

King College
Bristol, Tennessee 37620
July 21, 1968

Dr. R. T. L. Liston
The Commission of Holston Presbytery
323 West Walnut Street
Johnson City, Tennessee 37601

Dear Dr. Liston:

I acknowledge with gratitude Presbytery's gracious act of appointing a Commission to counsel with me and your coming from Atlanta to talk with me as a father to his son. This I will always remember with deep appreciation.

At this point in our discussion it may be helpful to write this statement as a means of seeking to identify those matters which we should pursue. First, let me say that I am heartily willing to compromise in matters of procedure and that I want to do all in my power to cause as little confusion and disruption as possible. I have no more intention of giving publicity to this matter than I have of seeking bill-board space on which to list the faults of my parents. I am willing to withdraw the letter originally written for a letter of transfer to some other body yet to be chosen, or I will reword any part of the letter which may be misunderstood. The expression "I...renounce", for example, has overtones which are not intended and that language is used only because it is that of the Book of Church Order.

We must, however, face the simple fact that there is no possibility of my functioning further on Presbytery's Committees. Few candidates, for example, are likely to want to be examined by one who will come to be known as "that heresy hunting fundamentalist who kept _____ out of the ministry." My presence in Presbytery will be a source of embarrassment to this boy's godly father, and the very fact that he is too much a Christian gentleman to ever mention such a thing is all the more reason for not imposing upon him in such a way. Broken eggs can seldom be reassembled.

I judge that it is highly improbable that Presbytery as a whole will ever understand that my letter was not a polemic against this candidate or that I made every possible effort to see that he had the opportunity to have an unprejudiced examination by Presbytery, without my being present.

And then there is the further fact that I have tried (harder than may be evident) to be a cooperative and peaceful presbyter and that I have not succeeded. I came to the juncture where the alternatives in Presbytery were to compromise about some of the most basic doctrines of the Christian Church or to start a fight which would have been disruptive in a major way and I found neither of these to be acceptable.

My basic decision, based on a much larger picture than the immediate occasion of the letter, was made in agony before God (I am not trying to sound pious) and is not subject to any basic compromise or negotiation. In other matters, I am willing, as indicated above, to follow the suggestions of the Commission.

I am much concerned that we make certain that this candidate is not blamed for what he has not done--I was more troubled by the casual reception of his answers than by the fact that a student with an exploring mind is seeking to think-through" what he believes, and I am far more concerned about the larger picture (The 1968 Assembly was unwilling to take a clear stand about situation ethics) than about the local affairs in Holston Presbytery.

With thankfulness for this additional kindness to me and with all Christian wishes, I remain

Affectionately yours,

George A. Anderson