



BEATUS RHENANUS TO WILLIBALD
PIRCKHEIMER, COUNCILOR OF
EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN I AND
NUREMBERG CITY COUNCILOR,
GREETINGS

MOREOVER, WHILE THESE musings of More's display his talent, and his distinguished learning, at the same time the indisputably keen judgment, which he has about such matters, will become most abundantly clear from his *Utopia*. About which, incidentally, I will mention briefly, because Budé, that man most meticulous in his scholarship, that incomparable, and extraordinary, authority of finer learning, and, for that matter, the unmatched glory of France, praised it, just as right, in an excellent preface. This work has principles of such a sort not possible to find in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, or even in the *Pandects* of your Justinian.* And it teaches less

This dedication appeared as one of the epigrams included with the two 1518 editions of Utopia; only the section concerning More's text is reprinted here. Willibald Pirckheimer was a prominent and wealthy German lawyer, scholar, and Humanist, who, in addition to his duty as a member of the City Council of Nuremberg, advised the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I on literary matters.

* The *Pandects* were laws compiled by the Roman Emperor Justinian in the sixth century AD.

philosophically, perhaps, than those, but more Christianly. Although (listen, by the muses, to a good story), when, not long ago, mention of *Utopia* was brought up here in a certain gathering of a number of serious men, and when I was celebrating that place with my praises, a certain blockhead was saying that More should have no more thanks than the secretary of some government official, who simply writes down the opinions of others in the meeting hall, all the while sitting by in the fashion of a “spear-bearer”* (as they say), while he himself expresses nothing of his own opinions. So then, this dolt was saying, all those things which More said had been taken from the mouth of Hythloday, and merely been set down in writing by him, and so More ought to be praised for no other reason, except that he had skillfully recounted these things. And there were men present, who gave their approval to the judgment of this man as though he had spoken most correctly. *Do you not, then, welcome this very cleverness of More, who leads such men as these astray, not just anyone, but men of renown, and Theologians at that?*†

*Basel, on the 7th day before Calends of March
[February 23] in the year 1518*

* “Spear-bearer” is a literal translation of *doriphorematis*, a Greek word used by Rhenanus in the text. It is a pejorative term describing a lackey or follower, someone who exists only to hold the spears that another throws.

† This last sentence is printed in Greek. The choice to use a language more rarefied than Latin at this point is telling, as this is the only place in all of *Utopia* where More’s fabrication is openly acknowledged.