

Sir Thomas More
Utopia
 Selections from Book Two

Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) was one of the greatest luminaries of the early English Renaissance. He was raised from the age of twelve in the household of John Morton, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor of England, and at fourteen entered the Inns of Court and trained to become a lawyer. He later met and became close friends with Desiderius Erasmus, the great Dutch Humanist. In fact, it was in More's house, on a visit, that Erasmus penned *The Praise of Folly*. After spending four years in a monastery, More left and married, remarrying after his first wife's death and raising a number of children. He spent the rest of his life in public service. After filling a number of posts, he became Lord Chancellor in 1529.

More's relations with the Protestant Reformation, which began in 1517 when Martin Luther nailed his famous 95 Theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany, were complicated. He knew the church was desperately in need of reform, but he was against the new religious tenets promulgated by Luther and others, which he considered heresies. As a minister and Chancellor, he had a number heretics burned at the stake, but when King Henry VIII declared himself head of the church in England in 1533—and Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy and the Treasons Act in 1534—he refused to take the oath of loyalty. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London, and in 1535 he was beheaded for treason. Four hundred years later, in 1935, he was canonized by the Roman Catholic Church.

Utopia was written in Latin in two parts, Book II in 1515, and Book I in 1516. The title is a pun on two Greek words meaning both "No Place" and "Good Place," and many of the names in the dialog are humorous; Hythloday, for example, means "speaker of nonsense." As to More's purpose in writing *Utopia*, and how it is to be understood, scholars are at odds. Some see the work as simply a light, clever work which More began writing while on a diplomatic mission in Flanders. It mixes reality and fantasy and is intended to delight, some of it, like the marriage custom of exhibiting the bride and groom naked to each other before their marriage, simply absurd. On the contrary, some take More's work more seriously and see it as a critique of sixteenth-century society, particularly the divide between the rich and the poor. Still others see it as an example of the genre of "Advice to Princes," such as Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), or the notorious *The Prince* (1532), by Niccolò Machiavelli. Finally, it can also be read (particularly Book II) as a supposed travel narrative. From the time of Columbus and the invention of the printing press in the previous century, such narratives had become extremely popular. They continued to be so well into the eighteenth century, spawning such works of fiction as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Even today, travel is a recognized genre, and science fiction has moved the descriptions to distant worlds and times.

Utopia is a mixture of all these threads. More, being a highly educated Humanist and scholar, as well as a lawyer, government official, and heretic hunter, was, like many famous people before and since (to use Robert Bolt's title), "a man for all seasons."

Utopia lent its name to a whole genre of subsequent works on perfect societies (and thus, by contrast, to the evils of the real societies from which they emerged). It is also the grandfather of more recent dystopias, such as Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984*. Of course, More himself was looking back to the progenitor of all such depictions, Plato's *Republic*. Translated by Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715)

The editor has modernized the text for contemporary students, altering punctuation and Americanizing the spelling. Additional information is provided in brackets, [like this.]

[On the Country of Utopia]

“The island of Utopia is, in the middle, two hundred miles broad, and it is almost the same breadth over a great part of it, but it grows narrower towards both ends. Its figure is not unlike a crescent. Between its horns the sea comes in eleven miles broad, and spreads itself into a great bay, which is environed with land to the compass of about five hundred miles, and is well secured from winds. In this bay there is no great current; the whole coast is, as it were, one continued harbor, which gives all that live in the island great convenience for mutual commerce. But the entry into the bay, occasioned by rocks on the one hand and shallows on the other, is very dangerous. In the middle of it there is one single rock which appears above water, and may, therefore, easily be avoided; and on the top of it there is a tower in which a garrison is kept. The other rocks lie under water and are very dangerous. The channel is known only to the natives; so that if any stranger should enter into the bay without one of their pilots he would run a great danger of shipwreck. For even they themselves could not pass it safe if some marks that are on the coast did not direct their way; and if these should be but a little shifted, any fleet that might come against them, no matter how great it was, would be certainly lost. On the other side of the island there are likewise many harbors, and the coast is so fortified, both by nature and art, that a small number of men can hinder the descent of a great army.

[On Their Towns and Cities]

“He that knows one of their towns knows them all—they are so like one another, except where the land makes some difference. I shall therefore describe one of them, and none is so proper as Amaurote [dim]; for as none is more eminent (all the rest yielding in precedence to this because it is the seat of their supreme council), so there was none of them better known to me, having lived five years all together in it.

“It lies upon the side of a hill, or, rather, rising ground. Its figure is almost square, for from the one side of it, which shoots up almost to the top of the hill, it runs down, in a descent for two miles, to the river Anyder; but it is a little broader the other way that runs along by the bank of that river. The Anyder rises about eighty miles above Amaurote, in a small spring at first. But other brooks falling into it, of which two are more considerable than the rest, as it runs by Amaurote it is grown half a mile broad; but, it still grows larger and larger, till, after sixty miles’ course below it, it is lost in the ocean. Between the town and the sea, and for some miles above the town, it ebbs and flows every six hours with a strong current. The tide comes up about thirty miles, so full that there is nothing but salt water in the river, the fresh water being driven back with its force, and above that, for some miles, the water is brackish. But a little higher, as it runs by the town, it is quite fresh, and when the tide ebbs, it continues fresh all along to the sea. There is a bridge cast over the river, not of timber, but of fair stone, consisting of many stately arches; it lies at that part of the town which is farthest from the sea, so that the ships, without any hindrance, lie all along the side of the town. There is, likewise, another river that runs by it, which, though it is not great, yet it runs pleasantly, for it rises out of the same hill on which the town stands, and so runs down through it and falls into the Anyder [waterless]. The inhabitants have fortified the fountain-head of this river, which rises a little above the towns, so that, if they should happen to be besieged, the

enemy might not be able to stop or divert the course of the water, nor poison it; from thence it is carried, in earthen pipes, to the lower streets. And for those places of the town to which the water of that small river cannot be conveyed, they have great cisterns for receiving rain-water, which supplies what the river does not. The town is surrounded by a high and thick wall, in which there are many towers and forts. There is also a broad and deep ditch, set thick with thorns, cast round three sides of the town, and the river is, instead of the ditch, on the fourth side. The streets are very convenient for all carriage and are well sheltered from the winds. Their buildings are good, and are so uniform that a whole side of a street looks like one house. The streets are twenty feet broad; there are gardens behind all their houses. These are large, but enclosed with buildings, that on all hands face the streets, so that every house has both a door to the street and a back door to the garden. Their doors all have two leaves, which, as they are easily opened, so they shut of their own accord, and, there being no private property among them, every man may freely enter into any house whatsoever. At the end of every ten years, they shift their houses by lots.

[On Their Occupations]

“Agriculture is that which is so universally understood among them that no person, either man or woman, is ignorant of it; they are instructed in it from their childhood, partly by what they learn at school, and partly by practice, they being led out often into the fields about the town, where they not only see others at work but are likewise exercised in it themselves. Besides agriculture, which is so common to them all, every man has some peculiar trade to which he applies himself, such as the manufacture of wool or flax, masonry, smith’s work, or carpenter’s work, for there is no other sort of trade that is in great esteem among them. Throughout the island they wear the same sort of clothes, without any other distinction except what is necessary to distinguish the two sexes and the married and unmarried. The fashion never alters, and as it is neither disagreeable nor uneasy, so it is suited to the climate, and calculated both for their summers and winters. Every family makes their own clothes, but all among them, women as well as men, learn one or other of the trades formerly mentioned. Women, for the most part, work in wool and flax, which best suits their weakness, leaving the more physically-demanding trades to the men. The same trade generally passes down from father to son, inclinations often following descent, but if any man’s genius lies another way he is, by adoption, translated into a family that deals in the trade to which he is inclined; and when that is to be done, care is taken, not only by his father, but by the magistrate, that he may be put to a discreet and good man: and if, after a person has learned one trade, he desires to acquire another, that is also allowed, and is managed in the same manner as the former. When he has learned both, he follows that which he likes best, unless the public has more occasion for the other.

“The chief, and almost the only, business of the Magistrates is to take care that no man may live idly, but that everyone follow his trade diligently; yet they do not wear themselves out with perpetual toil from morning to night, as though they were beasts of burden, which is indeed a heavy slavery and everywhere the common course of life amongst all mechanics except the Utopians. They, however, dividing the day and night into twenty-four hours, appoint six of these for work, three of which are before dinner and three after. They then sup, and at eight o’clock, counting from noon, go to bed and sleep eight hours. The rest of their time, besides that taken up in work, eating and sleeping, is left to every man’s discretion; yet they may not abuse that interval in luxury and idleness, but must employ it in some proper exercise, according to their various inclinations, which is, for the most part, reading.

It is ordinary to have public lectures every morning before daybreak, at which none are obliged to appear but those who are marked out for literature; yet a great many, both men and women, of all ranks go to hear lectures of one sort or other, according to their inclinations: but if others that are not made for contemplation choose rather to employ themselves at that time in their trades, as many of them do, they are not hindered, but are rather commended, as men that take care to serve their country. After supper they spend an hour in some diversion, in summer in their gardens, and in winter in the halls where they eat, and where they entertain each other either with music or discourse. They know nothing of dice, or any such foolish and mischievous games. They have, however, two sorts of games not unlike our chess; one is between numbers, in which one number wins over another; the other resembles a battle between the virtues and the vices, in which the enmity in the vices among themselves, and their agreement against virtue, is not unpleasantly represented. Or the special opposition between the particular virtues and vices is depicted, as well as the methods by which vice either openly assaults or secretly undermines virtue. And virtue, on the other hand, resists it. But the time appointed for labor is to be narrowly examined, otherwise you may imagine that since there are only six hours appointed for work, they may fall under a scarcity of necessary provisions, yet it is so far from being true that this time is not sufficient for supplying them with all things, either necessary or convenient, that it is rather too much, and this you will easily apprehend if you consider how great a part of all other nations is quite idle.

“First, women generally do little, who are the half of mankind; and if some few women are diligent, their husbands are idle. Then consider the great company of idle priests, and of those that are called religious men; add to these all rich men, chiefly those who have estates in land, who are called noblemen and gentlemen, together with their families, made up of idle persons, who are kept more for show than use. Add to these all those strong and lusty beggars that go about pretending some disease to excuse their begging, and upon the whole account you will find that the number of those by whose labors mankind is supplied is much less than you perhaps imagine. For instance, consider how few of those that do work are employed in labors that are of real service, for we, who measure all things by money, give rise to many trades that are both vain and superfluous and serve only to support riot and luxury. If those who work were employed only in such things as the necessities of life require, there would be such an abundance of them that their prices would so sink that tradesmen could not be maintained by their production. If all those who labor producing useless things were set to more profitable employments, and if all those who spend their lives in sloth and idleness (every one of whom consumes as much as any two of the men who work) were forced to labor, you may easily imagine that a small proportion of time would serve for doing all that is either necessary, profitable, or pleasant to mankind, especially while pleasure is kept within its due bounds. This appears very plainly in Utopia, for there, in its great city, and in all the territory that lies round it, you can scarce find five hundred, men or women, who by their age and strength are capable of labor, that are not engaged in it.

Even the Syphogrants, though excused by the law, yet do not excuse themselves, but work, that by their example they may excite the industry of the rest of the people; the like exemption is allowed to those who, being recommended to the people by the priests, are, by the secret suffrage of the Syphogrants, privileged from labor that they may apply themselves wholly to study, and if any of these fall short of those hopes that they seemed at first to give, they are obliged to return to work. On the contrary, sometimes a mechanic so employs his leisure hours as to make a considerable advancement in learning. When that occurs, he is excused from being a tradesman and ranked among their learned men.

[On Domestic Life]

“As their cities are composed of families, so their families are made up of those that are closely related to one another. Their women, when they grow up, are married out, but all the males, both children and grand-children, live still in the same house, in great obedience to their common parent, unless age has weakened his understanding. In that case he that is next to him in age takes his place. But, lest any city should become either too populous, or by an accident grow too small, provision is made that none of their cities may contain above six thousand families, besides those of the country around it. No family may have less than ten or more than sixteen persons in it, but there can be no determined number for the children under age. This rule is easily observed by removing some of the children of a more fruitful couple and giving them to another family that does not have so many. By the same rule, they supply cities that do not increase so fast from others that breed faster, and if there is an increase in population over the whole island, then they draw a number of their citizens out of the several towns and send them to the neighboring continent, where, if they find that the inhabitants have more soil than they can well cultivate, they fix a colony, taking the inhabitants into their society if they are willing to live with them.

“Where the native inhabitants agree of their own accord, they quickly enter into the colonists’ method of life and conform to their rules, and this proves a happiness for both nations; for, according to their constitution, such care is taken of the soil that it becomes fruitful enough for both, though it might be otherwise too narrow and barren for any one of them. But if the natives refuse to conform themselves to their laws, the colonists drive them out of those bounds which they mark out for themselves, and use force if they resist. They account it a just cause of war for a nation to hinder others from possessing a part of that soil of which they make no use, but which is allowed to lie idle and uncultivated, since every man has, by the law of nature, a right to such a waste portion of the earth as is necessary for his subsistence. If an accident has so lessened the number of the inhabitants of any of their towns that it cannot be made up from the other towns of the island without diminishing them too much (which is said to have fallen out but twice since they were first a people, when great numbers were carried off by the plague), the loss is then supplied by recalling as many as are wanted from their colonies, for they will abandon these rather than suffer the towns in the island to sink too low.

“But to return to their manner of living in society: the oldest man of every family, as has been already said, is its governor; wives serve their husbands, and children their parents, and always the younger serves the elder. Every city is divided into four equal parts, and in the middle of each there is a market-place. What is brought there is produced by different families and is carried from there to houses appointed for that purpose, where all things of a kind are put together. There every father goes, and takes whatever he or his family are in need of, without either paying for it or leaving anything in exchange. There is no reason for giving a denial to any person, since there is such plenty of everything among them, and there is no danger of a man’s asking for more than he needs, since they have no inducements to do this because they are sure they shall always be supplied. It is fear of want that makes animals either greedy or ravenous; but, besides fear, there is in man a pride that makes him fancy it a particular glory to excel others in pomp and excess. However, by the laws of the Utopians, there is no room for this.

“Near these markets there are others for all sorts of provisions, where there are not only herbs, fruits, and bread, but also fish, fowl, and cattle. There are also, outside their towns, places appointed near running water for killing beasts and washing away their filth, which is done by their slaves; for they suffer none of their citizens to kill their cattle, because they think that pity

and good-nature, which are among the best of those affections that are born with us, are much impaired by the butchering of animals; nor do they suffer anything that is foul or unclean to be brought within their towns, lest the air should be infected by ill-smells, which might prejudice their health.

“In every street there are great halls that lie at an equal distance from each other, distinguished by particular names. The Syphogrants dwell in those that are set over thirty families, fifteen lying on one side of it, and as many on the other. In these halls they all meet and have their repasts; the stewards of every one of them come to the market-place at an appointed hour, and according to the number of those that belong to the hall they carry home provisions. But they take more care of their sick than of any others; these are lodged and provided for in public hospitals. Every town has four hospitals, built without their walls, that are so large they may pass for little towns; by this means, if they ever have a number of sick persons, they can lodge them conveniently, and at such a distance that infectious diseases may be kept so far from the rest that there can be no danger of contagion. The hospitals are furnished and stored with all things that are convenient for the ease and recovery of the sick; and those that are put in them are looked after with such tender and watchful care, and are so constantly attended by their skillful physicians, that, as none is sent to them against their will, so there is scarce one in a whole town who, if he should fall ill, would not choose rather to go there than lie sick at home.

[On Their Travels]

“If any man has a mind to visit his friends that live in some other town, or desires to travel and see the rest of the country, he obtains leave very easily from the Syphogrants and Tranibores, when there is no particular occasion for him at home. Such as travel carry with them a passport from the Prince, which both certifies the license that is granted for travelling, and limits the time of their return. They are furnished with a wagon and a slave, who drives the oxen and looks after them. However, unless there are women in the company, the wagon is sent back at the end of the journey as a needless encumbrance. While they are on the road they carry no provisions with them, yet they want for nothing, but are everywhere treated as if they were at home. If they stay in any place longer than a night, each follows his proper occupation and is very well used by those of his own trade; but if any man goes out of the city to which he belongs without leave, and is found rambling without a passport, he is severely treated. He is punished as a fugitive and sent home disgracefully. If he falls again into the like fault, he is condemned to slavery. If any man has a mind to travel only over the precinct of his own city, he may freely do it, with his father’s permission and his wife’s consent, but when he comes into any of the country houses, if he expects to be entertained by them, he must labor with them and conform to their rules; and if he does this, he may freely go over the whole precinct, being then as useful to the city to which he belongs as if he were still within it. Thus you see that there are no idle persons among the Utopians, nor pretenses for excusing any from labor. There are no taverns, no ale-houses, nor stews among them, nor any other occasions of corrupting each other, of getting into corners, or forming themselves into parties; all men live in full view of one another, so that all are obliged both to perform their ordinary tasks and employ themselves well in their spare hours. It is certain that a people thus ordered must live in great abundance of all things, and these being equally distributed among them, no man can want or be obliged to beg.

[On Philosophy and Speculation]

“As to moral philosophy, they have the same disputes among them as we have here. They examine what is properly good, both for the body and the mind, and whether any outward thing can be called truly *good*, or if that term belongs only to the endowments of the soul. They inquire, likewise, into the nature of virtue and pleasure. But their chief dispute is concerning the happiness of a man, and wherein it consists—whether in some one thing or in a great many. They seem, indeed, more inclined to that opinion that places, if not the whole, yet the chief part of a man’s happiness, in pleasure. And, what may seem more strange, they make use of arguments even from religion, notwithstanding its severity, for the support of that opinion so indulgent to pleasure. For they never dispute concerning happiness without fetching some arguments from the principles of religion as well as from natural reason, since, without the former, they reckon that all our inquiries after happiness must be but conjectural and defective.

“These are their religious principles: That the soul of man is immortal, and that God of His goodness has designed that it should be happy, and that He has, therefore, appointed rewards for good and virtuous actions, and punishments for vice, to be distributed after this life. Though these principles of religion are passed down among them by tradition, they think that even reason itself determines a man to believe and acknowledge them. They freely confess that if these were taken away, no man would be so insensible as not to seek after pleasure by all possible means, lawful or unlawful, using only this caution—that a lesser pleasure might not stand in the way of a greater, and that no pleasure ought to be pursued that should draw a great deal of pain after it; for they think it the maddest thing in the world to pursue virtue, that is a sour and difficult thing, and not only to renounce the pleasures of life, but willingly to undergo much pain and trouble, if a man has no prospect of a reward. And what reward can there be for one that has passed his whole life, not only without pleasure, but in pain, if there is nothing to be expected after death?

“Yet they do not place happiness in all sorts of pleasures, but only in those that in themselves are good and honest. There is a group among them who place happiness in bare virtue; others think that our natures are conducted by virtue to happiness, as that which is the chief good of man. They define virtue thus—that it is living according to Nature, and think that we are made by God for that end; they believe that a man then follows the dictates of Nature when he pursues or avoids things according to the direction of reason. They say that the first dictate of reason is the kindling in us of a love and reverence for the Divine Majesty, to whom we owe both all that we have and all that we can ever hope for. In the next place, reason directs us to keep our minds as free from passion and as cheerful as we can, and that we should consider ourselves as bound by the ties of good-nature and humanity to use our utmost endeavors to help forward the happiness of all other persons. For there was never such morose and severe pursuer of virtue, such an enemy to pleasure, that though he set hard rules for men to undergo, much pain and many duties and other rigors, yet did not at the same time advise them to do all they could in order to relieve and ease the miserable, and who did not represent gentleness and good-nature as amiable dispositions. From this Utopians infer that if a man ought to advance the welfare and comfort of the rest of mankind—there being no virtue more proper and peculiar to our nature than to ease the miseries of others, to free them from trouble and anxiety and furnish them with the comforts of life, in which pleasure consists—then Nature much more vigorously leads us to do all this for ourselves. A life of pleasure is either a real evil, and in that case we ought not to assist others in their pursuit of it, but, on the contrary, keep them from it all we can—as from that which is most hurtful and deadly—or it is a good thing, so that we not only may but should help others to it. Why, then, should a man not begin with

himself, since no man can be more bound to look after the good of another than after his own? Nature cannot direct us to be good and kind to others, and yet at the same time to be unmerciful and cruel to ourselves. Thus as they define virtue to live according to Nature, so they imagine that Nature prompts all people on to seek after pleasure as the end of all they do. They also observe that in order to support the pleasures of life, Nature inclines us to enter into society; for there is no man so much raised above the rest of mankind as to be the only favorite of Nature, who, on the contrary, seems to have placed on a level all those that belong to the same species. Upon this, they infer that no man ought to seek his own happiness so eagerly as to interfere with the happiness of others; and therefore they think that not only all agreements between private persons ought to be observed, but likewise that all those laws ought to be kept which either a good prince has published in due form, or to which a people, neither oppressed with tyranny nor circumvented by fraud, has consented, for distributing those conveniences of life which afford us all our pleasures.

“They think it is an evidence of true wisdom for a man to pursue his own advantage as far as the laws allow it, although they account it piety to prefer the public good to one’s private concerns, but they think it unjust for a man to seek for pleasure by snatching another man’s pleasures from him. On the contrary, they think it a sign of a gentle and good soul for a man to dispense with his own advantage for the good of others, and that by this means a good man finds as much pleasure one way as he parts with another; for he may expect the like from others when he may come to need it, but, if they should fail him, yet the sense of his good action, and the reflections that he makes on the love and gratitude of those whom he has so obliged, gives the mind more pleasure than the body could have found in that from which it had restrained itself. They are also persuaded that God will make up the loss of those small pleasures with a vast and endless joy, of which religion easily convinces a good soul.

“Thus, upon an inquiry into the whole matter, they reckon that all our actions, and even all our virtues, terminate in pleasure, as our chief end and greatest happiness; and they call every motion or state, either of body or mind, in which Nature teaches us to delight, a pleasure. Thus they cautiously limit pleasure only to those appetites to which Nature leads us; for they say that Nature leads us only to those delights to which reason, as well as sense, carries us, and by which we neither injure any other person nor lose the possession of greater pleasures, as long as those draw no troubles after them. But they look upon those delights which men by a foolish, though common, mistake call pleasure, as if they could change as easily the nature of things as the use of words, as things that greatly obstruct their real happiness, instead of advancing it, because they so entirely possess the minds of those that are once captivated by them with a false notion of pleasure that there is no room left for pleasures of a truer or purer kind.

[On Marriage, Law, and Slavery]

“Their women are not married before eighteen nor their men before two-and-twenty, and if any of them run into forbidden embraces before marriage they are severely punished, and the privilege of marriage is denied them unless they can obtain a special warrant from the Prince. Such disorders cast a great reproach upon the master and mistress of the family in which they happen, for it is supposed that they have failed in their duty. The reason of punishing this so severely is that they think if they were not strictly restrained from all vagrant appetites, very few would engage in a state in which they venture the quiet of their whole lives, by being confined to one person, and are obliged to endure all the inconveniences by which it is accompanied. In choosing their wives they use a method that would appear to us very absurd and ridiculous, but it is constantly observed

among them, and is accounted perfectly consistent with wisdom. Before marriage some grave matron presents the bride, naked, whether she is a virgin or a widow, to the bridegroom, and after that some grave man presents the bridegroom, naked, to the bride. We, indeed, both laughed at this, and condemned it as very indecent. But they, on the other hand, wondered at the folly of the men of all other nations, who, if they are but to buy a horse of a small value, are so cautious that they will see every part of him, and take off both his saddle and all his other tackle, that there may be no secret ulcer hid under any of them, and that yet in the choice of a wife, on which depends the happiness or unhappiness of the rest of his life, a man should venture upon trust, and only see about a hands breadth of the face, all the rest of the body being covered, under which may lie hid what may be contagious as well as loathsome. All men are not so wise as to choose a woman only for her good qualities, and even wise men consider the body as that which adds not a little to the mind, and it is certain there may be some such deformity covered with clothes as may totally alienate a man from his wife, when it is too late to part with her; if such a thing is discovered after marriage a man has no remedy but patience; they, therefore, think it is reasonable that there should be good provision made against such mischievous frauds.

“There was a greater reason for them to make a regulation in this matter, for they are the only people of those parts that neither allow of polygamy nor of divorces except in the case of adultery or insufferable perverseness. In these cases, the Senate dissolves the marriage and grants the injured person leave to marry again, but the guilty are made infamous and are never allowed the privilege of a second marriage. None are suffered to put away their wives against their wills, because of any great calamity that may have fallen on their persons, for they look on it as the height of cruelty and treachery to abandon either of the married persons when they need most the tender care of their consort, and that chiefly in the case of old age, which, as it carries many diseases along with it, so it is a disease in itself. But it frequently falls out that when a married couple do not well agree, they, by mutual consent, separate, and find out other persons with whom they hope they may live more happily. Yet this is not done without obtaining leave of the Senate, which never admits of a divorce but upon a strict inquiry made, both by the senators and their wives, into the grounds upon which it is desired, and even when they are satisfied concerning the reasons of it they go on but slowly, for they imagine that too great easiness in granting leave for new marriages would very much shake the kindness of married people. They punish severely those that defile the marriage bed; if both parties are married they are divorced, and the injured persons may marry one another, or whom they please, but the adulterer and the adulteress are condemned to slavery, yet if either of the injured persons cannot shake off the love of the married person they may live with them still in that state, but they must follow them to that labor to which the slaves are condemned, and sometimes the repentance of the condemned, together with the unshaken kindness of the innocent and injured person, has prevailed so far with the Prince that he has revoked the sentence. However, those that relapse after they are once pardoned are punished with death.

“Their law does not determine the punishment for other crimes, but that is left to the Senate, to temper it according to the circumstances of the fact. Husbands have power to correct their wives and parents to chastise their children, unless the fault is so great that a public punishment is thought necessary for striking terror into others. For the most part slavery is the punishment even of the greatest crimes, for as that is no less terrible to the criminals themselves than death, so the Utopians think that preserving them in a state of servitude is more to the benefit of the commonwealth than killing them, since, as their labor is a greater benefit to the public than their death could be, so the sight of their misery is a more lasting terror to other men than that which would be given by their death. If their slaves rebel, and will not bear their yoke and submit to the labor that is enjoined

them, they are treated as wild beasts that cannot be kept in order, neither by a prison nor by their chains, and are at last put to death. But those who bear their punishment patiently, and are so much wrought on by that pressure that lies so hard on them that it appears they are really more troubled for the crimes they have committed than for the miseries they suffer, they are not out of hope, for either the Prince will, by his prerogative, or the people, by their intercession, restore them again to their liberty, or, at least, very much mitigate their slavery. He that tempts a married woman to adultery is no less severely punished than he that commits it, for they believe that a deliberate design to commit a crime is equal to the fact itself, since its not taking effect does not make the person that miscarried in his attempt at all the less guilty.

[On Religion and Burial Customs]

“There are several sorts of religions, not only in different parts of the island, but even in every town; some worshipping the sun, others the moon or one of the planets. Some worship such men as have been eminent in former times for virtue or glory, not only as ordinary deities, but as the supreme god. Yet the greater and wiser sort of them worship none of these, but adore one eternal, invisible, infinite, and incomprehensible Deity, a Being that is far above all our apprehensions, that is spread over the whole universe, not by His bulk, but by His power and virtue. Him they call the Father of All, and acknowledge that the beginnings, the increase, the progress, the vicissitudes, and the end of all things come only from Him. Nor do they offer divine honors to any but to Him alone. And, indeed, though they differ concerning other things, yet all agree in this: that they think there is one Supreme Being that made and governs the world, whom they call, in the language of their country, Mithras. They differ in this: that one thinks the god whom he worships is this Supreme Being, and another thinks that his idol is that god; but they all agree in one principle, that whoever is this Supreme Being, He is also that great essence to whose glory and majesty all honors are ascribed by the consent of all nations.

“By degrees they fall off from the various superstitions that are among them, and grow up to that one religion that is the best and most honored. There is no doubt that all the other superstitions would have vanished long ago if some of those who advised them to lay aside their superstitions had not met with unhappy accidents, which, being considered as inflicted by heaven, made the people afraid that the gods whose worship they had abandoned had interposed and revenged themselves on those who despised their authority.

“Those among them who have not received our religion do not harm any from converting to it, and they use no one ill that goes over to it, so that during the time I was there only one man was punished on this occasion. He, being newly baptized, did, notwithstanding all that we could say to the contrary, dispute publicly concerning the Christian religion, with more zeal than discretion, and with so much heat, that he not only preferred our worship to theirs, but condemned all their rites as profane, and cried out against all that adhered to them as impious and sacrilegious persons who were to be damned to everlasting fire. Upon his having frequently preached in this manner, he was seized, and after a trial he was condemned to banishment, not for having disparaged their religion, but for his inflaming the people to sedition; for this is one of their most ancient laws, that no man ought to be punished for his religion.

At the first constitution of their government, Utopus, having seen that before his coming among them the old inhabitants had been so engaged in great quarrels concerning religion, by

which they were divided among themselves, that he found it easy to conquer them—since, instead of uniting their forces against him, every different religious party fought by themselves. After he had subdued them he made a law that every man might be of whatever religion he pleased, and might endeavor to draw others to it by the force of argument and by amicable and modest ways, but without bitterness against those of other opinions. However, he ought to use no other force but that of persuasion, and was neither to mix with it reproaches nor violence, and such as did otherwise were to be condemned to banishment or slavery.

“This law was made by Utopus, not only for preserving the public peace, which he saw suffered much by daily contentions and irreconcilable disputes, but because he thought the interest of religion itself required it. He judged it not fit to determine anything rashly, and seemed to doubt whether those different forms of religion might not all come from God, who might inspire men in different ways and be pleased with this variety. He therefore thought it indecent and foolish for any man to threaten and terrify another to make him believe what did not appear to him to be true. And supposing that only one religion was really true, and the rest false, he imagined that the native force of truth would at last break forth and shine bright, if supported only by the strength of argument, and attended to with a gentle and unprejudiced mind. On the other hand, if such debates were carried on with violence and tumults, as the most wicked are always the most obstinate, so the best and most holy religion might be choked with superstition, as corn is with briars and thorns; he therefore left men wholly to their liberty, that they might be free to believe as they should see cause.

“Only he made a solemn and severe law against any who should so far degenerate from the dignity of human nature as to think that our souls died with our bodies, or that the world was governed by chance, without a wise overruling Providence: for they all formerly believed that there was a state of rewards and punishments for the good and the bad after this life, and they now look on those who think otherwise as scarce fit to be counted men, since they degrade so noble a being as the soul, and reckon it no better than a beast’s. Thus they are far from looking on such men as fit for human society, or to be citizens of a well-ordered commonwealth, since a man of such principles must needs, as oft as he dares do it, despise all their laws and customs. For there is no doubt that a man who is afraid of nothing but the law, and fears nothing after death, will not scruple to break through all the laws of his country, either by fraud or force, when by this means he may satisfy his appetites. They never raise any that hold these maxims, either to honors or offices, nor employ them in any public trust, but despise them, as men of base and sordid minds. Yet they do not punish them, because they lay this down as a maxim, that a man cannot make himself believe anything he pleases; nor do they drive any to dissemble their thoughts by threatening them, so that men are not tempted to lie or disguise their opinions, which, being a sort of fraud, is abhorred by the Utopians. They take care indeed to prevent them from disputing in defense of these opinions, especially before the common people, but they suffer, and even encourage them to dispute concerning them in private with their priest, and other grave men, being confident that they will be cured of those mad opinions by having reason laid before them.

“There are many among them that run far to the other extreme, though it is neither thought an ill nor unreasonable opinion, and therefore is not at all discouraged. They think that the souls of beasts are immortal, though far inferior to the dignity of the human soul, and not capable of so great a happiness. They are almost all of them very firmly persuaded that good men will be infinitely happy in another state: so that though they are compassionate to all that are sick, yet they lament no man’s death, except they see him loath to part with life; for they look on this as a very ill presage, as if the soul, conscious to itself of guilt, and quite hopeless, was afraid to leave the

body, from some secret hints of approaching misery. They think that such a man's appearance before God cannot be acceptable to Him, who being called on, does not go out cheerfully, but is backward and unwilling, and is, as it were, dragged to it. They are struck with horror when they see any die in this manner, and carry them out in silence and with sorrow, and pray to God that He will be merciful to the errors of the departed soul. They lay the body in the ground. But when any die cheerfully, and full of hope, they do not mourn for them, but sing hymns when they carry out their bodies, commending their souls very earnestly to God. Their whole behavior is then rather grave than sad. They burn the body and set up a pillar where the pile was made, with an inscription to the honor of the deceased. When they come from the funeral, they talk of his good life and worthy actions, but speak of nothing oftener and with more pleasure than of his serenity at the hour of death. They think such respect paid to the memory of good men is both the greatest incitement to engage others to follow their example, and the most acceptable worship that can be offered them, for they believe that though by the imperfection of human sight they are invisible to us, yet they are present among us, and hear those discourses that pass concerning themselves. They believe it inconsistent with the happiness of departed souls not to be at liberty to be where they will, and they do not imagine them capable of the ingratitude of not desiring to see those friends with whom they lived on earth in the strictest bonds of love and kindness. Besides, they are persuaded that good men, after death, have these affections and all other good dispositions increased rather than diminished, and therefore conclude that they are still among the living, and observe all the living say or do. Therefore, they engage in all their affairs with greater confidence of success, trusting to their protection. In addition, this opinion of the presence of their ancestors is a restraint that prevents them from engaging in ill designs.

“Their priests are men of eminent piety, and therefore they are but few, for there are only thirteen in every town, one for every temple; but when they go to war, seven of these go out with their forces, and seven others are chosen to supply their room in their absence, but these enter again upon their employments when they return. Those who served in their absence attend the high priest until vacancies fall by death; for there is one set over the rest. They are chosen by the people as the other magistrates are, by secret ballot, to prevent factions, and when they are chosen, they are consecrated by the college of priests. The care of all sacred things, the worship of God, and an inspection into the manners of the people, are committed to them. It is a reproach to a man to be sent for by any of them, or for them to speak to him in secret, for that always gives some suspicion. All that is incumbent on them is to exhort and admonish the people; for the power of correcting and punishing ill men belongs wholly to the Prince and to the other magistrates. The severest thing that the priest does is to exclude those who are desperately wicked from joining in their worship. There is not any sort of punishment more dreaded by them than this, for as it loads them with infamy, so it fills them with secret horrors, such is their reverence for their religion; nor will their bodies be long exempted from their share of trouble; for if they do not very quickly satisfy the priests of the truth of their repentance, they are seized on by the Senate, and punished for their impiety.

“The education of youth belongs to the priests, yet they do not take so much care of instructing them in letters, as in forming their minds and manners aright; they use all possible methods to infuse, very early, into the tender and flexible minds of children such opinions as are both good in themselves and will be useful to their country, for when deep impressions of these things are made at that age, they follow men through the whole course of their lives, and conduce much to preserve the peace of the government, which suffers by nothing more than by vices that rise out of ill opinions. The wives of their priests are the most extraordinary women of the whole country;

sometimes the women themselves are made priests, though that falls out but seldom, nor are any but ancient widows chosen into that order.

“Thus have I described to you, as particularly as I could, the Constitution of that commonwealth, which I do not only think the best in the world, but indeed the only commonwealth that truly deserves that name. In all other places it is visible that, while people talk of a commonwealth, every man only seeks his own wealth; but there, where no man has any property, all men zealously pursue the good of the public, and, indeed, it is no wonder to see men act so differently, for in other commonwealths every man knows that, unless he provides for himself, no matter how flourishing the commonwealth may be, he must die of hunger, so that he sees the necessity of preferring his own concerns to the public; but in Utopia, where every man has a right to everything, they all know that if care is taken to keep the public stores full, no private man can want anything, since among them there is no unequal distribution. Thus no man is poor, none in necessity, and though no man has anything, yet they are all rich. For what can make a man so rich as to lead a serene and cheerful life, free from anxieties, neither apprehending want himself, nor vexed with the endless complaints of his wife? He is not afraid of the misery of his children, nor is he contriving how to raise a portion for his daughters, for he is secure in this, that both he and his wife, his children and grand-children, to as many generations as he can fancy, will all live both plentifully and happily. He also knows that among them there is no less care taken of those who were once engaged in labor, but grow afterwards unable to follow it, than there is, elsewhere, of those that continue still employed.

“I would gladly hear any man compare their justice with that of all other nations, among whom I see nothing that looks either like justice or equity, for what justice is there in this: that a nobleman, a goldsmith, a banker, or any other man that either does nothing at all, or, at best, is employed in things that are of no use to the public, should live in great luxury and splendor upon what is so ill acquired, and a common man—a carter, a smith, or a ploughman—who works harder even than the beasts themselves and is employed in labors so necessary that no commonwealth could hold out a year without them, can only earn so poor a livelihood and must lead so miserable a life, that the condition of the beasts is much better than his? For as the beasts do not work so constantly, so they feed almost as well, and with more pleasure, and have no anxiety about what is to come, whilst these men are depressed by a barren and fruitless employment, and tormented with the apprehensions of want in their old age, since that which they get by their daily labor does but maintain them at present, and is consumed as fast as it comes in. There is nothing left to lay up for old age.

“Is not that government both unjust and ungrateful that is so prodigal of its favors to those who are called gentlemen, or goldsmiths, or such others who are idle, or live either by flattery or by contriving the arts of vain pleasure, and, on the other hand, takes no care of those of a meaner sort, such as ploughmen, colliers, and smiths, without whom it could not subsist? But after the public has reaped all the advantage of these men’s service, and they come to be oppressed with age, sickness, and want, all their labors and the good they have done is forgotten, and all the recompense given them is that they are left to die in great misery. The rich often try to bring the cost of labor lower, not only by fraudulent practices, but by the laws which they procure to be made to that effect, so that though it is a thing most unjust in itself to give such small rewards to those who deserve so well of the public, yet they have given those hardships the name and color of justice by passing laws for regulating them.

“Therefore I must say that, as I hope for mercy, I can have no other notion of all the other governments that I see or know, than that they are a conspiracy of the rich, who, on pretense of managing the public, only pursue their private ends, and devise all the ways and arts they can find out. First, that they may without danger preserve all that they have so ill-acquired, and then, that they may engage the poor to toil and labor for them at as low rates as possible, and oppress them as much as they please. And if they can but prevail to get these contrivances established by the show of public authority, which is considered as the representative of the whole people, then they are accounted laws. Yet these wicked men, after they have, by a most insatiable greed, divided among themselves that which all the rest might have been well supplied, are far from that happiness that is enjoyed among the Utopians, for the use as well as the desire of money being extinguished, much anxiety and great occasions of mischief is cut off with it, and who does not see that the frauds, thefts, robberies, quarrels, tumults, contentions, seditions, murders, treacheries, and witchcrafts, which are, indeed, rather punished than restrained by the severities of law, would all fall off, if money were not any more valued by the world? Men’s fears, solitudes, cares, labors, and anxieties would all perish in the same moment with the value of money. Even poverty itself, for the relief of which money seems most necessary, would disappear. But, in order to understand this properly, take one instance:

“Consider any year, that has been so unfruitful that many thousands have died of hunger. If, at the end of that year, a survey was made of the granaries of all the rich men that have hoarded up the corn, it would be found that there was enough among them to have prevented all that consumption of men that perished in misery, for, if it had been distributed among them, none would have felt the terrible effects of that scarcity. So easy a thing it would be to supply all the necessities of life if that blessed thing called money, which is pretended to have been invented to procure those necessities, was not, in reality, the only thing that obstructed their being supplied!

“I do not doubt but rich men are sensible of this, and that they well know how greater a happiness it is to need nothing necessary than to abound in many superfluities, and to be rescued out of so much misery than to abound with so much wealth. Thus, I cannot think but the sense of every man’s interest, added to the authority of Christ’s commands, who, as He was infinitely wise, knew what was best and was very clear in showing it to us, would have drawn all the world over to the laws of the Utopians, if pride, that plague of human nature, that source of so much misery, did not hinder it. For this vice does not measure happiness so much by its own conveniences, as by the miseries of others, and it will not be satisfied with being thought a goddess if none are left that are miserable whom she might insult. Pride thinks its own happiness shines the brighter when it is compared with the misfortunes of other persons, and that, by displaying its own wealth, the poor may feel their poverty the more sensibly. This is that infernal serpent that creeps into the breasts of mortals and possesses them too much to be easily drawn out.

“Therefore, I am glad that the Utopians have fallen upon this form of government, and I wish that all the world could be so wise as to imitate them; for they have, indeed, laid down such a scheme and foundation of policy that, as men live happily under it, so it is like to be of great continuance. For, since they having rooted out of the minds of their people all the seeds of ambition and faction, there is no danger of any commotions at home, which alone has been the ruin of many states that seemed otherwise to be well secured. But as long as they live in peace at home and are governed by such good laws, they are the envy of all their neighboring princes, who have often, though in vain, attempted their ruin, but they will never be able to put the Utopian state into any commotion or disorder.”

When Raphael had thus made an end of speaking, though many things occurred to me, both concerning the manners and laws of that people, that seemed to me very absurd, as well in their way of making war as in their notions of religion and divine matters—together with several other particulars, but chiefly what seemed the foundation of all the rest, their living in common, without the use of money, by which all nobility, magnificence, splendor, and majesty, which, according to the common opinion, are the true ornaments of a nation, would be quite taken away. Yet since I perceived that Raphael was weary, and was not sure whether he could easily bear contradiction, remembering that he had taken notice of some who seemed to think they were bound in honor to support the credit of their own wisdom by finding out something to censure in all other men's inventions, besides their own, I only commended the Utopian Constitution, and the account he had given of it in general. And so, taking him by the hand, carried him to supper, and told him I would find out some other time for examining this subject more particularly, and for discoursing more copiously upon it. And, indeed, I shall be glad to embrace an opportunity of doing it. In the meanwhile, though it must be confessed that he is both a very learned man and a person who has obtained a great knowledge of the world, I cannot perfectly agree to everything he has related. However, there are many things in the commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our governments.

Topics for Writing and Discussion

1. In discussing the Utopian's occupations, More stresses that everyone works, and since they have no "idle" class, six hours a day is sufficient to supply the whole country's wants. However, even non-working hours are spent in reading and other forms of self-improvement. Further, one of the ideals that is said to have informed the development of the United States is the "puritan work-ethic." That raises a question: What is work? Is work only something that you are paid for? If you love the work you do, even if you get paid for it, is it really work? Can one work at having fun? Or is having fun opposed to work? Discuss these questions in your group or class and write an essay on work.

2. In Utopia, there are no rich or poor, all living and enjoying everything in common. Raphael says: "In all other places it is visible that, while people talk of a commonwealth, every man only seeks his own wealth; but there, where no man has any property, all men zealously pursue the good of the public, and, indeed, it is no wonder to see men act so differently, for in other commonwealths every man knows that, unless he provides for himself, no matter how flourishing the commonwealth may be, he must die of hunger, so that he sees the necessity of preferring his own concerns to the public." *Utopia* has thus been called a "socialist paradise." Today, in 2017, there are vast inequalities in wealth around the globe: on the one hand, there are many multi-billionaires; on the other, there are places where people live on less than a dollar a day or starve to death. Even in the United States the disparities between rich and poor have continued to widen in the twenty-first century. Many, even with a college education, find it hard to find a job, as globalization and advances in technology disrupt traditional occupations. Discuss these problems with your group. What should be done to address these disparities, both here in the US and worldwide? Some have proposed a "basic income" for everyone, particularly since automation is taking over more and more of the jobs people used to hold. Look up that idea on the internet. Would it work? Would it even be possible? What will happen to people if, sometime in the future, machines and robots do all the work?