

**THE CLASSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF UTOPIA  
IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY MEXICO:  
LUCIAN, VIRGIL, MORE, AND ERASMUS IN VASCO DE QUIROGA'S  
*INFORMACIÓN EN DERECHO* (1535)**

Vasco de Quiroga (1470-1565) is still celebrated in Mexico for the *hospitales pueblo* or «village hospitals» he founded for indigenous people who had been dispossessed as a result of the Spanish conquest in 1521. Silvio Zavala was the first historian to suggest that Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) provided the blueprint for those residential communities – although the connection between More's celebrated philosophical fiction and Quiroga's social projects is not as direct as has often been supposed<sup>1</sup>. Following an outline of Quiroga's early life [I], the present discussion will show that More's Latin translation of Lucian was a far more palpable influence on his longest work, the *Información en derecho* (1535) [II]. A specific evocation of Erasmus of Rotterdam's writings reflecting the importance of the Dutch humanist's thought for the utopian principles espoused by Quiroga will be considered [III], before some concluding remarks [IV].

**I**

Vasco de Quiroga came from a noble Galician family from Madrigal de las Altas Torres, in the Spanish province of Ávila. Little is known of his early life: his date of birth is disputed, and it is not known where he was educated. In 1525 Quiroga was appointed as a judge in Oran in North Africa. His findings against a corrupt governor and his readiness to curb the excesses of the occupying Spaniards, there and, later, in Granada (where the Moors had been subjugated in 1492), appear consistent with the judicial scrupulousness he was to display as an auditor in New Spain<sup>2</sup>. He arrived in the colony the year after having been appointed to the Second Audience in 1530, to address the grievances created by the corruption of the First: Quiroga prosecuted conquistadors for their brutal excesses. His recognition of the Indians' grievances prompted him to set up the first of two communities for Indians who had been left homeless and destitute: the *hospital-pueblo* of Santa Fé near Mexico City was established gradually between 1531 and 1535.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas More, *Libellus vere aureus nec minus salutaris quam festivus de Optimo reip. statu deque nova insula Utopia* (Louvain: Theodoricus Martinus, 1516); Silvio Zavala, *La «Utopía» de Tomás Moro en la Nueva España y otros estudios* (Mexico City: Antigua Librería Robredo, 1937). Zavala, *Sir Thomas More in New Spain* (London: Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Councils, 1955) is reproduced in a collection of Zavala's papers, *Recuerdo de Vasco de Quiroga* (Mexico: Porrúa, 1998), p. 81-93. Benedict Fintan Warren, *Vasco de Quiroga and his Pueblo-Hospitals of Santa Fe*, Washington: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1963), p. 33-5 sees specific convergences between the *Utopia* and Quiroga's writing. Anthony Pagden, «The Humanism of Vasco de Quiroga's *Información en derecho*» in Pagden, *The Uncertainties of Empire: Essays in Iberian and Ibero-American intellectual history* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1993), p. 133-42 usefully questions the sense in which Quiroga was long regarded as a humanist, situating his work [p. 134-6] in a tradition of legal rather than liberal humanism. The conclusion to this chapter [IV] will highlight the presence of Erasmian elements and Renaissance preoccupation with patristics in Quiroga's thought.

<sup>2</sup> Benedict J. Warren, *Vasco de Quiroga en America* (Morelia: Fimax, 1998) contains a transcription and study of the litigations Quiroga conducted in Oran.

In 1533 Vasco de Quiroga visited Michoacán, a region roughly the size of Croatia, extending from the central Mexico to the Pacific coast. There he founded further settlements for the natives near Lake Pátzcuaro. The auditor's experiences in the region led to his longest work, a report to the Crown in 165 manuscript leaves (well over two hundred modern printed pages). The work was untitled but is known conventionally as the *Información en derecho* (1535)<sup>3</sup>. In it Quiroga conveyed amazement at the sophistication of the indigenous people and reproached the conduct of the conquistadors, displaying his juristic, doctrinal, and literary knowledge. The third and final chapter of the *Información* sought to demonstrate that the Indians should be subjected neither to «just war» [*iustum bellum*], the routine pretext for conquest, nor to captivity or enslavement. Instead pacification and conversion to Christianity could be achieved without aggravating the rights or legal codes of the indigenous population. Soon after his arrival in Mexico, in August 1531, Vasco de Quiroga had already maintained that the Indians should be brought to Christianity peacefully in a letter to the Council of the Indies. In his letter he compared the natives to the first Christian apostles, much as the latter had been described by Saint Mark<sup>4</sup> :

*porque naturalmente tienen inata la humildad, obediencia, y pobreza, y menosprecia del mundo y desnudez, andando descalzos, con el cabello largo, sin cosa alguna en la cabeza, á la manera que andaban los apóstoles*<sup>5</sup>...

because they are naturally possessed of an innate humility, obedience, poverty, and disregard for the world and nudity, walking barefooted with long hair and with no headwear in the way the first Christian apostles used to go about<sup>6</sup>...

Such idealisation of the primitive state of the Indians owed at least as much to stereotypes from European literature of the period as it did to actual observation: for instance Quiroga's *Información en derecho* «the peasant of the Danube» [*el villano del Danubio*], a fictional creation from Francisco de Guevara's *Libro aureo de Marco Aurelio emperador* or «Golden Book of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius» which was published in Spain in the 1520s<sup>7</sup>. In that popular work set in the second century AD, the peasant, a barbarian subject of the Roman empire, shared his philosophical wisdom with Marcus Aurelius, inspiring the sagely emperor's own *Meditations*.

## II

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<sup>3</sup> The manuscript is in the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid: Mss. 7369. The following edition cited here retains Quiroga's Latin quotations and was usually consulted by Silvio Zavala: *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía, sacados de los archivos del reino y muy especialmente del de Indias* vol. 10, ed. Luis Torres de Mendoza (Madrid: J.M. Pérez, 1868), p. 333-513.

<sup>4</sup> Gospel of Mark 14: 51: «girded in nothing but a linen cloth» [*amicti sindone super nudo*]

<sup>5</sup> Quiroga, *Carta del licenciado quiroga, oidor de la audiencia de Santo Domingo, al Consejo de Indias, sobre la venida de aquel Obispo a la presidencia de dicho Tribunal, y sobre otros asuntos*, 14 August 1531, *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento conquista y organización de las antiguas posesiones españolas de América y Oceanía, sacados de los archivos del reino y muy especialmente del de Indias*, vol. 13 [no editor named] (Madrid: José María Pérez, 1870), p. 423-4.

<sup>6</sup> Translations of all the Latin and Spanish passages quoted in this chapter are my own.

<sup>7</sup> Antonio de Guevara, *Libro aureo de Marco Aurelio emperador* (Valencia: cum privilegio Juan de Molina, 1528); Quiroga, *Información en derecho*, p. 345. See further David A. Lupton, *Romans in a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth-Century Spanish America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2003), p. 51-6.

Vasco de Quiroga attached much more importance to another text, which really did come from classical antiquity. In the third chapter of his *Información*, he discussed and reproduced a lengthy passage from the *Saturnalia* by the ancient Greek satirist Lucian<sup>8</sup>. The excerpt from Lucian's comical dialogue was a speech by Saturn (or Chronos, Jupiter's predecessor as ruler of the gods) explaining the purpose of the Saturnalian festival: it was held in order to recall the period of Saturn's reign in the Golden Age, when men did not have to sow or till the earth, when wine flowed in rivers, and there were streams of milk and honey. Saturn also declared that his age, in which all men were equal and free, slaves and masters alike, would soon return<sup>9</sup>.

Quiroga was quoting the text of the *Saturnalia* in Thomas More's Latin translation of the original Greek<sup>10</sup>. He then claimed that his understanding of the natives of the Americas had been unexpectedly illuminated by the account of the Golden Age in Lucian:

*cuyas palabras originales me pareció que debía poner aquí, pues que nunca las vi no oí, sino acaso al tiempo que esto escribía, y me pareció que Dios me las desperaba en tal tiempo y coyuntura tan bien, como las otras de la república de mi parecer, por ventura para echar el sello y poner contera y acabar de entender ésta, a mi ver, tan mal entendida cosa de las tierras y gentes, propiedades y calidades de este Nuevo Mundo y edad dorada de él entre sus naturales, que entre nosotros no es sino edad de hierro, como tengo dicho*<sup>11</sup>.

whose original words I thought I should put down here because I never saw nor heard them until the very time I was writing this, and it seemed to me that God was making them available for me at this time and juncture like other aspects of the republic before me, perhaps to seal, and cap, and make finally understood this (in my opinion) so ill-understood matter of the land and the people, the properties and qualities of this New World which is a Golden Age for its people, and for us, as I have said, is just an Age of Iron.

Over several pages Quiroga eulogised the innate virtues of the Indians, and drew attention to the abundant fruits of nature with which they were blessed: it was wrong for the Spaniards to impose their own legislation, designed for an Age of Iron, on the Indians, whose customs were in accordance with the Golden Age in which they lived, and whose conduct was anyway not far from the principles of the Christian religion. Lucian's distinction between the two Ages thus may have been what prompted Quiroga to envisage two «republics» in the *Información en derecho*, one for the Indians and one for the Spaniards: a communitarian model was appropriate for the former, but not for the

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<sup>8</sup> Raul Villaseñor, «Luciano, Moro, y el utopismo de Vasco de Quiroga», *Cuadernos Americanos* 68 (1953), p. 155-75.

<sup>9</sup> Lucian, *Saturnalia* [Τὰ πρὸς Κρόνον] 7, in *Luciani Opera* ed. M.D. Macleod, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 327. An English translation of the Greek is in H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, *The Works of Lucian of Samosata*, Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1905 vol. 4, p. 108-12.

<sup>10</sup> The edition is likely to have been *Luciani Samosatensis Saturnalia, Cronosolon, id est, Saturnalium legum lator, Epistolae Saturnales, De luctu, Abdicatus... Pro tyrannicida declamatio, Erasmi declamatio, Lucianicae respondens... Hercules Gallicus... De Astrologia, Des Erasmo Roterod. interprete. Aliquot item ex eodem commentarij, Thoma Moro interprete... Quibus si graece scripta, quae propediem, dijs propicijs adjicientur, conferat studiosus lector, facile cognoscet, arbitror, cuiusmodi res sit peregrinam linguam, ut in aliam quamvis, ita in Latinam bene ac fideliter vertere.* Basel: Johannes Froben[enium] 1521.

<sup>11</sup> Quiroga, *Información en derecho*, 483-4.

latter<sup>12</sup>.

Another reason why a devout Catholic lawyer like Quiroga saw a pagan Greco-Roman myth as a key to understanding indigenous Mexican society emerges later on when he twice recalls a greater classical authority:

*parece que con verdad por esto se pueda decir Redeunt Saturnia regna y que en nuestros tiempos, aunque no entre nosotros, sino entre estos naturales que tienen y gozan de la simplicidad, mansedumbre y humildad y libertad de ánimo de aquellos, sin soberbia ni codicia ni ambición alguna... Confiemos, pues, en Dios que todo lo puede, y de toda cosa que buena y conforme a su voluntad sea, ama y quiere, y pensemos siquiera que por ventura, permitiéndolo Él por sus secretos juicios, en este Nuevo Mundo Jam nova progenies coelo demittitur alto*<sup>13</sup>.

It could truly be said that *redeunt Saturnia regna* [the kingdoms of Saturn return], and in our own times, though not among us [Spaniards], but among the natives who possess and enjoy simplicity, meekness, humility, freedom for their souls, without pride, greed or any ambition... We trust then in God who loves and wants all things to be good and conform to his will, and we even think perchance that He is granting by his secret judgements that in this New World *Jam nova progenies coelo demittitur alto* [now a new lineage is sent down from heaven above].

The Latin phrases come from Virgil's fourth *Eclogue*, the pastoral poem which predicted that Saturn's Golden Age would return at the birth of an unnamed child, during the consulship of Pollio in 40 BC. Four centuries later, when Constantine had established Christianity as the Roman state religion, the emperor appeared to identify the child of Virgil's prophecy with Christ himself: that ascription of a Messianic significance to the *Eclogue* was shared by the church fathers and enjoyed longstanding acceptance in the Christian world<sup>14</sup>.

Quiroga thus conjoined his reading of Lucian with the Messianic interpretation of Virgil's poem to argue that the moral and material condition of the natives in their Golden Age was the ideal scenario for the rebirth of the church. The nascent Christianity he saw in the New World struck him as a shadow and outline [*una sombra y dibujo*] of the religion as it was at the time of the holy apostles and the church fathers. And, Vasco de Quiroga claimed, he was only following someone else's work in taking such a view:

*Y por eso tengo para mí, por cierto, que sabido y entendido por el autor del muy buen estado de la república, de donde como de dechado se sacó de mi parecer, varón ilustre y de genio más que humano, el arte y manera de las gentes simplicísimas de este Nuevo Mundo, y pareciéndole que en todo eran conformes y semejantes á aquellas de aquella gente de oro de aquella primera edad dorada, sacó para el único remedio de él y de ellos como inspirado del Espíritu Santo de las costumbres de aquellas, las ordenanzas y muy*

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<sup>12</sup> This important insight is suggested in a historical study of co-existence between Indian and Spanish communities: Rodrigo Martínez Baracs, *Convivencia y utopía: El gobierno indio y español de la "ciudad de Mechuacan", 1521-1580* (Mexico: INAH), p. 248-50.

<sup>13</sup> Quiroga, *Información en derecho*, p. 489.

<sup>14</sup> The identification was made in chapter 19 of the *Oratio ad sanctorum coetum* [Speech to the Gathering of Saints] attributed to Constantine and preserved by Eusebius of Caesarea, originally delivered in Greek in 323 AD. The text is in *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* 7.1 ed. I.A. Heikel (Leipzig 1902), p. 149-92; translation in Jan M. Ziolkowski and Michael C.J. Putnam ed. *The Virgilian Tradition: The First Fifteen Hundred Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 491-5. See further Pierre Courcelle, « Les exégèses chrétiennes de la quatrième Églogue », *Revue des Études Anciennes* 59 (1957), p. 294-319.

buen estado de la república *en que se podrian guardar, conservar e industrial muy mejor y más fácilmente sin comparación que por otra alguna manera y condicion, ni tan bastante para hacerlos bastantes para no se consumir ni acabar, y para introducirles la fé y policía mixta que solamente les falta, que lo demás parece les sea propio y natural; porque es así verdad, que sin la gracia y clemencia divina no se puede hacer, ni edificar edificio que algo valga; pero mucho y no poco aprovecha y ayuda cuando este cae y dora sobre buenos propios naturales que conforman con el edificio: lo cual parece porque este autor Tomás Moro fue gran griego y gran experto y de mucha autoridad...*<sup>15</sup>.

This was known and understood by the author of the *best state of the republic* as a model from which my opinion derives, an illustrious man and one of more than human genius. As it was clear to him that the arts and customs of these uncomplicated peoples of the New World conformed to and were in every way similar to those of the people of gold of that first golden age, he drew, as the only remedy for the former, as one inspired by the Holy Spirit, from the customs of the latter, the ordinances and *best state of the republic* in which they would be able to keep, maintain and work for themselves better and more easily, beyond compare, than by any other means or state that could be given them – which would not be so natural to them or in conformity with their skills, customs and condition, nor so sufficient to provide enough that they do not waste away or perish – in order to introduce to them only the blend of faith and social conduct that they are lacking; for the rest, they have all that is proper and natural to them. For, though it is true that without grace and divine clemency no edifice of worth can be constructed, it is of great advantage and help when this grace falls upon and gilds natural good qualities that are in line with this edifice and this appears to be the case because this author, Thomas More, was a great Hellenist and a great expert of much authority...

The words italicised in this quotation show that Quiroga was citing the original Latin title of Thomas More's *Utopia: De optimo reipublicae statu, deque noua insula Vtopia, libellus uere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festiuus*, «On the Best State of the Republic, and on the New Island of Utopia, a truly golden book, no less salutary than enjoyable<sup>16</sup>». A Frobenius edition printed in Basle in 1518 was owned by Bishop Zumárraga in Mexico: his handwritten inscription *Es de obispo de Mexico frai Joan Zumarraga* is on the frontispiece. Zumárraga knew Quiroga well and consecrated him as bishop of Michoacán, and it has been speculated that the auditor had the use of this particular copy<sup>17</sup>.

Quiroga's few mentions of the *Utopia* though characterise it misleadingly as a kind of political-theological manifesto, rather like the *Información* itself. Yet More had produced an evidently fictional dialogue, which was in the Greco-Roman tradition of far-fetched travellers' tales masquerading as factual reportage, a tradition amply sustained in the Renaissance<sup>18</sup>. The name of Utopia itself and of the river Anydrus, derived from Greek, respectively meant «No Place» and «Without Water», and More's original title for the work had been *Nusquama*, «Nowhere»<sup>19</sup>. Only a reader who did not understand the nature of fiction could regard as veridical an account by a character

<sup>15</sup> Quiroga, *Información en derecho*, p. 493-4.

<sup>16</sup> Compare the title of the earlier 1516 edition, cited in note 1 above.

<sup>17</sup> Silvio Zavala, *Ideario de Vasco de Quiroga* (Mexico: Colegio de México, 1995; orig. 1941), p. 61.

<sup>18</sup> William Nelson, *Fact and Fiction. The Dilemma of the Renaissance Storyteller* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press 1973), p. 32-7; Robert Carver, «“True Histories” and “Old Wives’ Tales”: Renaissance Humanism and the “Rise of the Novel”», *Ancient Narrative* 1 (2000-1), p. 322-49.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas More, Letter to Erasmus, London, 3 September 1516, trans. R.A.B. Mynors, D.F.S. Thomson, *The Correspondence of Erasmus: letters 446-593 (1516-17)* vol. 4 (Toronto: University of Toronto 1977), 66 [letter 461].

named Hythlodæus («Purveyor of nonsense») of a place where gold was used for chamber pots, and where newly hatched chicks followed humans about instead of hens<sup>20</sup>. In spite of his claim «frequently to admire» the *Utopia*, Quiroga's response to it was not that of at least some informed readers at the time<sup>21</sup>.

After first naming the illustrious writer of the dialogue, Quiroga goes on to specify the reason for his interest in More:

... este autor Tomás Moro fue gran griego y gran experto y de mucha autoridad, y tradujo algunas cosas de Luciano de griego en latín, donde, como dicho tengo, se ponen las leyes y ordenanzas y costumbres de aquella edad dorada y gentes simplecísimas de oro de ella, según que parece y se colige por lo que en su república dice de estos y Luciano de aquellos en sus Saturniales, y debiérale parecer á este varon prudentísimo, y con mucha causa y razon, que para tal gente, tal arte y estado de república convenia y era menester, que en sola ella y no en otra se podia conservar por las razones todas que dichas son<sup>22</sup>.

... this author, Thomas More, was a great Hellenist and a great expert of much authority. He translated some things by Lucian from Greek into Latin, where, as I have said, the laws, ordinances and customs of the Golden Age and the most simple people of that age are set out, according to what is found and set out in what he says about these [natives] in his republic [*Utopia*] and in what Lucian says about those [in the Golden Age] in his *Saturnalia*, it must have appeared to this most prudent man – and with much caution and reason – that for a people like this, such a craft and state of government would be suitable and helpful, and that by this means, and no other, can the people be maintained, for the reasons that have been stated.

More is thus credited for making known the communist principles of the mythological Saturnine Golden Age in Lucian, and then for recommending that they be applied to the social organisation of the Indians in the New World. In other words, More is praised for advocating exactly what Vasco de Quiroga was really advocating himself. The *Información en derecho* devoted several pages to Lucian's *Saturnalia*, quoting More's translation at length, with only glancing reference to his *Utopia*. That was in keeping the relative dissemination of those works in the sixteenth century, when More's Lucian was far better known. By 1550 there were about 270 printings of Lucian (also rendered into Latin by Erasmus) circulating in Europe along with some sixty Greek editions. Even by the time the *Información* was completed in 1535, there had been fourteen editions of Thomas More's Lucian translation and only six of the *Utopia*<sup>23</sup>. Vasco de Quiroga's *Información en derecho* was signed in Mexico on 24 July – less than three weeks after Thomas More was beheaded in London on 6 July 1535. It is a poignant coincidence that the Spanish *oidor* was already referring to the English humanist whom he admired in the

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<sup>20</sup> N.G. Wilson «The Name Hythlodæus», *Moreana* XXIX, 110 (June 1992), 33; Franklin B. Williams, «Utopia's chickens come home to roost», *Moreana* 18, no. 69 (March 1981), p. 77-8 suggests the account of the chicks was based on Bernard von Breydenbach, *Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam* (Mainz: Erhard Reuwich, 1486).

<sup>21</sup> Conversely Pagden, «The Humanism of Vasco de Quiroga», 141 suggests Quiroga «had read *Utopia* – and there is evidence that many contemporaries saw it in this light – as an account not of an imaginary and possible world, but as a description [of] the early condition of man in Lucian's Golden Age».

<sup>22</sup> Quiroga, *Información en derecho*, p. 494.

<sup>23</sup> The data are in Craig R. Thompson, *Translations of Lucian by Erasmus and St. Thomas More* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1940), p. 203, cited in R. Bracht Branham, «Utopian Laughter: Lucian and Thomas More», *Moreana* 86 (1985), p. 23-43. See also David Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins: Humor and Humanism in the Early Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

past tense: «Thomas More was a great Hellenist»<sup>24</sup>.

### III

Vasco de Quiroga's missionary method, expressed in his life and writing, could be called utopian, but that – like his manner of interpreting scripture – was primarily rooted in the thought of Desiderius Erasmus, although the Spanish judge was prudent enough never to name him<sup>25</sup>. Erasmus laid constant emphasis on the importance of spreading the Christian faith by good action in imitation of Christ himself and setting positive examples, as opposed to merely sermonising<sup>26</sup>. Quiroga shared these positions along with the Dutch scholar's ardent pacifism, and he too, somewhat confusingly, could use the imagery of warfare to convey his ideas<sup>27</sup>. In fact Erasmus' *Moriae Encomium* or *Praise of Folly* (1511) had forcefully reproached the church for its use of violence to defend its interests:

*Quasi vero ulli sint hostes Ecclesiae perniciosiores, quam impii pontifices, qui et silentio Christum sinunt abolescere, et quaestuariis legibus alligant et coactis interpretationibus adulterant, et pestilente vita iugulant. Porro cum Christiana Ecclesia sanguine sit condita, sanguine confirmata, sanguine aucta, nunc perinde quasi Christus perierit, qui more suo tueatur suos, ita ferro rem gerunt. Cumque bellum res sit adeo immanis, ut feras non homines deceat, adeo insana, ut poetae quoque fingant a Furiis immitti, adeo pestilens, ut universam morum luem simul invehat, adeo iniusta, ut a pessimis latronibus optime soleat administrari, adeo impia, ut nihil cohæreat cum Christo, tamen omnibus omissis, hoc tantum agunt*<sup>28</sup>.

As if the Church had any enemies more deadly than the impious popes who by their silence cause Christ to disappear altogether as they seek to bind him with their mercenary laws, betray him with their contrived judgments and slay him with their destructive way of living. For all that the Christian church was founded on blood [of martyrs], strengthened by blood, and enlarged by blood, they use the sword to do things, just as Christ, who looks after his own in his own way, had perished. Even though war is so monstrous that it suits beasts not men, so deranged that poets imagine it to be inflicted by Furies, so pestilential that it involves the universal corruption of morals, so wrong that it is generally managed by the worst criminals, and so irreligious that it has no connection to

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<sup>24</sup> Quiroga, *Información en derecho*, p. 494, quoted above. More had been imprisoned since Easter 1534: his incarceration was mentioned by the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives in a letter to Erasmus, from Bruges, 10 May 1534: *Opus Epistolarum Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami* ed. P.S. Allen, H.M. Allen and H.W. Garrod, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906-58) vol. 10, *Ep.* 2932, lines 30-2.

<sup>25</sup> Alejandro Coroleu, «Anti-Erasmianism in Spain», in *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, edited by Erika Rummel (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), p. 73-92.

<sup>26</sup> Richard L. DeMolen, *The Spirituality of Erasmus of Rotterdam* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1987), p. 35-67; R.J. Schoeck, *Erasmus Grandescens: The Growth of a Humanist's Mind and Spirituality* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1987), p. 31-40.

<sup>27</sup> Ross Dealy, *Vasco de Quiroga's Thought on War: Its Erasmian and Utopian Roots* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975, *passim*); Dealy, *The Politics of an Erasmian Lawyer* (Malibu: Undena, 1976, p. 8-9 draws attention to the pacifism in Cabrera's *De solicitanda infidelium conversione*. Luper, *Romans in a New World*, p. 155-8 shows that a treatise advocating just war, possibly dating from the 1530s, *De debellandis indis*, ed. René Acuña (Mexico: UNAM, 1988) has been wrongly attributed to Quiroga; sources and style of the treatise also make this unlikely: Andrew Laird, «Bartolo da Sassoferrato and the dominion of native Americans: The *De debellandis indis* and Las Casas' *Apologia*», *Studi Umanistici Piceni* (2009), p. 365-73.

<sup>28</sup> Erasmus, *Moriae encomium id est Stultitiae Laus* ed. Clarence H. Miller in *Opera Omnia Ordinis Quarti Tomus Tertius* (Amsterdam and Oxford: North Holland, 1979), p. 174.

Christ, they still undertake it.

The irony for Erasmus had been that the church, established in its early history by martyrs, was now itself engaged in killing. Quiroga saw that this very paradox was now being actualised by the conduct of Spanish Christians in the Americas:

*Tengo por cierto para mí según lo he visto y veo, que tanto mayor y más recia y fría persecución es y ha de ser la que recibe esta iglesia nueva y primitiva en estas partes de este Nuevo Mundo de sus hijos los malos cristianos que en ella estamos y la venimos á plantar, que la que la primitiva iglesia de este viejo mundo recibió en sus tiempos de sus enemigos y perseguidores los infieles, que pensando destruirla con tanta sangre como derramaban de los santos mártires, más la edificaban, y nosotros viniendo á edificarla con nuestros malos ejemplos y obras peores que de infieles, así la destruimos, cuanto es mayor la contradicción y repugnancia y el enemigo de dentro de casa, que no el de fuera*<sup>29</sup>.

I am sure on account of what I have seen and see, that the persecution of the new and early church in this part of the New World by its evil Christian sons, those of us that are in it and came to plant it, is and is to be so much greater and more vigorous and brutal than that which the early church of the Old World received in the time of its enemies and unbelieving persecutors, who thinking to destroy it with as much blood as the holy martyrs shed, rather built it up; while we coming to build it up with our bad examples, and deeds worse than those of the unbelievers, are thus destroying it. For such is the contradiction and repugnance that the enemy within the house is greater than the one outside.

Quiroga did not follow Erasmus in caricaturing the church's enemies as «impious popes» [*impii pontifices*], but referred more tactfully to «the enemy within» [*el enemigo de dentro la casa*]<sup>30</sup>. Unlike the *Moriae encomium* which was a sharp satire, the *Información en derecho* was designed not to provoke, but to persuade.

#### IV

Vasco de Quiroga was not a literary scholar but a lawyer and churchman who wrote in Spanish rather than Latin, in keeping with his practical agenda. Nonetheless, his citation of patristic rather than scholastic authors and his more general interest in the early church reflect the turn towards Christian humanism in Europe by the early 1500s<sup>31</sup>. That trend, mediated at least for a time by Erasmus, also characterised the thought of many prominent missionaries in New Spain<sup>32</sup>. Among them were Quiroga's associates,

<sup>29</sup> Quiroga, *Información en derecho*, p. 456-7. The convergence between these passages was noted in Dealy, *The Politics of an Erasmian Lawyer*, p. 14-15.

<sup>30</sup> Two years later Fray Julian Garcés, bishop of Tlaxcala used a similar device in his appeal to Pope Paul III to defend native Mexicans from war and enslavement: Andrew Laird «Humanism and the Humanity of the Peoples of the New World: Fray Julián Garcés, *De habilitate et capacitate gentium*, Rome 1537», *Studi Umanistici Piceni* 34 (2014), p. 193.

<sup>31</sup> For the importance of early church literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Patristique et Humanisme: Mélanges* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1976); Lewis W. Spitz, «Renaissance Ideas of Christian Antiquity: Humanist Patristic Scholarship», in Albert Rabil ed. *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms and Legacy* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 1988), vol. 1, p. 17-28; Jill Kraye, «Pagan Philosophy and Patristics in Erasmus and His Contemporaries», *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook* 31 (2011), p. 33-60.

<sup>32</sup> Marcel Bataillon, *Erasme et l'Espagne: recherches sur l'histoire spirituelle du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (Genève:

Bishop Juan de Zumárraga and his colleague in Michoacán Fray Cristóbal Cabrera. Like Quiroga, Zumárraga recalled passages of Erasmus in his doctrinal work, (sometimes reproducing them) without ever naming their original author, while Cabrera was a prolific Latin poet who displayed, if in a superficial or cursory manner, knowledge of a wide range of classical, patristic and humanist authors, including Lucian<sup>33</sup>.

In contrast, Vasco de Quiroga's own engagement with Lucian was sustained. The characterisation in Lucian's *Saturnalia* of the Golden Age and the Age of Iron served to account for the salient differences between Indians who lived in the former age and Spaniards who lived in the latter. It was that realization which provided Quiroga with the idea and rationale for his model of political pluralism: Spaniards and Indians could co-exist, with each people living in a community established in line with the respective inclinations and qualities of the age to which they belonged. Oddly enough, it was another classical pagan source, Virgil's Messianic eclogue, which provided theological legitimacy for this political position – in terms of Christian Messianic eschatology. On this basis, the lengthy passage from the *Saturnalia* reproduced in the *Información en derecho* was incorporated into its argument. The *Utopia*, on the other hand, was never directly quoted, either in that or in any of Quiroga's other writings. Thomas More's translation of Lucian thus appears to have been at least as significant an influence on Vasco de Quiroga as the *Utopia* itself.

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Droz, 1998), p. 540-550, 810-827; Aurora Egido, «Erasmus y la Torre de Babel. La búsqueda de la lengua perfecta» in Joseph Pérez ed. *España y América en una perspectiva humanista: Homenaje a Marcel Bataillon* (Madrid: Casa de Velásquez, 1998), p. 11-34.

<sup>33</sup> Arnold Kerson, «Fray Juan de Zumárraga, primer obispo y arzobispo de México: humanista y evangelizador», *Memoria. Encuentro Nacional de Investigadores del pensamiento novohispano* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes: 2002), p. 15-37; Andrew Laird, «Franciscan humanism in post-conquest Mexico: Fray Cristóbal Cabrera's epigrams on classical and Renaissance authors (Vat. Lat. 1165)», *Studi Umanistici Piceni* 33 (2013), p. 195-215 (p. 198-200 on Lucian).