

Feb. 14, 1959

Dr. H. Richard Niebuhr
409 Prospect
New Haven, 11, Conn.

Dear Dr. Niebuhr,

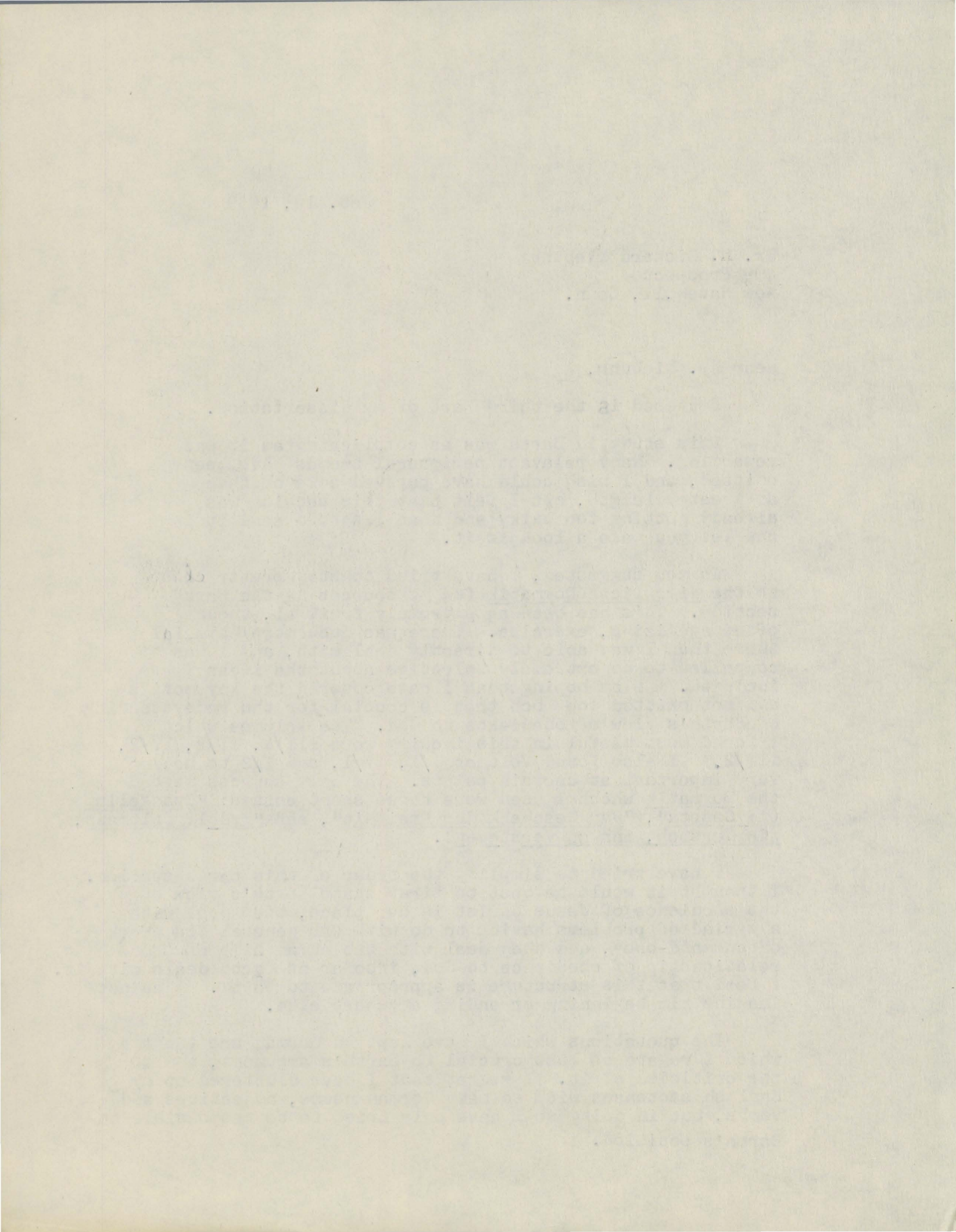
Enclosed is the third Part of my dissertation.

This study in Barth was as complicated as it was rewarding. Many relevant peripheral themes have been omitted, and I wish could have pursued some of them at greater length, but I felt that this section was already getting too bulky and that I should send it in and let you take a look at it.

As you suggested, I have tried to stay pretty close to the Kirchliche Dogmatik for my sources in the Barth section. This has been an extremely fruitful, though often agonizing, exercise. There was much more material there than I was able to directly deal with, and I was compelled to be extremely selective about the ideas I included. I am hoping that I have covered the key motifs and not omitted too much that is crucial for the understanding of Barth's view of obedience to God. The Volumes which I found most useful in this inquiry were III/4, II/2, IV/2, III/2. I also found Volumes I/1, IV/1, and I/2 to be very important at certain points. The only sources beyond the Dogmatik which I used were three short essays: "Evangelium und Gesetz", "Das Geschenk der Freiheit", and "Rudolf Bultmann, Ein Versuch, ihn zu verstehen".

I have tried to simplify the order of this Barth section. I thought it would be best to first state Barth's view of the obedience of Jesus Christ in our place, then deal with a myriad of problems having to do with the general framework of command-obey, and then deal with the human side of the relationship of obedience to God, insofar as Barth deals with it. I feel that this structure is appropriate to Barth. I cannot imagine him beginning or ending anywhere else.

The quotations which I have kept in German are the ones which I regard as most crucial to Barth's argument, and to the criticism of it. I regret that I have cluttered up my English sentences with so many German nouns, adjectives and verbs, but in doing so I have only tried to be responsible to Barth's position.



Please forgive me for inserting another diagram in the very last section. I quite agree with you that they are not as useful for communication as I had first imagined. The only reason I included this one was to illustrate the contrast of Bultmann and Barth. I had originally intended for the diagrams to supplement each other in meaning. I think your criticism is correct, however, that I have labored the triplicity of the relationship in these diagrams. I can only ask you to be charitable with my first efforts to communicate a relationship which, to me, is very difficult to systematically understand. But I assure you that in later drafts I shall try to reduce the thoughts of these diagrams to sentences.

As I look back on this year and last year, I realize that the reading and annotating and initial ground-work which I did on the dissertation last year has been immensely helpful to the actual ordering and writing of the dissertation this fall and winter. Not only the work I did independently in the library, but also the Barth seminar under Hans Frei, and the Gospel and Law seminar under Mr. Gustafson have been immensely helpful. The only reason I have been able to move through the dissertation at this rate of speed is because of last year's work. My main task this year has simply been the ordering and consideration and criticism and shuffling of the notes and ideas I worked through last year.

I find myself wanting to express my appreciation for being allowed to utilize approximately half of my second year study at Yale on my dissertation problem, even though I had not completed my general examinations. The systematic reading and annotating I did during that year has expedited the writing of the dissertation immensely. As I look back on that year, I can see that it was perhaps the most fruitful year I have even had, in spite of some of the anxieties which accompanied it. In any event, I am grateful that I was allowed to set out on the dissertation last year, because, as it has turned out, the task has been a thoroughly interesting, rewarding, and even enjoyable one from my perspective.

Doubtless you have received my letter of ~~February~~^{February} 12, inquiring about the Brunner section. You may wish to look over my Barth section before making that reply. If you would like for me to pursue the plan with Brunner, then I shall set out immediately on that section. But if you would prefer that I try to deal more adequately with the contrast of Barth and Bultmann, then I shall proceed in that direction. If possible, I would like to have your answer at your earliest convenience.

