

Concerning the Present Turmoil among the Churches

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9 November 2006 • Chicago, Illinois

What havoc has been wrought in the Church because so many of her ministers have sought to bring the churches under their ministry, rather than by their ministry serve the churches. As soon as the churches are brought under any ministry, they cease to be local and become sectarian.

— Watchman Nee (see p. 42)

The first sign of weakness is the gathering itself becoming the object of attention....

— J.N. Darby, circa 1846 (see p. 11)

We like to rank people, saying that the co-workers are the first rank, while others are the subsequent ranks. This is absolutely wrong....

We should not label people. We should not say that we are the class of people who live with the Lord, walk with the Lord, and work with the Lord. There is not such a class.

— Witness Lee, 1996
A Word of Love, pp. 30-31.

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PREFACE

The purpose of this paper is to give in a relatively comprehensive way the author's views of the current turmoil among the local churches. It is hoped that despite its length many in the recovery will feel it worth taking the time to read, given the gravity of the issues involved and of the current situation.

There are many saints whose understanding of this situation comes almost entirely through the blending brothers and Living Stream Ministry; they are not at all familiar with the views of those who do not agree with the course these brothers are taking, and thus they cannot really assess the situation accurately for themselves. This paper is intended to make it easier for such saints to get a basic understanding of the thoughts of others on these matters.

This paper was largely completed before the blending brothers' "Warning to All the Saints and All the Churches" against brother Titus Chu became public. Attached as Appendix A is an open letter the author sent to the responsible brothers in the Chicago metro area regarding it. Other than that, the body of this paper has not been modified to reflect the "Warning" letter.

There are, however, two brief comments to make here. First, one of the main themes of this paper is to show that the blending brothers have yielded completely to the spiritual obsession of believing that brother Lee's ministry is now their ministry, to the extent of believing that they now have the unique New Testament ministry. It is this obsession which is the real cause of the current turmoil. In their "Warning" letter they state plainly:

The...ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee...is the New Testament ministry.¹

The more these brothers believe that today they are God's unique ministers, the less they will be able to tolerate anyone who ministers in the recovery without coming under their authority; hence their effort to excommunicate brother Titus and his co-workers. This is the real issue among us, and if we still care at all for the Lord's recovery and His testimony, and desire to stand for it rather than for the ministry of the blending brothers, we will stand against their efforts to monopolize the ministry in the recovery.

This leads to the second point. Because they are set on pursuing such an agenda, the blending brothers are unwilling to fellowship in any meaningful way with those who do not agree with them. Rather, they steadfastly and resolutely refuse to fellowship over the current turmoil in any venue which is not under their control. As this paper documents in the section "Concerning the Breakdown in the Fellowship," both brother Titus and the Great Lakes' brothers' requested on several occasions fellowship with the blending brothers over the current issues, but these requests were either ignored or denied, unless conditions were attached that rendered such fellowship meaningless. This should be another strong indication to the saints of where the real problem lies.

¹ "A Warning to All the Saints and All the Churches in the Lord's Recovery," p. 1.

At the beginning of August the author made available to the saints a brief article drawing lessons from church history; its purpose was to illustrate how our situation in many ways parallels the negative aspects of some previous periods in the Lord's recovery. That article is available via this link: "[Brief Lessons from Church History](#)." If the reader is able to access that article he is encouraged to read it before continuing to read this one; it may grant a better perspective on the events this paper covers and of the author's views.

For the sake of simplicity, references in this paper to other publications, whether in the text or in the footnotes, only give the title of the publication. The reader may use this title as a key for obtaining the full information on the publication in the bibliography at the back.

Because of its length some readers will prefer to read this paper on their computer rather than printing it out. For the best presentation of the text they should download the document to their computer (rather than viewing it online via a browser) and save it, then open it in Adobe Acrobat Reader, go to the "View" menu and choose "Full Screen." (These instructions work with the current version of the Adobe Acrobat reader, v. 7.0, which is available here: [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).)

All quotations from the Scripture in this paper are from the Recovery Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

INTRODUCTION

Genuine Followers

In the past few years this comment concerning the period of church history immediately following the Reformation has been a great help to me:

The follower of a great benefactor moves forward developing his work. The imitator stands immovable and only poses beside it. During the century which succeeded their death, the Reformers had no followers. No one received again the fervent and creative spirit of their action. They had ready imitators, who clung to the dry husks of an empty faith, finding the letter where their heroic predecessors had found the spirit. These made of Luther's glorious theology, which had been framed as an expression of inner life, a philosophy of religion, whose importance was its correct and orthodox expression, and its intellectual apprehension, rather than its influence upon life and conscience. Luther and Calvin were quoted oftener than Christ and Paul. The Scriptures were forgotten for the creeds, and those sources of spiritual enlightenment from which should have flowed broad streams of truth became as stagnant pools of bitter waters.²

In the 20th century the Lord raised up two brothers, Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, to carry on His work of recovery, as so many others had carried on that work before them. As the statement above makes clear, if we desire to follow these brothers as they followed the Lord, we must do so according to their inward commitment from Him, not merely according to the letter of their ministry. That commitment was to bring the saints into the experience of Christ as life for the building up of the Body of Christ in the genuine local churches.

Today, however, we are in the process of forsaking that commitment and losing our first standing. The agent of this change is a group of brothers that has arisen among the churches to establish themselves as a hierarchy among us, and to make oneness with themselves, rather than oneness with Christ, the practical test of fellowship among us.

Their claim to authority is not that the churches were raised up through them, nor the exercise of a spiritual and life-imparting ministry among us; rather, it is merely the relationship they enjoyed with brother Lee. Nonetheless, these ones are seeking to monopolize the ministry among the churches, as well as to remove from the fellowship all who will not agree to their demands. In brief, they are seeking to turn us away from standing upon the genuine ground of the oneness of the Body of Christ, as we have for so long, to standing, instead, upon the ground of their ministry as another of the sects of Christendom.

² *Philip Jacob Spener and His Work*, page 6. Spener (1635-1705) was one of the Pietists, a group of believers who emphasized the personal spiritual life of believers. They came after the Reformers and had much influence upon Count Zinzendorf and the Lord's move among the Moravian Brethren.

In fact, these brothers are actually usurping brother Lee's ministry by insisting that they are its unique custodians and only legitimate interpreters. This will make it far more difficult for our brother's ministry to be accepted and received among Christians outside of the recovery, thus greatly limiting the spread of a ministry that God surely desires to use for the blessing of all His children.³

All this is taking place even though the outward pattern of our church life appears much as it has for many years, and in many places the saints still seem fairly happy in the churches. This is because the real nature of our situation is not made clear until it is put to the test, and it is not tested so long as these brothers have their way. However, where they are denied it, as they have been in the much of the Midwest, the true character of their ministry is revealed⁴ and there is conflict with those who refuse to forsake our first standing.⁵

While the root of our problems is a weakening in the spiritual life of the saints, these changes themselves will profoundly affect our relationship with Christ both personally as saints and corporately as His testimony. We must ask ourselves: doesn't it matter to us what kind of oneness we have? Is it acceptable to give up the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ for a man-made, sectarian oneness? Are we willing to have the Lord stand outside the church (Rev. 3:20), so long as we can still say that we are one and still have an enjoyable church life?⁶

At least to me this kind of church life is not acceptable. When we first came into the church life many of us had a "river-crossing" experience. That is to say, like Abraham, who crossed over the Euphrates to follow God and enter into Canaan,⁷ God called us out of our old situation to follow Him in newness of life in the church life. Surely this was

³ One of the key differences between the turmoil among the churches in the late 1980s and today's turmoil is that at that time a number of leading brothers, to the author's understanding, disavowed brother Lee as a servant of the Lord. In contrast, many of those who are resisting the negative trend among the churches today feel that they are fighting to preserve and protect our brother's ministry from some who, whether they mean to or not, are usurping it for their own ends.

⁴ This is exactly the same in principle as the operation of our own flesh, which, so long as it has its way, may appear very pleasant, congenial, and even submissive to God. When it is unable to obtain what it wants or have its way, however, its innate hostility to God becomes openly manifest.

⁵ In spiritual warfare our responsibility before the Lord, and our real fight, is to remain in the things He has committed to us. For example, the Lord Jesus exhorted the church in Philadelphia to "hold fast":

I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown (Rev. 3:11).

Also, in the section in Ephesians on spiritual warfare (6:10-20), the apostle Paul tells the saints several times to "stand" or "withstand" the enemy's attack. How appropriate, then, is the response brother Titus Chu gave to the claim that he has left the Lord's recovery:

I never left; I just never changed.

⁶ How joyful the saints in Laodicea were! They exclaimed "I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing!" (Rev. 3:17). Do they not sound like us today? Of course, the Lord knew better.

⁷ See the *Recovery Version of the New Testament*, p. 1030 (Heb. 1:1, fn 2), for a fuller explanation of this thought.

not a once-for-all experience. May the Lord grant us to follow Him again today as “river crossers” who stand against these changes!⁸

The Bible speaks of the beginning of the building of the temple in this way:

And these are the foundations which Solomon laid to build the house of God. The length in cubits, according to the former standard, was sixty cubits, and it was twenty cubits wide (2 Chron. 3:3).

Praise the Lord! How encouraging is this word to all those who would stand for God’s truth today! At the very start of the building work the Bible specifically records that Solomon built the temple “according to the former standard” (“the first measure,” KJV; “the old standard,” NASB). Why is this? To show us that, while men change their standard for the divine building work, God does not. Praise Him! In just the way He began His work, so will He complete it. He will only use “the former standard,” “the first measure,” “the old standard” to complete His building; He does not accept man’s innovations. May we be faithful to build according to that same standard.

In Danger of Following Only in an Outward Way

Among the churches we often praise both brother Nee and brother Lee—but this does not mean that we are really entering into their burden. The principle of the Lord’s word to the scribes and Pharisees still applies today:

You build up the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. You are witnesses then and fully approve of the works of your fathers, because they killed them, and you build up their tombs (Luke 11:47-48).

Why did the Lord condemn the religious leaders of His day for an apparent act of kindness shown to the prophets? Because, while the tombs were apparently built to honor the prophets, they were in reality built to honor the religious system that had them murdered. The way to honor the prophets is not to “build up their tombs”—which we do in the case of our brothers by overly praising them—but rather by keeping their word.

While we greatly appreciate both brother Nee and brother Lee, as well as their ministries, we should not put them on a pedestal. Moreover, while the Lord used brother Lee in particular to a remarkable extent, we must nonetheless affirm that he was still a fallen human being, a man of flesh who could make mistakes, even serious ones, and he did.

Brother Lee did not want a pedestal; he wanted to see the saints in the reality of God’s New Testament economy. At the end of his ministry he said:

⁸ On the one hand, we need to be the real river crossers, while on the other we simply need to remain in what the Lord originally called us into. This may seem paradoxical, but the Christian life often is.

I do not like to hear that you appreciate me, that you feel I am right and you follow me.⁹ If you appreciate the truths I have put out, I thank the Lord, but if you appreciate me, that is wrong. Be careful in following any co-worker whom you appreciate and to whom you are attracted. To be one with another co-worker in this way is wrong.¹⁰

He was also concerned that his ministry not be used to replace Christ or the Scriptures:

Many things that have been used by God have become replacements of Christ. This is true of persons as well as things. To some people, Christian leaders like Martin Luther and John Wesley have become a replacement for Christ. As John the Baptist was taken in place of Christ by the Jews, so today certain Christian leaders are taken by Christians as replacements of Christ Himself....

If it is true that not even the Scriptures can give us life apart from Christ, it is all the more true that the Life-study Messages cannot give life apart from Him. I am somewhat concerned that those who have received much help from these messages may, at least to some extent, put their trust in these messages instead of in the Lord Himself. Certain ones may read the Life-study Messages without directly contacting the Lord. In such a case, these messages would be taken as a replacement of Christ. But not even the Scriptures, and certainly not the Life-study Messages, should ever be used to replace Christ....

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....

We should not allow even the best spiritual things to replace Christ. This principle applies to the church life and to any practices we have. Why do we come to the meetings? We should come not for the sake of the meetings themselves, but for the sake of the living One who is ministered to us through the meetings, the only One who is able to enliven us again and again. It is of vital importance that we see that no holy thing, no religious thing, no spiritual thing, no traditional thing, can replace Christ. Not even the most up-to-date practices or the most spiritual matters can replace Christ. Only the present Christ, the living Christ, the Christ we are enjoying and experiencing at this very moment, can be our genuine help.¹¹

⁹ Brother Lee is speaking here of following him personally instead of as a pattern of one who followed Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1, Phil. 4:9).

¹⁰ *A Word of Love*, p. 57. These messages were given in 1996.

¹¹ *The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John*, pp. 165, 167-168. Darby expressed a very similar concern in the preface to his *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*:

Beginning in the Spirit and Ending in the Flesh (Galatians 3:3)

The changes that are taking place among us are for the most part incremental in nature, and thus many are not aware of the situation, while others feel it is not that serious. J.N. Darby comments in a very insightful way to show that it was in just the same way that the early church began its transformation into the Roman church, and that the change then was brought about by “the best persons”:

We are enabled in [the case of the Roman church today] to speak of the full and awful maturity of this abiding corruption of the enemy; but those most conversant with history, and most spiritual, know how much spirituality it requires to detect its commencement and early growth: and that it sprang really from the best persons and most apparently godly principles that appear after the record of Scripture....¹²

He then states that the basic change was to substitute man-made arrangements for the Spirit’s working, especially for the purpose of maintaining “good order and unity”:

The blessed and perfect word of God reveals in one word this history: they began in the Spirit, and ended in the flesh [Gal. 3:3]. If you inquire who were the persons who laid the basis of this amazing evil, it will be found that it was those who insisted on good order and unity; yet it was not in the power of the Holy [Spirit]...but in arrangements which attached to office the authority necessary to maintain it. There may have been fleshly workings which gave occasion to it; but the remedy was not spiritual acting on the conscience and affections of those astray, for this is what we see in the epistles, but the authoritative arrangement of order, because power was so much gone, [as well as the] spiritual discernment to know it [was gone].¹³

He goes on to give several characteristics of the enemy’s work against Christian groups:

The first sign of weakness is the gathering itself becoming the object of attention instead of their being a people enjoying the blessedness of their position by the relationship and fellowship it gave them with Christ, who had become and was their abiding object, revealing withal God the Father....

If [a commentary] pretend to give the contents of Scripture, or if he who uses it seeks these in its remarks, such commentary can only mislead and impoverish the soul....

What the reader is to expect...in this Synopsis, is nothing more than an attempt to help him in studying Scripture for himself. All that would turn him aside from this would be mischievous to him; what helps him in it may be useful.

¹² “Narrative of the Facts,” p. 10, emphasis added.

¹³ Ibid, emphasis added. Watchman Nee makes a very similar statement:

We require deeper spiritual experience and clearer spiritual light if we are to be workers acceptable to God and to His Church. If we wish to overcome difficulties, we must learn to overcome by spirituality, not by official authority. (The Normal Christian Church Life, p. 137).

You will find holy and spiritual affections broken and set aside to give place to the claims of the institution. And so are even natural affections, whilst the latter are given all their natural force and weight in practice to hold persons in the institution, and even largely used for this purpose....

The activity and zeal will be for the system. It will be to make proselytes, and establish them in what will keep them there, not to save souls or lead them on in Christ. There will generally be a good deal of acting against or depreciation of others who even hold the faith of Christ....

Paramount importance will be attached to the views which distinguish that institution, not to what saves or to what brings faith to the test by the revelation of Christ....¹⁴

The fact that these comments, made a century and a half ago, so closely match our own situation should warn us. Today we are leaving our first standing by following the negative pattern of so many that have gone before us.

Should We Speak Out?

Some who realize that something is indeed wrong claim that we should not speak out against such changes because doing so will expose the situation to those outside the recovery, thus giving ground for accusation to the ones who have always opposed us. However, as far as our testimony is concerned the real problem is not that others would see these things or accuse us, but that they exist among us in the first place. If we are to bear the Lord's testimony we need to be transparent.

Others say that to oppose the changes is divisive, while to accept the situation is to "keep the oneness" and "bear the cross." To reject sectarianism, however, is not divisive, nor is it keeping the oneness or bearing the cross to submit to a man-made requirement of fellowship; rather, to permit such a requirement is to forsake the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ and accept a "yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1), and no servant of the Lord could ever do this. The apostle Paul certainly would not (cf. Gal. 2), and neither have those martyrs throughout church history who have suffered at the hands of the religionists. Watchman Nee wrote:

Before the Lord we can yield on certain things, but there are other matters in which we can never compromise....There are two points in which we cannot compromise: 1) Denominations are sin; hence, in this we cannot compromise.... Denominations must be condemned. This is the negative aspect. 2)The church is local. This is the positive aspect, in which we neither can ever compromise.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid, p.11.

¹⁵ *Further Talks on the Church Life*. pp. 133-134.

Those who desire to remain silent and go along with the current situation appeal to the example of the apostle Paul, pointing out that he kept a good fellowship with the church in Jerusalem despite its Judaizing influence on the other churches. Surely, when visiting Jerusalem, both in Acts 15 and in Acts 21, Paul did all he could—even too much in the latter case—to keep the fellowship, but this is only one side of the truth. To be faithful to the Lord we must be balanced and recognize the other side as well. The fact is that, on several occasions when “some came from James” (Gal. 2:12) to spread their negative influence to the churches Paul cared for, our brother fought against them like a lion:

And when no little dissension and discussion with them came about through Paul and Barnabas...(Acts 15:2).

The false brothers, brought in secretly, who stole in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into slavery. To them we yielded with the subjection demanded not even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might remain with you (Gal. 2:4-5).

But when Peter came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before some came from James...(Gal. 2:11-12).

If anyone announces a gospel to you beyond that which you have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:9).

They are zealous of you, but not rightly; but they desire to shut you out that you may be zealous of them (Gal. 4:17).

For such ones are false apostles, deceitful workers, transfiguring themselves into apostles of Christ (2 Cor. 11:13; cf. v. 22).

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision (Phil. 3:2).

Remain in Ephesus that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things (1 Tim. 1:3; cf. vv. 7-10).

We need to learn the lesson from Paul’s example that, to care for the Lord’s testimony—“that the truth of the gospel might remain with you”—we cannot be political. Rather, we must stand very firmly for the truth, regardless of whether it offends those in the recovery who are seeking to turn the churches away from the Lord. He will not operate in this situation unless some stand firmly with Him for His testimony.¹⁶

¹⁶ As for the need to stand against ecclesiastical presumption, another instructive example is that of David in the Old Testament. He would never lift his hand against the Lord’s anointed (i.e., Saul; 1 Sam. 24:10, 26:23; 2 Sam. 1:14-16). However, when another (i.e., Saul’s son Ish-bosheth, who was put forward by Saul’s general, Abner; 2 Sam. 2:8) attempted to usurp the throne—based not upon any anointing he himself had received but only upon his relationship with his father, who was the Lord’s anointed—David fought against him not only for his own kingship but also to bring in the Lords’ kingdom on the earth (2 Sam. 3:1).

Almost exactly 30 years ago a very similar situation arose in the recovery. Nigel Tomes, who witnessed that time, states of his experience:

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.”

After that turmoil brother Lee greatly lamented the fact that no one had spoken out:

We have been short of the light of the truth. Doctrinally speaking, we have all had knowledge concerning the headship of Christ, hierarchy, the ground of the church, and the constitution of the church. But what we had was mainly the newspaper report, not the televised vision. Thus, when a hierarchy was strongly formed and began to assume its evil power in some places, hardly anyone was aware of it. If we had been under the televised vision concerning hierarchy and concerning the headship of Christ, someone would have immediately spoken out against this, pointing out that such a hierarchy is an insult to the headship of Christ.¹⁷

In the same way, if we fail to speak out in the current situation it only indicates a lack of such truth among us today.

In fact, failing to speak out would be unfaithful to the Lord, to the church, and to the saints. May it not be so. The saints and the churches need to be warned and to awaken to the fact that today we are facing a threat of the very same nature. This is not a time for weakness. We must not “dissemble”¹⁸ as Peter did in Antioch (Gal. 2:12-13, KJV), i.e., go along with something we know to be fundamentally wrong. Rather, we must stand boldly and clearly for the truth and for the Lord’s testimony.

To use another example, Darby refers to an incident in which, as part of an ongoing effort to establish a hierarchy in one of the early Brethren assemblies, a brother was stopped while praying in a meeting.¹⁹ Darby states:

¹⁷ *Truth Messages*, pp. 19-20, emphasis added.

¹⁸ To “disguise or conceal behind a false appearance”; *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, third edition. Speaking of the situation of the church in Jerusalem at the time of the Acts 15 conference, brother Lee says:

*Peter should have been compared to something pure white, but he did not dare to be what he was. Under that atmosphere, influence, and tendency, what Peter was would not have been welcome. However, James was welcome because he could fit in with two sides at the same time (*Elders’ Training*, book 1, p. 24).*

¹⁹ This was in the assembly at Plymouth, England in the mid-1840s under Benjamin Newton.

*How many a gracious person, esteeming himself and his doings of little importance, has yielded in this way, till power was gained to change principles!*²⁰

It is not always right or always of the Spirit to yield. We should learn from this incident that we cannot yield in such a way that allows others, even dear brothers, to “change principles.” Rather, we must stand for the things we have always stood for.

A Concern for Principles Rather than Persons

I wish to stress at the outset that my concern for the most part is not with the ones who comprise this group of brothers themselves, but with the principles of their operation. These are dear brothers, a number of whom have exercised real care for the churches, and they have their own very real and often quite legitimate concerns regarding our situation. They are right to be concerned for how we can together bear the testimony of the one Body, and how we can otherwise continue in the things that have been “handed down” to us (1 Cor. 11:2) through Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. In fellowshipping our own concerns we should not forget the concerns of others.

Moreover, since much will be said in this article against the work of Living Stream Ministry, it should also be said that I am personally very grateful to the Lord for the faithful labor of the saints at the Stream for so many years to make the writings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee available to the Lord’s children throughout the world; how great a blessing this labor has been to the church only He knows.

Even so, when it comes to the truth we must care more for the principles by which we carry out the church life than for the people who are doing it. The reason for this is quite simple: the people will change, but the principles will remain. Perhaps today the person is right, and thus the fact that the principle is wrong does not appear to be a great matter. Tomorrow, however, the person will be wrong, and the difference will be manifest as very great indeed. Yet, if the principles established today are not according to God’s order as seen in the Scriptures, there will be no going back to our first standing.

A Negative Example

Consider again the example of the early church and in particular that of Ignatius, who was “a disciple of the apostle John, and survived him by only about seven years.”²¹

*Being written on the eve of his martyrdom, and with great earnestness and vehemence, and having been the disciple and friend of St. John, and at that time bishop of Antioch, probably the most renowned in Christendom, his Epistles must have produced a great impression on the churches....*²²

²⁰ “Narrative of the Facts,” p. 22.

²¹ *Miller’s Church History*, p. 158.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Surely this was a dear brother—even a martyr for Christ—whose intention was to take care of the church. Even so, it was this very brother who seems to have begun to turn the church away from God’s order. As brother Lee writes:

It was Ignatius in the second century who taught that an overseer, a bishop, is higher than an elder. From this erroneous teaching came the hierarchy of bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and the pope. Also, this teaching was the source of the episcopal system of ecclesiastical government. Both the hierarchy and the system are abominable in the eyes of God.²³

If such a one as Ignatius could be the catalyst for such a terrible change in the early church, we should not assume that just because we know and trust certain brothers today, and feel they have the best interests of the church at heart, that therefore the path they follow will always be of the Lord. Andrew Miller comments of the apostolic fathers:

It may be only fair to suppose that those good men, by whose means a new order of things was brought into the church, and the free ministry of the Holy Spirit in the members of the Body excluded, had the welfare of the church at heart. It is evident that Ignatius, by this arrangement, hoped to avoid “divisions.” But, however good our motives may be, it is the height of human folly — if not worse — to interfere with, or seek to change, the order of God.²⁴

Lord, we all need your mercy.

²³*Recovery Version of the New Testament*, p. 978 (1 Tim. 3:2, fn 1).

²⁴*Miller’s Church History*, p. 184.

CONCERNING “PUBLICATION WORK IN THE LORD’S RECOVERY”*The Nature of “Publication Work”*

In June of last year a particular group of brothers among us, who refer to themselves as “the blending brothers” or “blending co-workers,” published a document that seeks to consummate a basic change in the nature of the Lord’s recovery. That document was entitled “Publication Work in the Lord’s Recovery,” and it is really the “crystallization,” so to speak, of their thoughts about the recovery and of their role within it.

The basic thrust of “Publication Work” is to state that the blending brothers must approve publications intended for general use among the churches. It also shows that they feel their ministry is the unique ministry in the recovery today. It begins by stating:

*Through Brother Lee’s fellowship over the years, we have long realized that there should be one publication among us. The one publication is not only a testimony of our oneness in the Body but also a safeguard for the unique ministry in the Lord’s recovery.*²⁵

Despite the brothers’ claims to the contrary, “Publication Work” is not a continuation of anything we have truly practiced in the recovery before. Rather, it represents a great apostasy from the Lord’s commitment to us through the Scriptures and through the ministries of His two servants, Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. None of the quotes in the document from Witness Lee actually support the brothers’ “one publication” theory or their claim that it is what we have always practiced, and no attempt is even made within it to justify this theory from the Scriptures.²⁶

While it is true that when Watchman Nee, and then brother Lee, were ministering among us, for the most part only they published their ministry for use in the churches, *that was because these were unique gifts to the Body and we all desired to be in their ministries.* To try to institutionalize such a practice, and assert that now—when there are no such ones among us—we may only have the publications that are approved by the blending brothers, is absolutely different. It is in fact an unprecedented effort to control the ministry in the recovery, and thus to begin to institutionalize all ministry among the churches. In other words, it is to begin to establish a *de facto* clergy in the recovery as a hierarchy among us.²⁷

²⁵ “Publication Work,” p. 3.

²⁶ 1 Pet. 5:2 and Acts 20:28-29 are referred to, but not in a way specifically related to the “one publication” theory. Since its publication, however, some have attempted to provide a scriptural basis for this theory, using verses such as Acts 2:42, 1 John 1:3, 1 Cor. 1:9, and 1 Tim. 1:3-4 (see A Faithful Word.com). The best reply is what brother Lee might have said to such claims: very simply, we should not interpret the Scripture like this. Brother Lee himself never presented “one publication” as a scriptural truth, and moreover it is plainly obvious that the Scripture was not written in the way of “one publication,” but rather through many brothers acting under the sovereign leading of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-7).

²⁷ It is quite striking to consider how this follows the pattern of the negative aspect of the history of the early church. Today we would all condemn the open teaching of a clergy-laity system, yet we are already beginning to see the practice of it. Even so, there were the “works of the Nicolaitans” (Rev. 2:6) in Ephesus before there were the “teachings of the Nicolaitans” (Rev. 2:15) in Pergamos.

This is the basic factor of the current turmoil among us. Very simply, a particular group of brothers feels it is their portion to arrogate to themselves all of the ministry in the Lord's recovery, and thus they are seeking to exclude any other brothers from ministering in a significant way. Such a concept, and such a practice, will always result in conflict with those who stand for the truth against such efforts, but those who take such a stand are not the cause of the problem. One historian has commented on a very similar situation among the Exclusive Brethren, when a particular group of brothers began acting as a central authority among them and made their ruling in certain cases a test of fellowship for the other saints. That historian said:

*Those who could not toe the line were not acting independently but were resisting ecclesiastical presumption.*²⁸

The Lord's Way

For the churches to go on in a healthy way it is essential that the Lord be free to raise up new ministries among us. Only He is the Head of the Body, and only He knows whom He desires to raise up, with what ministry.:

He Himself gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).

But there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are distinctions of ministries, yet the same Lord; and there are distinctions of operations, but the same God, who operates all things in all. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for what is profitable (1 Cor. 12:4-7).

Thus, the apostle Paul boldly declared that his apostleship was “not from man nor through man” (Gal. 1:1). In his *Synopsis* Darby makes a trenchant comment on this verse:

*What calls itself the clergy would freely admit “not from men,” but they cannot admit “not through man”; it strikes at the root of their existence as such.*²⁹

²⁸ “The Brethren since 1870,” by W.R. Dronsfield. It is also quite interesting to consider the history of the Exclusive Brethren light of our own situation, as explained in Dronsfield's paper. Around the time of Darby's death, instead of a new minister of the age, a strong hierarchy arose among the Exclusive Brethren very much like the blending brothers of today. That group of brothers did a great deal to divide the Exclusives into different sects—just as the blending brothers threaten to do today in the recovery—as described in author's paper, “Brief Lessons from Church History” at ConcernedBrothers.com.

²⁹ *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 365, note; edited for readability. The actual quote reads:

Not “of men” what calls itself the clergy would freely admit, but not “by man” they cannot. It strikes at the root of their existence as such.

We cannot expect to have the Spirit's marked blessing on the ministry among the churches if we exchange His leading for a merely human headship.

A New Class of Brothers

Actually, any attempt to define a distinct group of brothers as having some special authority among the saints—as in the case of the blending brothers claiming the authority to decide what publications the churches may use—is inherently Nicolaitan³⁰; it could not be anything but the beginning of a clergy-laity system in the recovery.

Unfortunately, even the existence of this new term “blending brothers” among us strongly indicates that a change has already occurred in our culture in this regard,³¹ i.e., whereas before we only had “brothers,” we now have in addition a distinct and authoritative class known as “blending brothers.” Brother Dave Shields comments very appropriately regarding this new terminology:

When Paul spoke of his co-workers, he referred to them not as some elite group, but as “Sosthenes the brother” (1 Cor. 1:1), “Timothy the brother” (2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:1), “all the brothers who are with me” (Gal. 1:2), etc. They were all simply brothers among brothers. Paul never referred to “the blended brothers with me,” nor did he use any other similar phrase....

A closed circle of specific “Blended Brothers” may be the start of the greatest division of all – the division between a clergy class and the laity. It marks out specific individuals who assume supposedly special authority and divine responsibility that the rest of the members don't possess. Isn't it ironic that the term “blended,” which was first employed by Paul to guard against division, is now used to divide the saints into “blended” and “non-blended” categories?³²

The clergy-laity system, which has existed in Christendom since about the end of the first century, is truly hated by the Lord. He told the church in Ephesus:

*This you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitians, which I also hate (Rev. 2:6).*³³

³⁰ The Greek word means “conquering the common people” or “climbing above the laity,” and thus signifies those who would seek to become the clergy. (See *The Orthodoxy of the Church*, p. 20; also, *The Recovery Version of the New Testament*, p. 1242 (Rev. 2:6, fn 1).

³¹ As brother Lee often said, a new culture requires a new language.

³² “The Blended Brothers’ vs. the Bible,” available at ConcernedBrothers.com.

³³ Based on this word Watchman Nee stated:

“The Lord is pleased with those who reject the mediatorial class” (The Orthodoxy of the Church, p. 22).

The Lord spoke this word after He had already warned the church in Ephesus that, because it had left its first love, He would take its lampstand away unless it repented (Rev. 2:4-5). This shows that even in such a negative condition the church in Ephesus still had one very positive characteristic before the Lord: it hated

It only began to be torn down in the 1800s as part of the Lord's recovery among the Plymouth Brethren. Surely the enemy hates this aspect of the recovery and will do whatever he can to frustrate it; we therefore need to be vigilant and stand against such efforts, even when they are made through well-intentioned brothers.

The Source of "Publication Work"

The blending brothers feel that all of the ministry in the recovery today should be carried on under their oversight because, as mentioned above, *they believe that they possess the unique ministry in the recovery*. "Publication Work," in its effort to control the publication work among the churches, is the clearest expression of this view. As noted above, it begins with the claim:

*Through Brother Lee's fellowship over the years, we have long realized that there should be one publication among us. The one publication is not only a testimony of our oneness in the Body but also a safeguard for the unique ministry in the Lord's recovery.*³⁴

This is truly a new thing among us; as we shall see, neither Watchman Nee nor brother Lee ever held such a concept, which will inevitably result in conflict with other ministries the Lord has raised up and thus wreak havoc among the churches.

At the root of all this is a profound spiritual obsession that has gripped much of the recovery in recent years, namely, the concept that the blending brothers' ministry is today the continuation of brother Lee's ministry. The blending brothers frequently seek to impress the saints with this concept, to the point that many saints seem to accept it now simply because it has been affirmed so often. "Publication Work" itself states:

*When Brother Lee was among us, he took the lead in both the ministry and the publication work....Today, by the Lord's mercy, the ministry continues. Now it is carried out by fellow slaves who serve in a blended way according to Brother Lee's realization and fellowship shortly before he went to be with the Lord. He called this "the Lord's sovereign provision for His Body, and the up-to-date way to fulfill His ministry" (A Letter of Fellowship with Thanks, March 24, 1997). It is important to note that Brother Lee spoke directly about the continuation of the ministry among us. He felt that after his departure the ministry should be carried out by a group of co-workers who are blended....*³⁵

the works of the Nicolaitans. In other words, so long as the church there rejected the clergy-laity system, the Lord still had some hope that the situation could be recovered. This shows how vitally important it is for us to reject any clergy-laity system in the recovery today.

³⁴ "Publication Work," p. 3, emphasis added.

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 4-5. One is reminded of the apostle Paul's rhetorical questions to the Corinthians:

Are we beginning again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some do, letters of commendation to you or from you? (2 Cor. 3:1).

Ron Kangas has also stated:

While there is no such thing as a successor, there is such a thing as an organic continuation. Therefore, the ministry has continued, and as junior co-workers being blended together as part of the corporate continuation of this ministry, we would like to enter into and contribute to the carrying out of this burden that our brother received from the Lord.³⁶

And in another message:

We are not claiming succession of any kind. Timothy was not Paul's successor, but he surely was Paul's continuation.³⁷

In fact, regardless of what we call it, to believe that one brother's ministry can be continued by another is absolutely in the principle of apostolic succession taught in the Roman church. How these brothers, along with so many of the saints in general, could believe such a thing, after having been under the spiritual ministry of brother Lee for so many years, is truly a mystery.

Perpetuating a Ministry

That the brothers could openly speak as they do, claiming that brother Lee gave to them his ministry, rather than just some aspects of his work, is only a further illustration of how much the ministry in the recovery has already been institutionalized.³⁸ In fact, the

³⁶ *The Ministry* magazine, July 2006, p. 10.

³⁷ *The Ministry* magazine, June 2003, p. 15. Perhaps this comment throws a great light on both the blending brothers' concept of their ministry and the actual situation. On the one hand they claim to be today's "Timothy's," but on the other they completely misunderstand that brother's portion in the ministry.

The Bible does tell us that Timothy was "like-souled" with the apostle; unlike others he "sought the things of Christ Jesus"; and he served with Paul as "a child with a father unto the gospel" (Phil. 2:20-22). The apostle told him to remain in Ephesus to "charge certain ones not to teach different things" (1 Tim. 1:3); to "lay these things before the brothers (4:6), and to "charge and teach these things" (4:11); to "fan into flame the gift of God" which was in him through the laying on of Paul's hands (2 Tim. 1:6); and to "commit to faithful men" the things he had heard from Paul (2:2).

The Bible says so much about Timothy; where then does Paul tell him to continue his (i.e., Paul's) ministry? He never does; rather, Paul charged him to "fully accomplish" *his own ministry* (2 Tim. 3:5). There is absolutely no indication, either in the Bible or from church history, that Timothy continued Paul's ministry. Where are the epistles that Timothy wrote? Which churches did he raise up? What truths did he define for us that we have today? While Paul did all of these things, Timothy did none of them, which fully proves that he was not Paul's continuation in any meaningful sense of that term.

Timothy had a real and very significant function, but he was not what we might call an outstanding servant of the Lord; the entire Bible does not contain a single spoken or written word from him. *If only the blending brothers truly could learn from Timothy's example!* Then they would understand that their serving with brother Lee could never confer on them our brother's ministry, and, like Timothy, they would have a sober estimation of their own function and portion in the ministry.

³⁸ We should not forget that it was some of the close co-workers of the early apostles who led the early church to begin its transformation into the Roman church. No doubt this was made easier by the saints' high regard of these brothers due to their association with the apostles. This shows us that we always need to exercise our own spiritual discernment in receiving any ministry.

attempt to perpetuate brother Lee's ministry can only result in the forming of a new Christian sect, just as the Lutheran church was formed after the death of Luther by his co-workers. As brother Nee points out:

When the grace of God comes, men immediately set up an organization to keep it. The organization remains, but the content is lost. However, the cup [i.e., the organization] cannot be broken; there are always those who are zealous to maintain the cup continuously. Here is a matter of principle: The students of Wesley could never be equal to Wesley, nor could the students of Calvin match Calvin. The schools of the prophets seldom produced prophets—all the great prophets were chosen by God from the wilderness. The Spirit of God descends upon whomsoever He will. He is the Head of the church, not we. Men always think the living water is valuable and must be kept by organization, but it gradually declines through the generations until it completely dries up.³⁹

God does not even desire that brother Lee's ministry would be continued, because He does not want us to trust in brother Lee, but in Himself. Again Watchman Nee states:

David "served his own generation," and slept (Acts 13:36). He could not serve two! Where today we seek to perpetuate our work by setting up an organization or society or system, the Old Testament saints served their own day and passed on. This is an important principle of life....God's work is spiritual to the point of having no earthly roots, no smell of earth on it at all. Men pass on, but the Lord remains.⁴⁰

We cannot go on as the recovery if we make the same mistake so many have before us of attempting to perpetuate the ministry of the one the Lord used to raise us up. Rather, we must learn the lessons from history and seek instead to stand on our brother's shoulders.

All this is not to say that the blending brothers have no portion in the Lord's ministry, but only that they cannot continue brother Lee's personal ministry. How much more peaceful and restful the entire recovery would be if the dear brothers could drop the presumption that they have been given such a ministry and simply function according to what the Lord truly has measured to them!

The Blending Brothers' View of Their Ministry

However, the blending brothers actually go much farther even than claiming that they are brother Lee's continuation. They feel that because he was "the minister of the age," they

To compare the blending brothers' statements with those on the leading Roman Catholic apologetics site regarding apostolic succession, which includes many quotes from the apostolic fathers, use this link: www.catholic.com/library/apostolic_succession.asp.

³⁹ *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Vol. 47, p. 57. Another translation of this quote is found in *The Orthodoxy of the Church*, pp. 60-61.

⁴⁰ *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Vol. 40, p. 84-85

are now a corporate minister of the age. For example, brother Ron Kangas, after speaking very strongly in a recent message against the churches in a certain area, went on to say:

I hope that some places will not have to be sacrificed for the learning of the Body. The word in the ministry, which is the ministry of the age, should be enough for our perfecting.⁴¹

Yet even this is not the limit of what the blending brothers feel God has committed to them. In the 2005 winter training brother Ron stated:

The wise master builder, the architect, oversees the construction work according to the designHe has the capacity to oversee the entire work on the earth in relation to God's economy for His building.

In this age, we were privileged to be perfected by a wise master builder....There is no successor to this wise master builder, but there is an open group of being-

⁴¹ *The Ministry* magazine, July 2006, p. 213. In fact, according to our understanding of the ministry of the age, it is not possible that the Lord has committed it to the blending brothers, for two reasons. Firstly, we believe that when the Lord raises up a minister of the age He always gives him a unique vision as well as a unique commitment for the carrying out of that vision. The blending brothers, however, constantly protest to the saints that they are only repeating what brother Lee said. For example, in a recent letter they claimed:

The blending brothers [have] remained true to their pledge of only re-speaking Brother Lee's ministry (Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, June 4, 2005, p. 4.)

Secondly, there is absolutely no example in the Bible of there being a corporate minister of the age. In every case, the Lord's vision and commitment, and with it the leadership, is given to an individual, for example, to Peter, then to Paul, and then to John in the New Testament. We cannot violate this principle today and say that for the first time in history we have a corporate ministry of the age.

The fact that the Lord works with individuals, rather than with groups of brothers, is a strong safeguard to keep the ministry from becoming organizational and institutional. Under His sovereignty, when a given brother dies or his work otherwise ends his personal ministry is over. In contrast we have to ask, if a group of saints such as the blending brothers have a ministry, when does it end? The answer is obvious: never, because the leadership is not with individuals as such, but with the group. Though over time some will leave that group, others will be added, so that such a ministry will continue without end until it develops into a full-blown clergy-laity system.

Another such safeguard against the ministry becoming an institution, which is quite important to note, is this: according both to the Bible and to church history there is not always a brother operating as a minister of the age. In this sense, we may speak of a pause in the ministry of the age. In other words, after the end of one brother's ministry the Lord often chooses, in His sovereignty, to wait for a period of time before beginning a new move through a different brother.

There are quite a number of examples of such pauses in the Old Testament—the book of Judges for example—and even the intertestamental period itself is a good example. The clearest example in the New Testament is the time between the death of Paul and the writings of the apostle John. There is absolutely no indication in the book of Acts, or from the rest of the New Testament, or from church history that anyone carried on the ministry of the age from the time of Paul's death around A.D. 67 until John began to minister around A.D. 90.

Consider our own understanding of recent history. Witness Lee indicated that, in his view, J.N. Darby was the minister of the age in the 1800s. Watchman Nee, however, was not raised up until the 1920s. Who then was the minister of the age in the 40-year period in between these two? We do not know of any. Why then do we assume that there must be a minister of the age to immediately succeed Witness Lee? Clearly, there is no basis for such an assumption, as much as we might like it to be so.

*blended brothers who are absolutely consecrated to the Lord to continue the work begun by this wise master builder. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*⁴²

These brothers actually believe that it is now their responsibility “to oversee the entire work on the earth in relation to God’s economy for His building!” How great an obsession is this! How then could these brothers not try to control all the work among the churches and make themselves a hierarchy among us?

So the blending brothers assume that any significant disagreement with them is an attack upon the recovery, a work of darkness, of death, etc.⁴³ Needless to say, it is almost impossible for these brothers to have any real fellowship with those in the recovery who do not accept their view of themselves.⁴⁴

⁴² *The Ministry* magazine, January-February 2006, p. 150, emphasis added. To claim that anyone other than the Holy Spirit Himself—including Witness Lee or the blending brothers—has “the capacity to oversee the entire work on the earth in relation to God’s economy for His building” is simply not a sober word.

Even to use the term “wise master builder” in the sense of one brother who takes the lead among all the workers does not have a strong scriptural basis, since it is only used in Scripture in relation to the work done in a particular locality (1 Cor. 3:10), not to the universal building. Immediately after discussing “the wise master builder,” Watchman Nee says that “In the Bible...there is no chief apostle” (*Church Affairs*, p. 165).

⁴³ For example, in Living Stream Ministry’s 2005 Winter Training brother Ron spoke of the differing views that have been expressed via the internet, and of the brothers who have expressed them, in this way:

*The nature of Satan’s attack on the church is death; his weapon is death. I am concerned that many saints may read certain things on the Internet without any realization that by so doing, they may be assaulted by death. There is something in this universe called the gates of Hades, and it is the strongest power next to God. Its attack is aimed at the church, at the blending co-workers, at the ministry, at Living Stream Ministry as an entity publishing the works of the ministry, and at the proper practices of the ministry. Recently there have been many such attacks of death. Much of the death issues out of the mouths of brothers who open the gates of Hades by speaking from the self. We need to realize that there will be the attacks of death and that death can come out of any one of us. (*The Ministry* magazine, January-February 2006, p. 144).*

The blending brothers have said on several occasions that it is inappropriate for those who disagree with them to express their views via the internet; what they really mean is that they don’t want such views expressed at all, which is proven by their ongoing refusal to fellowship concerning these matters in any venue that is not under their control.

Surely we all would prefer not to have to deal with these matters, but there is little choice. As for using the internet, it is true that anyone can access a website that deals with these issues. However, only a limited number of the saints will do so, and it will be by their own conscious choice.

In contrast, the blending brothers have spoken against those who disagree with them not only on their own website, AFaithfulWord.com, but also from the platform of the Living Stream Ministry international conferences and trainings as well. Each of these LSM gatherings is attended by several thousand saints, including many new and younger ones. These ones are often exposed, whether they so desire or not, to extremely harsh words spoken against dear brothers in the churches, such as those quoted above. Is this not much, much worse than promoting such views via a website?

The brothers say they are concerned that the opposers will have access to the things that are posted on a website, but we should care much more about our real situation and about the impact these things will have on the saints themselves rather than about maintaining a good appearance for others.

⁴⁴The author would add his own personal observation. As generally happens with those who yield to spiritual obsession, the human virtues of the ones involved—especially their ability to distinguish between things that are true and things that are false, and their ability to properly take care of their conscience—seem to have been greatly diminished.

Neither can they accept that the churches would receive any ministry other than their own. Consistent with the opening statement of “Publication Work” are brother Benson’s statements when speaking of what he refers to as “the general ministry”:

For a local church to receive a ministry that is different from the general ministry that produces the churches, establishes the churches, and is still edifying the churches affects the entire Body (1 Cor. 1:12; 16:2; Acts 18:25; 19:1-2; cf. Rev 2:1,4). Surely no local church should receive another ministry or teaching that is different from the general ministry. We have to admit that in the Lord’s recovery there is a general ministry. This general ministry has come through the release of the word and through the brother who produced the churches....

There is a general ministry that was carried out when Brother Nee was here. He had the portion to release the general ministry. When Brother Lee was here, after Brother Nee had gone, the general ministry that all the churches received was the same. Today it should remain the same. There is a ministry that produces the churches, establishes the churches, and is still edifying the churches. However, if someone takes another ministry, different from this one, it will affect not only that one local church, but it will eventually affect the entire Body. Today under the Lord’s sovereignty there is still the same general ministry being released through the publications and through the spoken word in the recovery. We need to follow the general ministry that has produced the churches, established the churches, and continues to edify the churches.⁴⁵

A Healthy Attitude toward Other Servants of the Lord

The blending brothers use the terms “the ministry,” “the New Testament ministry,” and even “the unique ministry” to make brother Lee’s personal ministry—which in their concept is what they are carrying out today—equal to the New Testament ministry itself. Brother Lee, however, flatly and explicitly rejected such a view:

When we say that the new covenant ministry is unique, we do not mean that it is the ministry of only one person. For example, it is slanderous to accuse me of saying that the unique ministry today is the ministry of Witness Lee. We do not say this, and we do not mean this. By the unique ministry, the new covenant ministry, we mean the ministry of the Spirit and of righteousness. Whoever ministers the Spirit and righteousness to others is one in the unique ministry, no matter who he may be. Peter, John, James, Paul, Timothy, Titus, Apollos—they all had the one ministry. The ministers are many, but the ministry is unique. As long as you minister the Spirit and righteousness to others, you are in this unique ministry.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ *The Ministry* magazine, June 2005, pp. 87-88, emphasis added.

⁴⁶ *Life-study of 2 Corinthians*, Message 27, pp.235-236, emphasis added. Messages 26 and 27 of this Life-study provide a very clear explanation of the unique New Testament ministry.

Our brother felt his ministry was only a part of the New Testament ministry today. In many places he was careful to distinguish between the different meanings of the word “ministry,” so that the saints would understand that his ministry was not equal to the New Testament ministry. While he did feel the Lord had committed to him the ministry of the age,⁴⁷ he never said that only he could minister. He spoke about the trouble in 1988 in this way:

*The first of the problems today among us is concerning the recognition of God’s speaking. I never told others not to speak and that I am the only speaker. I never said that my ministry is unique. I made it clear repeatedly by my writings that when we say “the ministry,” we are referring to the New Testament ministry, not just my ministry. If my ministry is a part of that ministry, thank God for this. The problems among us firstly are because we neglect God’s speaking.*⁴⁸

He also said, in 1978:

Some have said that the Lord’s recovery is a one-man show, that there is only room for the ministry of Witness Lee, not for the ministry of anyone else. This is absolutely false. This is not my intention nor is it my practice. In the Lord’s recovery I do not like to see one brother ministering all the time. For example, during the summer training in 1964 and 1965 I invited a certain brother to share with me in my ministry. Eventually, he gave up the recovery, but we did not give him up. We have also invited other brothers to share in the ministry. Our intention is to have a good number of brothers ministering....

*We have to be clear that we are not following a man nor imitating anyone. However, we are ministering the same thing from different angles. By doing this the riches are manifest, yet we have a glorious oneness. This is the one ministry, which encompasses many ministries. We are all ministering Christ as life for the building up of the local churches.*⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Even so, the manner in which he expressed this was always very careful, and neither arrogant nor insistent. He never insisted that the saints accept this view and he did not attempt to impose it on anyone; he simply expressed the facts of our history and left it up to the saints’ discernment.

⁴⁸ *The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life*, p. 16. A marvelous example of numerous brothers ministering is that of the Plymouth Brethren. Among them J.N. Darby took the lead—we would generally regard him as “the minister of the age”—yet the Lord brought forth His riches from so many others as well. To name some of the more prominent ones, Kelly, Macintosh, Soltau, Bellet, and Grant were expositors of the Bible; Andrew Miller focused on church history; and Mueller and Chapman developed the Christian experience.

How good and healthy it would be to have such ones among us today! What a strengthening such brothers could be to the churches! Unfortunately, among the churches today the saints very largely bury their talents (cf. Matt. 25:18) by practicing a kind of spiritual communism that almost completely stifles individual initiative in the ministry.

Some have wrongly claimed that it was these various ministries that resulted in the division of the Plymouth Brethren. In fact, it was at least in part the effort to exclude the ministries and centralize authority that was the immediate cause of the divisions among them. See the author’s “Brief Lessons from Church History” regarding this point.

⁴⁹ *Truth Messages*, pp. 42, 44.

The blending brothers' practice is also in stark contrast to the teaching and practice of Watchman Nee, who states:

We dare to exercise our ministry faithfully, but having done so, we dare to leave the church open to other ministry. This should be the attitude of all God's workmen. We should never cherish the hope that only "our" teaching will be accepted by any church. There must be no thought of dominating a church by our personality or by our ministry; the field must be left clear for all God's servants. There is no need to build a wall of protection around "our" particular "flock" to secure them against the teachings of others. If we do so, we are working along popish lines. We can safely trust God to protect our ministry, and we must remember that for "the perfecting of the saints" the varied ministries of all God's faithful servants are necessary.⁵⁰

And as Nigel Tomes has correctly observed, in the New Testament

Rather than prohibition, we see inclusion. Peter's epistles were sent to Galatia and Asia (1 Pet. 1:1), which were located in Paul's area of labor. Moreover, Peter's First Epistle was sent the same year Paul wrote to Ephesus and Colossae (AD 64). That year the church in Ephesus received letters from both Paul and Peter, possibly even during the same month or week, yet Paul did not prohibit the churches under his ministry from receiving "other publications" such as Peter's. Indeed, rather than restriction, we see recommendation (2 Pet. 3:15-16). Witness Lee notes, "Peter commends Paul, and says that both of them teach the same things...although their style, terminology, utterance, aspects of their views, and presentations of their teachings differed one from another, [they] participated in the same unique ministry, the ministry of the New Testament" (2 Peter 3:16, fn 2). It is also notable that, although the apostle John was aware of heretical teachings, he did not restrict the saints solely to his own writings. John instead commended the saints to the anointing (1 John 2:22-27).⁵¹

In contrast to brother Lee, the blending brothers are seeking to prevent any brothers besides themselves from ministering among the churches, based upon the delusion that today their ministry is the unique New Testament ministry. Not only is such a bizarre thought dangerous and cult-like; to practice such a thing is to make us a sect according to their ministry, which is fully against what we have always stood for.

In describing the manner in which the enemy typically works to subvert Christian groups J.N. Darby makes a statement that deals especially with the matter of ministry; so much of it seems to match our situation a century and a half later:

⁵⁰ *The Normal Christian Church Life*, pp. 138, 140-141.

⁵¹ "The Bible, Our Only Standard," available at ConcernedBrothers.com

Orthodox truth [in such groups] in general is maintained. Any pretension to the possession of spiritual power is based on church position, not on any particular manifestation of power....God is alleged to have set there, in that institution, the seat of blessing, and this is also acknowledged truth, and the unity of the Body of Christ is thereon connected with the institution. But the sovereign operation of the Spirit of God is set aside, and that which acts outside the actually formed institution is condemned as denying the authority of God's institution and schismatical sin [i.e., as being divisive]. Thus the actual possessors of the power of the institution...really take the place of God. His power is vested in them as far as it acts on earth. Divine condemnation attaches to all who act independently of them. Direct dependence on God is unallowable. And thus whatever puts individual faith to the test (for going with a crowd under authority does not) is condemned as self-will and presumption. The system which so judges is alleged to maintain the unity of the church.

This may exist in different degrees, and in different circumstances; but it always attaches divine authority more or less to official position, and thus puts man in the place of God by attaching His name to man. It is not spiritual energy in man putting souls through Christ in direct relation with God, with the Father. There spiritual affections are happy and blessed. It is man eclipsing God, getting between Him and the soul. Not man revealing God, but the authority of God attached to man. Hence full love and grace will never be known. The Spirit of adoption and blessed assurance of salvation in the knowledge of Him will never be. It may survive such a system for a time, but it cannot be identified with such a system when matured. To be with God, while always rendering the soul submissive, must render it independent of man; that is, it asserts no rights, but when the need is, it says, "we ought to obey God rather than man."⁵²

So too, rather than participating in such a system among us, may God give the saints the grace and the boldness in Him to say to them, "We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). Surely this is our need today.

The Practical Application of the Blending Brothers' View of their Ministry

Today, the practical application of the blending brothers' view of their ministry is their ongoing effort to remove brother Titus Chu from the ministry. More will be said about this particular effort below; at this point we want to consider how it illustrates in general their attitude towards other ministries.

Just prior to the release of "Publication Work" the blending brothers sent brother Titus a letter that expressed their view of his work. They said they hoped that their letter would

⁵² "Narrative of the Facts," pp. 8-9.

“resolve some of the issues that have troubled the Lord’s recovery in these past years.” The letter was based on a time of fellowship regarding the matter of publications that had recently taken place, in which, it says, many co-workers had spoken about

*the frustration they feel over the many difficult situations today in the Lord’s recovery that have arisen because of different works, and especially because of different publications. This fellowship referred mainly to your work, Brother Titus, and to that of Brother Dong in Brazil.*⁵³

These two, brother Titus and brother Dong, are the only ones widely known in the recovery today to be publishing their own ministry books, and it is evident that the blending brothers cannot tolerate either of their ministries. In fact, there is simply no evidence to suggest that they could tolerate any other ministries in the Lord’s recovery. Rather, they cannot seem to bear it if the saints are helped through anyone other than themselves. This shows that not just in theory, but in actual practice they are making themselves a *de facto* clergy as a hierarchy among us, and one which already claims the authority to determine what ministry is acceptable for use in the churches.

In their letter the brothers go on to make a number of deeply troubling statements expressing their view that only they have the right to minister among the churches:

*The intrinsic problem is the existence and use of other speaking and publications in a way of rivalry to the general ministry in the Lord’s recovery since Brother Lee’s departure....*⁵⁴

*By taking [the way of all the co-workers blending together] we can speak with one blended voice in the furtherance of the ministry that the Lord has entrusted to us corporately...*⁵⁵

*While the blending brothers remained true to their pledge of only re-speaking Brother Lee’s ministry, you have increasingly published your own work. Does this not have every appearance of a rival ministry to the general ministry being carried out through the blending brothers for the benefit of all the churches?*⁵⁶

*We appeal to you to stop your publications in all languages.*⁵⁷

They also admonished brother Titus to

*Join yourself and those co-workers loyal to you to the blending brothers, with the continuation of your previous work left to the fellowship of their coordinated oversight.*⁵⁸

⁵³ Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, June 4, 2005, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

Based on these statements it is more than clear that not just brother Titus, but any brother who was not under the blending brothers' authority, yet ministers in a significant way among us or publishes his messages, will be charged with "teaching differently" and with "conducting a rival ministry" to "the general ministry" among the churches. This will especially be so if, instead of only "re-speaking Brother Lee's ministry," as the brothers say, the Lord gave such a one another portion in the New Testament ministry.⁵⁹ Then how can the Lord begin anything new among us? He could not, but would be forced instead to turn to another group of His seekers, sadly repeating the negative ending of so many of the Lord's moves and terminating the Lord's recovery among us.

Actually, the "intrinsic problem" among the churches is not "the existence and use of other speaking and publications," as the brothers claim, but their own inability to tolerate these things. They cannot accept that the saints would be helped by ones other than themselves. Rather, the blending brothers attempt to force all the churches to receive only their ministry, which is so childish, and then wonder why there is turmoil among us.

The New Testament Pattern

After reading the statements above from the blending brothers' letter it is good to be reminded that it is in reality the sovereign Lord Himself, and not any brother or group of brothers, who gives the gifts to His Body:

He Himself gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as shepherds and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).⁶⁰

The Bible gives us a practical example of the Lord's sending out in the case of Barnabas and Saul:

Now there were in Antioch, in the local church, prophets and teachers: Barnabas and Simeon, who was called Niger, and Lucius the Cyrenian, and Manaen, the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Set apart for Me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away (Acts 13:1-3).

Brother Lee says in his footnotes to these verses:

⁵⁹ This is true even though the brothers also state in their letter that "The raising up of such an oracle" as Witness Lee was would be "welcomed by all in the recovery" (p. 6). Consider the example of the Pharisees, who were convinced that they were the guardians of God's truth and that anything the Lord wanted to do would have to be within the system of which they were the leaders. Yet because the Lord came in a way they did not expect they could not realize who He was, but instead strongly opposed Him and His ministry, and did so in large part to protect their own position.

⁶⁰ How great a contrast is this word to the statements above from the brothers' letter.

This was a great step taken by the Lord for the spread of the gospel of His kingdom to the Gentile world....It was initiated by five faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ, who gave the Head of the Body an opportunity through their ministering and fasting [not conferring with men and organizing], that He, as the Spirit, might set them apart to carry out His great commission to spread His kingdom for the establishing of His church in the Gentile world through the preaching of His gospel. This major step had nothing to do with the church in Jerusalem organizationally, and it was not under the authority and direction of Peter and the other eleven apostles in Jerusalem.... It was absolutely a move by the Spirit, in the Spirit, and with the Spirit through the coordination of the faithful and seeking members of the Body of Christ on the earth with the Head in the heavens.⁶¹

The blending brothers have spoken much in recent years of the New Jerusalem; we would remind them that the foundations of that city are not all of the same kind of stone, but of twelve different kinds (Rev. 21:14, 19-20). Therefore, to believe we can have the real building of this city among us by forcing everyone to be the same as we are is to deceive ourselves. In his classic book, *The Vision of God's Building*, brother Lee states:

The twelve foundations of the city are composed of twelve kinds of precious stones (Rev. 21:19-20). This signifies oneness in variety. Not one stone is the same: Peter is one color, and John is another. Altogether there are twelve colors seen in the Apostles—a real variety. Yet there is also oneness in this variety. The Peter and John of today never seem to be one, and this is the real problem. John does his work and Peter does his. There is a variety, but no oneness. So many gifted brothers today do not agree to be one. Even brothers who are supposed to be working together are not one. Each tries to convince the other to be the same as himself. Suppose that I am a stone of green jasper and you are a red sardis. The problem is that I will convince you to be green, and you will attempt to make me red. If I fail to convert you, then I have nothing to do with you. This is pitiful! Can we respect someone else whose ministry is totally different from ours? We must. We must hate narrow-mindedness and the urge to convince and convert others to be like ourselves. Never forget that Peter is Peter and John is John. The Lord...needs many different persons to express Himself; one individual Christian is not sufficient. It is a real mercy to be one of the stones and yet be different from others. There is no need to convince others to be the same as we are.⁶²

We say that we desire to build up the Body of Christ to consummate the New Jerusalem. However, if we can only have a one-fold ministry, then we can only have a one-fold blessing, and that is not a sufficient foundation upon which to build the New Jerusalem. Saints, if we are really for God's building to the extent that we claim we must be enlarged to accept all the ministries that build up the church.

⁶¹ *Recovery Version of the New Testament*, p. 533, emphasis added (Acts 13:2, fn 3; the bracketed portion is fn 1.)

⁶² *The Vision of God's Building*, p. 221, emphasis added.

Consider the pattern of the apostle Paul; how gracious he was! Even though it appears that when he visited James, Peter, and John in Jerusalem they did not have the same vision he had, he was nonetheless able to fellowship with them in a very good manner (Gal. 2:1-11). He did not condemn them for failing to see what he saw⁶³; neither did he forbid Peter from visiting Antioch or Corinth.

There is also the wonderful example of how he, as well as the saints raised up through him, treated Apollos. No doubt Apollos did not see what Paul did, yet at the start of Apollos' ministry we are told:

When he intended to pass through into Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he arrived there, he helped much through grace those who had believed....

Were the brothers wrong to "tolerate" Apollos' ministry in this way? No, for neither did the apostle Paul make any effort to exclude him,⁶⁴ even though he clearly did not serve with Paul or under the apostle's authority (1 Cor. 16:12). Rather, Paul was so gracious toward Apollos. When he learned that there was indeed a deficiency in Apollos' ministry (Acts 19:1-7), he made up the lack without any condemnation of this other servant of the Lord. He did not insist that Apollos had to see his vision, nor did he condemn him to the saints in Corinth or seek to purge him from the ministry, even though it appears that some saints considered Apollos' ministry to be in rivalry with Paul's. Rather, Paul strongly urged him to return to Corinth (1 Cor. 16:12), and even toward the end of his ministry

⁶³ We underestimate how crucial this seemingly small point was for the carrying out of God's New Testament economy. Suppose that Paul, instead of exercising grace towards these brothers, had condemned them, saying, "You see nothing of God's New Testament economy; I see so much more than you do!" Could Peter and John ever have received the benefit of Paul's ministry? And if not, would the Lord still have been able to work with them to bring them into the maturity of their vision as—in His own time—He eventually did, so that they could go on to fulfill their own crucial portion of the New Testament ministry? He knows.

It is interesting to note not only that Peter at the end of his life commended Paul's writings (2 Pet. 3:15-16), but also that the apostle John picked up Paul's burden to labor with the church in Ephesus as well as the other churches in Asia (Rev. 1:4; cf. 1 Tim. 1:3 and 2 Tim. 1:15). Both of these points are very sweet and strongly indicate that these brothers did eventually receive the benefit of Paul's ministry.

Paul's labor under the cross issued in a sweet coordination with these two notable servants of the Lord who were very different from him in every way, including the vision they had received. May we all learn from our brother, and from this example, the reality of the ministering life. This example very much shows the importance of exercising the humanity of Christ in our serving of the Lord for the carrying out of His New Testament economy.

⁶⁴ In contrast, brother Benson, in speaking of Apollos in the same message referred to above, gives an insight into just how exclusive the blending brothers' attitude is toward other ministries:

The establishing and building up of the churches in Asia were accomplished through the general ministry. However, different teachings, such as those of Apollos, gradually came into the church in Ephesus (The Ministry magazine, June 2005, p. 91).

Then later in the same message he states that "Surely we all love the Lord's recovery. If so, we will never tolerate different ministries (p. 94)." If this attitude had prevailed in the first century Apollos' ministry would not have been "tolerated." How great a contrast to the apostolic pattern!

still assisted Apollos in the carrying out of his ministry while he himself was in prison by telling his co-worker:

Zenas the lawyer and Apollos send forward diligently that nothing may be lacking to them (Titus 3:13).

In these examples we see the apostle's largeness of heart as a pattern to us. If there were problems, as when Peter came to Antioch (Gal. 2:11-21), he dealt with them in a very specific and direct manner; he did not attempt to purge another servant of the Lord from the ministry.

From Paul's example we must learn the lessons of not trying to force others to see what we feel we see, of not making issues out of what we see, and of not claiming that if others do not see what we see they cannot participate in the ministry. If we are truly humble before God and realize our own need for His mercy these things will come quite easily. Conversely, to behave otherwise indicates a condition of spiritual pride, issuing in spiritual blindness.

The Importance of "Publication Work"

Some have sought to downplay the significance of "Publication Work" by indicating that it only applies to the co-workers who put out this statement themselves, and thus does not restrict other saints from publishing. A Faithful Word.com includes several such statements in the responses to Nigel Tome's criticism of the document:

I am certain that among the co-workers who meet regularly to fellowship concerning the Lord's recovery on the earth there is no thought that their statement is anything more than a declaration that we desire to be restricted in one publication in the ministry.⁶⁵

I certainly respect your right to differ. But many of us wish to exercise the equal right, the higher right I would say, to be restricted in one publication in the ministry in the Lord's recovery.⁶⁶

According to my realization, the proposed statement regarding the publication work in the Lord's recovery is a reaffirmation of the desire and intention of the coworkers in the Lord's recovery to be restricted in one publication work....⁶⁷

⁶⁵ "Response from Gary Kaiser to Nigel Tomes," on A Faithful Word.com.

⁶⁶ Kerry Robichaux, responding to Nigel Tomes on A Faithful Word.com.

⁶⁷ "Response from Kerry Robichaux to Nigel Tomes," on A Faithful Word.com. Actually, as senior co-workers all of these brothers must have known that the letter to brother Titus had already been sent admonishing him to "stop his publications in all languages." How then could they honestly claim or even imply that in "Publication Work" the brothers only sought to restrict their own publications? This makes no sense whatsoever.

To the dear brothers who made these comments, and to all the saints who have a similar concept about “Publication Work,” the author would reply, have you even read it? Do you know what is actually in this document? It states clearly:

*At times there may be writings among us that could be considered for publication as part of the one publication among us.... Those who wish to write in this way should bring their proposals to the blended co-workers as well as to Living Stream Ministry and Taiwan Gospel Book Room and have their proposals checked to see whether they should be published or not.*⁶⁸

*All the saints and all the churches everywhere⁶⁹ should similarly be restricted in one publication in the Lord’s recovery.*⁷⁰

The whole point of this document, as stated above, is to require that all the saints who desire to publish something for the Lord have their writings approved by the blending brothers. How can anyone claim otherwise after reading these excerpts from it?

Moreover if “Publication Work” really is only related to the blending brothers’ own desire to be “restricted in one publication,” then, as others have pointed out, we should expect that other workers would be free to reject both that document and the “one publication” theory without “retribution or stigmatism.” This, however, has not been the case. Rather, those who have spoken out against this policy have been vilified by the blending brothers in conference messages, through the internet, and in other ways.⁷¹ Surely it is generally very healthy for ones who desire to publish something for the benefit of the saints and the churches to have others look over their writings, and to the

⁶⁸ “Publication Work,” pp. 6-7, emphasis added.

⁶⁹ Not merely all the co-workers but “All the saints and all the churches everywhere.”

⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 8, emphasis added.

⁷¹ For example, the open letter from the Southern California co-workers of September 27, 2005 was written in response to some of the early replies to “Publication Work.” In it these brothers stated:

The writings of the dissenting ones are surely a direct attack on Brother Lee’s ministry and his Living Stream Ministry office....These writings are also an attack on the blended co-workers in the Lord’s recovery and their service as well as the ministry of the age....

Because these writings are works of darkness that spread spiritual death, we are burdened to issue this word of warning in love, cautioning those in the Lord’s recovery not to touch “what is unclean” (in this case, the dissenting writings)....The fact that these writings convey spiritual death proves that they are not worthy of the Lord’s recovery and should be rejected by all the co-workers, elders, and faithful saints....

Anyone who reads these negative writings with genuine spiritual discernment will realize that they sow discord among the believers and exhibit ignorance of and disregard for the organic Body of Christ. Those who are propagating these writings, being in darkness, are ignorant of the Body and are causing damage to the Body. We surely need to build up the wall to protect the church in these days from the destroyers of God’s building. We are burdened to pass on the help that Brother Lee gave the saints to stay away from anyone or anything that would cause them to suffer spiritual death and to lose their fresh love for the Lord and their pure enjoyment of Christ brought to them through the ministry of the age.

author's knowledge this is the common practice among us. This checking, however, should normally be voluntary and based on life relationships, rather than compelled.

In contrast, it is completely unhealthy for anyone to require that another have his writings checked, and in particular to require that another brother check those writings with himself before publishing them. In doing exactly this, the blending brothers have set themselves up as arbiters of what may be published for use among the churches. This is to operate in exactly the same principle as the Cardinals of the Roman church, substituting their own authority for that of the Holy Spirit.⁷²

⁷² In fact, comparing "Publication Work" with what Canon law states about publications within the Roman church shows how similar the two statements are in their logic:

Can. 823 §1 In order to safeguard the integrity of faith and morals, pastors of the Church have the duty and the right to ensure that in writings or in the use of the means of social communication [e.g., the internet] there should be no ill effect on the faith and morals of Christ's faithful. They also have the duty and the right to demand that where writings of the faithful touch upon matters of faith and morals, these be submitted to their judgement. Moreover, they have the duty and the right to condemn writings which harm true faith or good morals.

The Roman church's catechism states:

The Church, given teaching authority by Christ and as the conduit for fullness of Truth on this earth, has the obligation to preserve Her sheep from deviations from the Truth and to guarantee them the "objective possibility of professing the true faith without error" (Catechism, No. 890).

It is ironic, given how much we would all condemn Catholicism, to compare these statements with that part of the Southern California co-workers' letter of September 27, 2005 which encourages the elders to read "Publication Work" to the saints in their localities:

The elders told the saints that by their reading the booklet to them, they were affirming the speaking of the blended co-workers and the excerpts from Brother Lee's ministry and were making them their own speaking. Furthermore, as shepherds of God's flock, they assured the saints of their intent to render the proper care to the church with regard to publications and to guard the flock from things that would cause damage (Online document).

One commentator (<http://www.fisheaters.com/imprimatur.html>), after quoting the statement from the Catechism above, goes on to explain the Roman church's approval policy for publications:

Because of this, the Bishops will look at books published by Catholics on Catholic matters in their dioceses, giving them their "okay" if nothing therein is found to be contrary to the Faith (relevant Canon Law: "Title IV: The Means of Social Communication," ¶ 822-832)

The procedure works like this: when a Catholic writes a book on faith, morals, theology, liturgy, books on prayer, editions of Sacred Scripture, etc., he will submit his manuscript to his diocese's Censor. If the Censor finds no problem with it, he will give it his stamp, which reads "Nihil Obstat," or "nothing stands in the way." He then sends it to the Bishop for his review. If the Bishop finds nothing objectionable, he gives the book his "Imprimatur" which means, "let it be printed."

Is “Publication Work” a Test of Faith?

Another way that some have attempted to minimize the importance of “Publication Work” is to say that it has not been made a test of faith, and therefore the saints and the churches are free to reject it if they wish and still be included in the fellowship. The document itself states in conclusion:

Finally, all the churches and saints everywhere must understand that the matter of one publication is not a matter of the common faith but something related to the one ministry in the Lord’s recovery.... The one publication should not become the basis of our accepting or rejecting any persons in the communion of faith or in the fellowship of the churches; it should not be insisted on as an item of the faith. If any are not inclined to be restricted in one publication, these ones are still our brothers; they are still in the genuine local churches. We would like to conclude with these words from our Brother Lee and wish to recommend that the full context of his words be read from Elders’ Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord’s Move, pp. 74-75:

Whether or not a certain church takes the ministry does not decide whether that church is a genuine local church. The title of this message does not say “no uncertain sounding of the trumpet in the Lord’s recovery” but “in the Lord’s ministry.” I am not talking about something in the Lord’s recovery, but I am talking about the ministry...

If this is really the case, however, why is the document entitled “Publication Work in the Lord’s Recovery” rather than “Publication Work in the Lord’s Ministry?” Brother Lee specifically says that his words refer to “the Lord’s ministry” and not “the Lord’s recovery,” which is the opposite of what the blending brothers have done. This is not a small point; rather, it says a great deal about the real nature of this document. Also, if this is really the case, why then was “Publication Work” even presented to all the saints? Brother Lee never did this; he only spoke such a word to the co-workers and elders.⁷³

Moreover, even if it really were not a test of faith, the wording of the document, and similar comments made by the blending brothers in support of it, cannot help but prejudice the saints against those saints and churches who do not accept the “one publication” theory:

If any are not inclined to be restricted in one publication, these ones are still our brothers; they are still in the genuine local churches.⁷⁴

⁷³ For the blending brothers to involve all the saints in this matter was, in and of itself, completely inappropriate, divisive, and destructive, especially since there is no consensus regarding the “one publication” theory; what result could have been expected from such an action except more confusion and strife among the churches? However, the release of “Publication Work” was only the culmination of a campaign that had already been underway for some time. See “The One Publication Campaign,” available at ConcernedBrothers.com

⁷⁴ “Publication Work,” p. 9.

Condescending language and concepts such as this will surely create divisions between the saints and churches that are willing to be “restricted” and those that are not.

In fact, the opening statement of “Publication Work” shows just how closely linked the “one publication” theory is to the blending brothers’ view of our oneness:

...The one publication is not only a testimony of our oneness in the Body but also a safeguard for the unique ministry in the Lord’s recovery. Without the one publication there is no way to preserve the integrity of the Lord’s ministry among us,⁷⁵ which is crucial to the practical oneness among the local churches.⁷⁶

This statement strongly indicates that anyone who does not accept the “one publication” theory will be regarded as an enemy of the oneness of the churches.

This brings us to the final and more important point in this regard: the manner in which the “one publication” theory has been applied, specifically in the case of brother Titus Chu and the churches raised up through him, shows that the blending brothers have indeed made it a *de facto* test of fellowship. It is more than evident that this policy is directly aimed at this brother. His ministry and publications are very much appreciated by a number of saints and churches throughout the world and especially here in the Midwest, but nonetheless the blending brothers are seeking to exclude him and his ministry.

The tone of “Publication Work” itself, the speaking from the platform regarding it, and the rigor with which the blending brothers have pursued this matter all make it clear that those who do not submit to the “one publication” policy will not be fully accepted among us. Rather, it clearly is a test of fellowship, no different in principle from the test of circumcision the Judiazers of the New Testament sought to impose on the Gentiles. No real servant of the Lord could ever submit to such a demand. As Paul stated to the Galatians:

To them we yielded with the subjection demanded not even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. (2:5).

If you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing (5:2).

May the Lord grant the saints, and especially the elders of the churches, the clarity and the boldness to fully repudiate this shameful document.

⁷⁵ According to this statement, the Lord cannot protect His ministry, but needs some others to do it on His behalf. This is often the excuse used by those who desire to become the clergy of a given Christian group.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 3. Here the brothers state very directly that they regard their “one publication” theory as a crucial factor of our oneness. However, in his booklet “Satan’s Strategy Against the Church,” brother Lee identifies the three stages of the enemy’s work: to bring in substitutes for Christ, then to establish the clergy-laity system, and finally to divide the church. This shows that rather than being a factor of unity, anything in the principle of a clergy-laity system is a strong factor of division.

Has “One Publication” Been Our Practice?

While “Publication Work” does not attempt to justify the “one publication” theory from the Scriptures, the blending brothers strongly assert both within “Publication Work” and elsewhere that their practice of one publication is what Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, as well as the Lord’s recovery as a whole, practiced from the beginning.⁷⁷

There is no question that, as mentioned above, we have generally had a single publishing work among us throughout our history. Again, however, the real basis for this is the fact that while Watchman Nee and Witness Lee were ministering we all desired to be in their riches. This is entirely different from what the blending brothers now assert.

No one has produced any statements by Watchman Nee that deal with this matter, and apparently brother Lee directly addressed it on only a single occasion in his ministry, namely the elders’ training in Anaheim in February of 1986.⁷⁸

On this occasion our brother did speak of “one publication,” and even of “being restricted in one publication.” In considering what our brother said, however, we should first of all state again that, unlike the blending brothers, *brother Lee never addressed these comments to the churches or to the saints in general.* To the contrary, he spoke them only to his personal co-workers.

Secondly, even among this group, *there simply never was a formal policy that brothers needed to have their publications reviewed before putting them out.* If there had been such a policy, the brothers could simply have reminded us of its existence; instead, they had to put out an entirely new statement. In other words, the recovery has been in existence among us since the 1920’s; if it is true that we have always had a “one publication” policy, why was the first direct statement regarding it released in 2005?

Instead, as the basis for their theory the brothers use this quotation from brother Lee, given during that 1986 elders’ training:

When we were on mainland China, only Brother Nee had a publication, and the Gospel Room belonged solely and uniquely to him. He asked me to help in the publication work....I never published anything by myself. I always mailed my manuscript to the Gospel Room, which was under Brother Nee and his helper. It

⁷⁷ For example, in introducing “Publication Work” to the saints, brother Ron Kangas stated:

The statement is mainly our declaration that we agree with and are one with...Brother Lee, with respect to the one publication work. We are not saying anything new or different.... To us it is normal as Brother Lee’s co-workers, to speak on his behalf and to echo his word” (The Ministry magazine, July/Aug. 2005, p. 281).

⁷⁸ The fact that the blending brothers have made so great an issue out of a matter that our brothers so rarely addressed by itself calls into question their claim that they are only following our brothers. Because of their stress on their “one publication” theory, it is easy to lose site of the simple fact that brother Lee only addressed this issue at a single point in his ministry.

was up to their discernment whether my manuscript should be published or not. I liked to have my writings checked as to whether there might be some inaccuracy in the truth. It is not a small matter to write a book that expounds the kingdom of the heavens. I liked my material to pass through their checking. This helped and protected me....Everything was published through Brother Nee's Gospel Room because the publication is really the trumpeting. The sounding of our trumpet is not just in the verbal message but more in the publication.⁷⁹

Clearly, our brother did want his co-workers to check their writings with him or his helpers before publishing them. As mentioned above, this kind of checking surely is healthy and normal; it is in fact abnormal to avoid such a checking. Yet even here, when speaking to his close co-workers, our brother did not make it a requirement but just gave his own example.

And what was that example? That he himself wanted his publications to be checked by his senior co-worker, based on his life relationship with him and the personal esteem he had for that brother. He did not say, "Watchman Nee required that I check my writings with him," but rather that it was what he himself wanted to do. This is vastly different from the "one publication" policy the brothers are attempting to enforce today, i.e., making it a formal requirement for all the other saints to have their writings checked with themselves.

Witness Lee submitted his writings to Watchman Nee for his review because that brother was his senior co-worker. In the same way, brother Lee felt it was appropriate for the co-workers who served under him to check their writings with him. Thus, by using this statement as the basis for their "one publication" theory, the blending brothers are really only betraying the Nicolaitan view they have of their ministry; i.e., even though the saints in general are not co-workers, they still want them to get the blending brothers' approval for their writings because they really feel the saints are under them. Surely to enact such a policy would be to "conquer the laity."⁸⁰

Again we would ask, *where is the statement from either brother Nee or brother Lee that restricts all the saints from publishing?* This is what the blending brothers are seeking to promote, and there is simply no basis for it either in our history or in the ministry of our brothers. Rather, it is clearly and obviously different from our past practice.

In fact, in the same elders' training whose messages are used as the basis for "Publication Work" our brother strongly reaffirmed his desire to see that others would publish—provided that they had that portion from the Lord:

Some are wasting their time by writing and publishing their own material. This is not their portion. I would like to see that many brothers had this portion with the riches of truth. This would be marvelous and wonderful, but this is our problem today.⁸¹

⁷⁹ *Elders' Training*, Book 8, pp. 161-162.

⁸⁰ See the *Recovery Version of the New Testament*, p. 1242 (Rev. 2:6, fn 1).

⁸¹ *Elders' Training*, Book 8, p. 164, emphasis added.

*There are no new points of life or light in what [some brothers] publish. I have been observing this situation among us for years. I would like to see if some young brothers among us would be raised up by the Lord to speak something. If I could see this, I would praise the Lord.*⁸²

These statements alone *fully repudiate the interpretation of brother Lee's remarks found in "Publication Work."* In them our brother makes the situation clear: he wanted to see many others "writing and publishing," but lamented the fact that no one else seemed to have this portion.⁸³

Actually, reading the messages from this training shows that our brother's real concern was not to keep others from publishing at all, but that he felt some were reworking his messages and publishing them under their own name. Over and over again he makes it clear that this was what he really wanted to stop:

The points in our publications are full of life and light, but these brothers would not present them as they are. I could not understand why they have to change the messages we publish to present something in their own style and in their own way. There are no new points of life or light in what they publish. It breaks my heart to see some practicing to have another ministry, using the material of the ministry.

I hate to see that some of the brothers would try to publish something by copying my points mixed with their "spices" and their "color."

It bothers me that some brothers among us still put out publications. According to my truthful observation there is no new light or life supply there....There is nearly no item of life or light that has not been covered in our publications. Based upon this fact,⁸⁴ what is the need for these brothers to put out their publications?

I hope that some of you brothers would do much development and expounding of all the messages I give.⁸⁵ Do not merely speak some points, adding your own "color" and "spices." This changes the taste. It damages my messages. You must receive the ability to expound all these things. I am not narrow. I would like to see that all of you will be great servants used by God. How wonderful that would be. But I do not like to see that some would merely repeat what I have said, pretending that it is their work with their spices and color.⁸⁶

⁸² Ibid, p. 124, emphasis added.

⁸³ Any brother who truly is a servant of the Lord will, like Moses, earnestly desire that many others besides himself be raised up speak for the Lord (Num. 11:24-29).

⁸⁴ Not based upon "one publication," but on the fact that the brothers had no new light or life supply.

⁸⁵ Brother Lee's hope was that we would develop and expound what he said, not merely repeat it. This requires a genuine ministry.

⁸⁶ *Elders' Training*, Book 8, pp. 124-125, 162-164.

All of these quotes restricting the publication work relate to re-using brother Lee's materials, not to brothers publishing something that was genuinely new and helpful.

Finally, there is the fact that brother Lee himself called the writer's conference in May of 1980. How can this fact be reconciled with the theory that he always wanted only "one publication" among us? It is important to note that, even after speaking of "being restricted in one publication," *brother Lee did not repudiate the writers' conference itself* and the intention of that conference to encourage some brothers to write and to publish. He only said that the result was not what he had hoped for. This was no doubt related to "our problem today," as quoted above, i.e., of no one having this portion. He stated:

*Our sounding must be one, so we must be restricted in one publication.
My intention in calling a writers' conference was to encourage you to write something, but not in the way it came out.*

This statement again strongly rebuts the "one publication" theory.

The Genuine Oneness

Much of the current turmoil stems from a desire we all have in the recovery to keep the genuine and practical oneness of the Body of Christ. This is a crucial and basic aspect of our testimony, and for many of us it was why we took this way in the first place.

The genuine oneness, however, cannot be forced. Concerning the Lord's praying for the oneness of the believers the night before He died, brother Lee makes a telling statement:

In John 17 the Lord deals with the matter of oneness not by teaching His disciples about it, but by praying regarding it. This prayer reveals that oneness can be preserved and realized only in life.⁸⁷

Today at the Living Stream Ministry conferences and trainings there is no end to teaching the saints about the matter of the oneness. Yet this teaching cannot actually produce the oneness; according to the Lord's prayer in John 17, the genuine, organic oneness is the issue of the believers' experience of the Father's name, the holy Word, and the divine glory. May the Lord grant all of His saints more and deeper experiences of each of these precious items.

Moreover, as we all know, according to Ephesians 4:3 the oneness of the Spirit is to be "kept," not made. That is to say, we cannot create the factors of our oneness, such as the teaching we stress, our practices, or what ministries we receive and don't receive. To create a oneness out of any such factors—as so many Christian groups have done before us—will immediately make us a sect, since it will be a oneness according to something other than the common faith. On this point we must absolutely insist, that our oneness must be in common with all our brothers and sisters in Christ. As the apostle Paul wrote:

⁸⁷ *The Genuine Ground of Oneness*, p. 27.

I beseech you therefore, I, the prisoner in the Lord, to walk worthily of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love, being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace: One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph. 4:1-6).

These items alone are the factors of the genuine oneness.

The Practical Result of “Publication Work”: A Sectarian Oneness

In contrast, by making such a great issue of their “one publication” theory and attempting to monopolize the ministry in the Lord’s recovery, the blending brothers are indeed seeking, whether intentionally or not, to make us a sect according to their ministry. How can we say otherwise if, in practice, that is the only ministry we are allowed to receive? Regardless of what we call it, it is still a sect. Watchman Nee states:

What havoc has been wrought in the Church because so many of her ministers have sought to bring the churches under their ministry, rather than by their ministry serve the churches. As soon as the churches are brought under any ministry, they cease to be local and become sectarian....

The worker to whom God has given fresh light upon His truth should encourage all who receive that truth to swell the ranks of the local church, not to range themselves around him. Otherwise, the churches will be made to serve the ministry, not the ministry the churches, and the “churches” established will be ministerial “churches,” not local ones. The sphere of a church is not the sphere of any ministry, but the sphere of the locality. Wherever ministry is made the occasion for the forming of a church, there you have the beginning of a new denomination.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ *The Normal Christian Church Life*, pp. 138-139. Closely related to this matter is that of becoming a sect according to a particular teaching. Even the best teachings, including the “high-peak” doctrines, can make us a sect if we overly stress them. In the same book Watchman Nee warns us of this very thing:

The whole thought [of the Greek word for “heresies” in Galatians 5:20; “sects” in the Rcv] is not of the difference between truth and error, but of division based upon doctrine. My teaching may be right or it may be wrong, but if I make it a cause of division, then I am guilty of the “heresy” spoken of here.... God forbids any division on doctrinal grounds.... If a group of believers split off from a local church in their zeal for certain teaching according to the Word of God, the new “church” they establish may have more scriptural teaching, but it could never be a scriptural church.

If we wish to maintain a scriptural position, then we must see to it that the churches we found in various places only represent localities, not doctrines. If our “church” is not separated from other children of God on the ground of locality alone, but stands for the propagation of some particular doctrine, then we are decidedly a sect, however true to the Word of God our teaching may be... (Ibid, pp. 113-114).

And in another statement that seems almost prophetic in light of today's situation, he says:

Whenever a special leader, or a specific doctrine, or some experience, or creed, or organization, becomes a center for drawing together the believers of different places, then because the center of such a church federation is other than Christ, it follows that its sphere will be other than local. And whenever the divinely-appointed sphere of locality is displaced by a sphere of human invention, there the divine approval cannot rest. The believers within such a sphere may truly love the Lord, but they have another center apart from Him, and it is only natural that the second center becomes the controlling one.... The center always determines the sphere, and the second center creates a sphere which divides those who attach themselves to it from those who do not.

Anything that becomes a center to unite believers of different places will create a sphere which includes all believers who attach themselves to that center and excludes all who do not. This dividing line will destroy the God-appointed boundary of locality, and consequently destroy the very nature of the churches of God.... There are no other churches in Scripture but local churches!⁸⁹

A Concluding Word to the Blending Brothers

According to an open letter sent out by the co-workers in Southern California last September, the blending brothers released "Publication Work" because of

the growing confusion, discord, and dissension caused by the promotion and proliferation of different ministries and publications.⁹⁰

In reality it is you, the blending brothers, who are causing these things among us, through your insistence on matters which by your own admission are not a part of our common faith. Why must you make issues out of matters such as "one publication"? Why must you insist that the churches can only receive your ministry? Why must you insist on putting others out of the Lord's work? We beg you, for the sake of the Lord's testimony and of our oneness, to desist from your ruinous course.

There is no precedent in the New Testament for authority among the churches being given to a group such as yourselves, but there are many examples of it in the negative aspect of the history of the church; this proves that it is man's solution to problems in the church, not God's. While I have spoken very negatively of you as a group, I know that many of you brothers are sincerely concerned for the welfare of the churches. Brothers, the worst thing we could do to protect the churches would be to limit the Spirit's freedom among us by replacing the headship of Christ with your own.

⁸⁹ *The Normal Christian Church Life*, pp. 92-93.

⁹⁰ Open letter from the Southern California co-workers of September 27, 2005; online document.

In recent years you have been very burdened to remind all the saints that the local churches are not the goal of God's economy but rather the procedure God takes for reaching the goal of the building up of the Body of Christ. In his very last message to us brother Lee told us how to help the churches into the fellowship of the Body of Christ:

In imitating the apostle to bring the local churches into the fellowship of the Body of Christ, we must learn not to despise or judge others in their doctrines or practices according to doctrinal concepts, religious practices, and anything that is unrelated to our basic faith. Concerning this matter, our co-workers and serving ones in all the places must be willing to learn, and all the brothers and sisters must have clear insight.

“Our basic faith” refers to the most important and fundamental truths. These are the truths concerning Christ's person and work and those related to our salvation. All other matters, such as eating and the keeping of days mentioned in Romans 14, are secondary truths, not the basic faith.... We should not despise or judge others according to doctrinal concepts and religious practices, including the doctrinal concepts and practices we have in the Lord's recovery. Nor should we despise or judge others according to anything that is not related to our basic faith.⁹¹

Are you brothers following brother Lee in this regard, which was his “final word” to us? To the contrary, is not your insistence on secondary matters—“including the doctrinal concepts and practices we have in the Lord's recovery,” as our brother says—doing so much to destroy the harmony and fellowship among the churches?

The fact that we are dealing so much in these days with issues such as “one publication,” who is in or not in “the seven feasts,” and what materials the churches are in, only proves that we have lost sight of the real treasure we have been given. As brother Lee stated:

The outward things are not worth our attention. We need to pay attention to the treasure within. When we see the treasure within, we will not be divided. As long as we are divided, we no longer see the treasure. Hence, the reality of the Body of Christ is the consummated Triune God within us, who is the pneumatic Christ, the resurrection. May the Lord have mercy on us to turn us from the outward things to the reality.⁹²

It is by focusing on the Triune God mingling Himself with His believers for the building up of the Body of Christ that we shall be one. Focusing on and making issues out of these minor things, as you are doing, can only result in division.

⁹¹ *The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life*, pp. 67-68; see also Romans 14:3, 15:7-9, 25-33. This book is from the Chinese-speaking conference in February of 1997.

⁹² *The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ*, p. 44.

In closing this section it is only appropriate to remind you all again of a statement made by a leading one among you in the foreword to brother Lee's book, *The Speciality, Generality, and Practicality of the Church Life*. In doing so we implore you, if you really desire to follow brother Lee as he followed the Lord, to pay the price to return to our first principles:

When the Body of Christ is divided, it loses everything; yet it has been divided again and again, mainly due to the over-emphasis of certain beliefs other than those comprising the faith. Beliefs other than those comprising the faith have much disagreement and disputation. These beliefs may even become winds of teaching (Eph. 4:14) blowing us away from the oneness of the faith (Eph. 4:13).

Concerning the faith we must be very specific and particular (Jude 3; 1 Tim. 6:12); however, concerning the other things we must follow Paul's example and be general, never insisting that others believe as we do (Rom. 14:1-8). To possess such a spirit of generality is the generality of the church life. If we are special and insist on anything other than the common faith, the oneness will surely be damaged, and divisions will occur....

Those of us who were in the meetings when these messages were released can never forget their timeliness and impact. The vision of all these points was deeply wrought into us. As the Lord is continuing to spread His recovery throughout the whole earth, this book, we believe, will fulfill a vital need and will be of immense practical help to all the local churches. We are grateful that this word can be made available to all the Lord's children in every place at this time. We pray that He will grant such a reality in all the local churches.⁹³

⁹³ *The Speciality, Generality, and Practicality of the Church Life*, pp. 5-6. The statement was made by Benson Phillips.

CONCERNING BROTHER TITUS CHU

The Reason for the Attacks upon our Brother

The current turmoil among the churches stems from the efforts of the blending brothers to exclude brother Titus Chu, and the churches raised up through him, from the fellowship in the Lord's recovery. They are doing this because, among all the senior co-workers, he is the only one who is clearly standing against the efforts to institutionalize the Lord's recovery and establish a hierarchy among us. We surely thank God for our brother's faithful stand in this regard, at much cost to himself and in the face of great opposition.

Many saints who are not really familiar with the situation, but only know what they hear through the blending brothers either directly or indirectly, feel it is obvious that brother Titus' ministry is causing problems. There is some truth in this statement; if he would just yield to the demands of these brothers the churches might well be peaceful—all the while not realizing the extent to which they had become a sect of Living Stream Ministry, since the point would have been gained that only the ministry of the blending brothers is accepted among the churches.

As stated at the beginning of this paper the real nature of the blending brothers' ministry is not evident so long as the saints and the churches are willing to come under their authority; instead, in such a situation everything may appear very pleasant and peaceful, as indeed it does in so much of the recovery today. When that authority is denied, however, as it is in much of the Midwest, their ministry is exposed as being Nicolaitan in character⁹⁴ and there is conflict.

The blending brothers have attempted to discredit our brother, but we would remind the saints that so many of the ones we appreciate who have gone before us, including our brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, have suffered this very thing when they resisted the religious establishment—some even to the point of their martyrdom. It is nothing new; J. N. Darby stated more than a century and a half ago:

I have remarked that it is the art and skill of some men to turn every conscientious man, every one who cannot or will not become an instrument, into a radical or a schismatic. But it is a sad state of things....With [those who rule in this way] it is only as in a famous Latin passage... "When they make a solitude around them, they call it peace." ⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Some would object to this statement on the grounds that the blending brothers are constantly encouraging the saints to function, such as by prophesying in the meetings. This, however, is only in appearance, not in reality. Yes, the saints are encouraged to function—but only according to the direction given by the blending brothers. (In that case, as far as the blending brothers are concerned, the more the better.) Individual initiative in the saints' function is almost completely stifled, and with it the real function of the members. While we are all members of one Body, we are nonetheless all connected directly to the Head (Eph. 4:15-16).

⁹⁵ "Narrative of the Facts," p. 22.

Is Brother Titus Teaching Differently?

The blending brothers have frequently accused brother Titus of “teaching differently,” but this is absolutely not the case. In the author’s own observation, brother Titus’ ministry is different from brother Lee’s—but only in its emphasis, not in its basic nature. While brother Lee’s ministry was very experiential, its hallmark was his unique ability to unfold the divine truth. On the other hand, the hallmark of brother Titus’ ministry, in the author’s feeling, is its emphasis on how the believers can practically enter into the experience of the Christian life and church life. The author spent many years under brother Lee’s ministry by personally attending his conferences and trainings and has also read very many of his books. He still finds, however, that brother Titus in his ministry frequently brings out very helpful points, especially concerning the Christian experience, that brother Lee did not cover. This is the evidence of a genuine ministry.

This difference in emphasis is absolutely normal and healthy; it indicates that, as the foundations of the New Jerusalem lay one on top of the other, so our brother is seeking to build upon the foundation laid by our brother Lee. It is also a test to the saints: did we touch the inward reality of brother Lee’s ministry, or only its outward appearance? If the former, then we will be able to receive the help from anyone who ministers that same reality. If the latter, however, we will only be able to receive what appears outwardly the same as brother Lee’s ministry and thus miss much of the Lord’s blessing.

To the author’s knowledge the blending brothers have never publicly enumerated what brother Titus’ “different teaching” really is, other than to indicate their disagreement with his handling of the young people’s work. However, in their first letter to him the brothers did specify some of the problems they have with his books.

These problems included objecting to the title and subject of one of his books:

Your writings tend to give your own version of certain truths in the Lord’s ministry. For example, Brother Lee wrote voluminously concerning the subject of the divine stream, yet you have published a book entitled The Reality of the Divine Stream. Do you not agree that the “reality” of the divine stream has already been more than adequately defined and revealed in Witness Lee’s writings?⁹⁶

This complaint is, quite frankly, silly; just consider the title of one of the messages in this year’s summer training: “The Reality of the Body of Christ.”

They go on to claim that some of his statements seemed to be warning saints against their ministry (“slandering your fellow workers”); to object to his thought that the Lord could raise up another minister of the age and that “the Lord’s recovery is in danger of becoming formal and routine,” and to claim that his view of the oneness and the one accord, as well as of the seven churches in Revelation 1- 3, is different from brother Lee’s. Whether true or not, these things should not be considered as “teaching differently” from God’s New Testament economy, but only as teaching differently from the blending brothers.

⁹⁶ Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, June 4, 2005, p. 6.

There is also another accusation that has often been made against our brother and which must be dealt with, namely, that he is drawing people away after himself. This is absolutely not true.⁹⁷ However, it is quite normal and healthy for those who are raised up through a brother to recognize their life relationship with him; it is in fact quite damaging to a Christian's spiritual life if he fails to honor the ones who have raised him up. Our brother has never sought a following for himself, but he has raised up others to follow the Lord, and we recognize and declare this fact.

The Need to Be General

Why do the blending brothers seek to sever our life relationship with this brother? Why do they feel that they must put such a one out of the fellowship? They may not feel his ministry is helpful, but they should not try to prevent others who do appreciate it from receiving and enjoying it. This is to be general for the sake of the real Body life.

Our dear brothers feel it is their responsibility to protect the Lord's recovery, but by trying to protect it in this way they are doing the most damage of all. Often they point out that one local church cannot represent the entire Body; why then do they seem to feel that they themselves are capable of doing so? In reality they cannot, and to believe or, even worse, to teach otherwise is absolutely in the principle of a romish, clergy-laity system.

It is for the entire Body to discern the value of brother Titus' ministry. Again, many churches and saints, especially here in the Midwest, appreciate our brother's ministry very much, and we would ask these dear brothers to respect that.

⁹⁷ Anyone who has been in a number of LSM conferences and heard the saints frequently extolling "this ministry," "the ministry of the age," etc., may rightly consider whether the blending brothers are the ones who are really guilty of doing this. (It cannot be said that this kind of praising of the speaker never takes place at brother Titus' conferences, but if so it seems much less pronounced.) The fact that the saints so often speak in this manner strongly indicates that they have in fact been gained by the blending brothers and their ministry, rather than pointed to Christ and the church. This, however, is not to be wondered at, since the blending brothers habitually commend their own ministry to the saints. They state in "Publication Work":

The ongoing ministry is carried out according to the fellowship of the blended co-workers....As has been apparent to all the saints everywhere, this labor produces the same ministry with the same taste as has been enjoyed in all the churches since Brother Nee's time (pp. 5-6).

And the official announcement of the international Chinese-speaking conference in Chicago in June of this year sent by "The Blending Co-workers in the Lord's Recovery" contained this remarkable statement:

It has been nine years since the Lord's servant Brother Witness Lee went to be with the Lord Whom he served all the years of his life. Yet the interpreted Holy Word continues to grow and spread throughout the earth through the all-inheriting and all-revealing ministry of the age. We firmly believe the Lord will gain His bride, consummate this age, and accomplish His eternal economy through this glorious ministry.

That the brothers must so often say such things about themselves is only another indication that in fact they have not been given what they claim to have been given. It is also another example of how they closely follow the pattern of the Roman Church, whose priests constantly affirm both to Catholics and to the world in general that they are the true successors to the apostles and Christ's unique representatives on the earth.

Brother Lee's Attitude towards Brother Titus

In their letter to brother Titus on June 27 of this year the blending brothers related several negative things they claim brother Lee had spoken about him in private fellowship. In May of 1986 he is reported to have said to “a few leading brothers in Taipei”:

The work of Titus Chu is not the work of the Lord's recovery at all because...his work is to put people into his own pocket.

In 1995 to “a group of co-workers in Southern California”:

What Titus has done is to build up a division.

In 1996 to “a group of co-workers from Taiwan”:

What kind of work does Titus Chu do? In the work in the United States he gives people a bad impression. The work he does is an individualistic work, without fellowship...If I were you, I would definitely not follow Titus Chu. You simply cannot follow him! For so many years I tried to help you many times, yet you are still following him. Only the blind would follow him!⁹⁸

The brothers go on to state in their letter:

As Brother Lee's co-workers and ones who view him as our spiritual father, we feel that we must follow his warnings about your work.⁹⁹

When the saints hear of comments such as these made by brother Lee, however, they should remember that they were often the issue of his fellowship with leading co-workers who have strongly opposed the work of brother Titus for many years. In his response to the blending brothers' letters to him brother Titus cites one of the main instances of this:

I am aware that many rumors and innuendoes have circulated concerning me for many years, with little or no factual basis. One of the strongest rumors was that some brothers (which may include some who are now considered as a blended brother) reported to Brother Lee that I had told some brothers I wished Brother Lee would die earlier so I could take over the work. Dear brothers, how ugly is this kind of report! Yet once these rumors were successfully put into Brother Lee, whatever I would do would become impure [in brother Lee's eyes].¹⁰⁰

Brother Titus did not seek to vindicate himself to brother Lee on this or other occasions, but this should not be taken to mean that the latter's comments, often based on the negative reports he received from others, were a fair evaluation of brother Titus' work.

⁹⁸ Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, June 27, 2006, p. 3.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Titus Chu to the 21 co-workers, July 22, 2006; online document.

Rather, it is an example of a brother serving the Lord under the cross and refusing to defend himself.¹⁰¹

In addition, to the author's understanding the last of the alleged comments cited above may relate to a specific instance that brother Titus has spoken of on several occasions; this illustrates how such comments could result from misunderstandings. Brother Lee had invited brother Titus to join him as he rested for about a week after one of his last trainings. Brother Titus considered this invitation very much before the Lord, but he knew it would cause brother Lee much suffering if he accepted it, due to the negative reaction a number of the other senior co-workers would have if he did. For brother Lee's sake, therefore, he declined that invitation, but brother Lee may have misunderstood his reasons for doing so and thus spoken of brother Titus in a negative way.

One example of how brother Titus actually stood with brother Lee in some very difficult times relates to the turmoil of 1988. In his letter to the blending brothers he states:

In the darkest days, I went to be with Brother Lee and spent around seven to ten days with him. Brother Minoru should still recall the difficult times when we two joined with Brother Lee to fast and pray for the Lord's testimony. At that time, Brother Lee declared publicly and privately that he was not able to meet in Anaheim for two years. Let me ask you brothers (who declare you are so close to Brother Lee), where were you at that time? Eventually it was I who invited Brother Lee to come to Cleveland to minister again.¹⁰²

Moreover, when brother Lee saw for himself brother Titus' work his view was quite positive. Over the Labor Day weekend of 1988, at a time when he was not attending the meetings of the church in Anaheim due to the trouble there, brother Lee came to Cleveland to give a conference.¹⁰³ Brother Titus goes on to state in his letter:

I still remember vividly Brother Lee's tears as he realized that the warm welcome he received by so many saints at the airport was spontaneous. It was in Cleveland again that Brother Lee began to release messages on the Body in Ephesians. That conference was so filled with the anointing of the Spirit that Brother Lee testified that "there is a flow in the Great Lakes area." It was based upon this word of Brother Lee that people began referring to this district as "the Great Lakes Area." Brother Lee's visit to Cleveland, Ohio, began the "restoration" of his ministry which continued in Boston and Atlanta.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ This is also the case with the tape-recorded conversation between brother Lee and brother Titus.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ The author was present at that conference, and was struck even then by the ease with which brother Titus and brother Lee were together. It appeared to the author that they were together in the same way that Timothy served with the apostle Paul, i.e., "as a child with a father" (Phil 2:22).

Perhaps the Lord also appreciated their relationship. In His sovereignty, in 1972 when brother Lee first heard of the death of Watchman Nee, his beloved senior co-worker, he was in the home of Titus Chu.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Moreover, according to brother Titus, at about this time (evidently after brother Lee's visit to Cleveland), brother Lee encouraged him to work in New England in the same way he had been working in the Midwest:

In 1988-9, Brother Lee formally challenged me to labor in the New England area. His word was, "produce there what you have produced in the Great Lakes area." I don't believe that Brother Lee was being "political" in saying this. Neither can I consider Brother Lee as a double-tongued person. Hence, I visited the Boston area several times and even asked Brother Silas Wu to provide an apartment to facilitate my labor there. I only regret I was unable to carry out Brother Lee's desire, due to a severe sickness of one of my family members.¹⁰⁵

Following the conference mentioned above a group of brothers who were then in a nine-month labor with brother Titus sent brother Lee a letter of appreciation, in which they described to him their weekly schedule in the labor. Our brother sent the following response, which is presented in its entirety. It is very important to note that this letter was sent not long after brother Lee made the first of the alleged negative comments quoted by the blending brothers above; this strongly indicates that even if brother Lee at some points did criticize brother Titus's work, the saints today should not take that as a basis for rejecting that work:

9 December 1988

To the Nine-Month-Labor Brothers and Sisters.

Dear brothers and sisters:

Thank you for your letter dated 20 October 1988. The surprising impression I received from you at the Labor Day Conference in Cleveland still remains with me. Now your letter reminds me of it and strengthens it. I am so happy and encouraged by your schedule of your spiritual pursuing. If the Lord's grace keeps you in this schedule for a few years, you will surely have a rich harvest in the divine truths and life, which will equip you and furnish you with His untraceable riches for your coming service in His New Testament economy. I do like to pray for you all that you may be the living witnesses for His recovery as the next generation. May the Lord so consummate it, and may you all pray for this. I treasure all your signatures, and I will keep them as a souvenir.

Your brother in Christ,

Witness Lee

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

How remarkably different is this letter both in word and in spirit from the correspondence of the blending brothers! At this time brother Lee was conducting his full-time training in Anaheim, in which he was typically giving several messages each week. Yet our brother made no accusation that Titus' labor was "in rivalry" with his own training; neither did he tell brother Titus that to be fully blessed he and those with him needed to drop that labor to become fully one with the ministry of the age. Rather, brother Lee hoped that the Lord's grace would keep those in that labor in their study schedule for a few years, and prayed that these saints would be "the living witnesses for His recovery as the next generation." How large was our brother's heart, and how fully focused on the Lord's interest rather than on his own position. Lord, restore this spirit to the recovery today!

In fact, concerning his long-term labors, according to brother Titus:

Brother Lee himself established my labor along these lines, which was firstly carried out in 1973-74 and then continued irregularly. Brother Lee personally called us and wrote to us with encouragement,¹⁰⁶ both privately and publicly. Even in 1995 he strongly encouraged me with words like, "Brother Titus, you should do this. This is your portion." Concerning this type of exercise, I feel I still have to be faithful to the Lord.¹⁰⁷

The Recent Campaign against Brother Titus

Those who are familiar with the situation know that the opposition to brother Titus did not begin recently, or even after the death of brother Lee. Rather, for many, many years some brothers centered around the Living Stream Ministry have strongly opposed our brother's ministry.¹⁰⁸ This has resulted not only in the ministry of our brother being questioned, but of the entire Midwest region being, to some extent at least, under a cloud of suspicion among the other churches.¹⁰⁹

It is outside the scope of this paper, and the competence of the author, to rehearse this entire history. Suffice it to say that these efforts have very much damaged and limited the ministry of a real servant of the Lord, and poisoned dear saints against him who might otherwise have greatly benefited from his ministry. Yet the Lord is aware of the situation and "will render to each according to his works" (Rom. 2:6).

¹⁰⁶ See the above letter.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ The author would provide a personal example of a small incident that took place almost 20 years ago. In 1987, while in the Full-Time Training in Taipei, he often served guard duty at the training center (Hall 3). On one such occasion, as he took over security at the main desk late at night, the brother who was going off duty passed along instructions, probably from the training office, that if brother Titus came to the hall he was not to be allowed entrance, and that these instructions were to be passed on to the next shift as well.

¹⁰⁹ As another example from the author's personal experience: some years ago he was taking hospitality with a number of brothers for one of the annual trainings in Anaheim. Another young brother was there from Southeast Asia. Eventually, that brother told the author that he had been considering coming to graduate school in Chicago, but someone in his locality—in Southeast Asia—had told him that the church in Chicago was "not so good." (Fortunately, he also said that after meeting a number of brothers from the church in Chicago during that training he had realized that that was not true, and he did attend school here.)

However, to correctly discern the current trouble it is important for the saints to understand the real attitude of the blending brothers towards brother Titus, and this can easily be seen from their more recent written statements and messages. This paper will cite just a few examples. It must be said, though, that it makes us very sorry to have to repeat even some of the ugly things that have been said about our brother, both for the sake of brother Titus and for the sake of the dear ones who have said these things.

Remarks by Brother “DT” in the Elders’ Training of April 2005

In a message given in the international elders’ training in April of 2005, one brother said:

To do a work within the work, to carry out another ministry within the one ministry, is a very serious matter. Suppose a brother decides to set up his own publishing house in order to send out his messages to the recovery and to develop his own ministry. This will cause trouble. This is like Saul setting up a monument for himself. This is serious. Please understand that this is simply an illustration and is not directed at anyone in particular.¹¹⁰

In fact, at a co-workers’ meeting just prior to this conference there had been a great deal of fellowship related to the publication works of brother Titus and brother Dong.¹¹¹ How then could the speaker claim that such a statement was “not directed at anyone in particular”? Actually, it is quite obvious that in this world-wide gathering of elders and leading ones the speaker was declaring that brother Titus, as well as brother Dong, was doing “a work within the work, to carry out another ministry within the one ministry” which was “a very serious matter”; to be a “Saul,” —who is a type of one serving God in the flesh for the building up of his own kingdom—and of “setting up a monument for himself.”

Comments on AFaithfulWord.com

The website *AFaithfulWord.com*, which is used to defend the work of the blending brothers and to which several of them have contributed, states in its “Introduction” that “Publication Work” was promulgated because:

¹¹⁰ *The Ministry* magazine, June 2005, p. 152.

¹¹¹ That co-workers meeting was held from April 4-7, 2005; the conference in which the above comment was made began just two days later, on April 9. According to the blending brother’s first letter to brother Titus, in that co-workers meeting there was

much heartfelt fellowship from the greater part of the co-workers, mostly related to the frustration they feel over the many difficult situations today in the Lord’s recovery that have arisen because of different works, and especially because of different publications. This fellowship referred mainly to your work, Brother Titus, and to that of Brother Dong in Brazil (A letter from twenty-one brothers to Titus Chu, June 4, 2005, p. 2).

The obviously disingenuous nature of the brother’s statement points out one important fact concerning the attacks on brother Titus in the blending brothers’ messages, i.e., they are often made by way of thinly-disguised innuendos. Those who serve the Lord should not engage in such things (cf. 2 Cor. 4:2a).

The co-workers in the Lord's recovery were considering how to face a...rising tide of different teachings that were troubling the saints and the churches.

Another article on the same website states:

In the seven and a half years since Brother Lee's passing, the co-workers have come together to pray and fellowship over eighty times, many of these times consisting of multiple meetings and many addressing particularly the problems caused by different teachings propagated through separate publication works.¹¹²

Here the blending brothers declare that brother Titus is spreading "different teachings."

Remarks by Brother Benson in the Winter Training of 2005

Often, as noted above, the attacks on brother Titus are made by way of innuendo, but in at least the last two semi-annual trainings the attacks have been more explicit. In a message entitled "Discerning the Destroyers of the Divine Building," brother Benson Phillips explicitly stated that he, and with him the blending brothers, consider brother Titus to be one of these destroyers, referring to him by his work rather than by name. This was in the reference to "a certain young peoples' gathering," i.e., the conference for the young people in Montreal that was starting the same day brother Benson made these remarks, and which was overseen by brother Titus' co-workers:

The destroyers of the divine building are those who blow the wind of divisive teachings by stressing things other than the central teaching concerning God's economy (Eph. 4:14; 1 Tim. 1:3-4). Teaching different things rather than the unique ministry of God's economy tears down God's building and annuls God's economy (vv. 3-4).¹¹³

...It is our responsibility to not tolerate different ministries in the church.

Even today this kind of situation exists in several places in the United States. This is regrettable. At a certain young peoples gathering, they have rock bands.¹¹⁴ Is that God's way? Is that not a different teaching? Other

¹¹² "An Application of and Deviation from the Pattern in Acts 15" on AFaithfulWord.com.

¹¹³ *The Ministry* magazine, February 2006, p. 285.

¹¹⁴ In the spoken message the reference was even more explicit, since brother Benson pointed out that the gathering he was speaking of was starting on the same day that he was giving the message. To the author's memory, he also asked "Who taught them this?" as a rhetorical question, referring to brother Titus.

The young peoples' work in the Midwest is, so to speak, one of the main "clubs" the blending brothers have used recently for beating brother Titus. In particular, a great deal has been made of the music played by young people in the Midwest. Have the saints forgotten the songs that were composed for the *Supplement* hymnal in the early days of the church life in this country? Many were quite wild—even set to rock music tunes—but they were sung quite often in the meetings for a number of years. We simply had a freedom then, especially for the young people, that we don't have today.

terrible things are being promoted on the Internet. They are hoping to ensnare those of us in the Lord's recovery with their teachings and their speaking. This kind of thing destroys God's building. It is another teaching....

It is hard to believe, but some brothers have become so bold on the Internet that they are actually contradicting Brother Lee's teaching, turning it upside down. By the Lord's mercy we will stand against the destroyers of God's building. We will all stand against the destruction.¹¹⁵

In brief, brother Benson considers brother Titus and his co-workers to be “destroyers of God's building” whose ministry should not be tolerated. How horribly divisive is this word.

Remarks by Brother Ron Kangas in the Summer Training of 2006

In this year's summer training brother Ron Kangas made the statements below.¹¹⁶ The reader should note that in them he says that what he is talking about “is happening,” showing that our brother was referring to an actual current situation he was aware of, not to something hypothetical. More definitely, his statement toward the end of this excerpt regarding the internet is a clear reference to the website ConcernedBrothers.com and the

Actually, brother Titus is not teaching the young people to be worldly, but his way of caring for them is very different from that of the blending brothers. One serving brother who was present at the past summer's college training in Montreal with brother Titus writes about that time:

The college students typically sang hymns before the message was shared. Brother Titus encouraged the young people to call different songs. Several students called young people's songs. Brother Titus sang along with the young people. At the end of every song, he went over the song, asking the young people if they had touched the Lord in their singing. He went over many of the words and even asked the young people if they might be able to improve the words by rewriting certain parts of the songs. It was evident that Brother Titus was not emphasizing which songs were 'right' or 'wrong.' Rather he was endeavoring to lead the college students into a genuine experience of Christ in their singing. Eventually, a college student called “O Love that will not let me go” (Hymns, #432). The college students sang that hymn a couple of times. It was evident to me, as someone who was attending the college training, that we were brought into the Lord's presence and into an experience of His love that had laid hold of us and would not let us go, no matter our circumstances or situation. After we had finished singing the hymn, I had the realization that I, along with the college students, had been brought to Christ directly (Antipas Desai).

Is this not a healthy way to lead the young people?

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 288-289.

¹¹⁶ As the quoted portions show, a good portion of this message was given over to poisoning the saints against anyone in the recovery who will not submit to the will of the blending brothers. This, however, is often the case at Living Stream Ministry conferences and trainings. For the dear brothers to give such messages and then wonder why the saints they are speaking of, and the leading brothers in the localities they are attacking, do not want to participate in their ministry, strongly indicates a condition of spiritual obsession.

correspondence that has taken place via that website. Since that site is used to present the views of a number of brothers here in the Midwest, this shows that in these remarks—made to all the saints in the recovery—our brother is indeed speaking explicitly, though not openly, of the churches in the Midwest and of the leading brother who serves these churches:

If a church or a region isolates itself from the fellowship of the Body there are three possible results. The first result is an organic disintegration in four steps—darkness, confusion, division, and death. This has happened and is happening. A region, country, or continent may separate itself, and the brothers there may claim to have a regional, national, or continental oneness¹¹⁷ or say that they are one with their leader, yet they are not in the oneness of the Body. Those who know the Body will recognize that such a locality, region, country, or continent is a division....¹¹⁸

He then spoke of the “leprous house” in Leviticus 14:33-53. In speaking of the last stage of the leprosy he said:

The worst case was when the leprosy could not be contained. In such a situation the entire house had to be broken down (vv. 43-45). That signifies a local church becoming incurable in its disease, and that church being terminated (v. 45, footnote 1). Churches can become sectarian, and churches can be terminated....If we are not in the fellowship of the Body, we can degrade into a sect. The Lord may allow the leprosy to break out. He may allow it to become public, perhaps through the internet, to let the whole earth know that there is leprosy in that place and that the brothers there will not submit to or obey the Lord’s organic operation in the Body. The Lord had a way, if necessary, to terminate such a church. I hope that some places will not have to be sacrificed for the learning of the Body. The word in the ministry, which is the ministry of the age, should be enough for our perfecting.¹¹⁹

In these comments brother Ron is saying that the churches in the Midwest have “isolated themselves,” are “sealed off from the fellowship of the Body,”¹²⁰ are a “leprous house,” and, according to our brother, are close to being “terminated” by the Lord.

¹¹⁷ Actually, though our brother omits to say it, even a global oneness is not the oneness of the Body of Christ; rather, it is still sectarian. The Catholic, Lutheran, and Presbyterian churches, and many others besides, each have their own global yet sectarian oneness that is not of the Body. In contrast, the apostle Paul only worked in a relatively small region around the Mediterranean Sea, yet the churches raised up through him were nonetheless in the reality of the oneness of the Body.

The genuine oneness is not a matter of geographical extent but of spiritual reality. Therefore, the saints should not believe that, merely because the blending brothers minister among churches throughout most of the world, their ministry is therefore in the genuine oneness. Nor should they believe that the churches in the Great Lakes area cannot be in that oneness. Again, the question is not geographical extent, but, where is the reality of the testimony to the one Body of Christ?

¹¹⁸ *The Ministry* magazine, July 2006, p. 211, emphasis added.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

¹²⁰ Because they often don’t participate in the ministry of the blending brothers or the Living Stream Ministry conferences, especially after the release of “Publication Work.”

Remarks by Brother Ed Marks in the Summer Training of 2006

In light of the above, it also seems clear that, in an earlier message in the same training, brother Ed Marks was referring to brother Titus when he made these comments speaking of an “adversary from within”:

Today there is an intense attack against the recovery because Satan hates our speaking concerning the reality of the Body of Christ. In these days we are being attacked by enemies from without and adversaries from within.... When the Body is being built, the enemy becomes very upset, just as Sanballat was in the Old Testament (Neh. 4:1)...It is a good sign that we are being opposed by enemies from without and that there are adversaries opposing us from within. Nehemiah said, “I came to Jerusalem and perceived the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah by preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God. And it grieved me much; therefore I cast all the household utensils of Tobiah out of the chamber.”... Nehemiah was absolute and properly aggressive in casting Tobiah’s furniture out of the temple and purifying God’s building. We should be the same.¹²¹

Here brother Titus is likened to Tobiah making an illicit home for himself in the temple.

A Concluding Word to the Blending Brothers

On reading the comments above the author would, first of all, simply reply to the blending brothers with Paul’s words:

If I love you more abundantly, am I loved less? But let it be so (2 Cor. 12:15-16a).

Brother Titus is standing for what the Lord’s recovery has always stood for: the testimony of Jesus Christ and the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ. He is a real servant of the Lord. He has labored faithfully on behalf of the churches in the Midwest—many of which were raised up through his ministry—and throughout the world for over forty years. He is indeed a beloved brother whom many of us regard as a spiritual father, and with whom many others have a strong life relationship.

Even in your first letter to brother Titus, while claiming that his ministry has caused problems, you are honest to admit its positive fruit:

We acknowledge the many genuine local churches with the dear saints that have been under your care over the years. We know that the co-workers and the saints love and respect the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee—this is undeniable.¹²²

¹²¹ *The Ministry* magazine, July 2006, pp. 38-39.

¹²² Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, June 4, 2005, p. 2.

Brothers, do you really regard brother Titus as your “adversary,” like a “Tobiah” whose furniture should be cast out of the temple? If so, isn’t it really because he is not willing to come under your authority? Why do you brothers feel that you must now put such a one out of the fellowship?

Actually, anyone with a genuine heart for the Lord’s testimony should recognize how deeply divisive and destructive of our fellowship your attacks on brother Titus are and be deeply grieved, even dismayed, by them.

Sadly, at this time it seems that our brother and the churches that have been raised up through him have to a large extent been cut off from the fellowship of the other churches. Already a number of nearby localities will not fellowship with any churches that receive brother Titus’ ministry,¹²³ very largely due to the work of the blending brothers and others affiliated with Living Stream Ministry to poison the saints against him.

¹²³ To the author’s knowledge these include Milwaukee and Madison in Wisconsin, Rochester and Brooklyn Park in Minnesota, Fairborn in Ohio, Bloomfield Hills in Michigan, and, more recently, the churches in the Chicago area other than Naperville. In contrast, the author is not aware of any churches in the Midwest that have cut off fellowship with any of the other churches simply because they receive the ministry of the blending brothers.

CONCERNING THE BREAKDOWN IN THE FELLOWSHIP

The Charge that Brother Titus Isolates the Great Lakes Area

One of the most striking features of the current trouble is the steadfast refusal of the blending brothers to fellowship with the Great Lakes' brothers in any meaningful way over the current troubles. Nonetheless, it is brother Titus who is commonly charged with isolating the churches in the Midwest from the other regions, in two ways in particular: first, by not encouraging the saints in the Midwest to participate in the seven annual gatherings sponsored by Living Stream Ministry,¹²⁴ and secondly, by not participating in the gatherings for fellowship among the co-workers.

As for the first charge, it is true that, especially since the blending brothers sent brother Titus their letter of June, 2005 admonishing him to hand his work over to them, and followed that by issuing "Publication Work," participation in the LSM gatherings has greatly declined. We would simply ask, how could the brothers here be expected to encourage fellowship with ones who are actively and very publicly seeking to destroy the ministry of the one who takes the lead among us, and through whom many of the churches in this area were raised up? How could they be expected to encourage the saints in this area to attend the LSM conferences and trainings when those events are consistently used to poison the saints against that brother and the leadership in this area? The fact that the blending brothers cannot understand this strongly indicates a condition of spiritual obsession.

It also indicates a lack of respect for the leadership in this area, which clearly does not share the view, in general, that the blending brothers are brother Lee's continuation. When the ministry of the blending brothers is so destructive to the church life as it has been recently the brothers have the full right, even the responsibility, not to participate in it, since they cannot willingly expose the saints to influences that seek to destroy our church life. Unless they have the right not to participate in the Living Stream Ministry gatherings and still be included in our fellowship, then we are decidedly a sect of that ministry.

As for the charge of not participating in the fellowship, this needs to be considered in some detail, and to so we will quote extensively from the correspondence between the Great Lakes' brothers and the blending brothers. First, however, it should be pointed out that at least until the real intention of the blending brothers became openly manifest, the brothers here were very exercised to keep a good fellowship with these co-workers. The churches here participated regularly in the LSM conferences and trainings, contributed a very substantial amount of money for the purchase of the new LSM campus, and supported the work of BFA. In particular, shortly after brother Lee's death a large number of the responsible brothers and co-workers from the Midwest visited Southern California in an attempt to blend with the co-workers there.

¹²⁴ Some churches have gone so far as to altogether break off fellowship with the churches in the Midwest over the issue of "the seven annual feasts," i.e., of the seven annual international conferences and trainings sponsored by LSM. To do this, however, is to make these "seven times" the basis of our fellowship; it also indicates how much the fellowship of the churches is already mediated by the Living Stream Ministry.

In addition, on a number of occasions since the mid-1990s the desire for fellowship was demonstrated very practically by inviting co-workers from outside this area to minister among the Great Lakes' churches. These included the following:

- Two international Memorial Day conferences were held in this area, one in Chicago in 1999 and one in Cleveland in 2001.¹²⁵
- Brother Ron Kangas gave a weekend conference in Chicago in October of 1996.
- Several brothers from Taiwan shared a "PSRP" conference at the Great Lakes annual serving one's conference in Toledo in February of 1997. Some also shared at a similar conference in Chicago the following month.
- Francis Ball and Dave Higgins shared the annual Great Lakes-area Labor Day conference in Cleveland in 1997.
- Benson Phillips and Andrew Yu shared with the saints in Chicago on a Thursday night on their way to fellowship with the Great Lakes' brothers, possibly in January of 1997.
- Howard Higashi gave a week-long summer college training in Cleveland in the latter part of 1990s
- Two brothers from Austin gave the region-wide summer college training in Chicago in the late 1990s
- Ed Marks and Albert Lim shared in Columbus, Ohio in the late 1990s.
- Paul Han gave a weekend training in Cleveland, before BFA was established, on how to sell the Recovery Version.
- Gary Kaiser shared several messages in Cleveland with a large group of responsible brothers from around the Great Lakes area in July of 2000
- Ed Marks and Dick Taylor gave a conference for the churches in the Minnesota area in 2003.
- In December of 2003 Andrew Yu shared a message at the inaugural conference at the church in Chicago's new meeting hall.
- Dick Taylor has been invited to share with the saints in Pittsburgh on a number of occasions when he was visiting his family there.
- Ed Marks, and Dan Towle shared in the area-wide April conference in Chicago in the early 2000s.
- Dan Towle also shared several messages in Chicago with the co-workers in the Midwest following his sharing in the April conference.
- In addition, the church in Toronto extended an invitation to brother Andrew Yu almost every year to come and minister to them, though due to scheduling conflicts this has never worked out.

¹²⁵ Brother Titus recently reminded the blending brothers that they tried to prevent his sharing any of the messages in these two gatherings. He stated in his letter to them:

Only the strenuous intervention of Great Lakes brothers facilitated my participation in gatherings in Cleveland and Chicago (Letter from Titus Chu to the 21 co-workers, July 22, 2006).

It is almost unbelievable that these brothers did not want brother Titus to share the platform in either of these conferences. Probably the majority in attendance were from the churches he had spent many years caring for. How can the blending brothers even claim that they have any heart to fellowship with our brother or to try to keep the oneness?

All of this seems to have been very much taken for granted by the blending brothers, and certainly has not been reciprocated. Even after checking with many of the Great Lakes' co-workers the author is not aware of any instances when any were invited to share in the ministry among the churches in other areas, especially within the United States.¹²⁶

The Nature of the Fellowship

The blending brothers have greatly stressed that many times they have come together to fellowship about the direction of the recovery, but that brother Titus and his co-workers have not fully participated in these gatherings. One brother has stated:

*In the seven and a half years since Brother Lee's passing, the co-workers have come together to pray and fellowship over eighty times, many of these times consisting of multiple meetings and many addressing particularly the problems caused by different teachings propagated through separate publication works.*¹²⁷

This comment was made on the website that the blending brothers use to defend and make known their views on the current turmoil. That its author would openly admit to such a prejudice in the fellowship throws a great light on the true nature of those gatherings. Based on his comments it clearly had been decided beforehand that there were "problems caused" by "different teachings" that were being "propagated through separate publication works"; the only point left to consider was how to deal with these problems. Should anyone be surprised that those who were under such accusation would be disinclined to attend these meetings?

The clear fact of this prejudice is also seen in the letter from twenty-one senior co-workers to brother Titus of June 4, 2005. Regarding the April, 2005 co-workers fellowship on the matter of the publication work that letter states:

The brothers who have expressed disagreement with Brother Lee's teaching and practice on this matter were not present in those meetings. However, it was clear from all the fellowship that the vast majority of the brothers do not want to deviate from the teaching and practice of Brother Nee and Brother Lee on the matter of one publication work in the Lord's recovery (p.2).

Here the very brothers who had the oversight of that fellowship admit that it was cast in terms of the question, "Do we want to deviate from the teaching and practice of brother Nee and brother Lee or not?" In reality, therefore, it was not fellowship at all, but rather an opportunity for these brothers to build the case for their "one publication" theory. Clearly, those who do not accept this theory should not have felt any obligation to participate in such times.

¹²⁶ The only instances in which some of the Midwest co-workers were invited to share seem to have been a few occasions involving the overseas FTTs.

¹²⁷ "An Application of and Deviation from the Pattern in Acts 15" on AFaithfulWord.com.

In contrast, genuine fellowship must be in mutuality, truly respecting the fact that different brothers may see things differently than we do. For example, regarding the statement above, it is not that some brothers disagree with what brother Lee taught regarding publications, but rather with the blending brothers' view of his teaching. The fellowship in mutuality is what both brother Titus and the Great Lakes' brothers in general have diligently pursued as the only means for addressing the current issues among us,¹²⁸ but the blending brothers have resolutely refused it.¹²⁹

Earlier Efforts to Fellowship with the Blending Brothers

One of the recent letters from the Great Lakes' brothers to the blending brothers provides a review of their past efforts to fellowship with the blending brothers. The blending brothers had claimed in an earlier letter that "we have had more than eighty times to fellowship and pray together" since 1997. As the Great Lakes' brothers pointed out, however, fully 50 of those times were gatherings for "reading through LSM message outlines and other informational fellowship. They were not used to address"¹³⁰ the basic issues among us. They go on to state:

*Concerning the other "20-plus special times of fellowship" Titus asked who initiated the fellowship? Who telephoned to request such times? According to Titus' recollection, in scarcely a single case did any of you brothers ever call him to initiate fellowship! Throughout these past 8 years, it was chiefly Titus who was, and still is, seeking to have fellowship with you brothers.*¹³¹

¹²⁸ Ezekiel 1 presents a marvelous picture of the genuine fellowship for the carrying out of God's move in its description of the four living creatures:

And every one had four faces...(1:6a)

As for their faces, they had the face of a man; and the four of them had the face of a lion on the right side, and the four of them had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four of them had the face of an eagle (1:10).

Ezekiel also tells us that the four living creatures only went "straight forward"; they "did not turn as they went" (1: 12). Thus they had four different directions in which to move, i.e., those in which their four faces pointed. Because each had all four faces, each also had the ability to see and move in all four of these directions.

Suppose, however, that each of the four living creatures only had one face, and thus each could only see in one direction. How then could the four move together? It would be impossible. In the same way, if we can only see things in our own way, it will not be possible for us to move together with others in our service to the Lord (unless, of course, we are able to force others to move in our way all the time).

This is the reason for fellowship. It is through fellowship that we can receive, so to speak, the "face" of another brother and thus see in his direction. That is to say, what he sees enters into us, and what we see enters into him. Thus it becomes very easy, even natural, for us to move together with him, because we see what each other sees. This is the genuine fellowship and the real blending.

¹²⁹ Such fellowship would also greatly reduce the need to deal with these matters publicly via such means as the internet. The fact that it is the blending brothers who have refused such fellowship points toward their responsibility for the public nature of the discourse on these matters.

¹³⁰ Letter from the Great Lakes' brothers to the blending brothers, February 28, 2006, p. 2.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

The blending brothers had also stated, concerning these eighty gatherings,

For whatever reason most [elders and coworkers from the Great Lakes area] have chosen in recent years not to attend.¹³²

The Great Lakes' brothers responded:

Some Great Lakes' brothers who attended testified their distinct impression that what you term "fellowship" was not an exercise in mutuality, but a "one-way street." It seemed to them that important items had already been decided by an "inner circle" during pre-fellowship. When these items were presented to the whole group, it seemed members of the "outer circle" were expected to endorse, "rubber stamp," and implement them. When important matters have been pre-determined by an "inner circle," how can there be serious fellowship in mutuality? The Great Lakes' brothers' impression of that "fellowship" was distinctly hierarchical, that they as "junior members" were being directed by you, the "senior brothers...."

May we inquire, did it ever occur to you brothers to investigate the reasons for the declining attendance from the Great Lakes? Was this ever a cause of concern to you? (Even your use of the phrase, "for whatever reason" would appear to lightly dismiss, in an off-hand manner, any possibility of a legitimate cause.) Had you earnestly inquired why Great Lakes' brothers were no longer willing to attend--the lack of genuine, open, two-way fellowship in mutuality was a major contributing factor.¹³³

The Great Lakes' brothers also went on to review their past efforts to fellowship with the blending brothers, which had left a very bad impression among the Great Lakes' brothers:

Shortly after Brother Lee's passing in 1997, a large group of (English-speaking) leading brothers and coworkers from the Great Lakes' churches flew to California to have fellowship with the S. California co-workers and elders. The manner in which the Great Lakes' brothers were treated left a lasting impression. At the scheduled time only one or two S. California coworkers were present. Over the next hour or two, more S. California brothers gradually arrived, yet serious fellowship did not commence because (it seemed) the brothers who "really mattered" were not yet present. Finally, fellowship began, only to be interrupted at frequent intervals by cell-phone conversations. Scheduled events with S. California elders were also poorly attended. Brother Andrew Yu apologized profusely to the visiting Great Lakes' brothers, but it seemed he was the exception in showing such concern. Frankly, a number of Great Lakes' brothers were offended by the indifference the majority of S. California workers seemed to exhibit on that occasion.¹³⁴

¹³² Ibid, p. 9.

¹³³ As quoted in the letter from the Great Lakes' brothers to the blending brothers, February 28, 2006, p. 9.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 10

In another instance, the Great Lakes' co-workers attempted to bring up in a definite way a specific matter that concerned them:

On a subsequent occasion co-workers from the Great Lakes area prepared a weighty document entitled: Quotes on Leadership from the Writings of Witness Lee and Watchman Nee. This document was presented to all the workers and leading brothers assembled at Big Bear (April, 2000). These quotes were intended to provide a basis for fellowship on this crucial topic. However, only one session was devoted to reading through a few sections together. Little fellowship ensued. One of the "blended co-workers" then exercised "closure," by proposing that we defer this material until a later time. No subsequent session occurred. The material was conveniently shelved and never referred to again. The Great Lakes' co-workers were however, admonished not to distribute their material to the saints. Brothers, these kinds of incidents caused us to seriously question your willingness to have serious fellowship on matters that concern us.¹³⁵

On another occasion, a small group of the leading co-workers from both the Midwest and Southern California gathered in Phoenix to attempt to come to an understanding of how to go on together. They eventually came to an agreement they called "The Phoenix Accord,"¹³⁶ which gave some basic principles for our going on together. It included two sections, one on "Principles" and one on "Applications," each of which contained eight points. The points in the former section included exalting Christ as the Head of the Body, honoring the Bible as the unique divine revelation, and acknowledging Watchman Nee and Witness Lee as our spiritual fathers "whose ministries constitute the basis for the teaching and leading in the recovery today." The points in the latter section included such items as refraining from "indictments and innuendos," and that "we should look for resolution of problems through constant, face-to-face, and personal fellowship."

Unfortunately, this agreement, which was arrived at after much time, effort, and consideration had been given to it, was not honored by the blending brothers. In their first letter to brother Titus they claimed:

After the time in Phoenix, our signed statement was misused to imply more than it said. It was used to imply the agreement of the blending brothers with your work, particularly in China. In addition, your continued publication work in the face of Brother Nee's and Brother Lee's clear "teaching and leading" concerning one publication demonstrated that, at most, you only follow their teaching and leading selectively.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Attached as Appendix C. This meeting took place in February, 2003. It included five brothers from the Midwest and nine from Southern California. See also "The 'Phoenix Accord' An Historic Document – Presentation & Commentary," at ConcernedBrothers.com.

¹³⁷ Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, June 4, 2005, p. 4.

Actually, the latter point regarding “one publication” is, as we have seen, merely the blending brothers’ own view of what our brothers taught and practiced. As for agreeing with brother Titus’ work, the Phoenix accord was never taken in the way of endorsement, but only for what it was, i.e., an agreement that the blending brothers would stop their efforts to frustrate his work. Even this, however, was apparently too much for the blending brothers, and thus in practice they abandoned the agreement, as they go on to tacitly admit in their letter, disavowing it by indicating that it only represented the commitment of “a few co-workers,” not of the blending brothers as a whole:

These two facts became a great discouragement to a number of co-workers against further such efforts, and some other co-workers were not at all happy that a few co-workers had taken that step.¹³⁸

While some may legitimately feel that this type of agreement is not appropriate in the church life, it is quite difficult to see how the brothers could object to the actual content of the document. The fact that the blending brothers were troubled by agreeing to such things as seeking to “refrain from indictments and innuendos” and trying to “find ways to keep open lines of fellowship among the brothers,” as stated in the agreement,¹³⁹ says much about their real intentions and actions towards brother Titus.

Another example was an internet newsgroup that had been used to facilitate fellowship among many leading brothers and co-workers. For a number of years since brother Lee’s death it was used chiefly for practical matters. At the beginning of 2005, however, some of the brothers began to use it to convey their feelings regarding matters such as “one publication.” Then, as the Great Lakes’ brothers state in their letter:

Abruptly, in early October, the fellowship@coworkers.net facility was unilaterally terminated by LSM without explanation. Brother Bob Danker simply sent a one-line message, “Dear Brothers, Effective today this email list will be discontinued.”¹⁴⁰

The Great Lakes’ brothers go on to speak of what is really the central obstacle to the fellowship, i.e., the inability of the blending brothers to genuinely fellowship with those who disagree with them, or who will not come under their authority:

Brothers, it seems in this case “actions speak louder than words.” Who terminated fellowship@coworkers.net? It is you brothers who unilaterally terminated that facility for fellowship. Why? May we ask, are you brothers enhancing or limiting opportunities to fellowship? Are you brothers willing to accept fellowship in mutuality? Or, are you only willing to have “fellowship” on terms dictated by you and when the agenda and channels of fellowship are controlled by you?¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ See Appendix C: The Phoenix Accord of February 2003.

¹⁴⁰ Letter from the Great Lakes’ brothers to the blending brothers, February 28, 2006 p. 12.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

*The Attempt to Fellowship Concerning
the Blending Brothers' Letter to Brother Titus*

The blending brothers' letter to brother Titus of June 4, 2005, asked him to "stop his publication work in all languages."¹⁴² It was essentially an effort to put out of the ministry the brother the Lord had used to raise up and care for most of the churches in the Great Lakes region. Given that this was such a serious matter, one would naturally assume that those who sent the letter—if they genuinely cared for the saints and the churches who would be affected by such an effort—would very much want to come together to fellowship their concerns with the co-workers in the area affected. However, this has not been the case at all, as the correspondence between the two groups of brothers shows.

Soon after the blending brothers' letter was sent the co-workers in the Midwest sent back a reply to the blending brothers which ended with a request for "a time of fellowship...to resolve any difficulties that have arisen and persist":

*As you acknowledge in your letter, all the churches in our area deeply cherish and treasure our relationship with all the other churches on the earth, and we will continue to receive and seek out fellowship. Also, as you have mentioned, we have always loved and received the ministries of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee and view them as our fathers. We treasure our heritage that all the riches of Christ, both past and present, given by God to His lovers and seekers are ours to receive for our living and growth together with you all.*¹⁴³

Our brother Titus has labored among us as a bond-slave of Christ, a pattern to us, and a faithful minister whom the Lord has given to us for our spiritual supply and growth. He has labored in the gospel, raising up churches, relating them with other churches throughout the world, and perfecting many saints to become functioning members in the Body of Christ. In addition, he has

¹⁴² The blending brothers have complained that brother Titus shared this letter with his co-workers:

Although our letter of June 4, 2005, was written privately to Titus Chu, he chose to share at least portions of that letter with over one hundred brothers in the churches in the Great Lakes area of the United States (AFaithfulWord.com).

The fact that the blending brothers would complain about this is truly remarkable. In their letter they admonished brother Titus not only to stop his own publication work, but also to

join yourself and those co-workers loyal to you to the blending co-workers, with the continuation of your previous work left to the fellowship of their coordinated oversight (Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, June 4, 2005, p 5).

Was brother Titus not supposed to fellowship concerning this request with his co-workers? The "continuation of [his] previous work" would include the ongoing care for the churches he had raised up and still labored among. Should the leading ones in these churches not have known what the blending brothers were asking brother Titus to do? This was never a private matter, because it necessarily affected so many saints besides brother Titus, but only an attempt by the blending brothers to carry out their policy in secret.

¹⁴³ Letter from the Great Lakes' brothers to the blending brothers, June 12, 2005, p. 1.

produced and raised up many workers who, as you mention in your letter, also love the ministries of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. They have helped many saints to grow and participate in the healthy church life....

Dear brothers, it is our sincere desire to continue with the churches according to truth. All the churches belong to God, Christ, and the saints (1 Cor. 11:16; 14:33; Rom. 16:16), not to any persons or ministry. As for the oneness, our testimony is that we already possess the oneness of the Spirit and desire to grow together with you all until we arrive at the oneness of the faith (Eph. 4:3, 13). Brothers, because of the serious repercussions your letter will cause the churches that we serve, we request a time of fellowship with all the brothers who signed your letter, Brother Titus, and a representative number of brothers from among us. We feel that according to Acts 15 this is the way to resolve any difficulties that have arisen and persist.¹⁴⁴

Despite the very serious nature of the situation and of this request, *no reply was received from the blending brothers either to this letter or to the specific request for fellowship.*¹⁴⁵ Therefore, in September, after more than three months had passed, the Great Lakes' brothers sent another letter, again asking for a time of fellowship. It stated in part:

A group of elders and co-workers from the Great Lakes area wrote a letter to you on June 12, 2005. In that letter a request was made for a time of fellowship according to the principle in Acts 15. More than three months have now transpired, and you have not responded to either the request for fellowship or to the letter....

*We are aware that Brother Titus has requested a time for thorough, face-to-face fellowship with you. Until now such fellowship has not occurred. Moreover, as stated above, you have not responded to our request for fellowship. Dear brothers, we hope that our request for further fellowship to address these concerns will be quickly answered.*¹⁴⁶

Finally, after another two months had passed, the blending brothers responded; *it had been more than five months since they had received the original request for fellowship from the Great Lakes' brothers.* In their letter the blending brothers for all practical purposes denied the Great Lakes' brothers' request for fellowship, stating that

*The true Acts 15 conference that you requested had already taken place over a period of many months in meetings of the co-workers from all parts of the earth.*¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ In the meantime brother Titus had written to the blending brothers on June 17. He received a response from them dated August 25 in which they denied his request for fellowship.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Letter from the blending brothers to the Great Lakes' brothers, December 6, 2006, p. 1. (The letters from the blending brothers to the Great Lakes' brothers have not been made public.)

This is a remarkable statement, since one of the points the blending brothers' themselves had expressed concern over was that brother Titus and his co-workers had not attended their gatherings for fellowship. Specifically, by the blending brothers' own admission concerning the main gathering¹⁴⁸ where the basic course of action was approved,

*the brothers who have expressed disagreement with [the "one publication" theory] were not present in those meetings.*¹⁴⁹

Nonetheless, the blending brothers would still not agree to fellowship with the Great Lakes' brothers about the latter's concerns. To quote from the Great Lakes' brothers' later response to the blending brothers' letter:

*Your December 6, 2005 letter appears to express a resolute refusal to meet with Brother Titus, "...What shall we come together to talk about with him?" It also appears that you are unwilling to meet with us in the presence of Brother Titus, "we feel that any such fellowship should not be complicated by the presence of Titus." Nor are you willing to discuss matters related to Brother Titus, "such fellowship should not be complicated... by the unresolved issues that we have with him." Yet, despite the above, you say, "We are open to consider a time or times of fellowship with you." Dear brothers, may we ask, what kind of "openness" is that?*¹⁵⁰

A Concluding Word to the Blending Brothers

Brothers, today your words and actions are dividing the saints and the churches all around the world, and yet you still refuse to enter into any serious fellowship with the brothers you are cutting off from the recovery.

The real reason for all of this is your insistence that today you are continuing brother Lee's ministry, and that only you have the right to minister among the churches. If you cannot give up that view, how could you agree to any real fellowship about the current situation with those who do not share it?

May the Lord, in His mercy that we all so much need, especially in these days, grant you a return to soberness concerning your portion in His ministry.

¹⁴⁸ The April 4-7, 2005 co-workers' meetings that prepared the way for "Publication Work."

¹⁴⁹ Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, June 4, 2005, p. 2. It should also be noted that, in an e-mail to the blending brothers dated May 9, 2005, brother Silas Wu, a co-worker from New England, had also, and very specifically, requested a time of fellowship along the lines of the Acts 15 conference to be held in Newton, Massachusetts from Thursday, September 29 to Saturday, October 1, 2005, immediately prior to the Elders' Training in Moscow. This request was also ignored. (See the letter from the Great Lakes' brothers to the blending brothers, June 12, 2005, p. 8.)

¹⁵⁰ Letter from the Great Lakes' brothers to the blending brothers, February 28, 2006.

APPENDIX A:**An Open Letter to the Responsible Brothers in the Chicago Metro Area in Response to the Blending Co-Workers' "Warning Statement"¹⁵¹**

Revised Wednesday, 18 October 2006
Proofing updates Wednesday, 8 November 2006
Chicago, Illinois

On the Lord's Day, October 8, the "blending co-workers in the Lord's Recovery" issued a statement, dated October 1, that seeks to excommunicate brother Titus Chu and his co-workers from the fellowship in the Lord's recovery. It states in part:

We solemnly exhort all the saints to join with us to mark Brother Titus Chu and those who disseminate his divisive views and his dissenting speaking, and turn away from them.... We urge the saints to keep a watchful eye on these contagiously divisive persons and to cease interaction with them. ("A Warning to All the Saints and All the Churches," p. 4. Links to this and other relevant documents are provided at the end of this letter.)

For some time I have sought both by writing and through personal fellowship to warn the brothers here that the church in Chicago is losing its standing for the oneness of the Body of Christ and becoming, instead, a sect of the blending co-workers and Living Stream Ministry. So far these warnings have had little effect that I am aware of.

With this act of excommunication, however, another—and very critical—step has been taken down this path. While the blending co-workers' statement deeply grieves me, I nonetheless receive it as an answer to my prayer in recent months that the Lord would manifest to the saints here the real situation of the church in Chicago and of the recovery as a whole. To all of the responsible brothers in this area I would now say, how can any of you in good conscience still deny that the church here is indeed becoming a sect of their ministry?

¹⁵¹ This is the text of an open letter originally sent by the author to the responsible brothers in the Chicago metro area as his initial response to the "Warning Statement" of the blending brothers. The initial version of this response was sent on October 12. The author later felt that comments of a personal nature that were made in that version were not appropriate, and thus withdrew it and replaced it with this one, which among other changes omits those comments.

Concerning the statement itself I will not say much in this letter. I would just remark that it is the fruit of many years of very divisive efforts by the blending co-workers to remove brother Titus from the ministry; his only real sin, in their sight, being his refusal to come under their authority. With last year's release of "Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery" these brothers made clear—to all who would admit it—their intention to exclude all but themselves from ministering among the churches. Now they are simply carrying out that intention, and to do so they need to discredit brother Titus, a real servant of the Lord, in the eyes of the saints. This type of thing is not at all new; J.N. Darby stated more than a century and a half ago:

I have remarked that it is the art and skill of some men to turn every conscientious man, every one who cannot or will not become an instrument, into a radical or a schismatic. But it is a sad state of things.... With [those who rule in this way] it is only as in a famous Latin passage... "When they make a solitude around them, they call it peace." (Collected Writings of J.N. Darby, vol. 20, "Narrative of the Facts," p. 22.)

I strongly commend for your reading the letters that the Great Lakes elders and co-workers sent to the blending co-workers, as well as brother Titus' final response to the blending co-workers. (Direct links are given below.) The first letter from the Great Lakes brothers was sent in June of 2005 and formally requested a time of fellowship about the difficulties among us; by the time the blending co-workers' responded, *more than five months had elapsed*. This clearly shows that the blending co-workers had no real desire to resolve the problems; even then they refused any meaningful fellowship (though still somehow claiming that they were "open to such a time.")

The blending co-workers' statement admonishes the saints to "cease interaction" with all of us who continue to stand with brother Titus. As the elders of the church in Chicago are signatories to that statement it seems clear to me that I am no longer welcome to participate in the church life here. Of course, the same would apply to all of Titus' co-workers, a number of whom are closely connected with the churches in this area. Moreover, the church in Chicago can no longer fellowship with the church in Naperville and many of the saints there, since that church continues to stand with brother Titus and sponsors an annual conference with him. These are the necessary consequences of that statement, which we cannot ignore.

We must not attempt to pacify the blending co-workers by going along with their statement if we believe it is wrong—that would be to "dissemble" in just the same manner that Peter did (i.e., to "disguise or conceal behind a false appearance," *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, third edition). In fact, how much is the situation of the church in Chicago today like that of the church in Antioch. The apostle Paul states:

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. For before some came from James, he continually ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to shrink back and separate himself, fearing those of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also joined him in this hypocrisy [“dissembled likewise with him,” KJV], so that even Barnabas was carried away in their hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11-13).

In the same way, to accede to the warning of the blending co-workers would be to shrink back from fellowship with those whom they consider as “Gentiles.” This is not to keep the oneness, as some claim, but rather to allow these brothers to turn us into a sect of their ministry. In his footnotes to these verses brother Lee says of Peter’s “shrinking back”:

This proves that at that time Peter was very weak in the pure Christian faith. In Acts 10 he had received an exceedingly clear vision from the heavens concerning fellowship with the Gentiles, and he took the lead to practice it. What weakness and backsliding to shrink from eating with Gentile believers out of fear of those of the circumcision! It is no wonder that he lost the leadership among the apostles.

Barnabas participated in Paul’s first ministry journey to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and to raise up the Gentile churches. Even one who had so much fellowship with the Gentile believers was carried away in Peter’s hypocrisy. What a negative influence Peter exerted on others! Surely he deserved to lose his leadership (Recovery Version of the New Testament, pp. 819-820; Gal. 2:12, fn. 3; 2:13, fn. 3).

Through the ministry of our brother Lee we have indeed “received an exceedingly clear vision from the heavens.” Brothers, we must stand firm for that vision! Our testimony is absolutely not for the blending brothers or for Living Stream Ministry, and regarding this we must be very clear and definite. Our authority must be the word of God alone, our testimony for Christ alone, and our standing for the Body of Christ alone. To declare this is not to be divisive, even if others in the recovery oppose us for taking such a stand; rather, it is to be faithful to the vision we have received.

Some say that brother Titus should “bear the cross” by accepting the demands of the blending co-workers to stop his ministry; they claim that this would be to follow the example of Watchman Nee. In fact, it would be to make us a sect of the blending co-workers and Living Stream Ministry, since it would establish the principle that only their ministry is acceptable for the use of the churches. No servant of the Lord, including brother Nee, could ever do this, and I’m so thankful for brother Titus’ faithful stand in this regard. Watchman Nee himself stated:

Before the Lord we can yield on certain things, but there are other matters in which we can never compromise....There are two points in which we cannot compromise: 1) Denominations are sin; hence, in this we cannot compromise.... Denominations must be condemned. This is the negative aspect. 2)The church is local. This is the positive aspect, in which we neither can ever compromise (Further Talks on the Church Life, pp. 133-134).

In 1977 the church here went through a turmoil very similar to the one it is in today, i.e., a group of brothers came to Chicago and said that it was their responsibility to act as the coordinators of the one new man; they even claimed, just as the blending co-workers do today, that they were acting in the name of brother Lee (who later strongly rebuked them and made it more than clear that such was not the case). The church in Chicago survived then because some brothers here stood firm for the truth against such nonsense. Brothers, today we need to stand firm against the blending co-workers' statement; we need to clearly stand as the genuine local churches, rather than as the churches of a particular ministry. Perhaps many of you brothers will go along with their statement, but I will not. As brother Titus said in response to the claim some make that he has left the recovery:

I never left; I just never changed.

I have already warned many of you personally regarding our situation. If you are silent now, you bear the responsibility before the Lord and agree with that situation. It will only become more and more bizarre. How much worse does it need to get? Where then will you be in five years, or ten years? You have to think through the consequences both of your actions and of your inaction. May the Lord be with you.

While the church here seems to have rejected fellowship with me, I want you to know that I still receive you all as my brothers in Christ.

For the sake of the Lord's testimony,

David Canfield

Online Documents Related to the Current Turmoil

Note: See the links in the "Online Documents" section of the "Bibliography" below.

APPENDIX B: The Use of Church-Sponsored Morning Revival Materials

This appendix is included because in recent years many issues have been made over whether or not the churches are using the *Holy Word for Morning Revival*.

According to Acts 2:42:

The disciples continued steadfastly in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Brother Lee comments concerning this verse:

We can see from the grammatical construction of this verse that the teaching and fellowship are of the apostles, but the breaking of bread and the prayers are not of the apostles. The teaching and the fellowship belonged to the apostles, but not the breaking of bread and the prayers.¹⁵²

This shows us that the Lord is balanced. He has given some things to the apostles, and we may say by extension to the leadership of the church, but He has also kept some things for the saints. The latter include the Lord's table and the prayers—and "the prayers" certainly must include the daily fellowship the saints enjoy with the Lord. We would all object if the elders tried to direct the Lord's table by saying "this topic is what we will pray, testify, and sing about in this meeting." Therefore, since the Bible classes "the prayers" with the Lord's table, why should we not also object to church telling the saints how to contact the Lord in their prayers? Yet however we may try to phrase it, that is exactly what church-sponsored morning revival materials, such as the *Holy Word for Morning Revival*, do.

Keeping the scriptural balance is a real protection to the Lord's testimony. Doing so allows for a healthy leadership in the church life through the ministry of the word, while at the same encouraging the saints to bear their own responsibility to exercise into the Lord's presence in their prayer life.

Accordingly, while the New Testament contains many charges concerning what may and may not be taught in the churches, it contains no specific direction concerning how the saints should contact the Lord on a daily basis.

In contrast, to make all of these matters the responsibility of the church leadership is to go beyond what the Lord has committed to that leadership, and doing so greatly increases the danger of our becoming a religious system. On the one hand, it puts too much into the hands of the leadership, and on the other hand it weakens the saints' relationship with the Lord by reducing their ability to exercise for themselves to enter into His presence.

¹⁵² *Life-Study of Acts*, p. 96

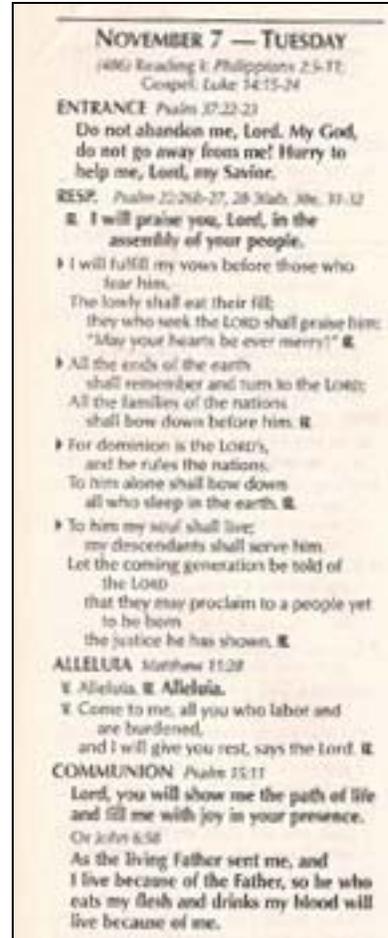
The practice of the church telling the saints how they should contact the Lord is thoroughly unscriptural and romish. At the beginning it may seem to be a blessing to the saints, but nonetheless such a seed will bear the fruit of a clergy-laity system. It puts the church in the place of God; how do we know what portion of the word or ministry the Lord desires to use to speak to the individual saints? It means that some believers are telling other believers, "Now you need to pray over this verse" to contact the Lord.

Some feel that the church-sponsored use of the *Holy Word for Morning Revival* shows how we are in oneness. In actuality it is a testimony of how much we have become organized; our real oneness does not consist in such outward things. One wonders if those who make such a claim are aware that this same type of thing is practiced by Roman Catholic church worldwide, which uses its missal to direct worship services. According to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the missal is

the book which contains the prayers said by the priest at the altar as well as all that is officially read or sung in connection with the offering of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass throughout the ecclesiastical year.

*The present Roman Missal, now almost universally used in the Catholic Church wherever the Latin Rite prevails, consists essentially of two parts...The smaller of these divisions containing that portion of the liturgy which is said in every Mass....The remainder of the book is devoted to those portions of the liturgy which vary from day to day according to feast and season.*¹⁵³

¹⁵³ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume X.



A sample from the Roman Catholic Missal
 (for Tuesday, November 7, 2006)¹⁵⁴

By using the same missal, Catholics world-wide can display an outward form of oneness in their worship. Some devout Catholics will use it to guide them in their devotions each day in the same way the saints use the *Holy Word for Morning Revival* to guide them in their daily time with the Lord, while others will follow *The Liturgy of the Hours*, which in a similar way directs their daily prayers and readings.

¹⁵⁴ Today's Missal, vol. 73, Number 4, p. 182.

APPENDIX C:**The Phoenix Accord of February 2003**

We, the brothers who attended the fellowship in Phoenix, Arizona on February 7-9, 2003, want to express some principles and applications that came out of our fellowship. We consider these as working guidelines for our living, service, and fellowship. These are humbly presented to the other saints for the help they can render. We have no intention for this to be taken as a final pronouncement nor as something to bind others.

Principles

1. We honor and exalt the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Body.
2. We honor and regard the Bible as the unique divine revelation and foundation for all teaching and practice.
3. We acknowledge and respect all the local churches as expressions of the one Body.
4. We love the Lord, we love the Lord's recovery and we love one another as brothers in Christ.
5. Our top priority is to keep the oneness of the Spirit.
6. In the Lord's recovery we hold to the speciality and generality of the church life without expecting uniformity.
7. We acknowledge Watchman Nee and Witness Lee as our spiritual fathers in the Lord whose ministries constitute the basis for the teaching and leading in the recovery today.
8. We should respect, honor, and appreciate one another's portion and function in the New Testament ministry.

Applications

1. In whatever fellowship we have, we should exercise forbearance, love, meekness, and forgiveness as we work through problems that confront us.
2. In all of our speaking-privately, publicly, and globally-we should refrain from indictments and innuendos.
3. At all times we should find ways to keep open lines of fellowship among the brothers.
4. We should let go of the negative and, in turn, emphasize the positive.
5. Direct communication is imperative in all our relationships.
6. We should look for resolution of problems through constant, personal, face-to-face fellowship.
7. We should try not to misunderstand one another but to understand by giving each other the benefit of the doubt.
8. We should endeavor to help the saints and those with whom we serve to keep the oneness of the Spirit and to speak well of all the churches, saints, elders, and co-workers.

Bill Barker,	Minoru Chen,	Titus Chu,	Ron Kangas,
James Lee,	Albert Lim,	Ed Marks,	Paul Neider,
Benson Phillips,	Jim Reetzke,	Dick Taylor,	Dan Towle,
James Yang,	Andrew Yu		

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Note: When viewing this document on a computer screen clicking on a link will open the selected document in your internet browser.

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- [“The One Publication Campaign,”](#) by Nigel Tomes, August 2005
- [“The Bible, Our Only Standard,”](#) by Nigel Tomes, February 16, 2006
- [“The “Phoenix Accord” An Historic Document,”](#) May 10, 2006
- [“The Blended Brothers vs. the Bible,”](#) by Dave Shields, August 7, 2006
- [“Brief Lessons from Church History,”](#) by David Canfield, August 2, 2006
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- [“An Application of and Deviation from the Pattern in Acts 15,”](#)
- [“Response from Kerry Robichaux to Nigel Tomes,”](#) June 21, 2005
- [“Response from Gary Kaiser to Nigel Tomes,”](#) June 23, 2005
- [“Response from Bob Danker to Nigel Tomes,”](#) June 25, 2005

Letters from the Blending Co-workers to Titus Chu:

- [“Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, June 4, 2005”](#)
- [“Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, August 25, 2005”](#)
- [“Letter from 21 co-workers to Titus Chu, June 27, 2006”](#)

Letters from Titus Chu to the Blending Co-workers:

- [“Letter from Titus Chu to the 21 co-workers, about June 14, 2005”](#)
- [“Letter from Titus Chu to the 21 co-workers, October 2, 2005”](#)
- [“Letter from Titus Chu to the 21 co-workers, July 22, 2006”](#)

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- [“Letter from the Great Lakes’ brothers to the blending brothers, June 12, 2005”](#)
- [“Letter from the Great Lakes’ brothers to the blending brothers, September 24, 2005”](#)
- [“Letter from the Great Lakes’ brothers to the blending brothers, February 28, 2006”](#)
- [“Letter from the Great Lakes’ brothers to the blending brothers, September 10, 2006”](#)

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¹⁵⁵ “LSM” refers to the Living Stream Ministry, Anaheim, California, www.lsm.org.

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