

Catholic thinker rejects Vatican demand for rewrite: Article criticizes Vatican's attitude toward other churches

News in the [November 4, 2008](#) issue

A prominent Roman Catholic theologian in Poland has rejected a demand from the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that he retract and rewrite an article criticizing its attitude toward other Christian churches.

"It's another sad story about how Rome sends out condemnations of theologians," said Wacław Hryniewicz, a founding member of an international commission for theological dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic churches.

"I was told disciplinary sanctions would be imposed on me if I did not recall and renounce my unfair, unjust and disrespectful language about the congregation. I do not know what this means—maybe just a publishing ban or excommunication for disobedience," said Hryniewicz in an interview.

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith defends theological orthodoxy. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, once headed the body.

Hryniewicz, a member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate order, retired in 2005 from the faculty of Poland's Catholic University of Lublin. His article, "The Savior uses many tunes," was published in *Open Theology*, an online interfaith journal based in London. The theologian criticized a June 2007 Vatican document reaffirming the Catholic view that Protestant denominations are not churches "in the proper sense."

Hryniewicz wrote that the Vatican document represented a "serious regression" by reflecting attitudes common before the Second Vatican Council, which introduced reforms in the Catholic Church in the 1960s.

Archbishop Angelo Amato, secretary of the church's doctrinal congregation, had complained that the article lacked "scientific and methodological rigor" and was "perceived as showing little respect for the authority" of the Vatican body.

Hryniewicz was given a three-month deadline to submit a new article to "competent superiors" for approval. However, he told his order he would not write "clarifications or rectifications" and said other leading Catholics share his disappointment with the Vatican's stance.

"My only intention was to share the pain and sorrow of many Protestant sisters and brothers in the Christian faith very profoundly hurt by the Vatican statement," the 72-year-old said in a March 26 letter.

Archbishop Jeremiasz Achimiuk, the Orthodox president of the Polish Ecumenical Council, which groups seven non-Catholic denominations, said he was "deeply saddened" by the attack on Hryniewicz. The worldwide ecumenical movement owes "a great deal" to the priest's work, he added. *-Jonathan Luxmore, Ecumenical News International*