

April 6, 1960

Professor Glenn C. Routt
Brite College of the Bible
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, Texas

Dear Glenn,

Enclosed is an article which I have just recently finished preparing for publication. I had a hunch you might like to see it.

It represents the growing edge of my thinking. I think present-day Protestant ethics is in real trouble. It is caught in web of moral ambiguity. Nothing can be clearly identified as the will of God. The result is an imperative-less paralysis of moral action. I think it is wise not to underestimate the seriousness of the situation. I have tried to speak to this condition in this rather lengthy paper, "Is the Demand of God Ambiguous?".

I enjoyed our brief conversations a couple of weeks ago at the conference on Christianity and the Arts. I only wish we had had more chance to chat about our mutual concerns and projects.

If anything further has developed at Brite on the matter about which we talked, whether affirmatively or negatively, it would comfort me to know. I must say in all frankness that I have not been able to avoid thinking about the possibility you suggested. I rather assume, however, by the fact that you have not written, that nothing has developed.

In talking with Albert Outler recently, he told me he would be most glad to write a letter if more information is needed about my work here. If this seems to be a negated possibility, however, do not hesitate to tell me so.

My good wishes to you and all your colleagues at Brite.

Sincerely,

Thomas C. Oden
Instructor in Christian Ethics,
Contemporary Theology and Homiletics

abstraction from the covenant relation, and that the covenant relation never be considered in abstraction from man. If such a program were strictly adhered to, some of the greatest obstacles between Barth and Bultmann would be removed, and both of their theological programs could be fulfilled. It would call an end to all talk about "man in himself" (which is the center of Barth's polemic against Bultmann) and all talk about "revelation in itself" (which is the center of Bultmann's polemic against Barth).

Bultmann regards any method as abstract which consistently begins with God and analogically moves toward man. Barth's method is misunderstood insofar as it appears to exclude man from the circle of theological knowledge. Barth, in contrast, regards any method as abstract which engages in a general existential analysis, as if man could be abstracted from his ~~covenantal~~ relation to God. Bultmann's method is misunderstood insofar as it appears first to see man in himself, and then to see man in relation to God, since even the man prior to faith exists already in relation to God. In our view, an integral doctrine of obedience would strive to maintain a circular modus operandi, constantly relating the action of God and the response of man, Christology and anthropology, or as Barth says, "the circle of God and faith, faith and God".