

## “The Blended Brothers” vs. The Bible

*And those members of the body which we consider to be less honorable, these we clothe with more abundant honor; and our uncomely members come to have more abundant comeliness, But our comely members have no need. But God has **blended** the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked, That there would be no division in the body, but that the members would have the same care for one another. (1 Cor. 12:23-25)*

This Greek word **συνεκέρασε**, translated “*blended*” in 1 Corinthians 12:24, is used only here and in one other place: Hebrews 4:2. First Corinthians 12:24 uses it in respect to how God has put all the members of the body together. Hebrews 4:2 uses it to show how the Word of God and our faith must be mixed together to become profitable (...*the word heard did not profit them, not being **mixed together** with faith in those who heard.*) Both uses show how God puts things together in a mysterious way that can only be accomplished in the Divine and mystical realm. In this writing we will only consider the 1 Corinthians usage, since our concern is with the way God blends together all the members of the body of Christ. We will compare and contrast the scriptural use of the term “blended” with the way this word is currently applied in the recovery.

The thought in 1 Corinthians 12:24 is very deep. It shows that God is actively blending His entire body together. This includes the more honorable member with the less honorable, and the comely with the uncomely. Based on this thought, no believer can claim a special status in the Lord’s body. Some may have special gifts, ministries, or operations (12:4-6), but God blends them together with those who do not. Some may operate as a foot, a hand, an ear, or an eye (12:15-17). Others operate in a much more hidden ways. But in the body, we are all being blended together.

Recently, we have begun to use the word “blending” to describe God’s action of putting us together in a spiritual way as we spend time together. We speak of “blending conferences,” “blending meetings,” “blending dinners,” and various “blending activities.” While the act of blending described in 1 Corinthians 12 goes much deeper than these terms imply, such activities surely do not hurt, and are not contrary to Paul’s thought. The more time we spend pursuing Christ together, the more opportunity God has to genuinely blend us all together.

### “The Blended Brothers” – Who Are They?

There is another use of this word among us, however, that is potentially much more damaging. Many today refer to a specific group of brothers as “The Blending Brothers,” “The Blending Co-workers,” or, even worse, “The Blended Brothers (or Co-workers).” This latter title suggests that, within this group, the blending process is somehow already complete, and the circle of persons it includes is closed. The term, “Blended Brothers” suggests that a select group have already attained a perfected state of being blended.

Sadly, instead of disavowing such a designation, these brothers even refer to themselves using this title. Letters written by these brothers sometimes lack any signatures, but instead are signed

using their official title, “The Blended Brothers (or Co-workers).” This surely implies that, in their minds, they, as “The Blended Brothers (or Co-workers),” are a specific, closed circle of individuals. But the use of this nebulous designation amounts to anonymity. How many brothers are included in “The Blended Co-workers?” What are their names? We know with certainty the author of every epistle in the New Testament except Hebrews. If the New Testament is our pattern, why can’t “The Blended Co-workers” also sign their letters?

It seems that on this point, those who call themselves “The Blended Brothers (or Co-Workers) do not know the truth as revealed in the Bible. Rather than implying that all the body is being put together into a spiritual, organic whole, their title – “The Blended Brothers” or “The Blended Co-workers” – sets them aside as a specific group of brothers who are in some way special, separate, and above the rest of the members. If some brothers are “The Blended Brothers,” doesn’t this imply all the other brothers are “non-blended?” Doesn’t it imply that these brothers are blended only with themselves, and the rest of the body is somehow left out? Yet, where is the biblical thought of the honorable being blended with the less honorable, and of the comely being blended with the uncomely? It seems to be totally absent. Again I would ask, do “The Blended Brothers” know the truth on this point?

The Apostle Paul would never have used such a title. He signed each letter (with the possible exception of Hebrews) with his name so that the receivers knew exactly who had written it. He never referred to himself using the definite article “**THE**”. Rather, Paul employed the indefinite article, calling himself “**A** slave of Christ Jesus” (Rom. 1:1), “**A** minister of Christ Jesus” (Rom. 15:16), “**A** called apostle” (1 Cor. 1:1), “**A** wise master builder” (1 Cor. 3:10), “**AN** apostle of Christ Jesus” (2 Cor. 1:1), etc. He seemed to feel that he was only one among many. This left room for God to call many others to the work like himself. This also, shows a humble spirit ready to be blended with the saints he served.

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.

Paul earned his respect from the saints not by title or position, but by his faithful daily labor among them. He described his labor among the saints in Ephesus this way: “*You yourselves know... how I was with you all the time... teaching you publicly and from house to house*” (Acts 20:18-20).

Paul reminded the Thessalonians “*even as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake*” (1 Thess. 1:5). He goes on to say, “*Nor did we seek glory from men, neither from you nor from others, though we could have stood on our authority as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle in your midst...*” (1 Thess. 2:6-7a) This is the way Paul labored among all the churches, and this is how he earned their respect.

Indeed, Paul's attitude toward those with a title is summed up in Galatians 2:6: "*But from those who were reputed to be something—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not accept man's person; for to me those who were of repute added nothing.*"

Can there be a special group of brothers in the Body of Christ who can uniquely be called "The Blended Brothers" or "The Blended Co-workers?" **Absolutely not!** This is unscriptural and smacks of hierarchy and of a collective Popery. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 12:25 that genuine blending is a safeguard to protect us from division. **In contrast**, 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? A term initially used by Paul to honor the uncomely members now designates a privileged class—"The Blended Brothers!"

In the absence of any biblical example or teaching to act as a basis for such a designation, we cannot help but wonder why this small group of brothers insists on using this special title. What is their motive? Brothers Nee and Lee never designated themselves with such a title. Are some trying to elevate themselves above others to attain a high position among the churches? Are they trying to gain some advantage so they can lord it over the saints?

### **No Committee System**

We are in grave danger if we misunderstand and misapply the biblical term "blending" according to our natural understanding. We will spoil its true meaning and negate the real experience. The result may forever change the nature of the church life as we know it.

Brother Watchman Nee wrote in Church Affairs (p. 168) that, "*God is always the God of authority and the God of order. There is never a committee system of three or five men. There is no such thing in the Bible!*" Isn't it strange that something Brother Nee strongly warned against, an unscriptural term, has grown so strongly among us?

According to the New Testament, the leaders in God's move are clearly the apostles, not a committee of "Blended Co-workers." First Corinthians 12:28 says, "*And God has placed some in the church: first apostles...*" Based on this verse, Brother Witness Lee wrote in his Conclusion Messages (p. 2169), "*The Church here [1 Cor. 12:28] refers both to its universal aspect and its local aspect. The first gifts to be placed in the church are the apostles...*" He also says, "*In the universal church there is only one office – the apostleship*" (p. 2158).

### **Where Are Today's Apostles?**

After Brother Lee's departure, we seem to have abandoned this biblical example and practice. We no longer talk about apostles, nor ask "Who is an apostle?" Rather, we chose to pick up the unscriptural term, "The Blended Co-workers." Are we still absolute for the truth? If so, how can we

turn so quickly from a biblical to a non-biblical term? If the apostles lead, then we should ask, "Who among 'The Blended Co-workers' are apostles? Where is the proof of their apostleship?"

Brother Witness Lee clearly listed the qualifications for someone to claim the office of apostle. In his Conclusion Messages (p. 2168) he writes, "*As long as anyone has the power to preach the gospel, the gift to preach the divine truth, and the ability to establish churches, he is qualified and confirmed to be an apostle sent by the Lord with His commission and authority.*"

Some of "The Blended Brothers" might have been very faithful in editing Witness Lee's messages into written form; others may be eloquent speakers; still others capable administrators, good at writing message outlines, or have an encyclopedic knowledge of Brother Lee's writings; others may be highly capable in handling litigation in the law-courts, etc., etc. – However, none of these things qualify them to be apostles and lead the recovery!!

### **The Bible as our Standard**

Both Watchman Nee and Witness Lee taught that we should follow the Bible absolutely.

*"The Bible is our only standard. We are not afraid to preach the pure Word of the Bible, even if men oppose; but if it is not the Word of the Bible, we could never agree even if everyone approved of it."* (Watchman Nee, *The Christian*, Issue No. 1, 1925, in *Collected Works*, vol. 11, p. 1231)

*"The very great, particular characteristic in the Lord's recovery is to do everything according to the Bible."* (Witness Lee, *Elders' Training, Book 7*, p. 107)

Let us come back to the truth concerning "blending" as presented in God's Holy Word.

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