

FROM WASHINGTON OFFICE
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Liberty Declaration Is
Debated By Catholics

By W. Barry Garrett

VATICAN CITY (BP)-- Efforts for a strong statement on religious liberty by the Roman Catholic Church will be made at the third session of Vatican Council II now in session here. The subject is scheduled for immediate debate.

Last year religious liberty was introduced on the floor of the council as a chapter in the proposed decree on Christian unity. The council, however, did not get opportunity to debate the issue before adjournment.

Since the second session in 1963 the chapter has been revised, and, according to some Catholic authorities has been improved.

Also the chapter has been removed from the proposed decree on Christian unity and has been given the status of a "declaration." As such it will, if passed, be included as an appendix to Christian unity.

This shift has caused concern among some observers that religious liberty has been downgraded and given an inferior standing. This view is denied, however, by experts on the U. S. bishops' press panel that meets daily with news reporters.

The Bureau of Information of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, D.C., earlier explained the shift. It said, "By making the statements on religious liberty and the Jews 'declarations' they wish to imply these to be of lesser binding force than a conciliar 'constitution' or 'decree.' A 'declaration' will be, by its nature, less solemn and not enjoy the same rank as a conciliar definition."

Baptist Press asked the U. S. bishops' press panel if it agreed with the above evaluation. Monsignor Frederick McManus, a canon law expert, said that he did not agree that religious liberty is being downgraded. He said that this does not at all mean that the "declarations" are any less binding or significant.

Questioned as to how the church would receive a "declaration," Monsignor McManus said that it is inconceivable that it could ever be ignored. He said that if the council publishes declarations, it means that this is a statement of principle of the pope and the council, and "as such it has the greatest authority and binding force."

Another expert on the press panel, Monsignor Francis J. McCool of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, explained the difference between a decree and a declaration. "A decree would immediately say such and such should be done," he said. "But in a declaration," he continued, "we would have an expression of the mind of the church toward religious liberty and toward a proper attitude toward the Jews."

Later at a press conference Archbishop John C. Heenan of Westminster spoke out in favor of a strong declaration on religious liberty. He said that it would be proper to call people who reject religious liberty "unprogressive."

In a special meeting of the U. S. bishops it was agreed that they would work to strengthen both the declaration on religious liberty and on the Jews.

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Earlier in the year in papers released by Monsignor John Courtney Murray, noted Catholic authority on religious liberty, he said that the new Catholic view "abandons" and "rejects" the old position of the church. He hastened to point out, however, that the modern view is both "new and traditional" thus preserving the continuity of doctrine in the church.

The old view is based primarily on the theory that only truth has rights. The new view shifts the emphasis to the fact that people have rights. This break with the past means that if the church approves the declaration on religious liberty it will positionize itself for complete religious freedom for all people everywhere.

The effect of such a declaration may not be felt immediately in all nations and cultures, but it will state the basic principle upon which the church must adjust itself in the future.

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Report From Rome

(9-22-64)

When Blindness and Immaturity Collide

By W. Barry Garrett

Two incidents illustrate the difficulty non-Catholics may have in understanding the nature and extent of the struggle going on in Vatican Council II for the updating of the church.

One day a friend and I were walking just outside St. Peter's here in Rome. Directly in front of us a little boy with a tray of coffee and chocolate delicately balanced in his hands collided with a blind man who was picking his way along with his white cane. Coffee, chocolate, cups, tray and all splattered over the sidewalk.

Immediately a violent argument arose. The little boy had to pay for the drinks he was delivering to a customer and he wouldn't let the blind man go without collecting. The blind man was furious at the boy for paying no attention. He refused to pay any damages. Angry Italian words filled the air like lightning and thunder. Neither person would give in to the other.

My friend, wanting to do something to solve the delicate situation, asked, "Now just what do you do when immaturity runs into blindness?"

Just then a stranger with more understanding than the rest of us slipped up and paid the boy for his loss. The argument stopped and everyone went happily on their way.

Here is our problem--immaturity in conflict with blindness. Here is a question--who or what is the third party to produce peace, harmony and understanding?

The other incident took place on the plane 33,000 feet above the Atlantic between New York and Paris. I was sitting toward the back of the plane where I could see the passengers ahead. We had been in the air a couple of hours and the passengers had settled down to five hours of self-occupation.

Some had stretched out across two or three seats sound asleep. Others were propped up on pillows trying to sleep. Some were reading, working on papers or chatting merrily with their traveling companions.

Suddenly, without warning, the captain reporting on our location and weather conditions blasted out on the public address system with the volume twice too loud. It was like a clap of thunder.

Several seats ahead a bearded, beatnik-looking man who had been drowsing jumped halfway out of his seat, flung his arms into the air, and acted like a wild animal suddenly caught in a trap.

Just in front of me a man, sound asleep, sat up wide awake, angry for being awakened. He paraded up and down the aisle fussing at the stewardess.

Others in the plane calmly looked up, listened to the captain and returned to their occupations. They understood. They were not disturbed.

This is the parable of life. People react to the same events in startlingly different ways, depending on their background, frame of mind or degree of understanding.

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This is especially true as one approaches the reform efforts of the Roman Catholic Church which is dramatically going on in the Vatican Council.

Some are gullible and make no effort to appraise what is taking place. They ask no questions and are not bothered with any doubts. Others are violent in their conviction that Rome does not and cannot change. They are super critical without taking the trouble to find out facts, understand the problems or to attribute sincerity to people who are obviously struggling with a hard situation.

It is my view that the truth and a proper understanding lies somewhere in between these two extremes. As the Catholic Church struggles with the problems of the nature of the church, centralization or decentralization of authority, relations with other Christians and with the Jews, religious liberty, attitude toward marriage problems, the role of the laity, revelation, the relation of the church to the modern world, etc., we must be careful lest we come to our conclusions too quickly and with inadequate or irresponsible information.

The two incidents remind me of two sayings of Jesus: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves," and "let a man take heed how he hears...he that has ears to hear let him hear."

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3 Baptist Journalists
Report Vatican Council

(9-22-64)

WASHINGTON (BP)-- Three Baptist journalists are reporting on the third session of Vatican Council II of the Roman Catholic Church now meeting in Rome.

W. Barry Garrett, a Baptist correspondent in Washington, D. C., is reporting for Baptist publications in North America and Europe. He serves Baptists in America through Baptist Press (BP) and Baptist Public Affairs (BPA). European Baptist Press Service (EBPS) will receive his reports for publications in Europe.

Garrett was in Rome five weeks last year for the second session of Vatican Council II.

John Jeter Hurt, Jr., editor of The Christian Index, Atlanta, Ga., is reporting for Church and State, a monthly publication of Protestants and Other Americans United (POAU) and for his own paper.

Last year Stanley Lowell, editor of Church and State, was in Rome for about 10 days during the second session of the council.

Stanley I. Stuber, director of Association Press, publishing house of the YMCA in New York, spent the first week in Rome during the third session this year as correspondent for Missions Magazine, a publication of the American Baptist Convention.

Stuber previously spent six weeks in Rome during the first and second sessions of the council as "guest" of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI.

Baptists do not have an official "observer" at the Vatican Council. The Baptist World Alliance did not take the opportunity to send an "observer" to the council when it was approached by Vatican sources about the matter.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

Earlier I had a story about Brooks Hays coming to Rome later this month. It is my understanding that efforts are being made for a private audience with Pope Paul. As soon as this takes place we plan a story on the Hays visit with the pope. No definite announcement has yet been made of such a visit to the pope, but I anticipate that it will take place.

---Barry Garrett

White Named Managing
Editor POAU Journal

WASHINGTON (BP)--J. Eugene White, editorial assistant at the Baptist Standard, Dallas, Tex., is the newly elected managing editor of Church and State, official journal of Protestants and Other Americans United (POAU).

White has served as assistant to E. S. James, editor of the Baptist Standard, for five years. The Standard is the publication of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. He assumes his new duties in Washington on October 15.

Prior to his work at the Baptist Standard, White was chaplain for the Goodwill Industries in Dallas. He held various pastorates in Oklahoma and Texas. He is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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Pratt Resumes Post
In Missouri Convention

(9-22-64)

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)--Eugene T. Pratt returns to the Missouri Baptist Convention offices here to be statewide director of evangelism, the same position he held once before for five years.

After that earlier period, from 1957 to 1962, Pratt joined the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth as associate professor of evangelism. He returns here Jan. 15, but during the interim months Pratt will give part-time direction to the evangelism program in Missouri.

James W. Hackney, who has served as director of evangelism in the state since 1962, resigned to become pastor of First Baptist Church, Sikeston, Mo. He was pastor of First Baptist Church, Rolla, Mo., before beginning his two years as state evangelism director.

His move to Sikeston was effective immediately.

During Hackney's term of service, 160 Missouri Baptist ministers went to Australia to lead a month-long evangelistic crusade among 400 churches there.

Pratt, a native of Sedalia, Mo., held several pastorates in Missouri and was also an associational superintendent of missions before his first period as state evangelism director.

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Kentucky Exceeds Goal

(9-22-64)

MIDDLETOWN, Ky. (BP)--The Kentucky Baptist Convention exceeded its Cooperative Program budget goal for the 1964 fiscal year which ended Aug. 31, collecting \$2,852,834 from cooperating churches. This was \$2834 above the year's goal and 6.3 per cent more than gifts during 1963, Executive Secretary Harold G. Sanders announced here.

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