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The History, Organization and Development of the St. Thomas More Society of America

BRENDAN F. BROWN*

THE ST. THOMAS MORE Society of America was founded in Boston on August 26, 1936, at the first annual convention of the American Bar Association held after the canonization of St. Thomas More. This canonization took place on May 19, 1935, according recognition to his sanctity throughout the whole Church, four hundred years after his martyrdom by Henry VIII. As former Lord Chancellor of England, St. Thomas More thus became in a unique sense the special protector of Anglo-American lawyers, since St. Ives and St. Raymond of Penafort, also Patron Saints of the legal profession, had labored in the fields of the Canon and Civil laws.

The group of lawyers which formed the Society deemed it fitting and proper that public prayer be offered and reverential tribute paid to St. Thomas More, not only at the Boston convention, but also at as many subsequent national gatherings of American lawyers as possible. It was their hope that this Society would become an important means for the cultivation and dissemination of his ideals and a perennial way of reminding contemporary lawyers of the importance and significance of his contributions.

The Constitution of the Society established a voluntary organization without dues. It provided for an active and an inactive membership. Any member of the Bar in good standing is eligible for active membership while any person, regardless of bar membership or legal training, may become an inactive member as long as he or she is particularly interested in the aims of the Society. The affairs of the Society are managed by a Council of five including a president and a secretary-treasurer, to whom donations may be made for the benefit of the Society. The members of the Council are elected at the annual meeting held either at the time of the convention of the American Law Institute, or of that of the American Bar Association. At the present time, the Council consists of the following

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members: Dr. Brendan F. Brown, president, Professor of Law, Loyola University of the South; Dr. James J. Hayden, secretary-treasurer, Professor of Law, Georgetown University;



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; Dean John C. Fitzgerald, Law School, Loyola University of Chicago; Mr. Walter A. Slowinski, practicing lawyer, Washington, D.C.; and Dean Antonio E. Papale, Loyola University of the South, School of Law.

Since the foundation of the Society, luncheon meetings have been held at all annual meetings of the American Law Institute and of the Association of American Law Schools, and at a large number of the annual conventions of the American Bar Association. These meetings have taken place in almost all of the principal cities east of the Mississippi River, once in Denver, and once in San Francisco. Judges, ambassadors, nationally known lawyers and jurists, as well as distinguished legal educators, have presented memorable addresses concerning St. Thomas More, or reviewed outstanding books about him. Some of these addresses have been

published in well-known legal periodicals. The official prayer of the Society was offered at these meetings, usually by prelates who were members of the legal profession.

In order to emphasize the national aspects of the meetings, and to enlist a maximum participation in the activities of the Society in different geographical areas, a Committee on Arrangements is appointed for each meeting, consisting of leading members of the legal profession in the particular locality. This Committee has full authority and responsibility for determining the precise time and place of the meeting and for selecting the guest speaker. It also takes care of local press publicity and invitations, and all incidental details.

The last meeting took place at the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, D. C., on Thursday, May 19, 1955, to coincide with the convention of the American Law Institute. This date was the twentieth anniversary of the canonization of St. Thomas More. As an innovation, two short dramas of about fifteen minutes each, written by members of the Society, were presented by drama students. One of these short plays dealt with the life of St. Thomas More, and the other with that of St. Ives. Another meeting is now being planned for next August in Philadelphia during the convention of the American Bar Association.

Constitution of the St. Thomas More Society of America

PREAMBLE

In response to a desire to perpetuate the name and work of St. Thomas More, a group of jurists organized a Society at Boston on August 26, 1936.

ARTICLE I — *Name*

The name of this society shall be "The Saint Thomas More Society of America."

ARTICLE II — *Object*

The object of the Society shall be the dissemination of the ideals of St. Thomas More.

ARTICLE III — *Membership*

Section 1. Active Members. Any member of the bar interested in the ideals of St. Thomas More shall be eligible to active membership.

Section 2. Candidates for Membership. Candidates for membership in the Society may be proposed by any member of the Society at any meeting thereof. They shall be admitted to full membership upon the recommendation of the Council.

Section 3. Inactive Members. Any person regardless of bar membership or legal training shall be eligible to inactive membership as long as he or she is particularly interested in the work of the Society.

ARTICLE IV — *Contributions*

This Society shall be a voluntary organization. Contributions may, however, be made to the Secretary-Treasurer.

ARTICLE V — *Administration*

Section 1. Officers. The affairs of the Society shall be managed by a Council.

Section 2. Council. The Council shall be composed of a President, Secretary-Treasurer,

and three other members; the first to serve for one year, the second to serve for two years, and the third to serve for three years. The Council shall be elected by a majority of the members of the Society at its annual meeting.

Section 3. Advisory Board. There shall be an advisory board selected by the Council.

Section 4. President. The President shall be elected at the annual meeting by a majority vote of the members of the Society.

Section 5. Secretary-Treasurer. The Secretary-Treasurer shall be elected by a majority of the members of the Society at the annual meeting.

ARTICLE VI — *Meetings*

Section 1. Meetings. The Annual Meeting of the Society shall be held upon due notice at the time of the meeting of the American Law Institute or of the annual meeting of the American Bar Association.

Section 2. Conferences. Conferences of the Society may be held from time to time at a time and place fixed by the Council.

Section 3. Council Sessions. The Council shall be convoked by the Secretary-Treasurer at the direction of the President or upon the petition of any member of the Council.

Section 4. Presiding. The President shall preside at meetings and in case of absence shall designate a person who shall preside.

ARTICLE VII — *Amendments*

Amendments to the Constitution may be proposed by any member of the Society. Such proposed amendments shall be referred to the Council upon a majority vote of the Society. If the Council recommends the submission of the amendment or amendments to the Society, a two-thirds vote of the active members of the Society shall be required for passage.