

Paris  
August 12

Dear Mr. Elliott -

I hasten to answer your request for a personal report of the Conference at La Chataigneraie lest the impressions are dimmed by the passing of too many days.

There can be no doubt that the conference was overwhelmingly Barthian. This was not the intention of those who planned the program, for if Dr. Van Dusen had been able to be present we should no doubt have had a healthy contrast. As it was, those of us who either through ignorance or by conviction found it difficult to fall in line with the Barthian position felt keenly the lack of an able spokesman. The discussion groups with Professor Barth might be likened to a small hand of pygmies throwing darts at an elephant. The elephant was more annoyed than wounded and almost treated with pity those who thought they could thus slay him.

Regardless of my own questions, I could not help but feel that the emphasis put on the primacy of the question - the individual and his God - was a much needed one and decidedly to the point. That question must be faced and solved in order to give the individual something firm to stand upon when he faces the questions the world puts to him. I think my difficulty with what I know of the Barthian position is one of detail rather than fundamentals. But there again one was met with the strongly implied if not actually spoken reply - "there can be no quarrel with details - you either are a Barthian or you are not - you must take it all or leave it all." Human reason was put to flight by the Barth - 't Hooft - Maury onslaught, and that sets rather uneasily on most American minds. But then, they may be right - who knows?

The evening liturgical services were variously received. I personally did not find in them any impetus to worship. Strangely enough - in a Barthian Conference - they presented the very un-Barthian spectacle of a group of people who had so much to say to God they had no time to listen to what He might have to say to them. Quiet outdoor worship services - before breakfast, or at sunset, would have suited my own temperament better.

The work of the Federation was ably presented, and one could not but be thrilled at the thought of a group of students the world over bound together by the only tie that can possibly bind men of differing races and creeds - a common love of a common Master.

I do not know whether or not the above is what you wanted but - there it is.

Cordially yours,

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