

## FRANCIS G. WILSON

Chairman of the Catholic Commission for Cultural and Intellectual Affairs, Professor Wilson is head of the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois, Urbana.

PROFESSOR KENNEDY's inquiry has, I think, advanced the discussion of Catholic economic ideas because he has correlated that thought with the current interest in economic growth.

Economic growth is, however, a highly technical area. Policy in this field is surely an intricate matter, since disparity in economic development and unevenness in the rate of growth are characteristics of our time. In some countries there is retardation and in some there is no doubt retrogression in specific industries. But universally, whether or not countries are advanced, whether the rate of growth is high or low, some form of inflation seems to be in progress. John Jewkes has said that as the first half of the 20th century was concerned with unemployment, the second half is to be concerned with inflation. And whatever the situation economically, there seems to be in the minds of contemporary men a great uncertainty, perhaps even fear, of their economic future. Behind "political moderation" may be a fear of anything that might prevent the economy from working at least at its current level.

Our author is flanked by thinkers of two extremes. On the one hand, there are the pessimists. They are pessimistic about the continuation of the rate of growth or the permanent success, in-

deed, of technological society. Abstraction from reality and alienation from the aspirations of the heart become characteristic, according to some, of the technological society at its height or its perfection.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, there are optimists about the future of the economy. They suffer no sense of disillusionment, for they are concerned with problems which inevitably are to be solved by the application of science, by the advance of technology, by the contributions of the civil service or by the operations of management in the free market.

There is here no alienation but there are problems of personal adjustment to the job, to the community or simply to life. There is no failure—there can be no failure—of technology, for here is the hope of man. There may be lags in social practice and there are personalities unsuited either to democracy or to the world of scientific solution but these are simply challenges that will be overcome.

However, there are two primary types of intellectuals here: first, the man who is a scientist and, second, the technical man and the management

<sup>1</sup> See Frederick D. Wilhelmson's Introduction to Friedrich Georg Juenger, *The Failure of Technology* (Regnery, Chicago, 1956).

man, who are also the symbol of business. The scientist is symbolized by the physicist, who can from his *hubris* express his amazement at the ignorance of management men, civil servants and political leaders. The purely technical man, having become an administrator of business, may be chiefly concerned with economic predictions for the next quarter.

Those who flank Professor Kennedy stand frankly above the ordinary man who may have, in relation to the mysteries of the economy, a sense of alienation in that the economy does not provide for the realization of the needs of his soul. In this perception we begin to understand the nature of the modern crisis, since it is the alienation of the person from both the economy and the state. The worker or the farmer or what not may sense like the experts the failure of the state to provide a prosperity economy, except perhaps in a very few countries, including the United States. And no doubt the prosperity we have is not due simply, or by any means, to the action of the government in directing the economy.

Professor Kennedy stands in the middle and he is only slightly pessimistic. Like a Christian, he says we must resist frustration, humanistic pessimism and the pride of the scientific and technical mind. He means, I believe, that we must try to realize by less than utopian reforms the Christian order of life in the framework in which we live. In this position he will find much agreement from both moderate liberals and moderate conservatives, who are both concerned with political action.

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SOCIAL ORDER

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It seems to me that Kennedy is right when he says that with a free market core we can work in time toward a

greater Christian infusion in the economic function. We can move toward spiritual conditions in living without accepting communism, let us hope without war, without Mr. Orwell's *1984* and without an unimaginative scientism living organically with a sterile bureaucratism.

I would say that we must try to realize Christian values in freedom—in the freedom of the man to choose his vocation and to work in a free market and in his freedom to develop his being through Christian living. Economic coercion goes ill with freedom, just as intellectual coercion goes ill with spiritual freedom. A free market society can offer the conditions for a pluralistic society, whereas we know that the "five-year-plan" mentality demands the subordination of all liberties to its advantage. A man may be a Christian under almost any circumstances, including those endured by a Father Rigney in a Chinese communist jail. And the purpose of Christianity, it must never be forgotten, is not merely to reform a social order. It may be that the Christian revolutionary is just as reasonable a creature as a Christian conservative but the conservative would say that we must struggle for the realization of the Christian norm in the society we actually have.

I agree with Professor Kennedy that a slower rate of progress will be more friendly toward the Christian-leavened order of society. In such an order there will be less perfection of technology and less alienation because the values a man may hold will be more possible of achievement in his life. At the moment our American "people's capitalism" seems to be in this sense the best of the economic orders.

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