

October 13, 1968

Reverend William D. Hill, Jr.  
Presbyterian Evangelistic Fellowship  
P. O. Box 808  
Hopewell, Virginia 23860

Dear Mr. Hill:

How thoughtful of you to take time from your pressing duties to write to us--we appreciate your letter very much.

What you have heard about my relationship to Presbytery is true. I had not at all intended to act independently or so soon but I found myself unwilling to make a compromise so large as the one demanded if I stayed in Presbytery.

The circumstances were that a candidate for ordination appeared before Presbytery's Examining Committee (graduate of Davidson and Union Seminary and the son of a Godly Presbyterian minister). He first aroused my concern by his unwillingness to say clearly that he believed in the objective, real existence of God--he may well believe that God exists but his language reminds me of Paul Tillich who does not believe in the "god of supernaturalism". When asked what he would say to a person who called and wanted to know how to be saved, he responded, "I don't know....nobody is asking that question any more." I asked about the feeding of the five thousand and the conversation went like this:

"What do you mean?"

"I mean if you had been there, would you have gotten anything to eat?"

"But I wasn't there."

"Well, the folks that were there, did they get 900 calories, 1200 calories or whatever it takes to make a meal?"

"Does it matter?"

I should add that he was not trying at all to be "smart"--he honestly couldn't see that it made any difference whether or not Jesus fed the multitude, and, of course, whether or not we take the Bible seriously.



Now after teaching in college for over twenty years, I certainly do not blame the school entirely for what it's students say, and I understand how young people can be overwhelmed by modern theology when they have not been given a well rounded picture of its nature and philosophic background, but I did NOT at all understand how the ministers on the Committee could say that they were not worried and how they could vote unanimously--and without a moment's hesitation--to recommend that Presbytery proceed the next day with the formal questioning leading to ordination. ((As it turned out the candidate himself did not appear for further examination)).

As chairman of the Committee I was quite unwilling to make the Committee's recommendation, nor was I willing to fight in Presbytery about the existence of God, the reality of salvation, the authority of Scripture and the reality of the miracles. Of course I talk about these doctrines to students all of the time but when a Presbytery's Committee denies them so clearly and flatly ((and I am persuaded fully that that is what they did)) I think that New Testament Christianity is gone. My response was to withdraw from the Church rather than to make the report or to follow any of the possible procedures for avoiding the confrontation.

It is true that this was made in less than a day's time. But it was in no way a rash or angry act. I knew what I was giving up and what it would cost--one of my ancestor's was an elder at the organization of Hanover Presbytery back in 1758 and I have a number of relatives in the Presbyterian ministry and on the mission field. I certainly did not want to leave, but a number of things have weighed heavily on my heart--such as the problem of whether or not it is right to influence young people to come into Presbyterian schools with their present influence.

My present plan is to complete my contract with the College for the 1968-69 school year and then accept whatever work may be available. I have in no way changed my mind about Christ and the Gospel ((all rumors to the contrary notwithstanding)) and would like to do something useful in the Church, though I assume that this will not be possible in the Presbyterian Church, U. S.

With thankfulness for your prayers and your interest and with rejoicing over God's blessing upon your ministry, I am

Cordially yours,