

FROM WASHINGTON OFFICE
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EDITORS: The following story was delayed in reaching us from Rome. We pass it on to you for your information and for whatever use you wish to make of it. It is closely related to "Catholic Council Sets Forth Ideas On Freedom" in the September 21 Baptist Press release.

--Washington Baptist Press

September 27, 1965

Catholic Bishops Vote
Approval Of Liberty

By W. Barry Garrett

VATICAN CITY (BP)-- The Roman Catholic bishops of the world in session here at Vatican Council II overwhelmingly voted for a new doctrine of religious liberty.

Although the declaration yet faces a long and rigorous procedure before it is finally promulgated as official Catholic teaching, many observers here feel that a major hurdle has at last been cleared. Expectation is strong that the Council will now proceed to enact a modern view on religious freedom.

The vote on the Declaration on Religious Liberty by the 2,222 bishops present was 1,997 for, 224 against, and 1 null vote.

The bishops had listened to 62 speeches this year on the subject before they closed debate and a vote was taken. About one-half of the speeches opposed the proposed declaration, and many experts at the Council were fearful that it would receive only a small majority. However, the overwhelming vote has made it clear that the mind of the Council is in favor of the principle of religious liberty as set forth in the document.

All further revisions of the document now must reflect that favorable mind, and the objections of the opponents of religious freedom need not now be taken into consideration.

The motion voted upon by the bishops is as follows: "Whether the text on religious liberty is acceptable as a basis for the definitive Declaration which will come after further amendment in the light of the Catholic Doctrine on the true religion and the amendments proposed by the Fathers in discussion, which will be subsequently approved according to the forms of Council procedure."

The principle approved by the bishops is that the right to religious freedom is founded on the dignity of the human person, that this right must be recognized as a civil right in society, and that "in matters of religion, no one may be forced to act contrary to his conscience, nor may he be impeded from acting in accordance with his conscience, in private or in public, within due limits."

Although religious liberty has been discussed at each of the previous three sessions of the Council, this is the first time it has reached the voting stage. As a result of this vote the document now becomes an official Council document that must be acted upon. It now goes back to the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity for a minute revision in the light of the speeches on the floor of the Council and the written suggestions for changes and correction from other bishops.

The revised document will then be brought back to the Council for vote chapter by chapter and section by section. No further debate on the Declaration is to be had. The voting hereafter will be either approval, disapproval, or approval with reservations. After this round of voting the procedure will be to revise it further in the light of the reservations, and then be presented to the Council for final approval.

September 27, 1965

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Baptist Press

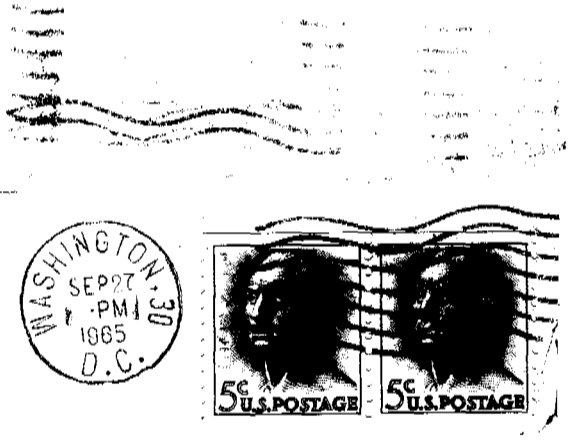
In discussions at the United States Bishops' Press Panel it has become clear that this Declaration is a "new" doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church. It will be binding upon all Roman Catholics, and it must eventually be implemented in all countries.

Admittedly, this implementation will take longer in some countries than in others, and there will be infractions of the doctrine. But this action heralds a turning point in Roman Catholic history and possibly in the history of the world. It is expected to have a strong effect in the United Nations, in Catholic countries, and hopefully in Communist countries. It is hoped by the advocates that religious restrictions will be eased where Catholics are involved in some countries, where Protestants are suppressed in others, where Jews suffer in others, and where Christians are restricted in non-Christian nations.

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