

JACKSON 11100511-10 May-June 1964 - p. 101
Episcopal Church Bishop - 63

MEMORANDUM

previous day. Instead of picketing the final four demonstrators on Wednesday had entered Primo's Restaurant and asked for service. They were jailed for "trespassing". So this restaurant had to be visited again. It was an especially attractive target since the Capitol street store was just one branch of the best known restaurant chain in the city; and the owner was one of the leaders of the Citizens Council in Jackson. The group jailed at Primo's this time included the first legitimate "outside agitator", ~~was~~ Jan Hillegas, a white student from Syracuse University in New York.

The police made their greatest mistake that day. Students at the Negro high schools gathered in their schoolyards during their lunch breaks to sing Freedom Songs. The police may have thought that this was the start of some demonstration or march. Probably the police just couldn't even tolerate the singing. Police ordered the students to disperse and go back inside the school. The students refused and defiantly continued singing songs they had helped teach the adults at the mass meetings like:

"Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Freedom.
Woke up this morning with my mind. stayed on Freedom.
Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Freedom.
Halelu, Halelu, Halelujah@

Ain't no harm to keep your mind stayed on Freedom.
Walkin' and talkin' with my mind stayed on Freedom
Gonna Walk Walk Vote Vote March March Oh,
Ain't no harm to keep your mind stayed on Freedom
Halelu--halelu--Halelujah!"

It was the next to last day of school and the students were feeling good. Soon some of them at one school began to march

around the schoolyard, just as several hundred people had tried to march around the church at the mass meeting the night before.

"Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round,
turn me 'round, turn me 'round.
Ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round
Keep on a walkin', keep on a talkin',
Marching up to freedom land.

Ain't gonna let no white PO-liceman turn me 'round,
turn me 'round, turn me 'round
Ain't gonna let no white PO-liceman, turn me 'round,
Keep on a walkin', keep on a talkin'
Marching up to freedom land.

All this was just too much for the policemen. At Lanier High School one of the student leaders, Miss Patricia Stewart, was arguing with a policeman who suddenly slapped her in the face and arrested her. A Negro woman who saw this and rushed to aid the student, was beaten by the police. The police soon broke up the singing and forced the students back inside the school buildings, but not until several students had been beaten. To stop the club swinging police a few students began throwing rocks and bottles at them.

At Lanier High School over 500 students tried to walk out of the school when the principal warned them not to take part in any demonstrations. Police prevented them from leaving the school. More students were clubbed and beaten. Soon the police had set up barricades in all streets near the schools and would only let parents through who promised to take their children home from school. There must have been nearly a hundred white policemen in the neighborhood of each school. The Negro sections of the city had never seen such a display of police power; word of the police brutality to the students spread rapidly. The Negro community of Jackson seethed with anger and tension; yet most of white Jackson had no idea anything

was happening and their press and television would never let them know.

At Medgar's office we discussed the situation. This was an unexpected crisis. Now we knew the students would definitely organize a mass march the very next day. We had seen the police violence and the response, generally nonviolent but with very understandable occasional rock and bottle throwing. Medgar, John Salter, Mrs. Allison, Dave Dennis, and the others at the office were now very afraid that a mass student march would turn into a massacre. We knew the police were bound to continue their insane violence. If too many students (and who could know what number that was) were beaten on the march there might be more rock throwing. If that happened on the city streets we were convinced the police would start shooting the students. We decided to make one last effort to reach responsible elements of the white community, hoping that once they understood about the police brutality and the student response enough whites would put pressure on the Mayor to make some concessions and resume negotiations. We tried to notify a few sympathetic white ministers by telephone but this was too slow. ~~But~~^{we} we needed some dramatic way to reach a large number of white people. We knew Medgar Evers could not call a press conference and discuss police brutality. It would never be honestly reported.

We soon decided to try to hold a public demonstration to protest the police brutality to the students. Of course no such demonstration would be allowed in Jackson. Then someone suggested gathering on the steps of the U.S. Post Office

and Federal Court Building, on Capitol St. This was federal property. We would get a small group of demonstrators to stand there while a Negro minister would try to make a public statement to whatever crowd and press was present explaining the violence at the schools.

While Medgar and John tried to line up people for the demonstration I tried to reach some of the white ministers in Jackson. I thought that if I could get any local ministers to stand with us the city police would never dare interfere with or arrest us. That way we stood an even better chance of having our spokesman make his statement. With some local white ministers with us the television stations might not refuse to carry the story.

It was already late in the afternoon. The only white person I could reach by phone was Bill Hutchinson, a Presbyterian minister on the staff of Tougaloo College. Bill quickly agreed to join us--but he was not a Mississippian. I finally decided to appeal directly to Bishop Dunca~~n~~ Gray, leader of the Episcopal Church in the state. His office was in St. Andrew's Church, across the street from the Federal Building where the demonstration was planned. I did not have time for his assistant, the much younger Bishop Allin. (He had already showed he could not comprehend the crisis.) As soon as the secretary told Bishop Gray I was present he agreed to see me. I explained the police brutality at the Negro highschools. He seemed to understand immediately the hostility and tension this had created and the dangerous situation that would exist in Jackson once mass marches were started. He did not seem

to doubt that police brutality was a serious problem. He did say that most white people in Jackson did not approve of violence. Then he added, "Well, I hope they don't," and explained that since the events at Oxford he was not so sure what the people of the state did want. (His son, rector of the Episcopal Church in Oxford, had been one of the few people to try to stop the rioting there.)

I reassured the Bishop that our main problem in Mississippi was that so few people really knew what was happening. I told him I was sure that if the good white people could only know the truth they would make their public officials keep down violence. I talked of the church people who did not know the full story of the mob at Woolworth's and certainly would not hear about the Negro school children beaten by the police. The problem was one of communication, getting the facts about the racial crisis to the responsible white people, then getting communication started between the races. Bishop Gray agreed with all of this.

Then I stressed the urgency of the present situation. I said that Medgar Evers should not and could not stop the angry students from marching. I even added, "Maybe that is the only way things will ever change, the only way for Negroes to say anything to white people." I suggested that there was one possible way to stop the student's march. If enough white voices criticized the police brutality and attempted to build white community pressure to control the police, then Medgar Evers just might be able to point to this and persuade

the students to postpone their marches. But the problem now was one of time. I asked the Bishop if he knew of any way to reach a large enough group of white moderates in a short time (a matter of hours, communication had to start that evening) and persuade them to do something. With this, he could offer no help.

(As in the face of every such crisis my inner thoughts were very schizophrenic. Intellectually I did not think any change could come to Mississippi without great confrontation, crisis sustained so long it exhausted everyone. But emotionally I was afraid of what such confrontation could bring; perhaps there would be so much violence and suffering that the only result would be enough white victims of occasional Negro violence to forever silence the white moderates (who, of course, were quite silent anyway) and ease whatever guilty conscience existed in the white world--and then would come a massacre of Negroes, leaders and bystanders. This would only produce more fear and hatred on both sides. Intellectually I said the federal government would never allow this to happen. Politically I did not trust the Kennedy administration to bypass Sen. Eastland & Co. and move fast enough to save us from ourselves. In a romantic sense I was even more "schizy." I wanted just enough confrontation so that the threat of ^C crisis and turmoil, without the reality, would cause the "good men of both races" to sit down together and quietly work out the solutions, to let Mississippi be a model for the world of the new road to brotherhood. The other romantic side of me was thrilled at the image of hundreds of Negro highschool students quietly walking into the ranks of the Jackson police,

singing hymns as they marched out to meet the vicious dogs. As the clubs began to fall, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, --my Gandhi-- would call everyone to fall on their knees; while his beautiful voice boomed out a prayer, the demonstrators would softly sing--- I probably would prefer that the tune be "Onward Christian Soldiers" instead of "We Shall Overcome." After the disaster the Negroes would forgive and the whites would repent. Of course, there was another side of the sort of wanted to be on the backrow of the demonstrators, out of the reach of the dogs and too far back to hear Martin's prayer, just the right distance from which to throw rocks at the cops. In the midst of all this there was a theological view, a spiritual perception that was (when I dared face it) my strongest conviction. I knew the Way of the Cross was never so simple, and hardly romantic. For Negroes to forgive whites would be more difficult even than white repentance. The Grace of God was not cheap. Once the palm branches had be thrown away, the people of Jerusalem showed little shame along the Via Dolorosa. Why should I expect miracles along Capital Street--or Farish Street? At the foot of the cross was the city, and there life went on as usual. The crucifixion midst the thieves on the city garbage dump was not seen as the Presence of God--despite the accompanying darkness of the sun, the earthquake, and the rending of the Temple veil. A few days later the empty tomb was cause for less comment. Yet this cross was the only way of reconcilliation. In this confrontation was the power, the love, the agony, the forgiveness, the grace of God--the redemption of man. The most powerful conviction I still held

was that deep in my heart I really did believe that we shall overcome---but the "someday" was not ours to decide. We had to live and act "this day." In anything so sin-sick as the world's racial problems, with Mississippi as the most visible, festering wound, there would have to be the Cross, of Calvary, not of Vacation Bible School, or the Baptist Spring Revival, or the Methodist Summer Camp. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no redemption of sins." In this land where Negro and white both sang so much of being "washed in the blood of the lamb," a cleansing flood was needed. Only by the Grace of God, seen in light from the Cross, could anyone survive to walk on the water. Medgar Evers, Mayor Thompson--Martin King, John Salter, Ed King--the Jackson police, the Negro students--all of us now waited the storm. Some wanted to start things, others to settle things "once and for all." Who was really on God's side? Whose side was God really on? Only with faith could we so arrogantly sing our songs or boast: "GOD's Gonna Trouble the Waters!" But "if God gave Noah the Rainbow sign, No more water but the Fire next time," were we ready? For the Baptism of Fire?)

Bishop Gray was sad. He could think of no way to reach any significant number of white moderates. Then I explained the proposed demonstration at the federal building, across the street from his office. I said that there might be mob violence but more likely the police would try to arrest the demonstrators before the Negro minister was able to read his statement about police brutality. The only way I thought there was a chance for the police to let the minister speak

(and thus be covered by television and be seen by the white moderates) was to have some prominent white Jackson clergymen standing with the Negro minister.

The Bishop seemed to understand the strategy easily. Then he asked which white ministers I had contacted. I had to tell him that I had not been able to reach anyone by phone. I had come to his office at the last minute hoping he would be present. Now I told him he was the only white church leader who understood the crisis. We needed him to join the demonstration. I quickly said we would not expect him to speak, only stand with the Negro minister who would try to speak.

In a quiet, slow voice--but with strength, Bishop Gray agreed. "Yes, yes. I see. I am ready," he said. "I will come."

I was overwhelmed with his response. I had been afraid he would be like so many others and find some way to refuse. I thought that he must be thinking of his sons's stand at Oxford. I suddenly wanted to leave him alone, to give him a chance to think about his decision without me standing in front of him. I quickly muttered that it was almost time for the demonstration to begin and I had to phone Medgar Evers to make sure there was no last minute time change. I said I would use the secretary's phone and excused myself from his office.

I got out of his office as quickly as I could. I felt that he must be alone. I wondered if I was tricking him in some way or pressuring him. I felt a respect for him that was nearly awe.

After I had called the office and confirmed the time, the Bishop's secretary spoke to me. In her quiet voice she said she knew what we were talking about. Then she asked me not to make the Bishop do it. I was not trying to force him to do anything but wondered even more if I had made too emotional an appeal. She then spoke to me of his age and poor physical condition. She said that he had been under great strain for almost a year, since the Meredith trouble began at Ole Miss. She was afraid that there might be some kind of mob yelling and cursing at him. She thought he might even have a heart attack. Finally, in a voice of deep love, she said, "Bishop Gray is so tired now. I don't know whether he really understands all of this. He is just so concerned. He has worked with the race problem in the church for many years. Now he wants to help in any way he can. But he doesn't really know what you want. Don't make him go out there. He is needed so much in his church. He must keep working there. He may not live if he goes out there. Please."

Her words were just one long plea. I was quiet and did not argue. She made me feel terribly guilty, like I was using, tricking, a good-hearted old man. I quickly assured her that I would not take him with me to the demonstration.

I returned to his office. "Bishop Gray?"

"Yes? Is the time still 4:30?"

"Well, yes it is," I said. "But we have decided that you can be more helpful to us if you stay here in your office now. We may have some younger men come join the demonstration," I lied, "and we need you to try to reach as many ministers by

by telephone as you can. Most of the men who came to our meetings will probably be getting home around five o'clock. I believe the best thing you can do is try to call those men and explain why we are having the demonstration. You can talk directly to them this way and be of more help than on the demonstration."

(to old page 75)

→

the Bishop said.

"Well, Mr. King, if you think so. You know the ministers in my church will want to know about the incidents at the schools."

"Yes, sir. Please call them, but if you could call the Catholic bishops, and Bishop Franklin and some of the others who were with us, it would be good. I have to go now. Thank you for giving me so much time and thank you for the help. Good bye."

The secretary also thanked me as I left. I walked across the street to the Post Office. Police, photographers, and a unfriendly looking crowd of whites was already gathering on the sidewalk in front of the building so I went in the side entrance.

~~There~~ In the lobby I met ~~my~~ fellow demonstrators. There were only 14 of us, several ministers, some students like Annie Moody and Joan Trumpauer, and John Salter and Mercedes Wright from the NAACP office. Our plan was to walk outside, stand on the stairs, ~~and~~ and stand in a small group as Rev. Eddie O'Neil ~~made~~ made a statement ~~and~~. Jeannette ~~was~~ was with us but she did not plan to demonstrate. She had brought me a purple clerical stole I wanted to wear, as a sign of penance for the brutality white Mississippi was inflicting on Negroes. When I saw the size of the crowd outside--several hundred people--I was frightened. ~~I turned to~~ I turned to Ken Toler, the reporter, and asked him to help Jeannette if the mob got violent. Then I joined the line of people filing out the door.

-----a handful of brave, or foolish, or desperate souls trying to stand straight but really holding close to each other. There were far more police on the steps than demonstrators. Capt. Roy told us we were under arrest "for blocking the entrance to a public building." Our minister tried to make his statement but the crowd was jeering loudly and the only distinct voice that the press could hear was that of the police. Then he started praying as the police began ~~seizing~~ seizing us. I dropped to my knees by his side. I was soon picked up and carried to the paddy wagon by several Negro trustees. The jail was so close by we hardly had time to sing one song before we were being ~~imprisoned~~ imprisoned. Mike Jackson never knew what he was protecting.

hours

In the next few ~~days~~ I was to wonder what might have happened if I had let Bishop Gray come with us. I could hardly imagine him sharing our white jail cell. Perhaps if he had come the police would have stood by while our minister made his statement. But probably not. The police would have still rushed up to us and while Capt. Ray led the Bishop back inside the building, ^{and released him} the rest of us would have been arrested. But strategy was not so much on my mind as something far more significant. When the secretary talked me out of letting the Bishop demonstrate she had made me feel guilty, like I was taking advantage of the man. And so I had decided ~~not to~~ to tell him not to come. But now I wondered if this action, this dishonesty, was not the ultimate betrayal of the man. He had heard my words, no matter how intense or emotional my plea (and I had not been overly dramatic with him,) and he had made his decision to come with us, to take his stand. I was sure that he did understand that his action meant public criticism at the very least--if not the possibility of arrest or even violence. He was not the kind of man to make ~~any~~ careless decisions. When I ~~deliberately~~ removed the terrible decision from before him I was playing the role of the traditional Christian minister, the priest who comforts, who hides the reality of life, who protests man from hard decisions, who removes the agony facing man, who holds the hand of a man called to walk alone with God--the good, loving, man of God who enjoys the work of standing between Man and God. The Bishop had made his decision. He was ready for this moment. He had not agreed to act because the R v. Ed King, friend ^{of the Rev. Sam Tomlinson, the Rev. Bert Ward, and of Mrs. Jane Schwab} ~~of the Rev. Sam Tomlinson, the Rev. Bert Ward,~~ his priests, had asked him. He had only listened to me, treated me with respect. But his decision to act must have been by the Grace of God, by his own conviction that this act ~~was~~ in this time, in this place, was the Will of God, the Call of God. ~~He had~~ ^{just} agreed that this particular demonstration was a brilliant strategic maneuver by the civil Rights Movement. Tactics ^{were} ~~was~~ not his concern. Surely he had made this decision

in the presence of God. His life was full of the Spirit. He needed no dramatic gestures such as telling me to come back in half an hour for his decision, after he had rushed upstairs to fall before the altar in prayer. Our faith tells us that, since the first ages, God places before man the Choices of Life and of Death, and calls us to Choose Life. *Yet most ministers specialize in preventing such confrontations and choices.* My arrogance was overwhelming. What right did I have to prevent him from acting on his choice? The secretary, of course, was right in raising the questions of his health, his mind, his safety. She loved him and served him. But I could not take her implied criticism. If anything had happened to the Bishop I would have felt terribly guilty, I would have been criticized by my friends in the Episcopal Church, accused of taking advantage of the good will of an old man. I did not want such criticism or such guilt. By lying and saying we did not really need him I really showed contempt for his integrity and for his very faith. His path was clear, the way was straight--and I had dared turn him down a detour. Yet, I had to admit, when I did it I felt so sanctimonious, even relieved. I went to the Bishop to ask his help not really expecting him to respond--but with a greater expectation of help from him than anyone else I might reach. In terms of strategy and in terms of responsible religion I knew that asking him ~~for~~ was the right thing to do at that moment. If he had just said no I would have gone out of the church to join the demonstration feeling so self righteous, so almost martyr-like-- I was ready, even if no one I sought help from would join us. But the Bishop was also ready and did not say "no." Bishop Gray said "Yes" to God, and Dr King forced "No" on the Bishop. I knew it was not just to avoid guilt and criticism that I had done this. ~~It was~~ The reason was much, much worse--the greatest temptation, the greatest sin in the ministry. A minister is always tempted to heal, to be gentle, to be kind, to be sweet, to show the kind of sentiment that masquerades as Christian Love, and to be rewarded by the respect, admiration, gratitude, friendship, and love that comes to those who preach good will and practice good fellowship. This is the kind of minister who presides over the

Communion Table as if it were celebrating the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, (a mountaintop picnic experience) instead of the Table of the Last Supper, with Christ the Host, and the life of men to be found in the Body and the Blood.

When Bishop Dunham Gray ~~proceeded~~ ^{walked} to stand ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~middle~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~crowd~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~side~~ ~~of~~ a Negro minister in ~~the~~ ~~demonstration~~ on the streets of Jackson, I felt such a power in the man; I felt humble in his presence; I felt such love and such awe, that I both wanted to cry softly and say "thank you, sir," and also to cry out, aloud, "Alleluia."

And yet, within five minutes, I was back in the comfortable role of the minister, giving comfort, ^{practically} assuring the man that the Christian faith did not really call for strength or action. ~~At~~ ^{that} ~~the~~ ~~same~~ ~~moment~~ ~~I~~ ~~was~~ ~~feeling~~, ^{no longer felt awe but a pleasant} warm and good, for keeping the man from taking any risk, as if, perhaps, his own faith was not strong enough--as if, even, God was not able to take care of ~~his~~ ~~own~~. I had to take care of the Bishop. As I went to the demonstration I felt such damned pride in my own ~~the~~ ~~courage~~ and faith. And I felt such damned pride in the fact that I had acted towards the Bishop with such good common sense and taking care that nothing harm^{ed} this kind old man. Perhaps, perhaps I really did not want him on that demonstration after all. Perhaps I was unwilling to share the moment--the terror ~~the~~ drumming inside one as he faced the mob, the police, the dogs; the fame as one faced the cameras; the magnificence of the brotherhood as one joined hands with comrades on the battle field; the thrill of combat; the conquest of doubt that comes with action; the knowledge of ~~the~~ ~~kairos~~, of being in the right place at the right time; the Power, the Comfort, the Blessed Assurance of the Presence of God; the fear of pain and suffering being overcome in one's body with the realization that you could ^{sometimes} love your enemies; the Grace of God that you ^{gave you power to} ~~the~~ ~~love~~; ^{part of a great company} ~~the~~ ~~faith~~ of being ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~of~~ ~~witnesses~~, of being a Soldier of the Lord; and, above and through everything, JOY.

So I denied the Bishop--and felt my heart warmed in a most familiar way; but I had also denied God, and I soon felt shame. The tiniest ~~the~~ ~~prison~~ ~~cell~~ is full of most empty spaces, and every prisoner soon feels very small, very alone. God unloves

"Me"

50

d.d