

# How Successful was the Synod? Future will Tell

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By HAROLD SCHACHERN  
Special Correspondent

Vatican City — (RNS) — The first world Synod of Roman Catholic Bishops has ended, and already there are sharply divided opinions on its accomplishments.

The pessimistic see it as a high-level debating society from which Pope Paul VI will draw on those points of view he likes in making vital Church decisions on his own.

More positive spokesmen regard it as an encouraging start

in a process of decentralization in Church structure and a step toward true democracy in the form of collegiality, the principle which regards bishops as sharing with the Pope in authority over the universal Church.

The final decision, however, lies with the future, and the key words are growth and development.

For this Synod, with 199 elected delegates from 58 national conferences has met solely on the invitation of Pope Paul.

When it left Rome it ceased to exist, and another, theoretically at least, cannot meet unless Paul or a future Pope elects to summon one.

"I expected to find the Synod supplanting the Roman Curia as the chief adjunct to the Papacy," one bishop said, "but instead found the whole affair under the direction of Curial figures."

But another added: "I have no doubt that the Synod fathers have injected

themselves once and for all between the Pope and the Curia, and that the Curia will ultimately become their servants.

"This has been an experiment and, by and large, I think a successful one. This is going to be a process of evolution. There will be more Synods, and they will mature as they go along and will end up electing Popes and everything else."

Even should future Popes be reluctant to summon Synods, none, it is felt, can reverse the

mind of the Church or even appreciably slow its present momentum.

At the beginning, Pope Paul informed the Synodal bishops that he "might" ask them to take "definitive" or binding votes on some issues, but never did.

All votes taken have been "advisory" or as one old Vatican hand put it, "manifestations of opinion."

One of the principal reasons for caution in building the influence of the Synod too rapidly, some feel, is the fear of creating within the Church structure a body that would compete with the College of Cardinals, whose principal function has been giving high-level advice and electing Popes.

"They are afraid of another Avignon," one clerical observer said, "a regrettable period in Church history when competing groups of cardinals were enacting contrary legislation and electing Popes and anti-Popes. Rome has a memory as long as its history."

The addresses delivered to the Synod by as many as 21 speakers a day, many of them speaking in the names of their episcopal conferences, along with advisory votes, were turned over to committees and commissions for summaries that would show the overall mind of the Synod. These, in turn, were voted on.

The reports on the five basic subjects discussed—Canon Law, doctrine, mixed marriages, seminaries and liturgy—received enthusiastic, often nearly unanimous approval of the bishops, in the closing days of the Synod.

Position papers on the five topics were distributed to the 199 delegates in advance and, in general, those on mixed marriages, seminaries and liturgy were well received, but still many changes were asked for and won.

Generally, however, there was dissatisfaction with the working papers on doctrine and Canon Law, many charging that they violated the spirit of Vatican II.

"I have read the documents and they really aren't half bad," said Father Jorge Majia, a progressive theologian from Argentina. "The significant point seems to be that the bishops want something better, perhaps a great deal better."

The fact that the bishops voted against the Canon Law report or the final 10-page doctrinal paper indicates they got "much better" documents.

The particular emphases of the Synod were, first, the determination to guarantee intellectual freedom to venturesome

theologians seeking a faith that makes sense in the modern world and, second, the efforts to cement the growing authority and autonomy of episcopal conferences.

The same was true of dispensations permitting Catholics to marry other Christians. The bishops did not complain that Vatican offices were too stingy with such dispensations, but quite the opposite.

Several bishops charged that Italian ecclesiastics, completely unused to religious pluralism, tended to treat a Catholic-Anglican marriage in much the same way they would a marriage between a Catholic and a member of a fringe cult.

The Synod asked that decisions on such questions be left in the hands of local authorities, who are aware of special situations, rather than Vatican functionaries far from the scene.

If the Synod did no more than get this matter straightened out in Rome, it will have been a month well spent.

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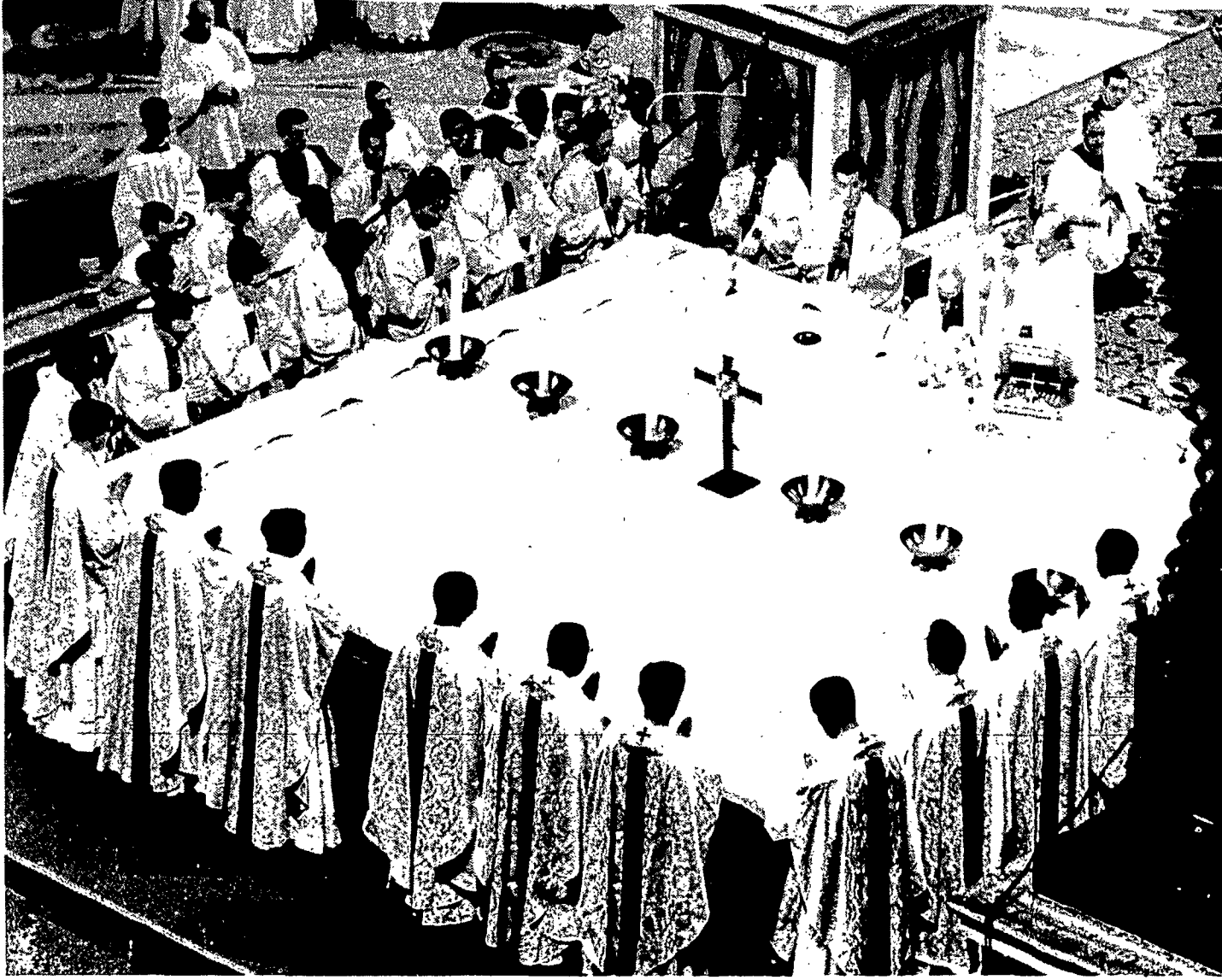
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## Young Missionaries with Pope

Pope Paul, at far side of altar, says Mass with young missionaries at St. Peter's at the Vatican. The newly ordained priests will be sent to outposts of the faith around the world.

## Freedom 'for' or 'from' Religion

United Nations — (RNS) — Progress in the United Nations debate on religious tolerance is so painfully slow and the results so open to wide-ranging interpretations that the very purpose of the draft Convention, now in its final stages of preparation, has been endangered.

Even the proposed title of the Convention is in dispute and a working committee had to be formed to sort out the merits of three amendments to the original draft which now reads: "International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Religious Intolerance." The preamble of the draft is also under attack.

The 122-nation Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee of the General Assembly is likewise hopelessly divided over whether the Convention should refer to "religion and belief," as advocated by religious-minded countries, or "religion or belief," as demanded by the Communist bloc.

The Afro-Asian bloc is split down the middle over atheism-motivated Soviet bloc amendments which some delegates warn would make it technically improper for the Churches to oppose apartheid in South Africa.

Another Soviet amendment would make it impossible for countries to follow their "pluralistic approach" to state and church-related education.

Russian and Italian delegates were locked in a dispute as to whether religion was a "fundamental element" in a person's conception of life.

The Soviet delegate argued that to an Italian "bread, wine and love" were more important, and that religion was something an Italian might remember once a week when he went to church.

Italy's delegate called these remarks "regrettable," saying that such a concept of Italians was taught "where atheism is disseminated." It "grieved" him to see means used to propagate atheism.

The Committee is under pressure to adopt a document which could be supported by the greatest possible number of countries. If signed and ratified by the required majority, the Declaration on Religious Tolerance would eventually amount to an international treaty, subject to individual reservations, exceptions and interpretations.

So far, the committee adopted without dissent only one paragraph of the proposed 30-article Convention.

It reads: "Considering that one of the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations is that of the dignity and equality inherent in all human beings, and that all State Members have pledged themselves to take joint and separate action in cooperation with the Organization (U.N.) to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without dis-

crimination as to race, sex, language or religion."

Even here, the Ukraine wanted to add the words "political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status," but eventually withdrew its amendment.

The argument that the Convention should say "religion or belief" and thus imply absolute equality between religion and atheism, was advanced by Hungary which proposed this text:

"Considering that intolerance and discrimination, and in particular the imposition of a religion or a change of religion on human beings by force and the abuse of religions for purposes having nothing to do with religion, have throughout history caused mankind immeasurable suffering;

"Considering that anything having to do with a human being's complex of ideas and emotions affects him most deeply and intimately and that, therefore, the freedom to practice religion and the freedom not to believe, the freedom to profess a religion and the freedom to profess the lack of a religion should be fully respected and guaranteed."

The Hungarian delegate said that rights and freedoms would not be complete if the proposed text did not "guarantee freedom from abuses to which religion may give rise under certain circumstances."

The Soviet Union then proposed the following amendment to the draft: "... Convinced that manifestations of freedom

of conscience, religion or belief should not impede the implementation of measures for the elimination of colonialism and that they should not serve as a means of interference in the political life of a country or as an instrument of foreign interference in the internal affairs of other States."

This led Argentina to introduce a sub-amendment to the Soviet proposal, saying: "Convinced that manifestations of religion or belief should not constitute an obstacle to the process of political independence of peoples or the exercise of such independence by peoples."

The countries tending to support the Soviet proposal included: Byelorussia, Bulgaria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, India, Poland, Mauritania, Guinea, Iraq, Morocco, Ceylon, Mali, Ethiopia, Sudan, Tanzania, Cuba and Zambia.

Those opposing the Soviet concept included the United States, Panama, Italy, France, Jamaica, Britain, Dahomey, Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Ireland, Liberia, Syria, Israel. Even India said the Soviet amendment was "not indispensable" for the Declaration.

Peru said that colonialism did not have any particular relationship with religious intolerance. Sierra Leone said it knew the meaning of colonialism but felt this did not belong in a Convention on religion.

The United States held that the Soviet amendment would limit the freedom to practice religion "under the excuse of

actually guaranteeing the freedom of religion."

Panama rejected the idea that the church played a "reactionary role" in society, saying that the Catholic Church, with its schools, universities and social work, "is one of the important elements of the progress and development."

Britain said the Soviets amendment would prevent the clergy from contributing to a fund to protect political prisoners in South Africa, and prevent churchmen generally "from taking progressive measures throughout the world."

Tanzania took exception to this by saying that "proper religion" could and should be used to combat "the reactionary form of religion applied by the apartheid regime in South Africa."

France, which opposes U.S. policy in Vietnam, said that religious leaders sometimes use their authority to express the position of all mankind, "as has happened in the case of the church's opposition to the war in Algeria and now in Vietnam."

But Pakistan alleged that the clergy in the southern part of Africa had propagated the belief that "God is white" to justify their occupation of the territory. Mauritania paid tribute to the words of "certain clergymen" in Africa but blamed others for consciously or unconsciously having contributed to that continent's "obscurity."

No country offered to answer the question put by Britain: Who would decide what is abuse of religion for political ends?

## Sunday A.M. TV Series

# Technology Requires Choice

New York — (RNS) — A series of nationwide television programs to be aired in November have become a total North American church project.

The four Sunday presentations, segments of the "Look Up and Live" series on CBS-TV, will also be shown on CBC-TV in Canada and are being promoted by Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox agencies.

Entitled "Choice, the Imperative of Tomorrow," the 30-minute telecasts deal with the extent of man's power to change himself and his environment and how that power can be used for good rather than self-destruction.

Marvin Kalb, CBS News correspondent, will be host of the programs, which are produced in consultation with the Broadcasting and Film Commission of the National Council of Churches.

The idea for the series was sparked by the University Christian Movement, an organization of U.S. Protestant, Orthodox and Roman Catholic campus ministry groups, which became concerned about the necessity

of helping its constituency understand the radical new choices facing man as a result of technological developments.

The series will form important background for a UCM conference scheduled for Cleveland in late December.

A broader program, involving 25 religious and secular organizations interested in technology's impact on society, has been formed in communities throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Study guides for viewers have been supplied, many in denominational magazines. The Church of the Brethren has programmed its student conference on Nov. 23-26 into a study of the series.

A viewer-study feedback scheduled for Feb. 4 as a follow-up is being planned by the Rev. David O. Poindexter of the NCC with the assistance of cooperating agencies.

The feedback will focus on positions developed and issues raised by the programs.

Segments of the series will be seen at 10:30 a.m. beginning

Nov. 5, and on each Sunday in the month.

Approximately one-half of the Canadian television stations and at least 60 per cent of the CBS network will carry them.

The first segment will be called "Creation or Destruction" and will treat man's capability to create a better world or destroy himself.

Among the guests on the program will be Dr. B. I. Sen, director general of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Glenn Seaborg of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, and Herman Kahn, director of the Hudson Institute.

Part two, "Superman or Gygis" will discuss the implications of man's capacity to manufacture life, to prolong it and alter it. Part three, "Preparation or Panic," examines man's successes and failures in readying himself and his children for existence in a vastly and rapidly changing world.

Ben Flynn produced the series for CBS. Pamela Ilott is executive producer.



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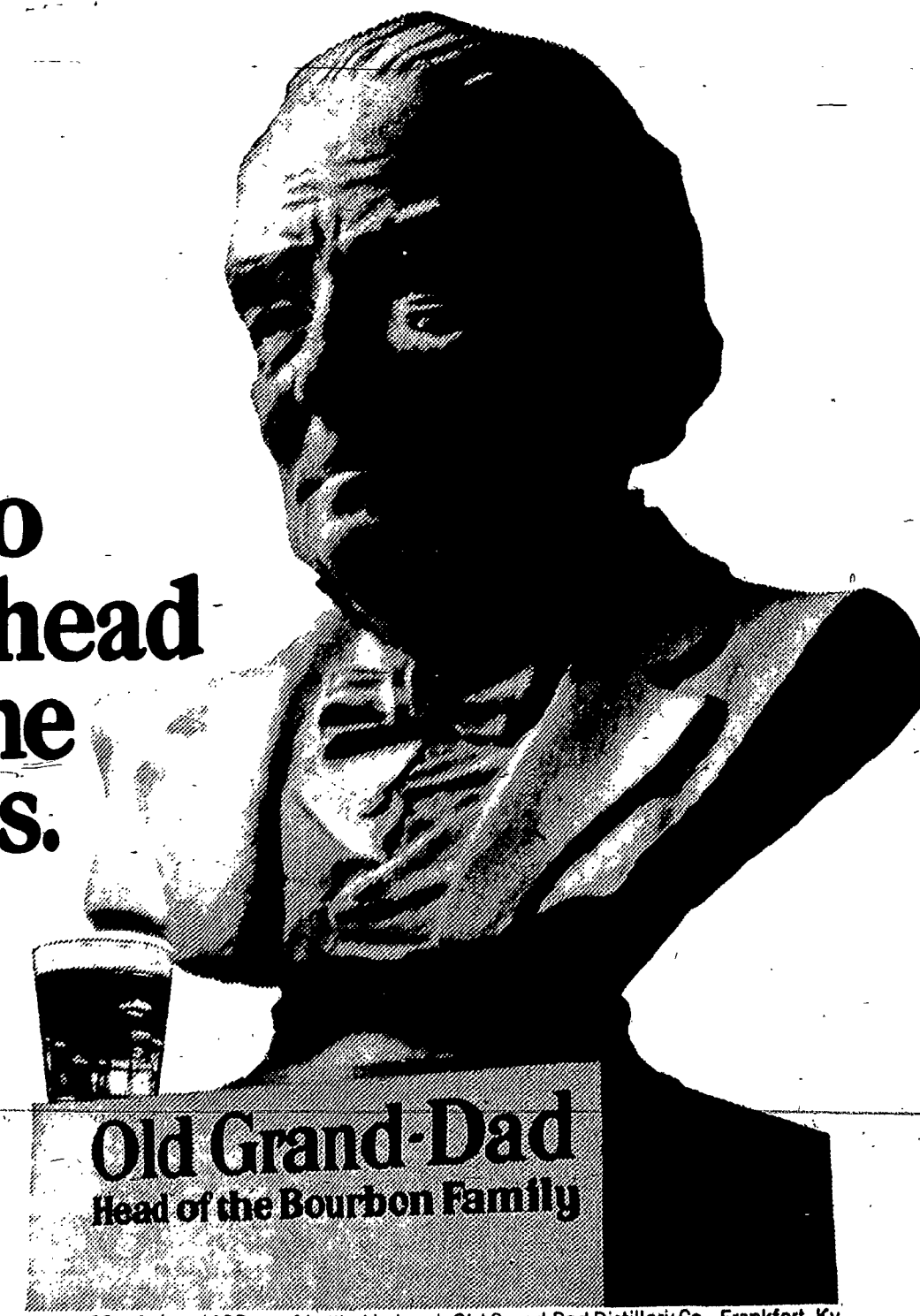


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