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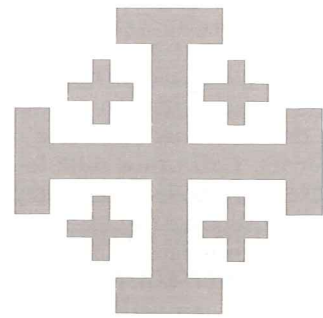
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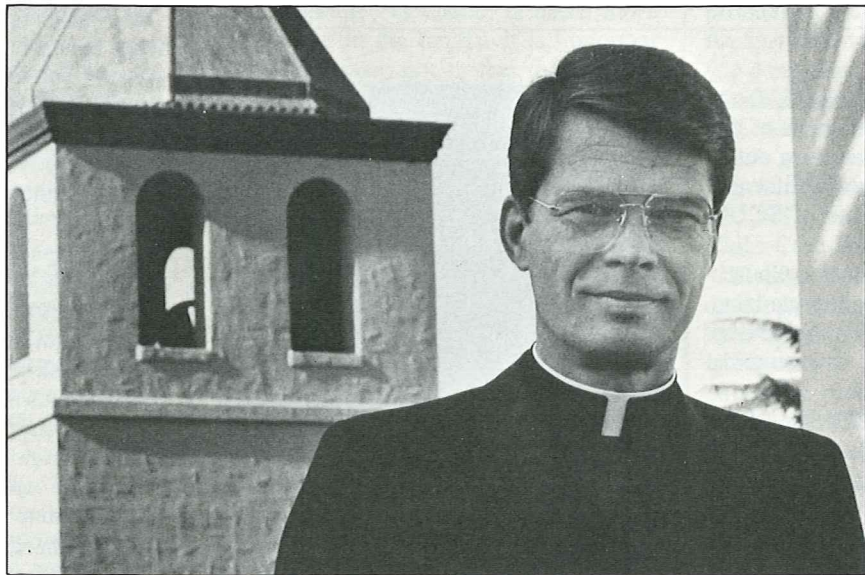
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# CAN THERE BE DISSENT IN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES?



BY WILLIAM J. REWAK, S.J.



Father Rewak: "We cannot, therefore, be a true Catholic university without taking risks."

On Tuesday, September 15, Pope John Paul II addressed the American Bishops in Los Angeles and indicated, quite forcefully, that there can be no dissent in the Catholic Church.

He said, "It is sometimes claimed that dissent from the magisterium is totally compatible with being a 'good

Catholic' and poses no obstacle to the reception of the Sacraments. This is a grave error. . ." The examples he used throughout his talk encompassed such issues as abortion, the ordination of women, sexual and conjugal morality, divorce and remarriage.

The mass media, of course, had their predictable field day with this address and omitted much of the nuanced qualification: For example, John Paul also said to the Bishops, "I wish to support you as you continue to engage in fruitful dialogue with theologians

regarding the legitimate freedom of inquiry which is their right."

There is no doubt, however, that he did emphasize what everyone expected he would emphasize: "the inacceptability of dissent and confrontation as a policy and method in the area of Church teaching," as he put it.

Theologians who are professionally dedicated to the growth in our understanding of theological doctrine, and at the same time committed to the values of the Church, have found such statements difficult because they perceive their work as a process of investigation: investigating the reasons behind theological doctrine (for example, in the area of birth control); exploring new areas of concern that arise because of cultural changes (place of women in the Church) or scientific advances (genetic engineering); formulating a more precise articula-

tion of doctrine (freedom of conscience as it has been formulated by Vatican II). Such investigation has always been a part of the Church's growing awareness of its apprehension of truth.

But, as theologians well know, such investigation, even when done from a motive of loyalty, can often result in a dissenting view. How does a theologian deal with that dissent—especially if he or she is intellectually convinced, after long and sometimes arduous study, that the dissent is appropriate?

And, more to the point here, how does a Catholic university deal with that dissent?

Discussions on the nature of dissent have been a common occurrence for several months on Catholic campuses, the result of what some consider a recent heavy-handed use of Vatican authority. Father Charles Curran of the Catholic University of America, for example, was ordered not to teach Catholic theology; Archbishop Hunthausen of Seattle was relieved of his teaching authority for a year. Father Michael Buckley, S.J., of the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, was questioned in Spring 1986 concerning his purportedly irresponsible action in signing a 1977 statement concerning the ordination of women. After a formal investigation, however, he was allowed to accept his position as a resident theologian in Washington, D.C., for the American Bishops.

And there has been that current difficulty in the Catholic Church's new Code of Canon Law: a statement requiring those who teach theology in Catholic universities to receive beforehand a mandate, or permission, from the local bishop. In addition, a draft of a new pastoral letter Pope John Paul wants to publish regarding Catholic higher education was recently issued, a draft all Catholic university presidents were asked to comment upon. They've objected to it very strongly and there have been indications that some changes will be made, though recent events—such as the Pope's address to the American Bishops in Los Angeles—might indicate to a perceptive Vatican-watcher that the Pope is not easily persuaded to change his mind or, as he sees it, to back down on strongly held principles.

I will not elaborate on the specific cases just mentioned—except to draw my con-

*Father William J. Rewak, S.J., became Santa Clara's 26th president on December 15, 1976. Earlier this year he announced his resignation, effective when a successor is chosen.*

clusion in the context of the Curran controversy. Rather, I want to say something about Catholic university education while allowing those specific cases to function as background. Finally, I would like to comment on John Paul's address to the American Bishops as it affects the discussion of theological doctrine on a Catholic university campus.

It is normal that the question would arise in our minds: What is the future of Catholic education if the isolated instances I have cited become a well-woven pattern? Before the Vatican issued its order, Bishop Matthew Clark of Rochester, New York—Father Curran's bishop—released a statement on March 12, 1986, saying: "If Father

*It is precisely through the operation of its critical intelligence that a Catholic university serves the Church.*

Curran's status as a Roman Catholic theologian is brought into question, I fear a serious setback to Catholic education and pastoral life in this country. That could happen in two ways. Theologians may stop exploring the challenging questions of the day in a creative, healthy way because they fear actions which may prematurely end their teaching careers. Moreover, able theologians may abandon Catholic institutions altogether in order to avoid embarrassing confrontations with Church authorities. Circumstances of this sort would seriously undermine the standing of Catholic scholarship in this nation, isolate our theological community, and weaken our Catholic institutions of higher education."

Such a concern gives rise to three important questions:

1. Is there a place for freedom of intellectual inquiry in a Catholic university?
2. Is there a place for responsible, and public, dissent from ordinary Catholic teaching?
3. And how valuable is the pluralism of an American Catholic university?

Was George Bernard Shaw right, after all, that "Catholic university" is a contra-

diction in terms? Or, to be more contemporary, is Dennis O'Brien, president of the University of Rochester, correct when he says in *America*, "The traditions of church and university are radically different ideological traditions, and nothing but disaster results from assimilation. . . . These traditions are in conflict, and so an attempt to blend university and church into one happy, syncretic whole will end in the corruption of both?"

Let us look at the first question: Is there a place for freedom of intellectual inquiry in a Catholic university?

Two considerations impel us to answer an obvious yes to that question. The first involves the very nature of the mind itself.

*The Catholic university, to remain true to its calling, needs constant dialogue with its traditions.*

Epistemologically, inquiry is as much a part of the brain as are the blood vessels and nerve endings; it's the process by which the intellect searches for meaning. "Human intellect," says Bernard Lonergan, "belongs to the realm of spirit. . . . Its knowing is process." And that process, he says, "is the prolonged business of raising questions, working out tentative answers, and then finding that these answers raise further questions."

The dynamism of the intellect, in other words, forces us to keep probing; it is of the nature of the intellect to want always to know further. This is, for all of us, an experiential fact. It is what we do in a university; and as long as we are a university, we will continue to do that—whether our minds are Catholic minds or Lutheran minds or Jewish minds.

But the second reason why we should say, "Yes, there is a place for intellectual inquiry in a Catholic university" involves both the nature of truth and our apprehension of it. And here we touch upon what it means to be Catholic.

Admittedly, Catholic universities adhere to certain values. They're outlined in our statements of goals and they are part of our

lived experiences on campus: Liturgy and prayer, the struggle for an integrated morality, the respect for life, and the ordinary teachings of the Church are all important values. But truth is also an important value. After all, Truth is, ultimately, God. The Church is therefore as much committed to the truth as a university is; indeed, over the centuries the Church has recognized that the particular modality in which the Catholic university carries out its mission of service is in seeking the truth, with all the critical intelligence at its command.

There is no doubt, however, that the consistent stance of the formal "teaching" Church—the magisterium—is to protect the truth; while the consistent stance of the university is to elucidate, question, and explore the truth. What must be asserted, with all due respect, is that these two stances are not incompatible: Dialogue, discourse, and mutual respect make compatibility possible.

And I am not saying that the Church's approach to truth is absolute while the university's is relative. Truth, that value we continually strive for, is not relative; but our apprehension of it is always partial. We are never in complete command, at any one point in history, of the fullness of reality or of God's revelation. As John Paul said last month to Catholic university educators in New Orleans: "The mind is capable not only of searching for the truth but also of grasping it, *however imperfectly*."

But that is only because we live in space and time; we progress through mistakes to a small understanding of one aspect of truth. We are not disembodied intellects, all-knowing and completely, simultaneously aware of all of reality. We are incarnate: We're stuck in matter and we live in dimensions. And so, being committed to the truth—even with a capital "T"—is not the same as possessing it, whole and entire, consciously and articulately, at any given moment. We are always groping, with assurance and with humility, toward understanding.

For revelation is both ahistorical—coming as it does from the timeless essence that is God—and historical: The Word is spoken and imbedded in history, and we must therefore look to the unfolding of history for the continuing incarnation of that Word.

There must, ultimately, after the last star has faded and after the last voice has spoken, be only one truth, even though we experience different facets of it. Then why

be afraid of seeking it? If we trust that God is good, that He has reached down in some mysterious way and made us a part of His life, then we cannot, if we are humble and honest, be too far wrong in our seeking. Mistakes, yes. But honest ones. The important thing is that we keep moving, haltingly but determinedly, toward Him.

I do not deny that some self-conscious integration is necessary in a Catholic university. Prudent balancing is called for when we are institutionally committed to something we accept with faith and at the same time obligated in a professional way to question that which we believe. John Paul asserted this himself when he spoke to the educators in New Orleans: "Religious faith itself calls for intellectual inquiry; and the confidence that there can be no contradiction between faith and reason is a distinctive feature of the Catholic humanistic tradition."

Northrop Frye, in *The Critical Path*, says, "It is clearly one of the unavoidable responsibilities of educated people to show by example that beliefs may be held and examined at the same time." Examination of belief is the only way theological understanding in the Church grows. Anyone familiar with the vagaries of past pronouncements by various Church councils knows that we believe and accept things as true today that we did not accept 500 or 1000 years ago. That fact does not undermine the teaching authority of the Church; it only says that we understand ourselves, our social nature, and our relationship with God in a better, more enlightened way. And—a crucial point—we become ever more precise in the articulation of our understanding.

Integration is also called for on a personal level. If we are religious persons, we have to respect what our religion teaches and accept it with humility, but be ready to question it *so that we may understand it better*. Integration is not always an easy matter: Our lives are filled with compartments; the schizophrenic is one who jumps from compartment to compartment without seeing any relation among them. And so the tension between faith and inquiry will always remain a part of our inheritance as human beings. But it is both possible and necessary to strive to integrate them—through discourse, through clear and humble scholarship, even through prayer.

As a Catholic, therefore, and as a Jesuit priest, I believe very strongly in certain issues, but that does not prevent me from studying those issues with enlightened and

respectful scrutiny. As a Catholic university, we are committed to certain traditions and values, but that commitment does not prevent us from applying to them the gift of our intellect; rather, *it is precisely through the operation of its critical intelligence that a Catholic university serves the Church*.

Father Richard McCormick, in his *America* article on the Curran controversy, wrote: "Discussion and disagreement are the very lifeblood of the academic and theological enterprise. We all learn and grow in the process, and it is a public process. Without such theological exchange and the implied freedom to make an honest mistake, the magisterium itself would be paralyzed by the sycophancy of theologians."

The second question is more difficult and takes its cue from Father McCormick: Is there a place in a Catholic university for responsible, and public, dissent from

of Archbishop Hickey's statement, even quite traditional theologians often view dissent in the Church now "much more realistically and positively—as the ordinary way to growth and development."

In other words, *in order to protect the intellectual vitality of the Church's understanding of itself, responsible dissent is not only allowed, it is required*. The controversial issue, as Archbishop Hickey and Father McCormick have suggested, is *public dissent*.

First, we must acknowledge the nervousness that certain groups in Rome feel about dissent—and especially about American dissent. The nervousness is historical, with roots in the Modernist controversy of the past century; and the Vatican had problems with "Americanism" at the start of the present century. Rome perceives us at times as a dissenting part of the Church. They feel, perhaps, that they are dealing with 13-year-old adolescents, and

*The Church, to be able to give to the world, needs constant dialogue with the world.*

ordinary Catholic teaching? For if we allow freedom of inquiry, dissent is an inevitable by-product.

Archbishop James Hickey of Washington, D.C., said in August 1986, referring to the norms for public dissent established by the U.S. bishops in 1968, that they are "simply unworkable. Indeed, the Holy See has gone on to clarify that for us and to say there is no right to public dissent." His statement came as a surprise to the U.S. Catholic Conference; but it does indicate that, regarding dissent, we are witnessing both a growing uneasiness within Vatican walls and a hardening resolve on the part of some members of the hierarchy.

What does a Catholic university do in the face of such a resolve?

An easy answer, and a valid one, would be to underline the primacy of academic freedom in a university setting. It is, however, not the complete answer, because dissent by itself is not the central issue. As a matter of fact, despite the general tenor

we should be honest enough to admit that we have not infrequently acted that way. Americans can be feisty; but I think American theologians do understand that dissent, handled responsibly, with study and humility, is "a way of getting at things, a part of the human process of growth in understanding," as McCormick says. The fact remains that we will continue to have to deal with the differences between our approaches to theological investigation: Rome tends to be prescriptive; America tends to be dialogic.

Second, in today's world, we cannot avoid that dissent will be public—especially in sensitive matters. With modern communications, the immediate availability of information, and the interest of the media in the Church, it is inevitable that any controversy surrounding those issues that touch the lifeblood of the Catholic Church—or even appear sensational to the media—will become public.

Public dissent, however, is not always and necessarily desirable. It can foreshorten reflection and often makes careful scholarly

work difficult: It is almost impossible for the media to handle complicated and thorny issues. My point is that we cannot step back from dissent simply because of its inevitable publicity; however, dissent must always be handled in a respectful and responsible manner. And it must avoid confrontational tactics: Such tactics only harden positions and make accommodation and workable solutions impossible. A scholar's mind is open and humble—but honest.

Karl Rahner asked: "What are contemporary moral theologians to make of Roman declarations on sexual morality that

understanding of itself. The alternative is unreasonable; for to stifle such an aberration, with some form of censorship, is to put in jeopardy that far greater good of theological development.

Peer criticism has always been much more effective, historically, than censorship. But peer criticism is only possible if the study of theology is accepted by the magisterium as a public function of the Church. To some extent, it has always been public—wars have been fought over opposing theological claims—but it has become more so in recent years. However, if we take Vatican II seriously, such public

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they regard as too unnuanced? Are they to remain silent, or is it their task to dissent, to give a more nuanced interpretation?" And his answer is, "I believe that the theologian, after mature reflection, has the right, and many times the duty, to speak out against a teaching of the magisterium and support his dissent."

Father Rahner always insisted, however, that such dissent be handled with love for the Church.

But what if such dissent is not responsible, is not handled with love for the Church? What if such dissent is not advanced within the context of a dialogue and only serves to harden positions and cause intellectual collision?

I suspect there are situations existing on a Catholic university campus here and there where a president would be very happy to see a tenured theology teacher resign. A bishop now and then must throw up his hands and wonder in stark amazement about some of the ideas being discussed and preached under the guise of responsible theological scholarship. But those cases are minimal when compared with the deep commitment, honest scholarship, and careful thought that characterize our theology departments. An occasional aberration is an unfortunate but reasonable price to pay for the intellectual freedom that the Church must have if it is to grow in its

theological activity, always recognizing the requirement of competence, is enjoined on the whole Church: "All the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence." (*Gaudium et Spes*, No. 62).

It is clear, I hope, that I am not opting for theological anarchy. Mistakes and irresponsibility are regrettable; and authorities in a Catholic university have an obligation to minimize, as far as lies in their power, the scandal that can be caused by such mistakes and irresponsibility. And there is a serious obligation for Church authorities, as far as lies in their power, to help maintain a theologically astute and steady course toward truth. But it is still true that the end does not justify the means: The goals of purity of doctrine and of clarity of understanding are valid, but they cannot be sought using means that vitiate the process of understanding.

So, yes, we run the risk of false scholarship and irresponsible behavior. But it is a risk we have enthusiastically agreed to and one we monitor with the professional academic safeguards of peer review and a clear understanding of the traditions of our institutions—in a pluralistic, academic context where we cannot and ought not to exclude from our consideration any facet of the diamond of God's creation.

That brings us to the third question: How

valuable is the pluralism of the American Catholic university?

It is a valid question since the Vatican now appears somewhat uneasy with pluralism. In its initial stages, certainly, the pastoral letter on Catholic universities to be issued in the near future by Pope John Paul emphasizes the dangers of pluralism. The letter's message seems to be that everyone should say and think the same thing in order to ensure that doctrine is kept safe. But universities ought not to be safe; they should be alive and bustling. The American university, especially, is accustomed to pluralism. We are a nation of many religions, of many peoples, of many languages. Respect for the human conscience and for religious liberty is a cornerstone of our nation; indeed, in Vatican II, thanks to Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray, that notion became a part of the Church's consciousness of itself.

Humanity, made up of billions of differently shaped pieces of flesh, finally, in the whole, composes the face of God. We should honor that difference, dialogue with that difference among ourselves, and understand our differences to see where our love fits together. We cannot honor and do justice to the astonishing diversity of God's gift of creation if we do not open ourselves to it.

It seems to me, therefore, that a university, if it is to be catholic, with a small "c," must emphasize pluralism—that's really a tautology. It must reach out to everyone and leave no part of creation untouched. It must embrace creation—be critical, yes, but be loving, too.

But if a university is to be Catholic, with a capital "C," it must also emphasize pluralism. As Joseph Komonchak recently observed, "The adjective 'Catholic' was first employed by church fathers precisely in opposition to sectarian and regional claims; it referred to the broad, worldwide communion of churches engaged in their creative and transformative encounter with the ancient culture."

In summary, we are being true to our mission as a Catholic university (1) only if we are engaged honestly and unrestrictedly in intellectual inquiry; (2) only if we are allowed to dissent—and the dissent is couched in sincere terms of a dialogue—so that our understanding of our role in the Church's mission can grow and the Church's understanding of itself can grow; and (3) only if we embrace pluralism.

Those three values are unreservedly necessary for the vitality and effectiveness of a Catholic university. *Without those values, we are not a Catholic university.*

For both the Church and the university have the same goal: to set people free so they may live the freedom of the children of God.

And Catholic universities passionately espouse all the traditional values of the Church: its struggle for wisdom, its adherence to the gospel message, its ecumenism, its deep reverence for the liturgy, its predilection for the poor (nowhere but in America do Catholic universities do so much in the form of community service and scholarship aid for minorities and underprivileged). Indeed, in today's world, there is probably no more crucial concern shared by both the Church and Catholic universities than the search for justice.

In moving words, Pope John Paul told the educators in New Orleans, "Here in the Catholic university centers of this nation, must be drawn up the blueprints for the reform of attitudes and structures that will influence the whole dynamic of peace and justice in the world. It is not enough to offer the disadvantaged of the world crumbs of freedom, crumbs of truth and crumbs of bread. The Gospel calls for much more. The parable of the rich man and the poor man is directed to the conscience of humanity and, today in particular, to the conscience of America. But that conscience often passes through the halls of Academe, through nights of study and hours of prayer, finally to reach and embrace the whole prophetic message of the Gospel."

With such common concerns, should we not be able to dialogue without recrimination or fear of censorship? The Catholic university, to remain true to its calling, needs constant dialogue with its traditions; the Church, to be able to give to the world, needs constant dialogue with the world.

And so the question is inevitable: What if we, at this University, were presented with the same situation as was presented to the Catholic University of America regarding Charles Curran? First, of course, there are differences: That University has divisions chartered by the Vatican; American bishops comprise a certain percentage of the Board of Trustees; and the Catholic theologians there are expected—certainly by the Vatican—to represent Catholic teaching in a much more formal way than they are in other American Catholic universities. That needs to be said, because if a

theologian here were ordered to stop teaching, we would, given the American legal and educational system, have a much harder time than Catholic University in complying with such a directive; we would not be able to comply with it. But it is also true that Catholic University, since it, too, is subject to accreditation and empowered by the state to give civil degrees, will certainly have a difficult time if it decides to heed the Vatican directive.

And here I must make a distinction between a university's response to such a directive and an individual professor's response. A university, when it grants tenure, makes a contractual agreement with a professor that binds the university to maintain the employment of that professor—barring those circumstances usually made explicit in the contract. The professor, however, is not so bound. Ordinarily, he can leave at the end of the year with impunity. He may simply choose, for example, not to sign his annual contract.

The university, therefore, cannot eliminate tenure or remove a professor from the classroom simply because an outside

*But as history shows, there has been fruitful dissent. Church teaching has advanced because of such theological discussion and disagreement.*

agency forbids him to teach. A professor, however, may very well decide—because of a special bond of obedience that he respects, because of the greater good or, perhaps, to avoid further scandal, or for personal reasons—to cease teaching and even to give up tenure. But this is a personal decision made apart from the institutional commitment to him. He can decide to give up his right to tenure, but the university cannot so decide. He can walk out of the classroom, but the university cannot order him out on the basis of an external directive.

However, quite apart from the legal and educational constraints, my point is that such compliance on the part of this university would not be desirable and could not be assented to, *precisely because we are a Catholic university. Precisely because of our love for the Church.*

It is love for the Church that inspires

theologians and love for the Church that urges their study. And they see their work—as does John Paul—as crucial for doctrinal development. That is why his remarks in Los Angeles to the American Bishops caused consternation: He did not seem to make some needed distinctions. Even in pre-Vatican II theology, various doctrines and practices taught by the Church demanded different degrees of assent, because they enjoyed different degrees of certainty. Some doctrines are matters of defined faith (Christ is God); some are not (the existence of different orders of angels). Some practices have been more important (weekly Mass) than others (no meat on Friday).

His talk to the Bishops seemed to lump together various doctrines and practices into one, unalterable category: not-to-be-discussed. And not to be dissented from. But surely abortion is a much more serious issue—involving a basic commandment not to kill—than the ordination of women. What seems to be happening is that all ordinary teaching, whether that flows directly from the Bible, or is the result of a conciliar pronouncement (in which case it may or may not be defined as necessary for belief) or whether it flows from tradition or may be a matter of discipline—all of it is being considered infallible. And, frankly, that is simply not a proper, or traditional, approach to doctrine and practice.

It has been charged that after Vatican II, the “liberal” theologians considered everything up for grabs. But, conversely, it also seems true that the “conservative” theologians tend to consider everything infallible. Neither approach is acceptable. We need theological discussion: We need to distinguish between the necessary and the appropriate, the eternal and the ephemeral, the substantial and the accidental, content and form, the infallible and the “discussable.”

And such discussion should proceed from faith. John Paul, in one of his more famous paragraphs, said to the Bishops in Los Angeles: “Within the ecclesial community, theological discussion takes place within the framework of faith. Dissent from Church doctrine remains what it is, dissent; as such, it may not be proposed or received on an equal footing with the Church’s teaching.”

And no theologian could take issue with this; what is necessary, of course, is to

distinguish between infallible and non-infallible Church teaching. True dissent from infallible Church teaching is serious and indicates an unwillingness to accept the Church’s radical self-identity. But discussion and dissent regarding the reasons behind infallible teaching, or regarding non-infallible teaching surely come under the Pope’s own rubric of “legitimate freedom of inquiry.” Theological dissent does remain dissent, but as history shows there has been fruitful dissent. Church teaching has advanced because of such theological discussion and disagreement.

But, no doubt, to engage in such discussion is, today, a risk.

*“Through you, I can be present in more than 200 Catholic institutions. . . I shall be grateful if you can transmit my affection to all of them. We are working together.”*

—Pope John Paul II to university educators, September 1987

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, General of the Society of Jesus, said in a letter to all Jesuits in March 1985, “Without doubt all the tasks which the Church entrusts to us entail risks in their accomplishment: To announce to a world distant from the Church the love of God manifested in Jesus Christ; to do this by means of social commitment and inculturation, dialogue and ecumenism, theological research and pastoral experience—this requires of us initiatives which lay us open to misunderstanding. Let us recognize in this fact. . . our mission to be men in the front lines and another reason for making it clear within the Church itself that we are living out an authentic mission within the Church, a mission given by the Church. This ‘missionary’ openness to a world which is at a distance from the Church or allergic to the Church will not always be understood by those ecclesiastical movements whose apostolic priority is primarily or exclusively the reinforcement of ecclesiastical structures or the unification of the faithful alone.”

We cannot, therefore, be a true Catholic university without taking risks. Moses took a risk when he went to the Pharaoh one day and said, “I have a message for you.” Jesus took a big risk when He said, “I have one thing to say to you, love one another.” Teresa of Avila took a risk when she started

traveling around to monasteries and convents, compelling them to a more evangelical way of life. And Ignatius Loyola took a risk when he started a new religious order and new schools, with no money.

All prophets take risks. And, according to John Paul, educators are prophets. At the end of his formal presentation in New Orleans, he stood on the dais, reluctant to leave. He then smiled, stepped forward again to the microphone and spoke, extemporaneously, about how educators share in the prophetic role of the Church. “Never forget that,” he said. “You are prophets.” He surely realized that prophets say things that are not always acceptable; they may be

ahead of their times; they take risks.

Because of risks, history is changed. It moves suddenly closer, with clearer purpose, toward final meaning, final understanding.

So we should not be afraid of taking risks with our intellects, our ideas, and our criticism. Not all ideas are good, and we should be honest in our criticism; but most ideas are worth investigating. We are here to extend human knowledge; and, as far as I am concerned, that is also to learn divine wisdom. In the final analysis, they ought not to be separated.

As John Paul said, in such an obviously warm and heartfelt manner, in his impromptu remarks to the university educators, “Through you, I can be present in more than 200 Catholic institutions, among all the teachers, the professors, and all the students. I shall be very grateful to you if you can transmit my affection to all of them. We are working together.”

# What's Ahead in the World of High Tech?



Jack Wilson, who covered Silicon Valley for *Business Week* for two decades, uses that base to make some predictions.

BY MICHAEL MALONE

They've given Jack Wilson the title of vice president for business and technology analysis. That earns him a corner office with a window. And from that window John W. Wilson can look out on one corner of Silicon Valley, a tiny piece of the world of high technology that for the past 21 years he has described better than anyone else.

Wilson's new employer is the market research firm Dataquest, Inc., for which, he says slowly and, as always, selecting his words carefully, he'll soon be writing a subscription newsletter “of analysis and strategic thinking about high tech.”

But until recently, the thin bespectacled Wilson, who is considered by many to be the dean of business reporting about high technology, was senior writer for *Business*

*Week*.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Wilson was the reporter who wrote *BW*'s big cover stories on high technology, many of which have changed the thinking of the business world. In 1974, Wilson wrote the first big story on the invention of the microprocessor. Four years later, he stunned the U.S. electronics industry by pointing out the growing Japanese competitive challenge. A 1982 cover story on Hewlett-Packard may have contributed to that giant firm's

Michael Malone '75 (MBA '77) is also a successful high-tech writer, and the author of *The Big Score: The Billion-Dollar Story of Silicon Valley* (Doubleday). Currently he hosts a new interview show, *Malone, on KTEH-Channel 54*.

reorganization. Finally, as a sort of swan song to his career as a journalist, Wilson wrote *The New Ventures* (Addison-Wesley, 1985), which one reviewer, a chip company president, called “the *War and Peace* of venture capital.”

This period of transition for Wilson, when he is no longer a competitor, seemed a good time to ask him to look back on his two decades covering the electronics industry, and then forward into predictions on its future.

One immediate surprise is that Wilson, despite the depressing nature of many of his most famous stories, says: “I am fundamentally optimistic about U. S. high technology as a whole, but not about any one company or even industry.

“Our greatest strength is our entrepre-