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Decree SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH CENSORSHIP OF BOOKS

MARCH 7, 1975

Censorship

The Pastors of the Church, who are entrusted with the care of proclaiming the Gospel all over the earth (1), have the task of preserving, expounding, spreading and safeguarding the truths of the faith and promoting and defending the integrity of morals. Certainly, "God in his gracious goodness has seen to it that what he had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations. Therefore Christ the Lord, in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion, commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men that Gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching, and thus to impart to them divine goods" (2). Therefore the office of interpreting authentically the word of God, written or handed down by tradition, is entrusted solely to the living Magisterium of the Church (3). The Bishops, successors of the Apostles, exercise this office, and in a special way the successor of Peter exercises it, as the perpetual and visible foundation of unity both of the Bishops and of the multitude of the faithful (4). Even the faithful themselves, each according to his own function, and especially students of sacred sciences, have the duty to cooperate with the Pastors of the Church to preserve and hand on in their integrity the truths of faith and to protect morals.

To preserve and defend the integrity of the truths of faith and morals, the Pastors of the Church have the duty and the right to be vigilant lest the faith and morals of the faithful be harmed by writings; and consequently even to demand that the publication

of writings concerning the faith and morals should be submitted to her prior approval; and also to condemn books and writings that attack the faith or morals. This office belongs to the Bishops both individually and gathered in particular Councils or in Episcopal Conferences, as regards the faithful entrusted to their care, and to the supreme authority of the Church as regards the whole people of God.

As regards the publication of books and other writings, this Sacred Congregation, after consulting various Ordinaries of places where publishing activity is more intense, established the following norms in Plenary Congregation:

ARTICLE 1

1. If not otherwise established, the local Ordinary, whose approval is to be sought for the publication of books, according to the following norms, is the local Ordinary of the author or the Ordinary of the place in which the books are published. If either of them has refused approval, however, the author may not ask for the other's approval without informing him of the previous refusal.

2. What is established by these norms with regard to books, must be applied to all kinds of writings intended for public circulation, unless otherwise established.

ARTICLE 2

1. The books of Holy Scripture cannot be published unless they are approved either by the Apostolic See or by the local Ordinary; similarly for the publication of their translations into the vernacular, there is required the approval of the same authority and also that they be furnished with the necessary and sufficient explanations.

2. With the consent of the local Ordinary, translations supplied with suitable explanations, can also be prepared and published by the Catholic faithful in collaboration with the separated brethren (5).

ARTICLE 3

1. Liturgical Books and also their translations into the vernacular, or their parts, may not be published except by order of the Episcopal Conference and under the surveillance of the later, after the previous confirmation of the Apostolic See.

2. To publish a new edition of liturgical books approved by the Apostolic See and also their translations into the vernacular, made and approved in accordance with the terms of par. 1, and their parts, it is necessary to obtain from the Ordinary of the place in which they are published an attestation that they conform to the approved edition.

3. Also books that propose prayers for private use may not be published unless with the permission of the local Ordinary.

ARTICLE 4

1. The approval of the local Ordinary or of the national or regional Episcopal Conference is required for the publication of catechisms and other writings dealing with catechetical instruction, or their translations.

2. Unless they are published with the approval of the competent ecclesiastical Authority, books concerning questions of Holy Scripture, Sacred Theology, Canon Law, Church History and religious or moral disciplines, cannot be used as teaching texts in elementary, intermediate and higher schools.

3. It is recommended that books dealing with the subjects in par. 2 should be submitted to the approval of the local Ordinary, even though they are not used as text books. The same applies to writings that contain anything of special interest to religion or morality.

4. No books or other writings dealing with religious or moral questions can be displayed, sold or distributed in churches and oratories if they are not published with the approval of the competent ecclesiastical Authority.

ARTICLE 5

1. In view of their office and their special responsibility, secular clerics are earnestly recommended not to publish without the permission of their own Ordinary books concerning religious or moral questions; likewise members of Institutes of perfection without the permission of their Major Superior, except where their Constitutions make it obligatory.

2. In dailies, papers or periodicals which are manifestly accustomed to attack the Catholic religion or morality, the faithful may not write, unless for a just and reasonable cause; clerics and members of Institutes of perfection (may write) only with the approval of the local Ordinary.

1. Without prejudice to the right of every Ordinary to entrust, according to his own prudence, the judgment on books to persons he trusts, in the individual ecclesiastical regions the Episcopal Conference can draw up a list of censors, outstanding for their knowledge, sound doctrine and prudence, who will be at the disposal of the episcopal Curias, or set up a Commission of censors that the local Ordinaries can consult.

2. The censor, in carrying out his duties, leaving all partiality aside, should keep in mind only the doctrine of the Church regarding faith and morals as it is proposed by the Magisterium of the Church.

3. The censor must express his opinion in writing, if it is favorable, the Ordinary, according to his prudent judgment, may grant permission for publication with his approval, expressing his name as well as the date and place of approval; if, on the contrary, he does not grant it, the Ordinary must communicate to the writer the reasons for his refusal.

In the course of the audience granted to the undersigned Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on March 7, 1975, His Holiness Paul VI approved these norms proposed in the Plenary Congregation of the above mentioned Congregation and ordered them to be published.

Given in Rome on March 19, 1975.

NOTES

- 1) Cf. Vat. Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 23.
- 2) Cf. Vat. Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, n. 7.
- 3) Cf. Vat. Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, n. 10.
- 4) Cf. Vat. Council II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, *loc. cit.*
- 5) Cf. Vat. Council II, Dogmatic Constitution, *Dei Verbum*, nn. 22, 25.

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