

THOMAS MORE AND CONTROVERSY

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Thomas More: Consensus and Controversy

In his writings against Luther and Tyndale, More expressed unconditional faith in the infallibility of the consensus of the whole corpus of Christian believers. More's certainty was rooted in the conviction that God saves the church from error in the continuing and perpetual act of forming its communal consent to things essential to salvation. Thus, the consensus of the *fideles Christi* is unerring. God and the church, in the words of Cardinal Cajetan, prescribe one and the same thing. In the canonical and theological literature, Christendom's consensual unity was known by several more or less synonymous phrases — *consensus credentium*, *consensus fidelium*, *universitas fidelium*, *communis ecclesiae sensus* — all with the implied significance of a corporate body of believers whose oneness is represented in the mystical body of Christ. This paper will examine the medieval authorities on the question of consensus with the aim of clarifying its canonical standing and, therefore, its significance in the arguments of More's *Responsio ad Lutherum*, *A Dialogue concerning Heresies*, and *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*.

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“Is this Erasmus borne in Rotterdam / He that so highly lov'd Sir Thomas More?": More, Erasmus and the Flight of English Protestants in Thomas Drue's *The Duchess of Suffolk*

Thomas Drue's neglected play *The Duchess of Suffolk* (1624/1631) is one of a sequence of late Tudor and Jacobean plays that stage events in England's struggle for Reform. Adapting episodes from *Acts and Monuments*, this cycle of history plays are definitely “Protestant” and make full use of cultural anti-Catholicism. Like the earlier play *Sir Thomas More*, Drue's play is partly dependant upon the figure of More as judge, not More as martyr. As this paper will show, Drue's play suggests that a century after More's execution, More's reputation in London was such that he, and those closely associated with him, could still be used as short-hand for justice. And More's justice extends to other cities in Europe during the course of the play's narrative.

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Pico and More's Conceptions of the Afterlife

Freed from “the storms of this world,” Giovanni Pico's soul was deemed to be spending some time “in the dark fire of purgatory” before its final place of abode “in the country of heaven” with its “blessed citizens.” According to Savonarola, Pico had avoided hell, “that other side deputed unto perpetual pain.” This paper proposes to examine Thomas More's and Giovanni Pico's conceptions of afterlife: the imaginary representations of the three eschatological places, heaven, hell, and purgatory. It will also analyze the new humanist attitude that, following Pico's assertion of man's exceptional dignity, had made the Christian a freer man, more directly responsible for his salvation.

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