

August 18, 1962

Dr. James Gustafson  
Yale Divinity School  
409 Prospect  
New Haven, Conn.

Dear James,

There have been many occasions in the last four years when I have wished to write you an unhurried letter. You remain a special person in my consciousness and you played a special role in my personal history when I was at Yale whether you were aware of it or not. I would really covet an opportunity to have a good chat with you. I had thought that we might hit Week of Work the same year but we haven't seemed to have crossed paths.

My two years of teaching at Perkins were of great significance and value to me. The joint course work I did with Albert Outler, Schubert Ogden, Van Harvey and John Deschner, an eight-hour year long core course integrating systematic theology and Christian ethics, was a profoundly meaningful way to begin my work as a teacher. As I look back upon it, it further strikes me that our decision for me to do my dissertation in absentia was a wise one, basically if not in every detail, however much I might have profited from another year at Yale.

My work at Phillips may be described as tough, challenging, varied, rewarding, demanding, and giving me a real sense of vocational self-fulfillment. Despite our very real limitations here with respect to library, students and (I say it charitably) faculty, I remain convinced that we here have an outstanding opportunity to build a splendid denominational seminary and eventually an ecumenically oriented seminary which would serve Protestant churches in this area quite meaningfully. With a new Dean this fall (D n Joyce) and three faculty positions to fill next year (religious education, pastoral care, and missions-ecumenics)--by the way if you have any suggestions on any of them I would be most pleased to receive them) we have an opportunity to strike out in a new direction, and there seems to be every reason to believe we will.

OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

MONTHLY MAILING

August, 1962

TO: ALL MINISTERS OF OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN CHURCHES  
FROM: THE OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

CONTENTS

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>FOR WHOM</u>	<u>ACTION NEEDED</u> (if any)
<u>NATIONAL, STATE &amp; DISTRICT EVENTS</u>		
THE LAST WORD on State CYF Commission . . . . . (August 13-18)	All Ministers	
Contributions & Remittance Procedures. . . . . (with remittance forms enclosed)	The Church Treasurer	
Oklahoma Laboratory Training Schools. . . . . (Tulsa, East Side Christian - Sept. 17-21) (Duncan, First Christian - - Nov. 5-9)	All Teachers of Every Church (Registration Form enclosed)	
<u>FELLOWSHIP GROUPS</u>		
C.M.F. Organization. . . . .	All Ministers . . . . .	Reply Requested
<u>LOCAL CHURCH LIFE</u>		
September Set-up Meetings . . . . .	All Ministers	
Christian Discipleship Series . . . . .	All Ministers . . . . .	Reply Requested
1962 Vacation Church School Report . . . . .	All Ministers. . . . .	Reply Requested
District Fall Assemblies . . . . .	All Ministers	
A Reminder of Past "Replies Requested" . . . . .	All Ministers. . . . .	Reply Requested
College Scholarships . . . . .	All Ministers	
Local Church Leadership List . . . . .	All Ministers . . . . .	Reply Requested

I was deeply shocked at the passing of Dr. Niebuhr. After hearing of it I read over all the rather lengthy correspondence we had in connection with my dissertation and other matters, and came anew into the awareness of the greatness of this man, his depth and complexity, his sensitivity in perception, his catholicity, his insight into the historic tradition and the contemporary scene, and perhaps more than anything his sense of "benevolence toward being in general". However, the occasion of his death was for me a reminder that he more than anyone was taught me a new way of looking at death, the death of our gods, the passing of finite realities, and of the One who meets us as friendly and affirming even in the death of our gods, enabling us to say "though he slay me yet will I trust him."

I greatly appreciated Treasure in Earthen Vessels. It spelled out a number of concepts of which I had heard you speak previously and did not fully comprehend. I have found it a rich resource for lecture preparation, and I plan to use it in a seminar this fall.

One item about which I would like to converse with you at length is my treatment of Bultmann and Barth in my dissertation. I assume you were one of the readers. I would honestly like to know some of your candid critical responses to the argument. Some day I would like to do some more work on the manuscript, probably with special reference to Bultmann's ethics, since to date no one else has tried to analyze the contribution of Bultmann to ethical thought. Hence I would welcome any comments you might have which in your view would improve either my explication of his position or my critique of it. I remain most interested in the ethics of both Bultmann and Barth, and this fall I will offer a seminar in Current Protestant Ethics in which I will lecture on both of them as well as Tillich, Richard Niebuhr, Gollwitzer and Bonhoeffer.

A more immediate interest prompts me to write you at this time, however. I have been engaged during the past year, and particularly this summer, in a writing project on the emerging new shape of the church in our time. I have to date completed roughly two-thirds of the first drafts of a manuscript which may turn out to be around 200-250 pages. Although the following is tentative, here is how the structure of the project seems to be taking shape:

Title: STRATEGY FOR RENEWAL (or possibly TOWARD THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH)

An initial essay on "The Despair and Hope of the Contemporary Church", with a section on Bonhoeffer's Question to the Church.

Part I. THE EMERGING REALITY OF A RENEWED CHURCH

Ch. I. Signs of Renewal

Ch. II. Renewal as Gift and Task



Ch. III. Resources for Renewal (here I elaborate the recovery of the denomination tradition as an instrument of renewal, the ecumenical movement, the lay movement, contemporary theology and historical theology, insofar as each of these are calling and enabling the church in our time to perceive a new image of itself).\*

#### Part II. JUDGMENT AND RENEWAL

Ch. I. The Failure of Pragmatic Activism\*\*

Ch. II. The Failure of Pietistic Liberalism\*\*

Ch. III. ~~Exegetical~~ Critique of American Fundamentalism (focusing on its Christological inadequacy).\*\*

These three chapters will have a historical-polemical character, seeking to characterize the inadequate theological rootage of popular American Protestantism. The following two chapters will attempt to indicate the significance of contemporary theology (post-liberal) for the new shape of the church.

Ch. IV. Tillich and the Næbuhr's as Theologians of Judgment.

Ch. V. Barth and Bultmann as Theologians of Renewal

#### Part III. THEOLOGY OF GOD'S RENEWING ACTION

Ch. I. The New Man\*\*

Ch. II. The New Community

Ch. III. A New Theological Humanism

#### Part III. LITURGY AND RENEWAL

Ch. I. The Place of the Sacraments in Church Renewal\*

Ch. II. The Christian Year Versus the Program Year\*\*

#### Part IV. STRATEGY FOR RENEWAL

Ch. I. The Need and Promise of Protestant Theology\*\*

Ch. II. The Ministry of the Laity and God's Own Ministry\*\*

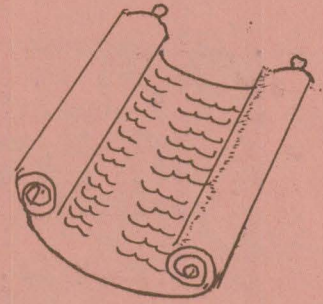
Ch. III. The Ministry of Those Set Apart

Conclusion: On Answering Bonhoeffer's Question to the Church.  
Something on the worldliness of the church

This is roughly the way the pattern seems to be emerging, although doubtless it will be much revised. Perhaps this will clue you in on some of my current concerns. Asterisks indicate sections in which I have completed one draft (\*) or a pretty nearly finished draft (\*\*).

Now I would like to make a request. I hesitate to make it since I know the range of your involvements, but have decided to do so nevertheless on the grounds that I would really like for you to not attempt it if it seems unfeasible time-wise or for other reasons. I would like to share with you this manuscript

COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS!!!



Crown Heights Christian Church in Oklahoma City is searching for young people who intend to pursue a career of full time Christian service and are in need of financial assistance in order to continue their education. Some of the vocations falling into this category are:

1. PASTORAL MINISTRY
2. MISSION SERVICE ABROAD
3. MISSION SERVICE AT HOME
4. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
5. CHAPLAINCY
6. CHURCH SOCIAL WORK
7. COLLEGE TEACHING

Young people who are interested in applying for one of these scholarships may obtain an application by contacting

GENE CUNNINGHAM  
Chairman, Scholarship Committee  
Box 1845  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Telephone - JA 5-7451 - or JA 5-3743.

\* \* \* \* \*

If more information is desired about the opportunities and responsibilities of full time Christian service, an interview may be arranged with the Scholarship Committee or with our ministers upon request. It is still not too late to obtain a scholarship for the coming school year of 1962-63, so do not delay.

either when complete or in its present stages, and after having read it, if it seems to you to have something significant to say, I would like very much for you to consider writing a brief (or ~~otherwise~~---as long as you wish) Introduction for it. As I have said, I am aware of the limitations on your time, and fully prepared to face the fact that you may have neither time nor inclination to do it. But if it should be the case that you were interested, believe me it would please me greatly. I can think of no ~~one~~ whom I would more desire to introduce this book than you.

I have not yet submitted the manuscript to any publisher. I think I will send it to Melvin Arnold (Harpers) for his assessment, since in previous correspondence with him he has seemed encouraging. Since summer is drawing nigh, and time for working on the manuscript will be limited during the coming year, I think I will send him all or part of what I have done at summer's end. Meanwhile, if you would care to see any portions of it, all of it thus far done, or even a precis of it, I would be glad to send it to you in photocopy.

I wish to underscore, however, that I would not really want you to take this on if it meant intolerably burdening your schedule or if you had serious hesitations about its adequacy.

My best regards to all at Yale.

Cordially and sincerely,

Thomas C. Oden

either when complete or in the present stages, and after having read it, it seems to you to have something of a value to say, I would like very much for you to consider writing a letter for me--as long as you wish, I am not at all aware of the limitations on your time, and fully prepared to look the facts that you may have written like you intended to do so. But if it should be the case that you were interested, I believe it would please me greatly. I can think of no one whom I would more desire to know than you.

I have not yet attempted the manuscript to my publisher. I think I will send it to Melvin Arnold (Harvard) for his assessment, since in previous correspondence with him he has seemed encouraging. Since some of the drawings and the for working on the manuscript will be limited during the coming year, I think I will send him all or part of what I have done at summer's end. Meanwhile, if you would care to see any portion of it, all of it, or even a great deal of it, I would be glad to send it to you in photocopy.

I wish to understand, however, that I would not really want you to take this on in its most intricate part, but your interest in it you had various feelings about the subject.

My best regards to all at home.

Cordially and sincerely,

Thomas A. Chen