

ST. JAMES CHURCH  
WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA 28401

MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY

March 7, 1966

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COMMISSION

Mr. Walker Taylor, Jr.  
Executive Officer  
Mutual Responsibility Commission  
815 Second Avenue  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Walker:

I am dictating this letter late Sunday night with the anticipation that it will be mailed to you special delivery - air mail some time on Monday. The thoughts I have are generally those we discussed on the plane Friday night. For whatever help or support they may be, they are as follows:

I mentioned to you a discussion held in Washington on Friday that involved a hard look at the kind of men who choose the ministry and presently man our Churches. The group with which I met tried to look realistically at a tension that faces every clergyman; that is, the pull to either run a smooth, efficient, effective operation as opposed to the pull to deal realistically with the disagreements, mixed feelings and conflicts of interest that make up the members of his congregation. It was our feeling, after studying a report by a rather perceptive student of the nature of clergymen, that generally speaking the clergy choose the smooth, orderly, comfortable and well run operation; rather than risk facing the potential and often emerging conflicting feelings of the members of a parish family. This has to do not only with the natural desire to keep the peace, but also related to the kind of man who enters this vocation. He is a person who, for all kinds of complex and obvious reasons, likes to keep people happy and who has as one of his chief goals in life being looked upon as a nice guy and being well liked.

This "average" clergyman, therefore, anticipates in his ministry the goal of running an effective and smooth operation that as he understands it ministers to the world. He is disturbed and upset by arguments, dissention and conflict within his parish. This, in his estimation, is "bad". This, in some peoples' view is not always true. There are those clergy who look upon the normal conflict of any group living together as not a sign of failure, but an opportunity to help human beings see the cost and promise of living together. In <sup>the</sup> view, the reality of what is <sup>as</sup> an opportunity to help people see themselves, make responsible decisions and live realistically together. One of the problems this tension presents is, that those clergy who choose the smooth and orderly way, are those who are considered to be successful. By successful, I mean here that these are the men who move up the ladder and ultimately find themselves in responsible positions

within the power structure (i.e. Bishops). It is an oversimplification to lay the total cause of the situation upon the clergyman himself. The fact is, that the man in the pew is the one who demands such an operation (smooth and comfortable) from his rector, and who also becomes a person who casts the vote to either call such a man to the bigger parishes, and also to elect him bishop of his diocese. There is, therefore, a conspiracy which places in positions of authority and ultimate responsibility men who do not care for dissention or unrest in the family, and who see as a real threat to their ultimate goal any kind of revolution, conflict, new ideas, i.e., anything that rocks the boat. Perhaps I protest too much for the sake of the cleric, but I think it is only fair to recognize that many men going into the ministry are simply anticipating fulfilling an image they have already seen; are then trained in seminary to fill that image, and have that same image reinforced and impressed upon them by their congregations and vestries.

The result of all this is, that the leadership that finds itself in decisive roles within the power structure, is not anxious for challenge, distrusts change, and by its very nature protects the status quo. Those men who choose the opposite for their life, that is, who choose to deal with what is, rather than control every situation, make people happy and become well liked; are those who almost to a man do not move up the "ladder". I know there are exceptions and I would guess that Bishop Pike is a prime example. Nevertheless, when you compare the number of bishops who are willing to operate this way, to those who are finally committed to the status quo, I think they are very, very few. As you mentioned, another important factor is, that as free and open as a man may be as he moves up the ladder, there is something instinctive that tells him once he gets there, that he must protect where he is and what he has, and not rock the boat once he is there. The realist (in my opinion) and the man who chooses a ministry to people, rather than choosing to become an eccleasical mechanic, is thus left in a small parish with an insufficient salary and with very few people where he enjoys his life. Those who move up the ladder either delude themselves into some kind of euphoric happiness that is made possible by pining for the old days; or, who do what I lovingly call, "sell out".

I write all this to simply substantiate my agreement with you as to the real purpose of your MRI Commission. The more I think of it, the more I am totally in agreement with the belief that your mission is to challenge, and to whatever degree possible, renew and reform, the structure within the Anglican Communion, and in particularly the Episcopal Church. If it is ever possible that any change come in the hierarchy and power structure of the Episcopal Church, I believe it will be up to you, and your group. I say this for two reasons as shown above: (1) The kind of men who can effect such a change will never get into the decisive positions and offices through the system, and (2) If they start to get there, by the time they arrive in such a role, they will no longer be effective. I therefore agree with you that this is a chance in not only a life time, but in many, many centuries. No such group has ever been created and given the freedom to so challenge the power structure as your MRI Commission has. This has certainly not happened since the revolution and my guess is, will not happen again for many, many years. You therefore play a decisive role in

the history and destiny of the Episcopal Church. I am the first to admit that it may be an impossible destiny and therefore, would not be surprised at failure. What I am really suggesting is, that you have the only chance. To dissipate your power and your possibilities on speaking engagements and second rate programs in parishes and missions is to me, sinful. You and I know enough about "the Prince" to cause things to happen. It requires a great deal of cost and compromise, but I am convinced a man can live with himself in doing it if he realizes that the ultimate purpose is worth while. I am more, and more convinced every day that the means do justify the ends.

One other thought about your unique position; as I said above I do not believe the Church can ever raise up people to a position to do what you can. This is also based upon the premise that real change involves rebellion and revolution. I believe that can happen within a power structure such as the Episcopal Church and it can still survive and make a comfortable transition into the new. The problem is, that unless it happens as the result of the work of a respected and authorized group, it cannot happen from the outside. The hierarchy of the Episcopal Church is entrenched; and an entrenched and solidly founded hierarchy does not allow rebellion in its ranks or from the outside, it is a total impossibility. It happened one time in 1517; the problem is that the days of Martin Luther are over. I do not see any men on the horizon. Those men who I know in the Church who have the power and potential to nail the 95 pieces to the door of the cathedral just don't really care that much, and have already left the ranks.

I hope this is of some help. It really does not differ much from what I said the other day. I am well aware that you cannot use very much of this in a speech, but I have the hope that it may encourage and support you in a decision you apparently have already made.

I still like the idea of the groups (members of your cabinet) doing independent study aside from your administrative and political manuevers. John Kennedy found this very effective, and I cannot help but believe that it is the only way to operate. You have the prestige and the stated purpose and the budget to influence some very capable men to take over and do some study and research for you. I wonder what would happen if you delineated several areas of concern, chose a capable enthusiastic man to head it up, and gave him the freedom to pick his own group; to perhaps employ a consultant (at a reasonable fee) and arrange for a meeting of several days or a week in which to seriously take under study such an area in the life of the Church. Their task would be to study independently and do research and then report to you and to the commission, so that some creative and imaginative thinking might be done in terms of the Church in the world today. They may come up with no solutions and without any plans, but you would have as a bonus a group of concerned people within the Church who had begun to think. That's expensive, but its worth it. If you at the same time were to employ an assistant, he might serve as your "chief of staff" and do all the coordinatng and putting together of such a research program and also distill from their work those ideas that would be helpful to you. I still do not know how you work alone.

Let me throw out several areas that you have mentioned and it seems to

me might be worthy of consideration: (1) The Episcopal authority as related to Presiding Bishop...this you have already raised and know a great deal more about than I do. (2) The Canons of the Church and reforms and revisions that are, it seems to me essential. One that deserves tackling quickly, is that of the role of the rector and of the clergy, to that of the layman. (3) Liturgy and Prayer Book...I am well aware that it is a good thing that these words and actions of the Church change slowly, but they do need to change. My belief is that the group that studies the Prayer Book and issues the study pamphlets is as deeply entrenched in the 17th Century as most of our congregations. (4) Clergy placement...I know this is an impossible dilemma and Bishop Warnecke has tried to deal with it. I think it deserves study. (5) Parish and Diocesan relationships...this is where I would call into play business, Management and consultant to help the Church see how to run a business that they refuse to see has anything to do with management. It is criminal for a diocese to operate, as many do, in an out-moded and irrelevant structure. (6) Theological Education...someone needs to challenge the seminaries other than the angry young men, and the prophets who are leaving the ministry. I include in theological education, clergy training; we have discussed this before and I honestly believe that until we come to terms with this one, we can make all the changes we want in the power structure and we will still have an ineffective and irrelevant pulpit.

I am going to list some names of people for your files and records. This is presumptuous since most of them are friends of mine, or with either degree, will fall in my camp; but I think it might be helpful to have them. Ted Gleason...you know Ted and I have talked enough about him; Bennett Sims...previously rector of the Church of the Redeemer in Baltimore and now in Corning, New York. A very, very bright guy who is on the calendar to head up the post-ordination education program at the Virginia Seminary, and who has all the credentials in the world. He is one of the few, who with credentials, also has something to say; Jim Finhagen...who originally from Maryland, served in South Carolina, and is now Executive Secretary of Christian Education in the Diocese of Washington. He is one of the brightest of the bright. If you could get him interested in any place on your cabinet he would be an asset. He is highly respected in his field. Harcourt Waller...Rector of St. Paul's Church, Charlottesville, Virginia. You have met him. I am not particularly comfortable with Harcourt, and was in a position of dickering with him when he showed interest in my joining his staff in Charlottesville at the University. I respect the feelings of many of my friends; that he is a powerful, strong, egotistical, but very preceptive man. Frank Ross...you know him better than I do; I think he has something to say. Dick Baker...Rector of St. James Church, Richmond. I think this guy has a great deal to say to the Church today. The problem is, that he doesn't relate very well to people and alienates more than listen to him. He is to me theologically sound...he has never had a chance. Jack Harris...this young man is now Director of the Deacons Training Program for the Diocese of Virginia and Maryland. He won that job over the heads of several seminary professors and very outstanding men. He was an unknown who came out of a small parish in the Diocese of Washington, but who, if I were to list all these names I would put at the top. He has a great deal of insight into the needs of the clergy in the

field and some telling comments on seminary training. John Fletcher...he was rector at one time of a church in Lexington, Virginia, and is now studying in Union Seminary prior to moving into the faculty of Virginia Seminary. If you could get him before he becomes sold on seminary life, he would be of great help. His field is ethics. Al Shands...he is in the Diocese of Washington, and for several years has run the "Hogate Church". His field is liturgics; he has traveled extensively; he is attractive, sophisticated, and very 'in'. Al Reiners...he is one of the men I refer to in my letter who will never get up the ladder, but will touch many people's lives and have a very fulfilling life, while the rest of us claw to be nice and get ahead. George Tittmann...I think you know him. He is controversial and erratic; if he is on your side and is interested in your purpose, he would be invaluable. Knox Kreutzer... I put him last on the list. One reason is, that I am not sure you can afford him; and the second is, I am not sure he would be interested in helping. I still contend he sees more and understands <sup>better</sup> best what is happening in the Church today than anyone I know. His problem is that of any who choose to step out from behind the stained glass. Once you are out there where the sky is clear, nobody listens.

I mentioned to you on the plane John Soleau...the more I think about it, the more I feel that he might be of real help. If you are ever in Cambridge, try and see him. His address is 17 Dunster Street, Cambridge, Mass. I knew John at the seminary and he had a part in our wedding. I respect him, like him, and wish you could know him.

I hope all this is of some help. I wish there was some other way I could assist you...I am more convinced than ever of the importance of your job. I am surer than ever that you know what you are doing.

I will be thinking of you as you work towards your weekend meeting during these days. You will be in my thoughts and prayers this weekend...God bless you.

Yours as always,



William L. Dols, Jr.

WLD/lm