

Primary Sources: Utopias around 1600



Introduction

By the early 17th century, the world had transformed just a few decades earlier. Now, rather than just a couple precarious European empires feeling their way around the world, the Spanish, Portuguese, English, Dutch, French and others competed with one another to expand their wealth and influence globally. Now, European slave trade posts dotted the West African coastline, establishing the trans-Atlantic slave trade and creating the Black diaspora. Now, European posts in Asia brought spices, gemstones, silks, pearls and other trade goods through Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Ocean worlds. Now, colonial regimes in the Americas displaced indigenous peoples, expanded land claims, and extracted resources in the service of competing European states. Challenges to European colonialism continued after just as before, but patterns of political domination, trade, racial hierarchies, and suppression of religious dissent were placing new limitations on what might be possible in many areas. The world we live in today was profoundly shaped by the ways events unfolded over the 16th century. Are there ways that we can use the utopian thinking of this past era to help us steer our way through the 21st century?

Discussion questions:

1. How did Andreae's Christianopolis compare to earlier imagined utopian societies, like Filarete's Sforzinda, Christine de Pizan's City of Ladies, or Thomas More's Utopia?
2. What factors best explain the dramatic contrasts between the ideals expressed by the examples of Christianopolis and Livorno in the early 17th century?
3. What do these two historical examples suggest for us, as we attempt to imagine how to work toward better possibilities for the future?

Primary Sources

Introduction

Primary source
1: Johannes Valentinus Andreae's
Christianopolis
(1619)

Primary source 2:
The Livorno constitution of 1593

Primary source 1: Johannes Valentinus Andreae's *Christianopolis* (1619)

In 1619, the German Lutheran pastor Johannes Valentinus Andreae (1586–1654) wrote *Christianopolis*, which drew from a repertoire of utopian writings going back to Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516). Unlike More, Andreae was born into a globalized world in which Europeans had emerged as colonial rulers over much of the Americas and enslavers of Indigenous Americans and West Africans. It had also been a century since the Reformation had divided Western Christianity; in recent decades, brutal religious wars had broken out in France, the Netherlands, and, most recently, in the German-speaking lands of the Holy Roman Empire. His vision for an idealized Christian utopia looks peaceful in a world in which the most devastating bloodshed and traumas associated with religious war in Europe, enslavement in West Africa, and colonialism in the Americas was just beginning.

Source: J. V. Andreae, *Christianopolis*, ed. Edward H. Thompson (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1999), 152–57, 161–62, 170–73, 175–76, 178–79, 180, 184, 186–88, 206–07, 265–68, 281–82.

Greetings to you, Christian Reader!

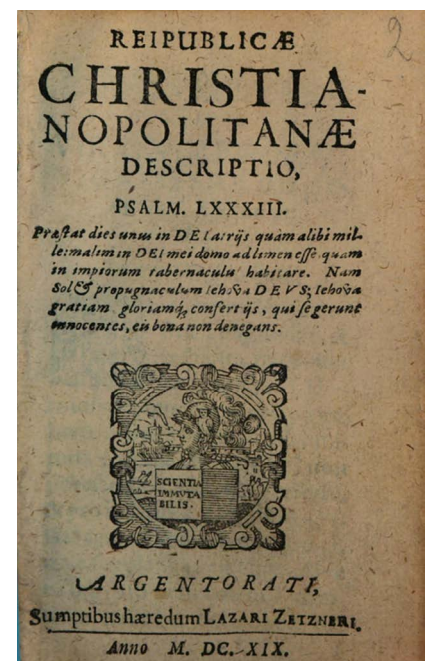
...You see here an example of this inner certainty of the Christian, my very dear reader, in this new *Republic* which I should like to name *Christianopolis*.... [B]ecause the laws are good everywhere but the behavior of people is corrupt, I am afraid that you will believe my citizens are the same. That is as may be: I have made up my mind not to praise my people, but to describe them – and I shall explain and make know what laws we should live under. I have spoken as openly and as honestly about different things as I can, and I could not reveal myself more to you....

Finally this book is an entertainment, which has not held against that celebrated man, Thomas More. Because my book is a less serious and less witty work, it may be ignored more easily. I wrote it for my friends, and one may share a joke with them.... So let anyone who wishes to read this book do so, and may they keep in mind that we up with many among friends and well-disposed people that would not stand up to examination by malevolent people....

1. The Occasion of the Journey, and the Shipwreck

While I was wandering about the whole world as a stranger, patiently enduring many tyrannies, sophists and hypocrisies, not yet having found the man for whom I was searching anxiously, I decided once again to attempt the Academic Ocean, even though it has very often been hostile to me. So I boarded the ship of Fantasy with many others and left behind the well-known ports, exposing life and limb to the thousand dangers of a desire for knowledge.

For a short time the weather was in our favour, then hurricanes of envy and false



Title page of Johann Valentin Andreae's book, *Christianopolis*.

accusations from the opposite quarter began to stir up the Ethiopian Sea¹ against us, driving out all hope of calmness.... Some people were swallowed up by the waves and some were dispersed hither and thither over enormous distances; others, who were experienced swimmers or who were supported by planking, were carried to various scattered islands of the sea. A very small number of us were spared from death, and I certainly was without any companion when at length I landed upon a very small island, the mere patch of turf.

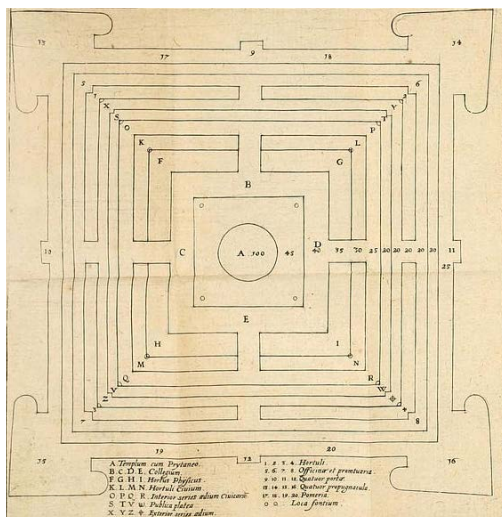
2 Cast Ashore on the Island of Capharsalama

...The island is three-cornered in shape, around 30 miles around. It is like a model of the entire world, enjoying cornfields and pastures, watered by streams and fountains, adorned with woods and vineyards, and full of livestock. You would believe that heaven has married the earth there, and they were living together in perpetual peace.

The sun had come out again as though re-born, and I was just drying my shirt, which was all that remained of my clothes, when one of the inhabitants of the island came along.... After he had enquired very courteously into what has happened to me, he sympathized with my misfortune and told me to trust confidently in him and accompany him to his community where I would be refreshed with their usual kindness toward strangers and exiles. ...

[The narrator is examined to ensure that he is not a beggar, religious zealot, or imposter; he is asked about his origins, lifestyle, and education before being permitted to enter the city.]

7. Description of Christianopolis



Plan of Andreae's ideal city of Christianopolis.

I shall not go far wrong if first of all I describe the appearance of the community. It is square in plan, with each of its sides about 700 feet long, and it is pretty well defended by four bastions and a rampart.... Its strength is reinforced by eight massive towers distributed throughout Christianopolis, and beyond this there are sixteen smaller towers... in the middle of all there is a citadel which is almost impregnable.

There are two ranges of domestic buildings on each side, of four rows if you count in the administrative officers and storehouses. There is a single public thoroughfare, and

a single public square, which is very fine. If you measure the buildings you will see that from the inner side of the thoroughfare, whose breadth is twenty feet, they increase in size by five feet at a time as you move toward the centre, where the temple, which is circular, has a diameter of one hundred feet. If you go outwards from the domestic buildings, it is twenty feet to the storehouses, which

1. A sea imagined by ancient Romans to be south of Africa.

are themselves of this breadth, then are the same distance to the wall, which is twenty-five feet across.

Each of the domestic buildings is three storeys high ... All the buildings are constructed of baked bricks, and are so divided by walls that fire can never do serious damage. There is a great abundance of water, supplied copiously by nature in springs and channelled along by human skill.... About four hundred members live here, enjoying perfect religion and peace ... Outside the walls there is a fifty-foot wide moat; this is full of fish so that it does not lie idle even in times of peace. The open spaces beside the outer walls are stocked with wild animals, not for pleasure but to be made use of....

12. Living Quarters

... No-one should be surprised that the living quarters are rather limited, for there are very few people to be accommodated, and there is almost no household furniture. Other people, who give houseroom to vanity, extravagance and things of that sort, and who heap up baggage obtained by wicked means, never have enough room to live. They overload themselves, and are a burden to others. Nor is there any necessity at all for this. On the contrary, the suitability of an immense heap of things is measured easily in another way, by how unbearable and intolerable it is. Oh, people are rich indeed if all they have is that which they truly need, if they call nothing their own which they are able to do without! ...

13. Craftsmen

I saw artisans who were, I believe, workers in bronze, tinsmiths, saw-makers, knife-makers, turners, makers of caskets, sculptors, plasterers, fullers, weavers, furriers and cobblers. Among the superior arts were woodcarvers, clockmakers, goldsmiths, organmakers, engravers, workers in gold leaf, ring-makers and a considerable number of others of this kind. There are also tanners, harness-makers, blacksmiths, cartwrights, coopers, cement-workers and glass-workers in this place. Since we have now named all these activities, we may add that clothing and needlework are the provenance of women.

14. Public Prayers

Before I go any further, something has to be said about public worship. They have prayers three times a day – in the morning, at noon and in the evening – when they thank God for His blessings.... No-one is allowed to be absent from these meetings, except for the strongest reasons. Everyone who is the parent of children brings them along so that they can as it were lisp their praise of God. Next, they listen to a reading from Holy Scripture, then the meeting is brought to a close after about half an hour with a hymn....

16. Work

Work, or as they prefer to call it, 'the exercise of the hands' is done to a plan, and everything that is produced is taken to a common store. The master of each craft receives sufficient supplies of material from the storehouse for the work of the next seven days. For the community is as it were all one single workshop, albeit with all sorts of different crafts in it No-one has any money, and it has no private use among the, although the community has a treasury.



Johannes Valentinus Andreae.

It is a very great blessing for the people of this place that no-one is able to rise above the others through wealth. Some are outstanding for their mental energy and intellect, and the highest value is placed on a person's morality and piety.

They have very limited working hours, yet no less work is done. This is because everyone thinks it is wicked to take more than the permitted amount of leisure.

17. Leisure Time

...They find pleasure in satisfying the requirements of religion, the community and learning, but when they have done this, and have exercised their body with craftsman's skills, then they have greater or lesser periods of rest.... This, they say, is not so much required for the flesh as for the spirit, and not so much for the body as the soul. It is most essential that we withdraw into ourselves very frequently and shake off the dust of the earth. We need to make a fresh start if we are to form generous resolutions in our mind, and if we are to subdue vice....

19. Punishments

[T]he judges of the Christian community observe this above all, that those who attack God directly are punished more severely; those who attack men are punished more lightly; and those whose crime is against property are punished most lightly of all. How differently the world behaves, which punishes a petty thief with incomparably more savagery than a blasphemer or an adulterer!

Since Christianopolitans are always chary² of spilling blood they do not willingly agree to the death penalty. The world, by contrast, is lavish with the blood of brothers and innocent people, and makes an entertainment out of killing people For anyone can destroy a man, but only the very best can reform him.

21. Officials

The central part of this community is governed by eight men, each of whom lives in one of the great towers. Beneath them are eight other officials distributed among the smaller towers. They are all fatherly in spirit, rather than authoritarian, and they are viewed less with fear than with reverence by those entrusted to them. Whatever they order others to perform, that they themselves also do. They lead less by their words than by their example....

24. Household Goods

There are only two kinds of garment, one suitable for work and the other for leisure. They are all the same pattern for everyone with differences in form according to sex and age. The material is linen or wool, changing from summer to winter, and the colour is white or grey. No-one had extravagant tailoring....

26. The College

It is now time for us to enter the very heart of Christianopolis. which you will

2. Suspicious.

with justice call the *primum mobile* [first mover] of the community. It is square in shape, 270 feet across on the outside and 190 feet across on the inside. It is enclosed by four towers ... The governors of the community – those in charge of Religion, Justice, and Learning – have their seat there, and they have the Chancellor added as their spokesman. I have never seen so much human perfection gathered into one place. ...

27. The Triumvirate

We must now consider why they prefer an aristocratic constitution to a monarchy. Although there are many advantages to a monarchy, they prefer to reserve this title for Christ and, not without reason, they distrust human self-restraint ... a triumvirate is the safest [form of government], to which only the best and more experienced people in the community are admitted after they have progressed up through all the levels of virtue.

Each of these (three) leaders carries out the duties of his office, though not without the knowledge of the others; they all take counsel together where the safety of the community is concerned....

28. Religion

When I considered all these things I could have easily suspected this to be some kind of community of fanatics, since in the world anyone who seeks the heavens may be judged heretical. But a double tablet soon freed me of my error: on this were inscribed letters of gold the essence of their confession and profession [of faith]....[What follows are twelve statements of faith that affirm common Christian beliefs in the divinity of Christ, the Trinity, the sufferings of Christ to redeem humankind, the afterlife in heaven, as well as standard Protestant beliefs about the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper].

29. Constitution

So far now we have been allowed to hear about the religion of Christianopolis. Information about morality and the rules of life is given by the second tablet, on which stand the following words: [What follows are ten laws that resemble the Ten Commandments but are less punitive and more positive in tone.]....

42. The Printing Press

[A]part from the Holy Scriptures and books which instruct the young and assist members of the community with their devotions, other books are seldom printed. ... it is not permitted to reproduce anything here which casts doubt on God, corrupts morals, or deceives the mind. However much printing presses are excused elsewhere, this is completely wrong: for even if the curiosity of the reader, the ambition of the writer, and the profit-seeking of the printers are satisfied, there is no concern for God or the harm that is done to one's neighbour. What an enormous number of volumes filled with foolishness, what a mass of lies and sophistries, are unloaded and heaped up twice a year – you might wonder if there are people who can even read through the titles of them.

88. Marriage

In Christianopolis they enter into marriage with great devotion. It is undertaken

with great caution, cherished with great tenderness and held in high respect. Marriage is thus safer here than anywhere else. For since pride over the bride's dowry is absent here, along with the uncertainty over their living expenses, they are left to judge people only by their good qualities and sometimes their appearance.

Young men who are twenty-four years old are allowed to marry young women of eighteen, subject to the consent of the parents, the advice of their relatives, the approval of the laws, and the blessing of God ... Moral impurity is considered to be the greatest fault, and the laws against it are severe. But since the opportunities have been removed, the crimes are easily avoided.

89. Women

When the women are married they make use of the accomplishment that they have acquired in the college. Whatever human industry can create out of silk, wool or linen is the province and object of women's art. So they learn spinning, sewing, embroidery and weaving, and excel in different ways in their vocations. Tapestry work is the art form of these women, making clothing is their work, laundry is their duty. In addition they have to see to the house and kitchen and keep them clean. ... They have to keep silent in the church and in council meetings, but nevertheless they mould piety and good moral behavior, and in this way shine no less in the gifts of heaven. ...

As regards the fact that there are many women who are domineering, it is the fault of men who are effeminate and have married mannish women. Nothing is more dangerous than when women rule in secret and men obey in public; on the other hand, nothing is more satisfactory than when men and women each have their own province. It is very unusual in Christianopolis for anyone to beat his wife, and it is not regarded as a manly thing to do.

The women have no adornments apart from those mentioned in Peter 3,3 and they have no authority except over household matters.... No-one is ashamed of women's work, or grows tired of serving her husband. Correspondingly also no man scorns honest work, whatever his station. For learning and working are not contradictories – if there is a proper balance, there is nothing more rational than serving the common good equally with thought and deed.

Return

So now that I have surveyed everything, I was led back to the Chancelor to describe for him what my impression now was of the members of the community.

He said: "Friend and guest, have you now seen how and where we live? Since everything human is imperfect, we have not been able to show you anything beyond our human lot. Nevertheless we have, as we hope, mitigated the burdens of our mortality in the way which we have shown you.... When you have returned to your people, you may be able to explain everything very charitably and very moderately. ... May good people pass judgement on us, teach us, and criticize us: they shall see that we are no less willing to learn than we are patient. While they can find excuses for all their arrangements, we shall apologise for ours and strive urgently for improvement. In this way they may be able to tolerate the contrary customs of a tiny island in the meantime.

Primary source 2: The Livorno constitution of 1593

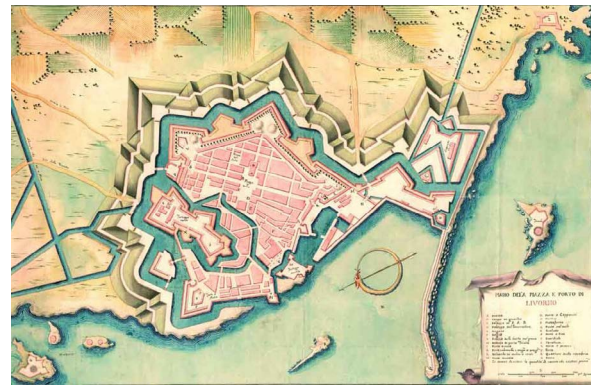
In 1591, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Ferdinando I, issued a constitution for Livorno, a new settlement imagined and financed by his predecessors in previous decades that had (until then) little success in attracting the kinds of non-Christian merchants that it had been established to entice. The new constitution offered extensive rights and protections; two years later Duke Ferdinando followed up with this revised and expanded constitution. The effort worked, but had some dark consequences for other people it had not been designed to attract.

Source: Appendix I to Bernard Dov Cooperman, "Trade and Settlement: The Establishment and Early Development of the Jewish Communities in Leghorn and Pisa (1591–1626)," (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1976), 416–34. Slight modifications in capitalization, spelling, and punctuation have been made by *History for the 21st Century*. The older English word for Livorno (translated by Cooperman as Leghorn) has also been updated in accordance with current English-language practice.

Don Ferdinand Medici, by God's grace...

To all ye merchants of whatever nation Levantines, Ponentines, Spaniards, Portuguese, Greeks, Germans, and Italians, Jews, Turks, Moors, Armenians, Persians, and others, Greetings.

We signify by these, our letters patent, that we are moved by worthy motives, and especially by our desire for the public good, to encourage foreigners at every opportunity to come and bring their commerce and merchandise to our beloved city of Pisa, and port and commercial center of Livorno We do give and grant you the following favors, privileges, prerogatives, immunities, and exemptions.



17th century map of Livorno.

- 1 We grant to all you Jewish, Turkish, Moorish and other merchants, real, free and most ample safe conduct, as well as free faculty and license, that you may come, stay [temporarily], traffic, pass [through], and dwell, with or without your families, leave, return, and trade in our city of Pisa and territory of Livorno.... [This privilege is valid] for the coming twenty-five years, with notice of termination required five years beforehand.... The above [period of notice is] in order that within that space of time [i.e., 5 years] you may dispatch and summarily recall all your accounts from your debtors and that you may sell, remise³ or otherwise [dispose] of all of your real estate at your leisure to whomsoever you prefer....
- 2 We assure you that during the said period [of twenty-five years] no court or prince may molest or trouble you, your families, servants, agents or any of these on account of any accusation, lawsuit or case which might have been brought or be brought against you, or any among you, even for a crime ... which you or your families committed or are accused of committing and doing in the past outside of our state....

3. Surrender.

3 We desire, further, that during the said period, no inquisition, visitation, denunciation, or accusation may be made against you or your families. Even though you may have lived outside of our dominion dressed as Christians ... you may... perform there all of your ceremonies, precepts, rites, laws, and customs according to the Jewish law or otherwise according to your custom and desire....



Portrait of Ferdinando I de Medici, 1590.

4 We render you furthermore free, exempt, and secure in your persons, possessions, and merchandize against whatsoever debt, civil or criminal, which you or your families have incurred outside the states of our dominion....

...

6 We grant you the right to traffic and trade in all the cities, territories, fairs, markets, villages, and other places of our states and to set sail for the Levant, the West [Ponente],⁴ Barbary,⁵ Alexandria,⁶ and elsewhere under your own names or under a Christian name, or otherwise, as it shall please you....

...

8 We promise to put 100,000 *scudi* at your disposal to pay charter, contract, and exchange fees, or other expenses due on merchandise which you may bring to our port of Livorno, to our city of Pisa, or to Florance. [Our intention in this is] that you may unload your merchandise from ships, etc., with greater facility....



Etching of the fortifications and ships of Livorno, 1655.

9 We further grant you that all your utensils and household goods, jewels, pearls, gold and silver [ornaments] and other items, etc., shall be free and exempt from any payment of customs duty upon entering or leaving [our] state...

10 We shall appoint a lay doctor [of laws] who is neither Florentine nor Pisan as your judge. He will have authority from us to determine and decide summarily all of your cases and differences, whether civil, criminal, or mixed, once the truth of the matter is known.... He shall provide justice to all. His sentences shall be unappealable except by our special favor.

4. This refers to coastal areas west of Genoa, and in this context includes ports in southern France and Spain.

5. The central and western parts of the north coast of Africa, mostly under Ottoman rule.

6. The main port in Ottoman-rule Egypt, that is the western part of the north coast of Africa.



Etching of the Port of Livorno with Statue of Ferdinand I, 1655.

11 In the event that any of your or your [dependents] should become involved [i.e., have sexual relations] with a Christian, male or female, with a Turk,⁷ male or female, or with a Moor,⁸ male or female, we desire that your case be heard by your said judge who shall be appointed as above. Furthermore,

you shall be punished by him and by no one else in accordance with the crime. [The punishment] shall not, however, exceed 50 *scudi* for the first offense, 100 *scudi* for the second, and whatever the said judge decides for the third and later offenses....

12 We agree that should any of you be sued or accused in error, if the plaintiff does not prove his lawsuit he shall be considered a libeler with regard to all expenses and interest which the innocent defendant may have incurred and suffered. Thus no one will dare to unjustly come against or between you.

...

17 We grant you license and the right to possess printed and manuscript books of all sorts in Hebrew or [any] other language. However they must be reviewed by the Inquisitor or someone else appointed for this.

18 We desire that your Jewish doctors, whether physicians or surgeons, shall be allowed to cure and medicate not only yourselves, but also any Christian whatsoever or any person without impediment or prejudice....

...

20 We grant you the right to maintain a synagogue. ... We do not want anyone to dare to insult you in any way or commit any outrage or act of violence against you during these [religious observances] on pain of our displeasure....

...

24 We desire further that your [holy] days of Sabbath and other Jewish festivals...shall be [considered] non-working days and legal holidays....

25 [We decree] that your Jewish stewards in your synagogue shall have the authority to decide, sentence and impose penalties as seems proper to them according to your Jewish rite and manner in all differences which may arise between one Jew and another....

26 [W]e forbid each of our Christian [subjects] to dare take or accept from

7. This term refers to a Muslim from the Turkish-speaking heart of the Ottoman Empire.

8. In this case, this term refers to a Muslim from north Africa.

you any [members] of your family, whether male or female, for the purpose of being baptized as a Christian unless [the said Jew] has passed the age of thirteen years. Those [candidates for baptism] who have reached majority may be reminded of their Judaism and spoken to by their father, mother, or other relatives ... prior to being baptized....

27 We grant you that your slaves cannot have their freedom.

28 We desire that all butchers shall prepare all sorts of meat for you according to your current needs.... Furthermore [we desire] that you be able, should you desire, to hire one or more Jewish slaughterers who shall prepare the meat which you may need....

29 We grant you all of the privileges, rights, and favors, which ... Christians enjoy. That is, you may engage in all types of crafts and [in] commerce of every sort. Furthermore, none of you nor your families shall be obliged to wear any badge different than our Christian [subjects]. Furthermore, you may buy real estate.

...

36 [We] desire and declare that the said favors and privileges granted you shall remain [in effect] for a period of twenty-five years as above.... In the event that notification of the five-year [period of grace] is not given as above, [we] intend that [the period of your privileges] shall be continually followed by further [periods of] twenty-five years....

37 We concede to you the right to purchase ... land in order to be able to bury your dead...

...

42 We grant you the right to employ Christian servants and similarly Christian wetnurses according to your needs....

43 We desire that the above capitulations contained in this privilege ... shall be understood in a straightforward and sincere manner without quibbling. [We desire] also that they always be interpreted by all our officials and ministers in a manner favorable and benefitting the said merchants in every way possible.



The Four Moors statue in Livorno, completed in 1626.

Given in Florence in our ducal palace on the tenth of June in the year 1593...

Ferdinandus

Image Citations

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Meichior Küsel, Johann Valentin Andreae, before 1683, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johann_Valentin_Andreae_mit_Wappen.jpg

Page 2:

Johann Valentin Andreae, Christianopolis, Zetznerus, 1619, cover page, Public Domain, https://books.google.com/books?id=h8RCAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA21&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=1#v=onepage&q&f=false

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Johann Valentin Andreae, Reipublicae Christianopolitanae descriptio, Argentorati 1619, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Plan_der_Stadt_Christianopolis_-_Tafel_1.jpg

Page 5:

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Page 8:

Map of Livorno Fortress, 17th century, Tuscany, Italy, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Livorno_map_17th_Century.jpg

Page 9:

Scipione Pulzone, Portrait of Ferdinando I de Medici, 1590, Uffizi Gallery, Public Domain, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Pulzone,_Scipione_-_Ferdinando_I_de%27_Medici,_granduca_di_Toscana_-_1590.jpg

Stefano della Bella, View of the fortifications, two men lifting a plank at right, several ships and boats the background and a galley at left, from 'Views of the port of Livorno', 1655, Public Domain, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/377480>

Page 9:

Stefano della Bella, Port of Livorno with Statue of Ferdinand I, from 'Views of the port of Livorno', 1655, Public Domain, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/377478>

Page 10:

Monument of the Four Moors, to Ferdinando I, 1626, CC BY-SA 2.5 Italy, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Livorno,_Monumento_dei_quattro_mori_a_Ferdinando_II_\(1626\)_-_Foto_Giovanni_Dall%27Orto,_13-4-2006_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Livorno,_Monumento_dei_quattro_mori_a_Ferdinando_II_(1626)_-_Foto_Giovanni_Dall%27Orto,_13-4-2006_01.jpg)