²⁰ Likewise the heart that loves God feels in his breast ‘inward gladnes of plesant contemplation’ and can experience both tears of joy and delight, but like the earthly lover, when God departs there are tears of ‘paine & woo’.¹²¹ Here More’s verse echoes of St Bernard, who observes in *On Loving God*, ‘Love is never without fear, but it is godly fear’.¹²² Love and fear are therefore closely linked and should operate in harmony.

¹¹⁵ *EW*, 114/15-19, Sermon on Ps 50, the fourth penitential psalms. cf Ch 2, n240. [myxed: mixed; ouermoche: too much, excessive; forgyuenes: forgiveness; mynde: mind; lyft: lifted; vp: up; presumpcyon: presumption]

¹¹⁶ *CW1*, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/17, 19. cf nn123 & 171 below; Introduction, n49; Ch 5, n56; Ch 9, n24.

¹¹⁷ *CW1*, Pico’s *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 93/27-28. Pico ends his first letter with the valediction: ‘Farewel and fere god’; cf *CW1*, 84/21. [begonne: begun]

¹¹⁸ *CW1*, *Twelve Properties of a Lover*, 113/11-26; cf *CW1*, xlix, Introduction, by Anthony S G Edwards.

¹¹⁹ *CW1*, *Twelve Properties*, 118/30-119/4. [plesaunt: pleasant; greuouse: grievous, burdensome; parfite: perfect; blis: bliss; bittir: bitter; sorow: sorrow; Ioy: joy]

¹²⁰ *CW1*, *Twelve Properties*, 119/5 [aduersite: adversity]

¹²¹ *CW1*, *Twelve Properties*, 119/9-12. cf Ch 8, n178. [gladnes: gladness; plesant: pleasant; paine: pain; woo: woe]

¹²² St Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God (De Diligendo Deo)*, Ch XIV; made available to the net by Paul Halsall, Halsall@Murray.Fordham.edu, accessed 26/2/2016. More appears not to have quoted from this work, although he does quote from St Bernard on a number of occasions.

Fear and hope also go together.¹²³ Hope in both God's help and God's grace is particularly evident in *A Dialogue of Comfort*; it is necessary never to cease to call for God for his help, for by doing so, God will give us the grace that is needed. The man who gains God's help is he who 'dwellith in the help of the hiest god' and who will also 'abide in the proteccion or defence of the god of hevyn'.¹²⁴ Who can do this and how is it done? It is the man with a good faith, who abides in trust and confidence of God's help and never ceases either to hope or to ask for it and then he will always have God's protection.¹²⁵ Never ceasing to hope with a steadfast faith,¹²⁶ he shall abide in the protection and safeguard of God of heaven.¹²⁷ Here More, writing in the Tower, weaves together fear, hope and God's protection to present the biblical concept found in the psalms: 'They that fear the Lord have hoped in the Lord: he is their helper and their protector'.¹²⁸ He states the result that then 'the trouth of god shall so compasse that man round about ... with a pavice that dwellith in the faythfull hope of his helpe'.¹²⁹ This 'pavice' or shield of God, which will encompass all who cry to him is no ordinary shield for unlike worldly shields which can defend only part of a man leaving him exposed to injury elsewhere, this shield encloses a man so completely that the enemy is unable to hurt his soul: it is nothing less than our Saviour Christ Himself.¹³⁰

While either too much or too little fear can lead a man astray, both fear and hope can also be sinful. In *A Devout Prayer*, composed by More between his condemnation and execution, he asks God to remove both.¹³¹ In the following sentence More's petition is that 'concernyng such feare, such sorow, suche heauinesse, such comfort, consolacion, & gladnesse, as shall be profitable for my soule'¹³² that He does with him [More] according to His great goodness.¹³³

¹²³ cf CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/14-19. John Fisher who borrows the simile of two millstones which grind flour from St Gregory. One without the other is useless, cf *EW*, 114/7-9; cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'More and Fisher: a note' in *Humanism, Reform and the Reformation: The Career of Bishop John Fisher*, (eds) Brendan Bradshaw & Eamon Duffy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 105. cf n116 above, n171 below; Introduction, nn49; Ch 9, n23.

¹²⁴ CW12, 102/27-103/2; this is taken from Ps 90.1. This psalm provides a framework for much of *A Dialogue of Comfort* against the temptations, tribulations and fears that the two protagonists, Antony and Vincent are attempting to confront. [hiest: highest; proteccion: protection]

¹²⁵ cf CW12, 103/2-6 & 121/21-22 & 166/13-15.

¹²⁶ cf CW12, 103/8-11.

¹²⁷ cf CW12, 166/14-15.

¹²⁸ Ps 113.11.

¹²⁹ CW12, 200/26-28; cf CW12, 106/14-18 & 107/14-14 & 112/13-14 & 121/23-24 & 156/30-31 & 186/18-20 & 244/13-15 & 248/2-3 & 316/3-4. [trouth: truth; compasse: encompass, surround]

¹³⁰ cf CW12, 105/24-106/16 & 108/15-19.

¹³¹ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 228-231, 229/14-15.

¹³² CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 229/15-19. cf n165 below. [heauinesse: sorrow, grief; consolacion: consolation; gladnesse: gladness]

¹³³ cf Ps 118.124.

More's fear and hope are like a carefully woven tapestry, intertwined with mercy, justice and a complete trust in the goodness and fidelity of God.

More views the fear of God as positive, as well as necessary for many benefits and blessings, both spiritual and practical, flow from it. These positive and beneficial consequences include salvation, wisdom, compassion along with mercy and justice as well as rejoicing. These positive benefits also covers the protection of God from want, and this allow for both spiritual or practical interpretations. As Dean Colet writes 'God is thy helper, thy refuge, and thy deliuerer from all yuell'.¹³⁴

Salvation is the most important consequence and benefit of fear: it is also the result of seeking God. The connection between salvation and fear is found in St Paul's admonition to the Philippians that they should 'with fear and trembling work your own salvation'.¹³⁵ St Paul connects his own frailty with fear and trembling and with his intention of revealing in his preaching of Christ crucified, not wisdom or persuasiveness, but the power of God.¹³⁶ This power of God, observes St Paul later, is made perfect through man's infirmity.¹³⁷ Salvation is the goal for both St Paul and More and as such is of primary importance that it requires the utmost seriousness and care. Being eternal it cannot be overestimated. According to Walter Hilton, fear is necessary in order to find God, and therefore salvation. In his *Scale of Perfection*, he employs the parable of the lost coin to illustrate how to seek Jesus.¹³⁸ It is necessary to 'sweep your soul clean with the broom of the fear of God,... and so you will find this coin Jesus'.¹³⁹

Wisdom is a beneficial consequence of fear. It is found in the biblical injunction 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' which occurs some seven times in the Old

¹³⁴ J H Lupton, *Life of Dean Colet*, London: George Bell and Sons, 1909, Appendix D: 'A Ryght fruitfull monicion', 306. [deliuerer: deliverer]

¹³⁵ Phil 2.12; cf CW8, 840/31-32.

¹³⁶ cf 1 Cor 2.2-3; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 79/5-7.

¹³⁷ 2 Cor 12.9. St Paul also uses fear and trembling in relation to servants being obedient to their earthly masters, as they should to Christ, Eph 6.5.

¹³⁸ cf Lk 15.8-9.

¹³⁹ Hilton, Bk 1, Ch 48, 121. Hilton's *Scale* is one of three works recommended by More as 'englysshe books as moste may norysse and encrease deuocyon'; cf CW8, 37/29. The others are the *Imitation of Christ* and Bonaventure's *Life of Christ*. *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* was published in two parts in the spring of 1532 (Preface and Books I-III) and the remainder (Books IV-VIII) in the early months of 1533, cf CW8, 1419. cf Introduction, n166; Ch 6, n207; Ch 8, nn158 & 197.

Testament,¹⁴⁰ although More uses it just once.¹⁴¹ Biblical references ally fear and wisdom to prudence,¹⁴² humility,¹⁴³ discipline¹⁴⁴ and was created with them in the womb.¹⁴⁵ Scripture also notes that the fear of God does not only give wisdom but is wisdom,¹⁴⁶ and that while the fruit of wisdom is fear,¹⁴⁷ ‘fools despise wisdom and instruction’.¹⁴⁸ The connection of fear and wisdom is also discovered in the Book of Job; God ‘said to man: Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. And to depart from evil is understanding’.¹⁴⁹ Here again fear of the Lord is linked with the avoidance of evil (or sin), and leads to understanding. More’s spiritual adviser, Dean John Colet tells why the wisdom that flows from fear provides a reminder of God’s power. Colet writes ‘also it is wysdom to feare God’ for He instructs us to do so and He has the power to kill both the body and soul, while men are able only to kill the body.¹⁵⁰ This connects fear as the beginning of wisdom with the prophet’s statement that the name of God is ‘holy and terrible’.¹⁵¹ This connection of fear and wisdom, with turning away from sin and its consequences is reflected in the biblical verse ‘Blessed is the man that is always fearful: but he that is hardened in mind shall fall into evil’.¹⁵²

Spiritual benefits include the compassion, mercy and justice of God which are drawn to those who fear Him. The psalms provide examples linking compassion and mercy towards those who fear the Lord, although mercy predominates. This connection is particularly evident in Psalm 32 which connects fear and mercy for ‘Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him: and on them that hope in his mercy’.¹⁵³ This verse is highlighted by More in his Psalter with a marginal line and is also found in his *Imploratio*.¹⁵⁴ A further example is found in Psalm 102 which says God ‘hath strengthened his mercy towards them that fear him. ...As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him:

¹⁴⁰ Ps 110.10; Prov 1.7; 9.10; 15.33; Eccles (Sir) 1.16; 1.34; 19.18.

¹⁴¹ cf CW8, 955/29-30; More uses it only once, reversing it to read ‘the begynnyng of wysdome is the feare of god’. cf n97 above; n150 below; Ch 4, n7.

¹⁴² Prov 9.10.

¹⁴³ Prov 15.33; cf Ps 22.4.

¹⁴⁴ Eccles 1.34.

¹⁴⁵ Eccles 1.16.

¹⁴⁶ Eccles 19.18.

¹⁴⁷ Eccles 24.24.

¹⁴⁸ Prov 1.7.

¹⁴⁹ Job 28.28.

¹⁵⁰ Lupton, *Colet*, 309. cf nn97 & 141 above; Ch 4, n7. [wysdom: wisdom]

¹⁵¹ Ps 110.9-10. These two verses are annotated in More’s Psalter with a double flag. Psalm 110 was also recited at Vespers on Sundays; cf *The Psalter or Seven ordinary Hours of Prayer according to the use of The Illustrious & Excellent Church of Sarum*, London: Joseph Masters, 1852, 277. cf Ch 4, n7.

¹⁵² Prov 28.14.

¹⁵³ Ps 32.18.

¹⁵⁴ cf *TMPB*, 64, CW13, *Imploratio*, 219/11-12.

for he knoweth our frame. ... But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity and unto eternity, upon them that fear him. And his justice unto children's children'.¹⁵⁵ More writes *miser cordia dei* next to the first verse and a marginal line continues to the end of the psalm.¹⁵⁶ In this psalm not only is mercy connected to fear, but also with justice, not just for the living, but also for those yet unborn. Mercy is also connected with fear in the New Testament. During the visitation of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth, she praises God in the *Magnificat*: 'And his mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear him'.¹⁵⁷ God does not promise mercy unconditionally, but to those who fear him, those who recognize his majesty, his power and his justice. Although More does not appear to have used this particular verse, it would have been familiar to him from the Liturgies of Maunday Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil; the *Magnificat* was also sung daily at Vespers.¹⁵⁸

Rejoicing is also the result of fear; again, as the psalmist says 'Conduct me, O Lord, in thy way, and I will walk in thy truth; let my heart rejoice that it may fear thy name'.¹⁵⁹ This verse brings together a number of different ideas. While the psalmist asks God to show him the way, it is in order to walk in his truth, for 'the Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?'¹⁶⁰ The result of this is rejoicing, but such rejoicing leads to and is connected with fear. More paraphrases the first part of the verse in the Tower as 'Lead me along your path'.¹⁶¹ He precedes this quotation with another: 'Take my right hand' which he annotates in his psalter with the words *evandens tentationem*.¹⁶² Thus More recognizes that his desire to follow Christ requires help from Christ. In his final Tower work, *A Devout Prayer*, he paraphrases the verse, conflating it with part of 'set me, O Lord, a law in thy way, and guide me in the

¹⁵⁵ Ps 102.11, 13, 17. Bishop John Fisher takes up the same theme in his sermon on Ps 50: 'The mercy of god is without ende on them that dredeth hym,...'; cf *EW*, Sermon on Ps 37, 96/16-17; cf Lk 1.50, n157 below.

¹⁵⁶ cf *TMPB*, 164, 201.

¹⁵⁷ Lk 1.50.

¹⁵⁸ For Maunday Thursday, cf Dickinson, col 307-308; Warren, Vol 1, 244; for Good Friday, cf Dickinson, col 332; Warren, Vol 1, 263; for the Easter Vigil, cf Dickinson, col 357; Warren, Vol 1, 288. For Vespers, cf *The Psalter or Seven ordinary Hours of Prayer according to the use of The Illustrious & Excellent Church of Sarum*; for Sunday, 281; Monday, 289; Tuesday, 303; Wednesday, 306; Thursday, 312; Friday, 317; and Saturday, 326.

¹⁵⁹ Ps 85.11.

¹⁶⁰ Ps 26.1; cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 217/25-27; *TMPB*, 54, 192. More seems not to have used this in his works, but it appears in the Liturgy on several occasions. It appears as the Psalm for the Tuesday after the second Sunday in Lent, cf Dickinson, col 175; Warren, I, 175; it appears again in the same context for the Tuesday after the fifth Sunday in Lent, cf Dickinson, col 240; Warren, I, 209. It also appears in the same context for the Sunday after Ascension Day, cf Dickinson, col 415, Warren, I, 332; and again, this time as the Office for the fourth Sunday after Trinity, cf Dickinson, col 469; Warren, I, 370; and finally as the Psalm for the fifth Sunday after Trinity, cf Dickinson, col 473; Warren, I, 372. cf n159 & 178 below.

¹⁶¹ cf Ps 26.1. cf n160 above; n178 below.

¹⁶² evading temptation; cf Ps 72.24; *TMPB*, 123.

right path, because of my enemies'.¹⁶³ More writes *Apprehende manum meam dexteram, & deduc me in via recta proper inimicos meos*.¹⁶⁴ Reverting to English, More then asks for the removal of 'all sinnefull feare' but accepts 'such feare,... as shall be profitable for my soule'.¹⁶⁵

Further blessings derived from fear include practical benefits as well as spiritual ones. The psalmist tells us that such practical consequences are found in protection of God and a lack of want. Two consecutive psalms illustrate this. The first is 'Behold the eyes of the Lord are on them that fear him: and on them that hope in his mercy. To deliver their souls from death and feed them in famine'.¹⁶⁶ Fear of the Lord leads directly to the application of mercy resulting in both spiritual and practical benefits, delivering their souls from death is their deliverance not only from death in this life (which inevitably comes sooner or later) but from eternal death in hell, while food in time of famine preserves their mortal bodies. The second psalm is similar: 'The angel of the Lord shall encamp roundabout them that fear him: and shall deliver them'.¹⁶⁷ 'Fear the Lord, all ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him', which can be regarded either from a temporal or spiritual angle.¹⁶⁸ This allows for both practical and spiritual interpretations; while the angel will rescue them from earthly troubles, it also allows for a spiritual interpretation of deliverance from spiritual foes. 'Want' can encompass either physical or spiritual needs. These verses from both psalms appear in More's *Imploratio* while his psalter has marginal lines penned against them.¹⁶⁹

More, like Pico, views the fear of God, combined with love, as positive. In his first letter to Gianfrancesco, he reminds him that the time will come when God will send each soul either to hell or heaven, and ask Gianfrancesco 'whi is ther no thing then y^t we lesse fere then hell or y^t we lesse hope for, then the kingdom of god'?¹⁷⁰ Later in the same letter, Pico warns his nephew that he should never forget two things: that God died for him and that he shall die soon no matter how long he lives.¹⁷¹ Here Pico employs the typical medieval theme of the

¹⁶³ Ps 26.11: 'Set me, O Lord, a law in thy way, and guide me in the right path, because of my enemies'.

¹⁶⁴ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 229/11-12.

¹⁶⁵ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 229/14, 16-18. cf n132 above. [sinnefull: sinful]

¹⁶⁶ Ps 32.18-19; cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 219/11-13.

¹⁶⁷ Ps 33.8; cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 219/22.

¹⁶⁸ Ps 33.10; cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 219/25-26; cf Ecclus 40.27.

¹⁶⁹ cf *TMPB*, 64, 65.

¹⁷⁰ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/15-17. cf Ch 4, n32. [whi: why; ther: there]

¹⁷¹ cf CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/13-16. cf nn116 & 123 above; Introduction, nn49; Ch 9, n23.

transitory nature of life that is so often found in More's works. Pico sets the opposing concepts of fear and love together, comparing them to 'spurs' to impel his nephew onwards through the transitory life of this world to eternal bliss in the next. These two realities of fear and love should act as 'two spurrys y^t one of fere y^t othir of loue spurre forth thin hors throw the short waye of this momentary life to y^e reward of eternall felicite sith we neither ought nor may prefix our selfe any othir ende than y^e endless fruition of y^e infinite goodnes both to sowle & body in euir lasting peace'.¹⁷² Such a motivation encompassing both fear and love as two 'spurs' acting in harmony reflects More's own goal, that of reaching the destination of heaven. Could Pico have either influenced the young More or was his choice of Pico merely reflecting his youthful ideas?¹⁷³

More's desire to walk in the way of the Lord expressed in these psalms, the annotation in his *Prayer Book* and in *A Devout Prayer* have another aspect. That is, obedience. The psalmist clearly links obedience and fear: 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord: he shall delight exceedingly in his commandments'.¹⁷⁴ While delight expresses the idea of deep contentment rather than rejoicing, it is clear that this contentment is closely related to obedience. 'Blessed are all they that fear the Lord: that walk in his ways'¹⁷⁵ reflects the same theme of fear and obedience. More does not appear to use these verses, but the latter is used liturgically in the blessing of a woman after childbirth before the church porch.¹⁷⁶ As More fathered four children, he would have heard and prayed this psalm, indeed verse three speaks of the fruitful wife and children around the table and it continues that in this way will the man who fears the Lord be blessed.¹⁷⁷ Fearing the Lord does not just have spiritual rewards such as salvation, but also practical ones in this life.

There is another, opposite angle to fear, a kind of anti-fear, namely trust. This is illustrated by three examples from the psalms. All are included in More's *Imploratio*; two have *fiducia* as an annotation in his psalter, while the final one has a marginal line against it. The first reads:

¹⁷² CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/17-21. cf n123 above. [felicite: felicity, blessedness, happiness; sith: since; our selfe: ourselves; fruition: enjoyment, pleasurable possession; sowle: soul; euir: ever]

¹⁷³ For Pico's influence on More, cf Introduction, n47.

¹⁷⁴ Ps 111.1.

¹⁷⁵ Ps 127.1.

¹⁷⁶ cf Dickinson, col 849*; Warren, Vol II, 164. Ps 127.2-6 is concerned with the blessings that follow from fearing the Lord and walking in his ways, including benefits from 'the labour of thy hands' and the blessings of children.

¹⁷⁷ Ps 127.3-4: Thy wife as a fruitful vine, on the sides of thy house. Thy children as olive plants, round about thy table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.

‘For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me’,¹⁷⁸ while the second echoes it: ‘The Lord is my light and my salvation: Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life: Of whom shall I be afraid?’¹⁷⁹ More’s choice of marginalia, *fiducia*, accurately reflects both verses, especially the latter; it is also the motto of Oxford University, where More studied.¹⁸⁰ The final example in this trio, annotated with a marginal line in the psalter, is ‘If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear’.¹⁸¹ This likewise resonates with trust, but it also reflects More’s perception that he is engaged in a battle, albeit a spiritual one. This is confirmed by two biblical quotations that More uses in his Tower works, *A Dialogue of Comfort* and *De Tristitia Christi*. Both examples are taken from the New Testament, and both concern his confrontation with the forces of evil and the devil. St Paul notes that the fight is not merely against our own weakness, but ‘against the spirits of wickedness in the high places’.¹⁸² The Apocalypse, used by More in two different places, lays the blame even more directly against the devil himself, exhorting: ‘Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold the devil will cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried:... Be thou faithful unto death: and I will give thee the crown of life’.¹⁸³ More is clear: we must not give way to despair for faithfulness and trust leads to eternal bliss. Given this understanding, it is no wonder that he annotated the two verses from the psalms containing ‘I will fear no evils, for thou art with me’ and ‘The Lord is the protector of my life: Of whom shall I be afraid?’ with the word *fiducia*.¹⁸⁴ Besides a lack of fear which results in trust, More indicates further blessings in his annotation of *consolatio spiritus in tribulatione* against the verse: ‘O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee!’¹⁸⁵

There is one further fear found in More’s works concerning the fear of God. It is more accurately awe and intense respect than fear and it touches More’s profound spirituality and deep love of God in an extremely personal way. It concerns the real presence of Christ found

¹⁷⁸ Ps 22.4; cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 217/7-8; *TMPB*, 51, 192. More seems not to have used this in his works, but it was the Gradual for the Mass of the Saturday in the third week of Lent, cf Dickinson, col 211; Warren, I, 192.

¹⁷⁹ Ps 26.1. cf n160 above.

¹⁸⁰ cf Germain Marc’hadour & Jocelyne Malhomme (eds), *Praying with Thomas More*, Angers: Amici Thomæ Mori, 1998, 14-15.

¹⁸¹ Ps 26.3; cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 217/28; *TMPB*, 54, 192. Again this verse does not seem to have been used by More, but like the others, it appears in the Liturgy as the Psalm for the fourth Sunday after Trinity, cf Dickinson, col 469; Warren, I, 371.

¹⁸² Eph 6.12; cf CW12, 101/19-22 & 317/23-24; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 545/4-7. cf Ch 3, nn28, 44 & 46.

¹⁸³ Apoc 2.10; cf CW12, 309/15-17 & 317/19-21.

¹⁸⁴ Ps 22.4; Ps 26.1.

¹⁸⁵ Ps 30.20; cf *TMPB*, 60, 193. It is also to be found in his *Imploratio*, cf CW13, 219/9-10.

in the Blessed Sacrament. He writes of the ‘great dred and reuerence’ and of the purity required to approach ‘the boorde of God’.¹⁸⁶ While He is with us ‘let all our businesse be about him. Let vs by deuout prayer talke to him, by deuout meditacion talke with him’.¹⁸⁷ More writes of Holy Communion as ‘a speciall time of prayer’ for God is our guest and ‘he that hath made vs, he that hath bought vs, he whom we haue offended, he that shall iudge vs, he that shall either damne vs or saue vs, is of hys gret goodnes become our geast, and is personallie present within vs, & that for none other purpose, but to be sewed vnto for pardon, & so thereby to saue vs’.¹⁸⁸ More warns not to neglect or waste this precious time for no one can know if this opportunity will come again.¹⁸⁹ Such fear and awe comes from the realization ‘of our own vnwoorthnesse’ which should prompt ‘the gret reuerence, feare and drede for our owne part, lette vs not forgeatte on the tother side to consider his inestimable goodnesse, which disdeigneth not for all our vnwoorthnesse, to come vnto vs, and to be receiued of vs’.¹⁹⁰ During this time of visitation, ‘let vs endeuer our sel to kepe him still, & let vs say with hys .ij. disciples that wer going to the castel of Emaus: *Mane nobiscum domine*, Tarye with vs good lord, & then shall we be sure, that he wil not go from vs, but if we vnkindly put him from vs’.¹⁹¹ The last of the twelve Collects that intersperse *A Treatise upon the Passion* includes a petition addressed to ‘Oure mooste deare Sauioure Christe’ which asks, in relation to the Blessed Sacrament, for ‘suche true fayth therein, and suche feruent deuocion thereto, that our soules may take fruitfull gostlye foode thereby’.¹⁹² It would seem highly likely that this reflects More’s own prayer.

The fear of God should end in the love of God. The love of God is found throughout More’s works; it appears at the very end of the first of his extant writings. The last stanza of his *Pageant Verses*, entitled ‘The Poet’ ends with an exhortation to focus upon God and salvation and to ‘put no confidence hereafter in trivialities, no hope in transitory advantage; offer your prayers to the everlasting God, who will grant us the gift of eternal life’.¹⁹³ Another early

¹⁸⁶ ie Holy Communion. cf CW13, *A Treatise on the Blessed Body*, 193/7-9. [dred: dread; boorde: board, table]

¹⁸⁷ CW13, *The Blessed Body*, 201/22-23. [vs: us; meditacion: meditation]

¹⁸⁸ CW13, 202/7 & 8-12. [sauue: save; gret: great; geast: guest; sewed: sued]

¹⁸⁹ cf CW13, 202/12-14.

¹⁹⁰ CW13, *The Blessed Body*, 199/22, 23-26; cf CW13, *The Blessed Body*, 200/2-7. [vnwoorthnesse: unworthiness; lette: let; forgeatte: forget; disdeigneth: disdains; receiued of: received by]

¹⁹¹ CW13, *The Blessed Body*, 202/14-19; Lk 24.29. [endeuor: endeavour; our sel: ourselves; .ij.: two; wer: were; castel: castle; Emaus: Emmaus; tarye: tarry, stay; wil: will; but if: unless; vnkindly: ungratefully, heartlessly]

¹⁹² CW13, *Passion*, 136/25-30. [mooste: most; Sauioure: Saviour; therein: in it; feruent: burning, intense; deuocion: devotion; fruitfull: fruitful; gostlye: ghostly, spiritual; foode: nourishment]

¹⁹³ CW1, *Pageant Verses*, 6/109-7/120; CW3.2, Vol 3.2 *Latin Poems*, (eds) Clarence H Miller, Leicester Bradner, Charles A Lynch & Revilo P Oliver, 1984, 292-293. cf Ch 6, n98.

example of this concept is found in the two verses comprising the fourth property of Pico's *Twelve Properties of a Lover*, More compares what a human lover will endure for his love to what the lover of God will endure to see after death 'the heuenly light / And of his loue the glorious blessed sight'.¹⁹⁴ These early quotations on the love of God are reflected in his Tower writings. The most appropriate of these is the last prayer he wrote between his condemnation and execution 'Geue me good Lorde, a longing to be w^t the, not for thauoiding of the calamyties of this wretched world, nor so much for y^e auoiding of the paines of purgatory nor of the paines of hel neither, nor so much for the atteining of y^e ioyes of heauen, in respect of mine own commodity, as euen for a very loue to the.'¹⁹⁵

The fear of God, allied to the realization of God's power to send the soul to everlasting torment in hell, is the pivot of More's fears and therefore all the others are related to it, whether theological or personal. More's faithful combination of servile and filial fear, along with the trust and blessings that flow from such fear guided him throughout his life, but most especially in the Tower. His understanding that the fear of God leads to the love of God helps him to trust God, throughout his life, but especially during his imprisonment. The next chapter will examine the fear of sin which is derived directly from the fear of God.

¹⁹⁴ CW1, *Twelve Properties of a Lover*, 115/18-116/2. cf Ch 6, n99. [heuenly: heavenly]

¹⁹⁵ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 230/7-11. cf Ch 4, nn31 & 161; Ch 5, n88; Ch 9, n172. [geue; give; w^t: with; the: thee; thauoiding: avoiding; hel: hell; atteining: reaching; heauen: heaven; commodity: advantage, benefit; euen: just, exactly]

Chapter 2: Fear of Sin

More's fear of sin leads to and stems from his fear of hell. He writes 'who wolde synne... yf he byleued veryly & surely that synne sholde brynge hym to hell'?¹ Sin leads to hell and the soul's eternal separation from God and its ever-lasting sufferings and torments. Sin is disobedience to God and His commands. It is the second of the four types of death described by Erasmus and constitutes the separation of the soul from God.² There are two aspects of More's fear of sin that need to be explored. The first is his general fear of sin, both venial and mortal, and its consequences; the second is More's fear of sin on a personal level. These personal fears centre on the fear of pride, and the presumption that flows from it, and both are of particular concern to him. More's awareness of the universality of sin lead to his understanding of its dangers and consequences and his comments and perceptions concerning sin pervade all his works. His desire to avoid sin, and his perception of the difficulties, is found in his early letter to Dean John Colet, in which he writes: 'For in the city what is there to move one to live well? But rather, when a man is straining in his own power to climb the steep path of virtue, it turns him back by a thousand devices and sucks him back by its thousand enticements'.³ With a complete awareness that each day brings death and the ultimate destiny of heaven or hell closer, it is not surprising that More sets out his view of sin with starkness. More's reaction to sin stems from his desire to reach heaven by living a life of virtue and this demonstrates the positive effects of his fear.

No-one lives without sin,⁴ writes St John and 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us'.⁵ More explains that venial sins are 'of their nature such as no man long liveth without'.⁶ Although venial sin does not kill the soul,⁷ it is nevertheless

¹ CW6, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, (eds) Thomas M C Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour & Richard C Marius, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, 393/25-26. [brynge: bring; veryly: truly, verily]

² cf Erasmus, *De Praeparatione ad Mortem* (Preparing for Death), in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol 70, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 411.

³ Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961, 4. cf Ch 6, n4; Ch 8, n73; Ch 9, n2.

⁴ This applies to venial, not mortal, sin.

⁵ 1 Jn 1.8.

⁶ CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, (eds) Louis Martz & Frank Manley, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 113/13-14.

⁷ Bishop Fisher in the second of his *Two Fruitful Sermons* states that many small sins deform our souls and make them unworthy of God's presence, cf Cecilia A Hatt (ed), *English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester (1469-1535)*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 251.

an inevitable part of human frailty,⁸ and also due to ‘our wylfull fraylty and neglygence’.⁹ Even the righteous man falls seven times daily, but rises again.¹⁰ Bishop John Fisher, in the second of his *Two Fruitful Sermons*, is equally clear that, while venial sins do not kill the soul, they are those which ‘we dayly commit, without the whiche the fraylty can nat continue in this lyfe’.¹¹ He observes that while everyone, including saints, commits venial sin, but it is the saints who recognize the reality of their sin and are sorry for it.¹²

What does venial sin encompass? More includes ‘such symple & frayle and corruptible workes as can neuer enter heuen. And such be veniall synnys, as ydle wordys,¹³ vayne & wanton myrth, & such other thyngys lyke: whych be but lyke wood, hay, or straw’.¹⁴ More is clear that while ‘in many wordes lacketh not sinne’,¹⁵ neither is silence always virtuous for unless we ‘kepe oure mindes occupied wyth good thoughtes, or els the deuil will fill them with euill’.¹⁶ In *A Dialogue against Heresies*, More notes especially Christ’s warning that ‘we shall of euery ydyll worde gyue accompte at y^e day of iudgement’.¹⁷ More recognizes and acknowledges the extreme difficulty of such forbearance in speech, observing: ‘It is I trow more harde not to swere at all, than not to forswere, to forbere eche angry worde than

⁸ cf eg CW6, 394/6-11; CW8, *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, (eds) Louis A Schuster, Richard C Marius, James P Lusardi & Richard J Schoeck, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973, 445/5 & 965/7 & 965/16-17; CW10, *The Debellation of Salem and Bizance*, (eds) John Guy, Ralph Keen, Clarence H Miller & Ruth McGugan, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1985, 80/20-21. cf Ch 1, nn83 & 104; Ch 4, nn144 & 145; Ch 6, n70.

⁹ CW8, 965/20. [wylfull: wilful; neglygence: negligence]

¹⁰ cf CW6, 395/23-26; cf Prov 24.16; cf CW8, 844/36-845/1.

¹¹ cf Hatt, 250. Fisher refers to St Augustine’s comment that venial sins are those committed daily; cf Hatt, *Commentary*, 284. [nat: not]

¹² cf Hatt 250.

¹³ cf Matt 12.36; CW7, *The Supplication of Souls*, (eds) Frank Manley, Germain Marc’hadour, Richard Marius & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 187/27-30; cf 193/30-33; cf CW6, 105/35-106/1. Bishop Fisher provides a similar list of venial sins in the second of his *Two Fruitful Sermons* that includes excessive eating or drinking and idle words, failing to speak when we should for fear of displeasure, negligence in prayer, lacking in pity and compassion towards the poor, cosseting our bodies without cause, sloth in various forms, speaking more roughly than necessary and flattering more than is appropriate; cf Hatt, 250. Fisher’s sermon on Psalm 37 draws attention to the dangers of idle words and notes their dangers to both soul and body; cf John E B Mayor (ed), *English Words of John Fisher*, London: Early English Text Society, 1876, 75/26-30 [hereafter *EW*]. Finally, Fisher in his *Spiritual Consolation*, written in the Tower, again speaks of idle words, cf *EW*, 359/6-12. [frayle: frail, through moral weakness; heuen: heaven; veniall: venial; synnys: sins; ydle: idle]

¹⁴ CW7, *Supplication*, 187/27-30. For another example of More’s describing venial sin that in the fires of purgatory will ‘be consumed vp as wode, hey, and stubblys’; cf CW8, 968/31-33; cf CW8, 969/9-13. [vayne: useless, worthless, foolish; myrth: mirth; thyngys: things; lyke: like; whych: which]

¹⁵ CW1, *The Last Things*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1997, 136/16-17. [sinne: sin]

¹⁶ CW1, *Last Things*, 136/23-24; cf Prov 10.19; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 136/6-12. [occupied: occupied; els: else; deuil: devil; euill: evil]

¹⁷ CW6, 105/35-106/1; cf Matt 12.36. cf Ch 3, nn110 & 111; Ch 9, n168. [ydyll: idle; accompte: account]

not to kyll,...'¹⁸ He highlights the demands of such self-restraint, noting 'what an anxyete and solycytude is there in y^e forberyng of euery ydyll worde'.¹⁹ More's returns again to venial sin in his polemic against Tyndale, this time describing it as loving anything before God, including husband, wife, son or worldly possessions, if while we live or when we die, we cannot lose them 'without greate sorowe'.²⁰

Although venial sin is an inescapable consequence of human frailty, fear acts as a corrective for it, More claims, men would view venial sin as mortal, such 'drede therof coulde make menne vtterly forbere theym'.²¹ Fear acts as 'a brydyll & byte to refrayne and pull hym backe, leste he fall to myschyefe'²² and counteracts human wilfulness. It acts beneficially for it leads to greater diligence and fear of a greater evil leads to the profitable avoidance of a lesser one.²³ The opposite is also true that viewing some sins as being of lesser importance encourages negligence that can lead to committing to greater sins and falling into greater danger.²⁴ More writes that the devil uses all temptations 'to bring us 'to impaciencie & therby to murmur and grudge & blasphemye', thus setting out how the gradations of sin operate.²⁵ However, More notes the remedy. Venial sin may be purged through confession,²⁶ daily prayer²⁷ and good works,²⁸ including alms-giving,²⁹ fasting,³⁰ and especially those good

¹⁸ CW6, 105/28-30. [trow: believe; swere: swear; forswere: forswear; forbere: forbear; eche: each]

¹⁹ CW6, 105/31-32; cf Matt 12.36. [anxyete: anxiety; solycytude: anxious concern, particular attention; forberyng: forbearing]

²⁰ cf CW8, 968/16-19. [sorowe: sorrow]

²¹ CW10, 80/23-24. [menne: men; vtterly: utterly]

²² cf Ps 31.9, CW11, *The Answer to a Poisoned Book*, (eds) Stephen Merriam Foley & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1985, 94/8-9; cf CW11, 47/32-34; CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, (ed & trans) Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1976, 207/8-10; cf CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1976, 229/12-13 where More quotes Ps 31.9 in Latin as part of a prayer. For More's use of the bridle and bit failing to bring back the proud from their errors, cf CW6, 123/22 & CW13, *A Treatise upon The Passion*, 1976, 172/5-9. For More's example of the lax use of the bridle allowing the possibility of a man's hanging, cf CW7, *Supplication*, 199/35-200/3. For More's use of the bridle and bit to keep us from sin, cf CW12, 282/20-25; CW7, *Supplication*, 168/11-12; CW8, 451/23-24. cf Nicholas Harpsfield, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More*, (ed) E V Hitchcock, London: Early English Text Society, 1932, 84; Michael A Anderegg, 'Nicholas Harpsfield, Thomas More, and William Roper's Lapse into Heresy' in *Notes and Queries*, NS, Vol 23, 1976, 225-226. [brydyll & byte: bridle and bit; refrayne: refrain; myschyefe: evil, harm]

²³ cf CW10, 81/20-21.

²⁴ cf CW10, 79/39-80/4; CW10, 81/28-30.

²⁵ CW12, 103/19-20; cf CW6, 216/1-9. [impaciencie: impatience; murmur: grumble, express discontent; grudge: complain; blasphemye: blasphemy]

²⁶ cf CW8, 960/10.

²⁷ cf CW8, 960/16; prayer is included in good works, cf CW8, 581/5; cf n30 below; Ch 3, nn61 & 62.

²⁸ cf eg CW8, 66/20-21 & 210/35-37 & 686/24-25 & 970/13-16. More includes penitential works alongside other good works, cf eg CW8, 471/24-28.

²⁹ cf CW8, 581/5 & 633/34 & 686/27-28, cf Lk 11.41.

³⁰ cf CW8, 66/33 & 581/5 & 633/33. cf n27 above; Ch 3, nn61 & 62.

works done in faith, hope and charity.³¹ Forgiveness can also be obtained and sin purged by giving thanks to God for any loss (including the loss of family) and for the tribulations caused by venial sin.³² Otherwise such sin will be purged in the fires of purgatory.³³ If these remedies are applied, then the fires of purgatory ‘can fynde eyther no thyng or ryght lytell to burne’.³⁴

More views the punishment and cleansing fires of purgatory to be for those sins ‘as were eyther vennyall in the bygynnyng, or from mortall turned to vennyall by the forgyuenesse of the mortalyte’.³⁵ Although many men believe that they will endure great pain in purgatory, they still make little effort to overcome venial sin.³⁶ The pains of purgatory should not be taken lightly, although ‘some man wyll saye, I force not how longe I there abyde, so that I maye at the last go to the euerlastyng lyfe. Let no man say thys my moste welbeloued bretherne, for the fyre of purgatory is more sharpe then any payne y^t in thys worlde can be sene, or thought or felt’.³⁷ Bishop John Fisher also warns his congregation that the pains of purgatory are worse than any pain that can be endured in this life, warning them that from that ‘paynfull pryson... no man shall be delyueryd, tyll tyme he haue payd the vttermost ferthyng’.³⁸ Both More and Fisher describe the pains of purgatory as being the same as those of hell.³⁹ The only difference is that in due course those of purgatory will come to an end.⁴⁰ Purgatory is a prison where souls are ‘pore prisoners of god’.⁴¹ Souls are in this prison as a consequence of being in the bondage of sin.⁴² More also describes the devil as the gaoler of the soul in purgatory but only ‘for the time of his punicion temporal’.⁴³

³¹ cf CW8, 402/1-3; CW8, 410/1-3.

³² cf CW8, 968/15-16 & 968/23-24.

³³ cf CW8, 968/9-13.

³⁴ CW8, 968/28-29. [fynde: find; eyther: either; no thyng: nothing; ryght: very]

³⁵ CW8, 279/7-9; cf CW7, *Supplication*, 193/10-12; CW8, 289/6-9 & 540/27-30. [venyall: venial; bygynnyng: beginning; mortall: deadly, fatal; forgyuenesse: forgiveness; mortalyte: being in the state of mortal sin]

³⁶ CW10, 80/14-17.

³⁷ CW8, 968/33-38; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 129/31-130/2; Hatt, 234. [wyll: will; force: care, take heed of; welbeloued: well-beloved; bretherne: brethren; fyre: fire; payne: pain; thys: this; sene: seen]

³⁸ cf Hatt, Fisher’s *First Fruitful Sermon*, 237, 236; Matt 5.26. [paynfull: painful; pryson: prison; delyueryd: delivered; payd: paid; vttermost: utmost, very last; ferthyng: farthing]

³⁹ cf CW7, *Supplication*, 179/4 & 178/25; *EW*, Sermon on Ps 6, 10/22-28.

⁴⁰ cf CW7, *Supplication*, 179/20-24; cf *EW*, Sermon on Ps 6, 10/22-28; cf Hatt, Fisher’s *First Fruitful Sermon*, 234.

⁴¹ CW7, *Supplication*, 111/6; cf CW7, *Supplication*, 112/24.

⁴² cf CW12, 253/8-10; Thomas a Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, (trans) Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1955, Bk III, Ch 21, No 4; CW7, *Supplication*, 178/28-179/1 & 179/22-24 & 208/28-29; Hatt, 236.

⁴³ CW1, *Last Things*, 142/24. [punicion: punishment; temporal: transitory]

In reality every man is in the bondage of sin, however free he believes himself to be, because of the universality of sin, even if only venial. Christ Himself tells us this when He said ‘he that commyttith synne, ys the thrall or bondman of synne’.⁴⁴ More repeats Christ's words and queries why anyone should find bondage strange when ‘he is alreedy thorow synne, become willingly thrall & bond vnto the devill’.⁴⁵ Walter Hilton describes sin as ‘the devil’s prison’.⁴⁶ That sin is universal and results in a man being imprisoned by it, is found in the *Imitation* which says ‘I am wretched and like one imprisoned and loaded with fetters’.⁴⁷ Likewise Bishop Fisher preaches in the sermon for the funeral of King Henry VII that ‘who that is in thralldom of synne is in full shrewed custody’.⁴⁸ The way to escape from the prison of sin is to ‘vndermyne the walles and crepe vnder them out at a strayte and narowe hole’ in order to gain the liberty of grace.⁴⁹ This is possible only with humility and lowliness.⁵⁰

Pride, as the opposite of humility, has always been seen, from the Old Testament onwards, as the first of the seven deadly sins and the source of all the others.⁵¹ More would have considered this an accepted commonplace, especially as it is found in some of his favourite books. In the *City of God*,⁵² St Augustine quotes the description of pride found in *Ecclesiasticus* as ‘the beginning of all sin’⁵³ and in Hilton’s *Scale* sin is presented as an ugly image with pride at its head as ‘the first and principal sin’,⁵⁴ leading to all others, both mortal and venial.⁵⁵ St Augustine and Hilton both use the biblical concept that pride begins by the

⁴⁴ CW12, 253/12-13; cf Jn 8.34. Bishop Fisher uses the concept of sin being a bondage and prison in his sermon for the funeral of King Henry VII; cf *EW*, 283/20-21. [commyttith: commits; thrall: slave; bondman: one in bondage, slave]

⁴⁵ CW12, 253/17-18. [alreedy: already; bond: slave; devill: devil]

⁴⁶ Walter Hilton, *The Mixed Life*, (trans) Rosemary Dorward, Oxford: SLG Press, 2001, No 23, 25. cf Introduction, n168.

⁴⁷ cf *Imitation*, Bk III, Ch 21, No 4.

⁴⁸ *EW*, Sermon for King Henry VII’s funeral, 283/20-21. [thralldom: bondage, servitude; shrewed: harsh]

⁴⁹ *EW*, Sermon for King Henry VII’s funeral, 283/22-23. [vndermyne: dig beneath; crepe: creep; vnder: under; strayte: straight; narowe: narrow]

⁵⁰ cf *EW*, Sermon for King Henry VII’s funeral, 283/24-30.

⁵¹ eg Ecclus 10.15; cf also St Gregory the Great lists the seven deadly sins in his *Moralia* 31.45.87; cf S Gregorii Magni, *Moralia in Iob, Libri XXIII-XXXV*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1985; St Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, Vol III, Parts V and VI, Ex Fontibus Company, 2012, 31.45.87.

⁵² As a young man, More lectured on St Augustine’s *The City of God* in the church of St Lawrence, Jewry; cf Roper, *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore, Knighte*, (ed) E V Hitchcock, London: Early English Text Society, 1935, 6/1-4; Thomas Stapleton, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1966, 7-8; Gerard B Wegemer, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, Princeton: Scepter, 1997. Wegemer gives a date of c1501, 234.

⁵³ cf St Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* (The City of God), (trans) Henry Bettenson, 1st pub 1972, re-issued London: Penguin Books, 2003, Bk 12, Ch 6.

⁵⁴ Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, (trans) John P H Clark and Rosemary Dorward, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991, Bk 2, Ch 85; cf Ecclus 10.15.

⁵⁵ St Augustine, *City of God*, Bk 14, Ch 13; Hilton, *Scale*, Bk 1, Ch 42. Hilton uses the image of the body to connect a different part of the body to each of the seven deadly sins. Pride is the head, covetousness is the back, envy is the breast, anger is the arms, gluttony is the stomach, lust is the legs and sloth the feet; Hilton, *Scale*, Bk

heart of man turning away from God towards himself.⁵⁶ Hilton explains how this happens; once a soul has turned its vision away from God, as happened with Adam and Eve, the soul proceeds to forget God and searches for satisfaction in created things. However, the soul is unable to find peace because it has lost Him who is the source of true peace. The consequence is the corruption of the senses and the imagination through ‘bestial pleasure... delight in yourself and created things’.⁵⁷ This dominant position of pride in the hierarchy of sin is due, More explains, because it ‘begon among the angels in heauen, so is it the heade and roote of all other sinnes, and of them al most pestilent’.⁵⁸ Pride is ‘the mischieuous mother of al maner vice’;⁵⁹ it is also a ‘monster,... a serpent from hell’⁶⁰ and, as Hythlodæus observes in *Utopia*, pride ‘is too deeply fixed in men to be easily plucked out’.⁶¹ While pride originated with Lucifer and his fellow proud angels, shortly to become devils, God gave man a safeguard against the ‘horrible perill’ and the ‘abhominable sinne’ of pride.⁶² The safeguard was fear in the form of ‘precepts and commaundementes, wherby thei shuld remember & consider them self to be but seruauntes’.⁶³ Adam and Eve were to be occupied by working in the garden, but forbidden from eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge.⁶⁴

The connection between pride and other sins is identified in More’s early adaptation of Pico’s *Commentary on Psalm 15*⁶⁵ in which the sinner says ‘my god art thou’ to the thing he regards as his chief good, the thing which he believes will make him happy and should be sought above everything.⁶⁶ Pico observes that while many will say ‘my god art thou’, how few can truly say it for it is only those who are ‘content with god alone’ and in this ‘standith all the

1, Ch 85. He employs a different biblical verse to support his analysis. For pride, cf Eccles 10.15; for covetousness, cf Phil 3.13; for envy, cf Wis 2.24; for anger, cf Matt 5.39; for gluttony, cf 1 Cor 6.13; for lust, cf Rom 6.13; for sloth, cf Prov 6.3.

⁵⁶ Eccles 10.14; cf St Augustine, *City of God*, Bk 12, Ch 6; Bk 14, Ch 28; Hilton, *Scale*, Bk 1, Ch 42.

⁵⁷ Hilton, *Scale*, Bk 1, Ch 43.

⁵⁸ CW13, *Passion*, 9/21-23; cf CW13, *Passion*, 47/8 & 64/26. As early as More’s translation of Pico’s *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle*, pride is described as ‘the very crop and roote of all mischeffe’; cf CW1, 109/5. [begon: begun; heauen: heaven]

⁵⁹ CW1, *Last Things*, 153/14. [mischieuous: wicked, harmful, having a harmful influence; al: all; maner: kinds, types]

⁶⁰ CW4, *Utopia*, (eds) Edward Surtz SJ & J H Hexter, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1965, 243/31, 39.

⁶¹ CW4, 245/3.

⁶² CW13, *Passion*, 7/10-12. [perill: peril; abhominable: abominable]

⁶³ CW13, *Passion*, 12/27-28; cf Lk 17.10. cf Ch 1, n7.

⁶⁴ Gen 2.15-17.

⁶⁵ CW1, Pico’s *Commentary on Psalm 15*, 94/1-103/18, cf 362-371 for Pico’s Latin and translation; cf CW1, 96/9-15: More paraphrases Pico: ‘the negard then seith to his money... the gloton seith vnto his fleshly lust, y^t ambitious man seith to his vainglory, my god art thou’; cf CW1, 365 for an accurate translation which reads: ‘the miser says to his money,... the glutton says to his drunkenness and the incontinent to his lust and the ambitious man to his power or glory,...’.

⁶⁶ cf CW1, Pico’s *Commentary on Psalm 15*, 96/3-9.

state of a rightwise man'.⁶⁷ Two decades later in *The Last Things* More explores the intimate connections between pride and the other deadly sins.⁶⁸ More regards spiritual pride as especially dangerous and he laments that it 'carieth w^t it a blindnes almost incurable saue gods gret mercye',⁶⁹ echoing Pico's description that 'vainglorie makith many a man blynde'.⁷⁰ When those suffering from spiritual pride would 'faine to haue the vertues that they lack:',⁷¹ pride turns into presumption, leading them to 'take themself for quick saintes on earth: proudly iudging y^e liues of their euen christen, disdainig other mens vertue, enuying other mens praise, bering implacable anger where they perceue themself not accepted & set by, after the worthines of their own estimacion'.⁷² Pride and covetousness are linked by the fact that although the covetous may appear humble, they trust in themselves rather than in God and continually treasure their goods in their mind, turning their goods into their god.⁷³ This makes the covetous especially hard to cure⁷⁴ for their sentiments are focussed neither God nor even on another creature, but on material possessions. More's description reflects the fact that 'And couetice is a very prysoner, for he cannot gette awaye. ... For the more full, the more greedye, and the elder the more nygarde, and the rycher, the more needye'.⁷⁵ Envy⁷⁶ and anger⁷⁷ are daughters of pride as both stem from 'an hie estimacion of our self',⁷⁸ and both have the devil as their father.⁷⁹ Envy is 'the first begotten doughter of pryde' and is 'not onely deuilish, but also very folysh',⁸⁰ for it hurts the one who envies without any power to hurt the envied.⁸¹ The only way to remove envy is to kill its mother, pride.⁸² Anger, too,

⁶⁷ CW1, *Commentary on Psalm 15*, 96/15-17, 21. cf Ps 15.1. [rightwise: righteous]

⁶⁸ More's connections between the different sins are found predominantly in *The Last Things*. A few references are found in *A Treatise upon the Passion*. The text of the section in *The Last Things* that connects pride and sloth is left unfinished. Lust would appear to have been overlooked, but More's writings contain comments on lust distributed throughout his works, but no work or even any section is dedicated specifically to this sin.

⁶⁹ CW1, *Last Things*, 153/34-154/1. [carieth: carries; w^t: with; gods: God's]

⁷⁰ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle*: 7th rule, 106/24. [vainglorie: vainglory, pride; blynde: blind]

⁷¹ CW1, *Last Things*, 153/26. [faine: pretend; vertues: virtues]

⁷² CW1, *Last Things*, 153/28-32. [iudging: judging; liues: lives; quick: living; euen christen: fellow Christian; mens: men's; enuying: envying; bering: bearing; perceue: perceive; set by: esteem; worthines: worthiness; estimacion: estimation]

⁷³ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 166/16-18; CW1, *Last Things*, 170/31-33 & 172/12-14.

⁷⁴ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 172/7.

⁷⁵ CW13, *Passion*, 65/5-10; cf CW12, 167/22-23. [couetice: covetousness; prysoner: prisoner; gette: get; greedye: greedy; nygarde: niggardly; rycher: richer]

⁷⁶ CW1, *Last Things*, 158/30-32; cf CW13, *Passion*, 14/2-3; CW6, 48/1-14 for a further example connecting envy to pride.

⁷⁷ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 163/19-20 & 164/27-28.

⁷⁸ CW1, *Last Things*, 153/17-18. [hie: high]

⁷⁹ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 158/31-32.

⁸⁰ CW1, *Last Things*, 158/23. [pryde: pride; deuilish: devilish; folysh: foolish]

⁸¹ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 158/27-29.

⁸² cf CW1, *Last Things*, 160/6-9.

stems directly from ‘the secret pryde by which we set ouermuche by our self’⁸³ and is manifested by a wrong done to our person or our possessions, and can change ‘an euyl custome into nature’.⁸⁴ Gluttony and pride were connected even in the Garden of Eden. It was the sin of gluttony, along with pride, that caused the fall ‘from the felicitie of paradise, & from their immortality into deth, & into y^e misery of this wretched worlde, well ought we to hate & abhorre it,...’.⁸⁵ Gluttony also has an ephemeral quality for the pleasures of sight, smell or taste pass quickly.⁸⁶ In the Tower More returns to the topic of gluttony with a trenchant criticism that the excess of ‘delicate & deliciose vitayle’ leads to illness and fevers arising from intemperance⁸⁷ as a further consequence of gluttony. Although it was the sin of gluttony that the devil used as an enticement encompassing ‘the pleasure of the eye in the beholdynge of that frute, with likorous desyre of the delicious taste’,⁸⁸ it was pride when the devil ‘made her desyre and longe by reason of highe knowledge, to be like a goddesse, & for that cause prouddie to disobey God, and eate of the forboden fruite’.⁸⁹ It was less the sensual desire of taste and more the greed for knowledge that led to the ‘proud curious appetite, and inordinate desyre to knowe the thing’.⁹⁰ It was the wish to be like God that led Eve and then Adam to sin through disobedience.⁹¹

Pride, through the devil’s temptation, leads to disobedience⁹² and results in the death and destruction of man and leads to hell.⁹³ The mistake made by Eve was that she came too close to sin: her first mistake was to listen to the serpent and speak to him⁹⁴ and the second was to doubt God and His word. Eve replied to the serpent that ‘God hath commanded vs that we

⁸³ CW1, *Last Things*, 163/19-20. [secret: hidden]

⁸⁴ ie: can become a habit. cf CW1, *Last Things*, 161/27-162/3. [euyl: evil]

⁸⁵ CW1, *Last Things*, 175/19-21. [deth: death; abhorre: abhor]

⁸⁶ cf CW1, Pico’s *Twelve Rules*, 109/28-110/5.

⁸⁷ cf CW12, 210/9-11. [vitayle: victuals, foods]

⁸⁸ CW13, *Passion*, 16/28-30; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 174/28-32; CW13, *Passion*, 16/21-23. [beholdynge: beholding, seeing; frute: fruit; likorous: greedy; desyre: desire]

⁸⁹ CW13, *Passion*, 16/30-33; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 174/30-31. Bishop Fisher twice refers to Adam eating the apple and the heaviness of the punishment that he received for what appears to be such a small fault; cf *EW*, 57/16-17; Hatt, 244-246. Genesis refers only to fruit. More refers to both apple and fruit. For apple, cf eg CW1, *Last Things*, 174/32; CW6, 140/4; CW8, *Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, 50/23 & 62/28 & 62/35; Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, 529/562. The word fruit is used more extensively and not only in relation to edible food. [goddesse: goddess; prouddie: proudly; forboden: forbidden]

⁹⁰ CW13, *Passion*, 16/21-22; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 174/30-33.

⁹¹ cf CW13, *Passion*, 16/32-33.

⁹² CW13, *Passion*, 7/9-16; cf CW13, *Passion*, 13/12 & 16/33.

⁹³ cf CW13, *Passion*, 14/15-20.

⁹⁴ CW13, *Passion*, 15/10-16; cf Gen 3.1-2.

shal not eate, & that we shuld not touch it, lest we may hap to dye'.⁹⁵ Eve's mistake was to enter into a conversation with the serpent and More pounces on the 'hap' explaining that here 'she began to stagar, and halfe to dout of the truth & stedfastnes of Gods word' and in so doing by 'not cleauyng to the grace of God, by thys her aunswer turned it into a dout, saying: *ne forte moriamur*, lest peradventure we dye'.⁹⁶ The moral of Eve's story is that 'when her curious mynde, had made her once set her fayre handes vnto the feeling of that fowle pytche, she could neuer rubbe the fylthe from her fingers after'.⁹⁷ During his imprisonment, More retains this attitude of the necessity of keeping sin at arm's length. Writing in *A Dialogue of Comfort* about the temptations that afflict those in prosperity, he says: 'it is a thing right hard to towch pich & neuer file the fingers, to put flex vnto fier & yet kepe them fro burnyng, to kepe a serpent in thy bosome & yet be safe fro stingyng...'⁹⁸

More looks at the problem of temptation in his early translation of Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco* and there he finds guidance. Pico advises his nephew to focus on heavenly and godly things,⁹⁹ and remember not to behave 'as though neythir god might reygne nor those heuenly citezens lyue with out vs.'¹⁰⁰ Pico's advice continues in his *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle*. He notes that there will always be sorrow, adversity, labour, grief and pain whatever our role in life, and the worldly labour that is without virtue will bring the reward of 'nought but fire and peyne perpetually'.¹⁰¹ In the tenth rule, More expands Pico's warning, writing that if temptation is not withstood 'To late commyth the medicine if thou let the sore / By longe continuance encrease more & more'.¹⁰² Over two decades later in *The Last Things*, More focuses on heaven as he notes that the way is arduous and cannot be won without

⁹⁵ CW13, *Passion*, 15/21-22; cf Gen 3.3. [hap: happen]

⁹⁶ CW13, *Passion*, 16/1-3. [stagar: waver, falter; dout: doubt; stedfastnes: steadfastness; Gods: God's; cleauyng: cleaving, holding fast; aunswer: answer; peradventure: perhaps]

⁹⁷ CW13, *Passion*, 16/25-28; cf CW12, 160/20-23. cf n98 below. [fayre: fair; vnto: to; fowle: foul; pytche: pitch; rubbe: rub; fylthe: filth]

⁹⁸ CW12, 160/20-23; cf Ecclus 13.1; CW13, *Passion*, 16/25-28. This also applies to those with whom we associate; cf CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 80/21-25; cf Erasmus, 'De Contemptu Mundi' (On Disdaining the World), in *CWE*, Vol 66, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) Erika Rummel, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1985, 151. cf n97 above. [towch: touch; pich: pitch; file: defile; flex: flax; vnto: into; fier: fire; burnyng: burning; bosome: bosom; stingyng: stinging]

⁹⁹ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 79/9-10.

¹⁰⁰ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 79/12-13. [neythir: neither; reygne: reign; heuenly: heavenly; citezens: citizens; lyue: live]

¹⁰¹ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Rules*, Second Rule, 104/5; cf CW1, *Twelve Rules*, 103/29-104/5; CW1, 373 for the literal translation. [nought: nothing; peyne: pain]

¹⁰² CW1, Pico's *Twelve Rules*, Tenth Rule, 107/27-28; cf CW1, 375 for the literal translation. [commyth: comes; sore: illness; encrease: increase]

effort. It entails ‘the declinyng or goyng aside from euil, and the dooyng of good’,¹⁰³ and the deadly sin of sloth can easily negate all the effort made to avoid the six other deadly sins.¹⁰⁴

More links pride and worldly achievement in the very first of his extant writings, the *Pageant Verses*, noting the fleeting nature of worldly success.¹⁰⁵ The final verse is entitled *The Poet* and includes the two lines: ‘Pleasures, praise, homage, all things quickly disappear – except the love of God, which endures forever’.¹⁰⁶ In *The Last Things*, written at a time when recent promotions had increased More’s responsibilities.¹⁰⁷ More reiterates this sentiment as a warning to those in authority: ‘Now the hye minde of proud fortune, rule, & authoritye, lord god how sleight a thing it wold seme too him, that wolde often & depely remember, y^t deth shal shortly take away al this ryalty, & his glorye shal as scripture saith neuer walk with him into his graue’.¹⁰⁸ It reveals More’s constant focus on heaven and his advice is to remember death according to the biblical injunction with which he begins *The Last Things*: ‘In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin’.¹⁰⁹ To those who refuse to think upon either death, the dreadful judgement of God or the bitter pains of purgatory or hell, More observes that ‘Thys is the sage sawes of suche as make thys world their heauen, and theyr lust theyr God’.¹¹⁰

More draws attention to pride, along with ambition, as a pitfall of public service in his *History of Richard III*,¹¹¹ written during the decade of his entry into the service of Henry VIII. More’s portrait of Richard, Duke of Gloucester describes the dangers, not just to those in public life, but to society in general from unbridled ambition and the ever-present enemy

¹⁰³ CW1, *Last Things*, 182/14-15. cf Ch 4, n70. [declinyng: deviating from, going away from; euil: evil; dooyng: doing]

¹⁰⁴ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 182/15-18.

¹⁰⁵ cf CW1, *Pageant Verses*, 3-7; for the verse entitled *The Poet*, cf CW1, 6/109-7/120. This verse, *The Poet* is the only one of the nine to be written in Latin; the remainder are in English. The exact date of their composition is unknown, but thought to be either between 1492-1494 or 1496-1501; cf CW1, Introduction, xvii-xviii. It is also found in More’s translation of Pico’s *Commentary on Psalm 15* in the phrase ‘y^c ambitious man seith to his vainglory, my god art thou’; cf CW1, 96/14-15. The literal translation reads ‘the ambitious man to his power or glory’; cf CW1, 365.

¹⁰⁶ CW1, *Pageant Verses*, 6/115-116; cf CW3.2, *Latin Poems*, (eds) Clarence H Miller, Leicester Bradner, Charles A Lynch & Revilo P Oliver, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984, 292/13-14: ‘Gaudia laus et honor celeri pedi omnia cedunt, Qui manet excepto semper amore dei’; cf CW3.2, 293 for translation; cf Ch 6, n148.

¹⁰⁷ *The Last Things* was written c1522. In 1521, More had been knighted and appointed as secretary to the king.

¹⁰⁸ CW1, *Last Things*, 155/36-156/4; cf Ps 48.18; cf CW12, 157/27-158/14 & 222/17-29. cf n115 below. [hye: high; sleight: slight; wolde: would; seme: seem; depely: deeply; ryalty: royalty; graue: grave]

¹⁰⁹ Eccles 7.40.

¹¹⁰ CW1, *Last Things*, 130/2-3; cf Phil 3.18-19. [sawes: maxims; lust: any desire, not just sexual desire]

¹¹¹ cf CW2, *The History of King Richard III*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963, lxiii. The dates for the composition of the *History of King Richard III* are given as c1513-1518 and these are generally accepted.

of pride. ‘Suche a pestilente serpent is ambicion and desire of vaine glorye and soueraintye, which amonge states where he once entreth crepeth foorth so farre, tyll with deuision and variaunce hee turneth all to mischiefe. Firste longing to be nexte the best, afterwarde egall with the beste, and at laste chiefe and aboue the beste’.¹¹² The risks of such pride and ambition to those who would be public servants are equally well set out: ‘...these bee Kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaid vpon scaffoldes. In which pore men be but y^e lokers on’.¹¹³ Although it is impossible to know whether this advice was written for the benefit of others or as a general admonishment to himself to consider all possible outcomes, including death, it certainly demonstrates that he was fully aware of the dangers of public service in the sixteenth century. As More rose in the service of Henry VIII he returns to this concept of the stage in *The Last Things*. He has not forgotten what he had written in his *History of King Richard III* and that life is a stage and that our play, like a real play, will soon be over. More forcefully brings home the comparison over a decade before his imprisonment with an emphasis on the transitory nature of life and the folly of pride:

‘...while the lorel playth the lord in a stage playe, woldest y^u not laugh at his foly, considering that y^u art very sure, y^t when y^e play is done, he shal go walke a knaue in his old cote? Now y^u thinkest thy selfe wyse ynough whyle y^u art proude in thy players garment & forgettest that whan thy play is done, y^u shalt go forth as pore as he. Nor y^u remembreth not that thy pageant may happen to be done as sone as hys’.¹¹⁴

Over a decade later in the Tower of London, More ponders on the dangers of pride that stem from worldly success. His career spanned over two decades before he reached the highest

¹¹² CW2, 12/21-27. [pestilente: destructive, injurious, pernicious, deadly; ambicion: ambition; vaine glorye: vainglory, pride; soueraintye: sovereignty; states: estates, noblemen; entreth: enters; foorth: forth; farre: far; tyll: till, until; deuision: division; variaunce: discord, dissension; hee: he; turneth: turns; egall: equal; aboue: above]

¹¹³ CW2, 81/6-8; cf CW4, *Utopia*, 99/14-101/2: More sets out a ‘philosophy, more practical for statesmen, which knows its stage, adapts itself to the play in hand, and performs its role neatly and appropriately... Whatever play is being performed, perform it as best you can,... So it is in the deliberations of monarchs. If you cannot pluck up wrongheaded opinions by the root, if you cannot cure according to your heart’s desire vices of long standing, yet you must not abandon the ship in a storm because you cannot control the winds. ...by the indirect approach you must seek and strive to the best of your power to handle matters tactfully. What you cannot turn to good you must at least make as little bad as you can’. Dermot Fenlon notes that More’s *Richard III* and *Utopia* together comprise the nature of his aims in entering public service; cf Dermot Fenlon, ‘Thomas More and Tyranny’ in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 32, No 4, October 1981, 454. cf Introduction, n58; Ch 7, nn34 & 37; Ch 9, n214. [bee: be; Kynges: king’s; plaid: played; vpon: upon; scaffoldes: scaffolds; lokers on: lookers on, audience]

¹¹⁴ CW1, *Last Things*, 156/16-22; cf CW2, 81/1-2; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 459/7-9 & 461/3-6; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 504/58. cf n113 above; Introduction, nn45 & 46; Ch 6, n279; Ch 7, nn34 & 37. Roper records that, in his teenage years at the house of Cardinal Morton, he would ‘at Christmas tyde sodenly sometimes steppe in among the players, and... make a parte of his owne there presently among them; cf Roper, 5/6-9. [lorel: rogue; playth: plays; woldest: would; y^u: you; foly: folly; knaue: unprincipled rogue; cote: coat; thinkest: think; thy selfe: thyself; wyse: wise; ynough: enough; whyle: while; players: player’s; forgettest: forget; remembreth: remember; pageant: part in the drama of life; sone: soon]

position in the land as Lord Chancellor and during his imprisonment he considers how long it takes to gain a position and how short a time it can be maintained.¹¹⁵ He reflects on the temptation of pride in prosperity and success that is ‘the arrow fleyng in the daye’.¹¹⁶ There would be much less temptation to pride if we remembered that this is ‘evyn a vyry short winter day. For we begyn many full pore and cold, & vpp we fle like an arrow that were shott vp into the ayer’.¹¹⁷ But for the short period we are in the air, we behave like the bumble bee who flies around in summer, unaware that she will die in winter. We look down on the world and others as though they were ants, forgetting that we must come down to the ground again. However high the arrow of pride flies and however light the arrow, ‘it hath yet an hevvy iron hed, and therfor fly it neuer so high, down must it nedes come & on the grownd must yt light,... but the pride turneth into rebuke & shame, & there is than all the glory gone’.¹¹⁸ The arrow passes through the air leaving no trace and ‘as sone as we were bourne, be by & by vinishid away, & haue left no token of any good vertue behind vs, but are consumed & wasted & come to nought in our malignite’.¹¹⁹ More warns that position and power sought only for worldly ambition leads to the abuse of authority, to corruption and simultaneously the oppression of the innocent who are vulnerable rather than capable of doing harm.¹²⁰ ‘Than the laws that are made against malefactours,... be mich like vnto Cobwebbes, in which the litle knettes & flyes stikk still & hang fast, but the greate humble bees breke them & flye quyte thorow. And than the lawes that are made as a buckler in the defence of innocentes, those shall they make serue for a swerd, to cutt & sore wound them with’.¹²¹ While More never forgot the reality of the brevity of life, this particularly visual image comes with a stark warning, for those behaving in this way not only because they ‘wound they their own soules sorer’ but also that all outward goods, if not used for any godly purpose lead to the ‘very dedly destruccion vnto the soule’.¹²²

¹¹⁵ cf CW12, 157/27-158/14 & 222/17-29; CW1, *Last Things*, 155/36-156/4. cf n108 above.

¹¹⁶ CW12, 157/19-20; cf Ps 90.6. [fleyng: flying]

¹¹⁷ CW12, 157/26-158/1. [evyn: even; vyry: very; begyn: begin; vpp: up; fle: fly; shott: shot; ayer: air]

¹¹⁸ CW12, 158/17-21; cf CW12, 158/1-21. [hevvy: heavy; hed: head; nedes: needs; grownd: ground; light: alight, land; than: then]

¹¹⁹ CW12, 159/5-7. [bourne: born; vinishid: vanished; token: sign; nought: nothing, evil; malignite: wickedness, evil]

¹²⁰ cf CW12, 224/31-225/6.

¹²¹ CW12, 225/6-12. [malefactours: malefactors; mich: much; cobwebbes: cobwebs; knettes: gnats; flyes: flies; stikk: stick; humble bees: bumble bees; quyte: quite; buckler: small round shield; serue: serve; swerd: sword; sore: severely; grievously]

¹²² CW12, 225/12, 17. [sorer: more intensely, more severely; dedly: deadly; destruccion: destruction]

Fear of Sin

This explains More's attitude to the many worldly activities that can distract the vision from God's priorities. Worldly activities are not necessarily wrong in themselves, merely that if not actually to godward,¹²³ that they contain no focus upon God, the soul becomes 'al foregrowen with nettels, breers, and other euil weedes, canne bring foorth no corne til they be weded out, so can oure soule haue no place for the good corne of spiritual plesure'.¹²⁴ These words appear in *The Last Things*, written more than a decade before his imprisonment. But this perception of the distraction of worldly activities away from God reappears in his Tower writings and is described in almost identical terms: 'that the thornes & the breres & the brambles of our worldly substaunce, grow so thicke & spryng vpp so high in the grownd of our hartes, that they strangle (as the gospel sayth) the word of god that was sowen therin'.¹²⁵ While the nettles, briars and evil weeds of the *Last Things* refer to carnal pleasures and the parable of the wheat and the tares,¹²⁶ the thorns, briars and brambles of the *Dialogue of Comfort* refer to the parable of the sower,¹²⁷ and both are connected with activities that lead to pride in its many various forms, including the possession of worldly goods.

Vainglory as a peril of public service also encompasses the ambition for honours, fame, flattery and the acquisition of worldly goods in any form, be they gold, silver, jewels, fine clothes or food. All are enjoyed only for a very short time, if the brevity of life is appreciated, and all these are treated at various times to More's laughter and mockery.¹²⁸ Much of More's humour stems from the hypocritical pride of those with position and worldly success. He views it as folly for his awareness of death and the temporal nature of the world renders the achievements seen as important by the world not merely as unimportant, but a possible source of sin, through over attachment and pride.

Worldly success that results in fame also carries the danger of pride. More's youthful poem, *The Nine Pageants*, portrays Fame personified, seen with Death under her feet, who claims to ensure that someone lives on in 'parpetuall memory' and by confounding death, thus

¹²³ to godward: with a focus upon God.

¹²⁴ CW1, *Last Things*, 132/27-30. [foregrowen: overgrown; nettels: nettles; breers: briars; canne: can; til: until; weded: weeded; plesure: pleasure]

¹²⁵ CW12, 241/1-4; cf Ch 6, n25. [breres: briars; substaunce: possessions, worldly goods; spryng: spring; hartes: hearts; sowen: sown; therin: in it]

¹²⁶ Matt 13.24-30, 36-43.

¹²⁷ Matt, 13.3-9, 18-23; Lk 8.5-15.

¹²⁸ cf Bernard Basset, *Born for Friendship*, London: Burns & Oates, 1965, 40-41. Basset notes that More does not ridicule the poor, the sick, the sinner or the unfortunate, although he does occasionally ridicule the abnormalities of the fictitious characters of his own creation.

promises a kind of immortality.¹²⁹ ‘Good name, honest estimacion, & honourable fame’,¹³⁰ writes More, are identical except for the social standing of the individual. Good name belongs to a poor man, honest estimation to one of a certain standing or position and wealth, while honourable fame belongs only to someone prosperous with important positions, with a reputation for praiseworthy behaviour.¹³¹ More contends that praise of worthy actions to encourage a man to further good deeds can be beneficial,¹³² but it can also result in envy and hatred.¹³³ Such truthful praise does at least diminish false flattery.¹³⁴ Most men prefer compliments rather than corrections and will react angrily to hearing the truth although this would serve them better.¹³⁵ The consequence of the false praise of flattery means that few will tell the truth even if asked; indeed, while flattery can make friends, telling the truth results in making enemies.¹³⁶ Pride, however, leads to the desire for praise,¹³⁷ and it seeks and feeds on flattery.¹³⁸ More’s writings frequently attest to his marked antipathy and complete aversion to the dangers and fault of flattery, including the flattery that comes from fame and worldly position and he notes the fickleness and insincerity of flattery.

More’s writings on flattery are predominantly found in *A Dialogue of Comfort* and his letters from the Tower; they are also found in *A Treatise upon the Passion*. Flattery is the ‘blast of another mans mouth’,¹³⁹ and ‘a blast of vainglory’.¹⁴⁰ It can diminish or rob those who follow this road of the rewards of everlasting joy.¹⁴¹ Flattery encourages pride and vainglory;¹⁴² it can be accompanied by fear.¹⁴³ It is destructive,¹⁴⁴ deceptive if not dishonest,¹⁴⁵ inimical to

¹²⁹ cf CW1, *Pageant Verses*, 5/72-79. cf Ch 6, n199. [parpetuall: perpetual]

¹³⁰ CW12, 211/7-8.

¹³¹ cf CW12, 211/10-15.

¹³² CW12, 218/25-28. More notes that this is an effective way to encourage children; cf CW12, 218/28-219/1.

¹³³ cf CW12, 212/1-2.

¹³⁴ cf CW12, 218/25.

¹³⁵ cf CW12, 212/27 & 218/11-12.

¹³⁶ cf CW12, 217/5-10; cf CW15, ‘Letter to a Monk’ in *In Defense of Humanism: Letters to Dorp, Oxford, Lee, and a Monk*, (ed) Daniel Kinney, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986, 290/23 & 291; Rogers, ‘Letter to a Monk’ in *SL*, 135-36; cf Terence, *Andria*, (ed & trans) John Barsby, Cambridge, Mass; London: Harvard University Press, 2001, Act 1, Sc 1, lines 64-68.

¹³⁷ cf CW1, *Life of Pico*, 29-30. For flattery, cf Ch 3, nn41, 76 & 77.

¹³⁸ cf CW12, 224/21-25; cf CW12, 212/7-15, 16-21 & 24-28.

¹³⁹ CW12, 212/5; cf Ch 6, n146; CW9, 69/6. [mans: man’s]

¹⁴⁰ This is found in both Pico’s *Life*, CW1, 59/18, 303 and Pico’s *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, CW1, 90/16, 359. The idea of flattery and More’s dislike of it and its consequences is also found in his *History of King Richard III*, cf CW2, 11/28 & 59/1 & 59/9 & 82/3-5.

¹⁴¹ cf CW1, Pico’s *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 90/12-14; CW6, 398/4-7; CW13, *Passion*, 10/25-28.

¹⁴² cf CW12, 224/21.

¹⁴³ cf CW2, 70/18-19.

¹⁴⁴ cf CW1, Pico’s *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 90/15-18 & 357; cf CW2, 82/3-5. cf nn157 & 160 below.

¹⁴⁵ cf CW12, 212/24-28 & 218/6-12; CW13, *Passion*, 84/5-11.

truth¹⁴⁶ and leads to evil.¹⁴⁷ It is also hollow and without substance,¹⁴⁸ foolish,¹⁴⁹ useless,¹⁵⁰ and it can even make men mad.¹⁵¹ Flattery is fair-weather friendship for he ‘fayneth to loue the, for that he fareth well with the. But nowe if aduersitie so mynysh thy substaunce, that he finde thy table vnlayde, farewell adewe, thy brother flaterer is gone’.¹⁵² This description of first being praised, followed by being deserted in hard times or after loss of office, is quite possibly autobiographical, for after his resignation More and his family were in much reduced circumstances.¹⁵³ After his resignation, More was also abandoned by his erstwhile friends, who may well have flattered him both as he rose to be Lord Chancellor and for the duration of his period in office. In the Tower, More demonstrates his focus and reliance on God, writing to Master Leder that no ‘rebuke or worldly shame’¹⁵⁴ would hinder him from confessing the truth, ‘For I purpose not to depende vppon the fame of the worlde’.¹⁵⁵

However, the harm caused by flattery applies not only to individuals, but also to society as a whole. It is in More’s *History of King Richard III* where the social evils and consequences of flattery are set out in the death-bed words of King Edward IV describing the dangers resulting from the accession of a minor to the throne. Discord among the young king’s advisers would lead to war. But ‘childehood must be maintained by mens authoritye, & slipper youth vnderpropped with elder counsaile, whiche neither they can haue, but ye geue

¹⁴⁶ cf CW12, 217/5-10; cf CW12, 212/24-28 & 218/6-12.

¹⁴⁷ cf CW12, 217/5-10; CW13, *Passion*, 10/25-28; cf also CW9, *Apology*, (ed) J B Trapp, New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1979, 69/3-6: More gives a view of the devil’s reaction here.

¹⁴⁸ cf CW12, 212/5-7; cf CW2, 59/1 & 59/9; CW6, 398/4-7.

¹⁴⁹ cf CW12, 168/32-169/4.

¹⁵⁰ cf CW12, 219/4-8: More uses this idea to create an amusing picture: ‘he that putteth his pleasure in the prayse of the people, hath but a fond fantasie, for if his fynger do but ake (ache) of an hote blayne (blister), a greate many mens mouthes blowyng out his prayse, will scantly do hym among them all half so much ease, as to haue one boy blow vppon hys fynger’; cf CW12, 221/4-13 for the stories of the king who does not derive as much pleasure from twenty men kneeling before him, as his own knee gives him pain if it happens to be sore and also of the twenty men standing before a great officer did not keep his head as warm as his own cap, and that he caught a cough after one had stood bareheaded before him for a long time.

¹⁵¹ cf CW12, 216/17-27; CW15, *Letter to a Monk*, 290/13-15. cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 199/1297-200/1300; This letter is dated to 1519-1520;.

¹⁵² CW13, *Passion*, 84/7-9. In *A Dialogue of Comfort* More portrays this idea slightly differently: ‘...many men vnder their princes in auctorite... speke them full fayre, & prayse them with their mouth, which whan there happeth any greate fall vnto theym, ball & barke & byte vppon them like dogges;’cf CW12, 221/33-222/2. [fayneth: pretends; aduersitie: adversity; mynysh: reduce; vnlayde: unlaid; adewe: adieu; flaterer: flatterer]

¹⁵³ This was written after More’s resignation in 1532. Roper records that, at roughly the same time, More was preparing his family for hardships, both current and future; cf Roper, 52/18-54/12 & 55/17-56/13.

¹⁵⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/5. More argues that shame can be overcome; cf CW12, 292/17-19. Little is known of Master [Stephen] Leder, other than that he was vicar of Ware and associated with the Carthusians at Sheen; cf Alvaro de Silva (ed), *The Last Letters of Thomas More*, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000, 187. [worldely: worldly]

¹⁵⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/6-7. For More’s letter to William Gonell, tutor to his children, to whom he writes of the evils of flattery in 1518; Rogers, *SL*, 103-107; CW1, Pico’s *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 90/16-18. cf n160 below; Ch 6, n203-206. For Master Leder, cf n154 above; Ch 6, 205.

it, nor ye geue it, yf ye gree not'.¹⁵⁶ If the counsellors do not agree and each counsellor attempts to become the chief, then 'flattery shall haue more place then plaine and faithfull aduyse, of whyche muste needs ensure the euyll bringing vppe of the Prynce, whose mynd in tender youth infect, shal redily fal to mischief and riot, & drawe down w^t this noble realme to ruine'.¹⁵⁷ More describes the scene around King Edward's death-bed where the councillors 'ech forgauē other & ioyned their hands together' but More, writing with hindsight, ironically adds that 'as it after appeared by their dedes, their herts wer far a sonder'.¹⁵⁸ So the body politic, along with the country, bears the results of the false praise that constitutes flattery and is another consequence of pride. As Dermot Fenlon explains 'For More, the world was governed by pride ruling through flattery and fear'.¹⁵⁹ The reason for More's antipathy to flattery is its eternal dangers. While fame or flattery may not lose our souls, it is possible that 'oure eternall rewarde be minisshed for the vaine promotion of a litle populare fame'.¹⁶⁰ Flattery is perilous for it is a path 'beginning but with a vayne pride of theyr own prayse, they become secondly theues vnto God, and finally from theeues they fall to be plaine rebellious traitours, and refuse to take God for their God.'¹⁶¹ This is More's contrasting vision and fear of the results that occur from seeking the opinion of men and the pleasure of the world rather than the glory and praise of God in heaven.

There are other aspects of pride that concern More. The first is 'bewtye, wit, strength, lerning, or such other gifts of god'¹⁶² because all these are on loan to us for a very brief period of time,¹⁶³ for 'they bee suche thinges as shal shortly by deth leese al theyr glosse, thowners wote nere how soone'.¹⁶⁴ Bishop Fisher makes the same point: physical health and beauty are lent only for a season and when they fail, 'arte thou then returned to thyne owne earthly

¹⁵⁶ CW2, *Richard III*, 11/21-24. [slipper: unstable; vnderpropped: supported, sustained; counsayle: counsel; yf: if; gree: agree]

¹⁵⁷ CW2, 11/28-31. cf n144 above. [aduyse: advice; euyll: evil; vppe: up; prynce: prince; mynd: mind; redily: readily; fal: fall]

¹⁵⁸ CW2, 13/29-31. cf CW2, 12/21-27; see note 107 above. [ech: each; forgauē: forgave; ioyned: joined; herts: hearts; a sonder: asunder, apart]

¹⁵⁹ cf Fenlon, 'Thomas More and Tyranny', 472.

¹⁶⁰ CW1, Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 90/16-18; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 155/27-35; CW6, 398/4-7. cf n144 above. [minisshed: diminished, reduced; vaine: foolish, worthless]

¹⁶¹ CW13, *Passion*, 10/25-28. [theues, theeues: thieves; traitours: traitors]

¹⁶² CW1, *Last Things*, 153/24-25; cf CW12, 10/1-3; CW13, *Passion*, 8/5-8. [bewtye: beauty; wit: intellect; lerning: learning]

¹⁶³ cf *Imitation*, Bk I, Ch 7, No 2.

¹⁶⁴ CW1, *Last Things*, 155/19-20. [leese: lose; glosse: gloss, superficial lustre; thowners: the owners; wote: know; nere: never]

colour: Nowe arte thou blacke, colde, and heauie, lyke a lumpe of earth'.¹⁶⁵ It is not a pretty picture and is intended to focus the mind towards eternal things, namely repentance and preparation for death, rather than the superficial and outward, and not to waste life in ephemeral pleasures.¹⁶⁶ Both More and Fisher perceive the fragile and temporal nature of life and both put the gifts of God in their proper and very transitory place. More had learned of the dangers of pride in physical appearance from the *Imitation* which warns: 'Boast not of your stature, or of the beauty of your body, which a little sickness can spoil and disfigure'.¹⁶⁷ While the *Imitation* notes that 'few are improved by sickness',¹⁶⁸ More advises 'let vs bee such whan we be whole, as we thinke we will bee whan we be sicke'.¹⁶⁹

The second aspect of pride is artificial beauty in the forms of jewels or fine clothes. While More abhors pride in physical beauty, he is even more scathing about its artificial variety. Silver, gold, pearls and precious stones are merely temptations presented by Fortune 'on which þe mased peple gase & stare, / & gape þefore, as dogges for the bone'.¹⁷⁰ More's Utopians, surely reflecting his own views, are incredulous that 'any mortal takes pleasure in the uncertain sparkle of a tiny jewel or precious stone when he can look at a star or even the sun itself'.¹⁷¹ It was this lesson, that jewels and other finery are either a temptation to the sin of pride or act as a distraction from seeking God, that he wishes to teach his children. In his letter to their tutor, William Gonell, he tells him 'to warn my children... not to be dazzled at the sight of gold;... not to think more of themselves for gaudy trappings, nor less for the want of them; not to deform the beauty that nature has given them by neglect, nor to try to heighten it by artifice'.¹⁷² Instead they should to seek virtue, learning and piety. In his defence of purgatory, the souls lament their previous luxurious clothes, fine head-dresses and jewellery, now hanging heavily around their necks and wish, that they had decorated their finery and head-dresses with 'fayre, orient peason'.¹⁷³ More also highlights the capacity of fine clothes

¹⁶⁵ Hatt, 'A Spiritual Consolation' in *English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester*, 371. [arte: are; thyne: thine; colour: colour; heauie: heavy]

¹⁶⁶ Hatt, 372.

¹⁶⁷ *Imitation*, Bk I, Ch 7, No 2; CW3.2, *Epigram* 143, cf opposite page for the translation.

¹⁶⁸ *Imitation*, Bk I Ch 23, No 4.

¹⁶⁹ CW1, *Last Things*, 145/13-15.

¹⁷⁰ CW1, *To them þat tristith in ffortune*, 35/119-120; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 130/27-34; CW4, 157/12-15 & 169/26-29; CW13, *Passion*, 8/16-19. [þe: the; mased: amazed; gase: gaze; peple: people; þefore: therefore; dogges: dogs; tristith: trust]

¹⁷¹ CW4, 157/12-15; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 130/27-34. More describes the Utopians' use of gold and silver – for chamber pots and the chains and fetters with which they bind their slaves; CW4, 153/6-10.

¹⁷² Rogers, *SL*, 104-105.

¹⁷³ cf CW7, *Supplication*, 224/6-21. Ro: Ba: tells the story of More's daughter-in-law, Anne Cresacre who desired a head-dress set with pearls. More prevaricated but finally had one made set with white peas. On

to create a sense of superiority and pride in those that wear them. Why should anyone be proud that his garment is of finer wool than another man's? Indeed, why do such people think they are better just because of a fine coat without which they would never consider themselves superior?¹⁷⁴ Demolishing the idea that fine garments make a man superior in any way, More asks 'yet as fine as it is, a poore shepe ware it on her backe before it came vpon his: and al the while she ware it, wer her wull neuer so fine, yet was she pardie but a shepe. And why should he be now better then she by that wull, that though it be his, is yet not so verelye his, as it was verely hers'.¹⁷⁵

More's expansion of Pico's *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle* reveals his understanding of the consequences of sin. Evil clings to the sinner along with 'grudge of hert & heuynes of mynde',¹⁷⁶ and the pleasure of evil quickly departs. While the effort required for doing good works will cease, the goodness remains.¹⁷⁷ Goodness has therefore a more permanent aspect than evil.¹⁷⁸ The consequences are described in the 'argument & mater' that constitutes More's introduction to Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*. He describes how voluptuous pleasure makes us drunk and, consequently, the soul abandons reason and turns us into unreasonable beasts.¹⁷⁹ Until we have 'cast vp agayne'¹⁸⁰ the bodily affections which cause

his return, Anne demanded her jewel which he presented to her solemnly in a box. Far from the present she expected, she found a head-dress with peas, almost causing her to weep with grief. But More gave her such a good lesson that she never again had any desire to wear any new toy; Ro: Ba: *The Life of Syr Thomas More*, London/New York/Toronto: Oxford University Press for The Early English Text Society, 1950, 129/11-16. Erasmus tells a similar story, of a newly-wed husband who bought his wife some jewels which were copies and persuaded her of their value. She kept them as if they were valuable treasures while her husband both saved the expense and earned her gratitude; cf Erasmus, 'Moriae encomium' (Praise of Folly), (ed) A H T Levi, (trans) Betty Radice, in *CWE 27*, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1986, 118-119. There is no evidence that this story applies to More. [orient: precious, excellent; peason: peas]

¹⁷⁴ cf CW4, 167/27-39.

¹⁷⁵ CW13, *Passion*, 8/20-24; More had used the same idea almost two decades earlier in *Utopia*; cf CW4, 157/15-20. [poore: poor; shepe: sheep; ware: wore; wull: wool; pardie: indeed; verely, verelye: verily]

¹⁷⁶ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Weapons*, 110/13. [grudge of hert: weary heart; heuynes: grief, sorrow]

¹⁷⁷ cf CW1, 110/7-8.

¹⁷⁸ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Weapons*, 109/27-113/10.

¹⁷⁹ cf CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 76/23-27. More's lists includes the proud who become lions, the angry become bears, the lecherous, goats, the drunken gluttons, swine, the ravenous extortioner, a wolf, the false deceiver, a fox and the mocking jester, an ape; cf CW1, 76/29-77/4. The idea of people becoming animals is found in the transmigration of souls in Plato; cf *Republic*, (eds & trans) Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 2013, Bk X, 620a-d (the myth of Er); *Phaedo*, 'Phaedo' in *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*, (eds & trans) Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 2017, 81e-82a. In *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Boethius says that the behaviour of the individual indicates the type of animal they will become. He says wickedness casts a man down from the human condition and equates those who do certain things with particular animals; cf Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Bk IV, Ch III, 47-69. Hilton equates the fleshly sins of gluttony, *accidie* [sloth] and lechery with bestiality, while Bk II, Ch 1, Ch 14 equates different sins with particular animals. Although there is some overlap, these authors do not consistently equate any particular type of behaviour or sin with the same animal; cf *Scale of Perfection*, Bk I, Ch 72. [mater: matter]

¹⁸⁰ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 77/5. [cast vp: vomited]

Fear of Sin

our enchantment,¹⁸¹ it is impossible for us to be restored to our own likeness. More states that through sensuality ‘we deforme y^e image of god in our sowles aftir whose image we be made & make oure self worse then idolatres for if he be odious to god which turneth y^e image of a best in to god: how much is he more odious which turneth the ymage of god in to a best’.¹⁸²

In an early epigram More also explains the consequences of sin as an enormous weight to be carried. A heavy storm threatens a ship and the sailors view their predicament as an indictment of their sin. After confessing their sins to a monk on board, the storm still rages and convinced that the problem is the weight of their sin, they throw the monk overboard as he now contains their sin. A moral concludes the epigram: ‘learn from it how heavy is a load of sin, since a ship cannot sustain its weight’.¹⁸³

More paints a vivid description of Richard III following the murder of the two princes that reveals how fear operates as a consequence following sin. More reports a credible account¹⁸⁴ that

‘after this abhominable deede done, he neuer hadde quiet in his minde, hee neuer thought himself sure. Where he went abrode, his eyen whirled about, his body priuily fenced, his hand euer on his dager, his countenance and maner like one alway ready to strike againe, he toke ill rest a nightes, lay long wakyng and musing, sore weried with care & watch, rather slumbred then slept, troubled wyth feareful dreames, sodainly sommetyme sterte vp, leape out of his bed & runne about the chamber, so was his restles herte continually tossed & tumbled w^t the tedious impression & stormy remembrance of his abominable dede’.¹⁸⁵

In this description of Richard’s unhappy fear, what is revealed is more guilt and a fear of the temporal consequences, rather than of having offended God. More’s *A Merry Jest* also illustrates this: a sergeant, disguised as a friar, gains admittance to a debtor’s house in order to retrieve money owed to a merchant. When he reveals himself as a sergeant, a fight ensues and the debtor nearly knocks him out with a blow. The debtor was ‘Well ferder than, Lest he

¹⁸¹ cf CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 77/4-7.

¹⁸² CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 77/16-20. [oure self: ourselves; then: than; idolatres: idolaters; best: beast; ymage: image]

¹⁸³ CW3.2, *Epigram* 175. The date of this epigram is unknown. Indeed, the exact date of the majority is unknown, but it is believed More wrote most of his epigrams between 1500-1510; cf CW3.2, Leicester Bradner and Charles A Lynch, Introduction: Dates of Composition, 10-12.

¹⁸⁴ More writes of a ‘credible report of such as wer secrete w^t his chamberers’; cf CW2, 87/10.

¹⁸⁵ CW2, 87/11-21. [abhominable: abominable; hadde: had; eyen: eyes; priuily: secretly; fenced: shielded, protected; dager: dagger; maner: manner, behaviour; toke: took; sore: very, exceedingly; weried; wearied; slumbred: slumbered; sommetyme: sometimes; sodainly: suddenly; sterte: start; runne: run; restles: restless; tedious: irksome, painful]

the frere had slayne'.¹⁸⁶ Fear and guilt was also the reaction of Adam and Eve following the fall when 'sodenly lo, thei heard oure Lorde commynge, and therewith for shame thei fel in a feare, and fled and hydde them selfe from the face of God'.¹⁸⁷

More observes that it was not solely pride in the form of sin of disobedience for which Adam and Eve were banished from Paradise: it was the pride that refused to repent, manifested in the original blame game. Adam took 'a waye farre a wry fro forgiuenes. For he confessed not his faut, but began to excuse hym selfe, and lay the faute from hym to his wife'.¹⁸⁸ Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent¹⁸⁹ and neither admitted their fault or accepted responsibility for it, much less repented. More makes the point that 'it is also specialy to be marked, that the stubborne maner of Adam and Eue, not praying God of forgyuenes, but excusing theyr sinne, was in maner more displeasure to God, than was theyr syn it selfe'.¹⁹⁰ It was Adam and Eve's prideful refusal to seek pardon and mercy through repentance that led therefore to the proximate cause that 'y^e sentence of deth [was] condicionally pronounced'.¹⁹¹

Repentance is therefore vital and the medieval world in general feared dying suddenly and unprepared,¹⁹² and without any opportunity to repent.¹⁹³ More acknowledges that God will always welcome the repentant sinner for 'him that cometh to me, I will not cast out'.¹⁹⁴ More's perception is clear: the initiative lies with God – He calls us – and it is for us to respond. For '*Ex te perditio tua, ex me saluatio tua*: Thy perdycon cometh of thy self, but thy saluacyon cummeth of me by y^e ayd and help of my grace'.¹⁹⁵ 'For grace ys y^e light

¹⁸⁶ CW1, *A Mery Gest how a Sergeaunt wolde lerne to be a Frere*, 26/352-353. [well ferder: more afraid; frere: friar; slayne: slain]

¹⁸⁷ CW13, *Passion*, 17/29-31. [sodenly: suddenly; commynge: coming; fel: fell; hydde: hid]

¹⁸⁸ CW13, *Passion*, 18/7-9; cf CW13, *Passion*, 53/17-18; cf Gen 3.12. The *Treatise* is datable to late 1533 to early 1534; for the circumstances of its composition. cf Introduction, n35. [a wry: opposed to; forgiuenes: forgiveness; faut, faute: fault]

¹⁸⁹ cf CW6, 405/6-7; cf Gen 3.13.

¹⁹⁰ CW13, 22/27-30; cf CW13, *Passion*, 53/16-17. [specialy: specially; maner: conduct; in maner: in a way; Eue: Eve; syn: sin; it selfe: itself]

¹⁹¹ CW13, *Passion*, 53/19-20; More is not alone in this opinion and follows St Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, 14.14 closely. Augustine, unlike More, also says that such excuses only accuse rather than excuse. [condicionally: conditionally, under conditions]

¹⁹² cf H W Donner, 'More's Treatise on the Four Last Things and the Gothicism of the Trans-Alpine Renaissance' in *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, (eds) Richard S Sylvester and Germain Marc'hadour, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977, 345.

¹⁹³ cf CW1, Pico's *Twelve Weapons*, 111/15-16.

¹⁹⁴ Jn 6.37; for More's use of this verse cf CW11, 41/3 & 89/8; CW12, 76/27-28; CW13, *Passion*, 103/4-6. For two examples of Bishop Fisher's use of this idea, cf eg *EW*, 225/3-21, Sermon on Ps 129, the sixth Penitential Psalm; *EW*, 283/8-14, Sermon for King Henry VII's funeral. cf Ch 9, nn55, 56, 98 & 100.

¹⁹⁵ CW7, *Supplication*, 192/1-3; cf Hos 13.9: *Ex te perditio tua*; there appears to be no exact biblical verse corresponding to More's rendering of *ex me saluatio tua*. The nearest are Ps 3.9: Salvation is of the Lord; and Ps

wherewith men se y^e way to walk out of synne: and grace ys the staf without help wherof no man is able to ryse out of synne'.¹⁹⁶ It is a question of recognizing the role that God plays in the life of faith and that it is God who draws us to Christ, for 'No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him'.¹⁹⁷ Bishop Fisher also acknowledges in a sermon the role God plays in repentance: 'Thou arte sorry for thy synne, it is a gyfte of almyghte god. Thou makest knowledge of thy synne wepyng and wayling for it, it is a gyft of almyghte god. Thou are besy in good werkes to do satysffaccyon, which also is a gyfte of almyghte god'.¹⁹⁸

God, through His grace, will always call and knock on the door of the sinner's heart¹⁹⁹ and God has promised that pardon will always be available for the truly repentant,²⁰⁰ and has 'bownden hymselfe to graunt yt'.²⁰¹ There is no sin 'so sore, so greuouse, nor so abomynable' that if a man co-operates with God's grace and has true repentance, 'he shall obtain of goddes goodnes remyssyon, forgyuenes, and pardon'.²⁰² But such sinners, although they may save their souls and heaven may rejoice at the repentant sinner, 'yet ys he not set in like state in hevyn, as he shuld haue bene if he had livid better before, except it so fall that he live so well after, & do so mych good, that he therin out runne in the shorter tyme, those good folke that yet did not so mych in mych lenger'.²⁰³ He uses two parables to illustrate his point with a warning, the parable of the good thief and the parable of the vineyard. In the parable of the good thief,²⁰⁴ while the 'goodnes of goddes excellent mercie' accepts the thief at the very

36.39: the salvation of the just is from the Lord; cf CW7, *Supplication*, 192/21-32, 366n. cf Ch 4, n146. [perdycon: perdition; saluacyon: salvation; cummeth: comes; ayd: aid]

¹⁹⁶ CW7, *Supplication*, 191/32-34. cf Ch 4, n147. [se: see; staf: staff; ryse: rise]

¹⁹⁷ Jn 6.44; cf Jn 6.66; cf 1 Cor 3.9; cf CW8, 746/25-30, 33-35 & 782/9-12 & 841/4-8; CW11, 47/22-23 & 87/7-9. More notes that the grace that first leads to faith comes from God not man, but requires our co-operation. For More's use of this verse, and CW14, *De Tristitia*, 207/5-10 for a possible allusion to this verse; cf Germain Marc'hadour, *The Bible in the Works of St Thomas More*, Part II, Nieuwkoop: B de Graaf, 1969, 162. [except: unless]

¹⁹⁸ *EW*, 98/21-26, Sermon on Ps 50, the fourth penitential psalm; cf Eamon Duffy, 'The Spirituality of John Fisher' in *Humanism, Reform and the Reformation: The Career of Bishop John Fisher*, Brendan Bradshaw and Eamon Duffy (eds), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 209. Fisher's Sermon is on Psalm 50. [gyft(e): gift; almyghte: almighty; wepyng: weeping; wayling: wailing; besy: busy, solicitous; werkes: works; satysffaccyon: satisfaction]

¹⁹⁹ cf Apoc 3.20; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 154/27-30; CW7, *Supplication*, 192/10-11; CW8, 424/9-13 & 521/6-7 & 747/6-9 & 787/7-8; CW11, 85/36-86/1.

²⁰⁰ CW8, 451/9-12; cf CW8, 521/2-5.

²⁰¹ CW12, 299/17-19; cf CW11, 86/6-7. [bownden: bound; graunt: grant]

²⁰² CW7, *Supplication*, 191/18-24. [sore: grievous, severe; greuouse: grievous; abomynable: abominable; goddes: God's; remyssyon: remission]

²⁰³ CW12, 91/14-17; More interprets this as a reference to St Paul, cf 1 Cor 15.10; cf CW12, 91/18-23. [bene: been; livid: lived; except: unless; mych: much; tyme: time; lenger: longer]

²⁰⁴ Lk 23.39-43; cf CW12, 90/20-25; 91/5-7.

end, More wryly observes that the thief ‘turnid not to god till he might stele no lenger’.²⁰⁵ Likewise in relation to the parable of the vineyard,²⁰⁶ More asserts that no one enters this vineyard unless God calls him. Hence the warning that ‘may there no man vppon the trust of this parable, be bold all his life to ly styll in synne’.²⁰⁷ Such misplaced sloth and trust is dangerous for ‘he that in hope to be callid toward night, will slepe out the mornynge, & drinke out the day, ys full likely to pass at night vnspoken to, & than shall he with shrewid rest go souperlesse to bedd’.²⁰⁸ More understands that God’s generous forgiveness should not be presumed but on the contrary should be sought through repentance. It is also possible to fall from the true faith for a while and ‘after that wyth helpe of grace fynde the fayth and fall therto agayne, and finally dye therin’.²⁰⁹ However, while some will accept God’s invitation to repentance, like Peter, others, like Judas, will refuse it.²¹⁰ God saw ‘in hys dyuyne prescience or rather in the eternyte of hys godhed presently beholdynge, that Peter wolde repent and Iudas wolde dyspayre, and that the one wolde take holde of hys grace and the other wolde reiecte it’.²¹¹ More insists that Judas was not cast out by Christ; on the contrary Christ did everything to appeal to his better nature to repent but finally, Judas cast himself out.²¹²

While God ‘doth of his goodnes comenly offer’ the grace of repentance,²¹³ no one can be fully assured of this.²¹⁴ More’s concern centres on the urgent need of repentance for he fears that sloth permits a lack of seeking repentance that leads to a lack of opportunity and presumption leads to the abuse of that opportunity. While God forgives everything if we seek him, it is the element of uncertainty and the consequent fear that restrains boldness in sin.²¹⁵ If repentance is deferred on the assumption that both God’s grace and the opportunity will always be there in the future is dangerous for both may be denied to us in the future. No one should act on the premise ‘that .iii. or .iiii.’²¹⁶ wordys ere they dye shall suffyciently sarue

²⁰⁵ CW12, 90/19, 23. [eccellent: excellent; turnid: turned; stele: steal]

²⁰⁶ Matt 20.1-6; cf CW12, 91/24-92/8.

²⁰⁷ CW12, 92/3-4; cf CW12, 299/2-4 & 299/9-11. [bold: presumptuous, shameless; ly: lie; styll: still]

²⁰⁸ CW12, 92/6-8. [callid: called; slepe: sleep; mornynge: morning; vnspoken to: not spoken to; shrewid: of evil nature; souperlesse: supperless; bedd: bed]

²⁰⁹ CW8, 488/5-7; cf CW8, 488/3-7 & 488/31-33. [therto: thereto, to that point]

²¹⁰ cf CW6, 401/31-34; cf Lk 22.61-62; cf CW6, 401/28-29; CW7, *Supplication*, 192/11-13; CW12, 60/12-21.

²¹¹ CW6, 401/35-402/3. On Peter, cf CW6, 401/31-33; cf Lk 22.61-62; on Judas, cf CW6, 401/33-34. [dyuyne: divine; eternyte: eternity; godhed: Godhead; Iudas: Judas; reiecte: reject]

²¹² cf CW11, 89/8; cf CW13, *Passion*, 103/4-6; cf n271 below.

²¹³ CW8, 451/19. [comenly: commonly]

²¹⁴ cf CW8, 451/18-20.

²¹⁵ cf CW8, 451/15-18 & 451/23-24.

²¹⁶ ie: three or four.

them to bringe them strayghte to heuen'.²¹⁷ More employs a merry tale in order to illustrate this. There was a man who would always say

'that all the while he livid he wold do what he lyst. For three wordes whan he died shuld make all safe inough. But than so happid it that long or he were old, his hors ones stumblid vppon a broken bryge, & as he laborid to recouer hym, whan he saw it wold not be, but down into the flode hedling nedes he shuld, in a soden flight he cried out in the fallyng, haue all to the divell. And there was he drownid with his iij wordes ere he died, wheron his hope hong all his wrechid life. And therfor let no man sinne in hope of grace, grace cometh but at goddes will,...'²¹⁸

More's fear is that the failure to escape from the bondage of sin through repentance risks eternal damnation and that the soul will 'straight vppon his temporal death, fal into eternall death, and thesame so horrible and paineful, that it far exceedeth al other kyndes of death'.²¹⁹

More also recognizes that God sometimes intervenes to correct a sinner and uses illness as an example. It is one of God's 'invisible instrumentes' to punish sin²²⁰ and More asks 'How many men atteyne helth of bodye, that were better for their sowle helth, their body were sike styl'.²²¹ God the goaler's instruments include

'an hote feuer, as evyll at his ease in a warm bed, as the tother gaoler layth his on the cold grownd, he wryngeth them by the browes with a mygrem, he collereth them by the neck with a quyncey, he bolteth them by the armes with a paluesey, that they can not lyft their handes to their head, he manacleth their handes with the gowt in their fyngers, he wringeth them by the legges with the cramp in their shynnes, he byndeth them to the bed bord with the crik in the bakke, & layeth one there a long, & as vnhabable to rise as though he lay the feet fast in the stokkes'.²²²

Sometimes the sufferer creates for himself a prison of illness which applies particularly to the sin of gluttony. More explains 'if the body to be the soule a prison, how strayt a prison maketh he the body, y^t stuffeth it so full of rif raf, y^t the soule can haue no rome to stirre it self, but as one wer so set hand & fote in a strayte stockes, y^t he can neither stand vp nor lye

²¹⁷ CW7, *Supplication*, 174/34-36; cf CW12, 92/9-18. [ere: before; suffycyently: sufficiently; sarue: serve; strayghte: straight]

²¹⁸ CW12, 92/9-18. cf Ch 8, nn40-41. [inough: enough; happid: happened; or: before; ones: once; stumblid: stumbled; bryge: bridge; laborid: laboured; recouer: recover; flode: flood; hedling: headlong; soden: sudden; fallyng: falling; divell: devil; drownid: drowned; iij: three; wheron: whereon; hong: hung; wrechid: wretched]

²¹⁹ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 212/29-31. cf Ch 4, n45. [straight: immediately, at once; thesame: the same; paineful: painful; exceedeth: exceeds; kyndes: kinds]

²²⁰ CW12, 274/18. cf n225 below.

²²¹ CW12, 22/5-7. [atteyne: attain, reach; helth: health; sike: sick]

²²² CW12, 274/20-275/3. cf Ch 7, n10. [feuer: fever; evyll: evil; wryngeth: presses, squeezes; mygrem: migraine; collereth: collar, grab or fasten by the neck; quyncey: inflammation of the throat; paluesey: palsy; manacleth: manacles; gowt: gout; shynnes: shins; bord: board; crik: crick; bakke: back; vnhabable: unable; stokkes: stocks]

down,... that it can nothing wield it self, in doying of any good spirituall thyng that appertayneth vnto his part, but is as it were enclosed, not in a prison but in a graue'.²²³ The consequences of such gluttony are even worse for its daughters are sloth and lechery.²²⁴ If illness, as one type of tribulation, is viewed as God's invisible instrument and born 'pacyently it purgeth, if gladly it greatly mereteth, and glad may he be y^t is with mekenes, glad of goddys punyshment'.²²⁵ More also quotes words from the Hebrews: 'For whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth: and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth'.²²⁶ So, while uninterrupted prosperity should be a cause of fear lest a man be in God's 'indignacion & displeasure', tribulation should be 'in their grief gret inward cumfort & spirituall consolacion'.²²⁷

Fear ensures that our trust in God does not turn into the boldness of presumption leading to an exaggerated hope of salvation.²²⁸ Fear is necessary for in this life no one can be 'so sure of his owne fynall saluacyon, nor of his own present estate neyther, but that he hath good cause to fere & temper hys hope of goddys mercy with the drede of his iustyce, lest his ouer bolde hope may happe to stretche in to presumpcion & occasyon of sleight regardyng synne'.²²⁹ Presumption is misplaced confidence, indeed overconfidence, in God's mercy with a view that salvation is secure. It is the devil's 'suttilllest crafte, & most venemous dart'.²³⁰ The presumption that manifests itself as certainty of salvation leads to the temptation of viewing it as something due to us through our good works.²³¹ Such presumption and assurance of our own holiness will 'destroy the merites & good workes'²³² previously done and is likely to lead 'wrechedly to y^e fire of hel for their sinful & wilful blind presumpcion'.²³³ This is especially dangerous on our death bed when the devil will distract us from the necessary repentance and the meditation of death, judgement, heaven and hell by longing for life.²³⁴

²²³ CW1, *Last Things*, 176/2-9. [fote: foot; strayt/e: straight; y^t: that; rif raf: riff raff; rome: room; stirre: provoke, urge; stockes: stocks; lye: lie; doying: doing; appertayneth: belongs as an attribute; graue: grave]

²²⁴ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 176/14-15.

²²⁵ CW6, 216/8-9; cf 216/7-8; cf n220 above. [pacyently: patiently; y^t: that; mekenes: meekness]

²²⁶ Heb 12.6. More quotes the words as from St Paul. It is now understood that *The Letter to the Hebrews* was not written by St Paul, although in More's time it was believed to have been so.

²²⁷ CW12, 44/4-5. [indignacion: indignation; cumfort: comfort]

²²⁸ cf CW8, 425/37-426/6; CW12, 121/20-21.

²²⁹ CW8, 425/37-426/6. [fynall: final; neyther: neither; goddys: God's; iustyce: justice; happe: happen; presumpcion: presumption; occasyon: occasion; sleight: carelessness]

²³⁰ CW1, *Last Things*, 155/7. [suttilllest: subtlest; crafte: ruse; venemous: venomous]

²³¹ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 143/9-11.

²³² CW1, *Last Things*, 155/6.

²³³ CW1, *Last Things*, 155/10-11. [wrechedly: wretchedly]

²³⁴ cf CW12, 4/11-12.

Alternatively, by means of temptation through pride in our good works, he will use distractions from the need of further good works or to leave them to our executors.²³⁵ Instead of being sorry for our sins and occupied with the thought of how to attain heaven, he will distract us with the idea of

‘somme honorable burying, so many torches, so many tapers, so many black gownes, so many mery mourners laughyng vnder black hodes, and a gay hers, w^t the delight of goodly and honorable funeralles: in which the folish sicke man is sometyme occupied, as though he thought that he should stand in a window, and see how woorschipfullye he shall bee broughte to church’.²³⁶

This picture is not original to More; it is found both in Seneca and Erasmus.²³⁷ More’s appreciation that such presumption leads to boldness in sin is revealed in his early poem in which he states that it stems from a misplaced expectation in life ‘of whose continuance maketh us bold to sin’ whereas a healthy appreciation that life is as transitory as a dream acts to counteract this false assurance.²³⁸ It is also found in More’s example of the man who takes pleasure in goods sinfully acquired for this ‘is the very straye way toward the takyng of boldnes & corage in synne’.²³⁹ Such presumption and boldness to sin lacks the balance of hope and fear described by Bishop Fisher as ‘lyke wyse it is with synners when hope is myxed with drede and drede with hope, so that by ouermoche hope of forgyuenes the mynde be not lyft vp in to presumpcyon, & by ouermoche fere it be not put downe in to dyspayre’.²⁴⁰ Balance is always necessary and God’s mercy along with His justice operates as equilibrium.²⁴¹ ‘Goddys mercy is so greate that no man can speke inoughe thereof. But the worlde waxeth such now a dayes, y^t as it is nede to pray for mercy, so were it nede to preche of goddys iustyce’.²⁴² This necessity is because men do not love Him sufficiently to prefer ‘his pleasure before theyr owne, and to forbere synne for the loue of his lawe, and for the regarde of his goodnes to fulfyll hys commaundementes’.²⁴³ Additionally, many men have an ‘ouer great regarde of his mercy, turneth truste into presumpcyon, and maketh men the more

²³⁵ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 143/12-15; cf CW1, 155/4-11.

²³⁶ CW1, *Last Things*, 143/17-23; cf CW7, *Supplication*, 219/29-220/25. [somme: some; honorable: honourable; hodes: hoods; hers: hearse; funeralles: funerals; folish: foolish; sometyme: sometime; woorschipfullye: worshipfully]

²³⁷ Seneca, ‘De breuitate vitae’ in *Moral Essays II*, (ed) Jeffrey Henderson, (trans) John W Basore, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 1932, 20.5. Erasmus, *CWE 27, Moria*, 115-116.

²³⁸ cf CW1, *Twelve Weapons*, 110/23-29. This is More’s expansion of the original.

²³⁹ CW12, 236/9-10. [takyng: taking; boldnes: audacity, presumption, shamlessness; corage: courage]

²⁴⁰ Eamon Duffy, ‘*The Spirituality of John Fisher*’, 209-210; cf Fisher, Sermon on Ps 50, *EW*, 113/27-34. cf Ch 1, n115. [lyke wyse: likewise; synners: sinners]

²⁴¹ cf CW7, *Supplication*, 198/23-36.

²⁴² CW8, 149/8-10. [speke: speak; inoughe: enough; waxeth: grows, becomes; preche: preach]

²⁴³ CW8, 513/2-5. cf Ch 4, n157. [fulfyll: fulfil]

bolde in synne, so forsothe that neyther loue of god, nor desyre of heuen, nor drede of hell, is able to pulle them backe'.²⁴⁴ Strong faith combined together with both the dread and the love of God ensures that many men will be neither 'more bolde in synne or the more negligente in good vertues'.²⁴⁵

In some of the starker passages to be found throughout his controversial and Tower works, More repeatedly insists that boldness and persistence in sin, coupled with a refusal to repent, can lead to the withdrawal of God's grace.²⁴⁶ Nevertheless, while it is sinful to presume upon the mercy of God, More notes that 'some He leaves [in sin] so as never to come back again, but others He lets sleep only until another time, according as He sees fit in His wondrous kindness and the inscrutable depths of His wisdom'.²⁴⁷ How God behaves towards any particular individual cannot be known by any man. More's sombre warnings about the presumption of committing sin in the hope of pardon, refusing and failing to work with God's grace to repent and failing to repent through an unwillingness to amend their life are directed at those individuals who 'may be so froward & obstynate in synne, & when he hath expelled god out of his hart, may dreue hym with synne vpon sinne and dispyghtfull cyrcumstaunces so farre of fro the dore'.²⁴⁸ Such are those who are unwilling to alter their lives as repentance would demand and continue in the same wickedness and 'at lenth with many tymes vsyng this maner, god vtterly castith them of'.²⁴⁹ God withdraws the grace of repentance from those who are 'obdurate in malice and euyll custume of synne'.²⁵⁰ More decries the fact that 'some wretches are there such, that in such wise abuse the great goodnes of god, that the better that he is the worse agayne be they'.²⁵¹ While he admits that 'I haue no power to shet the hand of god fro givying out his pardone where he lyst, nor wold yf I cold', he fears that if a man allows himself to sin in the hope of God's mercy, he may not find the grace to ask for it.²⁵² More writes that he cannot remember any instance in scripture where sinners who behave in

²⁴⁴ CW8, 513/6-10. cf Ch1, nn53 & 62; Ch 4, n159. [forsothe: forsooth; desire: desire]

²⁴⁵ CW6, 393/36-394/1. More writes this in the context of criticizing the Lutherans; he also claims that it does not apply to every man; cf CW6 393/32-33, 393/34-35. [negligente: negligent]

²⁴⁶ cf eg CW6, 401/25-28; CW7, *Supplication*, 191/27-30; CW8, 424/13-23; CW8, 451/20-23; CW12, 60/27-28 & 92/18-19 & 299/13-14; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 211/10-213/2.

²⁴⁷ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 213/1-4; cf CW6, 401/25-29.

²⁴⁸ CW8, 424/13-16. [froward: perverse; obstynate: obstinate; dreue: drive; dispyghtfull: contemptuous, insulting, malignant, malicious; cyrcumstaunces: circumstances; of: off; fro: from; dore: door]

²⁴⁹ CW12, 60/27-28. [lenth: length; vsyng: using; castith: casts]

²⁵⁰ CW6, 401/26. [euyll custume: bad habit]

²⁵¹ CW12, 91/9-11. [some...such: there are some such wretches; in such wise: in such a manner]

²⁵² CW12, 299/11-12. [shet: shut; givying: giving; cold: could]

such a manner will be given the grace to ask for pardon.²⁵³ More connects the presumption of forgiveness of sin ‘vnder the pretext of hope’²⁵⁴ with despair along with the refusal to respond at all to the grace of calling them to repentance.²⁵⁵ However, if there is no feeling that God is drawing us to Him, the remedy is to ‘aplye your self to pray hym... to draw you’.²⁵⁶

More’s connects his fear of presumption to the inconstancy of human nature. This leads to the necessity to hope and pray²⁵⁷ for salvation, to perform good works, while recognizing that every good deed and all virtue is the gift of God.²⁵⁸ In the *Last Things* he comments on ‘y^e vncertentie of thy self’²⁵⁹ with regard to salvation and later, in the Tower, he notes how ‘vnsure also what maner mynd we will our selfe haue to morow’.²⁶⁰

The fear of presumption has another aspect for Thomas More. It is the question of suicide. In More’s Tower work, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, a discussion on suicide occupies a disproportionate amount of space, as More himself admits,²⁶¹ especially as he concedes its irrelevance, stating ‘that were somewhat out of our purpose’.²⁶² Nonetheless, Louis Martz considers the long discussion on suicide in the *Dialogue of Comfort* an essential element in the discussion on tribulation in all its various forms.²⁶³

More refers to suicide throughout his works and displays an entirely traditional understanding of it. More describes suicide as ‘a nother kind of the nightes feare, a nother daughter of pusillanimite, that is to wyt that horrible temptacion by which some folke are temptid to kyll & destroy them selfe’.²⁶⁴ In *The Last Things* he observes that ‘if a manne willyngly kil hym selfe with a knife, the world wondereth therupon, & as wel worthy is, he is ended of his own

²⁵³ cf CW12, 299/13-17.

²⁵⁴ cf eg CW12, 299/19-23.

²⁵⁵ cf CW7, *Supplication*, 192/8-13.

²⁵⁶ CW11, 47/31.

²⁵⁷ CW12, 21/9.

²⁵⁸ cf CW8, 580/25-31; Jn 6.44; CW8, 633/36-634/2 & 841/4-11; cf CW8, 525/7-10.

²⁵⁹ CW1, *Last Things*, 153/5. [vncertentie: uncertainty]

²⁶⁰ CW12, 22/12. [vnsure: unsure; maner mynd: kind of mind/attitude; to morow: tomorrow]

²⁶¹ Suicide occupies thirty-five pages, cf CW12, 122/1-157/5; cf Louis L Martz, ‘The Design of More’s *Dialogue of Comfort*’, in *Moreana*, Vol 4, 1967, 338; Leland Miles, ‘The ‘Dialogue of Comfort’ and More’s Execution’, in *Modern Language Review*, Vol 61, 1966, 558.

²⁶² CW12, 131/21. [somewhat: somewhat]

²⁶³ cf Martz, *Design*, 339.

²⁶⁴ CW12, 122/1-4; cf Ch 2 for More’s possible fear that martyrdom could be a form of suicide. [a nother: another; nightes: night’s; daughter: daughter; pusillanimite: lack of fortitude, faint-heartedness; to wyt: namely; temptacion: temptation; temptid: tempted; kyll: kill; them selfe: themselves]

deth, his goodes forfeited and his corse cast out on a donghyll, hys bodye neuer buried in christen buryall'.²⁶⁵ However, it is interesting that at the beginning of his lengthy discussion on suicide in *A Dialogue of Comfort*, More reiterates his comment on suicides that 'the world wondereth therupon' and notes that actual suicides result in 'much spech & much wondryng'.²⁶⁶ Later in the discussion on suicide in *A Dialogue of Comfort* More repeats the same prohibition, 'there is playne among the commaundementes forbidden, the vnlawfull kyllyng of any man, and therfor of hym selfe, as S Austen sayth, all the church techeth'.²⁶⁷ More observes that there are also many good men and women who suffer from such a temptation who withstand it through grace and good counsel and are finally overcome it, but that these are not generally discussed.²⁶⁸

In his polemical writings More appears to equate suicide with despair. He certainly does so in the case of Richard Hunne, claiming that his suicide by hanging was a mixture of 'malyce and dyspayre'.²⁶⁹ More also perceives the sin of pride along with desperation and shame as factors in someone's decision to commit suicide.²⁷⁰ He uses the example of Judas whose sin of despair is the cause of his self-destruction for he fails both to repent and to accept the grace of God's forgiveness.²⁷¹ In *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, the advice More provides for those tempted to commit suicide is to seek good counsel, to pray, to occupy himself in good and virtuous activity and frequent good and virtuous company. Above all if he will 'abide in the faythfull hope of godes helpe, shall haue the trowth of god... so compase hym about with a pavice, that he shall not nede to drede this nightes feare of this wikkid temptacion'.²⁷²

²⁶⁵ CW1, *Last Things*, 180/27-30. [manne: man; willyngly: willingly; kil: kill; wondereth: wonders; therupon: thereupon, upon this; wel: well; endited: indicted; goodes: possessions, property; forfeited: forfeited; corse: corpse; donghyll: dunghill; hys: his; bodye: body; christen: Christian; buryall: burial]

²⁶⁶ CW12, 122/22.

²⁶⁷ CW12, 136/13-15; cf Exod 20.13; St Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* (The City of God), (trans) Henry Bettenson, 1st pub 1972, re-issued London: Penguin Books, 2003, 1.20 & 1.27. [playne: plain; commaundementes: commandments; vnlawfull: unlawful; kyllyng: killing; therfor: therefore; techeth: teaches]

²⁶⁸ cf CW12, 122/20-123/2.

²⁶⁹ CW6, 327/18; More claims that regarding Hunne's case, 'soo well I knowe it frome toppe to too, that I suppose there be not very many men that knoweth it moche better'; cf CW6, 318/21-22. [dyspayre: despair]

²⁷⁰ cf CW9, 126/11-127/2 for the cases of Thomas Philips, imprisoned for heresy, in whom More saw 'the same spirit of pride that I perceyued byfore in Rycharde Hunne... and fered that yf he [Philips] were in y^c bysshoppes pryson, his gostely enemy y^c deuyll myghte make hym there destroy hym selfe'; cf CW9, 126/32-127/2 for the case of Philips' cousin whose suicide More attributes to the fear of worldly shame.

²⁷¹ cf Matt 27.5; Acts 1.18; cf CW6, 401/33-34 & 402/1-3; CW11, 88/37-89/7; CW13, *Passion*, 103/6-9; CW13, *The Blessed Body*, 193/1-6; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 277/1-281/5 & 463/11-465/3; cf Monti, 394-395. cf n212 above; n321 below.

²⁷² CW12, 156/29-157/1. [faythfull: faithful; godes: God's; trowth: truth; compase: encompass, surround; pavice: convex shield covering the entire body; nede: need; drede: dread; wikkid: wicked]

Twenty years earlier, More writes in *Utopia* that ‘God has withdrawn from man the right to take not only another’s life but his own’.²⁷³ However, More had allowed his Utopians to commit suicide. A Utopian, sick and in great agony, may ‘free himself from this bitter life as from prison and the rack’ but he may only do so with the approval of the priests and senate and without this permission they ‘cast his body ignominiously into a marsh without proper burial’.²⁷⁴ No one in *Utopia* is therefore allowed to kill himself without the approval of those in authority, both religious and state, and it must be remembered that the Utopians are pagans, not Christians.²⁷⁵

Scholarly opinion is divided on whether More did or did not suffer the temptation to commit suicide. Louis Martz thinks that More did not suffer any temptation to commit suicide in the normal sense of the term.²⁷⁶ Paul Green concludes that More’s writings clearly repudiate suicide as a legitimate action.²⁷⁷ Bernard Basset thinks it is possible that he was tempted in this way, while Leland Miles also thinks More may have considered suicide as an option, but rejected it.²⁷⁸ Alistair Fox advances the theory that More’s predicament was a fine line between martyrdom and suicide²⁷⁹ while Richard Marius explains More’s dilemma as the choice between saving his life and risking damnation by swearing the oath.²⁸⁰

Louis Martz suggests that More’s fear is that pride instigated by the devil could lead him to a course of action akin to suicide and would lead to the loss of his soul.²⁸¹ More views suicide as a horrible temptation; his fear encompasses his fear that pain would lead him to forsake his faith and commit spiritual suicide.²⁸² More realizes that the temptation to commit suicide can come from spiritual pride and be an illusion of the devil.²⁸³ Indeed even holy monks can

²⁷³ CW4, *Utopia*, 73/26-28.

²⁷⁴ CW4, 187/11-12, 23-25.

²⁷⁵ cf Edward L Surtz, *The Praise of Wisdom*, Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1957, Chapter IV, Death, Euthanasia, Suicide, 79-93.

²⁷⁶ Louis L Martz, ‘The Design of More’s *Dialogue of Comfort*’, in *Moreana*, Vol 4, 1967, cf CW12, 129/19-25 & 130/1-6.

²⁷⁷ Paul D Green, ‘Suicide, Martyrdom, and Thomas More’ in *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol 19, 1972, 142-144.

²⁷⁸ Basset, 70; Leland Miles, ‘The *Dialogue of Comfort* and More’s Execution’, in *Modern Language Review*, Vol 61, 1966, 558.

²⁷⁹ Alistair Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982, 251.

²⁸⁰ Richard Marius, *Thomas More*, London: Collins, 1986, 475.

²⁸¹ cf Martz, *Design*, 338-339.

²⁸² cf CW12, 122/2.

²⁸³ cf Ch 5, n8.

suffer such delusions.²⁸⁴ More seeks to preserve his life (hence his silence) for in risking martyrdom his fear is that he could be committing the sin of either pride or presumption. Alistair Fox says that More ‘knew he was walking a tightrope between exposing himself to death for Christ's sake, which was meritorious, and committing suicide, which was damnable’.²⁸⁵ Whether or not More did suffer this temptation will almost certainly continue to be a focus of debate.

During an interrogation before the Council he is asked why he did not speak out against the statute plainly, his refusal making it appear that he was not as content to die as he said.²⁸⁶ More's reply reveals his fear of presumption. ‘the trowthe is, that I haue not bene a man of suche holy living as I might be bolde to offer myself to deathe, leaste God for my presumption might suffer me to fall, and therefore I put not miselfe forwarde but drawe backe. Howe beit if God drawe me to it himself, than truste I in his greate mercye, that he shall not faile to giue me grace and strength’.²⁸⁷ Paul Green observes that this comment is not ‘a courteous form of self-abasement’.²⁸⁸ More is attempting to avoid the sins of pride or presumption and to preserve his life (we now know in vain) until he is absolutely sure that martyrdom is God's will for him. Richard Marius perceives More's dilemma for ‘on the one hand, he could not swear the oath; on the other, he was bound by conscience to do everything possible to save his life short of damning his soul’.²⁸⁹ Both More's caution reasoning are clear as he writes ‘To expose one's self to death for Christ's sake when the case clearly demands it or when God gives a secret prompting to do so, this, I do not deny, is a deed of preeminent virtue. But otherwise I do not think it very safe to do so’.²⁹⁰ When no escape is possible More will have that sure indication; until then, he will equivocate before the King's Councillors and maintain his legendary silence,²⁹¹ until after his condemnation.²⁹² For More,

²⁸⁴ cf CW12, 129/12-25 & 131/1-6; cf Paul D Green, ‘Suicide, Martyrdom, and Thomas More’ in *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol 19, 1972, 154.

²⁸⁵ Alistair Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence*, 251.

²⁸⁶ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 559/132-135. This is during the interrogation of 3rd June, 1535. The councillors are most probably referring to the interrogation of 30th April, 1535 when More said that he ‘had fully determyned with my selfe, neyther to study nor medle with eny mater of thys worlde, but that my hole study shulde be, vppon the passyon of Chryst and myne owne passage owt of thys worlde’ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 552/64-68. This is recorded by James Gairdener (arr), *Letters & Papers Foreign & Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol viii, London: Longmans & Co, 1885; No 814 & 815. cf Ch 8, n144; cf Ch 9, n96.

²⁸⁷ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 559/136-141. For presumption, cf eg nn228-233 & 237-244 above. [leaste: lest; miselfe: myself; howe beit: howbeit; giue: give]

²⁸⁸ Green, 154.

²⁸⁹ Richard Marius, *Thomas More*, London: Collins, 1986, 475.

²⁹⁰ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 241/8-11.

²⁹¹ cf Green, 154.

martyrdom is for saints and he does not see himself as a saint; on the contrary, he views himself as a sinner.²⁹³ His comment to Margaret makes this crystal clear as they watched the Carthusians go to their terrible deaths on 4th May, 1535 through the window of his cell. He notes how cheerful they are ‘goinge to their deaths as bridegromes to their Mariage’.²⁹⁴ He continues ‘Wherefore thereby maiste thow see, myne owne good daughter, what a great difference there is betweene such as haue in effecte spent all their dayes in a straight, hard, penentiaall, and paynefull life religiously, and such as have in the world, like worldly wretches, as thy poore father hath done, consumed all theyr tyme in pleasure and ease licentiouslye’.²⁹⁵ As Maureen Purcell observes ‘perhaps one could conclude from the *Dialogue* that,... More’s imaginings of possible sin were vastly greater than his capacity to commit them’.²⁹⁶ More’s self perception is revealed in these comments on the Carthusians, and, despite his hair-shirt, spending all of Fridays in his new building in prayer and meditation on the Passion of Christ and the many other devotions and observances that had been an integral part of his life, More is the fearful, hesitant martyr that he presents in *De Tristitia Christi*. He does not commit suicide. He ‘creeps out hesitantly and fearfully, but for all that bears his death none the less bravely – unless someone perhaps imagines he ought to be thought less brave for having fought down not only his other enemies but also his own weariness, sadness, and fear – most strong feelings and mighty enemies indeed’.²⁹⁷

It is More’s understanding of the connections between fear – or its lack – and sin, along with the dangers of presumption and boldness, that results in his conviction that every person, no matter how holy, should always stand in dread and fear and should never, through any boldness of faith presume themselves to be sure of salvation.²⁹⁸ Faith and sin can exist together and More gives the example of Adam who ‘byleued the wordys of god, & yet he brake hys commaundement’.²⁹⁹ More notes that men have only half a faith who ‘byleue god

²⁹² cf Roper, 92/5-94/10, 94/17-95/9, 96/6-16.

²⁹³ cf Maureen Purcell, ‘Dialogue of Comfort for Whom?’ in *Essays on the Icon*, (eds) Damian Grace and Brian Byron, Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1980, 103.

²⁹⁴ Roper, 80/18-19. [bridegromes: bridegrooms; mariage: marriage]

²⁹⁵ Roper, 80/19-81/4. [maiste: may; myne: mine; penentiaall: penitential; paynefull: painful; licentiouslye: licentiously]

²⁹⁶ Purcell, *Dialogue of Comfort for Whom?*, 104.

²⁹⁷ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 249/4-16; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 85/1-7; Erasmus, ‘Disputatiuncula de taedio, pavore, tristitia Iesu’ (A Short Debate concerning the Distress, Alarm, and Sorrow of Jesus) in *CWE 70*, (ed) John W O’Malley, (trans) Michael J Heath, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 53-54.

²⁹⁸ cf CW11, 93/-37-94/4.

²⁹⁹ CW6, 394/14-15. cf Ch 1, n113.

only in his promises, and in hys threttys ye byleue hym not at all'.³⁰⁰ This attitude is ultimately derived from a faith that 'ys very faynt and feble'.³⁰¹ Such presumption and boldness display a 'lakke of fere in the credence of goddys commynacyon, and ouer mych hope and boldnesse of goddys ferther fauour and sufferaunce'.³⁰² When the fear of sin is abandoned, it is accompanied by negligence and sloth towards avoiding sin or a failure to seek repentance and treat it with the seriousness it merits. Those who do not fear God's punishment and rely instead upon an easy forgiveness will fall boldly in sin and make little effort to amend their life.³⁰³ They will believe that Christ's Passion has paid the entire debt of sin and that no further debt is required even after repentance and remission. Such men will have no fear of pain in this world or the next,³⁰⁴ and will therefore take little care how boldly they sin.³⁰⁵ Such presumptuous men 'stande out of drede of god'³⁰⁶ and thus make themselves worse than 'the deuyll whyche bothe beleueth and trymbleth also for drede'.³⁰⁷ Fear and trembling are also connected with persecution from the wicked as the psalmist notes 'My heart is troubled within me: and the fear of death is fallen upon me. Fear and trembling are come upon me:'.³⁰⁸ More indicates the importance of both these verses by their inclusion in both his *Imploratio* as well as marking them in his Psalter with a marginal line and the words *in tribulatione* next to them, although he does not use them elsewhere.³⁰⁹

But if the danger is the presumption of salvation, then the solution is to take St Paul's advice: 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, beware lest he fall'.³¹⁰ St Paul's admonition is intended for those 'he rekened for good men and faythfull'³¹¹ and More twice links St Paul words to the

³⁰⁰ CW6, 393/32-33. [byleue: believe; threttys: threats]

³⁰¹ CW6, 394/1.

³⁰² CW6, 252/30-31. [commynacyon: warning of divine punishment; ouer mych: too much; boldnesse: audacity, presumption; ferther: further; fauour: favour; sufferaunce: patient endurance, consent acquiescence, sufferance]

³⁰³ cf CW7, *Supplication*, 199/22-30; & 174/24-26 & 175/33 & 199/35-200/3. [boldly: audaciously, presumptuously]

³⁰⁴ cf CW8, 567/36-568/1; cf CW7, *Supplication*, 175/23-34.

³⁰⁵ cf CW8, 211/5-16.

³⁰⁶ CW6, 386/14.

³⁰⁷ CW8, 787/34; cf Jas 2.19; CW6, 386/10-12 & 388/7-8; CW7, *Letter to Bugenhagen*, 60/17-18, 61; CW8, 785/17-18. [deuyll: devil; beleueth: believes; trymbleth: trembles]

³⁰⁸ Ps 54.5-6. The Douai edition prefaces this psalm: 'A prayer of a just man under persecution from the wicked. It agrees to Christ persecuted by the Jews, and betrayed by Judas'.

³⁰⁹ cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 214-225, 224/20-21; *TMPB*, 95, 195.

³¹⁰ CW11, 86/16-19; cf CW8, 430/34-36; cf 1 Cor 10.12. Bishop Fisher uses this biblical verse at least twice; the first time in his sermon on Ps 129 in which he links it to the first two verses: *De profundis clamaui ad te domine: domine exaudi vocem meam* [Out of the depths I have cried to thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice], cf *EW*, 208/32-209/1; Fisher's second instance is in his Sermon for the Funeral of King Henry VII where he links it to the necessity of dying in a state of grace and the dangers of presumption: cf *EW*, 286/24-28.

³¹¹ CW8, 431/2. [rekened: reckoned]

other scriptural warning ‘Blessed is the man that is always fearful’.³¹² The emphasis on being aware in St Paul’s injunction is allied to fear, both the fear of falling and the fear of becoming slothful,³¹³ as well as its opposite of too much fear leading to the mistrust of God’s help.³¹⁴ Both immoderate fear and faintness of heart are to be avoided, as forbidden by Scripture.³¹⁵ When St Paul’s injunction is observed both the danger of any boldness in sin or of leaving repentance until too late will both be avoided.

However, More asserts, with equal insistence, that the dangers inherent in either boldness in sin or presumption of salvation do not apply to those who sin through frailty or sudden fear, who ‘by punishment be called agayne to grace, and not be for theyr faute so some cast clene away’ because of their previous good living.³¹⁶ The repentant sinner who falls through frailty can discover comfort and encouragement in More’s writing. ‘He that in a sodayne brayde for fere, or other affeccion, vnadvisidly falleth, & after in laboryng to rise agayne, comforteth hym selfe with hope of goddes gracyous forgivenes: walketh in the redy way toward his salvacion’.³¹⁷ More never expresses any vindictive ire – or even any criticism – towards those who are genuinely sorry for their sins and who wish to try again and live better and holier lives. He uses the example of St Peter who ‘forsoke our saviour & gate forgivenes after’,³¹⁸ but he also notes that although St Peter ‘was ouercome & vanqueshid vppon a sodayne feare’.³¹⁹ It was Peter’s repentance of his denial of Christ that saved him,³²⁰ just as it was the despair of Judas, or more accurately, his rejection of God’s forgiveness, that led to his suicide.³²¹ Peter’s sin lay in his denial, but this fall came after his proud promise ‘that he wold rather dye than forsake hym:... though he said more than he cold perforeme,... But his offence was, whan he did not after, so well as he said before’.³²² It was Peter’s over-generous impetuosity that did not allow him the time to think through the consequences of his claim

³¹² cf Prov 28.14; cf CW12, 162/2-6; CW15, *Letter to a Monk*, 300/18-20, 301; CW15, *Letter to Dorp*, 92/16-22; 93 where More uses practical examples to explain the necessity of taking care.

³¹³ cf CW11, 86/17-18.

³¹⁴ cf CW12, 162/6-7.

³¹⁵ cf Ecclus 7.9; cf CW12, 162/8-9.

³¹⁶ cf CW6, 401/20-25. [clene: wholly, completely]

³¹⁷ CW12, 299/6-9. [sodayne: sudden; brayde: attack, assault; affeccion: feeling, disposition; vnadvisidly: unadvisedly, without premeditation; laboryng: labouring, working; gracyous: gracious; forgivenes: forgiveness; in the redy way: on the straight path; salvacion: salvation]

³¹⁸ CW12, 299/28-29. [forsoke: forsook; gate: received, got]

³¹⁹ CW12, 300/1. [ouercome: overcome; vanqueshid: vanquished, overcome]

³²⁰ cf Matt 26.75; Mk 14.72; Lk 22.62.

³²¹ cf Matt 27.5; cf Acts 1.18; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 275/7-279/13 & 281/1-5. cf nn210-212 & 271 above.

³²² CW12, 196/27-197/4; cf CW12, 146/12-29. cf n328 below; Ch 7, n146. [perforeme: perform]

and so he was overcome and 'so sodenly fayntid, at a womans word'.³²³ But for Peter for 'y^e more sorrowfully that he repented it, the more bytterly that he bewepte and bewayled it,... the more hym selfe sheweth vs the sore offence and heynous dedelynes therof'.³²⁴ But More observes that Peter's short lapse did not gain him very much for it was not long before he was imprisoned, scourged and eventually crucified at Rome.³²⁵

St Peter surfaces as a very personal guide to More in his sufferings in the Tower.³²⁶ As More follows Christ carrying his cross, St Peter is one of the saints who gives More the example necessary 'to spur him up the rugged uncongenial path'.³²⁷ More's trust in God is too great for him to fall into the sin of despair, but he recognizes, using St Peter as his example, that it is easy to place a bold trust in one's own efforts and so forsake Christ.³²⁸ In this regard St Peter offers to More the example of both human frailty as well as his acceptance of Christ's forgiveness through the repentance offered to him by God's grace.

But More, the medieval man, has an acute awareness of the sinful nature of man and strives to live in accordance with his faith in God. He would 'goe to church and be confessed, to heare masse and be howsled'³²⁹ before he engages in any important matter, and the spiritual integrity of his confessions are described by More's spiritual father, the priest John Bouge, as 'so pure, so clean, with great study, deliberation, and devotion, I never heard many such'.³³⁰ In his own life, as well as in his writings, More understands and accepts the fact of universal sin, even if it is only venial and committed through frailty or sudden fear, as well as the generous gift of repentance given by God's grace.

³²³ CW12, 245/3; cf CW8, 866/7-11; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/128; cf Matt 26.69-75; Mk 14.66-72. [fayntid: fainted; womans: woman's]

³²⁴ CW8, 552/20-28; cf CW8, 1018/32-35. [bytterly: bitterly; bewepte: wept for, wept over; bewayled: bewailed, mourned, expressed sorrow for; sheweth: shows; heynous: heinous, odious; dedelynes: deadliness]

³²⁵ cf CW12, 300/1-11; cf Acts 4.1-21; Acts 5.17-42; Acts 12.1-11.

³²⁶ cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'Obedient Unto Death: A Key to St. Thomas More', *Spiritual Life*, Vol 7, No 3, Fall 1961, 209; Marc'hadour notes that 'St. Peter seems to have grown most dear to Thomas More's heart'. cf Chapter 9 To Godward for the role St Peter played for More during his imprisonment. cf Ch 6, n116; Ch 9, n173ff.

³²⁷ cf Marc'hadour, 209.

³²⁸ cf CW12, 245/5-7.

³²⁹ cf Roper, 72/12-18; quotation at 72/17-18 [goe: go; howsled: to receive the Eucharist].

³³⁰ cf quoted in Wegemer, 31.

Chapter 3: Temptation & the devil

The previous chapter examines More of the fear of sin and the following chapter shows how sin can lead to hell. This chapter analyzes More's perception of the role of the devil in temptation. This is not merely his fear of the direct temptations of the devil but also of the tricks and wiles that the devil employs in order to understand one important aspect of the fears and challenges he faces in the Tower. This is a theological fear as it relates to the faith More professes and a personal one as it relates to his salvation.

This examination turns to temptation and his temptations and how they relate, particularly to his last months in the Tower, but also to how such fears can be found in his early works and throughout his life. This chapter analyzes More's perception of the role of temptation and the devil in order to understand the nature and origin of the fears and challenges he faces in the Tower. This includes how the devil operates, how persecution and temptation are linked as well as the constraints God places on the devil's power. More's fear of the devil is driven by the latter's deviousness and trickery; it is one thing to face an enemy directly but another when that enemy relies on almost endless trickery. More's response shows how he counters his fear of the devil's attacks, firstly by prayer but also through trust and silence.

When Thomas More entered the Tower of London in April 1534, he knew exactly who to blame for his incarceration. It was not Henry VIII, or Anne Boleyn or Thomas Cromwell. More was under no illusion; it was the devil. During his imprisonment, More would quote 'the devill shall send some of you to prison, to tempt you,¹ he sayth not that men shall, but that the devill shall hym selfe, for without question the divelles own dede it is'.² More understands that his real adversary is the devil and that Henry (or Anne Boleyn or Cromwell) are merely the incidental visible manifestations. The most comprehensive, but not only, assessment of the devil's wiles is to be found in the marginalia of More's Psalter.³ Here More writes *demonēs* around forty times, *diabolus* three times and *spiritalēs nequitias* once.⁴ His other writings, including the Tower works, provide a less concentrated view of the devil's machinations, although More's awareness of 'our ghostly enemy the devil' is revealed in all

¹ cf Apoc 2.10.

² CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, (eds) Louis Martz & Frank Manley, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 317/19-21; cf Apoc 2.10. [divelles: devil's]

³ cf *Thomas More's Prayer Book (TMPB)*, (eds) Louis L Martz & Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969. All translations of More's marginalia are taken from *TMPB*.

⁴ On *demon/demonēs* and *diabolus* and their meanings; cf *TMPB*, xlv. cf Introduction, n61.

his writings, whether devotional or polemical.⁵ *A Dialogue of Comfort* and *De Tristitia Christi*, both Tower works, have references to the devil, especially the former. Two compilations also made in the Tower are relevant with regard to More's writings on the devil. First is the *Imploratio*, a compilation of verses from the psalms,⁶ and second is a scriptural *Catena*, which was appended to *De Tristitia*.⁷ The marginalia in More's Psalter should not therefore be seen in isolation from his other Tower works. The Psalter provides a scriptural view of how More counters his fear of the devil's temptations, rather than fear of the devil himself.

The chief activity of the devil is always temptation. More's fear of the devil stems from how the devil works and how the devil might succeed in tripping him up. In the Tower More explains that the devil operates through craft, grynne, illusions and false illusion, wonders, temptations and wicked temptations, provocation, and sleights.⁸ In short, 'the devill hath of his traynes a thowsand subtill ways'⁹ and possesses a Machiavellian shrewdness to his trickery. More displays evidence of his early awareness of the devil's temptations and the battle that every man must wage against it, using the language of warfare. In Rules One and Two of Pico's *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle*.¹⁰ More describes to his readers that this life is 'warre continuall / against y^e worlde, y^e flessch, y^e deuill' for this trio will always attempt to enslave us through temptation.¹¹ Imprisoned in the Tower, he expands this theme and

⁵ cf eg CW1, *The Last Things*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 142/5-8; CW6, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, (eds) (eds) Thomas M C Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour & Richard C Marius, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, 110/2-5; CW7, *A Supplication of Souls*, (eds) Frank Manley, Germain Marc'hadour, Richard Marius & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 188/32; CW8, *Confutation of Tyndale*, (eds) Louis A Schuster, Richard C Marius, James P Lusardi & Richard J Schoeck, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973, 130/2-4; CW9, *Apology*, (ed) J B Trapp, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979 126/28; CW12, 282/9; CW13, *Treatise upon the Passion*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 116/32-33 for one example in each of the works in which the phrase appears.

⁶ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 214-225. Its full title is *Imploratio diuini auxiliij contra tentationem; cum insultatione contra daemones, ex spe & fiducia in deum*; it is known as the *Imploratio*. cf Introduction, n152; Ch 9, n39.

⁷ cf CW14, *Catena*, (ed & trans) Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 627-679. It covers twenty-eight pages of biblical quotations. Of all these biblical quotations, only nine are taken from the psalms. Of these nine, five have marginalia in the Psalter, two have marginal lines with no annotation and two verses, both from Ps 118, are not marked in the Psalter. The Psalter does contain a part of Ps 118, but ends with verse 54, at least in the facsimile edition. Two of these quotations are also found in the *Imploratio*, Ps 41.2-3 & Ps 54.23; cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 222/17-18 & 224/25.

⁸ cf CW12, for craft: 132/2 & 147/6; grynne: 224/8; illusions/false illusion: 133/16; 134/22; wonders: 136/4; temptations/wicked temptations: 148/20; 156/18; 160/16; 201/28; provocation: 162/16; sleights: 131/28. cf Ch 6, n153. [craft: craftiness, trickery; grynne: snare, trap; illusion, illucion: false vision; sleights: trickery, deceit, stratagem]

⁹ CW12, 101/1-2. [trayne: trap; thowsand: thousand; subtill: subtle]

¹⁰ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle*, 103/21-109/12.

¹¹ CW1, *Twelve Rules*, 103/22-24. [warre: war; flessch: flesh]

replaces the devil with family and friends. ‘The suggestions of the flesh, thoccasions of the world, & of his worldly frendes much worse many tymes in drawyng a man from god than are his most mortall enmyes, which thing our saviour witnesseth hym selfe where he sayth: *Inimici hominis domestici eius*, the enmyes of a man, are they that are his own famyliers’.¹²

During his imprisonment More connects temptation and persecution. ‘By temptacion the devill persecuteth vs, & by persecucion the devil also temptith vs, and as persecucion is tribulacion to euery man, so is temptacion tribulacion to euery good man’;¹³ hence the necessity of fear. He also explains the difference between temptation and persecution. ‘Temptacion ys as it were the fendes trayne, and persecucion his playne open fight’.¹⁴ More perceives that persecution contains two benefits. The first benefit concerns the loss of worldly goods. If a man bestows his goods, he gives them to God and even if they are taken violently during persecution, if he parts from them willingly, he can still give them to God.¹⁵ He counsels his readers to ‘hyde their tresour in hevyn’, for ‘yf we send our tresour into hevyn, in hevyn shall we haue our hartes’.¹⁶ But ‘yf we laye vpp our tresours in earth, in earth shalbe our hartes’.¹⁷ But for those who will not leave their faith, to lose their goods acts like a touch stone to test them for it shows ‘the faynid fro the trew myndid’.¹⁸ More reasons that even if a man retains his goods for as long as he lives, he will shortly lose them all through death.¹⁹ Here More points out his priorities; God and heaven come first. The second benefit in times of persecution is that while men, when acting as persecutors, are merely the devil’s agents,²⁰ nevertheless they also act as God’s ‘folke’²¹ for when they take away our worldly goods it allows the ‘warne sonne of grace’²² to enter our hearts. On the other hand the severest of all tribulations to a good man is ‘the feare of lesyng thorow dedly synne the life of his silly

¹² CW12, 164/29-165/3; cf Matt 10.36; cf CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, 305/307. The Douai translation renders Matt 10.36 as ‘And a man’s enemies shall be they of his own household’. [thoccasions: the occasions; frendes: friends; enmyes: enemies; famyliers: intimate friends or associates, including family]

¹³ CW12, 100/13-16. [tribulacion: tribulation; persecucion: persecution]

¹⁴ CW12, 100/18-20; cf CW12, 107/17-21: Here More compares the dark and unknown nature of the ‘nights feare’ with the open fight and assault of persecution; cf Ps 90.5-6. [fendes: fiend’s, devil’s]

¹⁵ cf CW12, 226/29-227/31.

¹⁶ CW12, 239/13 & 241/14-15; cf Matt 6.19-21; cf CW12, 239/21-240/2; CW1, *Last Things*, 171/14. More uses Matt 6.21 in relation to the covetous rich man. cf Ch 6, n141. [hyde: hide; tresour: treasure;]

¹⁷ CW12, 241/13-14; cf CW12, 12-16; Matt 6.21; Lk 12.34; CW1, *Last Things*, 171/14.

¹⁸ CW12, 226/28. [faynid: feigned; myndid: inclined, disposed, determined]

¹⁹ cf CW12, 233/15-20.

²⁰ cf CW12, 317/16-17 & 317/25-27; cf CW13, *Passion*, 6/29-7/2; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 537/1-545/11. This is also reflected in More’s frequent use of ‘ghostly enemy’ as a description of the devil; cf eg CW1, *Last Things*, 142/6 & 153/4 & 155/5 & 155/7; CW6, 93/9; CW7, *Supplication*, 114/8 & 188/32; CW8, 133/3; CW9, 126/28; CW12, 282/9.

²¹ CW12, 241/5, 6.

²² CW12, 241/10. [sonne: sun]

sowle’, and the man most in need of this fear, according to More, ‘fearith lest of all’.²³ More had long learned to keep his eyes fixed on the goal of obtaining salvation; and here in his Tower writings he presents the choice once again.

Although the devil is a fearsome enemy, nevertheless he does not have the last word, for ‘though he is more than a match for us, he is never a match for God’.²⁴ In the battle with the devil, it is essential always to keep in mind that the devil has only as much power as God deigns to allow him.²⁵ While the temptations of the devil should not be underestimated for he remains a ‘formidable adversary’,²⁶ nevertheless it is vital to remember that it is Christ’s power, and not our own, that defeats this enemy.²⁷ The spiritual warfare of virtue versus vice is waged against our adversary the devil and, as St Paul describes it, against ‘the princes & potestates of these darke regions, against the spirituall wikked goostes of the ayer’²⁸ and the victory has already been won. As More explains ‘Therfor whan he [the devil] roreth out vppon vs by the threttes of mortall men, let vs tell hym that with our inward yie, we see hym well ynough, & intend to stand & fight with hym evyn hand to hand. Iff he thretten vs that we be to weyke, let vs tell hym that our capten Christ is with vs, & that we shall fight with his strength that hath vainquyshid hym all redy’.²⁹ Although the victory over sin and the devil has already been won by Christ’s Passion and death, nevertheless the fight is necessary for each man for it is the means God provides for each of us to gain merit through reason and grace.³⁰ While the malice of the devil is great, More sets out the limits and parameters of his personal attacks for ‘there is no divill so diligent to destroy hym, as god is to preserue hym, nor no devill so nere hym to do hym harme, as god is to do hym good, nor all the divelles in hell so strong to invade & assawte hym, as god is to defend hym, yf he distrust hym not but faythfully put his trust in hym’.³¹ Fear of the devil’s temptation is necessary but must not overwhelm us for they have limits. Our trust in God is vital and it is necessary to remember

²³ CW12, 20/10-11 & 20/9. cf Ch 4, nn132 & 143. [lest: least]

²⁴ cf Germain Marc’hadour, ‘St Thomas More’, in *The Month* (New Series), No 29, Jan-Jun 1963, 71.

²⁵ cf CW12, 74/17-27; cf Job 1.9-12; cf Marc’hadour, *St Thomas More*, 70-71 & n4.

²⁶ cf Marc’hadour, *St Thomas More*, 71.

²⁷ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 333/5-6 & 333/9-335/1.

²⁸ CW12, 101/19-22; cf CW12, 317/23-24; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 545/4-7; cf Eph 6.12: For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood: but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. cf nn44 & 46 below; cf Ch 1, n182. [potestates: potentates, rulers; goostes: ghosts, spirits]

²⁹ CW12, 318/12-17; cf Thomas a Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, (trans) Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 2nd impression 1955, Bk III, Ch 56, No 5. For More’s use of Christ as our captain, cf CW1, *Twelve Rules*, 104/9; CW13, *Passion*, 58/17-19; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 113/3 & 1091. [roreth: roars; iff: if; thretten: threaten; capten: captain; vainquyshid: vanquished, overcome; all redy: already]

³⁰ cf CW12, 21/4-8.

³¹ CW12, 153/13-17; cf CW12, 16/29-32. cf Ch 7, n84. [preserue: preserve; assawte: assault]

continually that God will not allow us to be tempted above what we can bear³² and no one is on his own against the devil. God will give us ‘strength against the devilles might, & wisdom against the devilles traynes’.³³ While ‘your aduersary the devill, as a roryng lyon goth about sekyng whom he may devour’,³⁴ he is unable to hurt us until we fall.³⁵

In the marginalia of his Psalter More recognizes the evident malice and wickedness of both satan and other devils, but does not confine them to the spiritual realm. The devil, or devils, can be either human or spiritual, single or plural and therefore represent ‘evil human beings, dangerous situations, actual devils and all those elements of life that conspire to divert the soul from the just way’.³⁶ They illustrate how the devil successfully achieves his malicious temptations through snares³⁷ and ambushes,³⁸ along with deceit,³⁹ taunts⁴⁰ and flattery.⁴¹ It is suggested by James Monti that More’s extensive use of *demon* and *demones* in his marginalia compared to the almost complete absence of those mentioning evil men implies that More ‘also intended to use the terms as a discreet and oblique reference to the human enemies who were confronting him’.⁴² This suggestion is probably accurate for, although it is the sole example, More does associate wicked men with actual devils directly when he writes *imploratio auxiliij contra uel demones uel malos homines* next to the two verses that read ‘Deliver me from my enemies, O my God: and defend me from them that rise up against me. Deliver me from them that work iniquity: and save me from bloody men’.⁴³ The connection between the world and the spiritual realm is confirmed by the marginalia next to the verse ‘O

³² cf CW12, 247/14-20; 1 Cor 10.13.

³³ CW12, 102/8-9. [devilles: devils’]

³⁴ CW12, 149/23-24; cf 1 Pet 5.8. More uses this verse nine times in his writings; six of the nine appear in his Tower Works: CW12, 149/20-24 & 201/1-2 & 318/6-8; CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 213/3-5; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 169/12-171/2; CW14, *Catena*, 637/2-3. The others are: CW1, Pico’s *Twelve Rules*, 106/9-20 & 142/17-18; CW5, *Responsio*, (ed) John Headley, (trans) Sr Scholastica Mandeville, 1969, 136/23-24. The last quotation is a paraphrase of the Bible. [aduersary: adversary; roryng: roaring; lyon: lion; goth: goes; sekyng: seeking]

³⁵ cf CW12, 317/27.

³⁶ cf Gerard B Wegemer, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, Princeton: Scepter, 1997, 187; Peter Ackroyd, *Thomas More*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1998, 360-361; cf Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, New York: (trans) John P H Clark and Rosemary Dorward, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1991, Bk II, Chs 21 & 22, 226-232.

³⁷ cf Ps 30.5; *TMPB*, 59, 193. Snares are not always physical; More notes that words can also act as a snare; cf Ps 5.11; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 551/7-9; cf Ps 67.2-3: More’s marginalia reads *contra demonum insidias et insultus* (against the snares and insults of the devils); cf *TMPB*, 111, 197.

³⁸ cf Ps (10).8, *TMPB*, 35, 190.

³⁹ cf Ps 5.11; cf Ps 13.3; *TMPB*, 29, 189.

⁴⁰ cf Ps 34.15, *TMPB*, 68, 194.

⁴¹ cf Ps 34.19; *TMPB*, 68, 194; cf Ps 54.22; *TMPB*, 97, 195. For flattery, cf nn76 & 77 below; Ch2, nn139-152.

⁴² cf James Monti, *The King’s Good Servant but God’s First: The Life and Writings of St Thomas More*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997, 355.

⁴³ A plea for help against either demons or evil men. This is next to Ps 58.2-3 in More’s Psalter; cf *TMPB*, 101, 196.

Lord, my God, in thee have I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me' which reads *contra spiritalis nequitas*.⁴⁴ This link between the persecutions of men and the devils of the spiritual realm also contrasts the powers of darkness in the form of worldly rulers to God, who will save and deliver us if we place our trust in Him. This verse from Psalm 7 is the only one to appear twice in the *Imploratio*.⁴⁵ It also reflects St Paul's admonition: 'For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood: but against principalities and powers, against the ruler of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places',⁴⁶ a verse More uses twice in *A Dialogue of Comfort* and once in *De Tristitia Christi*.⁴⁷ There cannot be any doubt that More refers to the principalities and powers and rulers of this world and his fear could not be more clearly described when he gives reign to his imagination in a powerful passage that places these fears into the mouth of Christ before His arrest in Gethsemane. C S Lewis criticizes More's gloss on 'This is your hour and the power of darkness',⁴⁸ for weakening it through verbosity.⁴⁹ Louis Schuster, however, notes More's 'image-making faculty', observing 'its energy' and how 'in a flash it can summon the abstract powers of darkness'.⁵⁰ More writes:

'And so this is your hour and the power of darkness. This is the short hour allowed to you and the power granted to darkness, so that now in the dark you might do what you were not permitted to do in the daylight, flying in my face like winged creatures from the Stygian marsh, like harpies, like horned owls and screech-owls, like night-raven and bats and night-owls, futilely swarming in a shrill uproar of beaks, talons, and teeth'.⁵¹

While the devil, or men acting as his agents, set out to tempt us, More sets out the methods by which to counter these attacks and the fear of them. In the translation of Pico's tenth rule More outlines how to conduct the battle against temptation. The first thing is 'in all

⁴⁴ Ps 7.2, cf *TMPB*, 31, 189. Against the spiritual hosts of wickedness; Eph 6.12. cf n28 above; n46 below; cf Ch 1, n182.

⁴⁵ cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 214/26-27 & 216/1-2.

⁴⁶ Eph 6.12. cf nn 28 & 44 above; Ch 1, n182.

⁴⁷ cf CW12, 101/16-22 & 317/22-24; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 545/1-7.

⁴⁸ Lk 22.53.

⁴⁹ cf C S Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962, 179.

⁵⁰ Louis A Schuster, 'The Tower: MORE'S GETHSEMANE' in *Moreana*, Vol XIX, No 74, 1982, 41.

⁵¹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 537/12-539/5. More's original is in Latin. A translation of the *De Tristitia* was made by More's grand-daughter, Mistress Mary Basset, and published in More's *English Works* in 1557. Her work, written in sixteenth century English, shows how she presents this rather fearful passage. She writes: 'Thys is therefore youre howre and the power of darknesse: thys is the shorte whyle that is graunted yee and the libertie geuen vnto darknesse, that now ye maye in the night, which till this howre ye could neuer be suffered to bring to passe in the daye, like monstrous raueninge fowles, like skriche owles and hegges, like backes, howlettes, nighte crows and byrdes of the hellye lake, goe aboute with your billes, your tallentes, your teeth and your shyrlle shrychinge, outrageouslye, but all in vayne, thus in the darke to flee vpon me'; cf CW14, Pt II, 1154. More mentions the raven, the owl and the bat. All are stated as unclean birds in the Bible; cf Deut 14.14-18; cf CW14, Pt II, 1054, note to CW14, 539/2-5. cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 543/4-13 & 553/9-557/5 for further descriptions of the powers of darkness.

temptation with stoned the begynnyng'.⁵² During the Fall, Eve's mistake was to dialogue with the devil rather than telling him either to speak to her husband or 'Be gone'.⁵³ The principal weapons in the warfare against the devil are spiritual. They include 'praying for hym selfe & desieryng other also to pray for hym, both pore folke for his almoise & other good folke of their charite, specially good preestes in that holy sacred seruice of the masse'.⁵⁴ Prayer is particularly important and More gives three examples as a recommendation. First, verses from the psalter and he quotes as his example *Exurgat deus & dissipentur inimici eius, & fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie eius*,⁵⁵ indicating the prudent necessity of placing trust in God. Secondly, he advises the use of the words of Christ that are terrible and odious to the devil: *vade sathana* for Christ himself used them to drive the devil away during His temptation in the wilderness.⁵⁶ Thirdly, he suggests that no prayer is more acceptable or effective than the words that end the Our Father: *Ne nos inducas in tentationem, sed libera nos a malo*,⁵⁷ which also shows the power of God to protect us and thus the trust that should be placed in Him. Other weapons include confession,⁵⁸ making the sign of the cross⁵⁹ and mocking the devil for his pride cannot stand it.⁶⁰ Further aids in this warfare are fasting and wearing a hair-shirt. In the marginalia of More's Psalter, one annotation reads: *demonas insultant sed humiliemur vtamus cilicio ieiunemus et precemur*.⁶¹ Here in this annotation More reveals his aids for spiritual battle, but throughout his writings More connects fasting not only with wearing a hair shirt and prayer,⁶² but also with alms deeds,⁶³ watching,⁶⁴

⁵² CW1, Pico's *Twelve Rules*, Tenth Rule, 107/22. [with stoned: withstand; begynnyng: beginning]

⁵³ cf CW13, *Passion*, 15/13-16.

⁵⁴ CW12, 155/15-18. More also refers to prayer as a channel of God's grace in his letter to Master Leder; cf Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, 549/19-20; cf CW12, 76/10-12. cf Ch 8, n15. [desieryng: desiring; almoise: alms; charite: charity; preestes: priests; seruice: service]

⁵⁵ Ps 67.2: Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered: and let them that hate him flee from before his face. Douai translation, cf *TMPB*, 111, 197.

⁵⁶ Begone Satan; cf CW12, 156/21-23; cf Matt 4.10.

⁵⁷ Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. CW12, 156/25-26; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 175/1-4; Matt 6.13. cf Ch 8, n94.

⁵⁸ CW12, 153/1-2.

⁵⁹ CW12, 155/6-7.

⁶⁰ CW12, 155/7-12.

⁶¹ The devils taunt us, but let us lie low; let us wear the hair shirt, let us fast and pray; cf *TMPB*, 68, 194. This annotation begins next to Ps 34.15: But they rejoiced against me, and came together: scourges were gathered together upon me, and I knew not. The annotation continues along verses 16-17: They were separated and repented not: they tempted me, they scoffed at me with scorn, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. Lord, when wilt thou look upon me? Rescue thou my soul from their malice: my only one from the lions. cf below nn 67 and 71. For prayer: cf CW8, 960/16 for fasting: cf CW8, 66/33 & 581/5 & 633/33. cf Ch 2, nn27 & 30.

⁶² cf eg CW9, 103/9. More cites St John the Baptist as having 'fasted, watched, prayed and ware here'; cf CW6, 44/14; CW8, 123/16; Matt 3.4.

⁶³ cf eg CW1, *Last Things*, 134/26-27; CW6, 433/23-24; CW8, 55/11 & 90/1-2; CW12, 316/28.

⁶⁴ cf eg CW6 106/15; CW8, 97/18 & 581/4-5 & 633/33-34. More cites St John the Baptist as having watched prayed and fasted from meat, cf CW8, 123/15-16, cf Matt 3.4; St Paul as having watched and fasted, cf CW12,

remission of sin,⁶⁵ good and godly living,⁶⁶ good works,⁶⁷ casting out devils⁶⁸ and the three theological virtues.⁶⁹ All these fight the devil's temptations and so lessen both his power and the fear of him. He also observes that Christ lived on earth in 'payne & labour, fasting, watch, preachynge and prayer'.⁷⁰

One annotation in More's Psalter, *contra demonum insidias et insultus*,⁷¹ covers the two verses 'Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered: and let them that hate him flee from before his face. As smoke vanisheth, so let them vanish away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God'.⁷² Another annotation expands this with *consilium demonum* next to 'For my enemies have spoken against me: and they that watched my soul have consulted together'.⁷³ In choosing these two verses to annotate, More brings the devil's activities into this world, as well as including clearly that words are within the devil's armoury of snares.⁷⁴ The *De Tristitia Christi* confirms that 'soft speeches' are part of the devil's snares used by persecutors to lead men from 'the way of truth'.⁷⁵ Words can act as a snare both through lies and flattery and More places *adulator* next to 'his words are smoother than oil and the same are darts', making a direct connection between words, snares and the

310/28-29; cf 2 Cor 11.27; CW14, *Catena*, 669/8; cf 2 Cor 6.5. In this example from the *Catena*, More writes 'sleepless nights'.

⁶⁵ cf CW8, 66/33-35 & 69/17-24 & 69/35-70/5; cf Jn 3.8-10; cf CW8, 67/2-4. More comments that Moses' fast was penance for the people's worship of the golden calf; Exod 33.

⁶⁶ cf CW8, 113/15-16 & 113/23-24 & 113/27 & 113/31.

⁶⁷ cf CW8, 53-5-6 & 205/29-30.

⁶⁸ cf CW8, 65/31-34 & 70/13-14, Matt 17.20; CW12, 96/9-10, Mk 9.28. Both Matthew 17.20 and Mark 9.28 are both found mentioning prayer and fasting in the Vulgate and the Douai translation of the same. Both are also found in the Authorized Version of the Bible as Matthew 17.21 and Mark 9.29. Matthew 17.20 is not found in either the Catholic or Protestant Revised Standard Editions of the Bible. Matthew 17.20 is also not found in the Jerusalem Bible. Mark 9.28 is found in the Revised Standard version of the Bible as well as the Jerusalem Bible but both mention only prayer and omit fasting. The Catholic Revised Standard edition contains Mark 9.28 and has prayer and fasting.

⁶⁹ cf CW8, 55/26-27.

⁷⁰ CW13, *Passion*, 27/23-24. More notes Christ's forty days' fast, cf CW6, 44/17-19; cf Lk 4.2. [preachynge: preaching]

⁷¹ Against the snares and insults of the devils; cf *TMPB*, 197.

⁷² Ps 67.2-3; *TMPB*, 111, 197. The heading of this psalm in the Douai translation reads 'A prayer to God against the iniquities of men'.

⁷³ The council of the demons. Ps 70.10; *TMPB*, 118, 198; cf Ps 40.6.

⁷⁴ The fact that More considers that words can be a snare is confirmed by the annotation *contra insidias demonum* next to Ps 5.11 which reads 'their throat is an open sepulchre: they dealt deceitfully with their tongue: judge them O God; cf *TMPB*, 29, 189. Ps 13.3 is very similar: 'Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they acted deceitfully: the poison of asps is under their lips'; the line alongside of the text continues as the verse goes on: 'Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood' and the marginalia simply reads: *demones*; *TMPB*, 39, 191.

⁷⁵ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 551/7-9. In *The Scale of Perfection*, Hilton uses the idea of a pilgrim going to Jerusalem (ie towards the heavenly city) who refuses to be distracted along the way by his search for the love of Jesus by carnal desires, vain fears as well as 'unclean spirits that are busily trying to deceive you with tricks and wiles'. Hilton includes fear and menaces as well and flattery and false blandishment and the temptation of the devil; cf Bk II, Ch 22, 230-232.

slippery nature of the devil's activities.⁷⁶ Flattery as a particular danger as well as the essential deceitfulness characteristic of the devil can be seen in More's response to the verses 'let not them that are my enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: who have hated me without cause,... For they spoke indeed peaceably to me; and speaking in the anger of the earth they devised guile'.⁷⁷ The marginalia says quite simply *demonēs etiam falsa prosperitate blandiuntur*.⁷⁸

The deliberations and intention of any council, whether of devils or men, can be malicious and More pens *contra demonēs*; next to the verse 'For many dogs have encompassed me: the council of the malignant hath besieged me'.⁷⁹ A marginal line runs against verses explaining the designs of such a malignant council. Its members 'have whetted their tongues like a sword;... They will shoot at him on a sudden, and will not fear; they are resolute in wickedness. They have talked of hiding snares; they have said: Who shall see them?'⁸⁰ Peter Berglar notes that 'false accusations have brought More down',⁸¹ and the single word *calumniā*⁸² if found next to the words '...for unjust witnesses have risen up against me, and iniquity hath lied to itself'.⁸³ The first two verses of this psalm ask God to 'deliver my soul from the fear of the enemy' and in the past tense 'Thou hast protected me from the assembly of the malignant'.⁸⁴ Here the psalmist's prayer is for delivery from fear, rather than from the enemy as such. The psalmist also acknowledges the strength of the enemy. He has been delivered from the enemy in the form of the assembly of the malignant, 'from the multitude of the workers of iniquity, and the marginalia for these two verses reads *precatio contra insidias demonis*'.⁸⁵ Clearly this could apply to More's interrogations either before or during his imprisonment.

More's awareness of the dangers of a malignant council is found not only in the marginalia of his Psalter, but preceding his imprisonment, in his *Treatise on the Passion*. He quotes the

⁷⁶ Flatterer. Ps 54.22; *TMPB*, 97, 195. cf n41 above; Ch 2, nn139-152.

⁷⁷ Ps 34.19-20; *TMPB*, 68, 194.

⁷⁸ The demons also flatter [us] with false prosperity. Ps 34.19-20; cf *TMPB*, 68, 194.

⁷⁹ Ps 21.17; *TMPB*, 50, 192. In the *Catena*, More uses the words *maledictos illos canes* of Christ's enemies at the foot of the cross; cf CW14, 653/5.

⁸⁰ Ps 63.4, 6; *TMPB*, 106.

⁸¹ Peter Berglar, *Thomas More: A Lonely Voice Against the Power of the State*, New York: Scepter, 1999, 210.

⁸² False accusation or calumny. *Contra potentem calumniam* [against a powerful piece of slander] is the annotation next to the phrase 'the words of the wicked'; cf Ps 64.4; *TMPB*, 107, 197.

⁸³ Ps 26.12, *TMPB*, 55, 192.

⁸⁴ Ps 63.2-3.

⁸⁵ A prayer against the snares of the demons; cf *TMPB*, 106, 197.

psalmist *Beatus vir qui non abiit in consilium impiorum*,⁸⁶ which can be interpreted either as a prayer or as a statement. The *Treatise* was written in the months immediately prior to More's arrest so his statement that he had not at that time 'vnto theyr wycked counsayle, hath not bene partener nor gyuen hys assent' is an affirmation that he had not said anything compromising.⁸⁷ It is possible, although probably unverifiable, that this refers to his appearance before the Commission in connection with his involvement with the Nun of Kent. This occurred in the very early spring of 1534.⁸⁸ In the *Treatise* More reminds his readers of Christ's promise to be present where two or three are gathered in His name,⁸⁹ having wryly observed that 'euerye greate counsayle is not alwaye a good counsayle', however important the participants.⁹⁰ He recognizes the role of the devil in such a council 'for lykewyse as God is in the myds of the good counsayle, so in the myddest of an euyl counsayl, is ther vndoubtedly the dyuel'.⁹¹ These comments reveal More's awareness of the verbal machinations of wicked councils as well as his understanding of the potential danger inherent in words. He almost certainly knows by the time he composed this, that sooner or later, he would be required to confirm by words, in whatever form, the king's new marriage to Anne Boleyn.⁹²

His choice of words in the marginalia of his Psalter, when connected to the adjacent verses, reflect More's fear of being trapped by speaking words and equally his determination not to be. But the prayer completing the section on wicked councils in the *Treatise* demonstrates, when compared to the marginalia in his Psalter, that More's silence and refusal to take the

⁸⁶ Ps 1.1: Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly,...; cf CW13, *Passion*, 74/6.

⁸⁷ CW13, *Passion*, 74/8-9; cf CW13, *Passion*, 75/22-25. More also quotes Ps1.1: Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly. cf n91 & 93 below. [wycked: wicked; counsayle: council; partener: partaker, sharer]

⁸⁸ The nun of Kent, Elizabeth Barton, made adverse prophecies concerning Henry VIII. More had met her and written to her. Both More and Bishop Fisher were included in the Act of Attainder against Barton and her associates which came before Parliament in February, 1534. More immediately petitioned the King to present his case before the House of Lords. This was refused but instead, More was allowed to appear Cromwell and members of the Privy Council [including Cromwell, Cranmer, Audeley and the Duke of Norfolk], cf William Roper, *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore, Knighte*, London: Early English Text Society, 1935, 65/7-68/24; Richard Marius, *Thomas More*, London: Collins, 1986, 453; John Guy, *Thomas More*, London: Arnold, 2000, 169; Ackroyd, 344. According to Roper, the nun of Kent was not mentioned and the intention appears to have been solely an attempt to persuade More to take the oath. More's name was subsequently removed from the Attainder. Barton, along with the priests who had supported her, was executed for treason on 20th April, 1534; cf Ackroyd, 358.

⁸⁹ cf Matt 18.20; cf CW13, *Passion*, 73/22-25.

⁹⁰ CW13, *Passion*, 73/19-20; cf CW13, *Passion*, 73/25-29. [alwaye: always]

⁹¹ CW13, *Passion*, 74/9-11; cf CW13, *Passion*, 75/22-25. cf n87 above; n93 below. [lykewyse: likewise; myds, myddest: midst; vndoubtedly: undoubtedly; dyuel: devil]

⁹² For the circumstances of the composition of More's *A Treatise on the Passion*, cf Introduction, n35. The *Treatise* is datable to early 1534 and it could easily reflect More's perception of the unfolding parliamentary and political events and their probable impact upon him and his family.

oath is part of a pre-considered reaction to the inherent danger of words, particularly in relation to any oath. The prayer reads: ‘Gracious god giue me thy grace so to consider the punyshement of that false greate counsayle, that gathered together against thee, that I be neuer to thy displeasure partener, nor giue mine assent to folow the sinful deuice of any wicked counsail’.⁹³ This evidence from the *Treatise*, together with the annotations in his Psalter, surely indicates that More viewed those who interrogated him as part of a malignant council, who, wittingly or unwittingly, were acting as the devil’s agents and attempting to ensnare him by words. It also reveals that More is fully aware of the dangers of a council prior to his imprisonment.

Words, or rather a lack of them in the form of More’s silence, play an important part in his imprisonment and execution. His refusal to swear the oath of Succession or state the reasons why he would not do so, led directly to his confinement.⁹⁴ More’s silence when asked to take the oath is legendary and, as Richard Sylvester notes, it could act as a legal protection.⁹⁵ At his trial, as Duncan Derrett notes, ‘More submits that silence itself is no crime. In treason an overt act must be proved’.⁹⁶ More also notes that silence normally presumes to mean consent, so his silence ‘should rather be taken as approval than contempt of your statute’.⁹⁷

In *A Dialogue of Comfort* More divulges his dilemma and his solution that ‘while there is noman to complayne to for the redresse: what remedy but pacience, & fayne to sit still & hold my peace’.⁹⁸ Henry was the only person to whom More could appeal but Henry [as well as the devil] was also the source of More’s trouble. A further insight into More’s silence is found in a letter to his daughter Margaret written in the Tower. In it he reveals one possible reason for his silence, and his lack of appeal to Henry. He tells Margaret that ‘albeit I rather would endure all the payne and peryll of the statute than by the declaring of the causes, geue

⁹³ CW13, *Passion*, 75/22-25; cf CW13, *Passion*, 74/6-9; Ps 1.1. cf nn87 & 91 above. [punyshement: punishment; deuice: stratagem, scheme; counsail: council]

⁹⁴ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 501/1-507/159. This letter is More’s first from the Tower and relates to his daughter Margaret the circumstances of his first interrogation at Lambeth Palace on 13th April, 1534.

⁹⁵ Richard S Sylvester, ‘Conscience and Consciousness: Thomas More’ in *The Author in His Work: Essays on a Problem in Criticism*, eds Louis L Martz & Aubrey Williams, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1978, 170.

⁹⁶ J Duncan M Derrett, ‘The Trial of Sir Thomas More’, in *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, (eds) Richard S Sylvester & Germain Marc’hadour, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977, 63; cf ‘The Paris Newsletter’ in *A Thomas More Source Book (TMSB)*, (eds) Gerard B Wegemer & Stephen W Smith, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004, 353/7-9; Nicholas Harpsfield, *Life of More*, London: 1932, 185/31-186/4; Harpsfield, Appendix II: *The Paris News Letter*, 260/13-16.

⁹⁷ *TMSB*, *The Paris Newsletter*, 353/14; cf Harpsfield, 261/1-3.

⁹⁸ CW12, 195/14-16. [complayne: complain; pacience: patience; fayne: gladly]

any occasion of exaspiration vnto my most dradde Souerain Lorde and Prince,...'⁹⁹ This is confirmed in More's letter to Master Leder, in which More writes of his awareness that he is thought to be 'wilfull and obstinate' because he has 'not writen vnto the Kinges Highnes and by myne owne writing made some suite vnto his Grace'.¹⁰⁰ He explains his silence by writing that it comes 'of a lowly mynde and a reuerente, because that I see nothinge that I coule write but that I feare me sore that his Grace were likely rather to take displeasure with me for it than otherwise, while his Grace beleueth me not that my conscience is the cause but rather obstinate wilfulness'.¹⁰¹

In another Tower work, *De Tristitia Christi*, More reveals the spiritual basis of his silence. He notes Christ's silence before his accusers and questions why this was so?¹⁰² His answer is that it is 'to teach us to bear patiently and gently all injuries and snares treacherously set for us, not to smoulder with anger, not to seek revenge, not to give vent to our feelings by hurling back insults,... but rather to set ourselves against deceitful injury with genuine courage, to conquer evil with good'.¹⁰³ In the *Catena*, he quotes St Peter that 'if, when you do right, you suffer patiently, this is indeed a grace in the eyes of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ too suffered for us, leaving us an example that we might follow in His footsteps... When He was cursed, He did not curse. When He suffered, He did not threaten but handed Himself over to him who judged Him unjustly'.¹⁰⁴ More's silence is more than a legal defence, it is also his own acceptance of the cross in following Christ, as *A Godly Meditation* indicates. He prays 'Gyve me thy grace good lord... To walke the narrow way that

⁹⁹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 541/43-46. It is interesting to ask just what More could have said that would have exasperated Henry. For suggestions regarding More's silence and its meaning, cf Dom David Knowles, 'For what so silently died More?' in *Ampleforth Journal*, Vol 83.1, 1978, 31-36. [peryll: peril; exaspiration: exasperation; dradde: dread; souerain: sovereign]

¹⁰⁰ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 550/28-31. [wilfull: wilful; writen: written; Kinges: King's]

¹⁰¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 550/32-36. [reuerente: reverent]

¹⁰² For Christ's silence before Caiphas: Matt 26.63; Mk 14.61; before Pontius Pilate when accused by the chief priests and ancients: Matt 27.12; Mk 15.4-5; before Herod: Lk 23.9. More uses only the last of these once in his writings, cf CW6, 82/5-8. This spelling of Caiphas follows the Douai version of the Bible. More's own use varies between Caiphas and Cayphas (but never Caiaphas). For further details of More's use spellings of Caiphas, cf Ch 6, n225.

¹⁰³ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 401/11-403/6; cf Rom 12.21. cf nn110 & 111 below.

¹⁰⁴ CW14, *Catena*, 657/10-659/3; cf 1 Pet 2.20-23. The translation is that of the Yale edition. More's Latin follows the Vulgate almost exactly and the Douai translation renders these verses: 'But if doing well you suffer patiently: this doing is thankworthy before God. For unto this are you called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps. *Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* [cf Isa 53.9] Who, when he was reviled, did not revile: when he suffered he threatened not, but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly'.

ledeth to life, To bere the crosse with christ'.¹⁰⁵ In his discussion on the biblical passage 'Then the disciples, all leaving him, fled',¹⁰⁶ More divulges how difficult is this cross of silence. He reflects on just how challenging silence can be, for 'to suffer without any comfort from revenge, to meet death with a patience that not only refrains from striking back but also takes blows without returning so much as an angry word, that, I assure you, is such a lofty peak of heroic virtue that even the apostles were not yet strong enough to scale it'.¹⁰⁷ He goes on to note that there is no evil that cannot be countered by a virtue that enables us to resemble Christ in some way.¹⁰⁸ While such reflections are understandable during his imprisonment, More's consistency is such that a similar reference to Christ's silence can be found in his early translation of Pico's *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle* in which he notices that from Christ 'Cam neuer signe of wrath or of disdayne / But patiently endured all the paine'.¹⁰⁹ Likewise in his polemical work, *A Dialogue against Heresies*, he draws attention to Christ's warning that 'we shall of euery ydyll worde gyue accompte at y^e day of iudgement'.¹¹⁰ He acknowledges the extreme difficulty of forbearance in speech, highlighting the demands of such self-restraint, noting 'what an anxiete and solycytude is there in y^e forberying of euery ydyll worde'.¹¹¹

The marginalia of More's Psalter and his *Imploratio* provide further information about his decision to remain silent and the significance of this decision in his fight to save his head.¹¹² Two especially relevant psalms are 37 and 38, for they are included in the *Imploratio* in their entirety,¹¹³ a choice which must surely be significant for out of the thirty-one psalms found in this compilation only seven are complete. Psalm 37 would appear to be particularly noteworthy as it is the third Penitential Psalm and one More prayed daily.¹¹⁴ Their importance to More can be discovered through a comparison of the marginalia with the content of the verses of the Psalter covered by More's markings. The relevant marginalia reads: *sic se debet habere uir mitis in tribulatione, et neque superbe loqui neque regerere*

¹⁰⁵ CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 226/4, 28-29. For the 'narrow way', cf Matt 7.14; Lk 13.24; CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/18-20; CW1, *Last Things*, 133/29-30. cf Ch 4, n44; Ch 6; n81. [bere: bear]

¹⁰⁶ Matt 26.56; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 559/2.

¹⁰⁷ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 559/7-561/1.

¹⁰⁸ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 105/15-21.

¹⁰⁹ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Rules*, 105/13-14; cf Jn 19.1-11. [cam: came; disdayne: disdain]

¹¹⁰ CW6, 105/35-106/1; cf Matt 12.36. cf Ch 2, nn17 & 18.

¹¹¹ CW6, 105/31-32; cf Matt 12.36. [solycytude: solicitude; forberying: forbearing]

¹¹² cf John Scarisbrick, 'Thomas More: The King's Good Servant' in *Thought*, Vol 52, No 206, September, 1977, 267. Scarisbrick notes that More 'was convinced silence would be impregnable defence'.

¹¹³ cf *TMPB*, 74-76, 194; cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 220/1-221/33. Of the thirty-one psalms in the *Imploratio*, only seven are complete. Psalms 37 and 38 are two of them. The other twenty-four are selected verses.

¹¹⁴ cf Roper, 25/16-18. cf Ch 8, n2.

*male dicta sed maledicentibus benedicere et libenter pati sive iusticiae causa si meruit sive dei causa si non meruit.*¹¹⁵ This is the longest marginalia in More's Psalter and runs from verse fourteen to verse twenty of Psalm 37. This sequence of verses covers a number of themes: being deaf and dumb and remaining mute; enemies speaking against him; scourging and sorrow; admission of sin; acknowledgement of the enemies' strength and numbers and that their hatred is misplaced. Indeed, the editors of *Thomas More's Prayer Book* go so far as to state that 'clearly Thomas More has based his silence during the period of his trial upon the principle expressed in this psalm'.¹¹⁶ It is also possible to see in this marginalia stretching across verses fourteen to twenty, how More reveals not only the reasons for his silence but he also gives a spiritual picture of his self-control, his trust in God, his preparation for suffering and his powerlessness against, in this instance, the authorities whose prisoner he is. His marginal notes here give an indication as to how his fears are overcome with trust and with an acceptance that, at that moment, he is powerless. The marginalia of Psalm 38 reflects and repeats many of the same themes, including speech as sin and silence, as well as renewed sorrow, the vanity of all things which encompasses man as an image along with hope in the Lord and silence – again. The most important annotation against part of verse two is straightforward, reading simply: *maledictis abstinendum* next to the text 'I said: I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue. I have set a guard to my mouth, when the sinner stood against me'.¹¹⁷ Marginal lines and two flags are found against other verses.¹¹⁸ Verses from both psalms are connected by the idea of silence which is emphasized by the marginalia. To More, sitting in his cell and acutely aware that execution is his probable fate, Psalm 38 also speaks of 'all things are vanity: every man living. Surely man passeth as an image:...' ¹¹⁹ More's own silence together with its appearance in the marginalia, especially

¹¹⁵ A meek man ought to behave in this way during tribulation; he should neither speak proudly himself nor retort to what is spoken wickedly, but should bless those who speak evil of him and suffer willingly, either for justice' sake if he has deserved it or for God's sake if he has deserved nothing. The marginalia begins at verse 14; the first thirteen verses do not concern silence; cf *TMPB*, 75, 194.

¹¹⁶ cf *TMPB*, xliii.

¹¹⁷ Evil words are not to be employed; cf *TMPB*, 76, 194.

¹¹⁸ The meaning of the flags is unknown, apart from the obvious fact that they highlight a particular verse. Perhaps they provide a reminder of a particular thought for More. For some conjectures on their meaning, cf *TMPB*, xli-xlii.

¹¹⁹ Ps 38.6-7; cf Eccles 1.2, 12.8. Vanity in this context means worthless, frivolous, foolish; image refers to the fleeting and transitory nature of life and is a leitmotiv found frequently in More's works. The idea of the fleeting nature of the world can be found in the classical world; cf eg Cicero, 'De Senectute', in *De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione*, (ed) Jeffrey Henderson, (trans) William Armistead Falconer, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 1923, 9.68; Seneca, *Epistles*, Vol I, (ed) Jeffrey Henderson, (trans) Richard M Gummere, Cambridge, Mass; London England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 1917, *Epigram* 49: 'On the Shortness of Life', 2-3, 4-5 & 10. It was also a recurrent theme in the late medieval world. Bishop John Fisher uses it in his *Good Friday Sermon* in which he describes man as a 'flower' and a 'shadow'; cf Hatt 302. This echoes the myth of 'The Cave' in Plato's *The Republic*, (eds & trans) Chris

next to Psalms 37 and 38 in his Psalter clearly indicate the personal nature and relevance of More's annotations to his situation in the Tower. That both Psalms 37 and 38 appear in the *Imploratio* adds further weight to a personal interpretation of the marginalia.

Reading and interpreting the marginalia in More's Psalter in such a personal manner has been questioned critically by Eamon Duffy.¹²⁰ Duffy argues that More's tendency is to 'a broadly spiritualising interpretation to verses in the psalms which we might expect him to apply more directly autobiographically' and that More's annotations lean towards 'spiritual generality rather than personal application'.¹²¹ First, Duffy's objection entirely overlooks the wider context in More's works, and thus views More's marginalia in isolation from his other Tower Works, especially his letters and the *Imploratio*. Secondly, Duffy's objection ignores More's own words from *A Dialogue of Comfort* in which More writes 'Speciall verses may there be drawn out of the *psalter*, agaynst the devilles wikked temptacions as for example, *Exurgat deus & dissipentur inimici eius, & fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie eius*, and many other which are in such horrible temptacion to god plesaunt, & to the devill very terrible'.¹²² This indicates clearly that More would chose particular verses in his prayers and religious devotions. This psalm, against which More penned *contra demonum insidias et insultus* echoes the title of More's *Imploratio* which reads *Imploratio diuini auxiliij contra tentationem; cum insultatione contra daemones, ex spe & fiducia in deum*.¹²³

Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 2013, Bk VII, 514a-517a. Erasmus refers to Plato's myth of the cave to illustrate the concept of the unreality of life; cf *Moriae encomium*, (Praise of Folly), (ed) A H T Levi, (trans) Betty Radice, in *CWE*, Vol 27, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1986, 150. The image that the world is fleeting and transitory is also biblical, cf eg Ps 143.4; Eccles 7.1 & 8.13; Wis 2.5; Job 14.2. More uses a number of different images for the transitory nature of life, cf eg CW1, Pico's *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle*, 110/23-29; CW1, Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 93/6-9; CW3.2, Latin Poems, (eds) Clarence H Miller, Leicester Bradner, Charles A Lynch & Revilo P Oliver, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1984, *Epigrams* 56 & 73; CW12, 207/26-208/10.

¹²⁰ Eamon Duffy, *Marking the Hours: English People & their Prayers 1240-1570*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, 107-118.

¹²¹ Duffy, 111-112. One problem, not of Duffy's making, lies within the Yale edition of *Thomas More's Prayer Book*. There is a comprehensive list of the marginalia along with the verse against which it begins; cf *TMPB*, 189-202. However, if the facsimile page is consulted, More's annotations often cover more than one verse or a marginal line highlights several verses, indicating a broader application and a wider understanding than is allowed by limiting the marginalia or marginal lines to the verse at which they begin.

Some of the marginalia read 'for the poor' or 'for the king'. There is one example that appears to be religious only by extension. Against Ps 105.37 which reads 'And they sacrificed their sons, and their daughters to devils', More writes *hoc faciunt qui male educunt* [this they do who bring up their children badly] cf *TMPB*, 170, 202.

¹²² CW12, 156/17-21; cf Ps 67.2: Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered: and let them that hate him flee from before his face; cf *TMPB*, 111, 197. Given More's use of Ps 67.2, the 'devilles wikked tempacions' is surely meant to be understood in the plural, ie 'devils', the temptations of many devils, cf n128 below. [drawn: drawn; agaynst: against]

¹²³ Against the snare and insults of the devils; Ps 67.2; *TMPB*, 111, 197. For the title of the *Imploratio*, cf CW13, 214/5-7.

Other scholars view More's marginalia in exactly the opposite manner. Louis Martz and Richard Sylvester, in their Introduction to *Thomas More's Prayer Book* note the personal nature of the annotations in the margins of his Psalter, observing that 'each of them carefully related to the verses of the psalms next to which they appear. His annotations reflect his personal griefs and fears as he prayed his Psalter and strove to comfort his soul. Moreover, many of them relate closely to the central situation of his *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, the best of More's English works, which, all the evidence indicates, he composed in the Tower'.¹²⁴ While they note that 'although opinions may vary on the degree of personal, or autobiographical relevant carried by the marginalia, there can be little doubt that at least some of them show us the Thomas More whom we know so well from other sources'.¹²⁵ Martz and Sylvester also comment that the 'progress of More's meditations... has followed that of the psalmist, out of the depths into a new trust and confidence'.¹²⁶ James Monti also supports such a reading observing that from More's marginalia 'a picture emerges of a man seeking consolation and strength from God in the face of isolation, temptation, and dread'.¹²⁷ Richard Schoeck comments that 'from the liturgical Psalter we are given a broader and perhaps deeper insight into More's mind and soul during his imprisonment'.¹²⁸ Louis Martz also notes More's detachment and objectivity despite the dread of possible torture and probable execution hanging over him. Martz observes that 'a veil of objectivity always intervenes between the inner More and the reader. For, in More's view, something beyond the fate of an individual is at stake'.¹²⁹

What Duffy argues are the generalized nature of the marginalia reflect that More understood that his imprisonment and the trial and execution that lay before him, were about much larger issues than merely his own refusal to concede to the king's demands, as Martz notes. They also reveal that More understood his enemies to be devils, reminding the reader that it is the devil who sends men to prison and the human authorities merely act his agents. Two of the

¹²⁴ cf Introduction to *Thomas More's Prayer Book*, xiii. Louis L Martz and Frank Manley were also the editors of the Yale edition of More's *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*.

¹²⁵ *TMPB*, xli-xlii.

¹²⁶ *TMPB*, xli.

¹²⁷ Monti, 354.

¹²⁸ R J Schoeck, 'On the Spiritual Life of St Thomas More' in *Thought*, Vol 52, No 206, September 1977, 326.

¹²⁹ Louis L Martz, 'Thomas More: the Sacramental Life' in *Thought*, Vol 52, No 206, September 1977, 305; cf Louis L Martz, 'The Design of More's *Dialogue of Comfort*' in *Moreana*, Nos 15-16, 1967, 334; cf Louis L Martz, *The Search for the Inner Man*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1990, 87. In their Introduction to *Thomas More's Prayer Book*, Louis Martz and Richard Schoeck agree that some of the marginalia appear to be general and that More was not only commenting on his own situation, but also thinking of 'the public realm... to which he felt himself to be united'; cf xliii-xliv.

verses mentioned by Duffy are Psalm 37.14 and Psalm 83.2 which says ‘How lovely are thy tabernacles O Lord of hosts: My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord’.¹³⁰ Psalm 37.14 has been examined above in relation to More’s silence.¹³¹ The long annotation alongside Psalm 83 runs from verse two down to and including verse six and their subject matter includes some of More’s favourite themes including longing for God, rejoicing and the blessings received from God by those who dwell in God house and those who He helps. It reads *oratio uel eius qui in carcere clausus est aut eger recumbit in Lecto suspirantis ad templum aut cuiuslibet fidelis suspirantis in celum*.¹³² Of the four concepts found in this marginalia, namely, an imprisoned man, a sick man, a man yearning to go to church or any faithful man who yearns for heaven, all can apply to More.¹³³ They can, of course, also apply to others. But More was in prison, he was a sick man and as his imprisonment became more rigorous, visits from his family were restricted, he was not allowed to attend church and he did long for God and long to go to God.¹³⁴ Therefore the marginalia describing a man in prison yearning to go to church is as personal as it could possibly be. As Peter Marshall observes, ‘in his physical and spiritual isolation, More’s desire was for participation in a communal devotional culture’,¹³⁵ the one in which he had participated all his life.

Duffy does indeed note the ‘strong communal emphasis’ of More’s marginalia, illustrating this with a quotation from More’s final prayer in which he asks for ‘thy grace to long for thine holy sacramentes’ and for God to ‘make vs all liuely membres swete sauioure Christe, of thine holy mystical body, thy catholyke church’.¹³⁶ The problem is that to argue that the spiritual nature of such marginalia is only ever general rather than personal, as Duffy does, is to miss the point that universal prayers, including the psalms, become personal through repetition. More’s annotations, especially the example on being shut up in prison and yearning to go to church, reflect the fact that Christian belief and particularly Christian

¹³⁰ cf *TMPB*, 139, 200.

¹³¹ cf nn112-116 above.

¹³² The prayer either of a man who is shut up in prison, or of one who lies sick in bed, yearning [to go] to church, or of any faithful man who years for heaven; cf Ps 83.2-7; *TMPB*, 139, 200.

¹³³ For longing for God, cf Ch 9, which show that More’s longing for God was lifelong, heightened in the Tower by his immediate situation and imminent death.

¹³⁴ Imprisonment: More was sent to the Tower on 17th April, 1534. For More’s illnesses: cf Ch 6, n5; Ch7, nn2-3, 5-6 & 13; for a man who yearns to go to church: cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 539/14-16; for a man who yearns for heaven: cf eg Ch 9; cf CW1, Pico’s *Twelve Properties of a Lover*, esp. 115/26-116/2 for an early example of longing for God and heaven. This concept of longing to go to God and longing for heaven is found throughout More’s works.

¹³⁵ Peter Marshall, ‘The Last Years’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, (ed) George M Logan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 125.

¹³⁶ Duffy, 111; CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 230/26, 230/32-231/1. [liuely: living; membres: members; swete: sweet; mystical: mystical; catholyke: catholic]

practice are not solitary activities; they are of their nature communal and this particular example reflects both More's personal devotion as well as the communal nature of the Christian life. It also, as seen above, reflects More's situation. Although in one sense More's marginalia are general, they are also highly personal to More. With More's marginalia it is not a question of whether they are general or personal because some are general, some are personal and some are both.

More's understanding of both the cause of temptation (the devil) and the benefits of it (the acquisition of merit before God) allow him to replace the various fears and sufferings of his imprisonment along with his fear of possible torture, impending death and separation from his family with the positive means of trust, hope in God and longing for God, which allow him to fortify himself for his expected end. Before this can be addressed, it is necessary to study More's personal fears, especially in relation to his fear of pain and of forsaking the faith.

Chapter 4: The Fear of Hell

The fear of hell in Thomas More's writings flows from his recognition of the almighty power of God, from his fear that unrepented sin can lead to hell and from his fear that the devil could tempt him to commit an involuntary sin. More fears most that hell is eternal and this can be deduced from the frequency with which he mentions the eternity of hell in his writings. Hell is the third of Erasmus' four types of death¹ and this eternal death occurs when the separation of the body and soul at death and the separation of the soul from God through sin are combined.² The fear of hell occurs frequently throughout More's works from his earliest translations and expansions of Pico to his writings in the Tower and is concentrated on the power of God to send the soul to hell for it is the eternal and everlasting reality of hell and its torments that renders it most especially terrible.³

The reason to fear God's almighty power is based on Christ's words to the disciples: 'fear ye not them that kill the body and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell'.⁴ The fearful nature of the almighty power of God comes from both the Old and New Testaments and was incorporated into the medieval outlook with its focus on death and hell⁵. In particular the psalms provide many verses linking God's power to fear; these include 'Thou art terrible, and who shall resist Thee?'⁶ and the psalmist's cry 'Holy and terrible is His name', a verse apparently omitted by More although he cites the

¹ Erasmus, 'De Praeparatione ad Mortem' in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol 70, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 411; cf Introduction, n106.

² cf eg CW7, *The Supplication of Souls*, (eds) Frank Manley, Germain Marc'hadour, Richard Marius & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 175/5-6 & 175/22 for examples from More's polemical works and CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, (eds) Louis Martz & Frank Manley, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 237/2 & 237/4-5 & 315/19 for examples from his Tower writings.

³ The reality that the pains and torments of hell are everlasting and eternal is found throughout More's English writings and his examples are too numerous to list. I am giving one example from each of his English works that contain references to the everlasting nature of hell: cf CW1, *The Last Things*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 177/26; CW6, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, (eds) Thomas M C Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour & Richard C Marius, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, 136/12; CW7, *Supplication*, 175/22; CW8, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, (eds) Louis A Schuster, Richard C Marius, James P Lusardi & Richard J Schoeck, 1973, 13/2; CW9, *The Apology*, (ed) J B Trapp, 1979, 109/34; CW10, *The Debellation of Salem and Bizance*, (eds) John Guy, Ralph Keen, Clarence H Miller & Ruth McGugan, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985, 231/11; CW11, *The Answer to a Poisoned Book*, (eds) Stephen Merriam Foley & Clarence H Miller, 1985, 72/22; CW12, 154/7; CW13, *A Treatise on the Passion*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 32/12; CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/15; CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 227/5.

⁴ Matt 10.28; Lk 12.4, 5. For More's frequent use of these biblical verses, cf nn83 & 160 below; Introduction, n105, Ch 1, nn37-40; Ch 6, n195.

⁵ cf Ch 1, Fear of God.

⁶ Ps 75.8. More does not appear to have used this verse.

following verse: ‘the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.’⁷ Elsewhere in the Old Testament fear is associated with God as monarch: ‘Who shall not fear thee, O king of nations?’⁸ Verses indicating both God’s power and its fearful nature are not confined to the Old Testament. New Testament examples include Christ’s statement of God’s omnipotence that ‘with God all things are possible.’⁹ Christ frequently demonstrates His divine power through His miracles, one example being when He rebuked the wind and the sea to calm the storm.¹⁰

More’s fear of hell is another way of looking at eternity and its perpetual and irreversible nature of hell is what he presses home with such urgency and frequency; it is the ultimate one-way ticket.¹¹ Hell is the everlasting death where souls ‘shall call & cry for deth, and deth shall flye from them’.¹² More’s acceptance that ‘they y^t be in that hell where the dampned sowles be: they be neuer delyuered thense agayne’ and that he stresses it so frequently eloquently reflects the eternal nature of hell.¹³ More, along with the medieval world, accepts hell as an eternal real and physical place, with its fire, unceasing pains and torments. Geoffrey Elton comments upon More’s belief in the eternal and physical reality of hell and its torments and how it illustrates the gulf between the medieval and modern world.¹⁴ G G Coulton reflects Elton’s observation and writes that there is ‘one area where the difference may be claimed to be absolute is the almost complete dethronement, in our day, of medieval

⁷ Ps 110.9-10. More cites verse 10 in conjunction with Matt 10.28; cf CW8, 955/25-30. More would have been very familiar with this psalm for it was said every Sunday at Vespers; cf *The Psalter or Seven ordinary Hours of Prayer according to the use of The Illustrious & Excellent Church of Sarum*, London: Joseph Masters, 1852, 277. cf Ch 1, n151.

⁸ Jer 10.7; More does not appear to have used this verse.

⁹ Matt 19.26; cf CW7, *Letter to Frith*, 246/10-21; Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, 452/460-462; cf Mk 10.27; CW8, 214/20-22; CW12, 171/23-24.

¹⁰ cf Matt 8.26; cf Mk 4.39. For More’s use of Matt 8.26, cf CW12, 58/21.

¹¹ For eternal nature of hell in More’s works: cf eg CW7, *Supplication*, 174/24-175/22 x 2; CW8, 289/29-35; CW9, 122/21; CW12, 109/7 & 237/2 & 268/22 & 304/3 & 304/14 & 317/22 & 319/8. cf Erasmus, *De Praeparatione ad Mortem*, (Preparing for Death) in *CWE Vol 70*, (ed) John W O’Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/ London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 408: Erasmus notes that hell is the worst possible evil and that it is ‘the abyss of despair’. He also notes that hell ‘never gives back what it has devoured’ and that it is ‘a second death’; cf Apoc 21.8. More does not appear to have used this biblical verse.

¹² CW12, 304/4-6; cf Apoc 9.6; CW12, 303/27-304/3; CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/16; CW14, *Catena*, (ed & trans) Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 639/10. cf n99 below.

¹³ CW7, *Supplication*, 178/22-23. [dampned: damned; be: are; delyuered: delivered; thense: from there]

¹⁴ cf G R Elton, ‘Review of ‘The Complete Works of St Thomas More’. Vol 12: *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, eds Louis L Martz, Frank Manley. Vol 13: *Treatise on the Passion, Treatise on the Blessed Body, Instructions and Prayers*, ed Garry E Haupt. Vol 14 (2 parts): *De Tristitia Christi*, ed Clarence H Miller’ in *English Historical Review*, Vol 93, No 367, April, 1978, 401.

eschatology. Not one man in a hundred – shall we say, not one in a thousand? – can now see heaven and hell as More saw them'.¹⁵

Elton also notes that More's belief reflects the medieval view of the torments of hell where it was 'a real location, where real devils inflicted real pain on real souls'.¹⁶ More argues that it is a reality for 'Christ I wote well in many places sayth there is fyre there,... and with that fyre he frayed his owne dyscyples, byddyng them fere that fyre, that they fell not therin'.¹⁷ More is not alone in his belief of the everlasting fires of hell. Bishop Fisher in his *Good Friday Sermon* quotes the Gospel of Mark and preaches that 'the heat of the burning fire of hell which never shall be quenched'.¹⁸ More thinks that men already fear hell too little, even if they believe in the reality of hell fire.¹⁹ However, if we truly believe Christ's words and fear the fires of hell, this belief is a sure means of keeping oneself from it.²⁰ More states clearly that the pains of hell are real and not 'after the maner of some heuy mynde, or of a troublous dreme'.²¹ On the other hand, by ignoring the truth of Christ's words a man is more likely to sin audaciously and boldly and so fall down into that fire and lie cursing those who told him otherwise.²² His fear of hell focuses especially on the everlasting pains of those unfortunate, damned souls in its grip and the 'terrible tourment they be sure they shall neuer haue end'.²³ James Monti²⁴ notes More's attitude to the eternal finality of hell and the sufferings of those unfortunates:

But what so euer soule misshappe to dy in dedely synne and impenytent: syth he ys therby fallen of for euer frome our sauour cryste y^t was hys fundacyon, & hath byylded vp wreched wurkys vppon your goostely enemy the deuyll, wherwhyth he hath so thorowly poysoned hym self, that he can neuer be purged:

¹⁵ G G Coulton, 'The Faith of St Thomas More' in *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, (eds) Richard S Sylvester & Germain Marc'hadour, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977, 505.

¹⁶ G R Elton, 'The Real Thomas More?' in *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government, Vol III Papers and Reviews, 1973-1981*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, 351.

¹⁷ cf CW11, 187/19-22; cf eg Matt 3.10; 13.42, 50; 18.8-9; 25.41; Mk 9.42, 44; cf also Matt 5.22. [frayed: frightened; dyscyples: disciples; byddyng: exhorting, commanding]

¹⁸ Cecilia A Hatt (ed), *English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 320; cf Mk 9.43; Isa 33.14 & 66.24. The Vulgate repeats '...the fire is not extinguished' in verses 43, 45 and 47. The Authorized Version [1611] gives them as verses 44, 46 and 48. The Revised Standard Version, both Catholic and Protestant editions omit verses 44 and 46, but retain verse 48. The Jerusalem edition also omits verses 44 and 46, but retains verse 48.

¹⁹ CW11, 187/34-35.

²⁰ cf CW11, 188/3-4; cf CW7, *Supplication*, 175/27-31.

²¹ CW11, 188/1-2. [heuy: doleful; mynde: attitude, intention, opinion; troublous: troubled, disordered; dreme: dream]

²² cf CW11, 188/7-12; cf CW7, *Supplication*, 175/31-34.

²³ CW12, 304/13-14; cf CW12, 304/1-3. [tourment: torment]

²⁴ cf James Monti, *The King's Good Servant but God's First: The Life and Writings of St Thomas More*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997, 258.

the fyre shall therefore lye burnyng vppon hym for euer, and his payne neuer lessed, nor hys fylthy spottys neuer the more mynyshed.²⁵

The sinner in particular is right to fear, for this world is but a thorough fare and when the final destiny of the soul is decided, either heaven or hell, it will be forever.²⁶ This is why ‘a christen man... that hath the light of fayth,... he can will not thynke onely vppon his bare comyng hether & his bare goyng hens agayne, but also vppon the dredfull iugment of god, & vppon the ferefull paynes of hell, and the inestimable ioyes of hevyn’.²⁷ Towards the end of *A Dialogue of Comfort* More repeats five times that once a soul enters hell, it will never get out.²⁸ This reality indicates why the never-ending pains and torments of hell are of such vital significance to More in the avoidance of hell and the gaining of heaven. It also provides an insight into More’s stand against Henry VIII in his refusal to take the oath; hell was at the forefront of More’s mind.

More’s references to hell appear throughout his works and the first direct reference occurs in his translation of the *Life of Pico* in the description of Pico’s virtuous living and that no occasion of sin could pull him back into ‘y^e voluptuose brode way y^t ledith to helle’.²⁹ More’s final reference to the fear of hell is more difficult to ascertain for the dating of his writings in the Tower is problematic. However, in *A Godly Meditation*, written in the Tower, he asks ‘to foresee & considre theverlastyng fyre of hell’.³⁰ His final prayer, written between his condemnation and execution, includes a petition of hope ‘Geue me good lord, a longing to be w^t the, not for thauoiding of the calamyties of this wretched world, nor so much for y^e auoiding of the paines of purgatory nor of the paines of hel neither, nor so much for the atteining of y^e ioyes of heauen, in respect of mine own commodity, as euen for a very loue to the’.³¹ This should perhaps be viewed more as fear subsumed by hope rather than a direct fear of hell.

²⁵ CW7, *Supplication*, 188/28-35. [misshappe: have the misfortune (to do something); dy: die; ys: is; of: off; frome: from; sauour: Saviour; fundacyon: foundation; byelded: built; goostely: ghostly, spiritual; thorowly: thoroughly; poysened: poisoned; lye: lie; lessed: lessened; spottys: spots, stains; mynyshed: diminished]

²⁶ cf CW1, *Pico’s Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle*, 111/10-24; cf CW12, 302/23-304/20.

²⁷ CW12, 163/27-164/2; cf CW12, 302/23-304/20. cf Introduction, n54; Ch 7, n208.

²⁸ cf eg CW12, 279/10-11 & 280/13 & 303/4-5 & 304/1-3 & 304/14.

²⁹ CW1, *Life of Pico*, 65/23-24. cf n35 below. More also mentions hell in his early English poem, *Fortune Verses*, where he describes Fortune as looking ‘as ffers as any ffury of hell’; cf CW1, 35/109. [ffers: fierce; ffury: fury] [voluptuose: voluptuous; brode: broad; ledith: leads; helle: hell]

³⁰ CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 227/5. [considre: consider; theverlastyng: the everlasting]

³¹ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 230/7-11; cf CW12, 305/5-9. cf n161 below; Ch 1, n195; Ch5, n88; Ch 9, n172. [thauoiding: the avoiding; calamyties: calamities; auoiding: avoiding; atteining: attaining, reaching; euen: just, simply]

Pico observes that hell is an effective ‘spur of fear’ and asks in his *First Letter to Gianfrancesco* ‘whi is ther no thing then y^t we lesse fere then hell or y^t we less hope for, then the kingdom of god’.³² Pico reminds his nephew that ‘neithir thi glory shalbe les if thou be happi with fewe nor thi pain more easy if thou be wretched with many’³³ advising him to enter ‘by y^e streight gate y^t ledyth to heuin and take no hede what thing many men do’.³⁴ ‘Ledyth to heuin’ is More’s addition. In his translation of Pico’s *Life*, More praises Pico’s character that neither his prosperity, learning nor his good looks ‘were able to pull him bak in to y^e voluptuose brode way y^t ledith to helle’.³⁵ Again, ‘ledith to helle’ is More’s addition. So More reveals to the reader that even as a young man, he emphasizes the necessity of remembering that our final destiny depends on favourable judgement of God and to seek the glory and praise that comes from Him, not the glory and praise given by men.³⁶ This attitude reflects Pico’s advice as well as that found in the *Imitation* that we should ‘fear the judgements of God; dread the anger of the Almighty’³⁷ because ‘the judgements of God are other than the judgements of men’³⁸ and if we turn to God we shall not ‘be disturbed by the judgements of men’.³⁹

Fear should, as Pico writes to Gianfrancesco, act as a spur. Pico observes men’s madness noting that there are many Christians in name but few in reality,⁴⁰ and while ‘it is verelye a great madnesse not to beleue the gospel... a far gretter madnes ys hit if thou dowt not but that the gospell ys trew: to lyue then as though thou doutest not but that hit were fals’.⁴¹ The lessons More found in Pico are reflected in his later works. In *The Last Things* he describes

³² CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/15-17. cf Ch 1, n170.

³³ CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/22-24. [neithir: neither; shalbe: shall be; les: less; happi: happy]

³⁴ CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/19-20 & 347 for the exact translation; cf Matt 7.13-14; Lk 13.24. [streight: straight; ledyth: leadeth, leads; heuin: heaven; hede: heed]

³⁵ CW1, *Life of Pico*, 65/23-24 & 323 for the exact translation; cf Matt 7.13. cf n29 above.

³⁶ cf CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/8-11; cf CW1, Pico’s *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 92/7; Thomas a Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, (trans) Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1955, Bk I, Ch 24, No 1. For More’s views on praise and flattery, cf Ch 2, nn136-152.

³⁷ *Imitation*, Bk III, Ch 4, No 4.

³⁸ *Imitation*, Bk I, Ch 7, No 3; cf CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/8-10.

³⁹ *Imitation*, Bk III, Ch 28, No 1. More says the same thing in his letter to William Gonell, his children’s tutor, cf Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961, 104-105; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/6-7.

⁴⁰ cf CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/17-18.

⁴¹ CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 81/28-82/5. More’s elaborations on the reasons to believe the gospel are ‘whos trouth the blode of martirs crieth, y^e voice of apostles sowneth, miracles proueth, reason confermith, the worlde testifieth, y^e elementis spekith, deuelis confessith’; cf CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 81/29-82/3. cf Ch 6, n155; Ch 7, n189. [sowneth: proclaims; beleue: believe; gretter: greater; hit: it; dowt: doubt; trew: true; doutest: doubt; fals: false]

the way to heaven as ‘straite & aspre or painful’⁴² and notes that few find it.⁴³ In the Tower he echoes Pico’s advice again in *A Godly Meditation*, in which he prays ‘Gyve me thy grace good lord... To walke the narrow way that ledeth to life’.⁴⁴

More’s fear of sin, along with his fear of God, is inextricably connected to his fear of hell. More warns of the risks of the failure to escape from the bondage of sin through repentance. The soul will ‘straight vppon his temporal death, fal into eternall death, and thesame so horrible and painefull, that it far exceedeth al other kyndes of death’.⁴⁵ This illustrates the importance of avoiding sin, with fear acting as a restraint to avoid the fate of eternal torment. More’s attitude is the medieval one found in the *Book of the Craft of Dying* which states of repentance that ‘it is better and more rightful that he be compunctious and repentant, with wholesome fear and dread, and so be saved, than that he be damned with flattering and false dissimulations’.⁴⁶ The late medieval world feared dying unrepentant more than death, which was ever present in their daily lives.⁴⁷

More’s translation of Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco* provides a warning of how venial sin can deflect a man from his intention to live virtuously. Pico cautions his nephew to be aware of the continuous obstacles that are able to deflect him from his goal of virtue and cast him down headlong into hell. More writes ‘who wolde synne... yf he byleued veryly & surely that synne sholde brynge hym to hell’?⁴⁸ Pico warns his nephew that ‘amonge all thyngis the very dedly pestilence ys this: to be conuersaunt day and night amonge them whos life is not only on euery side an allectiue to synne: but ouer that all set in the expugnation of vertue, vndre their capitaine the deuill, vndre the banaire of deth, vndre the stipende of hell, fighting a geinst heuen, a gainst oure lord god and a gainst his Christ’.⁴⁹ Pico’s words set out clearly where sin leads (hell) and who is the immediate cause (those who life is an enticement to sin)

⁴² CW1, *Last Things*, 133/29-30; cf Ch 6, n81. [straite: straight; aspre: rough]

⁴³ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 133/30-31; cf Matt 7.14; Lk 13.24.

⁴⁴ CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 226/4, 28; Matt 7.14; cf Lk 13.24; cf CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/18-20; CW1, *Last Things*, 133/29-30. cf Ch 3, n105; Ch 6, n81. [ledeth: leads]

⁴⁵ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 212/29-31. cf Ch 2, n219.

⁴⁶ Frances M M Comper, *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1917, 36.

⁴⁷ cf H W Donner, ‘More’s Treatise on the Four Last Things and the Gothicism of the Trans-Alpine Renaissance’ in *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977, 345.

⁴⁸ CW6, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, (eds) Thomas M C Lawler, Germain Marc’hadour & Richard C Marius, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, 393/25-26. [veryly: verily]

⁴⁹ CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 80/21-27; cf CW1, 345; cf Ps 2.2. [thyngis: things; dedly: deadly; conuersaunt: dwelling, living; allectiue: attraction; enticement; expugnation: conquest; vndre: under; deuill: devil; banaire: banner; stipende: soldier’s pay; a gainst, a geinst: against]

as well as who is the ultimate cause (the devil). It is in Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*: that More provides an early example of his focus on heaven. He writes: 'More desirefull is than to be condempned of y^e worlde and exalted of god then to be exalted of the worlde and condemned of god. The worlde condemneth to life: god exalteth to glori. The worlde exaltith to a fall: god condemnith to y^e fire of hell'.⁵⁰

More's view is entirely in line with medieval perceptions of life of worldly activities as a distraction to divert us from the destination of heaven, ideas that More would also have found in Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*.⁵¹ Hilton advises that if a man wishes to reach Jerusalem [ie heaven], he will have to endure any number of hardships and must not be delayed on the journey for any reason; pleasures, gifts and worldly goods must be ignored and the pilgrim must 'always think of Jerusalem'.⁵² Hilton explains that Jerusalem 'stands for contemplation in perfect love of God' which is to be found in Jesus.⁵³ Jerusalem is therefore our heavenly home where Christ dwells and where the faithful soul will see God. The devil tries to divert the soul from its journey to the heavenly Jerusalem through the temptation to sin.

Venial sin is of particular danger for it 'is a drawyng toward y^e dedely'⁵⁴ for it deforms the soul making it unworthy of the presence of God.⁵⁵ Not fearing venial sin – and not fearing purgatory as its consequence – can easily result in the loss of one's soul. If venial sin is not sufficiently feared then it can lead a man to see how near he can approach mortal sin without committing it 'tyll he come at laste so nere the brynke, that hys fote slyppeth and downe he falleth into it. For as the scrypture saith, *Qui amat periculum, peribit in illo*. He that loueth

⁵⁰ CW1, Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 90/4-8. [condempned: condemned; condemneth, condemnith: condemns; glori: glory]

⁵¹ Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, (trans) John P H Clark and Rosemary Dorward, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press (Classics of Western Spirituality), 1991.

⁵² cf Hilton, *Scale*, Bk 2, Ch 21, 227; cf eg *Imitation*, Bk I, Ch 10, No 1; Bk III, Ch 27, No 1; Hatt, 236, 237. Neither the *Imitation* nor Fisher use the word 'Jerusalem', although both present the same idea.

⁵³ Hilton, 227.

⁵⁴ CW10, 80/34. [drawyng: drawing; dedely: deadly]

⁵⁵ cf Hatt, 251.

perell shall peryshe in it'.⁵⁶ More employs one of his 'merry tales' to illustrate this. It is the tale of 'a lewde galand & a pore frere'.⁵⁷

'Whom when the galand saw goynge barefote in a great froste and snowe, he asked hym why he dyd take suche payne. And he answered y^t yt was very lytell payne yf a man wold remember hell. Ye frere quote ye galant but what & there be none hell, than arte thou a great fole. Ye mayster quote the frere but what & there be hell, than ys your maystershyppye a mych more fole'.⁵⁸

More notes the lack of diligence displayed by many in avoiding venial sin and its consequent pain in purgatory compared with the active care taken to avoid the mortal sins that will earn the soul perpetual pain in hell.⁵⁹ The danger of falling into hell unaware is further explained in a *Dialogue of Comfort* where More describes a man walking in darkness who does not know where he is going. He is set to work by a devil called *Negocium*⁶⁰ with 'bumblyng bysynes',⁶¹ especially in seeking fleshly pleasures including gluttony and in the acquisition of worldly goods.⁶² More's target here is not legitimate work to earn a living; it is the feverish and unrelenting activity that, when combined with an exclusive preoccupation with worldly concerns, distract us from God.⁶³ The man who is set to work by *Negocium* goes round and round as in a maze and in the middle of the maze is hell.⁶⁴ While those in the maze think they are not far from the beginning,⁶⁵ More quotes scripture to warn: 'They lede their life in pleasure, & at a poppe down they descend into hell'.⁶⁶ It is the danger of slipping from venial sin into mortal sin without due care. In this passage More takes specific aim at those who fall into the temptation of wanting to be rich and so into the trap of the devil which is 'the middle place of this besy mase,... the place of perdicion & destruccion that they fall & be caught &

⁵⁶ CW10, 81/3-6; cf Ecclus 3.27; CW1, Pico's *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle*, 107/20; CW5, *Responsio ad Lutherum*, (ed) John Headley, (trans) Sr Scholastica Mandeville, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969, 492/25, 493/29. [nere: near; brynke: brink; fote: foot; slyppeth: slips; loueth: loves; perell: peril; peryshe: perish]

⁵⁷ CW7, *Supplication*, 207/18-24. In this work, More defends the doctrine of purgatory; he places the entire treatise into the mouths of the Holy Souls. [lewde: wicked, base; galand: fine gentleman]

⁵⁸ CW7, *Supplication*, 207/18-24. [galand, galant: fine gentleman; goynge: going; barefote: barefoot; dyd: did; payne: pain; y^t: that; yt: it; fole: fool; mayster: master; maystershyppye: mastership]

⁵⁹ cf CW10, 80/14-19.

⁶⁰ CW12, 166/18 & 167/3-5 & 167/9-20; cf Ps 90.6; *Negocium* is 'the business that walketh about in the dark'. While most people are required to work for a living, work itself can provide the temptation to become a 'work addict' as Germain Marc'hadour notes in 'St Thomas More', *The Month* (New Series) No 29, Jan-Jun 1963, 77.

⁶¹ CW12, 167/5. [bumblyng: bungling, blundering; bysynes: activity, occupation, (also) feverish activity, excessive concern for worldly matters]

⁶² cf CW12, 167/7-8.

⁶³ cf Erasmus, *De Contemptu Mundi* (Disdaining the World), in *CWE*, Vol 66, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) Erika Rummel, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1985, 153-154. Erasmus makes the same point.

⁶⁴ cf CW12, 167/14, 24-26.

⁶⁵ cf CW12, 167/9-168/6.

⁶⁶ CW12, 168/5-6; cf Job 21.13; Erasmus, *De Contemptu Mundi*, 143. [lede: lead; at a poppe: in an instant, suddenly]

drownyd in ere they be ware'.⁶⁷ It is not only those who desire riches who risk hell, but also those who are rich.

In a cautionary and challenging observation on the story of Dives and Lazarus,⁶⁸ More comments that the rich man had not committed any 'greate heinous cryme, but the takyng of his own continual ease & pleasure', nor had Lazarus any 'very greate vertew'.⁶⁹ The primary sin of Dives was sloth and More had noted in his own prosperity that salvation requires both 'the declinyng or goyng aside from euil, and the dooyng of good'.⁷⁰ Six of the seven deadly sins, namely pride, envy, wrath, gluttony, covetousness and lechery can be forborn; however they are but half the way to heaven and for the other half 'slouth alone is hable to destroye'.⁷¹ The rich man's sin was to spend his life 'in pride & vanite... & after that so spent, passed hens into hell'.⁷² Lazarus died through 'hunger & thirste'.⁷³ and More argues that by allowing Lazarus to die patiently at the rich man's door, God did more for him than if He had allowed him to come to the rich man's table.⁷⁴ For 'though he [God] be graciouse to a man whom he deliuerith out of paynfull trowble, yet doth he mych more for a man, yf thorow right paynfull deth, he delyuer hym from this wrechid world into eternall blysse'.⁷⁵ The eternal destinies of Dives and Lazarus reverse their earthly ones: 'pore Lazare from tribulacion into welth, & the rich man from this contynuall prosperitie into perpetuall payne'.⁷⁶

Turning to More's contemporaries, his view on hell is reflected by Bishop John Fisher. Fisher reminds his congregation in his sermon on Psalm 37 of God's terrible judgement and that 'the countenance of god shall be so formidable and ferefull that in the tyme whan myserable synners shall stande in his syght they shall thynke themselfe set in a brennyng forneyse of

⁶⁷ CW12, 168/13-15; cf 1 Tim 6.9; CW12, 168/9-13. [mase: maze; perdicion: perdition; destruccion: destruction; drownyd: drowned]

⁶⁸ cf Lk 16.19-25. For the story of John the Baptist and Herod & Herodias, cf n127-128 below.

⁶⁹ CW12, 56/1-2. [cryme: crime; vertew: virtue]

⁷⁰ CW1, *The Last Things*, 182/14-15. cf Ch 2, n103.

⁷¹ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 182/16-18; quotation at 182/18. [forborn: forborne; slouth: sloth; hable: able]

⁷² CW12, 158/23-24; cf Wis 5.8-9, 5.12-14; CW12, 158/30-159/10; Ps 38.6-7. [vanite: worthlessness, foolishness]

⁷³ CW12, 54/4-5; cf CW12, 56/5-6.

⁷⁴ cf CW12, 319/1-4.

⁷⁵ CW12, 319/4-7. [deliuerith, delyuer: delivers; trowble: trouble; blysse: bliss]

⁷⁶ CW12, 55/31-33; cf Lk 16.19-25; CW12, 319/1-4. More is not suggesting here that a rich man may not be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, he uses the example of Abraham to show that it is possible for a rich man to enter heaven; cf CW12, 47/10-22. [Lazare: Lazarus; welth: well-being, spiritual well-being (not material wealth); contynuall: continual; prosperitie: prosperity]

fyre'.⁷⁷ Fisher preaches on Psalm 50, concentrating on the necessity of fear for sin and wickedness have provoked the dreadful majesty of God, leaving our lives in danger 'leste that he let fall this lyne our lyfe from his handes,... and we than fall downe in to the depe dungeon of hell'.⁷⁸ Earlier in the same sermon, Fisher reflects on the fragility of life, warning his congregation that our souls 'hange ouer a very depe pyt holden vp by a weyke and selender corde or lyne'.⁷⁹ He hammers home his message that 'truly all we be in lyke maner. For vnder vs is the horrible and ferefull pytte of hell, where the blacke deuylles in the lykenes of rampynge and cruell beestes dooth abyde desyrously our fallynge downe to theym'.⁸⁰ In another sermon on Psalm 129, Fisher reminds his congregation of the fear that the sinner should have of eternal damnation, For 'yf god commaunde it there is no remedy, no fleyng may serue, no socour may than be had, for his commaundement must nedes be obeyed & abyden by'.⁸¹

More's spiritual adviser, Dean John Colet,⁸² also says 'it is wysdom to feare God, for as he sayeth hym selfe: *Feare not hym that may kyll the body, and can not hurt the soule; but feare hym that can kyll the bodye and also the soule*, and commyt them to euerlastynge payne'.⁸³ More uses this scriptural verse from St Matthew's Gospel towards the end of *A Dialogue of Comfort* in a chapter devoted to 'the consideracion of the paynes of hell, in which we fall, yf we forsake our saviour, may make vs set al the paynfull deth of this world at right nowght'.⁸⁴ More's fear of hell is predominantly, but not exclusively, based on his fear both of eternal torments as well as his fear that pain could induce him to forsake Christ by taking Henry VIII's oath. Louis Schuster contends that More fear was the 'physical fear of disembowelment' and that a lack of fortitude in face of pain might prove chink in his

⁷⁷ John E B Mayor (ed), *English Works*, London: Early English Text Society, 1876, 53/26-30. Ps 37 is the third penitential psalm. [countenance: countenance; myserable: miserable; syght: sight; themselfe: themselves; brennyng: burning; forneyse: furnace]

⁷⁸ *EW*, 93/26-29, Sermon on Psalm 50, the fourth penitential psalm, . [lyne: line, depe: deep]

⁷⁹ *EW*, 90/31-32, Sermon on Ps 50. Fisher also refers to this fragile line at 91/2 and 91/12. [pyt: pit; holden: held; weyke: weak; selender: slender]

⁸⁰ *EW*, 91/17-20, Sermon on Ps 50. [in lyke maner: in a similar condition; pytte: pit; deuylles: devils; lykenes: likeness; rampynge: ramping; beestes: beasts; dooth: do; desyrously: eagerly, desirously; fallynge: falling]

⁸¹ *EW*, 221/30-33, Sermon on Ps 129, the sixth penitential psalm; cf *EW*, 53/32-54/17, Sermon on Ps 37, the third penitential psalm. [commaunde: commands; fleyng: fleeing; socour: succour; abyden: abided]

⁸² cf Rogers, *SL*, 6; cf Gerard B Wegemer, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, Princeton: Scepter, 1997, 15; John Guy, *Thomas More*, London: Arnold, 2000, 27.

⁸³ J H Lupton, *Life of Dean Colet*, London: George Bell and Sons, 1909, Appendix D, 309; cf Matt 10.28; Lk 12.4-5. cf n4 above; n160 below; Introduction, n105; Ch 1, n37-40; Ch 6, n195. [bodye: body]

⁸⁴ *CW*12, 302/19-21ff. [consideracion: consideration; nowght: nought]

armour'.⁸⁵ Geoffrey Elton argues that More's left himself with 'only one way open to him: he had to adhere to his faith and be saved, and he has to last out till release brought by death'.⁸⁶ More's belief is that hell is a place of eternal torment, but this perception is based not only on fear, but also on Christ's love and his acceptance of Christ's love for him. He views it as 'vnkyndnes'⁸⁷ on our part if we refuse to suffer for Christ when He suffered so much for us. More explains: 'And finally what vnkyndnes yt were, yf we wold... vnfaythfully forsake christ... which while he livid for our sake, forsoke all the world, beside the suffryng of shamfull & paynfull deth'.⁸⁸ Yes, More does fear pain but he fears the eternal consequences of rejecting Christ by forsaking him through pain much more.⁸⁹ He spells this out: 'For our Lord saythe, he that denyeth me before the worlde I wyll denye hym before my father in heuyn'.⁹⁰ This reasoning occurs before his imprisonment and the spectre of execution darkened the horizon. Christ commands that 'if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me'⁹¹ and More quotes Christ's words that 'the deciple or seruaunt is not above his master'⁹² revealing his appreciation of the truth that heaven is not gained without pain and demonstrating it in the reality of his life. Roper records that when his family were ill or troubled, More would counsel them saying

'We may not looke at our pleasure to goe to heaven in fetherbeds: it is not the way, for our lord himself went thither with greate payne and by many tribulacions, which was the path wherein he walked thither; for the seruaunt may not looke to be in better case then his master'.⁹³

Under the shadow of the scaffold and fearful that he would be tortured, More claims that if a man truly considers Christ's words, namely to fear God who can cast our souls into hell rather than man who is only able to kill the body, and let these words 'syncke as they shuld do

⁸⁵ Louis A Schuster, 'The Tower of London: MORE'S GETHSEMANE' in *Moreana*, XIX, No 74, 1982, 40. For More's fear of pain, cf Ch 6, nn26-66.

⁸⁶ Elton, 'Review of 'The Complete Works of St Thomas More' Vols 12, 13 and 14 in *English Historical Review*, 401.

⁸⁷ cf CW12, 278/4-9. [vnkyndnes: unnatural conduct, unkindness]

⁸⁸ CW12, 244/8-11. More had earlier described man's rejection of God as 'vnkyndnesse'; cf CW8 424/5-8. [vnfaythfully: unfaithfully; suffryng: suffering; shamfull: shameful]

⁸⁹ cf CW6, 190/34-191/1; cf Matt 10.33.

⁹⁰ CW6, 190/34-191/1. For Matt 10.33; cf CW8, 543/6-8 & 545/1-3. For Lk 12.9, cf CW6, 421/1-3; cf CW8, 557/15-17. In the Tower, More uses both these verses, cf CW12, 198/6 & 247/8-10; CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, 61/9-10.

⁹¹ Matt 16.24; cf Mk 8.34; CW12, 43/11-12 & 95/15-17; CW13, *Passion*, 48/14-16; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 485/4-6; CW14, *Catena*, 635/1-2.

⁹² CW12, 292/2-3; Matt 10.24-25; Lk 6.40; Jn 13.16; cf CW1, Pico's *Twelve Rules*, 104/7-13; CW13, *Passion*, 48/9-11 & 48/14-16 & 102/4-6 & 110/24-25 & 110/30-31 & 111/28-30. cf Ch 6, nn76, 77, 80 & 81. [deciple: disciple; seruaunt: servant]

⁹³ William Roper, *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore, Knyghte*, (ed) E V Hitchcock, London: Early English Text Society, 1935, 26/23-27/3; cf CW6, 106/19-20. cf n92 above; Ch 6, n78. [fetherbeds: featherbeds; thither: to that place; seruaunt: servant]

downe depe into his hart,...'⁹⁴ such a man would be able to 'set at nowght, all the greate Turkes threttes, & esteem hym not at a straw'.⁹⁵ More considers imprisonment as one way of following in Christ's footsteps. Christ was a prisoner throughout His Passion⁹⁶ and if we remember that He was prisoner for our sake, we would be worse than beasts if, through cowardice, we forsake him for fear of imprisonment and lead him to forsake us and 'with the avoydyng of an easier prison, fall into a worse, & in stede of a prison that can not kepe vs long, fall into that prison out of which we can neuer come'.⁹⁷ On the contrary, as Monti notes, it is sheer stupidity to escape from a short worldly imprisonment that wins us everlasting liberty and exchange it for an everlasting imprisonment in hell.⁹⁸ We would be content to suffer all the pains of martyrdom, however bitter, rather than cast himself into the intolerable pains of everlasting hell from which he can never escape in where 'folke shall euermore be dying & neuer can ones be ded, wherof the scripture sayth... They shall call & cry for deth, and deth shall flye from them'.⁹⁹ More reflects that such frequent consideration of the pains of hell 'were hable ynough to make I think many a martyre'.¹⁰⁰

More describes hell as an eternal prison,¹⁰¹ as does Bishop Fisher.¹⁰² Both More and Fisher also describe this fearsome prison as a 'deep dungeon'.¹⁰³ What is prison? More explains that prison is 'captivitie, bondage, or tharldome, what is it, but the violent restraynt of a man... that he must do what the tother lyst to command hym & may not do at his libertie such thinges as he lyst hym selfe'.¹⁰⁴ More's examination of the concept of prison leads him to an understanding that, in this world, every man is in prison, or as he puts it 'of very trouth our very prison this earth is'.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, the soul is in prison while it is in the body,¹⁰⁶ an

⁹⁴ CW12, 303/24. [syncke: sink]

⁹⁵ CW12, 303/26-27. [Turkes: Turks'; not at a straw: extremely little, not at all]

⁹⁶ cf CW12, 279/26-280/2.

⁹⁷ CW12, 280/11-13. cf nn113 & 123 below. [avoydyng: avoiding]

⁹⁸ cf Monti, 350; cf CW12, 280/7-14.

⁹⁹ CW12, 304/4-6; cf Apoc 9.6; CW12, 303/27-304/3. cf n12 above. [euermore: evermore; ded: dead]

¹⁰⁰ CW12, 304/25-26. cf Ch 9, n54. [martyre: martyr]

¹⁰¹ eg CW12, 237/2, 8 & 279/5, 10-11 & 280/13 & 317/6-11; cf Monti, 350.

¹⁰² cf Hatt, *First Fruitful Sermon*, 237; *Second Fruitful Sermon*, 247.

¹⁰³ cf CW8, 36/32-33 & 119/24-25 & 607/27-28 & 788/23-24; CW12, 237/1 & 279/7; CW13, *Passion*, 75/20. Fisher also employs the phrase 'the depe dungeon of hell'; cf *EW*, 93/29, Sermon on Ps 50, the fourth penitential psalm.

¹⁰⁴ CW12, 252/7-9; cf Seneca, *Epistle* 61.2-3: 'See to it that you never do anything unwillingly. That which is bound to be a necessity if you rebel, is not a necessity if you desire it. ... The man who does something under orders is not unhappy; he is unhappy who does something against his will'. [captivitie: captivity; tharldome: bondage, servitude; restraynt: restraint]

¹⁰⁵ CW12, 273/2-3; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 157/12; CW12, 269/9; cf eg Erasmus, *De Contemptu Mundi*, *CWE* 66, 167; Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1978, 331; Elizabeth McCutcheon,

idea with pre-Christian origins that can be found in Plato's *Phaedo*.¹⁰⁷ This idea is also scriptural for the psalmist declares: 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name'.¹⁰⁸ Erasmus uses this biblical verse¹⁰⁹ to describe a soul 'longing to leave a dark and troublesome prison',¹¹⁰ which will 'live more happily when freed from its prison'.¹¹¹ However, while Erasmus notes that at death 'the soul is drawn out as if from the most oppressive of prisons into blessed rest',¹¹² nevertheless he later observes that we ought to be terrified 'whenever we run the risk that God, our eternal life, may desert our soul'.¹¹³ But Erasmus also reminds his readers that while death leads to eternal happiness for the good man, nevertheless 'the death of sinners is most terrible'.¹¹⁴

More examines different types of prison. The most general prison is the universal one of the 'prison of the earth' which encompasses everyone, including princes.¹¹⁵ It is broad and so cleverly built that even without walls there is no possibility of escape.¹¹⁶ God is both our king and our chief gaoler,¹¹⁷ with both angels and devils acting as under-gaolers.¹¹⁸ Every man should remember that in this prison he is condemned to death,¹¹⁹ and should beware in case he exchanges the short-lived prison of this world for the eternal prison of hell.¹²⁰ There is also

"*This Prison of the Yerth: The Topos of Immurement in the Writings of St. Thomas More*" in *Cithara*, 1985, Vol 25, 1985, 35-46. In this article, McCutcheon explores More's concept of prison.

¹⁰⁶ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 176/2-3.

¹⁰⁷ Plato, 'Phaedo' in *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*, (eds & trans) Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 2017, 62b; 82e-83a.

¹⁰⁸ Ps 141.8.

¹⁰⁹ cf Erasmus, eg *De Praeparatione*, *CWE* 70, 393, 397.

¹¹⁰ *De Praeparatione*, 397.

¹¹¹ *De Praeparatione*, 412; cf Erasmus, *Moriae encomium* (Praise of Folly), (ed) A H T Levi, (trans) Betty Radice, in *CWE* Vol 27, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1986, 150.

¹¹² *De Praeparatione*, 393; cf Wis 4.7. Both Erasmus and More could well have known this concept from the *Book of the Craft of Dying*, which says 'Death is nothing else but a going out of prison, and ending of exile, a discharging of a heavy burden that is the body, finishing of all infirmities, escaping of all perils, destroying of all evil things, breaking of all bonds, paying of debt of natural duty, turning again into his country, and entering into bliss and joy'; C Horstmann (ed), 'The Book of the Craft of Dying' in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and his Followers*, Cambridge, 1999, 407.

¹¹³ *De Praeparatione*, 412. Erasmus is referring to God deserting the damned soul. For More's understanding of how boldness in sin can lead to the withdrawal of God's grace: cf Ch 3, nn245-50. cf n97 above & n123 below.

¹¹⁴ *De Praeparatione*, 414; cf Ps 33.22: 'The death of the wicked is very evil'. cf Eccles 7.2; *Craft*, 407: 'to evil men and blameworthy neither the day of their birth nor the day of their death may be called good'.

¹¹⁵ cf CW12, 269/9 & 273/3; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 156/29-30 & 157/6; CW3.2, *Latin Poems*, (eds) Clarence H Miller, Leicester Bradner, Charles A Lynch & Revilo P Oliver, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984, *Epigram* 119; cf Elizabeth McCutcheon explores More's concept of prison in 'This Prison of the Yerth'. cf n105 above.

¹¹⁶ cf CW12, 272/18-21. More also uses 'broad' to describe the prison of the world: cf CW12, 269/17 & 271/2 & 271/22.

¹¹⁷ cf CW12, 273/14; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 157/6-11; CW12, 271/21-22 & 272/17 & 273/22 & 274/16-17.

¹¹⁸ cf CW12, 271/21; CW12, 273/21-22; cf CW3.2, *Epigram* 119.

¹¹⁹ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 157/1 & 165/11-12; CW3.2, *Epigram* 119, 167-169.

¹²⁰ cf eg CW12, 279/10-11 & 280/12-14 & 317/9-11.

the particular one of actual imprisonment which is called prison.¹²¹ Such ideas are also found in the fourteenth century writing of Julian of Norwich. She writes that ‘this place [life/world] is a prison’ and More reflects her in his comments on the earth as a prison.’¹²² Writing during his own imprisonment, More points out the foolishness of forsaking Christ and ‘with the avoydyng of an easier prison, fall into a worse, & in stede of a prison that can not kepe vs long, fall into that prison out of which we can neuer come’.¹²³ The answer is to accept temporary incarceration in this life in order, in the next life, to ‘wynne vs euerlastyng lybertie’.¹²⁴ In this worldly prison of the earth, imprisonment can only ever last a short time and More compares this temporary one with the perpetual imprisonment that is hell.¹²⁵ More wishes his readers, especially if faced with persecution, to appreciate that it is ‘bette ys to be thrall vnto man a while for the pleasure of god, than by displeasyng god, be perpetuall thrall vnto the devil. If he thret vs with Imprisonment let vs tell hym we will rather be mans prisoners a while here in earth than by forsakyng the fayth, be his prisoners euer in hell.’¹²⁶ In order to express the reality of this temporary prison as compared with the eternal one of hell, More paints a colourful picture of the reversal of the fortunes of St John the Baptist compared to Herod and Herodias. In this world, John languished in prison while Herod and Herodias feasted, but their eternal fates are reversed, for ‘the daughter of herodias delytid them with her daunsyng till with her daunsyng she daunsid of S. Johns hed & now sittith he with great fest in hevyn at goddes bord while herode & herodias full hevvely sytt in hell burning both twayne & to make them sport withal, the devill with the damysell daunce in the fire afore them’.¹²⁷ Just as in the story of Dives and Lazarus, their eternal fortunes were reversed.¹²⁸

There is, perhaps unexpectedly, a positive element to More’s fear of hell which should act as an encouragement to seek heaven actively. The consequences of a realistic and salutary fear of hell is that ‘many a man & woman to, of whome there now sitt some, & more shall hereafter sit full gloriously crownid in hevyn, had they not first bene afraid of hell, wold

¹²¹ cf CW12, 270/2-4. More also views illness as a prison. It is God’s punishment with invisible instruments, restraining us as effectively as the stocks; cf CW12, 274/16-275/12. cf Ch 2, nn222-224. Sometimes men create a prison for themselves through gluttony; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 176/2-11.

¹²² Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press (Classics of Western Spirituality), 1978, 331.

¹²³ CW12, 280/11-13. cf nn97 & 113 above.

¹²⁴ CW12, 280/14. [wynne: win; lybertie: liberty]

¹²⁵ cf CW12, 279/10-11.

¹²⁶ CW12, 317/6-11. [bette: better; thret: threaten; forsakyng: forsaking]

¹²⁷ CW12, 279/20-25; Matt 14.2-12; Mk 6.16-29. [delytid: delighted; daunsyng: dancing; daunsid: danced; Iohns: John’s; fest: feast; bord: board, table; herode: Herod; hevvely: grievously; sytt: sit; twayne: two; damysell: damsel; daunce: dance; afore: before]

¹²⁸ cf nn68-76 above for the story of Dives and Lazarus.

toward heven neuer haue set fote forward'.¹²⁹ He admits that the provision of hell may appear 'most rygorouse' but perceives that it is precisely in this that God is in fact 'very mercyfull'.¹³⁰ The fear of hell is not only necessary but it is also both beneficial and practical, for 'our affeccion toward hevenly ioyes waxeth wonderfull cold, yf drede of hell were as far gone,' adding that without such fear of hell, 'very few wold fere god'.¹³¹ Here More states the necessity to fear God, and as we have seen, it is vital to fear God if only for His power to cast our souls into hell. This fear is that of the good man who has a great 'feare of lesyng thorow dedly synne' his soul.¹³² The search for heaven should be conducted actively for it is possible to fail to reach it. St Paul employs the metaphor of the physical exertion of running¹³³ to explain the effort required to reach heaven and More asks how can anyone reach it if he 'settith so litell therby, that he lusteth not to seke therfor.'¹³⁴ More considers it would take exceptional grace if a man somehow manages to reach heaven, for 'when shall he come at it that list not ones to steppe toward it'?¹³⁵

It is fear, along with the eternity of hell, that informs More's attitude in *A Godly Instruction*, based on the scriptural verse 'men shall seek death and shall not find it. And they shall desire to die: and death shall fly from them'.¹³⁶ He uses this verse from the Apocalypse in the context of a man saving his life but displeasing God by so doing. He will find that the next day he hates the life that he has saved.¹³⁷ Such fear is fully justified for 'certainly die thou must, shalt thou ful surely remember: but how or howe soone, that wotest thou not at all. And iuste cause haste thou to feare, lest vpon the suche delaye of y^t deth, may happily ensue the euerlasting tormentes in hel'.¹³⁸ Following this rather sombre stricture, More contrasts it to a positive hopeful alternative: 'wheras by thenduryng of y^t death whiche thou so muche abhorrest, there should haue vndoubtedly followed, the euerlastyng ioyes of heauen'.¹³⁹ A

¹²⁹ CW12, 305/12-15. [sitt: sit; crownid: crowned; heven: heaven]

¹³⁰ CW12, 305/10, 11. [rygorouse: rigorous; mercyfull: merciful]

¹³¹ CW12, 83/23-24. cf Ch 1, n41.

¹³² CW12, 20/10. cf CW12, 20/9. More notes that this fear does not appear to affect those most in need of it. cf n143 below; Ch 3, n23. [lesyng: losing]

¹³³ cf CW12, 41/13-15; 1 Cor 9.24-25.

¹³⁴ CW12, 41/11-12. [settith: sets; litell: little; therby: thereby; lusteth not: does not wish/desire]

¹³⁵ CW12, 41/15-16. [that list not ones to: does not choose to take one; steppe: step]

¹³⁶ Apoc 9.6; cf CW12, 303/19-20 & 304/3-6; CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/16.

¹³⁷ cf CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/8-12; cf CW12, 319/7-12; CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 212/3-8; CW14, *Catena*, 639/2-6 & 643/11-645/6.

¹³⁸ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/12-16; cf CW13, 212/24-31; CW14, *Catena*, 631/4-9; 639/8-10. [certainly: certainly; ful: full; wotest: know; iuste: just; happily: perchance; euerlasting: everlasting]

¹³⁹ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/17-19; cf CW3.2, *Epigrams* 221, 245, 259 & 273; CW12, 319/11-15; CW14, *Catena*, 639/11-12. A slight variation on this theme is found in More's *De Tristitia Christi*: Christ's followers 'should not, out of fear, flee from a death which will not last, only to run, by denying the faith, into

letter to his daughter Margaret reveals his practice of his own advice as he writes: ‘my reason sheweth me... that it wer gret foly for me to be sory to come to that death, which I wolde after wyshe that I had dyed’.¹⁴⁰ Earlier in the same letter, he tells her that since his imprisonment, ‘I sett by death euery daye lesse than other’ and comforts her through his reasoning ‘for thoughe a man leese of his yeres in this worlde, it is more than manyfolde recompensed by cominge the sooner to heauen’.¹⁴¹

Two short statements at the beginning of *A Dialogue of Comfort* reveal how More combines his fear with the trust and hope that is utterly dependent on God’s mercy. He states that ‘I fully put my trust and hope to be a sauid sowle, by the great mercye of God, yet sith there ys here noman so sure, that without revelacion may clene stond out of drede: I bethought me also vppon the paynes of hell,...’¹⁴² More also acknowledges (perhaps autobiographically) that ‘many a good man ys troublid most of all with the feare ...of lesyng thorow dedly synne the life of his silly sowle’.¹⁴³

No one can be utterly sure of their salvation (without a special revelation) and therefore it is a prudent fear that considers the pains of hell. This echoes both St Paul’s advice ‘Let him that thinketh he standeth, beware lest he fall’,¹⁴⁴ and the admonition in the Old Testament ‘Blessed is the man that is always fearful’.¹⁴⁵ More is careful to observe that the lost souls in hell are there through their own fault. They failed to take advantage of the grace offered by God and by extension, responsibility for their own salvation. More explains this in *The Supplication of Souls*: for ‘*Ex te perditio tua, ex me saluatio tua*: Thy perdycyon cometh of thy self, but thy saluacyon cummeth of me by y^e ayd and help of my grace’.¹⁴⁶ ‘For grace ys y^e light wherewith men se y^e way to walk out of synne: and grace ys the staf without help

one which will be everlasting’; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 58/8-59/3. [wheras: whereas; thenduryng: the enduring; abhorrest: abhor; vndoubtedly: undoubtedly]

¹⁴⁰ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/117-120; cf CW12, 319/11-12; CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/24-26 & 212/6-8; CW14, *Catena*, 639/1-6. [sory: sorry; wyshe: wish; dyed: died]

¹⁴¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/108-543/1; cf CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 212/24-27. cf Ch 5, n82; Ch 9, n63. [yeres: years; sett: set; manyfolde: manifold]

¹⁴² CW12, 8/23-26; cf CW8, 425/35-426/4. cf Ch 7, n209. [savid: saved; noman: no man; revelacion: revelation; clene: wholly, completely; stond: stand]

¹⁴³ CW12, 20/8-11. cf n132 above; Ch 3, n23. [silly: helpless, pitiful]

¹⁴⁴ cf 1 Cor 10.12. cf Ch 1, nn83 & 104; Ch 2, n9; Ch 6, n70.

¹⁴⁵ cf Prov 28.14; cf CW12, 162/2-6. cf Ch 1, n104.

¹⁴⁶ CW7, *Supplication*, 192/1-3; cf Hos 13.9: *Ex te perditio tua*; there appears to be no exact biblical verse corresponding to More’s rendering of *ex me saluatio tua*. The nearest are Ps 3.9: Salvation is of the Lord; and Ps 36.39: the salvation of the just is from the Lord; cf CW7, *Supplication*, 192/21-32, 366n. cf Ch 2 n195.

wherof no man is able to ryse out of synne'.¹⁴⁷ During his imprisonment More acknowledges and considers in a letter to his daughter the possibility that he might go to hell: 'And if he suffre me for my faultes to perish, yet shall I than serue for a praise of his iustice'.¹⁴⁸ He does not blame either Henry or indeed, anyone else, rather he acknowledges that no one goes to hell except through their own fault and in More's eyes this acts to praise God's justice. In *A Godly Instruction*, More makes his own responsibility shine clearly writing: 'My firme hope is, that he, whiche so derely bought me, will not, w^tout myne owne damnable fault, lese me to his most malicious enemye'.¹⁴⁹ However, both his acknowledgement of his personal responsibility before God together his complete trust in and dependence on Him is confirmed in his letter with the comment that 'without my fault he will not let me be loste. I shall therefore with good hoope committe my selfe wholie to hym'.¹⁵⁰ But he has not quite finished and continues telling Margaret 'and therefore mine owne god daughter, neuer troble thy minde for any thinge that euer shall happe me in this worlde. Nothing can come but that that God will. And I make me very sure that what so euer that be, seme it neuer so badde in sight, it shall in dede be the best'.¹⁵¹ More's 'very sure', addressed to his beloved daughter, is a clear indication not only of his spiritual preparation, but also the care he had taken over his instruction of his conscience.¹⁵² No wonder is it that he could write in a later letter to Margaret that 'the clearnesse of my conscience hath made mine hearte hoppe for ioy'.¹⁵³

More admits that he would much rather speak of heaven than hell, but also recognizes that it is much easier to imagine the fearful pains of hell and much more difficult to imagine the marvellous joys of heaven.¹⁵⁴ He relates an anecdote that 'at the sermon, & commonly toward the end somewhat the precher spekith of hell & of hevyn, now while he precheth of the paynes of hell styll they stand & yet give hym the heryng, but as sone as he cometh to the ioys of hevyn, they be buskyng them bakward & flokmele fall away'.¹⁵⁵ It would indeed be preferable if a man could be 'movid & styrid to the suffryng for christes sake in this world,

¹⁴⁷ CW7, *Supplication*, 191/32-34. cf Ch 2, n196.

¹⁴⁸ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 531/656-657. [suffre: suffer]

¹⁴⁹ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/4-6. [derely: dearly; lese: lose]

¹⁵⁰ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 531/654-656. [therefore: therefore; hoope: hope; committe: commit; my selfe: myself; wholie: wholly]

¹⁵¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 531/559-532/663. cf Ch 8, n72. [troble: trouble; badde: bad]

¹⁵² cf Rogers, 516/67-71; cf Gerard B Wegemer, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, 269, n26.

¹⁵³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 540/25-26. cf Ch 6, n294. [hoppe: hop]

¹⁵⁴ cf CW12, 305/5-9 & 305/16-18.

¹⁵⁵ CW12, 83/25-29. [precher: preacher; spekith: speaks; heryng: hearing; ioys: joys; buskyng: hastening; bakward: backwards, out of the back door; flokmele: by groups, in droves]

for the wynnyng of the hevenly ioyes, than for the eschewing of all those infernall paynes'.¹⁵⁶ What acts as a hindrance to many is that although they believe in 'the mercy of god, do nat yet loue god in suche wyse as is requisite vnto saluacyon, that is in the preferryng his pleasure before theyr owne, and to forbere synne for the loue of his lawe, and for the regarde of his goodnes to fulfyll hys commaundementes'.¹⁵⁷ Mercy does not automatically lead a man to the submission to the laws of God through love of Him.¹⁵⁸ The result is often the opposite, that mercy turns from trust into presumption and then into such shamelessness in sin that 'neyther loue of god, nor desyre of heuen, nor drede of hell, is able to pulle them backe'.¹⁵⁹

It would be easy to view More's attitude merely as a reflection of the late medieval church and its priorities. But it is more than that, for More absorbs this medieval picture and makes it central to his beliefs and to his actions. He seeks in his spiritual as well as his temporal life to ensure that it is a fate he avoids. He describes hell as eternal, everlasting, perpetual, and a dungeon and pit and the pain as sensible, perpetual, intolerable, endless and everlasting fire. He brings his readers attention to Christ's warning to fear God for He can cast the soul into hell.¹⁶⁰

More's belief in hell did not make him downcast or gloomy. He understood that God's love and forgiveness were greater than sin and made seeking God a lifelong project. Between his condemnation and execution More composed *A Devout Prayer*, almost certainly his last, expressing the desire for heaven purely for the love of God. 'Geue me good lord, a longing to be w^t the, not for thauoiding of the calamyties of this wretched world, nor so much for y^e auoiding of the paines of purgatory nor the paines of hel neither, nor so much for the attaining of y^e ioyes of heauen, in respect of mine own commodity, as euen for a very loue to the'.¹⁶¹ This prayer reflects the eighth of the Collects that intersperse More's *Treatise vpon the Passion* which reads: 'O my swete sauour Christ, whom thyne owne wycked disciple entangled with the deuyll, thorow vyle wretched couetyce betrayed, inspyre I beseche the, the

¹⁵⁶ CW12, 305/21-23. cf Ch 9, n7. [movid: moved; styrid: stirred; christes: Christ's; wynnyng: winning; infernall: infernal]

¹⁵⁷ CW8, 512/36-513/5. cf CW2, n243. [in suche wyse: in such a manner, in such a way; requisite: necessary; preferryng: preferring]

¹⁵⁸ cf CW8, 513/31-32.

¹⁵⁹ CW8, 513/9-10. This is very similar to the quotation from the *Imitation* which says that fear is necessary for 'if love cannot yet recall you from evil, it is good that the fear of hell at least should restrain you'; cf *Imitation*, Bk I, Ch 24, No 7. cf Ch 1, nn53, 62 & 109; Ch2, n244.

¹⁶⁰ cf Matt 10.28; Lk 12.4, 5. cf nn4 & 83 above; Introduction, n105; Ch 1, nn37-40; Ch 6, n195.

¹⁶¹ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 230/7-11; cf CW13, *Passion*, 82/4-9. cf n31 above; Ch 1, n195; Ch 5, n88; Ch 9, n172.

Fear of Hell

maruayle of thy maiesty, with the loue of thy goodnes, so depe into mine hert, that in respecte of the leste poynte of thy pleasure, my mynde maye sette all waye, this whole wretched world at nought'.¹⁶² To follow Christ and seek heaven purely from the love of God rather than for the benefits of heaven would be ideal, but More realistically perceives the problem: sinners have disordered priorities and both the fear of God and the fear of hell are absolutely necessary in order to avoid sin and keep their eyes on heaven. As Andrew Taylor frames it: 'Accounts of hellfire captivate an audience, but heavenly joys are less compelling'.¹⁶³ To sinful men, hell is just more colourful.

¹⁶² CW13, *Passion*, 82/4-9. cf Ch 6, n158f. [vyle: vile; couetyce: covetousness; inspyre: inspire; beseche: beseech; maruayle: marvel; maiesty: majesty; hert: heart; sette: be unconcerned about]

¹⁶³ Andrew W Taylor, 'In stede of harme inestimable good', in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, (ed) George M Logan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 221-222.

Chapter 5: Death: Physical & Spiritual

It is now necessary to consider More's fear of death, or rather, its notable absence in his writings. This is surprising as the fear of death is an almost universal emotion partly because death is something outside human experience; no individual has any personal experience of it until the time of their own death. As More writes 'And though we dayly se men dye, and therby knowe the death, yet our selfe neuer felte it.'¹ The 'fear of death' is itself an ambiguous phrase for it can mean either a fear of dying or it can mean the fear of being dead. Although More uses the phrase 'fear of death', analysis reveals that it is not death itself (that is, being dead) that he fears, but rather a 'fear of dying', that is the process of dying, with its attendant pains.²

The phrase the fear of death can therefore be misleading, so it would be both more accurate and more appropriate to ask the question: the fear of which death? Erasmus posits four types of death:³ first, the natural or physical death at the separation of the soul from the body which was caused by the sin of Adam;⁴ second, the spiritual death which separates the soul from God through sin; third, eternal death in hell, when the death of the body and the death of the soul are combined; fourth and last, the transformative death by which 'we are transformed from the image of the old Adam into the image of the new Adam'.⁵ This transformative death is nothing less than the participation in the Christian life of faith so that it is possible to say with St Paul 'And I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me'.⁶

The first of Erasmus' four deaths, that is the natural death when the soul separates from the body, holds no fear for More. This is largely due to More's awareness of death. It is possible that More's personal experience combined with such continual visual reminders of death, supplemented by preaching, led him to the awareness of death that he displays throughout his

¹ CW1, *The Last Things*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 138/9-10. [dayly: daily; se: see]

² cf Chapter 6, Personal Fears.

³ Erasmus, *De Praeparatione ad Mortem* (Preparing for Death) in *CWE* 70, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 411. It is unlikely that More would have known this work. cf Introduction, n106.

⁴ cf Gen 2.17; CW13, *A Treatise on the Passion*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 29/2-3.

⁵ Erasmus, *De Praeparatione*, 411. Only the first of these fears will be examined in this chapter; spiritual death, as sin, will be examined in Ch 2, the Fear of Sin; eternal death in Ch 4, the Fear of Hell; and transformative death will be examined in Ch 9, To Godward.

⁶ Gal 2.20. More does not appear to have used this biblical verse in his writings.

life and first recorded in his earliest extant writings, the *Pageant Verses*.⁷ Here, death is personified and described as ‘foule vgly lene mysshape’.⁸ Bernard Basset notes that ‘a vivid appreciation of the reality of death is the first and cardinal notion to absorb More’s recorded thoughts’.⁹ He also observes that in More’s outlook ‘death at any moment was for him reality’¹⁰ and its very familiarity removed any fear, and such familiarity could explain Basset’s other perception – the notable and striking consistency of More’s attitude towards death.¹¹ The *Pageant Verses* and his early translation and expansion of Pico’s *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle* where ‘Deth stelith on ful slily and vnware / He lieth at hand and shal vs entreprise / We not how sone nor in what maner wise’¹² provide early examples of More’s awareness. *A Godly Meditation*, written in the Tower, in which he prays ‘To haue the laste thing in remembraunce / To have ever a fore myn yie my deth that is ever at hand / To make deth no straunger to me’,¹³ illustrates clearly the consistency of More’s outlook from his youth to the Tower. His steadfast focus remains constant throughout his life until his execution brought him to this most inescapable of human events: death.¹⁴

⁷ CW1, *Pageant Verses*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 3-7; all the verses are in English, except the final one, The Poet, which is in Latin. The date of composition is unknown, but is likely to have been either between 1492-1494 or 1496-1501; cf CW1, Introduction, xviii.

⁸ CW1, *Pageant Verses*, 5/62; cf the similarity in Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, London: J M Dent & Sons, 1887, verse 156: ‘Hard-favour’d tyrant, ugly, meagre, lean’. [vgl: ugly; lene: lean; mysshape: misshapen]

⁹ Basset, 30.

¹⁰ Basset, 31.

¹¹ cf Basset, 36, 38.

¹² CW1, *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle*, 111/6-8; cf CW12, 267/26-268/19. cf nn14 & 38 below. Pico entitled this stanza ‘Deth at our hand and vnware’. [stelith: steals; slily: slyly; vnware: unexpected; entreprise: attack; sone: soon; maner wise: kind of manner]

¹³ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 227/1-4. cf Ch 9, n139. [a fore: before; myn: mine; yie: eye; straunger: stranger]

¹⁴ cf Robert Hamilton, ‘More’s Philosophy of Death’ in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Vol 57, 1941, 456. The inescapability of death runs like a leitmotif throughout More’s works, especially in CW1, *The Last Things* and CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*. This has been noted by a number of authors, cf eg Basset, n79-81 incl above. Germain Marc’hadour notes that More’s meditations on death began in his youth and are present in the poems of his youth as well as his Latin epigrams; cf G Marc’hadour, ‘Thomas More’s Spirituality’ *St Thomas More: Action and Contemplation*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for St John’s University, 1972, 131; cf n11 above. For examples of death in More’s early poems, cf CW1, *Pageant Verses*, 5/58-68; CW1, *The Lamytacyon off Quene Elyzabeth*, 9-13; his translations and expansions of Pico’s poems, eg ‘Deth at our hand and vnware’ in *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle*, 111/1-8; ‘the fourth propirte’ in *Twelve Properties of a Lover*, 115/18-116/2; for examples of death in his Latin epigrams, cf CW3.2, *Epigrams* 40, 55, 56, 70, 74, 75, 119 & 259; for Ep 278, cf nn40 & 43 below. For *Epigram* 75 ‘Life itself is a journey towards death’, cf CW1, *Last Things*, 149/23-26; Seneca, *Epistles*, Vol I, (ed) Jeffrey Henderson, (trans) Richard M Gummere, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 1917, *Epistle* 24.20. Other epigrams show death as a equalizer (*Epigrams* 40, 45 & 46); others connect death and tyranny (*Epigrams* 80 & 114). *The Lamytacyon off Quene Elyzabeth* was written immediately after the death of King Henry VII’s wife, Queen Elizabeth on 11th February, 1503, for in it the late Queen refers to ‘my lady dowghter Cate’ (line 69), who was born on 2nd February and died shortly after her mother; cf CW1, xxiii; note to 12/69. cf nn36 & 63 above; Ch 6, n8.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, death was everywhere: outbreaks of the plague and sweating sickness recurred frequently and medicine was rudimentary by modern standards; in addition to sudden death, wars and famine contributed to the perception of the fragility of life. More would surely have also known *The Book of the Craft of Dying*,¹⁵ the cadaver tombs found in many churches,¹⁶ as well as the *Ars moriendi* woodcuts which all contain visual depictions of death. He mentions the Dance of Death pictured in St Paul's.¹⁷ Holbein's woodcuts are among the most famous of the pictorial depictions of the Dance of Death,¹⁸ a version of the *ars moriendi*. In the Dance of Death, death is portrayed as a skeleton, carrying off everyone from Pope to child, irrespective of age, rank or wealth, sometimes taking people by the hand, sometimes gripping them violently but never showing any respect. Paul Binski argues that the skeleton does not represent Death personified, but rather the death of Everyman.¹⁹ In addition to these constant reminders of death, More had personal experience of bereavement, having lost his mother, as well as siblings as a child, and his first wife, Jane, after only a few years of marriage.²⁰ Daily experience combined with these visual images

¹⁵ cf C Horstmann (ed), 'The Book of the Craft of Dying' in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and his Followers*, new edn, Cambridge: D S Brewer, 1999, 406-420; cf Frances M M Comper (ed), *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1917. It seems probable that More would have known the *Craft*, due to its widespread distribution. *The Book of the Craft of Dying* is an English edition of the *Tractatus*, which was written between 1414-1418 by order of the Council of Constance; its rapid distribution probably due to participants returning home with copies; Nancy Lee Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the *Ars Moriendi* in England*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970, 4, 2; Sr Mary Catharine O'Connor, *The Art of Dying Well: The Development of the *Ars Moriendi**, New York: AMS Press, repr 1966, 50-54. O'Connor suggests that it was written during the Council of Constance, cf 54.

¹⁶ cf eg Christopher Daniell, *Death and Burial in Medieval England: 1066-1550*, London and New York: Routledge, 1997, 184. Cadaver tombs first appeared in England c1420 and so were well established by the time More was born. For more on cadaver tombs: cf Pamela M King, 'The Cadaver Tomb in England: Novel Manifestations of an Old Idea' in *Church Monuments*, Vol 5, 1990, 26-38.

¹⁷ CW1, *Last Things*, 139/22.

¹⁸ cf K J Wilson, 'More and Holbein: The Imagination of Death' in *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol VII, No 1, April 1976, 51-58. Wilson suggests that Holbein inspired More. Although Holbein's woodcuts were not printed until 1538, proof impressions had been made prior to the death of his engraver Lützelburger in 1526, the year Holbein both visited England and stayed with Thomas More. It is therefore possible, even likely, that Holbein brought some or all of these proofs with him. Wilson argues that More's description of the vulnerability of kings in the face of death, written in the Tower, reflects a composite image of Holbein's Emperor and Nobleman; cf Wilson 51-53; CW12, 267/26-268/15 & cf 269/25-27; Hans Holbein, *The Dance of Death*, London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1947, for the Emperor, 45; for the Nobleman, 55. Wilson contends that More's description does not reflect Holbein's king. Holbein's Emperor is unaware that death is approaching him from behind while the Nobleman is literally grabbed by the skeleton. Holbein's depiction of the Emperor and the Nobleman are unusual for death was typically seen as leading his victim gently by the hand. For Holbein's Empress, 48f; for Old Man, 71; cf Wilson, 52.

¹⁹ cf Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation*, London: The British Museum Press, 1996, 157; cf Beaty contends that one chapter of the *Tractatus* inspired the *ars moriendi* woodcuts and concerned with the deathbed temptations of Everyman; cf Beaty, 3; Horstmann, *Craft*, Ch 2, 408-412.

²⁰ Nothing is known of his mother, other than her name, Agnes. More never refers to her; cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'The Death Year of Thomas More's Mother' in *Moreana*, Vol 16, No 63, 1979, 13-16; for siblings, cf Bernard Basset, SJ, *Born for Friendship: The Spirit of Sir Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1965, 6; his first wife Jane died 1511, cf Basset, 88.

continually placed before medieval men and women the fact that human life in this world is always fragile, transitory and in constant danger of death.

More's early works reveal an appreciation of the power of death and its inevitability as the universal destiny of all men. In the *Pageant Verses*, Death does not so much claim as boast that 'Yet there is none in all this worlde wyde, / That may my power withstande or escape'.²¹ This concept is also found in *The Lamytacyon off Quene Elyzabeth* in which the dead Queen says 'Whan deth commyth thy myghti mesanger, / Obey we must þer ys no remedye, / He hath me somond. Loo here I lye'.²² The message cannot be overlooked: Death is more powerful than any mortal and that nothing, neither status nor riches, stands in his way. Such awareness led More to the themes explored in his Latin Epigrams on Death,²³ almost all of which were written before 1520 and display no fear of death. As Clarence Miller comments 'More's Latin poems contain a dozen or so sombre meditations on death, including his own death, but none is a cry of the heart'.²⁴ Further evidence from this period that More is not afraid of death for himself is found in his letter of August, 1517 to Erasmus during the outbreaks of plague and sweating sickness. He notes the danger of the sweating sickness and the loss of many friends among whom he mentions Andrew Ammonio. He observes that the sickness rages in Calais, just at the time that he has to go there and that it appears he must go in search of it. He concludes 'But what can one do? What one's lot brings must be endured. I have prepared my mind to face any outcome.'²⁵ This attitude is not fear, though arguably it could be described as acceptance or resignation. However later, when his beloved daughter Margaret is suffering from 'sweating sicknes' and her doctors despair of her recovery, More experiences 'no small hevines for her' beseeches God for her recovery.²⁶ Margaret recovers completely, but her father's fear is not a fear for himself, but for her.

²¹ CW1, *Pageant Verses*, 5/63-64; cf CW12, 267/26-268/19. cf nn22 & 53 below. [wyde: wide]

²² CW1, *Lamytacyon*, 10/20-22. [þer: there; somond: summoned]

²³ cf Yoshinori Suzuki, 'The Social Ideas of the Younger More' in *Moreana* XXI, Nos 83-84, 1984, 61-71, esp 65-67 entitled 'The Equality of Men before Death and Fortune' which looks at More's Latin Epigrams.

²⁴ CW3.2, Introduction, 49.

²⁵ Erasmus, *CWE* 5, (trans) R A B Mynors & D F S Thomson, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1979, *Epistle* 623, 67-68. Basset contrasts More's calmness with the attitudes of both Henry VIII and Erasmus who moved around to avoid both the plague and the sweating sickness; cf Basset, 31.

²⁶ Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas Moore, knight*, (ed) E V Hitchcock, London: Early English Text Society, 1935, 28/7, 14-15; cf 28/3-29/7. [sicknes: sickness; hevines: grief, sorrow]

More's epigrams view death as an end to suffering for it releases a man 'from... monstrous woes'²⁷ and ought not to be feared 'since it is the end of suffering' and it 'banishes disease and dismal poverty' and 'death alone visits miserable mortals only once'.²⁸ Death also rescues the oppressed from tyrants and lays him at their feet.²⁹ Its time is unknown³⁰ and unpredictable³¹ and acts as an equalizer; it treats everyone, the conqueror and the slave in the same manner and operates as the most efficient leveller of rich and poor.³² If men could appreciate that death 'lies hidden deep in our entrails'³³ and is at work in secret from the moment of our birth, and 'little by little we die, but in a single instant we cease to exist', they would then understand that death is always present.³⁴ Indeed, More insists that 'even now, while we are talking, we are dying'.³⁵ The concept that life is itself but a journey towards death, is one More knew from the *Epistles* of Seneca: 'we do not suddenly fall on death, but advance towards it by slight degrees; we die every day. ... It is not the last drop that empties the water-clock,... the final hour when we cease to exist does not of itself bring death; it merely of itself completes the death-process. We reach death at that moment, but we have been a long time on the way'.³⁶ Dying, as More appreciated, is only 'y^e passage & going out of this present life'.³⁷ If only death could be seen 'not as a stranger, but as a nigh neighbour'³⁸ and that we are dying as we live and continually hurry towards death which will, sooner rather than later, overtake us all.³⁹ This presents a slightly different perspective on that perennial medieval theme: the transitory nature of life.⁴⁰ More observes the failure to be aware of death's presence in the hope of a long life means either 'we se him not at al, or but a

²⁷ CW3.2, *Epigram* 81, cf line 8: *horrida solue malis*.

²⁸ *Epigram* 70, cf title, lines 1-2: *Mortem non esse metvendam cvm sit finis malorvm*; cf line 5: *...fugiunt morbid, moestaque pauperies*; cf line 6: *Sola semel miseris sese mortalibus offert*.

²⁹ *Epigram* 80.

³⁰ *Epigram* 55.

³¹ *Epigrams* 56 & 74.

³² *Epigrams* 40, 45 & 46.

³³ *Epigram* 75, cf line 3: *At medijs latet haec abdita uisceribus*.

³⁴ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 144/30-32 & 148/12-15.

³⁵ *Epigram* 75, cf line 11: *Quin nunc, interea dum loquimur, morimur*.

³⁶ Seneca, *Epistle* 24.20. cf CW1, *Last Things*, 148/12-15 & 149/23-31; CW3.2, *Epigram* 75, 'Life itself is a journey towards death' [*Vita ipsa cvrsvs ad mortem est.*]; cf Wis 5.13; John Archer Gee, *The Life and Works of Thomas Lupset*, New Haven: Yale University Press; London: Humphrey Milford: Oxford University Press, 1928, 288. The earliest known edition is 1534 (Gee, 263); it would therefore appear unlikely that More would have known this work, but it is evidence that his attitudes are reflected by his contemporaries. cf n14 above; n63 below; Ch 6, n8.

³⁷ CW1, *Last Things*, 148/31-32.

³⁸ CW1, *Last Things*, 148/9. cf n12 above.

³⁹ CW1, *Last Things*, 166/1-3; cf CW1, Pico's *Twelve Weapons*, 110/26-28; CW1, *Last Things*, 149/23-34; cf CW3.2, No 75.

⁴⁰ cf CW3.2, *Epigram* 278 in which More reminds both himself and the reader that only a fool expects to remain long in the world and that he should contemplate staying in heaven. [cf lines 3, 5: *Moraris, si sit spes hic tibi longa morandi: ... Desine morari, et caelo meditare morari.*] Here More puns on *morus* which can mean either More or fool in Latin.

sleight & vncertain sight, as a man maye see a thing so far of, that he woteth not whither it be a bushe or a beast'.⁴¹ The consequence of such awareness of death allows More to view as folly much of human striving this awareness leads to the spiritual detachment he displays during his imprisonment in the Tower.⁴²

Being dead equally held no fear for More, for he viewed death as the gateway to eternal life,⁴³ as did the medieval world in general, including Erasmus who writes 'that death, previously the passage to hell, is now the gateway to heaven'.⁴⁴ The concept of death being the gateway to eternal life appears in More's writings around the time of his resignation as Lord Chancellor; it is found in the Epitaph he writes for his tomb that it is 'made for himself, his first wife's bones hither too, that might every day put him in memory of death that never ceases to creep on him. And that this tomb made for him in his life-time be not in vain, nor that he fear death coming upon him, but that he may willingly, for the desire of Christ, die and find death not utterly death to him, but the gate of a wealthier life.'⁴⁵ This sentiment is also found in *A Devout Prayer* written in the Tower between his condemnation and execution in which he prays 'Geue me y^e grace ... to haue an eye to myne ende wythout grudge of deathe, which ... is y^e gate of a welthy life.'⁴⁶

In an epigram written around two decades before his own imprisonment,⁴⁷ More notes that all men are 'shut up in the prison of this world under sentence of death. In this prison none escapes death'.⁴⁸ He observes that in this prison men struggle for position⁴⁹ and considers that

⁴¹ CW1, *Last Things*, 144/12-14. For a comparison of a bush to a thief; cf CW12, 109/27-28. [vncertain: uncertain; of: off; woteth: knows; whither: whether]

⁴² cf Basset, 30-38.

⁴³ cf eg CW3.2, *Latin Poems*, (eds) Clarence H Miller, Leicester Bradner, Charles A Lynch & Revilo P Oliver, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984, *Epigrams* 278. More wrote this epigram three years before his death. 'You who remember More, may your lifetime be long and your death an open gate to eternal life'. [*Qui memo res Mori, longae tibi tempora vitae / Sint, et ad aeternam peruia porta, mori.*] More puns on 'momento mori' (remember death or remember More); cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'A Name for All Seasons' in *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977, 539-562; hereafter *EA*. All epigrams are taken from the Yale edition.

⁴⁴ cf eg Erasmus, *De Praeparatione*, 407.

⁴⁵ T E, Bridgett, *The Life and Writings of Sir Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1891, repr 1924, 250-252. The original Epitaph was in Latin. More sent a copy to Erasmus in a letter c June 1533. cf Ch 9, n142.

⁴⁶ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 229/6-8. cf Ch 6, n26; Ch 7, n44; Ch 9, n142. [grudge of death: reluctance to die; welthy: well-being, spiritual well-being (not material possessions)]

⁴⁷ cf Leland Miles (ed), *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1965, Introduction, lvi.

⁴⁸ CW3.2, *Latin Poems*, *Epigram* 119, cf lines 2-3: *Damnati ac morituri in terrae claudimur omnes / Carcere, in hoc mortem carcere nemo fugit*. More adopts the view that the world is a prison. It is also found in Plato; cf eg 'Phaedo' in *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*, (ed & trans) Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, Cambridge, Mass, London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 2017, 62b, 82e-83a; *Republic*,

‘we are in love with this prison as if it were no prison.’⁵⁰ Despite this, ‘we are escorted out of it, one way or another, by death’.⁵¹ That veritable bully death does not however escort us from the world; it drags us whether or not we wish to leave.⁵² Twenty years later in the Tower, More still views this world as a prison and God as our chief jailer and executioner, for ‘euery man is... set here by the ordenaunce of god in a place (be it neuer so large) a place... out of which no man can escape but that therein ys euery man put vnder sure & safe keypyng to be redely fet forth whan god callith for hym, & that than he shall surely dye’.⁵³ Death cannot be resisted and is personified as a thorough ruffian and bully; indeed he is a hangman,⁵⁴ who will ‘neyther knele before hym, nor make hym any reuerence, nor with any good maner desier hym to come forth, but rygorowsely & fiercely gripe hym by the very brest, & make all his bones ratle’.⁵⁵

Such an outlook enables More to view death not as a burden but a liberation, enabling life to be lived with one eye always on heaven and in this way More embraces and lives the reality that ‘dye we muste in few yeres liue we neuer so long’.⁵⁶ This idea can be traced back at least as far as Cicero and in a slightly different perception on the same thought, More quotes him

(ed & trans) Chris Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy, Cambridge, Mass, London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 2013, Bk VII, 514a-517b (the allegory of the cave). It is also found in *Of the Imitation of Christ*, London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1955, Bk III, Ch 21, No 4; in Julian of Norwich, *Showings*, Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1978, 331; and in Erasmus, cf *CWE 27, Moria*, 150; *CWE 70, Praeparatione ad Mortem*, 393, 397, 412.

⁴⁹ CW3.2, *Latin Poems, Ep 119*, lines 7-9: ‘*In caeco cupidus carcere condit opes, / ...obambulat hic uagus, hic uincitur... / Hic seruit, regit hic, hic canit, ille gemit*’; ‘The avaricious man hoards up wealth within the dark prison. One man wanders freely... another lies shackled... this man serves, that one rules, this one sings, that one groans; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 157/11-24; CW12, 273/9-13 for similar descriptions of the world. Boethius also offers a similar perception, writing ‘If you saw one mouse among many claiming to have rightful power over the rest, how you would laugh’; cf Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae* (The Consolation of Philosophy), (ed) E H Warmington, (trans) S J Tester, London: William Heinemann Ltd and Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 1973, Bk II, Ch VI, 16-18.

⁵⁰ cf CW12, 273/15-17; cf Plato, *Phaedo*, 82e-83a.

⁵¹ CW3.2, *Latin Poems, Ep 119*, cf lines 10-11: ‘...quoque dum carcer non tanquam carcer amatur, / Hic alij alij mortibus extrahimur.’

⁵² cf Elizabeth McCutcheon, ‘*This Prison of the Yerth: The Topos of Immurement in the Writings of St. Thomas More*’, *Cithara*, 1985, Vol 25, 37. McCutcheon notes that in *Epigram 119*, More uses the Latin *extrahimur*, meaning dragged, rather than the more polite, escorted.

⁵³ CW12, 267/12-17. cf n12. For early references to the inescapability of death, cf nn 21 & 22 above. [euery: every; ordenaunce: provision, command, ordinance; therein: therein; vnder: under; keypyng: keeping; redely: readily; fet forth: brought forth; callith: calls; than: then]

⁵⁴ cf CW12, 268/8 & 273/25.

⁵⁵ CW12, 268/11-14. cf n14 above. [knele: kneel; reuerence: reverence; desier: desire; rygorowsely: rigorously; gripe: grip; very: actual; brest: breast; ratle: rattle]

⁵⁶ CW1, *Last Things*, 128/24. Pico uses an almost identical phrase: ‘thou shalt also thi self dye shortly liue thow neuer so longe’; cf CW1, *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/15-16. More uses the concept on at least three other occasions, cf CW1, *Last Things*, 144/24-25; CW12, 4/16-17 & 86/9-10; cf Cicero, ‘De Senectute’ (On Old Age) in *De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione*, (ed) Jeffrey Henderson, (trans) William Armistead Falconer, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 1923, 19.68. cf Introduction, n49; Ch 1, nn116, 123 & 171; Ch 9, n23. [yeres: years]

and writes that ‘there none olde man so olde, but that as Tully saith he trusteth to liue one yere yet’.⁵⁷ The problem, in More’s perception, is that most people fail to consider death or any aspect of eschatology. Of the four last things, More noted that: ‘among foure thousande taken out at aduenture, we shal not find fourescore, but they shal boldly affirme it for a thyng to painefull, busilye to remember these fowre last thynges. And yet durst I lay a wageour, that of those foure thousande, you shall not fynd fourtene, that hath depelye thought on them foure tymes in all theyr dayes.’⁵⁸

More’s writings reveal another interesting attitude to death that reflects its inevitability. Death cannot be escaped; it can only be postponed. Noting its unpredictability, he writes in an early epigram that ‘you would be weeping if you knew you had one month to live; you laugh, although you may not have a day’.⁵⁹ Embracing both the inevitability and unpredictability of death allows More to accept it. More asks in *The Last Things* ‘what thing is dying? is it ani other thing, than y^e passage & going out of this present life?’⁶⁰ He says that a man is, even while he lives, ‘is going toward his ende’ and that ‘we neuer ought to loke toward deth, as a thing farre of’ but to remember that ‘we neuer cease our self to make hast toward him’.⁶¹ This reflects one of More’s early epigrams in which he writes ‘from the very hour of our birth, life and death steal forward together, step by step’⁶² which itself mirrors Seneca’s epistle ‘that we do not suddenly fall on death, but advance towards it by slight degrees’.⁶³ More came to terms with death, not in the Tower, but much earlier in his life as these examples reveal.

Another way More uses to approach the idea of death is the concept of a willing death; that is, the opposite of an unwilling death. It is not willing death meaning wanting to die but always being ready to die when God calls and wanting to be with Him. This is found in More’s early translation of Pico’s *Commentary on Psalm 15*, verse 3 which he renders as ‘we

⁵⁷ CW1, *Last Things*, 144/20-21; cf CW1, 144/24-26; Cicero, *De Senectute*, 7.24. cf n56 above. [Tully: Cicero]

⁵⁸ CW1, *Last Things*, 130/6-12. [at aduenture: at random; fourescore: fourscore; boldly: audaciously, presumptuously; thyng: thing; to: too; painefull: painful; busilye: actively; fowre: four; thynges: things; durst: dare; wageour: wager; fynd: find; fourtene: fourteen; depelye: deeply; tymes: times; theyr: their]

⁵⁹ CW3.2, *Latin Poems*, (eds) Clarence H Miller, Leicester Bradner, Charles A Lynch & Revilo P Oliver, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984, No 56, 131.

⁶⁰ CW1, *Last Things*, 148/31-32. [ani: any]

⁶¹ CW1, *Last Things*, 149/18-19, 32-34. cf nn12 & 35-37 above. [farre: far; of: off; hast: haste, ie hurry]

⁶² CW3.2, *Latin Poems*, No 75, 143.

⁶³ Seneca, *Epistles*, Vol I, *Epistle* 24.20. cf nn14 & 36 above; Ch 6, n8.

shall continually desire to be hens'.⁶⁴ It is a version reflected in More's other theme: longing to be with God.⁶⁵ Pico elaborates on this thought, and despite More's frequent paraphrases and expansions in his translations of Pico, here he is accurate. More writes

'by this meditation of the goodenes of that heuently contre we shulde wynne this vertu, that we shulde not only strongly suffre deth and paciently, whan our time commeth, or if hit were put vnto vs for y^e faith of christ, but also we shulde willingly and gladly longe ther fore, desiring to be departed oute of this vale of wretchidnes, that we may raigne in y^e heuinly contre with god & his holy saintes'.⁶⁶

Although this is a translation, the fact that More chose to translate it indicates his thinking. Here Pico writes of suffering death for the faith of Christ. It is an important theme in *A Dialogue of Comfort*, not only to be ready but More advises that a man should 'wish with goddes will to be hens, & long to be with hym in heven'.⁶⁷ Later in the same work he repeats this guidance again, linking it to tribulation in general. First it is necessary to trust in God and seek His help with God's pleasure, and to pray.⁶⁸ More writes 'begyn first with confession, & make vs clene to god & redy to depart & be glad to go to god'.⁶⁹ However we should not assume that we will have a long life and although we may keep it while God allows, nevertheless if God decrees that 'we may go, let vs be glad therof & long to go to him'.⁷⁰ More cautions while it is possible to ask God to remove some tribulations and gain comfort in trusting that God will answer such a request, 'yf a man shuld in euery sicknes pray for his helth agayne, whan shuld he shew hym self content to die & depart vnto god. And that mynd a man must haue (ye wot well) or els it will not be well'.⁷¹ Later in the *Dialogue* More presents his readers with the benefit of death, writing 'yf god will we shall hens than doth he much more for vs, for he that this way taketh, can not go but well, for of hym that is loth to leve this wrechid world, myn hart is much in feare lest he dye not well'.⁷²

⁶⁴ CW1, Pico's *Commentary on Psalm 15*, 97/28-29. More's translation of *The Life of Pico* was first published c1510; however there seems to be no evidence for dating the *Commentary on Psalm 15*.

⁶⁵ cf Chapter 9: To Godward.

⁶⁶ CW1, Pico's *Commentary on Psalm 15*, 98/2-8. [contre: country; shulde: should; vertu: virtue; paciently: patiently; hit: it; wretchidnes: wretchedness; raigne: reign]

⁶⁷ CW12, 4/23-24.

⁶⁸ cf CW12, 76/6-11.

⁶⁹ CW12, 76/12-13. [begyn: begin; redy: ready]

⁷⁰ CW12, 76/30-31.

⁷¹ CW12, 20/26-30; cf CW4, *Utopia*, (eds) Edward Surtz, SJ & J H Hexter, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965, 237/29-32; CW12, 4/22-24 & 76/28-31; Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, 507/16-508/18. [wot: know]

⁷² CW12, 76/18-20; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 143/2-5; CW12, 20/27-30. [loth: loath; leve: leave; myn: mine]

Death: Physical & Spiritual

More is encouraging his readers to be prepared for death, for no one knows when it will visit us. More dispels the fear of natural as opposed to unnatural death very easily telling his imaginary interlocutor: ‘me thinketh that the deth which men call comonly naturall, ys a violent deth to euery man whom yt fetcheth hens beforce agaynst his will. And that ys euery man, which whan he dieth ys loth to dye, & fayne wold yet live lenger yf he might’.⁷³ It is violent death that is the problem; it is ‘the fere of shame or sharp payne ioynid vnto deth, shold be the lett, wold els for the bare respect of deth alone, let to depart hens with good will’.⁷⁴ More points out that both natural and unnatural deaths can be violent. While pain and shame can make death more fearful, even without them, many men would be unwilling to die.⁷⁵ It comes from ‘a lake of faith, lak of hope, or finally lak of witt’ for without belief in life after death, they think that they lose everything when they die.⁷⁶ This lack of belief and faith gives scope to the suggestions of the devil, who at a deathbed ‘dooeth hys vttermoste deuoyre to brynge vs to damnacion: neuer ceasyng to mynyster by subtylle and incogytable meanes, firste vnlawefull longyng to lyue, horrour to goe gladly to god at his callyng’.⁷⁷

More also considers that as death is inevitable, it may only be postponed, but not avoided. He points out ‘certaynly die thou must, shalt thou ful surely remember: but how or howe soone, that wotest thou not at all’.⁷⁸ He asks that if someone postpones death, ‘art thou sure therefore either to continewe thy lyfe for euer, or at an other tyme to dye and feele no payne?’⁷⁹ He cautions that if you succeed in postponing death, you may come to wish that you had died before.⁸⁰ Of this More states ‘I suppose... that whan the tyme shall come, in whiche thou shalte lye sicke on thy death bedde, and therewith beginne to feele the paynefull panges of death, so dreadfully drawing on, than wilt thou heartely wishe, for the sauving of thy soul, thou hadst died a most sharp and cruell deathe manye a daye before’.⁸¹

⁷³ CW12, 301/22-25. cf Ch6, n36. [comonly: commonly; beforce: by force; agaynst: against]

⁷⁴ CW12, 284/21-23. [let: hindrance]

⁷⁵ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 143/6-9; CW12, 61/24-62/6.

⁷⁶ CW12, 283/14-15 & cf 283/9-17. For faith: CW12, 283/15-17; for hope: CW12, 283/23-284/9 & 284/20-285/6; for witt: CW12, 285/6-18. [lak/lake: lack; witt: intellect, reason, mental capacity]

⁷⁷ CW1, *Last Things*, 143/2-5. cf Ch 9, n29. [dooeth: does; vttermoste: utmost; deuoyre: endeavour; mynyster: administer; subtylle: subtle; incogytable: unthinkable; vnlawefull: unlawful; horrour: horror]

⁷⁸ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/12-14.

⁷⁹ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/25-26; cf CW14, *Catena*, (ed & trans) Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 643/4-6.

⁸⁰ CW3.2, *Latin Poems, Epigram*, 259; cf CW3.2, *Epigrams*, 221 & 245.

⁸¹ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 212/3-8; cf CW12, 319/9-14. [sauing: saving]

In the Tower, More is philosophical. In a letter to his daughter Margaret, he writes ‘since I am come hether I sett by death euery daye lesse than other. For thoughe a man leese of his yeres in this worlde, it is more than manyfolde recompensed by cominge the sooner to heauen. And thoughe it be a paine to die while a man is in health yet see I very fewe that in sickenes dye with ease’.⁸² Later in the same letter, he serenely writes of his acceptance of death observing ‘I neuer haue prayed God to bringe me hence nor deliuer me fro death, but referring all thing whole vnto his onely pleasure, as to hym that seeth better what is best for me than my selfe dooth’.⁸³ However, Margaret already knows of her father’s acceptance and readiness to meet God as he had previously written ‘as for longe lyfe (as I haue often tolde the Megge) I neither loke for, nor longe for, but am well content to goe, if God call me hence to morowe’.⁸⁴ However gloomy More’s visions of death may appear, his comments, from Pico to his Tower writings, usually end with a positive outlook. Pico’s first letter to his nephew, Gianfrancesco, ends ‘with these twayn, as with two spurrys, y^t one of fere, y^t othir of loue, spurre forth thin hors thorow the short waye of this momentary life, to y^e reward of eternall felicitye, sith we neither ought nor may prefix our selfe any othir ende than y^e endles fruition of y^e infinite goodnes, both to soule & body, in euir lasting peace. Fare wel and fere god’⁸⁵. In *A Dialogue of Comfort* More paints a picture of a man who ‘had in his hart, so diepe a desiere & love longyng to be with god in hevyn to haue the fruicion of his gloriouse face’⁸⁶ and explains a little later that ‘the very substaunce essentiall of all the celestially Ioy, standing in blessing beholding of the gloriouse godhed face to face’.⁸⁷ In the last prayer he wrote before his execution, he writes ‘Geue me good lord, a longyng to be w^t the,... euen for a very loue to the’.⁸⁸ Even in the face of fear, More looks towards the glories of heaven.

The fear that did exercise medieval minds, including that of Thomas More, is the fear of a sudden death which provides either no opportunity to cleanse the soul from sin through repentance or without the grace to do so. It is the fear of impenitent departing that is so crucial, when the moment of death would decide the destiny of the soul, either eternal reward

⁸² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/108-543/111. cf Ch 6, n37; Ch 7, n202; Ch 9, n67. [sickenes: sickness]

⁸³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/136-139. [deliuer: deliver]

⁸⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 507/16-508/18.

⁸⁵ CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/16-21.

⁸⁶ CW12, 204/28-30. cf Ch 9, n50. [diepe: deep]

⁸⁷ CW12, 308/20-21.

⁸⁸ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 230/7, 11. The entire sentence reads ‘Geue me good lord, a longyng to be w^t the, not for thauoiding of the calamities of this wretched world, nor so much for y^e auoiding of the paines of purgatory nor of the paines of hel neither, nor so much for the attaining of y^e ioyes of heauen, in respect of mine own commodity, as euen for a very loue to the’. cf Ch 1, n195; Ch 4, nn31 & 161; Ch 9, n172.

or eternal pain.⁸⁹ More writes about this problem in his own expansion of Pico's *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle* in the stanza entitled 'Fere of impenitent departinge'.⁹⁰ It reads:

If thou shuldest god offende think how therfore
Thou were forthwith in very Ieopardous case
For happely thow shuldest not liue an houre more
Thi syn to clense, and though thou haddest space
Yet peradventure shuldest thou lak the grace.
Well ought we then be ferde to done offence
Impenitent lest we departyn hens⁹¹

More's attitude is neatly summarized in the words of a younger contemporary, Thomas Lupset who writes in *A Treatise of Dyeing Well* 'that surely no man can dye well, that lyueth not well, for euer deth is a sorowfull thyng to the yuell lyuer, by cause he hathe nothyng to laye before the mercy of god whervppon he maye take hope and truste to be made worthy of the sure lyfe'.⁹² While More himself does not fear death, he notes in *The Last Things* that when remembered it creates 'terror & grief'.⁹³

This medieval fear, along with More's own experience of personal loss, creates his acute awareness and acceptance of the inevitability of death. However, such awareness and acceptance do not constitute fear of death; the fear here is that of unrepented sin and the consequence of hell with its everlasting torments.

More's awareness of the transitory nature of life could be viewed as just a 'medieval commonplace' but this really reveals the modern attitude of trying to ignore the fact of death and the reality that life is relatively short. More's attitudes are medieval, although many of his contemporaries shared them.

It is now time to analyze More's personal fears, of pain, of his own frailty and weakness and for his family.

⁸⁹ cf CW1, Pico's *Twelve Weapons*, 111/9-24; cf H W Donner, 'More's Treatise on the Four Last Things' in *EA*, 345; Frances M M Comper, *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1917.

⁹⁰ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Weapons*, 111/9-16.

⁹¹ For sin and forgiveness, cf Ch 2, nn199-202 & 213. For presumption in sin that leads to a lack of grace, cf Ch 2, nn217-218 & 246-249. [Ieopardous: jeopardous; happely: by chance, perhaps; thow: thou; thi: thy; syn: sin; clense: cleanse; haddest: had; lak: lack; ferde: afraid; departyn: depart]

⁹² cf Gee, 272. [lyueth: liveth; euer: ever; sorowfull: sorrowful; thyng: thing; yuell: evil; lyuer: liver; by cause: because; nothyng: nothing; whervppon: whereupon; lyfe: life]

⁹³ CW1, *Last Things*, 144/7.

Chapter 6: More's Personal Fears in the Tower

The theological fears – namely, the fear of God, of sin and of hell – do not only apply to More personally but also reflect the spirituality of the medieval world in which he was nurtured. More takes the theological fears of God, sin and hell and transforms them using his faith to apply them to his personal fears, encompassing temptation, pain, his frailty and weakness, the fear of men and fear for his family. Chapter 3 looked at his fear of temptation and the devil which again is both his own as well as medieval. His fear of pain, of possible torture combined with his frailty and weakness are the principal elements of his personal fears; two other lesser fears are the fear of men¹ and his fear for his family. It is to these, More's personal fears, particularly found in his Tower writings, that we must now turn.

More's primary personal fear is that of pain with the attendant fear that torture could lead him to forsake Christ through the pains inflicted by either torture or execution through his own frailty and weakness. Could torture or execution be the temptation that he was unable to withstand? He confides to his daughter Margaret in a letter that 'I am of nature so shrinking from paine, that I am almost afeared of a philip'.² The fear of men is an aspect of his fear of denying and forsaking his faith through pain, but which could also lead to hell. A further fear for More in the Tower is fear for his family. In this chapter More's his personal fears will be seen in his writings, letters and the margins of his prayer book which reveal his more intimate and private thoughts.

In order to understand how More confronts the fears he faces in the Tower, it is necessary to focus on the spiritual preparation that began while he was still a young man. Roper recalls that he 'gaue himself to devotion and prayer' for about four years in the Charterhouse as he decided his future.³ His decision was to marry, rather than become a monk or priest. His spiritual focus is evident in an early letter to John Colet, written in his mid-20's, where he writes of his desire 'to climb the steep path of virtue'.⁴ This preparation reveals More's lifelong focus 'to Godward' begins in his early life and continues up to and during his

¹ The fear of men is pertinent to this work in relation to More's fear of pain and to his ultimate fate, but it is not a religious fear as such.

² Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*: Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, 546/79-80. cf n51 below. [afeared: afraid; philip: flick of a finger]

³ Roper, *Life of Sir Thomas More*, (ed) E V Hitchcock, London: Early English Text Society, 1935, 6/9-11.

⁴ Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *St Thomas More: Selected Letters*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961, 4. cf Ch 2, n3; Ch 8, n73; Ch 9, n2.

imprisonment. This provides the key to understanding how living his faith and acquiring the practice of virtue provide the unshakeable spiritual foundation that enables him to withstand his fears during captivity. His perseverance and adherence to his faith, even if at times extremely challenged, remains constant. Following his resignation from Henry's service in May 1532, pleading ill-health,⁵ More retired to Chelsea. From now on, aware of the king's capacity for arbitrary behaviour coupled with an intense desire to obtain whatever he wants, More would write, less than a month later on 14th June, to Erasmus intending 'to devote some time to God alone and myself; at long last this wish has come true, Erasmus, thanks to the goodness of the Supreme and Almighty God and the graciousness of a very understanding Sovereign'.⁶ The sole purpose of preparation is to focus on the attainment of heaven. Following his resignation, More's focus is solely directed to the salvation of his soul. In reality, it had ever been thus.

At the time of his resignation as Lord Chancellor in 1532, spiritual preparation for More is primarily concerned with preparation for his own death, which by this time meant possible martyrdom. It is also preparation for imprisonment and possible torture as well as martyrdom. Preparation for death is, in reality, not only a question of considering death; it is a question of considering how to live one's life in this world for as Erasmus observes 'meditation upon death is the meditation upon the true life'.⁷ It is the understanding of life as transitory, a pilgrimage and a journey towards death⁸ and that 'death is the last act of human life, like the final act of a play'.⁹ More's awareness of death and the corollaries of the short, transitory nature of life had been part of his outlook since his youth, but the preparation begun upon his resignation was much more immediate. Preparation is not just about coping, mentally,

⁵ cf John Guy, *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980, 201.

⁶ Rogers, *SL*, 172-73.

⁷ Erasmus, 'De Praeparatione ad Mortem' (Preparing for Death) in *CWE* 70, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 397. cf Ch 7, n205.

⁸ cf Erasmus, *De Praeparatione*, 395; cf *CW*1, *The Last Things*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers and Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 149/23-26; *CW*3.2, *Epigram*, 75; *CW*12, 59/21-26; cf Seneca, *Epistles*, Vol I, (ed) Jeffrey Henderson, (trans) Richard M Gummere, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 1917, *Epistle* 24.20. cf Ch 5, nn14, 36 & 63.

⁹ Erasmus, *De Praeparatione*, from the covering letter to Thomas Boleyn, Earl of Wiltshire and Ormond, 392; cf Introduction, n106: Ch 8, n103. cf Erasmus, 'De conscribendis epistolis' (On the Writing of Letters) in *CWE* 25, (trans) Charles Fantazzi, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1985, 164. For the same idea: cf Seneca, *Epistles*, Vol II, (ed) Jeffrey Henderson, (trans) Richard M Gummere, Cambridge, Mass & London, England Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), 1920, *Epistle* 77.20; Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, (ed & trans) C R Haines, Cambridge, Mass; London, England: Harvard University Press (Loeb edition), (repr & rev) 1930, Bk XII.36. cf n278 below; Introduction, nn57 & 58; Ch 2, nn113 & 114.

psychologically and spiritually with the ordeals that confront him in the next three years, but also to prepare and comfort his family in this hour of trial.

Preparation has to be started before persecution and trials occur. More's comments on such preparation are to be found predominantly, but not exclusively, in his Tower works. More's *Treatise on the Passion*, almost certainly interrupted by his imprisonment, contains a section on Christ's love for the disciples as He approached His arrest and in it More admonishes his readers: 'Lette vs euerye manne therefore in tyme, lerne to loue as wee shoulde, god aboue althyng, and al other thyng for hym'.¹⁰ The vital thing in this sentence is 'in time'. With the passage of the Act of Succession through Parliament during the spring of 1534, it seems unsurprising that More would write 'lette vs euerye manne...in tyme'.

Evidence is also found in his Tower correspondence that More's preparation begins some time before his imprisonment. He insists that he had already perceived the danger of such a possibility and on more than one occasion 'before my comynge hither, both that peryll and all other that myght put my bodie in peryll of death by the refusing of this othe'.¹¹ Further confirmation of More's preparation prior to his imprisonment is found in the letter Margaret writes to Alice Alington following a visit to her father. She quotes her father saying 'I have ere I came here, not left vnbethought nor vnconsidered, the very worst and the vttermost that can by possibilite fall'.¹² Later in the letter, she again quotes her father in a detailed explanation of his previous considerations which allow the reader to glimpse something of his anguish, when he tells her that

'I forgat not in this matter, the counsell of Christ in the gospell, that ere I shoulde beginne to builde this castell for the sauegarde of mine owne soule, I shoulde sit and rekon what the charge wold be. I coumpted, Marget, full surely many a restles night, while my wife sleapt, and went that I had slept to, what peryll was possible for to fall to me, so farre forth that I am sure there can come none aboue'.¹³

¹⁰ CW13, *A Treatise upon the Passion*, (ed) Garry Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 84/24-25; cf CW12, 198/5-32. cf nn127 & 190 below; Introduction, n35; Ch 8, n17. [lerne: learn; shoulde: should; wee: we; althyng: all things]

¹¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/91-93. [bodie: body; othe: oath]

¹² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 516/75-77; cf CW13, *Passion*, 71/16-20; CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, (ed & trans) Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 67/2-6. cf Ch 7, n152. [vnbethought: unbethought; vnconsidered: unconsidered; possibilite: possibility]

¹³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 530/593-600; cf Lk 14.28; cf *Correspondence*, 67/2-6. [forgat: forgot; beginne: begin; castell: castle; rekon: reckon; coumpted: counted; sleapt: slept; went: thought]

Reflecting on this biblical admonition to count the cost before building a castle, More advises that

‘euery man pray still & call vnto god to hold his graciouse hand ouer vs, & kepe away this wrechidnes yf his pleasure be, yet... to remembre & consider, that it is very likely to come, & therfor make his rekenyng & cast his peny worthes before, & euery man & euery woman both, appoynt with goddes helpe in their own mynd beforehand, what thyng they intend to do yf the very worst fall’.¹⁴

Preparation should be grounded in prayer and meditation. However feeble we are – and More notes ‘our faynt & feble fayth’¹⁵ – nevertheless ‘let vs prepare our selfe with prayour’¹⁶ and place all our trust in God’s help and none in our own strength. Such preparation must be made with meditation based on reason and trust in order to render this peril and the fear of it less terrible.¹⁷ ‘Let vs thinke thereon & prepare vs in our mynd therto long before’¹⁸ is a reminder of the importance of frequent meditation before any trial comes.¹⁹ Although the devil attempts to influence us towards sensual emotions, God will work through the Holy Spirit to inspire in us ‘with ayd & help of his grace toward the tother affeccions spirituall’.²⁰ The desire to pray and meditate, to seek good counsel, to use reason to direct our spiritual dispositions correctly ensure that these spiritual exercises can persist in times of trial. However, although reason can guide us to good spiritual dispositions, it is not only necessary to receive them into our soul, but to water them with ‘godly counsayle & contynuall prayour, that they may be habituallly radicate & surely take depe rote therin’²¹ in order to strengthen our hearts against the terror of death in Christ's cause. Here More reveals his full awareness that, in the Tower, as he display his trust in God with his co-operation in the form of prayer and meditation. If prayer and trust are to be maintained in time of trial, such prayer and meditation are essential preparation before any such adversity and temptation appears, for the use of reason and ‘grace workyng with their diligens, engendre & set sure, not a sodayne sleight affeccion of sufferance for godes sake, but by a long contynuaunce, a strong depe

¹⁴ CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, (eds) Louis Martz & Frank Manley, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 195/25-31. The cumbersome phrase ‘make his rekenyng & cast his peny worthes before’ has been paraphrased in modern English as ‘make a personal assessment of the situation’; cf Thomas More, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, (ed) Mary Gottschalk, Princeton, New Jersey: Scepter Publishers, 1998, 194. [wrechidnes: wretchedness; remembre: remember; rekenyng: reckoning; appoynt: arrange, settle]

¹⁵ CW12, 205/3.

¹⁶ CW12, 316/19.

¹⁷ cf eg CW12, 205/10-11; cf CW12, 281/12-13 & 316/1-6.

¹⁸ CW12, 316/20-21; cf CW12, 198/5-32; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 67/2-6. cf n10 above; Ch 7, n152. [theron: thereon, on this subject, on this problem]

¹⁹ cf eg CW12, 205/8-9 & 281/13.

²⁰ CW12, 282/11-12. [affeccion: feeling, state of mind, mental inclination, disposition]

²¹ CW12, 282/15-17. [radicate: rooted, firmly established; rote: root]

rotid habit'.²² More uses the concept of deep roots several times in *A Dialogue of Comfort* to convey the idea of strength and permanence in relation to prayer to God.²³ They will not then be 'like a ride redy to wave with euery wind, not like a rotelesse tre scant vpp an end in a lose hepe of light sand, that will with a blast or two be blowen down'.²⁴ Equally he notes the likely consequences of the failure to make preparation; there will be no roots. Therefore if such a disposition born of meditation and continual prayer is absent, 'the thornes & the breres & the brambles of our worldly substaunce, grow so thicke & spryng vpp so high in the grownd of our hartes, that they strangle... the word of god that was sowen therin'.²⁵ More's reasoning is not yet finished; he describes how if reason alone can motivate a man to endure temporary pain in order to gain either worldly rest or pleasure or to avoid a greater pain, why

'shold not reason growndid vppon the sure fowndacion of fayth, & holpen also forward with ayd of goddes grace,... be mych more able, first to engendre in vs such an effeccion, and after by long & depe meditacion therof, so to contynew that affeccion, that it shall tourne into an habituall fast & depe rotid purpose, of pacient suffryng the paynfull deth of this body here in earth, for the gaynyng of euerlastyng welthy lyfe in hevyn, & avoydyng of euerlastyng paynefull deth in hell'.²⁶

More's fear of pain recurs frequently in his Tower writings and is the only one of his many fears that has received any attention from scholars.²⁷ However, More's fear of pain cannot be entirely separated from his fear of forsaking Christ through denying Him and his faith as a consequence of the pains of torture or the fear of martyrdom. It is his fear of pain that accounts for most, if not all, of the brooding and foreboding menace that overshadow his Tower works. More himself admits that the fear of pain is a fundamental problem in the

²² CW12, 205/12-14; cf CW12, 281/12-13. cf nn24, 26 & 129 below; Ch 7, n152; Ch 9, n52. [workyng: working; diligens: diligence; engendre: conceive, give rise to, generate; contynuaunce: duration, period; rotid: rooted]

²³ cf eg CW12, 205/14 & 282/17 & 294/9 & 303/24. cf Ch 8, nn85-97.

²⁴ CW12, 205/14-17; cf CW12, 240/30-241/4. cf n129 below; Ch 7, n73; Ch 9, n52. [ride: reed; roteless: rootless; tre: tree; scant vpp an end: scarcely upright; blowen: blown]

²⁵ CW12, 241/1-4. More also tells the story of the man who sets so much by his worldly goods, that he fears their loss more than the loss of his life in order to show how important are the attachments and inclinations of our minds; cf CW12, 281/11-18. cf Ch 2, n125.

²⁶ CW12, 293/27-294/12; cf CW12, 205/12-14 & 281/12-13. cf n22 above & n129 below; Ch 9, nn50 & 52. [growndid: grounded; fowndacion: foundation; holpen: helped, aided; effeccion: feeling, state of mind, mental inclination; contynew: continue; tourne: turn; pacient: patient; gaynyng: gaining]

²⁷ cf eg Louis A Schuster, 'THE TOWER: MORE'S GETHSEMANE' in *Moreana*, XIX, 74 (1982) 39-45; Andrew W Taylor: ' "In stede of harme inestimable good": *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More [CCTM]*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 216-238; Kenneth M Flegel, 'Thomas More: Was a sick man beheaded?' in *Moreana*, Vol 13, No 49, 1976, 15-27; James Monti, *The King's Good Servant but God's First*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997, 347-348, 350; Leland Miles (ed), *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1965, Introduction, xxviii; Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1998, 358; Peter Marshall, 'The Last Years' in *CCTM*, 2011, 124-125. All of these works will be mentioned in this chapter.

Tower. Leland Miles suggests that More had written himself into facing pain unflinchingly despite his dread of it.²⁸ In *A Dialogue of Comfort* that 'all the pynch is in the payn'²⁹ and that while wisdom can overcome shame, it 'can neuer so maister payne, but that payne wilbe paynefull spight of all the wit in this world'³⁰ and that 'euery man naturally grogeth at payne & is very loth to come at it'.³¹ Pain is, indeed, 'the sore pynch',³² for 'no man can... in such wise change the nature of payne, that in the having of payne he fele it not, for but yf it be felt yt is perdye no payne'.³³ It is not just painful death in the form of martyrdom.³⁴ When is death not painful?

In all his writings, not just those from the Tower, More uses illness to illustrate the problem of pain, recalling that many men have experienced the 'cut of a knife, the fleshe senged with fire, the pain of sundry sicknes'³⁵ and if they have not, they have heard about such pains from others. In a reply to the statement that natural death is not as painful as a violent one, More points out that 'the deth which men call comonly naturall, ys a violent deth to euery man whom yt fetcheth hens beforce agaynst his will. And that ys euery man, which whan he dieth ys loth to dye, & fayne wold yet live lenger yf he might'.³⁶ In a personal observation, he also notes in a letter to Margaret that 'thoughe it be a paine to die while a man is in health yet see I very fewe that in sickenes dye with ease'.³⁷ Most of those who die naturally 'haue euer one disease & sicknes or other'.³⁸ More explains that the pain experienced by those who die violently is suffered in a shorter time, whereas a natural death can involve as much pain but over a longer period.³⁹ Many would prefer to have a sharper, but shorter, pain than a longer lingering one.⁴⁰ Indeed, many suffer continual pain for more than a day, a pain almost as great as the pain of a violent death which would be over in half an hour.⁴¹ More relates that on their death-bed, many complain, that 'they thinke they fele sharpe knyfes cut atwo their

²⁸ cf Miles, xxxii. cf n132 below.

²⁹ CW12, 292/16-17; cf CW12, 281/11 for pain described as a 'sore pynch'. [pynch: difficulty; payn: pain]

³⁰ CW12, 292/21-22. [maister: master; wilbe: will be; spight of: despite, in spite of; wit: reason]

³¹ CW12, 297/2-3. [grogeth: complain]

³² CW12, 281/10-11. [sore: extreme, harsh, severe, grievous]

³³ CW12, 292/24-293/1. [fele: feel; but yf: unless; perdye: indeed, by God]

³⁴ CW12, 284/21-22.

³⁵ CW1, *Last Things*, 140/20-21. [senged: singed]

³⁶ CW12, 301/22-25; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 143/2-5; CW12, 20/27-30 & 76/18-22. cf Ch 5, n73.

³⁷ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/111-113. cf Ch 5, n82; Ch 7, n202; Ch 9, n67.

³⁸ CW12, 301/28-29. [desease: disease]

³⁹ cf CW12, 301/29-302/6.

⁴⁰ cf CW12, 302/1-6.

⁴¹ cf CW12, 302/7-9.

strynges.⁴² Some crye out & thynke they fele within the brayne pan, their hed prickyd even full of pynnys. And they that lye in a plurisie, thynke that euery tyme they cough, they fele a sharpe swerd swapp them to the hart'.⁴³ The only difference is if a man believes that 'the payne ys greate to haue a knyfe to cut his flesh on the owtside fro the skynne inward, the payne wold be mich lesse yf the knyfe myght begyn on the inside & cut fro the myddes outward'.⁴⁴

More also observes that many men will accept a lesser pain in order to avoid a worse one.⁴⁵ Even in worldly terms More contends that reason will lead a man to suffer pain willingly to effect a cure.⁴⁶ It would therefore be foolish indeed not to suffer a lesser pain to avoid a greater one, especially as by suffering the lesser pain it leads to our greater advantage.⁴⁷ If it is an adequate reason to suffer pain 'for the gaynyng of some worldly rest or pleasure, & for the avoydyng of a nother payne through peradventure more yet endurable but for a short season',⁴⁸ how much more is this true when the consideration is temporal pain and eternal pleasure. More reminds both himself and his reader on the penultimate page of *A Dialogue of Comfort* that the fear of pain by anticipation is a hindrance, but that if 'we wold remembre hell payne... than this short payne be no let at all'.⁴⁹ It is one of More's most vivid comparisons, the temporary pain of this world, especially in form of shameful and painful death, here anticipated in the form of public execution, contrasted with the everlasting pain of hell.⁵⁰

Much of More's fear of pain during his imprisonment was anticipated fear. In letters from the Tower, More tells Margaret not only of his anticipated fear of pain but of his reaction to it. He admits to Margaret that 'I am of nature so thinking from paine, that I am allmost afeard of a philip'⁵¹ and continues a few lines later that 'I founde my selfe (I cry God mercye) very sensuall and my fleshe much more shrinkinge from payne and from death, than me thought it

⁴² CW12, 302/14-15; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 140/11-19. [knyfes: knives; atwo: in two; strynges: heart strings]

⁴³ CW12, 302/14-18; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 140/15-17. [brayne pan: skull; prickyd: pricked; pynnys: pins; plurisie: pleurisy; swapp: strike, smite]

⁴⁴ CW12, 302/10-13; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 140/18-19; Flegel, 22-23. cf Ch 7, n200. [knyfe: knife; owtside: outside; skynne: skin; myddes: middle, midst]

⁴⁵ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 61/1-6.

⁴⁶ CW12, 293/10-23.

⁴⁷ cf CW12, 293/4-10; cf CW12, 296/28-29 & 304/11-14. cf Ch7, nn197, 209, 211 & 223.

⁴⁸ CW12, 293/25-27. [through: through]

⁴⁹ CW12, 319/18. cf Ch 7, n197. [let: hindrance]

⁵⁰ cf Ch 4, nn73-79; Ch 7, n91.

⁵¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 546/79-80. cf n2 above.

the part of a faithfull christen man, in such a case as my conscience gaue me, that in the sauing of my bodie shoulde stande the losse of my soule, yet I thanke our Lorde, that in that conflict, the Spirite had in conclusion the maistry'.⁵² During a visit, he tells Margaret that he perceives himself to be more faint hearted than most.⁵³ Peter Ackroyd correctly states that More's greatest fear was torture and that 'he seems to have had some compulsion to dwell upon all the vagaries of anticipated torment',⁵⁴ while Germain Marc'hadour suggests that although More was never tortured and escaped the horrors of Tyburn, nevertheless 'he suffered them in the agony of apprehension'.⁵⁵ C S Lewis provides another perspective on this problem of anticipated torment. Describing *A Dialogue of Comfort* as 'the noblest of all his vernacular writings',⁵⁶ Lewis quotes from it: 'when we remember the terrour of shamfull & paynfull deth, that poynt so sodaynly puttith vs in obliuion of all that shuld be our comfort' observing that here More demonstrates an unusual precision.⁵⁷ Lewis reminds us how the mind can become numb in the condemned cell, and the terror can return 'sodaynly'. There is no attempt to disguise the situation, or the consequences; More's persistent fear was that through 'paynfull tourmentry, he might peradventure happ for the sharpnes & bitternes of the payne, to forsake our saviour evyn in the myddes, & dye there with his synne, & so be dampnid for euer'.⁵⁸ More admits his anticipated fear when he writes that the 'feare while the payne ys coming, there is all our lett'.⁵⁹ The image More paints of his fear of pain, especially in the forms of torture and martyrdom, reveals him at his most vulnerable; it paints a vivid portrayal of anguish and suffering through apprehension.

Schuster suggests that More was aware that 'a lack of fortitude in the face of pain could prove the chink in his armor'⁶⁰ and that More's vivid imagination pictured the horrors of Tyburn in a 'visceral' manner that 'bombards the entire sensorium head-on and leaves one's nature convulsed'⁶¹ and that his fear increased under the anticipated terror of execution. Although we know that More was never tortured, More did not know. His own fearful

⁵² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/94-100. [sauing: saving; maistry: mastery]

⁵³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 527/507 & 546/68.

⁵⁴ cf Ackroyd, 358.

⁵⁵ cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'Obedient Unto Death: A Key to St Thomas More' in *Spiritual Life*, Vol 7, Fall 1961, 211.

⁵⁶ C S Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962, 177.

⁵⁷ CW12, 281/3-5; Lewis, 178. cf Ch 7, nn52 & 53. [terroure: terror; poynt: point; sodaynly: suddenly; obliuion: oblivion]

⁵⁸ CW12, 297/14-17; cf Matt 10.33; Lk 12.9. cf nn 121, 126 & 157 below. [happ: happen; tourmentry: torments; dampnid: damned]

⁵⁹ CW12, 319/15-16; cf Marshall, 124. [lett: hindrance]

⁶⁰ Schuster, 40.

⁶¹ Schuster, 40, 41.

anxiety over his strength to withstand the horrors and rigours of torture is revealed in his letter to Master Leder that that ‘if euer I shoulde mishappe to receiue the othe (which I truste owr Lorde shall neuer suffer me) ye maye reckon sure that it were expressed and extorted by duresse and harde handeling’.⁶² More expresses a plaintive hope in the next sentence: ‘And I truste bothe that thei will vse no violente forceble waies’.⁶³ Louis Schuster points out that ‘the devil More faced within himself... was the physical fear of disembowlement’ and that his prison writings are ‘the work of man preparing to face preliminary torture in Tower and terminal torture on Tyburn Hill’.⁶⁴ Schuster also suggests that it is unlikely that More had not witnessed executions in their various forms and that his fearful imaginings were based on experience.⁶⁵ More’s fear of pain can be viewed as a variant on his fear of hell.

More’s reference to ‘violente forceble waies’ in his letter to Master Leder is followed by a statement of trust that ‘if thei woulde, God woulde of his grace and the rather a greate deale thorowe goode folkes praiours giue me strength to stande’.⁶⁶ As he does so frequently, More contrasts his fear with hope and trust. His letter continues with a Latin quotation from St Paul, a verse that is one of More’s favourites: *Fidelis Deus qui non patitur vos tentari supra id quod potestis ferre, sed dat cum tentatione prouentum vt possitis sustinere*.⁶⁷ If a man acts on St Paul’s words and confesses his faith but afterwards denies Christ through the severity of pain, More is clear that God would give him grace to repent for he had been ready to suffer for Christ although pain proved more than he could endure.⁶⁸ More rather dryly observes ‘as though the more payne that a man takith for goddes sake, the worse wold god be to hym’.⁶⁹ While moderate fear is necessary and a blessing, the necessity of vigilance is confirmed in St

⁶² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/13-16. cf Ch 2, n154; Ch 8, nn16 & 68; Ch 9, n182. [mishappe: have the misfortune; receiue: receive; owr: our; reckon: reckon; handeling: handling]

⁶³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/16-17. cf n66 below; Ch 8, nn16, & 68; Ch9, n182. [vse: use; violente forceble waies: torture]

⁶⁴ Schuster, 40.

⁶⁵ cf Schuster, 41-42. There appears to be no direct record of More’s attending any execution. Stapleton says that More spoke to Dudley as he was being led to execution; but he does not say explicitly that More witnessed Dudley’s death, even if it is a reasonable assumption to think that he did. Edmund Dudley and Richard Empson were executed in 1510 by Henry VIII; they had been tax collectors under Henry VII. cf Thomas Stapleton, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1966, 25; cf also CW12, 315/12-20.

⁶⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/17-20. cf Ch8, n16. [thorowe: through; folkes: folks’; praiours: prayers]

⁶⁷ 1 Cor 10.13: And God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it. This verse occurs at least eleven times in More’s works, seven of which are found in the Tower writings, including the letter to Master Leder. The examples from the Tower are CW12, 247/17-21 & 248/13-14 & 278/25-279/2; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 69/7-71/3 & 105/6-8; CW14, *Catena*, 633/4-6.

⁶⁸ cf CW12, 298/2-6.

⁶⁹ CW12, 29/6-8. cf n135 below.

Paul's words 'he that standeth, let hym loke that he fall not.'⁷⁰ The importance of moderate fear is to counter the lurking danger, that of presumption. More explains, noting that moderate fear counteracts the danger that lurks in 'waxyng ouer bold & setting the thyng ouer light, they might peradventure mishapp to fall in therto'.⁷¹ However, moderate fear, while good, must remain moderate, for it also entails a risk: 'yet is ouer mich fere perillouse, & draweth toward the mistrust of godes graciouse helpe'.⁷² Fear must be balanced between hope and trust,⁷³ but the most important thing to fear is the 'losse of godes favour'.⁷⁴ More lived this realization through trust in God and distrust of himself.

More's reasoning about pain is also connected with another motif. It is both his realization and his acceptance that Christ suffered and that the servant is not above the master⁷⁵ and therefore we should not expect to reach heaven without suffering or pain, in whatever form this occurs. The biblical injunction that 'the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord' appears to have been a favourite of More's.⁷⁶ It is recorded by Roper that he would tell his wife and children, when they were ill or troubled 'We may not looke at our pleasure to goe to heaven in fetherbeds: it is not the way, for our lord himself went thither with greate payne and by many tribulacions, which was the path wherein he walked thither; for the seruaunt may not looke to be in better case then his master'.⁷⁷ While there is no record of exactly when More discovered this idea, he certainly found it as a young man in Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, in which he points out that there will be many obstacles in the way of pursuing virtue and that this should be no surprise, 'but rathir how gret a wondre were this if onli to y^e amonge mortal men the waye laye open to heuen with owt swet'.⁷⁸ More's translation of the third of Pico's *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle* spells this out:

Considre well that foly it is and vaine
To loke for heuin with plesure and delight

⁷⁰ cf Prov 28.14; 1 Cor 10.12; cf CW12, 162/4-6. cf Ch 1, nn83 & 104; Ch 2, n8; Ch 4, nn144 & 145.

⁷¹ CW12, 170/12-13. [waxyng: growing, becoming; bold: audacious, presumptuous, shameless; setting: taking; ouer light: too lightly; mishapp: have the misfortune]

⁷² CW12, 162/6-7.

⁷³ CW12, 198/19-21.

⁷⁴ CW12, 170/14.

⁷⁵ cf Matt 10.24; cf Lk 6.40; Jn 13.16. This idea is found first in More's translation of Pico's *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle*, cf CW1, 104/7-13 & 373; it is also found at CW12, 292/2-3; CW13, *Passion*, 48/9-11 & 48/14-16 & 101/7-8 & 102/4-6 & 110/24-26 & 110/30-31 & 111/28-30 as well as in his polemical work *Responsio ad Lutherum*, (ed) John Headley, (trans) Sr Scholastica Mandeville, New Haven and London Yale University Press, 1969, CW5, 287/15-16. cf nn77 & 80 below; Ch 4, n92.

⁷⁶ Matt 10.24. cf n76 above; n80 below.

⁷⁷ Roper, 26/23-27/3. cf Ch 4, n93. [fetherbeds: featherbeds]

⁷⁸ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 77/27-78/1. [rathir: rather; wondre: wonder; onli: only; with owt: without; swet: sweat]

Sith crist our lord and souereyne captaine
Ascended neur but by manly fight
And bittir passion: then were hit no right
That any seruaunt / ye will your selfe recorde /
Shuld stoned in bettir condition then his lorde.⁷⁹

In *The Last Things*, More paraphrases Christ's saying describing the way to heaven as 'straite & aspre or painful'⁸⁰ and this theme is reflected in his Tower prayer, *A Godly Meditation*, in which he asks for the grace 'to walke the narrow way that ledeth to life, to bere the crosse with christ'.⁸¹ More also repeats in both his devotional and polemical writings Christ's words that 'my yoke is sweet and my burden light',⁸² and asks how these two sayings can be reconciled. The ease of yoke and burden that Christ lays upon his followers is not bodily ease, but in 'the comfort & gladnes y^t the soule conceiueth therof, rising into the loue of oure lord & hope of his glory to come, so tempereth & ouermastreth the bitternes of the grief, y^t it maketh the very labor easy; y^e sowernes very swete, & the verye payne pleasant'.⁸³ It is the hope that looks beyond this world to the everlasting joy of heaven.

There is no easy way to heaven; there is only the necessity of walking the royal road of the cross, in the footsteps of Christ.⁸⁴ This road reflects that both the desire for heaven and the effort required in order to obtain it is arduous. Christ teaches 'yf any man wilbe my disciple let hym lerne at me to do as I haue done, take his crosse of tribulacion vppon his bake & folow me'.⁸⁵ More asks 'who can for very shame desire to entre into the kyngdom of Christ with ease, whan hym selfe entrid not into his own without payne'?⁸⁶ He describes the burdens of the apostles in his polemical writings as including 'watchynge, fastyng, prayeng, prechyng, walkyng, hunger, thurst, colde, & hete, betyng, scourging, prysonement, paynfull & shamfull

⁷⁹ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Rules*, 104/7-13; cf CW1, 373 for the accurate translation: The third rule: let him remember that it is foolish to think one can reach heaven except by such a battle* as this, just as our head, Christ, did not ascend to heaven except through the cross, and the condition of a servant should not be better than that of his lord. [*The battle is described in Rule 1 and is against 'the world, the flesh and the devil' and includes adversity, grief, difficulties and labours; CW1, 373.] More alters Pico's list slightly writing: 'Sorow / aduersite / labour / greife / and payne; cf CW1, *Twelve Rules*, 103/21-27. [crist: Christ; souereyne: sovereign; neur: never; your selfe: yourself; stoned: stand; bettir: better]

⁸⁰ CW1, *Last Things*, 133/29-30; cf Matt 7.13-14; Lk 13.24. cf Ch 4, n42.

⁸¹ CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 226/28-29; Matt 7.14; cf Lk 13.24; cf CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/18-20; CW1, *Last Things*, 133/29-30. cf Ch 3, n105; Ch 4, n44.

⁸² CW1, *Last Things*, 133/31-32; cf Matt 11.30; cf CW6, 106/17-19; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 547/3-5.

⁸³ CW1, *Last Things*, 134/1-5; cf CW6, 106/17-23; CW5, 415/27-30. [conceiueth: conceives; ouermastreth: overcomes; sowernes: sourness; verye: true, actual]

⁸⁴ cf CW12, 311/19-20; cf 1 Jn 2.6.

⁸⁵ CW12, 43/11-12; cf CW13, *Passion*, 48/14-16; cf Matt 16.24 & Lk 14.27; cf Lk 9.23. cf Ch 7, n126. [bake: back]

⁸⁶ CW12, 311/26-28; cf CW12, 43/7-9; CW13, *Passion*, 48/12. [entre: enter; kyngdom: kingdom; entrid: entered]

death'.⁸⁷ This list of trials finds a parallel in his Tower works and recounts St Paul's beatings, stonings and shipwrecks, and any number of other dangers.⁸⁸ As Christ did not enter His own kingdom without pain, he did not want his followers to be slothful in obtaining this precious gift; More contends that God did not want 'to gyue so great a gifte to euery slouthfull iauell that nothyng dyd sette therby'.⁸⁹ After all, St Paul exhorts us to run in order to obtain this prize and More asks how anyone will arrive in heaven without taking a step towards it?⁹⁰

This rejection of an easy way heaven without any penance or tribulation leads More to counsel against following any such advice 'lest that way be not sure'.⁹¹ Some years before his imprisonment he writes that the ease of Christ's yoke does not deliver men 'from the laws of the chyrch, or from any good temporall lawes eyther, in to a lewde lyberte of slouthfull rest. For that were not an easy yoke, but a pullyng of the hed out of y^e yoke'.⁹²

God sends men into the world to work, in whatever form that work may come.⁹³ However, the all too human desire to play rather than to work is found in his earliest recorded writing, the *Pageant Verses*, in which Chylhdhod speaks that 'in play is all my mynde'⁹⁴ and his wish is that his hateful books be reduced to powder by fire 'than might I lede my lyfe alwayes in play'.⁹⁵ The child's hedonism continues into Manhod who delights 'to hunt and hawke',⁹⁶ and More recognizes at an early age that the capacity for amusement can be misused. In his expansion of Pico's *Twelve Properties of a Lover*, More writes that the lover of God should, by prayer and meditation, always have Him in mind and leave others to 'play, reuell, syng, and dawnce'⁹⁷ should never allow the delight of any 'erthly Ioy, disport, or vaine plesaunce ... remoue his ardent mynde from god his heuinly loue'.⁹⁸ In his Tower work, *De Tristitia*

⁸⁷ CW6, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, (eds) Thomas M C Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour and Richard C Marius, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, 106/14-17. [prechyng: preaching; thirst: thirst; hete: heat; betyng: beating; prysonement: imprisonment]

⁸⁸ cf CW12, 310/19-29; 1 Cor 11.25-27.

⁸⁹ CW13, *Passion*, 48/5-7. [slouthfull: slothful; iauell: rascal; nothyng dyd sette therby: had no esteem for]

⁹⁰ 1 Cor 9.24-25; cf CW12, 41/13-16.

⁹¹ CW12, 99/15; cf CW12, 99/8-20.

⁹² CW6, 106/26-29. [chyrch: church; lyberte: liberty; pullyng: pulling]

⁹³ cf CW11, *The Answer to a Poisoned Book*, (eds) Stephen Merriam Foley and Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985, 33/24, 29-31. Along with manual labour, More also includes 'one good bysines or other'.

⁹⁴ CW1, *English Poems*, 3/12. [chylhdhod: childhood]

⁹⁵ CW1, *English Poems*, 3/17.

⁹⁶ CW1, *English Poems*, 3/27. [manhod: manhood]

⁹⁷ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Properties of a Lover*, 118/24; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 171/6-8. cf Ch 1, n119; Ch 8, n81. [reuell: revel; syng: sing; dawnce: dance]

⁹⁸ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Properties*, 118/25-27; cf CW1, 118/21-27. cf Ch 1, n194. [erthly: earthly; disport: entertainment; vaine: foolish, worthless; plesaunce: pleasure; remoue: remove; heuinly: heavenly]

Christi, More makes an interestingly similar comment. He writes that ‘Christ tells us to stay awake, but not for cards and dice, not for rowdy parties and drunken brawls, not for wine and women, but for prayer’.⁹⁹ However More, as a realist, recognizes the necessity of some recreation, albeit with some reluctance. Rest and recreation ‘shold be but as a sawse’¹⁰⁰ with the intention of bringing refreshment to our weary bodies and to restore our courage.¹⁰¹ It should be moderate with the purpose of strengthening our stomach for work and the sauce must not replace the meat.¹⁰² For it is ‘surely a very madde ordered lyfe that hath but lytle tyme bestowed in any frute full bysynesse, and all the substaunce idely spent in playe’.¹⁰³ Sloth is a dangerous sin for it contains ‘no notable act therin’.¹⁰⁴

A merry or foolish tale should not be needed to refresh us, for talking of heaven should be such a delight whereas now ‘in talkyng awhile therof, men wax almost werye, & as though to here of hevyn were an hevvy burdeyne’.¹⁰⁵ In a recognition of man’s capacity for distraction, More writes of the necessity to pray that conversation on the joys of heaven may provide more comfort in half an hour than worldly recreation would in a year.¹⁰⁶ While some recreation is lawful in tribulation, *A Dialogue of Comfort* portrays More’s deepest desires and reveal how his prayers reflect his exhortation that: ‘our chiefe comfort must be of god, & that with hym we must begyn, & with hym contynew, & with hym end also’.¹⁰⁷ This reflects his advice at the beginning of the same work that a ‘speciall cause of comfort, that by the pacient suffraunce of their tribulacion, they shall attayne his favour, & for their payne receive reward at his hand in heven’,¹⁰⁸ a comfort which can be found in ‘the graciouse help & ayd of god, to move styre and gide vs forward, in the referring all our gostly comfort, yee and our worldly comfort to, all vnto that heavenly end’.¹⁰⁹ In *A Godly Meditation* written in the Tower, More contrasts the realistic need for some relaxation and refreshment with the primary goal of

⁹⁹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 171/6-9. cf n98 above; Ch 8, n81.

¹⁰⁰ CW11, 33/31-32; cf CW12, 84/25-26. [sawse: sauce]

¹⁰¹ cf CW11, 33/26-29; cf CW12, 82/9-16.

¹⁰² cf CW11, 33/32-34; cf CW12, 84/26.

¹⁰³ CW11, 34/3-5. cf Ch 8, n81. [madde ordered: madly arranged; lytle: little; bysynesse: activity, occupation; substaunce: essential part; idely: idly]

¹⁰⁴ CW1, *Last Things*, 181/32; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 182/15-18. cf Ch 2, nn104, 208, 215 & 303-305.

¹⁰⁵ CW12, 83/19-21; cf CW12 84/18-22: ‘I can no more saye, but he that can not long endure to hold vpp his hedd & here talkyng of hevyn except he be now & than betwene (as though hevyn were hevynes) refreshid with a folish mery tale, there is none other remedy, but you most let hym haue yt...’ [awhil: awhile; wax: become; werye: weary; here: hear; burdeyne: burden]

¹⁰⁶ cf CW12, 84/26-85/2.

¹⁰⁷ CW12, 83/10-11; cf Jn 16.24; CW12, 15/24-16/2. cf Ch 7, n162; Ch 8, nn22-23; Ch 9, n72.

¹⁰⁸ CW12, 10/22-24. cf Ch 7, n97; Ch 8, n36. [attayne: attain]

¹⁰⁹ CW12, 10/27-29. cf Ch 7, n79. [styre: stir, incite, provoke, urge; gide: guide; gostly: spiritual, ghostly; yee: yea]

'winning Christ'. He desires to forgo 'vayne confabulations, To estew light folysch myrth & gladnesse', Recreationys not necessary, to cutt off / of worldely substauns frendys libertie life and all, to sett the losse at right nowght for the wynnyng of christ'.¹¹⁰

Another important fear with which More wrestles in the Tower is his fear of forsaking the faith and losing his soul in the process. This fear reveals his perception of his own weakness. However, this realization of his own human weakness allows More to use St Peter as an exemplar in overcoming it. St Peter and Thomas More were very different characters. St Peter displays a rash impetuosity on several occasions,¹¹¹ while More displays a lawyer-like caution in his resistance to the king. Nevertheless More employs St Peter to illustrate the importance of absolute trust in God and His generous forgiveness of sin in order to deal with his own frailties and fears. More acknowledges the ease with which St Peter 'with a blast of winde, began to sinke for his faint faith'.¹¹² Trust in God prevails and More provides a defiant answer to fear: 'Mistruste him, Megge, wil I not, though I feale me faint, yea, and though I shoulde fele my feare euen at poynt to ouerthrowe me to, yet shall I... doe as he [Peter] did, call vpon Christ and praye him to helpe'.¹¹³ However, his trust in God is unshakeable as he writes: 'And if so were that I wist well now, that I should faint and fall, and for feare swere here after, yet wolde I wish to take harme by the refusing first, for so should I haue the better hope for grace to rise againe'.¹¹⁴ He states that God will keep him from drowning and 'if he suffer me to play S. Peter ferther, and to fall full to the grownd, and swere and forsware too... yet after shall I trust that his goodnes will cast vpon me his tender piteous eie, as he did vpon S. Peter, and make me stande vp againe and confesse the trouth of my conscience afresh, and abide the shame and the harme here of mine owne faulte'.¹¹⁵ As Germain Marc'hadour has noted, More took St Peter very much to heart during his imprisonment.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 227/11-16. [vayne confabulations: worthless, frivolous conversations; estew: eschew, avoid; light: frivolous, trivial; myrth: mirth; recreationys: recreations; substauns: possessions, worldly goods; frendys: friends; sett: value; nowght: nought]

¹¹¹ cf CW13, *Passion*, 101/20-27 & 106/31-107/19.

¹¹² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 531/642-643; cf Matt 14.30; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 531/640-653 for this paragraph.

¹¹³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 531/640-645; cf Matt 26.69-75; Lk 22.56-62. cf Ch 8, n74. [feale: feel; euen: even; ouerthrowe: overthrow; doe: do]

¹¹⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 530/614-618. [wist: know, realize]

¹¹⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 531/646-653. [forsware: forswear; eie: eye]

¹¹⁶ cf Marc'hadour, *Obedient Unto Death*, 209. cf Ch 2, n326; Ch 9, n173.

In More's understanding, forsaking the faith leads to hell and eternal damnation,¹¹⁷ and this fundamental fear appears throughout both his polemical and Tower works. The references in the polemical works are concerned with forsaking any truth of Christ's faith,¹¹⁸ the denial of Christ with words,¹¹⁹ even if done through fear¹²⁰ and worshipping another faith which More describes as 'a playne renayng of Crystys fayth,... though they dyd it onely with theyr body for fere, and thought the contrary with theyr harte'.¹²¹ For More this is confirmed by Christ's words that 'whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel shall save it'.¹²²

The fundamental fear of forsaking the faith and the resulting danger to the soul is heightened if More's fear of pain and his perception of his own weakness are taken into account. It is therefore unsurprising to find that it features on several occasions in the *Dialogue of Comfort*, as well as his other Tower works.¹²³ More reminds his readers that Christ tells his followers that 'euery man shuld vppon payne of dampnacion, openly confesse his fayth',¹²⁴ and this is required whatever the cost: that 'we be bounden to abyde all sorow & shamfull dethe & all martyrdom vpon payne of perpetuall damnacyon for the professyon of our fayth'.¹²⁵ If we forsake Him, He will deny us before 'his father & all his holy company of hevyn'.¹²⁶ More claims that this attitude should be the habitual mind of every man and woman. This habitual attitude to confess the faith in all circumstances is one not only that 'euery christen man and

¹¹⁷ CW12, 237/11-19, cf Matt 16.26; CW12, 198/5-7 & 247/4-10 & 279/3-6 & 280/9-12 & 296/26-27 & 302/25-303/5 & 319/7-8; cf eg Taylor, *CCTM*, 228-231; Giovanni Santinello, 'Thomas More's *Expositio Passionis*' in *Essential Articles for the Study of Thomas More*, (eds) Richard S Sylvester and G P Marc'hadour, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977, 461; Monti, 351-352.

¹¹⁸ cf CW6, 420/31-421/3.

¹¹⁹ cf CW8, *The Confutation of Tyndale*, (eds) Louis A Schuster, Richard C Marius, James P Lusardi and Richard J Schoeck, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1973, 543/5-7 & 545/1-3 & 557/15-18. For More's comments on the wickedness of giving assent to an evil council; cf CW 13, 74/7-9 & 75/22-25. More does not use the word 'silence' in his Tower works, although his letters attest to his refusal to take the oath; cf eg Rogers, *Correspondence*, to Meg: 502/14-16; 503/26; 503/32-33; 504/64-65; 505/75; 521/246; 526/470; 527/510; 542/81; 556/29-30; 558/121; to Dr Nicholas Wilson: 536/126-127; to Master Leder: 549/12-16.

¹²⁰ For More's examples for denying Christ, cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 521/253-263 & 527/495-504 CW8, 544/33-36: this refers specifically to 'puttyng away' the fear of death. For other comments on death: for More's lack of fear, cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/108-109; for his overcoming the thought of violent death, cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/124-125; cf Matt 10.33; Lk 12.9. cf n157 below.

¹²¹ CW6, 190/32-34; cf Matt 10.33; Lk 9.26; Lk 12.9; 2 Tim 2.12; CW8, 542/37-543/5; CW12, 297/17-19 & 298/18-24. cf n58 above; nn126 & 156 below. [renayng: renouncing, abjuring; Crystys: Christ's]

¹²² Mk 8.35: cf CW8, 557/17-18; cf Matt 16.25: CW14, *De Tristitia*, 485/9-487/1.

¹²³ cf eg CW12, 280/11-13 & 302/19-21ff & 317/6-11. For More's other Tower Works, cf eg CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/9-23; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 59/1-3. For his letters, cf eg Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/94-100 & 558/100-104.

¹²⁴ CW12, 198/6-7 & 247/6-7; cf Matt 10.32-33; Mk 8.38; Lk 12.9. [dampnacion: damnation]

¹²⁵ CW6, 106/10-12. cf nn58 & 108 above; n126 below. [damnacyon: damnation]

¹²⁶ CW12, 247/9-10; cf Matt 10.33; Lk 12.9; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 61/9-10. This also occurs in his polemical works: cf CW6, 190/35-191/1; CW8, 543/5-8 & 545/1-3.

woman must nedes haue' but also that 'euery curat shuld often counsayle all his parishons, and euery man & woman their seruauntes & their children, evyn begynnyng in their tender youth, to know this poynt and thinke theron,...'¹²⁷ More's surprising inclusion of children, even 'in their tender youth', in this exhortation makes it chilling in its comprehensiveness, but it ends with hope that 'the goodnes of god shall not fayle so to aspire the grace of his holy sprite into their hartes, in reward of that vertuose diligence, that thorow such actuall meditacion he shall conserue them in such a sure habit of spirituall faythfull strength, that all the devilles in hell with all the wrestlyng that they can make, shall neuer be hable to wrest it out of their hart'.¹²⁸ Such 'sure habit of spirituall faythfull strength' requires consistency in prayer; the habit is formed and ingrained through the familiarity of repetition. Such practice becomes 'a strong depe rotid habit, not like a ride redy to wave with euery wind'.¹²⁹ So once again, More recommends the necessity of preparation along with prayer and meditation in order to remain faithful in all circumstances. However, if they shrink from the pain to which their imagination gives rise, they should remember Christ's pain and torment and pray for grace that if persecution comes, they will have the strength to stand, and while fearing that they may fall, should persevere in the hope and purpose of standing.¹³⁰ More describes the human reluctance to suffer and die for Christ as 'a wondrefull shame'¹³¹ and contrasts the fear of temporal death which is the cause of such unwillingness with Christ who 'willyngly suffred so paynefull deth, rather than he wold forsake vs, considering that beside that, he shall for our suffryng so highly reward vs with euerlastyng welth'.¹³² Here again More employs the contrast of short pain and physical death with the reward of everlasting happiness.

He rejects the possibility of a man saving himself from pain by denying Christ and repenting afterwards. He describes this as 'a three fotid stole... fantastically feare, false fayth, false

¹²⁷ CW12, 198/21-22; 198/22-25. cf n10 above. [curat: curate; parishons: parishoners]

¹²⁸ CW12, 198/27-32. cf Ch 9, n89. [fayle: fail; vertuose: virtuous; conserue: conserve; wrestlyng: wrestling; hable: able; wrest: extract, take by force]

¹²⁹ CW12, 205/14-15. cf nn22, 24 & 26 above.

¹³⁰ cf CW12, 198/10-21; cf 1 Cor 10.12-13, St Paul is referring to temptation. More regards persecution as the most dangerous temptation and the 'playne open fight' of the devil, cf CW12, 100/19-20. Persecution as martyrdom is the 'most perillouse' for other lesser persecutions only involve temptations and tribulations connected to worldly attractions involving grief and pain, encouraging complaints, impatience and blasphemy. At its extreme, persecution for the faith of Christ offers death and deliverance from death and pain only at the expense of denying Christ; cf CW12, 201/3-11.

¹³¹ CW12, 313/22. [wondrefull: wonderful]

¹³² CW12, 313/23-26; cf eg CW12, 198/14-17 & 314/14-16; CW1, Pico's *Twelve Properties*, The fourth and fifth properties, 115/19-116/17. cf Ch 9, nn7, 9 & 88. [suffred: suffered]

flatteryng hope'.¹³³ It is the fantastical fear 'as though the more payne that a man takith for goddes sake, the worse wold god be to hym'¹³⁴ and More is adamant that God will not allow a man to be tempted above what he can bear.¹³⁵ It is a false faith for it is a feigned faith for a man to say to God that he believes Him, trusts Him and loves Him but will not prove that he does by doing so before the world. It is also a false flattering hope when a man forsakes his faith through fear for it is forbidden 'by the mowth of god vppon the payne of eternall deth',¹³⁶ and to offend in the hope of forgiveness 'is a very false pestilent hope, wherwith a man flatterith hym selfe toward his own distruccion'.¹³⁷

More also examines and rejects the possibility in time of persecution of keeping goods, position and a part of the faith. More deals with the problem of losing goods easily. A persecutor cannot take goods without God's sufferance, just as the devil needed God's consent to take Job's.¹³⁸ It is not only a persecutor who can take goods for death will remove them;¹³⁹ indeed 'many a man is for his riches slayne'.¹⁴⁰ More's advice with regard to riches is biblical: 'hord not vpp your tresures in earth, where the rust & the mothe fret yt out, & where theves dig it out & stele it away. But hord vpp your tresures in hevyn, where neyther the rust & the mothe fret them out, & where thevis dig them not owt, & stele them away, for where as is thy tresour there is thyne hart to'.¹⁴¹ The question of losing worldly position or honour is also dealt with easily. Position can take years to acquire¹⁴² and can be lost either by a 'chaunge of their masters mynd',¹⁴³ or by death.¹⁴⁴ More describes position and riches as 'the short wynter day of worldly welth & prosperite',¹⁴⁵ while honour is merely the opinion of others and no more than 'a blast of a nother mans mouth'.¹⁴⁶ More's practical attitude to the loss of goods is demonstrated in a statement of complete hope and confidence found in *A*

¹³³ CW12, 297/23-26. cf nn124-126 above; n149 below. [fotid: footed; fantastical: fantastical; flatteryng: flattering]

¹³⁴ CW12, 298/6-8.

¹³⁵ cf CW12, 247/19-20 & 279/1; cf 1 Cor 10.13.

¹³⁶ CW12, 298/30-299/1; cf Matt 10.32-33; Lk 12.8-9. cf nn 121 & 124-125 above. [mowth: mouth]

¹³⁷ CW12, 299/3-5. cf nn121 & 124 above. [wherwith: through which, by which; distruccion: destruction]

¹³⁸ cf CW12, 235/21-22; Job 1.12.

¹³⁹ cf CW12, 287/11-15; cf CW12, 22/9-11 & 233/15-20.

¹⁴⁰ CW12, 210/16-17; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 165/7-9; CW12, 287/11-14. [richesse: riches]

¹⁴¹ CW12, 239/21-240/2; cf Matt 6.19-21; cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'Neither the Rust nor the Moth' in *Moreana*, Vol 2, No 6, 1965, 56-58; Germain Marc'hadour, 'St Thomas More' in *The Month*, New Series No 29, Jan-Jun 1963, 80-81. cf Ch 3, n16. [hord: hoard; tresures: treasures; fret yt out: gnaw it away, eat, devour; theves, thevis: thieves; owt: out]

¹⁴² cf CW12, 222/20-25.

¹⁴³ CW12, 222/7. [chaunge: change]

¹⁴⁴ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 155/36-156/4.

¹⁴⁵ CW12, 158/7-8. [wynter: winter; prosperite: prosperity]

¹⁴⁶ CW12, 212/5. cf Ch 2, n139.

Dialogue of Comfort: 'I pray god give me the grace... that I neuer for any good or substaunce of this wrechid worlde, forsake my fayth toward god, neyther in hart nor tong, as I trust in his grete goodnes I neuer shall'.¹⁴⁷ Such concepts are but a reflection of his earliest writings: 'Pleasures, praise, homage, all things quickly disappear – except the love of God, which endures forever'.¹⁴⁸

The question of keeping part of the faith in time of persecution is posed: is it possible not to be 'compellid vtterly to forsake christ, nor all the whole christen fayth, but onely some such partes therof ... [and] not be lettid to prayse christ also, & to call hym a good man, & worship hym and serve hym to'?¹⁴⁹ More replies with a resounding 'no'.¹⁵⁰ It is this question that prompts More to state unequivocally that there can be no meeting point between good and evil, between Christ and Belial and that all Christ's commandments must be obeyed.¹⁵¹ But is it possible to call Christ just a good man? More scorns such an interpretation: 'For surely yf he were not god he were no good man neyther for he playnely said he was god'.¹⁵² More previously noted the difference between the effects of the works of God and those of the devil, illustrating that God's works produce good results while the consequences of the devil's activities result in nothing more than illusion.¹⁵³ He explains that while 'christ & his sayntes haue their miracles alway tendyng to fruite & profit, the devill & his wiches & necromancers all their wonderfull workes, draw to no frutfull end, but to a frutles ostentacion & shew, as it were a iugeler that wold for a shew before the people, play maistreys at a

¹⁴⁷ CW12, 237/24-28. [tong: tongue]

¹⁴⁸ cf CW1, *English Poems*, 6/108-7/120; CW3.2, *Latin Poems*, (eds) Clarence H Miller, Leicester Bradner, Charles A Lynch and Revilo P Oliver, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984, No 272, 292-293. cf Ch 2, n106. This quotation (CW1, *English Poems*, 6/115-116; CW3.2, 292/13-14) comes from the ninth and last verse, entitled 'The Poet', describing a series of Pageants painted on cloth for Sir John More's house (Thomas' father). The exact date of the verses is unknown, but thought to be either between or 1492-1494 or 1496-1501, making them the earliest of More's extant works, cf CW1, Introduction, xvii-xviii.

¹⁴⁹ CW12, 229/25-30. cf nn121 & 133 above. [compellid: compelled; lettid: hindered]

¹⁵⁰ cf Monti, 346. He gives the same interpretation.

¹⁵¹ cf 2 Cor 6.15; CW12, 230/8. cf n178 below; Ch 9, n218.

¹⁵² CW12, 230/27-28. The biblical verses in which Christ applies God's name to Himself thus claiming divinity [Matt 26.63-64; Mk 15.62; Lk 23.70] are based on Exodus 3.14: 'God said to Moses: I am who am', although More does not use any of these verses. However, More does use 'Jesus said to them: Amen, amen I say unto you, before Abraham was made, I am'; cf Jn 8.58; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 185/3-5 & 537/11-12. In both his polemical works and in *De Tristitia Christi*, More also uses Christ's words 'I and the Father are one'; cf Jn 10.30; cf CW6, 155/25-27; CW8, 293/19-20; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 185/3-4; and in CW11, 189/6 quoting the Masker. More also uses 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life'; cf Jn 14.6; cf CW1, Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 89/3-4; CW8, 98/7-8 & 628/4-6 & 1023/18-20 & 1029/2-3; CW11, 134/20-21. Two other verses that More does not seem to have used are Jn 10.33: 'The Jews answered him: For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy: and because that you, being a man, makest thyself God', and Jn 14.9: 'he that seeth me seeth the Father also'. [playnely: plainly]

¹⁵³ cf eg CW12, 136/1-8. cf Ch 3, n8.

fest'.¹⁵⁴ This defence of Christ as the Second Person of the Trinity displays a slightly different angle of reasons to believe the gospel to that found in Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*. Pico spells out the reasons in details including the witness of the martyrs, the words proclaimed by the apostles and the evidence of miracles, before amplifying the logic of this statement: 'But a far gretter madnes ys hit if thou dowt not but that the gospell ys trew: to lyue then as though thou doutest not but that hit were fals'.¹⁵⁵

More's comprehensive rejection of the possibility of even a partial denial of the faith while adhering to the remainder in times of persecution is connected with Christ's words that 'he that denyeth me before the worlde I wyll denye hym before my father in heuyn'.¹⁵⁶ Christ's demand is absolute and requires total fidelity from his followers; it does not allow for any denial, even partially or even for fear, on pain of eternal damnation.¹⁵⁷ This is the foundation of More's absolutism and it is intimately connected to the very foundations of his faith and its practice.¹⁵⁸ Absolutism in More's thinking is his total acceptance of placing God's claims first and living in total conformity with all God's commands at all times. The faith is all and God demands all. This is More's personal response to Christ's requirement is that we love him above all other and are prepared to abandon absolutely everything for Him.¹⁵⁹ More's absolutism should also be seen in the context of his fear of pain and his determination to remain faithful to Christ. His exhortation on the importance of preparation for every person is likewise another aspect of his absolutism.

In *A Dialogue of Comfort* More's absolutism becomes a leitmotiv and his stance is presented in clear and indeed frightening terms. More's absolutism is not a new attitude discovered in the Tower, but rather a familiar one presented afresh, even if his altered circumstances change or deepen a particular perspective. With absolutism this is true and it is found in his

¹⁵⁴ CW12, 136/4-8. [sayntes: saints; tendyng: tending; fruite: fruit; wiches: witches; frutfull: fruitful; frutles: fruitless; ostentacion: ostentation; shew: show; play maistreys: perform conjuring feats or magic tricks; iugeler: juggler]

¹⁵⁵ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/3-5. cf Ch 4, n41; Ch 7, n189.

¹⁵⁶ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 61/9-10; cf Matt 10.33. This verse is also found in More's polemical works, cf CW6, 190/35-191/1; CW8, 543/6-8 & 545/1-3. More also uses the similar verse found in Lk 12.9: 'But he that shall deny me before men shall be denied before the angels of God'. This verse is found at CW6, 421/1-3, CW8, 544/22-24 & 557/15-17; CW12, 198/6 & 247/8-10. A similar verse is found at Mk 8.38: 'For he that shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation: the Son of man also will be ashamed of him, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels', but More does not appear to have used this verse. cf nn58, 121 & 126 above; cf Ch 4, n34.

¹⁵⁷ cf CW6, 190/33-34; CW12, 255/2-7; cf Matt 10.33; Lk 12.9. cf nn58, 120, 121 & 126 above.

¹⁵⁸ The words absolutism and absolutist are my own. Purism and purist could also be used in their stead.

¹⁵⁹ cf Lk 14.26-27, 33; CW12, 174/18-175/6; cf CW8, 968/16-25; CW13, *Passion*, 84/24-25.

earlier writings. His appreciation of the absolute priority of God's demands, and their uncompromising nature, neither changed nor lessened during the intervening decades. The first occurrence of absolutism in More's works is found in his early expansion of Pico's *Twelve Properties of a Lover*, in which he contrasts earthly love to the love of God. Even the earthly lover should 'loue but one a lone / And for the one all othir to forsake',¹⁶⁰ and this exclusive, human love is contrasted with the demands of God of those who would follow him, for 'will he in loue no partyng fellows haue... for body, sowle, witt, connyng, mynde & thought / Parte wil he none but either all or nought'.¹⁶¹

More presents a slightly different perspective on absolutism in his polemical works *A Dialogue concerning Heresies* and *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*.¹⁶² More states that both faith and works are necessary for they are ordained by God because 'that it pleaseth hym to saue vs for our obedience of hys commaundement bothe in the bylyefe and the worke'.¹⁶³ More acknowledges that God could save us without works or faith or even knowledge. Nevertheless 'the cause of the saluacyon standeth all in the obedience of goddes commaundement, wherby he byddeth vs, and by hys byddyng byndeth vs, to captiue our vnderstandyng in to the obedience of fayth and byleue hys promises'.¹⁶⁴ Obedience to all God's commands is absolute for Christ 'will haue you bileve all that he tellith you, and do all that he biddeth you, & forbere all that he forbiddeth you, without any maner excepcion. Breke one of his commaundementes & breke all, forsake one poynt of his fayth, & forsake all as for any thanke you get of hym for the remanaunt'.¹⁶⁵ No one may forsake any point of the Christian faith. In the Tower works, More repeats it, indeed hammers it home, both at considerable length and with considerable frequency.¹⁶⁶ It expresses a total clarity that leaves his readers in no doubt of his meaning. God's demands are pre-eminent for 'Christ will not take your service to halves, but will that you shall love hym with your whole hart'.¹⁶⁷ Christ does not need our service and More observes that we cannot make agreements or bargain

¹⁶⁰ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Properties*, 114/3-4. [a lone: alone]

¹⁶¹ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Properties*, 114/13, 15-16. cf nn178 & 180 below. [partyng: sharing; witt: intellect; connyng: knowledge, learning, skill]

¹⁶² cf CW6, 420/31-421/3; CW8, 405/18-21.

¹⁶³ CW8, 464/6-8. [bylyefe: belief]

¹⁶⁴ CW8, 464/13-17. [byddeth: commands, exhorts; byndeth: binds; captiue: bind, make captive]

¹⁶⁵ CW12, 230/10-14. [bileve: believe; excepcion: exception; remanaunt: remnant, remainder]

¹⁶⁶ It occurs five times in *A Dialogue of Comfort*: CW12, 198/5-11 & 230/10-14 & 237/13 & 245/11-13 & 247/6-10.

¹⁶⁷ CW12, 230/29-31; cf CW12, 230/4. More's references are not direct quotations; cf Matt 22.37; Mk 12.30; Lk 10.37. [halves: halves]

with Him about the nature and limits of what our service will entail,¹⁶⁸ nor can we make such decisions unilaterally.¹⁶⁹ More's absolutism allows for no half measures, only obedience to God's commands.

In his *Treatise on the Passion*, More spells out the connection of between obedience and his view of absolutism in concrete terms. When St Peter refused to let Christ wash his feet at the Last Supper, Christ rebuked him. More concedes that St Peter 'refused for reuerence the thyng that oure lorde woulde doe to hym'.¹⁷⁰ More observes that St Peter's disobedience is 'but an vnperceyued pryde, to stande styffe agaynste goddes wyll, and disobey his pleasure'.¹⁷¹ For 'no man lawefully maye for any pryuate mynde of reuerence or deuocyon to godde, doe the thyng that godde forbyddeth, nor leue the thyng vndone that godde byddeth'.¹⁷² The consequences of such disobedience follow an inevitable and predictable pattern: 'first the neglecting, & after the contemning, and finally with disobedience and rebellion, the very full forsaking of God'.¹⁷³ More tackles the consequences of personal interpretations of God's commands for 'neuer shall goddes preceptes be obeyed, if euery manne maye boldely frame him selfe a conscience, with a glose of his owne making, after his owne fantasye putte vnto goddes worde'.¹⁷⁴ To More, if men follow their own inclinations the result of such behaviour is clear and inescapable: 'There is a waye that vnto men semeth iuste, and the laste end therof ledeth vnto hell'.¹⁷⁵ However, More allows some laxity for those whose failure to follow God's commands is due to ignorance. While 'the bondman that

¹⁶⁸ CW12, 230/2-3, 15-18.

¹⁶⁹ cf CW12, 230/15-20.

¹⁷⁰ CW13, *Passion*, 112/3.

¹⁷¹ CW13, *Passion*, 112/8-9. More uses the expression 'stand stiff' on a number occasions; here it means obstinate, as at CW12, 17/27-28 and 'stiff-necked' in this sense is used at CW14, *De Tristitia*, 207/5-6; no one should 'stande obstynately dysobedient vnto goddes pleasure' as did St Peter, cf CW13, *Passion*, 112/28; but it is necessary to 'stand stiff' (ie be steadfast, remain firm) against the devil, cf CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 213/18, 20; Jas 4.7; 1 Pet 5.9. During an interrogation in the Tower, Cromwell told More that it was his demeanour that made 'other men so styffe therin as they be'; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 553/81-83. 'Stonde stifly' is also used in the sense of resolutely in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, (ed) Phyllis Hodgson, London: Oxford University Press for The Early English Text Society, 1944, 13/4. [vnperceyued: unperceived]

¹⁷² CW13, *Passion*, 112/4-6. [pryuate: personal; mynde: intention; godde: God; forbyddeth: forbids; leue: leave; vndone: undone]

¹⁷³ CW13, *Passion*, 7/14-16; cf CW13, *Passion*, 10/25-28.

¹⁷⁴ CW13, *Passion*, 112/10-13; cf CW12, 119/32-120/5. More gives a description of a scrupulous conscience writing that 'though it be paynfull and troubelows to hym that hath it, ... is lesse harm yet than a consciens ouer large, or such as for his own fantasye the man list to frame hym selfe, now drawing yt narrow now strechyng it in bredth after the maner of a cheuerell poynt, to serue on euery side for his own comoditie'. 'Cheuerell' refers to lace or cord made out of kidskin – hence 'cheuerell' from chèvre, the French for goat – and known for its flexibility and elastic qualities; a 'poynt' was used to fasten clothing. cf William Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII*, London: J M Dent & Sons Ltd; 1st pub 1935, repr 1948. An old lady tells Anne Boleyn of her 'soft cheveril conscience', cf Act II, Sc 3, line 32. [boldely: audaciously, presumptuously; glose: gloss; fantasye: desire; putte: put] [troubelows: troublesome; strechyng: stretching; bredth: breadth]

¹⁷⁵ CW13, *Passion*, 112/18-19; cf Prov 14.12. [semeth: seems]

knoweth his lordes wyll and dothe it not, shall be beaten with many strypes' the other bondman who was not wilfully ignorant of his Lord's wishes shall nevertheless 'bee beaten with few stripes'.¹⁷⁶

A further connection between obedience and absolutism is revealed in the vital necessity of loving Him above everything and following Christ, whatever the cost. Christ commands that we love 'the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind and with thy whole strength'.¹⁷⁷ Christ 'will haue in your service no partyng felow:... what feleship is there betwene light & darknes, betwene Christ & Beliall',¹⁷⁸ for it is impossible to serve two masters at the same time.¹⁷⁹ This categorical statement written in the Tower reflects More's early expansion of Pico's *Twelve Properties* in which he describes God as having 'in loue no partyng fellows'.¹⁸⁰ More identifies these two masters as God and mammon¹⁸¹ and More clearly equates mammon with riches¹⁸² and that to love God as we should it is necessary to be able to forsake everything, including family, possessions and even our very life.¹⁸³ Although this may not mean actually abandoning them, it involves a renunciation of them in our heart and affections and thus a willingness to leave them in circumstances where we would displease God if we did not.¹⁸⁴ More points out the sheer folly in forsaking Christ and His faith for the very short and temporary use of worldly wealth if in the process one's soul is sold to the devil.¹⁸⁵ He repeats Christ's question: 'what avaylith yt a man, yff he wanne all the whole worlde & lost his soule'?¹⁸⁶ On this verse Bishop John

¹⁷⁶ CW13, *Passion*, 111/22-24; cf Lk 12.47-48. [dothe: does; strypes: stripes]

¹⁷⁷ Mk 12.30; cf Lk 10.27: Luke repeats this command, but reverses strength and mind; cf Matt 22.37: Matthew omits strength; cf eg also: Matt 10.37, Lk 14.26: to hate one's father, mother, wife, children and brethren; eg Lk 14.33: to renounce all one's possessions.

¹⁷⁸ CW12, 230/6-8; cf 2 Cor 6.14-15: St Paul is comparing believers and unbelievers, justice and injustice; cf CW12, 420n; CW8, 489/1-3. cf n151 above; Ch 9, n178. [feleship: fellowship; betwene: between; Beliall: Belial]

¹⁷⁹ CW12, 230/10 & 231/5-6; cf Matt 6.24; Lk 16.13; cf CW8, 986/9-12 for another instance of More's use of Matt 6.24.

¹⁸⁰ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Properties*, 114/13. cf n161 above.

¹⁸¹ CW12, 230/10; cf Matt 6.24.

¹⁸² CW12, 231/5-6.

¹⁸³ cf CW12, 174/24-30.

¹⁸⁴ cf CW12, 174/30-175/1; cf Lk 14.33.

¹⁸⁵ cf CW12, 237/11-13; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 61/9-10 & 487/2-3.

¹⁸⁶ CW12, 237/15-16; cf Matt 16.26; Mk 8.36; Lk 9.25; cf CW12, 279/3-5; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 487/1-2 & 607/7-8. Fisher uses Matt 16.26 in the first of his *Two Fruitful Sermons*; cf Cecilia A Hatt (ed), *English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 238. It is likely that the first of these two sermons was preached on the Feast of All Saints, 1521 [Hatt 217], but they were not printed until 1532 [Hatt, 213-214]. cf Ch 7, n179. [avaylith: avails; yff: if; wanne: won]

Fisher reflects More, concluding in a sermon that ‘By this than euery man may lerne how dere his owne soule ought to be vnto hym selfe’.¹⁸⁷

A personal perspective is found in More’s *Treatise on the Passion*,¹⁸⁸ where absolutism is found in the eighth of the Collects that intersperse the work. The prayer asks: ‘O my swete sauour Christ,... inspyre I beseche the, the maruayle of thy maiestye, with the loue of thy goodnes, so depe into mine hert, that in respecte of the leste poynte of thy pleasure, my mynde maye sette all waye, this whole wretched world at nought’.¹⁸⁹ The phrase ‘in respecte of the leste poynte of thy pleasure’, is very specific in its absolutism, despite the fact that the rest of the Collect is phrased in general terms. This absolutism requires that every man must ‘lerne to loue as wee shoulde, god aboute althyng, and al other thyng for hym. ... And what so euer loue we bere to any creature, wherby we loue godde the lesse, that loue is a lothsom loue and hyndereth vs from heuen’.¹⁹⁰ This Collect finishes with the desire that his mind may always set ‘this whole wretched world at nought’, a sentiment mirrored in *A Godly Meditation*, his prayer written in the Tower which begins ‘Gyve me thy grace good lord, To sett the world at nought’.¹⁹¹ While the focus on eternal life in heaven may be understandable given his imprisonment, it takes on a slightly different aspect when the word ‘nought’ is considered. For while nought in the sixteenth century can mean nothing, it also has a variety of other meanings, depending on context, ranging from worthless to wicked, evil, sinful or to be despised or scorned.¹⁹²

More was not, however, alone in his absolute view of God’s demands. Bishop John Fisher’s words on the scaffold demonstrate an identical absolutism about the necessity of belief in the entire Catholic faith. After telling the crowd that he is about to die for the faith of Christ’s holy Catholic Church and that he has not hitherto feared death, Fisher requests that ‘I do desire you all to helpe and assist me with your praiers, that at the verie point and instant of

¹⁸⁷ Hatt, 238. [dere: dear]

¹⁸⁸ For the circumstances of the dating and composition of the *Treatise*, cf Introduction, n35.

¹⁸⁹ CW13, *Passion*, 82/4-9. cf Ch 3, n; Ch4, n44.

¹⁹⁰ CW13, *Passion*, 84/24-29. cf n10 above. [lothsom: loathsome; hyndereth: hinders]

¹⁹¹ CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 226/4-5. cf Ch 3, n105; Ch 4, n44.

¹⁹² These meanings are taken from a number of different glossaries at the end of Yale edition of More’s Complete Works. No particular meaning is assigned to the use of nought in the Commentary to either Collect 8 found in *A Treatise upon the Passion* or *A Godly Meditation*.

deaths stroake, I maie in that verie moment stand steadfast without fainting in any one point of the Catholick faith free from any feare'.¹⁹³

Denying Christ or His faith is forsaking it and can happen not only through the fear of pain or the desire to retain worldly goods or position but also through the fear of men. If a man truly fears God, he will not fear 'the terrors of men'¹⁹⁴ for the terrors of men are transitory. This fear of forsaking God and so losing one's soul that leads to hell is the reason why the fear of God must take precedence over the fear of men. More's fear reflects Christ's admonition not to fear those that kill only the body, but we should fear Him who can cast our souls into hell.¹⁹⁵ More explains that this does not mean that we should never fear men at all, but that out of fear of men we forget God and so displease Him.¹⁹⁶ Roper records that during More's interrogation prior to his imprisonment, his questioners had 'layd forth all the terrors they could ymagine againste him' to which he replied 'My lordes, these terrours be argumentes for Children, and not for me'.¹⁹⁷ More conquers his fear of men, although in the Tower, his fear of his weakness and for his family still haunt him.

The fear of men can work on either the individual level or the collective social level. With regard to the fear of men on an individual level, More reflects on the ills that result from fearing men rather than fearing God. A fear of men includes fear of their opinions, fear of a bad reputation, fear of what they may do to harm one's fame or success.¹⁹⁸ He decries fame as merely the 'voyce of people'; its attraction is that, through fame, when a man lives 'in parpetuall memory'¹⁹⁹ he attains a type of immortality. More asks what are men's opinions

¹⁹³ Rev Ronald Bayne, MA (trans), MA Harleian, 6382, *The Life of Fisher*, in British Museum Library, Oxford: Early English Text Society, Extra Series No 117, 1921 [for 1915], 125. This anonymous text is the earliest life of Fisher. Another example of Fisher's absolutism occurs in his letter to Bishop Tunstal written in 1525, in which he states: 'Christ's truth is one and undivided... Nor is it sufficient to affirm some articles, having denied one, for it is truly necessary to profess each and every article or at least to dissent inwardly from none. He who disbelieves in a single article of the faith is justly held guilty of disbelieve in the whole faith.' This is quoted in John M Headley's Introduction to CW5, *Responsio ad Lutherum*, 811; cf also Edward Surtz, *Works and Days of John Fisher*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967, 328-29. [priers: prayers; verie: actual; deaths: death's; stroake: stroke; maie: may; Catholick: Catholic]

¹⁹⁴ cf Thomas a Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, (trans) Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 2nd impression 1955, Bk III, Ch 36, No 3. For More's use of this phrase, cf Roper, 67/9-11. cf n197 below.

¹⁹⁵ Matt 10.28; Lk 12.4, 5. cf Introduction, n105; Ch 1, nn37-40; Ch 4, nn4, 83 & 160.

¹⁹⁶ cf CW12, 303/16-19.

¹⁹⁷ Roper, 67/8-11. cf Ch7, n68; Conclusion, n20. [ymagine: imagine; be: are]

¹⁹⁸ For fame: cf Ch 2, nn130 & 131.

¹⁹⁹ CW1, *English Poems*, 5/75, 5/79. cf Ch 2, n129. [voyce: voice]

but the ‘vain praise of the people, a blast of wind of theyr mouthes’?²⁰⁰ They are nothing but ‘a blast of wind’.²⁰¹

Another danger More perceives in the opinions of others for the individual is not just their fickleness and unreliability, but also in the distraction from God and the consequent inner disquiet and restlessness. The contrast of the calm serenity of a focus to Godward with such inner unrest is set out in 1518 in More’s letter to his children’s tutor William Gonell, in which he explains that ‘a mind must be uneasy which ever wavers between joy and sadness because of other men’s opinions’.²⁰² However, learning and detachment will allow them to possess ‘solid joy will neither be puffed up by the empty praise of men, nor dejected by evil tongues’.²⁰³ The reward of such wisdom ‘depends on the inner knowledge of what is right, not on the talk of men, than which nothing is more foolish or mischievous’.²⁰⁴ This lesson on detachment that More urges Gonell to give his children is reflected in More’s letter to Master Leder, written in the Tower, that ‘I purpose not to depend upon the fame of the world’.²⁰⁵ This is succinctly reflected in *A Godly Meditation* where he writes of his desire ‘To sett my mynd faste vppon the / And not to hange vppon the blaste of mennys mowthis’.²⁰⁶ Such an attitude is not only in keeping with his previous writings, but heeds the advice to be found in the *Imitation*, which advises ‘Let not your peace depend on the tongues of men. For whether they put a good or a bad construction on what you do, you are still what you are. ... And he that neither desires to please men, nor fears to displease them, shall enjoy much peace. From inordinate love and vain fear arise all disquiet of heart and distraction of mind’.²⁰⁷ The aim should always be based on the advice More found in both of Pico’s first letter to Gianfrancesco ‘that we shulde seke for the glory and praise not that commith of men but that

²⁰⁰ CW1, *Last Things*, 155/27-28.

²⁰¹ cf CW6, 398/4-7; CW9, *The Apology*, (ed) J B Trapp, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979, 69/4-6; CW12, 212/5; CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 226/7.

²⁰² Rogers, *SL*, 104.

²⁰³ Rogers, *SL*, 105.

²⁰⁴ Rogers, *SL*, 104.

²⁰⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/6-7; cf CW1, *English Poems*, 5/73-79. Ch2, n155.

²⁰⁶ CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 226/6-8; cf CW1, *Last Things*. 155/27-28; CW6, 398/4-7; CW9, 69/4-6. [sett: fix; mennys: mens’; mowthis: mouths]

²⁰⁷ *Imitation*, Bk III, Ch 28, No 2; cf Bk II, Ch 2, No 1; cf Bk III, Ch 46, No 3. More recommends the *Imitation* along with Bonaventure’s *Life of Christ* and Walter Hilton’s *Scale of Perfection* as ‘englysshe books as moste may norysshe and encrease deuocyon’; cf CW8, 37/30-31. cf Introduction, nn165 & 166; Ch 1, n139; Ch 8, nn158.

commeth of god'.²⁰⁸ More's entire focus is to keep God in the foreground of his mind in order to combat any fear of men's opinions.

The fear of men on the collective and social level could also be described as fear of the crowd and is an ever present danger to society, for the fear of civil disorder is the perennial worry of all governments in any era.²⁰⁹ The fear of civil disturbance would also affect the manner of More's death. The sentence More received as a traitor was the traditional one of hanging, drawing and quartering. This sentence was commuted by the king to that of beheading. We have looked at More's acute fear of pain and perhaps appreciate his quip that when informed of the king's decision to commute his sentence: 'May God avert such royal clemency from all my friends'.²¹⁰ But was Henry's real reason for reducing More's sentence merely clemency? Paul Green suggests that Fisher and More were spared the tortures inflicted on the Carthusians, Fisher because of his age and More because of his previous position in the government.²¹¹ Commuting the sentence was also unusual. The tortures of Tyburn were normally reserved for the very worst criminals and the axe was normally the fate of those of noble birth; however More was not of noble birth. While it is possible that Henry retained some lingering affection for his former servant,²¹² there is enough evidence that the fear of public disorder could have played a major part that led the king to commute the sentence, even if some lingering affection that led to clemency also played a part. On 4th May, 1535 Prior John Houghton of the London Charterhouse together with Prior Augustine Webster of Axholme and Prior Robert Laurence of Beauvale and Father Richard Reynolds of the Brigettine monastery at Syon suffered their grisly fate at Tyburn.²¹³ On 19th June three more Carthusians (Humphrey Middlemore, William Exmew, Sebastian Newdigate) suffered the same end. Susan Bridgen notes that the martyrdoms of the second group of Carthusians

²⁰⁸ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/8-10; cf Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, CW1, 90/4-7, 357, 90/28-91/3 & 359.

²⁰⁹ More's fear that heresy spreads social disorder has been noted in the Introduction.

²¹⁰ Stapleton, 177; cf R W Chambers, *Thomas More*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1945 (reprint), 353. Chambers gives a slightly different wording, although it is in essence the same. cf Ch 9, n178.

²¹¹ cf Paul D Green, 'Suicide, Martyrdom, and Thomas More' in *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol 19, 1972, 153; cf Chambers, 340.

²¹² Stapleton records that on hearing of More's execution he turned to Anne Boleyn and said 'You are the cause of that man's death' before leaving the room and shedding 'bitter tears'; cf Stapleton, 190-191. Ro: Ba: records the same story, cf *The Life of Syr Thomas More*, London/New York/Toronto: Oxford University Press for The Early English Text Society, 1950, 263/11-264/3.

²¹³ cf G R Elton, *Reform and Reformation: England 1509-1558*, London: Edward Arnold, 1977, 192-193; cf Charles Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors from AD 1485 to 1559*, Vol I, (ed) William Douglas Hamilton, London: Camden Society, 1875, 26-28.

occurred with no publicity ‘for fear of the displeasure of the people which was shown at the death of the others’.²¹⁴

There was a further precedent for a fear of the crowd on the part of both Henry and the authorities. On 17th June, as Fisher had crossed the moat on his return to the Tower after his trial, a crowd of men and women demanded his blessing and showed sympathy for him.²¹⁵ To the authorities, it must therefore have seemed very likely that public demonstrations would occur on the journey from the Tower to Tyburn, given More’s popularity.²¹⁶ Further evidence of their concern exists in the propaganda effort from the pulpit during these weeks.²¹⁷ Cromwell used the pulpit as the mass media of the age, to forestall any disturbances,²¹⁸ although the efficiency this tactic can be debated.²¹⁹ He began the process of ensuring that the clergy would preach on the King’s supremacy every Sunday with a letter to the bishops dated 3rd June.²²⁰ On 25th June, three days after Fisher’s execution but six days before More’s trial, Cromwell continued his campaign with a letter ‘to justices of assize throughout the realm,’ which covered the same ground as the earlier letter, but added that the declare at the Sessions ‘the treasons traitorously committed against us and our laws by the late bishops of Rochester

²¹⁴ cf Susan Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, 230; cf James Gairdner (ed), *Letters & Papers Foreign & Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII (L & P)*, Vol viii, London: Longmans & Co, 1885, 846. cf Dom David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England III*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, 235; cf Wriothesley records the trial and deaths, 28-29.

²¹⁵ cf E E Reynolds, *Saint John Fisher*, Wheathampstead, Hertfordshire: Anthony Clarke Books, 1972, 290n. Reynolds quotes Chapuys who said ‘he was followed by a crowd of men and women in great grief who demanded his blessing when he crossed the water. cf E E Reynolds, *The Field is Won: The Life and Death of St Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates Limited, 1968, 362.

²¹⁶ cf n214 above.

²¹⁷ The propaganda effort had begun as early as November-December, 1534, when the government arranged for the royal supremacy to be preached from the pulpit at St Paul’s Cross for six weeks; cf G R Elton, *Policy and Police*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, 214. cf Brigden, 233 on the importance to the government of control of the pulpits; cf James Gairdner (ed), *Letters & Papers Foreign & Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII (L&P)*, Vol ix, London: Longmans & Co, 1886, 989: This records a letter to Cromwell from the Bishop of Rochester which confirms the use of the pulpit for propaganda purposes. Wriothesley records the King’s command that the clergy preach the royal supremacy, but does not connect this to concerns about public order, cf 30. However, propaganda from the pulpit in favour of Henry VIII’s marriage to Anne Boleyn began earlier. Evidence for this can be found in *Letters & Papers Foreign & Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII (L&P)*, (ed) James Gairdner, Vol vii, London: Longmans & Co, 1883, 464. This is entered in the section for 11th April, 1533 and orders that ‘every preachers shall preach once in the presence of his greatest audience against the power of the bishop of Rome. ... Preachers to declare the justice of the King’s later matrimony to the best of their ability, and to point out the injustice of the bishop of Rome from the beginning of the King’s cause’. cf Geoffrey de C Parmier, *The King’s Great Matter, A Study of Anglo-Papal Relations 1527-1534*, London: Longmans, Green & Co Ltd, 1967, 285 & nn2 & 3.

²¹⁸ cf Brigden, 230; W Gordon Zeeveld, ‘Apology for an Execution’ in *EA*, 201.

²¹⁹ cf Brigden, 230; Zeeveld, 201; Elton, *Policy and Police*, 188 on the long-term failure of the propaganda effort against More. For More’s popularity. cf n224 below.

²²⁰ cf Elton, *Policy and Police*, 231-232. Although this letter was sent to the diocesan bishops, it required them to instruct ‘all manner abbots, priors, deans, archdeacons, priests, parsons, vicars, curates, and all other ecclesiastical persons’ in the diocese.

and Sir Thomas More...but also of divers others who lately have condignly suffered execution according to their demerits'.²²¹ Two days later, on 27th June and four days prior to More's trial, the prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral preached a sermon describing both as 'men of estimation'²²² but also as traitors.²²³

More himself had personal experience of civil disorder from the riots of Evil May Day in 1517.²²⁴ More describes this fear of the crowd in *A Treatise on the Passion*, with regard to the capture and death of Christ. The chief priests, including Caiphaz,²²⁵ met to discuss 'howe they myghte with some wyle take hym, and putte hym to death'.²²⁶ They were afraid of His popularity²²⁷ and of losing their own authority²²⁸ but they were also 'aferd of the people'.²²⁹ The chief priests and scribes decide on the capture and death of Christ, but 'not on the holy

²²¹ Elton, *Policy and Police*, 240-241. It should be noted that this letter was sent six days before More's trial and two days before Matthew's sermon.

²²² Elton, *Policy and Police*, 188.

²²³ cf Elton, *Policy and Police*, 188; cf Zeeveld, 200.

²²⁴ On the evening of 1st May, 1517, More, as under-sheriff of the city of London, along with other officials, tried to disperse rioting apprentices, whose grievance was that foreigners were stealing their jobs; cf Brigden, *London and the Reformation*, 129; cf J J Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1968, 67. More and the officials had to retreat; Derek Wilson, 'Evil May Day, 1517' in *History Today*, June 2017, 67. Over 300 people were arrested and around a dozen [the exact figure seems to be disputed] were executed, including John Lincoln, the leader of the uprising. Nearly 300 were charged and convicted of treason, but escaped with their lives due to the intervention of Cardinal Wolsey and Queen Catherine of Aragon; cf Wilson, 67, Brigden, 131. More gives his version of the riots in *The Apology*, cf CW9, 156/8-29. More's role in the Evil May Day riots became popular legend in *The Book of Thomas More*, (eds) Vittorio Gabrieli & Giorgio Melchiori, Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1990. More's role is exaggerated and suggests he played a large part in quelling the violence; cf *Book of Thomas More*, Act II, Sc 3. This play was written in the early 1590's and confirms More's enduring popularity and reputation in the memory of Londoners. Nearly sixty years after More's execution and around thirty-five years after the accession of the Protestant Queen Elizabeth, the author(s) write of More that 'a wiser or more virtuous gentleman / Was never bred in England' and 'Farewell the best friend that the poor e'er had', cf Act V, Sc I, lines 10-11 & Act V, Sc I, line 42. The principal author was Anthony Munday and it was revised by Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood and William Shakespeare (cf 12 concerning extent of Munday's contribution). Munday worked for Richard Topcliffe who as the Queen's chief priest catcher hunted down Catholic priests to send them to their terrible fates at Tyburn (cf 8). For the dating of the play, cf 11-12. In his play *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare places a compliment to More on the lips of Cardinal Wolsey, cf Act III, Sc II, lines 394-399. For fear of the people, cf nn226-230 below.

²²⁵ This spelling follows the Douai version of the Bible. More's own use varies between Caiphaz and Cayphas (but never Caiaphas). More uses Caiphaz at CW8, 609/22[quoting Tyndale]; CW13, *Passion*, 51/14[in a paragraph in Latin] & 68/29; 70/31 & 72/29; he uses Cayphas at CW8, 137/27[quoting Tyndale] & 611/32; CW12, 279/29; 279/30; CW13, *Passion*, 52/7.

²²⁶ CW13, *Passion*, 52/9-10; cf CW13, *Passion*, 68/30-69/1 & 72/27-31; cf Matt 26.3-4; Mk 14.1; Lk 22.2. [wyle: sly trick]

²²⁷ cf CW13, *Passion*, 69/32-72/1 & 72/23-25; cf Jn 12.19; Matt 21.8-9; Mk 11.10; Lk 19.38 for Christ's popularity on Palm Sunday.

²²⁸ cf CW13, *Passion*, 69/33; cf Jn 12.42.

²²⁹ CW13, *Passion*, 52/10; cf CW13, *Passion*, 69/1-2; cf Lk 22.2; Matt 26.5; Mk 14.2. [aferd: afraid]

day, lest there aryse some sedycious ruffle amonge the people'.²³⁰ Such was their fear of the populace that they sought not only Christ, but also Lazarus whom Christ had raised from the dead,²³¹ to put them to death. Such fear of social disorder can result from a number of different causes, which, according to More, stem from pride and flattery.²³²

At his trial the guilty verdict brought against Thomas More was a foregone conclusion, and the Tudor era saw nothing wrong in this.²³³ Evidence that More's trial was indeed predetermined comes from a memorandum corrected by Cromwell, although written by a clerk.²³⁴ One entry reads 'Item, what shalbe done farther touching Maister More'; another says 'Item, To knowe his [Henry's] pleasure touchyng Maister More, [Cromwell adding in his own hand] and to declare the oppynyon of the Judges theron and what shalbe the kynges plesure'. Further evidence is found elsewhere in the document with one item stating 'when Maister Fissher shall go to execucion with also the other', indicating that Fisher was then still alive.²³⁵ More's resolute silence was reverberating rather loudly and was influencing others.²³⁶ More reports in a letter to Margaret that Cromwell said 'that my demeanour in that matter was of a thing that of likelyhode made now other men so styffe therin as they be'.²³⁷

Cromwell's letter of 25th June also included the description of Fisher and More as intending to 'breed among our people and subjects a most mischievous and seditious opinion'.²³⁸ The executions were defended on the grounds of sedition, with the Ambassador to France, Sir

²³⁰ CW13, *Passion*, 69/2-3; cf Matt 26.5; Mk 14.2. A similar fear of the people is found in Acts 5.26. The officers brought the apostles from the temple without violence 'for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned'. [aryse: arise; sedycious: seditious; ruffle: tumult]

²³¹ cf CW13, *Passion*, 69/34-70/3 & 72/3-4; cf Jn 12.9-11.

²³² In his *History of King Richard III*, written in 1510's, More places the two sins of pride and flattery as causes of social disorder; cf for pride: CW2, *The History of King Richard III*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967, 12/21-27; For flattery, cf CW2, 11/28-31. cf Ch 2, nn134-155.

²³³ cf Elton, *Policy & Police*, 241.

²³⁴ cf Susan Doran (ed), *Henry VIII: Man & Monarch*, London: British Library, 2009, 159. This is the catalogue from the exhibition of the same title.

²³⁵ Doran, 159. [oppynyon: opinion; Fissher: Fisher; execucion: execution]

²³⁶ cf Zeeveld, 201. cf n237 below.

²³⁷ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 553/80-83; cf Hodgson (ed), *Cloud of Unknowing*, 13/4; cf n170 above. [styffe: obstinate] Even after his death, More's influence continued. More's parish priest, John Larke and a nobleman, Germain Gardiner, were both executed on 7th March, 1544 for refusing to acknowledge the King's Supremacy. Gardiner was sure he was right, stating the examples of 'the simple piety of the Carthusians, the wide learning of the Bishop of Rochester, and the profound wisdom of Thomas More'; Stapleton, 194. [likelyhode: likelihood]

²³⁸ cf Zeeveld, 203-204; cf Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, Vol VI, (new edn) Nicholas Pocock, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1865, 117. Germain Marc'hadour notes that the charge of sedition has an inglorious pedigree, having been levelled at Christ Himself; cf Lk 23.2, 5; cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'Obedient Unto Death', 216; cf CW13, *Passion*, 52/11-12 & 69/2-3; cf Matt 26.5, Mk 14.2; cf Lk 23.2: the Douai edition uses 'perverting our nation' while the Vulgate states 'subvertentem gentem nostram' which more accurately translates as 'subverting our nation'.

John Wallop, informing King Francis of 'their treasons, conspiracies and practices secretly practised, as well within the realm as without,... to sow sedition within the realm, intending thereby not only the destruction of the king, but also the whole subversion of his highness' realm'.²³⁹ This reveals the fear of social unrest felt by Henry and Cromwell, a fear confirmed for 'a watch was ordered through the City' two days after More met his executioner.²⁴⁰ The authorities were clearly nervous and although there was no civil unrest this fact could not have been known prior to More's execution.²⁴¹ Nevertheless, the executions of the Carthusians, Fisher and More appalled many²⁴² both at home and abroad.²⁴³ More's stand, although silent, appears to have made the authorities distinctly nervous.

More's fear for his family is another important feature of his Tower writings, especially his letters. It is a very personal and exceptionally poignant fear endured on behalf of his beloved family. More's fear comprises two connected features and encompasses both their material welfare as well as their spiritual welfare. After his imprisonment he is unable to provide for their material welfare either financially or practically. But his writings and letters reveal that he manages to continue his advice, albeit in a more limited manner. Preparation is an important element in how More approaches this problem, and he seems to have begun such preparation following his resignation in the spring of 1532.

After his resignation, More reduces his household but dismisses none of his servants before finding them another placement.²⁴⁴ He explains to his family how to cope with their reduced financial circumstances; he told them of his rise from the lowest degree to the highest and that now they would descent step by step from high to low. If, arriving at the lowest degree, their means are still not enough, they would 'with bags and wallets, go a begging together, and hoping that for pity some good folke will geeue vs their charytye, at euery mans doore to singe *salue Regina*, and so still keepe company and bee mery together'.²⁴⁵ Along with this practical advice for their reduced circumstances, More does what he can to prepare his family

²³⁹ cf Zeeveld, 204; Burnet, 117.

²⁴⁰ cf Brigden, 230.

²⁴¹ cf Zeeveld, 199.

²⁴² cf Brigden, 230. The Carthusians were known for their holiness, Bishop Fisher for his piety and learning and More had a reputation for integrity. cf Joseph G Dwyer (trans), *Pole's Defense of the Unity of the Church*, Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1965, 163, 176, 239-241, 250.

²⁴³ cf Elton, *Policy and Police*, 189.

²⁴⁴ cf Roper, 52/14-18.

²⁴⁵ Roper, 54/9-12. The *Salve Regina* [*salue Regina*] is an ancient hymn to the Blessed Virgin Mary. [geeue: give; charytye: charity]

for his arrest. This includes spiritual preparation in order to strengthen them for the future. He talks to his family about ‘the ioyes of heuen and the paynes of hell, of the lyves of holy martires, of their greiuous martirdomes, of their marvellous patiens, and of their passions and deaths that they suffred rather then they wold offend god’.²⁴⁶ He also prepares them for his almost certain arrest with a trick. He hires one of the king’s pursuivants to knock on his’ door during a family meal, and commands him in the king’s name to attend the commission on the next day. General confusion ensues with some weeping while others display more resignation and bravery. He praises the brave and admonishes the weeping.²⁴⁷ Roper observes that these precautions had their desired effect for when his trouble happened, it ‘to them was a greate deale the lesse’.²⁴⁸

Having prepared his family as well as he could prior to his arrest, More does his best from the Tower to offer them support. Indeed, this is one of the stated aims of a *Dialogue of Comfort*, when Vincent asks his uncle Antony to provide ‘such plenty of good counsell & comfort, that I may with the same layd vp in remembrauns, gouerne and staye the ship of ower kindred, & kepe yt a flote from peril of spirituall drounyng’.²⁴⁹ Vincent reveals the reason: it is because ‘some our pore famely be fallen into suche dumpes, that scantly can any such comfort as my pore wyt can give them, any thyng asswage their sorow’.²⁵⁰ Anthony explains his intention to provide a ‘store of comfort afore hand redy by you, to resort to & to lay vp in your hart, as a treacle agaynst the poyson of all desperat dreade, that might rise of occacion of sore trybulacion’.²⁵¹ This clearly sets out that the purpose of the work is guidance to prepare them to withstand the trials they will endure on his behalf. He provides the spiritual reasons for his stand to sustain them while enabling him to clarify his thoughts and thus bolster his own resolve during his ordeal of imprisonment.

²⁴⁶ Roper, 55/18-56/1. cf Ch 7, n214; Ch 9, n50. [lyves: lives; martires: martyrs; greiuous: grievous, burdensome; martirdomes: martyrdoms; patiens: patience]

²⁴⁷ cf Stapleton, 144-145; Ackroyd, 338; Gerard B Wegemer, *A Portrait of Courage*, Princeton: Scepter, 1997, 113; Ro: Ba: 188/18-189/3 who states that More played this trick more than once.

²⁴⁸ Roper, 56/12-13; cf Harpsfield, *Life of More*, London: Early English Text Society, 1932, 79/1-12 for further confirmation of this. Harpsfield says that when William Roper was sent to the Tower, those sent to Margaret’s house by the king found her teaching her children rather than whining or lamenting, did not seem surprised by their message and afterwards spoke very well of her, admiring her constancy and wisdom.

²⁴⁹ CW12, 6/11-14. [counsell: advice, counsel; layd: laid; remembrauns: remembrance; gouerne: govern; ower: our; a flote: afloat; drounyng: drowning]

²⁵⁰ CW12, 6/16-18 [famely: family; dumpes: mental depressions, fits of melancholy; wyt: intellect, reason; asswage: assuage; scantly: scarcely, hardly]

²⁵¹ CW12, 9/11-13. cf Ch 7, n57.

In a letter written soon after his arrest, More calms Margaret's fears assuring her that he is in good health and 'good quiet of minde'²⁵² and has no desire for more worldly things than he has. But he admits that he longs to talk to them 'concerninge the worlde to come'²⁵³ ending with a long list of those for whom he prays. Such support seems to have been reciprocated by Margaret who responds to one letter saying that, as she cannot talk to him as she would like, 'to delite my self'²⁵⁴ she writes as often as is expedient and 'by readinge againe and againe your most fruteful and delectable letter'.²⁵⁵ She relates that since his imprisonment the chief comfort of the family has been 'your lyfe past and godly conuersacion, and wholesome counsaile and verteous example'.²⁵⁶ In a later letter, More reveals that, more than anything, he misses his family and their company very deeply. In very moving terms, he tells Margaret that he refers everything to God's pleasure and that he does not long to enter his own house for anything, but rather plaintively and revealing a certain loneliness, he adds that 'gladlie wolde I sometime somewhat talke with my frendes, and specially my wife and you that pertain to my charge'.²⁵⁷ This aspect of his imprisonment, severing him from his family and friends, has been described as his 'worst agony'.²⁵⁸

It is not long after his imprisonment, however, that More's fear for his family surface. It is not simply a question of More missing his family, although this is undoubtedly true. His fears also encompass the very real danger to them due to his stand in refusing Henry's oath.²⁵⁹ He writes to Margaret 'A deadly grief vnto me,... is that I perceiue my good sonne your husband, and you my good daughter, and my good wife, and mine other good children and

²⁵² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 507/2.

²⁵³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 507/5.

²⁵⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 510/2. [delite: delight]

²⁵⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 510/4-6. [fruteful: fruitful]

²⁵⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 510/16-18. [conuersacion: conversation; counsaile: counsel; verteous: virtuous]

²⁵⁷ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/141-143. This sentiment with regard to his friends is confirmed in his penultimate letter, written to his longstanding friend, Antonio Bonvisi; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 561/1-563/74, esp 563/55-58; cf E E Reynolds, 'The Fame of Saint Thomas More' in *Moreana*, Vol 16, No 62, 1979, 38-39. [gladlie: gladly; pertain: pertain]

²⁵⁸ cf Germain Marc'hadour: 'On Death and Martyrdom: St Thomas More' in *The Portrayal of Life Stages in English Literature, 1500-1800: Infancy, Youth, Marriage, Aging, Death, Martyrdom*. Essays in Honor of Warren Wooden, (eds) Jeanie Watson & Philip McM Pittman. Studies in British History, Vol 10, Lewiston/Lampeter/Queenston: The Edward Mellen Press 1989, 213.

²⁵⁹ Apart from Dame Alice's financial hardship, Margaret was summoned before the Council accused of keeping his head as a relic and hiding his papers; his son John as well as both of his sons-in-law William Roper and John Daunce spent time in prison, as did John Clement, a former tutor to his children. His son-in-law Giles Heron was hanged at Tyburn for treason in 1540, Stapleton, 192-193; cf Bernard Basset, *Born for Friendship*, London: Burns & Oates, 1965, 192; Patricia Metzner, 'Hope in the Life of Thomas More' *Moreana*, Vol XVIII, No 70, 1981, 79.

innocent frendes, in great displeasure and daunger of great harme therby'.²⁶⁰ His fears are confirmed in a letter to Margaret for it appears that his house had been searched and More warns her to be prepared for further disruption. He tells her that some think he was not as poor as a search of his house suggested and that 'some new sodain searches may happe to be made in euery house of ours as narrowly as is possible. Which thinge if euer it so should happe, can make but game to vs that know the trouth of my pouertie, but if they find out my wyues gay girdle and her golden bedes'.²⁶¹ In the context of this letter and his obvious desire to bring some comfort and encouragement to his beleaguered family, this could easily be a family joke. If, as More indicates, they really were poor, would his wife have had golden beads and would the commissioners be looking for her girdles? Or is More simply having some fun at the expense of the censors? That More's letters were being read is tacitly acknowledged in his previous paragraph, when he says that he can write 'no long processe, nor dare aduventure, good daughter, to write often'.²⁶²

Certainly the More family lost much of its wealth.²⁶³ Two letters written by Dame Alice confirm the reduced circumstances of the family. The first was to Henry VIII, confirming the forfeiture to the king of 'all his goodis and cattells and the profytt of all his landes, annuities and fees' together with a plea 'to reteyne and keepe still his moveable goodes and the reuenewes of his landis' to keep both her husband and her household.²⁶⁴ The second was to Cromwell pleading for the re-instatement of her husband's pension in 'my great and extreme necessyte',²⁶⁵ explaining that she had been compelled to sell some of her clothes.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁰ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 509/19-25; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 515/39-44. [perceiue: perceive; sonne: son; daunger: danger]

²⁶¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 540/15-17; cf Miles, xxvi. [sodain: sudden; narrowly: carefully, closely; pouertie: poverty; wyues: wife's; bedes: beads]

²⁶² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 540/5-6. It is possible that this is a hinted acknowledgement that, as his imprisonment became harsher, both correspondence as well as visits were restricted. Another hint is in his letter to Antonio Bonvisi, Rogers, *Correspondence*, 563/57-58. cf n292 below; Ch 7, n46. [processe: narrative, discourse; aduventure: risk]

²⁶³ For example, the manor of South in Kent was confiscated and given to George Boleyn by Henry; cf Ackroyd, 369.

²⁶⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 547/9-11; 548/14-15. [cattells: chattells; profytt: profit; reteyne: retain; reuenewes: revenues]

²⁶⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 554/9. [necessyte: necessity]

²⁶⁶ Later the king gave her £20 a year on which to live; cf E M G Routh, *Thomas More and His Friends*, London: Oxford University Press, 1934, 232; Stapleton, 192, who says the pension was not reinstated until March 1537.

More's family fail to understand his refusal to take the oath; Dame Alice even describes it as a 'scruple'.²⁶⁷ His fear for their spiritual welfare can be read only between the lines of More's writings. Given the circumstances of his imprisonment and his refusal to both take the oath and answer the question of why he refused it, he could only address his concerns for their spiritual welfare very indirectly. In the letter known as *A Dialogue on Conscience*,²⁶⁸ written by Margaret to her step-sister Alice Alington, she relates her efforts to persuade her father to take the oath.²⁶⁹ She, too, describes his stand as a scruple²⁷⁰ and suggests that it is possible for him to set this scruple aside.²⁷¹ Margaret reminds her father that many learned men have taken the oath, and tells him that he will lose friends who may be able to help him if he persists in his stand.²⁷²

In his first letter to his daughter Margaret after his imprisonment, More observes how he was the only layman called to take the oath, which he refused.²⁷³ He was sent into garden, where he watched many of those who had taken it, including 'Maister Doctour Lattemer,... my Lorde of Caunterbury, and very mery I saw hym, for he laughed... Master Doctour Wilson' and comments that he heard that 'my Lorde of Rochester' [John Fisher] and 'Maister Vicare of Croydon' [Rowland Phillips] as well as other priests of London had also done so.²⁷⁴ The authorities, having failed to persuade More to take the oath, presumably thought the sight of so many priests doing so might persuade him to change his mind. If so, this tactic fails. These clerics then 'were spedde apace to their great comfote, so farre forth that Maister Vicare of Croydon, either for gladnes or for drines, or els that it might be sene (quod ille notus erat pontifici)²⁷⁵ went to my Lordes buttry barre, and called for drinke...'²⁷⁶ Ackroyd suggests that Phillips, known for his orthodox views, was not only quenching his thirst but also drowning

²⁶⁷ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 548/38. Dame Alice is writing to Henry VIII.

²⁶⁸ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 514-532, More refers to conscience some 40 times.

²⁶⁹ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 516/2-4.

²⁷⁰ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 514/5.

²⁷¹ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 524/370-371.

²⁷² His family were not alone in attempting to persuade him to take the oath; eg for Margaret: Rogers, *Correspondence*, 508/5-10; 515/39-44; for Cromwell: Rogers, *Correspondence*, 506/129-133; 559/142-143; for Audley: Rogers, *Correspondence*, 512/10-513/52; for More's expansion of Audley's second fable: CW12, 114/20-120/6; for Norfolk: Roper, 71/17-72/3.

²⁷³ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 502/3-6. It should be noted that More's first objection to the oath was a legal one. Roper records that More said 'I may tell thee, Megg, they that haue committed me hither for refusing of this oath not agreeable with the statute, are not by their own lawe able to iustifye my imprisonment'; cf Roper 78/8-12.

²⁷⁴ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 503/37-504/56. For Wilson: cf Ch 8, n65. [Lattemer: Latimer; Caunterbury: Canterbury]

²⁷⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 504/55: that he was known to the high priest; cf Jn 18.15-16.

²⁷⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 504/53-56.

the pangs of his conscience, against which he had almost certainly done violence.²⁷⁷ ‘Whan they had played their pageant and were gone out of the place, than was I called in again’.²⁷⁸

While conscience and the fear of hell were both at the forefront of Thomas More’s mind, he equally resolutely refused to take the oath or to criticize those who did. More consistently repeated that he would not meddle with the consciences of those who had sworn.²⁷⁹ He also consistently wrote during his imprisonment that he would not judge the conscience of anyone.²⁸⁰ But More did make his opinion clear. As seen in the paragraph above, he suggests that Philips went to the ‘buttery barre’ to be seen. Richard Marius suggests that More remained ‘in the olde burned chamber, that loketh in to the gardein’ because ‘the garden below swarmed with me who had sworn the oath, and More did not want to be in their company.’²⁸¹ Maybe More just wishes to reflect on his refusal to take the oath and the path he is choosing. Later in the letter sent by Margaret to Alice Alington, More suggests that at least some of those who took the oath had previously held different views, writing that ‘it is well knowen, that of them that haue sworn it, some of the best lerned before the oth geuen them, saide and plaine affirmed the contrarye, of some such thinges as they haue now sworne in the othe’.²⁸² While More refuses to judge other men’s consciences, he does go on to discuss their possible reasons.

More suggests that retaining the king’s pleasure and avoiding his indignation, the fear of losing worldly goods, or those of their family and friends could ‘happe make some men either swere otherwise than they thinke, or frame their conscience afresh to thinke other wise than they thought’, but rejects such an interpretation for ‘wil I know conceiue of them, I haue better hope of their goodnes than to thinke of them so’.²⁸³ Although recognizing that some might take the oath for reasons stemming from fear, he writes ‘well I wot the change cannot

²⁷⁷ cf Ackroyd, 353. [spedde: sped, taken forthwith; drines: dryness; buttry barre: board or ledge on the top of the buttery hatch [pantry], over which to serve food and drinks]

²⁷⁸ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 504/58-59. Here again More uses ‘pageant’ as in both a play as well as part of the drama of life. cf n9 above; Introduction, nn57 & 58; Ch 2, nn113 & 114.

²⁷⁹ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 502/12-13; 504/61; 505/93; 507/157. The following quotations are from More’s daughter Margaret to Alice Alington; 523/347-348; 528/544-545; 532/11-12; 537/144-145; 547/90-91; 559/130-131.

²⁸⁰ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 502/12-13; 505/93. From the letter of Margaret to Alice: 523/348-349; 527/484-486; 537/142-145; 547/90-91; 549/11-12; 559/130-131.

²⁸¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 503/35-36; cf Marius, 462; Travis Curtright, *The One Thomas More*, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America, 2012, 184-185. [gardein: garden]

²⁸² cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 527/476-479; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 527/486-493. [lerned: learned; oth, othe: oath; geuen: given]

²⁸³ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 527/495-501; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 527/501-503 & 527/503-505.

be good for my soule that ... shoulde growe but by feare'.²⁸⁴ More veils his criticisms claiming that he is unable to see the consciences or rule their hearts of other men, he nevertheless defends his stand when he writes 'But any thinge that euer I saw before, yet at this day to me they seme but as they dyd. And therefore, though they may doe other wise than they might, yet,... I may not'.²⁸⁵ His clearest declaration is that "I neuer entend (God being my good lorde) to pynne my soule at a nother mans backe,... for I knowe not whither he may happe to cary it... Some may do for fauour, and some may doe for feare, and so might they carye my soule a wronge way'.²⁸⁶

Richard Sylvester has examined the letter from Margaret to Alice and the roles assigned to More and Margaret, noting the unflattering part of Eve given to her by her father.²⁸⁷ Chiding her by calling her 'maistres Eue' who would tempt him to swear against his conscience and so go to the devil, he reminds her that 'we two haue talked of this thinge ofter than twice or thrise' and that after many years of studying this question he is unable to alter his mind, and adds 'I looke in this matter but only vnto God'.²⁸⁸ Sylvester argues that if More's family continue to fail to comprehend his stand and 'if they do not understand, if they do not become fully conscious of what his conscience means, then their own spiritual welfare may well be in danger'.²⁸⁹ Sylvester observes that while silence could act as a useful legal protection, in his letters, especially this one, More conveys his reasoning to his family. Sylvester argues that Margaret's role, although vile, would lead her to a sufficient understanding of conscience in general and her father's in particular. Sylvester also suggests that Margaret's last letter to her father provides evidence that she did, finally, understand. In it she no longer seeks to change his mind but offers her prayer that 'our Lorde of his infinite mercye geue you of his heauenly

²⁸⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 530/610-612.

²⁸⁵ Rogers *Correspondence*, 527/492-493; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 521/27-524/366 for the story of Cumpny, a juror who refused to go along with his fellow jurors for 'the passage of my pore soule passeth all good cumpny'.

²⁸⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 521/250-256; cf G Marc'hadour, 'Saint Thomas More and Conscience' (remembering Australia and New Zealand) in *Moreana*, Vol 30, No 113, March 1993, 56. Marc'hadour notes that here the meaning of 'never' is 'not at all' and that More acknowledges the necessity of divine grace to achieve this and the meaning of 'to pynne' is either 'to peg' or 'to glue'. In either case it expresses 'dependence and lack of autonomy'. cf Curtright, 191. cf Ch 8, n72. For the entire quotation, cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 521/250-273 [entend: intend; pynne: fix, glue; cary, carye: carry]

²⁸⁷ Richard S Sylvester, 'Conscience and Consciousness: Thomas More' in *The Author in His Work: Essays on a Problem in Criticism*, (eds) Louis L Martz and Aubrey Williams, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1978, 163-174.

²⁸⁸ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 516/82. [maistres: mistress; Eue: Eve; ofter: more often; twice: twice; thrise: thrice]

²⁸⁹ Sylvester, 170.

comfort, and so to assist you with his speciall grace that ye neuer in any thinge decline from his blessed will, but liue and dye his true obedient seruaunt'.²⁹⁰

In a letter to More, his daughter Margaret writes that the family are unaware why he is shut up again, surmising that this is intended 'to encline you to their will'²⁹¹ by keeping him from church and preventing visitors.²⁹² She also reminds him of his earlier warning of such a possibility as they walked in the garden during a previous visit she had made to the Tower. Perhaps this warning is further evidence of another attempt by More to prepare and strengthen his family for the inevitable. In his reply to Margaret, More suggests that he 'was shett vp againe, vpon some newe causeles suspicion, growen peradventure vpon some secret sinister informacion'²⁹³ which could lead to graver matters being found against him. But he protests his innocence that whenever this particular idea entered his mind, 'the clearnesse of my conscience hath made mine hearte hoppe for ioy'.²⁹⁴ Later in the same letter, he confirms that he has heard that the King may make a new law specifically against him. He acknowledges that while he cannot prevent such a law, 'if I dyed by such a law, I shoulde die for that poynt innocent afore God'.²⁹⁵ In *A Dialogue of Comfort*, his reasoning is set out more clearly in an autobiographical description on conscience which obviously echoes his own situation. He explains that

'a man may (as in dede he may) haue grete cumfort in the clernes of his conscience, that hath a false cryme put vpon hym, & by false witnes provid vpon hym, & he falsely punyshid & put to worldly shame & payne therfor, an hundred tymes mor comfort may he haue in his hart, that where white is callid blak, & right is callid wrong, abidith by the truth & is persecutid for iustice'.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁰ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 539/35-38. [heauenly: heavenly]

²⁹¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 539/15; cf Harpsfield, 173/27-174/4. cf Ch 7, n46. [encline: incline]

²⁹² cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 563/57-58: Further evidence that the authorities prevented visitors, as least on occasion, is found in More's penultimate letter, he writes to his friend Bonvisi of his hope that in heaven we 'shall nede no letters, no walle shall disseuer vs,... no porter shall kepe vs from talkynge together,...' Autobiographical evidence that More was prevented from going to church is intimated in his *Prayer Book*, in which he writes 'the prayer either of a man who is shut up in prison, or... yearning [to go] to church, or any faithful man who yearns for heaven'. The marginalia begins next to Ps 83.2: How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts: but continues down to and including verse 7; cf *Thomas More's Prayer Book*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969, 139, 200. The marginalia concerning the man in prison also incorporates verse 3: My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God'; cf *TMPB*, 139, 200. cf n262 above; Ch 7, n46.

²⁹³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 540/20-22. cf Ch 7, n45. [shett: shut; causeles: causeless; growen: grown; informacion: information]

²⁹⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 540/25-26. cf Ch 4, n153.

²⁹⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/83-84.

²⁹⁶ CW12, 33/20-26; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 540/25-26. cf n294 above. [clernes: clearness; witnes: witness; provid: proved; punyshid: punished; mor: more; blak: black; persecutid: persecuted]

More's Personal Fears in the Tower

More's lifelong practice of his faith and his steadfast habit of prayer provide More with the necessary foundation to underpin his steadfast resolution as he faces imprisonment. His clarity of thought and purpose aid him in confronting his deep personal fears during nearly fifteen months in the Tower. How he handles these fears and meets this challenge is the subject of the following chapters.

Chapter 7: In the Tower: Health, Comparisons & the Challenge of Martyrdom

The last two chapters examined the primary challenges that More faces in the Tower, namely, his understanding of the methods of temptation employed by the devil and the connected fear of his own weakness. This chapter will focus on More's ill health and the methods that he uses to address his predicament in the Tower and the challenge of impending martyrdom. The opposite finalities of heaven and hell and relative ones such as temporary versus eternal pain are used by More to sustain his faith as his execution looms nearer. Could pain, particularly of torture, allow the devil to triumph over him and lead him to damnation?

As More, by this time in his late fifties, began his imprisonment in the Tower he was a sick man, suffering from a number of illnesses, although it is impossible to make an accurate diagnosis at this distance of time.¹ More refers in a letter to 'his diseases, both in his brest of olde',² and during a visit relates to Margaret how 'his reynes now by reason of grauell and stone, and of the crampe also that diuers nights grypeth hym in his legges'.³ He claims that they are no worse than before his imprisonment and Margaret observes that when she visited him he was not in pain.⁴ In letters to both Margaret and to Dr Nicholas Wilson, More admits that on more than one occasion he believed that he would die. To his daughter he writes that 'I am dying alreedy, and haue syns I cam here, bene dyuers tymes in the case that I thought to dye within one houre, and I thank our Lorde I was neuer sorry for yt, (but rather) sorry whan I saw the pang past' and to Wilson he writes that 'I have lyved, my thynckis, a long lyff and now neyther I loke nor I long to lyve myche lenger. I haue syns I came in the Tower loked ones or twyse to haue geyen op my goste ore this and in good faythe myne harte waxed the

¹ cf K M Flegel, 'Thomas More: Was a sick man beheaded?' *Moreana*, Vol 13, No 49, 1976, 15-27; Salvador H Conesa, 'Did Thomas More have a cervical disc lesion?' *Moreana* Vol 21, Nos 83-84, Nov 1984, 27-31. Both these articles suggest possible medical conditions for More's symptoms.

² More complains in June 1532 in a letter to Erasmus of a 'chest ailment' which caused him both discomfort and pain as well as 'worry and fear over the possible consequences'; cf Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *Selected Letters*, New Haven and London, 1961, 173; cf James Monti, *The King's Good Servant*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997, 309. In March 1534, More apologizes to Cromwell for not writing in his own hand, explaining that the reason is 'this disceace of myne, wherof the chieffe occasion ys growne,... by the stowpinge and lenyng on my breste, that I have vsed in wrytinge'; cf Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, 488/281-283.

³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 514/11-13. [reynes: kidneys; grauell: gravel; diuers: several, some; grypeth: grips; legges: legs]

⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 514/13-515/1.

lighter wythe hope therof'.⁵ In what could be an autobiographical comment, one of the protagonists in *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* thinks he has only a few days to live and although 'among many paynfull in which I loke euery day to depart, my mendyng days come very seld & are very shortly gone... so haue I dyuers such days together, as euery day of them I loke evyn for to dye'.⁶ In his earlier *Dialogue concerning Heresies*, More writes about illness, that trouble or sickness are not signs of God's hatred 'but yf he fele hym selfe grudge and be impacyent and euyll content with it. For than is it a token of wrath and vengeance, and is to the sufferer as fruteless as paynfull. And in effecte nothyng els but y^e begynnynge of his hell euyn here'.⁷ However, if it is born patiently and meekly it results in great merit before God. Is it possible to see a lurking fear in both these quotations?⁸ Is More afraid that the pains he suffers from his ill-health in the Tower could lead to hell if not accepted willingly, even if such lack of acceptance occurs only as a complaint or murmur to himself? He certainly believes that illness can be God's invisible instruments to punish us and mentions a hot fever, migraine, sore throat, palsy, gout, cramp, back problems,⁹ all of which render someone 'as vnable to rise as though he lay by the feet fast in the stokkes'.¹⁰ His health deteriorated seriously during his incarceration,¹¹ as noted by Leland Miles.¹² At his trial More had to be given a chair because of his 'longe lingring disease, what for my present weaknes and debilitie' and leant on a stick.¹³ On the day of his execution, Reginald Pole

⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, to Margaret, 553/91-95; to Dr Nicholas Wilson, 537/148-151; cf Miles, xxix. cf Ch 9, n97. [syns: since; loked: looked; twyse: twice; geyen: given; op: up; goste: ghost, soul, spirit]

⁶ CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, (eds) Louis Martz & Frank Manley, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 85/16. cf Ch 9, n97. [mendyng: mending, better, ie. feeling better; seld: seldom; dyuers: several, some]

⁷ CW6, 216/2-7. In *A Dialogue of Comfort*, More also writes that 'euery tribulacion the devill vseth for temptacion to bryng vs to impaciencie & therby to murmur and grudge & blasphemye'; cf CW12, 103/19-20. cf Ch 3, n24; Ch 8, nn51 & 61f. [but yf: unless; impacyent: impatient; vengeance: vengeance; fruteless: fruitless]

⁸ cf CW6, 217/7-9.

⁹ cf CW12, 274/16-275/1.

¹⁰ CW12, 275/2-3; cf CW12, 274/16-275/3. More uses the idea of both illness and sin as types of prison in his earlier work, *The Last Things*; cf CW1, *The Last Things*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 175/25-176/11. cf n91 below; Ch 2, nn222 & 223.

¹¹ The Tower of London was an unhealthy place; the 9th Earl of Kildare died in September 1534 while imprisoned there; cf Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1998, 368.

¹² Leland Miles (ed), *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1965, Introduction, xxix.

¹³ cf Nicholas Harpsfield, *Life of More*, (eds) E V Hitchcock & R W Chambers, London: Early English Text Society, 1932, 184/6-14; cf Henry de Vocht, *Acta Thomae Mori. History of the Reports of his Trial and Death with an Unedited Contemporary Narrative*, Louvain: Institute for the Economics of the University, 1947, 51. [lingring: lingering; debilitie: debility]

describes his hair as white¹⁴ and Stapleton observes that ‘his beard was long and disordered, his face was pale and thin from the rigour of his confinement’.¹⁵

Thomas More spent the last fourteen and a half months of his life imprisoned in the Tower of London, emerging only for his trial and execution. The winter of 1534-35 was harsh,¹⁶ and More’s fellow prisoner John Fisher complained of the cold in a letter to Cromwell.¹⁷ Presumably More also suffered from the cold, despite the fact that his cell had straw mats both on the floor and hanging on the walls.¹⁸ His friend of nearly forty years, Antonio Bonvisi may have relieved some of his deprivations, sending him food and wine daily¹⁹ and a warm, camlet gown for his execution.²⁰ In More’s penultimate letter, he thanks Bonvisi for his ‘merueylous... faithful... constant’ friendship²¹ and describes the latter’s continued kindness as ‘a noble gifte procedyng of a certain singular benignity of God’²² noting his inability to repay Bonvisi due to ‘this vnfortunate shipwracke of myne’.²³

On that spring day in April 1534, when More arrived at the Tower, he surely knew what his end would be. A number of scholars, including Geoffrey Elton and Leland Miles, appear to agree with this.²⁴ The early lives of More indicate that More began to prepare for his

¹⁴ Reginald Pole’s *Pro Ecclesiae Unitatis Defensione*, cf xciii, was written and sent to Henry VIII within a few months of More’s death; cf Joseph G Dwyer (trans), *Pole’s Defense of the Unity of the Church*, Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1965, 230; cf T E Bridgett, *Life and Writings of Blessed Thomas More*, London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 2nd edn, 1924, 415. Pole uses ‘*canum*’ in Latin, which can be translated as either white or grey. Bridgett uses white, while Dwyer uses ‘grey-haired’. Pole was not present at More’s execution, writing ‘separated by such a great distance’, cf Dwyer, 230.

¹⁵ Thomas Stapleton, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, (ed) E E Reynolds, London: Burns & Oates, 1966, 187-88. Stapleton’s sources were good; they included members of More’s household as well as close friends, cf xv, xvii-xviii.

¹⁶ cf T H Baker, *Records of the Seasons, Prices of Agricultural Produce and Phenomena Observed in the British Isles*, London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co, 1883, 117. Baker records that there was frost from November, 1534 until February, 1535 and that the Thames froze below Gravesend.

¹⁷ cf E E Reynolds, *St John Fisher*, Wheathampstead: Anthony Clarke Books, Hertfordshire, rev edn 1972, 252. Fisher wrote to Cromwell on 22nd December, 1534.

¹⁸ cf CW12, 277/6-12; cf Harpsfield, 97/13-20. The lady in the story is taken to represent Dame Alice, and the description of the prisoner’s cell considered to be that of More.

¹⁹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 563/54.

²⁰ Stapleton, 187. Thomas Pope, the Lieutenant of the Tower, persuaded More not to wear it; cf Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas Moore*, (ed) E V Hitchcock, London: Early English Text Society, 1935, 102/3-7.

²¹ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 559-561 for the Latin, 561-563 for the English translation. More’s letter is merely dated 1535, and placed after his letter to Margaret Roper of June 1535. The adjectives More uses to describe Bonvisi are found: for marvellous, cf 562/29; for faithful, cf 562/30, 39; for constant, cf 562/36, 40. [merueylous: marvellous]

²² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 562/41-42. [procedyng: proceeding]

²³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 562/32. cf Ch 9, n148. [vnfortunate: unfortunate; shipwracke: shipwreck]

²⁴ cf G R Elton, ‘Sir Thomas More and the Opposition to Henry VIII’, *Studies in Tudor and Stuart Politics and Government*, Vol 1, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974, 155; cf Miles, xxviii.

‘trouble’, as Roper describes it,²⁵ after his resignation as Lord Chancellor.²⁶ John Guy notes that martyrdom, ‘after his resignation,... was always an end in view’.²⁷ Guy previously states that ‘by 1534 he was a prisoner in the Tower, where he began the preparation of his soul for the end’.²⁸ In one sense this is perfectly true, for More’s sole focus after his resignation in 1532 is now on his immediate as well as his eternal fate. However, it should not be overlooked that More’s awareness of death is an integral part of his life-long spiritual outlook and in this sense More had been preparing himself for death throughout his entire life.²⁹ Elton observes that the temptation for historians is not ‘to forget the end of the story’.³⁰ It is always easy for the benefit of hindsight to cloud an accurate perception of how historical events unfold, but Elton also claims that ‘it is exceedingly rash to suppose that his whole life, or even the last few years of it, was simply a preparation for the tragic outcome’.³¹

If this is understood to mean that few things are completely inevitable before they happen, this is quite true. But the evidence suggests that More had envisaged execution as a possibility even before he entered Henry’s service. Dermot Fenlon notes that More’s *History of King Richard III* and his most famous work, *Utopia*, were both written during the 1510s and Fenlon believes that More’s political philosophy and his reasons for entering the king’s service are to be found within their pages.³² It is a philosophy based on the fact that tyranny ‘is the everyday temptation of those who exercise authority’.³³ In *King Richard III*, More describes royal service, or statesmanship, as ‘kinges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaied vpon scaffoldes’.³⁴ Public service, most especially under a tyrannical king, is a delicate balancing act. More witnesses the arrest of Henry VII’s unpopular tax collectors, Edmund Dudley and Richard Empson within days of Henry VIII’s accession to the throne in April 1509. Both were beheaded on Tower Hill in August 1510, despite having

²⁵ cf Roper, 55/17.

²⁶ cf Roper, 55/17-56/13; Harpsfield, 77/1-19; Stapleton, 144-145.

²⁷ John Guy, *Thomas More*, London: Arnold, 2000, 181.

²⁸ John Guy, ‘Thomas More as Successor to Wolsey’, *Thought*, No 52, 1977, 275-292, 291.

²⁹ cf eg Basset, *Born for Friendship*, London: Burns & Oates, 1965, 30.

³⁰ Elton, ‘Sir Thomas More and the Opposition to Henry VIII’, 155.

³¹ cf G R Elton, ‘Sir Thomas More and the Opposition to Henry VIII’, 155.

³² Dermot Fenlon, ‘Thomas More and Tyranny’ in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 32, No 4, October 1981, 453-476.

³³ Fenlon, 453.

³⁴ CW2, *The History of King Richard III*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963, 81/6-7. cf n37 below; Introduction, n58; Ch 2, n113; Ch 9, n214.

acted on the late king's orders.³⁵ Three years later, Edmund de la Pole, the Earl of Suffolk was executed in May 1513 after his brother Richard had claimed the throne in his own right and had been recognized as the rightful king of England by Louis XII of France.³⁶ More is, indeed, fully aware of the dangers of the national stage that constitutes public life that can, for the individual, end on the public stage that is the scaffold.³⁷

More's reasoning is found in *Utopia* where the practical philosophy of the effective statesman 'knows its stage, adapts itself to the play in hand, and performs its role neatly and appropriately'.³⁸ It requires dedication for 'you must not abandon the ship in a storm because you cannot control the winds'.³⁹ More finishes this completely realistic outlook with practical advice of damage limitation: 'Whatever you cannot turn to good you must at least make as little bad as you can', adding ironically 'For it is impossible that all should be well unless all men were good, a situation which I do not expect for a great many years to come!'.⁴⁰ Although More's perception that execution is a potential outcome of royal service, nevertheless a possibility is not an inevitability. However, More's understanding of the nature of Henry's capricious and sometimes despotic character, allowed him to perceive the dangers of serving this particular monarch. It was probably in the early 1520s when Henry visited More at Chelsea⁴¹ and 'walked with him by the space of an houre, holdinge his arme aboute

³⁵ cf S J Gunn, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online; accessed 26/10/2015; M M Condon, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online; accessed 26/10/2015; G R Elton, *England under the Tudors*, London: Methuen & Co Ltd, repr 1967, 71. De la Pole and Buckingham were different for both belonged to the nobility.

³⁶ cf Sean Cunningham, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online; accessed 22/6/17. Eight years later, in 1521 the Duke of Buckingham was executed. A later victim of Henry VIII would be Edward, Duke of Buckingham in May 1521; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 160/34-161/13. The duke in the anecdote may well be this duke for his arrest and trial resemble More's description although this identification is 'speculative'; cf CW1, Commentary, 268.

³⁷ cf Fenlon, 458; cf CW2, 81/6-7. cf n34 above; Introduction, n58; Ch2, n113; Ch9, n214.

³⁸ CW4, *Utopia*, (eds) Edward Surtz & J H Hexter, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965, 99/14-15. According to Roper, More, as a child, 'wold he at Christmas tyde sodenly sometimes steppe in among the payers, and neuer studying for the matter, make a parte of his owne there presently among them, which made the lookers on more sporte then all the payiers beside'; cf Roper, 5/6-10.

³⁹ CW4, 99/34-35. More, however, did just that. The Submission of the Clergy occurred on 15th May, 1532 and More realized that the Church in this country had ceased to be independent. He also realized that he could do no more without compromising his integrity and resigned during the afternoon of the following day, 16th May, when he returned the Great Seal to Henry VIII pleading ill health, which was no doubt partially true; cf Peter Marshall, 'The Last Years' in *Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 116-117; Cathy Curtis, 'More's Public Life' in *CCTM*, 86-87.

⁴⁰ CW4, 101/1-4.

⁴¹ cf Roper, 20/25-26. An accurate dating of this event seems problematic. Dermot Fenlon suggests c1522-23 during Henry's second war with France, cf 463; E E Reynolds suggests before the Battle of Pavia in February, 1525, cf *The Field is Won: The Life and Death of St Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1968, 183; and Gerard B Wegemer suggests c1524; cf G B Wegemer & S W Smith, (eds), *A Thomas More Source Book*, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America, 2004, 27.

his necke'.⁴² Roper records his pleasure at More's favour with the king but More replies revealingly 'I may tell thee I haue no cawse to be proud thereof, for if my head could winne him a castle in Fraunce... it should not faile to goe'.⁴³ More understood the character of his monarch and he walked into court life with a full appreciation of the dangers that this entailed.

If Henry thought that he could break More's opposition by imprisoning him, as the months of 1534 passed and turned into 1535, he no doubt realized his hope was a vain one. Henry failed comprehensively to understand More, whose focus is continually on heaven. More exemplifies the realization of the medieval – indeed, Christian – belief that this world is merely a preparation for the next, that death is the gateway to eternal life.⁴⁴ The depth of More's faith combined with his determination not to deny his conscience or to compromise his integrity left Henry, with his flexible morality, at a loss to comprehend the spiritual motives of his erstwhile favourite. More's lifelong aim was to reach heaven, and thus he perceived everything as a means toward this goal and, equally, everything else as subordinate to it. With his understanding that the ultimate destiny of each soul is either heaven or hell, it follows that salvation, and how to obtain it, is the only question worthy of life-long attention. As More's imprisonment progresses, it becomes increasingly harsh as the authorities attempted to break his resolve. Margaret writes to her father that they are unable to discover why they have 'shutte you vp againe'⁴⁵ and surmises that the authorities 'thought it wer neuer possible to encline you to their will, except it were by restrayning you fro the church, and the company of my good mother your deare wife and vs your childern'.⁴⁶ More replies reminding

⁴² Roper, 20/26-21/1.

⁴³ Roper, 21/10-13. [cawse: cause; proud: proud; winne: win; Fraunce: France]

⁴⁴ cf More's *Epitaph* in T E Bridgett, *Life and Writings of Blessed Thomas More*, 250-252; a distych in CW3.2, *Latin Poems*, (eds) Clarence H Miller, Leicester Bradner, Charles A Lynch & Revilo P Oliver, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984, *Epigrams* No 278, 302 & 303, written c1532; CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 229/6-8. For More's use of this idea, cf Erasmus, 'De Praeparatione ad Mortem' (Preparing for Death) in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol 70, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 407. cf Ch 5, n46.

⁴⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 539/11; cf Rogers, 540/20-21. [shutte: shut]

⁴⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 539/11-20 & 540/9-10: Margaret Roper's letter to her father, and his reply stating that he had previously been able to attend church and had the freedom to walk in the garden. In another letter to Margaret, More writes in the past tense that 'in this wretched worlde I haue been very gladde of your company and you of mine, and yet wolde if it might be... so we may reioyce and enioy ech others company,... euerlastingly in the glorious blysse of heauen: and in the menetye, with good counsaile and prayer ech help other thitherwarde'; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 545/23-28. For his stricter confinement, cf Harpsfield, 173/27-174/2. A possible reference to More having been prevented from attending church is also found in his final prayer before his execution in which he writes 'Make vs al good lorde virtually perticipaunt of that holye sacrament thys day,...;

her of his warning that this might happen and also that it may be due to ‘some newe causeles suspicion’⁴⁷ and fears a ‘ferther lawe for me’.⁴⁸ Another implied confirmation that visitors were restricted is found in his letter to Antonio Bonvisi, written just prior to his execution. More writes of his hope that God ‘wyll brynge vs from this wretched and stormy world, in to his reste, where shall nede no letters, where no walle shall disseuer vs, where no porter shall kepe vs from talkynge together, but that we maye haue the fruicion of the eternall ioy with God...’⁴⁹ This comment to Bonvisi also characteristically demonstrates More’s continual and single minded devotion to attain salvation. His letter to Margaret ends also focussing on God, comforting his daughter with a plea not to worry: ‘And I praye you all praye for me, and I shall praye for you all. And take no thought for me what so euer you shal happe to heare, but be mery in God’.⁵⁰ While More seeks to comfort his family, he must also deal with his fears.

The question that needs to be resolved is how More, sitting alone in his cell in the Tower, for visits from his family were intermittent,⁵¹ wrestles with and overcomes his fear of pain and weakness. In *A Dialogue of Comfort* More tells of ‘the terrour of shamfull & paynfull deth, that poynt so sodaynly puttith vs in obliuion of all that shuld be our comfort’.⁵² C S Lewis acknowledges the imaginative horror of such a fate, reminding us how the mind can become numb in the condemned cell, and the terror can return ‘sodaynly’.⁵³ Indeed, how does More even remain sane when facing the possibility of torture as well as the horrific prospect of death by hanging, disembowelling and quartering?⁵⁴

cf CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 230/31-32. In *A Treatise on the Blessed Body*, More uses virtually in the sense of spiritually, as opposed to sacramentally; cf CW13, 192/15-16. cf Ch 6, n291. [restrayning: restraining; childern: children]

⁴⁷ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 540/21. cf Ch 6, n293.

⁴⁸ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/80-82: More’s fear of a new law to be made against him; cf Harpsfield, 174/6-8, 20-25. The Act of Supremacy and the Act of Treasons were passed in November, 1534; the Treasons Act came into force on 1st February, 1535, but More was attainted by a separate act passed specifically against him; cf G R Elton, *Policy and Police*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, 402. For the on/off pressure used by authorities against More, cf Leland Miles, ‘With a Coal? The Composition of Thomas More’s *Dialogue of Comfort*’, in *Philological Quarterly*, Vol 45, No 2, April 1966, 437-442.

⁴⁹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 563/55-60. It is also likely that communication was infrequent too, as he writes to his daughter that he can ‘wryte you no long processe, nor dare aduenture, good doughter, to wryte often’; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 540/5-6. cf Ch 6, n262. [brynge: bring; disseuer: separate; fruicion: enjoyment, pleasurable possession]

⁵⁰ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 544/163-165.

⁵¹ cf nn19-23 & 49 above.

⁵² CW12, 281/4-5. cf Ch 6, nn56-57.

⁵³ C S Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, excluding Drama*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962, 178. cf Ch 9, n50.

⁵⁴ More was, of course, beheaded, but the sentence was the traditional one inflicted upon those convicted of treason: hanging, drawing and quartering. Until almost the last moment, when Henry VIII commuted the sentence to beheading, this was how More would have assumed he would die.

At the very beginning of *A Dialogue of Comfort*, More sets out the aim of his writing, so that it would provide ‘comfortable counsayles’ to balance the ‘manyfold feres’ of his family.⁵⁵ It is, primarily, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* [my emphasis]. Its intention, as stated by More is that they, and by extension his other readers,⁵⁶ would have a ‘store of comfort afore hand redy by you, to resort to & to lay vp in your hart, as a treacle agaynst the poyson of all desperat dreade, that myght rise of occacion of sore trybulacion’.⁵⁷ What is tribulation? Tribulation in this world ‘is euery such thing, as trowbleth & greveth the man, eyther in body or in mynd’⁵⁸ and ‘semeth generally to signifie nothyng els, but some kynd of grefe eyther payne of the body or hevynes of the mynd’.⁵⁹ More observes that grief of mind far surpasses that of grief of body.⁶⁰ Tribulation also includes the loss of ‘goodes of fortune, reches, favour, & frendes, fame, worldly worship, & such other thynges, or of the body as bewtie, strength, agilitie, quiknes, & helth’⁶¹ whether they are taken from us by fortune or force, and even the fear of their loss can result in adversity or tribulation.⁶² More also observes that grief of mind far surpasses that of grief of body.⁶³

More rationalizes his imprisonment in order to allay his fears; the first problem to solve is to see actual reality in order to quell fears that are in fact only false perceptions. More’s analogies which he creates to view things through the lens of reality rather than the lens of fantasy and misconception are practical and down to earth. One example he uses is of a man who mistakes a hedge for a long row of soldiers; dawn reveals that these ranks of soldiers is nothing other than a long hedge.⁶⁴ Continuing his advice on seeing the reality of things, rather

⁵⁵ cf CW12, 8/19-20; cf CW12, 4/1-5. cf Ch 6, n251.

⁵⁶ It is only on the final page of the *Dialogue of Comfort* that Vincent tells Uncle Anthony that ‘I purpose... to put your good counsayle in remembrauns, not in our own langage onely, but in the Almayne (German) tong to’; cf CW12, 320/13-16. This suggests that More envisages a much wider audience for his writing, possibly even an international one, than just his family. A wider audience is also suggested at CW12, 79/7-10. cf Marshall, 221; cf Howard B Norland, ‘Comfort through Dialogue: More’s Response to Tribulation’ in *Moreana*, Vol XXIV, No 93, 1987, 64.

⁵⁷ CW12, 9/11-13. This dialogue is conducted between the aged Uncle Anthony and his nephew, Vincent. Vincent consults Uncle Anthony for advice for ‘some of our pore family be fallen into suche dumpes, that scantly can any such comfort as my pore wyt can give them, any thyng asswage their sorow’; cf CW12, 6/16-18. cf Ch 6, n251. [redy: ready; poyson: poison; myght: might; occacion: occasion; trybulacion: tribulation]

⁵⁸ CW12, 50/18-20; cf CW12, 10/6-7. [trowbleth: troubles; greveth: grieves, vexes, troubles]

⁵⁹ CW12, 10/6-7. [kynd: kind; signifie: signify; grefe: grief; hevynes: sorrow, depression, grief]

⁶⁰ CW12, 50/21/24.

⁶¹ CW12, 10/1-3; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 153/24-25; CW13, *A Treatise upon the Passion*, 8/5-8. cf Ch 2, n162. [reches: riches; bewtie: beauty; quiknes: liveliness, animation; helth: health]

⁶² cf CW12, 10/4-5.

⁶³ CW12, 50/21/24.

⁶⁴ CW12, 109/29-110/26; cf G B Wegemer, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, Princeton: Scepter Publishers, 1997, 195-196. Wegemer notes two other stories which elaborate on his theme of misunderstanding and perceptions that make us fear much more than is necessary: for the scrupulous ass whose knowledge of the

than the perceptions of imaginative fear, More notes that, in fear, we assume that the sounds in the wood during the night represent ‘not onely the lions whelps, but ouer that all the bestes of the wode beside’ which daytime reveals to be ‘no lyon at all, but a sely rude rorying asse’.⁶⁵ These down to earth illustrations created by More help on the simple imaginative level. But More also reveals his spiritual attitude to such meditations that differentiate between fantasy and reality. The sufferings of imprisonment or any other tribulation reveal a spiritual dimension so that imprisonment or persecution for the faith cannot shake it. Faith remains firm for such a situation has been forseen and preparation has been made through prayer and meditation.

More does not just react to his fears or his situation, he anticipates them. He had taken this yet-to-be written advice even before his imprisonment. More composes his unfinished *Treatise on the Passion* before his arrest. In the seventh of the Collects found within the work, More prays ‘that I be neuer to thy displeasure partener, nor giue mine assent to follow the sinful deuice of any wicked counsail’.⁶⁶ This reflects his own predicament and may possibly have been written around the time of his first interrogation concerning Elizabeth Barton, known as the Nun of Kent.⁶⁷ If this prayer can be connected to More’s first pre-arrest interrogation, it can also be linked to Roper’s descriptions of the same event. More’s reply to their threats is: ‘My lordes... these terrours be argumentes for Children, and not for me’.⁶⁸ Noting More’s merriment on the way home, Roper asks if all is well. More’s reply that ‘I reioyced, sonne,... that I had geuen the diuill a fowle fall, and that with those Lordes I had gone so farre, as without greate shame I could never goe back agayne’,⁶⁹ indicates a mind set at peace, with courage and sincerity, for the trials he correctly anticipated. Ackroyd suggests the *Treatise on the Passion* enables More him to concentrate his mind and his faith in an age

world enables him to shake of his scrupulosity: CW12, 114/20-119/30; for the fear that instigates the temptation to suicide: CW12, 122f.

⁶⁵ CW12, 110/30-31 & 111/3. [sely: silly]

⁶⁶ CW13, *Passion*, 75/23-25; cf CW13, *Passion*, 74/6-9.

⁶⁷ The exact date of this meeting is unknown. John Guy suggests late February and Richard Marius suggests a few days before 7th March; cf Guy, *Thomas More*, 231; Richard Marius, *Thomas More*, London: Collins, 1986, 453. Peter Ackroyd places the meeting after More’s letter to Cromwell; cf Rogers, *Correspondence, Epistle* 197, 480-488. The next two of More’s letters, the first to Henry VIII, the second to Cromwell are both dated 5th March, which suggests a date in late February or extremely early March for the meeting; cf Rogers, *Correspondence, Epistle* 198, 488-491 & *Epistle* 199, 491-501.

⁶⁸ Roper, 67/9-11. cf Ch 6, 197; Conclusion, n20.

⁶⁹ Roper, 69/20-23.

of anxiety; more deliberately, perhaps, it was also a means by which he prepared himself for his own death.⁷⁰

Those that have been prepared through ‘substanciall advise & good counsayle [are] well armyd agaynst it’.⁷¹ Such foresight in meditating upon suffering means that ‘all the devilles in hell with all the wrestlyng that they can make, shall neuer be hable to wrest it out of their hart’.⁷² Preparations and considerations allow success for such anticipation means that with our focus upon God, our faith becomes ‘not a sodayne sleyght affeccion of sufferaunce for godes sake, but by a long contynuaunce, a strong depe rotid habit, not like a ride redy to wave with euery wind, nor like a rotelesse tre scant vpp an end in a lose hepe of light sand, that will with a blast or two be blowen down’.⁷³

Tribulation is necessary for no man can reach heaven without it, argues More and St Paul says ‘through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of heaven’.⁷⁴ In order to seek comfort from God, the basic necessity of faith is required and faith, writes More, is ‘in dede the gracious gift of god himself’.⁷⁵ ‘Syth all our principall coumforte must come of God, we must first presuppose... the grounde & foundacion of fayth’⁷⁶ and ‘neuer cease to cal vpon God therefore’.⁷⁷ For unless a man believes that ‘holye scripture is the woorde of God, and that the woorde of God is true, how can a man take any coumforte of that, that the scripture telleth him therin’?⁷⁸ The comfort to be sought ‘is to wit the graciouse help & ayd of god, to move styre and gide vs forward, in the referryng all our gostly comfort, yee and our worldly comfort to, all vnto that heavenly end’.⁷⁹ The principal comfort in tribulation is ‘the desire and longing to be by god comforted’⁸⁰ and it is the first cause of comfort for they seek ‘comfort where they can not fayle to fynd yt’.⁸¹ God will provide comfort for He has promised ‘aske and you shall haue’⁸² and since such a desire is good, it is a sign to those who possess a good

⁷⁰ Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1998, 348-349.

⁷¹ CW12, 202/2-3; cf Wegemer, 198-199. [substanciall: solid, sound; advise: advice; armyd: armed]

⁷² CW12, 198/30-32; cf CW12, 281/13. cf n180 below.

⁷³ CW12, 205/13-17. cf Ch 6, n24; Ch 9, n52.

⁷⁴ Acts 14.21; cf CW12, 43/21-22.

⁷⁵ CW12, 12/29.

⁷⁶ CW12, 12/8-12. [coumforte: comfort; foundacion: foundation]

⁷⁷ CW12, 13/26. [cal: call]

⁷⁸ CW12, 12/17-20. [woorde: word]

⁷⁹ CW12, 10/27-29. cf Ch 6, n109. [to wit: namely]

⁸⁰ CW12, 14/9-10.

⁸¹ CW12, 15/27 & 15/29-30; cf Jn 16.24. cf Ch 6, n108; Ch 8, n22.

⁸² CW12, 15/29-30; cf Jn 16.24; cf Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, (ed) Michael G Sargent, Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2004, 106/28-29. cf Ch 8, nn22 & 199.

faith 'that he is not an abiect cast out of godes gracious favour'.⁸³ However, More goes much further than this, contending that as every good intention is inspired by God's goodness, this is itself a further comfort because by that desire we 'perceyve a sure vndowtid token, that toward our fynall saluacion our saviour is hym selfe so graciously besy about vs'.⁸⁴

More gives several possible causes of tribulation and explains its many benefits. One benefit is that for good men it is tribulation 'to fele in them selfe the conflyte of the flessch agaynst the sowle, the rebellion of sensualitie agaynst the rule & gouernaunce of reson' for this provides a God-given opportunity 'to strive agaynst yt & fight with all, & by reason & grace to master yt' and so gain merit before God.⁸⁵ The problem is that tribulations are misunderstood and misinterpreted as an injury rather than as the great benefit that they really are.⁸⁶ It is an aspect of God's mercy for when He sends tribulation, it 'servith ordinarily as a meane of amendment'.⁸⁷

Another benefit is that tribulations were 'ordeyned of god for the punyshment of synne' even if this cannot be identified.⁸⁸ More reasons that tribulation can bring benefits for 'such is God's kindness that even when we are negligent and slumbering on the pillow of our sins, He disturbs us from time to time, shakes us, strikes us, and does His best to wake up by means of tribulations'.⁸⁹ As tribulation is a means of amendment for sin, it is also connected with preservation from it. More uses imprisonment as one example of tribulation for it is a place that can protect us from both harm and sin. He asks 'how many men get owt of prison, that hap on such harms abrode, as the prison shuld haue kept them from'.⁹⁰ Illness provides another example for it is a different type of prison that can render a man as immobile 'as though he lay by the feet fast in the stokkes'.⁹¹

⁸³ CW12, 16/23-24. [abiect: outcast]

⁸⁴ CW12, 16/30-32; cf CW12, 16/29-32 & 153/13-17; Thomas a Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, (trans) Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 2nd impression 1955, Bk III, Ch 17, No 12. cf Ch 3, n31. [perceyve: perceive; vndowtid: undoubted, certain; about: about]

⁸⁵ CW12, 20/31-21/2 & 21/6-8; cf Rom 7-8, esp 7.22-25. [conflyte: conflict; sensualitie: sensuality; gouernaunce: governance; reson: reason]

⁸⁶ cf CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, (ed & trans) Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 203/5-7; cf Clarence H Miller, CW14, *De Tristitia*, Introduction, 759-760.

⁸⁷ CW12, 17/20-21. [servith: serves]

⁸⁸ CW12, 17/16-17; cf CW12, 24/7-8. [ordeyned: ordained; punyshment: punishment]

⁸⁹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 203/1-4.

⁹⁰ CW12, 22/8-9.

⁹¹ CW12, 275/2-3; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 175/25-176/11; CW12, 274/16-275/12. cf n10 above; Ch 2, nn222 & 223. [stokkes: stocks]

Tribulation should be understood as ‘a graciouse gyfte of god’ which requires a steadfast faith.⁹² It is

A gyfte that he specially gaue his speciall frendes, the thyng that in scripture is highly commendid & praysid, A thyng wherof the contrary long contynued is perilous, A thyng which but yf god send it, men haue nede by penaunce to put vppon them selfe and seke it, A thyng that helpith to purge our synnes passid, A thyng that preserueth vs fro sinne that els wold come, A thyng that causeth vs set les by the world, A thyng that excitith vs to draw more toward god, A thyng that much mynsheth our paynes in purgatory, A thyng that mych encreseth our fynall reward in hevyn, The thyng by which our saviour entrid his own kyngdome, The thyng with which all his apostelles folowid hym thether, The thyng which our saviour exortith all men to, The thyng without which (he sayth) we be not his dicyples, The thyng without which no man can get to hevyn.⁹³

Tribulation can therefore be beneficial, indeed curative, for ‘euery tribulacion which any tyme falleth vnto vs, ys eyther sent to be medicinable yf men will so take yt, or may become medicynable yf men will so make it, or is better than medicynable but yf we will forsake yt’.⁹⁴ For while tribulation is sent by God as punishment for sin, nevertheless it also mercifully provides a means of amendment.⁹⁵ Tribulation is, therefore, spiritually fruitful, especially when it leads to a focus on seeking God where everyone will certainly find it. By seeking comfort in God, especially through prayer, tribulation provides the opportunity ‘for the profit of his pacience & encrease of his merite’⁹⁶ and ‘by the pacient sufferance of their tribulacion, they shall attayne his favour, & for their payne receve reward at his hand in heven’.⁹⁷ Even if some tribulation sent by God is not directly caused by sin, it may either preserve us ‘from some synnes in which we were els lyke to fall’ or it may work for ‘the profit of his pacience & encrease of his merite’.⁹⁸ This is clearly seen by the fact that ‘in tribulacion which commeth you wot well in many sondry kyndes, any man that is not a dull best or a desperat wretch, callith vppon god, not houerly but right hartely, & settith his hart

⁹² CW12, 75/11; cf CW12, 13/24-26 & 14/9-10 & 75/8; cf Alistair Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983, 229.

⁹³ CW12, 75/11-24. [commendid: commended; praysid: prayed; contynued: continued; penaunce: penance; seke: seek; passid: passed; preserueth: preserves; excitith: moves, stirs; encreseth: increases; apostelles: apostles; folowid: followed; thether: thither, to that place; exortith: exhorts, encourages; dicyples: disciples]

⁹⁴ CW12, 23/22-25; cf CW12, 24/2-13 & 30/20-21. cf Ch 8, n29. [medicinable, medicynable: curative, possessed of healing properties; but yf: unless]

⁹⁵ cf CW12, 17/15-21; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 203/1-4; cf Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence*, 229.

⁹⁶ CW12, 24/10-11; cf CW12, 21/8 & 28/15-16 & 30/20 & 31/13-14; cf eg 2 Cor 12.1-10; Job 6.2. cf Ch 8, n26.

⁹⁷ CW12, 10/23-24; cf eg CW12, 28/15-16 & 30/24-28 & 31/12-14 & 36/14-16 & 253/31-254/3. More also says that suffering tribulation patiently can lessen the pains of purgatory; cf CW12, 36/5-7. In the case of death, it can remove the necessity for purgatory altogether; cf CW12, 33/3-6. Tribulation, particularly in the form of persecution, can be God’s method of keeping us from hell; cf CW12, 35/22. cf Ch 6, n108; Ch 8, n36. [attayne: reach; suffraunce: endurance, consent, acquiescence, sufferance; receve: receive]

⁹⁸ CW12, 24/9-11; cf CW12, 20/31-21/8. cf n97 above. [encrease: increase]

full hole vppon his request, so sore he longeth for ease & helpe of his hevynes'.⁹⁹ More contends that whatever the pains of tribulation are, they help diminish the pains of purgatory¹⁰⁰ through the merites of cristes passion.¹⁰¹ More states unequivocally that tribulation has 'no litell prehemynence' in merit,¹⁰² and of 'a right greate reward in hevin'.¹⁰³ More contends that this is especially true when tribulation appears in the forms of either temptation,¹⁰⁴ or persecution.¹⁰⁵ More never takes his focus off the goal of obtaining salvation; and here in his Tower writings he reiterates it once again for his readers.

In another of his Tower works, *De Tristitia*, More considers Christ's suffering in the garden of Gethsemane prior to this arrest.¹⁰⁶ Written in the shadow of his impending execution, More gains comfort from the example of Christ who is the 'the commander' whose lesson to us is humility, illustrated by lying flat on the ground before God the Father.¹⁰⁷ Christ's teaches His followers and the military language He employs indicates the depths of the spiritual struggle required. Christ tells His disciples to watch and pray – and in imminent danger, we should ask others to watch and pray on our behalf – He places His trust in God alone by moving away from the disciples and after praying 'Take this cup away from me' He refers it to God's will, adding 'but yet not what I will, but what you will'.¹⁰⁸ Christ teaches the correct way to approach God, not lazily, negligently, slothfully or with a distracted mind¹⁰⁹ but in a 'most humble mode of subjection',¹¹⁰ and that we should serve God in both body and soul and that a reverent bodily posture increases the soul's reverence and devotion.¹¹¹

⁹⁹ CW12, 65/17-21. [wot: know; sondry: sundry, various; houerly: lightly, inattentively; hartely: sincerely, earnestly; hole: whole; hevynes: grief, sorrow]

¹⁰⁰ cf CW12, 36/5 & 75/18-19.

¹⁰¹ cf CW12, 35/21-23.

¹⁰² CW12, 74/31-75/1. [prehemynence: pre-eminence]

¹⁰³ CW12, 153/27-28. More uses the examples of Job, Lazarus and Abraham to illustrate this. For Job: CW12, 47/10-13 & 74/24. For Lazarus & Abraham: CW12, 47/16-26 & 54/1-11 & 55/1-33. More notes that Lazarus did not seem possess any great virtue besides his patient suffering; CW12, 56/1-12 & 319/1-7. More also compares Abraham and Lazarus' relative position in heaven: CW12, 175/21-26. [hevin: heaven]

¹⁰⁴ cf CW12, 155/14 & 170/19.

¹⁰⁵ cf CW12, 241/26.

¹⁰⁶ Its full title is *De tristitia tedio pauore et oratione Christi ante captionem eius*; cf CW14, 3/1 for the translation: The Sadness, the Weariness, the Fear and the Prayer of Christ Before He Was Taken Prisoner. This title echoes the 1503 work of Erasmus' *Disputatiuncula de taedio, pavore, tristitia Iesu* (Concerning the Distress, Alarm, and Sorrow of Jesus), in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol 70, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) Michael J Heath, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 13-67. Its form is a letter from Erasmus to Dean John Colet with whom he had debated this topic in Oxford in 1499.

¹⁰⁷ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 113/8-9; cf Matt 26.39; Mk 14.35. cf Ch 8, nn99-105.

¹⁰⁸ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 111/8-113/1; cf Mk 14.36; Matt 26.39. cf Ch 8, n102.

¹⁰⁹ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 115/5-117/1. More elaborates on this theme at some length; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 115-135. cf Ch 8, nn106-108.

¹¹⁰ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 115/1-2; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 145/13-147/1. cf Ch 8, nn98-101 & 104-105.

¹¹¹ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 145/8-12. cf nn107 & 109 above.

More emphasizes the voluntary nature of Christ's anguish for He 'chose to experience sadness, dread, weariness and fear of torture and thus to show by these very real signs of human frailty that He was really a man'.¹¹² More writes that Christ chooses 'to suffer fear, sadness, weariness and grief'; he explains that "'choose" I say, not "be forced," for who could have forced God?'¹¹³ The suffering of Christ in Gethsemane is the answer to those who 'deny altogether that He was truly a man'.¹¹⁴ More notes Christ's humility, 'for though His divinity is equal and identical to that of God the Father, nevertheless because He is also man, He casts Himself down humbly as a man, face down on the earth before God the Father'.¹¹⁵ To those who think He was only a man 'Christ provided a very powerful antidote, the endless supply of His miracles'.¹¹⁶ Thus More reconciles the divinity and humanity of Christ¹¹⁷ and reflects on Christ's fear in terms of His foreknowledge. 'I see that Christ, as the thought of His coming passion was borne in upon Him, was overwhelmed by mental anguish more bitter than any other mortal has ever experienced from the thought of coming torments. For who has ever felt such bitter anguish that a bloody sweat broke out all over his body and ran down in drops to the ground?'¹¹⁸ Continuing his comments on the intensity of Christ's suffering, More writes: 'I see that even the presentiment of it before it arrived was more bitter to Christ than such anticipation has ever been to anyone else'.¹¹⁹ In his *Good Friday Sermon*, Bishop Fisher conveys the mystery of Christ's fear in sweating water and blood and contrasts it with the reality that it is He who 'is most to be dreaded and feared'.¹²⁰

¹¹² CW14, *De Tristitia*, 95/2-4.

¹¹³ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 87/4-5.

¹¹⁴ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 93/1-2.

¹¹⁵ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 113/6-9. cf Ch 8, n99.

¹¹⁶ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 91/6-7.

¹¹⁷ cf Giovanni Santinello, 'Thomas More's *Espositio Passionis*' in *EA*, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977, 459-461. Santinello notes that while the tensions of the Erasmus/Colet debate are still present, More fuses them 'in a unified treatment... resolving certain oppositions that had divided Erasmus and Colet'; cf Santinello, 459. Erasmus emphasized the human nature of Christ, while Colet focused on the divine nature of Christ. In the Introduction to Erasmus' work, Michael Heath points out that More took much the same line as Erasmus, who had maintained that the episode provided an example and comfort for those who were not blessed with the holy zeal of the martyrs'; cf *CWE* 70, Introduction, 6.

¹¹⁸ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 233/8-235/4; cf Lk 22.44. Bishop Fisher similarly preaches on Christ's fear: for 'if he for the only remembrance of the pain for to come was in so great an agony that he sweat water and blood, who can express or think was sorrow and heaviness he suffered when all the paynes were present, and presently did oppress him'; cf Cecilia A Hatt (ed), 'A Sermon preached on Good Friday' in *English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 321.

¹¹⁹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 235/6-7; cf Santinello, 'Thomas More's *Espositio Passionis*', 461.

¹²⁰ Hatt, 300. Fisher also refers to Christ's fear and the sweating of water and blood during his sermon for the funeral of Henry VII; cf John E B Mayor (ed), *English Works of John Fisher*, London: Early English Text Society, 1876, 277/1-3. For the date of Fisher's *Good Friday Sermon*, cf Hatt, 298; she suggests the early 1520's. However, www.luminarium.org [accessed 20/11/2019] gives a date of 153?.

More analyzes Christ's fear in the garden of Gethsemane in *De Tristitia* and declares that 'nothing can contribute more effectively to salvation, and to the implanting of every sort of virtue in the Christian breast, than pious and fervent meditation on the successive events of Christ's passion.'¹²¹ Christ 'made Himself weak for the sake of the weak'¹²² and, adds More, 'His agony seems designed for nothing more clearly than to lay down a fighting technique and a battle code for the faint-hearted soldier who needs to be swept along, as it were, into martyrdom'.¹²³ More imagines what Christ would say to such a hesitant and fearful martyr and puts in Christ's mouth this advice. 'O faint of heart, take courage and do not despair. You are afraid, you are sad, you are stricken with weariness and dread of the torment with which you have been cruelly threatened. Trust me. ... But you, my timorous and feeble little sheep, be content to have me alone as your shepherd,... if you do not trust yourself, place your trust in me. See, I am walking ahead of you along this fearful road...'¹²⁴ More writes that Christ did not want the apostles to hinder His death, He even wanted them to follow Him along the same road.¹²⁵ "If anyone wishes to come after me," He said, "let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"¹²⁶. This exhortation is not only for the apostles but for all those who follow Christ. More points out that St Paul reminds us that taking up the cross is following Christ and Paul advises that 'yf we dye here for hym, we shall in hevyn euerlastyngly both live & also reigne with hym' in his letters to the Romans and to Timothy.¹²⁷ There is no escape from the cross if the goal is to reach heaven. The choice is simple, even if stark.

More reflects on fearful martyrs and questions why 'Christ Himself, the very proto-type and leader of martyrs, the standard-bearer of them all, should be so terrified at the approach of pain, so shaken, so utterly downcast?'¹²⁸ In His suffering, Christ leads by example; He commits His cause to the Father three times beseeching 'Father, to you all things are possible.

¹²¹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 339/17-341/3.

¹²² CW14, *De Tristitia*, 107/7-8.

¹²³ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 109/3-5.

¹²⁴ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 101/10-105/2; cf Isa 35.4; Ecclus 7.9; Matt 26.30; Jn 10.14; Jer 17.16.

¹²⁵ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 485/3-4.

¹²⁶ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 485/3-6; cf Matt 16.24: this idea is found predominantly in More's Tower writings, cf CW12, 43/9-12; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 485/4-6; CW14, *Catena*, 635/1-2; cf Mk 8.34; Lk 9.23; in More's devotional works it is found: CW13, *Passion*, 48/15-16; cf Matt 10.38; and in his Tower writings cf Lk 14.27, CW12, 95/15-17; and elsewhere in his polemical letter to Bugenhagen, cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 343/657, cf CW7, *Letter to Bugenhagen*, (eds) Frank Manley, Germain Marc'hadour, Richard Marius & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 52/13-14, 53. cf Ch 6, n85.

¹²⁷ CW12, 314/3-4; cf Rom 8.17; 2 Tim 2.12; CW8, 756/29-31. [euerlastyngly: everlastingly; reigne: reign]

¹²⁸ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 55/3-5.

Take this cup away from me, but yet not what I will, but what you will'.¹²⁹ Christ suffers in Gethsemane for the weak and hesitant, those who feel 'anxious, heavy-hearted, fearful'.¹³⁰ Such people 'ought to be comforted and encouraged to take heart',¹³¹ and should consider and meditate constantly on the agony of Christ and 'drink deep and health-giving draughts of consolation from this spring'.¹³² Fear is not wrong for 'before the actual engagement, fear is not reprehensible, as long as reason does not cease to struggle against fear – a struggle which is not criminal or sinful but rather an immense opportunity for merit'.¹³³ Many fearful martyrs have overcome their fears and faced death bravely¹³⁴ and More asks whether the hesitant and fearful 'ought to be thought less brave for having fought down not only his other enemies but also his own weariness, sadness, and fear – most strong feelings and mighty enemies indeed'.¹³⁵ Louis Martz observes that More's 'defense of the faint-hearted, fearful kind of martyr takes on a poignant personal application that cannot and should not be avoided'.¹³⁶ Alistair Fox is more direct; he says that More was the kind of martyr 'who creeps out hesitantly and fearfully'.¹³⁷ The fearful, even those who prudently avoid danger, should not there be automatically considered cowards if they do not compromise themselves.¹³⁸ Christ's battle code for His followers consists of three things, to watch and pray, to place trust in God alone and finally to refer everything to His will.¹³⁹

Prior to his own arrest, More considers the moment that occurs when the cohort arrives in the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Christ. It provides a demonstration of Christ's power. In his polemical work, *The Apology*, More writes of this power. After asking the soldiers who they are seeking, More notes that none of those 'wreches of theym with all theyr wepens' who came to arrest Him were 'able to stande agaynste Crystes bare worde, when he sayde, I am he whom ye seke, but to grounde they fell forthwith vpryght vpon theyr backes'.¹⁴⁰ More returns

¹²⁹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 111/6-113/1; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 113/1-2 & 175/6-7 & 177/9-10 & 179a/16-17 & 179a/24-181/3; cf Matt 26.39, 42; Mk 14.39; Lk 22.42.

¹³⁰ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 251/9.

¹³¹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 251/10.

¹³² CW14, *De Tristitia*, 253/6-7.

¹³³ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 73/1-4.

¹³⁴ cf eg CW14, *De Tristitia*, 85/1-3 & 247/2-3 & 247/7-249/3.

¹³⁵ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 249/13-16; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 85/5-7; cf Erasmus, *CWE* 70, *De Taedio Iesu*, 57-58.

¹³⁶ cf Louis Martz, 'Thomas More: the Sacramental Life' in *Thought*, Vol 52, No 306, 312. For Martz's full discussion, cf 312-314.

¹³⁷ Fox, *Thomas More: History and Providence*, 250; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 249/11-12.

¹³⁸ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 83/3-6.

¹³⁹ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 109/7-113/2.

¹⁴⁰ CW9, 160/19-20, 20-22, cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 417/9-10; cf Jn 18.6. [wreches: worthless people, criminals; wepens: weapons; agaynste: against; Crystes: Christ's; sayde: said; seke: seek; vpryght: at full length, supine; vpon: upon]

to this event in the *De Tristitia*,¹⁴¹ interpreting this display of divine power as confirmation that ‘here Christ proved that He truly is that word of God which pierces more sharply than any two-edged sword’¹⁴² and that voice of Christ alone ‘deprived them [the cohort] of the strength to hold up their limbs.’¹⁴³ More observes the change that has come over Christ. From being the hesitant and fearful martyr, Christ ‘fearlessly approaches that whole mass of armed men and,... betrays Himself by His own act to those villains’.¹⁴⁴ Christ is the example for all types of martyr.

More also examines bold, fearless martyrs and recognizes the eager martyrs who ‘have taken the initiative by publicly professing their Christianity, though no one was trying to discover it, and by freely exposing themselves to death, though no one was demanding it’.¹⁴⁵ However, bold martyrs should beware less boldness becomes presumption and, like St Peter, their over-confidence leads to a fall.¹⁴⁶ To avoid such over-confidence, those who feel bold should pray to God for deliverance from such a great danger to their soul, always referring the request to God’s will.¹⁴⁷ More suggests that ‘God in His goodness removes fear from some persons not because He approves of or intends to reward their boldness, but rather because He is aware of their weakness and knows that they would not be equal to facing fear’.¹⁴⁸ He acknowledges that bold martyrs may encourage others through their example,¹⁴⁹ but as almost everyone is fearful when faced with death, fearful martyrs offer others who are also afraid the example of successfully overcoming their fears. More comments that it depends on what Christ meant when He commanded his followers not to fear death.¹⁵⁰ He argues that Christ did not mean

¹⁴¹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 413/4-5 & 417/9-10 & 425/8-10; cf Jn 18.6. Although More uses this verse three times in *De Tristitia*, it is only at CW14, 425/9-10 that More directly links this incident with the power of God. More would have heard the Gospel of John 18.1-42, 19.1-42 read every year during the Good Friday liturgy. Parts of Chapter 19 of St John’s Gospel were read on other occasions; cf Dickinson, cols 319-323; Warren, I, 253. The relevant verse is found in Dickinson, col 319.

¹⁴² CW14, *De Tristitia*, 425/11-12; cf Henry Ansgar Kelly, ‘A Procedural Review of Thomas More’s Trial’ in *Thomas More’s Trial by Jury*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011, 31-32. For Biblical references relating to God’s word as a two-edged sword, cf Heb 4.12; cf Isa 49.2. More also refers to ‘the sword of the word of God’, cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 477/10-11; to the ‘spiritual sword’ of excommunication, cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 479/11; and ‘the sword of the spirit which is the word of God’, cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 551/5-6; cf Eph 6.10-17, esp v17.

¹⁴³ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 427/4; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 10-12.

¹⁴⁴ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 418/2-4.

¹⁴⁵ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 65/3-6.

¹⁴⁶ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 251/8-9 & 251/13-253/3; cf Matt 26.33-35, 69-75. For St Peter: Ch 2, nn322-323 & 328; Ch 6, n115; Ch 8, n70.

¹⁴⁷ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 217/8-12.

¹⁴⁸ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 245/17-247/2.

¹⁴⁹ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 247/3-6.

¹⁵⁰ cf CW14, *Catena*, 639/2-12; cf CW13, *Passion*, 113/19-22. More elucidates Christ’s example saying ‘Jesus began to do and to teache: soo that hee not only taughte men to doe this or that, but hee gaue them also the sample, and dyd the thyng firste him selfe’.

that death should never be feared, but that His followers ‘should not, out of fear, flee from a death which will not last, only to run, by denying the faith, into one which will be everlasting’.¹⁵¹ Martyrdom is a special vocation and More acknowledges that such bravery is not an absolute command; hence it is not safe for anyone to follow that road unless he is able to persist to the end.¹⁵² More observes that persecutors would find ‘much to their outrage, that all their ferocity could not overcome martyrs who met death willingly’.¹⁵³ But for those called by God, if they ‘choose their goal and pursue it successfully and they will reign in triumph’.¹⁵⁴

More argues that for both brave and fearful martyrs ‘this anguish of Christ is most salutary: it keep the one from being over-exultant and it makes the other be of good hope when his spirit is crestfallen and downcast’.¹⁵⁵ In a possibly autobiographical comment, More suggests that in the remembrance of Christ's agony ‘let us beg Him with all our strength that He may deign to comfort us in our anguish by an insight into His’¹⁵⁶ and the strength of perseverance will be without doubt be brought by our angel from His Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁷ Confident trust in God is possible only because Christ has already trodden this route; martyrs are merely followers. As More notes that after His Passion, Christ entered into glory to prepare a place for those who follow Him.¹⁵⁸ As it is God who inspires martyrs,¹⁵⁹ both bold and fearful martyrs should therefore be admired: ‘we should venerate both kinds, praise God for both, we should imitate both when the situation demands it, each according to his own capacity and according to the grace God gives to each’.¹⁶⁰ On the different sorts of martyrs, More comments ironically ‘besides, just who outranks whom in the glory assigned by God in heaven is not, I think, quite crystal-clear to us, groping as we are in the darkness of our mortality’.¹⁶¹

¹⁵¹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 59/1-3.

¹⁵² cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 67/2-6; cf CW13, *Passion*, 71/16-20; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 530/75-77.

¹⁵³ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 65/11-67/2.

¹⁵⁴ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 67/7-8; cf Ps 44.5.

¹⁵⁵ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 251/11-13; cf Clarence H Miller, ‘The Heart of the Final Struggle’ in *Quincentennial Essays, on St Thomas More*, (ed) Michael J Moore, Boone, North Carolina: Appalachian State University, 1978, 121.

¹⁵⁶ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 255/1-3.

¹⁵⁷ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 255/7-10.

¹⁵⁸ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 257/3-5; cf Lk 24.26; Jn 14.2; 1 Pet 2.21.

¹⁵⁹ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 217/2-3 & 243/3-4.

¹⁶⁰ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 251/2-5; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 237/9-239/14.

¹⁶¹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 239/15-241/2.

Christ's example shows how to leave everything in God's hands and we will receive consolation, just as He did.¹⁶² 'After He had suffered this agony for a long time, His spirits were so restored that He arose, returned to His apostles, and freely went out to meet the traitor and the tormentors who were seeking Him to make Him suffer'.¹⁶³ Just as Christ, as man, overcomes his fear, so his followers can hope to do the same.¹⁶⁴ Towards the end of *De Tristitia* More explains how, 'the thought of death, once so bitter, will grow sweet, eagerness will take the place of grief, mental strength and courage will replace dread, and finally they will long for the death they had viewed with horror, considering life a sad thing and death a gain, desiring to be dissolved and to be with Christ'.¹⁶⁵ Veronica Lyter observes that for More 'it is more natural to feel reluctance or fear in the face of suffering but also more admirable to overcome it'.¹⁶⁶ Is it possible that here More is hinting at the personal and that this is the lesson that he learns from Christ's suffering in Gethsemane and that he makes his own during his months in the Tower? It would seem a distinctly plausible interpretation. More did not want to die and he both feared the pains of execution as a traitor and feared himself and his own weakness in the face of such pain.¹⁶⁷

More's Tower work *A Dialogue of Comfort* discusses the prospect of pain connected to martyrdom. The *Dialogue* reveals how More comforts himself against his attendant fears of both pain and martyrdom through his abiding habit of argument and counter-argument, of contrasts and comparisons. Through them he resolves his fears, fortifying himself to endure imprisonment and forthcoming execution. The tribulations of imprisonment, pain and martyrdom are all short compared with eternity. More observes that the short pains of torture or martyrdom 'shall tourne vs to eternall profit, both in our soules & in our bodyes to'.¹⁶⁸ Leland Miles has observed that fear 'permeates' Book III of *A Dialogue of Comfort*,¹⁶⁹ and

¹⁶² cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 255/6-10; cf Matt 26.39; Mk 14.36; Lk 22.42-43. cf Ch 6, n107; Ch 8, nn20 & 22-23; Ch 9, n72.

¹⁶³ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 255/13-257/3; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 339/10-13.

¹⁶⁴ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 413/6-417/5.

¹⁶⁵ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 415/12-417/5; cf CW12, 284/18; cf Phil 1.21, 23. cf Ch 9, nn129, 136, 137, 140, 141 & 146.

¹⁶⁶ Veronica Lyter, "'Brave and Prudent Soldiers": The Virtue of Courage in *The Sadness of Christ*' in *Moreana*, Vol 53, 2016, 61.

¹⁶⁷ cf Peter Marshall, 'The Last Years' in *Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 124.

¹⁶⁸ CW12, 248/7-8; cf CW12, 303/25-304/3. [bodyes: bodies]

¹⁶⁹ Leland Miles (ed), *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1965, xxviii.

that with regard to pain, 'More's anguish on this score runs the gamut of emotion'.¹⁷⁰ More was attempting to comfort himself, as well as his family. However, Miles' suggests that More, in his merry tales on decapitation, was 'forcing himself to see the comic aspects of having one's head chopped off,... to bolster himself for this possible end'.¹⁷¹ However, this is to read history backwards; the penalty for treason was hanging, drawing and quartering and that was More's sentence, which the king later commuted. A more realistic question would be: did More hope to be beheaded as the least hideous alternative method of execution?

More's perennial habit of contrasts and comparisons would have been fostered by his legal training in argument and counter-argument. In the Tower, More the lawyer argues, debates, analyzes and rationalizes his fears and hopes with himself. As Maureen Purcell observes, *A Dialogue of Comfort* 'is eminently a lawyer's book, exploring minutely each detail of the problem and letting no point go until his lawyer's mind is satisfied, his plea fully expounded and his case unassailable'.¹⁷² As Purcell notes it is no co-incidence that *A Dialogue of Comfort* is set in the form of a dialogue.¹⁷³ More's habit of contrasting argument and counter-argument would have been his daily experience as a lawyer, and as Richard Marius notes, More had a fascination with argument since childhood which became 'the habitual practice of legal rebuttal'.¹⁷⁴ Miller observes how the *De Tristitia Christi* reveals 'a mind habitually accustomed to debating both sides of an issue';¹⁷⁵ he points out that the contrasts in *De Tristitia* reveal how More's mind 'weighed questions carefully, precisely, prudently, even ironically, but which also resolved all oppositions and conflicts by fervent response to Christ'.¹⁷⁶ Miller also notes that 'in diction and phrasing More's revisions show him striving for precision and accuracy, weighing one word against another, exercising a lawyerlike caution to avoid any possible misunderstanding or misconstruction'.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁰ Miles, *A Dialogue of Comfort*, xxviii; cf CW12, Bk III, Ch 1-3, 17, part of 18 & 20, 21,24-27. Miles refers to his own, heavily amended, edition in which he has divided chapters and omitted sections which makes cross-referencing difficult. I have given the relevant chapter numbers taken from the definitive Yale edition.

¹⁷¹ Miles, *A Dialogue of Comfort*, xxvii.

¹⁷² Maureen Purcell, OP, 'Dialogue of Comfort for Whom?' in *Essays on the Icon*, (eds) Damian Grace and Brian Byron, Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1980, 101.

¹⁷³ cf Purcell, 100.

¹⁷⁴ Richard Marius, *Thomas More*, London: Collins, 1984, 499. Roper notes that it was More's practice to debate with any learned man from a university if he had the opportunity; Roper 21/16; 22/19-20.

¹⁷⁵ Clarence Miller, CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, Introduction, 769.

¹⁷⁶ Clarence Miller, CW14, Introduction, 774. cf CW9, n215.

¹⁷⁷ Miller, *The Heart of the Final Struggle: More's Commentary on The Agony in the Garden*, 117.

How foolish, More argues, it would be not to endure a short bondage, which cannot keep us long, rather than by escaping the short, temporal imprisonment fall into an eternal imprisonment rather than gaining the everlasting liberty and bliss of heaven.¹⁷⁸ How foolish for Christ has already refuted the folly of such behaviour asking, ‘what awaylith yt a man yff he wanne all the whole worlde & lost his soule’.¹⁷⁹ These alternatives lead him to conclude that it is possible to ignore the terror of the persecutor if our focus against the ‘feryouse endles fyre’ of hell.¹⁸⁰

This comparison of a short, temporal imprisonment contrasted with the eternal fires of hell as well as compared to the alternative of eternal bliss of heaven is not only typical of More but also illustrates his lifelong habit of comparing and contrasting with his most fundamental comparison being between heaven and hell or the temporal and the eternal. More’s other themes include the eternity of heaven versus the transitory nature of life and the transitory pains of martyrdom versus the eternal torments of hell. More also contrasts lesser pains with greater ones, spiritual pleasure with carnal pleasure and hope with dread. Such comparisons and contrasts all serve to underline the importance of the choices that determine the soul’s eternal destiny and thus the importance of choosing the road that leads to the eternal bliss of heaven rather than the road that leads to the eternal torment of hell. More’s comparisons and contrasts are crucial and fundamental to More’s reasoning as it permits alternatives to emerge as a stark contrast. This produces a clarity that allows not only a decisive choice between alternatives but also heightens the magnitude of the differences.

Such examinations, analysis and comparisons are found throughout More’s works. An early example that contrasts the fleeting nature of the world with eternity is found in his poem of 1503, *The Lamytacyon off queen Elyzabeth*.¹⁸¹ Here More contrasts the fact that neither worldly position nor possessions have any power in the face of death which must be obeyed.¹⁸² In the penultimate stanza, he contrasts worldly vanity in all its forms by praising

¹⁷⁸ cf CW12, 254/25-28 & 280/11-14; cf CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, 59/6-10.

¹⁷⁹ CW12, 237/15-16; cf Matt 16.26; Mk 8.36; Lk 9.25. cf Ch 6, n186.

¹⁸⁰ cf CW12, 8/29-9/5. cf n72 above.

¹⁸¹ CW1, *The Lamytacyon off Quene Elyzabeth*, 9-13. Queen Elizabeth, wife of Henry VII, died on 11th February, 1503. Her infant daughter, Katherine, born, 2nd February, is referred to as being alive [line 69], although she died shortly after her mother; cf CW1, xxii & Commentary, 195.

¹⁸² CW1, *Lamytacyon*, 10/20-21. More makes a similar point on the power of Death [ie as a personification] who when approaching a man will ‘neyther knele before hym, nor make hym any reuerence’; cf CW12, 268/11-12.

those who ‘erthly folye fle’ advising the reader to love and praise the things of heaven.¹⁸³ The stanza ends with the same refrain as the others: ‘Farewell & pray for me, for lo here I lye’.¹⁸⁴ This reinforces the inevitability of death and the importance of eternal and heavenly things and so contrasts them with this transitory world.

Another early example of contrasts that reveals that More uses this method from his youth to the Tower is found in Rule Eleven of his expansion of Pico’s *Twelves Rules of Spiritual Battle*. He compares how ‘many men erre for necligence’ for ‘lacking discretion thei compare... / their fowle synne the volupteouse delight / To the laberous trauaile of the conflict & fight’.¹⁸⁵ In short, they are simply choosing the temporal over the eternal and More suggests that they should rather compare ‘the Ioy of the victory / To the sensuall pleasure of their concupiscence’.¹⁸⁶ In this comparison More reveals his vision of the pre-eminence of the eternal over the transitory and how when men limit themselves to transitory things alone, the eternal is ignored. More identifies the problem; it is man’s unwillingness to fight the battle for it seems ‘byttir sharpe and sowre’;¹⁸⁷ he ignores the joy that conscience finds in virtue and defeating the devil than it does in ‘al his filthy synne’.¹⁸⁸ It appears that More had made his own Pico’s advice to his nephew that ‘it is verelye a great madnesse not to beleue the gospel... whos trouth the blode of martirs crieth, y^e voice of apostles sowneth, miracles proueth, reason confermith, the worlde testifieth, y^e elementis spekith, deuelis confessith. But

¹⁸³ CW1, *Lamytacyon*, 12/76.

¹⁸⁴ CW1, *Lamytacyon*, 12/76-78. [folye: folly]

¹⁸⁵ cf CW1, Pico’s *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle*, 108/9-15. Such comparisons are also found in More’s early translation of Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco* in which he compares fear and love as ‘two spurs’ in order to remember that Christ died for him and that he, too, will soon die, CW1, 84/16-17. More’s expansion of Pico’s *Fortune Verses* also employs opposites as a device, with the poem contrasting Fortune and Poverty. In the section ‘The wordes of Fortune to þe people’, the following contrast is found: ‘myrth, honour, & riches / Better is than shame, penvry, & payn’; CW1, *English Poems*, 33/75-76. The *Fortune Verses* were definitely composed before 1509, and possibly, even probably before 1505; cf CW1, xxviii. The translations of Pico were certainly published c1510 although an earlier date has been suggested; cf CW1, Introduction, xxxvii-xxxix; cxx-cxii. The *Fortune Verses* could, therefore, precede More’s translations of Pico, although the exact order is likely to remain unclear. For possible sources for the *Fortune Verses*: cf CW1, Introduction, xxx-xxxi. [lacking: lacking; necligence: negligence; volupteouse: voluptuous; laberous: laborious; trauaile: hardship, struggle]

¹⁸⁶ CW1, Pico’s *Twelve Rules*, 108/10-11.

¹⁸⁷ CW1, Pico’s *Twelve Rules*, 108/3. It seems unlikely that More would have written ‘bitter, sharp and bitter’. Alternative readings are ‘bitter, fierce and sharp,’ cf Thomas More, *The Life of Pico*, New York: Scepter, 2010, 58; W E Campbell (ed), *The English Works of Sir Thomas More*, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1931, 384 reads ‘bitter, sharp and sour’ as does Jeffrey S Lehman (ed), *The Life of Pico*, Center for Thomas More Studies, 2010, 56. This can be found online at www.thomasmorestudies.org. [byttir: bitter; sowre: bitter]

¹⁸⁸ CW1, Pico’s *Twelve Rules*, 108/8. Later More would repeat the same idea that even if this life, ‘vertue bringeth his pleasure, and vice is not w^hout pain’; cf CW1, *The Last Things*, 177/20-21.

a far gretter madnes ys hit if thou dowt not but that the gospel ys trew: to lyue then as though thou doutest not but that hit were fals'.¹⁸⁹

The problem of pain¹⁹⁰ is the stumbling block for while many would die for their faith, it is the anticipated fear of pain which acts as the hindrance.¹⁹¹ More asks 'how cold lovers be we than vnto god, yf rather than dye for him ones, we will refuse hym & forsake hym for euer, that both dyed for vs before'.¹⁹² He then proceeds to answer his own question noting that 'yf we dye here for hym, we shall in hevyn euerlastyngly both live & also reigne with hym, for as saynt Peter saith *Si compatimur et conregnabimus*: yf we suffre with hym we shall reigne with hym'.¹⁹³ Later in this last chapter of the *Dialogue of Comfort*, More provides a conditional remedy: the faithful consideration of the joys of heaven should urge us on and as St Paul tells us 'the passiones of this tyme, be not worthy to the glory that ys to come, which shalbe shewid in vs'.¹⁹⁴ This biblical quotation is the last in the *Dialogue*, and More comments that 'We shuld not I wene Cosyn neede mych more in all this whole mater, than that one text of saynt Paule, yf we wold consider yt well'.¹⁹⁵ Temporal pain is 'though bytter & sharp,... & in a maner a momentary payne'¹⁹⁶ but 'yf we wold remember hell payne... into which we fall while we flye fro this, than shuld this short payne be no let at all'.¹⁹⁷ This is More's rationalization of anticipated fear of temporal pain which pales into insignificance when compared to eternal pain. There is no reference to trust, God's mercy, the joyful hope of heaven or the glory that is to come. There is only the sombre comparison of two different painful terrors. More concludes his advice to 'remembre that yf yt were possible for me and you alone, to suffre as mych trowble as the whole world doth together, all that were not

¹⁸⁹ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 81/28-82/5. cf Ch4, n41; Ch 6, n155. [blode: blood; martirs: martyrs; sowneth: proclaims; elementis: elements; deuelis: devils]

¹⁹⁰ cf Ch 6, nn29-49.

¹⁹¹ cf CW12, 284/19-26.

¹⁹² CW12, 313/30-314/3.

¹⁹³ CW12, 314/3-6. More could have been thinking of 2 Tim 2.12 or Rom 8.17 which uses 'glory' rather than 'reign'. More makes a mistake for this quotation is from St Paul, not St Peter. Alternatively he could have been thinking of either 1 Pet 3.17 or 1 Pet 4.13. He quotes 1 Pet 3.17 in the *Catena*, cf CW14, 663/3-4 and 1 Pet 4.13 in both the *Catena*, cf CW14, 629/14-15 & 665/3-4 and in CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 210/3-4 [Latin], 212/18-20.

¹⁹⁴ CW12, 319/18-20, 21-23. More has paraphrased St Paul slightly; cf Rom 8.18: For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us. cf Monti, 353; cf 2 Cor 4.17: More does not seem to have used this verse. [shewid: shown]

¹⁹⁵ CW12, 319/20-25; cf CW12, Commentary, 443. [wene: think, suppose, believe]

¹⁹⁶ CW12, 296/28-29; cf CW12, 304/11-14 & 311/4-6, 9-11. [bytter: bitter]

¹⁹⁷ CW12, 319/16-18. cf Ch 6, nn47 & 49.

worthy of yt selfe, to bring vs to the ioy which we hope to haue euerlastyngly. And therfor I pray you let the consideracion of that Ioy, put out all worldly trowble from your hart'.¹⁹⁸

More uses his habit of making comparisons and contrasts to fortifying himself against the terrors of execution, but his fear of pain and the possibility of lacking perseverance and surrendering in the face of the pains of either torture or execution is a fear lurking in his Tower writings. At the very end of the *Dialogue of Comfort* More contrasts temporal with eternal pain concentrating first on the possible torments inflicted by men, then comparing them to the 'sely soules' in hell. He writes:

... 'yf the Turke stode evyn here with all his whole armye about hym, & euery one of them all, were redy at our hand, with all the terrible tourmentes that they cold ymagyne, & but yf we wold forsake the fayth were setting their tourmentes to vs, & to thencrese of our terrour, fell all at ones in a showt with trumpettes, taberettes, & tumbrelles, all blowyne vp at ones, & all their gonnes let go there with, to make vs a ferefull noyse, yf yon shuld sodaynly than on the tother side, the grownde quake & ryve atwayne, & the devilles rise out of hell, & shew themselfe in such vgly shappe as dampnid wretchis shall see them, & with that hydyouse howlyng that those hell howndes shuld shrich, lay hell open on euery side round about our fete, that as we stode, we shuld loke downe into that pestilent pitt & se the swarme of sely soules in the terrible tourmentes there: we wold wax so ferd of that sight, that as for the Turkes hoste, we shuld scantly remembre we saw them'.¹⁹⁹

More also addresses the problem of pain through the lens of various ailments, writing that 'except a man wold wene, that where as the payne ys greate to haue a knyfe to cut his flesh on the owtside fro the skynne inward, the pain wold be mich lesse yf the knyfe myght begyn on the inside & cut fro the myddes outward'.²⁰⁰ In the *Last Things*, More speaks of the pains to be suffered on the death bed. He observes: 'than findest thou that some one disease in some one part of thy body,... haue put thee to thine own minde to no lesse torment, than thou shouldest haue felt if one had put vp a knife into the same place,... ..whan thou shalt fele so many such paines in euery part of thy bodi... w^t like pain & grief, as though as manye kniues as thy body, might receiue, shold eueriwhere enter & mete in the middes'.²⁰¹ He rationalizes pain, writing to his daughter that 'thoughe it be a paine to die while a man is in health yet see

¹⁹⁸ CW12, 319/25-320/1. [yt selfe: itself]

¹⁹⁹ CW12, 315/6-20. [stode: stood; ymagyne: imagine; setting their tourmentes to vs: going to inflict their tortures on us; thencrese: the increase; at ones: at once; showt: shout; taberettes: small drums; tumbrelles: tambourines; blowyne: blown; gonnes: guns; noyse: noise; yon: yonder, over there; ryve: split, crack; atwayne: apart, asunder; wretchis: wretches; hydyouse: hideous; howlyng: howling; howndes: hounds; shrich: shriek, screech; fete: feet; pitt: pit; sely: deserving of pity, helpless; ferd: fearful, afraid]

²⁰⁰ CW12, 302/0-13. cf Ch 6, n44.

²⁰¹ CW1, *Last Things*, 140/10-19. [bodi: body; kniues: knives; eueriwhere: everywhere]

I very fewe that in sickenes dye with ease'.²⁰² More returns to this theme again in *A Godly Instruction* in relation to imminent death, as though its repetition would allow it to permeate his outlook: 'For putte case thou mightest for that while eschew the daunger of deathe, art thou sure therefore either to continewe thy lyfe for euer, or at an other tyme to dye and feele no payne?'²⁰³ Although it is sometimes possible to delay temporal death for a while, in relation to the choice before him, it is to exchange an inevitable temporal death, whether it comes either sooner or later, for eternal death.²⁰⁴ However once the lesson of the reality and inevitability of death is truly absorbed together with the acknowledgment of the importance of reaching heaven, whether death comes sooner or later is less important. More had absorbed the message of the *Imitation* that 'It is vanity to wish for a long life and care little about a good life'.²⁰⁵ Death can only be delayed; it cannot be escaped. More challenges his wife, Dame Alice on this point during a visit that she made to him in the Tower. She suggested that, if takes the oath, he could enjoy life for many years and he should not sacrifice 'his children, his country and his life'.²⁰⁶ When More asks her how long he will be able to enjoy this life, she replies 'A full twenty years' to which he retorts 'Do you wish me, then to exchange eternity for twenty years? Nay, good wife, you do not bargain very skilfully'.²⁰⁷ The only real choice is heaven or hell, every other choice is relevant only in its relation to this fundamental choice, and it is a choice that cannot be ignored.

More explains that the 'christen man that hath the light of fayth,... will not thynke onely vppon his bare comyng hether & his bare goyng hens agayne, but also vppon the dredfull iugment of god, & vppon the ferefull paynes of hell, and the inestimable ioyes of hevyn'.²⁰⁸ Judgement is inevitable and fearful and of much greater import than merely being born or dying. The final destiny of heaven or hell is to be contrasted through the fearful pains of hell with the inestimable joys of heaven. On short passage surveys the themes of death, heaven and hell and exemplifies how More analyzes his ideas and concludes:

'I dyvisid with my selfe vppon the Turkes comyng, yt happed my mynd to fall sodenly from that, into the dyvisyng vppon myn own departyng, wherin albeit that I fully put my trust and hope to be a savid sowle, by the great mercye of god,

²⁰² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/111-113. cf Ch 5, n82; Ch 6, n37; Ch 9, n67.

²⁰³ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/24-26. [putte case: suppose; mightest: might; continewe: continue]

²⁰⁴ cf CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/20-23.

²⁰⁵ Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, Bk I, Ch I, No 4; cf Erasmus, *De Praeparatione ad Mortem*, 397. cf Ch 6, n7.

²⁰⁶ Stapleton, 161; cf Roper, 82/13-83/3. cf Ch 9, n102.

²⁰⁷ Stapleton, 161. cf Ch 9, nn103 & 104.

²⁰⁸ CW12, 163/28-164/2. cf Introduction, n54. Ch 4, n27.

yet sith there ys here noman so sure, that without revelacion may clene stond out of drede: I bethought me also vppon the paynes of hell, and after I bethought me than vppon the Turk agayne. And first me thought his terrowre nothyng, when I comparid yt with the ioyfull hope of heven. Then comparid I it on the tother side with the fearefull drede of hell, & therin castyng in my mynd those terryble develysh tourmentours, with the depe consideracion of that feryouse endles fyre, me thought that yf the Turke with all his hole host, & all trumpettes & his tumbrelles to, were to kyll me in my bed come to my chamber dore, in respect of the tother rekenyng, I regard him not a rish'.²⁰⁹

Here More's inclusion of death in this quotation recalls the reader yet again to the temporary nature of the world. Trust in salvation through God's mercy acts as a reminder of the necessity of fear while the terror of persecution is contrasted with the 'ioyfull hope of heven', and both are contrasted with a 'fearefull drede of hell', 'the terryble develysh tourmentours' and the 'feryouse endless fyre'.²¹⁰ For More, these various considerations suffice to rationalize the sufferings and torments of death by martyrdom at the hands of persecutors with the hope of salvation. The brief phrase of 'the ioyfull hope of heven', although very easy to overlook, provides the effective contrast to all the terrors of persecution. This passage reveals how More's writing provides the reader with a kaleidoscope of vivid scenes and emotions.

More's contrasts do not end with the juxtaposition of temporary versus eternal pains or the bliss of heaven versus the unending torments of hell. He advises his readers not to imagine the joys of heaven, but rather to hear 'what our lord telleth vs in holy scripture, how mervelouse greate they shalbe, labour by prayour to conceve in our hartes such a fervent longyng for them, that we may for attaynyng to them, vtterly set at nought all fleshly delight, all worldly pleasures, all erthly losses, all bodely tourment and payne'.²¹¹ In order to overcome the fear of pain by placing it in its true perspective, he gives his readers three things to remember. These are 'the remembraunce of Christes kyndnes in suffryng his passion for vs, the consideracion of hell that we shuld fall in by forsakyng of hym, the Ioyfull meditacion of eternal lyfe in hevyn that we shall wyne, with this short temperall deth

²⁰⁹ CW12, 8/21-9/5. cf n223 below; Ch 4, n142. [dyvisid: considered, planned; happed: happened; dyvisyng: meditation, deliberation; wherein: in which; terrowre: terror; comparid: compared; castyng: casting; tourmentours: tormentors; feryouse: furious; endles: endless; trumpettes: trumpets; tumbrelles: tambourines; not a rish: care nothing for, take no account of]

²¹⁰ cf CW12, 163/28-164/2. cf n210 above; Introduction, n53; Ch 4, n27. [ioyfull: joyful; terryble: terrible; develysh: devilish;]

²¹¹ CW12, 306/27-307/3; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 135/18-23. The Commentary in CW12 references Isa 64.4 and 1 Cor 2.9-10, but gives no reference to any of the Gospels. cf Ch 9, nn9 & 26. [mervelouse: marvellous; conceve: conceive; attaynyng: reaching]

patiently taken for hym'.²¹² Such reflections would assist us 'yf we wold do our devour toward yt & labour for yt & pray therfor'.²¹³ He continues, insisting that he is very sure that 'yf we had the fyfteneth part of the love to Christ, that he both had and hath to vs: all the payne of this Turkes persecucion, could not kepe vs from hym, but that there wold be at this day, as many martires here in Hungarye, as haue bene afore in other countreys of old'.²¹⁴

More's faith and desire to reach heaven govern his priorities. In the *Dialogue of Comfort* More uses the example of St Stephen who saw the heavens open above him revealing 'the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God',²¹⁵ and More's interpretation is that both God and the heavenly company observes a martyr's entire passion.²¹⁶ He poses the question: How can it be other than glorious to die for Christ, if we do so in faith, hope and charity?²¹⁷ He answers his own question from Scripture: 'precieuse is in the sight of god the deth of his sayntes. Now yf the deth of his saintes be glorious in the sight of god: yt can neuer be shamfull in very dede, how shamfull so euer yt seme here in the sight of men'.²¹⁸ More disposes of the particular problem of shame with ease, for shame is the reaction of an individual to their perception of the opinions of others,²¹⁹ and such a perception can be false.²²⁰ More asks would we 'be so madd that we rather will fall into euerlastyng shame both before hevyn & hell, than for feare of a short worldly shame, to folow hym into euerlastyng glory'.²²¹ However 'a man may with wisdome so master it, that it shall nothyng move hym at all'.²²² More illustrates by comparison two different sorts of men presenting with clarity the choice offered to the potential martyr. He imagines a condemned man walking along the wide high street of a big city and describes the scene:

²¹² CW12, 314/17-21. cf n210 above; Ch 9, n87. [kyndnes: kindness; temperall: passing, worldly]

²¹³ CW12, 314/22-23. [devour: duty, utmost, best endeavour]

²¹⁴ CW12, 315/1-5. cf Ch 6, n246; Ch 9, n50. *A Dialogue of Comfort* is fictionally set in Hungary. More's comments are, however, topical as Gerard Wegemer explains in his Introduction to the Scepter edition of *A Dialogue*. In 1526, less than a decade before the composition of this book, the Turkish sultan Suleiman the Magnificent had conquered Hungary; cf St Thomas More, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1998, 10-11. [countreys: countries]

²¹⁵ Acts 7.55; cf CW12, 289/5-7. At his trial, More compares himself to St Stephen; cf Roper, 96/5-16. cf John R Cavanaugh, 'The Saint Stephen Motif in Saint Thomas More's Thought' in *Moreana*, Vol 2, No 8, 1965, 59-66. This article examines the role of St Stephen in a wider context than just More's imprisonment.

²¹⁶ CW12, 289/7-9; cf Acts 7.55-58. For More's use of St Stephen during his imprisonment, cf CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 210/15-17 & 212/36-213/2; and for his allusion to the saint during his trial, cf Roper, 96/5-12.

²¹⁷ cf CW12, 288/25-26; cf Ps 115.5.

²¹⁸ CW12, 289/2-5; cf Ps 115.15.

²¹⁹ cf CW12, 292/20.

²²⁰ cf CW12, 148/26-149/7.

²²¹ CW12, 292/6-9. [assendid: ascended]

²²² CW12, 292/18. [wisdome: wisdom]

In the Tower

Al along the way that ye were goyng, there were on the tone side of the way a rable of raggid beggers & mad men that wold despise you & desprayne you, with all the shamfull names that they could call you, & all the raylyng wordes that they could say to you, & that there were than all along the tother side of the same street where you shuld come by, a goodly company standing in a fayre range arow, of wise & worshipfull folke, alowyng & commendying you, mo than fivetene tymes as many as that rable of Raggid beggers & raylyng mad men are, wold you let your way by your will, wenyng that you went vnto your shame, for the shamfull gestyng & raylyng of those mad folysh wretchis, or hold on your way with a good chere & a glad hart, thinkyng your self mich honoryd by the lawde & approbacion of that other honourable sort.²²³

The next chapter will examine the importance of More's lifelong habit of prayer and how it provides a bulwark to sustain him during his months in the Tower. His life of prayer combines with faith and trust in God to understand that the only way to heaven is 'to bere the crosse with Christ'²²⁴ and that this cannot be done without suffering and tribulation.

²²³ CW12, 289/11-24. cf n209 above. [tone: one; rable: rabble; raggid: ragged; beggers: beggars; desprayne: blame, censure, disparage; raylyng: abusing, reviling, scorning; fayre: straight; range: line; arow: in a row; wise: sane; worshipfull: distinguished, honourable; alowyng: commending, praising; commendying: approving; fivetene: fifteen; wenyng: thinking, supposing, believing; gestyng: scoffing, jeering, mocking; chere: cheer; honoryd: honoured; lawde: praise; approbacion: approbation, acclaim, commendation]

²²⁴ CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 226/29.

Chapter 8: Prayer: an antidote to fear

Prayer is More's primary weapon and it acts as an antidote to fear and is the bulwark that sustains him in the Tower, as his writings testify. In these writings More sets out the focus and purpose of his prayer, which is salvation, how it aids the love of God, especially in tribulation which includes the comfort received from God. More's view of tribulation, what it is and what its benefits are, is also examined. His complete trust in God reveals his belief that God knows best and this leads to 'Thy will be done'. The necessity of regular, indeed continual prayer is also considered, as well as his understanding of the role of posture in prayer. All these themes culminate in the focus of More's prayer: The Passion of Christ and Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. The importance of Christ's posture and its importance for what it teaches are explored. The Passion of Christ as the central element is considered in More's focus for his life of prayer as well as some tentative suggestions with regard to his own practice and experience.

More's practice of prayer was a lifelong exercise. In his early life he resided in the London Charterhouse for about four years, giving himself to 'devotion and prayer'.¹ His family life also centred on daily prayer in the chapel, which included with the seven penitential psalms occupying an important place, as well as his own private prayers.² In addition to these devotions, More desired further solitude and constructed the New Building a short way from his house in Chelsea which comprised a chapel, a library, and a gallery where he would spend the whole of Friday in prayer, study and meditation.³ But More's daily habit of prayer was not only noted by Roper for Erasmus, in his letter of 1517 to Ulrich von Hutten, had earlier observed that 'True piety finds in him a practising follower,... He has his fixed hours at which he says his prayers, and they are not conventional but come from the heart'.⁴ More was approaching forty years of age when Erasmus penned this picture of a prayer life both regular and authentic: in short, the description of a man who does not just say his prayers but prays

¹ cf Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas Moore*, London: Early English Text Society, 1935, 6/9-11. Gerard Wegemer says that More lived 'near' rather than 'in' the Charterhouse; cf Gerard B Wegemer, *A Portrait of Courage*, Princeton: Scepter Publishers, 1997, 15; Cresacre More, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore* [1630], Menston, Yorkshire: The Scholar Press, repr 1971, 29.

² cf Roper, 25/16-22. The Penitential Psalms are numbers 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129 and 142. cf Ch1, nn21-22; Ch 3, n114.

³ cf Roper, 25/22-26/7.

⁴ Erasmus, *CWE 7, Epistle 299*, Letter to Ulrich von Hutten (trans) R A B Mynors, Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1987, 24/296-298; cf Roper, 25/16-26/7.

through genuine engagement with them.⁵ More's regular prayer life reflects that of Pico's, who 'euery day at certain howris he gaue hem self to praier'.⁶

What should be the focus of prayer? More answers this important question at the beginning of *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, and the focus is, as always with More, on the eternal. 'For the salvacion of our sowle may we boldly pray. For grace may we boldly pray, for fayth, for hope, and for charitie, & for euery such vertew as shall serue vs to hevyn ward.'⁷ Up to three decades earlier in his translation of *A praiour of Picus Mirandula vnto god*, More found the direction for prayer described for him. Pico asks that the love of his heart may be equal to God's, that he may escape from satan whom he has served for so long, and that sinful desires may be quenched and God's love will set his heart on fire.⁸

More sets out the purpose of prayer clearly: it is the most profitable means to attain salvation⁹ and a vital tool in the fight both against temptation and tribulation. Christ tells that prayer is particularly necessary for one thing: 'that we may not enter into temptation'.¹⁰ This concept is found both at the end of the Lord's Prayer as well as in the Garden of Gethsemane where it is accompanied by a sense of extreme urgency.¹¹ This idea is also found in Walter Hilton's *The Scale of Perfection* who perceives Jesus alone as one who does everything and prayer is only the means to rise upwards into God. Prayer is profitable for the destruction of sin and the reception of virtues to obtain the purity necessary to receive God's grace.¹² Prayer, fasting and alms deeds for both ourselves and others bring the grace of amendment of life.¹³ Pico

⁵ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, (ed & trans) Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 327/7-8: More acknowledges the difference between repeating prayers and praying.

⁶ CW1, *Life of Pico*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 64/10-11; cf CW1, 321: the literal translation is: Every day at his fixed hours he poured forth his prayers to God. [howris: hours; hem self: himself]

⁷ CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort*, (eds) Louis Martz & Frank Manley, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 21/9-11. In a letter to Margaret Roper from the Tower, More re-iterates this sentiment, writing that they should 'with good counsaile and prayer ech help other thitherwarde'; cf Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, 545/28. [charitie: charity; hevyn ward: towards heaven. In this context 'boldly' means fearlessly.] For 'heavenward' and 'godward'; cf Ch 9, first paragraph and n1.

⁸ cf CW1, *A Prayer of Pico*, 122/29-123/4; cf CW1, 381.

⁹ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 143/11-145/1.

¹⁰ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 173/4-8; Matt 26.41; Mk 14.38; Lk 22.40. For the effectiveness of the Pater Noster: cf Ch 3, n57. For the causes of tribulation: cf Ch 7, nn58 & 60. For the connection between temptation and persecution: cf Ch 3, n13.

¹¹ For the Lord's Prayer, cf Matt 16.13; Lk 11.4; for the Garden of Gethsemane, cf Matt 26.41; Mk 14.38; Lk 22.40.

¹² cf Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, (trans) John P H Clark and Rosemary Dorward, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press (Classics of Western Spirituality), 1991, 97-98; 225.

¹³ cf CW12, 44/23-45/5; cf CW8, 511/3-12.

also cites prayer and almsgiving as the two especially effective remedies against both the world and the devil and which he describes as two wings to lift us up to heaven out of this vale of misery.¹⁴ More's view of prayer as a channel of God's grace can be found at least twice in his Tower writings. In the first case, from *A Dialogue of Comfort*, grace can be found by 'praying for hym selfe & desieryng other also to pray for hym, both pore folke for his almoise & other good folke of their charite, specially good preestes in that holy sacred seruice of the masse'.¹⁵ In the second case, it is in connection with his fear of torture; More writes to Master Leder 'And I truste bothe that thei will vse no violente forceble waies, and also that if thei woulde, God woulde of his grace and the rather a greate deale thorowe goode folkes praiours giue me strength to stande'.¹⁶ In both cases for the fidelity for which he prays requires a notable reliance on the prayers of others who are described as 'good folk'. Prayer is a vital tool in the fight against temptation and it enables both temptation and tribulation to be seen in the light of eternity and how to benefit from the practice of prayer.

Prayer is preparation for eternity and is the means to make God the primary focus of our love; a reality that allows the perception of temptation and its contingent tribulations to be realistically assessed in advance. More exhorts 'lette vs euerye manne therefore in tyme, lerne to loue as wee shoulde, god aboue althyng, and al other thing for hym'.¹⁷ If love is not referred to that end, 'it is a very vayne and an vnfrutefull loue' which is loathsome and hinders us from heaven; indeed, anything is loved more than God, it not only breaks his commandment but this love is 'dedely and damnable'.¹⁸

More teaches that for daily problems and tribulations the Pater Noster provides petitions for daily food, preservation from temptation and deliverance from evil.¹⁹ It is right to seek comfort from God '...for god ys & must be your comfort & not I'²⁰ and such a longing and desire is in itself a comfort²¹ for they seek comfort 'where they can not fayle to fynd yt'

¹⁴ cf CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 82/24-27.

¹⁵ CW12, 155/15-18; cf CW12, 76/10-12; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/19-20. cf Ch 3, n54.

¹⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/17-20. cf n68 below; Ch 6, nn63 & 66; Ch 9, n182.

¹⁷ CW13, *A Treatise upon the Passion*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 84/24-25. The *Treatise* is datable to early 1534; for the circumstances of its composition, cf Introduction, n36. cf Ch 6, nn10, 127 & n190.

¹⁸ CW13, *Passion*, 84/27; 85/3; cf 84/24-85/5. [vnfrutefull: unfruitful]

¹⁹ cf CW12, 20/15-30. cf nn10 & 11 above; n75 below; Ch 3, n57.

²⁰ CW12, 5/2-3.

²¹ cf CW12, 14/11.

because as God is almighty and has promised ‘aske and you shall haue’.²² He that haue fayth... can not doubt but god will surely kepe this promise’.²³ It is licit that a man may pray against some tribulations and More specifies hunger, sickness, bodily hurt, the loss of either body or soul either for themselves or a friend as acceptable and valid subjects for prayer. More is also practical and realistic, understanding that in illness and pain it can prove impossible to pray but that lifting up one’s heart to God is more acceptable to him than long prayers said in health.²⁴

Tribulation is sent by God so that we may be drawn to seek him for while prosperity can make us forget Him, ‘sorow & siknes to force vs to draw toward hym, and compellith vs to call vppon hym & pray for relese of our payne, wherby when we lerne to know hym & seke to hym’.²⁵ Tribulation also provides the opportunity ‘for the profit of his pacience & encrease of his merite’²⁶ and so increase our reward in heaven. As always, More is seeking the spiritual benefits and looking to the eternal perceiving that the pains of tribulation, whatever they are,²⁷ are able to diminish the pains of purgatory.²⁸ This view permits More’s understanding that the effects of tribulation are more than just beneficial but also curative for it is ‘medicinable yf men will so take yt, or may become medicynable yf men will so make it, or is better than medicynable but yf we will forsake yt’.²⁹

More writes of two temptations connected with seeking comfort in tribulation. The first temptation is a subtle one. More states that it is always right to pray for the salvation of our soul, for grace, for faith, hope and charity and for the virtues that lead to heaven.³⁰ Sometimes it is lawful to pray for the removal of hunger, sickness and bodily hurt,³¹ as the church does in many prayers for various needs including the Lord’s Prayer which uses petitions for daily

²² Jn 16.24; cf Lk 11.9; cf CW12, 15/24-30; cf Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, (ed) Michael G Sargent, Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2004, 106/28-29. cf n199 below; cf Ch 6, n107; Ch 7, nn81 & 82.

²³ CW12, 15/27-16/2. [dought: doubt]

²⁴ cf CW12, 65/25-66/8.

²⁵ CW12, 58/26-29; cf CW12, 58/14-15; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 215/7-8. For the definition of tribulation: cf Ch 7, nn58 & 59. [siknes: sickness; relese: release]

²⁶ CW12, 24/10-11; cf CW12, 21/8 & 28/15-16 & 30/20 & 31/13-14; cf eg 2 Cor 12.1-10; Job 6.2. cf Ch 7, n26.

²⁷ cf CW12, 35/25-26.

²⁸ cf CW12, 35/22-23 & 36/5 & 75/18-19.

²⁹ CW12, 23/23-25; cf CW12, 24/11-13; 30/20-21. More notes that there are some men who will never seek God either in wealth or in tribulation; cf CW12, 59/8-16. cf Ch 7, n94.

³⁰ cf CW12, 21/9-11.

³¹ cf CW12, 20/15-25.

food, preservation from temptation and deliverance from evil.³² But if a man seeks comfort from God, More argues that it is not always pleasing to God to pray for the removal of all tribulation in all circumstances and ‘in all thing save onely for hevyn, our prayour nor our hope may neuer be to precise, although the thing be leifull to require’.³³ More’s advice is to trust in God, seek help from Him ‘submitting his own will wholly to God’s pleasure’³⁴ and pray and ask friends to pray.³⁵ There is however a caveat: in tribulation it is not always right to ask God for its removal. For in physical and worldly tribulations,

‘we may neuer well make prayer so presisely, but that we must expresse, or imply a condicion therin that is to wit, that yf god se the contrary better for vs, we referre it whole to his will, and in stede of our grefe taken away, pray that god of his goodnes may send vs eyther spirituall cumfort to take yt gladly, or strength at the lest way to take yt pacyently’.³⁶

The second temptation is that comfort is sought not from God in time of tribulation but from the world, the flesh and the devil.³⁷ An example is those who attempt to distract themselves when the idea of repentance enters their head and they continue in the same sinful habits that displease God.³⁸ Tribulation is intended by God as ‘medicynable’ to push people away from such attitudes and towards seeking Him.³⁹ While sinners have ‘y^e grace of god euer calling & knockyng vppon them for repentaunce all the days of theyr lyfe’;⁴⁰ nevertheless finally ‘god vtterly castith them of’ if they will not turn to Him.⁴¹ More comments that ‘the tribulacion that goddes goodnes sendith them for good, them selfe by their foly torn into their harm’.⁴²

³² cf CW12, 20/20-25.

³³ CW12, 193/22-23. [leifull: lawful]

³⁴ CW12, 76/9-10.

³⁵ cf CW12, 76/10-11; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/20 for More’s own practice of this advice. More quotes St Paul ‘And we know that to them that love God all things work together unto good:’; Rom 8.28; cf CW12, 248/25-28. He also uses the phrase at CW6, 400/32-34; cf *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, (eds) Thomas M C Lawler, Germain Marc’hadour & Richard C Marius, 1981; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 203/1424. The idea also appears in his early poem, *A Merry Jest*; CW1, 25/312-314.

³⁶ CW12, 21/13-18; cf CW12, 22/23-24 & 23/1-2. cf Ch 6, n108; Ch 7, nn97 & 98. [presisely: precisely; condicion: condition; referre: refer; grefe: grief; lest: least; pacyently: patiently]

³⁷ cf CW12, 59/15-16; cf CW12, 101/3-6: Here More expands the traditional triad of the world, the flesh and the devil. He writes that the devil ‘tempteth vs by the world, he temptith vs by our own flesh, he temptith vs by pleasure, he temptith vs by payne, he temptith vs by our foes, he temptith vs by our own frendes, & vnder colour of kyndred, he maketh many tymes our next frendes our most foes’; cf Matt 10.36. More also refers to this traditional triad in *The Last Things*; cf CW1, 138/33-34.

³⁸ cf CW12, 60/12-27.

³⁹ cf CW12, 59/17-60/12 & 61/15-17.

⁴⁰ CW7, *The Supplication of Souls*, (eds) Frank Manley, Germain Marc’hadour, Richard Marius & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 192/10-11. For the parable of the vineyard, cf CW12, 91/24-92/8. More reminds his readers that no man enters the vineyard unless God calls him. For More’s comments that sinners cannot repent without God’s grace, cf CW7, *Supplication*, 191/32-192/3; CW8, 424/22-24 & 451/17-18; CW12, 92/17-19 & 229/13-14. [knockyng: knocking; repentaunce: repentance]

⁴¹ CW12, 60/28. The terrifying idea that if a man sins often enough or severely enough that God may finally cease to call them is found not only in *A Dialogue of Comfort*, but also in his other devotional Tower work, *De Tristitia*. More observes that Christ leaves some sinners in their sin for a time ‘in His wondrous kindness and the

Tribulation should, therefore, result in seeking God and his comfort through prayer. If a man longs to be comforted by God, he shows that he has a good faith and is not 'cast out of godes gracious favour' because such a good mind is inspired in his heart either by our guardian angel or 'by the goodnes of god hymselfe'.⁴³ It is always best to 'remit the maner of that comfort vnto his own high pleasure'.⁴⁴ More's attitude could be summarized as 'God knows best'.

More is insistent that God knows and sees what is best for us; indeed, He sees much more clearly than we can what is for our true good.⁴⁵ It is for this reason that 'we may neuer well make prayer so presisely, but that we must expesse, or imply a condicion therin, that is to wit, that yf god se the contrary better for vs, we referre it whole to his will.'⁴⁶ It should never be doubted that God in 'his high wisdom better seeth what is best for vs than we can see our selfe, so shall his souerayne goodness give vs the thing that shall in dede be best'.⁴⁷ More employs the example of St Paul who asked God three times to take his tribulation from him, but God refused, telling the apostle that 'the help of godes grace in that tribulacion to strength hym, was ferr better for hym than to take the tribulacion from hym'.⁴⁸ Although God will help us if our desire is lawful, nevertheless when we leave the choice of comfort to God,⁴⁹ even if He does not fulfil our wishes, He will undoubtedly send something that is better.⁵⁰ It is because God sees what is ultimately for the best, and in this is found the answer to unanswered prayer and therefore we should not grumble if we do not obtain what we want, but rest content with the comfort that God sends.⁵¹ Acceptance of 'God knows best' means placing our trust in Him.

More appears to embrace the idea that God knows what is best for us early in his life and that we should trust Him, and it becomes one of More's perennial themes. It is found in an early

inscrutable depths of his wisdom' whereas others 'He leaves so as never to come back again'; CW14, 211/10-213/4. It is also found in More's polemical works, cf also CW6, 401/26-28; CW7, *Supplication*, 191/27-30; CW8, 424/22-23 & 451/20-23. cf Ch 2, nn213-218, 238 & 244.

⁴² CW12, 63/20-21. [torn: turn]

⁴³ CW12, 16/22-24, 27-29.

⁴⁴ CW12, 21/25; cf CW12, 16/5-9. cf n46 below.

⁴⁵ cf CW12, 21/18-23; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 177/5-8.

⁴⁶ CW12, 21/13-15; cf CW12, 193/21-23. For Christ's example in the Garden of Gethsemane, cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 175/6-7 & 175/12-177/1 & 177/4-8 & 217/9-12; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 507/16-508/18. cf n44ff above; n61ff below; Ch 9, nn48 & 62.

⁴⁷ CW12, 21/26-29. [souerayne: sovereign]

⁴⁸ CW12, 22/18-20; cf 2 Cor 12.7-10. [strengthen: strengthen; ferr: far]

⁴⁹ cf CW12, 16/16-19.

⁵⁰ cf CW12, 193/17-21.

⁵¹ cf CW12, 16/10-20; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 155/4-157/2.

and entertaining poem, entitled *A Merry Jest*, most probably written for a specific, although unknown, occasion. This poem portrays the idea in three short lines:

God may tourne all,
And so he shall,
I truste, vnto the best.⁵²

If God were always to grant our requests, thus leaving all choice entirely up to us, it is quite possible that our choice will bring us harm.⁵³ In fact God shows His gracious favour when he rejects our foolishness and our blindness,⁵⁴ because ‘God could not lightly do man a more vengauce, than in this world to graunt hym his own folysh wishes’.⁵⁵ Seeking God’s will is always paramount for ‘yf a man shuld in euery sicknes, pray for his helth agayne, whan shuld he shew hym self content to die & depart vnto god. And that mynd a man must haue... or els yt will not be well’.⁵⁶ Everyone must be content to die when God calls and several times in the *Dialogue of Comfort* More expresses a fearful concern for a man who is ‘loth to leue this wrechid world, myn hart is much in feare lest he dye not well’.⁵⁷ Even the pagan Utopians ‘are absolutely certain and convinced that human bliss will be so immense that, while they lament every man’s illness, they regret the death of no one but him whom they see torn from life anxiously and unwillingly’.⁵⁸ The question is ultimately one of trust, and faith that prayer and tribulation will have benefits beyond any immediate perceptions. More quotes St Paul saying that although we do not know how to pray for the things most profitable for us, the Spirit Himself desires for us with unspeakable groanings.⁵⁹ Trust in God is never misplaced for More, again quoting St Paul, says that as long as we pray well, holy Scripture assures us that ‘vnto good folke, all thinges turne them to good’.⁶⁰

⁵² CW1, *A Merry Jest*, 25/312-314. Proposed dates for its composition vary from 1503-1509: cf CW1, Introduction, xxvi-xxvii.

⁵³ cf CW12, 22/5; cf CW12, 22/1-2.

⁵⁴ cf CW12, 22/3-4, 11; cf CW1, *The Lamytacyon off Quene Elyzabeth*, 11/55-56; CW1, *To them Pat tristith in fortune*, 35/111; 38/204; CW2, *The History of King Richard III*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963, 52/13-16.

⁵⁵ CW12, 22/13-14. [lightly: easily; a more: a greater; vengauce: vengeance]

⁵⁶ CW12, 20/27-30; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 143/4-5.

⁵⁷ CW12, 76/19-20; cf CW12, 62/1-6.

⁵⁸ CW4, *Utopia*, (eds) Edward Surtz, SJ & J H Hexter, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965, 223/22-25. More notes the idea of the willing acceptance of death versus an unwillingness to die; cf eg CW12, 20/27-30, 76/18-20 & 301/22-25. More also observes that by delaying death, later a worse death may confront a man and lead to regret attempting to delay death; cf CW3.2, *Latin Poems*, (eds) Clarence H Miller, Leicester Bradner, Charles A Lynch & Revilo P Oliver, 1984; *Epigrams* 221 & 259; CW12, 319/7-18; CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/8-212/2 & 212.3-8. He also notes that, even if a man escapes death, he will surely die and may possibly die a more painful death than the one from which he escape and may also die an eternal death in hell; cf CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 212/24-31; CW14, *Catena*, 631/4-9; 639/2-12 & 643/2-645/6.

⁵⁹ cf CW12, 22/26-30; cf Rom 8.26.

⁶⁰ CW12, 248/28; Rom 8.28; cf CW6, 400/31-401/2. cf n52 above.

Thus the acceptance that ‘God knows best’ leads naturally, and probably inevitably, to *fiat voluntas tua*.⁶¹ More used it at the very end of the last prayer he wrote in the Tower, written between his condemnation and execution, where he prays: ‘Lord giue me pacience in tribulacion, and grace in euerything to conforme my will to thine: y^t I may truly say: *Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in celo et in terra*.’⁶² Indeed, ‘Thy will be done’ is one lesson to be learned from Christ's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane where More notes that

‘He implored His Father’s mercy and twice called His Father by name, begging Him that, since all things are possible to Him, He might be moved by His prayers to take away the cup of His passion if this could be done, that is, if He had not imposed it on Him by an immutable decree. But He also asked that His own will, as expressed by this prayer, might not be granted, if something else seemed better to His Father’s will, which is absolutely best’.⁶³

It is in More’s Tower letters that his extraordinary level of trust in God and His providence are found, along with his *fiat voluntas tua*.⁶⁴ Combining his acknowledgement that God knows best with the trust that accompanies it, he writes to his beloved daughter, Meg, that ‘I neuer haue prayde God to bringe me hence nor deliuer me fro death, but referring all thing whole vnto his onely pleasure, as to hym that seeth better what is best for me than my selfe dooth’.⁶⁵ That his awareness of his own frailty is balanced, indeed over-ridden by his trust, is demonstrated in a letter to Dr Nicholas Wilson, who was imprisoned in the Tower along with More in April, 1534.⁶⁶ More acknowledges his own frailty, as well as his trust in God, admitting to Wilson that what his mind ‘shalbe to morowe my selffe can not be suer and whether I shall haue fynally the grace to do according to myne owne conscience or not hangythe in Goddys goodnes and not in myne’.⁶⁷ More then asks Wilson to remember him in his devout prayers as he remembers Wilson daily in his. This combination of an acknowledgement of frailty, especially with regard to pain, combined with prayer and trust is typical of More, who writes to Master Leder that if he ever took the oath, ‘ye maye reckon sure that it were expressed and extorted by duresse and harde handeling... And I truste bothe that thei will vse no violente forceble waies,...’⁶⁸ However, should this occur, More

⁶¹ Matt 6.10.

⁶² CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 231/21-23; for Christ's example in the Garden of Gethsemane, cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 175/6-7 & 175/12-177/1; cf Matt 26.42. [euerything: everything]

⁶³ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 147/8-149/6.

⁶⁴ More does not actually use this expression in his letters.

⁶⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/136-139. cf Ch 9, n64. [prayde: prayed; deliuer: deliver]

⁶⁶ cf Wegemer, 163. Wilson later took the oath; cf E E Reynolds, *The Field is Won: The Life and Death of St. Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1968, 329; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 503/42-504/44.

⁶⁷ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 533/12-17; cf CW12, 22/11-12; Rogers, 543/130-132. cf n71 below. [my selffe: myself; suer: sure; fynally: finally; consyence: conscience; hangythe: hangs]

⁶⁸ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/14-18. cf n16 above; Ch 6, n63; Ch 9, 182.

proclaims his trust that God would give him enough grace to stand, and that he would be assisted by the prayers of good folk, and that it is to God he commits the whole matter, for *In cuius manu corda regum sunt*.⁶⁹ He writes to Margaret using St Peter as his example who, because he did not fear, or fear enough, for ‘at the worde of a simple gyrl he forsoke and forsware our Sauour’.⁷⁰ More continues that although he cannot guarantee his ability to maintain his stand, he will pray, and asks Margaret to pray with him, that ‘it may please God that hath geuen me this minde, to geue me the grace to kepe it’.⁷¹

But it is in the letter, known as *A Dialogue on Conscience*, that Margaret wrote to her step-sister, Alice Alington, reporting the conversation she had had with her father during a visit to the Tower, that More’s complete trust in God, coupled with an awareness of his own frailty, finds its full expression. He tells her:

And therefore mine owne good daughter, neuer troble thy minde for any thinge that euer shall happe me in this worlde. Nothing can come but that that God will. And I make me very sure that what so euer that be, seme it neuer so badde in sight, it shall in dede be the best.⁷²

The level of trust portrayed here is far removed from the cry of the young More writing to his spiritual adviser, John Colet: ‘For in the city what is there to move one to live well? but rather, when a man is straining in his own power to climb the steep path of virtue, it turns him back by a thousand devices and such him back by its thousand enticements.’⁷³ This letter shows the young man depending on his own efforts to try to reach God but with his focus upon eternity. Thirty years later, especially in a letter from the Tower, he writes of his awareness of his own frailty and again and again of his dependence and trust in God. There is also a particular defiance in his statement, recorded a paragraph earlier by Margaret in *A Dialogue on Conscience*, where he proclaims: ‘Mistruste him, Megge, wil I not, though I feale me faint, yea, and though I shoulde fele my feare euen at poynt to ouerthrowe me to,...’⁷⁴

⁶⁹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 550/37-39; cf Prov 21.1: ‘the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord’; cf CW12, 76/10-12 & 155/15-18; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/19-20; cf Thomas a Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, (trans Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1955, Bk III, Ch 15, No 2. cf n67 above; Ch 9, n149.

⁷⁰ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/128; cf Matt 26.69-75. cf Ch 2, nn322-323 & 328; Ch6 nn111 &115; Ch 7, n146. [gyrl: girl]

⁷¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/131-132. cf n67 above.

⁷² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 531/659-532/663. cf Ch 4, n151.

⁷³ Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961, 4. This is a translation of the Latin, cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 6/18-7/21. cf Ch 2, n3; Ch 6, n4; Ch 9, n2.

⁷⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 531/640-642. cf Ch 6, n113.

Prayer and trust combined are of pre-eminent importance. In the *De Tristitia Christi*, More notes that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ exhorted his apostles: ‘Watch ye: and pray that ye enter not into temptation’.⁷⁵ Watching suggests alertness and readiness and is of course the very opposite of sloth, which when it overcomes us makes us abandon the habit of prayer.⁷⁶ Because the flesh is weak, it is therefore even more essential to stay awake for prayer,⁷⁷ for it is only by prayer that temptation can be overcome and the devil resisted.⁷⁸ Vigilance and steadfastness are the keys: More quotes St Peter ‘Therefore, be prudent and watchful in prayers’.⁷⁹ Indeed it is not only important to stay awake to pray, but to get up in order to pray; indeed, Christ commanded his apostles to do so.⁸⁰ But it is for prayer that His followers are to arise, so that they do not enter into temptation, not for ‘cards and dice, not for rowdy parties and drunken brawls, not for wine and women, but for prayer’⁸¹ and in order to pray ‘not that we may roll in wealth, not that we may live in a continuous round of pleasures, not that something awful may happen to our enemies, not that we may receive honour in this world, but rather that we may not enter into temptation’.⁸² According to More, the lesson from Gethsemane is that in any danger we should ‘rather imitate Christ... by sighing and praying from the bottom of our hearts’ as He did ‘for in His agony He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became like drops of blood running down to the ground’.⁸³ Continuing with the guidance that can be found using the example of Christ in Gethsemane, More explains the meaning when Christ told the apostles three times to pray, it was

‘in order to teach them by His example as well, He himself prayed three times, suggesting in this way that we ought to pray to the Trinity, namely to the unbegotten Father, to the coequal Son begotten by Him, and to the Spirit equal to each and proceeding from each of them. From these three we should likewise pray for three things: forgiveness for the past, grace to manage the present, and a prudent concern for the future. But we should pray for these things not lazily and carelessly but incessantly and fervently’.⁸⁴

⁷⁵ Matt 26.41; cf Mk 14.38. The *De Tristitia Christi* contains four usages of Matt 26.41, one of Lk 22.40: ‘Pray, lest ye enter into temptation’, and eight usages of Lk 22.46: ‘Arise: pray: lest you enter into temptation’.

⁷⁶ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 209/1-3.

⁷⁷ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 171/6-8; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 167/10-11.

⁷⁸ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 309/10-311/2; cf Matt 26.41; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 159/6-8 & 167/7-8 & 333/5-9 & 563/5-6. cf Ch 1, n162; Ch 2, n27; Ch 3, nn61 & 62; Ch 6, n81.

⁷⁹ 1 Pet 4.7; cf CW14, *Catena*, 663/9.

⁸⁰ Lk 22.46; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 171/11-13 & 309/7-9.

⁸¹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 171/6-8. cf Ch 6, n99.

⁸² CW14, *De Tristitia*, 173/5-8. cf n10 above.

⁸³ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 227/8-229/1; cf Lk 22.43-44.

⁸⁴ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 311/4-12; cf CW12, 67/4-8.

Prayer is so vital that we must pray ‘not occasionally, but constantly’ and ‘unceasingly’,⁸⁵ and this should include at least some of the night as did the psalmist: ‘I arose in the middle of the night to pay homage to you’.⁸⁶ Christ acts as the exemplar for He did not even go to bed, spending all night in prayer.⁸⁷ But More wonders if we can even apply the text: ‘I thought of you as I lay in my bed’.⁸⁸ Observing Christ's custom of going up to a mountain to pray,⁸⁹ More says that this signifies that during prayer we must lift our minds above our ordinary everyday lives to the contemplation of heavenly matters.⁹⁰ Prayer should become a habit which directs our inclinations and passions towards spiritual matters. ‘Godly counsaile & contynuall prayour’ are needed so that ‘they may be habitually radicate & surely take depe rote therin’.⁹¹ Constancy in prayer is vital because ‘our minds, no matter how willing to do good, are swept back into the evils of temptation.’⁹² Christ tells us to pray because this is absolutely necessary if we are to avoid temptation.⁹³ More takes the example of the *Pater Noster* that Christ gave his followers, noting that the final petition ‘And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil’ ends the *Pater Noster* as a summary of all the previous petitions.⁹⁴ The consequences of a lack of the vigilance shown by watching and praying is given to us in the example of the apostles in the Garden of Gethsemane. They did not heed Christ’s warning of the ‘impending danger’ because they failed to take temptation seriously enough and so they allowed sleep to overtake them and abandoned their prayers.⁹⁵ They were tempted and overcome by sudden danger;⁹⁶ the apostles slept because they had not acquired the habit of prayer.⁹⁷

One of the most important aspects of prayer is posture. More expounds on Christ's prostration in the Garden of Gethsemane in his *De Tristitia Christi*.⁹⁸ He observes that although ‘His

⁸⁵ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 171/8-9; cf Lk 18.1; Lk 21.36; 1 Thess 5.17.

⁸⁶ Ps 118.62; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 7/10 & 137/5-6.

⁸⁷ Lk 6.12; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 7/11 & 33/1-2 & 171/9-13.

⁸⁸ Ps 62.7; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 9/1 & 137/4.

⁸⁹ cf Matt 14.23; Lk 22.39.

⁹⁰ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 9/9-11/1.

⁹¹ CW12, 282/15-17.

⁹² CW14, *De Tristitia*, 167/12-169/1.

⁹³ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 173/7-8.

⁹⁴ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 175/1-4. On the importance of the final petition of the *Pater noster*, cf CW12, 156/23-26. cf Ch 3, n57.

⁹⁵ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 331/3; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 169/9-10; cf Wegemer, *Portrait of Courage*, 205.

⁹⁶ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 331/1-333/9; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 169/10-11.

⁹⁷ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 159/3-4; cf Wegemer, *Portrait of Courage*, 205.

⁹⁸ cf Germain Marc'hadour, *Praying with Saint Thomas More*, Angers: Amici Thomae Mori, 1998, 32-34. Marc'hadour notes two Old Testament models of prostration; cf 2 Esdras [Nehemiah] 8.6; 1 Mac 4.55; 32. More does not use either of these examples.

divinity is equal to that of God the Father, nevertheless because He is also man, He casts Himself down humbly as a man, face down on the earth before God the Father'.⁹⁹ More addresses his audience: 'Reader, let us pause for a little at this point and contemplate with a devout mind our commander lying on the ground in humble supplication'.¹⁰⁰ For the example of Christ's humility and the nature of His subjection before God is revealed by how Christ implored His Father's mercy, not by sitting, standing or kneeling, but instead that 'He threw His whole body face-forward and lay prostrate on the ground'.¹⁰¹ But in another example of 'God knows best', More rather dryly observes that while begging God 'to take away the cup of His passion if this could be done,... He also asked that His own will, as expressed in this prayer might not be granted, if something else seemed better to His Father's will, which is absolutely best'.¹⁰² Although More was writing this in the expectation of a traitor's death, Erasmus, in his almost contemporary work, *De Praeparatione ad Mortem*,¹⁰³ likewise uses the example of Christ in Gethsemane preparing for His Passion and providing the example of how to pray. 'He got to his knees. This was not enough: 'he fell prostrate'. Christ prayed three times: 'Not as I will, but as you will.'¹⁰⁴ More interprets Christ's prostration as providing a vital lesson in the importance of posture for God is to be served 'not only in soul but also in body, since He created both, and He wanted us to learn that a reverend attitude of the body, though it take its origin and character from the soul, increases by a kind of reflex the soul's own reverence and devotion toward God'.¹⁰⁵

More inveighs against bad, distracted and irreverent prayer, particularly in the *De Tristitia*, where he employs trenchant criticism of the careless, the lazy, the slothful and the inattentive who bodily deportment betrays their negligence.¹⁰⁶ However, he is careful to distinguish such

⁹⁹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 113/6-9; cf Matt 26.39; Mk 14.35.

¹⁰⁰ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 113/10-115/2. cf nn101, 104, 105, 114, 116 & 117 below; Ch 7, n107 & 111.

¹⁰¹ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 147/6-8.

¹⁰² CW14, *De Tristitia*, 149/2-6. cf Ch 7, n108.

¹⁰³ Erasmus, *De Praeparatione ad Mortem*, (Preparing for Death) in *CWE*, Vol 70, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/ London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, 393-450. This was written at the request of the Earl of Wiltshire and Ormond [Thomas Boleyn, father of Anne] between June-December 1533. The dedicatory letter is dated 1 December 1533 and the work was printed early in 1534 by the Froben Press in Basel. Thomas More was imprisoned in April 1534 and it would seem debatable whether or not he would have seen Erasmus' work. Erasmus died in 1536 and More's *De Tristitia* was only published in the 1557 volume of his *English Workes*, having been translated by his grand-daughter Mary Basset [cf CW14.2, Appendix C, 1077], so it would appear unlikely that either Erasmus knew of More's work, or that More knew of Erasmus' *De Praeparatione ad Mortem*. cf Introduction, n106; Ch 6, n9..

¹⁰⁴ *CWE* 70, *De Praeparatione*, 449; cf Matt 26.39.

¹⁰⁵ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 145/8-12.

¹⁰⁶ eg CW14, *De Tristitia*, 113/10-119/2 & 123/10-129/5 & 327/4-329/12.

behaviour from brief distractions and inadvertent slips of attention.¹⁰⁷ Giovanni Santinello looks at More's writing on prayer in *De Tristitia* and how he notes our distractions and wandering minds.¹⁰⁸ As our outward bodily deportment indicates our inner attitude and reverence, so an inattentive mind is reflected by our bodily behaviour and that God observes both the inner and outer.¹⁰⁹ Santinello also observes More's attitude to posture.¹¹⁰ More instructs that 'we also occasionally say some prayers for which we prepare our minds more thoughtfully, for which we dispose our bodies more reverently,...', which is also noted by Santinello.¹¹¹

More and Pico share the same view of the importance of posture, especially prostration, before God. Pico advises Gianfrancesco that in order to be acceptable to God 'let no daie passe the but thou ones at y^e lest wise present thi self to god by praier and falling down by fore him flat to y^e ground with an humble affecte of deuout mynde not from y^e extremite of thi lippes but out of y^e inwardnes of thine hart...'¹¹² While it is possible that More discovered this idea in Pico, it is equally possible that in Pico he found a reflection of his own attitude.¹¹³ It would therefore seem probable that he practised prostration in his New Building during his Friday vigils. As a posture of prayer, prostration appears to have sufficient importance for More that even his pagan Utopians practise it during their religious observances for as the priest enters 'all immediately fall on the ground in reverence' and at the end of the prayers, 'they prostrate themselves on the ground again'.¹¹⁴ As an attitude of humble reverence to God,¹¹⁵ More does not refer to prostration again until a letter written to Margaret from the Tower. With the focus upon heaven, and he writes to his daughter that

¹⁰⁷ eg CW14, *De Tristitia*, 139/14-141/6 & 313/4-317/6 & 323/9-325/3 & 327/1-4.

¹⁰⁸ Giovanni Santinello, 'Thomas More's *Expositio Passionis*' in *Essential Articles for the study of Thomas More*, (eds) R S Sylvester and G P Marc'hadour, Hamden Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977, 457; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 139/1-143/10.

¹⁰⁹ CW12, 164/15-24; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 147/7-149/6 & 113/3-9 & 114/10ff; cf Santinello 457.

¹¹⁰ cf Santinello, 457.

¹¹¹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 137/7-9.

¹¹² CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 83/20-23. cf n147 below. cf note: extremity of thy lips contrasts with the inwardness of thine heart. [daie: day; y^e lest wise: at least; by fore: before; affecte: desire, disposition; extremite: outer point; lippes: lips; inwardness: inner part]

¹¹³ More's translations of Pico are not literal; some sections are omitted, some are paraphrased and More sometimes includes additions of his own. Pico's recommendation of prostration is found in the original; cf CW1, 347.

¹¹⁴ CW4, 235/31-32; 237/33-34. For More's New Building, cf Roper, 25/22-26/7. cf n3 above.

¹¹⁵ Prostration occurs once in More's polemical works in *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer* in connection with the sinner being 'prostrate vnder the deuyls fote,...' cf CW8, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, (eds) Louis A Schuster, Richard C Marius, James P Lusardi & Richard J Schoeck, 1973, 456/3. It also occurs in a letter to Henry VIII where More describes himself as being 'in my moost humble maner, prostrate at your gracious feete,...' cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 489/40. It is possible that this description is just an accepted

Prayer: An Antidote to Fear

‘I besech hym to bringe me, when his will shall be, in to his endelesse blisse of heauen, and in the meane while, gyue me grace and you both in all our agonies and troubles, deuoutly to resort prostrate vnto the remembraunce of that bitter agony which our Sauour suffred before his passion at the Mount. And if we diligently so do, I verily trust we shall find therein great comfort and consolacion’.¹¹⁶

In *A Dialogue of Comfort* he guides the reader on how to seek solitude and silence in order to pray. He tells him to imagine the account he has to render to God for his sinful living and so

‘let hym there before an altare or some pitifull image of christes bitter passion, the beholding wherof may put hym in remembraunce of the thing & move hym to devout compassion, knele downe or fall prostrate as at the fete of almighty god, verely belevyng hym to be there invisibly present, as without eny dowt he is’.¹¹⁷

The evidence of this letter and the quotation from the *Dialogue of Comfort* are as near as one can get to direct evidence that More did, indeed, practise prostration in his personal religious devotions. This quotation also brings us to the central focus of much of More’s prayer: the Passion of Christ in all its aspects from the Garden of Gethsemane to the crucifixion.

References to the Passion occur regularly throughout the majority of More’s works.¹¹⁸ The first references to the crucifix and the Passion are found in the *Life of Pico* and in Pico’s *Second Letter to Gianfranceso*. The *Life* records that Pico stated his intention to give his wealth to the poor and with the crucifix for protection to walk through the world barefoot preaching about Christ,¹¹⁹ and that on his deathbed Pico venerated the crucifix, that is ‘the ymage of cristis ineffable passione suffred for oure sake’.¹²⁰ In his letter, Pico reminds Gianfrancesco to avoid vainglory and to love disgrace and to be proud of the ignominy and

convention in the sixteenth century for Cranmer uses it similarly: ‘as prostrate at the feete of Your Majestie’ in a letter to Henry VIII dated 11th April, 1533; cf Geoffrey de C Parmiter, *The King’s Great Matter, A Study of Anglo-Papal Relations 1527-1534*, London: Longmans, Green & Co Ltd, 1967, 233, n6.

¹¹⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 509/40-46. cf Ch 7, n211; Ch 9, nn9 & 26. [endelesse: endless; blisse: bliss; deuoutly: devoutly]

¹¹⁷ CW12, 164/19-24. Bernard Basset notes Pico’s prostration, the practice of the Utopians and More’s own recommendation of it in *A Dialogue of Comfort*; cf *Born for Friendship*, London: Burns & Oates, 1965, 59. [altare: altar; belevyng: believing; eny: any]

¹¹⁸ The exceptions are his *English Poems*, *The History of King Richard III* [both Latin and English versions], the *Latin Epigrams* and *Translations of Lucian*, and *Utopia*.

¹¹⁹ cf CW1, *Pico*, 70/14-18.

¹²⁰ CW1, *Pico*, 71/6-7. Such deathbed veneration was not confined to Pico. Indeed, Bishop John Fisher in his sermon for the funeral of King Henry VII records that on the day of his death, the King contemplated ‘the ymage of the crucefyxe many a tyme... with grete reuerence, lyftyng vp his heed as he might, holdyng vp his handes before it, & often embrafyng it in his armes & with grete deuocion kyffynge it,...; cf John E B Mayor (ed), *English Works of John Fisher*, London: Early English Text Society, 1876, 274/26-30. [cristis: Christ’s]

reproach of Christ's cross like faithful servants, and preach Christ crucified through which God overcame the wisdom of the world and saves those who believe.¹²¹

More's earliest description is found in his expansion of Pico's *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle*.¹²² He connects temptation with 'the paynefull crosse of Christ' and advises his readers that in such temptation to 'Think on the very lamentable payne / Think on the piteouse crosse of wofull christ / Think on his blode bet out at euey vayne / Think on his precieuse hert carued in twayne'¹²³ and in doing so to consider the price of their redemption won on the cross.¹²⁴ Pico's works provide an indication of the importance of the crucifix to More for, as Germain Marc'hadour observes, he 'endorses this message by selecting it for translation'.¹²⁵

The cross of Christ appears in the *Last Things* in a passage on the pains of the dying in the section on the remembrance of death. More notes that Christ never cried out in pain either from the whips and rods that beat Him or the sharp thorns digging into His head or the nails piercing His hands and feet.¹²⁶ However, at the time when Christ's soul left His body, He cried out to God the Father and 'w^t a gret lowed crye he gaue vp the gost'.¹²⁷ More asks that if 'death was so painful and ragious to our sauioure Christ,... what intollerable torment wil death bee than to vs miserable wretches'.¹²⁸ The sufferings More enumerates include a painful conscience, the fear of hell, dread of the devil and sorrow for our sins, all of which shall exceed the physical pains of our body.¹²⁹

In *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, More's first polemical work in English, he stresses the importance of the crucifix for devotional purposes: 'there is no man but yf he loue another, but he delyteth in his ymage'.¹³⁰ More's intention, by focussing his reader's attention on the crucifix and Christ's Passion, is to allow the reader to be moved to pity and compassion

¹²¹ cf CW1, Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 90/14-25.

¹²² CW1, Pico's *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle*, 109/25-113/10. Pico gives only the headings of each stanza; the entire poem is More's work; cf CW1, 377.

¹²³ CW1, Pico's *Twelve Weapons*, 112/22, 24-27. [piteouse: compassionate; wofull: woeful; bet: beat; vayne: vein; carued: carved]

¹²⁴ cf CW1, Pico's *Twelve Weapons*, 113/1-2.

¹²⁵ cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'Thomas More's Spirituality' in *St Thomas More: Action and Contemplation*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for St John's University, 1972, 145.

¹²⁶ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 140/27-32.

¹²⁷ CW1, *Last Things*, 141/1; cf Matt 27.50; Mk 15.37; Lk 23.46. [lowed: loud]

¹²⁸ CW1, *Last Things*, 141/2-8. [ragious: full of suffering]

¹²⁹ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 141/9-12.

¹³⁰ CW6, 47/23-24; cf CW6, 56/15-18. [delyteth: delights]

through contemplation of the holy crucifix by devout meditation.¹³¹ He also acknowledges the importance of the crucifix to devotion and meditation because the

‘two wordes Christus crucifixus, do not so lyuely represent vs the remembraunce of his bytter passyon, as doth a blessyd ymage of the crucefyx, neyther to lay man, nor vnto a lerned. ... [for it is] an ymage made in remembraunce of our sauour hym selfe, & not only of his most blessyd person, but also of his most bytter passyon’.¹³²

Devotion to Christ's Passion is More's stated subject in his work *A Treatise on the Passion*.¹³³ However, this treatise finishes during the Last Supper and the discussion on how to receive the ‘very body and blood of Christ in the blessed sacrament’.¹³⁴ In the third of twelve collects to be found interspersed within its text, More reveals the purpose of devotion to Christ's Passion: it is to gain admittance into heaven, through co-operation with God's grace. The collect reads: ‘O hooly blyssed sauoure Iesu Christe, whiche willyngly diddest determyne to dye for mans sake, mollifye myne harde hert, and souple it so by grace, that thorowe tender compassion of thy bitter passion I may be partener of thyne holy redempcion’.¹³⁵ Reading the Passion must only ever be undertaken for spiritual profit, and in the next collect More sets out how to achieve this: ‘Good lorde gyue vs thy grace, not to reade or here this gospell of thy bytter passion with our eyen and our eares in maner of a passetye, but that it may with compassyon so synke in to our heartes, that it maye streche to theuerlastyng profyte of our soules’.¹³⁶ More recommends in his translation of Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, he recommends reading Scripture as ‘profitable’ for ‘ther lyeth priuely in them a certein heuently strength quik and effectual which with a meruelous powar transformeth & chaungith y^e redars

¹³¹ cf CW6, 56/19-20, 23-24. More's references to the crucifix are few in comparison with those of the Passion of Christ.

¹³² CW6, 47/15-31; cf CW1, Pico's *Twelve Rules of Spiritual Battle*, 104/11; cf CW1, 373. In his translation More describes the Passion as bitter, but this epithet is More's addition and is not present in the original. More describes the Passion with a number of different epithets including blessed, holy, ineffable, intolerable, painful, precious and shameful. The most frequently used is bitter, very occasionally accompanied with painful or dear. The description of Christ's Passion as bitter occurs in almost all his English works, the exceptions being his *English Poems* and *The History of King Richard III*. This description does not appear in his Latin works with the exception of *De Tristitia Christi*, where the concept of bitter is used slightly differently and is allied to feelings of sadness, torments, the winepress of his cross, death, and mental anguish; cf eg CW14, *De Tristitia*, 43/6 & 95/8 & 97/6 & 109/9 & 219/13 & 235/1, 3 & 529/9. [Christus crucifixus: Christ crucified; lyuely: vividly, forcefully; passyon: passion; blessyd: blessed; crucefyx: crucifix]

¹³³ CW13, *Passion*, 1976, 3-177. cf Introduction, n35.

¹³⁴ cf CW13, *Passion*, 174/27-33.

¹³⁵ CW13, *Passion*, 49/12-15. [hooly: holy; blyssed: blessed; diddest: did; determyne: decide; mollifye: soften, make less obdurate; souple: soften; redempcion: redemption]

¹³⁶ CW13, *Passion*, 52/27-30; this prayer is similar to the advice given at the beginning of *The Cloud of Unknowing* in which the author says that whoever possesses or reads this work shall have ‘a trewe wille & by an hole entent, purposed him to be a parfite folower of Criste,...’; cf *The Cloud of Unknowing*, (ed) Phyllis Hodgson, London: Oxford University Press for The Early English Text Society, 1944, 2/1-2. [here: hear; passetye: diversion, entertainment; compassyon: compassion; synke: sink; streche to: tend towards, serve for; theuerlastyng; everlasting; profyte: profit]

mynde in to the loue of god if they be clene & lowly entreated'.¹³⁷ This reflects the medieval idea of using the imagination to be present at a particular event in the history of salvation. Nicholas Love writes of the scene following Christ's burial and tells the reader 'And thou also by deuoute ymaginacion as thou were there bodily present, confort oure lady...'¹³⁸ More employs this concept of imagination relatively rarely but does so to imagine the 'dredeful dome of god', death and its image, heaven, hell and a comparison of heaven and hell.¹³⁹ He also uses it to stress its limits.¹⁴⁰ But in the way in which Love uses it, More's sole example is in his exhortation to 'conceyve in our myndes a right Imagynacion & remembrance of christes byttre paynefull passion' in order to bring it to life in our minds.¹⁴¹ A surprising idea emerging from More's *A Treatise on the Passion* is his gratitude for Christ's crucifixion. Gratitude and longing for God are combined in the ninth of the Collects that intersperse *The Treatise* in which he prays: 'O my swete sauour Christ, whiche of thyne vnderdeserued loue towarde mankynde, so kyndely woldest suffer the payneful deth of the crosse, suffer not me to be cold nor luke warme in loue agayne toward the'.¹⁴² Peter Ackroyd suggests that by meditating upon the torments of Christ More was better able to understand and endure those which he anticipated for himself.¹⁴³

When More tells the king's Councillors during an interrogation in the Tower that 'I had fully determyned with my selfe, neyther to study nor medle with eny mater of thys worlde, but that my hole study shulde be, vppon the passyon of Chryst and myne owne passage owt of thys worlde'¹⁴⁴ he was not only telling the truth but also continuing a long-standing devotion.

¹³⁷ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/6-9. [lyeth: lies; certein: certain; priuely: secretly; quik: living; powar: power; redars: reader's; clene: virtuous; lowly: humbly; entreated: treated]

¹³⁸ Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, 188/2-3; cf eg Love, 15/14 & 179/12. [confort: comfort]

¹³⁹ For the dome of God: cf CW1, *Last Things*, 129/34-130/1; for death and its image: CW1, *Last Things*, 139/20, 23, 29; for heaven: CW6, 397/7, CW12, 308/16; for hell: CW7, *Supplication*, 188/36, CW12, 61/11; for heaven and hell: CW12, 305/19. [dome: doom, ie Last Judgement]

¹⁴⁰ cf CW12, 308/28; cf CW7, *Supplication*; 226/10; CW12, 308/30.

¹⁴¹ CW12, 312/12-13; cf Louis A Schuster, SM, 'The Tower of London: MORE'S GETHSEMANE' in *Moreana*, Vol XIX, No 74, June 1982, 43. cf Ch 9, n85. [conceyve: conceive; imagynacion: imagination; byttre: bitter]

¹⁴² CW13, *Passion*, More uses the expression 'key cold' [ie stone cold] referring to the sinfulness of the members of the church, cf CW6, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, (eds) Thomas M C Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour & Richard C Marius, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, 205/32; to the lack of fervour in faith and faintness of faith, cf CW12, 13/8 & 242/24 & 248/19 & 313/4; to dullness in prayer, cf CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 230/23-24. For key cold: cf Ch 9, n51. [vnderdeserued: undeserved; mankynde: mankind; kyndely: with natural affection]

¹⁴³ Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1998, 348.

¹⁴⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 552/64-68. More's statement is quoted in the State Papers of Henry VIII; cf James Gairdener (arr), *Letters & Papers Foreign & Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol viii, London: Longmans & Co, 1885, No 814 & 815; cf W Gordon Zeeveld, 'Apology for an Execution' in *Essential Articles for the*

Clarence Miller comments that ‘no one need doubt that he had quite personal reasons for undertaking these spiritual exercise, entirely apart from his desire to avoid any incriminating topics in his conversation and writing’.¹⁴⁵ In a letter to Margaret, More writes of his fear of death, that ‘I thanke our Lorde, the feare of hel, the hope of heauen and the passion of Christ daily more and more aswage’,¹⁴⁶ and recommends that God ‘gyue me grace and you both in all our agonies and troubles, deuoutly to resort prostrate vnto the remembraunce of that bitter agony, which our Sauour suffred before his passion at the Mount’.¹⁴⁷ He goes further and explains the reason for ‘if we diligently so do, I verily trust we shall find therein great comfort and consolacion’.¹⁴⁸ In *De Tristitia*, More declares the necessity of devotion to Christ's Passion forcefully when he writes, ‘Although nothing can contribute more effectively to salvation, and to the implanting of every sort of virtue in the Christian breast, than pious and fervent meditation on the successive events of Christ's passion,...’¹⁴⁹ As James Monti observes, More's devotion was ‘upon the *entire* mystery of the Passion’.¹⁵⁰

More writes at length on the Passion but *De Tristitia* is concerned solely with the beginning of Christ's Passion in the Garden of Gethsemane. However, More rarely describes Christ's crucifixion. He appears almost reluctant to address it in detail and concentrate more than momentarily on its horrors. That changes slightly in the *Tower*. The reason may possibly be found in *De Tristitia* as More discovers not only the possibility, but also the reality of overcoming his fears, particularly that of pain, as he allies them to the agony of Christ, ‘and in our agony remembering His’.¹⁵¹ As he approaches his own martyrdom, two rare descriptions of Christ's crucifixion are found in *A Dialogue of Comfort*. The longest one is found at the beginning of the final chapter of the *Dialogue*. It is the most graphic description to be found in More's writings, that, with regard to painful death,

‘yf we could & wold with dew compassion, conceyve in our myndes a right
Imagynacion & remembraunce of Christes byttre paynefull passion, of the many
sore bloody strokes that the cruell tourmentours with rodde & whyppes gaue hym

Study of Thomas More, (eds) Richard S Sylvester and Germain Marc'hadour, Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1977, 616, n25. cf Ch 2, n286; Ch 9 n96. [medle: meddle]

¹⁴⁵ Clarence H Miller, ‘The Heart of the Final Struggle: More's Commentary on The Agony in The Garden’ in *Quincentennial Essays on St. Thomas More*, (ed) Michael Moore, Boone, North Carolina: Appalachian State University, 1978, 115.

¹⁴⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 509/20-22. cf Ch 9, n95. [aswage: assuage]

¹⁴⁷ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 509/42-45. cf n112 above.

¹⁴⁸ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 509/45-46.

¹⁴⁹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 339/17-341/3.

¹⁵⁰ James Monti, *The King's Good Servant but God's First*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997, 362 [Monti's emphasis]; cf CW13, *Passion*, 3/4-14.

¹⁵¹ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 253/14-15.

vppon euery part of his holy tendre body the scornefull crowne of sharp thornes beten down vppon his holy hed, so strayght & so diepe, that on euery part his blyssid blode yssued owt & stremyd down his lovely lymmys drawn & strechid out vppon the crosse to the Intollerable payne of his forebeten & sorebeten vaynes and synewes new felyng with the cruell strechyng & straynyng payne far passyng any crampe, in euery part of his blyssid body at ones. Than the greate long nayles cruelly dryven with hamers thorow his holy handes and fete & in this horryble payne lyft vpp & let hang with the payce of all his body beryng down vppon the paynfull woundid places so greuously percyd with nayles & in suche tourment without pitie, but not without many dispightes suffred to be pynynd & paynid the space of more than three long howres tyll hym selfe willyngly gave vpp vnto his father his holy soule after which yet to shew the myghtenes of their malice after his holy soule departid perced his holy hart with a sharp spere at which issued out the holy blode & water,... yf we wold I say remembre these thinges in such wise, as wold god we wold, I verely suppose that the consideracion of his incomparable kyndnes, could not fayle in such wise to inflame our kay cold hartes, & set them on fire in his love, that we shuld fynd our selfe not onely content, but also glad & desierouse to suffre deth for his sake, that so mervelously lovyngly lettid not to sustayne so farre passyng paynfull deth for ours'.¹⁵²

This important description of Christ's sufferings paints a forceful picture and provides a meditation to assist others in their own. More observes that Christ's most important prayers are those he prayed in 'in his grete agony & payne of his bitter passion'.¹⁵³ More enumerates these prayers as the agony of his heart with fear of the painful and cruel death on the cross which led him to fall prostrate three times and to sweat blood. The other two are the prayers he made upon the cross, firstly for forgiveness for those who crucified him and secondly commending his soul to his Father in heaven. These prayers and those of holy martyrs made in their torment reveal that prayers made in tribulation are 'strong and effectual', more so than any prayer made at leisure,¹⁵⁴ when our prayers are likely to be distracted by the wandering of our minds.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² CW12, 312/11-313/7. Over a decade before his imprisonment, More notes in *The Last Things* that Christ's death was ragious; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 141/1-3. cf above nn123, 128, 136, 137, 141 & 142. [dew: due; bloody: bloody; roddes: rods; whyppes: whips; beten: beaten; blyssid: blessed; yssued: issued; stremyd: streamed; lymmys: limbs; strechid: stretched; forebeten: previously beaten; sorebeten: severely beaten; synewes: sinews; felyng: feeling; strechyng: stretching; straynyng: straining; passyng: surpassing; nayles: nails; dryven: driven; hamers: hammers; horryble: horrible; payce: weight; beryng: bearing; greuously: grievously; percyd: pierced; pitie: pity; dispightes: scorn, disdain; pynynd: transfixed, pinned; paynid: punished, tortured; howres: hours; myghtenes: mightiness; perced: pierced; spere: spear; kay cold: key cold [ie stone cold]; desierouse: desirous; mervelously: marvellously; lettid: hesitated; sustayne: endure, submit to]

¹⁵³ CW12, 67/2-3.

¹⁵⁴ cf CW12, 67/1-22.

¹⁵⁵ cf CW12, 65/22-24.

Despite More's consistent references to the cross and to Christ's Passion, there is only one other meditation on Christ's actual crucifixion.¹⁵⁶ This is shorter and occurs earlier in *A Dialogue of Comfort* in a section on the most important of Christ's prayers. These include:

'...the paynfull prayours that he made vppon the crosse, where for all the torment that he hangyd in of beating, naylyng, & strechyng out all his lymmes, with the wrestyng of synews, & breakyng of his tender vaynes, & the sharpe crown of thorn so prickyng hym into the hed that his blessid bloude stremyd down all his face. In all [these] hidious paynes. In all their cruell despites, yet ij very devout & fervent prayours he made, the tone for their pardone that so dispituously put hym to this payne, & the tother about his own deliuerance, commendyng his own soule vnto his holy father in hevyn.'¹⁵⁷

These descriptions of Christ's crucifixion follow both medieval tradition and More's own contemporaries. One of the books More recommends to 'norysshe and encrease deuocyon'¹⁵⁸ is Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*. Although devotion to Christ's Passion does not dominate Hilton's *Scale*, an edition printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1525 has an image of Christ standing by the cross on its title page above the caption 'The greatest comfort in al temptacyon. Is the remembraunce of crystes passyon'.¹⁵⁹ The *Scale* allies devotion with meditation with result that

'...you feel as if you see in your soul your Lord appear in bodily likeness as he was on earth – how he was taken by the Jews and bound like a thief, beaten and despised, scourged and condemned to death; how humbly he bore the cross upon his back, and how cruelly he was nailed on it; also the crown of thorns upon his head, and the sharp spear that stung him to the heart. As you see this in the spirit, you feel your heart stirred to such great compassion and pity for your Lord Jesus...'¹⁶⁰

Although Hilton's description of the crucifixion provides one medieval example, such meditations were not unusual during the first part of the sixteenth century. More's contemporary, Bishop John Fisher illustrates this in his *Good Friday Sermon* in which he describes the cross as a book and explains that 'the leaues of this booke be the armes, the

¹⁵⁶ In *The Last Things*, More describes in under three lines the pains of the crucifixion, but it is in the context of noting that Christ cried out not the pain of his tortures but at the moment when his soul left his body and asks if it were so terrible for our Saviour, what 'intollerable torment wil death bee than to vs'? CW1, *Last Things*, 140/17-141/12. cf n122 above.

¹⁵⁷ CW12, 67/9-18. [hangyd: hanged; naylyng: nailing; lymmes: limbs; wrestyng: turning, twisting; synews: sinews; prickyng: piercing; hidious: hideous; despites: contempt, scorn; dispituously: contemptuously, spitefully; deliuerance: deliverance]

¹⁵⁸ CW8, *The Confutation of Tyndale*, 37/29, 31. cf Ch 6, n207.

¹⁵⁹ cf CW13, *Passion*, xcii.

¹⁶⁰ Hilton, *Scale*, 106. cf Ch 9, n94.

handes, legges and feete, with the other members of his most precious and blessed body'.¹⁶¹

He provides a moving and vivid description of Christ's crucifixion:

'These lorells that crucifyed him, drewe by vyolence his most precioues armes, with ropes vnto either braunche of the crosse, that the sinowes burst asonder, and so nayled his handes fast with spykinge nayles of yron, vnto the crosse. After they stretched his feete lykewyse vnto a nother hole beneath the crosse, and there nayled them with the third nayle thorough bothe his feete. ... It was set vp a loft to the entent that all the worlde might looke vpon this booke.'¹⁶²

'...Who may not bee rauished to hope and confidence, if he consider the order of his body, his head bowing downe to offer a kisse, hys armes spreade to embrace vs, hys handes bored thorow to make lyberall giftes, his side opened to shewe vnto vs the loue of his harte, his feete fastened with nayles, that hee shall not starte away but abyde with vs.'¹⁶³

Fisher's description of Christ's head 'bowing downe to offer a kisse, hys armes spreade to embrace vs, hys handes bored thorow to make lyberall giftes, his side opened to shewe vnto vs the loue of his harte' reflects medieval tradition. More appears to have used it only once, in *A Dialogue of Comfort*, in a passage on God's mercy in being 'redy to receve eury man' for Christ 'did spred his armes abrode vpon the crosse lovynglye to enbrace all them that will come'.¹⁶⁴ Fisher and More both reflect the well-defused medieval work, *The Book of the Craft of Dying* which describes the posture of Christ's body on the Cross and connects it, as Fisher does, to trust and confidence. The *Craft* quotes St Bernard:

'What man is he that should not be ravished and drawn to hope, and have full confidence in God, and he take heed diligently of the disposition of Christ's body in the cross. Take heed and see: His head inclined to salve thee; His mouth to kiss thee; His arms spread to be-clip thee; His hands thrilled to give thee, His side opened to love thee, His body along straight to give all himself to thee.'¹⁶⁵

In the prayer that More wrote between his condemnation and execution, he returns to Christ's Passion in an extremely personal way and admits his own fear and relates it to Christ's. 'Good lorde geue me the grace in all my feare and agonye to haue recourse to that great feare and wonderfull agonye, that thou my sweete sauour hadst at the mount of Oliuete before thy moste bitter passion, and in the meditacion therof, to conceue ghostly coumfort and

¹⁶¹ Cecilia A Hatt (ed), 'Good Friday Sermon' in *English Works of John Fisher*, Oxford University Press, 2002, 303. In his criticism of Tyndale, More uses the phrase 'the figure of Crystes crosse, the booke of hys bytter passyon'; cf CW8, 150/1-3. [leaues: leaves]

¹⁶² Hatt, 303. cf Ch 9, n94. [lorells: scoundrels, worthless people; braunche: branch; sinowes: sinews; nayle/s: nail/s; spykinge: large iron nail, act of fastening with spike; entent: intent]

¹⁶³ Hatt, *Good Friday Sermon*, 313-314. [rauished: ravished]

¹⁶⁴ CW12, 90/20-22. [lovynglye: lovingly; enbrace: embrace]

¹⁶⁵ Frances M M Comper (ed), *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1917, 14. [salve: salute; be-clip: embrace; thrilled: pierced]

consolacion profitable for my soule'.¹⁶⁶ How More remains steadfast in the Tower and how he trusts in God is easily seen in this, his final prayer.

Throughout his works More frequently writes about prayer and also composes both prayers and meditations.¹⁶⁷ But is it possible to discover anything about his own personal practices? Much has, inevitably, to be conjecture, but his writings do provide clues and insights. Some of More's comments about prayer are quite direct such as when he advises a man to 'chose hymselfe some secret solitary place in his own house'.¹⁶⁸ In early life More chose to translate Pico's commentary on Psalm 15; Bernard Basset suggests its theme of 'Deus Meus es Tu; My God art Thou'¹⁶⁹ reveals something of More's thinking. Basset believes there are other indirect indications, and that later More would 'reveal unconsciously other details of his prayer'.¹⁷⁰ Basset's example is taken from the *Dialogue of Comfort*, where More mocks those in prosperity and ease and 'while our tong patereth apon our prayours apace, good god how many mad ways our mynd wandreth the while'.¹⁷¹ More's earliest references to prayer are to be found his both the first and second letters of Pico to his nephew, Gianfrancesco, and his expansion of Pico's *Twelve Properties of a Lover*.¹⁷² Thereafter almost all of his works mention prayer¹⁷³ right up to the final prayer written between his condemnation and execution and in some of the last words he wrote to his family: 'Praye for me, and I shall for you,... that we maie merily meete in heauen'.¹⁷⁴

In More's translation of Pico's letters two references refer to the interior nature of prayer: it is a communication between God and the soul. Pico's advice in his first letter reveals this: 'Whan I stire the to praier I stire y^e not to y^e praier which stondith in many wordes but to that praier which in y^e secret chambre of the mynde, in the preuy closet of y^e the sowle...'¹⁷⁵ and

¹⁶⁶ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 229/20-24. [mount of oliuete: Mount Olivet; conceue: conceive]

¹⁶⁷ For More's compositions, cf CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 207-208; *A Godly Instruction* [in both Latin and English], 209-213, *A Devout Prayer* [*The Imploratio*], 214-225; *A Godly Meditation*, 226-227; *A Devout Prayer* [written between his condemnation and execution], 228-231.

¹⁶⁸ CW12, 164/15-16. cf n175 below. [secret: secluded]

¹⁶⁹ Basset, 59; cf CW1, Pico's *Commentary on Psalm 15*, 94-103.

¹⁷⁰ Basset, 59.

¹⁷¹ CW12, 65/22-24. [patereth: recites rapidly and mechanically; apon: upon]

¹⁷² CW1, Pico's *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 83/7f; 92/23-24; CW1, Pico's *Twelve Properties*, 118/23; 119/7-9.

¹⁷³ The exceptions are *Pageant Verses*, cf CW1, 3-7; *The History of King Richard III*, cf CW2; the *Translations of Lucian*, cf CW3.1; two short poems written in the Tower, *Lewes Y^e Loste Lover & Davy the Diser*, cf CW1, 45-46.

¹⁷⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 564/26; cf Roper, 96/15-16. [merily: merrily]

¹⁷⁵ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 83/7-9. cf n168 above; n183 below. [stire: incite, provoke, urge; stondith: stands; chambre: chamber; preuy: secret]

in his second letter Pico warns his nephew to flee from the company of the sinful and ‘retourning to thy selfe often times secretly pray vnto the most benigne fathir of heuin,...’¹⁷⁶ More obviously takes this lesson to heart, for in his expansion of Pico’s *Twelve Properties of a Lover*,¹⁷⁷ he says that the lover of God should imitate earthly lovers, having Him continually in mind, ‘With Hym in praier and meditation wake’ and that nothing should remove ‘his ardent mynde from god his heuinly loue’ while the following property continues in the same vein that the lover of God should rest in Him ‘with inward gladnes of pleasaunt contemplation’.¹⁷⁸

Basset observes that both More and Pico had an ‘acute awareness of God’s presence’ and both stressed the importance of silence and the ‘inward senses’ instead of many words.¹⁷⁹ More and Pico both identify prayer as primarily an interior activity and is not solely about saying prayers and also one which can be undertaken anywhere. In his Tower writings, More advises that a man

‘chose hymselfe some secret solitary place in his own house, as far fro noyse & company as he conveniently can. And thyther lett hym some tyme secretly resort along, ymagynyng hym selfe as one goyng out of the world evin strayt vnto the gevyng vpp his rekenyng vnto god of his sinfull lyvyng’.¹⁸⁰

More’s insistence on the private, secret and solitary nature of prayer is reflected in another comment written in the Tower in which he says that constantly lifting up our minds to God is ‘the most acceptable form of prayer’¹⁸¹ thus again identifying prayer as an interior activity, that can be undertaken anywhere.¹⁸² More’s advice is that everyone should pray secretly, silently and alone in their chamber, ‘in y^e secret chambre of the mynde, in the preuy closet of y^e the sowle...,’ as Pico recommends.¹⁸³ The secret and solitary chamber with the door shut, whether of your mind or your house, is advocated, along with the use of few words, as Christ taught,¹⁸⁴ in order to avoid vainglory.¹⁸⁵ More’s insistence on the secret and solitary is

¹⁷⁶ CW1, Pico’s *Second Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 92/23-24. [retourning: returning]

¹⁷⁷ CW1, Pico’s *The Twelve Properties*, 113/11-120/11.

¹⁷⁸ CW1, *Twelve Properties*, cf 118/21-27; cf 119/7-9. cf Ch 1, n121.

¹⁷⁹ Basset, 59.

¹⁸⁰ CW12, 164/15-19. [thyther: thither, to that place; secretly: secretly; ymagynyng: imagining; evin: even; gevyng: giving; rekenyng: reckoning; lyvyng: living]

¹⁸¹ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 135/9-137/1; cf CW14.2, 1013, note to 135/8-137/1 on various types of prayer and references.

¹⁸² cf CW6, 58/20-22; cf CW6, 43/24-27. More does not intend to disparage communal prayer and notes its importance elsewhere: eg CW6, 57/33-58/2 & 58/9-22; CW8, 163/22-30; cf Jn 4.24.

¹⁸³ CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 83/8-9; cf CW6, 58/26 & 257/20; CW9, *The Apology*, (ed) J B Trapp, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979, 104/3-5. cf n175 above.

¹⁸⁴ cf Matt 6.5-7.

certainly a reflection of his own practice in spending each Friday in his New Building, which included a chapel, where he was occupied with ‘devoute praiers and spirituall exercises’.¹⁸⁶

This paints a picture of More’s personal devotions, the proper focus of his prayer, his trust, the necessity of reverent bodily deportment and prostration, and the secret, silent, and solitary element in his life of prayer. Does he give us any further glimpses of his own experience of prayer? The answer can only be exploratory and tentative but there are a number of indications throughout More’s writings that provide a glimpse of his personal interior and spiritual experiences of prayer. Pico advises Gianfrancesco in his first letter to pray not in many words but in a way that ‘not only presentith the mynde to the father: but also vnieth hit with him by inspekable waies which only thei know that haue assaied’.¹⁸⁷ Although More’s translation of Pico’s *Life* contains many of his own additions and many deletions, his translation of Pico’s first letter to Gianfrancesco has almost no deletions and Pico’s words are translated accurately.¹⁸⁸ However, it is More’s additions in his expansion of Pico’s list of the *Twelve Properties of a Lover* in which More observes that prayer and meditation provide ‘inward gladnes of pleasaunt contemplation’ and the opportunity for tears of joy and delectation but leads to tears of pain and woe when his Love departs.¹⁸⁹ It is possible to dismiss such phrases as commonplaces of medieval spirituality combined with youthful imagination and exuberance.

It is more difficult to ignore or dismiss similar phrases from More’s later works, including *The Last Things*, written in his forties, where he recommends ‘tribulacion and affliction, labour, paine and trauaile’ with the assistance of prayer in order ‘to conceiue a delite and pleasure in such spiritual exercise, and thereby to ryse in the loue of our lord, with an hope of heauen, contempt of the world, and longing to be with god’.¹⁹⁰ Over a decade later in the Tower More writes, not only of the aim of prayer but also of its results, that it will help

‘throw the grace of god, draw nere to the secret inward pleasure of the spirite, we shuld by the litle sippyng that our hartes shuld haue here now, & that sodayne tast

¹⁸⁵ cf CW6, 58/24-26; CW8, 163/25-26; CW9, 104/9.

¹⁸⁶ Roper, 25/22-26/7; quotation at 26/7.

¹⁸⁷ CW1, Pico’s *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 83/11-13. cf n191 below. [vnieth: joins; inspekable: unspeakable; assaied: tried, experienced]

¹⁸⁸ cf CW1, 347 for the translation.

¹⁸⁹ cf CW1, Pico’s *Twelve Properties*, 119/7-12. cf Ch 1 n119.

¹⁹⁰ CW1, *Last Things*, 135/19-20, 21-23; cf CW12, 306/29-307/3. cf Ch 9, n26. [affliccion: affliction; conceiue: conceive]

therof, haue such an estymacion of the Incomperable & vncogitable Ioy that we shall haue (yf we will) in hevyn by the very full drawght therof,...'¹⁹¹

If a person lacks 'such experimentall tast, as god giveth here sometyme to some of his speciall seruauntes,'¹⁹² this should not result in any discouragement but he should be drawn to spiritual exercise and prayer with a fervent longing for the marvellous joys of heaven.¹⁹³ By writing of the 'experimentall tast' is More unconsciously hinting at his own experience? Or is he merely repeating the medieval spiritual expression or the experiences of others? The description of inward gladness of pleasant contemplation in More's expansion of Pico's *Twelve Properties* could easily be taken from spiritual works or merely represent a desire or hope rather than actual evidence of personal familiarity of such an experience. But when examining More's Tower writings, with all the fear and stress that he endured daily during his imprisonment, it is harder to postulate that More is only repeating traditional phrases. More asserts the necessity to remember Christ's kindness in undergoing His Passion for us, to balance this by the consideration of hell if we forsake Him which results in the joyful meditation of eternal life. If such thoughts held 'so dyepe a place in our brest as reason wold they shuld,... than shuld they so take vpp our mynd, & ravish yt... [it] were lykly to mynish & put away of our paynefull deth, foure partes of the felyng, eyther of the feare or the payne'.¹⁹⁴ 'Ravish' seems a highly unusual, if not problematic, word to choose if writing merely of the experiences of others and it could suggest that More does occasionally, if unwittingly, paint a picture of his own spiritual experiences.¹⁹⁵ However, as we have seen above, More is also following both a medieval and contemporary tradition, and making this tradition his own.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹ CW12, 306/9-13. cf n187 above; Ch 9, n8. [throw: through; sippyng: sipping; tast: taste; estymacion: appreciation; incomperable: incomparable; vncogitable: inconceivable, beyond thought; drawght: draught]

¹⁹² CW12, 306/22-23.

¹⁹³ cf CW12, 306/24-307/3.

¹⁹⁴ CW12, 314/21-31; cf CW1, *Twelve Weapons*, 109/1; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 457/630. [dyepe: deep; lykly: likely]

¹⁹⁵ cf Basset, 59.

¹⁹⁶ It is possible that More's use of ravish, as meaning 'transported in spirit', comes either from Bishop John Fisher's *Good Friday Sermon* or from *The Craft of Dying*. For Fisher's sermon, cf n163 above; for *The Craft*, cf n165 above. Hatt dates Fisher's sermon probably to the early 1520's, cf Hatt, 298; it seems perfectly possible that More could have been among the congregation. One example of ravished occur in More's expansion of Pico's *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle*, cf CW1, 109/1. More's expansion of the *Twelve Weapons of Spiritual Battle* predates Fisher's Sermon. Another example is found in his letter to John Frith, dated 7th December, 1532, cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 457/630. More also uses ravished meaning 'spoiled' or 'plundered' several times in *The Confutation of Tyndale*, cf CW8, 217/36; 490/2; 492/13; 493/25; 536/15 & 700/1.

More's descriptions of the 'secret inward pleasure of the spirite' and a mind ravished by thoughts of eternal life are possibly the reward of a lifetime of prayer and constant trust in following Christ. One possible source is Nicholas Love's *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, another of the books More recommends to 'norysshe and encrease deuocyon'.¹⁹⁷ Given this recommendation, did *The Mirror* exert an influence in his daily spiritual life? While such a direct influence obviously cannot be proved and many of More's themes can be seen as medieval commonplaces, viewed in the light of his approval of the work, the similarities lead to a qualified, possibly positive, conclusion. Love insists that prayer is vital in order to overcome both adversity and temptation; it is vital in order to know the tricks of the devil and not to be beguiled by them; it is vital, along with penance, in order to reach heaven, and it is vital to feed the soul with holy thoughts and spiritual meditations and devotions which will remove vice and implant virtues. For prayer teaches everything that the soul requires.¹⁹⁸ However, in advice that is part of Love's interpretation of the biblical injunction *Askep & it shal be 3iuen to 3owe*,¹⁹⁹ he goes much further, delving into the realms of spiritual experience, for prayer is also indispensable 'if þou wolt come to heuenly contemplacion & fele þe gostly swetnes, þat is felt of fewe chosen soules, & knowe þe grete graciose 3iftes of oure lord god, that mowen be felt bot not spoken,... For by þe exercise of praiere specialy a man comeþ to contemplacion & the felyng of heuenly þinges'.²⁰⁰ Love sees here 'how grete ghostly miht & virtue is deuout preiere'²⁰¹ but also concerning both the virtue of devout prayer and how God answers it, he provides an answer that is frequently found in More, God will do so 'in maner as it is most spedful to hem'.²⁰² As we have seen above, More is always insistent that God will answer our prayers in the way that is best for us, even if this does not coincide with our desires.

It is clear that More did not begin to lean on God through prayer during his imprisonment but that prayer was his constant practice throughout his life and part of the lifelong preparation

¹⁹⁷ cf Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*. For the use of ravish/ed meaning 'taken in contemplative rapture', see especially 10/38; 214/10 & 217/31; cf CW8, 37/29, 31 for More's recommendation of Love's work. Love's work is a free translation of the 14th C work, *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, originally thought to be by St Bonaventure. Love's first use of ravished occurs in his Prologue which is not part of the original work. The other two examples are from the section about Christ's Ascension and do not appear in the literal translation; cf *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, (trans) Isa Ragusa & Rosalie B Green, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961, 374-384. cf Introduction, nn165 & 166; Ch 6, n207.

¹⁹⁸ cf Love, *Mirror*, 106/34-107/4.

¹⁹⁹ Lk 11.9: 'Ask and it shall be given to you'; cf Love, 106/28-29. cf n22 above; Ch 7, n82.

²⁰⁰ Love, 107/4-9. [þou: thou; wolt: would; þe: the; swetnes: sweetness; þat: that; 3iftes: gifts; mowen: may; bot: but; comeþ: comes; þinges: things]

²⁰¹ Love, 107/10-11. [ghostly: spiritual; miht: might; preiere: prayer]

²⁰² Love, 107/21-22. [spedful: advantageous; hem: them]

Fear in the Life and Writings of Thomas More

that sustained him when he faced incarceration in the Tower and execution on Tower Hill. The next chapter will demonstrate that More's life of prayer allows him to draw together his longing for God and trust in Him to practise an extraordinary level of detachment that changes the practice of his faith into transformative death and reach the summit of his spiritual life.

Chapter 9: To Godward

Faith is the foundation of the Christian life, but attendance at church and daily prayer are also part of the process in which More translates faith into a lived reality. The last chapters have looked at how More's faith is fundamental to his approach to the challenges of temptations, fear of pain and impending martyrdom with prayer, trust and the use of comparisons as the positive means he employs to do this. This chapter is concerned with More's spiritual focus 'to Godward'. 'To Godward' or 'to heavenward' are medieval expressions denoting the attitude of a man to both God and his faith, either permanent or occasional. If a man's whole life indicates a continual, habitual and prayerful focus upon God in every action and aspect of his life, this can be described as 'to Godward'.¹ In More's case in the Tower, it is used here in relation to his longing for God and heaven as well as trust, detachment and transformative death. It is through living these attitudes with a prayerful focus upon God that enables More to overcome his fear. An example of an occasional attitude 'to Godward' is seen by the infrequent practice of religion and intermittent attendance at church and prayer.

Even in his youth More exhibits a desire to live 'to Godward'. In his early letter to his spiritual adviser, John Colet, he complains of the temptations of the city, that 'when a man is straining *in his own power* to climb the steep path of virtue, it turns him back by a thousand devices and sucks him back by its thousand enticements'.² [my emphasis] Here is a picture of the young Thomas More trying sincerely to reach God by his own efforts. When this early attitude is compared with his later writings, especially from the Tower, the change in his spiritual perception is clearly evident. Here is the evidence that the young More, with his focus already on eternity matured into the sick prisoner placing his total dependence on and trust in God. This results from the habitual practice of his faith and constant focus 'to Godward' in the intervening three decades. By the time of his first interrogation in early 1534 before his arrest, the transformative death and his spiritual detachment is apparent when he says to William Roper 'Sonne Roper, I thancke our Lord the feild is wonne'.³ Roper adds that he did not understand these words but 'as I coniectured afterwards, it was for [that] the loue

¹ The phrase may also be used of a specific activity. Thus prayer, both in general and in particular, can be described as 'to Godward'.

² Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961, 4. cf Ch 2, n3; Ch 6, n4; Ch 8, n73.

³ Roper, *Life of More*, London: Early English Text Society, 1935, 73/9-10. [thancke: thank; feild: field; wonne: won]

he had to god wrought in him so effectually that it conquered all his carnall affections vtterlye'.⁴

In the last two chapters of *A Dialogue of Comfort*, More does not just confine his comparisons to the pains of martyrdom with those of hell, as he is equally concerned with the glories of heaven. More balances his often stark writing ending the *Dialogue* 'not in fear of God but in the love of Christ', as Andrew Taylor notes.⁵ Thus More's focus is continually on God and he explains that he 'wold rather put vs in mynd of the Ioyes of heven, the pleasure wherof we shuld be more glad to gete, than we shuld be to flye & escape all the paynes in hell'.⁶ If we could conceive of heavenly joys in the same way that we can imagine hellish torments, we 'shuld not fayle to be far more movid & styrid to the suffryng for christes sake in this world, for the wynnynge of the hevenly ioyes, than for the eschewing of all those infernall paynes'.⁷

In order to attain this attitude 'to Godward' it is necessary to withdraw from worldly and carnal pleasures by prayer to gain a certain appreciation of the 'Incomperable & vncogitable Ioy' that will be enjoyed in heaven.⁸ More suggests that for now, the aim should be to 'labour by prayour to conceve in our hartes such a fervent longyng for them, that we may for attaynyng to them, vtterly set at nought all fleshly delight, all worldly pleasure, all erthly losses, all bodely tournament and payne'.⁹ In this life it is impossible to comprehend the reality of the joys of heaven¹⁰ and so it is necessary to hear what Christ tells us in Scripture. Therefore we should 'haue often in our eyen by readyng, often in our eares by heryng, often in our mouthes by reheryng, often in our hartes by meditacion & thynkyng, Those ioyfull wordes of holy scripture, by which we lerne how wonderfull howge & greate those spirituall hevenly Ioyes are'.¹¹ Such meditations are in the end only a means, with the goal being eternal life in heaven with God and 'the fruytyon of the sight of goddes gloryouse maiesty

⁴ Roper, 73/12-15. [coniectured: conjectured; vtterlye: utterly]

⁵ Andrew W Taylor, 'In stede of harme inestimable good' in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 233.

⁶ CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, (eds) Louis Martz & Frank Manley, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 305/7-9.

⁷ CW12, 305/21-23. cf Ch 4, n156.

⁸ CW12, 306/12. cf Ch 8, n191.

⁹ CW12, 306/29-307/3; CW1, *The Last Things*, (eds) Anthony S G Edwards, Katherine Gardiner Rodgers & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 135/18-23. cf n26 below; Ch 7, n211.

¹⁰ cf CW12, 309/5-8; cf 1 Cor 2.9; cf Isa 64.4.

¹¹ CW12, 308/10-12; cf 1 Cor 2.9-10. cf Ch 8, n191. [reheryng: rehearing; thynkyng: thinking; howge: vast, immense]

face to face'.¹² No man would be deflected from painful death 'yf there myght than apere the glory of god, the Trynitie in his high mervelouse maiestie, our saviour in his glorious manhod sitting on his Trone, with his Immaculate mother & all that gloriouse companye callyng vs there vnto them'.¹³ Several times he echoes and quotes St Paul's words 'That eye hath not seen nor ear heard: neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him'.¹⁴

More's Tower writings reveal his awareness that he will not leave the Tower as a free man and that he is writing in the expectation of meeting the death of the traitor: hanging, disembowelling and quartering. They also reveal an especially moving aspect of his spirituality. This is More's longing to be with Christ and it features prominently in his writings in the Tower, including in the margins of his Psalter, in *A Dialogue of Comfort*, his letters and also in some of his prayers and instructions and acts as a counterpoint to fear. The frequency of this sentiment in his Tower Works testifies not only to a very personal desire but reflects that his longing for God is a constant theme permeating his life and writings from his earlier years.

Longing for God is closely allied with More's focus 'to Godward' and assists in overcoming fear. Of particular interest in this respect is his very early translation of Pico's *Commentary on Psalm 15*.¹⁵ Longing for God permeates both Pico's *Commentary* and More's translation.¹⁶ Commenting on verse three, Pico contrasts the great felicity of heaven with the misery of this world and considering the goodness and charity of heaven's citizens suggests that 'we shall continually desire to be hens that we were there'.¹⁷ Remembering such things, among others, in meditation, we should 'willingly and gladly longe therefore, desiring to be departed oute of this vale of wretchidnes, that we may raigne in y^e heuinly contre with god &

¹² CW12, 306/15-16; cf CW12, 204/30. [fruytyon: enjoyment, pleasurable possession]

¹³ CW12, 315/21-25. [apere: appear; Trynitie: Trinity; manhood: manhood; Trone: throne]

¹⁴ 1 Cor 2.9; cf CW12, 308/8-16 & 308/21 & 309/3-4; cf CW14, *De Tristitia Christi*, (ed & trans) Clarence Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 239/10-12; CW14, *Catena*, 629/8-9. More also uses it in his early translation of Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*; cf CW1, 79/9-11.

¹⁵ CW1, Pico's *Commentary on Psalm 15*, 94-103. John Rastell published More's translation of the *Life of Pico* and a selection of Pico's works c1510. However, Thomas Stapleton, whose biography of More appeared in his *Tres Thomae* in 1558, suggests an earlier date, around 1504-1505, before More chose marriage rather than the priesthood; cf Thomas Stapleton, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, (ed) E E Reynolds, London: Burns & Oates, 1966, 9.

¹⁶ More's translations of Pico sometimes stray into paraphrases, as well as additions, rather than strict translations. In this instance More is broadly accurate.

¹⁷ Ps 15.3: *Sanctis qui sunt in terra eius mirificauit voluntates suas*: To the saints, who are in his land, he hath made wonderful all my desires in them; CW1, Pico's *Commentary on Psalm 15*, 97/28-29; for the literal translation: cf CW1, 367.

his holy saintes'.¹⁸ Pico also includes in his explanation of this verse that through meditation on heaven 'we shulde wynne this vertu that we shulde not only strongly suffre deth and patiently whan oure time commeth or if hit were put vnto vs for y^e faith of crist'.¹⁹ Martyrdom always remains a possibility and verse four reminds us again of how to live with the focus 'to Godward', telling us that 'a parfit man sholde abstaine not only from vnlawfull plesures but also from lawfull, to thende y^t he may all to gither hole haue his mynde in to heuen warde and the more purely entende vnto the contemplation of heuenli thinges'.²⁰ Verse eight continues this theme: *Prouidebam deum semper in conspectus meo*,²¹ rendered by More as 'if a man had god always bi fore his yen as a ruler of all his warkis & in all his warkis he shulde seke...only to y^e pleasure of god he shuld shortly be parfit'.²² More's early awareness of the necessity of being ever attentive to God through a focus upon heaven and an awareness of the close proximity of death are evident in these early writings. Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco* reflects this awareness of death and its corollary, the goal of heaven. He advises his nephew 'neuer to forget these two thinges: y^t both y^e son of god died for the & y^t thou shalt also thi self dye shortly liue thow neuer so longe'²³ and that these two things represent 'two spurrys y^t one of fere y^t othir of loue' to act as an impetus toward 'y^e reward of eternall felicite'.²⁴ This traditionally medieval advice reflects *The Book of the Craft of Dying*: 'to cun dey is to haue a herte & a soule euer redy vp to godward, Pat whan Pat ever deth com he may be founden a-redy'.²⁵ More's longing for God places this within his own personal desires and experience which reflects the traditional medieval interpretation.

In *The Last Things*, More speaks of how to achieve this longing to be with God and provides precise instructions. He recommends 'let euery manne by y^e labour of his minde and helpe of prair, ... tribulacion and affliction, labour, paine and trauaile,... to conceiue a delite and

¹⁸ CW1, Pico's *Commentary on Ps 15*, 98/6-8; for the literal translation: cf CW1, 367. [wretchidnes: wretchedness; raigne: reign; contre: country]

¹⁹ CW1, Pico's *Commentary on Ps 15*, 98/3-6; cf CW1, 367. [strongly: boldly]

²⁰ CW1, Pico's *Commentary on Ps 15*, 99/11-15; 'to heuen warde' is interchangeable with 'to Godward'. For the literal translation: cf CW1, 367-369. [parfit: perfect; thende: the end, the purpose; to gither: together; entende: attend; heuenli: heavenly]

²¹ More and Pico both render the verse in this way. However, the Vulgate reads *Providebam Dominum in conspectu meo semper*: cf CW1, Pico's *Commentary on Ps 15*, 101/22 & 368/37.

²² CW1, Pico's *Commentary on Ps 15*, 101/23-26; cf CW1, 368/37-370/4 for Pico's Latin and literal translation on opposite pages. For Pico's influence on More, cf Vittorio Gabrieli, 'Giovanni Pico and Thomas More' in *Moreana*, Vol IV, No 15, 1967, 43-57. cf Introduction, n47; Ch 2, nn69 & 70. [bi fore: before; yen: eyes]

²³ CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/14-16. cf Introduction, n50; Ch 1, n171; Ch 5, n56.

²⁴ cf CW1, Pico's *First Letter to Gianfrancesco*, 84/17-19. cf Introduction, n50; Ch 1, nn116, 123 & 171.

²⁵ C Horstmann (ed), 'The Book of the Craft of Dying', in *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and his Followers*, Cambridge: D S Brewer, 1999, 408. [cun: know how to; dey: die; Pat: that; com: comes; founden: found; a-redy: already]

pleasure in such spiritual exercise, and thereby to ryse in the loue of our lord, with an hope of heauen, contempt of the world, and longing to be with god'.²⁶ To accomplish this, More recommends the rejection of the world, the flesh and the devil and the remembrance of the four last things,²⁷ and when once 'cleane purged', will 'receiue the very swete and pure pleasure of the spirite'.²⁸ In the section on the remembrance of death, he reveals the importance of this focus on Christ, heaven and longing to be with God, especially at the end of a man's life. When a man is on his deathbed the devil never ceases 'to mynyster by subtylle and incogytable meanes, firste vnlawefull longyng to lyue, horroure to goe gladly to god at his calling'.²⁹ Later in the section on couetise,³⁰ he states again that Christ desires that 'we should in hert, only care & long for heuen'.³¹ Both More's translation of Pico and *The Last Things* reveal that his longing to be with God was an habitual attitude that is present from his youth onwards.

This fundamental attitude 'to Godward', although found in his earlier works, provides a glimpse into how More endures his imprisonment. In his Tower works it becomes a veritable leitmotif and is found in his literary works, his letters and the annotations in his Psalter written during his imprisonment. It displays his trust and hope in God, realized through his life of prayer. Germain Marc'hadour suggests that More's longing to be with God is the way in which he exorcises his fear of death.³² More's fear is not of death but rather a fear of pain. It would be more accurate to say that More's fear of pain is exorcised by regarding everything, as Marc'hadour rightly observes elsewhere, in the light of eternity.³³ Viewing everything through the lens of eternity provides the key to the many themes found in More's writings during his last months of the Tower, such as life as a pilgrimage, of the shortness of

²⁶ CW1, *Last Things*, 135/18-23; cf CW12, 306/29-307/3. cf n9 above; Ch 8, nn116 & 190.

²⁷ cf CW1, *Last Things*, 137/22-23; *The Last Things* is centred on the biblical injunction 'In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin; cf Eccles 7.40. cf CW1, *Last Things*, 138/33-34: here More reverses the tradition world, flesh and devil and places them in the order of the devil, the flesh and the world. More uses the phrase 'four last things' throughout the work, cf eg CW1, *Last Things*, 130/9 & 130/15 & 132/33 & 135/31 & 137/23 & 137/32 & 138/14 & 138/21; he uses the phrase the 'four things' of CW1, *Last Things*, 137/28; cf CW1, *Last Things*, 138/31-32; for the 'last things' cf CW1, *Last Things*, 127/5 & 129/2.

²⁸ CW1, *Last Things*, 135/27-28.

²⁹ CW1, *Last Things*, 143/3-5. cf Ch 5, n77.

³⁰ [couetise: covetousness]

³¹ CW1, *Last Things*, 168/23-24; cf eg Matt 6.33; Lk 12.31; cf also Matt 6.20-21; Lk 12.33-34.

³² cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'Thomas More's Spirituality' in *St Thomas More: Action and Contemplation*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for St John's University, 1972, 145.

³³ cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'On Death and Martyrdom: St Thomas More' in *The Portrayal of Life Stages in English Literature, 1500-1800: Infancy, Youth, Marriage, Aging, Death, Martyrdom*, Essays in Honor of Warren Wooden, (eds) Jeanie Watson & Philip McM Pittman. Studies in British History, Vol 10, Lewiston/Lampeter/Queenston: The Edward Mellen Press, 1989, 213.

life with eternity and short temporal pain with everlasting and eternal pain and includes the detachment that he displays during these last months in the Tower.³⁴

More's longing to be with God is found most pertinently in the marginalia of his Psalter where its presence reveals how deeply it is embedded in his personal prayers during his imprisonment. This longing reflects trust in God and thus acts as a counterpoint to More's fears. James Monti observes that 'More knew how to find Christian joy even amid the darkness of his cell'.³⁵ Monti also notes that More has penned a marginal line against almost the entire texts of Psalms 65 and 66;³⁶ these psalms are ones of praise and rejoicing while the only annotation reads *exultat quod deus eum non permisit cedere tentationi demonis*.³⁷ More's praise and rejoicing in God is linked to the successful rejection of the devil's temptations, and reflects the Pauline injunction of 'giving thanks always for all things' to God.³⁸ Thirsting for God is another way in which both the psalmist and More present longing. Three different annotations found in the margins concern thirsting for God, and the first two are also found in the *Imploratio*, providing a glimpse of their importance to More.³⁹ The first example reads 'As a hart panteth after the fountains of water: so my soul panteth after thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God. When shall I come and appear before the face of God?'⁴⁰ The marginalia against these two verses reads *felix qui istud ex animo potest dicere*.⁴¹ The second example is 'O God, my God; to thee do I watch at break of day. For thee my soul hath thirsted'⁴² and the marginalia *desiderium in deum* requires no explanation.⁴³ The final example begins alongside the verse 'How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts: My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord'.⁴⁴ More's marginal comment aptly reveals his personal understanding of this verse: *oratio uel*

³⁴ For further discussion on More's detachment; cf n102-107 below.

³⁵ James Monti, *The King's Good Servant but God's First*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997, 356.

³⁶ cf Louis L Martz & Richard S Sylvester (eds), *Thomas More's Prayer Book*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969, 108-110.

³⁷ cf *TMPB*, 109, 197. He rejoices because God has not permitted him to yield to the temptation of the devil.

³⁸ cf Eph 5.20. More does not appear to have used this verse in his works.

³⁹ The *Imploratio* ends abruptly with Ps 66; cf CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 225; cf *Praying with St Thomas More*, (eds) Germain Marc'hadour and Jocelyne Malhomme, Angers: Amici Thomæ Mori, 1998, 27. cf Introduction, n152; Ch 3, n6.

⁴⁰ Ps 41.2-3; cf *TMPB*, 80, 195; CW13, *Imploratio*, 222/15-18.

⁴¹ Happy the man who can say this from his soul.

⁴² Ps 62.2; cf *TMPB*, 105, 197; CW13, *Imploratio*, 225/8-9.

⁴³ Longing for God.

⁴⁴ Ps 83.2-3.

*eius qui in carcere clausus est aut eger recumbit in Lecto suspirantis ad templum aut cuiuslibet fidelis suspirantis in celum.*⁴⁵

More's longing for heaven appears not only in the margins of his psalter, but also at least nine times in his Tower works as well as in his letters.⁴⁶ *A Dialogue of Comfort* provides the framework of More's thought on longing for God and heaven. If God allows us to keep our life we may, 'but yf god give the occasion that... we may go, let vs be glad therof & long to go to hym'.⁴⁷ After his imprisonment, it appears in the second letter he writes to his daughter, Margaret, he writes '...as for longe lyfe... I neither loke for, nor longe for, but am well content to goe if God call me hence to morowe'.⁴⁸ More explains the connection between longing for God and His grace: that 'the plesaunt moisture that most shuld refresh hym, the holsom dew I meane of goddes grace, by which he shuld wish with goddes will to be hens, & long to be with hym in heven'.⁴⁹ In the same work, he writes that 'yf a man had in his hart, so diepe a desiare & love longyng to be with god in hevyn to haue the fruicion of his glorious face, as had those holy men that were martires in old tyme, he wold no more now styke at the payne that he must passe between, than at that tyme those old holy martirs did'.⁵⁰ Longing for God thus overcomes fear of the pains of martyrdom, along with his contrasts and comparisons. The obstacle is our faint, feeble and luke warm faith that makes us tepid in our desire of heaven along with our sudden dread of all bodily pain strikes our devotion dead.⁵¹ However if the desire for heaven along with the fear of hell is considered frequently before any peril appears, then 'the thing shall not apere so terrible vnto them reason shall bettre entre, & thorow grace working with their diligens engendre & set sure, not a sodayne sleight affeccion of sufferaunce for godes sake but by a long contynauce, a strong depe rotid habit'.⁵² This critical part of this advice revolves around the fact that its 'long contynauce' becomes 'a strong depe rotid habit' and deep rooted habits are, of their nature, hard to break.

⁴⁵ cf *TMPB*, 139, 200. The prayer either of a man who is shut up in prison, or of one who lies sick in bed, yearning [to go] to church, or of any faithful man who yearns for heaven. cf Ch 3, nn133 & 134.

⁴⁶ cf eg CW12, 4/24 & 76/13 & 76/23-24 & 76/30-31 & 174/16 & 204/29-30 & 251/10 & 306/29-307/1; CW13, *A Treatise on the Passion*, 103/5-6; cf CW12, 284/15 referring to St Paul; cf Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, 537/144-145.

⁴⁷ CW12, 76/29-31; cf CW12, 76/28-77/1.

⁴⁸ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 507/16-508/18. cf n62 below.

⁴⁹ CW12, 4/21-24. [holsom: wholesome, salutary]

⁵⁰ CW12, 204/28-205/3. cf Ch 5, nn86 & 87; Ch 6, n246; Ch 7, n214. [desiare: desire; styke: be deterred by]

⁵¹ cf CW12, 205/3-7. For More's use of kay cold [ie key cold] in relation to a lack of fervour with regard to faith cf CW12, 13/8 & 242/24 & 248/19; for More's use of kay cold in reference to meditation on the Passion which should inflame our and 'set them on fire in his love'; cf CW12, 313/4; cf C S Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962, 179. cf Ch 8, nn142 & 152.

⁵² CW12, 205/10-14. cf Ch 6, nn22, 24, 26 & 129; Ch 7, n73.

If consideration is made often that the pains of hell will last forever while the pain of martyrdom lasts for the space of half an hour,⁵³ will, if it is truly believed, mean that the fear of persecution would never be able to make us forsake the faith, and that ‘this one poynt alone, were hable ynough to make I thynk many a martyre’.⁵⁴

More’s letters also contain examples of longing for God. In a letter to Dr Nicholas Wilson, he writes of his belief that ‘eny that ever shall come to hym shall full hartely wyshe to be withe hym or ever he shall come at hym’.⁵⁵ Later in the same letter, he connects this desire to God’s welcome of that soul writing ‘I beseche hym geve me and kepe me the mynd to long to be owt of this worlde and to be with hym. For I can never but truste that who so long to be with hym shalbe well come to hym’.⁵⁶ More had previously quoted Christ’s words that ‘him that cometh to me, I will not cast out’⁵⁷ and he applies this in *A Dialogue of Comfort* to charity and trust that ‘were it so that he shuld come or he were well pourgid, for charite couerith a multitude of synnes, and he that trustith in god can not be confounded’.⁵⁸ The preparation needed to be with God is ‘begyn first with confession, & make vs clene to god & redy to depart & be glad to go to god’.⁵⁹

While longing for God is necessary, the desire to postpone death can be an equally strong desire. It can also be contrary to God’s wishes; it is a question of balance – and trust. It is always necessary to be ready to go to God, but no one may seek to go earlier because everything depends upon God’s will. Although in the Tower More’s his longing for God is a recurrent motif, the idea is found earlier, perhaps surprisingly, in *Utopia*.⁶⁰ More writes of death that ‘if it might be without offence to His Majesty, it would be much more welcome to him to die a very hard death and go to God than to be kept longer away from Him even by a

⁵³ cf CW12, 302/23-304/20.

⁵⁴ CW12, 304/25-26. cf Ch 4, n100.

⁵⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 537/158-159. cf nn56 & 98 below; Ch 2, n194. [or: before]

⁵⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 537/154-157. cf n98 below; Ch 2, n194. [geve: give]

⁵⁷ Jn 6.37; cf CW12, 76/27-28; cf CW11, *The Answer to a Poisoned Book*, (eds) Stephen Merriam Foley & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985, 41/3 & 89/7-9; CW13, *Passion*, 103/5-6.

⁵⁸ CW12, 76/24-27; cf 1 Pet 4.8 [cf Prov 10.12]; Rom 10.11 [cf Prov 29.25; Eccles 2.11]. [pourgid: purged, cleansed; couerith: covers]

⁵⁹ CW12, 76/12-13. More also notes that one of the benefits of ‘wilfull pouertie’ [ie evangelical poverty] is that it provides the means to ‘attayne the state of spirituall perfeccion, & the hungrye desire & longyng for celestially things’; cf CW12, 174/12, 15-16. [clene: virtuous]

⁶⁰ cf CW4, *Utopia*, (eds) Edward Surtz, SJ & J H Hexter, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965, 237/29-32.

very prosperous career in life'.⁶¹ It is a re-iteration of trust in God as He knows what is best for us, better than we do ourselves. It can be summed up by his thoughts found in a letter to his daughter Margaret, explaining that 'as for longe lyfe... I neither loke for, nor longe for, but am well content to goe, if God call me hence to morowe'.⁶² In a later letter he reiterates the same idea, telling her that since his imprisonment 'I sett by death euery daye lesse than other. For thoughe a man leese of his yeres in this worlde, it is more than manyfolde recompensed by cominge the sooner to heauen.'⁶³ However it is God's will that is paramount and the trust that 'God knows best'. He writes that 'I neuer haue prayde God to bringe me hence nor deliuer me fro death, but referring all thing whole vnto his onely pleasure, as to hym that seeth better what is best for me than my selfe dooth'.⁶⁴ He points out the folly of attempting to delay death for it can only ever be postponed and therefore not only is such avoidance ultimately doomed to failure,⁶⁵ but we may find ourselves dying a death that we wish we had died before.⁶⁶ Here he reminds his daughter that 'thoughe it be a paine to die while a man is in health yet see I very fewe that in sickenes dye with ease'⁶⁷ and comforts her with the thought that execution is not the only violent and painful death.⁶⁸

More's longing for God presupposes trust, especially with regard to martyrdom, a trust that can overcome all fear. In *A Dialogue of Comfort*, we have seen how temptation and tribulation are linked in the case of persecution.⁶⁹ The counterpoint to this is trust, particularly through prayer, and More finds the answer in the psalms. In tribulation 'god shall give hym such comfort by consideryng that god is in his trowble euermore nere vnto hym, *Quia deus iuxta est ijs qui tribulato sunt corde*,⁷⁰ god is nere sayth the prophet to them that haue their hart in trowble'.⁷¹ More expands this explaining that the result of God's closeness to those in

⁶¹ cf CW4, 237/29-32.

⁶² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 507/16-508/18; cf CW12, 76/29-31. cf n48 above.

⁶³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/108-543/1; cf CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 212/24-27. cf Ch 4, n141; Ch 5, n82.

⁶⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/136-139. cf Ch 8, n65.

⁶⁵ cf CW3.2, *Latin Poems*, (eds) Clarence H Miller, Leicester Bradner, Charles A Lynch & Revilo P Oliver, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984, *Epigrams* 221, 244 & 245; CW14, *Catena*, 639/6-8 & 643/3-4.

⁶⁶ cf CW12, 319/7-14; CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/8-23; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/113-120.

⁶⁷ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/111-113. cf Ch 5, n82; Ch 6, n37; Ch 7, n202.

⁶⁸ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/120-122; CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 211/24-26 & 212/3-8; CW14, *Catena*, 643/5-6.

⁶⁹ cf Ch 3: Temptation and the devil: cf nn13 & 14.

⁷⁰ Ps 33.19. The Douai Bible renders this as: The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart. It would appear that More's translation is more accurate. In his Psalter, More highlights both verses 19 and 20 of Psalm 33 with a marginal line. Verse 20 reads: Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them; cf *TMPB*, 66.

⁷¹ CW12, 76/4-7.

trouble is ‘that his ioy therof shall mynysh much of his payne. And he shall not seke for vayne comfort els where, but specially trust in god’.⁷²

More employs Psalm 90 in *A Dialogue of Comfort* to examine such trust. Here he finds the remedy for all fear, temptation, tribulation and trials in the form of God’s protection. The psalm begins ‘He that dwelleth in the aid of the most High, shall abide under the protection of the God of Heaven’⁷³ and More interprets this to be ‘he that thowrow a good faith abydith in the trust and confidence of goddes helpe’.⁷⁴ More explains that ‘with his sholders shall he shadow the, & vnder his fethers shalt thou trust’ and this gives ‘euery faythfull man a sure promise’ of God’s protection.⁷⁵ This protection comes from the truth that encompasses a man like a shield, or in More’s language, the ‘impenetrable pavice of the shulder of god’.⁷⁶ This pavice covers the entire body, leaving no part exposed for it is none other than ‘our saviour christ hym selfe’.⁷⁷ But if we remain under his wings, God offers a safeguard and guarantee for no power is strong enough to pull us out or hurt our souls.⁷⁸ This statement is about more than just the trust of which More frequently speaks. It is also about praise for if we do this, ‘we shall also vnder the coueryng of his hevenly wynges with greate exultacion reioyce’.⁷⁹ Wings as a metaphor of God’s protection appear several times in the psalms and are used by More in connection to hope and trust⁸⁰ allied to God’s help, protection⁸¹ and mercy.⁸²

⁷² CW12, 76/7-9. cf Ch 6, n107; Ch 7, n162; Ch 8, nn20 & 22-23.

⁷³ Ps 90.1.

⁷⁴ CW12, 103/3-4. [thowrow: through; abydith: abides]

⁷⁵ CW12, 103/15-16; cf Ps 90.4, 1. Although More uses the word feathers, the Douai Bible reads wings. More appears to use the words feathers and wings interchangeably; cf CW12, 103/15-16 & 103/30-32 & 104/10-13 & 104/15-17 & 105/1-6 & 106/2-3. [sholders: shoulders; fethers: feathers]

⁷⁶ CW12, 103/27-28; cf Ps 90.5. [shulder: shoulder]

⁷⁷ CW12, 106/11.

⁷⁸ cf CW12, 104/11-27. Another metaphor analogous to the wings and feathers is that of the hen gathering her chicks under her wings as a metaphor calling his sons, even those that have gone astray; cf CW12, 103/30-104/13.

⁷⁹ CW12, 105/5-6; cf Ps 62.8: And I will reioyce under the covert of thy wings. cf *TMPB*, 106, 197; an extended flag annotates verses 7-9; cf also Ps 60.5 against which More has penned a marginal line in his Psalter. [coueryng: covering; wynges: wings; exultacion: exultation; reioyce: reioyce]

⁸⁰ Ps 35.8; cf CW13, *Imploratio*, 219/31-32. This verse is one of only two out of thirteen transcribed by More from this psalm. cf Ps 90.4: He will overshadow thee with his shoulders: and under his wings thou shalt trust; cf CW12, 103/14-15, & 103/30-104/4; cf *TMPB*, 150 where there is a marginal line against this verse.

⁸¹ Ps 16.8: From them that resist thy right hand keep me, as the apple of thy eye. Protect me under the shadow of thy wings; cf *TMPB*, 44, 191. The marginalia reads *oratio christiani populi contra potentiam turchorum* [A prayer of the Christian people against the power of the Turks]. More also describes God’s protection as sitting under his wing, cf CW12, 106/2-3.

⁸² Ps 56.2: Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me: for my soul trusteth in thee. And in the shadow of thy wings will I hope, until iniquity pass away; cf *TMPB*, 98, 196. The marginalia next to the second half of the verse reads *fiducia in deum* [trust in God], but a marginal line runs against the entire verse.

The trust that More presents in this charming picture of feathers and wings is fostered by meditation on the Passion of Christ. Louis Martz observes that More ‘presents what might be called a treatise on the art of meditation in the final book of *A Dialogue of Comfort*.⁸³ It consists of suffering a painful death here on earth to win everlasting life in heaven and avoid the everlasting pains of hell.⁸⁴ What is necessary is to ‘conceyve in our myndes a right Imagynacion & remembraunce of Christes byttre paynefull passion,... that we shuld fynd our selfe not onely content, but also glad & desierouse to suffre deth for his sake’.⁸⁵ In fact More writes a single phrase meditation at the very start of the *Dialogue*, which sets out the basis for his longer ones at the end of the book; he writes that in sickness any meditation should be on ‘deth, iugement, heven, & hell’.⁸⁶ Meditation on Christ’s Passion should consider three things. The first is ‘Christes kyndnes in suffryng his passion for vs’, the second is ‘the consideracion of hell that we shuld fall in by forsaking of hym,’ and the third is ‘the Ioyfull meditacion of eternal lyfe in hevyn that we shall wynne, with this short temperall deth patiently take for hym’.⁸⁷

Through such meditation, which should be habitual, despite the fact of ‘the remembraunce of the payne that their imaginacion representith to the mynd, than must they call to mynd and remembre, the greate payne & torment that christ suffred for them’.⁸⁸ To pray for grace and persevere, despite the fear of falling but with the full intention of standing, God will inspire ‘a sure habit of spirituall faythfull strength, that all the devilles in hell with all the wrestlyng that they can make, shall neuer be hable to wrest it out of their hart’.⁸⁹ In order to strengthen us, it is necessary to remember Christ's painful agony before His Passion so that no fear leads us to despair; it should rather lead us to call upon Him for help and ‘let us... in our agony remember His’.⁹⁰ Although this quotation is taken from *De Tristitia*, More uses it again, near the close of the *Dialogue of Comfort*: ‘In our fere let vs remembre Christes paynfull agonye, that hym self wold for our comfort suffre before his passion, to thentent that no fere shuld

⁸³ Louis L Martz, ‘The Design of More’s *Dialogue of Comfort*’ in *Moreana*, Vol 4, Nos 15-16, 342.

⁸⁴ CW12, 245/18-25 & 294/10-12; cf Martz, *Design*, 342-343; cf Louis L Martz, *The Search for the Inner Man*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1990, 81.

⁸⁵ CW12, 312/12-13 & 313/4-6; cf Louis A Schuster, SM, ‘The Tower of London: MORE’S GETHSEMANE’ in *Moreana*, Vol XIX, No 74, June 1982, 43. cf Ch 8, n141.

⁸⁶ CW12, 4/12.

⁸⁷ CW12, 314/18-21. cf Ch 7, n212.

⁸⁸ CW12, 198/14-17; cf eg CW12, 313/23-26 & 314/14-16; CW1, Pico’s *Twelve Properties of a Lover*, The fourth and fifth properties, 115/19-116/17. cf nn7 & 9 above; Ch 6, n132. [imaginacion: imagination]

⁸⁹ CW12, 198/30-32. cf Ch 6, nn 128.

⁹⁰ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 253/13-15.

make vs dispayre, & euer call for his help, such as hymselfe lyst to send vs".⁹¹ More also offers his readers the remedy: that 'whan we fele vs to bold, remembre our own feblenes, whan we fele vs to faynt, remembre Christes strength'.⁹² More recommends kneeling or falling prostrate before 'some pitifull image of christes bitter passion',⁹³ which James Monti suggests is 'unmistakably autobiographical'.⁹⁴ There is evidence that this interpretation is correct for in a letter to Margaret, More writes that 'for the feare [of death], I thanke our Lorde, the feare of hel, the hope of heauen and the passion of Christ daily more and more aswage'⁹⁵ and in another later letter to Margaret, he says that when questioned on the subject of the King being head of the church he replied that he 'had fully determyned with my selfe, neyther to study nor medle with eny mater of thys worlde, but that my hole study shulde be, vpon the passyon of Chryst and myne owne passage owt of this worlde'.⁹⁶ More's balanced awareness of his approaching death, whether natural or by execution,⁹⁷ his complete trust in God and longing for God, along with an awareness of his own frailty are all found in his Tower letter to Dr Nicholas Wilson. More writes:

...I put my truste in God and in the meryttis of his bytter passion, and I beseche hym geve me and kepe me the mynd to long to be owt of this worlde and to be with hym. For I can never but truste that who so long to be with hym shalbe well come to hym and on the tother syde my mynde geveth me verely that eny that ever shall come to hym shall full hartely wyshe to be withe hym or ever he shall come at hym.⁹⁸

This insight connects More's thinking between trust and reliance on God in order to be able to long to be with God. More's personal responsibility before God, along with a recognition

⁹¹ CW12, 318/26-29; cf Louis L Martz, 'Thomas More: The Tower Works' in *St Thomas More: Action and Contemplation*, New Haven: Yale University Press for St John's University, 1972, 69. [list: choose, wish, desire]

⁹² CW12, 318/25-26. cf n160 below. [feblenes: feebleness]

⁹³ CW12, 164/20; cf CW12, 164/15-28. cf nn85 & 98; Ch 8, nn132, 136, 141 & 152. More repeatedly refers to Christ's Passion as 'bitter'; cf Bitter as a description of Christ's cross or death is found throughout More's writings. However, *The Confutation of Tyndale, A Treatise on the Passion, A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation* and *De Tristitia* are the works in which it is most frequently found. Only the last two were written in the Tower.

⁹⁴ cf Monti, 59. For quotations of More's use of Christ's Passion in his writings, cf Ch 8, nn132, 152 & 157. For More's quotations: for Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, (trans) John P H Clark and Rosemary Dorward, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press (Classics of Western Spirituality), 1991, 106, cf Ch 8, n160; for Bishop John Fisher, Cecilia A Hatt (ed), 'Good Friday Sermon' in *English Works of John Fisher*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 303, cf Ch 8, n162; and cf *The Book of the Craft of Dying*, Frances M M Comper (ed), London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1917, 14. cf Ch 8, n165 & cf Ch 8, nn120, 123, 124, 130, 135, 136, 141, 142, 144, 147, 153, 164. & 166.

⁹⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 509/20-22. cf Ch 8, n146.

⁹⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 552/64-68. cf Ch 2, n286; Ch 8, n144.

⁹⁷ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, to Dr Nicholas Wilson, 537/148-151; More writes in similar terms to Margaret, cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 553/92-95; cf CW12, 85/16-26. cf Ch 7, nn5 & 6.

⁹⁸ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 537/153-159. cf nn55 & 56 above; n 100 below; Ch 2, n194. [meryttis: merits; syde: side; geveth: gives]

of his own frailty, is displayed in his letter to Dr Wilson to whom he admits ‘Yet forget I not that I haue a longe rekenyng and a greate to geve accompte of’.⁹⁹ This letter joins his awareness of the account he must give to God at the judgement with his trust that God generously welcomes those who trust in Him.¹⁰⁰ More’s longing for God and trust in Him with his ever present awareness of death and focus on the eternal allow him to view everything in the spirit of detachment, not only from his predicament in the Tower, but also from the pitfalls and temptations he had encountered during his life. Bernard Bassett observes More’s ‘astonishing consistency... this vivid realization of death was his predominant attitude’.¹⁰¹

A further example of More’s focus ‘to Godward’ is his extraordinary detachment in the Tower. His detachment is illustrated during a visit by his wife Dame Alice who comments on his foolishness to be in prison when he could have the favour of the king, his council, if he would only do as the Bishops and other learned men have done and could return to his home, his library, his books, his gallery, his garden, his orchard in addition to his family and household.¹⁰² More’s reply illustrates that detachment as he asks her ‘Tell me one thinge,... Is not this house as nighe heauen as my owne?’¹⁰³ After his wife fails to give a direct reply, More observes that

‘I see no greate cause why I should much loye either of my gay house or of any thinge belonging thereunto; when, if I should but seuen years lye buried vnder the ground, and then arise and come thither againe, I should not faile to find some therein that wold bid me get me out of doors, and tell me it were none of mine. What cause haue I then to like such an house as wold so soone forget his master?’¹⁰⁴

More did not acquire such spiritual detachment in the Tower for this virtue is found in his attitudes and behaviour in September, 1529. More was with the court at Woodstock when his son-in-law Giles Heron brought him news of a fire and the loss of his barns full of corn after an abundant harvest following several years famine.¹⁰⁵ The detachment shown in his

⁹⁹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 537/152-153.

¹⁰⁰ cf Jn 6.37; cf CW11, 41/3 & 89/7-9; CW12, 76/27-28; cf CW12, 76/26-27; CW13, *Passion*, 103/5-6. cf nn55, 56 & 98 above; Ch 2, n194.

¹⁰¹ Bernard Basset, *Born for Friendship*, London: Burns & Oates, 1965, 38.

¹⁰² cf Roper, 82/13-83/6; Stapleton, 161. cf Ch 7, n206.

¹⁰³ Roper, 83/10-12.

¹⁰⁴ Roper, 83/21-84/3; cf Roper, 76/14-16. For an earlier example of More’s detachment and trust, cf n106 below. [seuen: seven]

¹⁰⁵ cf John Guy, *The Public Career of Sir Thomas More*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980, 13; T H Baker, *Records of the seasons, Prices of Agricultural Produce and Phenomena Observed in the British Isles*, London: Simpkin Marshall & Co, 1883, 114-116.

revealing letter to his wife requires no explanation. ‘We muste and ar bounden not onely to be content but also to be glade of his visitacion... thanke hym as well for aduersytye as for prosperytie... Therefore I pray you be of good chere and take all the howshold with you to chyrche and ther thanke God bothe for that he hathe geven vs and for that he hathe take from vs and for that he hathe lefte vs,...’¹⁰⁶

Such detachment, practised throughout his life, gives More the ability to exercise an independence of mind during his imprisonment. In a conversation with his daughter Margaret during one of her visits to her father in the Tower, More declares

‘I neuer entend (God being my good lorde) to pynne my soule at a nother mans backe, not euen the best man that I know this day liuing;¹⁰⁷ for I knowe not whither he may happe to cary it. Ther is no man liuing, of whom while he liueth, I may make myself sure. Some may do for fauour, and some may doe for feare, and so might they carye my soule a wronge way’.¹⁰⁸

Germain Marc’hadour describes these words as a ‘forcible and downright assertion of the independence of the individual soul, and of its responsibility to God alone, speaking within a carefully informed conscience’.¹⁰⁹ Marc’hadour asks ‘did ever a higher and bolder claim for liberty, and a prouder assumption of responsibility, fall from the lips of saint or hero?’¹¹⁰ Marc’hadour claims that, in order to understand More’s stand against the king, it is necessary to comprehend More’s own perception of his responsibility. This is his obedient and faithful acceptance of his responsibility before God as opposed to Eve’s disobedience in the Garden of Eden when, as More wrote a decade before in *A Dialogue against Heresies*, she ‘layd the wyt of her synne to the serpent, and god was offended that she toke not her owne parte to her self’.¹¹¹ During the months prior to his imprisonment, this idea was again in More’s mind. In

¹⁰⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 422/22-423/33; cf E E Reynolds, *The Field is Won: The Life and Death of St Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1968, 186-187; Gerard B Wegemer, *Thomas More: A Portrait of Courage*, Princeton: Scepter Publisher, 1997, 116-117. [ar: are; glade: glad; visitacion: visitation; aduersytye: adversity; prosperytie: prosperity; howshold: household; chyrche: church; geven: given]

¹⁰⁷ This is taken to refer to Bishop John Fisher. cf Ch 6, n187.

¹⁰⁸ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 521/250-256; cf G Marc’hadour, ‘Saint Thomas More and Conscience’ (remembering Australia and New Zealand) in *Moreana*, Vol 30, No 113, March 1993, 56. Marc’hadour notes that here the meaning of ‘never’ is ‘not at all’ and that More acknowledges the necessity of divine grace to achieve this and the meaning of ‘to pynne’ is either ‘to peg’ or ‘to glue’. In either case it expresses ‘dependence and lack of autonomy’. A very similar idea is found in Thomas a Kempis’ *Of the Imitation of Christ*, (trans) Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1952; cf *Imitation*, Ch 7, No 1: ‘Put your trust neither in your own knowledge, nor in the cleverness of any man living, but rather in the grace of God’. cf Ch 6, n286 [entend: intend; pynne: fix, glue; liuing: living; cary, carye: carry; liueth: lives]

¹⁰⁹ Germain Marc’hadour, ‘Obedient unto Death: A Key to St Thomas More’, *Spiritual Life*, Vol 7, Fall 1961, 214.

¹¹⁰ Marc’hadour, *Obedient unto Death*, 214.

¹¹¹ CW6, 405/6-8. [wyt: blame, weight; layd the wyt of: attributed the responsibility for; her self: herself]

The Treatise on the Passion More, following St Augustine,¹¹² comments that after breaking God's commandment Adam and Eve 'rather excused their default, and each of them put it from him self to some other'¹¹³ and failed to repent. More allows no 'get out' clause of blaming another; he gives only an explicit statement of every single man's personal responsibility before God.

More's lifelong focus on reaching heaven and the level of the spiritual detachment he reveals in his Tower writings are indicative of the fourth type of death of which Erasmus writes.¹¹⁴ He connects this to the transformative death of which St Paul speaks when he says 'And I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me'.¹¹⁵ This death is the one which all Christians 'must seek out and must contemplate with all our devotion through the whole of our lives'.¹¹⁶ This concept of transformation is found in More's *Catena* where he uses another Pauline verse to express it. He writes that we are 'always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies'.¹¹⁷ Erasmus paraphrases St Paul's words to the Corinthians to describe this death or transformation 'We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus Christ so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our body'.¹¹⁸ It is nothing less than the transformation of 'the image of the old Adam into the image of the new Adam, who is Christ the Lord'.¹¹⁹ It is the death of self-will. Erasmus continues his explanation with further words from St Paul's that 'you are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God' and concludes that 'this death is the mother of spiritual life';¹²⁰ but also notes that he does not know 'whether anyone has fully experienced this happiest of deaths in this life'.¹²¹ It is a transformation allowing Christ to live in us and work through us and so to participate in Christ's life. In reality such transformation demands the complete self-abnegation of the will to achieve this, something only possible if, as More did, a man primarily orders his life to seek and follow God's will.

¹¹² cf St Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* (The City of God), (trans) Henry Bettenson, 1st pub 1972, re-issued London: Penguin Books, 2003, Bk XIV, Ch 14.

¹¹³ CW13, *Passion*, 53/17-18. [default: fault, misdeed; som: some]

¹¹⁴ Erasmus, 'De Praeparatione ad Mortem' (Preparing for Death) in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol 70, (ed) John W O'Malley, (trans) John N Grant, Toronto/Buffalo/ London: University of Toronto Press, 1998, *De Praeparatione*, 411.

¹¹⁵ Gal 2.20. More does not use this verse.

¹¹⁶ *De Praeparatione*, 411.

¹¹⁷ 2 Cor 4.10; CW14, *Catena*, 673/3-5, 6-8. cf nn128 & 130 below.

¹¹⁸ *De Praeparatione*, 411; cf 2 Cor 4.10.

¹¹⁹ cf 1 Cor 15.45; *De Praeparatione*, 411. More does not use this verse.

¹²⁰ Col 3.3; *De Praeparatione*, 412.

¹²¹ *De Praeparatione*, 411.

More makes two earlier references to transformation, although neither refer to this death of self that allows Christ to work through us by our cooperation with him. The first of these references to transformation occurs in his earliest writings, *The Pageant Verses*.¹²² It is based on the ages of man and how the end, or death, of each age simultaneously means the arrival, or birth, of the succeeding age. These successive ages are, like physical death, an unavoidable part of life and in the *Pageant Verses* each personification ‘dies’ or is ‘defeated’ and replaced by the subsequent one where it is portrayed under the feet of the previous one. Each stanza appeared above a painting depicting each scene described.¹²³ The first five of the nine stanzas relate to earthly life from Childhood through to Death and are followed by Fame, Time and Eternity. The ninth and final verse is The Poet¹²⁴ who introduces a religious theme, contrasting with the previous worldly ones. While the transformations are predominantly worldly, there is also a spiritual aspect for each personification, that of pride, and Fame, Time and Eternity display this same spiritual vice. Despite their pride, hedonism and boasting, they all meet their appointed end, thus emphasizing the transitory nature of life. The Poet introduces the theme of the love of God; it is the only thing that remains for eternity and so our thoughts should therefore be directed to this end.¹²⁵ More’s second reference to transformation occurs in his polemical *The Answer to a Poisoned Book*, which relates to the reception of Holy Communion.¹²⁶ In this example More writes that Holy Communion transforms a man so that his ‘liuely spyryte [is] immedyately ioyned and vnseparably knitte vnto y^e eternall flowing fountayn of all lyfe, y^e godhed’.¹²⁷ Such a transformation merges with the idea of longing to be with God that is so frequently evident in More’s Tower writings.

Of the biblical quotations mentioned above and used by Erasmus, More mentions only one of them. It is from St Paul’s *Second Epistle to the Corinthians* and it appears in More’s *Catena*: that we are ‘always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of

¹²² Dating the *Pageant Verses* is problematic but they were probably written between 1492-94 or 1496-1501; cf CW1, Introduction, xvii-xviii & 3/2; cf Robert A Duffy, *Thomas More’s ‘Nine Pageants’* in *Moreana*, Vol 13, No 50, June 1976, 20-21.

¹²³ CW1, *Pageant Verses*, 3/2-4.

¹²⁴ The Poet is the only verse written in Latin.

¹²⁵ cf Duffy, ‘*Nine Pageants*’ in *Moreana*, Vol 13, No 50, (June 1976), 15-32.

¹²⁶ CW11, *The Answer to a Poisoned Book* was More’s reply to the Protestant work *The Souper of the Lorde*, probably written by George Joye, cf CW11, Appendix B, 343-374. cf n127 below.

¹²⁷ CW11, 29/8-10. More uses this motif of transformation elsewhere in reference to the change of the bread and wine during the Mass into the Body and Blood of Christ; cf CW11, 52/14-17 & 24-25. [spyryte: spirit; vnseparably: inseparably; immedyately: immediately; ioyned, knitte: joined; fountayn: fountain]

Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies'.¹²⁸ The aim is longing for God and heaven through the imitation of Christ's life and suffering and this reaches its culmination during his imprisonment. St Paul's *Epistle to the Philippians* provides a different way and are 'For me to live is Christ: and to die is gain' and having a 'desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better'.¹²⁹ St Paul reiterates this idea of transformation in his Epistle to the Galatians 'And I live, now not I: but Christ liveth in me',¹³⁰ reminding us of Erasmus' employment of it.¹³¹ Sometimes either one or other or occasionally both of these verses appear within the text¹³² and sometimes are stand alone comments as in the *Catena*,¹³³ while in other examples More uses them to expand his thoughts revealing how he connects different ideas and themes.¹³⁴ This reveals More's perception of a spiritual transformation similar to the one of which St Paul speaks.¹³⁵

Aware of his own approaching martyrdom, More connects the idea of dissolution and martyrdom in his other long Tower work, *De Tristitia*. He observes that even fearful martyrs (of whom he is one) 'will long for the death they had viewed with horror, considering life a sad thing and death a gain, desiring to be dissolved and to be with Christ'¹³⁶ and so connects this desire to death by martyrdom. The idea of dissolution is a constant theme in More's Tower works. In *A Dialogue of Comfort*, he relates St Paul's concept of dissolution to longing to be with Christ and death as the means to achieve it.¹³⁷ Of itself an awareness of death leads to a focus upon God, and in his own predicament, More returns to longing for God. Hamilton writes that More's life 'was, by meditation, a continual preparation for his

¹²⁸ 2 Cor 4.10; CW14, *Catena*, 673/3-5, 6-8. cf n117 above; n130 below.

¹²⁹ Phil 1.21, 23. More appears to have used Phil 1.23 only once before his imprisonment in his polemical work; cf CW11, 103/18-24. The theme here is very similar to an example found in *A Dialogue of Comfort*; cf CW12, 284/18 & CW14, *De Tristitia*, 415/12-417/5. cf nn136, 140, 141, 145 & 146 below; Ch 5, nn5 & 6; Ch 7, n165.

¹³⁰ Gal 2.20. More does not actually use this verse.

¹³¹ cf Erasmus, *De Praeparatione*, 411.

¹³² CW14, *De Tristitia*, 75/8-77/1.

¹³³ CW14, *Catena*, 635/6-7.

¹³⁴ Apart from the *Imploratio* and some of the other short meditations and prayers, these two verses from St Paul (Phil 1.21, 23) appear in all More's Tower writings; cf CW12, 4/23-24 & 284/3 & 284/18-19; CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 229/3-5 & 230/7; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 75/8-77/1 & 417/2-5; Rogers, *Correspondence*, to Meg, 544/13; Rogers, *Correspondence*, to Wilson, 537/155.

¹³⁵ cf Louis L Martz, 'Thomas More: The Sacramental Life' in *Thought*, Vol 52, No 206, 1977. Martz notes how profoundly More's involvement in the controversy over the Eucharist was. He notes that 'the heat and power of More's involvement here suggests that for him the controversy involved the very basis of his life' and that 'More's deep distress and anguish, his anger and outrage, when he witnesses the current efforts to make only a "sign" of the sacrament, arise from his feeling that heaven and earth are being torn apart,...'; cf 302, 303.

¹³⁶ cf nn120, 129, above; nn140, 141, 145 & 146 below; Ch, 7, n165.

¹³⁷ cf CW12, 284/18. In this example, More also uses the rest of the quotation from St Paul; that he was content to continue in this life for the profit of others; cf Phil 1.24.

death'.¹³⁸ Writing in the knowledge of his own probable fate, More notes the inevitability of death as he prays in *A Godly Meditation* of his desire 'To haue the laste thing in remembraunce, To have ever a fore myn yie my deth that ys ever at hand, To make deth no straunger to me'.¹³⁹ By sharing Christ's fear and agony, through persistence in prayer and submission to God's will, martyrs will be renewed by the dew of heaven and 'the thought of death, once so bitter, will grow sweet, eagerness will take the place of grief, mental strength and courage will replace dread, and finally they will long for the death they had viewed with horror, considering life a sad thing and death a gain, desiring to be dissolved and to be with Christ'.¹⁴⁰

In a letter to Margaret from the Tower, More repeats her words that 'of his tender pitie so firmly to rest our loue in hym, with litle regard of this worlde, and so to fle sinne and embrace vertue, that we may say with S. Paule, *Mihi viuere Christus est et mori luchrum. Et illud, Cupio dissolui et esse cum Christo.*'¹⁴¹ He praises her use of these words of St Paul and in his letter notes that the desire of the transformation that such dissolution achieves is linked to 'the welthy state of the lyfe to come'.¹⁴² More records that St Paul did not only hope for heaven, 'but also sore thyrsteth for it'¹⁴³ and that while St Paul 'findeth pleasure in his hope, so fyndeth he payne in the delaye of his hope'.¹⁴⁴

In *A Devout Prayer*, written between his condemnation and execution, More combines two different verses from St Paul praying 'Glorious god, geue me from henceforth y^e grace, with litle respect vnto ye world, so to sette and fixe firmly myne hearte vpon the, that I may say with thy blessed apostle saint Paul, *Mundus mihi crucifixus est, & ego mundi. Mihi viuere Christus est, & mori luchrum. Cupio dissolui & esse cum Christo.*'¹⁴⁵ In this instance, More associates and contrasts the idea of focusing away from this world and towards the eternal by

¹³⁸ Robert Hamilton, 'More's Philosophy of Death' in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, Vol 57, 1941, 454.

¹³⁹ CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 227/1-4; cf Ch 5, n13.

¹⁴⁰ CW14, *De Tristitia*, 415/12-417/5. cf nn129 & 136 above; nn141, 145 & 146 below.

¹⁴¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 544/10-545/1; Phil 1.21, 23; cf CW13, *A Godly Meditation*, 229/3-5; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 75/8-9 & 77/1; CW14, *Catena*, 635/6-7. cf nn136, 137, 141 & 146 above. [firmly: firmly].

¹⁴² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 544/7; CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 229/6-8; cf T E, Bridgett, *The Life and Writings of Sir Thomas More*, London: Burns & Oates, 1891, repr 1924, 250-252. cf Ch 5, nn45 & 46; Ch 6, n26; Ch 7, n44.

¹⁴³ CW11, 103/19; cf Phil 1.23. [thyrsteth: thirsts]

¹⁴⁴ CW11, 103/23-24; cf Phil 1.23; cf CW12, 284/16-18. [fyndeth: finds]

¹⁴⁵ CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 228/27-229/5; cf Gal 6.14; Phil 1.21, 23; The Vulgate reads *desiderium habens* rather than *cupio*. Other Tudor translators use *desire* and More alone uses *long*; cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'Three Tudor Editors of Thomas More' in *Editing Sixteenth Century Texts*, (ed) R J Schoeck, University of Toronto Press, 1966, 63. cf nn129, 136, 140, 141, & 146 above. [sette: set]

keeping heaven always in mind. It is the longing and focus found in More's previous interpretation of St Paul's words, that it 'is to haue my soule losed and departed fro my body and to be wyth Cryste'.¹⁴⁶

The phrase 'transformative death' belongs to Erasmus and More never uses it.¹⁴⁷ However, during his imprisonment More lives this transformative death. His understanding of it is the result of his life-long practice of the Christian faith during which he has developed a focus to godward and the virtue of spiritual detachment. Combined with his confident trust in God, this enables him to face disaster and 'shipwracke'¹⁴⁸ with fortitude and humour. His trust that God knows what is best for us allies with his detachment and independence of mind to merge in his comment to his daughter during a visit to the Tower that of all the benefits given to him by the king, 'I reken vpon my faith my prisonment euen the very chief'.¹⁴⁹ Roper records what is possibly a different version of this story writing that during a visit by his daughter, More tells her 'I believe, Megge, that they that have putt me heare, weene they haue done me a high displeasure. ... I find no cause, I thanck god, Megge, to reckon my self in wors case heare then in my owne house. For me thinckethe god makethe me a wanton, and settethe me on his lappe and dandlethe me'.¹⁵⁰ More chooses to turn all his troubles, as Roper has it, to 'profitable exercises'.¹⁵¹ His constant realization of God's presence everywhere allows More to perceive the opportunities offered by imprisonment. Part of this understanding possessed by More is that God is everywhere as he shows in *De Tristitia* where he writes 'For no matter where we may turn our steps, as long as our minds are directed to God, we clearly do not turn away from Him who is present everywhere'.¹⁵² In his other Tower work, More argues this out; using the idea of being taken to a foreign country, he reasons 'that whether so euer men convey me, god is no more verely here than he shalbe there, yf I get (as I may yf I will) the grace to set my hole hart vpon hym, & long for nothyng but hym, yt can than make me no

¹⁴⁶ CW11, 103/21-22; cf Phil 1.23. [losed: loosed; Cryste: Christ]

¹⁴⁷ Erasmus, *De Praeparatione*, 411, 414.

¹⁴⁸ More uses 'shipwracke' to describe his situation in a letter to his old friend Antonio Bonvisi in a letter from the Tower; cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 562/32. cf Ch 7, n23.

¹⁴⁹ This is recorded in Margaret's letter to her step-sister Alice Alington known as *A Dialogue on Conscience*, cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 531/629. cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 550/37-39; Prov 21.1: 'the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord'; cf CW12, 76/10-12 & 155/15-18; cf *Imitation*, Bk III, Ch 15, No 2: 'Put me where Thou wilt, and deal freely with me in all things. I am in Thy hand; turn me this way and that as Thou chooseth'. cf Ch 8, n69. [reken: reckon; prisonment: imprisonment]

¹⁵⁰ Roper, 76/4-11, 14-18. cf n217 below. [heare: here; weene: think, believe, suppose; wors: worse; thinckethe: thinks; makethe: makes; settethe: sets; lappe: lap; wanton: pet, pampered darling; dandlethe: play with, toy with, fondle, pamper, pet]

¹⁵¹ Roper, 76/21-22.

¹⁵² CW14, *De Tristitia*, 137/1-3; cf Jer 23.23-24; cf CW4, 51/14-15; Roper, 83/11-12.

greate mater to my mynd, whether they cary me hens or leve me here'.¹⁵³ This is a good example how he debates with himself during his imprisonment, where he has been taken from his family to the Tower, rather than a foreign country.

In *A Dialogue of Comfort*, he examines the nature of prison, concluding that the earth is a prison and God the gaoler.¹⁵⁴ In fact, the entire world is a prison. This prison is 'so sure & so subtilly bildyd, that albeit that yt lyeth open on euery side without any wall in the world,... the way to get out at, shall we neuer fynd, so that he nedeth not to coler vs nor to stokk vs for any fere of scapyng away'.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, More reaches the conclusion that every man is in prison, if prison is defined as 'a restraint of lybertie which letith a man from goyng whether he wold'.¹⁵⁶ Using the ideas of prison and liberty as a perception, he argues that a beggar is at greater liberty than a prince for 'there is many a beggar that may without lett, walke ferther vppon other mens grownd than many a prince at his best libertie may walke vppon his own'.¹⁵⁷ If it is true that being in prison is a restraint upon liberty, then if 'other prisoners enclosid within a castell... get the wisdome & the grace to quyet his own mynd, & hold hym selfe content with that place..., is by the same reson of yours, while his will is not longyng to be any where els, he is I say at his fre libertie to be where he will, & so is out of prison to'.¹⁵⁸ If prison is not what we think it is, then there is no need to fear it, but to rationalize it. In the same work he also creates the fictional problem of being transported into a foreign land. Whether it is captivity abroad or imprisonment at home, More understands that the difference is irrelevant for: 'I am very sure, that whether so euer men convey me, God is no more verely here than he shalbe there, yf I get (as I may yf I will) the grace to set my hole hart vppon hym, & long for nothyng but hym, yt can than make me no greate mater to my mynd, whether they cary me hense or leve me here'.¹⁵⁹

More's trust in God and understanding of transformative death as the way to heaven is realized in two of his Tower works. The first occurs at the end of *A Dialogue of Comfort*

¹⁵³ CW12, 251/8-12.

¹⁵⁴ For the earth as a prison, cf CW12, 273/2-3, 20 & 274/1-2; CW1, *Last Things*, 157/12; CW3.2, *Epigram* 119. For different types of prison: cf Ch 4, nn105, 115-116, 119; for hell, cf Ch 4, nn97-102, 123, 125; for the body, cf Ch 4, nn106-111; for God as chief gaoler, CW12, 271/21-22 & 272/17-18, 273/14, 22, cf Ch 4, n117.

¹⁵⁵ CW12, 272/19-23. [subtily: subtly; bildyd: built; coler: collar; to stokk vs: put us in the stocks; scapyng: escaping]

¹⁵⁶ CW12, 255/15-16 & 257/20-23 & 258/13-16. [libertie: liberty]

¹⁵⁷ CW12, 260/6-8. [lett: hinder, prevent]

¹⁵⁸ CW12, 261/17-24. [quyet: quiet; fre: free]

¹⁵⁹ CW12, 251/7-12; cf CW12, 317/4-5; CW4, 51/11-15; CW14, *De Tristitia*, 137/1-3; Roper, 83/11-12; cf Jer 23.23-24.

when his insight contrasts our weakness with Christ's strength so that trust can triumph weakness. 'Whan we fele vs to bold, remembre our own feblenes, whan we fele vs to faynt, remembre Christes strength. In our fere let vs remembre Christes paynfull agonye, that hym selfe wold for our comfort suffre before his passion, to thentent that no fere shuld make vs dispayre, & euer call for his help,...'¹⁶⁰ He observes that without doubt either Christ 'shall kepe vs from the paynfull deth, or shall not fayle so to strength vs in yt, that he shall ioyously bring vs to hevyn by yt, & than doth he much more for vs than yf he kept vs fro yt'.¹⁶¹ Trust in God is paramount and More finds the proof of this in the story of Lazarus. He argues that by helping Lazarus die patiently at the rich man's gate, God did more for him because He delivered him from this world into everlasting bliss.¹⁶²

The second example from the Tower works is found in *A Godly Instruction*¹⁶³ which examines the demands and extent of Christian charity. It goes far beyond More's rather plaintiff comment to the Commissioners during his interrogation of 7th May, 1535 when he replies to the charge of obstinacy in refusing the oath. He answers that 'I am, quoth I, the Kyngis trew faythfull subiect and daily bedesman and pray for hys Hyghnesse and all hys and all the realme. I do nobody harme, I say none harme, I think none harme, but wysch euerye bodye good. And yf thys be not ynough to kepe a man alyue in good fayth I long not to lyue'.¹⁶⁴ In *A Godly Instruction* it is essential to bear in mind that More writes in the expectation of a traitor's death, abandoned by his erstwhile colleagues and friends (except for the faithful Antonio Bonvisi) and misunderstood by his family, including his beloved daughter Margaret. It is in this setting that he begins his *Godly Instruction* considering charity as an attitude. 'Beare no malice nor euill will to no man liuing'.¹⁶⁵ The depth of his charity displayed in this statement is extraordinary in its demands. He continues contrasting good and evil: if a man is good then it is evil to hate him. However, if he is bad but amends and both reach heaven, then they will love each other in eternal friendship. But if the man fails to repent and go to hell, then 'I maye well thinke my selfe a deadly cruell wretche, if I woulde

¹⁶⁰ CW12, 318/24-29. cf n92 above. [to thentent that: in order that; dispayre: despair]

¹⁶¹ CW12, 318/30-319/1. [ioyously: joyously]

¹⁶² cf CW12, 319/1-7.

¹⁶³ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 207-208. The full title states that it was written in the Tower in 1534. More wrote two short pieces entitled *A Godly Instruction*. The shorter of the two is discussed here. The other, longer version is in Latin and is translated into English; its main topics cover pain, death and hell; cf CW13, 209-213.

¹⁶⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 553/87-92. [kyngis: king's; subiect: subject; bedesman: one who prays for another; Hyghnesse: Highness; alyue: alive]

¹⁶⁵ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 207/5.

not nowe rather pytie hys payne, than maligne hys person'.¹⁶⁶ He continues, now looking at the requirements of charity viewed as action rather than attitude. He writes 'I wil giue counsayl to euery good frende of mine, but if he be put in such a roume, as to punishe an euill man lieth in his charge, by reason of his office, else leaue the desire of punishyng vnto god...'.¹⁶⁷ Even in this short meditation intended for all his friends, his personal reflections reveal that he envisages reaching a wider audience than just his family. He exhorts not to display revenge by hitting back and this reflects his comments on silence in *De Tristitia*.¹⁶⁸ Having stated that a man can punish another by reason of his office, More expands this to include 'such other folk, as are so grounded in charitye, and so faste cleaue to God, that no secrete shrewde cruell affeccion, vnder the cloke of a iuste and a verteous zeale, can crepe in and vndermine them'.¹⁶⁹ He finishes with spiritual advice on what to do, using the pronoun 'vs', thus including himself in his own admonition, demanding from both himself and his readers an extraordinarily profound level of charity. Ordinary men should 'euer pray for suche mercifull amendement in other folk, as our owne conscience sheweth vs that we haue nede in our selfe'.¹⁷⁰

God must be sought for Himself and not just as a reward for fidelity. Prior to imprisonment, in one of the twelve Collects that intersperse the *Treatise upon the Passion*, More uses a similar phrase of longing, reminding his readers of the transitory nature of life and that we must 'recker oure selfe for no dwellers but for pylgrymes vppon the yerthe, that wee maye longe and make haste,... too come to the gloryouse country wherein thou haste bought vs enherytaunce for euer wythe thyne owne precyouse bloude'.¹⁷¹ More's final prayer, composed between his condemnation and execution, reflects the same focus on heaven and its importance to More: 'Geue me good Lorde, a longing to be w^t the, not for thauoiding of the calamyties of this wretched world, nor so much for y^e auoiding of the paines of purgatory nor of the paines of hel neither, nor so much for the attaining of y^e ioyes of heauen, in respect

¹⁶⁶ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 207/17-19. [pytie: pity]

¹⁶⁷ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 207/24-27. [frende: friend; but if: unless; roume: position, office; leaue: leave; punishyng: punishing]

¹⁶⁸ cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 401/11-403/6; cf Rom 12.21. cf Ch 3, nn103, 107, & 111. More also writes about forbearing every angry word; cf Matt 12.36; CW6, 105/28-106/1. cf Ch 2, nn17-19; Ch 3, n110.

¹⁶⁹ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 207/27-208/2. [cleaue: cleave; secrete: hidden; shrewde: malicious, wicked; cloke: cloak; vndermine: subvert]

¹⁷⁰ CW13, *A Godly Instruction*, 208/3-4.

¹⁷¹ CW13, *Passion*, 68/23-24; cf CW13, *Passion*, 82/6-7 & 100/12-17. [pylgrymes: pilgrims; yerthe: earth; enherytaunce: inheritance; precyouse: precious]

of mine own commodity, as euen for a very loue to the.’¹⁷² The focus and ideas are the same but his prayer from the Tower reveals that during his imprisonment his desire and prayer reaches the summit of his focus to seek heaven just ‘for a very loue to the’.

During his imprisonment in the Tower St Peter, as Germain Marc’hadour notes, becomes important to More.¹⁷³ Perhaps the dedication of the chapel within the precincts of the Tower to St Peter in Chains perhaps suggests this saint to More. His references to St Peter during his imprisonment concentrate on St Peter’s frailty and subsequent repentance and on his warnings about ‘your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour’.¹⁷⁴ In the final letter he ever wrote, More says to his daughter Margaret about his impending execution that ‘I woulde be sorye, if it shoulde be any lenger than to morrowe, for it is S. Thomas evin, and the vtas¹⁷⁵ of Sainte Peter and therefore to morowe longe I to goe to God, it were a daye very meete and conveniente for me’.¹⁷⁶ More had his wish.

Early the next morning on Tuesday 6th July, 1535, ‘St Thomas even, and the vtas of Saincte Peter,’ his friend Sir Thomas Pope brought More the ‘message from the kinge and his Councell, That he should before nyne of the clock the same morning suffer death; and that therefore furthwith he should prepare him self thereunto.’¹⁷⁷ It is not known exactly when More learns that his sentence is commuted to beheading, but Stapleton records that More’s reacts with humour replying ‘May God avert such royal clemency from all my friends’.¹⁷⁸ The news that the sentence is beheading rather than disembowelment must have been a huge relief to More who had written to his dearest daughter Margaret that he found ‘my fleshe much more shrinkinge from payne and from deth, than me thought it the part of a faithfull Christen man’.¹⁷⁹ He had previously told her that he had considered ‘the vttermost that can by possibilite fall’¹⁸⁰ prior to his imprisonment but reassures her that now ‘I sett by death eury

¹⁷² CW13, *A Devout Prayer*, 230/7-11. cf Ch 1, n195; Ch 4, nn31 & n161; Ch 5, n88.

¹⁷³ Marc’hadour, *Obedient Unto Death*, 209. cf Ch 2, n326; Ch 6, n116.

¹⁷⁴ In *A Dialogue of Comfort* alone, More refers to St Peter no less than sixteen times and in his prison letters five times; cf 1 Pet 5.8, cf Marc’hadour, *Obedient Unto Death*, 209.

¹⁷⁵ St Thomas evin: the eve of the Translation of St Thomas (Becket) of Canterbury, kept on 7th July. For the vtas: the octave day of the Feast of SS Peter and Paul (29th June) was 6th July.

¹⁷⁶ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 564/18-22.

¹⁷⁷ Roper, 100/3-4, 8-11; cf Harsfield’s *Life of More*, (ed) E V Hitchcock, London: Early English Text Society, 1932, 201/9-10, 13-16. [furthwith: forthwith]

¹⁷⁸ Stapleton, 177; cf Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1998, 392. cf Ch 6, n210.

¹⁷⁹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/95-97; cf Ackroyd, 358.

¹⁸⁰ Rogers, *Correspondence*, Letter of Margaret Roper to Alice Alington, 516/76-77.

daye lesse than other'.¹⁸¹ His fear of torture he confides in a letter to Master Leder, but not to his daughter.¹⁸²

More thanks Pope heartily for his good tidings and tells him that 'I haue bine alwaies much bounden to the highnes for the benefites and honoures that he hath still from tyme to tyme most bountyfully heaped vppon me; and yeat more bound am I to his grace for puttinge me into this place, where I haue had convenient time and space to haue remembraunce of my end'.¹⁸³ That morning More's merriment is noticeable. His contemporary, Edward Hall, is both mystified and scandalized by his behaviour and asks whether More should be described as 'a foolishe wyseman, or a wyse foolishman'.¹⁸⁴

The answer to More's humour is found in his attitudes to death and eternity and reveals his detachment and the culmination of his spiritual development. He could afford to be merry having had his sentence commuted for as he had written to Margaret during his incarceration that 'thoughe a man leese of his yeres in this worlde, it is more than manyfolde recompensed by cominge the sooner to heauen'.¹⁸⁵ Richard Sylvester comments that 'More knew exactly what he was doing. Since "the field was won" before the battle began, then the battle itself could be treated mock-heroically'.¹⁸⁶ More, along with many others, saw life itself as a play,¹⁸⁷ so the world can be viewed with detachment and he can appreciate the ridiculous side of human pretentiousness. Gerard Wegemer suggests that More's jokes at his execution illustrate 'Christian folly that saw redemptive meaning in the cross. Following the traditional Christian understanding, More considered it to be true wisdom not to rage against the cross, but to glory in it'.¹⁸⁸

While More's detachment, longing for God and humour, along with his trust and prayer life, aid him in his months in the Tower, the reason for his death, as Clarence Miller clearly points

¹⁸¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 546/80.

¹⁸² cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/15-16 & 549/18. cf Ch 6, n63; Ch 8, m16 & 68.

¹⁸³ Roper, 100/13-19; Harpsfield, 201/18-24. [bine: been; alwaies: always; kings: king's]

¹⁸⁴ Edward Hall, *Chronicles*, London: J Johnson, 1809, 817.

¹⁸⁵ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 542/109-543/111.

¹⁸⁶ Sylvester, Richard S, 'Roper's *Life of More*' in *Moreana*, Vol 9, No 36, 1972, 56; cf Roper, 73/9-10.

¹⁸⁷ cf Introduction, n46.

¹⁸⁸ Wegemer, *Thomas More*, 221-222.

out, is quite simply for the love of Christ.¹⁸⁹ More tries and fails to ward off execution, but in doing so, 'he would be sure that it was God's will for him to die a martyr's death'.¹⁹⁰ Martyrdom seeks More out, not the other way around. He does not seek it lest he be 'deceived by presumptuous pride' as Miller explains.¹⁹¹ More confirms in his letter to Margaret about his interrogation on 3rd June, 1535 that presumption is a factor in his silence. Asked by his interrogators why he would not speak plainly against the statute, More replies 'I haue not bene a man of suche holy living as I might be bolde to offer myself to deathe, leaste God for my presumption might suffer me to fall, and therefore I put not miselfe forward but drawe backe'.¹⁹²

David Knowles uses More's attitude as an example of the virtue of fortitude. He observes that:

'Other martyrs have been called upon to display the gift of fortitude under physical sufferings to a higher degree than he. The Carthusians, his near neighbours in the Tower, suffered in reality what he had faced in imagination through sleepless nights at Chelsea. But no martyr of whom we have detailed record shows more mental fortitude. In addition to the loss of all he had and loved, in addition to the physical and mental sufferings of a winter in the Tower with two dangerous bouts of illness, and much pain, More had to stand alone against all the motives of love and loyalty and common sense, bullied by men of lesser intelligence and no principles, betrayed by time-servers, regarded as a scrupulous fool by his old colleagues, and by all (save one) of the Bishops and theologians of the land, misunderstood by his wife, and even begged to yield by the daughter who was the dearest thing on earth to him, he had to fight off both in public and in silent solitude all the arguments that could be brought forward both by those who hated him and those who loved him, while his whole world,... went to pieces round him.'¹⁹³

When More entered the King's service, Henry told him that he [More] 'shold first loke vnto God and after God vnto hym' as More writes to Cromwell in March 1534, adding that these 'moost graciouse wordys was the fyrst lesson also that ever his Grace gave me at my fyrst comyng into his noble servyce'.¹⁹⁴ He also repeated these words in his letters in the Tower to

¹⁸⁹ Clarence Miller, 'The Heart of the Final Struggle: More's Commentary on The Agony in The Garden', in *Quincentennial Essays on St Thomas More*, (ed) Michael J Moore, Boone, North Carolina: Appalachian State University, 1978, 123.

¹⁹⁰ Miller, *The Heart of the Final Struggle: More's Commentary on The Agony in The Garden*, 122.

¹⁹¹ Miller, *The Heart of the Final Struggle: More's Commentary on The Agony in The Garden*, 122.

¹⁹² Rogers, *Correspondence*, 559/136-139.

¹⁹³ David Knowles, 'For What so Silently Died More?' in *Ampleforth Journal*, 83:1, 1978, 36; for a related assessment, cf Wegemer, *Thomas More*, 222-223.

¹⁹⁴ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 495/126-129.

both Dr Nicholas Wilson and to his daughter Margaret.¹⁹⁵ Germain Marc'hadour observes that 'More brought forth this 'gracious lesson' as evidence that, at the very moment when he was aggravating and incensing the king in order to obey his own conscience, he was in fact obeying the king's express command. He was being loyal to Henry sober against Henry drunk'.¹⁹⁶ Richard Sylvester notes the same thing but with a slightly different emphasis: 'The king's good servant would never serve (or die) more truly than when he did not serve at all'.¹⁹⁷

The King had requested that More use few words and More readily acquiesces. His last words, after that the assembled crowd pray for him, are usually reported to be: 'I die the king's good servant, *but* God's first'. This is now usually thought to be 'I die the king's good servant, *and* God's first'.¹⁹⁸ The first document to record this is *The Paris Newsletter*, written in French, which relates: '...qu'il mouroit son bon serviteur *et* de Dieu premierement'.¹⁹⁹ *The Paris Newsletter* circulates the news of the executions of both Bishop John Fisher and Thomas More in Paris within a couple of weeks of More's death,²⁰⁰ being therefore contemporary with these events. A number of other versions exist; one Latin text, known as *Expositio fidelis*, gives 'contestans se mori fidelem ac bonum Regis ministrum, *ac* Dei in primis'.²⁰¹ The author is unknown, but it has been attributed both to Erasmus by de Vocht, though it was published anonymously,²⁰² to Philip Dumont (or de la Montaigne) by Duncan Derrett²⁰³ and to a disciple of Erasmus.²⁰⁴ The Guildhall Report gives More's final words as

¹⁹⁵ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, to Wilson, 534/27-32; to Margaret, 557/50-55.

¹⁹⁶ Germain Marc'hadour, 'Obedient Unto Death: A Key to St Thomas More' in *Spiritual Life*, Vol 7, Fall 1961, 219.

¹⁹⁷ Sylvester, 56.

¹⁹⁸ R W Chambers important biography on *More* gives that he died '...the King's good servant but God's first'; cf R W Chambers, *Thomas More*, London: Jonathan Cape, repr 1945, 349. In later works, Chambers twice gives '...the faithful servant of the King, and, in the first place, of God'; cf R W Chambers, *The Place of St Thomas More in English Literature and History*, London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1937, 118; R W Chambers, *Man's Unconquerable Mind*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1939, 188.

¹⁹⁹ Harpsfield, *The Paris Newsletter*, 266/7-8; NB *et* = and. Marc'hadour suggests that More's last words should read *good* rather than *faithful* servant, in conformity with the Paris Newsletter which uses the French *bon*.

²⁰⁰ Henry de Vocht, *Acta Thomae Mori. History of the Reports of his Trial and Death with an Unedited Contemporary Narrative*, Louvain: Institute for Economics of the University, 1947, 121 n4. The *Acta Thomae Mori* appeared in early 1536. NB *ac* = and/and yet.

²⁰¹ 'Expositio fidelis' in de Vocht, *Acta Thomae Mori*; 162; NB *ac* = and/and yet.

²⁰² De Vocht relates that all More's friends [ie William Rastell who was More's nephew, Dr John Clement and his wife Margaret Gyge or Giggs, More's adopted daughter, John Harris, More's secretary and his wife Dorothy Coly who was Margaret More/Roper's maid] all attributed the *Expositio fidelis* to Erasmus; cf de Vocht, 84.

²⁰³ J Duncan M Derrett, 'Neglected Versions of the Contemporary Account of the Trial of Sir Thomas More' in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, No 33, 1960, 207.

²⁰⁴ Henry Ansgar Kelly, 'A Procedural Review of Thomas More's Trial' in *Thomas More's Trial by Jury*, (eds) Henry Ansgar Kelly, Louis W Karlin, and Gerard B Wegemer, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011, 20 & n86.

‘se mori eius fidelem ministrum, in primis *tamen* Dei Omnipotentis’.²⁰⁵ Derrett’s reconstruction of More’s trial and execution from a number of early documents claims, like the Guildhall Report, that More’s last words were ‘se mori eius fidelem ministrum, in primis *tamen* Dei Omnipotentis’.²⁰⁶

One scholar, R W Chambers, at first follows the traditional ‘*but* God’s first’, and describes More’s words as ‘the most weighty and the most haughty ever spoken on the scaffold’.²⁰⁷ Although Chambers endorses the traditional *but* in his biography, he would later amend it – twice. The first time is in his address to Lincoln’s Inn on 1st July, 1936 in which Chambers gives More’s words that he died ‘The faithful servant of the King, *and*, in the first place, of God’.²⁰⁸ His second amendment from an essay on *Reformation Martyrs* reads that More died ‘the faithful servant of the King, *and*, in the first place, of God’.²⁰⁹ Germain Marc’hadour ‘pleads for this, Chambers’ last version, to benefit from his authority, with one change: *good* rather than *faithful*, since the original [*The Paris Newsletter*] has *bon*.²¹⁰ The choice of *and* has been noted with reference to *The Paris Newsletter* in *A Thomas More Source Book*.²¹¹

There are several interpretative choices of the *and* or *but* or *and yet* or *however*. Elizabeth McCutcheon notes that ‘the Paris Newsletter, the *Expositio*, other Latin manuscripts (including Derrett’s reconstructed account and the Guildhall Report), and the English version from 1885 agree that More ended his speech by speaking first of the king and then of God’.²¹² McCutcheon’s observes that this reverses the words that King Henry said to More when he entered his service that More ‘shold first loke vnto God and after God vnto hym’.²¹³ The two ideas that ‘I die the king’s good servant’ along with ‘I die God’s servant first’ are connected

²⁰⁵ cf Document 17: Guildhall Report in *Thomas More’s Trial by Jury*, 195. NB *tamen* = however.

²⁰⁶ Derrett, 223; cf esp. 210 which gives a stemma from which the Reconstructed Text is drawn. NB *tamen* = however.

²⁰⁷ R W Chambers, *Thomas More*, London: Jonathan Cape (Bedford Historical Series), repr 1945, 350.

²⁰⁸ R W Chambers, *The Place of St. Thomas More in English Literature and History*, London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1937, 118.

²⁰⁹ R W Chambers, ‘Martyrs of the Reformation: 1. Thomas More’ in *Man’s Unconquerable Mind*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1939, 188. In general, Peter Berglar follows this wording in his *Thomas More: A Lonely Voice Against the Power of the State*, New York: Scepter Publishers, 1999, 208. Instead of ‘...*and*, in the first place, of God’, Berglar writes ‘but first and foremost as a servant of God’.

²¹⁰ Germain Marc’hadour, ‘Raymond Wilson Chambers’ in *Moreana*, Vol 28, No 105, 1991, 71.

²¹¹ cf *A Thomas More Source Book*, (eds) Gerard B Wegemer & Stephen W Smith, Washington DC: The Catholic of University of America Press, 2004, 357-358.

²¹² cf Elizabeth McCutcheon, ‘Thomas More’s Three Prison Letters Reporting on His Interrogations’ in *Thomas More’s Trial by Jury*, 108. For the 1885 version which records *but*; cf James Gairdener, (arr), *Letters & Papers Foreign & Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, Vol viii, London: Longmans & Co, 1885, No 996, 395.

²¹³ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 495/126-127 & 534/27 & 557/51-53.

by the insertion of *and* while *but* contrasts them. If *yet* is inserted so it becomes *and yet*, the reading could mean *and in addition* or *and besides*, which emphasizes his service to God; on the other hand, if *however* is inserted the meaning would be *nevertheless*. If the reading of *and* is accepted [as opposed to *but*], the other alternatives of *and in addition*, *and besides*, or *nevertheless* do not actually contradict *and*; rather they add emphasis to the connection of the two phrases and intensify the primacy of More's service to God.

It could be useful here to ask what More wants to say. More is, of course, throwing Henry's words back at him but it is possible More is also suggesting a couple of other things. It is realistic to suggest that More is saying that yes, you can be the king's good servant, and you can also be God's good servant but that, if you follow this route, it can easily end here on the stage of the scaffold. The stage is a favourite metaphor that More uses and even today, public service can be called 'the stage of public life'. Two decades earlier, in his *History of King Richard III*, More writes of public life that 'these matters bee Kynge's games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaied vpon scaffoldes'.²¹⁴ He understands the dangers that public life entails with each man playing his part, and tells his hearers where it can end – the scaffold. In his *History of King Richard III*, he continues, warning his readers to avoid the public stage for 'pore men be but y^e lokers on. And thei y^t wise be, wil medle no farther. For they that sometyme step vp and playe w^t them, when they cannot play their partes, they disorder the play & do themself no good'.²¹⁵ For the general populace, 'in which pore men be but y^e lokers on' More's cautions them not to become involved: 'And thei y^t wise be, wil medle no farther'.²¹⁶

From this argument about the stage of public life and its connection to the public stage of the scaffold, it is possible to suggest that More had something else in mind. It is the biblical injunction given by Christ and related by Matthew to 'Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's: and to God the things that are God's'.²¹⁷ Did More also remember Christ's

²¹⁴ CW2, *The History of King Richard III*, (ed) Richard S Sylvester, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963, 81/6-7. cf Introduction n58; Ch 2, n113; Ch 7, nn34 & 37.

²¹⁵ CW2, 81/8-10.

²¹⁶ CW2, 81/7-9; cf Dermot Fenlon, 'Thomas More and Tyranny' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 32, No 4, October 1981, 453-476; cf esp 457. Fenlon argues that in More's world there were three estates that guarded the realm against tyranny. They are the church and its liberties; the nobility and the law. In the 1530's these failed.

²¹⁷ Matt 22.21; cf Mk 12.17. More uses this biblical quotation twice in his Tower works. The first is in *A Dialogue of Comfort*, in which he alters the phrase to 'Geve the Emperour those thynges that be his'; cf CW12,

warning that ‘No man can serve two masters. ... You cannot serve God and mammon’?²¹⁸ Is More suggesting that the opposing ideas of serving either God or mammon could and should in fact be united? While it is theoretically possible, it is vital to remember that the things that belong to Caesar or mammon also ultimately belong to God. Is he calling attention not only to Henry, but to Henry’s ministers and servants that they too are under God – a fact that Caesars of all types and persuasions in this world are rather apt to forget.

One of his life-long lessons that More learns and practises is a focus on the cross that leads to a deep appreciation of the fragile and transient nature of life. With his eyes on eternity, he could laugh at human pride, stupidity and petty squabbles.²¹⁹ His trust and dependence upon God in the Tower and his fear of his own frailty are the completion of his constant spiritual meditations that he practised throughout his life and which are found in his Tower writings; this is primarily More’s focus ‘to Godward’ with the consequences that primarily consist of demonstrates trust, detachment and longing for and to be with God. These reflective reasonings, as Clarence Miller notes, ‘weighed questions carefully, precisely, prudently, even ironically, but which also resolved all oppositions and conflicts by fervent response to Christ’.²²⁰ In More’s case his ‘fervent response to Christ’ leads to the scaffold. These conclusions reveal the fulfilment of the life-long spiritual development that he began as a youth and which after his resignation and during his imprisonment allow him to develop and live the transformative death of which Erasmus speaks.²²¹ This transformative death and extraordinary charity allows him to say that he thinks God ‘settethe me on his lappe and dandlethe me’.²²² It is this transformative death that allows him to go the scaffold with a joke on his lips and with his vision of the eternity of heaven in his heart.

179/5-6. The second, more accurate, quotation is found in *De Tristitia*, where the Latin is translated as ‘...what is Caesar’s should be rendered to Caesar, what is God’s to God’; cf CW14, *De Tristitia*, 491/4-5.

²¹⁸ Matt 6.24; cf Lk 16.13. More uses this in his Tower work, *A Dialogue of Comfort*, cf CW12, 230/10 & 231/5-6; he also uses it in his polemical work *The Confutation of Tyndale’s Answer*, CW8, 986/9-12. He also quotes St Paul: ‘And what concord hath Christ with Belial’; cf 2 Cor 6.15, CW8, 489/1-3; CW12, 230/6-8. cf Ch 6, nn151 & 178.

²¹⁹ For funerals: CW1, *Last Things*, 143/17-23; cf CW7, *The Supplication of Souls*, (eds) Frank Manley, Germain Marc’hadour, Richard Marius & Clarence H Miller, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990, 219/29-220/25; cf Ch 2, n236; for the effects of pride: cf CW1, *Last Things*, 165/28-30; cf eg Ch 2, nn112, 185 & 218; for petty squabbles: cf eg CW1, *Last Things*, 165/28-30; CW7, *Supplication*, 174/30.

²²⁰ Clarence Miller, CW14, *De Tristitia*, Introduction, 774. cf Ch 7, n176.

²²¹ More writes to Erasmus in June 1532, about a month after his resignation, that he had always desired that one day he ‘might enjoy the opportunity... of being relieved of all public duties and eventually being able to devote some time to God alone and myself; at long last this wish has come true; cf Rogers, *SL*, 172-174.

²²² Roper, 76/4-6, 14-18; cf *Imitation of Christ*, Bk III, Ch 15, No 2. cf n150 above.

Conclusion

The stated purpose of this thesis has been to fill a gap for there is no scholarly study that provides an overall examination of More's various fears.¹ This omission is something of a puzzle, given the frequency of More's references to fear. The only reason that I can imagine is the discovery made during this investigation: fear can be challenging to consider. Any sustained consideration of the fear of serious pain or of hell is unsettling. More considers both of them, both before and during his imprisonment; his fear of being disembowelled is particularly challenging.

The central fact of More's life is his faith and fear is integral to it. More's religious fears appear throughout his writings but the lack of any previous scholarly analysis means that no attempt has been made either to study its prevalence or consider the implications of the underlying nature of More's fears. Thus the importance of this thesis rests on this fact that the fear of God, as well as More's other fears, have been ignored by scholars. A very scarce reference to the fear of God to be found in secondary literature is in Germain Marc'hadour's article on *Thomas More's Spirituality* where he quotes from More's *Letter to a Monk*,² in which he connects the fear of God with humility. However, while Marc'hadour quotes More's phrase, he does not expand upon it. This is a good example of a scholarly mention of fear, which remains unconnected to any other fear or is left without further explanation.³ This lack of examination of the fear of God reveals a gap in Morean studies that needs to be remedied.

Fear is an important and recurrent theme in Thomas More's life and writings. As this thesis shows, its theological aspects include the fear of God, the fear of sin and of hell. The examination of his personal fears in this thesis, including the fear of pain, reveals how he analyzes them to deal with and overcome them, particularly in the Tower, but also how they are informed by and connected to his theological fears. More's frequent references to sin,

¹ More mentions fear and its variants [eg fears, fearing, etc] 839 times, roughly the same as his references to heaven and heavenly 826 times. In comparison, hell is mentioned only 350 times. These figures exclude references to either dread, dreadful, terror or terrible or their variants.

² Germain Marc'hadour, 'Thomas More's Spirituality' in *St Thomas More: Action and Contemplation*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press for St John's University, 1972, 143; cf CW15, *In Defense of Humanism: Letters to Dorp, Oxford, Lee, and a Monk*, (ed) Daniel Kinney, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986, *Letter to a Monk*, 281; cf Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *St Thomas More: Selected Letters*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961, 130; the letter is dated c1519-1520.

³ To be fair to Germain Marc'hadour, the subject of his article is concerned with More's spirituality.

Conclusion

temptation and hell have been noted by many scholars in secondary literature but none has been examined in relation to fear in any scholarly study.

More's fear of God is fundamental and without it, most of his other fears would not exist. His fear of sin, of hell and of the devil would make no sense without his underlying fear of God. Hence his fear of sin, of temptation and of the devil's ability to trip him up all flow from his fear of God and lead directly to his fear of hell. Fear is fundamental for it is commanded by God; it is necessary for men to appreciate something of God's overwhelming power and to stand in awe of it and to understand both His omnipotence and omniscience.⁴ Fear exists prior to the Fall, in the form of filial fear.⁵ Fear is commanded by God in both the Old and New Testaments.⁶ In the Old Testament fear is also commended by God.⁷ The fear of God has many different angles: it includes fearing God as he can send our souls to hell,⁸ for he is a judge⁹ and that judgement is a result of sin.¹⁰ Fear acts as a corrective as it encourages good acts, especially in adversity.¹¹ This helps to prevent the sin of presumption and this allows an appreciation of Christ's words that 'whan they haue done all they can do, we be but vnprofytable seruauntes, we haue done but our dutye'.¹² However, fear should always be accompanied by hope.¹³ Fear produces many benefits both in this life as well as in eternal life, including salvation, wisdom, rejoicing, mercy, justice, freedom from want and protection.¹⁴ Mercy and fear are also linked in both the Old and New Testaments.¹⁵ Guidance from the Lord is also a result of fear.¹⁶ All these positive consequences resulting from fear should lead to trust.¹⁷

⁴ cf Ch 1: The Fear of God, eg nn 11-21, 23 & 43-47.

⁵ cf CW13, *Treatise on the Passion*, (ed) Garry E Haupt, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, 12/26-28; cf Nicholas Love, *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*, (ed) Michael Sargent, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004, 225. cf Ch 1, nn7 & 8.

⁶ cf Ex 20.18. cf Ch 1, nn19 & 20.

⁷ cf Job 1.8. cf Ch 1, n27.

⁸ cf Matt 10.28; Lk 12.4-5. Ch 1, nn37-38.

⁹ cf Ps 129.3; Thomas A Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, (trans) Abbot Justin McCann, London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1952, Bk I, Ch 24, No 7. cf Ch 1, nn52, 57-60 & 65.

¹⁰ cf Ch 1, nn65 & 66f.

¹¹ cf CW8, 955/25-30. cf Ch 1, nn97-98.

¹² cf Lk 17.10; CW6, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, (eds) Thomas M C Lawler, Germain Marc'hadour & Richard C Marius, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, 380/20-23. cf Ch 1, nn68 & 81.

¹³ cf CW12, 186/17-19; CW12, 247/24-25; cf CW12, 198/19-20; 1 Cor 10.12, cf Ch 1, nn82 & 83.

¹⁴ cf Ch 1, for salvation: n135; for wisdom: nn146 & 147; for rejoicing: n159; for mercy: nn153, 155 & 157; for justice: nn57 & 155; for freedom from want and protection: nn166-168.

¹⁵ cf Ps 102.11, 13, 17; Lk 1.50. cf Ch 1, nn155 & 157.

¹⁶ cf Ps 85.11; PS 26.11. cf Ch 1, nn159 & 163.

¹⁷ cf Ps 22.4; Ps 26.1. cf Ch 1, nn178 & 179.

More's fear of God is his primary fear with his fear of hell being a direct consequence of it. All his other fears are secondary. His recognition of religious fears is lifelong, but they are unsurprisingly heightened during his imprisonment. More overcomes his fears in the Tower first by analogy and comparisons which enable him to subsume them into the love of God and trust in Him through prayer.¹⁸ As More rationalizes his fears in general and his fear of pain in particular, his lifelong habit of prayer enables him to view 'everything not merely *sub specie aeternitatis*, but also in the warm glow of a personal God's encompassing love'.¹⁹

More's lifelong focus is heaven and to follow the road to reach it. More's filial fear of God which leads to the love of Him through prayer and trust, renders him immune to the fears which would overcome many. More is not afraid of what could be termed the terrors of men. Prior to his imprisonment, during the interrogation during the early spring of 1534, he replies to their questions and subtle threats: 'My lords,... these terrours [be] argumentes for Children, and not me'.²⁰ More is therefore immune to either the king's threats or to Cromwell's at the behest of the king. Their attempts, along with the other interrogators, to persuade More prove futile. More remains adamant; he will never take the oath in any circumstances. He will criticize no-one; he will not 'misse iudge any other mans conscience, which lyeth in their owne hart farre out of my sight'.²¹ More's fear and love of God means that he respects the king as his sovereign and prays for him daily,²² but does nothing to incite Henry's anger.²³ More now fears no threats for he has rationalized in argument that the pains of execution are temporary as compared with the eternal pains of hell.²⁴ He has debated with himself until any fears can be put aside compared to his love and trust in God. He does not fear men, either in relation to his own reputation or in relation to men as a crowd for they can but kill the body. As an individual, he simply is not bothered by the opinions of others which reflects his

¹⁸ cf Maureen Purcell, OP, 'Dialogue of Comfort for Whom?' in *Essays on the Icon*, (eds) Damian Grace and Brian Byron, Melbourne: Dove Communications, 1980, 100 & 101. cf Ch 6, nn173ff.

¹⁹ cf Germain Marc'hadour, 'On Death and Martyrdom: St Thomas More' in *The Portrayal of Life Stages in English Literature, 1500-1800: Infancy, Youth, Marriage, Aging, Death, Martyrdom*. Essays in Honor of Warren Wooden, (eds) Jeanie Watson & Philip McM Pittman, Studies in British History, Vol 10, Lewiston/Lampeter/Queenston: The Edward Mellen Press 1989, 213,

²⁰ cf Roper, *Life of Sir Thomas More*, (ed) E V Hitchcock, London: Early English Text Society, 1935, 67/9-11; cf Roper, 64/20-67/11. cf Ch6, n197; Ch7, n68.

²¹ Rogers, *Correspondence*, 527/485-486. [misse iudge: misjudge]

²² Elizabeth Frances Rogers (ed), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947, 509/29/32 & 517/127-130 & 536/122-124 & 552/46-47 & 553/87-89.

²³ cf Rogers, *Correspondence*, 541/43-46. More writes to his daughter Margaret that '...I rather wolde endure all the payne and peryll of the statute than by the declaring of the causes, geue any occasion of exaspiration vnto my most dradde Souerain Lorde and Prince,...'.

²⁴ cf CW12, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976, 8/21-9/5 & 315/6-20.

Conclusion

spiritual detachment.²⁵ More's lack of fear in these instances reflects his primary understanding that God should be feared, that hell should be feared as a consequence and that temporal fears are ultimately of little importance in the eternal scheme of things.

As this thesis shows, More has two further fears. The first is his fear for his family, that they would suffer for his stand, as they did.²⁶ This fear is directly related to his personal circumstances in not taking the oath, a situation which he had foreseen and for which he had prepared them.²⁷ Without the fear of God, any fear More has for his family would exist on a different level. The second fear that would still exist without the fear of God is More's fear of pain. Although he was not afraid of death, he was afraid of the attendant pains of dying whether by illness or execution. This is the one fear that would remain without the fear of God for, as More acknowledges, 'payne wilbe paynefull spight of all the wit in this world'.²⁸ More's personal fears of pain, particularly of torture, have been noted by scholars, as has his fear for his family.²⁹ More acknowledges that his fear of pain, in the form of torture, could prove to tempt him to deny God.³⁰

The remainder of this thesis examines More's fears on a personal level and how he deals with his fears of sin, of hell and of pain during his imprisonment and as his execution approaches. How More prepares to overcome his personal fears during his imprisonment enables an examination of how he approaches these problems. His preparation encompasses meditation and prayer and by following Christ, seeking comfort and strength from God.³¹ The final chapter looks at More's life 'to Godward'; his focus towards God encompasses his whole life

²⁵ cf Rogers, *SL*, Letter to William Gonell, his children's tutor, 104-106; Rogers, *Correspondence*, Letter to Master Leder, 549/6-7.

²⁶ cf Ch 5, n260: Apart from Dame Alice's financial hardship, Margaret was summoned before the Council accused of keeping his head as a relic and hiding his papers; his son John, his sons-in-law William Roper and John Daunce both spent time in prison, as did John Clement, a former tutor to his children and his son-in-law Giles Heron was hanged at Tyburn for treason in 1540, cf Stapleton, 192-193, Bernard Basset, *Born for Friendship*, London: Burns & Oates, 1965, 192.

²⁷ cf Ch 5, nn246-249 for More's strategy to allow his family to become accustomed to increasing hardship.

²⁸ CW12, 292/22.

²⁹ cf eg Louis A Schuster, 'THE TOWER: MORE'S GETHSEMANE' in *Moreana*, XIX, 74 (1982) 39-45; Andrew W Taylor: ' "In stede of harme inestimable good": A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation', in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More [CCTM]*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 216-238; Kenneth M Flegel, 'Thomas More: Was a sick man beheaded?' in *Moreana*, Vol 13, No 49, 1976, 15-27; James Monti, *The King's Good Servant but God's First*, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997, 347-348, 350; Leland Miles (ed), *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1965, Introduction, xxviii; Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1998, 358; Peter Marshall, 'The Last Years' in *CCTM*, 2011, 124-125. cf Ch 5, n27.

³⁰ cf CW12, 284/21-22 & 319/15-18; Rogers, *Correspondence*, 549/13-16.

³¹ cf Ch 8.

and his imprisonment, although not inevitable, is its culmination. In reality More had spent his entire life following the cross of Christ; his last fourteenth months reveal, through this final struggle, the result of his lifelong spiritual journey. My aim has been to concentrate solely on More's own fears, whether theological or personal.

It is also important to note what More does not fear. He does not fear death but rather notes its inevitability. Any fear of death is directly related to More's fear of pain.³² The fear of death has therefore not been a direct part of this study. More's attention is on heaven rather than fearing death.

More's views do not fundamentally alter during his life, although it is arguable that they matured. More's problem was that the world around him did change. Another important observation to note, especially through the approach adopted in this thesis, is that More's entire life, in either its devotional or secular aspects, is dictated by his faith. If any approach attempts to take the religion out of More, to study his views without taking his faith into account, there will not be very much left. It is More's religious faith that guides and encompasses his whole life.

A possible further line of inquiry for the future could be More's fear of the Turk. In his Tower work, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, More creates the fiction that the conversation recorded in its pages between Anthony and Vincent takes place in Hungary. This can be viewed as an allegory of More's situation with regard to Henry VIII, for More uses contemporary historical details, making the comparison of wider application as well as the literal one. The Turks had captured Belgrade and decisively defeated the Hungarians in 1526 at the Battle of the Mohács. They had captured more than 100,000 Hungarians. In both 1529 and 1532 the Hungarians had besieged Vienna but in both cases failed, due to the arrival of winter as much as to the actions of the defenders. This line of inquiry has been left aside as the purpose of this work is the examination of More's theological fears and the relation of these to his faith as well as to his personal fears.

In summary, this study therefore provides an initial exploration into what could prove to be a new line of inquiry for Morean studies. Other scholars, should they so wish, could link and

³² cf eg Rogers, *Correspondence*, 543/111-113.

Conclusion

contrast fear with such theological ideas as grace, salvation or forgiveness, although all of these have been mentioned throughout this study. Other theological and historical connections will have to be left, to those more qualified than I, to examine different aspects of fear.

All eras are fluid and experience change, but More lived in a time of great change, as we do. He provides an example for following the cross of Christ: fidelity and acceptance, teaching the importance of fearing God as well as loving Him. If More were alive today and was asked whether the fear of God was necessary for salvation, he would surely answer in the affirmative.

Glossary

A fuller glossary of 16th century English words used by More can be found at the end of all the English volumes of *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965-1997.

This glossary mostly comprises words used in this work which are either obsolete or which have a different meaning today from their sixteenth century one, or where the spelling is now altered, making it hard to comprehend. Words that have multiple spellings have been included, even if one of the alternative spellings is recognizable. In general where words have had two or more letters altered [eg betyng [beating] and watchyng [watching] they have been included. Almost all words have been included in the footnotes for the first time they occur in the text.

Words excluded from this glossary such recognizable ones such as accordyng [according], condicion [condition], denyeth [denies], and mater [matter]. Other words excluded are eternall and gloryouse as their meanings are obvious; this includes where a letter has been added gospell [gospel] and walle/s [wall/s] or removed/added madnes/madnesse [madness]. I have, however, erred on the side of caution in these selections.

abhominable, abomynable: abominable

abhorre, abhorrest: abhor

abidith, abyde, abydith: abide/s

aboue: above

abrode: abroad

accompte: account

aduenture: risk

aduersite, aduersitie, aduersyte, aduersytie: adversity

afeard, aferd: afraid

affeccion, effeccion: feeling, state of mind, mental inclination, disposition

affliccion: affliction

afore, a fore: before [cf bi fore, by fore below]

afir: after

agayne: again

Glossary

agaynst(e), a gainst, a geinst: against

al: all

allectiue: attraction, allurement, enticement

all redy, alredy, a-redy: already

althyng: all things

alwaies, alway, alwaye, alwayes: always

a nother: another

anxyete: anxiety

apere: appear

apon: upon

appered: appeared

ar: are

arte: are

asonder; a sonder: asunder

aspre: rough

assawt: assault

asswage, aswage: assuage

at aduerture: at random

at ones: at once

attayne, atteyne: attain, reach

attaynyng, atteining: reaching

auoiding, avoydyng: avoiding

avaylith: avails

ayd: aid

ayer: air

backe, bak, bake, bakke: back

badde: bad

be: are

bee: be

before: by force:

beginne, begyn, begynne: begin

begon, begonne: begun

begynnyng/e, bygynnyng: beginning

beholdyng/e: beholding

beleue, beleueth: believe(s) [cf bileve, byleue below]

bene, bine: been

bere: bear

bering, beryng: bearing

besech/e: beseech

best: beast

besy: busy, concerned, solicitous

bettir, better: better

bewtie, bewtye: beauty

bi fore, by fore: before [cf afore, a fore above]

bileve: believe(s) [cf beleue above, byleue below]

bittir, bytter, byttir, byttre: bitter

blessid, blessyd, blyssed, blyssid: blessed

blis, blisse, blysse: bliss

blode, bloud/e: blood

blowen. blowyne: blown

bodi, bodie, bodye/s: body, bodies

bold/e: audacious, presumptuous, shameless

boldely, boldly: audaciously, presumptuously

boldenese, boldness: boldness, audacity, presumption, shamlessness

bond, bondman: slave, one in bondage

boorde, bord: board, table

brake: broke

breers, breres: briers

breke: break

brese: breast

brode: broad

brynge: bring

burnyng: burning

but if, but yf: unless

by cause: because

byddeth: commands, exhorts

byddyng: commanding, exhorting

Glossary

byleue: believe [cf beleue, beleueth, bileve above]

byleue, bylyefe: belief [cf beleue above]

byleued: believed

bysynes, bysynesse: activity, occupation, (also) feverish activity, excessive concern for worldly matters

cal: call

calamyties: calamities

callid: called

callith: calls

cam: came

certaynly: certainly

capitaine, captaine, capten: captain

cary, carye: carry

cast his peny worthes before: 'make a personal assessment of the situation'

castel, castell: castle

causeles: causeless

chambre: chamber

charite, charitie, charytye: charity

chere: cheer

christen: Christian

christes: Christ's [cf cristes, cristis, Crystes below]

chyrch, chyrche: church

cleane, clene: wholly, completely

clearnesse, clernes: clearness

cleaue: cleave

clene: virtuous, humble

cold: could

comenly, comonly: commonly

commaundement/e/s: commandment/s

commendyng: approving

committe, commyttith: commit/s

commodity: advantage, benefit

commynge, comyng: coming

commyth, cummeth: comes
cominge, commynge, comyng: coming
compase, compasse: encompass, surround
conceiue, conceiue, conceue, conceve, conceyve: conceive/s
conflyte: conflict
consideracion: consideration
considre: consider
consolacion: consolation
continewe, contynew: continue
contre: country
continuell, contynuell: continual
contynuaunce: duration, period
coumfort/e, cumfort: comfort
councell, counsaile, counsayl/e, counsell: advice, counsel
counsail, counsayl/e: council
counsayle: advise, counsel
couetise, couetyce: covetousness
craft/e: craftiness, trickery, ruse
crepe, crepeth: creep/s
crist, Cryste: Christ
cristes, cristis: Christ's [cf christes above, Crystes, Crystys below]
cryme: crime
Crystes, Crystys: Christ's [cf christes above]
cumfort: comfort

damnacion, damnacyon, dampnacion: damnation
dampned, dampnid: damned
dandlethe: play with, toy with, fondle, pamper, pet
daunce, dawnce: dance
daunger: danger
daunsyng: dancing
deciple: disciple [cf dicyples below]
declinyng: deviating from, going away from
dede: deed

Glossary

dedely, dedly: deadly
dedes, dedis, dedys: deeds
delite: delight
deliuer, deliuerith, delyuer: deliver/s
depe: deep [cf diepe, dyepe below]
deeply/e: deeply
desier, desiere, desyre: desire
desierouse: desirous
despites, dispightes: contempt, scorn, disdain
destruccion, distruccion: destruction
deth/e: death
determyne: decide
deuelis, deuylls, devilles, divelles: devils
deuice: stratagem, scheme
deuil, deuill, deuyll, devill, divell, dyuel: devil
deuilish, develysh; devilish
deuocion, deuocyon: devotion
deuout/e: devout
devilles, divelles: devil's
dicyples, dyscyples: disciples [cf deciple above]
diepe, dyepe: deep [cf depe above]
diligens: diligence
dispayre: despair [cf dyspayre below]
diuers, dyuers: several, some
doe: do
dooeth, dooth, dothe: do, does
dooyng, doynge: doing
dore: door
dought, dout, doutest, dowt: doubt
doughter: daughter
dradde, dreade, dred, drede: dread, apprehension, fear
drawyng: drawing
dredful, dredfull: fearful, dreadful
dreue, dreve: drive

drownid, drownyd: drowned

dyd: did

dy, dye: die

dyed: died

dyspayre: despair [cf dispayre above]

ech, eche: each

eie: eye [cf yen, yie below]

els: else

encline: incline

encreace, encrease, encreseth: increase/s

endelesse, endles: endless

engendre: conceive, give rise to, generate

entend/e: intend

entent: intent

entre, entreth: enter/s

entrid: entered

eny: any

ere: before

erthly: earthly

estimacion: reputation, esteem, estimation

estymacion: appreciation

Eue: Eve

euen: even [cf evin, evyn below]

euen: just, simply, exactly

euen christen: fellow Christian

euer: ever

euerlasting, euerlastyng/e: everlasting

euerlastyngly: everlastingly

euermore: evermore

euery/e: every

euil, euill, euyl, euyll, evyll: evil

euir: ever

evin, evyn: even [cf euen above]

Glossary

excedeth: exceeds

except: unless

eyen: eyes [cf yie below]

eyther: either

faine, fayneth: pretend/s

fal: fall

fallyng, fallynge: falling

fals: false

farre, ferr: far

fathir: father

fauour: favour

faut, faute, fawte: fault

fayle: fail

fayne: gladly

fayne wolde I: earnestly/gladly would I have it

faynt: faint

fayre: fair, straight

fayth/e: faith

faythfull: faithful

faythfully: faithfully

feale, fele: feel

feareful, ferefull: fearful

feble: feeble, weak

felicite: felicity, blessedness, happiness

felyng: feeling

fenced, fensed: shielded, protected, fortified

ferd/e: afraid

fere, feare: fear

ferefull: fearful

ferther: further

feryouse: furious

fest: feast

fete, feete: feet

fetherbeds: featherbeds

fier, fyre: fire

firmely: firmly

fle, flye: fly

fle: flee

flessh: flesh

fleyng/e: flying, fleeing

folish, folysh: foolish

foly, folye: folly

foorth: forth

for: from

forbere: forbear

forberyng: forbearing

forгат, forgeatte, forgettest: forget

forgiuenes, forgiveness, forgyuenes, forgyuenesse: forgiveness

forsakyng: forsaking

forsoke: forsook

forsware, forswere: forswear

fote: foot

foundacion, fowndacion: foundation

fowle: foul

fraylty: frailty, moral weakness

frende/s, frendys: friend/s

frere: friar

fret yt out: gnaw it away

fro, frome: from

fruicion, fruytyon, fruition: enjoyment, pleasurable possession

fruite, frute: fruit

fruteless, frutles: fruitless

fruitfull, fruteful, frutfull: fruitful

ful: full

fulfyll: fulfil

fynall: final

fynd, fynde, fyndeth: find/s

Glossary

fyrst/e: first

galand, galant: fine gentleman

gaue: gave

gaynyng: gaining

geeue, geue, geve, giue: give

geuen, geven, geyen: given

gide: guide

gladness/se: gladness

glose, glosse: gloss, superficial lustre

godde: God

goddesse: goddess

godes, goddes, goddys, gods: God's

godhed: Godhead

godward, god ward: towards God

goe: go

goodes: possessions, property

goodnes, goodnesse: goodness

goostely, gostly, gostlye: ghostly, spiritual

gost/e: soul, spirit

goyng, goynge: going

graunt: grant

grefe: grief

greiuous, greuous, greuouse: grievous, burdensome

gret/e: great

gretter: greater

grownd/e: ground

grudge: complain

grudge of death: reluctance to die

grudge of hert: weary heart

grynne: snare, trap

gyft/e: gift

gyue, gyve: give

gyuen: given

hable: able
hadde, haddest, hadst: had
handelinge: handling
hap, happ, happe: happen
happed, happid: happened
hart/e, hart/es, hart/s, hert: heart/s
hartely: sincerely, earnestly
hast: haste, have
haue: have
heare: here
heauen, heuen, heuin, heuyn, heven, hevin, hevyn: heaven
heauenly, heuenli, heuenly, heuinly, hevenly: heavenly
heauie: heavy [cf hevy below]
heauinesse, heuynes, hevines, hevynes: grief, sorrow
hed: head
hee: he
hel/le: hell
hem self, her self: himself, herself
hens/e: hence, from here
hepe: heap
here: hear
heretykes: heretics
heryng: hearing
hert/e/s: heart/s
hether: hither
heuen warde, heven ward: towards heaven
heuy: doleful
hevy: heavy [cf heauie above]
hevy: grievous, burdensome
hevyly: grievously
hevynes: sorrow, depression, grief
hie, hye: high
hym selfe, hymselfe: himself
hit: it

Glossary

hole: whole

hoppe: hop

hord: hoard

hors: horse

humble bees: bumble bees

howres, howris: hours

hym: him

hymselfe, hym selfe

hys: his

iff: if [cf yf below]

illucion/s: false vision/s

imaginacion, imagynacion: imagination [cf ymaginacion, ymagynacion below]

incogitable, incogytable: unthinkable, inconceivable

incomperable: incomparable

in dede: indeed

inough/e: enough [cf ynough below]

inspyre: inspire

in stede: instead

in suche wyse: in such a manner/way

intollerable: intolerable

ioy/e: joy

ioyes, ioys: joys

ioyfull: joyful

ioyned, ionyid: joined

iudge: judge

iudgement, iugment, iugement: judgement

iuste: just

iustice, iustyce: justice

kay cold: key cold [ie stone cold]

kepe: keep

kil, kyll: kill

kings, kinges: king's [cf kynges, kyngis below]

knele: kneel

knyfe, knyfes: knife, knives

kyndes: kinds

kyndnes: kindness

kynges, kyngis: king's [cf kings above]

kyngdom, kyngdome: kingdom

lak, lake, lakke: lack

lawes, lawys: laws

leaste, lest/e: lest

leauē: leave [cf leue below]

lede, ledeth, ledith, ledyth: lead/s

leese, lese: lose

legges: legs

lenger: longer

lerne: learn

lerved: learned

les: less

lest, leste: least

[y^e] lest wise: at least

lesyng: losing

let, lett: hindrance

lett, lette: let, hinder, prevent

lettid: hindered, hesitated

leue, leve: leave [cf leauē above]

lewde: wicked, base

libertie: liberty [cf lybartye, lyberte, lybertie below]

list: choose/s, wish/es, desire/s [cf lyst below]

litell, litle: little [cf lytell, lytle below]

liue/s, liueth, liveth: live/s [cf lyue, lyueth below]

liuely, liuing: living

livid: lived

loke, loketh: look

lokers on: lookers on, audience

Glossary

lorel, lorell/s: rogue/s, scoundrel/s, worthless man/men

loth: loath

loue, loueth: love(s)

louing: loving

ly, lye: lie

lybartye, lyberte, lybertie: liberty [cf libertie, above]

lyberall: liberal, generous

lyeth: lies

lyfe: life

lyft: lift, lifted

lyke: like

[in] lyke maner: in a similar condition

lykewyse, lyke wise: likewise

lymmes, lymmys: limbs

lyne: line

lyst: wishes, chooses [cf list above]

lytell, lytle: little [cf litell, litle above]

lyue/s, lyueth: lives/s [cf liue/s, liueth, liveth above]

lyuer: liver [eg person who lives]

lyue, lyueth: live/s

magestee, maiesty: majesty

maie: may

maister, mayster: master

malyce: malice

maner: manner, way, conduct, proper behaviour, custom

[in] maner: in a way, in conduct

maner: kind/s, type/s, attitude, way

[all] maner lawys: any kind of law

[al] maner vice: all types of vice

maner wise: kind of manner

manhod: manhood

manne: man

mans: man's

manyfold/e: manifold
martires, martirs: martyrs
martyre: martyr
maruayle: marvel
medicinable, medicynable: curative, possessed of healing properties
meditacion: meditation
mens: men's
mercie, mercye: mercy
merueylous, mervelouse: marvellous
mery: merry
mesanger: messenger
mich, moche: much
mighti: mighty [cf myghti below]
miselfe: myself
mishapp, mishappe, misshappe: have the misfortune
mo, mor: more
moost, mooste: most
movid: moved
mowth, mowthis: mouth, mouths
mych: much
mych more: much greater
myddes, myddest, myds: middle, midst
myghti: mighty [cf mighti above]
myn, myne: mine
mynd, mynde: mind; [also] attitude, opinion, intention
mynish, mynysh, mynysheth: reduce, diminish
mynyster: administer
myscheues, myschyefe: evil doings, harm
my selfe, my selffe: myself
myxed: mixed

narrow, narowe: narrow
nat: not
nayle/s: nail/s

Glossary

necligence, neglygence: negligence

nede, nedes, nedeth: need/s

negligente, neglygent: negligent

nerre, nighe: near

nerre: never

neuer, neur: never

neyther, neythir: neither

nightes: night's

noman: no man

norysshe: nourish

no thyngge, nothyng/e: nothing

nought, nowght: nothing, evil

noyse: noise

obliuion: oblivion

occacion, occasyon: occasion

of: off

onely, onli: only

ones: once

op: up [cf vp, vpp, vppe below]

or, ore: before

oth, othe: oath

othir: other

ouer: over

ouermoche, ouer moche, ouer mych: too much, excessive

ouerthrowe: overthrow

our sel, our/e self/e: ourselves

owt: out

ower, owr: our

owtside: outside

pacience, patiens: patience

pacient: patient

paciently, pacyently: patiently

pageant: part in the drama of life
paine/s: pain/s [cf payn, peyne below]
paineful/l: painful [cf payneful, paynfull below]
pardie: indeed [cf perdye below]
parfit/e: perfect
parpetuall: perpetual
partener: partaker, sharer
partyng: sharing
passyon: passion
pavice: convex shield covering the entire body
payn, payne/s: pain/s [cf paine above, peyne below]
payneful/l, paynfull: painful [cf paineful above]
peradventure: perhaps
perced, percyd: pierced
perceiue, perceue, perceyve: perceive
perdicion, perdycon: perdition
perdye: indeed, by God [cf pardie above]
perell, perill, peryll: peril
perfyt: perfect
persecucion: persecution
pestilent/e: destructive, injurious, pernicious, deadly
peyne: pain [cf paine, payn above]
philip: flick of a finger
pich: pitch [cf pytch below]
pitie: pity [cf pytie below]
plaied: played
plaine, playne: plain
pleasaunt, plesaunt: pleasant
plesauce, plesure: pleasure
poore, pore: poor
poynt/e: point
praier, praier, praiour, prayour, preiere: prayer
prayde: prayed
preachyng, prechyng: preaching

Glossary

preche, precheth: preach(es)
presisely: precisely
presumpcion, presumpcyon: presumption
preuy: secret
priuely, priuily: secretly
profyte, profytt: profit
prosperite, prosperitie, prosperytie: prosperity
pryde: pride
punicion, punyshment: punishment
putte: put
pynne: pin, fix, glue, peg
pyt, pytte: pit
pytch: pitch [cf pich above]
pytie: pity [cf pitie above]

quick, quik: living

radicate: rooted, firmly established
ragious: full of suffering
raigne, reigne: reign [cf reygne below]
receiue: receive
receiued of: received by
receve: receive
recken, reken, rekon: reckon
redely, redily: readily
redy: ready
[redy] in the redy way: on the straight path
referre: refer
rekenyng: reckoning
remembraunce, remembrauns: remembrance
remembre, remembrest: remember
reson: reason
reuerence: reverence
revelacion: revelation

reygne: reign [cf raigne, reigne above]

ride: reed

rote: root

rotelesse: rootless

rotid: rooted

runne: run

rygoure: rigour, severity

ryse: rise

saluacyon, saluacion, salvacion: salvation

saue: save

saued, sauid: saved

sauegarde: safeguard

sauing: saving

sauour/e, sauour/e: Saviour

saynt, sayntes: saint/s

sayth/e: says

scaffoldes: scaffolds

scantly: scarcely, hardly

scrypture: scripture

se: see

secret/e: hidden, secluded, inmost

seke: seek

sely: deserving of pity, helpless, pitiful, foolish [cf silly below]

seme: seem

semeth: seems

sene: seen

sensualitie: sensuality

seruaunt/es: servant/s [cf seruaunt below]

serue: serve

seruice, seruyce: service

seruaunt: servant [cf seruaunt/es above]

set by: esteem

sett, sette, settethe, settith: fix, set

Glossary

sette at nought: set at naught

[nothyng dyd] sette therby: had no esteem for

settyng: taking

settyng their tourmentes to vs: going to inflict their tortures on us

shal, shalt: shall

shalbe: shall be

shamfull: shameful

shet, shett, shitte: shut

shew/e: show

shewed, shewid: shown

sheweth: shows

shipwracke: shipwreck

shold/e, shoulde, shuld/e, shuldest: should

sholder, shulder: shoulder

sickenes, sicknes, siknes: sickness

sike: sick

silly: deserving of pity, helpless, pitiful [cf sely above]

sinne/s: sin/s [cf syn, synne, synnys below]

sinnefull: sinful

sith: since [cf syns, syth below]

sinowes: sinews [cf synewes, synews below]

sitt, sytt: sit

skynne: skin

slayne: slain

sleight, sleyght: slight

sleights: trickery, deceit, stratagem

sleyght: carelessness

slouthfull: slothful

sodain, sodayne, soden: sudden

sodainly, sodaynly, sodenly: suddenly

solycytude: anxious concern, particular attention

sometyme, sommetyme: sometimes

som, somme: some

sone: soon

sonne: son, sun

sore: illness

sore: extreme, harsh, severe, grievous

sore: grievously, intensely, severely, very, extremely

sorow, sorowe: sorrow

sory: sorry

souerein, souerayne, souereyne: sovereign

soulis: souls

sowen: sown

sowle: soul

specialy: specially

speke, spekith: speak/s

spirituall, spyrytuall: spiritual

spryng: spring

spurre, spurrys: spur/s

staf: staff

[in] stede: instead

stele: steal

stire, stirre, styre: incite, provoke, urge, move

stockes, stokkes: stocks

stond, stoned: stand

straitte, strayghte, strayt/e, streight: straight, direct

strayght: immediately, at once

straunger: stranger

strechyng: stretching

stremyd: streamed

styll: still

styre: stir, incite, provoke, urge

styrid: stirred

substaunce, substauns: possessions, worldly goods

substaunce: essential part

subtill, subtylle: subtle

[in] suche wyse: in such a manner, fashion

sufferaunce, suffraunce: patient endurance, consent, acquiescence, sufferance

Glossary

suffre: suffer
suffred: suffered
suffryng: suffering
swerd: sword
swere: swear
swete: sweet
symple: unsophisticated, uneducated, innocent, honest
symplenes: gullibility
syn, synne/s, synmys: sin(s) [sinne above]
syncke, synke: sink
synewes, synews: sinews [cf sinows above]
synners: sinners
syns, syth: since [cf sith above]

takyng: taking
talkyng, talkynge: talking
temperrall, temporall: secular, worldly, passing
temporal: transitory
temporal, temporall: secular, worldly
temptacion, temptacyon: temptation
tendre: tender
terroure, terrowre: terror
than: then
thanck/e: thank
tharldome: bondage, servitude
thauoiding: the avoiding
the: thee
theeues: thieves [cf theues, theves, thevis below]
thei: they
themself, themselfe, them selfe: themselves
then: than
ther: there
therby: thereby
therein, therin, theryn: therein, in it

therfor, therefore: therefore

therof: thereof

theron: thereon, on this subject, on this problem

therto: thereto, to that point, to this subject

therupon: thereupon, upon this

therwith: therewith, by that means

thesame: the same

thether: thither, to that place [cf thyther below]

theuerlastyng, theverlastyng: the everlasting

theues, theves, thevis: thieves [cf theeues above]

theym: them

theyr: their

thi: thy

thin, thyne: thine

thinckethe: thinks

thinges, thyng/e/s: thing/s

thinke, thynke: think

thi self/e: thyself

thorow/e, thowrow, throw, throwgh: through

thow: thou, you

thraldom: bondage, servitude

thrall: slave

thret, thretten: threaten

threttes, threttys: threats

thyng/e: thing

thynges, thyngis, thyngys: things

thynke: think

thys: this

thy selfe: thyself

thyther: thither, to that place [cf thether above]

til: until

to: too

to god ward, to godward, to heavenward: with a focus upon God and/or heaven

toke: took

Glossary

token: sign
to morrow/e: tomorrow
tone... tother: the one... the other
tong: tongue
torn: turn [cf tourne, turne below]
tother: the other
touching/e: concerning
tourment/es: torment/s
tourmentours: tormentors
tourne: turn [cf torn above; turne below]
trauaile: struggle, hardship
trayne: trap, scheme designed to deceive
tre: tree
tresour/s, tresures: treasure/s
trew: true
tribulacion/s, trybulacion: tribulation/s
troble, trowble: trouble
trouth, trowth(e): truth
trow: believe
tumbrelles: tambourines
Turkes: Turks'
turne: turn [cf torn, tourne above]
twayn/e: two
twise, twyse: twice
tyll: till, until
tyme/s: time/s

Pat: that
pat: that
pe: the
per: there
perfore: therefore
pinges: things
pou: thou

vaine: foolish, useless, worthless, idle [cf vayne below]

vaineglorye, vainglorie: vainglory, pride

vainquyshid, vanqueshid: vanquished, overcome

vayne: worthless, foolish, useless, idle [cf vaine above]

vayne/s: vein/s

vengaunce, vengeaunce: vengeance

veniall, venyall: venial

verely, verelye, veryly: verily, truly

verie: actual

verteous, vertuose: virtuous

vertew, vertu/e/s: virtue/s

very/e: true, truly, actual [cf vyry below]

vgly: ugly

vnable, vnhable: unable

vncogitable: inconceivable, unknowable, unthinkable

vnder, vndre: under

vndermine, vndermyne: subvert, dig beneath

vnderstandynge: understanding

vndoubtedly, vndoutedly: undoubtedly

vnlawfull, vnlawefull: unlawful

vnperfyte: imperfect

vnprofytable: unprofitable

vnto: unto

vnwoorthinesse: unworthiness

volupteouse, voluptuouse: voluptuous

vp, vpp, vppe: up [cf op above]

vpon, vppon: upon

vs: us

vse: use

vtas: eve of a feast

vtterly/e: utterly

vttermost/e: utmost, very last

vyce: vice

vyry: very [cf very/e above]

Glossary

waies: ways

[violente forceble] waies: (ie) torture

wanne: won

wanton: undisciplined, foolish, frivolous; pet, pampered darling

ware: wore

ware: aware

warkis: works

wax: become

waxeth, waxith: grows, becomes

wee: we

weene, wene: think, believe, suppose

welth: prosperity; well-being, (not material possessions)

welthy: well-being, spiritual well-being (not material possessions)

went: thought

wer: were

weyke: weak

whan: when

wherby: whereby

wherof: whereof

wheron: whereon

wherwith, wherwhyth: by which, through which

whi: why

whych, whyche: which

wikked, wikkid: wicked

wil: will

wilbe: will be

wilfull, wylfull: wilful

willyngly: willingly

wisedome: wisdom

wit, witt, wyt: intellect, reason, mental capacity

with stoned: withstand

[to] wit, to wyt: namely

wold, wolde, woldest, woulde: would

wordys: words

worldely: worldly

worshipfull: distinguished, honourable

wot, wote, wotest, woteth: know/s

wreched, wrechid: wretched

wreches, wretchis: worthless people, criminals, wretches

wrechidnes, wretchidnes: wretchedness

wrest: extract, take by force

wrestlyng: wrestling

w^t: with

wycked: wicked

wyll: will

wynne: win

wynnyng: winning

wysdom/e, wysedom: wisdom

wyse: wise

wyshe: wish

wyth(e): with

wythout: without

ydle, ydyll: idle

ye, y^e: the

ye: you

yee: yea

yen: eyes [cf eie above, yie below]

yere/s: year/s

yf, yff: if

yie: eye [cf eie, yen above]

yimage: image

yimage, ymagyne: imagine

yimaginacion, ymagynacion: imagination [cf imaginacion, imagynacion above]

ynough: enough [cf inough above]

ys: is

yt, y^t: it, that

y^u: you

Glossary

yuell: evil

ii, ij: two

iii, iij: three

iiii: four

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