

Assembly of Princes To Elect Sovereign Head of Vatican State

Vatican City — (UP) — The forthcoming conclave of Cardinals marks the only instance of a monarchy in which the sovereign is elected by an assembly of princes. That is what election of the pope as king of Vatican state amounts to, both in name and fact. The pope is temporal sovereign of Vatican City as well as spiritual head of the Roman Catholic Church. The cardinals are "princes of the church."

But for 1,006 years, there was another world government by the same system. That was the Holy Roman Empire, counterpart and rival of the church in a struggle of giants through most of the Middle Ages. The Holy Roman Empire, founded by Charlemagne on Christmas Day of 800 A.D. and abolished by Napoleon in 1806, included Germany, most of Italy and for some time France, and was considered

the world government of Christendom in the same way as the church was its spiritual government. After the death of each emperor, his successor was elected by an assembly of "princely electors" in much the same way as a pope is elected by cardinals. The empire started with a gesture of allegiance to the Church when Charlemagne received the imperial crown from Pope Leo III in Rome

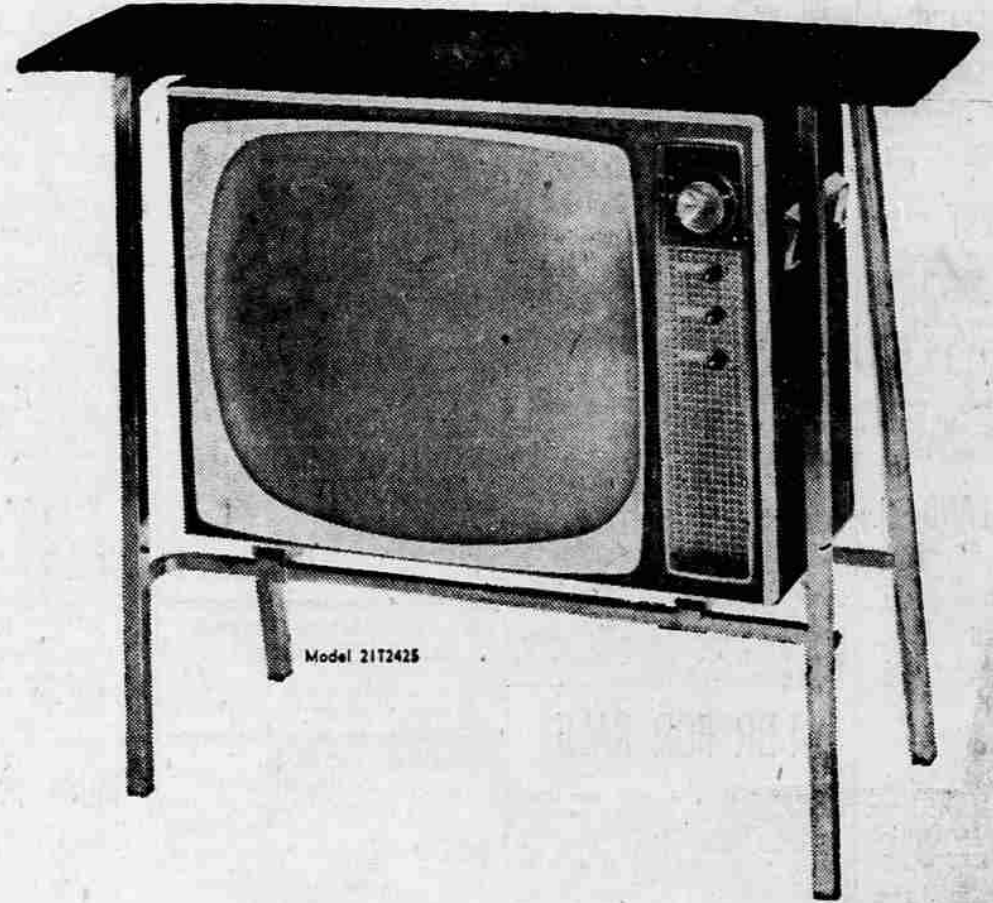
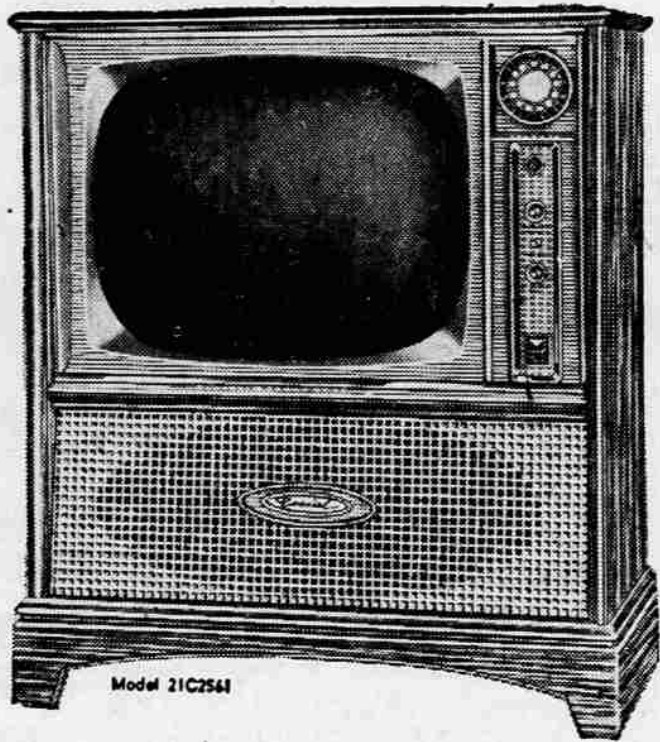
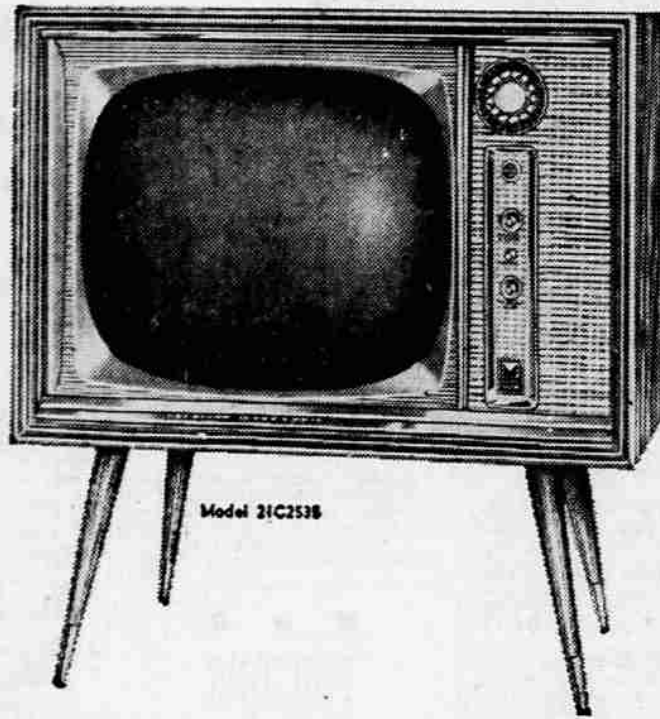
on Christmas day of the year 800. But soon the two powers came to odds, first over election of popes, then over appointment of bishops. Each struggled to overcome the other and unite spiritual and temporal might in one hand. For two centuries, in the Dark Ages, emperors practically controlled election of popes. Pope Clement II even formally recognized the emperor's right of appointing

popes in the Council of Sutri in 1046. This was eventually repealed in 1060 by Pope Nicholas II, who transferred the rights of electing pontiffs to the clergy and people of Rome. One century later, in 1179, Alexander III restricted election powers to the College of Cardinals. The Church counterattacked in another way. The great Pope St. Gregory VII, who resigned from 1073 to 1085,

forcefully proclaimed that the Roman Pontiff was the highest authority on earth and that all sovereigns owed him allegiance. Emperor Henry IV, ex-communicated and abandoned by his supporters, came to Italy to surrender to the pope and waited three days in the open air and snow before Gregory received him in the castle of Canossa. Henry IV won his revenge in 1081 when he conquered Rome and ousted the pope.

Gregory VII died in exile four years later. The fight between the two powers slackened in following centuries, and was practically over long before Napoleon abolished the Holy Roman Empire with a stroke of the pen in 1806. Today, the Holy Roman Empire is dust and the Holy Roman Church remains. Its victory is recorded casually in every Catholic Mass book with a brief note: "Prayers for the Roman emperor—these are no longer in use."

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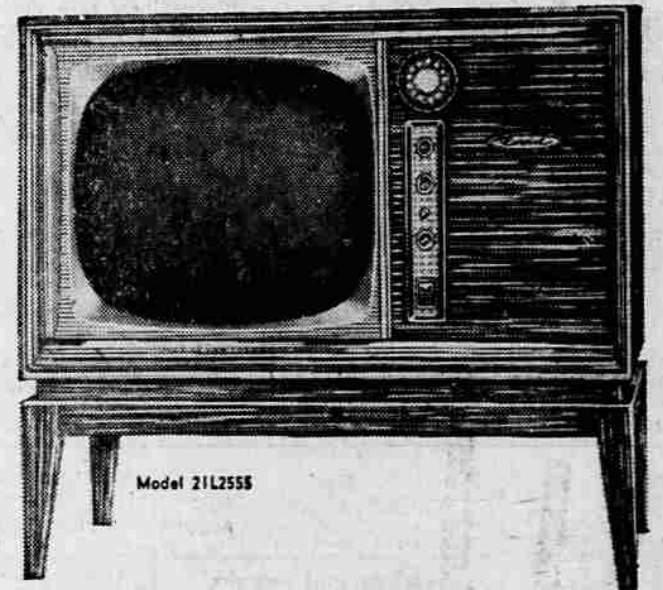
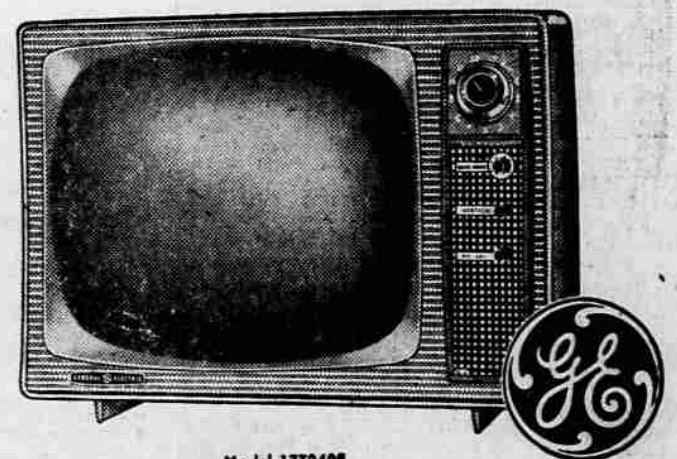
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