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REPORT ON THE 1979 CONVENTION (TAMPA, FLORIDA)

The Mariological Society of America held its thirtieth annual convention in Tampa, Florida, on Wednesday and Thursday, January 3 and 4, 1979. About fifty delegates were present for the two-day program at the Franciscan Center there, which is under the capable and most gracious direction of the Franciscan Sisters.

On Wednesday, January 3rd, at 10:00 A.M., Rev. Msgr. Albert W. Low of Boston, president, opened the session with a prayer. Father Norman Balthazar, O.F.M., Chaplain at the Franciscan Center, welcomed the delegates in the name of the Sisters and of their Center. This convention was to have begun with an Official Welcome delivered by Most Rev. Charles B. McLaughlin, Bishop of St. Petersburg. However, on December 14, 1978, three weeks prior to it, Bishop McLaughlin died most unexpectedly of a heart attack at the age of 65. In his place, the Vicar General and interim administrator of the diocese, Msgr. W. Thomas Larkin, welcomed those assembled and reminded them of the deep Marian devotion of the deceased and of his great interest in the Mariological Society, which has twice before held annual conventions in his diocese.

The lead paper was given by Father Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., founder of the Mariological Society and active as its Secretary throughout the past 30 years of continuous conventions. In 1978, Father Carol's learned, well-documented *A History of the Controversy Over the "Debitum Peccati"* was published. In this lecture, he reflected on the various theological positions taken, both in the past and in modern time, on Mary's preservative redemption. Following the method used in his book on the *debitum*, he presented an historical panorama of the various

theological opinions on Mary's preservation and redemption from original sin: those who—before the definition of 1854 and after—sustained that her preservation from original sin was not a redemption; those who affirmed that Mary was redeemed because of a *debitum peccati*, either *proximum* or *remotum*: those who taught a preservative redemption without any debitum. Father Carol favored the last-mentioned position. To explain that Mary was really redeemed, even though *sensu improprio*, he favored the theory of the French Franciscan, J. F. Bonnefoy, on the predestination of Mary: she was preserved (redeemed) from the moral headship of the fallen Adam *per merita Christi passionis*.

Father James T. O'Connor from Dunwoodie, New York's archdiocesan seminary, was the official Reactor to this lecture. Father O'Connor stressed the biblical meaning of the vocabulary on redemption and the insistence of Catholic teaching on the *sublimiori modo redempta* for Mary's preservation from original sin. After more than an hour of lively exchange, Father Eamon R. Carroll quoted Cardinal Wright's preface to Father Juniper Carol's work on the *debitum*, the Cardinal's remark that the controversy after centuries ended in the present stage of impasse. Father Carroll applied this to our debate which also came to an impasse. Nevertheless, we had to thank the lecturer for his clear and precise presentation of a very complex theological problem.

That afternoon at 3:00 P.M., Dr. Constantine Tsirpanlis, of the Orthodox Church, professor of Church History and Patristics at the Unification Theological Seminary at Barrytown, New York, presented the second paper of the day. It had been announced on the Program as: "The Mariology of Nicholas Cabasilas and Theophanes Nicaenus"; however, Dr. Tsirpanlis, unable to locate in New York the critical edition of Theophanes Nicaenus' Homily on the Theotokos, restricted his treatment to Nicholas Cabasilas. The reactor-discussion leader for this presentation was Father Robert Slesinski, Byzantine-rite

priest from Orlando, Florida. The lecturer, presented the doctrine of Nicholas Cabasilas from a Greek Orthodox point-of-view, and criticized Jugie and Gordillo for isolating various texts of Cabasilas from their context and for citing them in support of the Immaculate Conception as it is understood in Western theology. The discussion became an ecumenical dialogue which allowed the participants to understand better the belief and theological positions on both sides, Orthodox and Catholic, and the need for careful clarifications in the translation of a Greek or Latin vocabulary proper to patristic and Byzantine times (regarding the doctrines of redemption, reconciliation, original sin, absolute holiness, immaculate conception, etc.).

At the same seminar, Father Ladislaus Pelczynski, M.I.C., acting on behalf of the Nominating Committee, announced that Father Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., wanted to be replaced as Secretary of the Mariological Society, after thirty years of service in that office. Father Pelczynski proposed Father Théodore A. Koehler, S.M., as new secretary. Father Koehler, Director of the Marian Library at the University of Dayton, was elected by the Assembly.

At 5:00 P.M., a concelebrated Eucharist was offered in the Chapel of the Franciscan Center, followed by the traditional "happy hour" and dinner. The delegates took their meals in the Center's cafeteria, nicely decorated for the Christmas Season. These occasions provided good opportunity to continue discussion on the talks and to become more acquainted with each other.

In the evening of January 3, at 7:30 P.M., the Board of Directors held its meeting and, acting on the suggestion of the President, Msgr. Albert W. Low, decided to name Father Juniper B. Carol *President Emeritus* of the Mariological Society of America. Father Carol founded this Society in 1950, and, for thirty years, has demonstrated constant dedication to its scholarly purposes, especially by his work organizing its unin-

interrupted series of thirty annual conventions and publishing their proceedings in *Marian Studies*. In this way, he has contributed to the combat against the decline of interest in Mariology during more recent years.

Wednesday, January 4, at 9:30 A.M., Father Alban A. Maguire, O.F.M., a former president of the Society, introduced the first lecturer for the second day of the Convention, Father Peter D. Fehlner, O.F.M. Conv., who presented a paper on "Mary and Theology; Scotus Revisited." Actually, this lecturer had prepared a lengthy study (100 pages) which he could only summarize, outlining his purposes. He sees the person of Mary as a unique teacher of theology: without her immaculate presence in the Plan of God, we would not understand God as He is, as He has revealed Himself. Father Fehlner first analyzed the *magisterium theologicum* as an activity related to the Mission of the Son, the Word, (for the *objectum formale quod* of theology) and to the Mission of the Spirit (for the *objectum formale quo*). Following St. Bonaventure and, most especially, the teaching of Duns Scotus on the Immaculate Conception of Mary, he explained how in the scotistic view, Mary is seen as complementing the order of the absolute primacy of Christ. In her fullness of grace (without any *debitum*), she appears among the primary teachers of theology—precisely, as the primary visible term of the Mission of the Spirit. For, in Mary—in her Immaculate Conception—the fullness of the Spirit of Christ already appears in its most complete personal achievement. This is basic for Mary's role as *magistra theologiae*. Christ, as Revealer, is the visible primary teacher; Mary Immaculate, as the Perfect Witness of Jesus' Revelation, is also a visible primary teacher. Father Maguire, as Reactor, introduced the discussion which stressed the distinctions which should be maintained between faith and theology.

After a short intermission, at 10:40 A. M., Father Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., of the Catholic University of America (Washington, D.C.), gave his annual "Survey of Recent Mari-

ology." Father George F. Kirwin, O.M.I., was Reactor. This survey, with its appendix, contains some 250 references to Marian publications listed under the following headings: Marian periodicals; biblical and other sources; doctrine; liturgy and devotion; ecumenism; miscellany. This rich bibliographical presentation continues an invaluable work begun in 1967 by Father Carroll who, it seems appropriate to mention here, has a forthcoming book of his own, *Understanding the Mother of Jesus*, due for publication in early 1979 (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier).

That same afternoon, at 1:30 P.M., Professor William H. Marshner presented "A Critique of Marian Counterfactual Formulae." The discussion was then led by Father Matthew F. Morry, O.P., of Providence College, in Rhode Island. The lecturer made use of his current studies on the *debitum* (for his doctoral dissertation) to criticize in general the contrary-to-fact statements in Mariology, of which the *debitum* is a good example. His analysis was based on the criteria of contemporary formal logic. The *debitum peccati* in Mary is counterfactual; its survival, even in post-conciliar writings, rests on a confusion of language. Such formulas must be analyzed to avoid their harmful, confusing proliferation in theology, in Mariology.

After this lecture, the Vice-President, Father Roger M. Charest, presided over the remainder of the Convention in the name of the President, Msgr. Low. Father Charest read the citation decreeing the Cardinal Wright Award of the Mariological Society of America to Professor W. H. Marshner; the text of this citation appears after this report. He announced that the next convention would be held in New York (January 3-4, 1980), and read a very short statement from the Treasurer indicating that the Current Balance of the Society was only \$1799.53, soliciting donations for funding the printing of *Marian Studies* and urging prompt payment of annual dues. The Board of Directors raised these to \$10.00 for Active Members; they also inaugurated a new category, Supporting Mem-

bers (\$25.00 per year), and increased the dues for Associate Members to \$8.00 per year. Every member receives a copy of *Marian Studies*.

The delegates voted to send a telegram expressing the homage of the Mariological Society of America to His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, for his recent election as Successor of St. Peter. Members also confirmed by vote the decision reached earlier by the Board about the enrollment of the Mariological Society in the Joint Committee of Catholic Learned Societies and Scholars (JCCLS).^{*} Msgr. Low, President, was directed to execute this. Father Matthew F. Morry reported briefly on local meetings of the Mariological Society during the past year. Father Charest addressed some concluding remarks to the audience:

As we bring this meeting to a close, it is my pleasant duty to express the gratitude of the Society to the following:

- a) in reverent memory of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Charles B. McLaughlin, for inviting us to his Diocese.
- b) to His Eminence, Cardinal Wright, our episcopal Chairman, and to the Very Rev. Stanley Matuszewski, Editor of *Our Lady's Digest*, for their generous contributions to our Society.**
- c) to the staff of the Franciscan Center, especially Sister Mary, for the warm hospitality extended to us during the past two days.
- d) and, finally, to our distinguished speakers and reactors for their scholarly papers and thought-provoking discussions, with special thanks to Father Juniper B. Carol, our new *President Emeritus*, for his thirty years as Secretary.

Then, he called for any further business or a motion to adjourn. Adjournment was moved, seconded and officially de-

^{*} Father Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., is our representative to this organization; he attended the meeting of January 30, 1979.

^{**} Gratitude must also be expressed to the Franciscan Fathers of the Holy Name Province in New York, to Father Ladislaus Pelczynski, M.I.C., and to a friend of the Society for their generous donations.

clared at about 3:00 P.M., as planned. The meeting was closed with prayer.

REV. THEODORE A. KOEHLER, S.M.
Secretary