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U.S. Conference for the
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PROFILE OF TOMORROW'S CHRISTIAN

Excerpts from
An Address by

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The first half of the year 1968 has marked from my perspective, a significant turning point in contemporary history. There have been three major events which are decisive for the future of humanity, and all three have a great deal to do with this nation, but in fact affect the whole world.

First, the developments in the Vietnam War have paved the way for a new period of history where America will be more cautious about its own capacity to solve the problems of the world by sheer power and know-how. This, I hope, does not lead to a resurgence of isolationism in American politics, but to a truly creative role for the U.S.A. in international politics. America is the most vigorous, youthful, creative nation on the face of the earth, at least for the time being. She is the least shackled, among the nations, by hoary ancient traditions. But she is bound by more recent traditions of her own creation. She is the most ready to change, among the nations. But she lacks both the understanding and the will to change her own policy in relation to a world whose economies she continues to exploit. She is the least afraid, among the nations. But she is afraid of every development that threatens her hegemony of the world, and this drives her to become a reactionary nation.

The lessons of Vietnam may lead the U.S.A. to think along these lines. If that happens, the world will be a different place.

The second event of momentous significance has been the death of Martin Luther King. A martyrdom like that is never to be mourned. It was a supremely Christian act in which my friend King poured out his life for the life of the world.

I can see that this martyrdom, unlike most Christian martyrdoms, has immediate cash value. This will focus attention on the race issue as something which calls for more than passing a civil rights bill. I hope it will lead to three specific consequences:

- (a) the carrying through of the 'poverty' program in an intelligent manner
- (b) in trying to resolve the race problem in the U.S.A., recognize the universality of the problem - that the emancipation of the American Negro and, therefore, of the American white man, is inseparable from the emancipation of Southern Africa from its racialism and colonialism; and
- (c) in recognizing that the Negro's social emancipation is inseparable from his economic and ideological emancipation, become more courageously committed to the ideals of economic justice in the world and ideological pluralism within humanity.

The third event of great significance this year has been the failure of the UNCTAD Conference in New Delhi. The clear manifestation of lack of political will on the part of the rich nations of the world to apply their maximum effort to a resolution of an unjust trade balance, and the refusal to remove basic economic injustice, may at first sight appear a reactionary event. But it is to be hoped that the dramatic failure of UNCTAD would be a heavy burden on the conscience of the rich nations. It is to be hoped that the churches will show the same leadership as they have previously demonstrated in the race question and on the Vietnam issue. Let us hope that 1968 would mark the beginning of a process which would soon lead to a world-wide movement of humanity which will not rest until justice is close to the poor of the world, not as concessions from the rich, but as their due. The failure to do this can only lead to a world-wide conflagration, which both in its dimension of destructive passion and in the amount of hatred it creates, can dwarf the demonstrations in the cities of the United States.

Let us hope that the churches have a will to apply themselves wholeheartedly to this task.

ON SECTIONS V AND VI

The profile of tomorrow's Christian depends very much on the history of the coming decade. If there is no major economic crisis in the world in the next two years, if the third world war does not break out before 1970, and if the inevitable regroupings of power in Europe and Asia do not upset the present equilibrium of power - then I can see the profile of the Christian of the 1970's as still engaged in the campaign for justice and peace in the world.

If, on the other hand, the economic system collapses, or if there is a war, or if there is a preponderance of socialist or leftist power in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America - then quite new questions are in store for us.

But in either case, we will have to come back to the God question. The knowledge of God is the key question. The Marxist, the Secularist, the Scientist, the Hindu and the Buddhist, all alike are waiting for God. But there is no way of making God present to man through preaching and propaganda. The world, Western and Eastern, young and old alike, is looking for authenticity of worship and authenticity of a way of life.

The degree to which we find answers to the questions about worship and ethics will be the degree to which we can speak about God at all.

The worship of God in a secular age and the search for a new and authentic style of life, will be the forms of our proclaiming the name of God in the world.