

1-1-1997

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Recommended Citation

Anonymous (1997) "Church Authority and Academic Freedom (Frontiers of Theology)," *Perspective Digest*: Vol. 2 : No. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pd/vol2/iss1/7>

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CHURCH AUTHORITY AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

During the past decade a number of Catholic colleges and universities distanced themselves from the Roman Catholic Church. Professors and administrators described their institutions only as being "in the Catholic tradition." Today the secularization of the church's educational system has been reversed; once again schools are referring to themselves as Catholic colleges. The turnaround took five years, the ouster of two well-known Catholic theologians, and a new set of rules to govern relationships between the church's 235 higher educational institutions and church authorities. The nature of the controversy and how it has been resolved should be of interest to any church with colleges beset by theological aberrations and defiance of church authority on the one hand and alleged restraints imposed by academic freedom and tenure on the other.

It took five years for administrators of the Roman Catholic Church's 235 colleges and universities to get the message: The church expects loyalty to its message and mission from its higher educational institu-

tions. And its local bishops (analogous to Adventist union conference presidents) are to ensure that the schools accurately reflect Catholic teaching on controversial matters. The rules were spelled out in a document adopted with little debate or dissent by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) on November 13, 1996.

The document, says David E. Anderson, writing for Religion News Service, "stresses that Catholic colleges and universities must make a serious effort to hire and retain faculty and other staff members 'who are committed to Catholic tradition or, if not Catholic, who are aware and respectful of that tradition.'"^{*}

Bishops, said Thomas Reese, a fellow at Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University, were concerned that Catholic schools were "going the way of Protestant colleges and universities" by becoming secularized and separated from the institutional church. College and university presidents shared this concern, but many academics voiced fears that "insistence on Catholic identity would destroy academic freedom."

Two widely reported controver-

sies resulted in moral theologian Charles Curran's loss of his license to teach Catholic theology at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and theologian Hans Kung's ouster from his post as an official Catholic theologian in Germany.

The November document implements rules set forth by Pope John Paul II six years ago in *Ex code Ecclesiae*, published on August 15, 1990. Five years of talk between bishops and school officials resulted in language that both bishops and school authorities could endorse. At its heart is the "requirement that local bishops be more involved in the life of the schools and universities in their jurisdictions and especially

exercise oversight over professors and others charged with teaching Catholic doctrine."

However, a local bishop "in circumstances where he questions whether. . . an individual theologian is presenting authentic Catholic teaching," says the document, "shall follow a set of due process procedures adopted as suggestions by the bishops in 1989." Prior to adoption of the November document, these procedures were optional; they are now mandatory in cases where bishops and theologians are in conflict. □

*See Religion News Service, November 15, 1996.

CAN WE HONOR GOD BY ERRONEOUS OPINIONS?

The truth and the glory of God are inseparable; it is impossible for us, with the Bible within our reach, to honor God by erroneous opinions. Many claim that it matters not what one believes, if his life is only right. But the life is moulded by the faith. If . . . truth is within our reach, and we neglect to improve the privilege of hearing and seeing it, we virtually reject it; we are choosing darkness rather than light" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 597).