

THE CENTER FOR THOMAS MORE STUDIES
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS
AND
THE TERRENCE J. MURPHY INSTITUTE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

Utopia and the Roman Republic: Sallust, Augustine, and More in Dialogue

November 5-6, 2015

Thomas More had a longstanding interest in the writings of Sallust and Augustine. During the reign of Henry VII, More delivered a course of public lectures on Augustine's *City of God*, which he approached from the standpoint of history and philosophy. Likewise, More almost certainly offered another set of lectures on Sallust sometime in 1513, in partial fulfillment of his being awarded the right to instruct in grammar by the University of Oxford. And much later in life, More directed the tutor of his children to supplement their historical study of Sallust with "the lessons of the ancient Fathers," especially "St. Jerome and St. Augustine." It is therefore difficult to disagree with William Nelson's assertion that "among the historians, St. Augustine and Sallust seem to have been More's especial favorites."

But while several scholars have noted the influence of Sallust's *Wars* and *Histories*, and Augustine's *City of God*, on More's *Utopia*, no consensus about the extent or significance of this influence has yet emerged in More studies. In recent years, moreover, much of the best and most influential criticism on *Utopia* has emphasized its engagement with Cicero; in doing so, however, this criticism has sometimes muted the very different voices of Sallust and Augustine in More's text.

Our seminar, then, proposes to read More's *Utopia* alongside selections from Sallust's *Wars* and *Histories* and Augustine's *City of God*. By juxtaposing these texts, the seminar aims to raise several questions about More's *Utopia*. How do Sallust's and Augustine's accounts of the Roman republic contribute to the meaning of More's *Utopia*? Is the debate between Raphael Hythloday and Morus in Book I illuminated by Sallust's or Augustine's reflections on the realities of political life? Do the social customs, legal practices, or government of the Utopians, described by Hythloday in Book II, engage the historical arguments offered by Sallust or Augustine about the Roman republic? Does reading *Utopia* through the lens provided by Sallust or Augustine reframe the central issues of the text?

Friday, November 6, 2015

Morning Session

What is Sallust's argument for the greatness of Rome? What according to Sallust is the cause of Rome's corruption? How does Sallust's analysis of Rome compare with Augustine's? Is Augustine's critique persuasive or is it exaggerated for rhetorical effect? How does Augustine's later definition of the *res publicae* bear on questions raised by Sallust?

More, "More's Letter to His Children's Tutor, William Gonell"
Sallust, *The War with Catiline* 5.9-14.7; *The War with Jugurtha* 1-4.9;
Histories 1.7.8; 1.11.9-10; 1.12.12; 1.16.13; 4.69.67
Augustine, *City of God* 2.1-2; 2.17-21; 3.10-23; 3:30; 5.12-13

Afternoon Session

Does the description of England and other European countries offered in Book 1 resonate with either Sallust's or Augustine's analysis of Roman politics? What is the relation between the corruption of England and the practices of Utopia as described by Hythloday in Book 1? How does Augustine's ambiguous assessment of Cicero bear upon the debate between Morus and Hythloday in this book? What is at stake in this debate?

More, *Utopia* 1

Saturday, November 7, 2015

Morning Session

How do the governmental institutions of Utopia function? What purpose is served by them—in theory and in practice? Does Utopian government guard against the kind of corruption suffered by Rome? Why or why not?

More, *Utopia* 1

Afternoon Session

How does Augustine characterize social and political existence? To what extent are the practices and beliefs of the Utopians consistent with Augustine's characterization? Would Augustine's analysis of Utopian society differ remarkably from his analysis of Rome? Would Sallust's? How would you situate More's authorial vision in relation to these others?

Augustine, *City of God* 19.4-7; 19.14-16
More, *Utopia* 1-2