

4-15-1970

From/To: H.E. Steele (Chalk's reply filed first)

H.E. Steele

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April 15, 1970

Mr. H. E. Steele
1295 Homer Street
Memphis, Tennessee 38122

Dear brother Steele:

I appreciated so much receiving a copy of the letter you sent to Jimmie Lovell about my Action article on the Christian Echo. Brother Lovell and brother Hogan have been close friends through the years. I appreciated so much your observation on Jimmie's remark at the close of the article. I know how much brother Lovell loves all his brethren, and certainly loves his black brethren. I have talked with him on more than one occasion, however, about the way that some of the thing he says innocently, can be and are taken by others, especially blacks who don't understand his love for them, to reflect racial prejudice.

Your own sensitive response to his remarks simply underscores what I have felt. I do believe, however, that his remarks in the main are positive. Nevertheless, your response was one that I understand and accept.

I would like nothing better than to work with Jack Evans in the kind of forum you mentioned in your note to me. I didn't know that Memphis would be open to the race problem, and there is no question in my mind that we do have a problem; not only is it still with us but growing. I will be happy to help with anything that you might be able to arrange. I do want to caution, however, that you be completely honest with the brethren who plan such an effort. Jack Evans and I will have to be honest and biblical. This does not mean speaking pious platitudes that only mildly disturb white church members who didn't baptize their prejudices at the time they became church members.

It was a pleasure hearing from you again. Thank you so much for subscribing to the Christian Echo. Encourage others to do the same.

Your brother,

John Allen Chalk

JAC:lc

cc: Jimmie Lovell

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I hope that I am not wrong in this - or have not said it in the wrong way. If I have, please let me know. I follow your fine efforts with a great deal of respect and admiration.

Regards
Jimmy Steele

P.S. Bro. Yelldell tells me he has made some effort to get you to Memphis. I hope he can.

The Class of Bro. Jack Evans started out the first night with around 100. On the 4th night, when he spoke on race relations, he had around 500. The response was good. (I also made in the opening remarks, a statement on improving the racial climate in the Church, which was well received.) I believe the membership is ready for a change - but not the leadership - generally. We now attend Macom Rd. where the eldership has a better attitude - + the preachers, Robert Brown + Steve Nesbitt also. I would like to see you + Bro Jack Evans share the pulpit on a 2 day meeting on race relations - one night at Vance Ave + one night at Macom Rd. What do you think (if it could be arranged?)

1295, Homer St.,
Memphis, Tenn. 38122.

April 7, 1970

Mr. James L. Lovell, Editor,
Action,
P. O. Box 146,
Palos Verdes Estates, Calif. 90274

Dear Jimmie:

I enjoyed John Allen Chalk's article in the last issue and will subscribe to Christian Echo. I must, though sadly, disagree with your comments at the end of this article. I work with some of the "black" churches and try to be somewhat of a "bridge" between churches of both races in Memphis. (For instance, when we recently had our Mid-South Training for Service Series, we had brother Jack Evans of Southwestern Christian College as a faculty member and the elders at Macon Road selected me to be his sponsor, which I was most proud to be. He was our first black teacher). I am white. But back to my thought. Since I work with them and talk to them intimately, I know as well as I know anything in this world, that the opinion that "they are happier together" is not shared by them. They have felt and still feel unwanted in the "white" churches. This attitude of separateness is causing us to neglect them by the thousands in every city. If we leave it to the "black" churches to evangelize them, they cannot, since they are so pitifully understaffed and underfinanced and their male members have so little training. If we evangelize them with the thought or suggestion that "you should be a Christian but you will be happier worshipping at the Sunflower Alley Church among those of your kind", it does not convert them, neither does it fool them. Souls have no color unless they are blackened with sin. I long for the day when we will say that "God is no respecter of persons - then how in the world can we be?"

I sincerely hope, in fact implore you, to invite some of our black brothers to write articles, with their pictures, regularly and not just on the race question, but let them know they can cover this. I also hope sincerely, that you will spend some time with the black brothers in the south and understand their thinking and change your outlook, because I feel that this stand most definitely gives comfort to the many segregationist-minded elderships around our country and especially in the south. I congratulate you and admire you for the many fine works that you do - which will not be approached by many of us if we live 100 years

Sincerely,

Harry E. Steele
Harry E. Steele

cc: John Allen Chalk ✓ *over*