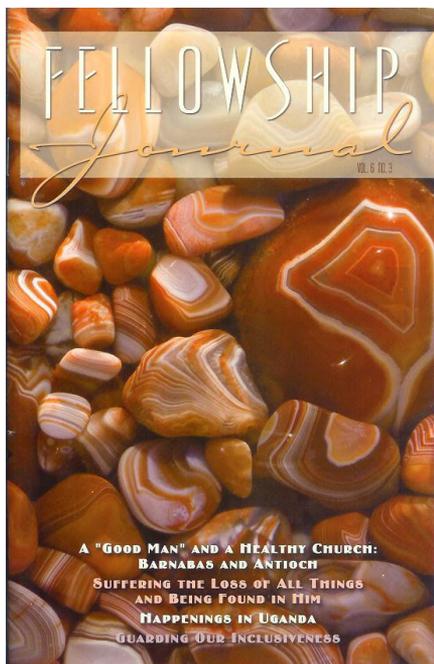


FELLOWSHIP *Journal*

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A Good Man and a
Healthy Church

Counting all Things
Loss and Being
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Peter

A Warning Against
Exclusivism

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INTRODUCTION

If there had been room, I was going to write an article entitled "Paul the Fool," applying it to our current situation.

It is claimed by some today that we should only receive ministers recognized or certified as being of "the ministry of the age". If any person *might* be called such a minister, I think we could agree it would have to be Paul. What then was Paul's attitude and exercise? Bring to view his treatment of Apollos. Apollos was not a brother who labored as a part of Paul's "crew," even though Apollos had been helped in his effectiveness by Priscilla and Aquilla, whom Paul had raised up. And yet Apollos labored independently of Paul.

Paul had raised up the church in Corinth, laboring no doubt as he had in Ephesus, from house to house and with tears (Acts 20:31). The saints in Corinth were his precious children (1 Cor 4:15) and yet when Apollos came to labor there, Paul did not tell them to inform Apollos he should go elsewhere and raise up his own church! No, in fact, Paul granted that Apollos' labor was as necessary as his own, saying, "I planted, Apollos watered..." (3:6).

We may think Paul should have been more protective of "his" saints, rather than opening the door of Corinth to all ministers. But Paul believed that if a person was raised up by Christ to serve His church, then that person had a portion of ministry needed by the saints (3:5). After all, the church he raised up was a church of Christ, not a church of Paul. Thus, as a "wise master builder" (3:10), Paul did not seek to build a protective wall around the saints. Paul would rather err on the side of inclusion than introduce suspicion that would cause saints to miss some portion of Christ His servants might provide. (Even of those workers doing damage to the Galatians, Paul would only say, "I wish they would cut themselves off!" Even then, he does not order that they be cut off. See Gal 5:12.)

Some have implied that if there were cell-phones or email back then, there could have been one work with one center. But what of those who would not respond to such a headquarters? Apollos did not join himself directly with Paul, yet Paul still facilitated him, ordering Titus to aid him and those laboring with him (Titus 3:13). The Lord Himself remains the Center to raise up whom He will and when, and where, and to send them forth. Ours is to receive those who come in His name to discover whether they may indeed be joints of the rich supply (Eph. 4:16). - *John Berglund*

A Weekend of Music

at

Ashland Woods

The new Fellowship Center at Ashland Woods became the venue for a lively time of song and fellowship on the first weekend in April. Around ninety saints from churches in the area convened to sing, enjoy and talk about the role of music in our worship of the Lord. Saints from Buffalo, Cleveland, Garfield Heights, Pittsburgh, Columbus, Cincinnati, Chicago, Toronto, Toledo, Bloomington (Indiana), Willoughby, and Goshen gathered on a mild Friday night and began by singing ... and singing ... and singing.

The music enjoyed was as varied as the participants and locals: hymns, contemporary Christian songs, African-American gospel, locally-written songs, rounds, songs rescued from the secular world—all types were sung enthusiastically throughout the weekend. The instruments supporting these songs included guitars (and plenty of them), piano, keyboard, flute, oboe, cello, percussion instruments

of all types (including tambourines, shakers and drums of both western style and African style), and let's not forget the simplest and most versatile percussion instrument of them all: the human hands. The most important instrument of all was there too, and operating beautifully: the human vocal cords.

On Saturday morning and afternoon, Mark Jordan, Vern Yoder, Del Martin, Jim Ruffin, Bob Brenneman, and Jeffrey Fuller led sessions which included talks on our vision concerning music in the churches, discussions and demonstration of how to use the instruments more effectively in the meetings, a listing of "musical maladies" and discussion of how to fix them, a group effort at four-part harmony (more on that in a moment), and a discussion about technical issues involving music and a demonstration of software.

The four-part harmony session, led by Bob Brenneman and Del Martin, resulted in a

harmonic version of "Under An Eastern Sky" by A. B. Simpson. The participants began by dividing themselves into vocal categories: sopranos and altos for the women, tenors and basses for the men. One person was overheard asking his neighbor, "How am I supposed to know which I am?" It didn't take long to find out as participants all were shown their part one at a time with the piano. Soon all four groups were meshed, creating a sound of harmonic praise to the Lord. It was, for all involved, a moving experience.

Saturday afternoon and early evening were spent with self-created groups selecting songs they wanted to demonstrate in the Saturday evening meeting. The groups tried to apply many of the points brought out earlier in the day. When 8:30 came, everyone reconvened in the acoustically-wonderful fellowship room and one by one they came forward to feed the saints musically. For two-and-a-half hours the saints gathered and floated away in Spirit.

On Lord's Day, after some final thoughts by the brothers,

a Lord's table began which was a continuation of a celebration of our Lord in song. Two particular songs stood out: "O How I Love Him" from the hymnal and "Nothing Without You," a contemporary Christian song. Both songs brought the saints up from their chairs and into the heavenlies.

One weekend is not nearly enough to explore all the areas needed to explore (one lifetime isn't!). With the encouragement of many participants, the brothers responsible for the weekend decided a second such event will be held this fall, tentatively set for the first weekend in October. There are limits on the number that can come together at these excellent facilities (Huntington House, the cabin and the Fellowship Center), so those wishing to join in the fall festival of praise should get their names in early.

Contact Mark Jordan at:
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or

Tom Neill at:

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More details will be forthcoming in the coming weeks.

RECONSIDERING THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

Message Seven

[Prior messages in this series may be found on our website and in the previous issue.]

BARNABAS – “A GOOD MAN”

In Acts 11:24, the Bible tells us something particular about Barnabas, and it is that he was a “good man”.

Sometimes in the church life we lay hold onto some inspired phrase spoken by a servant of the Lord. One such phrase among us has been, “God doesn’t want a good man; God wants a God-man!” Unfortunately, it seems that some think they are becoming God-men even though they are not being good men! Today some can even be seen acting in a way that is hardly found among people in the world! Why? Perhaps it is because they don’t care about being good men, since God only cares for God-men! If you are not a good man, however, you should not think of yourself as a God-man. Saints, if you can easily lie or do other unethical things, do not think of yourself as a God-man.

FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

In Acts 11:24 we are also told that as such a good man, Barnabas was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes I become concerned when I consider our situation. I am afraid that we have become old and peculiar. Once an old man finds something he is able to do he is happy, and he desperately holds on to it. Having the Spirit, however, is something marked by vitality, and vitality’s mark is its continual ability to break out of forms! Those who are old feel threatened by change, because they do not know how to handle what is unfamiliar. If things become unpredictable, they feel lost. If we find ourselves shocked and uncomfortable and unable to handle things in the church life when the Spirit is at work, that is not a good sign, because a healthy church is a church full of such vitality of the Spirit! Whoever is filled with the Holy Spirit is saved from oldness.

Another sign of problems in a church is barrenness. When things become overly formed in the church life, the Spirit can find little room to operate, so the outflow of life becomes

restricted. Instead of the flow of life, what others will find is a pattern that some will like and some won't. Therefore some will join and others will not, based on the pattern that has solidified. Brothers, this is not what marks the local church; this is what marks a denomination! The gatherings of a local church should be full of the Spirit.

If the church life is filled with the Spirit, people will be attracted, even though they may not know what to expect when they come.

Brother Lee told me that during the Chefoo revival, no one ever knew what was going to happen in a meeting. One time the saints came together and a sister began to weep until they all began to weep. When they returned to their homes, they felt totally satisfied because the Spirit was able to work so freely among them. No one was trying to "generate" anything; whenever they came together, everyone simply looked to the Lord for direction. Brother Lee then told me, "The more freedom the Spirit has among you, the more prevailing your church life will be!"

Of course, if you desire to give the Spirit the full freedom in your church life, you yourself must be a person full of the Spirit! Therefore, I urge you: Do not cease to pray-read, read-pray, call on the Lord's name, sigh, make supplication or give thanks... pay attention to prayer, reading and the exercise of the Spirit! I hope that every day everyone might spend thirty minutes or more before the Lord to spiritually keep yourselves fresh and living!

FULL OF FAITH

Secondly, besides being filled with the Holy Spirit, why might Barnabas have been described in Scripture to be a "good man"? He was full of faith (11:24).

Usually we denote faith as something that is towards God. Not many realize, however, that faith is something we exercise towards God's work. Abraham probably always believed in God, as most people do, but the Scripture reckoned that he believed God when he believed in what God would *do* (Gen 15:6, see also Romans 4 and Galatians 3). He believed that in one year's time God would do something so that he would have a son to fulfill what God promised. When we say we have faith in God, it means that we have faith in the work of God, which today means we should have faith in what He is doing in the brothers and sisters!

FAITH IN GOD'S WORKING EQUALS FAITH IN THE SAINTS

If we say we have faith in the Lord, do we trust His work in the brothers and sisters? If you have been in the church life a long time, it is likely that you do not fully appreciate how much the Lord has done and is doing in the saints all around you. Too often instead we look around us and see the saints in a manner that depreciates them. Everyone's problems appear much

more clearly than the Lord's work within them! This is one reason why it may become difficult for the church to be built up in your locality. Every church is a small society, and in many cases most of the members have known each other for many years. [As the old saying goes: "Familiarity breeds contempt"!] As we look to the Lord we are encouraged, but when we look at one another, our encouragement evaporates. If you desire to do something such as preach the gospel, you are encouraged until you begin to consider who you might do it with, for no one comes up to your standard. Barnabas, being full of faith, was not frustrated by such a thing! The gospel will still be preached, if you are such a "good man"! Acts 11:24 concludes by telling us that many were brought to the Lord.

The Bible stresses the gospel, yet in our church life many other things may end up being stressed which are not even found in the Bible! This does not mean such things cannot be done, but they should not become what is stressed in our church life. For instance, we often hear about a need for coordination, but the Bible does not stress coordination; it simply stresses the gospel. Paul did write to the Philippians that they should contend for the gospel in one spirit and with one soul (1:27), but some add in "one coordination," "one administration," "one kind of material," "one large gathering," and so on. When someone with this kind of mindset

proposes such a gospel campaign and few appear interested, he feels forced to conclude that they are not burdened for the gospel! Yet if you were a "good man" like Barnabas, even the apparent apathy of others would not discourage you.

What young woman, after her first date with the man who is smitten with her, says, "I am now as burdened for you as you are for me"? (Although I have seen sisters and brothers quickly decide to get married in the church life, I do not recommend it! Why jump so quickly from the sweetest, most enjoyable time God gives to a young man and woman into the "cage" of matrimony?) Regardless how she responds after the first date, if the man is after her, he will not give up simply because she doesn't seem to be as sure about it as he is! I believe Barnabas had this kind of heart. He was burdened for the gospel, and patiently brought others into this burden. The result was that Antioch had a good increase!

I am not suggesting there should be no coordination or planning for gospel events. There has been so much profit from the Gospel Odyssey, for example. I am just afraid we have more gospel coordinators today than we have gospel preachers!

SELFLESS IN THE LORD'S SERVICE

Barnabas, as a good man, was also selfless in the Lord's service. This can be seen in how he brought

Saul (Paul) into his labor in Antioch. He was able to receive Paul into his labor and work with Paul, even though Paul was probably manifestly the more gifted of the two, and had more potential. Barnabas, however, cared more about the profit of the saints than his standing among them.

Barnabas and Paul had to learn from each other. There are some here who meet in new churches where a number of young people are laboring. They enjoy a more contemporary form of music in their meetings, yet they are still able to sing these hymns with us today, even though it may seem to some of them very different! There is need for us to all learn from one another and to be open to each other. The older ones have to be open to the younger ones, and the younger ones have to be able to learn from the older ones.

Now let me ask you: are you such a good man as Barnabas? Sometimes we may think, "How can I say I am a God-man, when I dare not even say I am a good man?" What we need to ask is: "How filled am I with the Spirit? How much do I have confidence towards the brothers and sisters? How much am I, as a life-giver, preaching the gospel? And how willing am I to see others become even more profitable than I am so that the church may be blessed?" These are all reasons why the Lord was able to use Barnabas in such a way.

ANTIOCH: MATURED INTO A HEALTHY FORM

I have been in the church life for over fifty years, and I have yet to see a church that might boast as Antioch could, if Antioch cared to boast. Antioch, however, was content and blessed to be a "hidden" church. Even so, it was very prevailing! It had a very healthy birth and growth, aided as it was by servants of the Lord such as Barnabas. We should all be so happy to witness such a beautiful church.

ACQUIRING A TESTIMONY: "THESE PEOPLE ARE CHRIST-MEN"

After the church in Antioch arrived at its mature form, it acquired a marvelous testimony, for it was there that the Lord's followers were first called Christians ("Christ-men", 11:26)! In the Jewish churches, believers were considered as being of "the sect of the Nazarene" (24:5), as though they were still a part of Judaism. In Antioch, however, they had really become the luminaries Paul refers to in Philippians 2:15. They were no longer viewed as part of that "crooked generation" which included the Jewish religion. The church in Antioch had truly achieved a certain spiritual stature. I believe they really preached the gospel. Jerusalem at that time may have been the largest church on the globe, probably numbering in the tens of thousands, but Antioch was

likely the second largest, although probably not nearly so large. Many, however, were being saved and brought into the church life in Antioch.

OBSERVING THE EFFECT OF RELIGION
UPON THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

Another thing that impacted the church in Antioch should have been their observation of what was happening in Jerusalem. When Paul and Barnabas brought the offering of the saints from Antioch to the churches in Judea (11:30), they witnessed a number of things while they were there in Jerusalem. No doubt, from what we can deduce from chapter 12, they noted how James was operating, and probably realized that could become their own future. They must have been impressed with how even the great apostle Peter had been subdued, even to the point that he lost his buoyancy. He was no longer the Peter who could walk out of prison and preach boldly. Before this time, others would even seek to lie in his shadow to be healed! By chapter 12, however, others probably avoided him lest they be brought under scrutiny. Seeing this, the brothers must have felt strongly warned about compromising even a little bit with religion, for once the door was opened to it, it had the power to swallow everything up!

In chapter 12 it is also noted how the Lord dealt with Herod as he stood boastfully before the people.

This was the Herod who had James, the Lord's disciple and brother of John, beheaded (v.2). We have to appreciate how the Lord operates. Herod was eaten by worms even as he received the crowd's praise claiming him to be a god and not a man. Our God is so real!

Undoubtedly, Paul and Barnabas' realization of the situation in Jerusalem had something to do with their consideration of Mark, for we are told after all this that they took Mark with them back to Antioch (v.25). Barnabas probably felt that they could not allow his cousin Mark to remain in that unhealthy environment and that it would be best for him to come with them. (Another possibility, of course, is that Mark simply desired to be with them.) Mark, however, was still a person of ease and not yet the spiritual laborer he would one day become.

In Jerusalem, in spite of the fact that there was good increase, it is evident that the church there had become very sick. Peter's behavior in chapter 12 is an indicator of this. (Unlike the first time he was released from prison (Acts 4), this time he could hardly accept that the Lord would consider him worthy of release! He deemed himself as someone who had been purged from the leadership. This possibly was due in part to the influx of a number of priests into the church life (6:7).

In the church the saints are usually quite simple. This is a blessing, but it can also make it easy for people who seem educated or

eloquent to take over if the leadership is not healthy. The presence of so many priests in the church may have affected the church life. James himself was very much on the side of the Law, and obedience to the Law eventually became the requirement of the Jerusalem church. Very little room was left for Peter to operate, and the church life in Jerusalem departed from the Spirit.

It is no wonder they wanted to take Mark with them to Antioch!

MINISTRIES ABLE TO DEVELOP
IN ANTIOCH
AS RACE AND CLASS WERE OVERCOME

In Antioch we see another picture. In Antioch a number of the saints were able to develop their ministries. In Antioch we can see prophets and teachers (13:1). Any church in which ministers can develop becomes a rich church! On the other hand, if a church is unable to produce ministers with ministries, that church will become old.

In Antioch, five names are mentioned who were no doubt also exercising the leadership there. Because Antioch was healthy, the Spirit was able to use that church to have a breakthrough!

According to Acts 13:1 there was in Antioch, besides Barnabas and Saul, Simeon who was also called Niger ("Black"), Lucius of Cyrene (likely also a man of color), and Manaen, foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch (Herod Antipas). Therefore you have Saul, a Pharisee

(scholar) and Roman citizen from present-day Turkey; Barnabas, a Levite (the Jewish tribe of the priesthood) from Cyprus; Simeon, who was possibly from further away in Africa; Lucius, from present-day Libya; and Manaen, who grew up in a Roman palace alongside Herod Antipas. What a diverse group! These were the leading brothers in Antioch.

Today, for instance, some who minister here have PhD's, while others have had no college experience. This was one of the things that revealed that Antioch was a very healthy and mature church: they did not discriminate based on race or social standing. Whoever you were, you could grow into your ministry in Antioch.

IN ANTIOCH THEY MINISTERED
TO THE LORD AND WERE ABLE TO HEAR
AND FOLLOW THE SPIRIT

In the following verse (13:2) we are told that as they ministered to the Lord, the Spirit was able to speak to them. This is precious! In Antioch, they had the capacity to hear and follow the Spirit! Your ability to follow the Spirit's leading ultimately decides how healthy and prevailing your church life will be.

Do you want to know how healthy your church life is? Just consider the question: Do we have the leading of the Spirit? One issue that has come up among many churches has been regarding the use of certain reading materials. The

problem is not with the materials themselves; the problem comes whenever we give up following the Spirit! In Antioch we have such a precious picture of saints serving the Lord together and who were able to hear the Lord's speaking together. In Antioch, they were able to hear the Spirit say: "Separate unto Me now Barnabas and Saul unto the work to which I have called them" (13:2). While they were together, they had the Spirit's speaking that two among their five were to go out to pioneer in the Lord's work for the spread of His testimony. This is a great thing.

IN ANTIOCH THEY COULD RECEIVE
BROTHERS EVEN WHEN THEY COULD
NOT RECEIVE THEIR TEACHING

Another sign of Antioch's maturity was how they handled the situation when some brothers came from Judea and told them those who were Gentiles had to be circumcised. How peculiar this must have been! For instance, one of them might have asked Manaen if he was circumcised, and he might have said he was not. They then would have claimed that he wasn't saved, and yet he was an elder there! He might have replied, "I have preached the gospel and many have been saved through my preaching." They would have said, "All these people are not really saved if they are not circumcised!" When people are possessed by spiritual ideology, they can find themselves doing some

pretty foolish things! You might argue that the whole thing doesn't make sense, yet they will promote and exalt that thing as the primary thing and the "flow," regardless. Probably they only considered that a minority of the church in Antioch were saved, for only those who had been circumcised qualified. If I were there, I would have asked, "What about the sisters... how are we to know whether they are saved?"

If this wasn't such a serious situation, the whole thing would appear silly. What, however, can be seen in this picture that is so healthy? It is how Barnabas and the brothers received these saints and handled the situation. We must learn from their example here and take it as a healthy pattern for us. These saints who came to Antioch from Judea were brothers, so they were received as brothers (even though they did not receive all the brothers in Antioch as brothers!) but when it came to their teaching, they did not feel they had to receive it. In fact, the Scripture reveals they strongly dissented. What came out of this? Fellowship!

ANTIOCH TRUSTED THE PROCESS OF
FELLOWSHIP

The leading brothers in Antioch appointed Barnabas and Saul to go to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders there, to consider this with them. After they gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 15), Peter gave a very good word about how the Lord had poured out

His Spirit on the Gentiles, and that the Gentiles who believed were just as saved as they were. Barnabas and Paul also testified about how the Spirit was working among the Gentiles. Eventually James had no choice but to say that they should not load anything upon the Gentiles other than to abstain from meat offered to idols, etc. (Don't think that James was being fair here... he realized he could do nothing else after Peter had spoken.) As the conclusion to this time of fellowship, Acts 15:21 has James saying, "For Moses from generation to generation has those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." (!) In other words, regardless whether or not Gentiles are getting saved... there will always be some Jews who keep Moses alive, even if you Gentiles do not! How proud was this word! James seems to refuse to embrace the Gentiles fully. He could not argue with Peter about his account of how the Spirit poured out upon Gentiles, or with Paul and Barnabas about the signs and wonders that took place among them there in Antioch or about how many among the Gentiles were coming to Christ. He had no choice other than to conclude that the Gentiles should be accommodated. Still, he let those who valued the Law know that the Law still had its voice. Therefore, we can see that something that had such a profound beginning in the Spirit had fallen under the influence of religion. How prevailing was the

situation in Jerusalem in those early days! Such a pattern of degradation can be seen repeatedly in church history. What was begun in Jerusalem was indeed something uniquely done by God to raise up His first church for His testimony. Yet what had been so prevailing was totally taken over by religion, even to the point that they thought that since they were the first church, they should act as the headquarters of all the churches.

Yet at the same time, there were some brothers in Antioch who were so pure. They couldn't boast of such a beginning as Jerusalem had, but they were still able to minister to the Lord and be before Him. In this, they were able to permit the Lord a way.

PEOPLE WERE BEING PERFECTED IN ANTIOCH

Antioch was also a place where people could be perfected. Luke wrote his Gospel and the book of Acts, yet in them he doesn't tell us about himself. This was a spiritual principle he held to, or perhaps he just felt it wasn't important. His ability, though, to write so much about all these things indicates he must have been with Paul much of the time. Even though he does not tell us so, he probably was perfected in Antioch.

Mark also underwent perfecting in Antioch, although he had to pass through many "waves" to arrive at his eventual stature. He was

simply someone who was slow in growing up. Paul and Barnabas disputed over Mark, probably because they disagreed about what was best for him. When I see some of the young people, I feel that they really need something strong to help them. Then my “Barnabas” side rises up and says, “Don’t be too tough on them. Give them time.” Even within us there is a “Paul” side and a “Barnabas” side!

I would, however, say a word to the young people: If you do not know how to love the church or give yourself to serve the church, the Lord won’t be able to do much with you. You need to be enlarged. Give yourself not to a work, but to the church. Serve in the work for the church. Serve in the work to bless the church. Then the Lord will be able to do so much. I feel that the Lord is bringing some of us through various stages, waiting for us to have a breakthrough. I believe the fields will really open up, but if we are small and argumentative, I don’t believe the Lord will be able to use us much. Do not waste your life on unnecessary things! Mark’s development came as he passed through various levels. I see a number of the young serving ones have come up to a certain level. If they can peacefully break through that level, they will become very useful to the Lord. We should pray for them, for if they can break through, the churches will be blessed.

In Antioch we also see the development of Silas. Silas had come from Jerusalem with the letter written for the Gentiles from the fellowship in Jerusalem in chapter 15. He must have been a spiritual man, for once he saw the situation in Antioch, he decided that, rather than returning home, he should stay, and the brothers in Antioch confirmed this (15:31-33). He received further perfecting there, and eventually he was able to accompany Paul on his second gospel journey (15:40). Silas was brought into the exercise of the apostleship through Antioch.

Antioch became a good ground for the development of ministers. In this matter, Acts 15:35 is most telling. After the letter had been read in the church in Antioch concerning the matter of circumcision, we are told that Barnabas and Paul taught and preached “with a number of others also”. Isn’t this encouraging? It would be as if Watchman Nee and Witness Lee were holding a conference... along with “many others also”! Let me tell you honestly, if Watchman Nee and Witness Lee were holding a conference here, I would have nothing to say, unless they commanded me to. My word would simply be: “You are here, brothers. I have nothing to say.” I would be afraid my words would appear childish in comparison. According to Acts 15:35, however, Paul gave a message, and then the second message was given by an unknown brother, followed by a third, and so on. They shared the same pulpit! I would challenge anyone to

try to follow someone like Brother Lee onto the pulpit to share something after he has finished his message! Many years ago I accompanied DeVern Fromke to Norfolk, Virginia, where he was to give a conference along with Stephen Kuang. For some reason Brother Fromke could not release his burden in the first meeting, so he asked if I would mind sharing, which I did. Apparently my sharing was helpful, for they expanded the time from two meetings a day to three so that I might be given time. Then, however, for the next conference in Norfolk, I was asked to share the platform with T. Austin-Sparks! I was just a young man of 28, while T. Austin-Sparks was the brother that even Watchman Nee took as his authority! When I heard I was to share alongside Brother Sparks, I was scared to death! By the Lord's mercy, however, I did not accept the invitation. To my feeling it just wasn't fitting. Watchman Nee had written that, according to his estimation, all the work of the Holy Spirit in the Western world was focused upon the ministry of T. Austin-Sparks. Just thinking about speaking alongside him made me feel faint! Yet in Antioch, a good number of other brothers were able to stand up with the apostle Paul and Barnabas to share. (Notice that it does not say "a few others," but "many others"!)

How prevailing the church life in Antioch must have been, to produce so many who could share alongside Paul and Barnabas!

RATHER THAN BEING PULLED INTO
PAUL AND BARNABAS' DISPUTE,
ANTIOCH BECAME A PRESERVING
ELEMENT FOR THEIR ONENESS

Eventually, the church in Antioch became very mature in the Lord. One remarkable sign of this was the saints' stability in the wake of Barnabas' and Paul's parting. We have spoken about how Barnabas and Paul strongly disagreed about including Mark in their return journey to Galatia, and how they eventually went their separate ways. It seems the church there did not even care, though they surely were aware! The saints knew both of them very well by this time. Perhaps Manaen might have invited Paul and Barnabas to his luxurious villa for a love-feast in hopes they could be reconciled, but by and large the church did not seem to touch the matter. Paul was so spiritual, Barnabas was so spiritual, and even the whole church was so spiritual. Unlike fleshly Corinth, those in Antioch did not take sides, and neither did Paul or Barnabas try to entice anyone to side with them.

*PAUL, BARNABAS AND THE CHURCH
IN ANTIOCH HANDLING THE MATTER
SPIRITUALLY*

If Paul had tried to get the elders in Antioch to censure Barnabas and to stand with him, or vice versa, there would have been trouble, but neither of them did any such thing. Barnabas could have

claimed that he was the one Paul owed so much, but they both only cared about what was best for the Lord's interest. This is why they probably argued over Mark in the first place! They may each have had a different view about what would be best for Mark. Thus, in the end there were no repercussions. There were no accusing phone calls; no bitterness resulted. How spiritual were these two men, and how spiritual was this church!

There is no record that anyone in Antioch took sides with either Paul or Barnabas. Wouldn't this have been a good opportunity for anyone trying to promote himself? Such a person could have simply gone to Paul and said some sympathetic words. Paul would have not received it, of course, but even his silence could have given the ambitious one the ability to claim Paul had agreed with him! Then such a one could have done something further to promote himself and damage the church. Yet no such thing occurred, for the saints there were spiritual, realizing that the church belonged to Christ alone. A local church is a church of Christ! All those in this situation in Antioch displayed genuine spirituality.

*ANTIOCH'S HEALTHY STAND
BECOMING A PRESERVING ELEMENT TO
PAUL AND BARNABAS*

The church in Antioch treasured the fellowship of ALL the apostles. This, in turn, became a source of

oneness which protected the apostles themselves. Because the saints in Antioch so firmly appreciated and desired both of these apostles, Paul and Barnabas were both able to return to Antioch and remained closely associated with each other. Why? Because the saints in Antioch refused to give up ANY ministry that the Lord had granted to them and equally appreciated ALL of the Lord's ministers. Their feeling was: "We must have them all!"

Barnabas' trip must have been briefer than Paul's, for Paul continued on to Macedonia and Achaia (Greece) before returning, while Barnabas probably returned after only visiting Galatia (south central Turkey) where he and Paul had first labored. Therefore when he returned to Antioch, Barnabas probably had some time with the saints to report and continued serving in Antioch. Eventually Paul also returned, and he and Barnabas had to go on together there, for the church there ensured that, and in a way even required it.

Here we see a wonderful thing: When a church refuses to belong to an institution or a person, the oneness of the Body is preserved, and the oneness of the work is also preserved. Thus, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, you find Barnabas and Paul still were closely related to one another. Paul was the one who raised up the church in Corinth, but they also knew Barnabas, for Paul refers to Barnabas in a

way that shows they must have been well acquainted with him (1 Cor 9:6). Furthermore, in Colossians Paul refers to Mark as “the cousin of Barnabas” (Col 4:10). Therefore those in Colosse must have known of Barnabas, and in a good way.

In his journeys, Paul eventually labored in three major areas: in the Roman provinces of Galatia (south central Turkey), Asia (western Turkey, where Ephesus and Colosse were), and Achaia (or Greece, where Corinth was). Barnabas was familiar to the saints in all three of these areas. This should help us realize that Paul in his labor continued to be associated with his brother Barnabas. They may have experienced some contention, and even separated over it for awhile, but due to the operation of this mature church, they were able to continue on together. How crucial it is for churches to become this mature in their operation! We must have this kind of growth. When someone comes in to accuse one brother against another or to divide one group of workers against another, some churches must be mature enough to say, “Our stand is for the Body of Christ in our locality. Therefore we refuse to side with anyone against any co-worker, as long as that worker is serving Christ for the church.” (In Galatians, of course, we can see how Paul treated those “workers” who were attempting to bring the churches to something other than Christ. That is

something we also must be clear about.) Paul and Barnabas were both very clear that they were for the churches; and the churches they labored for were Christ’s, not theirs.

It is not an uncommon thing for workers to have disagreements, but if the church knows how to stand properly, such things will be swallowed up, and the brothers will eventually be able to be brought back together. Oh brothers, love the local church and treasure it, for it is such a precious thing! Refuse to be swallowed up in any institution, and at the same time, do not give cause for issues to rise up among the workers. Receive them as servants of the Lord, because their desire is to help you grow unto Christ.

PAUL AND BARNABAS RAISING UP
PEOPLE NOT FOR THEIR OWN USE,
BUT RATHER THE LORD’S

Because neither Paul nor Barnabas felt that anyone should be for them, they were very open. It is natural for us to feel we must protect those we care for, and thus keep them in our pocket. This can even be done out of a good heart. Our “pocket,” however, while it may be a very sanitary place, is too restricted; it will not allow the saints enough room to breathe!

Any church that attempts to hold on to its own people will cause those people to suffer. Your young and new saints must be brought into a greater sphere. You may say there is too much danger of germs, but

that is how they develop spiritual antibodies. Paul and Barnabas did not hold on to the promising ones they helped raise up. Mark, who was perfected by Paul and Barnabas and became useful to Barnabas and Paul for their ministry also became someone Peter could call his son (1 Pet 5:13)! It is hard to find anyone else in the Bible who profited from so many great servants of the Lord. Besides likely being a young disciple of Jesus, Mark was also Barnabas' cousin, trained by both he and Paul, and he became to Peter a "son" as well! Eventually he wrote a book in the Bible, and became a great servant of the Lord. According to tradition, he labored in Alexandria, Egypt, which was a very great city. The point is: no one felt Mark "belonged" to them.

Furthermore, who was Silas eventually with? Paul or Peter? In 1 Peter 5:12, Peter speaks of Silas being with him. Paul, after losing Mark and gaining such a sweet brother as Silas to labor with, wasn't allowed to hold on to Silas either! Peter was able to say of him, "I count him faithful." Silas labored with them both. Does this not give us a sweet picture?

NO ONE FROM ANTIOCH EVER
CAME IN THE NAME OF ANTIOCH

Finally, in the Bible you never read of anyone "coming from Antioch," yet you do read of people coming "from Judea" (Acts 15:1;

28:21) or "from James" (Gal 2:12, which also meant "from Jerusalem"). There was a time when, if you wanted to labor in a certain country, all you had to do was to tell them you were from some particular place. Then all the doors opened to you. A local brother, however, told me that he did not understand why they had to allow these certain brothers to minister, when others from among them could have done better! So I asked him, "Why did you let them give the messages?" He replied that it was because they were from this certain place. Antioch never lent itself to such issues. A local church is for that locality. If someone in a church desires to help a certain locality, then send some to live there or go labor to raise up people who can help that locality... do not send two or three from your locality to control them! Such a thing is damaging to the Lord's testimony. Because of their healthy stand, Antioch never considered that they should send people to other places to exercise control over them or even just to let them know how well they were doing! No Bible verse tells us anyone went out from Antioch in the name of Antioch.

May the Lord be with us as we consider all these matters. We thank the Lord for His Word. May we all become those who can minister to the Lord, and those to whom He can so freely speak!

- Titus Chu

Considering Peter

Peter's First Vision

Peter was a man of vision right from the start. According to Luke's account, the Lord first opened Peter's eyes by performing a miracle in his fishing boat (Luke 5:1-9). Peter's response was to fall down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord" (v. 8). Thus Peter's first vision was of Jesus as Lord and himself as a sinner.

Peter's Second Vision

His next great vision is recorded in Matthew 16:13-19, where the Lord asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" Only Peter could answer. He said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." This response was not a small thing. Peter did not come up with it himself. The Lord told him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood has not revealed

this to you, but My Father who is in the heavens." Peter could only have known who the Son of Man was because the Father had revealed it to him. The Lord then added to this God-given vision by telling Peter, "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens."

Peter's Third and Greatest Vision

The first of these "keys" was used at Pentecost when the church was born through Peter's preaching to the Jews (Acts 2). But in order to use the second key, a higher vision was needed. In Acts 10:9-28 Peter saw a vision in which the Lord told him to slay and eat all kinds of unclean animals. Through this vision Peter learned that although "it is unlawful for a man who is a Jew to join himself to or

come near one of another race, yet God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (v. 28). Obeying the Lord's leading, he went to the house of the Gentile Cornelius and preached the gospel. All who were there received the Spirit and were baptized (vv. 44-47). Thus the Gentiles, considered unclean by all the Jews, were declared clean and brought fully into the church through Peter's vision.

Perhaps it was because of these visions that Peter was so bold to speak the Gospel even under the threat of his life. At Pentecost (Acts 2) he spoke to the same crowd that 50 days earlier were shouting for the crucifixion of the Lord. In Acts 4 he healed a lame man and preached boldly, resulting in being thrown into prison. After his release, he joined himself to the church where they all praised the Lord. In Acts 5 he and the other apostles were arrested again, and were miraculously rescued by an angel. Immediately they went back into the temple and boldly resumed their preaching.

Peter Influenced by Religion

Yet in Acts 12 we begin to see a different picture. Peter is again arrested, and is again rescued by an angel. But instead of going back to boldly resume his preaching, he slipped away to a prayer meeting at a sister's house to report his release. Once there he said, "Report

these things to James and the brothers. And going out, he went to another place" (v. 17). It seems that the once bold Peter now went into hiding! In this verse we see two related things: Peter's loss of boldness and the rise of James among the brothers.

Peter had not forgotten his vision. In Acts 15, at the conference held in Jerusalem over the need of the Gentiles to be circumcised, Peter stood to remind everyone, "Men, brothers, you know that from the early days God chose from among you that through my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe" (v. 7). But when all was said and done, it was James who commanded that everyone listen to him as he gave the final verdict about the matter. He said, "Men, brothers, listen to me... Therefore I judge..." (vv. 13, 19).

It is not too much to say that the rise of the influence of James with his religious, law keeping practices (Acts 21:20) had a subduing effect on Peter. This effect is abundantly clear in the account given by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:12-13. "For before some came from James, he [Peter] continually ate with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to shrink back and separate himself, fearing those of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was carried away in their hypocrisy."

That Peter still held to his God-given vision concerning the Gentiles

is clear because he freely ate with them. He himself was not “from James.” But when “some from James” came, they immediately produced in Peter a religious fear of “those of the circumcision.” This fear forced him to go against his vision, violate his conscience, and enter into hypocrisy. His reaction of hypocrisy was so strong and obvious that it even caused others to grow weak in their faith and do the same. In Paul’s words, “they were not walking in a straightforward way in relation to the truth of the gospel” (v. 14).

Peter’s Return

Fortunately Peter’s story does not end there. By 64 A.D., Peter was no longer in Jerusalem. He had left that heavy religious atmosphere and was now in the city of Babylon. It was here, no longer under the direct influence of James and his followers, that he wrote his first Epistle.

Even though this book is written to the Jewish “sojourners of the dispersion” (1 Pet 1:1), there is no hint of the demands of James anywhere. Instead, we read “And if you call as Father the One who without respect of persons judges according to each one’s work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear, knowing that it was not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, that you were redeemed from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, but with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, the blood of Christ” (1:17-19).

Regarding the Gentiles, Peter writes, “Who once were not a people but now are the people of God; who had not previously been shown mercy but have now been shown mercy” (2:10).

Second Peter was written from Rome about five years later, close to the time of Peter’s martyrdom. Here he writes one of the greatest revelations of all: “Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things which relate to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and virtue, through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust” (2 Pet 1:3-4). It is Paul’s writings, rather than James’, that he recommends (3:15-16).

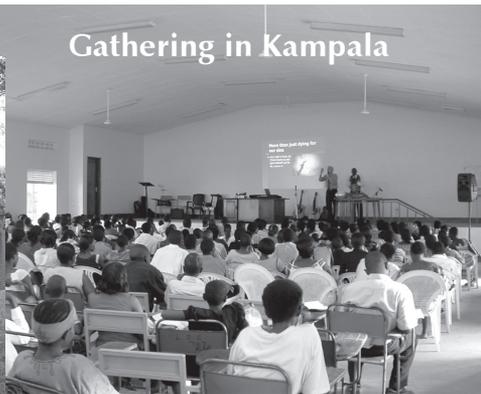
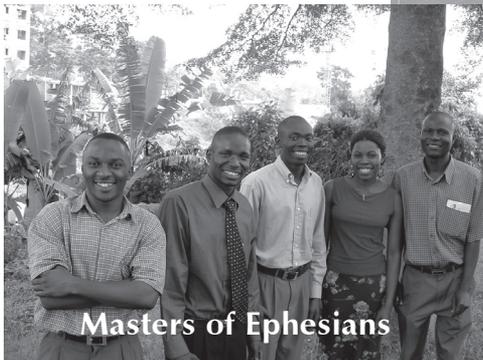
Once the Lord told Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has asked to have you all to sift you as wheat. But I have made petition concerning you that your faith would not fail; and you, once you have turned again, establish your brothers” (Luke 22:31-32). The Lord made petition for Peter throughout his entire life. This was His mercy. Thus Peter passed the test of the strong, charismatic leader with his legal religious teaching. He was able to remain true to his God-given vision. At the end of his life, through his epistles, he is able to establish us all in the same way today. - *David Shields*

Uganda Africa

An update to the churches

A New Testament Expression of Christ

On March 11, nearly 400 believers gathered together to enjoy the Lord and partake of the Lord's Table meeting. Eleven different communities from within the city of Kampala were represented. There was singing, praise and worship to the Lord as well as ministry from the Word. Brother Nigel Tomes from Toronto, Canada, ministered on how the Lord on the cross accomplished more than personal redemption; He also gave birth to the church! The gathering was a beautiful display of the oneness Christ accomplished on the cross and an evidence that the New Testament Church is a practical reality in this age.



Love for the Bible

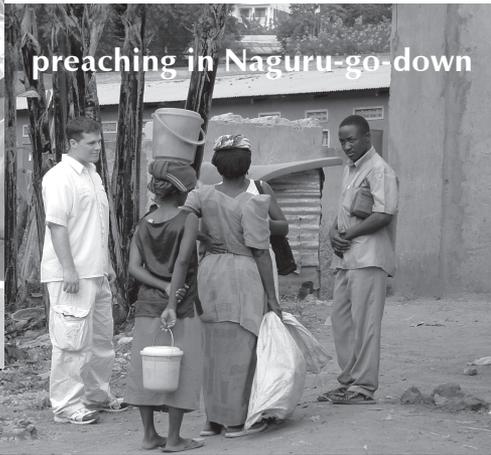
Gaining an appreciation and understanding of the Bible is crucial for growth in the Christian life. In addition to reading through the entire Bible, one component of the ten-month training is memorization of key Bible passages. Participants in the ten-month training have been memorizing the book of Ephesians chapter by chapter since the start of the training last August. By the end of January of this year, five of the trainees had successfully memorized and recited the entire book of Ephesians...all six chapters! All of the trainees can testify how their love and appreciation for the Lord has increased by "letting the word of Christ dwell in them richly".

A Timely Visit

On March 8, brother Nigel Tomes from Toronto, Canada visited Uganda. His ministry imparted an essential element into those in the ten-month training and was a great encouragement to the church. He emphasized the importance of keeping the Bible as our only standard and learning from our past and current church history. During his visit, he was also able to conduct the pastors training and minister at the corporate church gathering. This enabled the pastors to gain a greater understanding and appreciation for the work of Christ on the cross in producing the church.



Nigel with brothers



preaching in Naguru-go-down

Community Outreach - Faith in Operation

In Matthew 28, the Lord charges His disciples to go and make disciples of all the nations. That charge is known as the “great commission” and still is applicable today. On February 21, several participants in the ten month training coordinated with some of the saints from Naguru-go-down to bring the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ to the people in that poverty-stricken community. Several were brought to the Lord through that mission, and some of those that were saved have been added to the church.

Two brothers took this commission to preach the gospel and pioneered into Kampala International University located in a community on the other side of the city. They now have a weekly Bible study at the campus and are caring for about 15 students. Nine of their student friends recently attended the church gathering in the Makerere community.

Old Kampala Senior secondary school is located just a little over a mile from Makerere University. Several students from that school now regularly meet with the church. These students are being shepherded and receive care from two brothers in the ten month training who are serving them as “big brothers” (**standing at each end with the young men in photo below**). On March 21 we arranged to bring the gospel to that high school. The trainees sang several inspiring contemporary Christian songs interspersed with personal testimonies.



One Body in Practice - Pastors Training

Every Tuesday there is a training for interested pastors and leaders from various congregations throughout Kampala. Pastors and leaders from several communities throughout Kampala now attend this time. Many are taking what they have learned and seen back to their congregations. Gradually they are realizing that they are part of the one body of Christ practically expressed as the church within the city. This is evidenced by their commitment to attend the trainings and bring many from their congregations to the corporate church gatherings. Recently several new pastors from Namuwango and Kanyanya communities and Mokono district began attending the training.



The picture above is taken of the Saturday night Bible study upon the book of Revelation at Makerere University. This Bible study has become a valuable means of introducing new people to the church.



Believers now come from all across Kampala to attend the church gatherings

We'd Love to Hear From You!

While the Lord is doing much among the Ugandan people, receiving a letter from you is a real encouragement and supply to the labor here. Thanks for your prayers, love, and support. -Keith and Tina Miller

ugandankeith@yahoo.com
Or contact us by mail at:
Keith and Tina Miller
PO Box 10704
Kampala, Uganda AFRICA



Editor's note: Keith and Tina's son Andrew has joined them in their labor. He is seen in the picture on p. 23.

March 6, 2007

Dear Brother Titus,

GREETINGS AND INVITATION TO VISIT WEST AFRICA

Heb 6:10 For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work, and the love which ye have shown to his name, having ministered to the saints, and *still* ministering.

1Co 15:58 (Darby) So then, my beloved brethren, be firm, immovable, abounding always in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in *the* Lord.

We greet you with the above verses remembering fully well how much you have labored among us here in West Africa in the past. Times that we spent with you in those years are still very fresh in our minds. You helped us a great deal to lay the foundation for the work in this sub-region. It is therefore a great joy to us to know that you desire to visit us here again.

Brother Titus, we have heard and read of all the difficulties and persecutions you are facing especially from the so-called blended brothers and LSM. We wish to assure you that our faith in you and your ministry has not diminished in any way. We can testify of your love and zeal for the Lord and His testimony. We also can testify of the impact you have made in the lives of many of us. The so-called quarantine exercised by those brothers on you does not change our confidence in you. We pray the Lord to strengthen and encourage you to keep going because many of God's children still appreciate your ministry.

The visit of Brothers Vern and Del was very refreshing. We really enjoyed the time we had with them. The time with these brothers was very profitable. We therefore believe that your coming in September will be a season of refreshing to us. We are, by this email, officially inviting you to visit us here in West Africa. Please let us know exactly when you can visit so we can inform the churches.

As to what to do when you visit, we have been considering a few things. We feel that, if it would be possible, apart from general fellowship you could hold a training for the responsible ones. We have a lot of young elders and some fulltime workers who we believe will benefit a lot from such training. We also would like you to help us with how to raise up our young people to take up responsibility.

May the good Lord be with your spirit.

JERRY OKINE

FOR THE LORD'S WORK IN WEST AFRICA

CALEB LANQUAYE-TETTEH

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST IN PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE TWENTY-EIGHT: COUNTING ALL THINGS AS LOSS AND REFUSE AND BEING FOUND IN HIM (PHILIPPIANS 3:7-9)

THREE “ON ACCOUNT OF’S”

In Philippians 3:7-8, we have three “on account of’s”. In verse 7 Paul writes, “But what things were gains to me, these I have counted loss *on account of* Christ.” In verse 8 he continues, “But moreover I also count all things to be loss *on account of* the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, *on account of* whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them refuse that I may gain Christ.”

The first “on account of” indicates that for Christ to be truly present, everything else must disappear.

The second “on account of” has to do with the excellency of the *knowledge* of Christ. This knowledge is something that can be subjective and inward as well as a matter of revelation. The word in Greek allows for both of these elements. Therefore, when Paul said he was giving everything up on account of the excellency of the

knowledge of Christ, it meant he was pursuing Christ so that he might know Christ in all aspects: who He is; what He has accomplished; what He is doing; our eternal status in Christ; our subjective experience in Him; our stand in Him... all such things can be said to be the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

It was on account of such knowledge that Paul was willing to suffer the loss of all things and count them refuse. His desire was to gain Christ and to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Why? That he might *gain* Christ!

SUFFERING THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS

Naturally speaking, it is not an easy thing to hear the phrase “on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things”. This goes against our human nature. It goes against what we feel is valuable in

our natural being. Usually what we gain in our human life is something we value, or else we wouldn't have gained it. Therefore it is not easy to think about giving it up. For instance, there is a brother who serves the Lord full-time, and yet he finds it difficult to leave one place to serve in another because he had "sown" in that place, and desired to oversee their growth as well. There is nothing wrong with maintaining a relationship with saints in a place you have labored, but if you try to maintain a certain kind of relationship after the Lord is bringing you into something else, you will not have Christ as you could have. If you are not careful, even the fruit you have gained for the Lord can become a frustration to your gaining Christ Himself. This is why we must be willing to suffer the loss of all things. "All things" simply means all things: good or bad, important or unimportant, spiritual or natural. We find it hard to let certain things go, however. (That is why Paul uses the word "suffer"!)

Let me give you a simple example of how people find it hard to give up even small things. Some people buy pirated CD's from China, because they only cost a dollar or so. They know there may be problems in playing the CD, but they figure it is worth it. Eventually, they may buy the authorized CD. What do they do with the old one? Some may destroy the pirated CD, but others may think

they should hold on to it because it still has value. That is just how people are. Many American homes are filled with such "refuse" because of this mentality. In America, things are cheap and there are always sales, so people pick up things they don't really need or even want, and yet they feel they cannot throw them out after they get them home.

One of my daughters was going to buy some furniture. I told her to buy something that would last, because I notice how some saints have furniture that has lasted, unlike mine which was cheaply made. Her reply was that wouldn't be as enjoyable, because a big part of gaining such things is the joy of buying it! In her view, to have the same piece of furniture for thirty years would be boring, even though it might be more economical. Why? Because as long as it is around, you don't have room for other things!

I have a simple residence in L.A. because I was there often, and couldn't take being in a hotel anymore. I ordered a couch, but the wrong one was sent, and what was sent didn't really lend itself so well to a comfortable atmosphere for fellowship. It is real ugly, but to have it sent back to get another one becomes a headache. What should I do? If I let such a thing occupy me, that becomes the real problem. What must I do? I must learn to count it loss. Every time I go into that living room I have to

count it loss, or else it would frustrate my ability to use that room as it should be used.

OUR HEART IS LIMITED IN ITS
HOLDING CAPACITY

Your heart only has so much capacity. It can only carry so much. If you are not able to give the room that is in your heart over to Christ, He will not be gained by you. Once you say you really want Christ, you should realize that other things will have to go! Learn to count all these things as loss, so that you may gain Christ! Your belongings, your interests, your hobbies, your manner of life... all will have to be counted loss so that eventually the only thing left in your heart is room for Christ. This is what it means to say "on account of Christ, I have suffered the loss of all things".

A CONTINUAL EXERCISE

I am happy when I see someone make the decision to drop everything else to follow the Lord full-time. That person may have given up their degree, their profession and their fortune, but they have made more room for Christ. Even this person needs to realize, however, that such a step is only a step. In that particular step, they may have made it. After that step, however, there will be many more, and at every step you will have to declare continually: "On account

of Christ I have suffered the loss of all things". And do not think that it becomes easier to say this after taking such a step! Many who have determined to drop every "thing" and serve the Lord still get caught by some "thing" along the way.

These "things" can be even the most precious things. The Lord covers me to say this: After loving the Lord for more than fifty years, by the Lord's mercy I believe the Lord has committed to me a certain amount of ministry for His Body's sake. I have acquired some amount of riches and I have received a certain amount of revelation. But the day I begin to consider that I have something—Bible knowledge, all the people I have raised up, or even riches of revelation—Christ would have to say, "Goodbye". Why? Because instead of Christ, I become filled with my fifty years of Bible riches, ministering ability, fruitfulness, and even whatever blessing to the church the Lord has gained through my service. If I make something else richer in my life than Christ, if I lay hold of anything other than the living Person of Christ, He is pushed out.

AN EXERCISE FOR THE LOCAL
CHURCHES AS WELL AS FOR EACH
INDIVIDUAL

Such a matter is serious with regards to churches as well as individuals. The day a church determines, "We got it; we see it; now

we have the way"... the Christ who was present is gone. This is what happened with so many Christian groups. Christian Missionary & Alliance churches, for instance, had such a spiritual founder in A. B. Simpson, but today they have little. The Plymouth Brethren possess such a wonderful heritage, but not much to show for it today. What became their frustration? It was not worldly things, nor even things of virtue, although these are things we also need to beware of. What caught them, however, was what the Lord had blessed them with. Because they came to value these things more than Christ Himself, they departed from Him, and He had to pass them by.

How serious this is! This is why Paul made a strong determination to count all things loss and even to suffer the loss of all things. Yes, he insisted on truth, and defended what was of the truth. He was strong for truth, but he was not possessed by them more than the living Christ. He owned the "truths", but the "truths" did not own him.

HAVING ONLY CHRIST IN VIEW

When I read how Paul told Timothy that his departure was at hand (2 Tim 4:6, as he was imprisoned the second time in Rome), I am bothered. During his first imprisonment, he told the Philippians that he was confident

he would remain for their sakes (Phil 1:25). Yet to Timothy he says he is peaceful to go. He had finished his course and had fought the good fight. He doesn't say, "I still need more time!" Why doesn't he claim, "I have seen so much; I have much more to release to the churches"? There is nothing wrong for such a servant of the Lord to struggle to remain for such a purpose. So why wouldn't Paul say to Timothy, "I still need more time"?

After Brother Lee spoke at the last gathering he attended, as he turned to look at all the saints he smiled. There was so much in that smile! There was no tinge of sadness or regret; only rest in Christ. That smile testified: "I have finished my course. I have fought the good fight." The time of struggle was over, and only, "Praise the Lord! It is time for me to go" was left.

IN ADDITION TO FILLING UP, REFUSE CONTAMINATES

It is much too easy for us to become refuse collectors. Before some of you were saved, you may have collected antiques. Eventually some even filled their houses to the point they did not even know what they had anymore because they collected things faster than they could enjoy them. Spiritually speaking, we may become "antique collectors," valuing many things that truly have value, yet not

realizing how much those things of “lasting value” will eventually occupy us, even to the point that Christ is pushed out. Paul, however, determined never to let such a thing happen. This is why he not only counted all things loss, but even counted all things as refuse, or garbage.

What is the significance of refuse? Refuse does more than simply fill up the environment; it *contaminates* it. When I go into my apartment in LA, I have to be careful or else preoccupation with that couch will contaminate my heart and ruin the “ecology” that is within me. Because of this, I must learn to simply reckon it as loss and realize that it is refuse. Therefore I cannot afford to allow it to occupy me, or else it will become a source of contamination.

For instance, we all like a particular kind of music. Saints from China or Taiwan often develop music in a certain way, even to the point of over-developing a tune. When Brother Lee would write a hymn, he never dwelt overmuch on the tune; he just found a hymn that worked for the lyrics and used it. This made his hymns easy to enjoy. Sometimes the more you work on a tune, the more difficult it makes it to sing. In fact, when you work too hard to produce something, it can become a contaminating element. In the church life, we must be careful about what occupies us. You only have a certain amount of room. If you do not

know how to count things loss, you will have less room for Christ, and those things will contaminate you or your church life. Even the best truth, when exalted too highly, can replace Christ, and become a source of contamination in the church life. It is more than possible for the entire church life to be in a certain truth, and yet not in Christ! You should never consider that by gaining any particular Christian truth, or any kind of labor or practice, that you have gained the “top”. What you must consider being the “top” is Christ Himself!

Some things only occupy; some both occupy and contaminate. When refuse is present, your ecology and your environment will deteriorate. How many realize that Christ alone is pure? Yet how easy it is to accumulate such things, rather than making it a practice to quickly let things go! Anything that replaces Christ in the church life will damage its ecology. If the stress in the church life becomes some doctrine or practice other than Christ, then the ecology in that church has been contaminated. Even if you stress something of Christ that is not Christ Himself, the church life will find its environment has become degraded. How we need to be before the Lord, and pray “Lord, be merciful to us so that in our church life there is no refuse that would contaminate what is purely here for You.”

Watchman Nee wrote a hymn in which were the words, "How easily, though the manna I have received has begun to stink, I still hold as something from God." Why did he write this? He realized that anything that was once fresh from the Lord can frustrate the possibility of your having Christ freshly today. This is why Paul is so strong here. He wanted only to gain Christ, therefore he suffered the loss of all things and counted them as refuse.

AND BE FOUND IN HIM...

Now we come to a verse that is somewhat more involved: "...And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God" (3:9). Many of us boast of having this as our goal, but I do not believe many among us know what we are talking about!

THREE ASPECTS OF THE WORLD WE MIGHT BE FOUND IN

There are many things other than Christ in which we might be found. There are things of the physical world, things of the religious world, and things of the sinful world. When I see a sister in a grocery store, it is likely I find her in the physical world. Even when I see a brother in a meeting, it is often as someone in the religious

world. Perhaps when I meet an old schoolmate, I may find him in the sinful world, having just come back from Las Vegas! The Lord desires that we would not be found in anything of the world. The Lord desires that we would be found in Him. The problem is that when I meet the saints, most of the time I find them in anyplace other than Christ.

This does not mean that we should judge others based on what we see. I heard how some who visited one country were so impressed with how well they were treated. When they arose in the morning, they even found the saints had taken their shoes during the night and shined them. Such a thing, however, was a matter of those saints being found in a very good culture of the material world. Yet when we are found in the material world, we are easily impressed by such things.

When we find others in the religious world, our thought is that we should see something of Christ. We see people behaving in a certain way. Is it real? It may be something of Christ, or it could be something not in Christ at all.

We are either found in the material world or the religious world most of the time, although at times we might even be found in the Satanic world. For instance, entertainment is part of the sinful world. But to what point is it sinful, and to what point is it not? To the point you are not "found in Him"! These

verses make it very simple.

FOUND IN CHRIST NOT HAVING
OUR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS

However, verse 9 does not say we are found in Christ in the way we probably *think* it should. We think we may be found in Christ if we are filled *with* our own righteousness according to the Law. According to us, to be found in Christ means not to be found in the material, religious or sinful world. But Paul doesn't say that. Paul says his aim was to be found in Him, NOT having anything of his own righteousness. Some may question Paul about this. They may suppose Paul wrote this because he had too many problems, and only hoped it was so. According to our concept, in order to qualify to be found in Christ, you've got to have righteousness! You've got to be out of the material world, out of the religious world, and out of the sinful world to qualify. But Paul said, "No. I can be found in Christ because I am TERRIBLE!"

Paul wrote, "and be found in Him, *not having my own righteousness*". In other words, if you have your own righteousness, you cannot be found in Christ! But this simply is not our thought. Our thought is if someone has no righteousness, he needs to sit in the back row of the meeting and mourn his poor situation. But Paul says, "Not having my own righteousness, I can be found in Him! Even though there is nothing good

in me, I can be found in Him!" How can we then be found in Christ? By means of the righteousness which is based on faith! It is our faith in Christ that causes us to be found in Him, not our own righteousness. Because I have faith in Christ's redemptive work, I have the righteousness of God which is based on faith. By applying our believing ability to lay hold of what the Lord has made available to us, we may be found in Christ.

GOD IS THE ONE WHO MUST
FIND US IN CHRIST

Are you found in Him? This is not for anyone to say, but God. No one else can look at you and say whether you are found in Christ or something else. This righteousness that enables us to be found in Christ is not something before men, but before God! It is not someone else who says you are found in Christ, or even you yourself that determines it; God is the one who determines it. Isn't this marvelous? How much better it is if God claims you are found in Christ than if you claim you are found in Christ! But how is it determined? By whether or not you have faith in Christ.

THERE IS NO WAY FOR US TO PUT
OURSELVES INTO CHRIST BASED ON
OUR BEHAVIOR

Many times we may have heard that we need to be found in Christ,

but in actuality there is no possibility of our being found in Christ based on our own righteousness. It would be a miracle if we could even have our little toe in Christ at any moment. Because of our faith, however, we may entirely be found in Christ! It is a good thing that our being found in Christ is not determined by our ability to make it! Our being found in Christ is instead based on the faith we have, and even that ability is a gift from God.

Are you a person who is in spirit all the time? Are you reading the Bible all the time? Are you overcoming every hour? Are you continually considering the profit of the saints and praying for them? To all this, I would have to say no. Then how can we say we are still found in Christ? Because, even as we are defeated, we still believe in what Christ has accomplished. We believe in what Christ has done on our behalf, and what He will do. We believe Christ is our Savior. We believe that we are being carried by Him. This is the righteousness which is based on faith, and it is because of this righteousness that we are found in Him. When God sees us, He sees us in Christ because of our faith in Christ. This is the basis, but it is something you must apply. This faith in Christ must become your application.

THREE STAGES OF BEING FOUND IN CHRIST

When we say, "Lord Jesus, I desire to be found in You," we need

to realize there are actually three stages. First, as we have noted, we are found in His completed and accomplished work. We are found in what He has done. We are found in Him because of what He has accomplished. Our being found in Him is based upon our faith in His work. If I were to ask you whether you are continually in the Lord's accomplished work, you would have to say yes, because from the moment you took Him as your Savior, God declared you righteous. Why? Because you partook of what Christ has done. However, since this is the case, why would Paul still seek to be found in Christ, if he was already found in Christ by means of what Christ had accomplished? It is because the application must also be something further that is subjective, based upon our faith.

FOUND NOT ONLY IN HIS WORK, BUT ALSO IN HIS PRESENT OPERATIONS

Secondly, this faith enables us to be found in Christ's present operation. Where must I be found? I must be found in what the Lord is doing NOW. This is an advance. Are you found in Christ? According to His completed work, you may say yes, but how about His up-to-the-moment operation? Praise the Lord! Many here can say they are right in the middle of the marvelous operation of the Triune God. We should be found in His accomplished work, and we should also be found

in His present operations.

For this, we need to know the flow of the Spirit. We need to know how to be in its flow. Some of you have read the book *The Reality of the Divine Stream*. In that book I mention that a flow is not a flood! Many times we try to make the flow into a flood, but a flow is something that brings in life, whereas a flood is something that overwhelms what is of life. If something is truly of the Lord's present divine operation, it only supplies life. Wherever the present divine operation of the Lord comes, people are made alive.

I am happy that none of you tried to make the flow you enjoyed in your recent trip into a flood. I know of one brother who went to a particular place thinking the flow was there, but when he came back he didn't bring back anything of any genuine flow with him. Instead, he attempted to bring everyone into a flood! He proclaimed, "Either you are in, or you are out! There is only one divine flow!" However, the Lord told the disciples, "He who is not against you is for you" (Luke 9:50). How grand was the Lord! That is the flow. What is a flood? It is, "Do this. If you do not, you have no hope!" Don't threaten people; give them life. How can we be found in Christ? Be found in His present operations.

EVENTUALLY, FOUND IN HIS PERSON

Then, you may grow from there to yet another stage: the stage of

being found in His person.

THREE STAGES OF BEING UNITED,
BEING MINGLED AND BEING INCORPORATED WITH CHRIST

I feel these three stages match the stages of being united with Christ, being mingled with Him, and becoming incorporated with Him. When we first have faith in the Lord, we are united with Him by means of our faith, not our works. Then, we need to go on and grow to become found in Him in His present operation. This is to experience the mingled life. You live according to Christ. Eventually, however, as you continue to grow, you become someone who is simply found in Christ's person. This is like the Song of Songs 6:12-13, where the seeker eventually is carried away from everything else, until she is lost in the one she loved. So the saints would call out to her, "Come back, come back, O Shulamite, that we may gaze upon you!" Why? Because this person was found in Christ! Such a one becomes truly spiritual and even heavenly. He or she is not bothered by outward things any longer. Such a person doesn't tell others what to do any longer. Usually people who insist on telling others what to do are not found in anything other than their own zeal.

We need to be found in Christ in these three ways. First of all, we have to be able to say to the Lord, "You died for me; You resurrected

for me and You are enthroned for me. I take You as my Savior." Then you will not be someone claiming his own righteousness, but rather the righteousness of God which is based on faith. From there, however, you have to advance to be found in the Lord's present operations. When the Lord is advancing, we should be advancing with Him. When the Lord is working, we should be working with Him. We are found in the flow of the Lord's Spirit, but we are not producing a flood! Yet how many declare they are "in the flow" when they do not even know how to personally appreciate the Lord's accomplished work! They declare they are found in Christ's operation, but what they produce becomes a damaging and assaulting element, and saints get hurt.

What is the mark of being found in the Lord's person? Such a person is far above issues involving who or what is right or wrong. He becomes a person one with Christ and completely trusting in Christ. Then may we grow from being united with the Lord in life to being mingled with Him in nature. And may we all grow yet further, even to the point we become incorporated into oneness with Christ Himself. Then we will be above such things as what is right or wrong. Yet even such a person as Paul, being so joined to Christ, still had to say, "I count all things as loss and as refuse on account

of this Person". He determined there would be nothing that would introduce any contamination into his "ecology" in Christ.

PAUL: ABSOLUTE AND RESTFUL
IN CHRIST

This is why Paul could respond as he did to the Corinthians, some who felt not to eat meat, and others who did. Paul simply said, "Thank the Lord. Do all to His glory." (1 Cor 10:23-33, see also Rom 14). When we grow to this extent, things such as this will not concern us. What did concern Paul, however were the things that affected the oneness of the Body of Christ. To those who began claiming they were of one servant or another, he was very strong. To everything else, he said "Praise the Lord!" He honored everyone's conscience as to how they felt they must follow Christ, for our goal in the church life is to gain Christ alone.

Brothers, what I have spoken is not a light matter. It is the result of many years of pursuing the Lord. Consider how Paul wrote these verses, and why. May the Lord have mercy. May we have such a strong cry within, "Lord, I want to be found in You. I want to be found in Your work, Your present operation, and in You Yourself. May we all achieve such a restfulness in Him, and yet be absolute for what matters. - *Titus Chu*

AGAINST THE PRACTICE OF EXCLUSIVISM

A GENUINE LOCAL CHURCH
MUST BE INCLUSIVE

The local churches' stand has always been inclusive. Our bold declaration was,¹ *"We stand on the ground of the oneness of all believers...we recognize all the blood-redeemed and Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ as members of the one church in each city."* Brother Watchman Nee emphasized² *"the most important matter for the church in a locality is that she must be inclusive, not exclusive."* This requires more than merely declaring we receive all genuine believers at the Lord's Table meeting. It has implications regarding the truths we teach. In Watchman Nee's words, being inclusive means³ *"Whatever is in the Bible, we must include; otherwise, we will separate and exclude some of God's children."* Conversely,⁴ *"whatever the Bible does not have, the church must by all means reject. Otherwise, all those who follow the Lord faithfully will leave when they see the church having what the Bible does not have."* Extra-biblical teachings disqualify a congregation's claim to be a genuine local church. Here,

as in all aspects of the Christian life, the Bible is the barometer for distinguishing between an inclusive local church and an exclusive sect.

The local churches' position was inclusive during Brother Lee's active ministry. During that era, Brother Ron Kangas (presently LSM's "Senior editor") wrote strongly refuting the charge of exclusivism. He said:⁵ "We believe that there are millions of genuinely saved ones outside the local churches. We believe that in all manner of Christian groups, in the various sects and denominations, there is a large number of genuine blood-washed, Spirit-regenerated believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. All these saved ones are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we would receive them as the Lord has received us." On that occasion Brother Ron did not address the question whether any of the recovery's teachings undermined their claims of inclusivity. That question is even more relevant today than it was then.

Since Witness Lee's passing, the

unrelenting 10-year trend in the Lord's recovery has been towards exclusivity. A decade after Brother Lee's departure, LSM's "blended co-workers" still declare they receive all believers⁶. Yet their claim rings hollow when evaluated against their teachings and practices. To many the gradual departure from Watchman Nee and Witness Lee's initial position has been imperceptible. Yet it is now evident that the "blended brothers'" teachings contain extra-biblical elements which alienate many genuine believers. In Watchman Nee's words "those who follow the Lord faithfully will leave when they see the church having what the Bible does not have." Extra-biblical elements and exclusivity characterize the "blended co-workers'" core teachings concerning the Body, the ministry, the work and companies of workers. Today these factors are so pervasive they negate LSM's claims of being inclusive. It's time to ask—Is the Lord's recovery becoming the modern equivalent of the "Exclusive Brethren"? Here we document the exclusivism inherent in the "blended brothers'" teachings and point out their departure both from the Scriptures and from Watchman Nee and Witness Lee's initial position.

EXCLUSIVE TEACHING
CONCERNING MINISTRY—THE UNIQUE
MINISTER OF THE AGE

The term "Minister of the Age" did not enter the vocabulary of the Lord's recovery until after Brother Lee's departure in 1997. Since then

it has been a prominent theme in the "blended co-workers'" teaching. Indeed it is the cornerstone of their theological system. They explain this unique minister's role,⁷ *"In every age there is a particular vision...released not through many persons but through one person who is the minister of that age."* Bob Danker elaborates concerning this "Minister" (or master builder). He says,⁸ *"In every age God does not give His vision...to two men; He gives it to only one man. [That] man...is the wise master builder; he is the minister of the age. In God's unique work of building... only the word of the master builder counts...God does not give other ministers their own light and revelation. All the ministers in a particular age must...speak only the contents of the unique vision...This is a strong principle that holds in every age, including today."*

The "blended co-workers" unequivocally declare that "in every age," for the past 6,000 years, God gave His vision to only one man—the unique "Minister of the Age." Their sweeping assertion denies the validity of any other minister's "own light and revelation." This exclusive view reduces Church history to a single thread of successive "Ministers of the Age," from Luther, through Madame Guyon, Count Zinzendorf, John N. Darby to W. Nee and W. Lee. Concerning the latter, Brother Ed Marks says,⁹ *"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. This single historical line of sequential ministers denies any significant role to Zwingli, Calvin, Wesley, Andrew Murray, A. B. Simpson, Jessie Penn-Lewis, T. Austin-Sparks, A. W. Tozer or Bakht Singh (to name just a few.) They are merely “local ministers,” relegated to insignificance. Significantly this linear view of successive ministers was not invented within the recovery. This teaching is associated with exclusivism. The exclusive “Taylor Brethren” espoused a similar view,¹⁰ tracing “God’s select vessel” from Darby through Raven to James Taylor Sr. and Jr. Despite the Taylor Brethren’s initial acceptance of Watchman Nee, they later excommunicated him and (of course) excluded him from their line of recognized oracles.

MINISTERIAL SUCCESSION—
 SEQUENTIAL MINISTERS OF THE AGE?—
 WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE SAY?

The “blended brothers” dogmatically assert this “*strong principle...holds...today.*” They allege that God has only one unique oracle on earth—the “Minister of the Age.” In their view, today “*only the word of the master builder counts.*” Yet “*what does the Scripture say?*” (Gal. 4:30) It says that Christ is the Minister and Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 8:2, 6.) Hence Jesus Christ is the unique “Minister of the Age,” the entire age of grace! Beyond

this, no term similar to “Minister of the Age” appears in the New Testament. The New Testament contains no explicit teaching about “ministerial succession;” We see neither prescriptive teaching, nor descriptive examples of a sequence of “Ministers of the Age.” On the contrary, Scripture indicates the one New Testament ministry is carried by various ministers each having a portion of “this ministry” (Acts 1:17, 25.) The Apostle Paul says “We” (plural, the many ministers) have “this (singular, one New Testament) ministry” (2 Cor. 4:1.) Consistent with this Brother Lee clearly taught that this “*unique ministry [is] common to all the apostles of Christ.*” (2 Cor. 4:1, note) The sole basis for the “blended co-workers” teaching appears to be W. Lee’s sharing to a select group of Taiwan brothers in 1986. Significantly these messages were never published in English as long as Brother Lee lived. However, since his passing, the “blended co-workers” have emphasized and elaborated upon this theme making it the centerpiece of their ministry. In doing so they have extrapolated “beyond what has been written” in Scripture (1 Cor. 4:6) and given this extrabiblical teaching an unwarranted prominence.

Watchman Nee never used the term “Minister of the Age.” Rather he envisioned the “ministry of the age” as the common portion of many ministers. Hence he wrote,¹¹ “*When God chooses a man to be a minister, and his revelation reaches a certain height,*

he will become the ministry of the word in that age...In every age God chooses great vessels to meet His need...In a certain age God may choose five brothers to see what others in the same age have not seen.”] His phrase “God may choose five brothers” shows Brother Nee did not dogmatically assert that only one person is God’s oracle in an era. Yet, in their teaching, the blended brothers have chosen to override the Scriptures’ clear teaching of multiple ministers (and W. Nee’s word) with their extra-biblical teaching of one Minister of the Age. Thus Brother Ed Marks claims,¹² “The ministry of the age subsumes and includes all the foregoing ministries. The whole New Testament ministry has been recovered...” LSM’s Benson Phillips goes further to claim Brother Lee’s ministry is¹³ “the New Testament ministry in all its fullness.” The “blended co-workers” “minister of the age” teaching is being used to “trump” the Scriptural view (and Watchman Nee’s teaching) of multiple ministers sharing the New Testament ministry.

This teaching is far from innocuous. The practical implications of this exclusive view are obvious from recent developments among the local churches. If the unique “Minister of the Age” is the sole possessor of the up-to-date vision and ministry, only his word counts, only his messages should be published, read and recited. Other messages and publications are (at best) distractions. Based upon this ideology, LSM’s “One Publication” policy is fully justified;

other publications should be terminated. Moreover, other ministers, perceived to be speaking differently, ought to be silenced. Hence, according to this view, quarantine is a valid means of eliminating other voices!

EXCLUSIVE TEACHING CONCERNING MINISTERS

Based upon their “Minister of the Age” teaching, LSM’s “blended brothers” have overly exalted Witness Lee’s ministry. They do not hesitate to go beyond what Witness Lee said. Brother Ron Kangas proclaimed,¹⁴ “Brother Lee could not say it then, but we can say it today; He was the wise master builder; he was the (emphasis original) minister of the age, he had the design, and he could oversee the work.” Similarly, LSM president, Benson Phillips is on record saying,¹⁵ “we declare strongly that his [Bro. Lee’s] ministry could never be over because his ministry is the New Testament ministry” He also refers to Witness Lee’s ministry as¹⁶ “this glorious ministry, which is the New Testament ministry in all its fullness.” Thus (according to Benson Phillips) the New Testament ministry, once jointly possessed by various apostles, has become the exclusive possession of Bro. Witness Lee. In making these exaggerated claims aren’t the “blended co-workers” going “beyond what has been written” in Scripture (1 Cor. 4:6)? Aren’t they being “puffed up on behalf of one” of the Lord’s servants against others (1 Cor. 4:6)?

The “blended co-workers” over-

stated claims on behalf of Brother Lee are contradicted by his own words. He said,¹⁷ “We do not mean that [the New Testament ministry] is the ministry of only one person...It is slanderous to accuse me of saying that the unique ministry today is the ministry of Witness Lee. We do not say this, and we do not mean this...I have been asked...‘Do you mean that your ministry is this unique ministry?’...I have always answered this question by saying, ‘No, I definitely do not mean that my ministry is the unique [New Testament] ministry.’” Rather Brother Lee claimed to have only a portion of that ministry. He said,¹⁸ “When we say ‘the ministry,’ we are referring to the New Testament ministry, not just my ministry. If my ministry is a part of that ministry, thank God for this.” Yet Witness Lee’s own balanced word has been overridden by the “blended co-workers” in their haste to exalt Brother Lee.

EXCLUSIVE TEACHING CONCERNING
LEADERSHIP—BROTHER NEE, BROTHER
LEE AND “BROTHER WE”

Given the exalted position the “blended co-workers” attribute to the “Minister of the Age,” the question arises—Who is today’s “Minister of the Age”? Brother Lee passed away ten years ago, and yet the “blended Brothers” categorically assert “his ministry could never be over.” In contrast to their axiom that God only speaks through one man, they now claim today’s “Minister of the Age” is “Brother ‘We.’” Thus Brother

Ed Marks has said,¹⁹ “Brother Nee and Brother Lee have gone to be with the Lord, therefore today in the Lord’s recovery it is now the time of ‘Brother We.’” He elaborates further saying,²⁰ “After Brother Lee went to be with the Lord, a brother came to our co-workers’ meeting, looked around and asked, ‘Who is in charge?’ When Brother Lee was here, we all looked to Brother Lee. Now that Brother Lee was gone, this brother was wondering who the leader was. The leader is Brother ‘We,’ the blended co-workers.” Here then is an unambiguous assertion regarding leadership that, following Brother Lee’s passing “the leader is Brother ‘We,’ the blended co-workers.” An obvious deduction would be that today’s “minister of the Age” is the “blended co-workers.”

But who exactly are the “blended co-workers”? Who is this “Brother We”? A cute response to these questions (thought to have originated in Taiwan) is—“Brother ABCDE—Brothers Andrew Yu, Benson Phillips, Chen (Minoru), Dick Taylor & Dan Towle, Ed Marks and (don’t forget) Ron Kangas.” According to this cute retort, “Brother We” equals the core “blended co-workers”—“Brother ABCDE.” They are today’s “Minister of the Age”! While conceding that other brothers may have a portion in the New Testament ministry, the specific group of “blended co-workers” claim the entire New Testament ministry as their possession by virtue of being Brother Lee’s unique continuation.²¹ Yet does Scripture

support such claims? The New Testament ministry was not the unique possession of the Apostle Paul, nor Peter or John. Rather each had a portion. How then can the “blended co-workers” claim that Brother Lee had the entire “*New Testament ministry in all its fullness*”? Moreover what is the scriptural basis for the “blended brothers” claim that they are the unique “continuation” of Brother Lee’s Ministry of the Age? Isn’t this claim virtually equivalent to asserting apostolic succession? Yet, as Watchman Nee says,²² “*Apostleship is not hereditary.*”

EXCLUSIVE TEACHING CONCERNING
GOD’S ONE WORK

The “blended brothers” exclusivity extends to God’s work. LSM president, Benson Phillips rejects the notion that Christians outside the Lord’s recovery have any part in God’s authentic work. He says,²³ “*Anyone can work. There are Christians working throughout this whole earth. I would like to say boldly that they are not working the work of God because they are not laboring in the same stream that we are laboring in.... We recognize that other Christians are working, but they are not working the work of God.*” With one sweeping statement the labor of millions of believers is summarily dismissed as not being God’s legitimate work! What is the basis for this drastic conclusion? Brother Benson’s basis is Witness Lee’s forfeiting his work in Northern China to join with Watchman Nee because the

Lord showed him there is only one divine stream. Benson Phillips extrapolates from W. Lee’s personal leading to every Christian worker worldwide. Yet we ask—On what basis can the Lord’s personal leading of Witness Lee become the standard for all God’s servants? Moreover, it seems Brother Benson demands uniformity in the Lord’s work beyond that required by the Lord, who said, regarding service, “He who is not against us is for us” (Mark 9:40.) Benson’s exclusive attitude contrasts with the Lord’s inclusive stance expounded by Brother Lee.²⁴

EXCLUSIVE TEACHING CONCERNING
WORKER COMPANIES—ONE GLOBAL
COMPANY OF WORKERS

Watchman Nee taught clearly that while the church is local the work is regional.²⁵ Acts shows the Apostle Peter and his co-workers laboring among the Jews with Jerusalem as their center. A second company of workers, led by the Apostle Paul, worked in the Gentile lands with Antioch as their center. Thus we see multiple co-worker companies with different centers laboring in various regions. Recently however this Scriptural paradigm has been challenged by the “blended brothers.” According to their Minister of the Age paradigm, the situation described in Acts was “not satisfactory.” Bob Danker alleges,²⁶ “*The situation in the first century was not satisfactory according to God’s way in His economy...*

God's way is to have all His people serving Him under... the supervision of one master builder"—Paul. Hence, Bob Danker claims "Peter and James should have joined themselves to Paul's company and worked together with Paul under the vision the Lord had given him... All the workers... should have served together with Paul in God's move at that time."

Extrapolating this principle to the present, Bob Danker asserts, "We must serve in one company, even in one Body, under the proper leadership in the Lord's move"—i.e. the leadership of the "blended co-workers," today's guardians of the "Ministry of the Age." Thus LSM's "blended co-workers" reject the New Testament pattern and W. Nee's view, replacing it with their preferred paradigm which calls for one global company of co-workers under their direction. This view is more than merely an alternative viewpoint; it has drastic implications for the Lord's work within the recovery. Based upon this view, the "blended co-workers" called on Brother Titus Chu (in the Great Lakes area) and Brother Yu-Lan Dong (in S. America) to subjugate their work under the "blended co-workers'" leadership. Failure to comply with these demands led to Titus Chu's "quarantine." Moreover it provides a basis for the "blended co-workers" to deny, discredit and damage any work in the recovery that isn't under their direct oversight. Essentially according to this view the "blended co-workers" become "global elders"²⁷ overseeing one

worldwide work of recovery.

The "blended co-workers'" insistence on one global company of workers practically eliminates various regions, consolidating them into one worldwide field. Yet Witness Lee warned against this saying²⁸ "If we organize these regions into one unit, it will lead to hierarchy with an official leadership. This would insult Christ's headship." It seems the "blended co-workers" have turned a deaf ear to this warning by Bro. Lee. Moreover, Bro. Nee cautioned against having a human directorate overseeing God's work. He told the "Exclusive Brethren,"²⁹ "Some...are tempted to attain the position of director over all of God's servants...We would say, however, that regardless of how man seeks after God's will, the Holy Spirit is always the unique Executor. He never needs man to be His manager...We must allow the Holy Spirit to exercise His lordship in everything. No matter how we have sought after His mind, we are never His assistants." Watchman Nee viewed the creation of one worldwide work overseen by a global eldership as usurping the Holy Spirit's role and returning to Rome.

EXCLUSIVE TEACHING
CONCERNING THE BODY—"THE BODY
EQUALS THE RECOVERY"

The Body of Christ has been a central focus of the "blended brothers'" ministry. Yet what exactly do they mean by "the Body"? Do they mean

the universal Church including millions of believers in every place throughout the age of grace? Or do they mean only those believers meeting practically as local churches in the Lord's recovery? Unfortunately it seems the latter, exclusive definition, underlies much of the "blended co-workers'" teaching. Hence Brother Minoru Chen is on record saying,³⁰ *"I would say that practically speaking, for us the Body today is just the Lord's recovery.... In Brother Lee's understanding, the Body equals the recovery. We know that the mystical Body of Christ includes all the believers, all of the redeemed ones in time and in space, but practically for us today, the recovery is the Body."*

This statement, equating the Body with the recovery, is not an isolated example. Consider, as a further example, Brother Benson Phillips' assertion:³¹ *"Surely we have seen that when a brother leaves the church life his situation tends to worsen. This occurs because he has become an individual again. He is no longer a part of the Body."* This speaking equates leaving the practical church life with no longer being part of the Body. *"When a brother leaves the church life,"* according to Brother Benson, *"he is no longer a part of the Body."* An obvious deduction is that (for Bro. Benson) the local churches are the Body. This narrow definition of Christ's Body also underlies other statements like,³² *"The Body should be first. All the other local churches which comprise the*

Body of Christ should be number one and your local church should be second." Again, for Brother Benson, *"All the... local churches... comprise the Body of Christ."* No recognition is given that millions of believers not currently meeting in the local churches, are also members of Christ's one Body. This narrow definition of the Body leads to non-biblical claims that a select group of brothers exercise propriety rights over the "fellowship of the Body" or possess (in some special sense) the "feeling of the Body."

PERVASIVE EXCLUSIVISM—TODAY'S
LORD'S RECOVERY, TOMORROW'S
"EXCLUSIVE BRETHREN"?

The exclusivity inherent in the "blended brothers'" current teachings is not exhausted by the examples given above. For example, Brother Benson Phillip admonishes church members to remain within the Lord's recovery saying,³³ *"In any case, do not leave the Lord's recovery. I can assure you that if you go away from the Lord's recovery, you will have no way for the process of sanctification to go forward within you. Instead, you will just enter into a bankrupt situation... The sanctification process is carried out in the Lord's recovery."* Here is an assertion that the process of sanctification occurs exclusively within the realm of the Lord's recovery. Leaving the Lord's recovery (according to Bro. Benson) causes sanctification to cease.

A further example is the concept that we, in the recovery, are the “One New Man,” with the New Man’s culture and language. Yet, in the New Testament, doesn’t the “one new man” (Eph. 2:15; 4:24; Col. 3:10) like “the Body,” include all believers? It is not the exclusive property of the “Lord’s recovery.” Yet the “blended co-workers” admonish,³⁴ “*We must learn the new language...in the new culture, the God-man culture of the new man...Today we are learning a new, divine, mystical vocabulary*”—the theological terminology of “high peak truths.” Unconsciously doesn’t the emphasis on speaking this “new language” create a barrier inhibiting uninitiated believers from entering the church life, further contributing to exclusivity? Moreover, this kind of teaching justifies the view that (as one brother wrote me) “Since things of the old creation have no place in the one New Man we receive all genuine believers in Christ, but we reject anything they bring to the church...” The implicit assumption is that only “our culture,” the “culture of the New Man,” is acceptable. Their culture, since it is viewed as belonging to the “Old Man,” is rejected. Hence, one brother writes, “*We receive all whom the Lord received, but not their music which the Lord has not received.*” Yet what is the justification for assuming that “our Hymnal” is the “New Man Hymnal,” meaning, it contains only the lyrics and music of the “New Man” and contains nothing of the “Old Man”? Yet, this superior attitude has been expressed

among us. A similar sentiment seems implicit in Brother Benson Phillips’ proclamation,³⁵ “*We should not bring anything of Christianity into the Lord’s recovery. We only take the faith. If some in Christianity are in the faith, then we accept them, but we accept nothing of Christianity.*” While proclaiming inclusivity, the superior attitude inherent in these words reflects an underlying exclusivity which many of our fellow believers find repulsive.

It is almost 30 years since the local churches boldly declared “*We stand on the ground of the oneness of all believers...we recognize all the blood-redeemed and Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ as members of the one church in each city.*” Today the position taken by LSM’s “blended co-workers” is far removed from that stand. The departure has been gradual, imperceptible to many saints. Nevertheless it should be clear to discerning saints that behind the facade of inclusivity, the “blended brothers’” teachings are pervaded with extra-biblical elements and exclusivism.

LSM’s “blended brothers” have extrapolated Brother Lee’s ministry, producing a system of extra-biblical teachings like, “One minister of the Age,” “One Publication,” “One global group of co-workers.” Despite continued claims of inclusiveness, these teachings render us “exclusive” because (in W. Nee’s words³⁶) “*Whatever is in the Bible, we must include; otherwise, we will separate and exclude some of God’s children.*” More-

over,³⁷ “whatever the Bible does not have, the church must by all means reject. Otherwise, all those who follow the Lord faithfully will leave when they see the church having what the Bible does not have.” The “blended brothers” extra-biblical teachings undermine their claims of inclusivity and risk producing an exclusive global sect.

The book of Acts records the first phase of Church history. Within 30 years of Pentecost, Judaic exclusivism pervaded the Church in Jerusalem, threatening the believers’ liberty in Christ. According to Bro. Witness Lee,³⁸ “The flow of the Lord’s move went from Jerusalem to Antioch, and turned from Antioch to the Gentile world. However, the source...of this flow in Jerusalem had been ‘poisoned.’ Since the source was poisoned, the poison would be carried by the flow where ever it went.” Paul’s final visit to Judea was motivated (in W. Lee’s view) by Paul’s concern that³⁹ “the poison from the source at Jerusalem was flowing out towards Asia, Europe and even Rome,” the field of his labor. Southern California was the base of Bro. Witness Lee’s labor in North America and beyond. It is now the base for LSM’s “blended co-workers” global operations. We fear that history is repeating itself with the “poison” of narrowness and exclusivism inherent in the “blended brothers” teachings spreading from that source to the local churches worldwide, producing the modern equivalent of the “Exclusive Brethren.” - Nigel Tomes

NOTES:

1. The Beliefs & Practices of the local churches, by “The Co-workers in the Lord’s Recovery,” 1978, p. 4

2. W. Nee, Further Talks on the Church Life, p. 56

3. W. Nee, Further Talks on the Church Life p. 58

4. W. Nee, Further Talks on the Church Life, p. 64

5. Ron Kangas The Truth Concerning Exclusivism posted on www.ContendingForThefaith.com

6. For example the “blended co-workers” ‘One Publication’ edict concludes with the statement: “...one publication should not become the basis of our accepting or rejecting any persons in the communion of faith or in the fellowship of the churches; it should not be insisted on as an item of the faith. If any are not inclined to be restricted in one publication, these ones are still our brothers; they are still in the genuine local churches.” Publication Work in the Lord’s Recovery, by “The blended co-workers in the Lord’s recovery” (June 30, 2005). We leave it to the reader to judge whether the “blended co-workers” subsequent actions in quarantining Titus Chu, Frank Lin & Nigel Tomes are consistent with their declaration!

7. *The Ministry*, Vol. 7, No. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 34

8. Bob Danker, “On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder” In “Contributions” on the LSM-affiliated DCP web-site:

AFaithfulWord.org

9. *The Ministry*, vol. 9, no. 6, June 2005, p. 114

10. See for example, Searching For The True Church, by Roger Shuff, (Paternoster, 2005) p. 115

11. W. Nee, Collected Works, vol. 59, p 282

12. *The Ministry*, vol. 9, No. 2, Feb. 2005, p. 137

13. Letter to Great Lakes Brothers by Liu Suey and Benson Phillips, Aug. 10, 2006. On AFaithfulWord.org

14 *The Ministry*, vol. 10, No. 1, (Jan./Feb. 2006) p. 150

15. *The Ministry* Vol. 10, No. 1, p. 275, Jan. 2006

16. Letter to Great Lakes Brothers by Liu Suey and Benson Phillips, Aug. 10, 2006

17. W. Lee, Life-Study of 2 Corinthians, pp. 235-236

18. W. Lee, The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life, p. 16

19. *The Ministry*, vol. 7, no. 6, August, 2003, pp. 14-15

20. *The Ministry*, vol.8, no. 6, p. 214

21. This line of reasoning appears in Brother Ron Kangas' sharing on Jan 31 of this year in Manta, Ecuador (as reported by brother "DWV" on LastAdam.com):

"Brother A in one country is in THIS ministry. We receive his part of THIS ministry. Brother B is in other country. We receive him as a brother and we receive his portion of THIS ministry. Suppose there are Brothers A, B, C, Z. All can say I

have a part in THIS ministry. I told the saints in that church, we receive every portion of THIS ministry, including the ministry of Brother So-and-So. But you must be clear that all these brothers have a portion of THIS ministry. But they do NOT have the ministry of this age. YES they are ministers. Yes, they have part of THIS ministry. But their ministry is NOT the ministry of this age. The ministry of the age was given to Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. You say these brothers have passed away. Yes, but their ministry remains and we are still in the same ministry ...

He is speaking to us through the ministry of the age which was carried out through the minister of the age. THIS ministry. Many ministers. We all have a part. It is one thing to have a part. It is another thing to have the MINISTRY of the age. Let us be humble. I will take the lead. The Lord did not choose me to be the minister of the age or have the ministry of the age directly. But praise the Lord. He brought His minister to the United States and raised up a group of faithful brothers. This is the ministry of the age. My being is crying out to the Lord; crying out desperately for South America. Oh that all the Lord's people would come into direct contact with the ministry of the age. It is this ministry that brought us the tree of life, taught us how to eat Jesus as the tree of life, and how to drink the Spirit . This ministry showed us how to live a crucified

life, how to be in resurrection, how to be in Spirit, and how to practice the Body life. It showed us God's economy, organic salvation, conformation, transformation, God's building. Hallelujah! This is for you all. We are here to wash your feet, and shepherd your souls. We are just here to build up the Body of Christ. Hallelujah. THIS IS THE MINISTRY OF THE AGE."

22. W. Nee, Collected Works, Vol. 62, p. 305

23. *The Ministry*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Feb. 2005, p. 106

24. Concerning this Scripture W. Lee says "Both this person and the Lord's disciples were casting out demons. However, that one did not follow the Lord in the same way the disciples did... Likewise, believers today may preach the gospel in a way that is different from our gospel preaching, but both they and we are still preaching the gospel... we need to be general in our attitude regarding it." [W. Lee, Life-study of Mark, p. 262]

25. "While the churches are local, the work is regional. This, I feel, is very clear in the Scriptures.. In other words, a church is in one locality, but the work is in many localities which are combined together to form a region. In the book of Acts, it can be clearly seen that the twelve apostles had a definite region for their work. Peter, John and their group worked in one region, while Paul, Silas, Timothy and Barnabas worked in another region." (Watchman Nee, Further Talks on the Church Life, p.154)

26. Bob Danker, "On the Min-

ister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder" In "Contributions" on the LSM-affiliated DCP web-site: AFaithfulWord.org

27. Significantly, the LSM-brothers say, "we are also cognizant of our responsibility to keep watch over the interest of God's allotment to us (Acts 20:31; 1 Pet 5:2-3)." ["Why are we continuing the Present Litigation?" on ContendingForTheFaith.org] Note that the Scripture references refer to the responsibility of elders. It seems LSM's "blended co-workers" view themselves in the role of "global elders" in relation to the Lord's recovery and all the local churches.

28. Witness Lee, Life Messages, p.148

29. W. Nee, Collected Works, Vol. 26, p. 425

30. *The Ministry*, v. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 196

31. *The Ministry*, vol. 9, No. 3, March 2005, p. 130

32. *The Ministry*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Feb 2005, p. 113

33. *The Ministry*, vol. 8, No. 1, 2004, p. 189

34. *The Ministry*, vol. 9, No. 5, May, 2005, pp. 136-7

35. *The Ministry*, Vol. 9, No. 3, March. 2005, p. 121

36. W. Nee, Further Talks on the Church Life p. 58

37. W. Nee, Further Talks on the Church Life, p. 64

38. W. Lee, Life-study of Acts, p.444

39. W. Lee, Life-study of Acts, p.456