

December 23, 2006

To All Concerned,

I have refused up to this time to enter the public forum concerning the turmoil in the local churches. But, I do not agree with division or cutting off or any such practice within the church or in the churches. I have heard rhetoric on both sides that has deeply troubled my spirit. Statements such as: "You have to deal with the leprosy and remove the leprous stones", "Sometimes amputation is necessary", etc. I am watching the lambs of Christ being slaughtered. For this reason I have decided to write.

First, I will give a brief background of my experience since many may not know me. I came into the church life in 1973. The Lord used a word spoken in 1983 in one of the trainings to call me to serve Him fulltime. Titus Chu trained a group of us to serve full time from 1984-85. We were in fellowship with Brother Lee concerning what we were doing. I wrote the letters that were sent to him during that time. I have served the Lord fulltime now over twenty years.

In 1995 I moved to Fullerton, CA with fellowship from Brother Lee to spend two years to blend with the brothers there. I would ask any of the brothers I was with to point out any matter in which I caused any problems. I am willing to repent if any matter can be brought to my attention. I served in the Full-time Training in Anaheim, CA.; Seoul, Korea; and later Jakarta, Indonesia. My serving has always been with a clear reserve and restraint from the Lord due to His sovereign arrangement.

This little incident will illustrate what I mean. One day while having lunch with a senior brother at the training center in Korea, I said to him, "My being here troubles you, doesn't it." He answered, "Yes." (I was there because Brother Lee had asked that I participate in teaching in the training there.) I proceeded by stating, "My words are the words of the ministry of Witness Lee and my practical labor is that of Titus Chu." He responded somewhat like, "Exactly."

To this day I would still say the same thing. If I had been practically with any other brother over 30 years the result would be the same. I treasure those years. Brother Lee had helped unfold the counsels of God to me. Titus Chu had taught me that I should never labor with people if I did not intend to fully commend them to the Lord and to His church. I was told that to do this would require the pouring out of my whole being for them. I recommend this to any saint in the Lord.

Now it is almost ten years since Brother Lee's departure to be with the Lord. Some brothers have felt led of the Lord to quarantine Titus Chu for causing division. I have not yet heard one brother involved in the quarantine state, "A group of saints related to Titus Chu are dividing this particular locality. Or there is

a division in this particular locality that was started by Titus Chu."

But even if it is so, consider these portions out of Elder's Training Book Four, Chapters Six and Seven by Witness Lee and two portions from Watchman Nee. (I would use only the Bible but many today in the local churches will not receive a word unless it is from Brother Nee, Brother Lee or the "blended brothers". Is this not an offense to the headship of Christ?)

...in Romans 14 and 15. Paul tells us that we have to receive all kinds of believers (surely he means the real believers) who may be different from us. Even if there are believers that still keep the Sabbath and that still eat the Jewish religious diet, there is no ground for us to reject them. If we reject them, we become a sect.

One of the basic constituents by which any group of Christians is constituted to be a denomination is that they only receive the saints according to their kind of taste or their kind of belief.... p71

LOSING THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH

At this point, I would like to study with you a number of portions of the Word which deal with the matter of a believer losing the fellowship of the church.

Matthew 18:15-17

..."Now if your brother sins, go, reprove him between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not hear you, take with you one or two more, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. But if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to hear the church also, let him be to you as the Gentile and the tax collector." If one brother sins, we should not expose him, but "reprove him between you and him alone." If he does not hear you, you should not spread the thing to many, but just to one or two among us. If this brother refuses to hear you and the other one or two, you should tell it to the church. This is crucial and this is the last step.

If this brother refuses to hear the church, the Lord Jesus tells us to "let him be." These three words, "let him be," comprise a crucial point for us to interpret. "Let him be" is an interpretation of one Greek word. This Greek word is not a strong word and does not mean cut him off, cast him out, or put him aside. Even to "consider him" as a Gentile is stronger than the original text....According to the Greek in verse 17 the meaning is to "let him be what he is." This means to look on him as a Gentile losing the fellowship. This matter is up to him. **pp72-3**

Romans 16:17-18

..."Now I beg you, brothers, keep a watchful eye on those who make divisions and causes of falling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them. For such men do not serve as slaves our Lord Christ, but their own appetites; and by smooth and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple." These ones even make divisions and

causes of falling contrary to the teachings which we have heard, teachings, which, no doubt, are the ministry of the New Testament economy. This is a very serious matter, yet Paul still did not tell us to cut off such ones. The most we can do is to turn away from them. Maybe we can also render some advice to them in love. Whether or not they would listen is up to them, but we should not go further than this. p74

Brother Lee further states, "If You do not have the assurance and clarity that the removing of someone from the fellowship will not damage any party, do not carry it out in an exposing way...." p78

Here is a short portion from Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship (1), p56 by Watchman Nee relating to dealing with a sinful brother. **"We did not excommunicate him earlier because we did not have any definite proof. Even if we had proof in the past, we could not have excommunicated him because the other brothers and sisters would not have let him go. But the Lord has done a work today and personally stepped in to clear up the matter."**

A LIMIT OF PUNISHMENT

[Bracketed items are my inserts.]

Something divisive [*Which specific locality today?*] which has happened and which has been manifested to everybody [*Who manifested this to everybody today?*] does not involve people's morality in principle. Even if we said something concerning this, this would not constitute any kind of defamation, [*But today to post this to the whole world on the web is this not defamation?*] and this would not be contagious to the listening ears. Even with the matter of divisiveness, however, we must take care of it in a very careful way. According to the Old Testament law, when a sinful brother is going to be punished with forty stripes, this punishment had better be done with thirty-nine stripes (Deut. 25:1-3; 2 Cor. 11:24). Thirty-nine lashes were given in order to insure that the limit of forty was not exceeded. There is the possibility of meting out more punishment than is necessary because there is something in us which likes to punish people....Therefore, we should always under punish.... p80-1

ALEXANDER THE COPPERSMITH

...When a person speaks negatively about the ministry, you should not consider that an attack. We must give people the liberty to express what they feel and think....To criticize the ministry, to say something bad about the ministry, and even to oppose the ministry should not be considered as the type of attacking that was done by Alexander the coppersmith. p81-2

SECOND THESSALONIANS 3:14-15

...Second Thessalonians 3:14-15 is another portion of Scripture

related to this matter. "If anyone does not obey our word by this letter, mark this one that you may not associate with him, in order that he may be put to shame; and do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." Seemingly, Paul's words in these two verses are contradictory. In verse 14 Paul says that you may not associate with him. According to our understanding this means not to contact him, but in verse 15 Paul says to admonish him as a brother. How can these two verses be reconciled?

According to our natural understanding, Paul charged us to reject this person because he says that we may not associate with him, which to us means that we should have nothing to do with him. The second verse, however, tells us that we must admonish him as a brother. Although we may not associate with him, this does not mean that we should not contact him. This means we should not associate with him as a companion. We should not count him as an enemy or give him up but admonish him. p83

NO NEED OF A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

Unconsciously we are still under the influence of the traditions of Christianity which are hidden in many aspects of our practice of the church life. This matter of excommunication comes from tradition. Also, we have always considered the proper time to make an announcement of a certain excommunication. We thought a public announcement was needed, but there is no hint in the New Testament that we need to make a public announcement. Even in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul did not say that the saints there had to make a public announcement. He only charged the church to remove the sinful brother.

In the past, we all thought there was the need of making a public announcement. We must see, however, that to make a public announcement of a kind of excommunication involves a person's name, position, and status in today's society. This is serious and very risky. This involves families and human relationships. In this matter we have been under the influence of the tradition of Christianity, but in my experiences over the past fifty years I have surely learned that to make a public announcement, especially in a matter concerning immorality, is not so safe and profitable. If we announce a certain person's being excommunicated in a public meeting, he could appeal to a court of law and say that we are spoiling his name...

According to our present knowledge of the New Testament, I do not believe there is the need of making a public announcement.... pp85-6

BY WISDOM, WITH PATIENCE, AND IN LOVE

For all of us to be healthy for the Lord's recovery, we need to take care of two points—the major point of bearing the same testimony and the small point of dealing with a sinful brother with wisdom in love. The principle is "with wisdom in love." This must be the atmosphere in the church. We love not only the good ones but also the sinful ones. This, however, does not mean that we are light or loose. We are very strict, yet we carry out such dealings with patience, with much wisdom, and in love. We must receive the saints properly in our locality so that all the local churches can go along with us. Our receiving of the saints should in no way be sectarian. Then in dealing with the saints, we deal with the cases with wisdom in love, and do not give Satan an advantage. We should not close the door for the sinning one to be recovered, and we should not do anything without love. p89

DECEMBER 22nd

Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God. Ephesians 4:13.

To have constant close association with people whose interpretation of Scripture does not tally with ours is hard for the flesh, but good for the spirit. We may have right views, but God is giving us an opportunity to display a right attitude; we may believe aright, but he is testing us to see if we love aright. It is easy to have a mind well stored with sound scriptural teaching, yet a heart devoid of true love. Oh, for Christian tolerance! Oh, for largeness of heart! Alas, that many of God's children are so zealous for the light they have that they immediately label as outsiders, and treat as such, all whose interpretation of Scripture differs from theirs. God would have us walk in love towards all who hold views contrary to those so dear to us. Nothing so tests the spirituality of a teacher as opposition to his teaching. A Table in the Wilderness; Watchman Nee.

What I am touching here is what I see as the total disregard for a brother's, Titus Chu's, humanity, dignity and right to live his life as a man and before the Lord as he is led. To place eight hours of video on the web, which contains some items which are character assassination, personal views and surmisings would be low for even a non-believer to publish. And now the collecting of letters from around the world to nail shut his coffin, is this Christian love? What of his family, the saints that love him and the churches which are related to him in life? Do we have a cause so high that gives us the right trample one of God's chosen vessels and all those related to him into the ground. Brothers, is this the God-man living?

In the public arena you brothers have been judge, jury and hangman, without the accused being present or able to defend. Your henchmen (lordsarmy's, lastadam, and other web sites) are propagating your verdict. The Bible says, "Do not judge, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you... (Matt. 7:1-2). And "Who are you who judge another's household servant? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will be made to stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand (Rom 14:4).

And what of the churches in the Mid-West? The turmoil that is being caused in families. The division in churches. Last year a denomination in Mansfield, Ohio had a case similar to what is happening in that locality today. It was headline news and the papers tried to dig up dirt on the members for the public to feast on. The name of Christ was totally shamed. Brothers, is this what we want?

I am making an appeal to all our consciences. Let us shut down all the web sites, fall on our faces repenting before our Lord, ask Him for His mercy and the grace to forgive one another.

A sorrowful brother in Christ,

Norman J. Minahan
co-worker and elder
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