

Thomas More  
A dyaloge . . . touching the pestylent  
sect of Luther and Tyndale . . .  
London  
1529

A dyaloge of syr Thomas  
More knyghte: one of the  
counsayll of oure souerayne lorde the kyng  
and chauncellour of hys duchy of Lan=  
caster. Wherin be treated dyuers  
matters, as of the veneration  
and worshyp of ymages and  
relyques, prayng to  
sayntys, and goyng  
on pylgrymage.  
Wyth many othere  
thyngys touching the  
pestylent sect of Luther and  
Tyndale, by the tone bygone in  
Saxony, and by the tother  
laboryd to be brought in  
to England.

.....

<book 4, chapter 14>

119rb

. . . robbed, polluted, and pulled downe  
many a goodly chyrch of Cryst.

And now wher they lay for a profe,  
that god were not contented wyth batayl made  
against infydelys, the losse and mynyshment of  
crystendom synnys that guyse bygan, they fare  
as dyd onys an olde sage father fole in  
Kent at such tyme as dyuers men of wor  
shyp assembled old folk of the cuntre to com=  
mune and deuyse about the amendement of  
Sandwich hauen. At which time as they  
bygan fyrst to enserche by reason and by the re=  
port of old men there about, what thing  
had ben thoccasyon that so good an hauen was  
in so few yerys so sore decayed, and suche  
sandys rysen, and such shalow flattys made  
therewyth, that ryght smal vessels had now  
mych worke to come in at dyuers tydys,  
where grete shyps were wythin few yeris  
passed accustomed to ryde wythout dyffy=  
cultie, And som layng the fawt to Good=  
wyn sandys, sum to the landis Inned by dy=  
uers owners in the Ile of Tenate oute  
of the chanell, in which the se was wont  
to cumpace the Isle and brynge the vessels  
round about yt, whose course at the ebbe  
was wont to scoure the hauen, whych  
now the see excluded thense, for lacke  
of such course and scouryng ys chouked  
vp wyth sande, as they thus alledged  
dyuers men dyuers causes, there starte  
vp one good old father and sayd, ye may=  
sters say euery man what he wyll, cha  
marked this mater as wel as sum other,

and by god I wote how it waxed nought  
well ynoughe. For I knew yt good, and  
haue marked so chaue when it bygan to  
wax wors. And what hath hurt it good  
father quod these gentylnen? By my

119va

fayth maysters quod he yonder same ten=  
terden stepell and nothyng ellys, that by  
the masse sholde twere a fayre fyshepole.  
Why hath the stepell hurt the hauen good  
father quod they? Nay byr lady maysters  
quod he ych can not tell you wel why, but  
chote well yt hath. For by god I knew  
yt a good hauen tyll the steple was byl=  
ded. And by the Mary masse cha marked  
yt well yt neuer throue synnys. And  
thus wysely spake these holy Luthera=  
nys, which sowing scysmes and sedycyons  
among crysten people, lay the losse ther  
of to the wythstandyng of the Turkes  
inuasyon, and the resystynge of hys ma=  
lyce, where they sholde rather yf they  
had eny reason in theyr heddys, lay yt  
to the contrary. . . .

r. cholde

r. speke

<This is, as far as I know, the first recorded version of the silly story about Tenterden steeple. (The passage is quoted by Lewis (1723, pp. 4–5); that is how I came across it.) As More tells the story here, the point of it is its absurdity. This old man insists on seeing a causal connection where no causal connection can possibly exist. (Lutherans, says More, are inclined to do the same.) The old man proves himself to be a figure of fun by swearing all the time, and by speaking in Kentish dialect (or in More's idea of Kentish dialect). If I understand him correctly, he says 'ych' for 'I', 'cha' or 'chaue' for 'I have', 'cholde' for 'I would', 'chote' for 'I wot, I know'. (Probably More expects us to join in the joke by mispronouncing 'f' as 'v' – 'a vair vishpool', vor example. Londoners found that hilarious.) The printed text uses many abbreviations, which I have silently expanded. More's spelling makes it hard enough to read, without letting other obstacles get in the way. – C.F. February 2011.>