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The St. Thomas More Collection at the Boston College Law Library

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THE ST. THOMAS MORE COLLECTION AT THE BOSTON COLLEGE LAW LIBRARY

The More Collection was purchased by the Boston College Law School in 1961 from the estate of Arthur Brown. It contains approximately 100 titles focused on the life and work of Sir Thomas More, patron saint of lawyers and ardent defender of the Catholic Church. It includes several very special editions of More’s landmark work, UTOPIA, including a beautifully illustrated 1518 edition and an 1893 edition published by William Morris’ famed Kelmscott Press.

This exhibition features selections from the More Collection arranged by themes. It begins in the horizontal wooden case to the left of the entrance door and continues clockwise around the room. The exhibit was curated by Laurel Davis, BC Law class of 2006, with assistance from Karen Beck, Curator of Rare Books. Much of the text was drawn from Peter Ackroyd’s THE LIFE OF THOMAS MORE (1998). It will remain on view through mid-December 2007.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ST. THOMAS MORE

Thomas More was born in London, probably on February 7, 1478, to John and Agnes More. John More was a judge and likely influenced his son’s decision to become a lawyer. Thomas More never took vows and thus remained a layman his entire life, but in addition to being a respected lawyer and statesman, he was a person of tremendous faith who was a devout member of the Roman Catholic Church. His love for the law and his religious nature were deeply intertwined. More biographer Peter Ackroyd wrote that “[More] knew that human justice was only the faintest reflection of divine law, but it became for him the principle and model of conduct upon the earth.”

More worked as a lawyer and in various administrative positions in London after finishing his studies. In 1517, he became a councillor attendant to King Henry VIII. His proximity to the king allowed More to become a figure of much authority and power. It was when Henry gave him the lucrative position of Undertreasurer in 1520 that he was knighted, thus becoming Sir Thomas More.

In 1529, Henry VIII appointed More Lord Chancellor, a position second in power only to the king. At this point, Henry was attempting to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, the Spanish princess to whom he had been married almost 20 years. It was around this time that Henry began to embrace the Protestant teaching that the Pope was only the Bishop of Rome, and therefore had no authority over the Christian Church as a whole. More had been completely devoted to his king, but as Henry began to deny the Pope’s authority, More’s qualms grew until he eventually resigned as Lord Chancellor in 1532. In 1534, More refused to swear an oath he construed as denying the Pope’s authority. For this, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. Following his imprisonment, he was tried and convicted under the Treason
Act for refusing to swear a different oath that deemed Henry VIII the supreme head of the Church. He was executed by beheading on July 6, 1535.

In 1886, Sir Thomas More was beatified by Pope Leo XIII – the first English layman to be beatified as a martyr. In 1935, he was canonized Saint Thomas More by Pope Pius XI after a mass petition by English Catholics.

First wooden case to left of entrance:

Biographies of St. Thomas More

William Roper, Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore, Kt.
London: Printed for C. Davis, 1626

William Roper was More’s son-in-law and his earliest biographer. He was also a wealthy and successful lawyer in his own right. Married to More’s beloved eldest daughter, Margaret, Roper spent a great deal of time with More, living with Margaret in the family home for more than sixteen years. This biography was written around 1555 but first published in 1626.

The book is opened to the title page and an engraving of More. Note the wormholes on the paper. Behind the title page you can see part of a large fold-out table showing the genealogy of the Roper family.

James Mackintosh, The Life of Sir Thomas More
London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1844

Mackintosh was a nineteenth-century Scottish historian, critic, and politician. He wrote this biography shortly before his death in 1832; it was published for the first time in 1831. The project grew out of Mackintosh’s research into Henry VIII’s reign.

This copy features an attractive vellum cover embellished with gold scrollwork.

Elizabeth M. Ince, St. Thomas More of London

Ince, a descendent of More’s daughter and son-in-law Margaret and William Roper, wrote this biography of More for children. According to her, More used to warn his children that they would “never get to heaven on feather beds!”

Richard Marius, Thomas More: A Biography
New York: Knopf, 1984

This widely praised book was a finalist for the National Book Award. Marius’ depiction of More – not as a saintly figure but as a flawed human being – caused a good deal of controversy. Marius assessed More’s life and legacy from a modern perspective, criticizing what he saw as More’s religious fanaticism and intolerance toward Protestants.

Rev. Michael J. Larkin, SAINT THOMAS MORE: MODEL FOR LAWYERS AND LAYMEN
New York: Paulist Press, 1937

According to the author, this little purple pamphlet was intended to “bring to the public in a small way an epitome of the life of the recently canonized saint, Thomas More; one of the most fascinating characters in history.”
ERNEST EDWIN REYNOLDS, MARGARET ROPER
London: Burns & Oates, 1960
This is a biography of More’s oldest daughter, Margaret. More made no distinctions in the way he educated his daughters and his son; Margaret was a fine classical scholar who translated one of Erasmus’ works into English. She remained her father’s closest confidante throughout his life and was the last person to visit him in prison before his execution.

STANLEY MORISON, THE LIKENESS OF THOMAS MORE
New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 1964
This book collects and analyzes the many images of More that have been created over the years. It is opened to two portraits of More and his family, both painted in the early 1590s by Rowland Locky after Hans Holbein. In the top portrait, More sits at the center with his dog at his feet. His wife sits with her pet monkey at the far right, and his daughter Margaret sits to the left of her mother, holding an open book.

Wooden case to right of entrance:

MORE’S DISPUTE WITH KING HENRY VIII

The disagreement that ultimately led to More’s execution began with King Henry VIII’s desire to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon. Catherine had been married to Henry’s brother, but upon his death she claimed (and continually maintained) that the marriage had been unconsummated. Because of this, a papal dispensation was granted allowing Henry to marry her, and the political alliance between Spain and England was sustained.

After close to 20 years of marriage, Henry began to claim that Catherine’s marriage to his brother had indeed been consummated. If this was true, it would mean that his own marriage violated the dictates of Leviticus, which forbade one from sleeping with his brother’s wife. It is unclear how much of Henry’s motivation stemmed from a true religious conviction that his marriage was invalid and how much arose from his newfound interest in Anne Boleyn.

Regardless, Henry began to explore, through his then Lord Chancellor Thomas Wolsey, whether the Pope would annul his marriage to Catherine based on the dictates of Leviticus. As More’s biographer Peter Ackroyd notes, the central question became one of the extent of papal power, and, in particular, of the ability of the Pope to waive the injunction of Leviticus. As it became increasingly clear that the annulment would not be granted, Henry began to assert that divine law had made his marriage abhorrent to God and that no pope had the authority to abrogate that law.

Henry appointed More to replace Wolsey as Lord Chancellor in 1529. At first devoted to Henry and his assertions of royal prerogative, More became uneasy when Henry began to deny the authority of the Pope. More eventually incurred Henry’s wrath for refusing to acknowledge the king as the head of the Church of England, and for objecting to moves by Henry and Parliament to weaken papal authority. More was put on trial for treason in 1535.
MORE’S TRIAL AND EXECUTION

The trial of Sir Thomas More is one of the most celebrated in English history. It was held in Westminster Hall before a jury of twelve men. More represented himself against charges of treason for refusing to take an oath declaring Henry VIII to be the supreme head of the Church. He argued that if a parliamentary statute, such as one that demanded the oath, offends against the law of God, then it is insufficient, and cannot be imposed upon any Christian subject. At his trial, he affirmed the primacy of the rule of law itself; he did not believe that the English Parliament could repeal a thousand years’ worth of ordinances to make Henry the head of the Church.

The court disagreed with him. Furthermore, it found a presumption of malice in More’s refusal to swear the oath of the king’s supremacy, and thus he was convicted as a traitor and sentenced to death. He spent his last six days in the Tower of London and then was executed by beheading on July 6, 1535. His body was taken to the church of St. Peter ad Vincula within the Tower, where, in the presence of some of his family, it was interred.
In 1515, More wrote his most famous work, UTOPIA, a novel in which the fictional traveler Raphael Hythloday describes the political arrangements of the imaginary island nation of Utopia. Hythloday is Greek for “peddler of nonsense,” indicating that perhaps readers should not take the work completely seriously. The word “Utopia” was invented by More (or possibly by his friend Erasmus) and is a play on the Greek “ou-topos,” meaning “no place” and “eu-topos,” meaning “good place.” In More’s fictional nation, private property does not exist and religious tolerance is practiced.

There are significant divergences in the literary criticism of UTOPIA, as it is difficult to tell which parts of the novel are satirical and which parts More actually would have considered an ideal society. Some have argued, based on his later intolerance for Reformation “heretics,” that More never would have believed that the type of religious tolerance described by Hythloday was an ideal to strive towards. Furthermore, More’s biographer Peter Ackroyd notes that More would have considered many other traits of the Utopians dreadful: the citizens of Utopia encourage euthanasia, condone divorce, and deny the truths of divine law.

The Boston College Law Library’s More Collection features many editions of this famous work. A few of our choicest selections are on display in these cases.

**UTOPIA**

**THOMAS MORE, DE OPTIMO REIP. STATU, DEQUE NOUA INSULA UTOPIA ... Basel: 1518**

This beautiful book is a very early edition of UTOPIA: the second printing of the third edition. It features many engravings, including those shown here on the title page, which are taken from designs by Hans Holbein. Annotations by an early owner are sprinkled throughout the book and on the title page.

**THOMAS MORE, A MOST PLEASANT, FRUITFUL, AND WITTY WORK OF THE BEST STATE OF A PUBLIC WEAL, AND OF THE NEW ISLE CALLED UTOPIA ... London: Printed by Wm. Bulmer for Wm. Miller, 1808**

This famous edition of Utopia contains a biographical and literary introduction by T.F. Dibdin. This copy features striking engravings in a modest binding; note the untrimmed pages. It is opened to the title page and a portrait of More.

**Top Shelf:**

**PAINTING OF SIR THOMAS MORE**

This painting dates from the 1700s. Despite the time that had elapsed since More’s death, it is quite historically accurate because the painter used More’s death mask as a reference. Although most images do not show it, More was slightly cross-eyed, as you can see in this painting.

Second wall cabinet (labeled Cabinet III):

UTOPIA: FINE PRESS EDITIONS

In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England, the art of the book enjoyed a renaissance. In response to burgeoning industrialization and mass production, artists and artisans founded the Arts and Crafts movement and created handmade works of beautiful quality and design. Artists, bookmakers, papermakers, printers, illustrators and authors came together at several small presses, where they produced small print runs of beautifully designed books.

The Law Library is fortunate to own four examples of UTOPIA that were published by fine art presses during this golden age of bookmaking.

THOMAS MORE, MORE'S MILLENNIUM; BEING THE UTOPIA OF SIR THOMAS MORE ...
London: Alston Rivers, Ltd., 1909

The Book of Revelation describes an important interval lasting 1,000 years when Christ rules on earth after the events of the last days have brought an end to this world. This is a golden era, a time of universal peace. Hence, as a general religious term, the word "millennium" indicates a sort of utopian state.

This copy is bound in an attractively illustrated cover and spine, in the art nouveau style of the period.

THOMAS MORE, UTOPIA
Hammersmith: William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, 1893

This copy of UTOPIA is a magnificent example of the art of the book. Printed by the artist William Morris at his famed Kelmscott Press, and containing a foreword by him, it is bound in vellum and retains most of its fabric ties. It is opened to one of many pages which feature two-color printing and a striking engraving in Morris’ characteristic style.

THOMAS MORE, A FRUTEFULL AND PLEASAUNT WORKE OF THE BESTE STATE OF A PUBLIQUE WEALE, & OF THE NEWE YELE CALLED UTOPIA ...
Chelsea: Ashendene Press, 1906

Issued in an edition of only 100 copies, this book was printed on thick cotton paper with its edges deliberately left untrimmed. It is opened to a page that shows red and black printing and beautiful typography.

THOMAS MORE, A FRUTEFULL PLEASAUNT, AND WITTIE WORKE OF THE BESTE STATE OF PUBLIQUE WEALE, & OF THE NEWE YELE, CALLED UTOPIA ...
Berkshire, Golden Cockerel Pr., 1929

This magnificent book, numbered 144 of only 500 copies, was printed by Robert Gibbings at the famous Golden Cockerel Press. The illustrations are by the noted illustrator Eric Gill. The title page is printed in the unusual two-color combination of deep blue and black.

Cabinet IV:

UTOPIA: BEAUTIFUL ENGRAVINGS

THOMAS MORE, UTOPIA

This book is opened to an engraving of the main characters in UTOPIA, including Raphael Hythloday and Sir Thomas More himself. Notice the striking arrangement of type, centered in a “V” on the page.
THOMAS MORE, UTOPIA
New York: Limited Editions Club, 1934
Like the book in the previous case, this too was printed in a limited edition: number 534 of 1,500 copies. It features an introduction by none other than H.G. Wells.

On view here, preceding Book Two, is an engraving of the island of Utopia. Raphael Hythloday stands at the lower left corner of the picture. Very similar to the other book on this shelf, this copy features beautiful typography and two-color printing in black and an odd burnt orange hue.

Bottom shelf:

OTHER WRITINGS OF ST. THOMAS MORE: The Four Last Things

In 1522, More wrote an unfinished meditation on the seven deadly sins, in which he advises his daughter Margaret to meditate on Death, Judgment, Pain and Joy as medicinal herbs in the battle against the spiritual sicknesses of pride, covetousness, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth and lust. More wrote brief essays on the seven deadly sins, but abandoned the work before finishing “sloth” and “lust.”

THOMAS MORE, THE CONFUTATION OF TYNDALE’S ANSWER
New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1973
This massive work, the longest religious polemic in the English language, was More’s 1531 counterresponse to Protestant reformer William Tyndale. Tyndale had earlier written a response to More’s DIALOGUE CONCERNING HERESIES.

other sins and crimes “of sloth there is no man ashamed, but we take it as for a laughing matter and a sport.”

Cabinet V:

OTHER WRITINGS OF ST. THOMAS MORE: GRAPPLING WITH LUTHER AND THE PROTESTANTS

THOMAS MORE, RESPONSIO AD LUTHERUM
New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969
After Protestant reformer Martin Luther vitriolically responded to Henry VIII’s Defense of the Seven Sacraments (to which More likely contributed), More counterattacked on the King’s behalf with this “Reply to Luther” in 1523.

These exchanges between More and Luther illuminate some of their major differences—the ritualistic More who valued the inherited traditions and beliefs of the Church and the individualistic Luther who saw faith as an intensely personal experience.

It was in writing this piece that More determined that the papacy was indeed divine in origin and not simply a political order invented by men. This determination would affect him deeply in the political conflicts to come.

The book is opened to a portrait of Martin Luther.
More biographer Peter Ackroyd writes that “the confrontation between Tyndale and More embodies the struggle between the opposing tendencies of the period—inner prayer and belief against communal worship and ritual, faith against works, the direct inspiration of scripture against inherited orthodoxy, redemption through Christ rather than the sacramental system . . . . More had reached such a pitch of nervous intensity that he could not rest from the fight; his whole life and duty lay now in his battle to protect the Church."

**Bottom shelf:**

**OTHER WRITINGS OF ST. THOMAS MORE: HIS FINAL WORKS**

**THOMAS MORE, DIALOGUE OF COMFORT AGAINST TRIBULATION**  
London & N.Y.: Sheed & Ward, 1951  
More wrote the DIALOGUE in 1534 during his imprisonment in the Tower of London, before he was convicted and executed as a traitor to King Henry VIII. The grave sentence came as a result of More’s refusal to swear an oath recognizing Henry as the supreme head of the Church. Set in Hungary, the DIALOGUE tells the story of two men, one young and one old, who discuss matters of faith such as how to pray, what to give to beggars, and how to counsel a friend who believes he should commit suicide. More wrote this work to comfort himself about what lay ahead, and to comfort others in similar situations as well.

**HENRY SEBASTIAN BOWDEN, ED., CRUMBS OF COMFORT: FROM THE DIALOGUE OF COMFORT UNDER TRIBULATION BY BLESSED THOMAS MORE**  
London: Burns & Oates, 1915  
Here the editor, Henry Bowden, presented a selection of extracts from More’s work, intending to “obtain a wider circulation under a handier form” than the original. Bowden’s title was inspired by this Biblical verse from Matthew xv, 27: “The whelps also eat of the crumbs which fall from the master’s table.”

**W.E. CAMPBELL, ED., LAST LETTERS OF BLESSED THOMAS MORE**  
St. Louis: B. Herder, 1924  
This is a compilation of the letters Thomas More wrote to his daughter Margaret, King Henry VIII, Chief Minister Thomas Cromwell and others in 1534-1535, the two years before his execution. More used the word "conscience" more than 100 times in his final correspondence. He felt strongly that the human conscience was of divine origin—a mirror that reflected the will of God. Even the pleas of his beloved daughter in her letters to her father could not persuade him to ignore his conscience and take the royal oath that would have saved his life. The book is opened to the now-familiar portrait by Hans Holbein, and to a sample of More’s handwriting and autograph.
Cabinet VI (across the room):

THE ERASMUS CONNECTION:
IN PRAISE OF FOLLY

IN PRAISE OF FOLLY was Dutch scholar and humanist Desiderius Erasmus’ most famous work. A close friend of Thomas More, Erasmus wrote the work while staying at More’s home in London. Though both men were devout Roman Catholics and critics of Martin Luther, IN PRAISE OF FOLLY includes a satirical look at superstitious abuses of Catholic doctrine and corrupt practices in parts of the Catholic Church.

The title, which in Latin is “Moriae Encomium,” can also be interpreted as “In Praise of More.” Indeed, Erasmus intended the book to be a tribute to his dear friend.

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, L’ELOGE DE LA FOLIE
Amsterdam: Francoise l’Honore, 1728

This beautifully bound copy is opened to two engravings which precede the title page. One shows three miniature portraits of Erasmus, More and the artist Hans Holbein. The other is a visual representation of Folly and the seven deadly sins. The book is replete with magnificent engravings by Holbein and features two-color printing on the title page.

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, IN PRAISE OF FOLLY
London: Reeves & Turner, 1876

Though rather unattractive overall, this book contains delightful engravings by Holbein and a portrait of Erasmus opposite the title page.

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS, THE PRAISE OF FOLLY

New York: W. Black, 1942
This book was copiously illustrated by Rotterdam artist Hendrik van Loon.

COAT OF ARMS OF SIR THOMAS MORE,
LORD CHANCELLOR OF ENGLAND,
DRAWN BY JOHN R. SUTHERLAND,
EDINBURGH

These arms were probably granted to Thomas’ father Sir John More during the reign of King Edward IV. This coat of arms is an example of “canting arms,” or a coat that embodies a pun on the name of the bearer. Here, among other designs, are six Moorcocks, and the shield is topped by a Moor’s head – all of which were meant to be puns of the name “More.” Surrounding the shield is the golden collar of a Lord Chancellor of England.

Cabinet VII:

WORKS INSPIRED BY MORE’S LIFE:
NOVELS, POEMS AND PLAYS

These three novels are works of historical fiction; that is, they use the facts of More’s life as a jumping-off point to explore episodes in his life that are wholly or partially fictional.

CHARLES BRADY, STAGE OF FOOLS
New York: Dutton, 1953

This novel explores More’s dispute with King Henry VIII.

NOEL MACDONALD WILBY, A MERRY ETERNITY: A ROMANCE OF SIR THOMAS MORE’S HOUSEHOLD
New York, etc.: Benziger Bros., 1932

JOHN E. BEAHN, A MAN BORN AGAIN
Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1954

This historical novel focuses on More’s sainthood.
CAROL WIGHT, SIR THOMAS MORE AND OTHER VERSE
Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1925
The first piece in this book is a short play entitled “Sir Thomas More: A Tragedy.” It is followed by 25 brief poems on a variety of subjects. The book is autographed by the author.

MOVIE: A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS
Columbia Pictures, 1966
Winner of six Academy Awards, including Best Picture of 1966, this movie explores More’s battle with Henry VIII. It features Paul Scofield, who won a Best Actor Oscar for his portrayal of More. The movie was based upon an award-winning play by Robert Bolt, which was first performed in London in 1960. Both the movie and the play depict Sir Thomas More as a saintly individual, the ultimate man of conscience, and have been criticized by some for neglecting to mention More’s treatment of Lutherans during his reign as Lord Chancellor.

FRANCIS BLACKWELL, BLESSED THOMAS MORE: A PLAY
Written by a Benedictine monk, this little 36-page play focuses on More’s dispute with King Henry, and his subsequent execution. It ends with a twist: after More has been executed, a remorseful Henry turns to his wife Anne Boleyn and exclaims: “Woman, this is thy deed! I’m damn’d; and – doubly – you!” The curtain falls with Anne’s portentous words: “In that dread visage [Henry’s] I behold my doom!”

Cabinet VIII:
WORKS INSPIRED BY MORE’S LIFE:
THE HOUSEHOLD OF SIR THOMAS MORE
Anne Manning wrote this work in the literary form of a faux diary. First published in 1860, it purports to be a record of the experiences and observances of More’s favorite daughter, Margaret Roper.

ANNE MANNING, THE HOUSEHOLD OF SIR THOMAS MORE
The law library is fortunate to own two nearly identical editions of this work. One features a beautifully illustrated cover typical of late nineteenth-century book design. The building on the cover is More’s home. Inside are 25 illustrations by John Jellicoe and Herbert Railton.
The second copy is opened to Jellicoe’s illustration of “Erasmus and the peacocks.”

ANNE MANNING, THE HOUSEHOLD OF SIR THOMAS MORE
This copy contains 24 glorious color illustrations by C.E. Brock. It is opened to the title page and an illustration of King Henry kissing More’s wife Alice – presumably with Margaret watching suspiciously in the background. The caption reads: “His grace ... at going saluted all round, which Mother took delightedlie.”

Top shelf:
PORTRAIT OF ST. THOMAS MORE
Gift of Sharon Hamby O’Connor.
SAINT THOMAS MORE TODAY

Though he lived centuries ago, Thomas More's legacy continues in the realms of law, literature, religion and more. Scholars continue to study his life and work, as is evident from the sampling of materials in this case.

MOREANA
Angers, France: Association Amici Thomae Mori, 1963-
This is an international bilingual (French and English) review. It was founded in France in 1963 by Father Germain Marc'Hadour and is read today in nearly 40 countries. Its main object is to make known the work and deeds of Saint Thomas More. Three issues are on display here from 1978 and 1980.

R.W. GIBSON, ST. THOMAS MORE: A PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY OF HIS WORKS AND OF MOREANA TO THE YEAR 1750
New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1961
This thick book of nearly 500 pages conveys some idea of the immense popularity of More, his writings, and the study of his life and thought. The bibliography includes a careful compilation of all known early editions of UTOPIA. It is opened to the title page, where various examples of More's signature can be seen on the page opposite.

CATHOLIC LAWYER
Brooklyn, N.Y.: St. Thomas More Institute for Legal Research of St. John's University School of Law, 1955-
This law journal publishes articles about legal problems having ethical, canonical, or theological implications. Its cover and title page feature images of More, and the inside back cover contains a picture and explanation of More's coat of arms, seen elsewhere in this exhibit.

THE ST. THOMAS MORE SOCIETY AT THE BC LAW SCHOOL
The Society's goals include applying Catholic values as law students and as lawyers, promoting understanding of the Catholic faith, and serving the community. Many law schools throughout the country have chapters. Membership is open to anyone interested in the Society's mission. Visit http://www.bc.edu/schools/law/services/studentorgs/tms.html for more information.