

**Letter from John Donne, Fleet Prison, to Sir George More, 1601/1602  
February 11: autograph manuscript signed, Papers of the More family of  
Loseley Park, Surrey. Transcription by Early Modern Manuscripts Online  
(EMMO). MS L.b.527, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.**

leaf 1 recto

S<sup>r</sup>

The inward accusacons in my Conscience, that I haue offended yo<sup>w</sup>, beyond any ability of redeeming yt by me, and the feeling of my lords heauy displeasure, following yt, forceth me to wright though I know my fault make my l<sup>r</sup>s very vngracious to yo<sup>w</sup>. Almighty God whom I call to witnesse, that all my greife ys, that I haue in this manner offended yo<sup>w</sup>, and him, direct yo<sup>w</sup> to beleeeue, that w<sup>th</sup>owt of an humble and afflicted hart I now wright to yo<sup>w</sup> And since we haue no meanes to move God, when we he wyll not hear or prayers, to hear them, but by prayeng, I humbly beseech yo<sup>w</sup>, to allow, by his gracious exam=ple, my penitence so good Entertainmt, as yt may haue a beeleife, and a pittie. Of nothings in this one fault, that I hear layd to me, can I disculpe my selfe, but of the contemtuous and despightfull purpose towards yo<sup>w</sup>, w<sup>ch</sup> I hear ys surmised against me. But for my dutifull regard to my late lady, for my Religion, and for my lyfe, I refer my selfe to them, that may haue observd them. I humbly beseeche yo<sup>w</sup>, to take of these waytes, and to put my fault into the balance alone, as yt was donne, w<sup>th</sup>owt the addi<sup>o</sup>n of these yll reports And though then yt wyll be to heauy for me, yett then yt wyll less greiue yo<sup>w</sup> to pardon yt. How litle and how short the comfort and pleasure of Destroyeng ys, I know y<sup>r</sup> wisdome and Religion informs yo<sup>w</sup>. And though perchance yo<sup>w</sup> intend not vtter Destruction, yett the way through w<sup>ch</sup> I fall towards yt, ys so headlong, that beeing thus pushd, I shall soone be at bottome. ffor yt pleaseth God, from whom I acknowledge the punishmt to be iust, to accompany my other ylls, w<sup>th</sup> so much sicknes as I have noe refuge, but that of Mercy, w<sup>ch</sup> I beg, of

leaf 1 verso

of him, my l, and yo<sup>w</sup> w<sup>ch</sup> I hope yo<sup>w</sup> wyll not repent to haue afforded me, since all my Endevors, and the whole course of my lyfe shalbe bent, to make my selfe worthy of her<sup>^yo<sup>r</sup></sup> fauor, and her loue, whose peace of Conscience, and quiett, I know must be much wounded and violencd, if y<sup>r</sup> displeasure sever vs. I can psent nothing to y<sup>r</sup> thoughts, w<sup>ch</sup> yo<sup>w</sup> knew not before, but my submission, my repentance, and my hartly desire, to do any thing satisfactory to y<sup>r</sup> iust displeasure: of w<sup>ch</sup> I beseech yo<sup>w</sup> to

make a charitable vse and Construction. from the  
fleete 11<sup>o</sup> febr: 1601

Yo<sup>rs</sup> in all faythfull duty  
and obedience.  
I. Donne

**leaf 2 recto**

**leaf 2 verso**

To the right wor<sup>ll</sup>  
S<sup>r</sup> George More knight.