

25 March 2007

Dear Brother:

This is my response to the email you recently sent me. I am sending it not only to you, but also to the brothers in the Chicago metro area who received my open letter concerning the church in Chicago. (Of course, your email to me has already been made public, with your permission, having been distributed and read on Tuesday the 6th to the church here.)

Actually, I'm glad to have a forum where we can discuss and, to some extent, fellowship concerning the differences we currently have. I believe that such a discussion could be very helpful to many saints, especially since to this point most of the saints meeting with the churches have only heard the blended brothers' views regarding the turmoil now among us.

I agree with you that one statement in my email summarizes my feelings, namely:

Please give us the freedom to view things differently than you do and still be included in the fellowship of the churches.

Your email, in contrast, is well summarized by the only statement you put in bold type, along with your concluding statement:

Certain of the brothers in the Great Lakes area, under the leadership and influence of Brother Titus Chu, feel that they know better than Brother Lee and accordingly, seek to now direct the churches under their care in a direction different than that established by Brother Lee....

If you want to be something new, then do something new but don't do it under the auspices of the Lord's recovery.

Brother, after reading these statements I feel I need to remind you that "God...has called us into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9), not into the fellowship of any man, even Witness Lee.

Unfortunately, however, based on your statements it is more than clear that you brothers have already turned the church life into a sect of Witness Lee, since you make his teaching concerning certain practices—as you brothers understand that teaching—the basis for deciding who may or may not be included in the fellowship of the churches.

So many times in church history, when the Lord raised up a brother to serve him, his followers quickly used his teachings to start a new denomination; now you brothers are doing exactly this with brother Lee. You are saying, in reality, that the practices brother Lee left us with (in your view) at the time of his death can never be changed. You even indicate very plainly that, if we do not wish to accept your views on these matters we should leave the fellowship! Regardless of how we cloak it in spiritual terminology, this is horribly sectarian. Haven't we learned anything from church history?

Ephesians 4:4-6 shows us the seven basic items that comprise the genuine “oneness of the Spirit” (v. 3) we originally stood for. Now it appears that you brothers have added some new items that we must accept, such as the “one ministry” and the “one work” you mentioned in your letter, in order to be accepted in the fellowship. It is this that is really causing the turmoil among us, because many of us refuse to forsake our first standing to join you in such a sectarian oneness.

The fact that the brothers in Chicago would use such a letter to respond to me confirms, rather than refutes, the concerns I have expressed, i.e., that despite their denials they are indeed turning the church here into a sect of a particular ministry with its particular practices.

This is the real forsaking of the Lord’s commitment to us through Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, rather than anything we in the Midwest have done. I have no interest in arguing over smaller points; I would just respond that your list of grievances concerning the churches in the Midwest is, frankly, completely without merit, or even any understanding of what we are actually doing; in fact, the truth is often quite the opposite of what you express.

You are doing exactly what brother Lee warned us against in the book we have both referred to already, *The Speciality, Generality, and Practicality of the Church Life*. That is, you brothers are causing division by your insistence (which seems quite childish to me) on non-essential items. At this point I would briefly remind you of some of brother Lee’s words in that book:

We should never try to adjust or correct other churches. If the church you visit were under your direction, you might do things differently. But when it is not under your direction, you should not do anything....

The problem, however, is that when we visit another local church, we may tell the saints there that the practice in the local church where we are is the right way. We may try to make the church in another city like the church in our place. We should not do this. We should never say the way in our church is the normal way. It is absolutely not right to correct others like this. Your way might be the worst. But even if it is the best, there is no need for you to try to convince others to take it. To try to convince others of your way will only cause division. If you think your way is the best and it indeed is the best, others will see it and will learn of it. If others do not care to learn of it, that is up to them....

By all means we have to keep the oneness. Do not make anything definite. Do not make anything specific. Do not have anything set. We should be open, we should be general, and we should be learning all the time (pp. 31-32.)

In contrast, if we are focused merely on the outward practices they become empty forms; it means we are trading the real experience of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit for these forms. Nonetheless, your response is almost completely bereft of any reference to the Spirit’s work or the Lord’s move among us; the entire focus is on whether or not we are keeping what you view as the appropriate practices.

Therefore, I cannot agree that the blending brothers are actually following brother Lee—despite their constant invocations of his name to support their actions—any more than those who strongly claimed to be the followers of the early apostles were truly following them when they began to set up the hierarchy among the early churches. (Concerning this I would refer you to my paper, “Brief Lessons from Church History,” which is available at www.ConcernedBrothers.com.)

Rather, I am reminded of a comment by Nigel Tomes regarding 1977, when the church in Chicago passed through its first major turmoil. Just as with the current group of brothers, those who at that time came here to destroy the church were also co-workers of brother Lee (some of whom were from the West Coast), and they came proclaiming their oneness with brother Lee and saying that it was now their responsibility to provide the direction for all of the churches on the earth:

In 1977 I was present in Chicago when Max R. visited, (with a supporting cast of leading brothers) declaring himself to be the “universal coordinator of the One New Man” and claiming that all his actions were endorsed by Brother Lee. I personally witnessed the turmoil precipitated by Max R., which was exacerbated by the saints’ unquestioning acceptance of actions performed “in the name of Brother Lee.”

In fact, brother Lee later strongly rebuked the brothers involved—who had so loudly proclaimed their oneness with him—and made it more than clear that he did not agree with what they had done.

To truly be a follower of brother Lee, in the most positive sense, does not mean we simply keep some practices. Rather, it means that we receive the same inward commitment that he did from the Lord, which was to care for the building up of the Body of Christ in the genuine local churches by bringing the saints into the practical experience of Christ. Brother, in closing, for your own going on I would urge you to give heed to brother Lee’s word in this respect:

I am deeply concerned that many of us still have replacements of Christ. We may trust in the church life, we may trust in certain ways or practices, and we may trust in messages. I am burdened that we all realize that nothing apart from Christ can give us life. Only He who is the living Son of God, the One sent by God, is the life-giver. Because only He can give us life, we must contact Him ([The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John](#), pp. 165, 167-168).

I still treasure you as my brother in Christ, and have no intention of cutting off fellowship with you or with any other saints; if you feel to do so, as the blending brothers and so many of the churches have already done to us in the Midwest, that is your responsibility before the Lord. I would just ask you, again, to give us the freedom to allow the Spirit to work among us and to follow the Lord in His recovery according to His leading among us.

In Christ, your brother, David Canfield