

Clerics Tune in World, World Turns Religion Off

Bishop Sheen will join bishops from around the world at history-making, first-of-its-kind Synod of Bishops in Rome at end of this month. The bishops will face a world urgently in need of a message of hope. Can such a message be given honestly in the light of the world's—and the Church's—present condition?

Vision of Hope In Decadence

"I can't understand what's happening to our Church and to our country!"

That was the anguished statement of an anonymous elderly voice on the phone at the Courier this week.

She was deeply upset by Father James E. Groppi and his Negro open-housing marchers of Milwaukee, by Father James Kavanaugh and his book of complaints about his "Outdated Church," by young Hippies, by Americans who criticize the President for his efforts to hold back Communist aggression — she was just generally upset by most of the headlines in our daily papers.

Earlier this summer, Bishop Sheen, commenting on racial turmoil in our nation and the seeming endless war in Vietnam, said, "What has happened in our nation in recent days is the fatal tell-tale scar of a disease which has festered and corrupted till it finally broke out in the open for all to see — the disease of national decadence."

Michael Harrington, author of the book "The Other America" which aroused the nation to launch its war against poverty, has written a new book titled "The Accidental Century" — about this decadence of which Bishop Sheen spoke.

"In the twentieth century," Harrington says, "something enormous is being born. And something enormous is dying. This book is about what is dying. It is about the contemporary decadence." But he points out that his is "a hopeful book about decadence."

The contemporary breakup of human community by the inhuman megalopolis — this Harrington calls an "accidental revolution" of a "sweeping and unprecedented technological transformation" of mankind's way of life. He also predicts "an acceleration of this process in the future" with routine voyages to the moon by the year 2000 — this week's soft-landing of another space vehicle on the moon makes such a prophecy plausible, inhabited artificial satellites, genetic control of personalities, electronically impregnated education — realities beyond the imaginings of science fiction.

Sigmund Freud, father of psychoanalysis, noted, however, that the more man conquers nature, the more he represses himself.

St. Augustine back in the fifth century gave Christians the vision of a City of God toward which they were journeying. During the past century science replaced the goal with a City of Man. Now both visions have vanished for the vast majority of people today. "This is the meaning of the term intended here," says Harrington, "the present decadence is the corruption of a dream rather than a reality."

The Bible's Book of Proverbs long ago stated, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Dr. Harvey Cox, author of the book "The Secular City," in his talk opening a colloquium of young theologians at Colgate Rochester Divinity School this week, said that too many people, including theologians, are too pre-occupied with either the past or the present but they fail to create a goal which can knit the various races and nations of mankind into a new community of endeavor and hope.

Harrington's remedy for this fragmentation of technological man is quite similar to Pope John's in his encyclical "Mater et Magistra" — a massive "socialization" of those factors which shape our thinking and our living — education, housing, jobs, leisure time activities. Both Pope John and Harrington realize the risk of a latent totalitarianism in such a solution but the alternative, both see, is that frightening "Brave New World" of "1984" where man is reduced to a mechanism, a brutalizing of the human family contrary to all the values developed over more than two thousand years.

Harrington concludes that this will mean that "the greatest spiritual adventure of humanity will have come to an end." He nonetheless does not yet despair: "There is, paradoxically, in the depths of the various despairs of these times the glimpse of the heights of our hope."

Five years ago this autumn, Pope John, who did have a vision and a confidence in the future, launched his Vatican Council. He admitted there were "prophets of doom" who didn't share his optimism but he said he listened to a different Counsel. I too share his confidence and his hope!

—Father Henry A. Atwell

By DOUGLAS J. ROCHE

Toronto — (RNS) — When 45 of the world's most brilliant theologians pour out their reflections on the renewal of the Church in 700 pages of papers compressed into a four-day meeting, ideas go off like a fireworks display.

While all the ideas that lit up the Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church here, sponsored by the Canadian Roman Catholic bishops, may not win a place in the life of the Church, at least two have moved the renewal forward.

First, it is clearer than ever that theology has to take into consideration all the learning in many different fields now available before making its judgments. Second, the impact of the communications media on the formerly shadowy world of theology will force theologians to bridge the language gap that exists between what they're saying and what the rest of the Church understands.

Planned for four years, the Congress was the Canadian Bishops' contribution to Canada's centennial celebrations.

It was by far the most ambitious intellectual endeavor ever held by the Church in Canada and was dubbed "Vatican Two-and-a-Half." The same stimulating clash of ideas that took place at the Congress occurred again at the Congress as 1,900 invited delegates rubbed shoulders with theologians and bishops. Another 2,000 people watched the presentations and panel discussions over closed circuit television at various locations on the sprawling University of Toronto campus.

Four evening plenary sessions featured Cardinal Leger of Montreal, Archbishop George Hakim of Nazareth, Cardinal Suenens of Malines-Brussels and Cardinal Koenig of Vienna. But during the rest of the Congress, at any given moment a participant was missing four-fifths of what was going on. Five seminar sessions were held each morning and afternoon, resulting in such unfortunate scheduling clashes as theology giants Father M. D. Chenu, O.P., Father Bernard Lonergan, S.J., and Etienne Gilson speaking at the same time.

Anglicans, Protestants and Jews took prominent roles. Indeed, Rabbi Abraham Heschel, who spoke on the Jewish notion of God and Christian Renewal, was accorded the esteem reserved for prophets.

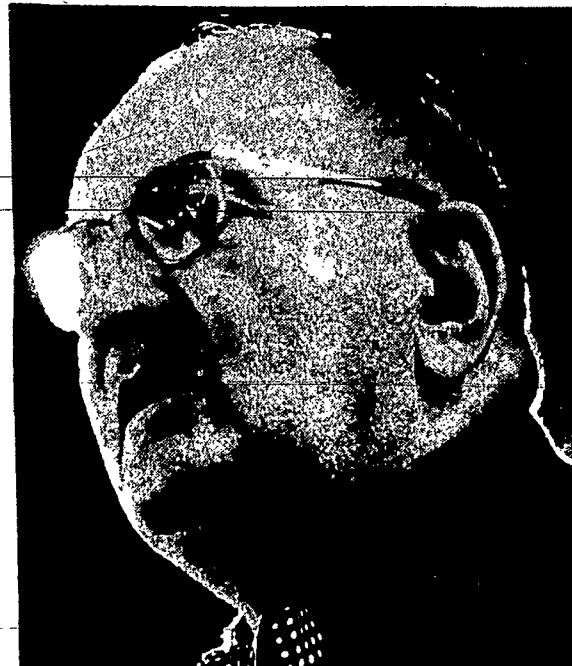
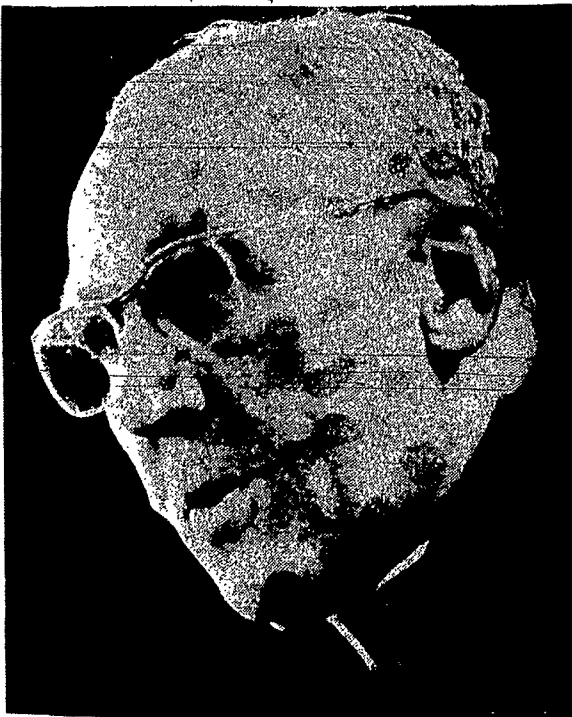
And the Congress moved a notch ahead of the international theological conference held last year at Notre Dame University by including women as speakers. One of these, Elizabeth Anscombe, a none-too-clear British philosopher, electrified staid members of the clergy by turning up in trousers and smoking a cigar. However, Christine Mohrmann, a Dutch classicist, and Sister Jeanne-Darc, a French biblical scholar, restored the more traditional feminine image.

As an educational experiment to create conditions of intelligent dialogue, the Congress was a qualified success. The reading of long, technical papers is clearly an outdated teaching method in the electronic age of audio-visual instruction. New techniques are desperately needed to enable participants at such unwieldy assemblies to communicate their confusion to the experts.

Nonetheless, the Congress scored an important gain by making the participants more aware of the rich theological body of knowledge ready to support man in the secular city.

A theological congress has probably never been held against a probably never held background. Toronto's swelling cult of Hippies have their headquarters in Yorkville and Queen's Park, which flank the university campus. While the theologians were debating the erudite themes of institution versus charisma, the Flower Power school was constructing to have cars banned from their main thoroughfare so that middle class gawkers would have

Mr. Roche is the editor of The Western Catholic Reporter, news weekly of the Archdiocese of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.



Among the major participants in the Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church were Gabriel Marie Cardinal Garrone, pro-prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Instruction; Father Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., professor of Theology at the Catholic University of Mijmegen, Holland; French philosopher Etienne Gilson and German theologian Father Bernard Haering, C.S.S.R.



Father Charles Lavery of St. John Fisher College enjoys a chat with a former teacher of his, famed philosopher Etienne Gilson at Toronto Theology Congress.

to walk through Yorkville and thus come into deeper contact with Hippie culture.

Each evening, the two worlds mingled briefly. For the most part, the clerics and Sisters nervously skirted the bare-foot band of beards and long-hairs referred to by one observer as the "monks of the secular city." One minister stopped and talked to the Hippies about Jesus. Another time, a Hippie slipped by the guards at a lecture and jumped onto the stage at intermission to ask the theologians for their support. Most of the delegates were indignant, but a group of priests took him to dinner and were impressed by the young man's seriousness about the Bible, Jesus and love.

The theologian-Hippie confrontation pointed up a principal lesson of the Congress: the professional theologians are tuned in to the theory of religion in the modern world, but the modern world has turned off religion. Theologians face not only the formidable hurdle of learning to speak clearly but in such a way that modern man can recognize the God they are talking about.

Christian revelation, Father Edward Schillebeeckx, O.P., the explosive Dutch thinker, said, appears not to make any material contribution to modern man's meaningful understanding of himself. Unless Christians rid themselves of obsolete forms, "our own witness of and speaking about God will clearly be greeted by most people of today with headshaking disbelief as incomprehensible."

As an example of the secularized world's ignoring of God — concepts of whom were formed in cultures long dead — Father Schillebeeckx told of a Dutch youngster who was admonished by his father for not saying grace at lunch. "Thank God for what He is giving you to eat today," said the father. The boy's answer was immediate: "God isn't giving it to me. You work it out to me."

A dominant note of the Congress was the need of the theologians to assimilate the knowledge obtained through modern sciences into new formulations of God.

"We ask the Gospel new questions which previous generations of Christians could not

ask," Father Schillebeeckx noted, "simply because they were not living in a secularized world like ours."

Contemporary theology, said Father Lonergan, a Christian internationally known for his linking of theology with human living, has not only to reflect on divine revelation but must learn to draw on the relatively new sciences of Religion, Psychology, Sociology and the new techniques of the communication arts. Hailing the rise of an empirical theology that uses Scripture and tradition not as premises but data, Father Lonergan insisted, "theology has somehow to mediate God's meaning into the whole of human affairs."

The "painful re-assessment" of what used to be taken for granted must now be conducted by scientific and theological discussion and debate, warned Father R. A. F. MacKenzie, S.J., rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. And in the moral field, declared Bernard Haering, C.S.S.R., the renowned German theologian, the permanent values of marriage and the family have to be rethought on the basis of a wholly new set of facts.

The widespread appeal for an open-ended theology was summed up by Father Haering who feared that unless theology is fitted into the expanding frontiers of knowledge, the world will construe the Church's teaching as concerned with a God who died "with the beginning of the scientific epoch."

Once more, as during the Vatican Council, the tension that exists between creative theologians and the magisterium (teaching authority of the church) was evident.

Many theologians hold that the bishops, who express the judgment of the magisterium, are taught by the theologians, but not all bishops are by any means ready to accept the finds of the theologians. The Congress showed that this tension is likely to go on for some time and that it is healthy for the vitality of the Church. There's room in the Church for people who will stand up and cause "wholesome scandal" by taking a radical line for the sake of a better community, said Father Enda McDonagh, Ireland's leading theologian.

Many ears picked up at a cautionary note sounded by Bishop Christopher Butler, O.S.B., a distinguished theologian at Vatican II before being consecrated. "Charismatic life is self-destructive in the long run unless the divinely-established rights of magisterial control are honestly recognized and loyally obeyed." He feared the abuse of new-found liberty might provoke an excessive reaction of control.

Father MacKenzie noted in his paper, however, that abuses of liberty do not prove that liberty is a bad thing any more than abuses of authority prove the same about authority.

A sombre description of a Church falling into chaos, given by Father Henri de Lubac, S.J., a French visionary once under a Holy Office cloud for his reformist ideas, gave the Congress another jolt. Agglomeration, openness of the world, adaptation, rejuvenation, ecumenism, the spirit of dialogue are yielding to the pressures of a "secularized Christianity," he warned, and it is possible that "there will soon be no renewal or progress to talk about, but disintegration and liquidation. The hope raised by the Council will be swallowed up."

To protect the Church from this catastrophe, Father de Lubac pleaded for more attention to Teilhard de Chardin, who had stressed a three-fold faith in a personal God, faith in Jesus Christ, and faith in the role of the Church of Christ.

The Congress was brought back from rarefied heights to the crushing problems of the day by Father Francois Houtart, a Belgian sociologist, who pleaded for a theology of the Church and the developing nations.

"What is the value of a religion that retires to Olympus and lets men flounder in their problems?" he asked, citing the war in Vietnam on which the U.S. spends in one month what the world spends in one year on aid to developing nations.

"Vietnam is becoming, whether we like it or not, the symbol of the battle of the underdeveloped against the developed, the poor against the rich, the oppressed against the oppressor; and it is on its way to making the 'free world' a myth."

Just as Father Roberto Tucci, S.J., editor of the influential Civiltà Cattolica, had called for an end to the Church's involvement in politics through nuncios, Father Houtart scorned "ostentatious expenditures" of the Church in poor countries that link Christianity with a colonial mentality.

"A Latin American government," he reported, "whose people are struggling in dreadful misery, has offered a million dollars to build a new nunciature. Will the nuncio have the courage to refuse, or will he come out of the affair with a red hat?"

Here, however, the Congress tagged behind the Notre Dame Conference which concluded with a public statement on world poverty.

In the one paper widely hailed at the Congress as a breakthrough, Father Johan Baptist Metz, 39-year-old protégé of Karl Rahner, offered the outline of a "political theology."

Far from becoming identified with any society, the Church would establish itself as a positive critic of all societies. Christians would not withdraw from political engagement and in fact charity might demand actions of a revolutionary character. But the institutional Church would develop a "socio-critical attitude."

To achieve this, more critical public opinion is needed within the Church, determining where the ecclesiastical institution oversteps its competence and ready to denounce the Church's struggle on wrong battle-fronts or sociological prejudices like racism.

Clearly, we are going to hear much more from Father Metz.

Cardinal Koenig of Vienna ended the Congress on the resounding call to expanded openness and greater "transparency" of the Church for all to see. "The more the flow of communication within the Church is increased," he said in the most important single sentence at the Congress, "the more inter-communication between the Church and society as a whole will be increased."

Synod of Bishops to Renew Dynamism of Council

By GARY MacEOIN

"Either a great flop or an event of historic importance comparable to the second Vatican Council." That is how a leading theologian recently summed up for me in Rome his forecast for the Synod of Bishops which will open September 29.

Few are prepared to go much farther.

What I think significant, however, is the growing belief that it will — for better or worse — be a major event. Early this year, many observers thought it would come and go almost without causing a ripple. That mood is gone. In addition, I believe I sense a mounting confidence that the Synod will renew the dynamism of the Council.

A major reason for the earlier pessimism was the ambiguity of the charter of the Synod. The body is only partly elected, 132 members being chosen by their fellow bishops and a further 60 or 70 participating ex officio or named by the Pope. It is strictly advisory. Its agenda is determined by the Pope. In addition, a

ruling from Rome early this year called for total secrecy as regards not only the Synod's discussions but even its agenda.

Far from achieving its intent, however, this ruling quickly demonstrated the new dynamism of the Synod. Before they could choose their representatives, the bishops of the world had to know the agenda, since their choice of delegates would depend in substantial part on its content. And human nature being what it is, how can knowledge communicated to several thousand persons be kept secret?

In actual fact, it was not. Before the United States bishops met, the press had an unofficial text which the bishops confirmed as accurate. One milestone was passed.

The Canadian bishops went considerably further, criticizing the attempt to impose secrecy as a restriction on the Synod's ability to perform its function. Appealing to the example of the Council, they argued that secrecy, far from being desirable, would be harmful.

Since the action of journalists during

Vatican II, they declared in a resolution adopted at their plenary meeting last April 7, "We felt it our duty to urge that all facilities be given by the Vatican to the great media of information, so that they can provide the people of God with the services they expect from the press, all subjects discussed, and also a feedback to the Synod itself of the views formed and discussions provoked by this information among the people of God."

Strengthened by this statement and by similar ones from bishops in other parts of the world, the Vatican correspondents of major world newspapers and agencies have been urging the Synod secretariat and the Vatican press office to announce the press services they intend to provide. Reaction was initially quite negative, but each month has produced indications of a growing awareness that secrecy is not viable.

My latest information is that Father Edward Heston, CSC, daily-briefer of the English-language press at the Council, has been asked and has agreed to provide similar briefing during the Synod. If he

is given the same facilities as at the Council, when he attended the discussions of the Fathers in St. Peter's, the objective sought by the Canadian bishops will have been substantially secured.

Two non-official information centers were created in Rome during the Council. The first, designed to brief bishops and expert advisors on the theological issues under discussion was DOC (documentation of the Council). The other, intended for the press as a center for conferences, talks at a more popular level, and distribution of written releases and statements, was the CCC (center for coordination of Council communications).

They were fused at the end of the Council into IDO-C, a center for information and documentation on the implementation of the Council. IDO-C hopes to provide for the Synod services similar to those offered during the Council.

The public can thus hope to be kept informed on the deliberations. But what, many are asking, will be the content of the deliberations? Will they go beyond the agenda formulations? I shall try next week to give an answer.

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REV. CONRAD

Two Protestants will be speakers at institutes coming to the Rev. Dr. of Rochester's Terian Church w.

This Boy 13 Years

When Mr. and Casey were expected baby 13 years ago name "Michael" it was a boy.

It was a girl—a next nine Casey

"Michael" will however, as the finally had a boy Mary's Hospital of Sept. 6.

Michael's middle be Lawrence—no dad, but for the Bishop Lawrence Paterson, N.J. diocese auxiliary bishop. By coincidence Michael Lawrence was great uncle's big Casey marked his last week.

The Casbys, lived on Hobart

Adult

The new will swing in of Sept. 25.

Geneva, the centers for one hour course adults a capuchin centers will

Leaflets blanks for wishes of the

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The program in Geneva. The heartening up for the co Scripture course

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If there interest in Adult decided the

Capuchin rector of the capable faculty rigorous order lay people at

The fall 16. No credit work or rec "encouraged"

Fees are the present two courses

The program Spring sessions, courses, and courses.

The center courses offered

Men

"The For p.m.) Father

"Life an

At St. Be

Boy

An estimated will assemble of St. Bernard's a two-day Retreat Oct. 1. The act by the Oletiana Lay Committee open to all boys in or out of school. Scout Troop or Post. The ev of its kind with ter City limits.

According to chairman Maurice Retreat is a good to start his Scout what better found? Father J Seminary rector.