

"PROSPECTS FOR 1970"

January, 1970

The decade that begins this week is bound to be an important one for each of us. How do things really stand? What are the prospects for the future? Let me be bold enough to sketch in some thoughts on a few widely scattered issues, each of which I feel we Christians have a natural concern for as we face the 1970ies:

(1) The Prospect for Peace in South East Asia: On the whole I think the chances are good, though the "ifs" and variables are many. A part of the new shape of things for the future of Asia will be characterized by two facts: (1) The military presence of the USA will decline which reflects a new low profile security philosophy for this region partly because of a desire to disentangle but also because the large presence of traditional military forces is felt to be unrealistic. (2) There is a growing awareness that peace in Asia must be secured primarily within the region itself and therefore the key to that peace and stability is for the Asian nations to grow strong economically, politically and socially. Governments must have popular support to be able to resist subversion and insurrection movements and this support will come

because of basic viability within the nation and its institutions. The prospects for this kind of nation building in Asia are not discouraging, but great amounts of international economic aid will be needed to help these countries do the infrastructure part of the job. On this score it is ironic that at precisely the time when aid programs have become wiser and more truly helpful, less susceptible to political diversion, it is at such a time that most of the rich industrialized nations are hedging and reducing real economic aid. As Christians we must speak out against this deterioration in world wide concern and at the same time find ways with our own private sources of funds and people to help in smaller though strategic instances where positive community models of concern and development can point the way for the future. (I believe that this is the larger significance of the Carmona project.)

(2) The Challenge to the Foreign Businessman in a Developing Country.

Business investment and development is crucial for all of the developing countries. Because of the need for large amounts of capital formation much of this investment must come from outside of the developing country itself. As I see it the moral question is not one of to have profits or not to have profits but rather the issue of reasonable and long-term profitability versus immediate payout. The one is genuine investment in the life of the country where the other is often exploitation. It is careless moral philosophy that confuses this very significant difference. A business venture that is good for the country in the long run should be both profitable to the investor and beneficial to the developing nation at the same time. When the businessman puts his personal influence on the side of long-term involvement and investment he not only is wiser from a business point of view but he has taken a morally sound position as well.

But there is another very concrete way in which a business firm (foreign or national) can really build for the future and that is when our companies take seriously the training, the worker benefits, and promotion of the Filipino worker and manager. When a company recruits a young man on the basis of his desire and skill and not because of special connections, and then helps him to develop into the new middle class then a building foundation has been invested in Asia worth far more than money. The decent days wage for a day's work creates the climate of hope for a man and encourages him to build for the future.

(3) The State of the Family in 1970. I am concerned for the health of our families as we move into this new decade. The 1960ies have been traumatic for the family though fortunately this most primitive of man's institutions is the most durable and resilient. But there are signs of strain and some families are in disarray. Like the developing nation there is no real peace without popular support and basic viability, and you win the former by the latter. The aloneness and general pull-away which has characterized the 1960ies among European and American youth will be healed by those who are parents of 1st, 2nd and 3rd graders today. It is very difficult though not impossible to reverse an isolationism that is firmly set into motion, but the new chances for building genuine bridges and fellowship are ours every morning. A rule of thumb that is valid for both youth and parents goes as follows: It is better not to moan and complain about past failure when it comes to our families but to build existentially from the present onward, asking God to give us the grace and the wisdom.

(4) What About the Church in this New Age? Old it is but not an artifact or museum piece; troubled from within by its own sinners in the pews and the pulpit; ignored by many, mocked, sometimes admired, patronized, and even feared -- this is the Church of Jesus Christ of which we are part. The Church needs your time, your criticism, your love more today than ever before to keep its style of life relevant to this odd age in which we live. But never write the Church off because mark my words God will embarrass us all by the surprises yet to come.

"O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant."