



SOUTH PENINSULA

AREA DIRECTOR - CHRIS HAUGEN
SOUTH PENINSULA STAFF - JAY GRIMSTEAD, KRISTINE TAYLOR
TRAINING STAFF - PATTI DOBBS, MIKE DUNKLE, FRED CHAY
ADMINISTRATIVE AIDE - SHERI HOPKINS

October 6, 1976

Dr. R. C. Sproul
Ligonier Valley Study Center
Stahlstown, Penn. 15687

Dear R. C.,

An idea has been germinating in my mind since last spring and it's taken a concrete enough form by now so that I want to share it with you and get your opinion and have you bounce back any comments you may have about this idea. You're the first person I'm really mentioning this to because I don't really foresee going ahead with something of this magnitude if you aren't excited about it yourself.

The general idea is to arrange a yearly conference for Christian scholars, theologians, apologists, biblical scholars, who stand for the traditional view of scripture that you and Gerstner and Warfield and I believe. That is, I'm not thinking of setting up a dialogue thing or a broad thing for men of various evangelical stripes to get together, but to take those who stand for traditional orthodoxy, for the biblical reformational view of scripture. I see the purposes for such a gathering being these; first, to strategize what needs to be written and taught for the next year or two or three years and to perhaps keep in touch with an ongoing ten-year strategy, to teach and inform and encourage the Christian church along orthodox lines of believing and living. Within this strategy session I could see us talking about where the pressure points are, what articles need to be answered, what books need to be answered, what tapes need to be produced. Secondly, and in conjunction with whatever strategy we arrive at for written materials, scholars would assign themselves various tasks and perhaps even co-authoring books, men would buy into the action as they felt they needed to, in order to catch their piece of the front line battlefield action. It's easy for scholars to get excited about a two-hundred page dissertation on the vocalized schwa or some point about Ugaritic. This all needs to be done sometime by someone, but I would guess that the whole health of the Christian Church in America and abroad would be greatly helped by a concerted focused coalition effort of orthodox scholars, rather than letting all these orthodox scholars buy into a piece of the action periodically and as they happen to think of something that needs written or said. A third reason for getting together men at a yearly conference (even if they didn't come every year) would be general encouragement in a very lonely position and general information sharing as scholars and as men concerned about the state of the church and what to do about it. A fourth reason would be to have a united effort, a correlated logical coalition effort, in solving the problem within the church. I don't know if we'd want to present the united front openly or not; that is, I see a difference between a united effort and an united front. Or rather I see a difference between a low profile united front and a high profile united front and I'm not at all

sure we'd want a high profile united front, though that may be desirable. ~~There are probably other reasons, but those are the ones that come to my mind and this is the thing I've been running around in my mind for six months.~~

I think the reason this idea has come to mind is this, R. C. It's apparent to me that evangelical Christianity actually is divided right down the middle between those that hold to the traditional view of scripture and truth on the one hand, and those on the other hand who have been affected by Barth and Berkouwer in their view of truth and epistemology and scripture and all the resulting doctrines that get diminished as a result.

This is something that neither Hubbard nor the archangel Gabriel can rightly accuse you or Schaeffer or Lindsell of causing. The division has only this last couple years made itself apparent even tho it has been coming for probably the last twenty years. I think it's foolish to say the division is not there and I think it's even more foolish to say as, for example Hubbard is trying to say, (and Guder is trying to say and many theologians are trying to say) that what we need is an evangelicism broad enough to straddle Warfield on one side and Berkouwer on the other. With their spongy view of truth and their great tolerance for logical disharmony within systems, they're able to think that way sincerely and to really think it can be done and should be done. On the other hand, we with the traditional view of truth and scripture know that there's a watershed here and that a choice has to be made. That this is one of those either-or situations rather than a both and. Here's the kind of thing I mean. This is "a letter from Hubbard that I received three days ago, in response to my letter of sharing with him all the liberal stuff I found at Fuller. It's interesting that of all the points I brought up he did not deal with even one of them. It's as if political astuteness and love can cover every heresy that ever raises it's head. I mention this to you in confidence so that you will be careful who you share this information with, but the quote I wanted to share with you is as follows:

"I've had further discussion with Geoffrey Bromley on these matters and I'm inclined to agree with him that we need to seek some kind of middle ground between Warfield's rationalistic response to nineteenth century criticism and what may be Berkouwer's tendency to lean too far to the side of Barth."

So I take the division of evangelical Christianity into two major camps, theologically, as a fact we have to live with--something that cannot be ignored and something which cannot be reconciled. So my interest in a yearly conference of orthodox scholars is based on the fact of that sure division. I would hope what could be accomplished through a yearly conference of this sort would be to inform those who stand with orthodoxy, (laymen and pastors and young people) what the issues really are and that it is an either-or choice and why orthodoxy is the most biblical and the true reformation view, and the most rational view, Also that this view is worth being lonely for and worth suffering for, and even worth dividing

over if necessary; not that any of us want division, but it's just that some of us realize there are sins in the church worse than division. On ~~the other hand I would hope for this conference to produce enough convincing arguments and enough strategic writing that those laymen and pastors who are in the other camp by default or because they haven't thought through the issues would, as it were, defect and come over to true orthodoxy.~~ I have to say that I have very little hope for ~~the~~ scholars who know what it's all about and have made a deliberate choice, such as Jewett and I would include Guder. I say I have very little hope of changing their minds or swinging them over. From what I see, most of the Christians in America are grossly ignorant of the true foundational issues underlying the biblical debate on inerrancy. To me, inerrancy as an issue is like the tip of an iceberg with nine-tenths of the discussion underneath the water in the area of presuppositions and epistemology and an understanding of philosophy.

So I see education as a major task for people on our side of the fence. Strategically, my guess is that those redefinition evangelicals or neo-evangelicals or whatever they're to be called, do not really want people to be thoroughly educated on these issues philosophically, historically, biblically. This may be an overly harsh judgment, but I really think if people see the facts of what Calvin and Luther really taught, if they could really understand something of Kant and Kirkegaard and the noumenal-phenomenal world, then they would, in an overwhelming way, see that we're speaking the truth and the other side is speaking falsehood; that we're seeing clearly and the other side is seeing through confused and foggy glasses. In short, I see that education of the masses will help our side and it will not help the other side. What will help the other side are the two things that they're already doing; first, stressing a focus on fellowship over clear doctrine and labelling some of us divisive, narrow, unloving, etc., and secondly,—and again this may be overly harsh—secondly, a deliberate reinterpretation of the facts as we see Jewett's rewriting of the reformer's doctrine in his bulletin, "The Divine Word in Human Words". I really don't know whether Jewett's bulletin was written that way out of sheer confusion or deliberate effort to misrepresent the facts. That's for God to say. The truth of the matter is that you and I know that it definitely misrepresents the facts, and people who believe that will be believing a lie rather than the truth.

So, my gut level feeling is that guys like Jewett don't really want to face the issues head on in open debate. This is one reason I think a massive concentrated focused effort where we could renew our strategy each year and build it as we go each year would be the way to go for the orthodox side. I think we're a minority. I think the whole cultural and religious situation is such that left unattended, the weight will all be thrown on the side of the redefinition evangelicals. I think that most Christians, on whichever side of this issue they stand, are so negatively loaded to the idea of fighting for truth or taking an unpopular stand on doctrinal issues, having lack of courage, etc., that people have to be quite well educated and motivated to stand for where we have to stand. At best, I think we probably have a losing battle. But I think

if we organize and strategize and get our scholars focused and coordinated in working together as a united front, we'll have a much better chance to affect the whole Christian Church than if we just let everybody take a little piece of the action as he saw it and felt it, and as it came to him in the midst of his regular pursuits.

Practically, what I envision is having this conference be hosted by Pittsburgh one year and San Francisco the alternate year, and going back and forth. On our side out here, I think I could get my hands on enough Christians who could provide free housing and a lot of board free to any scholars or conferees who happen to be coming. The transportation would be the only serious cost in something like this. I envision the thing being a week long where the scholars are talking to each other and perhaps anybody else who's listening in. For four or five days strategizing and assigning themselves tasks, etc., and then having the thing culminate in a weekend conference for the public that people would fly in to or drive in to—a conference like Mt. Hermon Grounds that would hold five hundred people. At that point we could charge people an extra ten or fifteen dollars for the fee and take in \$6,000 each year to defray the cost of the scholars' air fare. I don't know if this should officially be a joint venture of the Ligonier and the Reformation Study Center or if we should just be a catalyst in this thing, if you like the idea. I would guess it would be better to have a broad base of orthodox churches. What I would fear at the outset is that such a thing would eventually take into it's governing group men who truly were not orthodox in their views of scripture and then we would be right back to where the redefinition evangelicals want us to be. I would really like to get the response from you and your cohorts and board there at Ligonier because if this is a viable idea, if this is something God would have us do, I'd like to begin shooting for a conference in '78. I might try to reach you by phone within ten days, just to get your initial reaction.

We're grateful that you exist and have set this example for us. God bless you guys as you carry on. My love to Jim and Tim and those tremendous wives.

In Christ,

Jay
Jay