

# The Thomas More Society

The Thomas More Society of America • P.O. Drawer 33609, Farragut Station • Washington, DC 20033-0609

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 1984

## LONDON CALLING

The 50th anniversary of the canonization of Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher and the 450th anniversary of their deaths will be commemorated by admirers in London, England in July, 1985.

The International More and Fisher Congress will be held from July 14 to 21, 1985 at Allen Hall, Chelsea on the grounds of More's house. All are invited. To submit papers, send a one-page abstract by October 31, 1984, to Dr. Nancy R. Sodeman, 419 Valley Cove Dr., Richardson, TX 75080 or to Rosemary Rendel, organizer of the Congress at 24 Lennox Gardens, London SW1X0DQ, England. Papers will focus on More and Fisher's prison writings, their trial and martyrdom.

During the same week, the American Bar Association will be holding its annual meeting in London. President McGrath and John St. Peter of Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin, are forming a committee to sponsor a Bar association trip to places associated with Thomas More.

## MORE ON CAPITOL HILL

On June 22, 1984, the feast of Thomas More and his fellow martyr Bishop John Fisher, the Society attended Mass at St. Joseph's Church on Capitol Hill.

Rev. Ladislav Orsy, S.J. Professor of Canon Law, Catholic University, was celebrant and homilist. He said it was a time for people of all religions to rejoice because God had given us a beautiful human person with nothing lacking in his integrity.

### *Prayer to St. Thomas More*

St. Thomas More, be our advocate and counsel before the Divine tribunal that alone is without error.

Bespeak for us the wisdom to apply the precepts of God's eternal law to the problems of our daily lives.

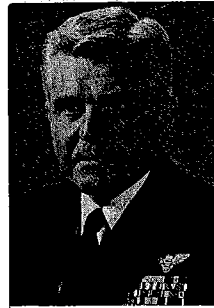
Intercede for us that we may emulate the sense of humor which made your heart echo with the mirth of heaven.

Pray that we may spurn false oaths and live as you did, faithful to our faith, even though by doing so we may be called upon to sacrifice our all as you sacrificed yours.

These things seek for us through the merits of Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

—Prayer written by Hon. Howard T. Markey, chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, founder of the Society.

## SURVIVOR OF ORDEAL TO ADDRESS SOCIETY AT THIRD ANNUAL DINNER



The Society's third Annual Dinner will be held at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington on Thursday, September 20, 1984. Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale, M.H., U.S.N. (Ret.), will discuss the requirements and principles of leadership evidenced by Saint Thomas More and others. (For a sampling of his ideas see p. 4.)

Admiral Stockdale served for more than thirty years as an officer of the regular Navy, primarily at sea as a fighter pilot aboard aircraft carriers. He was shot down on his second combat tour over North Vietnam and endured eight years as a prisoner of war in Hanoi, where he was tortured, kept in leg irons and spent four years in solitary confinement.

He left the naval service as its most highly decorated member, with twenty-six personal combat decorations. In 1981 the United States Navy established the "Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale Award for Inspirational Leadership," the first ever issued in the name of a living person. It is presented annually to a command naval officer in the Atlantic and the Pacific fleets.

Admiral Stockdale, author of dozens of articles on leadership, moral philosophy, the prison/hostage experience and the anatomy of extortion, is now a Senior Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University, where he also lectures in Philosophy. A former president of the Naval War College, he is Chairman of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships, member of the Board of Visitors and Governors of St. John's College of Annapolis and Santa Fe, member of the Academic Policy Board of the United States Naval Academy, and Special Advisor to the American Leadership Forum.

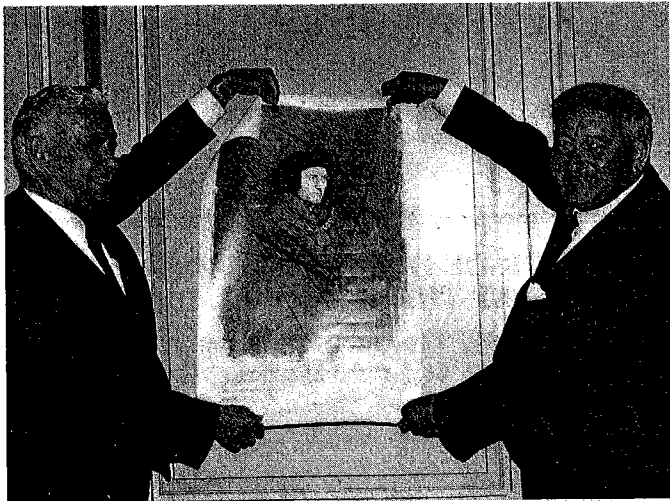
Dinner Chairman Regina McGranery says this year's annual dinner should again be an elegant and inspiring affair. It provides a perfect opportunity to introduce friends to the Society. Send her names and addresses of people who might like to join us in honoring Admiral Stockdale so they can receive invitations.

## QUOTABLE THOMAS

In a speech on the occasion of the presentation of the one millionth volume to the Lauinger Library at Georgetown University, President Timothy Healy, S.J. ended with a reference to Saint Thomas More:

A 16th century gentleman and scholar who went to my own university at Oxford and later served as its High Steward, Sir Thomas More, remarked that "God made plants for their simplicity, animals for their innocence, and man to serve Him wittily in the tangle of His mind."

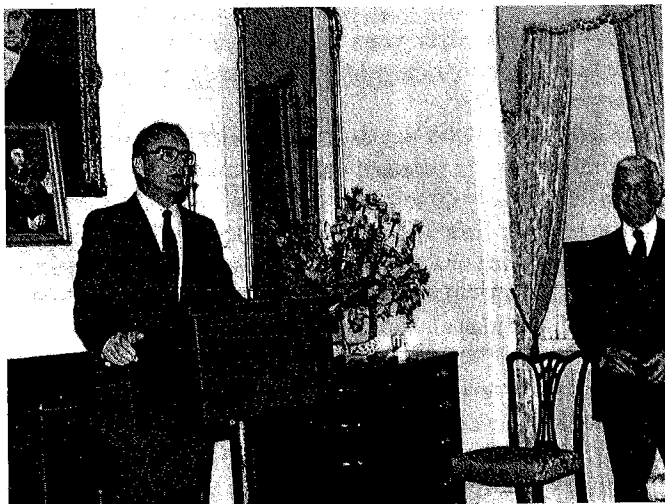
May all Georgetown's learners, students or faculty members know here the tangle of the mind and learn to live and love in it wittingly.



**POSTER PALS**—Joseph B. McGrath, President of the Thomas More Society of America displays a rare copy of poster depicting Thomas More, presented by the Society to William Kinsella, President of the St. Thomas More Society of Ireland.



**WISTFUL VISTA**—Society Treasurer James Keenan poses with Mr. and Mrs. Kinsella of Dublin and Mrs. Keenan, formerly of County Galway, Eire, at University Club Reception, Washington, D.C., May 24, 1984.



On January 17, 1984, William Ruckelshaus, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, first recipient of the Society's "Good Servant Award," addresses the Society. The award presented to one who "serves his country well and faithfully, and at great personal cost," is a reproduction of the Holbein portrait of Thomas More. At right is Society President Joseph B. McGrath.



Pictured above in the Senate Office Building are the Officers of the Thomas More Society and their visiting guests from West Germany's Thomas-Morus-Gesellschaft. From left to right: Roswitha Menke, Member of the Board, TMG; Claudia Helmstaeder; Martin McNamara, Chairman of the Society's Board of Directors; Dr. Gerhard Helmstaeder, Member of the Board, TMG; Gertrud Kloth; Joseph McGrath, President of the Society; Dr. Hermann Boventer, President of the TMG; U.S. Senator David Durenberger (R.MN); and Mrs. Ilse Helmstaeder.

## THE DIALOGUE DISCUSSED

Dr. Charles R. Dechert, Professor of Politics at The Catholic University of America, spoke to members of the Society on February 28, 1984 at the Georgetown Law Center. (See p. 3)

The subject of his talk was More's *Dialogue of Comfort* and its application to the 1980s. *Dialogue of Comfort* was written in the Tower of London while More waited to learn his fate. Dr. Dechert characterized this discourse on suffering as "the swan song of the Christian medieval tradition," seeing it as a clear and explicit Christian commitment in which tribulation is accepted as a gift of God because of its moral and spiritual results. More saw the need to prepare oneself in advance if one is to be

able to persist in faith under persecution. We may not purchase well-being through apostasy, he wrote. God will help the morally tough. The pain is transitional. One can have spiritual freedom in prison and one should die courageously for Christ. More was to die as he had believed.

Dr. Dechert, a graduate of Catholic University, chose as the topic for his Ph.D. dissertation *Thomas More and Society: A Study in Renaissance Thought*. He has published many books and articles, with special emphasis on international politics, and is Chairman of the Parliamentary Internship Committee, which is responsible for sending 25 United States students to London each summer to serve as Research Assistants to Members of Parliament.



## MORE'S DIALOGUE OF COMFORT AGAINST TRIBULATION

### Moral lessons for another time of crisis.

Our time, like More's, is one of transition, of critical changes, of the breakdown and restructuring of social institutions. A strange thing happened on the way from the *Respublica Christiana*, the European Christian Commonwealth of the high middle ages, to the post-Renaissance era of Western global dominance, nation-states, scientific and industrial revolutions. Christendom broke apart in the Reformation and Islam, under Turkish impetus, destroyed Byzantium, assumed control of the Eastern Mediterranean and bade fair to occupy Eastern Europe. Belgrade had fallen to the Turk in 1521, Budapest in 1526. This is the setting of More's *Dialogue*.

After fighting the brave fight against Tyndale and the English reformers, after "sorting and placing" Henry VIII's arguments against Luther (*Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*) making the British crown "Defender of the Faith," More found himself in the Tower of London. To deny the King's spiritual primacy was treason, to remain silent most suspect. Were the foes of the Christian Commonwealth outside its member nations breaking down the gate, or inside, burning down the house? Was the Turk without but an analog of the "reforming" prince within?

Then, as now, the "Common Corps of Christendom" was under assault from within and without, and seemed to be losing. Was Hungary under the Turk so very much different from Hungary under Soviet control? Was More's and Fisher's idiosyncratic opposition to Henry VIII's spiritual pretensions less quixotic than some contemporary Christians' opposition to the secular humanism that has become the state religion of much of the world on both sides of the Iron Curtain?

More felt his spiritual and civic isolation in 1534 acutely. From Chancellor to jailbird! The *Dialogue of Comfort*, to no small degree, is Thomas More arguing with himself; why am I here in the Tower, voluntarily, to the chagrin, disgrace and financial ruin of my family, against the counsel and example of all my friends (almost all) and my spiritual leaders, the bishops (almost all — God bless Bishop Fisher of Rochester; he's in the cell one flight up!)?

Clearly Christendom was (and is) losing — to enemies without, to the forces of disintegration within. More faces the situation with the equanimity and good cheer of the man profoundly, inwardly convinced of a benevolent Providence. God's ways are not our ways. Yet More was clearly under tremendous personal strain as is clear both from his lengthy discussion of suicide (direct and indirect) in the *Dialogue of Comfort* and his wry, obviously autobiographical comments on the recriminations of friends and family, particularly his wife, Dame Alice, a down-to-earth woman who could not for the life of her understand More's nonsensical behavior likely to deprive her of both husband and estate. The authorities would see to it that More would not be venerated as a Martyr (at least in England). His death was, if not shameful, at best ambiguous — and contrary to all the best opinion.

Pope John Paul II's most recent letter is on "The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering" (*Salvifici Doloris*). It is an analysis of and commentary on this century's flight from suffering, from tribulation, for to feel physical, psychological or moral pain is both undesirable and an infringement of some "inalienable right" to happiness, usually conceived as pleasure. This has occurred in a century that has witnessed the "useless slaughter" of World War I, the untold suffering of untold millions in World War II and its aftermath. Surely these phenomena are not unrelated. Do prosperity and pleasure lead men to forget God and the divine law, to forget their propensity to sin and their vulnerability to evil? Must the scourge of tribulation remind us of our weakness and mortality, our contingency, our responsibilities in the providential order of things?

The Pope remarks, "It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace that transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the power of redemption."

This is precisely the spirit of More's *Dialogue of Comfort*. Why do bad things happen to good people? Hell, says he, is the destination of those who suffer no tribulation in this life. Even those blessed by fortune suffer internal and spiritual troubles, and can be better persons for it. Such trials are challenges to be overcome. They prompt men to turn to God who is with us and for us. We are made aware that God's ways are not our ways, that our confused and shortsighted perspectives, our priorities and decisions must be subject to Divine Providence — as we pray, "Thy will be done." We must believe no man is tried beyond his capacity, that even when he is seemingly broken a man's internal flight to God as his last refuge is the ultimate and constructive response to overwhelming evil.

It's all done in good humor. There's no harm in a merry tale to liven the moral discourse, or in pleasant conversation. But by God, Mr. More, you know in your heart you'll be dead this time next year (1535) and you're telling the rest of us how to cope.

Charles R. Dechert  
March 1984



**FROM OUR BANQUET SPEAKER:**

**THE PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP\***

By James Bond Stockdale

\*Excerpted from an article in the *American Educator*, Winter 1981, reprinted with permission from the author.

In most educational institutions, leadership is addressed as a part of courses dealing with values, tradition, sociology, or management.

\*

Yet, the importance of leadership in all sectors of our society has never been greater, and I believe that there are some teachable and learnable truths that underpin good leadership.

\*

Several years ago, I introduced a course at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, entitled "Foundations of Moral Obligation."

\*

I believe that every factor that prompted me to originate this course is equally applicable to the civilian sector of our population.

\*

The single most important foundation for any leadership course is history. That discipline gives perspective to the problems of the present and drives home the point that there is little new under the sun.

\*

Philosophy is an equally logical discipline from which to draw insights into leadership.

\*

If one leads men into battle committed to the idea that each value judgment is as good as the next, he's in for trouble. Thus, the discipline founded by Socrates, that is, a discipline committed to the position that there is such a thing as central, objective truth and that what is "just" transcends self-interest, provides a sensible contrast to much of today's management and leadership literature. It is this type of philosophy and "ultimate-situation" literature that I recommend.

\*

One of the most productive results of my course was the development of a framework that focused on universal principles that are broad enough to handle most situations and specific enough to describe much of what the leaders will experience.

\*

These principles, distilled from many sources, may come in an infinite number of variations, but I believe that they are valid under all conditions, in peace, war, behind the desk in the heart of a corporation, or in the cockpit of a jet fighter. They are,

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| 1. You are your brother's keeper.                              | * | 2. Life is not fair.   |
| 3. Duty comes before defiance.                                 | * | 4. Compulsion and free will can coexist.                         |
| 5. Every man can be more than he is.                           | * | 6. Freedom and absolute equality are a trade-off.                |
| 7. People do not like to be programmed.                        | * | 8. Living in harmonious "ant heaps" is contrary to man's nature. |
| 9. The self-discipline of stoicism has every day applications. | * | 10. Moral responsibility cannot be escaped.                      |

With these principles in mind, what, then, makes good leaders? First, we all need to be moralists — not posturers who exhort men to be good but thinkers who elucidate what is good. This requires first a clear idea of right and wrong and the integrity to stand behind your assessment of any situation.

\*

Also, there are times when our leaders must be jurists, when decisions will be based solely on their ideas of fairness, their knowledge of the people who will be affected, and their strength of character.

\*

Every great leader I have known has been a great teacher, able to give those around him a sense of perspective and to set the moral, social, and motivational climate among his followers.

\*

Another duty of a leader is to be a steward. This requires tending the flock — "washing their feet," as well as cracking the whip. It takes compassion to realize that all men are not of the same mould.

\*

One final aspect of leadership is the frequent need to be a philosopher . . . to handle failure with endurance of soul.

\*

The test of our future leaders' merit may well not lie in "hanging in there" when the light at the end of the tunnel is expected but rather in their persistence and continued performance of duty when there is no possibility that the light will ever show up.

---

## SOCIETY PROGRAMS — 1983-84

*September 1983* — Annual Meeting, Election of Officers.

*October 1983* — Annual dinner: Speaker, Reverend William J. Byron, S.J., President of Catholic University of America — “Thomas More and the Concept of a Free, Independent University.”

*January 1984* — Address to Thomas More Society at Georgetown Law School: Reverend Timothy Healy, S.J., President of Georgetown University — “The Role of the Law School in a Catholic University.”

*January 1984* — Reception in honor of William D. Ruckelshaus, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency — Presentation of the First Annual Thomas More “Good Servant” Award.

*February 1984* — Joint program with the Thomas More Society of Georgetown Law School: Speaker, Dr. Charles R. Dechert, Professor of Politics at the Catholic University of America — “Thomas More’s *Dialogue of Comfort*.”

*March 1984* — Luncheon Speaker: Sister Mary T. Clark, R.S.C.J., Professor of Philosophy, Manhattanville College, New York — “Thomas More and John Paul II on Personal Responsibility.”

*April 1984* — Reception and Dinner in honor of Officers and Directors, Thomas More Society of Western Germany.

*May 1984* — Luncheon Speaker: Dr. Thomas L. Shaffer, Professor of Law, Washington and Lee University, Virginia — “Hope and Skill: Keys to the Character of Thomas More in *A Man For All Seasons*.”

*May 1984* — Reception and Dinner in honor of William J. Kinsella, President of the Thomas More Society of Ireland, and Mrs. Kinsella.

*June 22, 1984* — Ceremonial Mass and Reception at St. Joseph’s Church on Capitol Hill, Feast Day of Saints Thomas More and John Fisher.

*September 20, 1984* — Annual Dinner: Speaker, Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale, M.H. (U.S.N. Ret.) — “Thomas More A Study in Character and Faith.”

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION:** The Annual Dinner will be at the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D.C. It will be a formal dinner with a reception at 7:00 p.m., dinner at 8:00 p.m. Tickets will be \$75 per person; tables of eight, \$600.00. Guests will be welcome.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES THIS YEAR INCLUDED:

(1) A Proposed Fundraising Project for Society — Authorized Development of a Scholarship Program for High School Students Based on Essays on Thomas More; (2) Authorized appointment of a Site Selection Committee for a Public Statue of Thomas More in Washington, D.C. (3) Published a Membership Newsletter on Fall and Spring events; (4) Publishing Speeches and articles on Thomas More delivered to Society in 1983-84 (in process).



## PRELIMINARY PLANS FOR SOCIETY’S PROGRAM — 1984-85

*September 22, 1984* — Annual Meeting, Election of Officers

*October 1984* — Luncheon Speaker: Reverend Owen Bennett, O.F.M., Conv., Franciscan Priest, philosopher and teacher — “Thomas More and Communism.”

*November or December 1984* — Speaker (invited): U.S. Senator Dave Durenberger (R.-MN), a long-time student and admirer of St. Thomas More.

*January or February 1985* — Presentation and reception in honor of recipient (not yet chosen) of Second Annual Thomas More “Good Servant” Award.

*February or March 1985* — Speaker (accepted): Professor Louis L. Martz, Yale University, Chairman of the Yale Thomas More Project.

*Spring or Fall 1985* — Speaker (invited): George F. Will, columnist, author and member of the Society.

*July 1985* — 450th Anniversary of Thomas More’s death, to be celebrated in London, England (see page one).

*October 21-23, 1985* — A Retreat for Society members and guests, Loyola Retreat House, Faulkner, Maryland — Retreat Master (invited): Abbé Germain Marc’hadour, International Secretary of the “Amici Thomae Mori” and Professor at the Université Catholique de l’Ouest, Angers, France.

---