

Friday Sep. 14, 1:30-3:30 pm – “More and Luther”

Chair : Rev. Dr. Jonathan Arnold (Magdalen College, Oxford)

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More’s view of heresy in the context of the sixteenth century

This short paper will examine Thomas More’s view of heresy. Its aim is to look at More’s hatred of heretical ideas and his attitude to heretics by looking at the attitudes and beliefs found in his writings. It concentrates primarily on two of More’s attitudes: his fear that heresy leads both its leaders and its followers to hell and that, in this world, heresy leads to violence, sedition and social disorder. This examination attempts to look at More’s ideas and attitudes through his eyes and gain a perception of his convictions. It is not the intention to examine or decide whether his views are right or wrong. It is easy to say that More was wrong because the modern world does not share his views on execution or hell, but that is to tell More what he should have thought rather than to examine what he did believe. Being concerned here with More’s beliefs, whether or not he persecuted heretics is not pursued largely due to a lack of space but also because the focus is on his perception.

