

Marian Studies

Volume 7

Article 3

1-16-1956

Secretary's Report on the New York Convention

Mariological Society of America

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Recommended Citation

Mariological Society of America (1956) "Secretary's Report on the New York Convention," *Marian Studies*: Vol. 7, Article 3, Pages 5-11.

Available at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/marian_studies/vol7/iss1/3

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REPORT ON THE NEW YORK CITY CONVENTION

THE present volume, the seventh of the series published annually under the title MARIAN STUDIES, contains the proceedings of the National Convention of the Mariological Society of America, held at the Hotel New Yorker in New York City, on Tuesday and Wednesday, January 3 and 4, 1956. The Convention, wholly devoted to the study of Our Lady's Virginity, was by far the most successful in the history of the Society, both as regards the attendance, and also from a strictly theological point of view. We shall attempt to summarize here the various items on the program.

The first general meeting was called to order at ten o'clock in the morning by the President of the Society, Father Cyril Vollert, S.J., who offered the invocation prayer and conveyed his greetings to the numerous delegates present. He then introduced the Right Reverend Monsignor John S. Middleton, P.A., Consultor of the Archdiocese of New York, who, as the representative of His Eminence, Francis Cardinal Spellman, extended a cordial welcome to the guests, assuring them that the Archdiocese was very happy indeed to play host to the Society for the second time in its short history.

Having thanked Msgr. Middleton for his brief but warm words of welcome, the President introduced the next speaker on the program, the Rev. Philip J. Donnelly, S.J., professor of dogmatic theology in Weston College, Weston, Mass. In his excellent paper Father Donnelly studied the various aspects of Our Lady's Virginity *ante partum*, pointing out, among other things, the baselessness of the attacks hurled by the Rationalists against the virginal conception of Christ. The Rev. Thomas H. McBride, O.P., of Providence College, Providence, R. I., led the long and fruitful discussion provoked by Father Donnelly's paper.

At 12:30 in the afternoon most of the guests attending the

Convention gathered in the Mosaic Room of the hotel where they were served the usual refreshments and an exquisite luncheon.

The second general assembly, convened at 2:30 in the afternoon, was devoted to another important phase of Our Lady's unique prerogative, namely, the miraculous and supernatural manner in which she brought forth Our Savior. The dissertation was read by the Very Rev. Gerard Owens, C.S.S.R., rector of St. Alphonsus Seminary in Woodstock, Ontario, where he also teaches dogmatic theology. As anticipated, Father Owens' masterly treatment of this difficult question gave rise to a very animated exchange of views centering particularly on the controversial book recently published by Prof. Mitterer. Appropriately enough, the discussion leader was the well-known scientist-theologian, Prof. Allan B. Wolter, O.F.M., of the Franciscan Institute in St. Bonaventure University.

Believing that theology without spirituality is but a sterile science, the members of the Society have traditionally gathered in prayer and adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament at the close of the first day of the annual Convention. This year the Holy Hour services were held in the church of St. Francis of Assisi, beautifully decorated for the occasion. Since the scheduled speaker, the Most Rev. John J. Wright, Bishop of Worcester, was unfortunately prevented from attending, the President invited the Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., dean of the School of Sacred Theology at the Catholic University of America, to substitute for the distinguished prelate. In his inspiring sermon Father Connell not only stressed the legitimacy of the Catholic position relative to Marian cult and devotion, but also pointed out the valuable contributions made in this province by the activities and publications of the Mariological Society of America during the past six years.

The first general meeting on the second day of the Convention opened at ten o'clock in the morning, and featured a

paper on Our Lady's Virginité *post partum* by the Rev. Eamon Carroll, O.Carm., until recently professor of Mariology in Rome, Italy. The learned speaker, a professional in the field, studied mainly the patristic data on the subject, and also paid considerable attention to the non-Catholic attacks based on the various biblical references to the "brethren of the Lord," showing conclusively how unfounded these attacks were. The lively discussion following his scholarly thesis was ably led by the internationally known Jesuit patrologist, Prof. Walter J. Burghard, of Woodstock, Maryland.

At 11:30 the delegates were offered the opportunity to attend either of the following panel discussions: *Our Lady's Marriage to St. Joseph*, by the Rev. Geron G. Fournelle, O.F.M., professor of biblical exegesis in St. Joseph's seminary, Teutopolis, Ill. (discussion leader: the Rev. Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C., of Notre Dame University, Ind.); and *Non-Catholic Attitudes Toward Mary's Perpetual Virginité*, by Rev. Titus Cranny, S.A., of Graymoor, N. Y. (discussion leader: the Rev. Kenneth Dougherty, S.A., professor of dogmatic theology in Washington, D. C.).

The last general session of the Convention took place in the Mosaic Room at 2:30 in the afternoon. It was highlighted by a very learned essay on the much-debated question of *Our Lady's Vow of Virginité*, read by the Rev. Neal M. Flanagan, O.S.M., professor of Sacred Scripture at the Servite House of Theology in Lake Bluff, Ill. Father James A. Brennan, C.M., of Mary Immaculate Seminary, Northampton, Pa., conducted the spirited debate which centered mostly on the interpretation of *Luke* 1:34.

The customary business meeting began promptly at 2:30 in the afternoon, and was devoted to the reading of brief reports by the treasurer, secretary, president, and the chairman of the Nominating Committee. After reading his financial report, which appears toward the end of this volume, Msgr.

Shea took the opportunity to express the profound gratitude of the Society to the Very Rev. Stanley Matuszewski, M.S., editor of *Our Lady's Digest*, for his much-needed support of our organization by means of frequent and very generous donations. In this turn, the secretary read out the names of those who had applied for membership in the Society during 1955, all of whom were officially enrolled in the Society by a unanimous vote. The secretary likewise announced with regrets that twenty members had forfeited their membership owing to failure to pay their dues for two consecutive years.

These preliminary reports having been read, the President proceeded to take up the matter of the new By-Laws of the Society, drafted by a legal expert of the DuPont Corporation in Wilmington, Del. Father Vollert explained that they had been tentatively incorporated into the 1955 proceedings in order to give our members an opportunity to study them with a view to a definite approval at this time. Since there were no objections to the contrary, a vote was taken and the By-Laws unanimously adopted.

The President then announced that the Rev. Mr. William F. Hogan, C.S.C., of Holy Cross College, Washington, D. C., had been chosen as the winner of the Seminarists' Contest in 1955. He will receive a check in amount of \$100.00 for his excellent paper entitled: *The Fiat. A Theological Consideration of the Object and Extent of Mary's Consent to the Divine Maternity*. In this connection, the President also explained that, instead of the annual circular mailed to the various seminaries announcing the contest, a pertinent notice would be inserted in this issue of MARIAN STUDIES in the hope that it would reach the largest possible number of seminarists throughout the United States and Canada. (The notice appears immediately after this Report.)

The next item on the President's agenda concerned the Mariological Award given annually to an active member of

the Society for some outstanding contribution to the field of Mariology. The President announced that the Rev. Bernard J. Le Frois, S.V.D., of Techny, Ill., had been designated as the recipient of the award (\$100.00), and he proceeded to read the following citation:

THE MARIOLOGICAL AWARD FOR 1955

Citation

At the close of its Seventh National Convention, held in New York City in 1956, The Mariological Society of America is happy to announce that the Reverend Bernard J. Le Frois, S.V.D., has been designated as the recipient of this year's Mariological Award.

Father Le Frois was born in Rochester, N. Y., in 1908. He entered the minor seminary of the Divine Word Missionaries in 1921 at Girard, Pa.; made his novitiate in East Troy, Wis.; and received his major seminary education in St. Mary's, Techny, Ill.

Shortly after his ordination to the holy priesthood in 1934, Father Le Frois was sent by his religious superiors to the Eternal City where he attended the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Pontifical Biblical Institute until 1938, obtaining at that time the licentiate in Sacred Theology and in Sacred Scripture. In 1938 he was appointed professor of exegesis in St. Augustine's Seminary, Rhineland, Germany, the largest and most important theological institute of his Order. Two years later, owing to the unfavorable circumstances created by World War II, he was transferred to St. Mary's Seminary, Techny, Illinois, where he has occupied the chair of Sacred Scripture ever since.

A fitting climax to Father Le Frois' assiduous labors came in 1954 when he obtained a doctorate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. His doctoral dissertation, entitled *The Woman Clothed with the Sun*, published by Herder in Rome, has been rightly hailed by scholars at home and abroad as a most noteworthy and epoch-making contribution to the difficult exegesis of Apocalypse XII.

Besides this major work on the apocalyptic woman, Father Le Frois is also well-known for his valuable Marian publications in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (of which he is an associate editor), in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, *Revista Biblica*, and *MARIAN STUDIES*.

In view of these accomplishments in the field of the sacred disciplines, The Mariological Society of America has deemed Father Le Frois well deserving of the Mariological Award for 1955. In honoring him today, our Society wishes to pay a fitting tribute to a distinguished scholar who has consistently utilized his rare talents in the service of our Immaculate Mother and Queen.

Having received the well-deserved award, Father Le Frois addressed a few words of gratitude to the President, and expressed the hope that the Lord will allow him to continue his labors in his favorite field of biblical Mariology.

At this time the President extended his sincere thanks to all those who had helped make the Seventh National Convention the huge success it turned out to be. In particular, he thanked His Eminence, Francis Cardinal Spellman, for having so graciously sponsored the Seventh National Convention, and the Rt. Rev. Msgr. John S. Middleton for his warm welcome; His Excellency, the Most Rev. John J. Wright, Bishop of Worcester, and Episcopal Chairman of the Society, for his generous support of our organization year after year; the Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., for his inspiring sermon during the Holy Hour; the Rev. Emmanuel Duffy, O.F.M., pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Church, for his kind co-operation in connection with the Holy Hour services; the management of the Hotel New Yorker for its efficient service; the various speakers and discussion leaders for their excellent dissertations and discussions; and finally, the various committees, the Board of Directors, and his fellow officers for the assistance they had given him during his two years as President of the Society.

The final item on the agenda was the election of a new Board of Directors, including both officers and non-officers. The Rev. Vincent J. Nugent, C.M., chairman of the Nominating Committee, submitted the names of the candidates for the various offices, and upon a duly seconded motion, they were unanimously elected by the delegates present. The slate was as follows:

OFFICERS: Rev. Bernard J. Le Frois, S.V.D., *President*; Very Rev. Peter A. Resch, S.M., (Marianist), *Vice-President*; Rev. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., *Secretary*; Rev. Armand Robichaud, S.M. (Marist), *Treasurer*.

NON-OFFICERS: For a period of three years: Very Rev.

Francis J. Westhoff, M.S.C., and Rev. Eamon Carroll, O.Carm. For a period of two years: Rev. William G. Most and Rev. Joseph L. Shannon, O.S.A. For a period of one year: Rev. Kenneth Dougherty, S.A., and Rev. Cyril Vollert, S.J.

The elections being concluded, the new President, Father Le Frois, came to the podium to thank the Society for the signal honor bestowed upon him; he expressed his gratitude to the retiring President, Father Vollert, and to his Board for the valuable services rendered to the organization during their term of office, and finally brought the Convention to a close with a prayer of thanksgiving at approximately four o'clock.