

THOMAS MORE'S PRAYER BOOK

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GAZETTE

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THOMAS MORE'S PRAYER BOOK*

By Louis L. Martz and Richard S. Sylvester

WHAT we have called "Thomas More's Prayer Book" is actually two printed books, a Latin *Book of Hours* and a liturgical Latin *Psalter*, which are bound together as a single volume now preserved in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University, thanks to the generosity of Edwin J. Beinecke, 1907, and Frederick W. Beinecke, 1909 S. This volume was in Thomas More's possession while he was a prisoner in the Tower of London (April 17, 1534–July 6, 1535). In the upper and lower margins of nineteen pages in the *Book of Hours*, More wrote an Eng-

*Adapted from the introduction to *Thomas More's Prayer Book: A Facsimile Reproduction of the Annotated Pages; Transcription and Translation . . .* by Louis L. Martz and Richard S. Sylvester, to be published later this year by the Yale University Press. The GAZETTE is grateful to the Yale University Press and Messrs. Martz and Sylvester for their kind permission to publish this article.

From the Editors' Preface: "We wish to express our deep appreciation to all those who have made the publication of this volume possible. The late James T. Babb, Librarian of Yale University, was one of the chief founders of the St. Thomas More Project; his interest in More and in the basic materials for humanistic scholarship led to the purchase of this book for the Beinecke Library. James M. Osborn and Eugene M. Waith have warmly supported this facsimile from the start as representatives of the Publications Committee of the Elizabethan Club. . . . Herman W. Liebert, Librarian of the Beinecke Library, and Miss Marjorie G. Wynne, Research Librarian, have offered us every facility for research in the editing of one of their greatest treasures. To the Reverend Germain Marc'hadour, who participated in the original identification of the *Psalter* marginalia, our gratitude is boundless. He has . . . offered trenchant criticisms, and inspired our work with his own energy from start to finish. We wish also to thank Mr. Thomas E. Marston for much useful advice, Professor Clarence Miller, for many communications regarding the Valencia manuscript of More's *Expositio Passionis*, Mr. N. R. Ker, for identifying the binding for us and for help with paleographical matters, and Mr. J. B. Trapp, for his aid in checking sales catalogues."

lish prayer which has long been known as "A Godly Meditation," the title given to it by his nephew, William Rastell, when he first published it in the 1557 edition of More's *English Works*.¹ Often reprinted, and frequently quoted, the "Godly Meditation" is justly famous; its lines are resonant with More's intense spirituality as he pondered the death which he knew awaited him, and yet they reflect, deeply and poignantly, the lot of any Christian as he endeavors "to walk the narrow way."

The second item in More's Prayer Book, his liturgical *Psalter*, gives us a broader, and perhaps ultimately a deeper, insight into the state of his mind during the period of his imprisonment. In its margins More wrote about one hundred and fifty notes, 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.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTION

I. THE *Book of Hours*

Title Page: ¶ Hore beate Marie ad vsum | ecclesie Sarisburiensis. | ¶ Anno.M.cccc.xxx. | [woodcut of Tree of Jesse] ¶ Uenundantur Parisijs apud Franciscum | Regnault / in vico sancti Iacobi / ad signum | Elephantis. | All within a woodcut border, which contains the date "1525" in its left and right margins.

Format and Signatures: Quarto. A-C⁸, a-z⁸, &⁸, 2⁸, aa⁶, bb⁴. Folio numbers do not begin until sig. a1. They then run consecutively from j to ccvj. The final gathering (bb) has no folio numbers. The following irregularities occur: A₂ mismarked B₂, fol. xviiij unnumbered, fol. clxv misnumbered lxxv, fol. clxxvj misnumbered lxxvj. The full page measures 202 mm. x 135 mm. The type page measures 162 mm. x 100 mm.

1. *The vworkes of Sir Thomas More Knyght* (London, 1557), S.T.C. 18076, sigs. UU_{8v}-XX₁. Cited hereafter as "*English Works*." It should be noted that, when we speak of Rastell as directly responsible for texts in the 1557 edition, we do so only for convenience' sake. Most probably, he acted only as its entrepreneur, contributing the magnificent preface and overseeing the publishing.

Colophon (sig. bb₄): ¶ Expliciunt Hore beate Marie / secundum vsum Sarum / | totaliter ad longum / cum multis pulcherrimis orationi | bus et indulgentijs iam vltimo adiectis. Impresse Pa | risijs in edibus Francisci Regnault Alme vniuersita- | tis parisiensis librarij iurati. Anno domini millesimo | quingentesimo trigesimo. Die vltima Aprīlis. | On sig. bb₄v is Regnault's Sign of the Elephant and beneath it the date, M.d.xxx.²

More's *Book of Hours* is an imperfect copy; in its present state it lacks nine signatures or seventy-two leaves (sigs. f₁-o₈, fols. xlj-cxij), which may have been lost when the volume was bound or rebound.³ Whether or not these missing pages contained further marginalia by More we shall probably never know, but other hands than his have been at work elsewhere in the volume. Inside the front binding, on a pasted-down leaf which may originally have been a flyleaf,⁴ is written "Liber quondam Thomae Mori militis in multis locis manu sua propria inscriptus,"⁵ and the same hand has penned the words "Refugium meum dominus" across the bottom of the title page.⁶ Another hand has made a number of additions and corrections in the text throughout the *Book of Hours*. Thus at sig. c₁v, line 6, the words "Maria plena gratiae & c." are added and the running head on sig. c₈v is changed (correctly) from "tertiam" to "sextam." Since these changes are usually made in letters which try to imitate the shape of the letters

2. Only one other copy of this edition (S.T.C. 15963) is now known (Bodleian Library, Gough Missal 117). It is described in Edgar Hoskins, *Horae Beatae Mariae Virginis* (London, 1901), No. 89. Hoskins mentions another copy sold at Sotheby's as lot 485 on July 29, 1886. See also Hanns Bohatta, *Bibliographie der Livres D'Heures* (Wien, 1924), No. 1143, following a listing in *Serapeum*, 2, 239. The last two references may, however, refer to Hoskins No. 93, another quarto *Book of Hours* published by Regnault in 1530. The description in the Sotheby sale catalogue (p. 41) indicates that this copy could not have been More's: "wants part of Fiii, Ni and ii, Rviii and Sv, blue morocco extra, gilt gaufré edges, old style."

3. The Bodleian copy is also imperfect. It lacks the final leaf (bb₄) and the 2 signature is bound before the & signature instead of after it.

4. These lines are written over a number of scratched out words, some of which can still be deciphered. At the upper left are the words "in gratitudo in pios." Between the second and third line of the inscription can be read "tu plan . . . where euer etc."; a line below begins with the letters "Som . . ." The hand which wrote these cancelled lines appears to be the same hand that penned the passage on "Idolatory" which is found on one of the end papers bound into the volume (see below).

5. "Once the book of Thomas More knight, inscribed in many places with his own hand." The phrase "in multis locis" probably refers to More's annotations in the *Psalter* as well as to the English prayer in the *Book of Hours*.

6. These words probably echo Psalm 31:7, "Tu es refugium meum a tribulatione quae circumdedit me," a verse which More annotated in his *Psalter*.

in the printed text, it is possible that at least some of them may have been printer's corrections.⁷

II. THE *Psalter*

Title Page: Sancta trinitas vnus deus miserere nobis. | ¶ Psalterium cum Hymnis | secundum vsum & consuetudinem | Sarum et Eboracensem. | [Woodcut showing device of the Trinity] Fortuna opes auferre: non animum potest. |

Format and Signatures: Quarto. ✠⁸, a-s⁸, t⁴, A-D⁸, E⁴. The *Psalter* is actually in two parts, the psalms proper running from fol. j to fol. cxlvij (sigs. a1-t4, after the preliminary ✠ signature containing the calendar) and a hymnal ("Sequuntur hymni etc.") occupying sigs. A-E (36 leaves). The folio numbers commence again with j on A1 and run consecutively to E4 (fol. xxxvj). Signature C4 is mismarked B4 in the hymnal. The full page measures 202 mm. x 130 mm. The type page measures 150 mm. x 96 mm.

Colophon (sig. E3v): ¶ Explicit Psalterium cum antiphonis dominicalibus & ferialibus suis locis insertis / vna cum | hymnis ecclesie Sarum et Eboransensem. deser- | uientibus. Impressum Parisius Expensis | & sumptibus honesti mercatoris Francisci | Byrckman. Anno virginei partus. M. ccccc. | xxij. Die vero .vij. mensis Iunij. | Signature E4 is blank; signature E4v contains the device of Francis Byrckman.

More's *Psalter*, like the *Book of Hours*, is now imperfect. It lacks the first signature (✠¹⁻⁸, including the title page), all of the r, s, and t signatures (fols. cxxix-clij) and the final leaf (E4). Another copy of this same edition at Yale is complete⁸ and it has been used for the facsimiles of the title page and sig. E4v.

Bound into More's Prayer Book after the *Psalter* are five non-con-

7. There are about two dozen corrections in all, running from sig. a8v to sig. y8. All except the last are in brown ink, in contrast to the black ink which More used for his English prayer. The longest addition comes at the foot of sig. d4v where the following lines are written:

Summa Deum pietas nostreque iniuria culpae
factum hominem saeuam iussit adire crucem.

8. Two other copies of this 1522 edition (S.T.C. 16260) by Byrckman are known, one in the Bodleian Library and the other in the Cambridge University Library.

jugate leaves. Four of these are blank, but the middle leaf contains a paragraph (not in More's hand) which quotes and enlarges upon St. Augustine's definition of idolatry. Pasted inside the back cover is a single leaf which gives the opening verses for a sequence of five psalms (numbers 21, 19, 73, 97, and 110). These lines are in More's autograph, but we have not been able to discern any special significance in this arrangement of these particular psalms. The first three were annotated by More in the *Psalter* earlier, but he has no marginalia on numbers 97 and 110.

III. THE BINDING

The front and back covers of the prayer book are an original, English blind-stamped binding of the sixteenth century. The spine has been rebacked in nineteenth-century calf. Both the covers have been much battered and there is extensive worm-holing. The ties of the metal clasps have been broken off, but the four studs are still attached to the covers. Although the designs of the rolls on the covers are now very faint, it is possible to identify them as corresponding, in this combination, with a binding recorded in 1534.⁹ The prayer book binding can thus be safely assigned to the period 1530–1540, even if we cannot be sure that the *Book of Hours* and *Psalter* were bound together when More used them in the Tower. The two books *may* have been bound together then, but the fact that each work now lacks a considerable number of pages tends rather to indicate a later binding before or during which these signatures were lost. The marginalia themselves are of no help here, for the English prayer contains no reference to the *Psalter* and the *Psalter* annotations do not refer to the *Book of Hours*.

IV. THE PRINTERS

Both Francis Regnault and Francis Byrckman were well-known printers and stationers who lived for some years in England during the early sixteenth century. Byrckman was a native of Cologne, one of a large family of stationers who had their headquarters in Antwerp.

9. The outer borders are Oldham, SW. b (6), 949 (Plate LVI), a strapwork pattern, and the rolls used in the panels are Oldham, FP. g (2), 686 (Plate XLII), a foliage design. See J. Basil Oldham, *English Blind-Stamped Bindings* (Cambridge, 1952), p. 47, who records only one example of this combination.

He is first mentioned in 1504 when he issued a Sarum missal¹⁰ in partnership with Gerard Cluen of Amersfoort. His business expanded rapidly after 1510 as he specialized more and more in Sarum service books, most of which, like the 1522 *Psalter*, were printed on the Continent for him and imported into England. Byrckman had a London shop in St. Paul's Churchyard. No book is known to have been printed for him after 1529 and he seems to have been dead by 1530 when his son, Francis the younger, returned to the Continent. Byrckman's device always contained his mark and the arms of Cologne, and he often introduced these designs into the ornamental borders of his books.

Francis Regnault began his career as a London stationer about the end of the fifteenth century. After 1518, when his father died, he issued a great number of service books from Paris for the English market. His shop, from 1523 on, was at the Rue Saint Jacques, "en face des Mathurins, à l'enseigne de lelephant." Regnault's export business for the English market was severely hampered by the restrictions placed on foreign printers and on imported books in the Act of December 25, 1534; his last English primer (S.T.C. 16005a and b), corrected in press to remove references to Thomas à Becket, was published in 1538. He died at Rouen between November 23, 1540, and June 21, 1541.

V. PROVENANCE

Except for the statement on the inside of the front cover regarding More's original possession of the prayer book, there are no other indications of ownership in the volume.¹¹ It is perhaps significant that when More's English prayer appeared in the 1557 *English Works*, it was not said to be printed directly from either the *Book of Hours* or from a copy of the prayer in More's own hand. In all probability, copies of the prayer were made by members of the More circle as soon as the prayer book left More's possession,¹² and it was from one of these

10. That is, a missal according to the use of Salisbury. See footnote 16 below.

11. That the volume remained in Catholic hands during the sixteenth century is perhaps indicated by the fact that the many references in the *Book of Hours* to various "Popes" have not been obliterated. In most of the English service books extant from this period, as in the calendar of the other Yale copy of the *Psalter*, references to Popes and some saints are heavily inked over or scratched out.

12. We cannot be certain just when the prayer book left the Tower. The marginalia could have been written at almost any time during More's imprisonment and the book

copies that Rastell took his 1557 text. The subsequent history of the prayer book is a complete blank until the twentieth century.¹³ At some time before 1929, the volume came into the possession of the Feilding family, Earls of Denbigh. Through the generosity of the ninth Earl, Rudolph Feilding (1859–1939), the prayer book was included in the exhibition of More's relics and writings held at the Convent of the Adoration Réparatrice, Beaufort Street, Chelsea, in July 1929. It was exhibited again at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, in 1935. After the second world war, it passed from the Feilding family to a continental owner, from whom it was purchased by the Beinecke Library in August 1965.

BOOKS OF HOURS AND PSALTERS

Of the two items which comprise Thomas More's prayer book, the second, his liturgical psalter, will no doubt be more familiar to the modern reader. The psalms formed a part of the Hebrew divine service in pre-Christian times and they passed naturally from the synagogue into the liturgy of the early Church. In Latin, or in the vernacular, they have always occupied a central position in Christian worship. St. Jerome made three successive translations of the Psalter and it was his second version, the so-called "Gallican Psalter," that became the standard Vulgate text. Byrckman's 1522 edition is representative in every respect.¹⁴ After a preliminary calendar, which lists the feast days month by month, and day by day, it prints a two-page (sig. ✠⁸) exhortation "De laude / virtute / & efficacia psalmodum." The Vulgate text of the psalms follows, with running heads and interspersed rubrics

may have remained with him until the eve of his execution, when he sent some personal belongings to his daughter Margaret. It is unlikely that the prayer book was included in the group of books which were taken away from More on June 12, 1535, by Cromwell's agents (see R. W. Chambers, *Thomas More* [London, 1935], p. 332), but it may well have been smuggled out of the Tower before that date.

13. Its existence was unknown to T. E. Bridgett (*Life and Writings of Sir Thomas More*, London, 1891), who devotes a still useful appendix (pp. 441–444) to other relics of More. In *Notes and Queries* for August 13, 1892 (8th Series, II, pp. 121–122), Bridgett gave an account of a manuscript book of hours, then in the possession of Baron von Druffel of Münster, which had once belonged to More's son John and in which were recorded the birth of a number of More children between 1531 and 1561.

14. For a good account of the Psalter and its use in the early sixteenth century, see Helen C. White, *The Tudor Books of Private Devotion* (Madison, Wis., 1951), pp. 31–52.

indicating the season and service at which particular psalms are to be sung. Many of the psalms are introduced by antiphons, or short pieces of plain-song, with their musical staves. After the psalms proper (sigs. r1-t4) comes the litany, followed by a series of short prayers, and the service for the dead. The hymnal (sigs. A-E4) gives the texts of hymns sung at principal feasts throughout the year. It concludes with an alphabetical index of first lines.

Books of hours, or "Primers," as they were usually called in England,¹⁵ are much less homogeneous volumes than psalters. The basic element in all books of hours was the office (that is special services devoted to) of the Virgin Mary, containing the psalms and hymns, with appropriate ancillary prayers and responses, which were recited and sung at the canonical hours of matins, lauds, prime, terce, sext, none, vespers and compline. Modern research has shown that this office was first developed by St. Benedict of Aniane (c. 750-821) as a supplement to the daily office of the Breviary. It spread quickly from French monasteries to England and was firmly established there by 1050. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it was adopted by the secular clergy for cathedral use. The service thence became popular with the laity, who used it for both public and private devotions. The first vernacular primers appear in the second half of the fourteenth century, but most of them remained at least partly in Latin until the time of the Reformation. The office of the Virgin Mary, like that of the Breviary, varied from diocese to diocese in Western Europe. For England, the use of Sarum dominated,¹⁶ and it is this use which is presented in Regnault's 1530 volume.

But the "little hours of the Virgin," as they were popularly called, form only a small part of most books of hours. By the middle of the tenth century a number of other services and series of prayers had become associated with the office of the Virgin. These features soon came to be considered as essential elements and thus liturgical his-

15. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word "primer" probably comes from "prime," the name of the first canonical hour in the daily service. It is also true, however, that the "primer" was often the "first" book used by children and the word may have originated in this fashion.

16. The Sarum use prevailed in the dioceses of Canterbury and Lincoln as well as in Salisbury itself. For the history and development of the rite, see Dom David Knowles, "Religious Life and Organization," in *Medieval England*, ed. A. L. Poole, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1958) 2, 382-438, especially, pp. 394-395. Other uses in Britain were those of York, Hereford, and Bangor. A York book of hours, printed in 1536 (S.T.C. 16106), has been edited for the Surtees Society (vol. 132, 1920).

torians find that most extant books of hours are built up around the following group of core materials:

- I. The Hours of the Virgin
- II. The Seven Penitential Psalms (Vulg. 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, 142)
- III. The Fifteen Gradual Psalms (Vulg. 119-133)
- IV. The Litany
- V. The Office of the Dead, together with the Commendations which follow it.¹⁷

To these elements were added, from time to time, and from diocese to diocese, a vast body of additional prayers and sundry devotions for particular occasions. Moreover, since most books of hours were the personal possessions of the laity, they were often richly illuminated and ornamented for their wealthier owners. Some of the surviving manuscript examples are priceless works of art.

More's printed book of hours is a typical specimen and a brief description of its contents will illustrate the traditions of popular devotion which it represents. Although most of the prayers, psalms, etc., that it contains are in Latin, they are often introduced by English titles and rubrics. The volume opens with a calendar, a table of moveable feasts and of the phases of the moon, and a few pages on the signs of the zodiac and the four humors. Then comes the opening chapter of the Gospel of St. John, followed by the first chapters of Luke, Matthew, and Mark, and the Passion according to St. John. The next item is a series of "suffragia," or prayers for special occasions—a prayer "to be sayde or ye departe out of your chambre," or another to be offered "whan thou shall receyue the sacrament," the collection filling about fourteen pages (sigs. C2-C8). The office of the Virgin begins on sig. a1; interwoven with it is the supplementary "horae de cruce" or Hours of the Cross. After the office another collection of "suffragia" is introduced (sigs. e5-g7v), including several to which large indulgences are attached. The "Fifteen O's" of St. Bridgit of Sweden, in Latin, occupy sigs. g8-h3v;¹⁸ they are followed by another section of special

17. The classifications used here are basically those of V. Leroquais in his Introduction (vol. 1) to *Les Livres d'heures manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1927-43). See also P. Lacombe, *Livres D'Heures Imprimés Au XV^e Et Au XVI^e Siècles* (Paris, 1907) and Hoskins' Introduction to his *Sarum and York Primers*.

18. A very popular series of fifteen prayers, each of which begins with the exclamation 'O.'

suffragia (sigs. h4-k8). Then come, in this order, the "Hours of the Conception of the Blessed Mary" (sigs. k8v-l1v), a further set of suffragia (sigs. l2-p6v), the Fifteen O's in English (sigs. p7-q3v), the seven penitential psalms (sigs. q4-r1v), the fifteen gradual psalms (sigs. r1v-r6), the Litany and accompanying ejaculations (sigs. r6v-s2v), a short series of verses from the psalms called "Versus sancti bernardi"¹⁹ (sigs. s3-s3v) plus a few additional prayers, the office of the dead (sigs. s5-x2), the commendations (sigs. x2-y2v), the Passion Psalms (Vulg. nos. 21-30, sigs. y3v-z3), the "Psalter of St. Jerome"²⁰ and other prayers attributed to him (sigs. z3-&3v), the "Hours of the Name of Jesus" and the "Hours of the Blessed Mary" (sigs. &4-aa3v), and "The forme of confessyon," in English (sigs. aa4-bb1). A table of contents then terminates the book—a rich collection indeed, and one in which the devout layman might well find prayers to satisfy his needs on almost any occasion.

THE MARGINALIA

I. AUTHENTICITY AND DATE OF COMPOSITION

There can be no doubt whatsoever that both the English prayer in the *Book of Hours* and the Latin annotations in the *Psalter* are in More's own hand. The holograph nature of the "Godly Meditation" has been generally accepted since its presence in the *Book of Hours* was made public in 1929. Its authenticity can be verified by comparing its paleographical features with those of More's holograph English letters now in the British Museum and Public Record Office. With More's Latin hand, however, the case has been different. Until quite recently, no extensive specimen of his Latin script had been accepted as authentic, but the discovery in Spain of the holograph manuscript of More's *Expositio Passionis* in 1963 has remedied this difficulty.²¹

19. The English rubric tells the apocryphal story of "St. Bernard's Psalter": "Whan saynt Bernard was in his prayers the dyuell sayd vnto him. I knowe that therbe certayne verses in the sawter hoo that saye them dayly schall not peryshe: and he schall haue knowlege of the daye that he schall dye but the fende wolde not schowe them to saynt Bernard. Than sayd saynt Bernard. I schall dayly say the hooll sawter. The fende conydyryng that saynt Bernard scholl doe so moche profyte and good labor / so he schewed hym this verses."

20. A *cento* prayer consisting of 190 verses extracted from the psalms. This sequence may have served as a model for a Latin prayer by More. See footnote 29 below.

21. See Geoffrey Bullough, "More in Valencia: A Holograph Manuscript of the Latin 'Passion,'" *The Tablet*, 217 (December 21, 1963), 1379-1380; G. Marc'hadour,

Comparison of the hand of the Valencia manuscript with that which wrote the *Psalter* marginalia reveals that the two are identical.

But, even if the English and Latin hands in the prayer book are incontestably More's, can we be certain that he wrote the marginalia while a prisoner in the Tower, that is, between April 17, 1534, and July 6, 1535? Regnault's *Book of Hours* was printed four years before More's imprisonment began and Byrckman's *Psalter* may have been in his possession as early as 1522. Could he not have written his prayer and annotations in the volumes at some time during this period? For anyone acquainted with More's deep spirituality and his constant awareness of death, the answer to this question must be "Yes, he *could* have."²² Yet, if the external and internal evidence is closely examined, there is every probability that the marginalia were in fact written while More was in the Tower.

First of all, with regard to the "Godly Meditation," Rastell's statement in the 1557 *English Works* cannot be taken lightly. He specifically affirms that More wrote the prayer "whyle he was prisoner in the tower of London in the yere of our Lord. 1534,"²³ and he includes it as the fourth item in a sequence of five "deuout and vertuose instruccions, meditacions and prayers made and collected by syr Thomas More knyght while he was prisoner in the towre of London."²⁴ While it is true that Rastell is not always absolutely precise in his assignment of dates for More's writings,²⁵ he is, on the whole, remarkably accurate.

"Au Pays de J. L. Vivès: La plus noble relique de Thomas More," *Moreana*, 9 (1966), 93-96, and 10 (1966), 85-86; and Clarence Miller, "The Holograph of More's *Expositio Passionis*: A Brief History," *Moreana*, 15-16 (1967), 372-379. The entire manuscript is being edited in facsimile by Professor Miller for the Yale Edition of More's Complete Works (volume 13, part 2).

22. As Father Marc'hadour has well said, "it [the English prayer] contains no sentence beside which it would be hard to place some passage from More's earlier writings, equally stark and thorough-going . . . For More, every day was doomsday." (*Moreana*, 5 [1965], 60).

23. Rastell follows the normal practice in Tudor England when he makes the year begin on Lady Day, March 25. His "1534" thus covers the period between March 25, 1534, and March 24, 1535, in modern reckoning.

24. *English Works*, sigs. UU₈v and UU₃ (mismarked XX₃). The "Devout Instructions" occupy sigs. UU₃-XX₂ and the five items seem to have been arranged in what Rastell considered to be their order of composition. The first two and the fourth (the "Godly Meditation") are dated "1534"; the third (More's *cento* prayer discussed below) is not given a year date, and the final item is dated "1535." All five of the prayers are being edited by Professor Garry E. Haupt in volume 13, part 1 of the Yale Edition.

25. The English *Treatise on the Passion*, which Rastell says was composed in the Tower, is now known to have been written at least in part before More's imprisonment. See *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters* (New Haven, 1961), p. 185. For a general evalua-

Secondly, we should note that the second of the five "Devout Instructions" is also found, with its sections arranged in a different order,²⁶ in the final gathering of the Valencia manuscript of the *Expositio Passionis*, a work which Rastell declares to be the very last of More's writings in the Tower: "Syr Thomas More wrote no more of this woork: for when he had written this farre, he was in prison kepte so streyght, that all his bokes and penne and ynke and paper was taken from hym, and sone after was he putte to death."²⁷

Thirdly, on sigs. a5v, a6, a6v, and a7 (fols. v^v-vij) More marked certain verses of Psalm 9 with a series of letters which run from "a" to "p" but which are not arranged in strict alphabetical sequence. The letters suggest that the annotator is planning to arrange the verses of the psalm in an order different from that of the text itself. At the same time, he appears to be selecting what seem to him to be appropriate verses either for his meditation or for a prayer of his own which he is composing. Now that More did in fact design such a composite (or *cento*)²⁸ prayer we know from the 1557 *English Works*, where Rastell prints, as the third of the "Devout Instructions,"

A deuoute prayer, collected oute of the psalmes of Dauid, by sir Thomas More knighte (while he was prisoner in y^e tower of London) whereunto he made this title folowing.

*Imploratio diuini auxiliij contra tentationem;
cum insultatione contra daemones,
ex spe & fiducia in deum.*²⁹

Rastell's statement that More himself devised the title to this composite prayer becomes especially significant when we turn to the

tion of Rastell's reliability, see *The History of King Richard III*, ed. R. S. Sylvester, volume 2 of the Yale Edition (New Haven, 1963), pp. xxix-xxxii.

26. Professor Miller informs us that there is no way in which the leaves of this last gathering could have been rearranged so as to produce the sequence of sentences found in the 1557 text. Rastell's (or an earlier copyist's) editorial reconstruction of the prayer thus seems well established. In Professor Miller's opinion, the final gathering of the Valencia MS. was almost certainly written *before* the earlier gatherings which contain the *Expositio Passionis*.

27. *English Works*, sig. UU₂v; see also Rastell's similar comment at sig. QQ₇v.

28. *Centio* poems seem to have originated with the *cento nuptialis* of Ausonius in the fourth century. Their use in the liturgy is rare, but see the next note.

29. *English Works*, sig. UU₄. The prayer, which runs to sig. UU₈v, begins with verses from Psalm 3 and ends with the whole of psalms 62 and 66. The "Psalter of St. Jerome," included in More's *Book of Hours*, may have provided a distant model for More's prayer. It contains 190 verses, beginning with Psalm 5 and ending with Psalm 142. No psalm is selected in its entirety, and no reordering of verses occurs.

Psalter marginalia, for we find that the phrasing of the title corresponds exactly with several of More's annotations for particular psalms. Thus Psalm 58:2³⁰ is marked "Imploracio auxiliij contra uel demones uel malos homines"; at Psalm 3:7, which also forms the sixth verse of the *cento* prayer, More wrote "Insultatio contra demones"; 19:8, 56:2, and 72:28 are marked "fiducia in deum," and 26:13 "spes et fiducia." It is clear, from these and from many other examples, that the themes of the *cento* prayer are linked directly with those which concerned More most closely as he annotated his *Psalter*.

But the correspondence between *cento* and *Psalter* does not stop with these thematic similarities. The first verse in the 1557 prayer is Psalm 3:2, which is also the first verse annotated by More in the *Psalter* (sig. a2).³¹ In addition, More has run his pen down the margin on this page, indicating that his note on 3:2 also covers the third and fourth verses of the psalm. The line touches the top of verse 5 but does not include it. The *cento* prayer begins with Psalm 3:2-4; it skips verse 5, but includes verses 6 and 7, both of which are separately annotated by More in the *Psalter*. Again, after 3:7, the *cento* prayer skips to 5:9-13, all of which it includes; in the *Psalter*, More annotates 5:11, but his line down the margin stretches from 5:8 to 5:13 (leaf a3).³² Or, to take just one more example, all of Psalm 12 is included in the 1557 prayer. More's note in the *Psalter*, "Qui scrupulum habet in confessione et animo suo non satisfacit precetur hunc psalmum," obviously singles out the whole psalm, and not merely its opening verse, for special attention.

Patterns like these, either duplicating exactly or approximating closely the sequence of verses in the *cento* prayer, can be found at many places in the *Psalter* marginalia. But the most striking instance occurs

30. The psalm and verse numbers employed here are those of the modern Vulgate text (*Bibliorum Sacrorum Iuxta Vulgatam Clementinam*, curavit Aloisius Grammatica, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1929). The Vulgate, unlike the Authorized (King James) Version, usually includes the title of the psalm in its numbering of the verses, and thus the Vulgate verse numbers will often run one higher than those in other texts. The reader should also be reminded that Psalm 9 in the Vulgate [divided as "9" and "(10)" in the modern text] is treated as two psalms in the Authorized Version; thus Vulg. Ps. 10 becomes A.V. Psalm 11 and the numbers of the latter generally run one higher than those of the former through the rest of the *Psalter*. Many of More's marginalia (e.g., 12:1, 37:1, 59:3, etc.) refer to the entire psalm and not merely to its opening verses.

31. On the preceding pages (sig. a1-a1v) More made six "nota bene" marks in the margin, but his note on 3:2, "anima resipiscens a peccato," are the first words which he wrote in the book.

32. Psalm 4:7 is annotated in the *Psalter*, but this verse is not included in the *cento* prayer, which does, however, employ Psalm 4:9-10, placing them after Psalm 7:18.

with the sequence of letters, next to Psalm 9, referred to above. The order of the verses from Psalm 9 in the *cento* prayer (*English Works*, sig. UU⁵) is as follows in this instance: 9:14, 9:11, 9:10, (10):1,³³ 9:19, (10):12, (10):14, (10):17, 10:5. In the *Psalter*, the verses are marked in the following fashion:³⁴ 9:14 [a], 9:11 [b], 9:10 [c], (10):1 [g, with an "e" canceled before it], 9:19 [d], (10):12 [h], (10):14 [i], (10):17 [k], 10:5 [m and n, for the two consecutive parts of the verse]. As can readily be seen, the "overlay" here is too close to be accidental, even though the texts do not correspond exactly.³⁵ It would appear that, in his prayer book during 1534 or early 1535, Thomas More worked out a tentative sequence for the composite psalm which Rastell eventually printed in 1557. In all likelihood, More either later made a more definitive list of the verses he wished to select or copied out the actual verses, indicating, as he did so, the order in which he desired them to be presented. Perhaps Rastell, working from this copy, with or without access to the prayer book itself, then devised the sequence as it was published in the *English Works*.³⁶

Finally, we have the internal evidence provided by the annotations themselves: many of them suggest the particular problems and circumstances of Thomas More during the last years of his life, and specifically, during the time of his imprisonment. Four of the annotations specifically mention prison, suggesting the suitability of a particular psalm for an "incarcerated" man.³⁷ Furthermore, one is struck by the fact that the word *tribulatio* occurs, in various forms, no less than twenty-seven times, as in the phrase *in tribulatione et timore mortis* ("in tribulation and fear of death"). Now this word, especially

33. For convenience, the numbering of the modern Vulgate, which breaks Psalm 9 into two parts and designates the second as "Psalm (10)," is employed here. The Massoretic text and most modern versions divide the psalm as Psalm 9 and Psalm 10. See above, n. 30.

34. Each of More's letters is given in square brackets after the psalm and verse numbers.

35. The variations should be carefully noted: More's sequence of letters begins (sig. a5v) with the capital letter "E" opposite 9:7, a verse which is not included in the *cento* prayer. (10):7 and (10):9, each marked with "ff" by More, do not appear in the *cento*, although the absence of the latter can be explained by the reoccurrence of this verse at Psalm 10:5, which is marked with an "m" and "n" by More. More also puts an "l" after 10:3 and an "o" and "p" after 10:6 and 10:7 respectively; none of these verses occur in the *cento* prayer.

36. The relationship between the *Psalter* marginalia and the *cento* prayer of 1557 will be discussed in full detail in volume 13, part 1 of the Yale Edition.

37. 24:15, 68:34, 83:2, and 87:5. The references given here and in subsequent notes refer to the psalm and verse (Vulgate numbering) next to which More's marginalia are written.

in such a phrase as *solacium in tribulatione*, is bound to suggest a relation with More's *Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation*, a work that bears every indication of having been composed in the Tower, during the last year or so of More's life. This relation becomes even more striking when we remember the dramatic situation in which More has cast his *Dialogue of Comfort*, with the setting in Hungary, where two Hungarians, nephew and uncle, discuss the problems of tribulation under the immediate threat of conquest and persecution by the Turks. It is clear that under this guise More is implying the threat to certain Christian doctrines and to certain Christians closer to home, under the power of Henry VIII.

Among More's annotations to the psalms we find six references to verses to be used *contra turcas*: "against the power of the Turks." The most striking of these may be translated thus: "to be said in [time of] tribulation by the faithful among the Hungarians when the Turks grow strong and many Hungarians fall away into the false faith of the Turks." This long comment about the "Hungarians" occurs at the beginning of the following strongly marked passage from Psalm 68 (7-21):³⁸

Let them not be ashamed upon me, which expect thee,
 O Lord, Lord of hosts.
 Let them not be confounded upon me that seek
 thee, O God of Israel.
 Because for thee have I sustained reproach,
 confusion hath covered my face.
 I am become a foreigner to my brethren,
 and a stranger to the sons of my mother.
 For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me: and
 the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell
 upon me.
 And I covered my soul in fasting: and it was made
 a reproach to me.
 And I put haircloth my garment: and I became a parable
 to them.
 They spake against me that sat in the gate; and they sung
 against me that drank wine.
 But I, my prayer to thee, O Lord;
 a time of thy good pleasure, O God.

38. All of the English translations of the psalms given here are taken directly from the Douay-Rheims version of 1609, which was based directly on the Vulgate text. We have modernized spelling and punctuation.

In the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of
thy salvation.
Draw me out of the mire, that I stick not fast:
deliver me from them that hate me, and from the depths
of waters.
Let not the tempest of water drown me, nor the depth swallow
me: neither let the pit shut his mouth upon me.
Hear me, O Lord, because thy mercy is benign;
according to the multitude of thy commiserations, have
respect to me.
And turn not away thy face from thy servant: because I am in
tribulation, hear me speedily.
Attend to my soul, and deliver it: because of
mine enemies, deliver me.
Thou knowest my reproach, and my confusion, and my shame.
In thy sight are all they that afflict me:
my heart hath looked for reproach and misery.
And I expected somebody that would be sorry together with me,
and there was none: and that would comfort
me, and I found not.³⁹

Can we doubt that Thomas More, as he meditates upon this psalm, is thinking of the problems of faith and infidelity in England, as well as in Hungary? These annotations concerning the "Turks" seem to provide the germ from which the dramatic setting of the *Dialogue of Comfort* has developed.

Further relationships between the annotations and More's personal situation will be considered in the following section; but from the evidence thus far presented, we may say that the authenticity of the marginalia in both *Psalter* and *Book of Hours* is firmly established and that there is every probability that they date from the period of More's imprisonment in the Tower.

II. PLACEMENT, CONTENT, AND SIGNIFICANCE

Thomas More's marginalia in the *Book of Hours* portion of his prayer book consist solely of the thirty-seven verses which compose his "Godly Meditation." The first thirty-six verses of this psalm-like

39. It is important to note that More's marginal line stops just before verse 22, for this verse is reserved for Christ: "And they gave gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

prayer⁴⁰ are written, two verses per page, in the top and bottom margins of eighteen consecutive pages (sigs. c₁-d_{1v}, fols. xvij-xxv^r). The final long verse, which forms a kind of *coda* to or commentary on the prayer proper, is placed at the bottom of sig. d₂ (fol. xxvj). More's choice of the pages upon which he placed his prayer was by no means accidental. The leaves that it covers comprise exactly the hours of prime, terce, and sext (6 A.M., 9 A.M., and noon) in the office of the Virgin; moreover, the printed text includes not only the prayers, hymns, and psalms said in that office, but also the additional devotions known as the Hours of the Cross (*Horae de Cruce*) which were usually appended to it. The first page of prime bears a large woodcut of the nativity scene (sig. c₁) and it is thus with the birth of Christ that More's own prayer commences, "Gyve me thy grace good lord." The last verse of More's prayer, excluding his *coda*, is placed at the foot of the final page (sig. d_{1v}) for the hour of sext, which shows a woodcut of Christ carrying His cross. The text reads "Hora sexta iesus est cruci con-clauatus" (at the sixth hour Jesus was nailed to the cross), and the page concludes with a prayer that Christ's death may save the sinner. By being written in psalm-like pairs, one half at the top of a page, and the second half at the bottom, More's psalm, as we might well call it, thus gives the effect of embracing all the events of Christ's life, from birth up to the beginning of the crucifixion at the sixth hour.

This point emerges clearly if we read the prayer through, pausing to reflect on its lines in relation to the pictures in the *Book of Hours* which they surround. Here is a modern-spelling version of the "Godly Meditation," with the woodcuts noted as they occur in the printed text:

Give me thy grace, good Lord,
 [*Large woodcut of the Nativity*]
 To set the world at nought;

To set my mind fast upon thee,
 And not to hang upon the blast of men's mouths;

To be content to be solitary;
 Not to long for worldly company;

Little and little utterly to cast off the world,
 And rid my mind of all the business thereof;

40. Father Marc'hadour reminds us that the parallel structure of the verses is not always evenly balanced and suggests that the tone of More's prayer is closer to that of the litany than it is to most of the psalms.

Not to long to hear of any worldly things,
But that the hearing of worldly phantasies may be to me displeasant;

Gladly to be thinking of God,
[*Small woodcut of Jesus before Pilate*]
Piteously to call for his help;

To lean unto the comfort of God,
Busily to labor to love him;

To know mine own vility [vileness] and wretchedness,
[*Large woodcut of the Angel appearing to the shepherds*]
To humble and meeke[n] myself under the mighty hand of God;

To bewail my sins passed;
For the purging of them patiently to suffer adversity;

Gladly to bear my purgatory here;
To be joyful of tribulations;

To walk the narrow way that leadeth to life,
To bear the cross with Christ;

To have the last thing in remembrance,
[*Small woodcut of the Crowning with Thorns*]
To have ever afore mine eye my death that is ever at hand;

To make death no stranger to me,
To foresee and consider the everlasting fire of hell;

To pray for pardon before the judge come,
[*Large woodcut of the Visit of the Magi*]
To have continually in mind the passion that Christ suffered for me;

For his benefits uncessantly to give him thanks,
To buy the time again that I before have lost;

To abstain from vain confabulations,
To eschew light foolish mirth and gladness;

Recreations not necessary—to cut off;
Of worldly substance, friends, liberty, life and all, to set the loss
at right nought for the winning of Christ;

To think my most enemies my best friends;
[*Small woodcut of Christ carrying the Cross*]
For the brethren of Joseph could never have done him so much good
with their love and favor as they did him with their malice and hatred.

These minds [thoughts] are more to be desired of every man than all
the treasure of all the princes and kings, christian and heathen, were
it gathered and laid together all upon one heap.

In nomine domini Amen. Vilius & Hieronymus
Ad tertiam.



Deus in adiutorium meum intende.
Domine ad adiuuandum me festina.
Gloria patri & filio & spiritui sancto.
Sicut erat in principi. Hymnus.

*to humbly & make my people vnder the
mighty hand of god*

Thus the three large woodcuts illustrate scenes from the first part of Christ's life, while the three alternating smaller ones, which relate to the Hours of the Cross, speak vividly of its end. More's prayer wreathes itself around the group, suggesting, by the position of its verses, its central theme—the imitation of Christ's life as the greatest spiritual exercise in which the true Christian can engage.

Enclosed within the lines of More's own psalm are also the psalms that form part of this traditional service of private meditation.⁴¹ These psalms provide the thoughts from which More's own psalm seems to arise, or which his prayer seems to include, words such as these from Psalm 117, which occur on the third page of More's prayer:⁴²

Our Lord is my helper: I will not fear what man can do
to me.

Our Lord is my helper: and I will look over my enemies.

It is good to hope in our Lord, rather than to have
confidence in man.

It is good to trust in the Lord, rather than to hope
in princes.

As the rubric in the *Book of Hours* says (sig. c1v) with regard to Psalm 53, lines such as these may well "teach the just man to praise God in adversity" (*docetur vir iustus in aduersis laudare deum*). By meditation on the words of the psalmist, More strengthened himself to endure his end, reaching at last the state of mind that he witnesses in his own psalm, written on the margins of these pages.

The finished quality of the "Godly Meditation" stands in sharp contrast to the marginalia which More wrote in his *Psalter*. It may well be that the English prayer was composed after the *Psalter* annotations,⁴³ and that it sums up the fruits of More's meditation on the verses of the latter volume. We may be certain, in any event, that meditation on the psalms was a spiritual exercise which More himself both advocated and practiced. In the second book of his *Dialogue of Comfort*, he speaks feelingly on the subject:

41. The following psalms occur in the office for the three hours covered by More's prayer: prime, Psalms 53, 116, and 117; terce, Psalms 119, 120, and 121; sext, Psalms 122, 123, and 124. Interestingly enough, none of these psalms were annotated by More in his *Psalter*.

42. Psalm 117:6–9.

43. Such an order of composition is indicated by Rastell's arrangement of the "Devout Instructions" in the *English Works*, where the *cento* prayer immediately precedes the "Godly Meditation." See above, n. 24.

Speciall verses may there be drawn oute of the Psalter, against the devilles wicked temptacions. As for example *Exurgat deus & dissipentur inimici eius, & fugiant qui oderunt eum a facie eius*. And many other, whiche are in suche horrible temptacion [to suicide] to God pleasaunt, and to the deuill verye terrible.⁴⁴

The last two books of the *Dialogue* are in fact developed as a complex meditation on Psalm 90 with its warnings against "the fear of the night," "the arrow flying in the day," and "the business walking in the darkness." More knew the psalms thoroughly, perhaps almost by heart, and his works are tessellated with quotations from or allusions to them.

The *Psalter* portion of the prayer book contains one hundred and fifty-one verbal annotations on the text of the psalms.⁴⁵ More's first comment refers to Psalm 3:2, his last to Psalm 105:37. Psalm 30 receives six annotations, Psalms 26, 34, 54, 68, and 72 five each; Psalms 24, 55, 56, and 70 are annotated four times and Psalms 3, 7, 21, 48, and 67 three times. Many other psalms carry two annotations. At least seven of the marginalia definitely refer to whole psalms and another six probably do. But the marginalia, taken by themselves, do not tell the whole story of how More used his *Psalter*. In addition to his verbal comments on the psalms, he also drew lines down the margin of the text, indicating that the verses so marked were to be specially emphasized. Sometimes these vertical strokes relate directly to one of the marginalia; in other cases they either appear in isolation or are combined with More's other mark of emphasis, a flag-like figure which appears frequently in various shapes and sizes. In many cases this latter mark resembles a musical note, similar to those which occur in the musical staves of the *Psalter* text. Conjecture here becomes mildly whimsical, but it might be suggested that the flags were modeled by More, with a typical play of wit, on the musical "notes" of his prayer book.⁴⁶

More's vertical lines and flags in the margin begin before his verbal comments and continue for some time after the marginalia proper

44. *English Works*, sig. GG₃v. More quotes Psalm 67:2. In his prayer book this verse is annotated "contra demonum insidias et insultus."

45. The count is exact, but it does not include the sixteen letters which More placed in the margin of Psalm 9.

46. Mr. N. R. Ker informs us that these flag-like marks of emphasis are most unusual in sixteenth-century manuscripts. They may represent More's rendering of the monogram for "Nota" (N^o) found often elsewhere. Interestingly enough, six sets of double flags occur in MS. Royal 17. D. xiv (fols. 327^v, 341^v, 342, 346^v, 347^v, and 358^v), a manuscript which undoubtedly emanated from the More circle in the early 1550s.

cease. The first flag appears on sig. a1 (Psalm 1) and there are five on sig. a1v (Psalm 2). More wrote his last verbal annotation on sig. l4v (Psalm 105), but he marked ten more pages with flags and/or marginal lines, the last mark (a single flag) coming at sig. m8 (Psalm 118:53). Why, we may well ask, do the annotations cease and the marks dwindle off so sharply after Psalm 105? It seems most likely that More did not find the psalms in the later portion of the *Psalter* so applicable to his personal situation as the earlier ones had been. Traditionally, the one hundred and fifty psalms were divided into five books on the model of the Pentateuch. Modern biblical scholars analyze the *Psalter* in various ways, but there is general agreement that three main groupings can be clearly discerned. Thus Psalms 1–40, 41–88, and 89–150 form three divisions. In the first division come most of the intensely personal psalms; in the second occur most of the national psalms (prayers in times of calamity and thanksgivings for deliverance); in the final group are found the liturgical psalms of praise or thanksgiving for Temple use. The psalms most relevant to More's own plight would thus be contained in the first two thirds of the *Psalter*.

This impression is borne out by the pattern which the marginalia themselves assume from about Psalm 88 to Psalm 105. In the earlier psalms, More's notes speak mainly of temptation and sin, of the attacks of the "*demonēs*" and of the effort of the individual soul to obtain spiritual consolation. "Tribulation" is a constant theme. Perhaps the climax of this movement comes with the annotation at Psalm 87:5–10:

I am accounted with them that descend into the lake: I am
 become as a man without help,
 Free among the dead. As the wounded sleeping in the sepulchres,
 of whom thou art mindful no more: and they are cast off from thy hand.
 They have put me in the lower lake: in the dark places, and in
 the shadow of death.
 Thy fury is confirmed upon me: and all thy waves thou hast
 brought in upon me.
 Thou hast made my familiars far from me: they
 have put me abomination to themselves. I was
 delivered,⁴⁷ and came not forth,
 Mine eyes languished for poverty. I cried
 to thee, O Lord, all the day: I stretched out my hands to thee.

In the margin here, More wrote the words "in tribulatione uehemente et in carcere." Yet the very next annotation strikes a new theme that is

47. "I was betrayed" is perhaps a better rendering of the Vulgate's "traditus sum."

repeated three more times before the marginalia end. At Psalm 88:7 More writes "maiestas dei" next to the verse "For who in the clouds shall be equal to our Lord," and he uses the same words again at 95:4, 96:1, and 103:32.⁴⁸ Coupled with this group of annotations are others which reflect a similar, more public and more optimistic, strain—"ut opus prosperet deus" (89:17), "de protectione dei" (90:1), and "misericordia dei" (102:11). The progress of More's meditations, in other words, has followed that of the psalmist, out of the depths into a new trust and confidence.

This is not, however, the dominant note in the main body of the marginalia, those, that is, which refer to the first eighty-seven psalms. The basic pattern of More's meditations can be seen in a negative way if one observes how he carefully refrains from commenting on those psalms which are not directly relevant to his personal situation. Thus he writes no notes on Psalms 1 and 2, which serve as a kind of general introduction to the *Psalter*; he skips Psalms 8 and 18 entirely, for he is not immediately interested in their hymns of praise to the Creator. Psalm 23, not a personal psalm, is left unannotated, and so is Psalm 28, a commemoration of God's works. The pattern continues to develop as Psalms 32 and 33, 42 and 44, and 46 and 47 are also left without marginal comment.⁴⁹ The annotations, it appears, are the work of a man deeply absorbed in problems of personal conscience, a man "in tribulation" who struggles to reconcile his lot with his faith and his hope.

Although opinions may vary on the degree of personal, or autobiographical, relevance 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. The six annotations which emphasize the utility of the psalms against the Turkish threat have already been mentioned, as have those which specifically refer to prison. At Psalm 34:15, More speaks of the hair shirt and fasting as weapons against the taunts of the devil; both ascetic practices were daily features of his spiritual life. Several of the notes (e.g., 26:12, 64:4) recommend certain psalms as useful against "calumnia," the false accusations and slander which formed so large a part of the suffering of "the king's

48. The phrase "maiestas dei" had not been used by More in the earlier marginalia.

49. Some of the psalms which receive no verbal annotation are of course marked with lines or flags next to particular verses, but it is nevertheless clear that More did not emphasize their import to any great extent.

good servant.” Other striking comments in this vein come with the series of nine “pro rege” notes,⁵⁰ some of them decidedly ironic as they suggest a contrast between the “pius and suppliant” king praised by the psalmist with the less than humble monarch for whom More could still pray. To some extent at least, as he merged his own words with those of the persecuted David, Thomas More must have been tempted to wonder if Saul too, irascible and petulant, did not reign again in the new Israel.

But the marginalia that suggest More’s plight most fully to us are those which, taken with the verses of the psalm they accompany, show him reflecting on his isolation from his friends and family. Next to the following verses from Psalm 30 (12–14), More wrote the words “in infamy and danger”:

Above all mine enemies I am made a reproach, both to my neighbors exceedingly
and a fear to my acquaintance.
They that saw me, fled forth from me.
I am forgotten, from the heart as one dead. I am made as
a vessel destroyed.
Because I have heard the reprehension of many that abide round about.

Then, at Psalm 37 (12–20), comes the most revealing of all the marginalia, a long note by More which may be translated as follows:

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.

This comment is written opposite the verses,

My friends and my neighbors have approached, and stood against
me. And they that were near me stood far off:
And they did violence which sought my soul. And they that
sought me evils, spake vanities, and meditated guiles
all the day.
But I, as one deaf, did not hear: and as one dumb
not opening his mouth.
And I became as a man that not hearing: and not having
reproofs in his mouth.
Because in thee, O Lord, have I hopes: thou wilt hear me,
O Lord, my God.

50. 19:10, 20:2, 60:7, 71:2, 74:2, 74:5, 75:5, 75:7, 88:23.

Feria. ij.

et huius faciebant qui querebant animam meam.

Et qui increbant mala michi locuti sunt vanitates: et dolos tota die meditabantur.

Ego autem tanquam surdus non audiebam: et sicut mutus non aperiens os suum.

Et factus sum sicut homo non audiens: et non habens in ore suo redargutiones.

Quoniam in te domine speravi: tu exaudies me domine deus meus.

Quia dixi nequando supgaudeat michi inimici mei: et dum commouentur pedes mei super me magna locuti sunt.

Quoniam ego in flagella paratus sum: et dolor meus in conspectu meo semper.

Quoniam iniquitatem meam annuntiabo: et cogitabo pro peccato meo.

Inimici autem mei viuunt: et confirmati sunt super me: et multiplicati sunt qui oderunt me iniquitate.

Qui retribuunt mala pro bonis detrahebant michi: quoniam sequebar bonitatem.

Ne derelinquas me domine deus meus: ne discesseris a me.

Intende in adiutorium meum: domine deus salutis mee. Gloria. Antiphona. Reuela domino viam tuam domine in celo: misericordia tua. R. Et

sic se debet habere in tribulatione et neque super te loqui neque regere male dicta sed maledicere benedictione et libenter pati sine infirmitate si meruit sine dei culmine si non meruit

Because I said: Lest some time mine enemies rejoice over me:
and whilst my feet are moved, they speak great things
upon me.

Because I am already for scourges: and my sorrow is in my sight always.
For I will declare my iniquity: and I will think for
my sin.

But mine enemies live, and are confirmed over me: and
are multiplied that hate me unjustly.

Clearly Thomas More has based his silence upon the principle expressed in this psalm, and also in Psalm 38, where More has marked the first four verses with the comment, *maledictis abstinendum* ("evil words are not to be employed"):

I have said: I will keep my ways: that I offend not in
my tongue.
I have set a guard to my mouth, when the sinner stood
against me.
I was dumb and humbled, and kept silence from
good things: and my sorrow was renewed.
My heart waxed hot within me: and in my meditation
a fire shall burn.

All these thoughts are in accord with what More told his daughter Margaret in August 1534: "Ther is no man liuing, of whom while he liueth, I may make myself sure." This was indeed, as he reminded her, "a case in which a man may lese his head and haue no harme."⁵¹

Not all of More's *Psalter* marginalia take us so close to the heart of his own "great matter." Some of his comments seem merely incidental, casual observations like "flatterer" (54:22) or "exultation" (56:9). We recognize the man when he agrees with the psalmist about the treacherous nature of riches (48:17) or the false prosperity of the wicked (34:19 and 36:1), but comments like these are more general than personal. In many of the marginalia, More shows that he was thinking not merely of his own suffering, but also of the public realm, that "whole body of Christendome"⁵² to which he felt himself to be united. Thus he notes that Psalm 59 is a suitable prayer "for the people in time of plague, famine, war or other tribulation," calamities which he himself did not face, and he marks Psalm 78:5 as efficacious "pro christiano populo." Psalm 83, so runs More's comment, has a very

51. E. F. Rogers, *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More* (Princeton, 1947), pp. 521 and 530.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 524.

wide application; it is "a prayer 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." Faced with death, and possibly with torture, More could nevertheless see himself as but one among the many who had prayed over the psalms for centuries. His final annotation reminds us of the man who concerned himself so much with his children's education, but it is applied universally, for all parents, and not just for the Chelsea household. Psalm 105:37 reads "And they immolated their sons, and their daughters to devils," one count in a long indictment of the sins of the Israelites. More generalizes the sentiment deftly: "This they do who bring up their children badly."

Yet the central theme of the marginalia remains poignantly personal as they reflect, again and again, the battle between the "*demonēs*" on the one hand and the forces of good on the other. More uses the words "*demon*" or "*demonēs*" forty times in his notes, and it is surely significant that he identifies these evil spirits not merely with the traditional devils but also, following the psalmist, with the all too human enemies that encompass him. At Psalm 54:24, for example, which speaks of "bloody and deceitful men," More writes "*demonēs*" in his book, and he identifies the "inimicis" of Psalm 58:2 as "uel *demonēs* uel malos homines." When More wishes to refer specifically to Satan, he uses the singular (and etymologically correct)⁵³ word "*diabolus*," but he employs this form only three times in the course of his annotations. More had no illusions about the nature of the evil which he was confronting. He knew all too well that men as well as devils beset him, enemies like those which he described in his note to Psalm 57:2, "hypocrites, who speak of justice, and who judge unjustly or act iniquitously."

To read the marginalia now, over four hundred years after More wrote them, is to relive with him the anxious agony that was his as he meditated on his prayer book. His faith, in himself as well as in God, is never really in doubt, for, poised against the many annotations that mention "tribulation," "spiritual wickedness," "temptation," and "demons" are others that pray for "consolation," "help," "hope," and "trust." The typical pattern, which can be found in several sequences

53. For the etymologies of "demon" and "diabolus," see the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The former term had both a good and bad connotation, the Socratic *daimon* or the evil spirits which plagued men. More's three uses of "diabolus" occur at 30:9, 60:4, and 72:1.

of the notes, is like that which occurs in the five marginalia next to Psalm 26. Beside the first two verses,

Our Lord is my illumination and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
 Our Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I
 be afraid?

Whilst the harmful approach upon me to eat my flesh,
 mine enemies that trouble me, themselves are
 weakened, and are fallen,

More wrote "fiducia" (verse 1) and "demonēs" (verse 2). Then at verse 12, "Deliver me not in to the souls of them that trouble me, because unjust witnesses have risen up against me, and iniquity hath lied to itself," he entered "calumnia" in the margin. For verse 13, "I believe to see the good things of our Lord in the land of the living," he added the words "spes et fiducia," and, finally, for the last verse of the psalm, "Expect our Lord, do manfully; and let thy heart take courage, and expect thou our Lord," his comment is "patientia." The movement is stark and simple: first the opposing forces, the enemies and faith; then the "false accusation," which is compensated for immediately by an upsurge of hope and a resolute patience. The little drama played out here is of course present in the psalm itself, but More has made the psalmist's mood and feeling his own, seeing himself, enclosed in his cell, as participating in the actions performed on an ageless stage.