

Strathaven,
Hepburn Gardens,
St. Andrews,
Scotland.

24th Dec., 1931.

Dear Professor Barth,

I have been intending to write you for a long time to thank you for the delightful and Encouraging letter of congratulation I received in October. If I remember rightly it arrived just on the day on which I was publicly installed and I was very proud indeed thus to have your blessing on the new venture on which I was embarking. I am glad you approve of what I have done and I hope I shall be able to prove myself not altogether unworthy of all the kind things you say. I have always felt more than grateful to you for the patience and consideration you showed me when I was a student in Münster, still struggling with the

difficulties of a foreign language, and I know that the influence you exerted on me in various ways then has ~~not~~ made a permanent difference in my whole outlook. Of one thing I am quite certain, namely that I shall retain the keen interest in theological questions which you did more than anyone else to arouse in me. I know that it was because they felt that I would approach the Old Testament as a theologian and not as a mere linguist or archaeologist that some of my friends pressed so hard for my appointment and I shall certainly do my best not to disappoint their hopes and yours.

But I have not only to thank you for your letter but now also for the most welcome copy of your book on Amos which you were so kind ^{as} to have sent on to me lately. I am very pleased to have it and hope to work carefully through it at the earliest opportunity. This last term has been such a crowded one that I have not yet had the time. When everything is over one has everything to learn. Next term promises to be still busier but after Easter there will be more leisure time in which to do some systematic reading on

my own account.

I am not altogether satisfied with the kind of work I have to do at present here but perhaps it may be possible to modify the course gradually. Men are supposed to attend my lectures for two consecutive years. To my junior class I teach Hebrew grammar for three hours a week and with my senior class I read selected parts of the Hebrew Bible. Unfortunately, though students are expected to have worked through part of the grammar before they come to me, most of them know very little and I have to go right back to the beginning and explain everything. Their rate of progress is very slow and their memories are so short! The senior class reads very slowly and I am somewhat discouraged at the small amount we have succeeded in reading. I cannot help wishing that there was a little more of the German diligence about them. I attended Sellin's Old Testament Seminar in Berlin and he would certainly not have tolerated for a moment what seems to be taken as a matter of course here. Then one hour a week I have to

lecture on Old Testament Introduction. The practice has been to deal with the Pentateuch and Prophets one year and the Historical Books and Hagiographa the following year. Both Senior and Junior Classes are taken together for this. I find that this is far too brief a measure of time as it does not leave me time to say what it is most important that I should say.

In my inaugural lecture I tried, however, to deal with more fundamental questions. My subject was "The Problem and Significance of the Old Testament Synthesis" (using the word not in its Hegelian sense but as opposed to "analysis"). My general thesis was that the Old Testament is composed of various conflicting elements, for example Cult and prophecy, realistic narrative and "critical narrative" (the Deuteronomist in Judges, Samuel and Kings or in the case of the secondary narrative of the founding of the monarchy in I Samuel a writer of the prophetic school akin to E.), and that there is a deep theological significance in the fact that the Canon does include such conflicting elements. I contended

that it is a mistake to confine ~~any~~
one's attention exclusively to prophecy
as if God had not also spoken to the
men who instituted the cult. The
cult is a witness to Jahve just as
the words of the prophet are. It was be-
cause the cult helped to fashion the
community of Israel that prophecy was
possible at all.

But when I have time to type out a
copy of my lecture I shall let you have
it as I should like to know your
opinion of what I have said.

It is curious that when your letter
arrived I was busy reading Vischer's
book "Jahve der Gott Kains". I hope
shortly to get in touch with him as
you suggest. His book is very fine
and I like his method of treatment. The
Kenite theory is advocated strongly by
Canon Burney of Oxford (died a few
years ago) in his big commentary on
"Judges" (Richter) and combined
with the view that Jahve as worshipped
by the Kenites was originally a moon-god.
There is, of course, the difficulty in the
way of accepting the identification of
Cain and the supposed Eponymous ancestor

of the Kenites, ~~that~~ and concluding that the Kenites were a wandering tribe of Smiths, that the wandering Smiths of Arabia are to this day despised by the other tribes and no suggestion of inferiority is made about the Kenites. At the same time I do not know if that is a conclusive objection. Certainly Vischer's discussion of the significance of the rejection of Cain, Ishmael and Esau is most suggestive.

But I have been talking a great deal about myself. It is fine to know that your illness in the Spring was not of very long duration and that you are now quite well again. I trust that you will keep fit this winter. I was most interested to hear about your son and his intention to study Theology. Whether my little Jan will do the same still *Εἰς τοῦτον* *ὁρῶν* *Κεῖται*! I hope you will make his acquaintance some day but that you may know what he is like now, I send you a recent photograph of him which my wife took in our garden. I find that having a baby in the house has a distinctly humanising effect on one! This little fellow has certainly brought a great deal of brightness and warmth into our lives.

I have no doubt you will be away in Switzerland just now but this letter will be sent after you. I hope you have a very good holiday and come back to your work much refreshed.

Do you know a man called Dr Kullmann, a Swiss who has something to do with the educational side of the work of the League of Nations at Geneva. He was here lecturing to the students on "Leadership" and I had a talk with him afterwards. He had said some things which reminded me of you and some others which didn't and I was rather amused to discover that he is one of Tillich's satellites. He said that they were trying to work out a "gott-menschliche Theologie" as distinguished from your "theozentrische Theologie" on the one hand and a "humanistische Theologie" on the other or something like that. Personally Kullmann seemed a very fine fellow and I know that he made a very deep impression on the students. His general thesis seemed to be that things wouldn't be right with the world until personal, human values were more fully recognised. I thought his best point was his emphasis on the

~~Community~~ Community ^{also} as opposed to the individual. He suggested ~~that~~ the more diabolic forms of evil seem to have gone out of individuals and lodged in institutions. That, however, is only a half truth.

Will you please accept our united good wishes for the Christmas season and also for the New Year which will soon be upon us. My greetings and remembrances to your wife and family.

Yours very sincerely,
Norman W. Porteous.
