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REPORT ON THE BALTIMORE, MD. CONVENTION

The historic city of Baltimore, Md. was selected for the twenty-ninth annual convention of The Mariological Society of America at the suggestion of its archbishop, the Most Reverend William D. Borders. The two-day meeting, thoroughly ecumenical in spirit, was held at St. Joseph's Spiritual Center, staffed by the Passionist Fathers, on Wednesday and Thursday, January 4 and 5, 1978. The freezing temperature outside, normal for that time of the year, contrasted sharply with the warmth and cordiality which pervaded the atmosphere in the auditorium as representatives of different faiths candidly exchanged their personal views on matters of mutual concern. While the attendance was not exceptionally good—some fifty priests and a few lay persons—the active participation of the delegates in the discussions after each lecture was surprisingly widespread, prolonged and very enlightening indeed.

The meeting was called to order at ten o'clock in the morning by Fr. Frederick M. Jelly, O.P., president, and the opening prayer was offered by the Most Rev. Austin B. Vaughan, Auxiliary Bishop of New York and Rector of St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y. Fr. Carol, secretary, noted that this was our first opportunity to extend our corporate congratulations to Bishop Vaughan on his recent and well-deserved promotion to the fulness of the priesthood, and he asked the assembled guests to convey their sentiments with a warm round of applause. The secretary recalled the distinguished theologian's many years of faithful participation in the affairs of the Society, and expressed the hope that he would continue to give his valuable assistance to our group in the years ahead.

In his presidential address Father Jelly spoke of Our Lady

in her role as "Mother of Unity." He pointed out that only a few years ago the expectation that Mary could ever become more a help than a hindrance in the quest for Christian unity seemed very unlikely. And yet, certain developments during the past decade have shown the very opposite. Among other examples, he mentioned the activities of the flourishing Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary founded in England, and its newly-established American branch. After a few theological reflections on Mary's role in ecumenical development, Father Jelly made some specific proposals for the future of Mary's place in dialogue, for instance, that we further the dialogue about the special relationship between the Holy Spirit and Mary with the special help of our Orthodox colleagues, and that we explore more deeply the relationship between Sacred Scripture and Tradition with a particular view toward determining the criteria for valid development of Marian doctrine.

The keynote speaker, Fr. James T. O'Connor, professor of Christology at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y., undertook to indicate some of the origins and consequences of contemporary challenges to the doctrine of Mary's divine maternity. He singled out the views of Hans Küng and Raymond Brown as presenting serious difficulties from a Catholic standpoint. Fr. O'Connor saw a definite link between these authors' position on Mary's virginity (Küng clearly rejects it; Brown insists its historicity is an open question, unresolved by controllable biblical data) and their questionable assertions on Mary's divine motherhood. The speaker noted that the latter doctrine, understood as the Magisterium understands it, presupposes the former. During the prolonged discussion following the oral presentation of the paper, the reactor, Fr. Charles W. Neumann, S.M., wondered if the speaker had not perhaps exaggerated the nexus between virginity and motherhood; however, the consensus seemed to be that, on the whole, Fr. O'Connor's critique of Küng and Brown was very objective and well

founded. The speaker drew particular praise for having pointed out, in connection with Brown's disregard of Tradition in the exegesis of the infancy narratives, that Catholic Tradition is the only scientifically controllable evidence we have for the canonicity of the very documents with which Brown is working.

The afternoon session began with the election of new members to the Board of Directors. On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Fr. Ladislaus Pelczynski, M.I.C., proposed the following candidates: For *president*: Rev. Msgr. Albert W. Low; for *vice-president*: Rev. Roger M. Charest, S.M.M.; for *secretary*: Rev. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M.; for *treasurer*: Rev. Albert Bourke, O.C.D.; replacing Fr. Bernard Lazor, O.S.A.: Rev. Peter D. Fehlner, O.F.M.Conv.; replacing Fr. Manuel Miguens, O.F.M.: Rev. Theodore A. Koehler, S.M.; replacing Fr. Bernard Przewozny, O.F.M.Conv.: Rev. Author J. Weiler, C.S.B. A vote was taken, and the suggested slate was unanimously approved.

Following the election, the delegates heard a very thought-provoking lecture by Rev. Dr. Reginald H. Fuller, professor of New Testament in the Virginia Theological Seminary, Alexandria, Va., on *N.T. Roots to the Theotokos*. The well-known Anglican scholar divided his paper into two parts: (a) the origin of Jesus, and (b) His divinity. He examined the various christological patterns and their combination as founded in various N.T. writers, and expressed the opinion that in most passages the origin of Jesus was explained in "functional" terms rather than referring to an "ontological" quality of the Child in a pre-existent state. This is true, he said, even of the title "Emmanuel" (God with us). It would be an anachronism to interpret it in the sense that Jesus is ontologically identical with God. Dr. Fuller concluded that the N.T. does point to a "development" in which the origin of Jesus will be expressed in terms of a pneumatic-virginal conception of the pre-existing One, who in the ontic language of mythology may be described as being in the form of God and, in a carefully defined sense,

as "God," though to be distinguished from God.

In the second part of his paper, Dr. Fuller examined the more important passages usually cited to prove the divinity of Christ, and he found them not as clear and definitive as they are sometimes taken to be. In his opinion, we can say that Jesus is God "only with a particular nuance," a nuance that is derived from revelation in salvation history. Even so, these passages say nothing about Jesus' being the son of Mary. The title *Theotokos* became possible only after the wisdom mythology of pre-existence and incarnation was combined with the conception Christology of the birth narratives *after* the New Testament period. For Dr. Fuller, form-critically, the pre-existence Christology is mythological and the conception Christology a "legend."

After Fr. Frederick Jelly, O.P. thanked the speaker for his scholarly paper, there were quite a few questions raised from the floor. Some, for example, wondered whether *Gal.* 4:4 might not be said to contain a clear reference to the *Theotokos*. Others again felt rather uneasy with expressions like "mythological" and "legendary" in connection with pre-existence Christology and the virginal conception in the infancy narratives. Dr. Fuller tried to answer them all with his characteristic graciousness. Some of the "dissenters" in the audience, however, did not seem to be altogether satisfied with some of his answers. Had time allowed it, they would have undoubtedly received fuller explanations (no pun intended).

At five o'clock a concelebrated Holy Mass was offered in the main chapel of the Passionist Fathers and, after that, the delegates were treated to a fine dinner in the dining room of the Center.

The annual meeting of the Board of Directors was held at 7:30 P.M. As usual, it dealt mainly with the topic to be discussed at the next convention.

On the second day of the meeting, the morning session opened with a lecture on the *Patristic Witness to the New Eve*,

by Dr. J. A. Ross Mackenzie of Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va. The speaker summarized what, in his opinion, is the fundamental and important message contained in the oft-repeated parallel-contrast between Our Blessed Lady and the first woman, as found in many of the Fathers. He developed a few of them, for example, the idea of "from death to life: the reorientation of human nature;" Our Lady's active participation in the redemption; Mary as witness to the divine benevolence, etc. According to Dr. Mackenzie, the Eve-Mary antithesis does not imply that Mary is our Co-redeemer, but only that it was through her faith and obedient listening to God that life came into the world.

The general reaction to the paper was very positive, and the learned speaker was warmly congratulated by not a few of the delegates for the scholarly presentation of a rather controversial topic. During the discussion from the floor, led by Fr. Boniface Ramsey, O.P., the question of Mary's cooperation in the redemption naturally surfaced several times. Fr. Carol noted that some Catholic theologians erroneously (in his view) believe that the doctrine of Mary's direct cooperation in our objective redemption was clearly taught by the Fathers through the Eve-Mary antithesis. He claimed that the doctrine in question is a later development, although with roots in patristic teaching. In this, he willingly corroborated the conclusions arrived at by Dr. Mackenzie.

After a ten-minute intermission, Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J. of New York City presented an interesting and very timely essay on Mary in contemporary catechesis. Both the speaker and the reactor, Fr. Ronald Lawler, O.F.M.Cap., have long been very active in this particular field and both spoke from personal experience about the sad condition of present-day catechetics. Fr. Hardon, himself the author of a highly successful catechism, pointed out that the scarcity of Marian references in most modern catechisms used in this Country is hardly surprising when one considers their glaring omissions and even de-

plorable distortions concerning some of the fundamental dogmas of Christianity. Quite a few authors of catechisms, he said, are more interested in stressing the "experiential" method than in teaching the true faith. He mentioned, however, that there were, here and there, some signs of reappraisal being made in this connection, and he strongly encouraged the members of the Mariological Society to take an active part in the current crusade to return to a sound, thoroughly orthodox and adequate presentation of the faith in our catechisms.

In the spirited exchange of views which followed the Jesuit's excellent presentation, no one was heard to dissent from his strictures. The consensus seemed to be that something must be done, and soon, to correct the dismal situation so well described by Fr. Hardon.

The afternoon session was devoted to the traditional *Survey of Recent Mariology* prepared with characteristic competence by Rev. Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., professor of Mariology at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. In the absence of Fr. John M. Donahue, O.P. who was ill, Fr. Carroll served as his own discussion leader.

During the business meeting, which began at 2:30 P.M., Fr. J. Armand Robichaud, S.M., now retiring as treasurer, read a brief report relative to the finances of the Society. He was followed at the podium by Msgr. Albert W. Low, our newly-elected president, who announced that the 1979 convention would be held at the Franciscan Center in Tampa, Florida on Wednesday and Thursday, January 3 and 4. He likewise called the attention of the delegates to the fact that the printing of MARIAN STUDIES becomes more expensive with each passing year, while our membership continues falling off. In this connection, Msgr. Low urged our delegates to pay their dues promptly and to try and recruit new members for our Society. Before bringing the meeting to a close, the president extended words of sincere gratitude to the following:

(a) first and foremost, to His Eminence, John J. Cardinal

Wright, our Episcopal Chairman, to the Very Rev. Stanley Matuszewski, M.S., Editor of *Our Lady's Digest*, and to Rev. Ladislaus F. Pelczynski, M.I.C. for their generous donations to the Society;

(b) to Father Gerald Hynes, C.P., Retreat Director, Father Francis, C.P., Assistant Director, and the staff of the Spiritual Center for their warm hospitality;

(c) and finally to the distinguished speakers and reactors for their scholarly papers and interesting discussions.

Since there was no further business to be transacted, the president declared the meeting adjourned and closed with a prayer.

For the benefit of those who did not attend the Baltimore meeting, we would like to point out that the paper entitled *A Logician's Reflections on the Debitum Contrahendi Peccatum*, written by Prof. William H. Marshner and appearing in this volume, was not read at the convention. It is being published at the suggestion of Fr. Frederick M. Jelly, O.P. (while he was still president) during the meeting of the Board of Directors held in North Palm Beach, Fla. on January 3, 1977.

REV. J. B. CAROL, O.F.M.
Secretary