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AN ADDRESS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH.
REPUBLICAN LEADER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AT GRACE BIBLE COLLEGE
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

7:30 P.M. SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1972

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY

"THE SEVENTIES: A DECADE OF HOPE"

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The awesomeness of the title reminded me of my college days when one of the easy courses that many of the football players would take was called "New Testament Survey." The reason it was so easy was that the professor, a kindly old gentleman, would give the same examination question year after year: "Discuss and analyze the travels of the Apostle Paul." All the students had to do the whole term was to memorize the answer to this question.

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And so I might paraphrase, who am I to tell you what the role of the church should be, but I would like to talk about some of the issues that will be facing the nation in the next few years.

Let us heed the words of the Danish theologian Kierkegaard who wrote, "Life must be lived forwards, but can only be understood backwards." And so if I am to look ahead into the Seventies, I must first discuss the decade of the 1960's.

If I am to talk about future-shaping issues, particularly as they relate to the hopes for peace, the goals of science, and the aspirations of the Blacks

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and of our youth, I first must talk about the directions and goals of the '60's and compare them with present directions and goals.

Think back to the 1960 presidential campaign. What were the dominant themes that Senator Kennedy and Vice President Nixon addressed themselves to then?

In foreign policy, the Cold War was still the paramount concern.

To John Kennedy, the crucial issue in American foreign policy was the rivalry with the Soviet Union. The world was divided in two--with the forces of freedom on one side and Russia and the Communist nations on the other. It was called the Sino-Soviet bloc--a monolith directed by Soviet leaders.

And this intense sense of competitiveness with Russia spilled over into the science field. Remember Sputnik and the shock which that first orbiting satellite put up by Russia had on the American public? There is little doubt that John Kennedy was reacting to that feeling when he pledged in the 1960 presidential campaign an all-out effort to put an American on the moon. And so the science headlines of the 1960's were dominated by aerospace accomplishments--John Glenn's orbit of the earth--the first hard-landing on the moon--and then finally the soft-landing in July 1969.

Another incident of that 1960 campaign that we remember was John Kennedy's famous telegram to the jailed Martin Luther King. King at that time was just assuming leadership in the Black struggle in the 1950's and '60's to overcome discrimination, such as the obstruction of voting rights and segregation in schools.

Although it was the Eisenhower Administration in the 1950's that sponsored the first Civil Rights voting bill and sent in the National Guard to Little Rock to insure the integration of that city's schools, it is the decade of the 1960's that is remembered as the time when civil rights moved to the public forefront as the major issue of the time.

The Black movement was not the only movement that characterized the Sixties. Another was youth. Here, too, we remember in the 1960 campaign the interest generated by John Kennedy's call for a Peace Corps. It was a summons that touched the idealism of the college youth. And the 1970's became a time of student political involvement. Students marched against war and against pollution. It was a time of idealistic fervor and political participation.

And yet by the end of the 1960's the heady wine of student idealism was turning sour. Many young people, flushed with the excitement of political participation, became frustrated by the complexity and slowness of democratic

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change. Some, not finding easy results or instant solutions, turned against the system. The excitement of participation became the disillusionment of alienation.

A Harvard law student in a graduation speech explained the growing reaction of students to the rhetoric of the early '60's.

"We were given visions and then we found we had to curb them. We were offered dreams and then we found we had to abandon them. We had been made idealists and then we were told to go slowly."

This youth frustration with the institutions of government and society in the 1970's is reflected by the popular phrase "against the establishment." And yet the phrase seems ironic when we look back to 1960. Then many commentators were criticizing the student generation for being too much a part of the establishment.

Critics despaired of the buttoned-down, crew-cut students of the 1950's who too readily accepted the status quo and who were too eager to join the establishment life of banks, corporations, and country clubs.

If a growing complacency was the malaise that disturbed critics about youth as the decade turned from the Fifties to the Sixties, it is a growing hostility that disturbs critics as we move through the Seventies. If the problem then was to awake a sense of idealism in youth, the problem now is to develop a better sense of realism about society and the ways to serve it.

We have plenty of protestors to spotlight problems but fewer professionals to solve them. We need those skills in the courts and the legislatures. We need them to expand business opportunities and to deliver vital services to the needy.

If we ask youth for a more realistic response, the leaders in society must show a more sensitive awareness of their concerns. This Administration is trying to do that. Draft reforms have been achieved; the voting age has been lowered.

Reinhold Niebuhr once wrote that a problem of society is the confrontation between "idealists who have too many illusions and realists who have too little conscience."

The institutions of government, law, business, and medicine need the energy, initiative, and imagination that idealism generates. The challenge in this decade is to find more effective ways of enlisting the dedication of our young people.

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The President has fashioned one of these ways by bringing the Peace Corps, Vista, and a number of other agencies scattered throughout the Federal Government together in a new agency--a new ACTION corps that gives young Americans an expanded opportunity for the service they want to give--and that gives them what has not been offered, a chance to transfer between service abroad and service at home.

At the same time, law firms and businesses, for example, will have to allow their young associates or executives wider opportunities to meet community needs.

The next few years will witness tremendous pressures for change in our cities. Corruption and decay in local government will no longer be tolerated. Major reforms will be called for in taxation and the allocation of resources. New solutions will be needed in housing, employment, business investment, education, and law enforcement. These solutions will need the energies and time of young professionals--lawyers, bankers, engineers, and scientists.

Perhaps even more important than the goal of bringing youth into the mainstream of society is that of bringing in the Blacks. Here, too, there will be a change in emphasis or direction.

As the Black movement in the Sixties pushed for civil rights, in the Seventies the emphasis will be on economic rights.

Now, that does not mean that efforts to end voting discrimination and school segregation will be abandoned. In 1970 the President signed into law a strong new Voting Rights Amendment and praised the Congress for extending a law under which so many minority citizens were given the vote. Furthermore, in this Administration there has been more school desegregation than in the entire period between 1954--when the Supreme Court first spoke to this issue--and 1969.

But in the next five years it will be not so much a drive for political and social equality as one for economic equality; that is, equality at the starting line.

The thrust of the Administration's new Family Assistance Plan is to help those who want help--to get a job or job training.

The Administration's battle for the Philadelphia Plan for construction unions is just the first chapter in the coming struggle to open up union membership to minorities.

Similarly, the drive for economic opportunity in the 70's will see expanded Black entrepreneurship--Black-owned and managed coops, shopping plazas, car dealerships.

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If in the area of minority rights the emphasis is changing from civil rights to economic rights, in science national attention is moving from space to environment. It might be said that the exploration of other planets has made us more conscious of our own.

In his last speech, Adlai Stevenson expressed that thought: "We travel together, passengers on a little space ship, dependent on its vulnerable reserves of air and soil..."

The President, too, underscored the urgency to safeguard those reserves as he said, "It is literally now or never," when signing the bill establishing a new Council on Environmental Quality.

The President followed up with a message to Congress calling for 21 new pieces of environmental legislation.

Meantime the Congress has adopted a tough Clean Air Act Amendments and is on the verge of approving a comprehensive and accelerated clean waters program.

This is just a start on the attempt to undo the despoiling of our land that we took for granted as the price of technological advance.

Man's greatest failure is that he is unable to see his planet as a single dwelling place.

The same failure might describe man's incapability to live in peace. And yet I am not a pessimist about the future.

I think there is greater hope today for better accommodation of differences between East and West than there was ten years ago.

We recall John Kennedy's inaugural address which was praised then for his cold war rhetoric. "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and success of liberty."

At that time, Kennedy had just finished a campaign where he had pledged no more missile gap and no more Cubas. President Kennedy looked upon our foreign policy from the perspective of potential confrontation with Russia, the head of the Eastern Sino-Soviet Bloc.

Let us compare that inaugural address with the one given in 1969 by Richard Nixon.

"Let us take as our goal: Where peace is unknown, make it welcome, where peace is fragile, make it strong; where peace is temporary, make it permanent. After a period of confrontation, we are entering an era of negotiation."

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Now that does not mean that the President entertains any notion that East and West meeting at super-summit meetings can negotiate away all the differences. No, what the President means is that the 1970's will be a time of realistic negotiating on many fronts--and that some of this negotiation will lead to settlements--settlements that will gradually slice away from the edges the danger of war. Already the Nixon Administration has opened more doors, initiated more peace moves, begun more negotiations than any other administration in a comparable period. Richard Nixon is the first President to visit a Communist country--he visited the People's Republic of China this year, Romania in 1969 and Yugoslavia in 1970. He has opened up communications with China by relaxing trade regulations and passport restrictions.

Major peace moves include the cease-fire in the Mid-East in August of 1970, and continued efforts to allow negotiations to take place now that we have only a de facto cease-fire. Seeking peace in Indo-China, the President has proposed an initiative that includes troop withdrawal, a cease-fire, exchange of prisoners, and an internationally supervised Presidential election in South Vietnam.

At the same time, the President is drawing down America's troop commitment in Vietnam to 69,000 by May 1.

In the area of the arms race, there has been tremendous progress.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed by the President in 1969. And hopefully this year we will see a successful conclusion to the SALT talks on the regulation and limitation of strategic weapons.

This Administration is the first to renounce the use of biological weapons, and resubmitted to the Senate for approval the 1925 Geneva Protocol prohibiting the use of poisonous gases and bacteriological weapons.

The turn-away from the cold war era is no more apparent than in examination of the national budget. For the first time in thirty years, America is spending more for human needs than for defense.

The next years of our decade will see a continued shifting of priorities. It will witness a continual diplomatic effort for settling those disputes that can be realistically negotiated on grounds of mutual advantage.

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From confrontation to negotiation in foreign policy; from the conquest of space to the conservation of environment in science; from voting rights to economic opportunity in the minority struggle; from the politics of protest to the pursuit of professionalization in the attitudes of youth--the 1970's will be a different decade.

Now, as religious leaders, what should be your role in response to this changing scene? I recall the story of the Civil War era when Abraham Lincoln received a delegation of Methodist clergy at the White House. The ministers expressed confidence in the eventual victory of the Union because, as they said, "God was on our side." Lincoln replied: "It's not a question of whether God is on our side. It is a question of whether we are on His side."

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Since World War II the church has gone through two phases--first, the time of non-political involvement in the Fifties when the church was expanding into the suburbs and second, the time of political involvement in the Sixties when the church turned back toward the cities and political issues.

I am convinced that in the Seventies the Church will move away from simplistic activism and toward reconciliation. The Church will urge people to look at social problems from a perspective of moral concern but not decide for them the morality of such issues.

In the Old Testament when the angel of the Lord asked the young Solomon what he needed most to lead his people, he answered, "Give me an understanding heart."

So today the most important gift of leadership in the solution of problems is the capacity to understand the other side, to respect motives, to honor integrity.

If the Church helps bring about this climate of political tolerance, the ideals of America will prevail in the coming decade.

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