

Jerónimo Antonio Medinilla y Porres
(ob. 1650)

**PREFACE OF HIS SPANISH TRANSLATION OF
THOMAS MORE, *UTOPIA*
[1637]**

Among those who formed ideas on Statecraft was the most able Thomas More, Lord Chancellor of England, whose constancy in the Faith, enhanced by his prudence, graces his memory. It is one thing to describe states as they are, another to say what they should be. And it is not enough that the person who governs be good: he must also make his subjects so. To avoid raising ill-feeling by reproach, he wrote more about how men should be than about those in his own country, and placed them under laws and institutions which neither Spartans, nor Athenians, nor Romans had evolved. He saw the success of a perfectly happy state as founded on virtue and on the destruction of vice. And he sketched out the reasons for men's responsibilities, having them live in common without any individual possessing anything in particular. In this way no public or private action would be occasioned by the greed of the many, or by passing fancy, or by the evil desires of the few. And before all comes his marvellous image of justice and continual equality of all which masters our weakness, and reveals the risks of ambition. His style is so dignified, and so carefully worked, that he has made of a difficult subject, which seems sterile, a book worthy to rank with the most subtle political discussions of Livy and Tacitus. For he has written a history of human needs and feelings, and not an uncritically partial book.

My admiration for him roused in me a curious desire and wish to serve my country by making this treasure common property. I told some learned friends what I intended to do, showed them some samples, and finally decided to risk this version before the opinion of the world. I was careful to translate the spirit of the author rather than his words. He loved brevity; he says much in a few words, rich and plain, but pithy. But the squeamishness of men is such that they can become tired of not being tired. I intend to make accessible to all sorts of people, what in a larger volume would benefit only a few. Whoever compares this version with the original Latin, will realise how much work this has cost me. But if my project is received with favour, I will count myself successful.