

June 21, 1960

The Rev. Don C. Shaw
Church of St. Michael and All Angels
8501 New Hampshire Ave.
Adelphi, Maryland

Dear Rev. Shaw,

I was pleased to hear word from Dr. McCabe that the Journal of Pastoral Care wanted the article "What is Mental Health?", and I was grateful for the suggestions he made on how it might be improved.

I was very interested in your letter of May 31. I am afraid that I am not the person you met in Atlantic City some time ago. But I very much appreciated your encouraging words. You need not be appologetic about your affirmation of hope for Methodist scholars. This is a hope, certainly as yet unfulfilled, which I share with you.

As for the Kierkegaard paper, if you happen to have that copy of it, and if JPC does not need it, then you may have it. I have the original on an ozalid master copy.

If you happen to live near Washington D.C., then you perhaps might have crossed paths with Rev. James Hardison, a pastor of a Methodist Church in Hyattsville, a very perceptive person, and one who shares many of my concerns. I look forward to the occasion when we might meet and become better acquainted than is possible through the printed page.

Affirmatively yours,

Thomas C. Oden
Theology and Pastoral Care
Address after August 1:
Phillips Theological Seminary
Phillips University
Enid, Oklahoma

is not the theme of the continuity of political and social orders, as if these orders had some sort of autonomous status in nature apart from grace. Rather the locus of continuity is always, for Barth, in God rather than the orders themselves. The horizontal sphere in which human obedience takes place has no existence in and of itself, but only out of grace¹

Disobedience to God is, from man's point of view, a breaking of the continuity of the covenant relation. But from God's point of view the continuity is never broken. In spite of every human interruption, the horizontal continuity of the divine commanding and reconciling remains uninterrupted. The real continuities of human existence are maintained not by man but by God's grace. In Jesus Christ He has declared his decision that His faithfulness shall not be put to nought by man's unfaithfulness.²

F. The Ontological Impossibility of Disobedience

1. The freedom of the Christian man does not consist in a choice between two or more possibilities, but between a possibility and an impossibility, Barth writes. When man chooses to be disobedient to grace, he is choosing the absurd, the impossible and the groundless³ He is choosing what God

¹K.D. 3/4, pp. 47f.

²K.D. 3/2, pp. 50ff.

³Ibid., pp. 158ff.