

June 21, 1960

The Rev. Lawrence Williams
Episcopal Church
Muskogee, Oklahoma

Dear Rev. Williams,

I just received a note from Frank Littell, urging me to get in touch with you.

I have heard some splendid things about the Fern Mountain lay institute. I would like to hear more, and would like to cooperate in any way I could to further the ends of this project.

I have been teaching here at Perkins in the fields of Theology and Christian Ethics during the last two years. I have just accepted an invitation to come to Phillips Theological Seminary in Enid as Associate Professor of Theology and Pastoral Care. As you perhaps know, Phillips is the only theological school in Oklahoma, except for the Roman Catholic seminary. Although Phillips is now oriented pretty much toward Disciples Churches, it is striving more and more to become an ecumenical seminary. Actually, that is one of the reasons for my coming. I am a Methodist and will be the first, and I hope not the last, non-Disciple on their faculty.

Why do I write you? I suppose because I sense that we might have some profoundly common concerns as churchmen in Oklahoma, and as persons concerned with the oneness of the church in the midst of its de facto brokenness. Joe Mathews is a close friend of mine, and a former teacher. Kelley Barnett may also be a person with whom we are mutually acquainted. I came very close to accepting an invitation from the Institute of Church and Community at Hartford Seminary, patterned after the German evangelical academies, and led by Peter Berger, whom you perhaps know, who wanted me to join their staff. In short, I am much concerned with the theology of the laity and with lay theological education, and I have a hunch that you doubtless are likewise concerned.

I only wish to give you my greetings, and my good wishes for your project. I would like to become better informed as to your conception of your task in this venture.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas C. Oden

to God within these orders. Barth's quarrel with Brunner is essentially his contention that Brunner has made the orders an independent force or entity which can be considered abstractly, apart from the fact they they are God's orders.¹

Likewise, one is never called to be obedient to the moment, or to the demand of the moment, but always to God in the moment. Barth's quarrel with Bultmann is essentially his contention that Bultmann has made an idolatry of the moment. The moment must not be considered abstractly, apart from the Lord of the moment.²

3. Although he rejects the notion of "orders of creation", Barth speaks of certain horizontal orders (Ordnungen) of human existence which form the framework for human obedience. He never defines these orders as independent or neutral spheres, but he simply refers to them as the area or realm (Bereich) of the divine commanding and corresponding human obeying.³ The divine demand does not meet man in a vacuum, but in the historical, horizontal, human, temporal, experiential realm where man lives.⁴

The predominant emphasis of Barth's social ethics

¹K.D. 3/4, pp. 20-21.

²Ibid., pp. 19f., p. 421.

³Ibid., pp. 41ff.

⁴Ibid., p. 43.