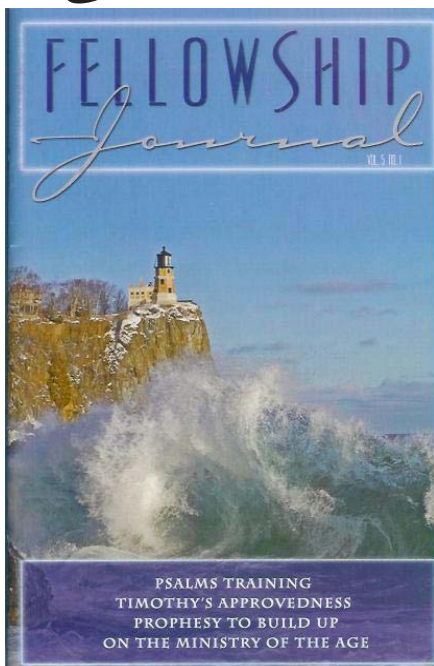


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

If nothing else, the "one publication" issue has brought about much searching of heart. We again must consider what our stand should be in these days.

It seems clear that we must stand for the truth delivered to us more than any human means used to reveal it. In other words, if I were to stand for some ministry more than the truth itself, what will I do if that ministry departs from the truth? What if those ministers told me I should no longer receive other believers, or other ministers the Lord is sending to speak for the continued building up of His Body? Would I not then depart from the ground of oneness in the name of that ministry, or miss the speaking the Lord intended for His church? John's operation was not foreseen by Paul, who seemed to pin his hopes on Timothy, and neither did John seem to refer to Paul! (This does not mean each did not perceive the grace the Lord had given to the other - Gal. 2:9.) The line of continuation was spiritual. If there had been a party of Paul insisting we should only receive Paul's "completed word," they would have missed John's ministry! If John came to our town, what would we have missed if we said, "We have Paul's writings! You are confusing the churches with your different teaching! You bother us with your different flavor! Be gone!"

Some feel it is safe to make the move to gather exclusively on the "ground" of a particular ministry. In fact, many rich and dear saints seem to have taken this way. But if we are clear about the truth, even though we feel comparatively poor and less worthy of the Lord's blessing, we cannot follow in such a departure from what was first delivered to us. Paul warned, "If even we, or an angel out of heaven, should announce to you a gospel beyond that which we have announced to you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). Even if someone as spiritual as Brother Lee* were to leave this ground, we could not leave it, because to our realization it is what God has committed to us. The revelation of God's economy and the ground of oneness are the two things we have been uniquely committed with in His recovery. We cannot sacrifice either, and certainly not one in the name of the other! Both are necessary for God's purpose to be fulfilled. How tragic then whenever the sweet practice of oneness is violated in the name of a particular ministry! If no protest of "All are yours" is heard (1 Cor. 3:22), I, for one, am left with the impression that the divisiveness that takes place in their name is condoned. And, if the practical oneness is broken over an issue introduced by that ministry, and condoned, I am led to conclude that such attacks are endorsed.

Strikingly, one of the "tests" of a local church, as Brother Lee taught, was that it held no particular teaching**! Should we then blissfully abide where only approved teaching can be heard? No. We should desire to abide where the organic function of the Body is proven and borne out. The Lord will not abide in institution. In the churches He must have the freedom to speak freely and even instantly. If this gives the enemy opportunity, I would rather face it leaning on a living Lord than on any effort of man to safeguard God's work. Therefore, Lord, raise up many prophets in the churches in these days, and may the Lord have mercy on us all for His name's sake.

John Berglund

*box, page 36 **Young Peoples Training, Message 14

THE CHINESE-SPEAKING THANKSGIVING CONFERENCE

A report:

About 350 saints, 40 young people and 110 children attended a Chinese-speaking conference in Naperville during the Thanksgiving weekend. The saints came from about 30 localities, ranging from Minneapolis and Ames, Iowa to Toronto and Montreal, Canada. Starting Thursday evening, the conference consisted of five messages, one question and answer session and two afternoon fellowship meetings. Brother Titus Chu spoke on “**Our Victorious God of Glory.**” During the messages, Brother Titus covered:

God’s eternal plan to have a reproduction of Himself;

The corruption of earth due to Lucifer’s fall;

God’s creation of man in His image and likeness to be His expression and ruling representatives on the earth;

God’s interaction with men through the successive ages;

God’s salvation and the creation of the New Man (the church);

God’s gaining the earth through the local expressions of the church (the local churches) ;

The characteristics of the local churches:

- 1. Under the authority of the Holy Spirit,**
- 2. Upon the local ground of oneness,**
- 3. Having Christ as the unique content, and**
- 4. Taking the Bible as the unique standard;**

Christ’s headship toward His Body (the church);

Christ as the One walking in the midst of the local churches; and

The factors of degradation.

During the afternoon fellowship many saints gave touching testimonies of what they have experienced during and after the disciples' camps and the work of the Lord in the 10-month labor.

The conference was held in an elementary school, while the children and the young people's service were cared for in the two local halls. Although these three sites are all within one mile of each other, the traffic was busy and the logistics were not easy. We thank the Lord for covering all aspects so that everybody was kept in safety for this time. The various services during the conference also provided wonderful opportunities for the saints in Naperville to experience the Lord and the rich fellowship of the saints. More than thirty families gave hospitality for about 160 saints and family members. Many also stayed in nearby hotels. The bulk of the coordination was carried out by about two dozen local saints, some of whom are relatively new in the church life. They experienced the great blessing of one accord in the Lord. We realized that there were some shortages, and we hope to learn from our experiences. We thank the Lord that all serving ones were able to smile from their hearts at the end of the conference. This is a miracle considering all the practical needs and the lack of experience. The saints enjoyed the messages, the fellowship, the hospitality and the service. They responded with generous offerings that far exceeded the expense of the conference. The surplus will be passed on for the Lord's work.

During the conference it was decided that we will have another Thanksgiving conference next year in Naperville or nearby. Based on the positive experience, the brothers felt confident that the attendance at such times will continue to increase. It was suggested that we hold the next conference in a large hotel. We hope that you and the saints in your locality may consider planning ahead to come and enjoy the riches of Christ with us next Thanksgiving!

Simon Song

CORRECTION:

In the November issue of the Fellowship Journal (Vol. 4, No. 11), on page 2 the phrase "the first term referring to his function, and the second to his spiritual maturity" should have read "the first term referring to his spiritual maturity, and the second to his function".

CONFERENCE IN GOSHEN

"I alone know My purpose for you, says Jehovah, prosperity and not misfortune, and a long line of children after you." - Jeremiah 29:11

On November 4 - 5, brothers John Myer and Vern Yoder led a weekend conference in Goshen, Indiana, with the theme being **Our Future and Our Hope**. They began reminding those in attendance that we are on the front lines. How does God feel when people encounter us. Is He concerned? Will we let Him touch others through us or will we hinder Him? We are part of His testimony, representing God on this earth. We are His expression; the effective, living testimony of Jesus Christ. When people come to a meeting, they should encounter this wonderful Somebody over and over. But if we are stuck in a rut, often this doesn't happen. How is it we can practically be His expression? In considering this matter we looked at the church in Jerusalem (Acts 21) which had been flourishing as the Lord's testimony. But something had happened (vs. 21), for they slowly began to be zealous for a codified way of living as expressed in the Jewish law. To apply this to our situation today, when they meet us, people may encounter something that is simply not Christ. It may be something of right and wrong. Instead of meeting Jesus they meet other things and find no way to enter in. In such a case, they find no testimony of Jesus. We need to remain fresh and living and not allow ourselves to become a testimony of anything other than Jesus. Our desire is to be the Lord's testimony. We want to be the shining,, cutting-edge testimony of Jesus Christ!

God is the ultimate optimist! He trusts that we are able to represent Him on the earth, because He is in us! Sometimes that means we have to change our forms and practices in order to bring Christ to people. This doesn't necessarily mean our practice is wrong - it just may not meet the need of those we are trying to reach. For example, in Acts there was a time when the right thing to do was to have all things in common. Yet there was another time when not having all things in common was the way to go. A living testimony has to be able to respond to the needs of the specific situation surrounding it.

One of the brothers compared our church life to often being that of a life-boat station where the members are content just to get together and talk about saving lives, fix up their boats, and "fellowship" regarding their mission. Yet if they never actually go out and save any lives, how sad that would be! We shouldn't become exclusive to the point that we are not able to receive new members. In fact, in some situations it almost seems as if saints are afraid new ones might come in and mess up the system they are comfortable with!

We need to remember what we are here for and determine how we might accomplish it. What we are doing here is for the testimony of Jesus Christ. It is too easy to forget what the church is supposed to be. For instance, we may become consumer-oriented and do things to attract people from other “clubs” rather than saving people who are dying! If we don’t remember our purpose, we become self-serving. For example, the purpose of a car is to drive it, not merely to fill it with gas. How silly it would be to just be content to have a full gas tank, and yet never drive the car! The church is not here merely for truth or even the enjoyment of Christ; the church is here to testify of Him - in truth and by enjoying Him.

How do we accomplish this? We have been promised power to be His testimony (Acts 1:8). He will fill us. It is not up to our imagination or any creativity on our part. It is entirely a matter of cooperation between us and the Spirit at a human level. We have received power to be His witnesses; this is our mission. We need only step out and trust Him to supply us.

Our testimony is that Jesus is alive from the dead. We are one only as we focus on this common faith in the ascended Christ. If we look away at one another or anything else, the oneness is easily lost. In this oneness our message of the resurrected Christ is shared with the world. This is made known and witnessed to in power by the Spirit as He is poured out upon us. It is His power, not our skill, that reaches people. If we believe, God will honor His Word, even if it is not skillfully presented.

When our focus is upon the Lord and the Lord’s testimony, the church life becomes fresh. We must not come together for any other mission. In addition, we are here for a corporate expression, not merely as individuals attempting to reach people. In Acts 1:8 the “you” in “you will be My witnesses” is corporate.

We can compare the church to a team. We play together, yet each member has a different function. There are no individual stars! We operate together as one body. This is powerful! Each of us should be satisfied to be a member, to be on the same team, yet be different. Each added portion is a testimony of the body.

The church falls into a rut when the members are bound by religious concepts. Sometimes our practices are simply according to traditions, principles or philosophies rather than the leading of the Lord. In our meetings we must remember our focus and do things that make Christ accessible to others, not just whatever benefits us. Paul said that during the meeting he would rather speak five words others could understand than practice something which to them would be incomprehensible! We must be willing to change our practice for the sake of those outside. It should be our desire that each of our gatherings would attract others. Lord, may our meetings become magnetic! - D.S.

(We thank this sister for her summary! - ed.)

PSALMS TRAINING

PSALM TWENTY-THREE

From December 21 through 26, Titus Chu spoke on the first 24 Psalms to a group of trainees in Cleveland, Ohio. Nestled between the two high “peaks” of Psalms 22 and 24, Psalm 23 portrays a marvelous portrait of what those who have followed Him into His death and resurrection experience as His tender sheep on this continuing pathway.

**“JEHOVAH IS MY SHEPHERD;
I LACK NOTHING”**

Psalm 22, the previous Psalm, is a psalm focused upon the experience of the Lord’s death and resurrection. Those who experience something of the Lord’s death and resurrection really experience that the Lord is their Shepherd, and that all they want, they will have.

A shepherd lives an idyllic life. Once, while visiting northern China, I asked someone to take me to see the grasslands that region is famous for. While there with some of the people I drank horse milk and ate their cheese. That was also the first time I saw such a large flock of sheep. There must have been more than a thousand, watched over by only one shepherd and one dog. Since the sheep basically follow one another from one field to the next, the shepherd basically does little other than watch over them. He selects the pasture, and then abides with the sheep while they graze along. That scene was one of the most pleasant I have ever witnessed.

Now we belong to a heavenly Shepherd who knows where the best grass is, and leads us to that place and then allows us to enjoy that field as our portion. Still, our Shepherd cannot eat for us! Sometimes we ask Him to put something in our mouth, but He says, “My responsibility is to bring you to a place where you can have so much satisfaction, but you have to eat for yourself!” Too many Christians only eat when someone else feeds them! We need to partake of this pasture daily and take in the riches the Lord has provided.

When David shepherded his flock, he had to contend with wild animals, but he doesn’t stress that here. Instead, the shepherd is portrayed primarily as the source of supply. Our responsibility is to be in the flock and in the field.

Furthermore, we should learn to be so happy with whatever the Lord has provided us. The sheep-psalmist could say with appreciation, “I lack nothing! I shall not want!” Many, however, seem to raise their head and say, “Where is there a better field of grass?” We

like to look around for what appears to be a better pasture. Instead of saying, "Lord, I enjoy You in Your death and resurrection, and my living is simply a living that is together with You, so I am happy with whatever You provide for me. I am very happy with whatever You have given me." For so many, however, this is perhaps the hardest lesson to learn. People tend to always be looking around. Many times Satan can lead us astray just because we want something called "success."

The ability to say, "I will lack nothing" is truly a sign of having experienced the cross. Who are the ones who can say, "The Lord is my shepherd; I will lack nothing"? Only those who say "I am one with my crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus Christ".

"HE MAKES ME LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES, HE LEADS ME BESIDE WATERS OF REST"

How does the Lord shepherd us? He makes us to lie down in green pastures and leads us beside the waters of rest. Green is the color of life, but rest here signifies death. He leads you in life, and He leads you to death. Isn't that marvelous? He makes you to lie down in green pastures. This field is full of life. The Lord provides us with something so rich in life. Even around you as you lie down, there is so much to eat! You are right in the midst of the riches of life. Furthermore, He leads us beside waters of rest. Water is the substance of life, and green is the sign of life. When He leads you to the pasture to surround you with

all the riches of life, He also leads you beside waters of rest.

The best rest is death. This is why the Bible sometimes portrays death as sleep. Often the Lord has a difficult time being our shepherd just because we move around too much! Some people are very ambitious and are full of considerations about what they should do for themselves. The Lord, however, seeks to lead us to lie down in His life, and to bring us to the waters to put ourselves into His death. It is there we will find the real enjoyment.

The real enjoyment comes in when you are finally able to testify to the world, "I have died to my future. I have died to my success. I have died to seeking my fortune." The water is the water of rest. Unless you die, you cannot drink much, for you will be too preoccupied with other things. Those who put themselves in the place of death enjoy the most bountiful supply of Christ.

"HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME ON THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE"

David then says, "He restores my soul, He guides me on the path of righteousness for His name's sake". Your soul denotes your person. Your soul is simply you. Your entire person, therefore, He restores. Why? Because your name is Fragile. After these five days of enjoyment in the Word together you are filled in Spirit. As you drive home, however, a car may cut you off and then drive slowly along, blocking your way. Are you still in the pasture and be-

side the waters? We are interesting. The good part is this—We have a good Shepherd who understands our situation exactly. He says, “If you seem short of something, I am able to restore it. I will even restore your soul to the freshness of life.

Many young people experience this. After participating in a wonderful time at a training such as this, you desire to live totally for the Lord. Then, after returning to school, you hear from your friends what they all did over the break. When you tell them what you attended, they laugh at you for wasting your time! They cannot appreciate what you experienced, but you find yourself envying what they did. That is when you think, “My soul, O, what did I do?” It seems we are professionals at being defeated. Our soul can be worn out so easily, but here David says, “He restores me”! The Lord is still supporting you. Quite frankly, as I serve the Lord, many times I look at the environment, and I feel I need to say, “Lord Jesus, I am tired.” But every time we touch the Lord, He restores our soul. Even if you feel unable to turn to Him, He still arranges everything so you can be restored! He guides you in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.

This word for “guides” in Hebrew does not depict something strong and forceful...instead it depicts something very tender, sweet, and understanding. When led onto the paths of righteousness, different people respond differently. One who is sturdy may be very steady and finish in less time than another

who is young and timid. However, there is but one road God has planned for all of us, which is the path Christ Himself pioneered, and this path becomes the path of righteousness. Along this path, He gently yet persistently guides us. Some are buoyant, so He says, “Come on! Let’s run!” Some would say, “Lord, I am just a little sister.” He would say to that person, “Let’s take it one step at a time”. This has been my experience for the last fifty years. Whether I have felt strong or tired and fragile, the Spirit of the Lord has matched me. No one can make the church life in his or her natural life. Eventually everyone has to say, “Lord, this is tough going, and I am tired!” As our guide, the Lord does not deal with us harshly on this pathway. Instead, He says, “I am tired too. Let’s go, I will guide you. Take a step. Was that all right? Now take another one... that’s good. How about let’s try a slow jog for a little while. Be careful of that rock!” He guides every one of us in such a way. He fully understands where we are! He knows how ready we are, what kind of energy we possess. Knowing all things, in His tender care He guides us.

On the one hand He guides us fully knowing us and our capacity to follow along on this path, and on the other hand His guiding is always with the goal in view. If His guiding was according to His strength and our will rather than our strength and His will, think how terrible the outcome would be! The direction, however, never changes. It is in the path of

righteousness, something according to His will, but it is still exactly according to our strength.

No one can plan where they will be with the Lord at a certain point in the future, but you can say that it will be on this path of righteousness if you take Him as your shepherd. For His name's sake, He will keep us on this pathway! He is not a God who lets people down who trust Him in the way of righteousness.

Your name represents who you are. When I was young, I spoke at a very large conference. Many got to know me at that time as someone who was very energetic and forceful. To those who were present, my name became associated with that kind of prevailing image. Many years later I went to Florida to see some brothers. I didn't think I would need any warm clothes in Florida, but it was cold! A middle age sister was introduced to me, and when she found out that I was Titus Chu, she couldn't quite believe it, because her knowledge of my name came from that conference long ago! That testimony of my name disappeared, for I was no longer that young prevailing brother, but rather just a middle-aged shivering person suffering the cold! To David's feeling, however, Jehovah had a name on the earth, and that name was His testimony. The Lord desired to uphold that testimony His name bore, so for His name's sake He would be faithful to take care of David, be with him, and even patiently guide him and walk with him according to his ability and strength to follow. We must re-

alize, however, that everything that the Lord does for us is for HIS name's sake, not ours. Everything must eventually produce something for this marvelous Christ!

**“EVEN THOUGH I WALK THROUGH THE
VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH,
I DO NOT FEAR EVIL,
FOR YOU ARE WITH ME”**

David then says, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I do not fear evil, for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me”. The psalmist has already passed through the experiences of Psalm 22 and is committed to this pathway of the cross. In Hebrew the word for “shadow” (v.4) conveys the sense of being in the midst of high cliffs. The valley of the shadow of death is both scary and confining. This valley is a deep, narrow passage with steep and lofty rock walls. You are walking in the midst of it, so you do not quite see the sunshine. Furthermore, you don't see what is up ahead; you cannot see the future. You don't know when a big stone may drop in front of you or behind you to block your pathway. When something comes down to shut the way behind you, it helps you go forward, for you realize there is no turning back! In the process, in a sense it *is* scary. You have no future. You don't know in experience where this pathway leads. You have no way to plan ahead. You have nothing else that can support you along the way. You are walking right in the midst of cliffs.

You have no alternative source of support, no safety net. Everything causes you to feel you are right in the midst of extreme danger. But even though it is the valley of the shadow of death, you will not die, for it is only a shadow, not death itself!

The Christian life is interesting. When you are walking in the path of righteousness, he guides you so comfortably. Then you find you are passing through the plain and the hills, you are suddenly surrounded by sharp cliffs. Everything seems threatening. When you were single, the way was easier. Now that you are married, for instance, every decision holds greater consequence, and the consequences as you follow the Lord are multiplied further when you have children. Sometimes the way in front seems totally blocked, yet still you find there is a way, even though it seems almost breathtakingly narrow. Isn't the Christian life romantic? In a sense, we should tell the Lord the more such "turns" that are ahead the better, for every turn causes us to be afraid, and every turn causes us to know our God! In any and every valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil. We die with Christ, and we live with Christ; not by the experience of God's mighty hand upon us in power, but rather along this consuming pathway, experiencing and witnessing His operation for His name's sake.

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

I have had some "good" days, but most have been in the depths

of this winding and narrow chasm. Because of it, I can testify how the Lord has been faithful, when everything seemed finished, to keep the way open! In 1955 I went to military school to be an English interpreter. I didn't know that was for my preparation to be here speaking with you today! Before I could begin the program, I received a letter informing me that as a cadet of the language school I was required to undergo basic training at the military academy at a certain date. That, however, was the date I was to be discharged from Interpreter's School. So I saw the commander and was allowed to go home for a week. I found I had just missed hearing T. Austin-Sparks share. Everyone was telling me how glorious that was. Then someone told me that I could take comfort in the fact that Brother Lee was going to conduct a training, but that training was to begin at the same time I had to begin my second round of boot camp! One of the brothers even told me, "Brother Lee is totally ripe in his ministry now. You have to be in that training!" I had to reply that it was the Lord's will that sent me to military academy instead, but every word he said made me ache. Afterwards, as I was singing "The way of the cross means sacrifice" on the train to the base, the train stopped. I looked up, wondering why. Another train had arrived from the other direction. Out piled my fellow trainees from the base, who, spotting me, began to jump and shout and bang on my window, "Hey, Titus, there you go again!" They were

all in their civilian clothing, and I in my uniform. At that moment I told the Lord, "You can beat me, You can discipline me, and You can do whatever you want to me, because I am consecrated to You, but You cannot make fun of me!" So I folded the Bible and hymnal and said, "From now on I am not going to read the Bible or pray. Forget about Jesus because He is a joker!" Before the meal, I would almost forget myself and begin to pray, but then I would stop myself. Yet after a week I was so thirsty for the Lord. I held out for eight or nine days, but finally I said, "Lord I surrender". I knelt down in the corner of a field and had a thorough repentance. I told the Lord, "I know I said I loved You, but I lied: I really only love myself". After that, at the next meal in the mess hall the company commander entered with a certain expression on his face. Inwardly I heard a voice say, "Now you go back to be in the training with Brother Lee!" My commander announced to us that all who had been previously trained were released as of that day. The biggest miracle to me was that the Lord provided me that repentance a few hours before. I told myself, "My Lord is the overcomer! He is really the Lord of all things." What is this? This is how He guides you.

This is how I first met Brother Lee: I asked the elders about being in the training with Brother Lee, and was later told he wanted to see me at a certain time in the lobby at Hall One. I was praying, "Lord Jesus, Let Brother Lee say yes!" Another el-

der appeared and, looking at me, told me to go home, for he didn't think Brother Lee could be bothered, but I didn't have the peace to leave. Then the brother who originally told me where to wait passed by and said, "Don't worry, He will come." That was a real comfort! Eventually he came and asked, "Are you brother Chu?" I said yes. He stood with me there for a matter of moments, considering before the Lord. It seemed a long time to me! Then he finally said, "It's good. You come." When I went home, I had the feeling, "Whatever the enemy does, the table the Lord sets before us just becomes richer!" I enjoyed that "banquet" for three months. So much was released in that training. After those three months, my entire spiritual understanding was elevated. Much of what I received required years to experience. You do walk through the valley of the shadow of death. It does seem illogical sometimes. Americans like to say, "Why me?" I like to answer, "Why *not* you?" In reality, we who walk in the valley experience the richest feast!

**"YOUR ROD AND YOUR STAFF, THEY
COMFORT ME"**

The psalmist experiences the Lord's rod and staff in this way. The rod of authority the Lord uses is as Aaron's budding rod; it is full of life in resurrection; it is not merely a symbol of authority. Furthermore, the Lord also wields a staff... of comfort! A rod is something the Lord uses as He executes His government

(Rev. 19:15). A staff is something a shepherd uses to guide and comfort his sheep. You do confront difficult experiences, but afterwards you feel so comforted! Actually, His government and His leading both comfort us.

**“YOU SPREAD A TABLE FOR ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ADVERSARIES;
YOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL;
MY CUP RUNS OVER”**

Eventually, the Lord spreads a table before us in the presence of our adversaries. The difficult experiences only bring us into a deeper enjoyment of Christ. By going through these experiences Christ is spread out on the table to meet all kinds of needs and as our supply and encouragement for our maturity in life. In this context, our head is anointed by the Lord our Shepherd with oil. We serve him. The psalmist is now like a high priest, serving the Lord. How good this is! Many desire to serve the Lord, but without passing through the process portrayed in Psalms One through Twenty-three, even should you attempt to serve Him, how will your service bring about what the Lord is after? What the Lord is after is that you eventually become such a person whom He can anoint.

But do not worry. The Lord tells us, “I am with you. My Spirit is with you, my process is with you. I have my divine commitment.” He, the anointed One, will anoint our head with oil, and more than that, He will bless us. The portion we have is so full, far beyond our under-

standing! My feeling is, “How, Lord, can you measure such a cup to me?” Yet as I followed the Lord on the path of righteousness and through the valley of the shadow of death, I was led to this place.

“SURELY GOODNESS AND LOVINGKINDNESS WILL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE, AND I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH FOR THE LENGTH OF MY DAYS”

Thus the psalmist concludes, “Surely goodness and loving-kindness will follow me all the days of my life”. After you take a step, you find there is goodness. It is not that goodness and lovingkindness will LEAD me. Every step you take may be very risky, but if you don’t take the step, you cannot experience goodness and lovingkindness following you! You should be so free, that you care for nothing, lay hold of nothing, and desire nothing but to take the Lord’s way. If you do, with every step you will discover that there is goodness and mercy following you.

It is such a living that causes the psalmist to declare, “I will dwell in the house of Jehovah for the length of my days.” It is not a house of a certain locality you will live in all your days, but the Lord’s house. Now you realize how blessed is this life. My life is only for Christ and His testimony. How good this is!

- Titus Chu

(Further messages from this training on Psalms 1-24 will be available at www.clevelandonline.org.)

ON
“THE MINISTRY OF THE AGE”
AND
“THE MINISTER OF THE AGE”
WHAT DID WATCHMAN NEE TEACH?

Recently, the topics “the Vision of the Age,” “the Ministry of the Age,” and “the Minister of the Age” have been emphasized in the Lord’s recovery. By “Minister of the Age,” we mean a particular servant of God, who accomplishes God’s work in an era, like Noah or Moses in the Old Testament. These three matters—the Vision, Ministry and Minister of the Age—are conceptually distinct. There can be a unique vision and one ministry in an age, yet, they may not belong to a particular “Minister of the Age.” Hence, someone may agree that there are a vision and ministry in an epoch, yet reject the idea that these belong to a singular “Minister of the Age.” Rather a number of ministers, perhaps widely dispersed over the globe, may share the same vision and ministry in an era. This corresponds with the apostle Paul’s word, “Therefore having **this ministry** (singular) as **we** (plural, the ministers) have received mercy...” (2 Cor. 4:1)

The concept of a unique “Minister of the Age,” has been strongly promoted in recent years. Consider, this exposition from *The Ministry* magazine published by Living Stream

Ministry, “In every age there is a particular vision. This vision is released **not through many persons but through one person who is the minister of that age**. There is the vision of the age, and **the one who receives this vision becomes the minister of the age**. All the others who are with him are led through this one, ... they speak ... according to the leading of the one whom the Lord has chosen to give the vision of the age.” (*The Ministry*, vol. 7, No. 6, Aug., 2003, p. 34, emphasis added).

What we wish to examine here, is not mainly “the vision of the age,” and “the ministry of the age,” but, more importantly, the unique person, the “minister of the age.” We should ask, Is this teaching according to the New Testament? However, we defer that question to another occasion. Instead, at this time, we want to pose two questions:

(1) Did Watchman Nee teach that there is one, unique ‘Minister of the Age’?

(2) Did Brother Nee see himself as the unique ‘Minister of the Age’?

**"IN EVERY AGE THERE IS A
MINISTRY OF THAT AGE"**

In 1948 Watchman Nee briefly addressed this issue. He said *"In every age there is the ministry of that age."* (*Collected Works*, vol. 57, p. 260). Brother Nee explains *"In every age the Lord has special things that He wants to accomplish. He has His recoveries and His own works to do. The particular recovery and work that He does in one age is **the ministry of that age.**"* (57, 260-1) Here brother Nee refers to "the ministry of that age," explaining that God has a specific work or service He wants to accomplish in each era. He adds, *"It is God's mercy that a person can see and come into contact with the ministry of that age."* (57, 261) Clearly, Watchman Nee taught that there was a "Ministry (service) of the Age." But the question remains, Is there one particular person, a special servant of the Lord, who is **the unique** 'Minister of that Age'? In the same place Brother Nee says, *"Luther was a minister of his age. Darby was also a minister of his age."* (57, 260) Note the indefinite article, *"a minister of his age."* The Chinese can also be rendered, *"Luther was **one** minister of his age, Darby was also **one** minister of his age."* When directly addressing this issue, Brother Nee does not refer to either Luther or Darby as **the** unique "minister of the age." We cannot find a statement by Watchman Nee affirming one, unique "Minister of the Age."

MARTIN LUTHER WAS NOT THE
UNIQUE MINISTER IN HIS AGE

Elsewhere brother Nee elaborates on the theme of recovery in Church history. He says, *"not until the fullness of time did God release certain truths during particular periods of time and cause them to be revealed once more."* (11, 844) He calls these truths "the present truth" for that era (2 Peter 1:12). Watchman Nee cites the example of Martin Luther saying, *"He was a vessel raised up by God to unveil the truth of justification by faith. ... this truth became the 'present truth' in that age."* (11, 844) Brother Nee emphasizes, *"the truth of justification by faith. This was Luther's particular recovery."* (11, 845) Yet, (according to Brother Nee) it was not the recovery of Luther alone. Elsewhere Watchman Nee writes, *"God's work of recovery began with Martin Luther. ... This, of course, **does not mean that the recovery***



MARTIN LUTHER

began with Luther alone. At the same time that he was raised up, ***other people saw the same things that he did.*** He is merely taken as representative of the recovery of that age." (57, 49 emphasis added) In Watchman Nee's view, the recovery of justification by faith did not belong to Martin Luther alone. No doubt Luther was important, yet ***"other people saw the same things that he did."*** In Brother Nee's words, Martin Luther "is merely taken as representative of the recovery of that age." Brother Nee does **not** teach (either explicitly or implicitly) that Luther was **the unique** "Minister of his Age."

JOHN NELSON DARBY WAS NOT THE
UNIQUE MINISTER IN HIS AGE

When Watchman Nee considers "John Nelson Darby and the revival which he represents," he says "In 1827 a group of people were raised up in Dublin, Ireland. Among them were men like Edward



JOHN NELSON DARBY

Cronin and Anthony Norris Groves. ... A short time later, ...John Nelson Darby began to ...expound the Bible among them. Gradually, more and more expositors were raised up among them, such as William Kelly, C. H. Mackintosh, B. W. Newton, and J. G. Bellett." (11, 850) No doubt Darby played a pivotal role. Brother Nee records, "Originally what the brothers saw was rather limited, but when Darby joined, the light of heaven poured down like a torrent." (47, 65) Yet Darby is not presented as a single, isolated "minister of the age." Darby's seminal book, ***The Nature and Unity of the Church...*** was "the first among thousands of books published by the brothers." (11, 66). Moreover, Darby was one, among many ministers. In addition to those named above, George Muller, George Cutting, James Deck, F. W. Grant, Robert Anderson, Andrew Miller and Robert Chapman are listed by Brother Nee, who concludes, "If we were to recount in detail others among the brothers, ***the number of all who were greatly used by the Lord would exceed at least a thousand.***" (47, 69) Hence, Darby is viewed as **"a** minister of his age," and **not "the** Minister of the Age." The evidence suggests that the concept of one unique minister of the age was not held by Watchman Nee. Therefore, our answer to the first question, — **Did Watchman Nee teach that there is one, unique 'Minister of the Age'? — is "No."**

**DID WATCHMAN NEE CONSIDER
HIMSELF
THE UNIQUE MINISTER OF THE AGE?**

In recent LSM publications, Brother Nee has been designated “the Minister of the Age.” Consider, for example, the statement, “*The Lord raised up our brother Nee in approximately the first half of the twentieth century. The vision of the age was with him. He was the minister of the age.*” (*The Ministry*, *ibid*, p. 35, emphasis added) Along the same lines, another brother says, “*In the twentieth century the minister of the age was Watchman Nee and then Witness Lee as the continuation of Watchman Nee. These brothers were ministers of the age. There is no doubt about this.*” (*The Ministry*, vol. 9, no. 6, June 2005, p. 114, emphasis added)

In the Lord’s recovery, we all respect and appreciate Brother Watchman Nee. He was a vessel greatly used by the Lord; we are not questioning that. However, we should ask, **Did Watchman Nee consider himself the unique minister of the age? Would Brother Nee agree with this designation? Would he accept the title, “Minister of the Age”?**

Reviewing his own role in the early twentieth century, Brother Nee says “*From 1926 on, we began to release many messages concerning salvation, the church and the cross.*” (11, 856) He continues, “*Personally, I received much help from Mrs. Penn-Lewis. In England Mr. Austin-Sparks also received help*

from her.” (11, 856) “*It was not until 1934 that we realized that ... Christ is God’s centrality and God’s universality. All God’s plan is related to Christ. This is the truth that God is pleased to reveal to us in these days.*” (11, 857) Did Watchman Nee claim that only he saw this? Was this his vision alone? He continues, “*This is what God showed Brother Sparks also,*” and adds, “*One elderly pastor, Dr. F. B. Meyer also saw this matter.*” (11, 857) In 1934, Watchman Nee did not claim to be the unique minister of the age. Rather, he viewed himself, together with T. Austin-Sparks, F. B. Meyer, and others, as ministers (plural) of that age. This represents brother Nee’s earlier perspective.

Fifteen years later, Watchman Nee again surveyed God’s current recovery. In 1948, he recalled, “*It was not until Brother T. Austin-Sparks wrote about resurrection in 1926 ... that the world knew for the first time what resurrection is.*



THEODORE AUSTIN-SPARKS

When Miss Barber and I read his writings, we began to pay attention to this matter." (57, 56-7) Brother Nee continues, "About 1930 Brother T. Austin-Sparks went on further to see the Body. From that time on, he continued to speak on the Body." (57, 59) In 1948 Watchman Nee declared, "The recovery has reached the stage of the Body. Perhaps this will be the last recovery." (57, 60) Again, Brother Nee made no claim that only he saw "the Body." Rather, he recognized the portions of other New Testament ministers, especially T. Austin-Sparks.

We conclude from our investigation that, even in his later ministry, Brother Nee still valued the revelation of others, notably T. Austin-Sparks. Based upon his own writings, we assert that Watchman Nee did **not** claim for himself a unique status as **the** sole "Minister of the Age." Rather Brother Nee regarded himself as one, among a number of ministers, carrying out the ministry of that age. Hence, our answer to the second question, — **Did Brother Nee see himself as the unique 'Minister of the Age'? – is also "No."**

Recent LSM publications have assigned the title, "Minister of the Age," to Watchman Nee. However, we should ask, would Watchman Nee have accepted this designation? We think not. His own writings suggest that **Brother Nee would have rejected this designation**, not because of humility, but because it did not match his view of God's recovery work throughout history and in his own era. - Nigel Tomes



W. NEE & T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

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THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST IN PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-FOUR: APPROVEDNESS (2)

In the previous issue of the Fellowship Journal, Paul's approvedness was considered. In this selection, Timothy's approvedness is examined.

TIMOTHY: A CO-WORKER'S APPROVEDNESS

Paul wrote, "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged by knowing the things concerning you. For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you" (Philippians 2:19-20).

God had approved not only Paul, but also Timothy. If this had not been the case, Paul would not have had any confidence to send him to the Philippians. Paul had many co-workers, but to Paul it seems that Timothy was the only co-worker that was fully approved. Paul wrote that the other co-workers sought their own things rather than the things of Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:20-21). Paul had no confidence that the other co-workers would genuinely care for what concerned the Philippians. But praise the Lord for Timothy's approvedness! Both God and Paul approved of Timothy. Even the Philippians knew of Timothy's approvedness. Because of this, Paul had confidence in Timothy's service to the

Lord and to the saints.

Timothy is the second servant in Philippians that is approved by the Lord. Eight factors qualified him to be approved: 1) being the cause of a good state of soul; 2) being "like-souled" with the apostle; 3) being recommended by the brothers in the churches; 4) showing his genuineness even in tears; 5) knowing the organic order in the Body; 6) pursuing with healthy companions; 7) knowing the Bible; and 8) serving as a child with a father unto the gospel.

1) BEING CAUSE FOR THE APOSTLE TO HAVE A "GOOD SOUL"

Paul told the Philippians that he would be encouraged if he sent Timothy to them. The Greek word for "encouraged" literally means "to have a good soul", or "to have a good state of soul." Paul said that he would be encouraged by the good report Timothy would bring back to him. This report would encourage Paul and give him "a good state of soul." Actually, it was Timothy's ability to work with Paul,

along with the report he would give that would bring encouragement to the apostle. Paul was encouraged or “had a good state of soul” because Timothy would be able to help the Philippians, who already had such a healthy spiritual condition.

Thus, the first factor to Timothy’s approvedness was his being a blessing to Paul, the Lord’s servant. The apostle Paul had a good state of soul because of Timothy. Paul told the Philippians that if he sent Timothy to him he would have a “good state of soul,” that is, he would be encouraged.

LEARN TO HELP THE ELDERS AND THE
LEADING CO-WORKERS
HAVE “A GOOD STATE OF SOUL”

For a young brother to be approved, the first thing he must learn is to have such an attribute of helping the leading brothers have a good state of soul. But this is one of the hardest lessons for young brothers to learn. For this reason, whenever someone tries to help me have a good state of soul, I really appreciate it.

For any young brother or sister to say, “My elder is not good” is terrible! You have to learn to stand with those who serve you no matter if they are mature or immature. You must learn to help them have a good state of soul. Many spiritual things can progress if your leading brothers are in a good state of soul.

Every time I visit a particular locality my chief concern is for my state of soul. My soul often be-

comes very troubled and distracted because of many frustrations. But Praise the Lord, after a few years I am now seeing encouraging things in that locality. There are some brothers who are growing well, and that makes me happy. I have gradually come to have a good state of soul concerning those brothers. Praise the Lord for this! To help older brothers have a good state of soul toward you is actually a hard lesson.

Timothy’s ability to give the apostle Paul a good state of soul qualified him to be to be an approved co-worker with Paul. Timothy was an encouragement to Paul. Regarding Timothy, Paul had a good state of soul. This was Timothy’s first qualification for his approvedness.

2) BEING “LIKE-SOULED” WITH PAUL

Furthermore, in Philippians 2:20, Paul said that Timothy was also like-souled with Paul. To be “like-souled” literally means to be “equal-souled.” Whatever occupied Paul’s soul also occupied Timothy’s soul. Since Paul and Timothy were equal-souled, Paul was confident that Timothy would genuinely care for what concerned the Philippians. This was the second factor to Timothy’s approvedness.

What does it mean to be equal-souled? It means that the burden of one also becomes the burden of the other. What charged Paul was also what charged Timothy.

At times brothers argue and complain, saying, “Must we listen

to the elders? Must we listen to the leading ones? Must we listen to the older brothers? This is a free country. I should be able to have my vote!" As an American, you can always have your vote. But if you insist on having your vote, you can vote yourself out of the church life. Remember that the church life will never become prevailing if the young co-workers do not know how to be equal-souled with the older ones. The church life will never become prevailing if the older co-workers and the elders do not know how to be one with one another. To be one in this way is to be equal-souled. In your own locality, do your best to carry out the burden of your local church. This is the second qualification of Timothy's approvedness.

3) BEING RECOMMENDED BY THE BROTHERS IN THE CHURCHES

The third factor to Timothy's approvedness was that the churches he served recommended him to Paul. While Paul was traveling through Asia Minor preaching the gospel and raising up churches, he was introduced to Timothy. Two local churches, Lystra and Iconium, recommended Timothy to him (Acts 16:2 – Lystra and Iconium were neighboring towns). Paul came to Lystra and found a certain disciple who was a young man, the son of a Jewish woman and a Greek father, who was well attested to by the brothers.

What does "well attested to"

mean? It means to be recommended. Timothy had a good name. He was well known and much appreciated by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium.

Timothy seemed to have done a little traveling as a young brother. He may have been twenty years old. He probably went from one church to another church as a serving brother. Based on his serving between these two churches the brothers spoke well of him and recommended him to Paul.

It is not a small thing to have a good name in your local church. If you have a bad name in your own local church, your so-called approvedness anywhere else means very little. It is of no use to be well accepted by saints who live many miles away from you but not be built up with anyone in your own locality. Approvedness begins in your local church, and with the churches near you.

This was the case with Timothy. Two churches recommended Timothy. He was from Lystra, but the churches in both Lystra and Iconium recommended him. Let me say a strong word to you—this is a hard lesson that will test you throughout your entire life. Many may try to be globally appreciated, but the real approvedness does not come globally; the real approvedness comes from your own locality.

It is good to be appreciated and respected by your local church. You should not give the saints the feeling that you are just young and useless. Instead, they should feel, "here is a young brother full of zeal to the

Lord and loving care to the saints!" To be approved by your locality is very crucial. Because they are the ones who really see you; they are the ones who know you best.

You must show love in your locality. You must labor in humility and simplicity. Serve the saints and serve the church diligently, so that they all appreciate you. Without their appreciation there is no approvedness. No mere "church-goer" can gain approvedness. Only those who know how to give themselves to the church life can be approved. Live for the church life and exercise yourself in the church life according to what the Lord has given you. By this you will obtain approvedness before God and before the saints.

4) KNOWING HOW TO CRY

When the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, he said, "I remember your tears" (2 Tim. 1:4). To have tears is a great matter. It is another factor to being approved. Watchman Nee gave a message called "Precious are the Tears" which impressed me when I read it as a young believer. He said, "In this world everything is in corruption. It is God's mercy that we still have some tears to wash away its dirtiness." Then he said, "Your tears will be put into a bottle, and they will become the source of your reward."

TEARS TESTIFY GENUINENESS

Do you know why tears are so crucial? When people shed tears,

usually they are being very genuine. Of course, do not always trust a young girl's tears! Some people cry just to get what they are after!

TEARS INDICATE PARTICIPATION

Tears also show that you are an active participant in something. Would you have tears if you stepped on an ant? No, for you are not an active participant in the life of that ant. Therefore, whether the ant lives or dies, you do not care. If you've been in the church life for many years and have never had any tears, however, I would be very worried about you. You must be a very lonely person, and very isolated from the other saints. Tears reveal whether you are an active participant in the lives of others.

If you are so touched by a message that your tears come, it shows that you are participating in that message. When you see a saint suffering, your tears come because you partake of his sufferings. When the saints experience something so joyful in their Christian life, your tears come because you participate in their joy. You shout, "You see something! Praise the Lord! I am so happy that you see it! Hallelujah!" Your tears indicate your genuine participation.

TEARS REVEAL A TENDER HEART

Tears reveal that your heart is tender. Such a tender heart becomes a source of many good works. Many people seem to have no heart. I once read a novel in

which one person took advantage of another person, causing the other to go bankrupt. His heart was so hardened that he shed no tears over the sufferings he had caused. Some people have this kind of hardened heart. They only care about how much they can get for themselves. They have no room in their heart to care for others. Tears are only found in those whose hearts are very tender. If you have a tender heart, you will have room for the saints. If you have a tender heart you will have room for the things of the Lord. A tender heart has room for the Lord's move. Therefore, a tender person with tears can operate with great capacity.

Basically, tears show participation. Tears show understanding. Tears show what's in your heart. Tears show tenderness. Tears show that you are able to realize and participate in what the Lord is doing and what the brothers are experiencing. Tears show your ability to be with people. This is why Paul treasured Timothy's tears. Paul surely committed a heavy burden to Timothy by exhorting him to remain in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). The situation in Ephesus must have been difficult.

Paul was in Ephesus for a total of three years. For two of those years he taught at the school of Tyrannus. The total amount of time that he labored throughout Asia and Europe was probably only ten to fifteen years. Of these years of operation we are told Paul spent at least three years in Ephesus. He knew that city was very crucial, so

he eventually sent Timothy there. Ephesus was used as an operating center. Paul instructed Timothy on the qualifications for elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-10). So Timothy was probably charged to appoint elders there. Timothy perhaps felt that such a commitment was way beyond what he could handle. He did not give up this commitment, but it did cause him to cry. This is why Paul said, "I remember your tears". Tears show Timothy's approvedness.

Do you have tears? After serving the Lord for so many years, how rich have your tears been? Do not look down at people's tears, because in following the Lord, to have tears is healthy. I am not speaking of emotional tears. I am speaking of tears that show that you are one with the Lord; tears that show you are concerned for the church; tears that show you are participating in the saints' difficulties; tears that show your tenderness; tears that show that you are allowing the Lord to lead you further. To be approved as a young co-worker of the apostles, you must know how to cry before the Lord and with the saints.

(This message is continued on page 39 of this issue.)

WHAT A PROPHET MUST SEE

On April 28, 2005, a number of brothers from across the Great Lakes area gathered in response to the great need for prophets to be raised up among us. Every locality, if it is to function properly for the building up of the Body of Christ, must have some who can function as prophets! This was the burden of this time with brother Titus. Every locality must have some who can be perfected to be prophets in these days!

GOD WORKS THROUGH SPEAKING

Every time the Lord has desired to do something, He has done so by speaking. To bring about His creation, He spoke. After man fell, to take care of the situation, He also spoke. Generation after generation and age after age, the Lord has operated through speaking. This is a principle. The Lord works by speaking; thus He needs those who can work together with Him in this way.

FRUSTRATIONS TO PROPHEYSING

I feel sorry that for so long a time we have discouraged the saints from learning to speak, and have instead stressed on such things as “the three-minute prophecy”. Because of this shortage we have become weak, for we have cut off the potential for the Lord’s speaking among us in the churches. Furthermore, speaking seems to have become something limited only to a privileged few. This is serious, for it introduces hierarchy among us. In other words, if certain brothers do not speak, then no one can, and

after they do, everyone has to follow what they have said. I strongly disagree with this psychology. I have not heard that the “speaking brothers” themselves ever promoted such a thing, therefore I hope they would give me the freedom to say that what is commonly practiced has become something that is not found in the Bible. In the New Testament church life, there was no such thing as brothers being limited to speaking briefly by way of testimony in the meetings. Instead, what is revealed in 1 Corinthians 14 is that there are a group of prophets who are able to prophesy “one by one”. The prevailing attitude discourages such functioning, and encourages instead only short testimonies. Such a practice, however, is not in the Bible!

MANY AMONG US CAN OPERATE AS PROPHETS

In spite of our weakened situation, a good number of “typical Americans” can still be found meeting among the churches in this area. I am Chinese; my logic and my background limit my ability to operate among those who grew up in

America. Real Americans are the best ones to reach other Americans. For this reason, I encourage you who are Americans to treasure yourself and appreciate your being here.

I am thankful that the Lord has raised up around seventy local churches in this area. I believe this number will soon reach one hundred if we know how to labor properly. The Lord has preserved many brothers who came in among us in the 1970's. I no longer have the ability to labor as I did then, but the Lord does not grow old; He is still fresh. One thing I did not have to deal with when I labored as a young brother, however, was a history. Today, whenever the saints try to initiate something, they must consider this and that, and thus often eventually do nothing. A paralysis seems to have set in among us. Therefore I strongly say to you brothers—appreciate yourselves; appreciate the local church you are in; appreciate the Lord's recovery; and appreciate the Lord's move among you. Even if the number meeting as the church in your locality is small, your testimony can be very healthy!

**THE VISION OF THE PROPHETS
DETERMINES THEIR FUNCTION**

Prophets are the spiritual strength of a local church. The vision of the prophets will determine how their local church will go on. Don't think that this is a light thing, for it is very easy to deviate from what has been committed to us by the Lord. Therefore, in this first message, if you

wish to exercise as a prophet in your local church, the first thing I would say to you is that you must be a spiritual person who is under a controlling vision. For this, you must be a spiritual man, for your vision cannot be kept by any other means. You cannot be by your natural strength guard such a vision. If your vision is not clear, sooner or later the church or churches you serve will become something "other". Your vision is the controlling element for your life-long operation.

**THE VISION AND REALIZATION
NECESSARY TO PROPERLY
FUNCTION AS A PROPHET**

**CHRIST AS THE CENTRALITY OF GOD'S
ECONOMY**

What constitutes our vision? Our vision is of God's economy, and the first matter in God's economy is Christ. It is a shame for anyone who loves Jesus to stress anything else other than Christ. Christ is the embodiment of the Triune God for us to lay hold of. Whether or not something is taught or practiced among us, Christ Himself must be the measure.

Christ, as the embodiment of the Triune God for us to lay hold of, is the One we must pursue. A prophet must therefore be a pursuing person. If you desire to operate as a prophet in your locality, you must pursue to lay hold, experience, and live out Christ. Christ must be your focus. When we are together, we should talk about Christ. If, in our church life, the el-

ement of Christ is absent, the reality of the church is absent. I have visited denominations and observed how well they are able to hold dinners and orchestrate other events, but where is the content of Christ? In the church life, the only one we should focus upon is Christ. If something other than Christ becomes an issue in the church life, we should realize that we are off. This holds true for both our personal life and our corporate life.

THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST

The church as the Body of Christ is the fullness of the One who fills all in all (Eph. 1:23). This reveals that the church is totally an organic matter. We are here as the Body, but we are not the totality of the Body. Anything such as the Body that is real and yet abstract is difficult to apply. In China, for instance, the term “the people” is often used, and surely this group of one billion people passed through something together. There is such a people, but still the term is abstract in the absence of any way to ascertain what is really the case among them, as with a vote or a survey. Even so, the communists claimed they represented the will of “the people” when they oppressed and punished those who did not go along with them. The accused had no way to argue back, even though each of them was also one of “the people”! Around sixty million of “the people” eventually died under that regime. We should realize that we need to exercise care when using a term that is both real and abstract.

The Body is real, yet when taken beyond the local level, it becomes something abstract. The church is truly the Body of Christ. Yet Paul also said that the church in Corinth was the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). Therefore every local church is a miniature “type” of the Body of Christ. Therefore we must be very careful when we use the term “the feeling of the Body”. I have heard it said, “Why don’t you fellowship with the Body?” Be careful, for this can only be applied locally, because who can practically be recognized as representing “the Body” once you go beyond the level of the locality?

CHRIST IS THE PERSON OF HIS BODY

We all are members of the Body of Christ. Therefore we must operate according to the person of the Body of Christ. When you see a body, you see a person, not the body separately. You don’t really address my body when you talk to me, you address the person within my body; it is the person of the body that is crucial. Furthermore, the person and the body cannot be separated. When my body comes, I come. If one day we speak of the Body of Christ without stressing upon Christ as the person of the Body, we are making a very foolish mistake. Thus I am troubled when I hear some brothers say, “Why don’t you fellowship with the Body?” If some claim to represent the Body, they replace Christ! The Body has one Head and one person—the exalted, pneumatic Christ.

**THE LIFE OF THE BODY OF CHRIST IS
THE PROCESSED TRIUNE GOD**

Christ is the person of the Body of Christ. What then is the life of the Body? The life of the Body is the processed Triune God as the Life-giving Spirit dispensed in the divine and mystical realm. The Body of Christ is itself a realm, being divine and mystical. In the Body there is a constant dispensing and infusing of life from Christ as the Life-giving Spirit. Even within our physical body, every cell is replaced every few years. If you knew me seven years ago, and said, "Nice to see you again," I could technically say, "But you don't! All that was me then has disappeared! What you now see is new!" The Body is always fresh and new, for Christ as the Life-giving Spirit is always infusing and dispensing His life into it. Every member of the Body should be involved in this process. In order to participate in this being made new physically, I must eat and exercise. It is the same in the Body of Christ.

**AS HIS LIVING MEMBERS, WE SHOULD
HAVE AN OPERATION IN CHRIST'S BODY
THROUGH THE OPERATION OF
HIS WORD**

As those who hold to Christ as the person of the Body and experience the processed Triune God dispensed as the life of the Body, we should begin to have an operation in Christ's Body. This divine operation issues out from the enthroned Christ in His headship and lordship

through His feeding, nourishing, strengthening, life-giving rhema according to His eternal, purposeful, economical logos. (Not only does He feed and nourish us; He also speaks to us instantly according to His constant word. For example, one who becomes an engineer does so by continually taking in the "instant word" of his classes according to the "constant word" of the body of engineering knowledge. In the church life, there must continually be such instant speaking according to the constant word of God's economy and purpose.) There is no word that God speaks to us that is for the speaking itself; every word that God speaks is for the accomplishment of His economy and purpose.

God governmentally works with all the members of the Body to produce His riches in the Body. In this one Body, God only has one word, the logos, which is simply His economy. With this Body there is also an instant word that is spoken through many, many saints. All the instant speakings together generate the Lord's testimony. The Lord spoke through His apostles, and then through those who followed after them. Some of their speaking became the "building blocks," while other speakings simply met some timely need. Regardless, it is rhema when it is spoken, and this instantaneous rhema corresponds to the logos, the constant word.

I needed to encourage someone close to me, so to achieve this objective, I contemplated what would be the appropriate utterance to

bring about this encouragement. My “logos” regarding this person is that he would achieve a certain joyful and completed state. My desire for this never changes, so it is my purpose. My intention is that he would achieve this fulfillment. Thus, in addition to all I have already spoken, I realize I need to speak something further to insure he achieves what I hold in view concerning him. In the local church life there should always be such continuous speaking to bring about what is in the logos of God.

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE GIFTS TO DEVELOP THE GIFTS

God also works with all the saints by speaking to them through the gifts, so every saint who is such a gift or who is becoming one is very crucial. As you prophesy, the saints are able to possess the rhema word and be brought into the logos word, and even are strengthened to experience what the Lord has arranged for them for their development into such gifts themselves. We must learn to take everything from the Lord, whether logical or unreasonable. Eventually, you have to be able to say, “Lord, I realize that not only there is feeding, nourishing, strengthening, instant speaking and constant speaking—even more, You arrange all things in such a way that continually surprises me.” As a Christian, you must realize there is no such thing as being lucky, unlucky, fortunate, or unfortunate. No. Everything that takes place in our lives comes to us from the governmental hand of the Lord.

THE BODY IS A GRAND MATTER

The Body has experienced a constant organic growth, and also experiences an instant organic growth. This is an inclusive enlargement! If you were to really see the Body of Christ, you could realize this. Quickly in the beginning, the church in Jerusalem grew from seventy to a number of thousands over a few years. This produced a constant growth that spread out to many cities. Even in this one hour, do you realize how the Body has grown? Some have been added into the Body in Africa, in Asia, in America, in Europe... you must have this kind of realization, or else your realization is peculiar. It is difficult to take a definitive “snapshot” of the Body, for it is continually growing. In a local church you may not see this, but certainly in its universal aspect, the Body has been constantly enlarging, for it has never ceased to grow since it began. This is the increase of Christ! Even should numbers seem to shrink, no member can ever be lost once gained. Therefore, the Body can only be added to. Everyone who is saved becomes a part of Christ’s increase in the Body.

THE BODY RECEIVES ONLY WHAT IS OF CHRIST

In the Body, there can be no other element other than Christ. Anything else will be rejected or exposed as unfitting. If you add a piece of artificial bone to a growing

child, in a year it will no longer fit, for the body of that child is growing! Whatever brings about the growth of the Body must be of Christ, and the Body is always organically growing. Anything that is not organically related to the growth of the Body is not of the Body.

THE LOCAL CHURCH INCLUDES ALL THE BELIEVERS IN A LOCALITY

Besides seeing Christ and the Body, we must also see that a local church is the expression of the Body within a locality, possessing only Christ as her riches, life, and content. Every local church is a “mini-type” of the Body, for through the local church the Body is expressed. A local church stands on the ground of locality, which is the ground of oneness. How many saints are in the church in Toledo? We cannot answer with certainty, for every born-again believer currently within Toledo is a member of the church in Toledo. We cannot refuse any believer in Toledo, for if we do, we do not stand upon the ground of oneness. We cannot be selective concerning those who believe: not according to age, culture, language, doctrinal differences, or whatever. There cannot be a Chinese church, or an American church or a young people’s church, for the church is the church. It is just that simple. If we wish to practice the local church life, we must be inclusive. We receive everyone who believes. And if you do not believe, we preach the gospel to you. We are not selective. Your inclusiveness determines

whether or not you are a real local church. Brother Lee’s statement when he first came to the United States was “the more inclusive, the better.” Other believers should not feel we are peculiar. Even if a clergyman should walk into our meeting, we should welcome him.

THE LOCAL CHURCH IS AN EXPRESSION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

The local church is a new creation, with no element of the world. As the expression of the Body of Christ, the local church is heavenly. You may have to use elements of the world (such as chairs!) but such things cannot be considered as a part of the church.

THE PRACTICES OF A LOCAL CHURCH MUST BE CENTERED ON CHRIST

The practices of the local church should be Christ-oriented, Christ-infusing, Christ-testifying, and ultimately Christ-magnifying. Through your prophesying within your local church, people should see Christ. Such a church must receive everything that is scriptural and spiritual. If the Bible says it, we should receive it. For instance, we should even receive someone who speaks in tongues, even though we may hold Paul’s view of the practice, that it does more harm than good when practiced publicly.

I once visited a Three-Self congregation in China. I met with a few of them, and they invited me to their Saturday morning prayer-meeting. I expected just a few saints

to be present, but what I found were nearly four hundred, or one-fourth of the congregation, kneeling there, praying silently to the Lord. Everything was so godly. Some may consider them not to be in the same "league" with the churches taking the way of what we call the Lord's recovery, but can any church among us boast of such a weekly time of prayer? Transportation there is not convenient, yet they pay the price to come and kneel down together. When inclusiveness is practiced, you are very open to watch how the Lord is moving, realizing we do not have everything. If we are inclusive, we are able to receive from others. Sometimes we declare the Lord is with us, yet we must also admit that the Lord is with others also. Shall we not receive from such?

THOSE PRACTICING THE LOCAL CHURCH LAY HOLD ON THE COMMON FAITH

The local church also lays hold on the common faith, which concerns who God is in His Person and what He has and will accomplish in Christ. For this we stand firm. We also refuse those who are fornicators, idol worshippers, and those who intentionally create division. We should realize, however, that one who goes into a temple is not necessarily an idolater. We do not refuse someone who is merely overtaken by weakness, but someone who becomes such a person, such as one who is a fornicator, which is grounds for separation and refusal.

BECAUSE THE LOCAL CHURCH HOLDS THE LIVING CHRIST, WE ARE NOT FOR ANYTHING OF ROUTINE

In the churches, we should beware of anything that may replace Christ. Thus, first of all, we must beware of a routine church life, for routine can easily replace Christ. Sometimes the saints automatically go to meetings on certain nights. This is not struggling to gain Christ! Secondly, we must beware of a religious living that replaces the operation of fresh divine infusing and speaking. It is not how many meetings you attend or how much time you spend with the saints, but rather how much fresh, divine infusing there is. It should never be that you walk out of a meeting having received nothing of Christ! At the Lord's table, you should have the Lord's presence. Afterwards, if there is someone who speaks, it must be with fresh, divine speaking and infusing and operation; there must be something fresh from the Lord. You must ask the Lord to use you for this. Third, beware lest position or place replace organic manifestation. You may coordinate an event, yet you should not count that as something much before the Lord, nor should you simply desire to be an elder for the sake of having a greater function. Some feel it is pointless to be in the church life if they cannot gain some such place in the church life. The reason they feel this way is because they aimed at it from the beginning. Those who seek a place or position in the

church life will not find it possible to have much organic manifestation. We need to be spiritual to the point that we only care for the organic manifestation that is a profit to the Lord for His testimony.

WE CANNOT STRESS ANYTHING OTHER THAN CHRIST

We must also be wary of stressing any person, teaching, ministry, method of work, or way of practice, for to do so will replace Christ. I have heard some say, "The ministry today is higher than the ministry of Witness Lee!" and others proclaim, "Today is the age of Brother So-and-So." When the young ones feel they have to make such statements, things are off. Where is Christ? Is not Christ the answer to everything? We should desire that in our meetings only Christ is exalted! Yet still some insist on things such as stressing a certain person or teaching, or a method of work. Haven't we been damaged enough by such things already? Many localities were doing well until an emphasis on a certain practice took away most of what was left of the saints' initiative and morale.

THE BIBLE IS OUR UNIQUE STANDARD

We also must be wary lest any slogan or spiritual declaration replace the Bible as our unique standard. In one place hangs a banner that says, "We must abide in the up-to-date speaking of the ministry." I asked a brother to give me one verse from the Bible that

backed this statement up. Even those in the denominations have some verses from the Bible they can point to to back them up! Those who posted these banners could not say it was based on anything in the Word, even though many among them were both brilliant and very capable. Oh, how religion can blind people! We are Christians. As Christians, we believe and practice what is found in the Bible.

THE WORK MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF ITS OBJECTIVE: TO RAISE UP THE CHURCHES AS CHRIST TESTIMONY

Let us also take heed lest the work replace the testimony. God has called us to be a testimony, yet it seems that on this earth there is no group quite like us; so able to focus all those within it upon the work. A brother who was serving the young people once said, "Those who served in the past never had such great numbers attending as we do now!" I do not say this is right or wrong; but we should never compromise the truth for the sake of work. After all, was it not a great number who urged Pilate to crucify Christ? As those who seek to be prophets for the building up of the churches, your desire should be not to do a great work, but to raise up your local church to be a strong testimony of Christ. Anyone who cares for work will eventually be caught with divisiveness.

THE GREAT NEED TODAY

Today what the Lord has divinely committed to the churches must

be upheld by the operation of the prophets. This is the reason for this time. Every local church needs speaking. Without adequate speaking, a local church cannot be strong. Some took what Brother Lee said about three-minute prophesying very legally, and because of it, prophets have not been developed among the churches, and the churches have suffered from the lack of supply. Yet Brother Lee told me emphatically, "Titus, I am not at all against the prophet speaking in the church meetings. The problem is that we do not have enough prophets!" It is true that for someone to come up to speak without life, light, utterance or impact is to waste everyone's time. To my understanding, Brother Lee encouraged three-minute speaking to develop prophets. His word, however, has been taken to the point that in some places, whoever spoke longer became sinful! Without the oracle of the Lord, however, the church goes nowhere. Every local church should be directly under the headship of the Lord, yet many seemingly have lost that ability.

The Lord needs prophets to transmit what He has for His people. It is the prophets who "blow the trumpet" in the local churches (1 Cor. 14:8). When the prophets are prevailing, the entire church becomes prevailing. When the prophets become common, the whole church becomes common. The condition of the prophets determine the condition of the

church. The church life needs joyful prophets these days; we have enough in the way of teaching. Be real with the saints. If you are a person in joy, the church life will become joyful, and if you are rich in truth, the church where you are will pursue the truth. If you are growing properly, the local church where you are will also advance. If you have not been advancing, will not the saints who need your speaking be hindered from advancing as they should? A local church should be a congregation of pursuers. A church will never deviate from God's economy if the prophets lay hold on the commitment according to the divine vision.

May the Lord raise up such prophets among us in these days!

- Titus Chu

"But now brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you, unless I speak to you either in revelation or in knowledge or in prophecy or in teaching? Yet even lifeless things, whether flute or harp, in giving a sound, if they give no distinction in the tones, how will what is played on the flute or on the harp be known? For also if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So also, you, unless you give with the tongue a word easy to understand...since you are zealous of spirits, seek that you may excel to the building up of the church."

- 1 Corinthians 14:6-9a, 12b

HONESTY IN HISTORY: AGAINST HISTORICAL REVISIONISM

The Lord's recovery rests on the realization that God has moved throughout history. God's move is seen, not only in the Bible, but also in the progressive restoration of divine truth since Martin Luther's time until the present. History provides the backdrop against which God's recovery work is illuminated. An accurate historical record clarifies God's move, while biased accounts distort the picture and obscure God's work. One pitfall to be avoided is "Historical Revisionism," rewriting the record in a manner not supported by the facts. This may arise from a preconceived notion of what history ought to say.

As a possible example of revisionism, let us examine statements from the booklet, "**Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery**" (June 30, 2005). This document recounts a number of historical facts. Two striking assertions are:

[1] "***Since Brother Nee's day we in the Lord's recovery have been "restricted in one publication"For decades we all have been nourished... by the one publica-tion.***" (p. 7)

[2] "***... the one publication has always been trumpeted by one practical publication endeavor – in Brother Nee's day by his Gospel Room, during Brother Lee's years after he left mainland China by Taiwan Gospel Book Room, and during his years in the United States by Living Stream Ministry.***" (pp. 3-4)

Statement (2) presents a linear-sequential account of the "practical publication endeavor"; Brother Nee's Shanghai Gospel Book Room was succeeded by Brother Lee's Taiwan Gospel Book Room, then his Living Stream Ministry. But is this historically accurate? Strikingly, no mention is made of the Gospel Book Room in Hong Kong. Yet, elsewhere, Brother Lee recognized the role of the Hong Kong (HK) Book Room. He recounts that, in the 1950's, the practical publication endeavor was conducted "separately in three places: Shanghai, Taipei and Hong Kong. Brother Nee was responsible for the bookroom in Shanghai, I was responsible for the one in Taipei, and Brother Weigh

was responsible for the one in Hong Kong.” [W. Lee, *Words of Training*, vol. 1, p. 34-5] Of course, one could argue that all three book rooms were “one.” Yet we are addressing the “practical publication endeavor.” Most of the early English translations of Watchman Nee’s writings seem to have issued from the HK Book Room. Why then has its role been omitted from the historical narrative presented in “*Publication Work...*”? Could it be, perhaps, because the HK Gospel Book Room does not fit neatly into the picture being presented? On the contrary, one could argue that **two publishers** existed simultaneously in the recovery, the Hong Kong and Taiwan Gospel Book Rooms.

The first statement gives a dogmatic historical view of “one publication” — “*Since brother Nee’s day we in the Lord’s recovery have been restricted in one publication.*” It suggests that “*for decades,*” the saints and the local churches have been consciously limited to “one publication.” Moreover, this “restriction” is said to have been in effect since Brother Nee’s era. May we ask, what historical facts support this bold assertion? The only evidence presented is Brother Lee’s testimony concerning his participation in Brother Nee’s publication work. However, that testimony, “*I never published anything by myself. I always mailed my manuscript to the Gospel Room, which was under Brother Nee ...*” relates to brother Lee’s personal exercise as

a co-worker. It tells us little about the saints and the churches. Perhaps we should ask: In brother Nee’s era was there a **teaching of “one publication”**? Were the saints **taught** to confine themselves to materials published by the Shanghai Book Room? I have found no such teaching in *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*. Isn’t it more likely the saints focused on brother Nee’s materials because they found them beneficial and **not** because they were “restricted to one publication”?

There is no historical evidence of an official policy, or a systematic teaching of “one publication” in that epoch. If ‘one publication’ was an important principle in Brother Nee’s day, why is it **not mentioned in Brother Lee’s biography, Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation?**

In the interests of historical accuracy, may I inquire, (prior to 1986) were the saints in North America **taught** to confine themselves to one publication, materials published by LSM? If so, why does the document, *The Beliefs & Practices of the Local Churches* (issued in 1978 by the “co-workers in the Lord’s Recovery”) contain **not even a single reference to “one publication”**? The omission of “one publication” from Brother Lee’s biography of Watchman Nee and *The Beliefs & Practices...* is an “argument from silence.” However, “silence” in the Bible has strong implications. The omission of Melchisedec’s ancestors from the Old Testament qualifies him to

be a type of Christ (Hebrews 7:3). Brother Lee says that since “after [Acts 15] there is no further mention of Barnabas in the divine record ... This indicates that Barnabas was wrong.” [*Life-study of Acts*, p. 371] The silence of the history of the Lord’s recovery concerning “one publication” is significant.

Moreover, if the Lord’s recovery was “*restricted in one publication*” why, did Brother Lee call a “Writers’ Conference” in the early 1980’s? Brother Lee recalled later, “My intention in calling a writers’ conference was to encourage you to write something...” (Witness Lee, *Elders’ Training Book #8*, p. 163)

These historical facts suggest the document, “*Publication Work...*” is not merely reaffirming a “one publication” teaching and policy which existed “since Brother Nee’s day.” According to the historical record, no such teaching or official policy existed in Brother Nee’s era, nor in the early church-life

(pre-1986) in North America. To pretend otherwise is to distort the record of history; it is “historical revisionism.”

- Nigel Tomes

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When asked about which group to meet with in a city, T. Austin-Sparks responded “The more Christ, the more church!” Witness Lee, however, responded that some very rich saints have given themselves to build up the denominations! When it comes to the testimony of the Lord’s Body in our locality, the stand we take is more important than the spiritual condition of those we take it with. As to that, the Lord will work with those on this ground.

“The church should be measured by the ground of locality and the reality of the Spirit of oneness. It should not be measured by people’s spirituality. Spirituality is relative and conditional.”

(Witness Lee, *Elders’ Training - Book 11*, p. 125, Living Stream Ministry, Anaheim, CA. Pages 124-125 referred to above.)

Ashland Woods

A LOOK AT WHAT'S HAPPENING



Not long ago, a lodge on fifty acres of woods and fields was purchased near Sullivan, Ohio. This property, called Ashland Woods, is located about three miles south of Huntington House (a facility currently used for “woody” fellowship and small conferences). Upon Ashland Woods a larger structure is now being built for the purpose of increasing the usefulness of these properties. The goal is that the number of those who can come together for times of perfecting and fellowship might be increased. The lodge has also been updated and renovated. A three acre pond will provide a tranquil “shoreline” link between the original and new building.



These pictures were taken December 26. In this house, gatherings of all sorts can be accommodated. There will be a large kitchen and eating area, as well as meeting and fellowship rooms, and sleeping facilities.

May the Lord bless the churches through all the times together that these properties will make possible!



TIMOTHY'S APPROVEDNESS

(continued from p. 24)

5) KNOWING THE ORGANIC ORDER IN THE BODY

Timothy was also approved because he knew the order in the Body. This is also a very important lesson to learn. I like Philippians 2:19: "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly." It seems as though something in this verse is missing. It should say, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, because after I confronted him about it and conferred with him a few times, he was finally convinced. So he promised he would come. Praise the Lord!" Was this what the verse said? Let's read it again. "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly. I consulted with him and shared with him. At the beginning he resisted and rejected my request, but finally, by the Lord's mercy, after six hours of fellowship, he finally agreed. Hallelujah, Praise the Lord! I am encouraged." No. Timothy was a very organic brother in the work. Paul simply said that he hoped to send Timothy to the Philippians shortly. To be such a brother in the work organically is the hardest thing for a co-worker to learn.

If and when elders or co-workers request that you move to another locality, you may have the view that, since you are a brother, why should anyone push you around or shuffle you around to

move to another locality? A full-timer may say, "I am a co-worker and I'm burdened for the locality I am in." I do not say that you should not be burdened. You should be burdened. But I just cannot understand why it is you can be burdened in this city, but your burden disappears when you move to another city. If this is the case, then your burden is not a burden, but a work. If you are burdened, it should be something spiritual. When your burden is spiritual, then whether you are in this city or in that city, it makes little difference.

The hardest lesson for you to learn is to organically abide in the work of the Lord. Honor the order the Lord has given to us. To keep the order in the Body is a hard lesson for anyone to learn.

Sometimes I have asked co-workers to go to certain places. Such a brother may say, "Oh, yes." But then he will come back later and tell me, "My wife does not agree." Other co-workers may come back and say, "Yes, yes, I'll come back." And later tell me, "The saints will not let me go." If a wife does not agree, I cannot say much. But I also know that very few wives disagree with their husband when their husband's decision is firm. If the husband feels very clearly that the Lord has led him, then the wife will always agree. But when he hesitates and sighs and says, "Well, Titus wants me to go to another city," this is when she will respond, "If you are so unrestful, just don't go." Actually, this is the response the brother wanted to hear, and gives

him a way of escape, for he can then say, "Brother Titus, my wife doesn't agree."

Throughout your whole life, this will be a test to you. All such directions and suggestions are done in fellowship. We do not have a dictatorship. At the same time, we must keep the order. I like Philippians 2:19, even with my insertion, "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly – and after six hours of fellowship he finally agreed. Praise the Lord!" Even with this added, it is better than hearing, "The saints won't let me go, and my wife does not agree."

I read in the biography of Watchman Nee that when he decided that the work in Taiwan should be developed, he cabled three brothers, telling them, "Move to Taiwan immediately." One brother was a medical doctor, not a full-time worker. Even so, this brother honored the organic function of the Body. What was the result? Taipei had the best ground-work for the Lord, because the majority of the top leaders, the pillars among them, experienced the revival in the locality Brother Lee labored in. These brothers knew how to work with Brother Lee. They had also learned something very spiritual. Therefore what they brought into the church life in Taipei was very healthy and strong. Whether you have a job or not, there is still the need to know the order in the Body and the order in the work. To know the order in the Body and to know the order in the work is

crucial for one's approvedness.

6) PURSUING WITH HEALTHY COMPANIONS

Paul wrote to Timothy that in a great house there are vessels unto honor and vessels unto dishonor (2 Tim. 2:20). Two verses later, he told him to flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. In the church life among the saints are all kinds of vessels. When you are in the church life, learn that you must be with those who call upon the name of the Lord out of a pure heart. Your companions are another factor to your approvedness.

If I am a servant of the Lord and an elder and I have been in the Lord's recovery for so many years, yet every day I go out with three brothers who smoke, drink, and watch movies all the time, do you think I can have a good testimony? Even if I have given myself to the Lord for many years, people will look at the four of us getting together and feel, "These brothers are useless." Those who are with you decide who you are. Furthermore, your desire to be with certain ones indicates something about who you are. A person who likes to be with brothers who talk about movies probably likes to talk about movies also. Your companionships demonstrate something about yourself to others.

For you to be approved you have

to be with those who are vessels unto honor. You should be with those who follow the Lord. You should be with those who seek only Christ. You should be with those who only care for the interest of the church. Then brothers, praise the Lord, you will be very hopeful. You will find approvedness. The brothers who are with you will determine your approvedness.

7) KNOWING THE BIBLE

Another factor to Timothy's approvedness is seen in Second Timothy 3:15, "And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings." Timothy knew the sacred writings from his youth. Let me ask you, how much do you know the Bible? If you desire to be approved, you need to know the Bible.

A sister once asked me, "Should the Old Testament practice of a prophet be carried out today?" Then I remembered the Old Testament prophet, Hosea. God said to him, "Go marry a prostitute". If I did not know the Bible well, I might have been caught in error by such a question.

Brothers, you must know the Bible. You do not have to recall every verse perfectly. Often with my faulty memory, I cannot recall exactly where a certain verse is, but at least I know there is such a verse. Also, in some parts of the Bible, such as the prophecies concerning the Lord's coming back, I feel I have not studied sufficiently. Other than that, I can possibly take you through the whole Bible. Brothers,

if you want to be approved as a young servant of the Lord, you have to know the Bible.

8) SERVING AS A CHILD WITH A FATHER UNTO THE GOSPEL

There is yet another crucial factor concerning Timothy's approvedness. This may even be the most important. Paul wrote of him, "That as a child with a father he has served with me unto the gospel" (Philippians 2:22). There are three crucial items in this verse: "As a child with a father," "he has served with me," and "unto the gospel". First, when we follow the Lord, we should be spiritual children with spiritual fathers. Second, we should serve with the apostle. Third, this service should be unto the gospel.

We have already seen that the apostle Paul himself was approved by God and the saints he served. Because of Paul's approvedness, his approval of Timothy was proof of Timothy's approvedness. Their manifestation may have been different, but they were of the same category, the same line. Paul was approved, so Timothy was approved. What was a major reason for Timothy's approvedness? Timothy was approved because he was Paul's spiritual child. In fact, not only was Timothy Paul's child, but he served with the apostle Paul as a child with a father. Thus, his serving with the apostle Paul was unto the same goal, the same purpose, the same operation, and the same attainment. His serving with the apostle

Paul was unto the gospel. Timothy served with Paul as a child with a father serving unto the gospel.

This is not in our usual concept of how one serves. Our concept is that God has called us, so we answer only to Christ. I have heard many brothers say they will only hear and will only listen to Christ, saying, "It is Christ alone who called me and Christ alone who leads me." This is certainly true. In the whole book of Philippians Paul was seeking after nothing but to gain Christ, to be found in Christ, and to pursue Christ. Therefore, he only belonged to Christ. Everything Paul did was for Christ and unto Christ. Yet at the same time, Paul did not give up the church. While he was unto Christ, he was also for the church. This is why he made the statement to the Philippians, "I desire to depart and be with Christ for this is far better, but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake" (1:23-24).

As the Philippians' spiritual father, Paul said, "But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake." He was very much for Christ, but he had the church in his heart. As he considered the church, he realized that he needed to stay for their advancement in the Lord. He needed to remain alive on this earth, in order to serve for the advancement and joy of the saints. Philippians 2:23 continues Philippians 1:24, "Him therefore I hope to send immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me." Paul's consideration of the Philippians' need was also the purpose for which Paul wanted to send Timothy

to them.

Paul had confidence in Timothy. Timothy was someone who served with him as a child with a father. Because of this, Paul could send Timothy! Praise the Lord! Timothy was approved.

A FATHER WITH A SON IS
A LIFE-RELATIONSHIP

If a young brother can find a good father in the church life, he is blessed. He may not be as blessed as Timothy to have the apostle Paul as his father. But at least he will have some who can be his big brothers. You may have someone who is willing to take you as a son. When that happens you will be very blessed.

You may ask, "Who is my father?" Actually, this is a mutual matter. Paul never traveled around with a banner that said, "I am an apostle looking for a son. I will raise up this son so that I will be able to send him around to different churches." He never did this! He just passed through Lystra and Iconium, and the brothers there recommended Timothy to Paul. So Paul agreed to take him.

Did the father-son relationship develop because of Paul or because of Timothy? It developed because of who each of them were. There was no formal ceremony in which Paul announced to the churches that Timothy was now his son and heir. When Timothy and Paul were together, a life relationship began to develop. This father-son relationship developed mutually as they spent time together.

This relationship is very crucial to the growth of every young person. This relationship between a father and a son is extremely sweet. It is a relationship in life and a relationship in love. A son can say, "I love my father." A father can say, "I love my son." The son can say, "My life is from my father." The father can say, "Not only did I give my life in begetting my son, but I would even now lay down my life for my son."

When an older brother has a life-relationship with a younger brother, the younger brother will not look at the older one only as an elder in his position, but also as his father. He will owe him his growth, his spiritual understanding, his equipping, and the development of his ability for his operating in the church life.

Whoever has this kind of father or this kind of big brother is very blessed. You should look for this kind of relationship in the church life. This does not mean that you should shop around for a son if you are a father, or for a father if you are a son. Instead, treasure how the Lord has arranged your circumstances. Treasure the place where the Lord has placed you to develop.

A GOOD FATHER IS A GOOD PATTERN TO HIS SON

Once both parties realize they are in a father and son relationship, the father will not have peace unless his son grows well. The son will not have peace unless he is cohesively related with his father. Such a relationship issues in a real peace. In such

a relationship of life and love, a family manner of life develops and the father becomes a pattern to the son. This pattern is not outward and shallow, but a father can even be a pattern in the intrinsic qualities of the young brother's person. It is not just his living and his operation, but it is also his decency, his sobriety, and his buoyancy which make a deep impression on the younger brothers. Those who are comparatively spiritual do not attract with outward appearances, but with the substance of their person. When ones see them they know this person is profound, deep, grand, knowledgeable, and has a high understanding and apprehension of spiritual things. This brother is a good pattern. Such a brother will cause younger saints to say, "I want to be like him."

A good father must always be a good pattern to his son. A divorced family is hard on the children, because they no longer have a pattern. If the father is a drunkard or a gambler, this is also very hard on the children and hurts their growth. Without a healthy pattern it is very difficult to grow properly.

If a spiritual father's conduct with other brothers is hypocritical, then his spiritual son will become a hypocrite. His unhealthy pattern will teach his son that you can lie a little bit to smooth over an uncomfortable situation. Such improper behavior, even in very minor things, can become very damaging to a young brother's growth. This is why older brothers must guard themselves and be a healthy pattern.

A SON LEARNS HIS SPIRITUAL SKILLS
FROM HIS FATHER

A father gives his son life and loves him. A father raises his son in a healthy family life and becomes his pattern. This father-son relationship is also an apprenticeship. The son will learn everything from the father. He will learn how to give a message, how to read the Bible, how to handle difficult situations, how to care for the brothers, even how to rebuke brothers. Through the father, the son learns the proper way to exercise himself. In one sense you could say the son learns all his skills and his trade from the father. During the New Testament time, a son would always continue in his father's trade. Joseph was a carpenter, so the Lord Jesus was a carpenter. This principle holds true spiritually. You need to learn spiritual things as an apprentice from your father.

HAVING THE PROPER STAND,
SERVING AS A BOND SLAVE OF
JESUS CHRIST

Timothy was not just a child with a father, but he also served with Paul. This service was an important part in Timothy and Paul's relationship. In what way and in what capacity did Timothy serve with Paul? First, he served in the position of a slave. Paul said, "He has served with me." This meant that Timothy had taken the same position as Paul. Who was Paul? He was a bond slave of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1). Then who was Paul's

son? His son was also a bond slave of Jesus Christ. The father's stand was to surrender absolutely to the Lord. So the son's standing was also to surrender absolutely to the Lord. They were both bond slaves.

Brothers, remember that this intimate relationship can easily become an issue, a party, a faction, or a sect in the church life or among the churches. However, taking the same stand together as bond slaves of Jesus Christ can save us. The son must learn to say, "I am not for my father. I am for the Lord. My father is not for me. He is for the Lord. I am for my father, because my father is for the Lord." The father must say, "I am for my son, because my son is for the Lord."

This life relationship is not natural; it is not common; it is not worldly; it is not merely human. These things may be involved, but they are not the priority or focus. You can love a brother for many years and invest yourself in that brother. You can watch the brother grow and develop with great expectation, but if one day that brother refuses to take a stand as a bond slave of Christ for the interest of Christ and the church that will be the end of your relationship. You may still be friends, but the father-son relationship will end. It is not because mistakes are made, but because the stand as a bond slave of Christ is lost.

SERVING WITH A COMMITMENT

So in Philippians 2:22 we see a child with a father in a sweet, life-

relationship. The child and the father are also very strong to take the same stand for Christ and the Body of Christ; for the Lord and for His manifestation; for Christ and the local church. When Timothy took a strong stand for these things, he served with Paul. Even more than this, they both served with a commitment. Any kind of service must be with a commitment. Service consists of three parts: a stand, a commitment, and a proper labor.

To serve without commitment makes you merely employed. Your commitment goes beyond how you spend your time; your commitment demands your whole person. You may say that you are serving, but if you do not have a commitment you are just performing a job in the church life. A person who is committed invests himself even to the point of being completely overwhelmed. Sometimes brothers tell me to take a vacation. How can I take a vacation? How can I rest?

A commitment does not come and go. A father has a commitment. A father will never say to his son, "So, you finally graduated from a university! Hallelu-Me! Now please get out of here! My responsibility is over!" That is not a father; that is an animal! Fathers remain with their sons as fathers until they are fully developed according to their expectation. That is a commitment. A father cannot rest or take a break. He cannot take a vacation from being a father. He can never say, "I can relax now, because my son has grown enough."

OUR STAND PRODUCES
OUR COMMITMENT;
OUR COMMITMENT PRODUCES
OUR LABOR

Timothy and Paul were together as a child with a father. Their relationship was so sweet, and together, they served. Their stand was the same. Their commitment was the same. Eventually their labor was the same. Your stand produces your commitment. Your commitment produces your labor.

You may visit a gospel contact four or five times. They may always be happy to see you, but they may refuse to come with you to a meeting. You may respond, "There isn't any hope for this person. I tried and tried, but he just won't come to the meeting." This kind of labor is hopeless, because you are laboring according to an achievement and not according to commitment.

Many times we do not really labor. We carry something out for our amusement or our convenience. But we are not really committed. Our visitation is just like an employee carrying out a job. It may have come out of the church elders making a decision: "Brothers, from now on, let's visit two families every week. You're not allowed to stay at home. You must be in the saints' home two evenings a week!" So you follow the order because you are a good brother in the Body. Did you realize that this service has very little value? Why? Real service must have a stand, a commitment, and a labor. A real serving one can never deviate from these three things.

To labor according to a commitment is very meaningful and enjoyable. It is like a young brother dating a young sister. For him to labor to win a sister's heart and cause her to love him, and to gain her family's approval is much more enjoyable than announcing to her that he feels she should marry him. If he gets married by telling her when they first meet, "Sister, God has arranged for us to be together. Let's get married next week," he will miss the sweet labor of courtship and probably not be married. Labor with younger saints and with gospel friends in a way that wins their hearts.

When the Lord finally sees the completed result of all His labor, He will be satisfied. The church is not produced by miracles. Matured believers are not produced in one day. The Lord will testify, "I worked with each of My believers one by one. I enjoyed them one by one. I caused them to grow one by one. I developed each of them one by one. I made them My lovers one by one. Now they are all mine. 'Behold, I and the children God has given Me!'" That is a labor with commitment.

SERVING UNTO THE GOSPEL
WITH A VIEW,
WITH AN OPERATION, IN A PROCESS

Timothy served with Paul as a child with a father in a sweet relationship. They shared the same stand, commitment, and labor in their service. They also served unto

the gospel. The word "unto" shows that a process is involved. Remember that in Ephesians 4 God gave us apostles to perfect the saints. The saints are perfected unto the building up of the Body of Christ, unto a full-grown man, until we all arrive at the oneness of the faith. These are lovely "unto's." They show that "unto" means there is a goal and a process to reach that goal. "To serve unto the gospel" means that our service has a view and an operation, and is a process.

The gospel is equivalent to God's economy. To serve "unto the gospel" means that you serve with God's economy in view. When you begin to serve with this view, you have an operation. According to your commitment, you labor. According to your view, you operate. What is the difference between labor and operation? Labor is to toil hard in the field, but to operate is to work according to a plan. I operate according to God's eternal plan. I operate according to the heavenly blueprint I have seen. I am also going through a process as I serve unto the gospel.

The sweet father and son relationship between Paul and Timothy was not unto itself, but unto God's economy. The father and the son were both unto God's economy and unto the fulfillment of God's economy. Their relationship was based on Christ, founded on Christ, growing in Christ, and operating in Christ. This father and son had the same stand, shared the same commitment, and had the same labor.

This service was with God's economy in view. They shared such a high view, and they began to operate together in God's economy. They were also going through the same process so that God's economy could be fulfilled.

We should tell the Lord, "Thank You. We worship You that You have gained such a church, that You have gained such a young co-worker, and that You have gained Paul. We worship You that he could be such a father to Timothy and such a fa-

ther to the church in Philippi. We worship You Lord, for such a servant. Be with us, and in this age raise up many servants to operate in such a way. Raise up servants who are not for work; they are not developing a work; but they are for the profit and well-being of the local churches." Timothy was such a servant with Paul. Because of this, Paul was able to tell the Philippians that they knew of Timothy's approvedness.

- Titus Chu

On the Regulation of Apostles and Prophets

In his book *The Spreading Flame*, F.F. Bruce hints at why the function of the prophets fell away after Paul's time (he does not, however, seem to have the view that prophets could speak in a way that each could wait their turn!): (1) Churches "became suspicious that not all who claimed to practice the prophetic gift were genuine prophets", (2) the "growth of ecclesiastic organization left little room for such unarranged ministry", and (3) [therefore?] the number of prophets decreased.

Rather than encouraging the prophetic function, the churches relied more and more on such things as lectionaries, and meetings took on a predictable form. (During times of persecution, however, or times of a new move of the Lord, the function of prophesying seems to reassert itself.) To handle what confusion might arise from the function of such "prophets," the *Didache*, or *Teaching of the 12 Apostles*, was produced to direct the churches as to what to look for, and what to look out for.

After setting forth the "way of life" and the "way of death," the *Didache* goes on in detail to discuss how baptisms should be performed, how fastings should be carried out, how to have the Lord's table (if you were not baptized you could not participate, for that would be "casting pearls before swine"!) and especially how to deal with those claiming to be apostles and prophets. Rather than trusting it to the saints' and the elders' judgment, those who produced the *Didache* provided definite guidelines of what could be considered of the Lord, and what should not. The question is obvious...Is this indeed the unavoidable pathway as time progresses? Shall apostles and prophets continue to be raised up among us? And can't the saints themselves discern their operation? -J. Berglund

*p. 92. Ferdmans, Grand Rapids MI, 1958.

CONCERNING TAG MAGAZINE

In December, TAG came out in the Fellowship Journal format. Whether this gospel magazine for young people is continued or not will depend upon continued interest and participation.

The general sense so far has been that the content is suitable, but the presentation could be improved upon. Those who understand how to use layout to make the gospel and the truth more accessible to young people are encouraged to contact us for further fellowship.

Distribution and funding are also considerations. TAG is meant not merely for "our" young people, but for the generation of which they are a part. Shall we expect those who need it to subscribe to it? TAG is a gospel publication firstly, and then also a truth publication with believers and our own young people in view. TAG is something that any young person who loves Jesus should be able to make use of, even if they do not know us or our terminology.

The first issue took a "cash on the barrelhead" approach to the gospel. Its overall message was "Give yourself to Jesus and trust in Him." If anything came across as unfitting to that message, it is not what was desired. (For instance, I became very concerned that the article on hedonism might bring some of our young people under condemnation if they owned a certain brand of clothing. Such a thing was not the intention! Many, including myself, are probably guilty of naively subscribing to something that promotes something unclean! The point was that a trend that was once not promoted by our culture is now blatantly endorsed. If we wish to be a testimony for Christ, we cannot identify ourselves publicly with what is contrary to Christ.)

This TAG also introduced matters that students and their parents could read together. This is an area in the church life that may be overlooked! Perhaps someday there may be a way for parents and their high-school children to come together in a setting tailored just for them. Our second-generation develop their own subculture simply because no one else, neither their "first-generation" parents, nor their friends, understands what they have experienced. And, quite frankly, many of our children simply do not understand why we have chosen this way!

Additionally, there are some who have been serving the young people for many years now. Outside of their own localities, few of these serving ones have any outlet for passing on anything they have developed or learned. TAG could be a means to get these riches out as well.

If TAG is to be successful, however, some young people with a genuine burden for their generation will have to rise up to help make it happen. Of course, TAG is not necessary for any of these matters. How the Lord will carry whatever He is burdened for is up to Him.

- John Berglund