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John Allen Chalk

9-4-1970

From/To: Richard E. Smith (Chalk's reply filed first)

Richard E. Smith

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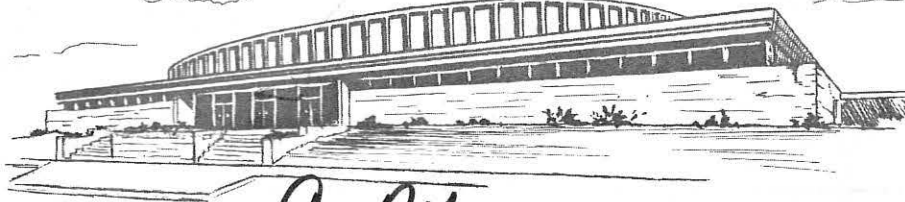
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September 4, 1970

Copy

Mr. Richard E. Smith
1420 Drury Drive
Dallas, Texas 75232

Dear Dick:

I opened your letter with fear and trembling. Lately I get all kinds of letters, not only from the people who resent my "Midnight Cowboy" review, but those who also cannot understand the spiritual dynamics in a black/white marriage ceremony I recently performed. I also get unusual mail from Highland members -- those who seem to be responding to the word of God as best I can preach it and live it - and then there are those who are very shaken and believe I am the epitomy of a false teacher. Please pray that God's work will have free course in more and more hearts in this church.

The sermon Sunday morning is an excellent example of what I mean. There were dear friends of mine, whom I consider some of our more spiritual people, who felt I threatened them on that occasion. Others who remain in the bonds of legalism and have been accustomed to being kicked spiritually every Sunday morning, thought it was great. Thank God that a sensitive, perceptive soul like you happened to be in the audience and was able to look on to other particulars in the total context of the service that allowed the lesson to be properly interpreted. It meant so much to me to have you properly interpret the service and to have you understand the context in which I even dared to be that frank and at times negative with the congregation.

I was so pleased by your remarks about the Holy Spirit. I feel very strongly that the key to spiritual life and power for the Christian is the gift of God's indwelling Spirit. I do accept the TEV translation of Luke 11:13. Even though the New Testament emphasis seems to be on God's gift of the Spirit, I can nevertheless accept the teaching of Luke 11. I do know of those who spend all their time seeking the Holy Spirit rather than responding to Jesus Christ as Lord. As I see John 15:26-28 and First Corinthians 12:3 and also the major thrust of I John, the New Testament emphasis seems to be on the Lordship of Jesus, which recognition in our lives opens us to God's gift of His Spirit to us. Your own experience with the Holy Spirit sounds extremely

Biblically. The conditions of life and heart that you are personally experiencing are described clearly as the "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22 and 23.

I have shared this with the Highland church. I have not been as plain and specific in some ways as I would like to be. I am attempting to be responsible with the situation I have been granted. Your words of exhortation regarding self-propulsion versus spiritual propulsion is extremely pertinent and was needed at this point by me.

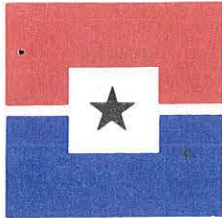
I hope God will bring us together at some future date for Bible study, prayer, and some personal association. Thank you for taking the time to write such a perceptive letter. It meant a great deal to me. I am sharing it with my wife who also enjoys the same quest that unites us.

Your brother,

John Allen Chalk

JAC:lc

DALLAS COUNTY



JUNIOR COLLEGE DISTRICT

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1420 Drury Drive
Dallas, Texas
August 25, 1970

Dear John Allen:

This past weekend it was my lot to attend a wedding in Abilene. Also present for the affair were Bob & Mary Lou Holton. Chatting with them that evening over a dish of homemade icecream "inspired" me to want to come to Highland the next morning and hear you speak since I had never had the opportunity.

The visit was a pleasant surprise. Generally, I have a personal preference for a very small assembly but I was impressed with the way things happened. The casual spontaneous singing at the start, the very personal manner in which you dealt with the lads bound for Geneva as well as the two girls who received Christ as Lord. There was an absence of much of the mechanistic and the hollow approach I have sadly observed at some large churches. You seemed as if you really cared, and surprising tho it may seem to some, this is getting to be a rare quality -- that of obviously caring. Many probably do care but ~~do~~ to convention and constrictions dont manage to convey it.

If I may employ that old paradoxical expression, you sure gave 'em "holy hell" Sunday morning. It testified to an earnestness that was refreshing to see. "Flat," "sterile," and "dead" are not adjectives that one flings around on a whim. What also encouraged me was your obvious willingness to be fired if they didn't want to listen to the truth about themselves. I suddenly looked on you in a whole new light. You see, I have deep sympathy but little respect for the many fellows who know much better, but stifle themselves and compromise to keep that ole check coming in.

My heart went out to you because in spite of your near perfect self-control and your articulate presentation, you are clearly a man in anguish. I thought of Jeremiah as you spoke. His was a painful and thankless task, yet in his teaching he didn't fail to swing from the present gloom to the future glory. Your lifting up of the person of Jesus Christ as Lord was the most encouraging thing of all. As they say, "Man, that's where its at." He is the answer. He is fulness and totality. If he is truly Lord of my life, the peripheral stuff will fall into place. I certainly agree with you on this emphasis.

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Sorry about the squeeze being put on you over the "Cowboy" review. Deep down, tho, I'm rather amused at all the raised eyebrows and gasps of horror. I don't even know what you wrote but I believe it was honest and sincere. Frankly, that's more important to me than a lot of viewpoints and opinions. From what I can tell, John Allen, you'd make a lousy hypocrite, and that, brother, is a sincere compliment.

Let me react briefly to your sermon. Perhaps I could begin with a couple of questions: Is it possible that there is any relationship between the problem as you see it at Highland and the lack of a full appropriation of John 4:14? Do you "buy" the TEV translation of Luke 11:13? Can we apply to ourselves 1 John 2:20, 27, 3:24 and 4:13? If so are they not rather marvelous words to ponder? Paul seems to indicate that this awareness will make us want to "praise his glory!" (Eph 1:14 TEV). I went through Ephesians about a month ago and just underlined each time "Spirit" or "Holy Spirit" was mentioned. It became a whole new letter for me. What an exciting treatise! This "power" he talks about in 1:19 is "in us" and is "the same as the mighty strength which he used when he raised Christ." How can we possibly get "flat", "sterile" and "dead" if that power is really in us?

*M.A.
5:22-23*
You're probably thinking, "here comes another one of those guys who just discovered the Holy Spirit and now he has to enlighten the rest of us." You'd be right about the first part, but I'm hardly qualified to accomplish the latter. All I know, John Allen, is that in the last two years I've discovered more love, joy and peace than I dreamed existed. It comes pretty easy to me to "praise his glory!" When you've subsisted on spiritual beans and hardtack for many years, its only natural to get excited when you pull back the cloth and see the dinner-on-the-grounds type spiritual feast that has been there for you all along.

I could be all mis-cued. Maybe you have told the folks there at Highland about all of this already. Maybe thats why you're so very frustrated. If so, just pat me on the head in my ignorance and send me on my way. Its just that I've met so many people these past two years who would answer with a joyful "YES!" to Paul's questions: "Does your life in Christ make you strong? Does his love comfort you? Do you have fellowship with the Spirit?" (Phil 2:1 TEV) There is a "Disciples" church nearby where the deity of Christ is officially snickered at, yet within that awful environment a little 5th column of about 20 souls has formed to whom Jesus Christ is Lord and a real and powerful savior. They convert hippies in parks, convicts in jails, preach in apartments, minister to drug addicts and unwed mothers, turn people around 180 degrees and really change lives. Their joyous love is a thing that reaches out and engulfs you.

Well, enough is enough. I wanted to visit with you but didn't have the opportunity. So rather than stifle my impulses I invested a couple of hours in this clumsy letter. I love you, John Allen, and I thank you for lifting my Spirit Sunday morning. ~~I hope you are for real.~~ If you are as honest and as earnest as you seem to be and as fine as Bob & Mary Lou think you are, God can get some exciting things done through you. You've got a bundle of ability. I guess an awesome responsibility goes with that. Just don't try and be self-propelled. There is power enough to spare without you doing that.

Yours in prayer to Him for all deprived
believers who remain "flat" "sterile"
or "dead" unnecessarily

Dick Smith

PS - Learned from your bulletin of your Dad's condition. Please know that it will be our privilege to join with those who have been praying in his behalf.

Your planned effort to be carried out this fall in lieu of the traditional "Gospel Meeting" sounds exciting. May God's blessing be on all of you in that project.

ds