

*Is the Catholic University a Safe Haven for Its Faculty?
Academic License vs. Academic Freedom*

Abstract

There is a frequently heard notion afloat, not only in academic circles, but among the wider public, that the unquestionably religious college or university, and notably the Catholic college or university, is the last place you would want to be employed if you value academic freedom. This notion is based on a number of misconceptions, the central one being that freedom is detachment from any higher authority or common mission.

This paper will argue that academic freedom is the heart of any university. However, it cannot be divorced from academic responsibility to the mission for which the scholar was hired to begin with. Such a notion was still available in the 1940 AAUP statements, but lost ground in the 1970 revisions, and was equally undermined by the Land o' Lakes Statement. *Ex corde ecclesiae* demands a hearty idea of academic freedom as necessary to the accomplishment of the mission of the university, but equally demands that it be linked to academic responsibility for the mission. When all is said and done, the academic freedom of the Catholic university, properly understood, is far sturdier than the license offered in much of contemporary academe.

Stephen J. Heaney
Department of Philosophy
University of St. Thomas
St. Paul, MN