

Thomas More Reader: Memorabilia: Personal Remembrances: Part One

82. "Sir Thomas More and the Pacifier"

[From *The Debellation of Salem and Bizance* ; Works. pp. 929a-b; 930a; 930b; 933b]

The Debellation of Salem and Bizance sometime two great towns, which being under the great Turk, were between Easter and last Michaelmas last passed (this present year of our Lord, M.V.C. thirty and three ¹) with a marvelous metamorphosis enchanted and turned into two Englishmen (by the wonderful inventive wit and witchcraft of Sir John Some-say, the Pacifier ²), and so by him conveyed hither in a *Dialogue* to defend his division against that *Apology* of Sir Thomas More, Knight. But now, being thus between the said Michaelmas and Halloweentide ³ next ensuing in this debellation ⁴ vanquished, they be fled hence and vanished and are become two towns again with those old names changed: Salem into Jerusalem and Bizance into Constantinople, the one in Greece, the other in Syria, where they may see them that will and win them that can. And if the Pacifier convey them hither again, and ten such other towns with them, embattled in such dialogues, Sir Thomas More hath undertaken to put himself in the adventure alone against them all. But and if he let them tarry still there, he will not utterly forswear it; but he is not much minded as yet, age now so coming on and waxing all unwieldly, to go thither and give the assault to such well-walled towns, without some such lusty company as shall be somewhat likely to leap up a little more lightly....

* * * * *

But then heard I shortly that thick and threefold the pens went to work, and answers were a-making, divers, by divers very great cunning men. And of his travail of such great mountain hills I heard much speech made almost every week, so farforth that at last it was told me for truth that unto one little piece, one great cunning man had made a long answer of twelve whole sheets of paper, written near together and with a small hand!

But in good faith I could but laugh at that. For as for that piece, I was very sure that the cunningest man that could come thereto, neither in ten sheets nor in ten quires neither, write as near as he could, should never answer it well....

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Hearing therefore that this gay book was made of the twelve sheets of paper and lacked but overlooking, and that many more were in hand that shortly should come out, like as an husband whose wife were in her travail hearkeneth every hand [mean-] while, and fain would hear good tidings, so, sith I so much heard of so sore travail of so many, so cunning, about divers answers, I longed of their long labor to see some good speed and some of those fair babes born that they travailed on. And when these great hills had thus travailed long from the week after Easter till as much afore Michaelmas, that good hour came on as God would, that one was brought abed with sore labour [and] at last delivered of a dead mouse! The mother is yet but green, ⁵ good soul, and

hath need of good keeping. Women wot what caudle ' serveth against her after-throes....

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And finally in the very end to shew that he ' could write not in only prose, he endeth all the whole book in this wise with a "glorious" rime:

And thus the glorious Trinity,
Have in his keeping both thee and me

and maketh Bizance pray for no more but for them two, after the manner of the good man, Grim, a mustard maker in Cambridge, that was wont to pray for himself and his wife and his child, and grace to make good mustard, and no more.

NOTES

(1) More incorporates the title of his polemical treatise into the body of the text and alludes in his title to *Salem and Byzance* (1533), an attack on his *Apology* by Christopher St. German, who earlier had written (also anonymously) *A Treatise concernynge the diuision betwene the spiryтуaltie and temporaltie* (1532/3). Salem and Bizance (Byzance) represent Jerusalem and Byzantium (Constantinople), two towns ruled at the time by Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.

(2) **The Pacifier:** More sarcastically mocks the anonymous author (St. German) of the *Division* for attempting to mediate conflicting points of view between the clergy and the laity. More alludes to him as a "Pacifier" who consistently takes hear-say and rumors as fact (see above, no. 5). The appellation "Sir John" is a common title for an obscure priest, usually applied in a humorous or mocking way.

(3) The first example of the use of the word "**debellation**" cited in *O.E.D.* is from the *State Papers of Henry VIII* (1526) in reference to the Turks. More's use here is most appropriate in this allegorical "conquest" of two great towns now "under the great Turk."

(4) **Syria** and Palestine formed a part of the Byzantine Empire in the early middle ages. Jerusalem, the chief city of Byzantine Palestine, fell to the Mohammedans in 637, and Antioch, the chief city of Byzantine Syria, fell soon after. In 1453 the Ottoman Turks, who had been steadily encroaching upon Byzantine territories since 1000, took the capital city of Byzantium, and in 1516 took Syria from the Egyptian Mamelukes. (Sir Thomas More most likely here [and above, No. 31] equates "Syria" with the Ottoman Empire, for at the time of writing Syria was under the control of Suleiman the Magnificent). In 1526 the young Sultan, so-called "Angel of Heaven," after an earlier seizure of Belgrade invaded once again the Balkans and defeated King Louis on August 31, massacring 2000 prisoners and devastating Mohács forever. On September 10 he entered Buda on the Danube, burned it to the ground, carting away a complete library, Italian bronze statues and much else after feasting and hunting in celebration of his victory. After burning neighboring Pest he left for home. Budapest was then taken over by John Zapolye who in turn was deposed by Ferdinand as King of Hungary. To protect Zapolye, whom he favored, and in defiance of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, Suleiman led another huge army in May

1529 which reached the outskirts of Vienna after a crucial delay due to heavy rain. A 20,000 garrison of Protestants and Catholic forces were united under Count Nicholas von Salm to defend Vienna. By mid-October Suleiman realized he could not breach the walls and so ordered a humiliating retreat, burning alive all but those useful as slaves. Te Deum was sung at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna.

In April 1532, one year before More wrote *Debellation of Salem and Bizance*, Suleiman tried once again to take Vienna but was frightened off by the largest army ever mustered in western Europe, the result of Charles V's concessions to Lutheran Protestants. Once again Suleiman withdrew, never again to threaten Vienna and Europe. Although there were later Moslem Turkish encounters with Christian Europe, notably Black Mustafa's ignominious failure to take Vienna in 1683, the terrifying, catastrophic military actions of Ottoman Sultans such as Mehmed II, Conqueror of Constantinople, Selim I (The Grim), and Suleiman, The Magnificent, were a thing of the past. In fact, before More was beheaded by order of sultanic King Henry VIII, Vienna opened close diplomatic relations with Istanbul to the immediate benefit and delight of all. (See Kinross, chapters 11-14, *passim*). See also Frank Manley's discussion of "The Turkish threat 1452-1526-1529" in his essay, "The Audience" (*A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, CW, 12, pp. cxx-cxxxv).

(5) By referring to himself by name twice in the same passage, More emphasizes his willingness to reveal himself as the author of his attack upon the "Pacifier" who by contrast hides behind a mask of anonymity. More alludes to the Aesopic fable of "The Mountain in labour" (Cf. L'Estrange, no. 23, p. 23 and to the ancient Roman proverb, "The mountains are pregnant, but will produce a mouse.") More amusingly compares a mountain that was "delivered" of a dead mouse with the anonymous author's striving hard and long to write a "gay book of twelve sheets of paper," making also an allusion to contemporary practises of midwifery. **Midwifery**, the care of women before, during and after child-birth, was scorned by physicians and was considered the work of women only. The only work now extant which was available to Sir Thomas More (who knew a good deal about the subject) was *Der Swangern frawen und Hebammen Roszgarten*, written by Eucharius Rösslin in 1513, adapted into Latin as *De partu hominis* in 1533 or 1536, and translated into English as *The Byrth of Mankynde* in 1540 by Richard Jones (or Jonas). This little work of 88 leaves went through at least twelve editions by 1634, and was superseded by *Child-birth or the Happie Deliverie of Women* (1612), the English translation of a serious treatise by Jacques Guillemeau, the learned surgeon to the King of France. By this time the Huguenot Chamberlen family living in England had invented the obstetrical forceps and were attempting to control the instruction of midwives. Presumably, Rösslin's "certain pills, the which make the labour easy without pain," were still available.

More elsewhere (No. 96) lauds the miracle of the birth of a "man-child" to a woman living in his community.

83. "Erasmus, my Darling"

[From *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*; Works, pp. 421b-422b]

Then he asketh me why I have not contended with Erasmus (whom he calleth "my darling") of all this long while for translating of this word *ecclesia* into this word *congregation*. And then he cometh forth with his *feat propre taunt* that I favor him of likelihood for making of his book of *Moria* in my house. There had he hit me, lo, save for lack of a little salt. I have not contended with Erasmus, "my darling," because I found no such malicious intent with Erasmus, "my darling," as I find with Tyndale. For had I found with Erasmus, "my darling," the shrewd intent and purpose that I find in Tyndale, Erasmus, "my darling," should be no more my darling. But I find in Erasmus, "my darling," that he detesteth and abhorreth the errors and heresies that Tyndale plainly teacheth and abideth by, and therefore Erasmus, "my darling," shall be my dear darling still. And surely if Tyndale had either never taught them or yet had the grace to revoke them, then should Tyndale be my dear darling, too. But while he holdeth such heresies still, I cannot take for my darling him that the devil taketh for *his* darling.

Now for this translation of *Ecclesia* by "Congregatio," his deed is nothing like Tyndale's. For the Latin tongue had no Latin word before used for the "Church" but the Greek word, *Ecclesia*; therefore Erasmus in his new translation gave it a Latin word. But we had in English a proper English word, therefore, and therefore was no such cause for Tyndale to change it into a worse. Erasmus also meant none heresy therein as appeareth by his writing against heretics, but Tyndale intended nothing else thereby, as appeareth by the heresies that himself teacheth and abideth by. And therefore was there in this matter no cause for me to contend for putting in "Congregation" instead of "Church," except that Tyndale peradventure meaneth that I should have been angry with Erasmus because that instead of "Congregation" in his Latin translation he had not put in our English word, "Church."

As touching *Moria*, in which Erasmus under the name and person of *Moria* (which word in Greek signifieth folly) doth merrily touch and reprove such faults and follies as he found in any kind of people, perusing every state and condition spiritual and temporal, leaving almost none untouched, by which book Tyndale saith that if it were in English, every man should then well see that I was then far otherwise minded than I now write. If this be true, then the more cause have I to thank God of amendment. But surely this is true: For God be thanked, I never had that mind in my life to have holy saints, images or their holy relics out of reverence. Nor if there were any such thing in *Moria*, that thing could not yet make any man see that I were myself of that mind, the book being made by an other man, though he were "my darling" never so dear. Howbeit, that book of *Moria* doth indeed but jest upon the abuses of such things after the manner of the disour's part in a play, and yet not so far neither by a great deal, as the Messenger doth in my *Dialogue*, which I have yet suffered to stand still in my *Dialogue*, and that rather yet by the counsel of other men than myself.

NOTES

(1) **William Tyndale** asks in the preface to his *An Answer vnto Sir Thomas Mores Dialogue* why More has not "contended" against "his **darling Erasmus** all this long while: peradventure he oweth him a favor because he made *Moria* in his house. Which book if it were in English, then should every man see how that he then was far otherwise minded than he now writeth" (*Works*, p. 251). More is indignant that Tyndale should impugn his motives for challenging Tyndale's translation, and he deals with the slur on his character first before arguing the matter of

Erasmus's translation of the Greek *New Testament* into Latin.

(2) **Book of Moria** : i.e., *Moriae Encomium (In Praise of Folly)* , which Erasmus wrote in 1509 while suffering from lumbago at More's home on Bucklersbury road in Walbrook ward in London. Erasmus wrote to More in June, 1511, explaining how on a recent journey from Italy into England he had conceived a plan for his book which he eventually dedicated to More and whose title puns on More's name (see above, no. 14). Erasmus satirizes popular superstitions, abuses in society and the church, and especially the vagaries of some monks and friars. Light-hearted narrative became exceedingly popular in England, especially with Protestants who (ironically) found in it grist for their reforming mill. *Moriae Encomium* was first translated into English in 1549 by Sir Thomas Chaloner, the elder.

(3) **There had he hit me, lo; save for lack of a little salt** : i.e., he would have defeated me or hurt me with his wit, had he enough bitterness or truth; (or) there could he have hurt me with his wit, had he any real intelligence.

(4) Erasmus of Rotterdam, self-styled affectionately "**Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus** ," was born about 1466 and died in 1536, the year after More's execution. He visited England on six different occasions between 1499 and 1517: the first three times he remained for a year or more (1499-1500; 1505-1506; 1509-1514); the three last trips were brief visits only (Spring, 1515; Summer, 1516; Spring, 1517). He came to England the first time as a guest of one of his pupils in Paris, William Blount, 4th Baron Mountjoy; and before leaving he visited Oxford and met John Colet, and through him, Thomas Linacre. It is believed he also met Thomas More at that time (1499) through Baron Mountjoy. More was then attending Lincoln's Inn. On this third and longest visit (1509-1514) he resided in More's house in Walbrook ward, where More had settled with his first wife, Jane Colt. The two men quickly recognized each other's genius and they formed a close and life-long friendship, attested by their large extant correspondence. More was, therefore, in reading Tyndale's abusive comment about his friendship with Erasmus, profoundly stung by the insulting phrase, "Erasmus his darling," and he rose up to defend Erasmus and his own friendship for him. More's method of undercutting Tyndale was to reiterate incessantly the very phrase Tyndale used to insult him.

84. "Lincoln's Inn"

[From *The Debellation of Salem and Bizance* ; Works, 963b-964a]

If I were again to read ^u in Lincoln's Inn and there were in hand with a statute that touched treason and all other felonies, I would not let ^u to look, seek out, and rehearse whether any heinous words spoken against the prince were for the only speaking to be taken for treason or not.

Nor I would not let in likewise to declare, if I found out any cases in which a man thought he took another man's horse against the law, should yet not be judged for a felony thereby. And this would I not only be bold there to tell them but would also be bold in such French as is peculiar to the laws of this realm to leave it with them in writing, too. But yet would I reckon myself sore

overseen if all such things as I would in that school speak in a reading I would in English into every man's hand put out abroad in print. For there is no such necessity therein as is in the other. For in the places of court these companies must needs be taught it, out of which companies they must after be taken that shall be made judges to judge it. But as for the common people to be told that tale shall as far as I see do many folk little good, but rather very great harm. For by perceiving that in some things were nothing the peril that they feared, some may wax therein more negligent, and by less fearing the less danger may soon step into the more. And therefore have I wist ere this, the judges of a great wisdom in great open audience (where they have had occasion to speak of high misprision or of treason) forbear yet the saying of some such things as they would not have letted "to speak among themselves.

NOTES

(1) More's formal education culminated with his training at **Lincoln's Inn**, a law school in Chancery Lane. More's father, Judge John More, wanted his son to be a lawyer and therefore carefully planned young More's education towards that end. At about ten years of age (ca. 1488) More, having presumably finished ordinary petty school, entered the free grammar school of St. Anthony on Threadneedle Street (a short walk from his home on Milk Street in London). There he would have become imbued with Latin and would have studied basic grammar, logic and rhetoric. He was then placed as a page and serving boy in Cardinal Morton's Lambeth Palace (ca. 1490), where he remained for two years learning the manners of the great, ad-libbing bit parts in comic presentations, and undoubtedly picking up a great deal of information concerning the reigns of King Edward IV and King Richard III, under whom Morton had served and suffered. Probably at the age of fourteen More entered Oxford University (possibly Canterbury College), but was called down by his conservative father, who had fears of his son's involvement with newfangled (humanistic) learning. In 1494 More was entered to New Inn, an Inn of Chancery dependent on Lincoln's Inn of Court. New Inn was a kind of "junior college" preparatory for entering Law School. It was here that More acquired skills of legal procedure and of writs, before tackling the more complex theories of jurisprudence and the elegancies and fine points of law. In 1496 he entered Lincoln's Inn of Court, where he remained probably until 1501, during which time he not only studied the law but attended Linacre's lectures on Aristotle, and gave lectures himself on St. Augustine. Lincoln's Inn taught law by court exercises ("Mootings") and by lectures and debates by "Readers," two of whom were chosen annually by their peers, the "Benchers." More was chosen Reader at the dependent, junior, Furnivall's Inn of Chancery about 1501 and kept the post until about 1504, delivering occasional lectures. In 1504 he was elected Member of Parliament and in 1509 was appointed Under-Sheriff of London. In 1510 he was Under-Sheriff of London and was elected a Bencher of Lincoln's Inn and also the Autumn Reader for 1511; and in 1515 was elected Lent Reader for 1516. He was appointed governor and treasurer of Lincoln's Inn in 1512. By 1515 "he was given the highest honor conferred by the inns of court: he was asked to deliver the Lenten lectures in law, an honor reserved to the very best and most experienced practitioners" (Wegemer, p. 56). More continued as an active member of Lincoln's Inn long after his rise to royal favor.

(2) As late as Shakespeare's time, the language of the laws of the realm was compounded of Latin, French and primitive English, and reports were still written in Norman French. In his capacity as judge, officer of the crown, privy councillor, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster,

and Lord Chancellor, More would have been familiar with the peculiar language used in ordinary civil action that presented often a mixture of language presumably incomprehensible to the layman (and to the modern reader), such as is seen frequently in cases recorded in the *Calendar of Patent Rolls*. For example, in 1504, the year More was elected MP, a grant was given to John Islyp, abbot of the convent of St. Peter's, for lands and liberties in certain manors, as well as "soc, sac, tolle and theam, infangemes and utfangemes, wesegeldres, hamisocne and erithbrigge and blodewyte, infang and forfang and fythwite and flythcoyte and ferdewyte and angewyte and leyrywte and flemeneffrenth and escape of prison, and murder and larceny and the moneys which pertain to murder" etc., etc. Although More was required to understand (and possibly to speak) French, he claims in a Latin epigram written about 1513 that he has "no command of French," but in another epigram he criticizes Englishmen who affected to speak French "with open palate, a shrill sort of sound, effeminate-like women's chatter, but lisping prettily" (trans., L. Bradner and C.A. Lynch, no. 77, p. 167).

¹ *M.V.C.* thirty and three: i.e., 1533

² I.e., the mediator: see note

³ *Between Michaelmas and...Halloweentide* : i.e., between September 29 and October 31

⁴ Conquest

⁵ Sickly

⁶ Warm gruel with wine or ale

⁷ *He*: i.e., the Pacifier (St. German)

⁸ I.e., William Tyndale

⁹ *Feat propre taunt*: i.e., apt, suitable and scornful reproach

¹⁰ Jester's, fool's

¹¹ I.e., *A Dialogue concerning Heresies and matters of Religion* (June, 1529)

¹² I.e., lecture

¹³ Refrain

¹⁴ Refused, avoided