

NIGEL TOMES' RESPONSE TO S. CALIFORNIA COWORKERS' LETTER
of 27 Sept. '05

Dear Brothers Benson Phillips, Ron Kangas, Andrew Yu and other S. Cal. Co-workers

I received a copy of the S. California co-workers' letter of 27 Sept. '05 through coworkers.net.

First, on a personal level, I wish to make two requests:

1. In your letter, **I am the only person identified publicly by name** as a source of (what you label) "negative writings," [a] "dissenting document," considered by you as "what is unclean" and "releasing negative feelings." Given the "distinction" you have awarded me, I am surprised that I was not contacted directly first and that I have not received a personal, signed copy of the letter. You say, "**We, the undersigned...**" Yet your letter contains only the "generic designation,"-- "the co-workers in Southern California." Am I not entitled to know who exactly is included under this label? **Please forward to me, at your earliest possible convenience, a signed original document.**

2. Bearing in mind the above, you recommend that the contents of your letter be conveyed to the responsible brothers and the saints, world-wide [*"We encourage you to pass on our fellowship in this letter to all the responsible brothers in your area, so that they may in turn inoculate the saints."*] and you also write "*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*" Again, since **I am the only person identified publicly by name** and you are charging "*the saints to stay away from anyone...*" Doesn't this amount to **a charge by you, the S. California co-workers, to the saints in the recovery world-wide to ostracize, shun, quarantine and/or excommunicate me?** If not, isn't your letter open to this interpretation. Might it not be understood and applied in that way? I can easily imagine the word being spread, as a result of your letter, that "*Nigel Tomes has been excommunicated from the Lord's recovery.*" Is this the message you intend to convey by your letter? **Please make this matter clear**, since it seriously affects my relationship with many saints, workers and churches. I feel your lack of clarity on this point is irresponsible. Let me ask, Am I to interpret your letter as a disciplinary action against me? Are the workers, elders, saints and churches to interpret your letter as a disciplinary action against me?

More generally I want to respond to your letter with the following points:

- 1. Not taking the way of fellowship to resolve differences according to the Biblical principles in Matthew 18 and Acts 15.**
 - **Kingdom people and the principles according to Matthew 18**
 - **The Pattern in Acts 15**
- 2. Lack of freedom to have fellowship in the Lord's recovery today**
 - **Categorizing my Writing with Anonymous Documents**
 - **The Impact of Your 27th Sept. Letter**
 - **The difference between my writing & the anonymous E-mails**
- 3. Not addressing the 12 points I raised in my "Analysis and Response"**
- 4. The Rationale for Releasing the "One Publication" Document**

5. The ‘One Publication Policy’ becoming a “line in the sand” to divide saints, churches and workers.

6. The Rationale for the public distribution of my writings -- “Analysis & Response.”

- **One Work, Yet Multiple Groups of Workers**
- **Leadership in the Lord’s recovery**
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1. Not taking the way of fellowship to resolve differences according to the Biblical principles in Matthew 18 and Acts 15.

- **Kingdom people and the principles according to Matthew 18**

Since you identify me publicly by name, and also name the locality where I reside, obviously you could have contacted me personally and directly, prior to releasing this Letter. May I respectfully ask, Is not this a principle of the “kingdom people” which was taught to us by Brother Lee? According to Matthew, if your brother offends you, shouldn’t you first go to him alone? You, the co-workers from S. California, refer to “*certain fundamental principles that have been built up in us within the Lord’s recovery.*” May I ask, Is not this one of those principles? If not, at least it is a principle of normal human decency! Yet, you have publicly branded me as a source of dissenting writings [“*Nigel’s dissenting document*”], one who spreads “spiritual death” [“*these writings are works of darkness that spread spiritual death*”] etc. None of these accusations were made directly and personally to me prior to the release of your 27 Sept. document. This is even more serious, given the fact that your letter may be understood as a charge by you, the S. California co-workers, to the saints in the recovery world-wide to ostracize, shun, quarantine and/or excommunicate me? You refer to “standards of behavior” [“*The standard exhibited in these two writings is lower than that adhered to by unbelievers.*”] Dear brothers, may I ask what standards have you employed in your dealings with me?

If you, the co-workers in S. California, were offended by my Aug. 18 document, why did you not contact me directly and personally? [The only co-worker who engaged in E-mail dialogue with me was brother Ron Kangas. Unfortunately, dear brother Ron made his response contingent on my answering a battery of questions about an anonymous E-mail. I consider this request unreasonable! As a result, no significant dialogue ensued.] The fact remains that not one of the S. California co-workers has contacted me directly and personally concerning my Aug. 18 writing and its distribution. Instead, you, the S. California co-workers, have now issued this public document to all the co-workers world-wide for dissemination to the responsible brothers (“*We would like to encourage you to pass on our fellowship in this letter to all the responsible brothers in your area, so that they may in turn inoculate the saints.*” p. 3) Recently a few of the Toronto elders (including myself) had a telephone conference call with brother Andrew Yu. In the course of that conversation I do not recall even one word was spoken about any “disciplinary action” being contemplated by the S. California coworkers. In issuing this public letter, prior to any personal contact with me, have you not violated the clear teaching of Scripture, Brother Lee’s teaching, “*certain fundamental principles ... within the Lord’s recovery,*” and the standards of human decency?

- **Pattern in “Acts 15” process to resolve the differences between workers over the “publication issue”**

From my perspective, it seems that there has not been sufficient effort made to have true fellowship to resolve this issue, which impacts so many saints and local churches. In May 2005 Brother Silas Wu (E-mail to the coworkers 9 May '05) suggested that the co-workers, including brothers Benson Phillips, Titus Chu, Yu Lan Dong and others, come together in Newton, MA. USA to fellowship to resolve this matter according to the pattern in Acts 15. Ironically, the dates suggested by Brother Silas are these few days, Sept. 29 to Oct. 1, just prior to the Elders' Training in Moscow. Sadly, this suggestion was not taken up. May I ask, why was brother Silas' suggestion never adopted? It seems to me that the process of fellowship was unilaterally and prematurely terminated, “closure” was exercised. Rather prior to the proposed “Acts 15”-type of conference in September, at the LSM Summer training (June 2005), the ‘One Publication’ document was released to all the trainees and published on the Internet (at LSM.org), without the concerns of myself and others being adequately addressed.

2. **Lack of freedom to have fellowship in the Lord’s recovery today**

- **Categorizing my Writing with Anonymous Documents**

Dear brothers, I am very bothered by the fact that you have categorized my writings together with other anonymous writings. Isn't this “guilt by association”? After enumerating 3 anonymous documents, plus mine, you make statements such as, “*All the aforementioned writings contain similar accusations and expressions and bear the same flavor.*” “*These writings are works of darkness and spread spiritual death*” “*The fact that these writings convey spiritual death proves that they are not worthy of the Lord’s recovery...*” Each of these statements (and more) lump together my “signed,” identified writing with 3 anonymous E-mails. I protest! This is surely “guilt by association.” You firstly designate anonymous writings as “works of darkness” based upon the fact that they are anonymous, unsigned [“*These two writings are clearly works of darkness, as proved by the fact that they do not bear the signatures of the writers.*”] You then label my writing, along with the anonymous ones, “*These writings are works of darkness and spread spiritual death*” May I ask, is this “guilt by association” fair, reasonable and ethical?

Brothers, I have always signed the documents authored by me; they have always appeared under my name. When I was professor of Economics, I authored and published 20 papers, all of which appeared under my name. In recent years, whatever I have written and published on Church History and other topics, has always been clearly identified as mine. This includes my E-mails and writings on the topic of publications in the Lord’s recovery. In your own letter you state “*Nigel had written to the co-workers earlier, in June 2005, to express his concerns related to the release of the co-workers’ statement on one publication. ...*” You have to admit that all my communications with you brothers were all clearly identified me as the author. Moreover, you say, “*a document authored by Nigel Tomes in August 2005 and sent out by email to all the co-workers on August 18. This document is entitled “ ‘Publication Work in the Lord’s Recovery’—Analysis & Response.*” As you admit, it was clearly, “*authored by Nigel Tomes.*” I clearly indicated my authorship and sent you brothers a copy first. **I believe that in this**

matter of anonymity, which you strongly emphasize in your 27 Sept. letter, **my actions are beyond reproach**; I have never authored an anonymous document! Yet, you, the S. California co-workers, insist on categorizing my writing together with other anonymous writings. I protest! You have combined things which differ. **Your letter never clearly and definitely points out this important distinction.** Instead you seek to “paint” my writings and the anonymous ones “with the same brush.” [*“All the aforementioned writings contain similar accusations and expressions and bear the same flavor.”*] Please permit me to ask again Is this “guilt by association” fair, reasonable and ethical?

It occurs to me that perhaps you “lump together” my writings with these anonymous E-mails, because you believe (or suspect) that I have “acted in concert,” to produce these anonymous writings. Brothers, let me assure you that I am not involved in any “behind the scenes conspiracy,” I have not knowingly contributed input to any of the anonymous documents you refer to (nor any others). I have not collaborated to produce any anonymous documents. Some of these documents, which you refer to, I have never seen. The “promulgation” document was a surprise to me, as much as (I believe) it was to you. Let me state emphatically that **I am not “acting in concert,” in the production of any anonymous writings.** Neither do I intend to do so. If your reaction to me in this letter is motivated (in part at least) by that notion, then it is based upon an unfounded suspicion. In this matter, I believe in this matter I have acted with integrity. I wish you could take my word in this.

- **The Impact of Your 27th Sept. Letter**

I wrote and “signed” my comments on this topic, yet I am branded as a “dissenting brother” and criticized together with a group of anonymous writers. Please consider this for a moment. A writer who identifies his work is **singled out by name for attack**, while anonymous writers hide behind their anonymity. By denouncing me publicly, what kind of signal are you brothers sending to the saints in the Lord’s recovery? It may appear to some that if someone identifies themselves when publicly expressing their concerns, they risk being marked, stigmatized and becoming a “target” for attack in order to serve as an object lesson for others. The obvious corollary is that it is “prudent” to remain anonymous if one has any concerns which might possibly be considered “negative”? Wouldn’t it be reasonable for some to conclude that **your public denunciation of me, while categorizing me with anonymous writers, is itself an incentive to anonymity!** May I ask, **Is this the kind of atmosphere of secrecy, suspicion and under-handedness which you, the S California co-workers, seek to foster in the Lord’s recovery?**

- **The difference between my writing & the anonymous E-mails**

Since you have combined my writing with those of others, let me remind you of the differences. My writing on this topic began as a “solicited response” to your request for input. I am on the list of brothers at fellowship@coworkers.net. In early June 2005, I received a draft version [Draft #8] of the Booklet, “Publication Work...” Responses and comments were solicited from various workers who received that draft (including myself). **In response to that invitation**, I sent a series of comments in a spirit of fellowship, conveying my thoughts to the blending brothers and other coworkers. Other workers in the Lord’s recovery also responded. I also received responses to my

submissions. According to my knowledge, none of the anonymous documents began as a solicited response to the blending brothers' request for input.

What I have written on this topic (now summarized in the document, "*Analysis & Response*") had its origin **in a response to a request for fellowship from the blending brothers**, an invitation for "feedback" on an earlier version of the Booklet. The blending brothers asked for fellowship and I took them at their word that they wanted "feedback" and not merely a "rubber stamp of approval." May I humbly ask, **Have I erred in taking the blended coworkers at their word?** I, for one, do not consider my responses as "*an attack on the blended coworkers*," nor as "*a direct attack on Brother Lee's ministry*."

I do not regard my writing as "*a direct attack on Brother Lee's ministry*." Rather, it seems to me that what you brothers have produced is based upon a selective reading of Brother Lee. You have not quoted or printed all of Brother Lee's speaking on the topic of publication. Both I and brother Silas Wu (among others) referred you to highly relevant writings of Brother Lee, which it seems you have chosen to ignore. Why was no reference made to Brother Lee's call for a "Writers' Conference," in the early 1980's? Why was Brother Lee's charge to Brother Silas Wu for Boston to publish overlooked by you? It seems to me, that you brothers have not presented a convincing case for "one publication" based upon a balanced consideration of all Brother Lee's speaking on this topic. Moreover, you have not reconciled your promotion of "one publication" with the whole body of teaching we have received from Brothers Nee and Lee. [My comments on this are necessarily brief]

3. Not addressing the 12 points I raised in my "*Analysis and Response*".

My 12 points of concern and others which I raised have never been directly addressed by my respondents. I raised these points of concern with the co-workers at coworkers.net **prior to** the release of the "Publication Work..." document and at the point when I heard that it was to be released. I did this through three successive E-mails to all the coworkers dated (1) 13th June 2005; (2) 24th June 2005 and (3) 1st July 2005. The twelve points contained in these 3 E-mails now (in revised form) constitute my "*Analysis and Response*." These are questions which have never been directly addressed by the blended coworkers in their correspondence with me. Please allow me to enumerate:

My 12 Points of Concern

- 1. Is the "one publication" policy Scriptural?**
- 2. Is "one publication" an item of "speciality" or "generality"?**
- 3. If a local church adopts the "one publication" policy is it still a genuine local church? Or has it become a "ministry church"?**
- 4. Why has an informal, voluntary, personal practice among workers become a teaching which is now a public policy, mandated upon the saints and the local churches?**

5. Has the Living Stream Ministry office been elevated above the “Levitical service” established by Brother Lee?
6. Isn’t the “one publication” policy, the same as Roman Catholicism’s practice concerning publications?
7. Is *Publication Work in the Lord’s Recovery* an example of Historical Revisionism?
8. Did Brother Lee’s call for “one publication” establish a “general principle” for all time or was it a “temporary expedient?” In other words, was it a “situation-specific” and “person-specific” fellowship?
9. Doesn’t this “one publication” policy contradict Brother Nee’s teaching concerning the futility of using institutional arrangements to contain the Lord’s blessing?
10. What impact might the “one publication” policy have on the saints?
11. What impact might the “one publication” policy have on the local churches?
12. Isn’t there the appearance of a “conflict of interest” in the issuing of the policy of “one publication”?

Up to this day, not a single point of my 12 points of concern has been directly addressed. One of my main concerns is that no firm Scriptural basis has been presented for such a ‘One Publication’ policy. You brothers virtually acknowledge this in your writings published in *The Ministry* magazine. When brother Minoru Chen addressed this issue in the LSM 2004 Winter Training he said: “... **it is not a matter of right or wrong, biblical or non-biblical.** It is a matter of whether there is one sound or more than one sound.” (*The Ministry Magazine*, Vol. 9, issue 1, p. 186). Doesn’t this amount to a covert admission that it is not in the Bible? If not, I believe the onus is on the proponents to present such a basis. Moreover, may I ask, If the Biblical basis for one publication is so clear, why is it being promised in the near future, *ex post*, after the release of the “policy statement” on “Publication Work..”

4. The Rationale for Releasing the “One Publication” Document

I wish to point out some of the rationale offered me by co-workers in their “attempt to help [me] realize the benefit to the recovery of releasing such a statement.” Brother Bob Danker, in writing to me said: “*The proposed statement ... is a reaffirmation of the desire and intention of the coworkers in the Lord's recovery to be restricted in one publication work... we, the blending coworkers, would like to affirm to the saints our intention to carry out this aspect of the recovery...*” (Bob Danker, E-mail to me 25 June '05, emphasis added)

Brother Kerry Robichaux explained to me, “*I am certain that among the co-workers ... 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. It seems that the act of putting down in writing their desire to be restricted in one publication in the ministry*

(following the admonition of our Brother Lee) is easily mistaken....” (Kerry R.’s E-mail to me, 21 June ’05 (emphasis added)

These words seem innocuous, The Statement on Publication is **nothing more** than a declaration by a group of co-workers of their own desire to be restricted to one publication. They are merely “putting down in writing” their own desire.

These statements correlate with Brother Ron Kangas’ speaking in message #11 of the LSM 2005 Summer Training “*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, Vol.9, No. 7, July/Aug. 2005, p. 281, emphasis added)

These statements suggest that these workers (or groups of workers) are simply “declaring”, “reaffirming”, “echoing”, “agreeing with” and “putting down in writing their own desire to be restricted to” one publication. There is “**no thought that their statement is anything more than**” this [according to brother Kerry]. This being the case, one would expect that workers would be free to affirm or not affirm, declare or not declare their willingness to be ‘restricted.’ Moreover, if the statement is “nothing more than this,” other workers should be free to not “affirm” or not “declare” without retribution or stigmatism.

Dear co-workers in S. California, this is a basic point of disagreement. The “Publication Work “itself declares much more than this, “*All the saints and all the churches everywhere should similarly be restricted to one publication in the Lord’s recovery*” (p. 8) Moreover, your letter reinforces this point.

The letter by the S. California Co-workers indicates that not only do they themselves wish to be restricted to one publication, but they also **intend to impose this restriction on all workers (saints and churches)** everywhere. **Brothers, you cannot have it both ways!** If you are “simply declaring, only affirming, your own desire to be restricted,” then don’t try to impose this restriction on others.

If you intend to enforce this restriction on all workers world-wide, then don’t claim that you are **merely declaring** your own desire; that you are **just reaffirming** your own intention to be restricted to one publication. In that case, the statements by brothers Kerry Robichaux and Bob Danker (quoted above) are inaccurate, misleading or just plain wrong! Then, please allow me to ask, have you been fully honest in your representation of this issue to me (as quoted above), to the saints and churches. Or is this a case of “bait and switch”? You claim to be “merely reaffirming, just declaring, putting down in writing, and echoing Brother Lee’s speaking,” etc. while seeking to impose a publicly-mandated policy of one publication?

In my view, the blended co-workers are **not just** “*echoing Brother Lee’s word,*” (contrary to brother Ron Kangas’ word quoted above.) You say, “*We are not saying anything new or different.*” Yet you have **done something both “new and different” by issued a public-policy statement mandating ‘one publication’** for all the saints and churches. “*All the saints and all the churches everywhere should...be restricted to one*

publication in the Lord's recovery" (p. 8). This is surely something 'new.' Brother Nee never issued such a policy statement; neither did Brother Lee. I regard this as a "quantum leap" beyond merely "echoing" Brother Lee's word.

In 1986, when Brother Lee shared about "one publication," with the elders, he left the application to the elders, saying, "*Take these principles, pray before the Lord, and consider the real situation in your locality. Then you can make some adjustment of the eldership.*" [Elders' Training, Book 8, p. 164] May I ask, if you are merely "echoing Brother Lee," why did you not simply share your burden and leave its practical application to the oversight of the elders as they see fit, according to Brother Lee's fellowship (quoted above)?

5. The 'One Publication Policy' becoming a "line in the sand" to divide saints, churches, and workers.

I acknowledge that 'one publication' can be a **voluntary practice** by some workers, such as Brother Lee. But how can it be mandated as a policy when you have not demonstrated a clear Scriptural basis and it is not an item of the faith? This being the case, and since it is only a practice, shouldn't there be the freedom to have genuinely different views or to practice differently? It does not have to be a "line in the sand," to divide saints, churches, and workers.

In their (27 Sept) letter the S. California co-workers' say "*Nigel had written to the co-workers earlier, in June 2005, to express his concerns related to the release of the co-workers' statement on one publication. Several of the co-workers responded to him in an attempt to help him realize the benefit to the recovery of releasing such a statement. We regret to say that this was apparently to no avail.*"

Concerning the help I received from other co-workers please allow me to enumerate: In June 2005 I received E-mails from five co-workers [brothers Kerry Robichaux, Sterling Byassee, Gary Kaiser, Ron Kangas and Bob Danker] responding to my concerns and questions. I agree, they did indeed attempt "*to help [me] realize **the benefit to the recovery of releasing such a statement.***" I am grateful to them for their efforts. However, the proposed publication statement involves not only "benefits," **but also "costs."** It is a matter of "Benefit-Cost Analysis," considering both the benefits and the costs. While my respondents eagerly emphasized the "benefits," they seemed unwilling to consider the "costs," which in my estimation are considerable. For example, I asked: "**What impact might the "one publication" policy have on the local churches?**" I elaborated, "According to past experience in many churches, other zealous saints will insist on this "one publication" policy and condemn saints, elders, and churches who feel otherwise. Is this not ironic; the very thing intended to preserve the "practical oneness among the local churches" (Publication Work, p. 3) could become a factor of division both within local churches and among them? But isn't this according to Benson Phillips' own prophetic word: "**If we... insist on anything other than the common faith, the oneness will surely be damaged, and divisions will occur.**" (Benson Phillips, Preface, *Speciality, Generality & Practicality of the Church-life,*)

Personally, I fear that this document will create a fissure between saints and local churches. By "drawing a line in the sand," with this statement, two categories of churches

may emerge – “churches that wish to be restricted in one publication” and “churches that do not.” I feel this is not insignificant. Saints and local churches coexisting peacefully within the Lord’s recovery, may soon be separated by the “wedge” formed by the “one publication” issue.”

6. **The Rationale for the public distribution of my writings -- “Analysis & Response.”**

I gave some indication, in my “*Analysis & Response*,” of the motivation behind the wider distribution of my writings. I stated, “In the Lord’s recovery we all desire to “keep the oneness of the Spirit” and endeavour to be in one accord. Yet circumstances may arise which necessitate our speaking out. One such occasion in our recent history was the “Max Incident” in the 1970’s. Shortly after that affair, Brother Lee charged **“every local church must be a police station and every saint must be a policeman. If during the past four and a half years the churches had been police stations and the saints had been policemen, there would have been no way for the thieves to enter in. Many have been reluctant to act as policemen for fear they might cause trouble...”** (Witness Lee, *Truth Messages*, 1979, p. 10). Still today, many are reluctant to speak out “for fear they might cause trouble.” In responding to the LSM document, **I do not wish to be contentious. Rather, I feel that brother Lee’s warning (quoted above) applies to our present situation.** I commend these comments to the reader’s consideration and conscience.” [quoted from the Introduction to my “*Analysis and Response*”]

Brothers, 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.” The lesson which our Brother drew from those incidents -- **“every local church must be a police station and every saint must be a policeman”**—made a lasting impression upon me. Moreover, I would remind you that this was not merely a local matter, affecting only the Church in Chicago. It affected the whole recovery, especially the N. American churches.

Now, 25 years later, the circumstances and the issues are surely different. Others may feel differently, but, I personally feel before the Lord, that Brother Lee’s 1979 word (quoted above) is relevant to our current situation. May I humbly ask the S. California coworkers, just as you take Brother Lee’s speaking on publications seriously, **shouldn’t we also take this speaking** by Brother Lee just as seriously? In writing my “Analysis and Response,” I feel that I have acted upon Brother Lee’s charge to be a “policeman.” You may feel that my writing is misguided and my application of Brother Lee’s “policeman charge” misdirected. Yet, why cannot you try to understand my actions in this light and respond to me with love and understanding, rather than vitriolic accusations about dissension and negative speaking? Shouldn’t I seek to be faithful to my feeling before the Lord? Why then should it be interpreted as, **“an attack** on the blended coworkers”? If, once a declaration is made by the blended coworkers, the slightest sign of disagreement is interpreted as dissension, “negative speaking” and “spreading death,” where is the role for “the policemen,” which Brother Lee talked about?

In sending my writing, "**PUBLICATION WORK IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY-- Analysis & Response**" to the coworkers on 18 Aug. '05, I included the following explanation:

"Dear brothers,

It is now six weeks since the release of the booklet, "**PUBLICATION WORK IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY**" at the LSM Summer training. I have used some of the elapsed time to try to **express more clearly my reservations to the stand concerning "one publication."** At the risk of being tiresome on this issue, I have expressed my response in the document attached. (It is also copied below).

I hope that in the near future the blended coworkers would revisit and reconsider this matter, with a view to changing their position concerning publications in the Lord's recovery.

your brother,
Nigel Tomes"

Dear co-workers in S. California, today, even though I feel I am being attacked and defamed by you in your Sept. 27 letter, I still retain the hope that as a result of this dialogue, "the blended coworkers would revisit and reconsider this matter, with a view to changing their position concerning publications in the Lord's recovery."

- **One Work, Yet Multiple Groups of Workers**

My dear co-workers in S. California, I feel that some of the frustration towards me that you have expressed in your 27th Sept. letter arises from the fact that we are perhaps operating under divergent understandings of how workers exercise. Briefly, according to my understanding, although there is "one work" ("the Lord's work," "the work of the Spirit"), yet there are multiple companies of workers (work groups). The "one work" is "one" due to the one Spirit, coordinating all the operations, not because it is administratively one, with one "central administration of the work." As Brother Watchman Nee wrote: "*Paul and those with him -- as for instance Luke, Silas, Timothy, Titus, and Apollos formed **one group**. Peter, James, John, and those with them formed **another**. **One group came out from Antioch, another from Jerusalem**. Paul refers to those who were with him, (Acts 20:34), which indicates that while there was no organization of the workers into different missions, still they had their own special associates in the work. Even in the beginning, when our Lord chose the twelve, He sent them out two by two. All were fellow workers, but each had his special fellow worker. Such grouping of workers was ordained and ordered by the Lord. **These apostolic companies were not formed along partisan or doctrinal lines; they were formed under the sovereignty of the Spirit, who so ordered the circumstances of the different workers as to link them together in the work. It was not that they were really divided from other workers, but merely that in the Spirit's ordering of their ways, they had not been led into special association with them.***" (Watchman Nee, "**The Normal Christian Church Life**", Volume 30, Collected Works, p. 119)

Brother Nee shared that among the workers in the Lord's work, there were companies of workers grouped around some leaders like Peter and Paul (Acts 2:7). They were in the one Body and in the one work of the Lord, but they were not under one

administration or under one central organization. The one Body organically, did not imply one organization among workers administratively. There are multiple groups of workers within the “one work,” who should “extend the right hand of fellowship towards one another,” seeking to fellowship together and learn from one another. In the matter of work groups, there is no hierarchy of one group above the others. Moreover, the diverse ministries of the apostles Peter, Paul, John etc did not negate the “one New Testament ministry.” All this is my understanding of Brother Nee’s teaching according to the New Testament pattern. When I read the New Testament, I find it consistent with the view Brother Nee gave in *Normal Christian Church Life, Church Affairs* etc. No doubt Brother Nee also “saw the Body” and his seeing the Body does not (I believe) negate or over-ride these scriptural principles. Since Brother Lee was “fully one” with Brother Nee in all matters except details such as the identity of the “two witnesses,” I understand that Brother Lee also taught these same principles.

When Brother Lee was with us, most of the co-workers accepted his leadership among the co-workers and followed his lead as “the one wise master-builder” in the work, and they honored him as “the one who brought the Lord’s recovery to North America.” Nevertheless, at a more practical level there have been multiple groups of workers while Brother Lee was physically with us. In the Americas, Brother Dong led a work-group in South America, Brother Titus Chu led a work-group in the Great Lakes area, and there were other groups.

Now that Brother Lee, [“the one wise master-builder” and “the one who brought the Lord’s recovery to North America.”] is no longer here, there are still multiple companies of co-workers around the globe. I feel it is sovereign of the Lord that your letter to me is addressed from “*The Co-workers in Southern California*,” since it underlines this point. In my understanding, you brothers are a work group who (among other things) labor in S. California in the work of the Lord. Obviously, since I reside in E. Canada, I do not participate in that aspect of the “one work.” Rather, I have, historically labored together with workers in the Great Lakes area, where Brother Titus Chu also labors.

In the matter of publications, a draft of the ‘One Publication’ document was sent out for comment. Some co-workers had serious reservations about releasing the One Publication document. Brother Silas Wu suggested that because of the seriousness and the ramifications of the issue, the affected co-workers should come together in October 2005 for thorough fellowship to resolve the issue according to the Biblical pattern set in Acts 15. That would have been a “real blending according to the “Acts 15”-pattern among the apostles and elders and the result was encouragement for all the saints.

Unfortunately Brother Silas’ suggestion was not heeded and this fellowship did not take place. The serious reservations about the One Publication, including mine, were not addressed or (in some cases) responded to, in any significant way. No consensus was reached on this matter, as no fellowship took place, unlike what happened in Acts 15. An “Acts 15-type” conference has not occurred, an “Acts 15-type” resolution has not been reached, and an “Acts 15-type” decree cannot be issued!

In such a case when one company of co-workers, say “the co-workers in S. California,” decides to go ahead and release the One Publication document publicly, they

are not speaking for all the co-workers. In my view, **this is not an “Acts-15 type decree.”** It seems to me that, under such unfortunate circumstances, **a second or third company of co-workers has the equal right to respond to the document** that affects the churches and the saints they are caring for. Perhaps another relevant Biblical example is when Paul opposed Peter because he was not walking in a straightforward way in relation to the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2:11-14). Had Peter issued a policy pronouncement in Antioch about relationships between Jewish and Gentile believers, while under the influence of Judaizers from James, would not Paul also have the right to issue **a second pronouncement** along the lines of Galatians chapter 2? [Of course I am not implying that you are “under the influence of Judaizers.”] My point is circumstances may arise (like those just indicated) when the release of a second document is justified. My personal view is that such circumstances currently exist. No doubt, time and history will probably (and eternity will certainly) reveal if I am correct.

Brothers, I made my comments public not because I do not know the order in the Body. I am sincerely troubled by the impact of the One Publication document on the saints and churches I serve (especially those in this area). If you ask me why I went public with my comments, I think I have expressed them as clearly as time will currently allow.

- **Leadership in the Lord’s recovery**

Underlying your actions, perhaps, is the assumption that you have the leadership over all the co-workers and all the churches around the globe in the Lord’s recovery. You may have made this assumption because you felt that you had a special relationship with Brother Lee. You may have been asked by him to head up the Living Stream Ministry (LSM) Publishers. However to be on the Board of Directors of LSM Publishers does not automatically confer upon you the responsibility for the leadership over all the co-workers world-wide. The two functions may have been true for Brother Lee as “the one wise master-builder” and “the one who brought the Lord’s recovery to North America.”. It is not necessarily true for the co-workers who follow after him. In my view, the leadership of the Lord’s recovery is not a mandate for Brother Lee to confer. It is the Holy Spirit who would manifest the leadership. In time it will be manifested. Brother Lee did speak of brothers who would “*serve with me [Brother Lee] in a blended way*” Brother Silas Wu has suggested that this was Brother Lee’s view for the remaining period of his life-time as long as the Lord allowed him to remain. As far as I know, Brother Lee left no publicly- proclaimed list of ‘blended co-workers.’ It seems to me that all the co-workers who are truly blended can all lay claim to be “blended co-workers.” It is a spiritual reality, not a position.

Finally I realize that one possible response to my past and present writing is to say, “*Obviously you don’t see the Body, otherwise you would see the matter of one publication.*” Please permit me a brief response. “One publication” is mainly in the “physical, material realm.” It seems to me that this is mainly a physical, administrative and organizational matter. This question – “one publication”- is not an essentially organic matter (like the Body of Christ). If “one publication” is as crucial as you brothers seem to claim, the Sovereign Lord should have simply added it to the “seven ones” in Ephesians 4 (as suggested by brother James Lee on the first occasion when I heard this matter addressed by you brothers). I find it hard to believe that deeper, spiritual insights into the

question of 'one publication' are reserved for an elite group of believers who "live in the Body," "move in the Body," and "have the feeling of the Body."

I submit this response for your consideration and reassure you that I seek the best for the Lord's recovery, as I believe you all do also. If my remarks offend anyone, or if I have overstepped my position, I ask your forgiveness.

Your brother in the Lord's recovery,

Nigel Tomes

PS These are my personal views and not necessarily those of the saints, workers, elders and churches with whom I am associated.