

A FAITHFUL WORD

S E R I E S F O U R

“Who concerning the truth have misaimed.”

**REGIONS
OF THE WORK
AND COMPANIES
OF WORKERS**

**Book
5**

DEFENSE & CONFIRMATION PROJECT

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Phil. 1:7 – Even as it is right for me to think this concerning you all because you have me in your heart, since both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel you are all fellow partakers with me of grace.

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Boldface type has been used for emphasis in quoted passages and is not in the original quoted material unless otherwise noted.

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PREFACE

2 Tim. 2:18a – Who concerning the truth have misaimed...

A few dissenting brothers have published criticisms of the teachings of the ministry in the Lord's recovery on crucial matters related to the preservation of the proper oneness in the Body of Christ. This series of books contains extensive responses from the Bible and the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee to the issues raised in those criticisms. The dissenting ones have misaimed concerning the truth (2 Tim. 2:18a), as the divisive fruit of their misaimings increasingly manifests. We commit these articles to the saints' prayerful consideration before the Lord in the hope that they can instruct, heal and inoculate them and equip them to inoculate others (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:1-3, 14-15, 23-26; 3:16-17).

The books in this series address the following issues:

1. The practicality of the Body.
2. Authority in the Body of Christ and in the local churches.
3. The local church life for the Body of Christ.
4. The direction and leadership of the Lord's recovery.
5. Regions of the work and companies of workers.
6. Using worldly means to gain increase.
7. Properly discerning spiritual authority to rightly follow the Lord.

This book about *Regions of the Work and Companies of Workers* presents the following biblical principles for carrying out the work of the ministry as presented in the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee:

1. The work is carried out by co-workers serving in groups in coordination.
2. There is only one work to carry out one move to produce one Body as one unique testimony.
3. The work takes the Body as the principle.
4. The work maintains the one fellowship of the Body of Christ.
5. The work is carried out under one leadership.
6. The groups of co-workers do not act independently.
7. There are no jurisdictions in the work.
8. The workers do not have different teachings.

- 1 Tim. 1:3-4 – [3] Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things [4] nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God’s economy, which is in faith.
- 1 Tim. 6:3-4 – [3] If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness, [4] he is blinded with pride, understanding nothing, but is diseased with questionings and contentions of words, out of which come envy, strife, slanders, evil suspicions.
- 2 Tim. 2:1-3 – [1] You therefore, my child, be empowered in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; [2] and the things which you have heard from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who will be competent to teach others also. [3] Suffer evil with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
- 2 Tim. 2:14-15 – [14] Remind them of these things, solemnly charging them before God not to have contentions of words, which is useful for nothing, to the ruin of those who hear. [15] Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, an unashamed workman, cutting straight the word of the truth.
- 2 Tim. 2:23-26 – [23] But foolish questionings and those arising from an untrained mind refuse, knowing that they beget contentions. [24] But a slave of the Lord ought not to contend but be gentle toward all, apt to teach, bearing with wrong; [25] in meekness correcting those who oppose, if perhaps God may give them repentance unto the full knowledge of the truth, [26] and they may return to soberness out of the snare of the devil, having been caught alive by him, unto His will.
- 2 Tim. 3:16-17 – [16] All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, [17] that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

CONCERNING REGIONS OF THE WORK AND COMPANIES OF WORKERS

In this article we will endeavor to present a clear and balanced view of the regions of the work and of the companies of workers from the Bible, from the teaching of Brother Nee and Brother Lee, and from our practice in the Lord's recovery. At the outset, the reader should understand that we are not interested in mere words or terms, but in substance. In this we follow Brother Nee's fellowship:

... The apostles care for the work in a certain region or area. Perhaps the word *region* is too formal. As long as you know what it means, that is good enough; we are not fighting over words.... (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 51, p. 132)

Whether we call it a region, an area, or a center, these are but terms. We need to emphasize the essential thing behind the terms.... (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 55, p. 90)

It is important to have such an understanding because a superficial analysis put out by a dissenting brother states that there is a difference between Brother Nee's teaching and Brother Lee's teaching on the point of the regions of the work. This dissenting brother has further accused one of the contributors to this site, Brother Bob Danker, of making a serious error by saying that there should be only one company of workers serving together in the ministry when Brother Nee said in *The Normal Christian Church Life* that the workers should not be brought into one company under central control. However, if you penetrate beneath the surface, the underlying principles of Brother Nee's teaching and practice are the same as those underlying Brother Lee's teaching and practice and those described by Bob Danker. These principles, which may be considered governing principles in the work, include:

1. The Work is Carried Out By Co-workers Serving in Groups in Coordination.

2. There is Only One Work to Carry Out One Move to Produce One Body as One Unique Testimony.
3. The Work Takes the Body as the Principle.
4. The Work Maintains the One Fellowship of the Body of Christ.
5. The Work is Carried Out Under One Leadership.
6. The Groups of Co-workers Do Not Act Independently.
7. There Are No Jurisdictions in the Work.
8. The Workers Do Not Have Different Teachings.

One instructive scriptural example that shows the importance of these principles is the case of Apollos. Based on a clear understanding of these principles, it is easy to see the harmony between Brother Lee's fellowship that there are only two regions—the Jewish region and the Gentile region—in the work and Brother Nee's fellowship that the Lord can open up many regions. Under the light of these principles Brother Bob Danker's writing that there should be only one company of workers is fully in harmony with Watchman Nee's teaching in *The Normal Christian Church Life* that there should be many companies of workers. Finally, we can see the application of these crucial principles in the pattern the Lord gave to us in our brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

1. The Work Is Carried Out By Co-workers Serving in Groups in Coordination.

The work is carried out by co-workers serving in groups in coordination. This is the pattern in the New Testament, and it has been the consistent practice in the Lord's recovery since the Lord raised up Watchman Nee in China.

These apostolic companies were not formed along partisan or doctrinal lines; they were formed under the sovereignty of the Spirit, who so ordered the circumstances of the different workers as to link them together in the work. It was not that they were really divided from other workers, but merely that in the Spirit's ordering of their ways, they had not been led into special association with them.... (The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 30, p. 119) [emphasis in original]

The workers in the Body are placed in order in groups under the sovereignty of the Spirit. Today there are groups of brothers serving together in harmony in the Living Stream Ministry, the Taiwan Gospel Bookroom, Rhema, Bibles for America, the Lord's Move to Europe, all of the full-time trainings throughout the earth, all of the campus teams throughout the U.S. and elsewhere, etc. There are also groups of co-workers serving together in Russia, Europe, the Chinese-speaking world, India, Australasia, etc. There is no other practical way to carry out the work. The problems come in when a segment of the work violates one of the other vital principles of the work described below.

2. There Is Only One Work to Carry Out One Move to Produce One Body as One Unique Testimony

Although there are many fields of labor, there is only one work to carry out one move to produce one Body as one unique testimony.

Gal. 2:7-8 – [7] But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcision, even as Peter with the gospel to the circumcision, [8] (For He who operated in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcision operated also in me for the Gentiles).

Acts 1:15 – And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers and said (there was a group of persons gathered together, about a hundred and twenty).

Acts 2:14 – But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke forth to them: Men of Judea, and all who are dwelling in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.

Acts 9:15 – But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.

Acts 22:21 – And He said to me, Go, for I will send you forth far away to the Gentiles.

Eph. 2:16 – And might reconcile both in one Body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity by it.

Rom. 12:5 – So we who are many are one Body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Cor. 12:12-13 – [12] For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the body, being many, are one body, so also is the Christ. [13] For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.

Eph. 4:4 – One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling.

Rev. 1:2 – Who testified the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, even all that he saw.

Rev. 1:9 – I John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

Two Regions Not Two Works

Brother Nee said this based upon the fact that the Bible reveals that **the work of the Lord on this earth as the New Testament ministry had two regions**. The first region was in Judea, which was mainly among the Jews, and the second region was in the Gentile world, which was mainly for the Gentile churches. It is also clear that in the record of the New Testament, the work in the region of Judea for the Jewish churches was under the leadership of Peter, and the work in the Gentile world for the Gentile churches was under the leadership of Paul (Gal. 2:7-8). This is also clearly recorded in the book of Acts (Acts 1:15; 2:14; 9:15; 22:21).

Some would take a standing to say that these were two works—one for the Jews in the Jewish land and one for the Gentiles in the Gentile world. One work was by a group of workers having Peter as the leader, and one work was by a group of workers having Paul as the leader. We must realize, however, that the Lord does not have two moves on this earth. He has only one move. Also, the Lord does not have two bodies on this earth. He has only one Body [Eph. 2:16; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 4:4].

One Move, One Body, and One Testimony

Actually, in this one Body there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile. Every kind of distinction has altogether disappeared in the Body. **In the Body there are no regions**

and there are no Jews or Greeks. For such a Body the Lord only has one work on this earth. From the New Testament we can see that the Lord has one move on this earth, one Body, and only one testimony [Rev. 1:2, 9]. According to space and time, His New Testament move, His Body, and His testimony are universal. These three aspects must impress us very deeply. The Lord only has one move, one Body, and one testimony.

While the ministry is going on, it is regional. This does not mean, however, that the Lord has different moves in different regions and that He has different bodies and different testimonies. This does not mean that the ministry or the work under Peter's leadership in the Jewish land was for one kind of testimony, and then the work and the ministry under the leadership of Paul in the Gentile world was for another kind of testimony. **The Lord has, in the New Testament age, one unique ministry for one move to produce one unique Body as one unique testimony.** (*Elders' Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 27-28)

One Move through One Ministry to Produce One Body to Bear One Testimony

I must testify that I really treasure the Lord's one move through the one ministry to produce the one Body of Christ to bear the one testimony of Jesus, which is of God's New Testament economy. The more I consider this point, the more I feel that this is marvelous and excellent that we could have such a reality on the earth today. (*Elders' Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord's Recovery*, p. 37)

3. The Work Takes the Body as the Principle

Furthermore, all the workers must take the Body as the basic principle of their work.

...In their turn the two [Barnabas and Paul], being thus separated, went forth, not to represent any particular individuals or any special organization, but to represent the Body of Christ, and the Body of Christ alone. All work that is truly scriptural and truly spiritual must be out from the Body and must minister to the Body. **The Body must be the**

ground on which the worker stands, and it alone must be the sphere in which he works. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, p. 29)

This is most important. In the previous chapters we have sought to show their respective functions and spheres; now the danger is lest, failing to understand the spiritual nature of the things of God, we should not only try to *distinguish* between them, but *sever* them into separate units, thus losing the interrelatedness of the Body. However clear the distinction between them, we must remember that they are all in the Church. Consequently, **they must move and act as one, for no matter what their specific functions and spheres, they are all in one Body.**

So on the one hand, we differentiate between them in order to understand them, and on the other hand, we bear in mind that they are all related as a body. **It is not that a few gifted men, recognizing their own ability, take it upon themselves to minister with the gifts they possess; nor that a few persons, conscious of call, form themselves into a working association; nor is it that a number of like-minded believers unite and call themselves a church.** All must be on the ground of the Body. The church is the life of the Body in miniature; the ministry is the functioning of the Body in service; the work is the reaching out of the Body in growth. Neither church, ministry, nor work can exist as a thing by itself. Each has to derive its existence from, find its place in, and work for the good of the Body. All three are from the Body, in the Body, and for the Body. If this principle of relatedness to the Body and interrelatedness among its members is not recognized, there can be no church, no ministry, and no work. The importance of this principle cannot be over-emphasized, for without it everything is man-made, not God-created. The basic principle of the ministry is the Body. **The basic principle of the work is the Body. The basic principle of the churches is the Body. The Body is the governing law of the life and work of the children of God today.** (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, pp. 187-188)

4. The Work Maintains the One Fellowship of the Body of Christ

Because the work is in the principle of the Body, the workers must maintain the one fellowship of the Body of Christ.

Acts 9:28-30 – [28] And he was with them, going in and going out in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. [29] And he spoke and disputed with the Hellenists, but they attempted to do away with him. [30] But when the brothers realized it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him forth to Tarsus.

Acts 11:22 – And the account concerning them was heard in the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to pass through as far as Antioch.

Acts 11:27 – And in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

Acts 11:29 – And the disciples, according to how one was prospered, determined, each one of them, to send things for dispensing to the brothers dwelling in Judea.

Acts 15:2 – And when no little dissension and discussion with them came about through Paul and Barnabas, the brothers directed Paul and Barnabas and certain others among them to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem concerning this question.

1 Cor. 1:9 – God is faithful, through whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our division into regions is similar to the practice of the apostles. At that time, Jerusalem was a center, and Antioch was also a center. There was the Jewish region and the Gentile region. Peter was responsible for the work among the Jews, whereas Paul was responsible for the work among the Gentiles. **Although there is a division of regions, there still remains one fellowship.** (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 41, p. 203)

Work Being Divided into Regions,
but the Fellowship Being One

There are regions to the work, and each region includes certain localities. Under normal circumstances, **though the regions are different, there is still a oneness between the**

regions. When the relationship is normal, all the works in the different regions maintain the one fellowship. Jerusalem is one with Antioch. Although they belong to different regions, they still have fellowship before the Lord. When people were saved in Antioch, Jerusalem sent some men over to help (Acts 11:20-28). Jerusalem also sent out Barnabas and Paul (9:28-30). Antioch was something that came out of Jerusalem and returned back to Jerusalem. When Jerusalem was short of money, Antioch sent money from the Gentiles to Jerusalem (11:27-29). Barnabas went from Jerusalem to Antioch (v. 22), and Paul returned from Antioch to Jerusalem (15:2). **Here we see that although regions are different, the fellowship remains one.** (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 57, p. 306)

5. The Work Is Carried Out Under One Leadership

Although there is no central control of the churches or of the work, the co-workers should labor together corporately under one leadership.

Acts 1:15 – And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers and said (there was a group of persons gathered together, about a hundred and twenty).

Acts 2:14 – But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and spoke forth to them: Men of Judea, and all who are dwelling in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words.

Acts 9:15 – But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.

Eph. 4:3-6 – [3] Being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace: [4] One Body and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling; [5] One Lord, one faith, one baptism; [6] One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

In the New Testament there is only one ministry and only one leadership in the ministry. Although there is the truth of the leadership in the New Testament ministry, the Lord did not officially appoint someone to be the leader. The early part of Acts shows us that Peter was taking the lead among the apostles (cf. Acts 1:15; 2:14). However, the Lord

Jesus did not appoint Peter to be an official leader. The leadership was something spontaneous according to life, according to the real need, and according to the situation. A leadership is shaped by the growth in life and is an issue of the need. If there is no need, no leadership can be manifested. The environment forms and constitutes the leadership.

There is one unique leadership since the ministry is one (Acts 1:17, 25). **Because the ministry is one, there should never be more than one leadership.** There is also one unique leadership since God, the Lord, and the Spirit are all one (Eph. 4:4-6). Since there are one God, one Lord, and one Spirit, how could there be more than one leadership? **The one unique leadership is for keeping the oneness of the Spirit for the Body of Christ** (Eph. 4:3). Today's Christianity is divided because there are too many leaderships. Every leader has a group which is the sphere of his leadership, and that sphere becomes a division. Thus, **if the matter of leadership is not applied or viewed properly, it will create division.** (*Leadership in the New Testament*, p. 15)

In the Lord's recovery there is no such practice of a "centralization of the churches" and a "centralization of the work." We do emphasize that all the churches should be one in the Body of Christ, not by the way of forming a federation but in the way of adequate fellowship in the Spirit in the organic union of the divine life. **We also stress that the co-workers should not work independently but corporately under one leadership....** This is the way to bring in the Lord's blessing. We do not practice any kind of centralization; we treasure only the proper oneness in the Spirit by the divine life, both of which unite us together organically, whether in the church life or in the work for the Lord. (*Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way* (2), p. 98)

It is clear that when the Lord's recovery was raised up in China, Brother Nee bore responsibility for overseeing the work throughout all of the "regions". For example, in a talk in 1935 he gave a report of the work throughout China and outlined a

proposed arrangement for the work in which he identified geographic areas in which groups of co-workers should labor.

The co-workers throughout China have **asked me to give a report of our work in every part of the country**. Since we are co-workers together in our work in China, we should be concerned for the work of the whole country. Later, if we find others standing on similar ground in other countries, we can enlarge our hearts to the work of the whole world and be concerned for them as well. Today, however, we should at least be burdened for the work in China as a whole....

We propose the following divisions:... (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 41, p. 203)¹

Similarly, in 1948 in the Kuling Training he identified ten “divisions or regions” into which the work throughout China should be arranged:

I feel that we should let the brothers and sisters know as soon as possible about the way ahead of them. Some are still not clear about what to do, while others are clear already. Those who do not know can pray to the Lord. If you do not have a clear guidance from the Lord, you should let us know

¹ In both volumes 41 and 60 of *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, when Brother Nee outlines the regions of the work in China, he mentions the literature as a separate work spanning all geographic regions. In volume 41 he says:

Today we hope to carry on the work in four directions.... The second is the literature work. Our publications should spread throughout the whole of China and lead the whole nation to the Lord.... (p. 204)

In volume 60 he says:

...The literature work, such as the publishing of books and periodicals, is considered a separate unit of the work. Such works are handled by Shanghai. (p. 362)

In each case it is evident that under Brother Nee’s leadership the work was to be carried out by groups of co-workers in various geographical regions, but that there would be one common literature work for the work in all of the regions. This one common literature work kept the work in the various geographic areas under the speaking of the same vision.

as soon as possible. Let me talk a little about the work here in Kuling and also about **the work throughout China. I have considered dividing our work into ten divisions or regions.** At least one or two of these regions have made a start already. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 60, p. 361)

Later in the same talk to the co-workers he said:

From now on, we have to deal with the Lord concerning our work. If any of us has any kind of feeling at all, please let us know so that **together** we can make the proper decisions. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 60, pp. 362-363)

6. The Groups of Co-workers Do Not Act Independently

Although the groups of co-workers are not under a central control, neither are they unrelated, independent, and isolated from one another:

Many are called to work for the Lord, but their sphere of service is not the same, so it follows that their associates cannot be the same. But the various companies must all be identified with the Body, coming under the headship of the Lord, and having fellowship among themselves. There is no laying on of hands between Antioch and Jerusalem, but there is the giving of the right hand of fellowship. **So the Word of God does not warrant the forming of one central company; neither does it warrant the forming of various scattered, unrelated, and isolated companies.** There is no one central place for the laying on of hands, nor is there *merely* the laying on of hands and nothing else in any one of the various groups; but among them there is also the giving of the right hand of fellowship one to the other. Each company should recognize what God is doing with the other companies and should extend fellowship to them, acknowledging that they are also ministers in the Body. Under the ordering of God they may work in different companies, but **all must work as one Body.** The extending of the right hand of fellowship implies a recognition that other people are in the Body and we are in fellowship with them, **working together in a related way, as becomes functioning members of the same Body.** “Seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcision...and perceiving the grace given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to

me and to Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we should go to the Gentiles, and they, to the circumcision” (Gal. 2:7-9). **The unrelated, scattered, disrupted, and conflicting organizations in Christendom, which do not recognize the principle of the Body and do not come under the sovereignty and headship of Christ, are never according to the mind of the Lord.** (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, p. 130)

...In many things we can claim a direct guidance from the Head, but in just as many things the Head moves others and we simply *move with them*. Their movement is reason enough for us to fall in. It is most important to recognize this relatedness of various ministries in the Body of Christ. We have to know our ministry and to recognize the ministry of others, so that we can move as one obeying those who have a greater ministry. Since our ministry is interrelated in such a way, **we dare not take an individual or independent attitude.** (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, p. 125)

7. There Are No Jurisdictions in the Work

Although of necessity workers are limited to caring for certain areas or aspects of the work, that part of the work does not become their jurisdiction in which they can exercise authority and exclude other workers.

2 Cor. 10:13 – But we will not boast beyond our measure but according to the measure of the rule which the God of measure has apportioned to us, to reach even as far as you.

Another hidden divisive factor is the tendency to keep separate territories. The Lord’s work and move for the accomplishment of God’s eternal economy is uniquely one. If we consider any region in which we are participating in the Lord’s unique work as our particular territory, this will be a cause or a factor of division. **Even the tendency to keep a separate territory should be uprooted.** We should work for the Lord within His measure (2 Cor. 10:13-16), but **we should not consider what the Lord has measured to us as our particular territory.** Our local work in our region should be for the Lord’s universal Body. **In the New Testament we cannot see such a thing as jurisdiction in the Lord’s work.**

(Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (2), p. 19)

In practice there were regions during Paul's and Peter's time. However, we must realize that it would have been wrong for the brothers in Judea to say that they were in one region and that Paul who was with the Gentile churches in another region should not bother them. It is wrong to have the attitude that the churches in another region have nothing to do with us. Whether we are in Jerusalem, Rome, Corinth, or Antioch, all the churches are one Body bearing one testimony.

Some of you may feel that through my fellowship I am now trying to carry out Catholicism and that this is the "Catholic Church." Actually, the word "catholic" is a good word, but it has been spoiled, damaged, contaminated, corrupted, and ruined by the so-called Roman Catholic Church. All the churches should be catholic. We should be under one catholic move, bearing one catholic testimony. We should be this way because this is one Body. **We should not consider that just because we brothers are working in a certain region covering a few states that this is our region.** Thank the Lord that you began the work there. Peter also began the work in Judea, but if he thought that was his region and not Paul's region, that would be wrong. Thank the Lord that He used you to begin the work in that state or in those two states. Thank the Lord that He used me to begin the work in California. However, if I consider that California is my region and not your region this is wrong. We cannot do this. *(Elders' Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord's Recovery, pp. 35-36)*

Some of the co-workers may want to keep their locality or area of the country independent and, to some extent, isolated. According to our history, when this happened in the past, **turmoil came out of these isolated areas and cities....** *(Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (2), p. 163)*

8. The Workers Do Not Have Different Teachings

The governing constitution for the teaching of the ministers of the New Testament is the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). Furthermore, in order to maintain the harmony and oneness in

the Body, the workers should seek to avoid having different teachings (1 Tim. 6:3). To have different teachings produces questionings rather than God's economy (1 Tim. 1:3-4).

1 Tim. 1:3-4 – [3] Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things [4] nor to give heed to myths and unending genealogies, which produce questionings rather than God's economy, which is in faith.

Acts 2:42a – And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles...

1 Tim. 6:3 – If anyone teaches different things and does not consent to healthy words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the teaching which is according to godliness.

Eph. 3:8-9 – [8] To me, less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to announce to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel [9] and to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things.

Furthermore, **we take this one way for one goal without different teachings** (1 Tim. 1:3-4). We take only the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42) as the healthy words of the Lord Jesus (1 Tim. 6:3). First Timothy 1 speaks of the teaching concerning God's economy and chapter six speaks of the healthy words of the Lord Jesus. All the teachings of the apostles are for God's economy, and these teachings are the healthy words of the Lord Jesus. The apostles learned these words from the Lord and followed the Lord to teach the same thing that He did. The apostles' teaching is the teaching concerning God's economy. We must preach and teach concerning Christ's unsearchable riches and God's New Testament economy. In Ephesians 3:8 Paul speaks of the unsearchable riches of Christ as the gospel and in verse 9 he speaks of God's eternal economy. We must preach and teach these two items. **May the Lord preserve us in the one way for one goal without opinion and without different teachings.** (*The God-ordained Way to Practice the New Testament Economy*, p. 147)

...If we have many different teachings, we will also have many different practices resulting in division. It would then be impossible to have the one accord, the oneness. (*Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move, p. 45*)

This is why Paul wrote 1 Timothy in the midst of a confusing environment and after many years of his work with his co-workers. This Epistle is altogether an inoculation. Poison after poison was injected into the Christian church while the church was going on. At the conclusion of his writing ministry, Paul wrote 1 Timothy to inoculate the church against all these poisons. In the opening word of this Epistle, however, Paul did not write in a way that we would think to be so serious: "Even as I urged you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach differently (1:3)." This phrase "not to teach differently" seems so simple. If you merely read this phrase, you will not sense the seriousness of different teaching. We may not think that this is serious, but actually it is more than serious. It kills people to teach differently. **To teach differently tears down God's building and annuls God's entire economy. We all must realize that even a small amount of teaching in a different way destroys the recovery.** There is a proverb which says, "One sentence can build up the nation and one sentence can destroy the entire nation." You do not need to give an entire message. Just by speaking one sentence which conveys your kind of concept tears down everything. We must realize that ministry is "terrible." Your speaking can build up or destroy. It is possible that your speaking destroys, kills, and annuls. (*Elders' Training, Book 3: The Way to Carry Out the Vision, pp. 42-43*)

Psa. 133:1, 3b – [1] Behold, how good and how pleasant it is /
For brothers to dwell in unity! [3b] ...For there Jehovah commanded the blessing: Life forever.

Nevertheless, all of us need to realize that we are in the Lord's recovery. **The first characteristic of the Lord's recovery is oneness. Once we lose the oneness, we are through. If we lose the oneness, we are no longer the Lord's recovery. Therefore, we need to see that there is a peril of different teachings and different opinions**

damaging the oneness.... Opinions may be good, and teachings may be scriptural, yet they may be different. Sooner or later, these matters will create a hidden division. The blessing that always comes down from God to His recovery is based upon the oneness (Psa. 133). If we lose the oneness, we will lose the blessing. (*Elders' Training, Book 1: The Ministry of the New Testament*, p. 29)

The Example of Apollos

Acts 18:24 – And a certain Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, an eloquent man, arrived at Ephesus, and he was powerful in the Scriptures.

Acts 19:1-2 – [1] Now while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper districts, came down to Ephesus and found some disciples. [2] And he said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? And they said to him, On the contrary, we did not even hear whether there is a Holy Spirit.

Acts 20:30 – And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them.

1 Cor. 1:10-12 – [10] Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion. [11] For it has been made clear to me concerning you, my brothers, by those of the household of Chloe, that there are strifes among you. [12] Now I mean this, that each of you says, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.

1 Cor. 16:12 – And concerning our brother Apollos, I urged him many times to come to you with the brothers; yet it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.

1 Tim. 1:3 – Even as I exhorted you, when I was going into Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus in order that you might charge certain ones not to teach different things

2 Tim. 1:15 – This you know, that all who are in Asia turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

Rev. 1:11a – Saying, What you see write in a scroll and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus...

Rev. 2:1a, 4-5 – [1] To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write: ... [4] But I have one thing against you, that you have left your first love. [5] Remember therefore where you have fallen from and repent and do the first works; but if not, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.

In the first two messages of the urgent elders' trainings called by Brother Lee in the 1980s, he spoke of the problems caused by different ministries both in the New Testament and in church history. One particularly instructive example is the case of Apollos. Apollos first appears in Acts 18. From that point there is a line through the record of the New Testament that traces the effect of the ministry of Apollos. There are strong hints that Apollos was not absolutely one with Paul. The two places where Apollos is specifically mentioned as having ministered—Corinth and Ephesus—are particular problem cases in the New Testament. The church in Corinth was in danger of division because different ones declared their allegiance to different ministers of Christ (1 Cor. 1:10-12). Paul urged Apollos to go to Corinth to help resolve the problem, but Apollos was unwilling to do so (1 Cor. 16:12). On his final trip to Jerusalem, Paul warned the elders of the church in Ephesus that perverted men would rise up from among them to draw away men after themselves (Acts 28:30). While in prison Paul charged Timothy to remain in Ephesus to charge some not to teach differently (1 Tim. 1:3). Later Paul wrote Timothy that all who were in Asia, in which Ephesus was a leading church, had turned away from him (2 Tim. 1:15). Finally, in Revelation 2:4-5, the Lord rebuked the church in Ephesus and warned them that unless they repented, He would come and remove their lampstand.

The dissenters dismiss these as “minor incidents.” One brother who is promoting the concept of multiple independent bands of workers writes:

...When Paul mentioned Apollos, he said, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth” (1 Cor. 3:6). We can see that there was a sower and there was also a waterer.

Were they not in the same work? Their labors were different, but “the work” was the same. If not, all things would have been in vain. The apostle Paul was very confident that they were doing the same work.... (Frank Lin, “I planted, Apollos watered...”)

This is not at all the view of the New Testament record that Brother Lee presented in the latter part of his ministry. In *The Vision of the Age* Brother Lee made it very clear that Paul was the one through whom the Lord opened up the vision of the age. Barnabas, Apollos, and even Peter were not under Paul’s vision and did not serve under the vision of the age. This caused a problem among the churches, as is evidenced in 1 Corinthians 1:10-12.

Based on this, the names of all those who did not join themselves to Paul’s vision were eventually dropped from the record of the Bible. For example, Barnabas was the one who initiated Paul into the service, but because he contended with Paul, his name was eventually dropped from the Bible. Apollos was very capable at expounding the Bible, but 1 Corinthians 16 records that he told Paul that it was not at all his desire to go to Corinth and that he would go when he had opportunity. After this, the Bible no longer mentions anything concerning him. **Barnabas was zealous in his service, and Apollos was capable in his exposition of the Bible, but God did not use them anymore because their service was no longer under the vision.** This is a very sober matter. (*The Vision of the Age*, p. 23)

I would ask you to consider, according to the New Testament, what was the first division to invade the church. **I believe that the first division came in when Barnabas left Paul...**

In serving the Lord in the Body of Christ, our heart must be single and pure. There was something not so single and pure, perhaps something of ambition, in the heart of Barnabas. This issued in division. (*Life-study of 1 Kings*, p. 104)

...It was necessary for Apollos to be merged in with Paul’s ministry, the more the better. Although he may have

been very much one with Paul, his case became a problem. (*Elders' Training, Book 1: The Ministry of the New Testament, p. 26*)

...I do not believe that Apollos conducted himself in a way to be one with Paul to the uttermost in God's New Testament economy (see 1 Cor. 16:12).... (*Elders' Training, Book 1: The Ministry of the New Testament, p. 27*)

I believe that we can learn from Apollos's case that there is the possibility of having different flavors, different atmospheres, and different colors, although we may move together, minister together, work together, and all be together in the Lord's recovery. Apollos was not dissenting with Paul, but his ministry bore a different color and flavor than Paul's ministry. (*Elders' Training, Book 1: The Ministry of the New Testament, pp. 29-30*)

...We can detect through various hints that the cause of Ephesus's decline was its failure to rid itself of Apollos's seed. From the standpoint of the New Testament, that teaching was a different teaching; it was a different doctrine.... (*The Vision of the Age, p. 75*)

Col. 1:25 – Of which I became a minister according to the stewardship of God, which was given to me for you, to complete the word of God,

2 Pet. 3:15-16 – [15] And count the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation, even as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you, [16] as also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which some things are hard to understand, which the unlearned and unstable twist, as also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Phil. 4:3a – Yes, I ask you also, genuine yokefellow, assist them...

Phil. 2:20-22 – [20] For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you; [21] for all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus. [22] But you know his approvedness, that as a child with a father he has served with me unto the gospel.

2 Tim. 1:15 – This you know, that all who are in Asia turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

One dissenting brother claims that the diverse groups of workers—Paul, Apollos, Barnabas (after his split with Paul), etc.—in Acts should be the pattern for us today because it is what is recorded in the New Testament. We need to be careful to learn the proper lessons from reading the New Testament. It is true that there were other workers laboring independently in the Gentile region during Paul’s time, but their work is not recorded in the New Testament. It is more than evident that God’s move was being carried out through the ministry of Paul. Paul had the completed divine revelation (Col. 1:25). Paul received the clear vision of God’s work in the New Testament concerning the producing and building up of the church as the Body of Christ. Paul’s vision was “the vision of the age.” Even Peter eventually acknowledged Paul’s vision (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Furthermore, we need to observe the outcome of those other works, and it is in this that the example of Apollos is particularly instructive. In Paul’s time a serving one could be one with Paul’s ministry as a genuine yokefellow (Phil. 4:3), laboring as Timothy did as one who was like-souled with Paul (Phil. 2:20-22), or that serving one could carry out his own ministry. Eventually, the fruit of carrying out one’s own ministry was that the churches receiving that ministry turned away from the one entrusted with the vision of the age (2 Tim. 1:15). No doubt there was some benefit, some edification, in Apollos’ ministry, or the churches would not have received it. Nevertheless, the churches who took his ministry were at risk of being sidetracked from God’s move and losing their standing as the testimony of Jesus.

Apollos’ case is instructive because it shows the crucial need of those who are ministering among the churches to be one with the vision of the age and the Lord’s up-to-date move to speak the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10) and teach the same thing in every church (1 Cor. 4:17). The dissenting ones today have gone much farther than Apollos did in deviating from the central lane of God’s economy. Not only do they have a different flavor, but they vehemently attack those who are seeking to bring the Lord’s recovery into the reality of the Body of Christ through the vision of the age and they actively promote their own teachings,

knowing that they contradict the general ministry in the Lord's recovery, which is based on the divine revelation conveyed to us through the New Testament ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. They do this in callous disregard for the Lord's Body, which is God's heart's desire. The deviation of Ephesus began from Apollos. The churches in Asia turning away from the ministry of Paul was the fruit of that deviation. Today the dissenting ones are not in the initial stage of deviation; their deviation has ripened to the point that they are aggressively seeking to turn others away after themselves (Acts 20:30). The saints should turn away from these dissenting ones today (Rom. 16:17) lest they be turned away by them (2 Tim. 1:15a) from the Lord's way in His recovery.

“Two Regions” and “1000 Regions”

A dissenting brother claims that Brother Lee's teaching in the 1980s elders' trainings that in New Testament times there were only two regions—the Jewish region and the Gentile region—is in conflict with Brother Nee's teaching that the Lord is able to open up 1000 regions (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 51, p. 138). He is wrong. They are fully in harmony. Brother Nee's speaking referred to the grouping of workers into fields of labor without a central controlling authority. Brother Lee's fellowship focused on the types of issues raised in this article—one move, one Body, one testimony, working in the principle of the Body, maintaining one fellowship, laboring under one leadership, not acting independently, having no jurisdictions, and not having different teachings. As we have seen, within the context of all of these crucial items to maintain the oneness of the Body of Christ, there is a practical arrangement of workers into groups. We hope there would be 1000 such groups, all laboring together in one accord.

Brother Nee taught about the regions of the work in his book *Further Talks on the Church Life* (see chapter six entitled “The Way for the Work Hereafter”—pp. 153-170). We have to realize that in the New Testament, for the apostles' work, there were only two regions. One was the Jewish world, and

the other was the Gentile world. In these two regions, there were no sub-regions.

Peter was working in the Jewish region, and that area was relatively small. But the Gentile world in which Paul worked was vast with different countries. These different countries, such as Asia Minor, Greece, and Macedonia, were different geographical regions. Rome with its surrounding areas could also be considered as a geographical region. But the New Testament does not have this kind of consideration concerning the work. In the Gentile world, there was only one region with one group of co-workers.

Did Paul, because of the vastness of his region, let some brothers take care of the work in Rome and another group take care of Greece with Macedonia? There was not such a thing. There were not different groups of workers under Paul taking care of specific regions or sub-regions. Paul and those with him were altogether just one group. (*Elders' Training, Book 11: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way* (3), pp. 115-116)

The reason why I am sharing this at this time is because in the Lord's recovery over the entire earth, there are signs coming out to indicate that there is a certain realization that the churches in different regions under certain kinds of work have the freedom to be different....

The United States is quite large with fifty states and with over eighty churches in the Lord's recovery. I think many of you have an impression and the tendency to think that the work is divided into regions and that certain regions would not touch other regions. Also, these regions would not be touched by other regions. No one has said this, but the situation already exists in this way. It seems as if every region has its own jurisdiction just like a local church has its own jurisdiction. We must realize that every church should have its own local jurisdiction, but this is only for administration. It is not for the testimony or for the Lord's move. (*Elders' Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 30-31)

“One Company” and “Many Companies”

Similarly, the word “company” is used differently even within the pages of *The Normal Christian Church Life*, the book on which the dissenting brother bases his criticism of Brother Bob Danker’s article. For example, on page 117 Brother Nee says:

...In the thought of God only one company of people exists, and all His designs of grace center in that **one company—His Church**.... (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, p. 117)

Here the one company is the Church, the Body of Christ. Furthermore, on page 122 he says:

We need to emphasize this fact, that the apostles worked in association with others, but their companies were not organized. Their relationship one to another was only spiritual. They loved and served the same Lord, they had one call and one commission, and they were of one mind. The Lord united them; therefore, they became fellow workers. Some were together from the outset; others joined at a later date. **They were one company**, yet they had no organization, and there was no distribution of offices or positions. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, p. 122)

However, on page 128 he says:

In Scripture the workers were formed into companies, but that does not imply that *all* the apostles formed themselves into *one* company and placed everything under one *central control*.... (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, p. 128)

Here Brother Nee is talking about the undesirability of bringing all of the workers under one centrally controlled organizational hierarchy. In spiritual reality, the Body of Christ and all of the co-workers are one company. In practical arrangement, they are ordered by the Spirit into multiple companies. When Brother Bob Danker used the expression “one company,” he clearly refers to the aspect of all of the co-workers standing on the ground of the Body to carry out the unique work of the building up of the Body of Christ.

Our unique responsibility today is to enter fully into this vision and to serve the Lord in His unique recovery under this

unique vision. Furthermore, we must serve **in one company, even in one Body**, under the proper leadership in the Lord's move, until the vision becomes a reality. (Bob Danker, "On the Minister of the Age and the Wise Master Builder")

Thus, the dissenting brother's harsh criticism of Brother Bob's statement is misplaced. What the dissenting brothers mean by not being brought into one company is that they want to be able to have their own jurisdictions in which they can exercise leadership and promote their own teachings without respect to the effect of their endeavors on the Lord's move, the Lord's Body, the Lord's testimony, and the fellowship of the churches. Thus, while on the surface their citation of Brother Nee's words in *The Normal Christian Church Life* may seem to lend credence to their claims, in fact they are violating all of the principles on which the work and the practice of the Body life have been built up in the Lord's recovery from Brother Nee's time to today.

Conclusion — the Lord's Pattern to Us

As brothers in the Lord's recovery, we are blessed to have two senior co-workers—Watchman Nee and Witness Lee—who endeavored throughout the entire course of their Christian life and ministry to faithfully follow the proper patterns in the New Testament record to carry out the work among us. We do well to follow both the pattern of Paul in the New Testament and the practice of our two senior brothers:

1 Cor. 11:1 – Be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ.

Phil. 3:17 – Be imitators together of me, brothers, and observe those who thus walk even as you have us as a pattern.

2 Thes. 3:9 – Not because we do not have the right, but in order that we might give ourselves to you as a pattern that you might imitate us.

1 Tim. 1:16 – But because of this I was shown mercy, that in me, the foremost, Jesus Christ might display all His long-suffering for a pattern to those who are to believe on Him unto eternal life.

2 Tim. 3:10 – But you have closely followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, endurance.

At least I can testify for myself and for my senior brother, Brother Watchman Nee. **We always behaved, acted, and took action in the recovery as one Body.** This is why the Lord's recovery could exist on this earth over these past approximately seventy years. We do not have any organization to keep anything, but the recovery is still here. The recovery is still existing and has been kept by the principle of the Body. While I was ministering the word, I often considered Brother Nee. I considered what he spoke; I did not like to speak anything which was contradicting with his ministry. If I had spoken in a contradicting way, where would the recovery be today? We must know the Body. (*The Issue of the Dispensing of the Processed Trinity and the Transmitting of the Transcending Christ*, p. 91)

