

The Thomas More Society of America

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

11/85

Beginning with this edition of "The President's Report", the Thomas More Society of America wishes to communicate more frequently with its members. Communication and participation are necessary elements for a vital organization. We hope you will agree. We want to keep members informed of events, news, books and issues related to St. Thomas More. By so doing we will achieve our purpose, to make better known "the man for all seasons".

THE ANNUAL DINNER

On September 26, 1985, the Society held its Annual Dinner at the Mayflower Hotel. One hundred and forty-five (145) guests gathered in festive dress to commemorate the 450th Anniversary of Thomas More's death. Judge Robert H. Bork of the U.S. Court of Appeals, District of Columbia Circuit delivered an address entitled "Law, Morality and Thomas More" which was well received. Copies of the talk will be sent to those who attended the dinner. A more complete report of the dinner will appear in the Society's Newsletter later this year.

SYMPOSIUM REPORT

John C. Olin, Professor of History at Fordham University, invited three professors and Governor Mario Cuomo to speak at a symposium on Thomas More's Utopia on October 17, 1985. Professor Olin is an expert on Erasmus and on the Catholic Reformation. The gathering commemorated the 450th Anniversary of More's death.

Governor Cuomo spoke briefly of his pre-Vatican II appreciation of More's life which taught him that a Christian can be ambitious and that it is good not to take yourself too seriously. After Vatican II the Governor especially liked More's way of living the world

and being in the world. As his career as a public servant continues, the Governor said he has often reflected on the way More handled the temptations of public life.

The next three speakers: George M. Logan from Queen's University, Ontario; Thomas I. White from Upsala College, New Jersey; and the Abbe' Germain Marc'hadour from Universite Catholique de l'Ouest, Angers, France discussed the meaning of Utopia from various viewpoints.

Professor Logan thought the argument of Utopia is to persuade the reader about the best conditions for the commonwealth. The debates at the beginning of Book I offer a systemic analysis of the problems of justice, poverty and thievery thereby setting the stage for the discussion of the most efficient public policies. Ultimately, More concluded that there can be only a limited utopia because there must always be accommodation between the moral and expedient.

Thomas White looked at More's understanding of the greatest evil in society -- pride. More saw pride as arrogance, "superbia", a social sin, a feeling of superiority over others based on wealth, an external display of superfluous things. Institutions in society influence how we think about life. More recommended that we keep watch over our institutions and the motivations that guide them so they do not lead to greater inequality in society.

Abbe' Marc'hadour, an international expert on Thomas More, argued that the Utopians had some rudimentary understanding of martyrdom because they had special admiration for a group of Christians, who were free of all pride and who voluntarily, even cheerfully, did all the dirty work of the nation. Did the Utopians

see these people as martyrs? If martyr is defined as "witness"--yes, because these people paid an exceptional, public price for witnessing to their love of God.

The speakers answered questions from the floor for about forty minutes and the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Professor George M. Logan has published **The Meaning of More's "Utopia"** (Princeton, 1983).

BOOKS REPRINTED

Several books on Thomas More that were out of print have become available through Fordham University Press. We will mention one each month with a review to explain the importance of each one.

The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More by Thomas Stapleton (206 p., 1984, \$7.50).

For too many years the English translation of **The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More** by Thomas Stapleton had been out of print. It was translated for the first time into English by Monsignor Philip E. Hallett, and recently copies have not been easy to locate. It is well, therefore, that it has been reprinted, and that it has been edited for the popular reader by E.E. Reynolds, the well-known biographer of More. For this biography...remains a document of prime importance in More studies, and it is especially valuable to the More biographer, inasmuch as it gathered information from exiled members of the More circle and extracted from or printed letters preserved by John Harris, More's secretary, which we do not find elsewhere. --- **The Catholic Historical Review.**

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To order this book, please send \$7.50 plus \$1.00 shipping and handling to: Fordham University Press, University Box L, Bronx, New York 10458.

IN SYMPATHY

About two weeks ago we learned about the death of Professor Louis Martz's wife in late August 1985. Professor Martz was an editor of the Thomas More Project at Yale University and teaches English literature there. He regrets he will not be able to address the Society this year. During the Fall of 1986, he will teach a seminar at Georgetown University and will arrange a meeting with the Society at that time.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to extend our deepest sympathy and prayer to Professor Martz and his family.

OF INTEREST

Saturday, November 16, Barnard College, New York will host a one day conference, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on "The Humanism of Thomas More: Continuities and Transformations". The morning panel of three speakers will be followed by afternoon workshops. Registration is \$18, students \$10 (includes lunch). Check in at Altschul Lobby, 9:00 a.m. If interested, send check, payable to the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program, to: Mr. Jean McCurry, Director, Special Programs, Barnard College, 3009 Broadway, New York, N.Y 10027.