UTOPIA

TEXT AND TRANSLATION
DE OPTIMO
REIPUBLICAE STATU
DEQUE NOVA INSULA
UTOPIA

libellus vere aureus,
nec minus salutaris quam festivus,
clarissimi disertissimique viri
THOMAE MORI
inclutae civitatis Londinensis civis
et Vicecomitis
ON THE BEST
STATE OF A COMMONWEALTH
AND ON THE NEW ISLAND
OF UTOPIA

A Truly Golden Handbook,
No Less Beneficial than Entertaining,
by the Most Distinguished and Eloquent Author
THOMAS MORE
Citizen and Undersheriff of the Famous City
of London
ERASMUS ROTERODAMUS IOANNII FROBENIO
COMPATRI SUO CHARISSIMO S.D.¹

Cum ante hac omnia Mori mei mihi supra modum semper placuerint, tamen ipse meo iudicio nonnulli diffidebam ob artissimam inter nos amicitiam. Ceterum ubi video doctos uno ore omnes meo subscribere suffragio ac vehementius etiam divinum hominum ingenium suspicere, non quod plus ament sed quod plus cernant, serio plado meae sententiae nec verebor posthac quod sentio palam eloqui. Quid tandem non praestitisset admirabilis ista naturae felicitas si hoc ingenium instituisset Italia? si totum Musarum sacrarum vacaret, si ad iustam frugem ac velut autumnum suum maturesset? Epi-
grammata lusit adolescens admodum ac pleraque puer. Britanniam suam numquam egressus est nisi semel atque iterum, principis sui nomine legatione fugens apud Flandros. Praeter rem uxoriam, praeter curas domesticas, praeter publici munus functionem et causarum undas, tot tantisque regni negotiis distrahitur, ut mireris esse otium vel cogitandi de libris.

¹ This letter appears in 1518M and N, but not in 1516 or 1517.
ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM TO HIS VERY DEAR FRIEND JOHANN FROBEN, THE FATHER OF HIS GODSON, GREETINGS

While heretofore I have always thought extremely well of all of my friend More’s writings, yet I rather mistrusted my own judgement because of the very close friendship between us. But when I see all the learned unanimously subscribe to my opinion, and esteem even more highly than I the divine wit of this man, not because they love him better but because they see more deeply into his merits, I am wholly confirmed in my opinion and no longer shrink from saying openly what I feel. How admiringly would his fortunate disposition have stood forth if his genius had been nurtured in Italy? If he had devoted his whole energy to the service of the Muses, maturing gradually, as it were, towards his own proper harvest! As a youth, he toyed with epigrams, many written when he was only a lad. He has never left Britain except a couple of times to serve his prince as an ambassador to Flanders. Apart from the cares of a married man and the responsibilities of his household, apart from his official post and floods of legal cases, he is distracted by so many and such important matters of state business that you would marvel he finds any free time at all for books.

1 In a letter of c. 29 September 1516, More told Erasmus that he was anxious that Utopia ‘be handsomely set off with the highest of recommendations, if possible, from several people, both intellectuals and distinguished statesmen’ (Selected Letters, p. 76). Erasmus complied, in spades. The practice of publishing books with buttressing commendations was common then as now, but the amount of ancillary material in Utopia is unusual. The letters and poems are valuable, though, in indicating how Utopia struck the humanist readers for whom More appears primarily to have intended it. We print all these items, in the position and order in which they occur in 1518; this and the following letters, poems and other materials before More’s text; three other items after it (pp. 210–7). For Beatus Rhenanus’ prefatory remarks about Utopia, and for three items that had appeared in previous editions but were not reprinted in 1518, see pp. 258–60.

2 It is interesting that Erasmus’ own tribute – which implies some reservations – did not appear until this third edition of the book. The addressee, Johann Froben (c. 1460–1527), was the distinguished printer whose Basel shop produced the edition and its November successor.

3 Actually More had visited the Universities of Louvain and Paris in 1508 (see Selected Letters, p. 17). The Flanders missions were the one during which he began Utopia (1515) and another in 1517.
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Proinde minimus ad te progynasmata illius et Utopiam ut (si videtur) tuix excusa typia orbi posteronatique commendentur. Quando ea est tuae officinae auctortias ut liber vel huc nomine placeat eruditis si cognitum sit o Frobenianis aedibus prodisse. Bene vale cum optimo socero, coniuge suavissima, ac mellitissimis liberis. Erasmum filiulum mihi tecum communem, inter literas natum, fac optimis literis instituendum cures.

Louanii VIII Cal. Septemb. An. M.D.XVII.

GUILLIELMUS BUDAeus THOMAE LUPSETO
ANGLO S.²

Gratiam sane ingentem a nobis inisti, Lupsete adolescentum docetissime, qui me recta mihi UTOPIA THOMAE MORI ad iucundissimae simul et usui futuroe lectionis intentionem avertisti. Nam cum a me dudum precibus id contendisses, id quod meapte ipse sponte magnopere exoptaturus eram, ut THOMAE LINACRI ² medici utraque lingua praestantissimi libros sex de sanitate tuenda legerem, quos ille ex Galeni monumentis latinitate nuper ita donavit, vel quibus ipse potius latinitatem, ut si omnia eius auctoris opera (quaeg ego instar omnis medicinalae esse puto) Latina tandem flant, non magnopere tum medicorum schola Graecae linguae cognitionem desideratura videatur, eum librum ex schedis

² Budé's letter appears in 1517 and 1528M, N.
BUDE TO LUPSET

For this reason I am sending you his Exercises¹ and his Utopia, so that, if you think proper, their appearance under your imprint may commend them to the world and to posterity. For the authority of your firm is such that a book is sure of pleasing the learned as soon as it is known to issue from the house of Froben. Farewell to you, to your excellent father-in-law,² your dear wife, and your delightful children. Make sure that Erasmus, the little son we share in common, and who was born among books, is educated in the best of them.

Louvain, 25 August 1517

GUILLAUME BUDE TO THOMAS LUPSET OF ENGLAND, GREETINGS³

Most learned of young men, Lupset, you have left me enormously in your debt by presenting me with the Utopia of Thomas More, and thereby introducing me to an extremely amusing and profitable book. In fact, you had recently asked me to do what on my own account I was more than ready to do — that is, to read over the six books of Galen, On Protecting One’s Health, which the physician Thomas Linacre, a man equally skilled in both languages, lately translated from the extant originals, endowing them with Latinity — or rather bestowing them on Latinity — in such a way that if all the works of this author (who all by himself, in my view, comprehends the entire science of medicine) were turned into such Latin, the medical profession would then not need to know Greek. I consider

¹ The Exercises (Progræmæsma) were a series of rival translations by More and the grammarian William Lily: both men made Latin versions of the same Greek epigrams. The Progræmæsma were bound with Utopia in the Froben editions, along with a second series of epigrams by More and a collection of poems by Erasmus.
² Wolfgang Lachner, a bookseller who played an important part in Froben’s business.
³ While studying in Paris in 1517, Thomas Lupset (c. 1498–1530) supervised the printing of two of Thomas Linacre’s translations of works by Galen (the great medical authority of classical Greece), and of the second edition of Utopia. He also made the acquaintance of Budé (1468–1540), the foremost French humanist of the time. Budé’s lengthy epistle, which typifies humanist rhetoric at its most florid, was first published in the 1517 edition. Erasmus described the letter as an ‘elegant preface’ for More’s book (CWE, V, 316), and he made a point of getting it into the Basel editions. See below, p. 272.
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LINACRI tumultaria lectione ita percurri (quarum mihi usum tantisper a te indultum summi loco beneficii ducro) ut ea lectione multum me profectisse existimem, sed ex libri editione quae nunc a te sedulo procuratur in officinis huius urbis, ego maiores etiam profectum mihi spondeam. Hoc nomine cum me tibi obstrictum esse satis crederem, ecce tu mihi velut prioris beneficii vel appendicem vel auctarium UTOPIAM illum MORI donasti, hominis in primis acris, ingenioque ameno, et in rerum humanarum aestimatione vesteris.

Eum librum cum ruri in manibus cursiendo, satagendo, operis imperiando haberem (partim enim nosti, partim audisti villaticis me negotias alterum iam hunc annum multum operae impendisse), usqueadæus eius lectione auctus sum cognitis et perpensis Utopianorum moribus et institutis ut paene rei familiaris procurationem immerisem atque etiam abiercim, cum nugas eæ viderem artem omnem industriamque oeconomiam, omnesque¹ omnino curam census ampliatricem.

Qua tamen ipsa omne genus mortali velut oestro quodam intesino et congenito exagitari nemo est qui non videat et intelligat, ut legitimarum prope dixerim et civilium artium ac disciplinarum eum esse scopum lateri necesse sit: ut tam livida quam accurata sollertia alter ab altero, quicum civilitatis ius ei et interdum gentilitatis intereedit, quippeam semper abducat, abstrahat, abradat, abiret, exprimat, extundat, exculpatur, exsorquet, excutiat, excudat, subducat, suffretur, supplet, involvet, legibusque partim conventionibus, partim auctoribus, auferat et intervetart.

Id adeo magis in eis gentibus apud quas iura quae civilia et pontificia vocantur amplius in utroque foro valent. Quorum moribus et institutis eam invaluisses opinionem nemo non videt ut homines cautionem prudentes, vel captionion potius, et inconsultorum civium auctipes, et formularum, id est excipularum opifices, ac pacilis iuris callentissimi, et litium consciencatores iurisque controversi, perversi, inversi, consulti, anticites esse iustitiae aequitasque existimentur, solique digni qui de aequo bonoque responsent, atque etiam (quod maius est multo) qui cum imperio ac postestate statuant.

¹ omnesque supplied from 1517; omitted 1518M, N.

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BUDÉ TO LUPSET

your lending to me for so long a time the manuscripts of Linacre
an act of the highest generosity; I believe I profited immensely
from my first hasty reading of them, and I promise myself even
richer rewards from the printed volume which you are just now
busily ushering through the presses of this city. For this reason I
already thought myself sufficiently in your debt; and now, as an
appendix or supplement to your former gift, you send me the
_Utopia_ of More, a man of the keenest wit, the most agreeable
temper and the most profound experience in judging human affairs.

I took his book with me to the country and kept it in my hands
as I bustled about, in constant activity, supervising the various
workmen (for you no doubt know, or have at least heard, that for
two years now I have been absorbed in business connected with
my country house); but when I read it I was so fascinated with
learning about and reflecting on the customs of the Utopians that
I almost forgot and even dismissed entirely the management of my
household affairs. What nonsense, I thought, is all this bustle over
maintaining a household, this whole business of constantly accumu-
lating more and more!

And yet this appetite, like a hidden parasite rooted in our flesh
from birth, preys on the whole human race – there is no one who
does not see and understand that fact. I might almost say we are
bound to admit that this is the real end of legal training and the
profession of the civil law: to make each man act with ingrained
and calculated malice towards the neighbour to whom he is linked
by ties of citizenship and sometimes of blood. He is always grab-
bing something, taking it away, extorting it, suing for it, squeezing
it out, breaking it loose, gouging it away, twisting it off, snatch-
ing it, snitching it, pinching it, pillering it, pouncing on it –
partly with the tacit complicity of the laws, partly with their direct
sanction, he carries off what he wants and makes it his own.

This is particularly frequent in those countries where the two
codes of law, called civil and canonical, exercise their double juris-
diction more widely. Everyone knows that through their precedents
and institutions the opinion has solidified that only men skilled in
the ways – or perhaps just the wiles – of the law, only those who
set snares for unwary citizens, artists of the legal phrase or fraud,
contrivers of complicated contracts, fosterers of litigation, expo-
nents of a perverse, confused and unjust justice – only such men as
these are to be thought the high priests of justice and equity. They
only are qualified to say peremptorily what is just and good; they
only have the authority and power to decide (a much greater
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quid unum quemque habere, quid non habere, quatenus quam-
dique liceat, alueinatis id utique sensus communis iudicio, quippe cum plerique hominum crasis ignorantiae lemis caecci-
estes, tam acquisissam fere causam unum quemque putemus habere quam maxime ius postulat, aut iure subnixus est.

Cum si ad veritatis normam et ad simplicitatis evangelicae praes-
criptum exigere iura velimus, nemo sit tam stupidus quin intelligat, nemo tam vecors quin fateatur si urgeas, tam ius et fas hodie ac
iamdu in sanctionibus pontificis, et ius atque aequum in legibus
civilibus et principum placitis dissidere, quam CHRISTI rerum
humanarum conditoris instituta eiusque discipulorum ritus, ab
eorum decetis et placitis qui Croesi et Mida acervos honorum
finem esse putant et felicitatis cumulum. Adeo si iustitiam finire
nunc velis quomodo priscis auctoris placuit, quae ius suum uni-
cuique tribuat, vel nullibi eam in publico invenias, vel (si dicere id
mihi permettam) culinarium quandam dispensaticem esse ut fatea-
nur necesse sit, sive nunc imperitantium mores spectes, sive civium
inter se et popularium affectus.

Nisi vero a germana mundique aequali iustitia (quod ius naturale
vocant) manasse ius iad contenterint, ut quo quisque plus polleet, eo
etiam plus habeat, quo autem plus habeat, eo plus eminere inter cives
debeat. Quo fit ut iam iure gentium receptum esse vidcamus ut qui
nec arte nec industria memorabili iuvare cives suos et populares pos-
sunt, si modo pactiles illos nexus et contractiles nodos teneant, quies
hominum patrimonim obstringuntur (quoque vulgus ignorantum,}

* An archaic form of quibus.