

U.S. Theologians Protest Schillebeeckx Hearings

New York (RNS)— A group of Roman Catholic theologians have petitioned the Vatican to turn its secret "hearings" on the controversial works of Dominican priest and scholar Edward Schillebeeckx into an "authentic dialogue" to be joined by other informed theologians.

The petition, signed by 144 prominent North American theologians, joined by some Swiss and Germans, expressed "deep concern" over the procedure of the inquiry, "not only in the case of Father Schillebeeckx, but in general."

The conduct of the investigation was criticized in a

cover letter by the petition organizers, Leonard Swidler and the Rev. Gerard Sloyan, professors at Temple University in Philadelphia. They referred to Catholic scholars and journalists who view the Schillebeeckx as "part of a developing pattern of investigations and restrictive actions by the Vatican against progressive Catholic theologians in Europe and America."

Father Schillebeeckx, a Belgian-born university theologian, was recently summoned to Rome to defend his 1974 book, *Jesus, an Experiment on Christology*. Vatican sources said the Congregation for the Doctrine

of the Faith has questioned the orthodoxy of his views on the physical resurrection of Christ and on Christ's real presence in the Eucharist.

Following the furor over the summons, Father Schillebeeckx, a professor at Nijmegen University in the Netherlands, collapsed with fatigue. The hearings were scheduled to be underway at this time.

The petition buttressed its point with several quotations from Pope John Paul II which advocated unrestricted, open inquiry and discussion among theologians. Among the cited papal statements on the issue was an excerpt from the

pope's address to Catholic theologians and scholars at the Catholic University of America, during his tour of the U.S. in October.

"We will never tire of insisting on the eminent role of the university... a place of scientific research," the pope told his Washington audience. The university must apply "the highest standards of scientific research, constantly updating its methods and working instruments... in freedom of investigation."

Based on selected series of eight papal pronouncements, the petitioners argued that "the function of the

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith should be to promote dialogue among theologians... so that the most enlightening, helpful and authentic expression of theology could ultimately find acceptance."

The petition also called for dialogue on doctrinal issues to

be held in collaboration with universities, theological organizations, the International Theological Commission and the Pontifical Biblical Commission. "Such a procedure is, of course, by no means new," the statement said. "It is precisely the procedure utilized by the Second Vatican Council."

U.S. Sexuality Report Again Castigated

Vatican City (RNS)— The Vatican has renewed its attack on a book on human sexuality published by a group of American theologians in 1977.

In its Dec. 7 edition, the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, gave prominent display to three church documents which sharply criticized the findings and recommendations of the book, *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*.

There was no explanation why the criticism was renewed at this stage or why it was being given such prominence.

The hardcover book, published by the Paulist Press in 1977, was the fruit of a research project commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America. It proposed that the morality of human sexuality be viewed from "personalist" criteria, rather than from an "objective" approach that categorized certain actions as "intrinsically evil."

It offered a new perspective for judging the morality of sexual expression from premarital sex and adultery to masturbation and homosexual acts.

One of the three documents published in the newspaper was a reprint of a November 1977 statement of the Committee on Doctrine of the U.S. Catholic Bishops

Conference which said that the book "contradicts theological tradition and the church's clear magisterial teaching refined over the centuries and recently reaffirmed in the Vatican Declaration on Sexual Ethics and the American Bishops Pastoral Letter."

The second document was a reprint of a letter to Archbishop John R. Quinn, USCBC president, from Cardinal Franjo Seper, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which took the American theological society to task for not scuttling the human sexuality project and which praised the U.S. bishops committee for publicly rejecting the book.

The third document, entitled "Observations," presented the Vatican doctrinal agency's detailed negative analysis of the book. Scoring the book's contention that the central role of human sex is to contribute to a person's "creative growth toward integration," the Vatican document said that that principle "allows for a relativism of human behavior which in the end fails to recognize any absolute values."

The document charged that the book, in one of its most fundamental errors, failed to accept the established Catholic view that the "traditional end" of human sexuality was "procreative and uniting."

The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

Inquisition Continues

Is it not time for Catholic scholars around the world to take a lead from the fable of the little boy and the emperor and say that the Inquisition has no clothes.

Catholic scholars did in book censorship in the late 1960s by simply refusing to submit their books for censorship. That age-old oppressive custom withered and died. Ought not the Inquisition be given the same treatment? And let us call it by its proper name. Not the Congregation for the Protection of the Faith, not the Holy Office, but the Inquisition, for that is what it is particularly as the Dominican Archbishop Jerome Hamer pursues his neurotic vendettas against members of his own order.

Why should a theologian of the caliber of Edward Schillebeeckx have to respond to the idiocies that are proposed as an attack on his life and work? They clearly have been written by men who do not understand what Schillebeeckx has said, do not want to understand what he has said, will not accept whatever answer he gives and will not permit any kind of fair or impartial process. Is it not time for Catholic scholars all over the world to serve notice on the Holy See that until the processes become fair and the personnel become competent they will simply not even open mail that comes from the Inquisition?

Schillebeeckx, Hans Kung and the American moral theologians who are apparently being harassed all have made major mistakes by taking these harassments seriously. The process by which the Inquisition operates is a pilgrimage from prejudices to foregone conclusions without any pretense at fairness, understanding, communication, or respect for human rights in between.

Paul VI dilly-dallied with the Inquisition, refusing to suppress it but restraining its more vicious tactics and its more obvious vendettas. John Paul II cannot have it both ways. He cannot continue the Inquisition

under the aegis of men like Hamer and still expect Catholic scholars to live up to the high academic standards he propounded in his speech at the Catholic University of America (a university which fails miserably, by the way, on virtually all the criteria for excellence which the pope laid down).

The rumored decision of the Inquisition, for example, that leavened bread is invalid matter for the Eucharist in the Western church has to be one of the most ridiculous absurdities in the history of Christianity. It presumes that when Jesus instituted the Eucharist and determined bread as its basic material he said, "All right, all you fellas in the West can only do it validly with unleavened bread, but you fellas in the East can use either bread if you want."

This is the Magisterium of the church?

Don't be silly.

What power does the Inquisition have? Perhaps it can force theologians off the faculties of seminaries. If a theologian intends to write controversial materials, or even the kind of things that will offend Archbishop Hamer's scrupulosities, he probably doesn't belong on the seminary faculty in the first place. A scholar who has a tenured position at a university is utterly beyond the reach of Hamer and his thumbscrew crowd.

Edward Schillebeeckx cannot be fired from Nijmegen. Hans Kung cannot be fired from Tubingen. And American theologians, even at Catholic universities, cannot be fired either. The Inquisition may tell you that you cannot write anymore, as it told Father Teilhard a long time ago. But however virtuous Teilhard's obedience may have been in his day and age, an order from the Inquisition today forbidding you to write has about as much clout as a \$3.00 parking ticket.

There are some crazy things passing for theology in the church these days. Chicago's De Paul University, for example, has a professor who denies in freshman theology classes the resurrection of Jesus. Hamer and his spies miss things like this and go after dedicated and orthodox men like Schillebeeckx.

Evaluate Life Styles, World's Jesuits Told

New York (RNS)— Jesuits around the world are being asked by Rome to consider whether they have become too secular in their life styles and whether they have become involved in work "incompatible with the priestly character."

If so, they are to take steps to remedy the situation.

The questions and the directive to the 27,500 members of the worldwide Society of Jesus were included in an October letter sent by Father Pedro Arrupe, the head of the order.

The subject was the response of the Society of Jesus to criticisms leveled by Pope John Paul II on Sept. 21.

The pope called a special private audience for Father Arrupe, his general assistants and counselors, and 14 representatives of national Jesuit provincial conferences from around the world.

The Pope told the Jesuit leaders of his admiration for their work and told them he "counts on their collaboration."

But he also spoke about what he called the "crisis affecting the Jesuit order and other religious institutes."

"Certainly I am no unaware that the crisis, which in these recent times has troubled and troubles religious life, has not spared your Society, causing confusion among the Christian people and anxieties to the church, to the hierarchy, and also to the pope who speaks to you," he said.

He praised the Society of Jesus as a group which "for more than four centuries has worked in every part of the world for the defense and propagation of the faith." Pope John Paul recalled the

main duties of the Jesuits as outlined by Pope Paul VI as "austerity of religious and community life, without yielding to secularizing tendencies; a profound sense of interior and exterior discipline; doctrinal orthodoxy in full fidelity to the supreme magisterium of the church and of the Roman pontiff, and an apostolate proper to an order of priests."

He urged the Jesuit leaders to do everything possible to "remedy" what he called the "lamented shortcomings" of some members of the Society of Jesus.

Father Arrupe, in his letter to the Jesuits, pointed out that the pope's criticisms were similar to those made by Paul VI and the later John Paul I, who died before he could actually deliver his prepared strictures.

"A call from three popes leaves little room for doubt that it is the Lord himself who, surely with love, but also with insistence, expects something better of us," Father Arrupe's letter said. "We cannot wait any longer."

He asked the Jesuits to ask themselves the following:

"Are there any signs of secularizing tendencies in the community or any of its members, for example, a lack of community life, independence of superiors, questionable relationships with others, failures in the observance of the vows; or is there evidence of apostolic work incompatible with the priestly character which ought to mark our activity, however varied and difficult it may be?"

"If so, what steps are being taken to rectify the situation?"

Answers are to be submitted in writing by January.

USCC Turns Down Census Request

Washington (RNS)— The U.S. Catholic Conference said no to federal government requests that the church urge illegal aliens to cooperate in being counted in the 1980 general census.

"The Catholic Conference fully appreciates the importance of the census, but as far as undocumented aliens are concerned, USCC is neither encouraging them to register nor discouraging them

from doing so," said Bishop Thomas C. Kelly, USCC general secretary.

The negative response was expected by the Census Bureau, which made overtures to the bishops last summer to use their prestige in getting undocumented aliens — many of Hispanic origin — to fill out the census forms with the promise of confidentiality.

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