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**BUREAUS**

**ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Billy Keith, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lynn M. Davis, Jr., Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37203, Telephone (615) 254-5461  
**RICHMOND** Jesse C. Fletcher, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (703) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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News Analysis

**Prayer Amendment Killed  
In House by 28-Vote Margin**

By W. Barry Garrett

**WASHINGTON (BP)**--The proposed constitutional prayer amendment is dead, at least for a little while.

It was killed in the House of Representatives on November 8 when proponents of the amendment failed to achieve the required two-thirds majority by 28 votes, considered by many observers as a sizeable defeat. The vote was 240-162.

The dramatic defeat of the prayer amendment demonstrates the virility of the First Amendment of the Constitution and its guarantees for religious liberty in the United States.

It also demonstrates that the religious forces of the nation do not take their freedom lightly and that they can be rallied to action when that freedom is threatened.

The keynote of the opposition to the prayer amendment was sounded by Rep. Carl Albert (D., Okla.), speaker of the House, when he marched to a microphone on the floor and asked to be heard.

In an extremely tense moment and in thundering tones, sounding like a Southern Baptist evangelist at the climax of his sermon, Albert declared: "Any interference by any official at any level is a violation of freedom of religion. I am not prepared to let the meddling hand of government at any level in any degree be placed on any man's altar. This resolution must be defeated."

The rejection of the prayer amendment by the House marks its defeat in the complete legislative circle of the Congress. In 1964 the House Judiciary Committee and in 1966 the Senate Judiciary Committee refused to approve any prayer amendment.

In October of 1970 the Senate Judiciary Committee was bypassed by attaching the Dirksen Prayer Amendment to the proposed amendment for equal rights for women. The Senate then killed the whole package.

This year, by the process of a discharge petition, the House Judiciary Committee was bypassed and the prayer amendment was brought directly to the floor, where it was rejected.

Even though the prayer amendment is dead for this session of Congress, it is like a snake with its head cut off but its tail continues to wiggle.

Obviously recognizing in advance that they were defeated, the proponents of the amendment had a mimeographed press release ready for distribution the instant the vote was taken in the House of Representatives.

Robert G. Howes, national coordinator of Citizens for Public Prayer, declared that, although the prayer amendment has suffered a temporary setback, the target is now the elections in 1972. At these elections the prayer amendment people have announced that they will seek the defeat of all congressmen who voted against them.

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Whether or not the prayer amendment advocates can sustain their drive after defeat in both houses of Congress remains to be seen. It would appear that it will be more difficult in the future to discharge committees and to achieve two-thirds majority in either house of Congress now that both bodies have had opportunity to vote on a prayer amendment.

History, however, takes strange turns and the supporters of religious liberty and of the First Amendment cannot afford to be lulled into comfortable sleep.

What happened to the prayer amendment that led to its defeat in the House of Representatives?

When the House of Representatives convened at noon on November 8, there were only 20 or 30 Congressmen on the floor, and the galleries had scatterings of visitors. Chaplain Edward G. Latch opened the meeting with a prayer that was obviously addressed to Congress and for the prayer amendment, rather than to the ear of God.

The chaplain intoned, "Bless our President, our speaker, members of Congress, and all who labor with them. Gird them with cheerful courage and inspiring insight that they may highly resolve that this white-domed Capitol may be the symbol not only of material might, but of reality in religion, proclaiming to all men the moral and spiritual resources upon which our freedom rests and without which they disintegrate and disappear."

A careful examination of the chaplain's words reveals that they were a pitch to Congressmen on behalf of the prayer amendment and that the philosophy undergirding it is the basis on which union of church and state has been achieved in many countries of the world.

The first crucial vote was taken when the House voted whether or not to discharge the Judiciary Committee from further responsibility for the prayer amendment. Even though the vote to discharge was 242 to 156, it was a clear indication that the prayer amendment proponents did not have the required two-thirds vote for passage of their resolution.

From then on the tactics were to salvage as much as possible. The strategy that was agreed on was for an amendment to the amendment to be proposed. Rep. John Buchanan (R., Ala.), an ordained Baptist clergyman, was selected for this job.

After an hour of debate on the prayer amendment, Rep. Buchanan was recognized for the purpose of making his amendment. He moved to substitute "voluntary" prayer for "nondenominational" prayer and to add "or meditation" to H. J. Res. 191.

The hope of the proponents was that this change would remove the objectionable features of the original proposal and that enough votes would be picked up to get two-thirds majority.

After another hour of heated debate the revised amendment was rejected.

What happened prior to the vote on November 8 to kill what otherwise was considered on September 21 to be a sure thing?

As fate would have it, or as some would say that it was providential, the prayer amendment proponents did not figure correctly on the timing of their discharge petition. The rules of the House of Representatives require that action on a discharge petition can take place only on a second or fourth Monday following the signing of the petition.

What the prayer amendment people did not figure on was that the next two eligible Mondays were federal holidays and the first Monday available for voting was November 8. This gave the opponents seven weeks in which to rally their forces and to inform the public about the real issues involved in changing the First Amendment.

Immediately a coalition of strange bed-fellows was formed in Washington to fight the prayer amendment. Leaders of major religious bodies in the United States joined with education and civil liberties groups. These included such diverse groups as Southern Baptists and Unitarians, Jews and the National Council of Churches, the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United.

The first action was to produce a joint statement of opposition to the prayer amendment which was signed by 38 representatives of national religious bodies. A literature was created and 120,000 pamphlets were distributed to key spots throughout the United States.

A congressional bi-partisan coalition against the prayer amendment was formed. A press conference with national religious leaders and congressional leaders was held. Weekly meetings of the religious coalition were held to coordinate activities and to make assignments.

Groups were organized for activity on Capitol Hill, and other strategy was adopted to produce pressure from the congressional districts.

For weeks prior to November 8, in the absence of public hearings, a lively debate among congressmen was conducted in the pages of the Congressional Record. The issues were thoroughly aired through this medium.

On the day the vote was to be taken a "whip" system was organized to assure that all who were against the prayer amendment were present and voting.

The outcome of all the effort was the defeat of the prayer amendment, which on September 21 was considered a sure success.

Minority leader Gerald R. Ford (R., Mich.), who favored the prayer resolution, attributed its defeat to the religious leaders of America. All who are familiar with what happened concur with this conclusion.

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#### Ohio Convention Opposes Abortion Liberalization

11/9/71

FAIRBORN, Ohio (EP)--The State Convention of Baptists in Ohio meeting here adopted resolutions opposing liberalization of abortion laws, and opposing the prayer amendment to the U. S. Constitution.

Meeting just a few days before Congress was to vote on the prayer amendment, the Ohio Southern Baptists voted to send telegrams to Ohio congressmen indicating the convention's opposition.

Another resolution asked for a presidential investigation into the rising costs of medical care, and still another strongly urged the Ohio legislature and governor to oppose liberalization of abortion laws.

The abortion resolution stated that "the taking of life is wrong according to God and his word, and the taking of fetal life denies the right of that individual to live his life in service to God."

The resolution expressed support for "the God-given right of all men to live, that the point where life begins is clearly God's work, and the potential for life is always present."

The resolution was in contrast with a resolution adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in St. Louis last June, when the SBC urged Baptists "to work for legislation that will allow the possibility of abortion under such conditions as rape, incest, clear evidence of severe fetal deformity, and carefully ascertained evidence of the likelihood of damage to the emotional, mental and physical health of the mother."

In major business actions, the convention re-elected T. James Eford, pastor of Whitehall Baptist Church, Columbus, Ohio, as president; adopted a budget of \$1.4 million; and heard reports on plans for an evangelistic emphasis in 1972.

Ray Roberts, executive secretary of the convention, reported that a record 7,359 persons were baptized (converted) in Ohio Southern Baptist churches last year, and that 51 new missions had been started, the largest number since 1964.

Next year, the convention will meet with the Mt. Carmel Baptist Church in Cincinnati.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is the third in a series of special reports for Baptist Press from C. Brownlow Hastings, assistant secretary of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's department of interfaith witness, who is attending the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops in Rome as an observer and correspondent for Baptist Press.

Billy Graham Upstages  
Pope, Synod of Bishops

By C. B. Hastings

ROME (BP)--Evangelist Billy Graham upstaged Pope Paul VI and the Synod of Bishops when he came to Rome for a rally of evangelicals to explore the possibility of a major crusade here in 1973.

The Italian leaders who issued the warm invitation to Graham laid down one restriction, however: they asked that Graham "not have contact with the Pope or other representatives of the Catholic hierarchy before, during or after his addresses."

Graham, who said that he, like the Apostle Paul, had a "longing to come to Rome to preach the gospel," did not immediately accept the invitation. He promised his answer in a month or two.

Religious leaders here, both Protestant and Catholic, did not know whether Graham would accept the restriction placed on his invitation, nor did they know the real reasons for the restriction's being given.

Some observers were wondering if those who invited Graham, supposedly influenced by a rather strong group of Pentecostals on the committee, were smarting from the widely-publicized visit between the pope and W. A. Criswell of Dallas, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, who was accompanied by a party of 400 Baptists on their way to the Holy Land. Graham is a member of the First Baptist Church of Dallas where Criswell is pastor.

Only shortly before Graham was in Rome, Pope Paul had called for a world-wide thrust among Catholics toward "evangelization of unbelievers," and during the week of Graham's visit, many Italian Catholic churches were urging lay support and participation in this "apostolic mission."

The Synod of Bishops, meanwhile, was in a flurry of activity, preparing final statements on the two main issues on its agenda--the future of the priesthood, and justice and world peace.

Putting the two issues of the priesthood and justice on the same agenda in that order has been a major mistake in the eyes of many observers here. It tended to short-change the urgency of each issue and to lead to poor comparisons.

Most clergymen, both Protestant and Catholic, likewise can find it easier to denounce the world at large than to clean up their own houses in particular.

While at the beginning of the Synod the Bishops seemed preoccupied with the issue of the priesthood, no one can find fault with the bishops in their frequent call for a worthy example in the struggle against world injustice and need.

In his summary statement to the assembly on the full debate on justice, Archbishop Alberto Valderrama of the Philippines called for the Catholic Church not to talk, but to act. Such action, he said, must begin at home, within the church itself. "The whole style of life in the Church should be reformed," he said. "Stark simplicity, poverty in personal life, especially for clerics, should be part of this change." The archbishop made the plea within a stone's throw of the opulent Church of St. Peter and the Vatican Museum.

Alberto also took note of the number of bishops who had advocated "that women have a larger share in the consultative and executive institutions of the Church."

Canadian Catholics had called for a study commission on involvement of women in the church. Patriarch Hakim of Antioch, strongly advocating such a commission, told the synod:

"Even in Muslim countries, civil law is trying to make amends for the injustices toward women. The Church must not, as often happens, arrive late on the scene, after civil governments."

Calling for the next synod to concern itself in a major way with the role of women in the church, he pointed out that half of the Catholic Church's members are women, and that sisters under vows were ten times as numerous as priests in the world.

Archbishop Byrne, coadjutor bishop of Minneapolis-St. Paul, urged the national conferences of bishops not to wait for the next synod or any proposed papal commission, but to deal with the issue. He urged the bishops to "undertake serious studies of their own national cultures, and of Church law and practice, in order to eliminate any form of infringement on the rights of women in civil or ecclesiastical life."

In the largest press conference during the synod, Barbara Ward, Lady Jackson of England and the first woman in recent centuries to address a Catholic synod or council of bishops, told about 250 reporters not to get hung up over the issues of celibacy and birth control when there is so much injustice, oppression and abject poverty in the world.

She urged top priority for the church "to get on with the job of being concerned with the massive job of the maldistribution of wealth and the desperate plight of an increasing majority of the world."

She pointed out that all the talk in the synod about solving the problems of world justice recognizes that the Roman Catholic Church is not trying to "go it alone," but that the solution is a truly ecumenical concern, reaching even beyond professing Christians to all men of good will everywhere.

Perhaps this is a major message of the synod to Southern Baptists--to look at ourselves, as the Catholics are trying to do, to see where our priorities are, and to seek to bring peace and justice to all people everywhere.