

## Notes and quotations from “Utopia” by Sir/Saint Thomas More’s

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### About the time period

Thomas More was preceded by a century that was slowly breaking the shackles of the Catholic Church, unending war, and insane taxation (mostly to pay for the 100 Years’ War). In 1395, John Ball, an English clergyman, was quoted saying:

*“My friends, the state of England cannot be right until everything is held communally, and until there is no distinction between nobleman and serf, and we are all as one. Why are those whom we call lords, masters over us? How have they deserved it? By what right do they keep us enslaved? We are all descended from our first parents, Adam and Eve; how then can they say that they are better than us... At the beginning we were all created equal. If God willed that there should be serfs, he would have said so at the beginning of the world. We are formed in Christ's likeness, and they treat us like animals... They are dressed in velvet and furs, while we wear only cloth. They have wine, and spices and good bread, while we have rye bread and water. They have fine houses and manors, and we have to brave the wind and rain as we toil in the fields. It is by the sweat of our brows that they maintain their high state. We are called serfs, and we are beaten if we do not perform our task... Let us go to see King Richard. He is young, and we will show him our miserable slavery, we will tell him it must be changed, or else we will provide the remedy ourselves. When the King sees us, either he will listen to us, or we will help ourselves. When we are ready to march on London I will send you a secret message. The message is `Now is the time. Stand together in God's name.’”*

In these words you can hear the whisper of the coming Protestant Reformation. But the peasant uprising sparked by these seditious words failed, and John Ball was captured, drawn and quartered. The young King Richard II tricks the peasants and then beats down their revolt saying:

*“Rustics you were and rustics you are still. You will remain in bondage, not as before but incomparably harsher. For as long as We live... We will strive with mind, strength and goods to suppress you so that the rigour of your servitude will be an example to posterity.”*

But John Wycliff, a follower of Ball, survives the rebellion and continues to translate the Latin bible into English. And, doing so meant that any commoner could read the word of God. His Bible was banned by the King. And a Papal Bull was passed to burn all of Wycliff’s bibles.

In Germany Jan Huss appealed to the cardinal of Bohemia, but Wycliff’s translated Bibles were burned anyway. Huss becomes an outspoken critic of the Catholic church and is eventually invited by German King Sigismund, under royal safe conduct, to the Council of Constance. Once there, the Cardinals captured Huss and condemned him as a heretic. But Huss’s followers, the Hussites, organized to riot. The wars with these rebels go on for 20+ years in Bohemia, demanding the “4 articles of Prague,”

- Freedom to preach the word of God
- Celebration of the communion under both kinds (bread and wine to priests and laity alike)

- Poverty of the clergy and expropriation of church property;
- Punishment for mortal sins i.e. the punishment of notorious sinners, among whom prostitutes are singled out for special attention

Beyond these 4 articles, the Hussites fought against all entitlement and privilege. Again, More's own text echoes the thoughts and desperate desires of the Hussites.

The Council of Constance, which brought an end to Huss, was a very important meeting for the Catholic Church. Meeting for over a year, they finally resolved the Western Schism that had broken the papacy into three separate Popes. However, they were unable to resolve the continuing East-West schism between Constantinople and Rome.

Midway through the 100 Years' War, in France the nobles fought over the throne and split their strength. As a result, Henry V marches into France and into his famous victory at the battle of Agincourt. Henry is declared Reagent of France, but eventually he dies and in the aftermath of trying to unify the nobles under his rule. This was the time of Jean d'Arc, who was martyred as a Heretic by the English after she was captured. But, following her death, the French nobility reunited under Charles VII eventually prevailed in the 100 Years' War. The people suffered greatly throughout this time at the whim of the nobility. There is little doubt that the behavior of the nobility during the period of the 100 Years' War served as the inspiration for More's harsh criticism of "Princes" and nobility in general.

The 15<sup>th</sup> century was also the Age of Discovery for Spain and Portugal. They sailed off to the Americas, found the Pacific Ocean, and sailed around the Cape of Good Hope. Vasco de Gama sailed from Europe to India and back!

Mercantilism was the leading school of economic thought in this time period. Mercantilism "was viewed as a zero-sum game in which any gain by one party required a loss by another." Wikipedia goes on to simplify the aims of Mercantilism as:

1. Imposing high tariffs on the importation of finished goods; and imposing low, or no, taxes on the importation of raw materials or exotic products.
2. Imposing low, or no taxes on the export of finished goods; and imposing high taxes on the exportation of raw materials.
3. Seeking new markets for domestic manufactured products, so as to artificially increase the demand for domestic production.

This troubled century also gave rise to the West African Slave trade.

To the east the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks leads to a migration of Greeks and Greek texts to the west, particularly to Italy. With the end of the influence of the Byzantine Empire, we essentially mark the end of the Middle Ages, and move in Renaissance.

It is important to understand that the Renaissance was a "rebirth" of the classical ideas of Greece in Europe. The influx of Greek texts combined with advances by men like Gutenberg, who improved the printing press, meant that ideas began to flow freely again throughout the western world. Thomas More was one of the first Englishmen schooled in Ancient Greek, and no doubt he took an intense interest in Plato's Republic, our next text.

## About Thomas More

The introduction of our edition of *Utopia* elaborates on More's reputation as a man deeply schooled in the Law. "In the first years of the reign of Henry VIII he rose to large practice in the law courts, where it is said he refused to plead in cases which he thought unjust, and took no fees from widows, orphans, or the poor."

More seemed to be very much the product of the "Classical Humanism" school of thought, taught to him when he was a page for the Archbishop of Canterbury John Morton. Classical Humanism "sought to create a citizenry able to speak and write with eloquence and clarity and thus capable of engaging in the civic life of their communities and persuading others to virtuous and prudent actions. This was to be accomplished through the study of the "studia humanitatis", today known as the humanities: grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy." (Wikipedia) It is important to note that "Logic" was dropped from the all-important "Trivium" of Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric in the studia humanitatis.

Studia humanitatis was advanced by the Catholic Church, and those who advanced it were typically staunch Catholics, or at least reformers who fell outside of the radical ideas of Martin Luther and the Protestant Revolution. More was a loyal Catholic, although his ideas ironically echo the same sentiments of church critics like John Ball, Jan Huss and John Wycliff. As Chancellor, More fought strenuously against the policies of the Reformation. But More's loyalty to the church cost him his life when serving as the Lord High Chancellor of England (essentially the head of the House of Lords). He refused to take the "Oath of Supremacy," which would acknowledge King Henry VIII as Supreme Head of the Church of England and approve of the annulment of his marriage. He was beheaded.

The Pope canonized More in 1935, making him the "heavenly patron of statesmen and politicians."

"*Utopia*" was published in 1516 with the aid of his friend Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, just over 500 years ago. It is a politically rebellious text that proposes a world without money and where people share everything equally without the special distinctions of social class. It was published nearly 350 years before Marxism and Socialism rise out of the post-enlightenment period. But, it was also not the first example of idealized communal living.

## Synopsis of the Text

- The title "*Utopia*" is derived from Greek, in which it almost literally means "nowhere," or a place that doesn't or cannot exist. Therefore, it is interesting that the modern definition of the word is that of an ideal world, but which still implies that it can't exist.
- Rafael is entreated to speak of his travels. He does not have much good to say about the princes and their courts.
  - "... most princes apply themselves more to affairs of war than to the useful arts of peace; and in these I neither have any knowledge, nor do I much desire it; they are generally more set on acquiring new kingdoms, right or wrong, than on governing well those they possess: and, among the ministers of princes, there are none that are not

so wise as to need no assistance, or at least, that do not think themselves so wise that they imagine they need none; and if they court any, it is only those for whom the prince has much personal favour, whom by their fawning and flatteries they endeavour to fix to their own interests; and, indeed, nature has so made us, that we all love to be flattered and to please ourselves with our own notions."

- Rafael speaks of injustice in the land.
  - "... this way of punishing thieves was neither just in itself nor good for the public; for, as the severity was too great, so the remedy was not effectual; simple theft not being so great a crime that it ought to cost a man his life."
  - "... no punishment, how severe soever, being able to restrain those from robbing who can find out no other way of livelihood."
- Rafael criticizes the habits and virtues of the nobility.
  - "... noblemen among you that are themselves as idle as drones, that subsist on other men's labour, they carry about with them a great number of idle fellows, who never learned any art by which they may gain their living..."
  - "They stop the course of agriculture, destroying houses and towns, reserving only the churches, and enclose grounds that they may lodge their sheep in them."
- Rafael defends the peasants.
  - "... what is left for them to do but either to steal, and so to be hanged (God knows how justly!), or to go about and beg? and if they do this they are put in prison as idle vagabonds, while they would willingly work but can find none that will hire them."
- Rafael summarizes with this famous quotation:
  - **"If you suffer your people to be ill-educated, and their manners to be corrupted from their infancy, and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded from this but that you first make thieves and then punish them?"**
- The audience objects raising the necessity of deterrence, questioning:
  - "I would gladly know upon what reason it is that you think theft ought not to be punished by death: would you give way to it? or do you propose any other punishment that will be more useful to the public? for, since death does not restrain theft, if men thought their lives would be safe, what fear or force could restrain ill men?"
- Rafael replies:
  - "It seems to me a very unjust thing to take away a man's life for a little money, for nothing in the world can be of equal value with a man's life."
  - "... we ought not to approve of those terrible laws that make the smallest offences capital"
  - "God has commanded us not to kill, and shall we kill so easily for a little money?"
  - "if it is pretended that the mutual consent of men in making laws can authorise man - slaughter in cases in which God has given us no example, that it frees people from the obligation of the divine law, and so makes murder a lawful action, what is this, but to give a preference to human laws before the divine? and, if this is once admitted, by the same rule men may, in all other things, put what restrictions they please upon the laws of God."
  - "for if a robber sees that his danger is the same if he is convicted of theft as if he were guilty of murder, this will naturally incite him to kill the person whom otherwise he would only have robbed"
- Rafael diverts to give an example of justice, by describing the Polylerits.

- The men are preserved to work as slaves, while “a piece of one of their ears is cut off” to forever mark them as criminals and slaves.
- “vice is not only destroyed and men preserved, but they are treated in such a manner as to make them see the necessity of being honest and of employing the rest of their lives in repairing the injuries they had formerly done to society.”
- The conversation turns to Philosophy and the counsel Kings and Princes require to rule justly.
  - “But Plato judged right, that except kings themselves became philosophers, they who from their childhood are corrupted with false notions would never fall in entirely with the counsels of philosophers.”
  - “This philosophical way of speculation is not unpleasant among friends in a free conversation; but there is no room for it in the courts of princes, where great affairs are carried on by authority.”
- Rafael brings up the Utopians at last.
  - “But though these discourses may be uneasy and ungrateful to them, I do not see why they should seem foolish or extravagant; indeed, if I should either propose such things as Plato has contrived in his ‘Commonwealth,’ or as the Utopians practise in theirs, though they might seem better, as certainly they are, yet they are so different from our establishment, which is founded on property (there being no such thing among them), that I could not expect that it would have any effect on them. But such discourses as mine, which only call past evils to mind and give warning of what may follow, leave nothing in them that is so absurd that they may not be used at any time, for they can only be unpleasant to those who are resolved to run headlong the contrary way....”
- Rafael is asked again if he would serve society better if he brought his wisdom and knowledge of these perfect places to the courts of Kings and princes.
  - “... if we must let alone everything as absurd or extravagant — which, by reason of the wicked lives of many, may seem uncouth — we must, even among Christians, give over pressing the greatest part of those things that Christ hath taught us, though He has commanded us not to conceal them, but to proclaim on the housetops that which He taught in secret. The greatest parts of His precepts are more opposite to the lives of the men of this age than any part of my discourse has been, but the preachers seem to have learned that craft to which you advise me: for they, observing that the world would not willingly suit their lives to the rules that Christ has given, have fitted His doctrine, as if it had been a leaden rule, to their lives, that so, some way or other, they might agree with one another. But I see no other effect of this compliance except it be that men become more secure in their wickedness by it; and this is all the success that I can have in a court, for I must always differ from the rest, and then I shall signify nothing; or, if I agree with them, I shall then only help forward their madness.”
  - “Plato set forth the unreasonableness of a philosopher’s meddling with government. ‘If a man,’ says he, ‘were to see a great company run out every day into the rain and take delight in being wet — if he knew that it would be to no purpose for him to go and persuade them to return to their houses in order to avoid the storm, and that all that could be expected by his going to speak to them would be that he himself should be as wet as they, it would be best for him to keep within doors, and, since he had not influence enough to correct other people’s folly, to take care to preserve himself.”
  - “Plato, he resolved not to make any laws for such as would not submit to a community of all things.”
- Again Rafael summarizes:

- **“I am persuaded that till property is taken away, there can be no equitable or just distribution of things, nor can the world be happily governed; for as long as that is maintained, the greatest and the far best part of mankind, will be still oppressed with a load of cares and anxieties.**
- The company listening again object asking:
  - “How can there be any plenty where every man will excuse himself from labour? for as the hope of gain doth not excite him, so the confidence that he has in other men’s industry may make him slothful.”
  - And Rafael answers by simply suggesting that if these others had been in Utopia with him, then they would understand.
  - The others arrange for a special meeting where he will have time to tell the story at length.
- The group meets again and Rafael begins to describe Utopia.
  - There are many details that I am not including here. I will attempt to only draw attention to those aspects of the culture that seem to draw a distinct contrast to Europe in the time of the warrior princes.
- Distribution of labor and assignment of skills.
  - “...there is every year such a shifting of the husbandmen to prevent any man being forced against his will to follow that hard course of life too long yet many among them take such pleasure in it that they desire leave to continue in it many years.”
  - “Besides agriculture, which is so common to them all, every man has some peculiar trade to which he applies himself.”
  - “The same trade generally passes down from father to son, inclinations often following descent: but if any man’s genius lies another way he is, by adoption, translated into a family that deals in the trade.”
  - “... if, after a person has learned one trade, he desires to acquire another, that is also allowed.”
  - “... they do not wear themselves out with perpetual toil from morning to night , as if they were beasts of burden.”
  - “... they, dividing the day and night into twenty-four hours, appoint six of these for work, three of which are before dinner and three after; they then sup, and at eight o’clock, counting from noon, go to bed and sleep eight hours: the rest of their time, besides that taken up in work, eating, and sleeping, is left to every man’s discretion; yet they are not to abuse that interval to luxury and idleness, but must employ it in some proper exercise, according to their various inclinations, which is, for the most part, reading.”
  - They only require six hours for work because: “if all those who labour about useless things were set to more profitable employments, and if all they that languish out their lives in sloth and idleness (every one of whom consumes as much as any two of the men that are at work) were forced to labour, you may easily imagine that a small proportion of time would serve for doing all that is either necessary, profitable, or pleasant to mankind, especially while pleasure is kept within its due bounds.”
  - “The magistrates never engage the people in unnecessary labour, since the chief end of the constitution is to regulate labour by the necessities of the public, and to allow the people as much time as is necessary for the improvement of their minds, in which they think the happiness of life consists.”
- Explaining how a society without money works in practice.
  - **“Every father goes, and takes whatsoever he or his family stand in need of, without either paying for it or leaving anything in exchange. There is no reason for giving a**

**denial to any person, since there is such plenty of everything among them; and there is no danger of a man's asking for more than he needs; they have no inducements to do this, since they are sure they shall always be supplied: it is the fear of want that makes any of the whole race of animals either greedy or ravenous; but, besides fear, there is in man a pride that makes him fancy it a particular glory to excel others in pomp and excess; but by the laws of the Utopians, there is no room for this."**

- "they take more care of their sick than of any others; these are lodged and provided for in public hospitals"
- If a woman cannot nurse her child, another woman will happily step in and "the child whom they nurse considers the nurse as its mother."
- And "old men are honoured with a particular respect, yet all the rest fare as well as they."
- They discuss traveling about the island and the rules for doing so.
- They discuss what occurs when they have a surplus of food.
- And he describes how the Utopians have a large store of gold and treasure of which they have no use other than to buy services of others. More on this later.
  - "... since they have no use for money among themselves, but keep it as a provision against events which seldom happen, and between which there are generally long intervening intervals, they value it no farther than it deserves — that is, in proportion to its use. So that it is plain they must prefer iron either to gold or silver, for men can no more live without iron than without fire or water; but Nature has marked out no use for the other metals so essential as not easily to be dispensed with. The folly of men has enhanced the value of gold and silver because of their scarcity; whereas, on the contrary, it is their opinion that Nature, as an indulgent parent, has freely given us all the best things in great abundance, such as water and earth, but has laid up and hid from us the things that are vain and useless."
  - "Of the same metals they likewise make chains and fetters for their slaves" and there-by "they take care by all possible means to render gold and silver of no esteem."
  - **"The Utopians wonder how any man should be so much taken with the glaring doubtful lustre of a jewel or a stone, that can look up to a star or to the sun himself; or how any should value himself because his cloth is made of a finer thread; for, how fine soever that thread may be, it was once no better than the fleece of a sheep, and that sheep, was a sheep still, for all its wearing it."**
- The topic switches to the Utopians' understanding of Philosophy.
  - "They had never so much as heard of the names of any of those philosophers that are so famous in these parts of the world, before we went among them; and yet they had made the same discoveries as the Greeks, both in music, logic, arithmetic, and geometry."
  - "They are so far from minding chimeras and fantastical images made in the mind that none of them could comprehend what we meant when we talked to them of a man in the abstract as common to all men in particular."
  - "... they knew astronomy, and were perfectly acquainted with the motions of the heavenly bodies; But for the cheat of divining by the stars, by their oppositions or conjunctions, it has not so much as entered into their thoughts."
  - **"They examine what are properly good, both for the body and the mind; and whether any outward thing can be called truly good, or if that term belong only to the endowments of the soul. They inquire, likewise, into the nature of virtue and**

**pleasure. But their chief dispute is concerning the happiness of a man, and wherein it consists — whether in some one thing or in a great many.”**

- “... they never dispute concerning happiness without fetching some arguments from the principles of religion as well as from natural reason, since without the former they reckon that all our inquiries after happiness must be but conjectural and defective.”
- They think that **“the soul of man is immortal, and that God of His goodness has designed that it should be happy; and that He has, therefore, appointed rewards for good and virtuous actions, and punishments for vice, to be distributed after this life.”**
- “... they think that even reason itself determines a man to believe and acknowledge them; and freely confess that if these were taken away, no man would be so insensible as not to seek after pleasure by all possible means.”
- “... they think it the maddest thing in the world to pursue virtue, that is a sour and difficult thing, and not only to renounce the pleasures of life, but willingly to undergo much pain and trouble, if a man has no prospect of a reward.”
- “They define virtue thus — that it is a living according to Nature, and think that we are made by God for that end.”
- **“They say that the first dictate of reason is the kindling in us a love and reverence for the Divine Majesty, to whom we owe both all that we have and, all that we can ever hope for. In the next place, reason directs us to keep our minds as free from passion and as cheerful as we can, and that we should consider ourselves as bound by the ties of good - nature and humanity to use our utmost endeavours to help forward the happiness of all other persons;** for there never was any man such a morose and severe pursuer of virtue, such an enemy to pleasure, that though he set hard rules for men to undergo, much pain, many watchings , and other rigors, yet did not at the same time advise them to do all they could in order to relieve and ease the miserable, and who did not represent gentleness and good - nature as amiable dispositions.
- “Thus as they define virtue to be living according to Nature, so they imagine that Nature prompts all people on to seek after pleasure as the end of all they do.”
- “Nature inclines us to enter into society; for there is no man so much raised above the rest of mankind as to be the only favourite of Nature.”
- “They think it a sign of a gentle and good soul for a man to dispense with his own advantage for the good of others.”
- “They look upon freedom from pain, if it does not rise from perfect health, to be a state of stupidity rather than of pleasure.” They consider health to be the greatest of the bodily pleasures.
- **“But, of all pleasures, they esteem those to be most valuable that lie in the mind, the chief of which arise out of true virtue and the witness of a good conscience. They account health the chief pleasure that belongs to the body; for they think that the pleasure of eating and drinking, and all the other delights of sense, are only so far desirable as they give or maintain health; but they are not pleasant in themselves otherwise than as they resist those impressions that our natural infirmities are still making upon us.**
- “But they think it madness for a man to wear out the beauty of his face or the force of his natural strength, to corrupt the sprightliness of his body by sloth and laziness, or to waste it by fasting; that it is madness to weaken the strength of his constitution and reject the other delights of life, unless by renouncing his own satisfaction he can either serve the public or promote the happiness of others, for which he expects a greater recompense from God. So that they look on such a course of life as the mark of a mind

that is both cruel to itself and ungrateful to the Author of Nature, as if we would not be beholden to Him for His favours, and therefore rejects all His blessings; as one who should afflict himself for the empty shadow of virtue, or for no better end than to render himself capable of bearing those misfortunes which possibly will never happen.”

- Rafael talks about how the Utopians master Greek in a short time.
- He talks about slavery.
  - “... slaves among them are only such as are condemned to that state of life for the commission of some crime, or, which is more common, such as their merchants find condemned to die in those parts to which they trade, whom they sometimes redeem at low rates, and in other places have them for nothing.”
  - “Another sort of slaves are the poor of the neighbouring countries, who offer of their own accord to come and serve them: they treat these better”
- He discusses suicide of the terminally ill
  - “... their sick, when any is taken with a torturing and lingering pain, so that there is no hope either of recovery or ease, choose rather to die since they cannot live but in much misery.”
  - “... if any man takes away his own life without the approbation of the priests and the senate, they give him none of the honours of a decent funeral, but throw his body into a ditch .”
- Rafael discusses marriage.
  - “... they think that if they were not strictly restrained from all vagrant appetites, very few would engage in a state in which they venture the quiet of their whole lives, by being confined to one person, and are obliged to endure all the inconveniences with which it is accompanied.”
  - “Before marriage some grave matron presents the bride, naked, whether she is a virgin or a widow, to the bridegroom, and after that some grave man presents the bridegroom, naked, to the bride .”
  - “... neither allow of polygamy nor of divorces, when a married couple do not well agree, they, by mutual consent, separate, and find out other persons with whom they hope they may live more happily.”
  - “They punish severely those that defile the marriage bed ;”
- He speaks of the power of the prince for each city, priests, lawyers and of the law.
  - “The Prince himself has no distinction, either of garments or of a crown; but is only distinguished by a sheaf of corn carried before him.”
  - “They very much condemn other nations whose laws, together with the commentaries on them, swell up to so many volumes ; for they think it an unreasonable thing to oblige men to obey a body of laws that are both of such a bulk , and so dark as not to be read and understood by every one of the subjects.”
  - “Every one of them is skilled in their law; for, as it is a very short study , so the plainest meaning of which words are capable is always the sense of their laws.”
- Rafael speaks about Treaties and War
  - “They think leagues are useless things , and believe that if the common ties of humanity do not knit men together, the faith of promises will have no great effect.”
  - “the treaties, which are purposely couched in such ambiguous terms that they can never be so strictly bound but they will always find some loophole to escape at, and thus they break both their leagues and their faith.”

- “kindness and good nature unite men more effectually and with greater strength than any agreements whatsoever, since thereby the engagements of men’s hearts become stronger than the bond and obligation of words “
- “... they do not rashly engage in war, unless it be either to defend themselves or their friends from any unjust aggressors, or, out of good nature or in compassion, assist an oppressed nation in shaking off the yoke of tyranny.”
- “... demand that the guilty persons may be delivered up to them , and if that is denied , they declare war”
- “And in no victory do they glory so much as in that which is gained by dexterity and good conduct without bloodshed .”
- **“... nature, when he conquers his enemy in such a way as that no other creature but a man could be capable of, and that is by the strength of his understanding. Bears, lions, boars, wolves, and dogs, and all other animals, employ their bodily force one against another, in which, as many of them are superior to men, both in strength and fierceness, so they are all subdued by his reason and understanding.”**
- “As soon as they declare war, they take care to have a great many schedules, that are sealed with their common seal, affixed in the most conspicuous places of their enemies’ country. This is carried secretly , and done in many places all at once. In these they promise great rewards to such as shall kill the prince,”
- “They think it likewise an act of mercy and love to mankind to prevent the great slaughter of those that must otherwise be killed in the progress of the war , both on their own side and on that of their enemies, by the death of a few that are most guilty; and that in so doing they are kind even to their enemies, and pity them no less than their own people, as knowing that the greater part of them do not engage in the war of their own accord, but are driven into it by the passions of their prince.”
- “... they hire soldiers from all places for carrying on their wars;”
- “... as they force no man to go into any foreign war against his will, so they do not hinder those women who are willing to go along with their husbands; on the contrary, they encourage and praise them, and they stand often next their husbands in the front of the army.”
- Rafael digresses into a discussion about the Zapolets, a barbarian race who desire war above all else and are ready for hire to fight wars.
  - Their maxim is: “as they seek out the best sort of men for their own use at home, so they make use of this worst sort of men for the consumption of war”
  - “Utopians are not at all troubled how many of these happen to be killed, and reckon it a service done to mankind if they could be a means to deliver the world from such a lewd and vicious sort of people, that seem to have run together, as to the drain of human nature.”
- The Utopians are monotheistic, and yet they have many flavors of religion.
  - **“... some worshipping the sun , others the moon or one of the planets... a wiser sort of them worship none of these, but adore one eternal, invisible, infinite, and incomprehensible Deity; as a Being that is far above all our apprehensions, that is spread over the whole universe, not by His bulk, but by His power and virtue; Him they call the Father of All, and acknowledge that the beginnings, the increase, the progress, the vicissitudes, and the end of all things come only from Him; nor do they offer divine honours to any but to Him alone. And, indeed, though they differ concerning other things, yet all agree in this: that they think there is one Supreme Being that made and governs the world, whom they call, in the language of their**

**country, Mithras. They differ in this: that one thinks the god whom he worships is this Supreme Being, and another thinks that his idol is that god; but they all agree in one principle, that whoever is this Supreme Being, He is also that great essence to whose glory and majesty all honours are ascribed by the consent of all nations."**

- Rafael tells of his evangelism while in Utopia
  - "... many of them came over to our religion , and were initiated into it by baptism. They have had great disputes among themselves , whether one chosen by them to be a priest would not be thereby qualified to do all the things that belong to that character , even though he had no authority derived from the Pope."
- Rafael tells of Utopis, the founder of the island and some of his rules.
  - "... that no man ought to be punished for his religion."
  - Further, he "made a law that every man might be of what religion he pleased , and might endeavour to draw others to it by the force of argument and by amicable and modest ways."
  - "He judged it not fit to determine anything rashly; and seemed to doubt whether those different forms of religion might not all come from God, who might inspire man in a different manner, and be pleased with this variety; the native force of truth would at last break forth and shine bright, if supported only by the strength of argument, and attended to with a gentle and unprejudiced mind; he therefore left men wholly to their liberty, that they might be free to believe as they should see cause; only he made a solemn and severe law against such as should so far degenerate from the dignity of human nature, as to think that our souls died with our bodies, or that the world was governed by chance, without a wise overruling Providence."
- Rafael talks about some ascetics among the Utopians who approach virtue through good works alone
  - "... here are many among them that upon a motive of religion neglect learning , and apply themselves to no sort of study ; nor do they allow themselves any leisure time , but are perpetually employed , believing that by the good things that a man does he secures to himself that happiness that comes after death ."
  - "... some live unmarried and chaste , and abstain from eating any sort of flesh; and thus weaning themselves from all the pleasures of the present life, which they account hurtful.... Another sort of them is less willing to put themselves to much toil , and therefore prefer a married state to a single one; and as they do not deny themselves the pleasure of it, so they think the begetting of children is a debt which they owe to human nature."
- And finally Rafael discusses the role of Priests and their temples.
  - "None of the magistrates have greater honour paid them than is paid the priests ; and if they should happen to commit any crime, they would not be questioned for it; their punishment is left to God."
  - "Though there are many different forms of religion among them, yet all these, how various soever, agree in the main point, which is the worshipping the Divine Essence ; and, therefore, there is nothing to be seen or heard in their temples in which the several persuasions among them may not agree."
  - "There are no images for God in their temples, so that every one may represent Him to his thoughts according to the way of his religion; nor do they call this one God by any other name but that of Mithras, which is the common name by which they all express the Divine Essence."

- "... the music takes the impression of whatever is represented , affects and kindles the passions , and works the sentiments deep into the hearts of the hearers."
- "In these they acknowledge God to be the author and governor of the world, and the fountain of all the good they receive, and therefore offer up to him their thanksgiving; and, in particular, bless him for His goodness in ordering it so, that they are born under the happiest government in the world, and are of a religion which they hope is the truest of all others; but, if they are mistaken, and if there is either a better government, or a religion more acceptable to God, they implore His goodness to let them know it, vowing that they resolve to follow him whithersoever he leads them."
- Rafael then concludes
  - "Thus have I described to you, as particularly as I could, the Constitution of that commonwealth, which I do not only think the best in the world, but indeed the only commonwealth that truly deserves that name."
  - **"... for what justice is there in this: that a nobleman, a goldsmit , a banker, or any other man, that either does nothing at all, or, at best, is employed in things that are of no use to the public, should live in great luxury and splendour upon what is so ill acquired, and a mean man, a carter, a smith, or a ploughman, that works harder even than the beasts themselves, and is employed in labours so necessary, that no commonwealth could hold out a year without them, can only earn so poor a livelihood and must lead so miserable a life, that the condition of the beasts is much better than theirs?"**
  - **"I can have no other notion of all the other governments that I see or know, than that they are a conspiracy of the rich, who, on pretence of managing the public, only pursue their private ends, and devise all the ways and arts they can find out; first, that they may, without danger, preserve all that they have so ill - acquired, and then, that they may engage the poor to toil and labour for them at as low rates as possible, and oppress them as much as they please."**
  - **"... who does not see that the frauds, thefts, robberies, quarrels, tumults, contentions, seditions, murders, treacheries, and witchcrafts, which are, indeed, rather punished than restrained by the severities of law, would all fall off, if money were not any more valued by the world? Men's fears, solitudes, cares, labours, and watchings would all perish in the same moment with the value of money; even poverty itself, for the relief of which money seems most necessary, would fall."**
- Thomas More makes his own comment in the end, that removes himself from the opinions of Rafael, the main speaker, and yet endorses at least some of what was said. It can be inferred that this is an effort to cover his own ass.
  - "In the meanwhile, though it must be confessed that he is both a very learned man and a person who has obtained a great knowledge of the world, I cannot perfectly agree to everything he has related. However, there are many things in the commonwealth of Utopia that I rather wish, than hope, to see followed in our governments."