

# REPORT ON REGIONAL MEETINGS

## 1956-57

### I

#### THE FACTS

During the academic year 1956-57, seven regional meetings were held: two in the Baltimore-Washington area, and one in each of the other regions as now constituted—as follows:

(1) On December 12, 1956, the Baltimore-Washington region (embracing Maryland and the District of Columbia) held an afternoon meeting at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore. Two problems were presented and discussed. Father John F. Sweeney, S.J., of Woodstock College, Maryland, led a discussion on "The Objectives and Content of the Seminary Course in Dogmatic Theology." The center of consideration was the relationship between systematic and kerygmatic theology. Father Paul Farrell, O.P., of the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, led a discussion on "The Objectives and Content of the Seminary Course in Moral Theology." The centers of consideration were (a) current criticisms of moral theology as it is generally presented, and (b) the Dominican system based entirely on the approach of St. Thomas. Attendance: 72.

(2) On December 27, 1956, the New York region (embracing New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut) held a meeting at Cathedral College, New York City, from 10:15 a. m. to 1 p. m. Under the general theme, "Recent Approaches to Apologetics," two particular topics were discussed: "The Gospels as History" and "The Religious Context and Sign Value of Miracles." Father Vincent T. O'Keefe, S.J., of Woodstock College, Maryland, presented the problems and led the discussions. Attendance: 32.

(3) On December 28, 1956, a full-day meeting of the Boston region (embracing Massachusetts and Rhode Island) was held at St. John's Seminary, Brighton, Massachusetts. At the morning session the discussion in dogmatic theology was guided by Father Philip J. Donnelly, S.J., of Weston College, Weston, Massachusetts, who presented an introductory paper on "Current Discussions on the Theory of Condign Satisfaction and on the Nature of Sin as an Offense against God." After lunch, at which the priests in attendance were guests of the Archdiocese, the discussion in moral theology was led by Father Gerard Rooney, C.P., Associate Editor of the *Sign*, who read a paper on "The Morality of Right-to-Work Laws." Attendance: about 90.

(4) On February 22, 1957, a meeting of the Chicago region (embracing Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana) was held at the Hotel Congress in Chicago from 10 a. m. to 3:30 p. m. At the morning session Father Hugh J. O'Connell, C.S.S.R., Professor of Moral Theology at the Redemptorist Seminary at Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, presented a lengthy, thorough paper studying "The Problem of Catholics in Bad Marriages," with special emphasis on the competence of bishops, pastors, and confessors to permit the brother-sister cohabitation. The afternoon session was spent discussing various aspects of the problem as suggested by the formal paper. The discussion was principally directed by Father O'Connell and Father John S. Quinn, of the Chicago Chancery Office, who presented the view of the chanceries and the canonists on the questions raised. Attendance: 35.

(5) On March 12, 1957, the Cleveland region (embracing Ohio, Kentucky, and Michigan) held an afternoon meeting at St. Joseph's Seminary of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers in Cleveland. Two papers were read. Father James Forgac, O.S.B., spoke on "The Immaculate Conception, First Act of Our Merciful Redemption," and discussion was led by Father Joseph Buckley, S.M. Father Frederick J. Hunnefeld, C.P.P.S., spoke on "Problems Concerning the Intention to Consecrate at the Holy Sacrifice"; discussion leader was Father T. Kirwin Obendorfer. Attendance: 30.

(6) On March 20, 1957, the Baltimore-Washington region held an afternoon meeting at the Theological College of the Catholic University in Washington. Father John M. Paul, C.S.P., read a short paper on "The Morality of Segregation and the Movement toward Integration." Discussion followed. After a "coffee break," Father John F. Harvey, O.S.F.S., outlined the recent "Report of the British Roman Catholic Advisory Committee on Prostitution and Homosexual Offenses and the Existing Law," and offered some points of criticism. Discussion followed. Attendance: 42.

(7) On June 10, 1957, a full-day meeting of the Quebec-Montreal area (embracing the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario) took place at the University of Ottawa, on the occasion of the Conference of Learned Societies. A lecture was given in the forenoon by Father Roland Fournier, S.S., Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Theology, University of Montreal, on "The Problem of the Existence of God in Theology." Discussion followed. In the afternoon two seminars were held, one in English, the other in French. Father Gerard Owens, C.S.S.R., of Woodstock, Ontario, presented a report on "The Content of Tradition in Relation to Scripture"; and Father Fernand Jetté, O.M.I., of the University of Ottawa, reported on "The Priestly Vocation and Its Obligation." Attendance: more than 30.

II

A CRITIQUE

With reference to the facts outlined above, the Committee and the Regional Chairman feel that the desirable reaction is a well-tempered complacency.

(1) The complacency stems from five factors:

(a) exactly the same number of meetings was held this year as last—distributed in exactly the same way as last year, with at least one meeting in each region;

(b) attendance was comparable to last year's with a slight retrogression in quantity alone;

(c) the subjects discussed are increasingly more vital;

(d) general audience participation is somewhat more satisfactory;

(e) intellectual fellowship, interchange of ideas, and self-evaluation—though still comparatively low—have reached an all-time high among American Catholic theologians.

(2) Our complacency is tempered by two scarcely debatable facts:

(a) we have not yet succeeded in reorganizing the regions so as to include all states of the Union and all members of the CTSA, and so as to make individual attendance geographically and financially feasible;

(b) no satisfactory method has yet been discovered of keeping the total membership of the CTSA posted on what is taking place in the individual regions, save for this indisputably inadequate post-mortem.

As last year, so too this year, there are two brief items I find it imperative to mention. In the first place, the success of the 1956-57 regional meetings would have been impossible without the gracious cooperation of the Regional Chairmen, Msgr. Lawrence J. Riley, and Fathers Myles M. Bourke, Richard P. Brosseau, S.S., Francis D. Costa, S.S.S., Thomas W. Coyle, C.S.S.R., and Edward J. Hogan, S.S., as well as my associates on the Committee, Fathers Edmond D. Benard and John F. Sweeney, S.J. In the second place, in consequence of the charity of individuals and institutions, no expenses had to be borne by the general treasury of the CTSA.

WALTER J. BURGHARDT, S.J., *Chairman.*

Dated June 26, 1957.