

Father Haering Reports on Council

(Continued from Page 1)

Such an interpretation con- ducts, to mention only this, the final address of the Pope and the formulation of the introductory note: Ne cogitemus de dependentia velut ab aliquo extraneo (One should not think of dependence as upon an outside).

In the Council and with the organs of the Council, the Pope tried to find a clear, unambiguous formulation of collegiality. Moreover, the final formula with which Pope and bishops together promulgated the conclusions shows very clearly how seriously Pope Paul VI takes the truth of collegiality.

The wonderful Decree on Ecumenism was apparently the occasion for the largest cloud in the third session's heaven. It seemed to many — unjustly so — that the Pope at the last minute intentionally wanted to impose text changes on the Council from without, either drastically to demonstrate his independence from the Council, or to cool down the enthusiasm of the ecumenical optimists.

The question of the timing of the suggested emendations is very easily explained by the mountain of work which Pope Paul had to do. As to the form, it was not a question of an authoritarian act, but of a polite request to the secretariat whether these proposals could not still be considered. No one denies that they were real emendations which were gladly received.

It was basically only one text change which saddened Council Fathers and observers whose greatest interest in life is Christian unity. But even it could cause this great disillusionment only if one examined it one-sidedly, apart from its context.

The original text read that the Christian communities of the West which are separated from Rome "at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, find God in the Holy Scriptures, who speaks to them in Christ."

The very last version, however, says that "at the call of the Holy Spirit they look in the Holy Scriptures for God who in some manner speaks to them in Christ" (quasi sibi loquentem).

Many may have misunderstood the quasi, in the sense of "as if he were speaking to them." Quasi, however, has a purely hypothetical meaning and one that almost precludes reality only when used with a substantive. In the context it affirms a real manner in which Christ speaks to those who honestly seek him and rely on God's grace. It is also clear from the context both before and after that God permits all to find him in Christ Jesus who truly seek him, especially since there is immediately preceding the Scripture-text that the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1, 16).

One can see that it is a question here of a "psychological" cloud, which the wind of better understanding can disperse.

A third cloud arose for many on either side in regard to the difference of opinion on the solemn declaration of a new title for the Mother of God as "Mother of the Church."

It appeared to many that those who were opposed to the declaration of a new title in the Council showed thereby a lack of piety and devotion to Mary.

In reality there was no disparity of opinion about devotion and love for the Mother of God because the Council Fathers had almost unanimously adopted the text: "The Catholic Church, taught by the Holy Spirit, honors her in the spirit of childlike piety as the most loving mother" (Art. 53). The only question was what effect the festive proclamation of the title as such would have here and now in ecumenical endeavors.



Cardinal Suenens of Belgium and Cardinal Lercaro of Italy, two prelates who steered Vatican Council's day to day discussions in St. Peter's basilica in Rome.

Others might fear that the strong emphasis on a new title of honor could somehow obscure for many the great richness of the text and the spiritual duty of interior likeness to Mary, the mother of faith and the model of the humility of the Church. In the end it is only a question of the juxtaposition and occasional clash of two devout positions, of which one places greater value on the newness of proclamation of titles than the other.

This disparity should not make us forget that in the chapter about the ever-blessed Virgin, a Mariological and at the same time ecumenological and Christocentric text was finally found with full unanimity of the Council Fathers, which is uncommonly rich, beautiful, interior and studied, and which one may hope will also be ecumenically fruitful.

A Purifying Storm
The difference of opinion on religious freedom was a real thundercloud — or to speak more exactly, the difference of opinion about the deferring of the vote on it was. The fact that in the hurry and nervousness of the last days it came to a vote after all the Council Fathers had not so tragic upon sober reflection.

One must deeply lament that the Catholic Church has not been the crusader for freedom of conscience that she might have been. One must certainly lament that, after all the dark shadows of the Inquisition and all that went with it and same after, all the Council Fathers did not at first perceive that in this respect the Church would have to clean up her image in humility and firm resolution.

But no one can be unaware that the problem, whether one wants to face it dogmatically or pastorally, is extremely difficult and therefore demands patient investigation in the Council.

The tension probably came into the Council because a few representatives of the minority were not only adverse to a discussion of the question, but also sought to hinder it with diplomatic moves. After the discussion had taken place, where the minority had spoken simply, the fear became widespread that certain opponents of the schema would now do everything to hinder a vote and promulgation.

The derogatory articles against Cardinal Ben because of his activity for the declaration on Religious Freedom surely increased the tension still more. Still other pamphlets which wanted to perpetuate anti-ecumenism took a similar tack. Would they, if possible, even bring pressure on the Pope, so that he would not dare to give free rein to the Council, although himself undoubtedly a warm supporter of such a declaration?

The last straw was the rather busy manner in which a few Council Fathers had collected signatures against the vote, and

shape as a true community. The world episcopate is no mass of individualists. The bishops and the episcopate have entered into a reciprocal, spiritual exchange which will not stop after the Council.

They know each other better. They are learning from one another. They feel themselves, in unity with the Pope, collectively responsible for the good of the whole Church and for the preaching of the gospel to all men.

Constitution on Church

The greatest harvest is the dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

The external constitution, the visible phenomenon, the juridical structures of the Church, are in no way emasculated by the constitution, but rather retain their true value in a much deeper, more comprehensive, more believing view. The Church is an inexhaustible, mysterious reality, a mystery which from eternity has been locked in the heart of God and has been made manifest in the time of full salvation. Our human rational concepts and juridical structures simply do not suffice to describe its nature with anything approaching completeness.

The dogmatic constitution (Chap. I and II) faithfully follows Biblical thinking: not through one concept or one image; but only through many converging images and concepts as we brought nearer to recognizing and admiring the nature and the mission of the Church.

Law and administration are not the first things in the Church: The Church is a community of love which lives from the saving love of Christ and reflects the community of love of the three divine persons.

The primacy of love, however, does not stand next to or against law and administration, but law and administration too, in as far as is humanly possible, in faith, bear witness that the Church is a supernatural community of love, whose golden rule is the goodness and gentleness of Christ.

Moreover, the answer of the Holy Father to the appeal of the majority corresponds most exactly not only to the Council norms, but also to the true desire of the latter majority. It contained the most emphatic assurance that no blocking of the declaration would be possible. Why could it not find a still better form in the time before the next session? Can we not rather say that this declaration is not just an out-of-hand, simple explanation, but above all an inner cleansing and self-commitment, whereby former failings may clearly be called by name?

When the first Vatican Council announced the doctrine of infallibility in St. Peter's Basilica, a violent storm was raining down on Rome, so that many people compared this day with the promulgation of the law on Mt. Sinai: "with thunder and lightning." In St. Peter's the mood of victory was dominant in a part of the majority. They had won a final victory over a substantial minority.

Among many, though, the mood was one of deep dejection because of the circumstances and the manner of the victory. The minority of the bishops, who according to their dioceses represented more than a third of the Catholic Church, was literally defeated. They had, of course, in their way contributed much to the formulation of the definition, but their doubts about the opportunity (the pastoral effectiveness) of the definition were anything but allayed. Many had already left before the closing.

In contrast to this, what do the little passing clouds and the one short but cleansing thunderstorm in the skies of the third session of the Vatican Council II signify?

In the decisive questions, moral unanimity had been attained. As with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy at the end of the second session, so now the two great texts, the Constitution on the Church and the Decree on Ecumenism, were accepted with practical unanimity.

The four or five who voted "No" could appear more as stubborn individualists than as a defeated minority.

The small clouds belong to the Council, which does not represent the heavenly Jerusalem, but the Church in pilgrimage, the people of God on earth.

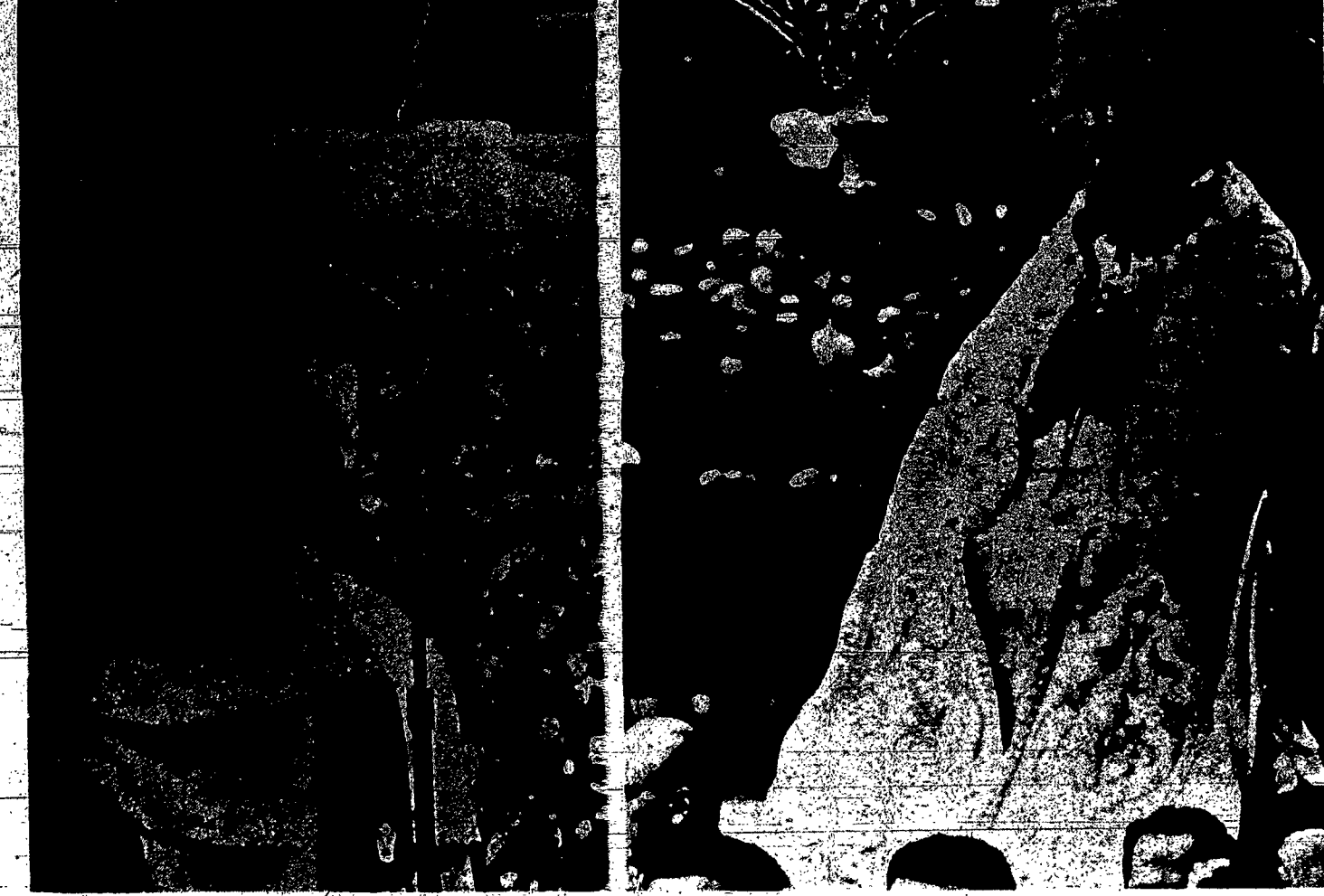
With the good-will of all the Johannine spirit of the Council, love will be strong enough not only to disperse these clouds, but also to recognize their benefit to the further work of the Council. The sign of John — the spirit of love and unity — is more clearly visible where Pauline freedom and Pauline frankness find a true home in the diversity of opinions and experiences.

Rich Harvest

A farmer who has brought in most of an abundant harvest does not lose courage if he brings his last load into the barn in a rainstorm. He is sure that the Lord will continue to give His blessing. The blessed harvest of the third session was actually quite great.

And it is not only a harvest, but also seed for the future, which can bring still richer fruit.

Joy in the harvest should fill us in view of the maturing of the Council. It has found its



The loneliness of the papacy is caught in these pictures of Pope Paul and Pope John as they presided at Vatican Council ceremonies. Both have had to face critical decisions on Church policy affecting millions of souls.

COURIER-JOURNAL
Thursday, Apr. 1, 1965

have stimulated a still deeper-going examination of conscience, which has not yet come to an end.

Practically, collegiality means all renunciation of power psychology and group egoism. Wherever one group seeks or wants to retain privileges which do not serve unity in the humble exercise of the pastoral office, collegiality is betrayed. Collegiality is a conscious and morally binding restriction of diocesan or episcopal glory seeking.

Only thus can a common pastoral plan be developed and implemented. Not without reason were the bitterest opponents of the doctrine of collegiality those who spoke of the monarchical episcopate in purely juridical tones, as of a "so-called ruling bishop," and in practice wished to leave the rights of the individual bishop and diocese defined only by authoritative regulations from the Vatican, but not directly by the pastoral needs of solidarity and the spontaneously felt and spontaneously recognized duty of a service in love.

Others would probably have agreed without hesitation to a purely moral view of love and solidarity, but not to a structural principle, which, if implemented, would have meant the jurisdiction of the episcopate according to the needs and the circumstances of the time.

The constitution came to a good balance between the fundamental ontological-eucharistic conception, charismatic spontaneity, and juridical demands. Thereby broad perspectives either were opened or remained open for a future unfolding of this synthesis and its field of application.

The religious orders too are happy with the Constitution on the Church. According to their wish they received their own chapter, which of course has no more than visual significance. More decisive is the fact that the charismatic function of those who lead a life in community according to the evangelical counsels becomes truly meaningful.

They are called, by their whole life, by their inner liberty, their mature obedience and their striving for ever greater love of God and neighbor, to be witnesses of the universal calling of all Christians to holiness, and to sing the most joyful song of praise for the gift of grace of the Holy Spirit in the humble service of the Church.

Decree on Ecumenism

The Decree on Ecumenism has a highly developed beauty, if it was quite promising, extending in its kindness even when it was sent to the Council Fathers before the first session, now it has not only been developed in full discussions by the three Council sessions, wherein also observers of the Non-Catholic church communities took part, but also — and this is a decisive gain — it has become the common property of the episcopate throughout the whole world.

The Catholic Church manifests herself also towards the separated brethren as the house of love, as the treasure-house of truth, precisely in the knowledge that love is the eye of faith, which everywhere discovers and gladly recognizes the workings of God and the good, and thus effectively counteracts error and at the same time also its poisonous source, the lack of love and a loveless judgment which is opposed to truth.

The Decree on Ecumenism, itself already a fruit of true dialogue, is the beginning and basic law of future dialogue with separated brethren, a dialogue in which it is always a question of love and truth in love.

Loveless argument and naked truths are unmasked as opposed to truth and unchristian for all Christians are bound to Christ, the truth which has been

on an exhaustive schema. On the Missionary Activity of the Church has demonstrated that the time of the Church is at the same time a missionary springtime.

On this occasion at any rate, the principle of collegiality of the bishops with the Pope did not function without some losses by friction.

The Holy Father made a magnanimous collegial gesture when he wished to be present at the beginning of the discussion and emphasize it with a brief talk. One wonders, however, if he had been as clearly informed about the wishes of the bishops as was common sense with his position and activity as head of the college of bishops. It was then certainly no rebuff to collegial behavior that the bishops, in spite of general praise of the short schema by the Pope, nevertheless found it insufficient.

But this could have been done better in answer to the words of the Pope "that it could be completed." The question then would only have been how much elaboration one might ask.

This defective echo, however, does not refer to any lack of collegial disposition, nor, given the fact that the Council is a session of St. Peter, but reflects a defeat in the machinery of the Council discussions during the third session: because one had to announce any intervention five days in advance and even present it in written form, the actual dialogue in the Council chamber was made difficult and was even reduced to a minimum.

However, since a dialogue in structure and answer cannot structure by function among the bishops in St. Peter's Basilica, it would be a real miracle if a dialogue with the Pope, presenting still greater demands, would suddenly function perfectly with this set-up without any structural changes.

Other Council Discussions

The discussion about missionary activity has, in pursuance of the lines of the Constitution on the Church, shown that the Church cannot and may not be a self-enclosed community, intent only upon itself. The divine revelation which is committed to her is spirit and life destined for all men.

The schema on Divine Revelation promises now after three sessions to become a true pearl and a source of fruitfulness similar to that of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. If the Sacred Scriptures and the powerful living process of Tradition are seen by all with deep faith and genuine humanity like that in this schema, then the Church will surely have a gleaming strength for all men in the epoch after Vatican Council II.

It is normal that the great Council, which has the Church as its principal theme, can in conclusion make a decisive statement about the Church in the Modern World, because the credibility of this statement depends on her inner living force, on her understanding of herself and her will to renewal.

On the other hand the question of relationship to worldly culture, to earthly pursuits, and the great problems of our time also belongs to the self-understanding of the Church. In the position she takes on these questions she shows the world her true features and demonstrates her inner health and freedom.

The schema on the Church in the Modern World is still not a ripe Council fruit. It still needs much work, many prayers and sacrifices. And still one may probably say that the mere fact that the Council has addressed itself courageously to these questions and has received such special attention in the world beyond already and definitely to the results of the third session of the Council. The Church takes the world today seriously and is taken seriously by it.



Colorful and outspoken Patriarch-Cardinal Maximos Sagh at Vatican rite. He was frequent spokesman for riding the Catholic Church of medieval, European lands.