RELI GION AND HUMANISM IN
SIR THOMAS MORE'S UTOPIA

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Sir Thomas More's Utopia has probably led to more divergent opinions concerning its nature and meaning than any other book ever written: for Erasmus it was a means of diversion and amusement, and of seeing "the source from which almost all the ills of the body politic arise";¹ for More's biographer, Harpsfield, it was "loolly invention";² and for John Desmarais of Cassel, the island of Utopia gave "the total sum of all virtue once for all... to earth-born men".³ In more recent times, Karl Kautsky has seen it as a significant blueprint prefiguring the rise of modern socialism;⁴ J.H. Hexter as an indictment of pride as the root of all evil in society;⁵ and C.S. Lewis as "a holiday work, a spontaneous overflow of intellectual high spirits, a revel of debate, paradox, comedy and (above all) of invention which starts many hares and kills none".⁶ Utopia has been interpreted in so many contrasting ways that it has

been questioned whether it is possible to arrive at a
definite statement of its meaning. Most critics who have
attempted to analyse the message contained in *Utopia* have
failed to give a comprehensive explanation of the work as
a whole. Either they have given one aspect undue emphasis
at the cost of minimizing the significance of other
modifying features, or they have judged the institutions and
customs of Utopia from a Twentieth Century standpoint,
ignoring those precepts which the Renaissance Humanists
would have considered axiomatic. Such critics as Paul
Turner, and H.W. Donner who see *Utopia* as presenting
propositions which are consistently serious in every respect,
can only reach this conclusion if they disregard those
beliefs, expressed in More's devotional writings, which are
indisputably his own, or if they ignore the points in the
narrative at which More disassociates himself from viewpoints
expressed by Raphael Hythlodaeus. If the real meaning of
*Utopia* is to become at all accessible, one must recognize
that More's viewpoint is perpetually shifting, and that his
method results in many equivocations. This equivocal method
is illustrated by Raphael Hythlodaeus' name: "Raphael" means
"spiritual angel" and "bringer of good tidings", but
"Hythlodaeus" means "a teller of idle tales". One must
remember that More's narrator is both of these. To under­
stand the equivocations, a reader must appreciate the beliefs
that furnished More and his audience with a stable and discri-
limiting point of view. Unless this view is understood, *Utopia* becomes liable to misinterpretation. More later became aware of this danger and would have preferred *Utopia*, along with Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*, to be burned. He considered it was too dangerous a book to be misconstrued by men such as Tyndale and other leaders of the Reformation, who might ignore its subtle equivocations. More's fear was well founded, because such misconstruction has continued for four centuries.

In my opinion, it is possible to rediscover those principles and personal beliefs according to which More composed the work. They are partially to be found within the framework of *Utopia* itself in the oscillating distance between "persona - More" and Raphael Hythlodaeus, and in Peter Giles' marginal glosses. Primarily, however, they are to be found in clues furnished by More's personal life and in his English works. The evidence that can be adduced shows that there was a fundamental tension in More between his Humanism and his religious faith. My primary aim is to show how this conflict governed the composition of *Utopia*, and determined the equivocal nature of its form and meaning. Like St. Augustine, More used all the skills of the classical rhetorician to expound an argument, while withholding his personal approbation. Both investigated classical and contemporary theories to show what features of them were
compatible with Christianity. However, once they had isolated the point at which a theory became inadequate, both subordinated the theory to the revealed truths of their religion. For this reason, my secondary contention is that More was closer to St. Augustine than to Plato, Plutarch, or any other of the ancients that have been suggested as his models, and that the ideas found in *Utopia* are more closely related to *De civitate Dei* than to any other book of the Renaissance or of Classical Antiquity.

The ultimate purpose of this thesis is to offer, through an analysis of the tension between Humanism and Christianity in Sir Thomas More, a new means of interpreting the problematical issues found in *Utopia*. My investigation should show that the precepts and principles which govern the meaning of *Utopia* are not obscure; the Twentieth Century reader must acquaint himself with the viewpoint of a medieval Christian, and then More's message becomes quite clear.
CHAPTER I

THE GENESIS OF UTOPIA

One question that must be answered is why More chose to write about a pagan commonwealth rather than a Christian one. The answer lies in the circumstances which prompted More to write Utopia, and a recreation of these motivating factors goes far in explaining why the Christian-humanist conflict in More left such a fundamental influence in his work.

More's inspiration was the product of a striking coincidence in his career. As far as his personal life was concerned, the years between 1500 and 1516 saw More's greatest study and assimilation of the Greek, Roman and Christian classics. At the same time, they witnessed a great series of voyages of discovery to the New World. Columbus, by 1504, had made three voyages to the West Indies, Ojeda and Niño in 1499 had sailed there in search of pearl fisheries, Pinzon had discovered both Brazil and the Amazon, and in 1501 Amerigo Vespucci made his famous voyage down the Brazilian coast as far as the River Plate. In 1504 More would have seen the three specimen savages that were brought to the court of Henry VII from the mainland of America. In other words, there were two major influences at work on More during this time, and in a singularly fortuitous way, they reinforced each other.
The influence of More's study of the classics can be seen in the many parallels between Plato's *Republic* and *Utopia*. More was aware of his debt to Plato, and indeed he intended *Utopia* to be seen as the logical successor to Plato's ideal commonwealth. He has Anemolius, the Utopian poet-laureate, give these words to Utopia:

...I am a rival of Plato's republic, perhaps even a victor over it. The reason is that what he has delineated in words I alone have exhibited in men and resources and laws of surpassing excellence. Deservedly ought I to be called by the name of Eutopia or Happy Land. 1

Features of the *Republic* are echoed in the communism of *Utopia*, the communal banquets, the discussion of the ideal philosopher and his relation to politics, the attitude towards gold and silver, and the notion that wealth and poverty produce the major ills of a Commonwealth. Thematically, More borrowed much from Plato.

Even more important to an understanding of the nature of *Utopia* is More's debt to Lucian. Erasmus related that More was especially delighted with Lucian's work, 2 so much so that in 1505 the two friends translated some of his pieces from Greek into Latin. It is likely that this admiration for Lucianic satire left a strong influence on More. This conclusion is reinforced if one studies *Utopia* in relationship

2. Nichols, Epistle 471.
to possible models by Lucian. Among the four dialogues which More contributed to the joint translating enterprise with Erasmus, was the satirical sketch *Menippus goes to Hell* from which More derived several terms used in *Utopia*. For example, from the name "Mithrobarzanes", that of Menippus' guide to the Underworld, More extracted the word "Barzanes" which he turns into the Utopian word for mayor. Of greater importance is the influence that Lucian's good-humoured and ironical tone had on More. Although there is no concrete evidence to prove that More read *The True History*, Book II of *Utopia* in its form and method of presentation so closely embodies the precepts elucidated by Lucian at the beginning of his fantastical history, that one must conclude that More was profoundly influenced by it. Lucian commences by asserting that intellectuals should rest their minds after they have been occupied with a lot of serious writing, and so build up energy for another bout of hard work. He continues that:

> For this purpose the best sort of book to read is one that is not merely witty and entertaining but also has something interesting to say.

More reiterates this classical precept in his advertisement for *Utopia* in which he describes it as "no less beneficial than entertaining". As Lucian proceeds in the elaboration

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of his principles more parallels with Utopia emerge:

...I am telling you frankly, here and now, that I have no intention whatever of telling the truth. Let this voluntary confession forestall any future criticism: I am writing about things entirely outside my own experience or anyone else's, things that have no reality whatever and never could have. So mind you do not believe a word I say.

Lucian could have added that although the things he wrote about could never have any reality, they nevertheless served a very real purpose through presenting an ironical comment on features in the real world. The meaning of Book II of Utopia is much easier to understand if one allows that More may have composed it according to the method shown by Lucian. More found Lucian's technique admirable for his own design because it best accommodated the tension in him between Christianity and humanism. He could freely theorize about the validity of certain attitudes, such as those that condoned euthanasia for incurables and marriage of the clergy; he could even expound an ideal, as with the idea of property held in common; and yet, ultimately, he could always use as his norm the principle that something which is ideal in theory may not be possible in the real world. More was a complex man, and the success of Utopia resulted from his ability to incorporate together all the different sides of an argument. It is not by chance that the Platonic

1. Ibid., p. 250.
dialogue is the basic form which is used to present Utopia. The reader should be alerted at once that different aspects of an argument are going to be put forward, with which he is either to agree or disagree. Erasmus, too, found the Lucianic manner of satire very congenial, and he used it for his In Praise of Folly, which should be regarded as the sister book of Utopia, because both works were by-products of the translating collaboration.

In addition to providing a suitable method for More, Lucian, in The True History, furnished him with a pregnant idea. This idea may have been crucial in linking together More's study of the Classics and the voyages of discovery. Lucian facetiously begins in Chapter I:

I once set sail from the Pillars of Heracles with a brisk wind behind me and steered westward into the Atlantic. My reason for doing so? Pure curiosity. I just felt I needed a change, and wanted to find out what happened on the other side of the Ocean, and what sort of people lived there."

More probably read this passage in 1505, when he translated the Lucianic dialogues with Erasmus. In the very same year Amerigo Vespucci's New World was published in Basel. In other words, soon after More read how Lucian imaginatively created a world beyond the Atlantic Ocean, he became fascinated by a real report which stimulated him to create his own

1. Ibid., p.250.
imaginary picture of "what happened on the other side of the ocean". The importance of Vespucci's influence on More has sometimes been neglected. From the *Mundus novus* More drew much of the detail that determined the customs of his Utopians, who strikingly resemble the savages of the New World whom Vespucci describes as having:

...no private property, but everything is shared in common. They live together without a king, without a government, and everyone is his own master....They live according to nature, and may be called Epicureans rather than Stoic... the natives said that there was a great deal of gold inland, and that it was not prized or considered of any value there.

Although More does not follow Vespucci to the extent of making his Utopians without king or government, their essential features are contained in Vespucci's description: their communism, their Epicurean philosophy; and their disdain for gold. What must have struck More was how closely these features of the heathen savages of America coincided with the features attributed to the Guardians by Plato in his *Republic*. I consider that the parallel beliefs of Vespucci's heathen savages and the highly civilized pagan Greeks stimulated More to speculate on how two such vastly separated groups of human beings arrived at similar conclusions. The answer he reached is that embodied in *Utopia*: both the

ancient Greek philosophers and the heathen Utopians base their beliefs on reason, and this is why they arrive at conclusions that contradict the teachings of Christianity. More intended his Utopia to be seen as a rational commonwealth in a very literal sense, and as such its institutions were to be regarded with suspicion. The standards of discrimination through which More's real purpose can be seen are still accessible to the modern reader, and I will discuss how they can be obtained in my next chapter.

Although the parallel influences of More's reading of the classics and the voyages of discovery explain much of the form and matter of Utopia, they do not explain the fundamental disparity between the style and tone of Book I and Book II. Whereas the tone of Book II is relaxed, genial, and witty, the tone of Book I becomes terse, abrupt, and more vituperative. The explanation for this discrepancy lies in the contrasting circumstances in which More composed each Book.

In 1506, when More's imagination had been stimulated by the similarity of ideas between the ancient Greeks and the newly discovered savages of America, he had no opportunity of expounding his own speculations. During this time he was an extraordinarily busy man, having a large family to support, and needing to devote many hours to his duties as lawyer, undersheriff, and judge. However, in 1515 More was appointed
by the King to a mission which was to negotiate with Prince Charles of the Netherlands over Anglo-Netherlands trade. The negotiations at Bruges reached a stalemate and Charles' ambassadors withdrew to consult higher authorities about the English propositions. More found himself left in an enforced inactivity; he was thereby provided with the ideal opportunity of writing down the ideas that must have been germinating in his mind for a long time. During his enforced holiday, More was not idle. He seized the chance to make the acquaintance of Peter Giles, a friend of Erasmus, who had been praised to him by Erasmus. In September of 1515 More went and stayed with Giles at Anvers. The great importance of this visit is hard to estimate. It is likely that he and Giles, as humanists, discussed the implications of the new discoveries, reports of which were trickling into the Netherlands every day. Undoubtedly, More also discussed the social and economic ills he saw afflicting England. As an undersheriff and judge More must have been highly distressed at the desperation which drove many honest men into theft and vagrancy. He would have sought Giles' opinion on his theories of reform for these evils, and may have speculated with him on what institutions and customs a commonwealth in the New World might have. That Peter Giles did play a large part in the composition of *Utopia* is seen in the function More gives him as the questioner of Raphael Hythlodaeus. Giles, moreover,
was responsible for creating much of the fiction of reality for *Utopia*, providing the prefatory letter to Busleyden, and the Utopian alphabet and language. For the second edition of *Utopia*, Giles provided his own marginal glosses for the text. It is fairly safe to assume that he greatly enthused More in the writing of the Discourse in Book II.

However, for the influences governing the composition of the opening dialogue in Book I, one must look elsewhere. Towards the end of 1515 More was recalled to England, where he found himself beset with a profound dilemma. Henry VIII and Wolsey offered him a permanent place at Court, which meant he would have financial security for the rest of his life if he accepted it. On the other hand, More knew that if he did accept the chancellorship he would lose much of his liberty, and that if he spoke the truth about England's ills as he saw them, he was sooner or later bound to incur the King's displeasure. More's dilemma was a very real one for a man of conscience, and he needed to objectify the issues involved before making his decision. This he did in Book I of *Utopia*, which we know was written in haste on More's return from Flanders. The change in tone and mood between Book I and Book II strikingly illustrates the contrast between the happy leisure More experienced in Flanders, and the tense situation he found in England. Whereas Book II is leisurely,
discursive, and genially ironic. Book I is urgent, earnest, and bitterly sardonic. More had been abruptly awakened out of the happy world of Utopia and found himself back in the real world of England, with its pressing problems of poverty, vagabondage, enclosure, and threatened despotism. Never again did More have the time or enthusiasm to indulge in imaginative fictional writing. Henceforth he was faced with problems of his political office which prevented the recurrence of the Utopian mood.¹

Before leaving the question of the genesis of Utopia, one must consider its relationship to the rest of its age. The optimistic and confident spirit of Utopia is very much that of the humanistic reform movement, which in 1515 seemed about to achieve its greatest success. Practically every Christian prince of Europe was under the influence of humanistic teachings, and Erasmus felt so optimistic that he wrote to the Pope on 21 May, 1515: The age of iron has suddenly melted into an age of gold...² Erasmus had good reason to be confident that a new age was about to dawn, because everywhere his books were being acclaimed, and his own literary output was nearing its peak. In June of 1515

the *Enchiridion* was published, while in 1516, the "Annus Mirabilis" saw the completion and publication of Erasmus' crowning glory, the Greek *New Testament*. The same year saw in quick succession the publication of the *Institutio Principis Christiani*, and his edition of *Saint Jerome*. The latter two works were printed in March and April respectively. *Utopia* was printed in December, 1516, and must be seen as a product of the international reform movement, because many of the issues dealt with in *Utopia* such as the marriage of priests, suicide, and divorce, are also given consideration in Erasmus' works. Other humanistic reformist books to appear at the same time were the *Satyrae* of Gerard Geldenhauer of Nimègue, Reuchlin's translation of *The Commentary of St. Athanasius on the Psalms*, Seyssel's *La Monarchia de France*, and the *De Asse & Partibus eius* by Bude.

Although *Utopia* is thoroughly humanist in its literary origins and its preoccupations, in its most important conclusions and ideas it is not humanist, but Christian. Whereas most Christian humanists were able to harmonize their humanism with their religious faith, at least to their own satisfaction, More was never able to do this. He was too intelligent and complex a man to gloss over the discrepancies that existed between the philosophical beliefs of humanism and the doctrines of the medieval Catholic Church. The great richness and subtlety of *Utopia* lay in More's ability
to encompass both the compatibilities and the incompatibilities between his humanism and his religion at the same time. Whereas an investigation into the influences of Plato, Lucian, and Vespucci can explain the form of Utopia and some of the content, it can not illuminate significant aspects of More's personal belief. However, a source of indications as to More's beliefs is to be found; it exists in the De cívitate Dei of St. Augustine of Hippo.
CHAPTER II
MORE AND ST. AUGUSTINE

Although a consideration of the classical sources for
Utopia shows how More borrowed from Lucian a literary form
which could accommodate the tension between humanism and
Christianity within him, it does not suggest the personal
beliefs which provided More with a consistent philosophical
attitude. A far more profitable approach to discover the
underlying principles which inform Utopia, is to investigate
the influence on More of St. Augustine of Hippo. Such an
investigation is fruitful, because it reveals that More
assimilated many of the doctrines elaborated by St. Augustine
in De civitate Dei. It reveals, moreover, that there was a
striking parallel between More and St. Augustine, and
between the ages they lived in.

That More was profoundly influenced by the writings of
the early Church Fathers, especially those of St. Augustine,
is a known fact. Erasmus, in his famous letter to Ulrich
von Hutten in which he gives a portrait of More, tells how:

He also expended considerable labour in
perusing the volumes of the orthodox Fathers;
and when scarcely more than a youth, he lectured
publicly on the De civitate Dei of Augustine
before a numerous audience, old men and priests
not being ashamed to take a lesson in divinity
from a young layman.

Some critics have suggested that More underwent a change from an early liberalism, as expressed in *Utopia*, to a conservative and rigidly orthodox attitude which provided the impetus for his later anti-heretical works. This view is entirely erroneous because it suggests that More, in *Utopia*, seriously questioned some of the doctrinal teachings of the Catholic Church; a suggestion that would have horrified More. It is time that More, like all the Christian humanists, sought to reform abuses among the clergy, but there is no evidence to suggest that he ever advocated any principle which contradicted the orthodox Church teachings. The fact that priests and old men were unashamed to take lessons in divinity from the twenty-four year old More when he lectured on *De civitate Dei* in 1502 indicates that he already adhered to orthodox doctrine even at that early stage of his career. Moreover, his early reverence for the works of the Church Fathers never left him, as is shown by a passage in the *Dialogue Concerning Tyndale* of 1523 in which More advocates that attention should be paid to the traditional interpretation of the Fathers:

> As to the old holy doctors, first their wits were as much as our new mens'; their diligence as great, their study as fervent, their devotion hotter, their number far greater, their time continued longer by many ages persevering... Here might I lay you the holiness of their life and the
plenty of their grace well appearing thereby, and that our Lord therefore opened their eyes and suffered and caused them to see the truth.

Once More's attitude to the Fathers is understood, one may confidently expect to uncover, in De civitate Dei, doctrines in which More would have most certainly believed. Augustine's work is the most profitable of the writings of the Fathers to investigate in this respect, for the reason that More is known to have studied it. Consequently, when the same issue is treated by both Augustine and More, one can assume that More is being serious if he presents the same view as Augustine, or that he is being ironical if he presents a view contradictory to that of Augustine. As I aim to show in a later chapter, the text of Utopia itself confirms that this view is correct.

There are further reasons for considering that a study of De civitate Dei is fruitful in an assessment of Utopia. Chief among these reasons is the surprising parallel which emerges between the life and times of More and Augustine. Both were writing in periods of accelerated change when traditional values and beliefs were being challenged and were in a state of flux. If De civitate Dei was a response to the Barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire in the West, Utopia was a response to the political, economic, and moral

changes that were occurring in Europe as it achieved the transition from the medieval world to the modern. St. Augustine had to grapple with the problem of why God had allowed Rome to fall in a defence of the Christian religion against those who claimed that it was responsible for this fall. More, in his turn, had to affirm the validity of orthodox Christian teachings against the humanists of the Renaissance who claimed that reason undermined the validity of such teachings. He also had to offer some stable proposals for reform, which could cope with the social, political, and economic upheaval resulting from a new capitalist economy, and a new despotic statesmanship. He achieved both these tasks through the satire of *Utopia*. In the face of a period of accelerated change and its resultant uncertainty, both Augustine and More found security in the stability of the answers provided by their religious faith. A particularly disturbing feature of the ages in which they lived was the undefined relationship between Hellenistic rationalism and Christian faith. The effect of this uncertain balance meant that both Augustine and More had to resolve a tension within themselves between religion and piety. In the Fifth Century the success of Christianity had unseated the supremacy of the classical tradition. Rhetoricians and scholars of the classics who upheld the value of classical studies, while affirming the moral truth
of Christianity, had to try and show how far the rational ideals of Hellenic philosophy were compatible with Christian doctrine. In the Sixteenth Century it was Christianity that was on the defensive. Europe saw the great revival of the Hellenic tradition which produced the Renaissance, with its shift in emphasis from an interest in theological matters to an interest in man and the world in which he lived. The men of the Renaissance began to subject medieval Christian beliefs to the test of their reason, and concluded that many of them were mere superstitions. It was the task of devout orthodox believers, such as More, to defend traditional doctrine against the attacks of radical reformers. Although in 1515, when Utopia was being written, this protest against many of the established teachings of the Catholic Church had not yet exploded into the Reformation, its force had been felt within the works of many Christian humanists, even those of Erasmus. The peculiar tension which is to be seen in More resulted from a semi-conscious desire to apply orthodox beliefs to the test of his reason in the same way. However, as a devoutly religious man, he was unable to surrender his judgement entirely to his reason, and consequently the tension between piety and humanism was created which is seen in Utopia. What is most significant in the comparison between Augustine and More, is that both men resolved the same tension within themselves in the same way.
They constructed a hierarchy of values in which Hellenic ratiocination was subordinated to the rank of handmaiden to religion. Even though this system recognized the value of the study of classical philosophy and its methods of deduction, it emphasized the point at which the pagan cardinal virtues of Temperance, Prudence, Justice, and Fortitude became inadequate. Thereafter a man had to rely on the three Christian virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity to enable him to grasp the ultimate truths about existence. Reason alone could not reach a perception of these truths; revealed religion was necessary to provide mankind with knowledge that is not accessible to him through his own efforts. In 1513, soon after *Utopia* was published, More wrote a letter to the authorities of the University of Oxford defending the new learning. This letter contains an explicit statement on how More regarded humanism in relation to religion, and shows how closely he followed Augustine's method of reconciling the two conflicting elements. He begins his defence of classical learning by claiming that "this education which he [a critic attacking the new learning] calls secular does train the soul in virtue", and he continues:

Moreover, there are some who through knowledge of things natural [i.e., rational] construct a ladder by which to rise to the contemplation of things supernatural; they
build a path to Theology through Philosophy and the Liberal Arts, which this man condemns as secular.

The distinction that More and Augustine make between reason as the means rather than the end is basic to an appreciation of *Utopia* because it shows that More intended the rational Utopians to be seen as erroneous in certain of their beliefs and customs.

Because More was able to see in St. Augustine a kindred spirit to himself, it is not surprising that he includes many of Augustine's concepts in *Utopia*. Although a full analysis of the influence of Augustine's doctrine on specific issues in *Utopia* must be reserved for a later chapter, it is convenient here to outline the main features of it which are relevant to an understanding of More's work.

The most important of Augustine's concepts was that of the City of God, as distinct from the Earthly City and the State. The City of God was no visible, earthly society but the whole community of God's faithful wherever they existed in eternity. The basis of this distinction was the concept of righteousness, or *justitia*, which Augustine borrowed from Plato. In *The Republic* Plato described an ideal society which functioned according to a system of right relations between men, based upon the idea of station. In contrast to

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this ideal Society were the actual earthly cities which had no system of right relations between men, and consequently had no justitia. Augustine took these ideas and christianized them. The justitia of the City of God became a system of right relations between man and God as well as between man and man. Plato's idea of actual earthly cities was transformed by Augustine into the concept of the Earthly City which consisted of all the unrighteous wherever they were. That More was deeply influenced by Augustine's idea of the City of God is indicated by a passage from his Dialogue Concerning Tyndale in which he refers to:

...that most glorious society and celestial city of God's faithful, which is partly seated in the course of these declining times, and partly in the solid estate of eternity.\(^1\)

If the Utopians are regarded in the light of this distinction, it is clear that they do not represent the ideal city, which is the City of God, and is to be found nowhere on earth. Utopia, like all earthly cities, contains faults as well as merits.

At this point Augustine's view of the State is of great importance. One of his problems was to relate the ideal City of God to the actual, fallen world. The answer at which he arrived was that the State had a relative righteousness of its own because it was the means by which the faithful voyaged through the sinful world. For this

\(^1\)More, Dialogue Concerning Tyndale, Book III.1, quoted in W.E. Campbell, p.137.
purpose, the State and its institutions of government, property, and slavery were necessary as forms of dominion to create order. This ordo created by dominium, however, was only partially good because it was relative to the sinfulness it had to correct. All forms of dominium—that of a government over its subjects, owners over property, masters over slaves, and fathers over children—represented the inevitable return of God's original order which was interrupted by man's sin. This belief led Augustine to condone the institutions of private property and slavery. Private property, he considered, was the punishment for greed; slavery was a means of restoring those who had committed sin to the harmony of natural order and to thereby secure their eternal happiness.

Both the ideas of dominium and ordo are found in Utopia and are essential to an understanding of its true meaning. It may at first appear that More contradicted St. Augustine in giving the Utopians a system of communism, but once it is remembered that the Utopians have largely conquered greed, this departure is seen as entirely logical. The Utopians no longer need a punishment for greed and so they are able to put into practice an ideal that for the normal world is impossible.

A third major influence of Augustine on the ideas in
Utopia, is his view of what constituted the *sumnum bonum*, or supreme good. Augustine modified the concept of Epicurus, who saw happiness as the supreme good. This happiness consisted of the goods of the mind and the goods of the body. Of these, the goods of the mind were the superior. The highest goods of the mind led a man to act virtuously; consequently a man was most happy when he was following a path of virtue. Augustine regarded this Epicurean philosophy as inadequate because it was related to this world only. Whereas the Epicureans saw the *sumnum bonum* as consisting of earthly happiness, Augustine saw it in Eternal Life. The supreme good could therefore never be attained in this life alone, even with the aid of the four cardinal virtues of Temperance, Prudence, Justice, and Fortitude. It was folly, then, to consider that it was possible to believe that true happiness could be found in the mortal world. A man needed in addition the Christian virtues of Faith in God's purpose and Hope of Eternal Life.

More adhered strictly to this belief when he described the philosophy of the Utopians. It was only to be expected that they arrived at the Epicurean philosophy of what constituted the supreme good, considering that they were heathens with only reason to guide them.

My contention that St. Augustine profoundly influenced
the thought of More, as it is expressed in *Utopia*, is central to this thesis because no critic has ever explored the full implications of such an influence. An assessment of More's debt to Augustine explains more than some of the ideas of *Utopia*; it helps to illuminate the very nature of the tension between humanism and religion which I maintain existed in More. For this reason the remainder of my thesis will largely be an attempt to offer a new means of interpreting *Utopia* through evaluating it in the light of St. Augustine's principles.


CHAPTER III

HUMANISM AND RELIGION AS DETERMINANTS
OF FORM IN UTOPIA

In the preceding chapters I have suggested that there were three specific influences on More which helped to prompt the writing of Utopia and determined More's attitude to his subject matter. These influences were: the stylistic influence of Lucian; the historical influence of Amerigo Vespucci's Mundus novus; and the theological influence of St. Augustine. It is now time to examine in detail how these influences determined that Utopia would be written in the form in which it now stands.

If Utopia is read in conjunction with Lucian's satirical pieces and his True History, it becomes obvious that More adopted many aspects of Lucian's style for his own purpose. As T.S. Dorsch has noted, book I of Utopia is a type of Lucianic dialogue, while book II is a Lucianic "True History". That More modeled his form and style on Lucian's suggests he had a similar purpose to that of the earlier satirist. Lucian, like Plato, uses the dialogue to allow one character to expound an argument or point of view while a second or

third character raises relevant questions, approves the propositions or opinions put forward, or rejects them. With Lucian, the key to the real meaning lies in the irony. His method is well illustrated in *Menippus Goes to Hell*, one of the dialogue More translated in collaboration with Erasmus. Menippus, like Hythlodes, is a traveller who has a strange tale to relate. In Menippus' case, he has just been on a voyage through Hell where he has tried to discover "the most sensible way to live". Philonides is an ordinary citizen who, like Giles and More, poses those questions which stimulate Menippus to expound his point of view, as, for example, when he interjects:

*Philonides:* "But I say, Menippus, what about the ones who've got large and expensive tombs up here - monuments, statues, epitaphs, and so on? Aren't they treated with any more respect than ordinary people down there?"

*Menippus:* "My dear chap, what a silly question! You know Mausolus, the Cavian who's buried in the famous Mausoleum? Well, you'd never stop laughing if you could see him now. There he is, stuffed away among the lower orders, and so far as I could see, the only difference that his tomb had made to him was that he'd got squashed flat by the weight of all that masonry."

In many places, both in Book I and in Book II, More used the same technique to bring out truth through irony. More's irony, however, is much more complex than that of Lucian because in *Utopia* there are different layers of irony. At times More satirizes English and European abuses by making Hythlodes compare them unfavourably with customs

or institutions in Utopia. At other times More satirizes
Hythlodaeus himself for considering that certain features
of Utopia are superior to their counterparts in Europe
when, in fact, More intends us to see they are not.
Consequently, although More utilizes many aspects of the
Lucianic dialogue, unlike Lucian, he does not make the
expositor of the discourse consistently reliable. Instead,
he adopts the method that Lucian used in The True History,
whereby the meaning is implied through authorial irony.
The difference between the method of the dialogue and that
of The True History, is that in the latter the standards
of judgement are assumed to be possessed by the reader.
Consequently Lucian does not have to make any comment in
addition to the ironical presentation of what he is
describing. This method is illustrated by Lucian's des-
cription of one of the law cases he witnessed on the Island
of the Blest:

The second was a matrimonial case, in which both
Theseus and Menelaus claimed conjugal rights over
Helen. The verdict was that she should cohabit
with Menelaus, on the ground that he had suffered
considerable inconvenience and danger on her
account, and also that Theseus had three wives
already, viz. Hippolyta, Phaedra, and Ariadne. 1

Lucian does not need to spell out what he means to the
reader because his irony is self-evident.

More used the same type of self-evident irony in much
of Book II of Utopia. However, whereas Lucian's irony

depends solely on the reader's acquaintance with certain accepted social norms, that of More is much more complex because it relies upon the reader's acquaintance with theological doctrines. This is why it is important to consider the formative effect on More of St. Augustine in addition to that of Lucian. When the two influences are evaluated together they show how More was led to adopt a specific form to convey a specific aim. Because More was a humanist scholar of the ancient classics, he took great delight in the wit and satire of Lucian. Even as St. Augustine's personal character seemed to express the deeply religious, ascetic side of More's nature, so did the ebullient good-humoured character of Lucian appeal to the witty, fun-loving side of More. It was only natural, therefore, that More should wish to attempt a satirical analysis of his own times similar to that made by Lucian in *The True History*.

Nevertheless, as a devout Christian, More felt obliged to express an attitude to life which he believed was superior to that of the pagan Greek philosophers. This meant he had to "overgo" his classical models through infusing revealed Christian doctrine into *Utopia*. Milton was later to similarly overgo classical models through christianizing the epic to produce *Paradise Lost*. The strategy that More employed was to present various classical
ideas in their most attractive form, and then show how they were deficient when compared with the revealed truths of Christianity. Nevertheless, a study of *Utopia* shows that More was uncomfortable with the disparity that existed between the conclusions of his reason and those of his faith. Often the rational argument threatens to obscure the religious principles by which it is to be judged. Again, the comparison can be made between *Utopia* and *Paradise Lost*, where Milton faces the danger of creating a Satan who is too attractive.

I have already suggested that More assumed the humanists for whom he wrote *Utopia* would share the same beliefs as himself. They would see at once the point where various arguments of the Utopians became spurious, and would realize that More was sharing a sophisticated joke with them. It is likely that More intended to present Raphael Hythlodaeus as a warning to humanists that they should not allow their judgement to become obscured by an extreme devotion to classical learning and abstract theorizing. Hythlodaeus has become so great an admirer of the rational perfection of Utopia that he has lost touch with the real world. As his name implies, he is both a bringer of good tidings and a dispenser of nonsense. This is why More took great pains to emphasize that while he approved of many of
the Utopian customs, he never expected to see them established in England. Various other Utopian beliefs eulogized by Hythlodaeus he considered to be merely absurd. That More intended his readers to apply a similar kind of discriminatory attitude to *Utopia* is shown by a letter he wrote to Peter Giles after the publication of *Utopia*:

I was extremely delighted, my dearest Peter, with a criticism already known to you, made by an unusually sharp person who put this dilemma about our Utopia: If the facts are reported as true, I see some rather absurd elements in them, but if as fictitious, then I find More's finished judgement wanting in some matters. Whoever this fellow was, I am very much obliged to him, my dear Peter. I suspect him to be learned, and I see him to be friendly. By this very frank criticism of his, he has gratified me more than anyone else since the publication of my little volume.¹

More proceeds to state that certain things pertaining to *Utopia* are not meant to be seen as perfect:

...I do not see why he should appear to himself so open-eyed, or, as the Greeks say, "sharp-sighted", because he has detected that some little absurdities exist in the institutions of Utopia or that I have devised some things not expedient enough in the framing of a commonwealth.²

More assumed that his learned humanist readers would be able to detect the absurdities which he created in the institutions of *Utopia* as well as the meritorious features.

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Indeed, he wrote *Utopia* in Latin so that it would be read only by those who were sufficiently educated in humanism to realize that More's method contained many equivocations. In 1516 he did not foresee that within a decade the Protestant Reformation would be in full swing, and that such a work as *Utopia* would become highly susceptible to misinterpretation when read in a spirit of religious zeal. Even such a learned Protestant as Tyndale failed to perceive More's serious purpose, and despised *Utopia* as poetry. More, when he saw such misinterpretation becoming frequent, became determined that *Utopia* would not be translated into the vernacular. He realized that in the hands of non-humanists *Utopia* was a very dangerous book indeed, and would have preferred it to be burnt along with *In Praise of Folly*:

I say therefore in these days in which men by their own default misconstrue and take harm of the very scripture of God, until men better amend, if any man would now translate *Utopia* into English, or some works either that I myself have written are this, albeit there be none harm therein - folk yet being (as they be) given to take harm of that that is good, I would, not only my darling's [Erasmus'] books but mine also, help to burn them both with mine own hands, rather than folk should (though through their own fault) take any harm of them, seeing that I see them likely in these days so to do.

More was justified in his fears because misinterpretation of *Utopia* has continued through four centuries up to the present day.

My purpose in examining how classical and religious influences led More to create his own literary form, has been to suggest that in *Utopia* he gave objectified expression to a fundamental tension between the humanist and the Christian within him. It is now possible to analyse more particularly how this tension is manifested in *Utopia* itself.
Although the tension in More between humanism and religion manifests itself most clearly in the discourse of Book II of *Utopia*, its operation can be clearly distinguished even in the dialogue of counsel in Book I. It is possible to claim that the very *raison d'être* of Book I was More's need to objectify this tension. Moreover, the precarious relationship More established between his humanism and his piety in Book I is the same that underlies the rest of *Utopia*.

I have already described how More, on his return to England from Flanders, found himself faced with the prospect of assuming high office under the King. He was immediately placed in a dilemma as to whether he should accept it or not. If he did, he knew that to speak the truth about the political and social evils of England would eventually lead him into trouble with Henry VIII. Faced with this dilemma, More took the chance, when writing Book I as an introduction to the Discourse he had written in Flanders, to objectify his conflict in order to work out his own position. His method was to explore the issues at stake in a dialogue with his humanist creation, Hythlodaeus. That his conflict over
Henry's offer of a permanent place was very deep is indicated by the way in which Erasmus tells how:

...King Henry...would never rest until he dragged him into his Court. "Dragged him," I say, and with reason; for no one was ever more ambitious of being admitted into a Court, than he was anxious to escape it.1

More, naturally was familiar with Plato's discussion in The Republic of the relationship that should exist between the philosopher and the ruler. Plato concluded that the true philosopher should stand aside from political life because there was no existing form of society good enough for the philosophic nature:

This small company, then, [of philosophers], when they have tasted the happiness of philosophy and seen the frenzy of the masses, understand that political life has virtually nothing sound about it, and that they'll find no ally to save them in the fight for justice; and if they're not prepared to join in the general wickedness, and yet are unable to fight it single-handed, they are likely to perish like a man thrown among wild beasts, without profit to themselves or others, before they can do any good to their friends or society. When they reckon all this up, they live quietly and keep to themselves, like a man who stands under the shelter of a wall during a driving storm of dust and hail; they see the rest of the world full of wrongdoing, and are content to keep themselves unspotted from wickedness and wrong in this life, and finally leave it with cheerful composure and good hope.2

This is the view that More, a humanist student of the classical philosophers, might have been expected to take up regarding his own position. However, as a Christian, he remembered that:

...what He [Christ] had whispered in the ears of His disciples He commanded to be preached openly from the housetops.¹

More, therefore, was placed in a severe agony of indecision as to whether he should commit himself to an active political life, or whether he should withdraw, and, like Erasmus, continue his abstract speculations free from the fear that immediate retribution might descend upon him if his views ran contrary to those of an enraged ruler.

At the time when he was composing Book I, More obviously had not yet resolved the problem in his own mind. Consequently he worked out the implications of both alternatives through incorporating the question into his general plan. The strategy he employed was to give Hythlodaeus the classical Platonic view of the role of philosophers in relation to politics, while he, in his own person, raised all the objections to Plato’s theory that he could, and suggested possible alternative courses of action. After Hythlodaeus has finished relating his scheme of penal reform, which he believes would eliminate idleness and vagrancy and do away with the unnecessary harshness of

capital punishment, More expresses his sorrow that such a man of talent is not in the service of some king. He says to Hythlodaeus:

"Your favourite author, Plato, is of opinion that commonwealths will finally be happy only if either philosophers become kings or kings turn to philosophy. What a distant prospect of happiness there will be if philosophers will not condescend even to impart their counsel to kings!"

Hythlodaeus answers that the idea is ridiculous, because kings are so set in their own misconceived ideas that they would not listen to a philosopher:

"If I proposed beneficial measures to some king and tried to uproot from his soul the seeds of evil and corruption, do you not suppose that I should be forthwith banished or treated with ridicule?"

He then proceeds to imagine himself in a secret meeting of the French king's council when it was discussing French ambitions in Italy. He tells More that he would be merely ridiculed if he put before them the decisions of the Anchorian people, who offered their king his choice of retaining only one of the two kingdoms he ruled, for the sake of just and efficient government. Similarly, he would be mocked if he put before them the law of the Macavians, who limited the king's revenue to no more than a thousand pounds of gold, or its equivalent in silver in his coffer at any one time. In this way the Macavians prevented a lack.

money among his subjects, whose welfare was uppermost, and prevented their king from encroaching upon the possessions of other nations. Hythlodaeus concludes that he would merely be talking to deaf ears.

More replies:

"Deaf indeed, without doubt, ... and by heaven, I am not surprised. Neither, to tell the truth, do I think that such ideas should be thrust on people, or such advice given, as you are positive will never be listened to. What good could such novel ideas do, or how could they enter the minds of individuals who are already taken up and possessed by the opposite conviction? In the private conversation of close friends: this academic philosophy is not without its charm, but in the councils of kings, where great matters are debated with great authority, there is no room for these notions."

More continues that this academic philosophy is indeed useless in the realm of politics, but:

"...there is another philosophy, more practical for statesmen, which knows its stage, adapts itself to the play in hand, and performs its role neatly and appropriately."

Continuing the metaphor of the play, More asserts that for a philosopher to state his opinions in the way that Hythlodaeus would, would be like mixing comedy with tragedy. It is far better to take a silent part rather than bring in irrelevant matter which, however superior in itself, would upset the actual play in hand. More continues by saying

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that even if you can't reform the world according to your own desire, that is no excuse for adopting the escapists' solution of withdrawing from the actual problems of the world:

"You must not abandon the ship in a storm because you cannot control the winds."¹

But on the other hand, a philosopher ought not to offer opinions which are so radical that they automatically raise opposition. The true path to follow is the one that works through the indirect approach, so that:

"What you cannot turn to good you must make as little bad as you can. For it is impossible that all should be well unless all men were good, a situation which I do not expect for a great many years to come."²

Hythlodeus, however, rejects the view that there is a practical philosophy which ought to be followed, and reiterates Plato's objection that a philosopher who participated in the political world would merely become tainted or corrupted by it:

"By this approach," he commented, "I should accomplish nothing else than to share the madness of others as I tried to cure their lunacy."³

Hythlodeus then goes on to voice his opinion that it is only possible to have a just commonwealth when private

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property is abolished, and therefore he agrees with Plato that philosophers should not compromise themselves through participating in politics, unless rulers are prepared to accept as an initial condition legislation giving to all an equal share in all goods. This statement naturally gives rise to the example of the Utopians, who embody communism in practice. Book II consists of the exposition by Hythlodaeus of Utopia and its customs and institutions.

The difference in opinion between More and Hythlodaeus over the desirability of philosophers participating actively in politics is central to an understanding of Utopia as a whole, because it shows even at this early stage, that Hythlodaeus' opinions are not to be accepted entirely without reservation. He is not, therefore an absolutely reliable narrator, and some of his praise of Utopian institutions is to be regarded with suspicion. It is clear that, in suggesting a different course of action concerning political participation, More rejected the classical attitude, as expressed by Plato. Yet at the same time he could not feel convinced that he should proclaim the truth from the housetops as Jesus instructed his disciples to do. What is interesting is that More adopted a position midway between these two extremes. As a philosopher and student of classics, he desired to withdraw from the active life to
pursue his speculations unimpeded; but as a Christian he knew that he must try to defeat evil in whatever way he could. It is very important to note the way in which More resolved his conflict: he tried to utilize the best elements from both views. He would not compromise his integrity through dissembling, flattering, or telling falsehoods, but he would act as an influence for good in whatever unobtrusive way he could. We get a fairly clear picture of how More embodied his ideal of the practical philosopher from Erasmus' portrait, written not long after More had in fact entered Henry's court:

If serious affairs are in hand, no one gives wiser counsel; if it pleases the King to relax his mind with agreeable conversation, no man is better company. Difficult questions are often arising, which require a grave and prudent judge; and these questions are resolved by More in such a way, that both sides are satisfied. And yet no one has ever induced him to accept a present. What a blessing it would be for the world, if magistrates like More were everywhere put in office by sovereigns.1

It appears from this description that More perfectly embodied his ideal of the Christian philosopher committed to action that he describes in Book I of Utopia.

The importance of More's attitude towards political participation lies in his rejection of the classical attitude. He rejected the view of Plato precisely for the reason that he could in a fallen world. This belief was directly opposed

to his natural inclination, which was to escape into a happy world of scholarship and philosophical speculation as most of the other humanists did. It is important to note that the Christian side of More's nature inevitably triumphed over the humanist side in his resolution of the conflict. It is important, too, to realize that More was conscious of a fundamental idea of St. Augustine when he replies to Hythlodaeus in his own voice:

"...it is impossible that all should be well unless all men were good, a situation which I do not expect for a great many years to come!"

More, as a Christian, believed human beings lived in a fallen world, and that the philosopher, therefore, could not afford to wait until the world and society became congenial to his philosophical nature, because it was unlikely that they ever would. Consequently, the Christian philosopher must try to bring as much of the ideal to function in the real world, as was possible.

In trying to reach a decision about whether he should accept office under the King, More found it was impossible to harmonize his humanism and his religion: the one prompted him to withdraw, and the other forced him to participate. When one investigates the great issues More dealt with in

Book II of *Utopia*, one finds that he was equally unsuccessful in harmonizing his conflict in the realm of ethical and philosophical speculation.
CHAPTER V

THE "ABSURDLY ESTABLISHED" CUSTOMS OF UTOPIA

The tension between humanism and piety which produced the debate over political participation in Book I, operates in varying degrees of strength throughout the rest of Utopia. The great success of More's imaginary commonwealth is that it never becomes "utopian" in the sense that its customs and institutions are impossibly idealistic. More portrayed both the desirable and the undesirable features of Utopia, and in so doing he explored the conflicts within his own nature. Consequently, the basic conflict between humanism and Christianity is expressed in a myriad of different forms. Sometimes the tension is almost resolved, as when More shows that much of the Epicurean philosophy is compatible with Christianity. At other times the tension is entirely rejected with More firmly reiterating a tenet of his faith, as with the question of euthanasia. More often than either case, the tension poses a question which is left unanswered; for example the issue of whether communism is desirable or not. It is impossible in an investigation of this scope to analyse in detail every issue in which the tension is
manifested, and so I intend to restrict myself to a
discussion of the features of Utopia which have caused
the greatest divergence of opinion.

More himself was careful to indicate that certain
aspects of his "ideal" commonwealth were to be regarded
in a critical light. He even suggested which features
were to be so regarded. He says at the end of Book II:

When Raphael had finished his story, many
things came to my mind which seemed very
absurdly established in the customs and laws
of the people described - not only in their
method of waging war, their ceremonies and
religion, as well as their other institutions,
but most of all in that feature which is the
principal foundation of their whole structure.
I mean their common life and subsistence -
without any exchange of money.¹

It is possible that More created a persona "More" who is
to be regarded unfavourably for his conservatism in the
face of Hythlodaeus' enlightened liberalism. However,
More's life, and his other literary works show that the
opinions of persona "More" and the real More were identical.
What many critics have failed to see is that More satirized
the blind idealism of Hythlodaeus rather than the practical
realism of his persona. The concluding lines of Utopia
are a specific rejection of the reliability of Hythlodaeus
as More's mouthpiece:

¹. Utopia, p.245.
Meanwhile, though in other respects he is a man of the most undoubted learning as well as of the greatest knowledge of human affairs, I cannot agree with all that he said. But I readily admit that there are very many features in the Utopian commonwealth which it is easier for me to wish for in our countries than to have any hope of seeing realized.

This, then, is the problem of Utopia; one must attempt to distinguish which features of Utopia More condemned, and which features he approved.

A guide for such an attempt at distinguishing the serious from the satirical is provided by the way in which the discourse of Book II changes its character beyond a certain point in the narrative. This division occurs in the section More entitled "Utopian Travel", in which he completes his discussion of the social and economic features of Utopia. Up to this division More put forward serious proposals for the reform of contemporary abuses in Europe; after the division, having completed his initial aim, he began to relax into a witty, ironical mood which occasionally verges on sarcasm. Once he began writing in this relaxed mood, More could let his imagination take flight. Consequently, the Utopian customs of warfare, philosophy, and religion which he describes, become far more fantastical than the more important social and economic customs.

1. Utopia, pp.245-247.
Compared with the ironic and fantastical second part of Book II, the first part is very serious in tone and thought. Indeed, the social and economic principles More elaborated read very much like the implementation, on a grand scale, of the practices he cultivated in his own household, and of the methods he himself employed when dealing with thieves and vagabonds. Everyone in Utopia is taught the particular trade that is best suited to his own special abilities, although everyone does a period of agricultural work, not being ashamed to engage in manual labour. In exalting the idea of manual labour, More may have had in mind St. Benedict's adage; "to work is to pray". As in his own household, likewise in Utopia, both men and women engage in learning. Music also is very important; a point which reflects More's love of music at mealtimes, and his admiration of it as a form of recreation. More was very serious in advocating that women should be educated and taught culture. His own daughter, Margaret, was a scholar of distinction, eliciting even Erasmus' praise. More even persuaded his less amenable second wife, Dame Alice, to learn the harp, viol, spinet, and flute, and to devote a prescribed time every day to practice.¹ Further imitations in Utopia of practices of More's own

household are the communal banquets, at which the old
are mingled with the young, and at which music plays, and
the morally instructive games which are profitable to the
young, not merely "ruinous" and "foolish" like the
European games of dice and cards. Because everyone works,
in Utopia, the hours of work have been reduced to a six
hour day. Another advantage is that there is no shortage
of necessities, no-one being idle. No-one is led to
demand more than he needs because there is a plentiful
supply for all, and, because the Utopians have eliminated
pride, there is no ostentatious display of private
possessions. The family organization is strictly hierarchial,
authority residing in the eldest male. More's concern for
public welfare extended even to a consideration of public
health and sanitation. In Utopia, there is an efficient
system of refuse disposal, all beasts being slaughtered
outside the city at designated places where the offal can
be washed away in running water. Nothing unclean or
tainted by putrefaction may be brought into the city where
it might spread disease. It is interesting to note that
all butchering of animals is performed by slaves. In this
way the aesthetic sensitivity of the citizens is guarded,
because, as Peter Giles notes in his marginal gloss:

From the Butchery of Cattle We Have Learned
to Cut the Throats Even of Men.
The four hospitals in Utopia are slightly beyond the city walls, and are equipped with everything conducive to health. In the city proper, there are spacious halls in every street for the sake of recreation.

In describing these economic and social customs of Utopia, More obviously aimed to suggest measures which would improve the existing state of affairs in England. Consequently his treatment of these ideas contains no equivocations. Similarly, in his discussion of the Utopian constitution, More described characteristics which, if adopted in England, would reform many of the evils he saw in the English constitution. The government of Utopia is a totally representative democracy in which only scholars are chosen for official posts. In the senate all disputes are settled quickly to avoid unnecessary delay and procrastination. However, to prevent over-hasty decisions, a decree must be discussed in the senate for three days before it can be ratified. Matters of state must be discussed only within the senate. Through this means, secret arrangements without the knowledge of the senate are impossible, and no dictatorship or absolutism can be established.

There is no indication that any of these Utopian practices are to be regarded equivocally. However, within
the predominantly serious first section, which I have designated, there are two features which are open to differing interpretations; the issues of communism and colonization. Either these two practices are serious proposals for reform, or else they are early outbursts of the satirical wit which characterizes the second section. It is extremely difficult to perceive whether More's description of communism and colonization is satirical or serious. Perhaps More himself intended them to be both satirical and serious: serious in their logic, but satirical in their impracticality.

When considering the Utopian houses and gardens More says:

> Every home has not only a door into the street but a back door into the garden. What is more, folding doors, easily opened by hand and then closing of themselves give admission to anyone. As a result, nothing is private property anywhere. Every ten years they actually exchange their very homes by lot.¹

As Peter Gile's marginal gloss suggests:

> These Features Smack of Plato's Community.²

It is possible that More included communism in the customs of Utopia to emphasize the relationship of Utopia to The Republic, in which Plato made it a condition for his guardians that:

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¹ Utopia, p.121.
² Utopia, p.121.
...none of them shall possess a dwelling-house or other property to which all have not the right of entry.\(^1\)

Did More imitate Plato because he was impressed with the principle of communism, or did he include communism in order to have a jest with the reader? I will reserve a full discussion of this problem for a later sub-chapter; it suffices now to indicate how there are exceptions within the broad distinction I have made between the serious first half of *Utopia*, and the fantastical second half. The second exception is More's description of the Utopian method of controlling excess population through establishing colonies on the mainland:

> They consider it a most just cause for war when a people which does not use its soil but keeps it idle and waste nevertheless forbids the use and possession of it to others who by the rule of nature ought to be maintained by it.\(^2\)

It is hard to determine whether More really believed such colonization was legitimate or not. Once again he may have been merely imitating Plato, who claimed that once the territory becomes too small:

> ...we shall have to cut out a cantle of our neighbour's land if we are to have enough for pasture and ploughing...We shall go to war...\(^3\)

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On the other hand, More may have been considering the New World as a potential area for the establishment of colonies. The morality behind colonization and whether or not it was legitimate, was a topical issue of the time. Noteworthy examples of the European concern over the morality of colonization are the treatises of Paz and Vitoria, in which they studied the rights of Spaniards to colonize Latin America. The most common justification put forward was that Europeans, being more civilized and having the advantage of Christianity, had a right and duty to convert the heathens of the New World. More may have believed in this so-called "Christianizing mission", but it is doubtful whether he would agree that "the rule of nature" justified the seizure of land from one nation by another. One suspects that it is more typical of Utopian ratiocination, and is just another example of how the Utopians' belief in reason leads them to false conclusions.

Even though the issues of communism and colonization are found within the first section which, I have argued, is predominantly serious, they do not obscure the sharp division between the first and the second sections. I consider that once More had completed his discussion of the social, political, and economic practices of Utopia, his serious purpose was complete. Thereafter, he freed
himself from his serious mood and indulged in his natural wit and good humour. To More's humanist readers the ironical and witty tone of the second half of Book II would form as great a contrast with the tone of the first half, as the leisurely, happy tone of Book II as a whole would form a contrast with the terse, intensely serious tone of Book I.

That such a change occurred in More's attitude during the composition of Utopia is shown by the way in which he altered the characteristics of the Utopians. In the early part of Utopia the Utopians are portrayed as rigorous ascetics. They pay no attention to the comforts of clothing, wearing only the most simple and durable of garments. The basic items of clothing for everyone are leather garments which are worn while the Utopians work. For more serious occasions the Utopians merely throw an uncoloured cape made from linen or wool over these same leather clothes. Such a cape is used until it wears out, usually after two years. The facts of More's life indicate that such asceticism was very close to his own heart, and he was not satirizing the Utopians through giving them the simple garments he would have preferred to wear himself. However, when he discusses their philosophy in the later part of Utopia, More portrays the Utopians as Epicureans:
...the Utopians have no hesitation in maintaining that a person would be stupid not to seek pleasure by fair means or foul, but that he should only take care not to let a lesser pleasure interfere with a greater nor to follow after a pleasure which would bring pain in retaliation.  

The Utopians of the second part of Book II who are prepared to seek pleasure "by fair means or foul" are certainly not the Utopians who dress rudely, without any concern for personal comfort. This apparent inconsistency is merely symptomatic of the general change of mood and attitude which More underwent. The tone of Utopia changes from that of a philosophical romance to that of a jeu d'esprit. It is important to realize that such a change occurs. It is because many critics have failed to do this that they have misunderstood Utopia so often.

I consider that More rises to the true climax of Utopia when he proclaims:

Now you can see how nowhere is there any license to waste time, nowhere any pretext to evade work - no wine shop, no alehouse, no brothel anywhere, no opportunity for corruption, no lurking hole, no secret meeting place. On the contrary, being under the eyes of all, people are bound either to be performing their usual labour or to be enjoying their leisure in a fashion not without decency. This universal behaviour must of necessity lead to an abundance of all commodities. Since the latter are distributed evenly among all, it follows, of course, that no one can be reduced to poverty or beggary.  

This passage contains the statement of More's serious theme, and marks the point where his primary didactic aim in writing *Utopia* is accomplished. The social, political, and economic characteristics More has described up until this point, would indeed correct the ills of vagabondage, poverty, and theft which More, in Book I, delineated as the chief evils of England. Peter Giles makes the importance of Utopia as a model for European reforms quite clear in his marginal gloss to the passage I have just quoted:

\[ \text{O Holy Commonwealth - and Worthy of Imitation} \]
\[ \text{Even by Christians} \]

More obviously began to write *Utopia* as a didactic work designed to suggest serious proposals for reform. Up until the division I have indicated Utopia is "worthy of imitation, even by Christians"; after the division it most certainly is not worthy of imitation. This change in attitude towards Utopia shows that More, once he had completed his serious aim, expanded his purpose to satirize the Utopians as well as Europeans. The fallacious beliefs and misguided customs of the Utopians which he satirizes are still those of contemporary Europeans, but it is nevertheless significant that the Utopians now embody the abuse satirized rather than the true practice that

would reform it. In a curiously balanced way, the roles of the Europeans and the Utopians are reversed. Whereas in the first part of Book II the Utopians are held up as models worthy of emulation by the Europeans, in the second half they are shown to be inferior to the Europeans in matters of ethical and religious truths. This change in the direction of the satire must be recognized, or else Utopia becomes impossible to interpret.
CHAPTER VI
MORE'S CHRISTIAN VIEWPOINT IN
UTOPIA, BOOK II

Having established how a tension between humanism and religion was embodied in More, I can now proceed to show how More's reaction to this tension determined his viewpoint in the "fantastical" section of Book II of Utopia. Throughout this section More dealt with principles which he found justified by his reason, but condemned by his faith. The treatment given to the issues of philosophy, euthanasia, marriage, warfare, and religion is essentially that of a Christian humanist who cannot fully reconcile his Christianity and his humanism. The great importance of More's treatment of these ideas is that whenever his reason and his faith reach an impasse in their struggle, he inevitably chooses the beliefs of his religious faith. Consequently one can distinguish a firm Christian viewpoint ordering the argument which these principles are considered: a viewpoint which functions according to a stable set of religious beliefs. If one reads Utopia in conjunction with De civitate Dei, the nature of these beliefs is clearly discernible.
The philosophy More gives his Utopians raises difficult questions of interpretation. The Utopians, through their reason, have arrived at the Epicurean philosophy of pleasure, and the Stoic philosophy of virtue. In describing the reasoning behind their philosophy, More gives such an eloquent and apparently convincing argument in favour of Utopian hedonism that it could appear he believed in hedonism himself. Some commentators on Utopia have considered that the philosophy presented is the highest attainable through human reason, and is therefore the most tenable. They infer that More intended to offer an enlightened philosophy to counter the irrational asceticism of medieval religious practice. However, an examination of the text itself shows that More clearly does not approve of the philosophy he describes.

The most fruitful means of approaching More's treatment of the Utopians' philosophy is to compare it with the similar discussion of the question of the summum bonum in De civitate Dei. More and Augustine use the same approach. Their method is to show at what points the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies are compatible with Christianity, and at what points they diverge. More's discussion of the summum bonum in Utopia echoes De civitate Dei so strongly,
that More can be suspected of using Augustine as his conscious model.

At the beginning of his discussion, More is careful to associate the Utopian philosophers with the ancient classical philosophers. Although they have not heard of any of the European philosophers before Hythlodaeus' arrival:

Yet in music, dialectic, arithmetic, and geometry they have made almost the same discoveries of those predecessors of ours in the classical world.1

This is a warning to More's contemporary Christian Humanist readers that they are therefore to treat the Utopian philosophy in the same way as they treated other pagan philosophy - they were to agree with it so long as it was compatible with Christian beliefs, but where it wasn't they were to disapprove of it. The Utopians are further associated with the classical philosophers, in their divergent opinions and theories concerning the mysteries of the natural world and the creation of the universe:

But as to the causes of all these phenomena, and of the flow of the sea and its saltiness, and, in fine, of the origin and nature of the heavens and universe, they partly treat of them in the same way as our ancient philosophers and, as the latter differ from one another, they, too, partly, in introducing new theories, disagree with them all and yet do not in all respects agree with fellow Utopians.2

1. Utopia, p.159.
More intended the uncertainty and confusion of the Utopians concerning the mysteries of creation to compare unfavourably with the assurance of Christians who have the truth of creation revealed to them in the Bible.

The reader's suspicion of the validity of the Utopians' philosophy is deepened further when More proceeds to describe the nature of their speculation on the Supreme Good. Once again, More has planted a warning that their views are to be regarded critically when he has Hythlodaeus say:

In this manner they seem to lean more than they should to the school that espouses pleasure as the object by which to define either the whole or the chief part of human happiness.1

The reader is thereby warned that the philosophy to be described will be Epicurean. More begins his discussion by showing how the Utopians are erroneous in their initial assumption that their religion supports their belief in pleasure as the Supreme Good. More very cleverly shows how the Utopians unwittingly discard such principles as those of immortality of the soul, and of retribution and reward after death:

Once the principles are eliminated, the Utopians have no hesitation in maintaining that a person would be stupid not to seek pleasure by fair means or foul.2

2. Utopia, p.163.
More's aim, in writing this sentence, must have been to advise the attentative reader that he could read the ensuing discussion with the knowledge that his own Christian understanding of the sumnum bonum was not going to be challenged, or called in question. He was, rather, to read the description of the Utopians' philosophy from a point of superiority, and so see in what respects his Christian philosophy was superior to the pagan one presented. For the twentieth century reader, the surest way to distinguish the right from the wrong in the Utopian philosophy is to apply the principles of St. Augustine to it, as I have suggested, seeing as More was a keen student of Augustine and would have accepted his doctrine without question.

Hythlodaeus begins the discussion of the Utopians' principles of pleasure by describing how the Utopians reject any sort of asceticism or mortification:

To pursue hard and painful virtue and not only to banish the sweetness of life but even voluntarily to suffer pain from which you expect no profit... - this policy they declare to be the extreme of madness.1

This statement could give the impression that More specifically rejected religious asceticism, but More himself is known to have secretly led an ascetic life.

1. Utopia, p.163.
His son-in-law, William Roper, describes how More believed the path to heaven to be one of perpetual rigour and strife, as he often instructed his own family:

If his wife or any child had been diseased or troubled, he would say unto them, "We may not look at our pleasure to go to heaven in feather-beds; it is not the way, for our Lord himself went thither with great pain and by many tribulations, which was the path wherein he walked thither, for the servant may not look to be in better case than his master." More went further: he recurrently mortified his own flesh through wearing next to his skin a shirt of hair, as he esteemed no vanities of outwards appearance. Moreover:

He used also sometimes to punish his body with whips, the cords knotted, which was known only to my wife, his eldest daughter, whom for her secrecy above all other he specially trusted, causing her, as need required, to wash the same shirt of hair. More's own practice flatly contradicts the view of the Utopians. Why then did More have them express a rejection of religious asceticism? Here, I consider, is one manifestation of the conflict within him between Humanism and his religious faith. Rationally, the Utopians are right in seeing bodily mortification as senseless, and More must have often considered so himself. Yet as a religious man he felt an emotional desire to punish the body. Why did

2. Ibid., p.25.
More choose to pursue a course that ran counter to his reason? Once again, the key to this riddle exists in Christian doctrine as expressed by St. Augustine:

Again, how weak is our apprehension of truth in this life when, as we read in the book of true Wisdom, "The corruptible body is heavy unto the soul, and the earthly mansion keepeth down the mind that is full of cares."1

Man lives in a world of sin and evil, in which the "lusts of the flesh" threaten continually to pull down the mind from its quest for good. This is why More mortified his flesh. As a devout Christian he was aware of the need to turn his thoughts away from the pleasures of this world to contemplate the eternal truths revealed in his religion. However, a basic tension remained which More felt the need to fight against. He was a warm, sensuous man with an acute appreciation of beauty and music. Erasmus tells how that he could not suppress his desire for the married state, and so refrained from taking holy orders. It is quite probable that rationally, he was highly attracted to the Epicurean philosophy of the Utopians, while realising that there was a higher doctrine that must be adhered to.

Hythlodeaean continues the discussion by saying that, in the view of the Utopians, happiness resides not in every pleasure, but only in good and decent pleasure.

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To such, as to the supreme good, our nature is drawn by virtue itself...¹

More, as a Christian, most certainly did not believe that virtue itself would draw human nature to the supreme good. When he gave this belief to the Utopians he must have remembered that in *De Civitate Dei* St. Augustine had written:

...virtue, which is not from nature, but comes afterwards from learning, when it has got the highest place in humanity, what other work has it but a continual fight against the inbred vices that are inherent in our own bosoms...²

The Utopians, therefore, like the ancient philosophers, were wrong in supposing that human nature would naturally incline towards virtue as providing the greatest happiness.

More next considers the question of genuine and false pleasures. In this section, he underlined many features of the Utopians' beliefs that were close to his own heart. Especially in the consideration of false pleasures, More reiterates what in ancient philosophy was most compatible with Christian doctrine. The Utopians condemn vanity in clothing, servility from others, ideas of nobility and rank, the lust for gems and superfluous wealth, dicing, and hunting. More, throughout his whole life, showed that these evils were to be spurned. However, once Hythlodaeus begins to describe the hierarchy of pleasures the validity

¹. *Utopia*, p.163.
². *De Civitate Dei* XIX. IV. p.238.
of the arguments begins to decrease, because the Utopian philosophy is so clearly a reconstruction of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophies of the ancients, that it is immediately suspect. The philosophy of pleasure that More gives the Utopians is precisely that which Augustine attacks and refutes in detail. Like the ancient philosophers, the Utopians divide genuine pleasures into those of the soul, and those of the body. The pleasures of the soul include: intelligence, "the sweetness bred of the contemplation of truth", "the pleasant recollection of a well spent life", and "the sure hope of happiness to come". The pleasures of the body subdivide into those "which fill the sense with clearly perceptible sweetness", such as food and drink, defecation, sexual intercourse, rubbing, and scratching; and those "which tickle and affect our senses with a secret force", such as music, and health, which the Utopians consider the basis of all pleasures. Of the two classes of pleasures the Utopians cling above all to the mental pleasures.¹ The Christian answer to this philosophy is best expressed in the words of St. Augustine himself:

But such as found the perfection of felicity upon this life, placing it either in the body, or in the mind, or in both: or, to speak more plainly, either in pleasure or in virtue, or

¹. Utopia, pp.173-177.
in pleasure and rest together, or in virtue, or in both; or in nature's first desires, or in virtue, or in both, fondly and vainly are these men persuaded to find true happiness here.¹

Once again, features of the Utopian philosophy are flatly contradicted by an authority of the Church. I find it impossible to believe that More, who had studied De Civitate Daæ and lectured upon it, did not have Augustine's discussion of the supreme good in mind, and was influenced by it. The Utopians are primarily misled by their belief that supreme happiness can be achieved in this life. As St. Augustine saw it, this was the prime error of the classical philosophers also, and it was his first aim in Book XIX of De Civitate Daæ to refute this notion:

...I must therefore first lay down their arguments...who intend to make for themselves a beatitude extant even in the continual misfortune of man's temporal mortality.²

The parallels between St. Augustine's ideas and More's own life show that the philosophy of the Utopians is far from valid. It is possible that More was objectifying one side of his own thought as a humanist, and sought to exhaust the possibilities of reaching truth through the exercise of reason alone. Whether this is true or not, the fact remains that More did not believe in the principles

¹ De Civitate Daæ, p.237.
² De Civitate Daæ, XIX. 1. p.231.
which his reason elaborated. Why he did not is shown by the words he gives Hythlodaeus at the conclusion of the discussion on the Utopian philosophy:

This is their view of virtue and pleasure. They believe that human reason can attain to no truer view, unless a heaven-sent religion inspire man with something more holy.1

More does not approve of the conclusions of the Utopians because he knows Christians do have a heaven-sent religion which has provided them with a truer view. The truer view, was that revealed by St. Augustine, which More adopted to guide his own behaviour. What he intended was to show his readers the ineffectiveness of reason in arriving at an apprehension of eternal truths. Reason, he shows, is merely an aid; not the means.

SLAVERY

In dealing with the question of slavery, More shows how closely he was related to the general movement of Humanism in his time. For the Humanists slavery had become one of the crucial problems of the age, owing to the overseas expansion of Portugal and Spain. As gold mining became an established industry along the Guinea Coast, the Portuguese found it expedient to take slaves

1. Utopia, p.179.
for labour, the majority of slaves coming from the Congo. However, by 1487 the morality of the African slave trade had become greatly disputed. The greatest Portuguese historian of the age, Joas de Barros, writes how Joao III, "ever more mindful of the salvation of souls than of the profits of his treasury, ...ordered the cessation of this trade, although he suffered great loss by this act..."1

The immediacy of the problem was further emphasized once the Spaniards began to colonize and exploit their conquests in the West Indies and Mexico. In the first decade of the Sixteenth Century the native Indian population of the Caribbean was practically exterminated because of the rigours to which the Indians were subjected by the Spanish encomenderos. Undoubtedly news of the debates and treatises concerning slavery reached England; it is not surprising that More should treat the problem in his discussion of an imaginary commonwealth envisaged in the newly discovered lands. More shows himself a typical Humanist in his preoccupation with slavery. However, the ideas which he presents concerning slavery, show More to be radically differed from his humanist counterparts in his conclusions. Whereas Patrizi and Erasmus were profoundly disturbed by the incompatibility between slavery and the rights of a baptised Christian, More reaffirmed the older doctrine of St. Augustine. The similarity of the ideas put forward by I. G.R. Crane (ed.), The Voyages of CadaMosto and other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century (Hakluyt Society, London, 1937) Second Series, Vol. LXXX pp. 124-5.
More and Augustine is so close that one must assume that More was writing on the subject of slavery with *De Civitate Dei* in mind. I consider that More was proffering ideas which he seriously believed. This conclusion is supported by the way in which More carefully elaborates the argument for slavery as a means of correcting vagabondage and theft in Book I, and has Cardinal Morton, his old tutor, approve the scheme. To show that More's proposals for slavery were serious it is necessary to examine the relationship between Hythlodeus' description of Utopian slavery and the ideas propounded by St. Augustine.

More begins with a specific rejection of hereditary slavery. Prisoners of war are not made slaves unless they are captured in wars fought by the Utopians themselves. The sons of slaves do not remain in slavery with their fathers, nor does anyone who was a slave when he was acquired from a foreign country. Those that are enslaved are people who commit some heinous offence in Utopia, and people who have been condemned to death in some other country. In other words, More is careful to establish that slavery is not a social or economic institution, but the consequence of sin.

In presenting these views, More followed Augustine very closely, who declared that slavery originated with guilt:
And therefore in all the scriptures we never read the word servant, until such time as that just man Noah laid it as a curse upon his offending son. 1

Slavery was not a part of the natural order in which mankind lived before the Fall:

But penal servitude had its institution from that law which commands the conservation and forbids the disturbance of nature's order; for if that law had not first been transgressed, penal servitude had never been enjoined. 2

This belief is reiterated in *Utopia*, where only those are enslaved who have committed crimes against nature and order. Although at first sight this doctrine appears very reactionary, it is nevertheless an enlightened rejection of the motives for taking slaves that the Portuguese and Spaniards put forward; namely, that heathen savages were eternally damned unless they came under the dominion of Christian Europeans who could convert them and thereby save their souls. This justification was used merely as a pretext to gather slave labour for colonial agricultural and mining enterprises. More removes the question of slavery from the sphere of economics, and places it in a theological perspective. It is most likely that More fully agreed with St. Augustine's belief that God would not allow the institution of slavery, unless it was part of the divine purpose:

Sin... is the mother of servitude, and first cause of man’s subjection to man; which notwithstanding comes not to pass but by the direction of the Highest, in whom is no injustice, and who alone knows best how to proportionate his punishment unto man’s offences.  

The most striking parallel between the thought of More and Augustine exists in the notion that prisoners captured in wars fought by the Utopians should be made slaves. More follows Augustine so closely that one must conclude that he was either satirizing one of the Fathers of the Church, or, more likely, that he had derived his material from his predecessor. St. Augustine writes:

...in the justest war, the sin upon one side causes it; and if the victory fall to the wicked (as sometimes it may) it is God’s decree to humble the conquered, either reforming their sins herein, or punishing them.

More, in keeping with his general humanitarian nature, would certainly have considered the enslavement of prisoners of war much preferable to the inhuman slaughter of captured prisoners, especially mercenaries.

One other class of Utopian slaves must be mentioned: those from other countries who voluntarily become slaves in Utopia to escape from the poverty-stricken drudgery of life in their own country. It is possible More was merely being witty here, but more probably he intended that his readers would assume that the beggars and disposessed in

1. Ibid., p.253.
2. Ibid., p.253.
England would willingly enter into slavery if they thought it would make life more tolerable. If this is what More intended, it is a very harsh indictment of conditions in England.

More, then, in dealing with the problem of slavery, reveals himself to be both a Humanist and a Christian: Humanist in that he shared the general concern about the justice of contemporary slavery; and Christian in the conclusions he reached. As with most of the other problematical issues in *Utopia*, it is virtually impossible to decide whether More is serious or satirical unless St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* is regarded as a probable source for, or indication of, the nature of More's opinions.

**EUTHANASIA**

The arguments More gives the Utopians to justify euthanasia make interpretation difficult for the Twentieth Century reader. In this century the case for euthanasia has been prosecuted with great zeal, even to the point where prominent Churchmen have condoned the practice in theory.\(^1\) It is therefore hard for the modern reader to rid himself of the liberal notions of the 1960s concerning euthanasia, in order to approach the subject with the preconceptions of More's original readers. However, if

\(^1\) e.g. Dr. L. Weatherhead, *The Christian Agnostic*, (London, 1967).
one looks at the issue through the eyes of a Renaissance Christian, More's purpose becomes more clearly understandable.

More, when considering euthanasia and suicide is not so much concerned with presenting principles in which he believes, as with developing, in its most attractive form, a rational argument for a belief contrary to his own. Through approaching the issue in this way, he can unravel all the arguments which could justify the practice, and see at what point they become spurious. More expected the reader, on his part, to detect the point where the argument becomes false. However, the complexity of More's thought and the subtlety of his reasoning mean that the crucial point where the argument shades off into spuriousness can pass unnoticed, unless the reader has constantly in mind the Christian doctrines that ultimately determined More's attitude to the issue in question.

More opens the discussion by telling how the sick are lovingly cared for and given every possible form of medical aid and emotional comfort. But if anyone's disease is incurable and agonizing, he is exhorted by the priests and public officials to choose a voluntary death. The reasons why a man should choose to end his own life are that he is now unable to do all life's duties, that he is
a burden to himself and a trouble to others, and that he is living beyond the time of his death. Moreover, such a man is justified in taking his own life because he will be obeying the counsels of the priests "who are God's interpreters", and because he can rely on good hope.  

This argument for euthanasia appears to be extremely plausible on the surface, but elements of equivocation begin to emerge when the justifications of it are examined more closely. The Utopians are somewhat inhumane in exhorting an incurable to take his own life merely because he is unable to perform all the duties he should. They are also inhumane in stressing that he is a trouble to others and is living beyond the time of his death. The justification they invoke is even more dubious: an act of euthanasia will be pious and holy because it is sanctioned by priests who are interpreting the will of God. When he invented this justification, More would have been highly aware of the fact that the Church had never claimed the power to allow suicide. He would consequently expect the reader to question on what authority the Utopian priests claimed that euthanasia was allowed by God.

The greatest flaw in the Utopian argument, however, is their belief that a man contemplating suicide can rely on good hope. It is probable that when More supplied the Utopians with this hope, he remembered St. Augustine in De Civitate Dei, had quoted St. Paul as an authority that the hope of a man who wished to escape from the misfortunes of this world was no hope at all:

"Hope that is seen is not hope, for how can a man hope for that which he seeth? But if we hope for that we see not, we do with patience wait for it."1

The mistake of the Utopians is that their hope is seen, and therefore they do not have the patience to wait for an unseen hope. Augustine likens hope to salvation; it can only be bestowed by the Creator, not made by man:

Wherefore as we are saved, so are we blessed by hope; and as we have no hold on our safety, no more have we of our felicity, but by hope, patiently awaiting it; and being as yet in a desert of thorny dangers, all these we must constantly endure...2

For Augustine and for More, life was full of evils and temptations that must be resisted and endured. The mistake of the Utopians is that they believe that through eliminating the agony of an incurable's disease they are ridding both the man and Utopia of unhappiness. This is a false hope, as Augustine points out when he rejects the similar view of the Stoics:

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1. De Civitate Dei, XIX. IV. p.240.
2. Ibid., p.240.
To this height is their proud stupidity grown (building all their beatitude upon this life), that if their wise man were blind, deaf, lame, and made the very hospital of all agonies and anguish, which should lie so on him that they should force him to his own death, yet this life that is environed with all those plagues are they not ashamed to call blessed.1

The Utopians, likewise, build all their beatitude upon this life, and according to their ratiocination it is only logical for a man to end his own life once his beatitude is destroyed through sickness and pain. The errors in their condonement of euthanasia spring from the fundamental error that forms the basis of their philosophy: that pleasure in this world is the Supreme Good. Because of this mistaken belief, the Utopians are led to commit a crime against nature through urging men to be their own executioners. Augustine makes this clear:

It must needs be a forcible evil, that has power to make a man (nay, and a wise man) to be his own executioner, it being truly said by themselves, that it is as it were nature's first and most forcible precept, that a man should cherish a respect for himself, and therefore avoid the hand of death, by sheer natural instinct, and so befriend himself that he should still desire to be a living creature, and enjoy the conjunction of his soul and body.2

1. Ibid., p.239.
2. Ibid., p.239.
More, through creating the most attractive argument for euthanasia that he could, showed again how the conflict within him between humanism and Christianity operated. Like St. Augustine, More utilized all the techniques of the rationalist and rhetorician that were at his command in order to explore a topic which interested him. But, like his predecessor, he subjected all his reasoning to the precepts supplied to him by his religious faith, and ultimately his faith superceded his reason.

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

More's discussion of Utopian marriage customs raises two problems: that of the validity of divorce, and that of the marriage of priests. Is More a radical humanist proposing reforms which are far in advance of his own times, or is he a superb satirist who is subtly mocking a contemporary abuse and a spurious theory? An examination of More's argument concerning marriage and divorce shows a sequence of changing tones which oscillate between the serious and the facetious. When one compares this oscillating tone with More's statements on marriage and divorce in his English Works, one sees that More's Christian viewpoint operates as effectively in this section of Utopia as it does elsewhere.
More begins his consideration of marriage in a very serious tone. He comments on the contemporary abuse of child marriages by describing how in Utopia girls may not marry until they are twenty-four. Undoubtedly More remembered that Arthur, the Prince of Wales, had been contracted to Catherine of Aragon when he was only a year old, and that such dynastic matches were the rule rather than the exception. More continues in this tone of deadly earnestness to describe how premarital intercourse is severely punished because:

...unless persons are carefully restrained from promiscuous intercourse, few will contract the tie of marriage, in which a whole life must be spent with one companion and all troubles incidental to it must be patiently borne.¹

One can detect More's own voice in his stress on the permanence of marriage and the patience that must accompany it. Confirmation of the fact that More is speaking in his own person is found in the harsh punishment he gives the father and mother of the family in whose house the offence was committed. Stapleton tells how More, in his own household, was very careful to prevent a situation which might allow promiscuity:

To ward off danger of unchastity he arranged that his men-servants and maid-servants should sleep in separate parts of the building, and should rarely meet together.²

¹. Utopia, p.187.
When, however, More passes to a description of how a prospective bride and groom are exhibited to each other, naked, the tone at once becomes lighter and facetious. More even has Hythlodaeus regard this custom as "very foolish and extremely ridiculous". Hythlodaeus' attitude is a certain indication that the custom is not to be regarded seriously, because his condemnation is in marked contrast to his usual uncritical admiration for all things Utopian. More may even have intended his humanist readers to recognize a joke in the analogy he makes between choosing a wife and buying a colt:

In buying a colt, where there is question of only a little money, persons are so cautious that though it is almost bare they will not buy until they have taken off the saddle and removed all the trappings for fear some sore is concealed under these coverings.

There is an inherent jest in this analogy because More imitated it directly from Horace's *Satires*. Horace uses the analogy to prove that fornication with a prostitute is better than adultery, because with a prostitute one can see her charms more readily revealed. Pope was later to borrow the same analogy to satirize Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in *A Sermon against Adultery*:

A lady's face is all you see undress'd
(For none but Lady M... shows the rest)...

11.124-5.

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1. Utopia, p.189.
2. Ibid., p.189.
Through describing the Utopian custom of showing the lovers naked to each other, More cleverly suggests that the Utopians are more sensually-motivated than they should be. More would have agreed with Erasmus that one should choose a wife for the way in which she reflects Christ's piety, modesty, soberness, and purity, rather than for her outward beauty. More himself certainly followed this principle when he chose the aged and sterile Dame Alice as his second wife.

As More proceeds, he shows that the Utopians are plainly anti-Christian in allowing divorce. He so obviously contradicts his earlier description of marriage as a tie "in which a whole life must be spent with one companion and all troubles incidental to it must be patiently borne", that he clearly intended the reader to view with suspicion the fact that:

...when a married couple agree insufficiently in their dispositions and both find others with whom they hope to live more agreeably, they separate by mutual consent and contract fresh unions, but not without the sanction of the senate.1

More so plainly contradicts what he has said earlier that he is obviously being satirical. A comparison between the Utopian practice and the view of St. Augustine on divorce,

1. *Utopia.*
shows that More presents the Utopians as living in the condition of the ancient Israelites before the advent of Christ. The Utopians, like the Children of Israel, allow divorce on the grounds of incompatibility. St. Augustine, when considering divorce amongst the Israelites because of "the hardness of their hearts", and that since the advent of Christ divorce was no longer permissible. To reinforce this principle St. Augustine quoted Jesus' words from Matthew XIX:

"Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female?"

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. So that now they are no more two but one. Let no man therefore sunder what God has coupled together".¹

That More firmly believed in this principle was the prime reason for his execution. As a man of conscience he could not approve of Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, an act which cost him his head. More was not alone in rejecting the validity of divorce. Erasmus closely follows St. Augustine's distinction between divorce allowed before the coming of Christ and its subsequent prohibition. In his colloquy entitled Marriage, Erasmus has Eulalia ("sweetly speaking") give Xanthipphe the following advice:

¹ De Civitate Dei, XXII, p.51.
Eulalia: "Whatever your husband's like, bear in mind that there's no exchanging him for another. Once upon a time divorce was a final remedy for irreconcilable differences. Nowadays this has been entirely abolished; you must be husband and wife till the day you die."
Xanthippe: "May heaven punish whosoever robbed us of this right!"
Eulalia: "Mind what you're saying. Christ so willed."
Xanthippe: "I can scarcely believe it."
Eulalia: "It's the truth. There's nothing left now but to try to live in harmony by adjusting yourselves to each others' habits and personalities."

The opinion Erasmus expresses through the mouthpiece of Eulalia is very close to More's first statement that marriage is for life "and all troubles incidental to it must be patiently borne." The way in which the right of the Utopians to separate through mutual consent and contract fresh unions reveals them to be primitive and unenlightened in this practice. As with their philosophical beliefs and their attitude towards euthanasia, so with marriage: the Utopians do not hold beliefs which are as enlightened as those of Europe. The degree of their unenlightenment is reflected in the extreme harshness of their penalties for adultery. First offenders are punished with the strictest form of slavery, and marriage with the injured party may only continue if the innocent husband or wife is prepared to share the slavery and hard labour of his or her partner.

Relapses into the same offence are punished by death. In the rigour of these punishments the Utopians again resemble the Israelites of the Old Testament, and perhaps More intended a parallel to be drawn between them. They certainly do not show the qualities of mercy and charity taught in the New Testament. Such harsh punishments do not coincide, moreover, with the humane practices of the historical More.

When More comes to discuss how "the priests have for their wives the very finest women of the country,"¹ he is surely satirizing the prevalent contemporary abuse of sacerdotal unchastity. His description of how the Utopian priests marry must be viewed alongside his later statements on marriage of the clergy.

More was aware that celibacy of the clergy was a rule enforced only later by the Church and that it was not at first an essential requirement. St. Paul, delineating for Timothy the character of an ideal bishop, wrote:

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife.... One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.²

However More, while acknowledging that at first it was permissible for priests to marry and that many did so,

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¹. Utopia, p.229.
². I. Timothy, 3.11.
maintained that the example of Christ justified the rule that priests must be celibate. He clearly expounds this opinion in *The Confutation*:

...the churche both knoweth and confesseth, that wedlocke and priesthood be not repugnant but compatible of their nature, and that wedded men have been made priestes and kept stall their wives. But sith perpetuall chastitie, and the forebearing of the works of wedlocke in matrimony, is more acceptable to God then the works of wedlocke in matrimony: therefore the church taketh none to priestes but such as promise and professe never to be married, but kepe perpetuall chastitie.\(^1\)

In *The Dialogue Concerning Tundale*, More was even more specific. Chastity, regarded as fitting for priests by the Jews, was even more fitting for the priests of Christ:

...which was born of a virgin, and lived and died a virgin himself, and exhorted all his to do the same.\(^2\)

The Utopians, when judged by these later statements of More, are not enlightened in allowing their priests to marry. That the priests do marry is yet another indication that the Utopians are not as advanced as the Christians of Europe.

Why was More so averse to the idea of married priests? Once again, the precepts found in *De Civitate Dei* provide the clue to More's thought. Following St. Paul, Augustine

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considers that it is best for a man to remain unmarried. But if a man cannot remain continent, "it is better to marry than to burn." Sexual desire, he believed, is an inheritance from man's first sin. When man lived sinless in paradise his desire was directed by reason, but now; "in the very moment of consummation, it overwhelsm almost all the light and power of cogitation." It is very important to remember that at the time More was studying De Civitate Dei, along with the other Church Fathers, he was debating whether he should enter the priesthood or not. That he finally decided not to become a priest was due to his acceptance of St. Augustine's views on marriage. More knew himself to be a very sensuous man, and realized that the priesthood would offer him no escape from his deep-seated longings for marriage. Erasmus tells us that:

...indeed there was no obstacle to his adopting this kind of life [i.e. the priesthood], except the fact that he could not shake off his wish to marry. Accordingly he resolved to be a chaste husband rather than a licentious priest.

More realized that, according to his own standards of what a priest should be, he was unsuited to become a priest, because he felt the cravings of original sin within him. Most probably this is why he secretly mortified his flesh

1. I Corinthians 7. 8-9.
2. De Civitate Dei, XVI, p.47.
with knotted ropes and wore a hair shirt next to his skin which chafed until he bled. One can understand More's tremendous indignation therefore at the marriage of Luther, whom he referred to as "an open incestuous lecher." It was natural for More to condemn Luther for succumbing to the temptation which he had so rigorously rejected.

More cannot have presented the marriage of Utopian priests as a model to be copied. He allowed the Utopian priests to be married because he himself would have liked to be both husband and priest. This desire was part of the tension between humanism and piety within him. More was perpetually torn by the antithetical elements in his nature. He longed for an ascetic, religious life, but enjoyed the "honest pleasures of the world:" therefore he gave the Utopians the Epicurean philosophy. He longed to be a priest, yet he longed more to be a husband; therefore he allowed the Utopian priests to be married. More, in Utopia, presented elements of his nature which he ultimately rejected as inferior to his spiritual aspirations. In this way, his treatment of these elements was therapeutic for him. In his discussion of marriage customs in Utopia, More reveals that the conflict within him extended even further than the tension between humanism and religion: it was a

conflict between his spiritual aspirations and his material desires.

WARFARE

The section on warfare in Utopia is the most overtly satirical passage in the book. Here the tension is not evident, because his humanism and religion are at one in their unequivocal condemnation of warfare. Nevertheless, More’s discussion of the Utopian methods of waging war has been misunderstood by those who see it as an example of Machiavellian realpolitik. When the passage is examined closely, one can see that More employed his typical satirical method. As with his treatment of Utopian philosophy and marriage, More expresses an initial principle or belief, and then shows how in practice, the Utopians do not follow it. Consequently, More imperceptibly slides into satire of increasing intensity.

At the outset of the discussion, More describes how the Utopians share the belief of humanists and Christians concerning warfare:

War, as an activity fit only for beasts and yet practised by no kind of beast so constantly as by man, they regard with utter loathing.¹

This detestation of war is laudable, and coincides with the feelings of Erasmus, Colet, and almost all other humanists.

¹ Utopia, p.199.
Continuing in his serious tone, More tells how "they count nothing so inglorious as glory sought in war". This, too, is admirable and leads one to expect that More is going to uphold the Utopians as a virtuous model to be copied by Europeans. However, the tone gradually begins to slide into the satirical when More shows that the Utopians are really no better than Europeans in their practice of war, and, indeed, embody all the most treacherous and unchivalric features of European war policy. More is careful not to make his satire too obvious at first. He alternates between giving the Utopians virtuous qualities and then detestable qualities. For example, the preliminary statement of Utopian motives for going to war seems laudable, their incentives being to protect their own territory, to drive invading enemies out of their friends' lands, and to deliver people oppressed by Tyranny from the yoke and slavery of the tyrant. In all these motives they are prompted by human sympathy. At this stage it appears that the Utopians fight for only the most just of wars, but as More proceeds, some of their motives become very dubious. More tells us that they go to war:

...sometimes also to requite and avenge injuries previously done to them.

1. Ibid., p.201.
2. Ibid., p.201.
Through ascribing the motive of revenge to the Utopians, More clearly links them to the pagan Indians that Vespucci described, who:

...never fight for power or territory....
Their one cause for war is an enmity of long standing.1

Already More shows that the Utopians do not truly regard war "with utter loathing" or else they would never embark upon it out of the un-Christian motive of revenge. The satire becomes more obtrusive when More tells how the Utopians recently went to war against the Alaopolitans on behalf of the Nephelogaetes, whose traders had suffered a wrong at the hands of the Alaopolitans. Even Hythlodaeus withdraws his approbation from the Utopian action, because:

...whether right or wrong, it [the Alaopolitan misdeed] was avenged by a fierce war.2

Hythlodaeus implies that the Utopians act too hastily in going to war, without real consideration of whether their course is fully justified or not. Hythlodaeus tells how the initial war escalated into such a general conflict that it could be ended only by the enslavement of the Alaopolitans. More intended his readers to see that this was a ridiculously exaggerated conclusion to a relatively minor incident, and that the Utopians committed a greater evil than the one they

1. Amerigo Vespucci, Quatuor Americi Vespucii nauigationes, 1507, quoted in Utopia, op.cit., p.497.
2. Utopia, p.201.
punished. The injustice they were led to commit did not
end there. The Utopians yielded all the Alaopolitans
into the power of the Nephelogetes:

...a people who, when the Alaopolitans were
prosperous, were not in the least comparable
to them.1

Even Hythlodaeus seems aware that the Utopians were wrong
in debasing a whole people to the level of slaves under
an inferior nation.

More becomes vehemently satirical when he describes
the Utopian methods of procuring a victory. The Utopians
have swung far away from their basic ideal that war is to
be loathed as fit only for beasts. More is now able to
ascribe to them the most treacherous of contemporary
political abuses in Europe. At first sight it appears as
if the Utopians are entirely noble as they "blush" at a
victory that has cost much bloodshed, and feel pride if
they overcome and crush the enemy by stratagem and cunning.
However, once More elaborates the nature of their strategies
and cunning, one's initial approval is changed into condem-
nation. Their first strategy is to have the enemy King
assassinated, and to promote this aim they set up placards
on enemy territory promising huge rewards to anyone who
will kill the King. Lesser rewards are offered for the

1. Ibid., p.201.
assassination of other named officials. The Utopians believe that such a policy of tyrannicide reflects their wisdom, because the death of one man prevents the death of many. Their argument for tyrannicide sounds convincing in rational terms, but it is entirely un-Christian and More cannot have believed in it, because tyrannicide had been condemned a century earlier in 1415 at the Council of Constance. As More recites further Utopian practices, one sees that the Utopians are utterly amoral in their diplomacy. If the plan to have the enemy king assassinated fails, they foster strife by boosting a rival claimant to the throne. If the ensuing internal strife dies down:

...they stir up and involve the neighbours of their enemies by reviving some forgotten claims to dominion such as kings have always at their disposal.1

These strategies are obviously thinly disguised imitations of the dealings of Henry VIII, and one is astonished at More's boldness in presenting them so plainly. The Battle of Flodden, in 1513, left a child on the throne of Scotland, and between 1513 and 1515, when Utopia was written, Henry tried every treacherous means in his power to gain control over the infant heir to the throne and his mother, Margaret Tudor. The Scottish historian Tytler well summarizes Henry's policy:

1. Utopia, p.205.
By means of his indefatigable agent, Lord Dacre, he had not only corrupted some of its [i.e. Scotland's] leading nobility, but so successfully fomented dissensions amongst them, that every effort of the regent to re-establish the control of the laws was rendered abortive by the prevalence of private war.

The Utopians are now no longer the peace-lovers they were in the opening of the discussion, but fosterers of strife and anarchy. More is now totally satirical. He bitingly remarks that, like European princes, the Utopians supply money liberally amongst their enemies and keep a special treasury for this purpose. They even have vast treasuries abroad in each of the neighbouring nations.

More has now created the right tone for launching his harshest attack on contemporary European abuses. He tells how the Utopians use their riches to hire mercenaries, especially from the Zapoletans. The Swiss are the obvious butt of More's attack, because the Zapoletans are described as living five hundred miles to the east of Utopia (the equivalent distance between England and Switzerland) in a country of rugged woods and mountains. In 1515 the question of Swiss mercenaries was a topical issue because they had fought in the Battle of Marignano on the side of Ferdinand and the Pope, and had been defeated. Throughout

the whole of Italy, mercenary armies were an unwelcome scourge. This is reflected in Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, published the year after *Utopia*, in which Machiavelli condemns the use of mercenary armies owing to their ineffectiveness and their destructive pillaging. More utters similar sentiments when he describes how the Zapoletans sell themselves to whichever side offers to pay them the most, forget both kinship and friendship, and spend their pay in debauchery. The Utopians "do not care in the least how many Zapoletans they lose". More intends the reader to see that the Utopians are not really peace-loving; they merely wage war by proxy. When they do have to fight on their own land in their own persons, their methods are plainly barbarous.

Through describing how the Utopians themselves fight, More gives his harshest satire of the horrors of war. Women are encouraged to fight with the men, and are given an equal amount of military training. Each man is accompanied by his own children and his relations by blood and marriage, to spur him to the greatest effort in their protection. They never retreat, and if the enemy holds his ground the battle ends in mutual extermination. In the horrors of his description of Utopian methods, More

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expresses an indictment of war which is as powerful as any of Erasmus’ anti-war tracts. The fundamental irony is that although they profess to loathe war, the Utopians are very highly skilled in all aspects of it. Their actions belie the profession of their principles. They believe that all their motives and methods are just, but More shows us they are not. The actions of the Utopians are put in their true perspective if one views them in the light of St. Augustine’s teaching about whether a war can be just:

Yea, but a wise man, say they, will wage not but just war. He will not! As if the very remembrance that himself is man ought not to procure his greater sorrow in that he has cause of just wars...so that a wise man should never have war.

It is clear that More did not intend to suggest that the Utopian method of waging war was a more humane, more moral alternative to the methods employed by Europeans. Rather, he aimed to satirize the most treacherous of European abuses through ascribing them to the Utopians. In this aim, the Christian and the humanist in More were at one.

UTOPIAN RELIGION

Whereas More was able to synthesize his humanist and Christian principles in treating the question of warfare,

when he dealt with the religions of Utopia the basic conflict reasserted itself and he was unable to resolve it. His description of religion centres around two basic problems: that of the relationship between reason and faith, and that of toleration for heretics. More is able to create a harmonious balance between reason and faith, but he only arrives at an uneasy compromise in trying to resolve the second problem.

More's discussion of religion is saturated with Augustinian thought and the influence of St. Augustine is strongly felt when More tackles the question of the relationship between faith and reason. Like St. Augustine, he aims to show that:

...reason [must] not resyate faith but walke with her, and as her handmaide so wayte upon her, that as contrary as yet take her, yet of a truth faith goth neuer without her.

In order to show how reason was the handmaiden to faith, More chose to represent the Utopians as Platonist in matters of religion. His aim was to show how that the highest religion attainable by reason alone was compatible in most points with the religion revealed by Christ. In following this course, More again shows how indebted he is to St. Augustine, whose appraisal of the merits of Platonism in De Civitate Dei More surely followed as a guide for his

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presentation of the Utopian beliefs. St. Augustine considered that the Platonist doctrines constituted the highest kind of philosophy outside the Christian religion because the Platonists perceived that God was no bodily or mutable thing. He regarded the Platonists as far in advance of any of the other philosophical schools which believed God existed in the planets, or in finite objects. The Platonists surpassed these other schools because they realized.

...His life, understanding, and beatitude are all His being. From this invariable and simple essence of His they understood Him to be the uncreated Creator of all existence.  

Although a minority of Utopians do worship the sun, moon, planets, or great men as god, more clearly intended the majority to be compared to the Platonists when he describes how they believe in

...a certain single being, unknown, eternal, immense, inexplicable, far above the reach of the human mind, diffused throughout the universe not in mass but in power. Him they call father. To him alone they attribute the beginnings, the growth, the increase, the changes, and the ends of all things as they have perceived them.  

The Utopians call this supreme being "Mithras" and all the different forms of religion tend to the same end: the worship of his nature. St. Augustine, when pondering how Plato could have arrived at a doctrine so similar to that

1. De Civitate Dei, Book VIII, viii, p.231.  
of Christianity, quotes the words of St. Paul to suggest that:

"...the invisible things of Him, that is
His eternal power and godhead, are seen by
the creation of the world, being considered
in His works."\(^1\)

More picks up this suggestion when he describes how the
Utopians

...think that the investigation of nature, with
the praise arising from it, is an act of worship
acceptable to God.\(^2\)

The inference that both writers make is that men can reach
an understanding of the nature of God through contemplating
the natural world as evidence of his power. Through
comparing the Utopians to the Platonists in their religion,
More shows how reason, in its most perfect form, will
confirm the truths of revealed religion. Further parallels
between the Utopians and the Platonists, as described by
St. Augustine, reinforce the impression that More aimed
to show the Utopians have evolved the highest form of
religion attainable through reason. Like the Platonists,
the Utopians believe that the ultimate truth is not to be
found in any one religion, and therefore a variety of sects
must be tolerated. Also, like the Platonists, they believe
that invisible spirits hover amongst the living. These

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invisible beings approximate to the "airy spirits" described by Plato. Although the Utopians do not worship them as the Platonist's did, their fear of the personal presence of their forefathers keeps them from any secret dishonourable deed. Here, the overt parallels with Platonism end; but, in keeping with his aim to show how the Utopian religion confirms the practices of Christianity, More describes further merits of it. The Utopians closely resemble Christians in their ideal that priests should be holy and venerable, and the churches should provide an atmosphere conducive to worship. It is significant that More has the Utopians adopt all the practices of the medieval Catholic Church which he himself extolled in his later works. They have fine vestments, brightly-coloured; they burn incense and candles, and holy music is played during divine services. They admit that such embellishments add nothing to the divine nature, but they feel that

...by these sweet smells and lights, as well as by the other ceremonies, they somehow are uplifted and rise with livelier devotion to the worship of God.¹

More closely follows St. Augustine when he describes the Utopian view of sacrifices. Augustine, like More, rejects the validity of animal sacrifices, and says the true and perfect sacrifice exists in

Every work therefore tending to effect our beatitude by an holy conjunction with God... 1

Augustine considered that such holy work was to be found in two courses of action: when one consecrated one's life wholly to God in an active life, and when one chastised the body by abstinence to make it a more perfect instrument for God. More picks up Augustine's belief when he ascribes these two courses of holy works to the two different classes of Buthrescae ("religious par excellence"). The first class of Buthrescae is composed of celibates who eschew all sexual activity and are strict vegetarians. "They entirely reject the pleasures of this life as harmful". 2 The second class regard matrimony as preferable, "not despising the comfort which it brings and thinking that their duty to nature requires them to perform the marital act and their duty to the country to beget children." 3 They eat meat, and do not avoid any pleasure unless it interferes with their work. Here is another instance of the familiar tension between More the sensuous man, and More the ascetic. The Utopian judgement that the second class of Buthrescae are the saner while the first are the holier, probably sums

1. *De Civitate Dei*, Book X, vi, p. 278.
up More's own personal feelings on the matter. Another parallel between Utopia and De Civitate Dei exists in the similar attitude to miracles presented by More and Augustine. Both see miracles as examples of the divine power at work, confirming the true adoration of one God.

Although More shows how the best features of the Utopian religion confirm the practices of the Christian Church, he is careful to emphasize that the Utopian religion is in no way equal to Christianity. The Utopians reach faulty conclusions that arise when reason alone is the standard for determining religious beliefs. The two great errors of the Utopians are the marriage of priests. I have already discussed how More emphatically rejected the right of priests to marry. He was equally adamant in asserting that it was not possible for women to become priests. In The Dialogue More wrote:

...if it had been a wisdom and not against God's will, it would of likelihood have been founden by some good men before these days, in this long time of so many hundred years.1

He proceeds to elaborate the practical reason why women may not be priests:

...A woman can keep counsel well enough. For though she tell a gossip, she telleth it but in counsel yet, nor her gossip to her gossip neither, and so when all the gossips in the town know it, yet it is but counsel still.2

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2. Ibid., p.150.
More clearly did not regard women as suitable to hear confession.

Apart from these wrong beliefs, the Utopian religious practices are so close to those of Christianity that it is not surprising that the Utopians readily inclined to Christianity once the Europeans had told them of Christ and his teachings, character, and miracles. They were particularly drawn to Christianity when they heard that the common way of life of the disciples had been pleasing to Christ. Through showing this easy transition from a religion determined by the highest form of reason to the true revealed religion of Christianity, More successfully achieved his aim of showing how reason and faith are not at odds, but are complementary.

In considering the questions of toleration and heresy, More did not reach a similarly successful conclusion. Here his humanism and his religion remain in conflict. More, as a humanist, must have felt that it was the right of every man to have freedom to arrive at his own conclusions concerning religion. He often expressed the opinion that no man could be coerced into accepting any belief against his will. Consequently, More gives the Utopians freedom to choose their own form of religion. However, as a Medieval Catholic, he believed there was only one true
religion that held the key to salvation. How could he therefore, in conscience, tolerate the existence of heresies which might tempt true believers into disbelief? More found the conflict irreconcilable. He is able to grant the Utopians a certain amount of religious freedom because, since King Utopus could rely only on reason, he could not be sure there was one true religion which he could enforce on the inhabitants of his new state. However the right of freedom of belief is no sooner stated, than More qualifies it by describing two exceptions: Utopus forbade anyone to disbelieve in the immortality of the soul, or to disbelieve that the world was ruled by divine providence. These exceptions show that complete toleration is not possible even for non-Christians. More, in an attempt to resolve the clash between his humanistic ideal of toleration and his Christian conviction that complete toleration was not possible, reaches an uneasy compromise. He makes a clear distinction between the toleration of private beliefs which is permissible, and the toleration of dissentious, proselytizing heresy. The Utopians allow their citizens to choose their religion freely. But Hythlodaeus tells how when a Christian convert began to preach publicly "with more zeal than discretion", 1 condemning all other religions as profane and sacrilegious,

he was arrested and convicted of stirring up a riot among the people. This distinction between private beliefs and violent public heresy is the core of More's argument. He implies that a person is free to damn himself, but is not free to procure the damnation of others. This is why, as Chancellor, More vigorously suppressed heresy. Some critics have seen his strict treatment of heretics as indicative of a change in attitude from that expressed in *Utopia*; but More's actions are quite in keeping with the Utopian distinction between private and public heresy. What More especially detested in heretics was the violence with which they tried to spread their teachings:

...if the heretiques had neuer begun with violence, though they had vset al the waies they could to allect the people by preaching, ...yet yf they had set violence aside, good christen people had peraduenture yet vnto this daye, vset lesse violence towarde them than thei do now...1

The contradiction between the principle of toleration More expressed in *Utopia* and the persecution he employed against heretics a decade later, does not so much show a change in More's attitude, as it shows that his apparent solution to the problem of toleration was merely illusory. The basic conflict remained, and when More had to face it

in pressing circumstances he chose, as always, the course laid down by his Church. Even so, More was not the ferocious heretic persecutor that Foxe portrayed him as in his *Book of Martyrs*. He hated the vice of heretics and not their persons. Consequently he showed extreme benevolence to individual heretics, and never showed personal cruelty towards them.

In his discussion of Utopian religion More the humanist triumphs in showing how reason confirms the truths of revealed Christianity, and is an indispensable aid to it. But More the Christian remains in conflict with More the humanist, over the problem of toleration.

**COMMUNISM**

A discussion of Utopian communism has been reserved until last because it is the principle foundation of the whole of Utopia, and because it has caused the greatest disagreement among critics. Did More seriously believe in the principle of common ownership, did he later change his mind and reject it, or did he include it in *Utopia* merely as a satirical joke? The answer is impossible to determine unless one examines the question from the point of view of the tension between religion and humanism in More.
Hythlodaeus concludes his description of remedies for vagabondage and theft, in Book I, by saying that:

...wherever you have private property and all men measure all things by cash values, there it is scarcely possible for a commonwealth to have justice or prosperity...¹

As Hythlodaeus elaborates his belief in the principle of communism, one sees that More's purpose was to use the description of communism as an imaginative device to highlight European greed and injustice. This he does through contrasting European ills with Utopian equality and charity. The important point is that Utopian communism is used as a device for the sake of contrast, rather than as a seriously proposed reform for Europe.

More's aim was to expose as false:

...all the nobility, magnificence, splendour, and majesty, which are, in the estimation of the common people, the true glories and ornaments of the commonwealth.²

More is careful to make it clear that he personally does not believe it is possible to have a communist system in practice. When Hythlodaeus has finished stating his belief in communism as the only true remedy for the ills of a commonwealth, More and Giles state their objections. Communism can not work because there can not be a sufficient supply of goods. Individuals have no

1. *Utopia*, p.103.
2. *Utopia*, p.245.
incentive without the motive of personal gain, and they are rendered slothful by trusting in the industry of others. Moreover there can be no true authority if all men are equal. Hythlodaeus' only defence is to say that Giles and More would change their minds if they could see communism in action in Utopia.

One must be careful to distinguish between More's rejection of communism as a practical possibility and his belief in the theoretical principle of communism. More realized that the highest ideal was that of a life in which possessions were shared amongst all. He recalls this ideal in describing how the Utopians were especially attracted to Christianity when they heard that Christ had approved of his disciples' common way of life. More adds that this way of life "is still in use among the truest societies of Christians". In other words, More realized that there was a distinction between State communism, which it was impossible to force on a whole nation, and a voluntary communism, which is adopted as a religious way of life. More fully approved of this second form of communism and even lived in a Carthusian order for several years. Hythlodaeus' great mistake is his belief that this ideal way of life can be imposed on everyone, and that it will remove all the other evils in a commonwealth.

1. Utopia, p.105.
More mildly ridicules the naivety of Hythlodaeus' eulogy of Utopia:

In Utopia all greed for money was entirely removed with the use of money. What a mass of troubles was then cut away! What a crop of crimes was then pulled up by the roots! Who does not know that fraud, theft, rapine, quarrels, disorders, brawls, seditions, murders, treasonings, poisonings, die out with the destruction of money?¹

Hythlodaeus errs in supposing that the abolition of money will remove the evil from human nature. More follows St. Augustine when he affirms, in contradiction to Hythlodaeus, that

...it is impossible that all should be well unless all men were good, a situation which I do not expect for a great many years to come!²

Man lives in a fallen world and his tainted nature needs to be subjected to many forms of dominium, of which the institution of private property is one. More recognized that communism was impossible, owing to the evil in human nature, which made it necessary for man to be under the regulation of many laws and restrictions. More made this explicit when he later attacked Luther's belief that State laws were unnecessary:

As if the best magistrates in the world could bring it about that all Christian people wanted to live in a communist system, or that wicked people did not want to steal...³

1. Ibid., pp.241-3.
2. Ibid., p.101.
More expresses his opinion that Luther is naive in advocating that we should live in a sort of natural communism, "even if one were to grant him the truth of that theory".¹ He sees that even under a system of communism laws would still be needed to compel people to work and to suppress crimes "which would still cause trouble even in a life like that".² Hythlodeus is clearly wrong in his belief that property owned in common would remove all the other moral and political evils which he enumerates.

More, in his description of Utopian communism, expresses not so much a tension between his humanism and his religion, as a tension between his belief in the ideal of common ownership and the realization that such an ideal is impossible for mankind to adopt. He realizes that human nature will always contain greed and selfishness and therefore a communist system could not exist without a totalitarian system of compulsion. Moreover, the problem remains of how such a system is to be established. Hythlodeus suggests that certain legislation could improve matters, such as statutes to limit the amount of land a man could possess, and to limit monetary income. More may have believed that such legislation was an initial step but it is significant that communism was only established

¹. Ibid., p.149.
². Ibid., p.149.
in Utopia forcibly by its conqueror, Utopus. More uncovered the same problem that later troubled William Morris in *News From Nowhere*: how was a socialist system to be established in a world governed by greed and selfishness? More frankly admits that it is impossible to establish the true ideal in the real world, although he still uses a description of the ideal to show up the actual evils of European life. Morris does not concede this impossibility, and adopts the Marxist solution of violent revolution. The result is that his utopia contains a tonal disparity, and is full of paradoxes which More avoided.

The attitude of More towards communism, was governed by his dual view. Both as a humanist and a Christian, he believed that a common way of life was the ideal form of existence. However, his Christian view of man's nature and the human condition led him to reject communism as impossible in reality.
Previous commentators on Utopia have usually regarded it as wholly serious or wholly frivolous. Karl Kautsky viewed it as an enlightened document by a man who was living ahead of his time; T.S. Dorsch\(^1\) regards it as a description of a detestable state. R.W. Chambers,\(^2\) while recognizing that some features of Utopia were of dubious validity, still considered that More created it as the highest form of commonwealth attainable by reason alone. His contention was that More aimed to shame Christian Europe into doing better than the pagan Utopians. Whatever their conclusions about the nature of More's purpose, all these critics see the treatment of Utopia as uniform in tone and attitude. To view Utopia in this way is to miss many subtleties of irony and humour, and to misunderstand More's intention. More was concerned primarily with treating ideas, rather than with creating an imaginary commonwealth. The fictitious island of Utopia is merely the medium through which he can express his own attitude towards various beliefs, theories, and practices. It does not matter to More whether the belief he holds is one held by Europeans, or one held by the Utopians. When Europeans, in his opinion, hold a belief

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which is correct, he satirizes any contrary beliefs which the Utopians might hold. When he sees that Europeans hold a belief which is imperfect, or practise a custom which is unjust or irreligious, he creates a corrective belief or practice which he has the Utopians embody. Sometimes he gives the Utopians the same belief as Europeans to show that the belief is correct no matter how it is reached. The student of *Utopia*, therefore, must discover More's own viewpoint before the book can be properly understood. It is not sufficient to view *Utopia* as uniform in satire or seriousness: one must recognize that More's approval and disapproval constantly shift. However, More's attitude is governed by a stable viewpoint; a viewpoint which is that of a devout Christian. Before *Utopia* can be interpreted accurately, one must understand fully the Christian beliefs that More would have held, and would have expected all his Renaissance audience to hold. If this is done, one sees that there was a fundamental tension in More between his humanism and his religion. *Utopia* reveals More in a constant attempt to reconcile the two when considering various beliefs or practices. In order to isolate this tension and see how it influenced More in the writing of *Utopia*, one must examine the sources from which he drew ideas and literary methods.
A study of Lucian's influence upon More shows how he adopted the satirical method that Lucian had used in his Satirical Sketches and his A True History. This was a very subtle form of satire which allowed delicate shifts of irony based on unspoken assumptions. More found this method perfectly suited to his own shifting approbation, because it allowed him scope to include both the attitude which his humanism prompted him to accept and also the Christian attitude which made him reject it. For this reason, Lucian's satirical method perfectly accommodated the fundamental tension within More.

A consideration of the immediate historical milieu in which Utopia was composed likewise illuminates the humanist influence in More's attitude. One sees that he was firmly tied to the general European Reform Movement headed by Erasmus. It was this humanist preoccupation with reform which determined that More would deal with topical issues of doctrine and practice in Utopia. The great expansion of Europe into Africa and the New World from the late Fifteenth to the early Sixteenth Century also helps to explain why More chose to embody his reformist discussion in an imaginary commonwealth. The influence of Amerigo Vespucci's travel memoirs helps, moreover, to show why More's commonwealth is pagan rather than Christian, and
why it echoes many features of Plato's Republic which are paralleled in the customs of the American Indians.

The greatest influence of all, however, and the one which most substantially explains the meaning of Utopia, is that of St. Augustine and De Civitate Dei. A suspicion that De Civitate Dei may have been an influential source for More's own beliefs is confirmed by the many instances of Augustinian thought in Utopia. The presiding beliefs of More and Augustine are nearly identical, and both men tackle their subject in the same way. The purpose of both is to try to reconcile their reason and their piety, and both attempt this by showing that reason is the handmaiden of faith and will inevitably support the conclusions reached by faith. Why More was so greatly influenced by Augustine, is because he saw in Augustine's problems and situation an analogy with his own. Both men lived in periods of great change when all stable values and beliefs were in question, and when the relationship between Hebraism and Hellenism was unsure. Consequently, both Augustine and More manifest practically the same tension between reason and faith, and their treatment of their subject matter is governed by this tension. Another great similarity exists in the way both More and Augustine ultimately trust in the teachings of the Christian religion.
More's Christian viewpoint prevails throughout *Utopia*, and governs his attitude to any issue he discusses. The tension between humanism and religion in him operates with varying degrees of strength. Occasionally the tension is entirely absent, either because More totally believes in a custom he describes, such as the principle of slavery, or because he totally rejects practices he describes, such as euthanasia, the marriage of priests, and divorce. However, more frequently, a fundamental disparity remains between More's professed rejection of a principle he has described, and the commitment with which he has argued for it, for example Utopian Epicureanism and communism. More quite possibly was confident that he had satisfactorily reconciled his humanism and his religion, but one sees that this was not so. The basic tension remains, and it goes far in accounting for the many shifts in the direction of the satire in *Utopia*, and in More's attitude towards the great issues he debates. Understanding the tension in More provides an entirely new means of interpreting his enigmatic book, for the tension most adequately explains its complex meaning.
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


