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Evangelical Influence Felt  
At Synod of Bishops

By C. B. Hastings

ROME (BP)--The message of Baptists and other evangelicals is being heard at the world Synod of Bishops meeting here.

Cincinnati Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin, president of the U. S. Conference of Bishops, told the 206 bishops that in the U. S. the desire to do catechetical (religious instruction) work "is strongest among those who have come to understand their Christian life as the response to their personal experience of Jesus Christ as Savior, Redeemer and Lord."

"How can children come to Jesus unless they see living witnesses?" Bishop Raymond Lucker of New Ulm, Minn., and a national expert on catechetics, asked the bishops later. He took note of many adult church members who have become inactive and then saw a great need.

"Worse, vast numbers, while continuing to attend church services and fulfill minimal observances, have never really been converted," he declared.

Bishop Lucker described this conversion as coming from "a living faith, the response of the total person, under the grace of God, to the living Word of God. It is the surrender of one's self, one's life, one's heart, one's hands and feet to the Lord Jesus. Being born again is at the very heart of the Christian life," he said.

The agenda of the Synod, as approved by Pope Paul VI for the four weeks' discussion, is "Catechetics in Our Time, with Particular Reference to Children and Youth." Appropriately, it follows the 1974 Synod on "Evangelization of the Nations." A year later, the Pope issued an "apostolic exhortation," noting that "The Gospels must be proclaimed." That has stimulated interest in evangelization and missionary activity afresh.

The agenda sounds so much an "in-house" concern that few reporters are here beyond the Catholic press. One asked Archbishop Bernardin if the subject was not boring. He replied that catechesis--the forming of individuals of each generation in mature faith--is the life and future of the Roman Catholic Church. It is true that few observers expect any great issue to come out, such as during the 1971 debate over priestly celibacy. But it is a subject of wide concern within the Church.

Perhaps the larger profit is in the periodic necessity for bishops representing many nations to listen to each other. They were restricted this year to only one "panorama" view of the world church by a German, Johannes Joachim Degenhardt, archbishop of Paderborn. But in their eight-minute "interventions" they reflect the diverse conditions of 101 nations.

The makeup of the Synod reflects world emphases; with 56 from Europe, plus 20 more from the Pope's administrators (the Curia), 37 from Africa, 24 from South America, 22 from Asia, 14 from Central America, 6 from the U. S. and 4 from Canada. The Iron Curtain countries sent 12, plus 2 from Vietnam.

In view of Pope Paul's recent 80th birthday and the state of his health, the European press has long articles speculating on "papabile"--hot prospects for the next Pope. The 52 cardinals present are no doubt the movers and shakers among the 120 total. They will eventually pick the Pope's successor.

Political maneuvering no doubt is going on, but no one in authority will comment. The Pope himself stirred the rumor mill recently when he moved one of his trusted advisors in the Curia. Cardinal Giovanni Benelli is now archbishop of Florence. Pastoral duty is usually required for papal candidates.

There was some pre-Synod unhappiness over the theme. It seemed that catechesis might be restricted to children and youth. But the first week's speeches quickly broadened that to focus primarily on adults. They, themselves, are in need of continuing catechesis to mature in the faith. Parents are the first catechists. Often, in countries where church schools are prohibited, the laity are the most available ones.

Catechesis, in the minds of the bishops, runs the whole range from preparing children for first communion to "raising the consciousness" of the poor to claim their political and economic rights. It may happen in the classroom, but it is only effective if the family and the Christian community make it come alive in their own environment.

Sister Joan Chittister, president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in the U. S., and an unofficial observer, pointed out that Catholics have too often had a "graduation mentality" about catechetics. If the children took the class and/or went to Catholic schools, they "graduated" and no longer needed any Christian training. That may have sufficed in simpler, more legalistic times, but it doesn't meet the challenge of the Christian in a secular world today.

Bishop Lucker pointed out that of 14½ million Catholic school age children 6½ million have never been in Catholic education of any kind. Hence, the scope of Christian "formation" must be greatly widened.

Cultural and national problems abound. Bishops from Communist Poland told how the refusal of the state to allow any church schools has provoked great interest of youth in catechetical groups that meet for mutual support.

On the other hand, Paul Nguyen van Binh, archbishop of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), Vietnam, aroused the hackles of the archconservatives among the press by seeming to surrender to the Marxist lifestyle. They conveniently overlooked his closing appeal to countries, such as Poland, to show him how to survive and even prosper under persecution.

A good rule of thumb here comes out. In a traditional Roman Catholic country the concern is how to evangelize the born Catholics. In a country where they are a minority, dedicated communities of Christians take over the "forming" of lives. This stress on "basic communities runs through most of the speeches from the Third World. Some accent strongly their need for liberation and social justice. Others are concerned to center on prayer and Bible study.

Youth are being heard. They require both ministers to youth and youth ministering to each other. They need the Gospel and Christian life in their own cultural forms. Catechesis, therefore, must be problem-centered and life-oriented, not so much indoctrination.

Very little is heard from the bishops over concern for orthodoxy in textbooks. In the U. S., the Catholics United for the Faith are a small but loud lobby. They have even sent personal letters to every Synod member urging him to stand pat. But most of the bishops are not buying that kind of stagnation.

Some novel experiments have surfaced. In Zaire, for example, Catholics have worked with others to produce a "common catechism" that can be used in the state-run schools. Each group finds ways to go beyond this to teach its own distinctives.

"Incarnation" rather than "adaptation" is the strategy of the approach to diverse cultures. How do you insert Christ and His Gospel into the heart of a non-Christian world? In one form or another that is every Christian community's challenge.

Still another experiment in Thailand seeks to bring adolescents together for three months. They live in common, study the Christian faith and worship and pray together. They are even asked for the period to take the classic three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. It sounds exactly likelife in a Baptist college during the Depression!

The Synod will do well to stay close to Archbishop Bernardin's five evangelical principles upon which to base catechesis: justification by grace and not by law; the calling of God to His way of life; becoming one of "the New Men" in union with Christ and living such in community; the relation between God's revealed Word and His acts in history; and the power of the Spirit to live in Christ.

If this is what catechesis is all about, no wonder Baptists and other evangelicals can get enthusiastic about what is happening in Rome.

This is the first of several reports for Baptist Press on the world Synod of Bishops in Rome by C. B. Hastings, assistant director (research in Catholicism), Department of Interfaith Witness, at the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board.

Seminary Extension Enrolls  
Over 8,700 Students

NASHVILLE (BP)--Students in all 50 states and 19 foreign countries swelled 1976-77 enrollments of the Southern Baptist Convention's Seminary Extension Department to record highs, according to the department's year-end report.

The total 8,773 students participating in the continuing education program represents an increase of almost 100 percent since the beginning of the current decade.

Developed primarily for persons who have never attended seminary, the Seminary Extension courses are available through two delivery systems--extension centers and home study. Last year, 6,972 enrolled for study in one of the 328 extension centers. Another 1,801 enrolled with Seminary Extension's Home Study Institute.

Eight years ago, in 1969-70, Seminary Extension had 4,420 students enrolled. The 1976-77 total reveals a 98.5 percent growth in the eight years.

Course enrollments (the number of individual courses for which the student signed up) showed a parallel growth pattern. From 6,334 in 1969-70, course enrollments now stand at 12,202, a 92.6 percent increase.

Raymond M. Rigdon, department director, points to several factors contributing to the recent growth of the program, established in 1950 as a department of the six Southern Baptist seminaries.

"I believe we're seeing an increasing awareness among ministers that continuing education is essential to their ministry. Along with this has come an increasing acceptance of Seminary Extension as a viable source for that study.

"We now have cooperative relationships with 18 state Baptist conventions in which a state staff member has been designated to promote Seminary Extension work within that state."

Rigdon said Seminary Extension is becoming "a world-wide movement." He noted that Seminary Extension work has reached into all 50 states for the past two years and that missionaries and U. S. military personnel are largely responsible for its spread into 19 foreign countries on five continents. Missionary Milton Murphey in Haifa, Israel, for example, this year reported that nine students there each had completed a 16-course diploma for a total of 144 course enrollments.

Rigdon continued, "We have a broad curriculum that offers something for almost any student." The current Seminary Extension catalog lists almost 40 college-level courses plus more than a dozen basic ("easy-to-read") courses. These range from in-depth studies of individual books of the Bible to practical courses in church leadership. Eight of the basic courses are available in Spanish.

The department recently entered a five-year plan, during which it will focus on a special group and its continuing education needs each year. During 1977-78 the emphasis is on minority group pastors (blacks and language groups). In 1978-79 it will be on bi-vocational pastors.

Throughout the five-year plan Seminary Extension will work closely with Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) agencies most closely related to the focus group for each year. Already in operation is a cooperative arrangement with the SBC Home Mission Board, under which home mission appointees without seminary training are required to enroll for Seminary Extension courses.

"As more and more adults discover their own need for continuing education for ministry, we look forward to serving an increasing number of students in the years ahead," Rigdon said.

Healthy Church Members  
Visit 'Hospital' Weekly

TOKYO (BP)--The 51 members of Hasune Baptist Church of Tokyo enjoy normal good health, but once a week they all go to the hospital.

Hasune Church, which formally organized Jan. 1, 1977, uses a hospital chapel as its sanctuary. A Christian physician, Dr. Nobuyoshi Okada, operates the hospital, the successor of a much smaller clinic and hospital where Dr. Okada carried on his practice in the mid-1960s.

Dr. Okada began holding Bible study meetings in the old clinic. When he had a new six-story hospital built in 1969, he included a chapel in the structure in the hope it would one day serve a new Baptist church.

In January, 1970, a mission from Shimura Baptist Church began using Dr. Okada's chapel for meetings. At the start of 1976, Shimura Church set apart 40 of its members to form the nucleus of a new church under the leadership of Motoo Yokote. Within a year, membership had grown to 51.

It is one of four Japanese Baptist churches in Itabashi Ward, one of the 23 administrative districts that make up central Tokyo. The ward has a population of about 400,000.

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Mrs. Cauthen to Donate  
Book Royalties for Missions

Baptist Press  
10/20/77

RICHMOND (BP)--Eloise G. Cauthen, wife of Baker J. Cauthen, executive director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, will give royalties received from a book she has written about her father, W. B. Glass, to the board to benefit missions.

The book, expected to be published by Broadman Press in March 1978, under the title "Higher Ground," tells of Glass' experiences as a Southern Baptist missionary to China. He served in Shantung Province for 40 years, 34 of which he taught at the North China Baptist Theological Seminary in Hwanghsien.

Pastor of a church in Lung Ko for 26 years, Glass found opportunity to participate in other evangelistic work in China and Manchuria and to help with famine relief. He was interned by the Japanese early in World War II, but was repatriated to the United States in 1943. He died in 1967.

Glass had four other children besides Mrs. Cauthen. Another daughter, Lois Glass, was also a Southern Baptist missionary to China and later served in Japan and Taiwan before her retirement in 1975. His first wife, the former Eunice Irene Taylor, died in 1914. He later married Jessie Pettigrew, a missionary nurse. She died in 1962.

The Foreign Mission Board, which voted to accept Mrs. Cauthen's donation with "deep gratitude," directed that the royalties be placed in the Baker J. and Eloise G. Cauthen Endowment Fund, established in connection with Cauthen's 20th anniversary as the board's chief executive. The principal of the fund remains intact, with the income earned going to foreign missions.

Cauthen, recuperating at his home here from a Sept. 18 heart attack, is also the subject of a new biography entitled "Baker James Cauthen, A Man For All Nations," scheduled for publication by Broadman in November. The author is Jesse C. Fletcher, who recently resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church, Knoxville, Tenn., to become president of Hardin-Simmons University, Abilene, Tex. He formerly served as director of the mission support division of the Foreign Mission Board.

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CORRECTION:

In Baptist Press story of October 18, Bernice Elliott: New Frontiers For A Pioneer, in graph 5, please include the word "New" before Mexico in the second line.