

A F A I T H F U L W O R D

S E R I E S T W O

“That You All Speak the Same Thing and
That There Be No Divisions Among You”

**THOUGHTS ON
PUBLICATION
WORK
IN THE LORD’S
RECOVERY**

**Book
3**

D E F E N S E & C O N F I R M A T I O N P R O J E C T

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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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PREFACE

1 Cor. 1:10 – 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.

In dealing with emerging divisions, Paul charged the Corinthians, “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” (1 Cor. 1:10). We do well to heed this word today. Recently, some have risen up to damage the oneness among the churches by speaking differently according to their own opinion.

A proliferation of different teachings was the stimulus for the July 2005 printing of *Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, an affirmation of the co-workers in the Lord's recovery of their intention to follow the pattern of the teaching and practice of Brother Nee and Brother Lee of being restricted in one publication. Although most of the workers and the churches in the Lord's recovery received the fellowship in this book, a small, but very vocal, minority openly opposed it. Because of the many misrepresentations of both what the co-workers had said in the book and what Brother Nee and Brother Lee had taught and practiced, DCP posted a series of articles on afaithfulword.org to address many of the issues raised.

This series of books reproduces that series of articles. This book reproduces an article sent to DCP by Brother David Ho, in which he addresses point by point each of the major issues initially raised in opposition to the co-workers' fellowship about being restricted in one publication.

THOUGHTS ON THE ONE PUBLICATION WORK IN THE LORD'S RECOVERY

Preface

For several months now, Brother Nigel Tomes' "Analysis & Response" to the pamphlet "Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery" (the "Pamphlet") has been circulated and promoted through various outlets. I am burdened to respond to his twelve point analysis. My qualification to do so is unproven; I am only a brother who loves the Lord and His recovery. My grounds for doing so are perhaps better, as his comments have become public and it is incumbent upon us all to be clear in our understanding, both for ourselves and for those we shepherd. Accordingly, I write based upon my understanding of Scripture, the ministry, and spiritual principles. The nature of this response is not a legal brief but what I would informally share with the saints, particularly the younger ones among us, who may ask concerning such matters. Brevity is sought, but not at the sacrifice of substance. These views are mine (but perhaps not mine alone) and are not representative of any group of saints. I write with the hope that the Body will approve of and improve upon the thoughts below.

Introduction

Much concern is made over what the Pamphlet does not say, rather than what it does say. At the outset then, it is important to define the meaning of "one publication." One publication is not a restriction on anyone's basic right to publish. Neither does it mean that saints may not read other publications. One publication means the "publication of the ministry materials of [Watchman Nee and Witness Lee]" as well as the "ongoing ministry in the Lord's recovery as the extension of the ministry of these two brothers" (*Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, p. 5). Hence the title of the Pamphlet: "Publication Work in the

Lord's Recovery". In other words, one publication has to do with the body of works that represent *and continue to represent* the ministry of the Lord's recovery. Therefore, while saints may freely publish, they may not unilaterally claim, and expect others to assent, that such other publications are part of the "ongoing ministry in the Lord's recovery."

The one publication work must have a practical vehicle to be carried out. Under Brother Lee's explicit direction, and as first established by Brother Nee in principle, the one publication has been and continues to be published by Living Stream Ministry ("LSM") and Taiwan Gospel Book Room ("TGBR"). According to the fellowship of the blended co-workers in the Lord's recovery, LSM and TGBR coordinate and co-labor to publish materials for the nourishment of the churches and saints.

Many churches and saints may voluntarily choose to restrict themselves to LSM and TGBR publications. Others may not. Whether and how a church restricts itself to one publication is for the leading ones in such church to determine. Although their decisions may be disputed by some, their responsibility as shepherds to make decisions for the safety of the flock cannot be disputed (cf. Acts 20:20-32; 1 Peter 5:2-3).

The Pamphlet concludes by emphasizing that "all the churches and saints must understand that the matter of one publication is not a matter of the common faith....the 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" (*Id.*, p. 9). Although it is always good to be zealous in a good thing (Gal. 4:18), this balancing word helps adjust those who wrongly insist on the practice of one publication as an actual or *de facto* item of the faith.

The foregoing points summarize and govern my understanding of the Pamphlet. They will be revisited and developed in the responses below.

RESPONSES

The enumerated subheadings below are the verbatim questions posed by Brother Nigel. The length of these responses will vary. His first question may require the most extended treatment as he devoted the most space to it and thought it worthy of a separate (but largely repetitive) submission to the “Concerned Brothers” website.

1. Is “one publication” scriptural?

To answer the serious charge implicit in the question, it is worth reviewing the references cited in the Pamphlet as well as addressing other scriptural principles underlying the practice of one publication. Brother Nigel’s example of the canonization of the Scriptures is briefly addressed as well.

Shepherding the Flock

Brother Nigel summarily dismisses the relevancy of the references in the Pamphlet to 1 Peter 5:2 and Acts 20:28-29. Such disregard is unfortunate. These verses, mentioned near the end of the Pamphlet as part of a charge to the elders of the churches in the Lord’s recovery, are highly relevant to his question as they outline the scriptural duties and responsibilities of the elders:

1 Peter 5:2 – Shepherd the flock of God among you, overseeing not under compulsion but willingly, according to God; not by seeking gain through base means but eagerly.

Acts 20:28-29 – Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among whom the Holy Spirit has placed you as overseers to shepherd the church of God, which He obtained through His own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

These verses indicate that the elders’ primary duty is to shepherd the church of God. Shepherding is to “take all-inclusive tender care of the flock, the church of God” (Acts 20:28 footnote 4). Based on their discernment, maturity and

coordination with each other and with the Holy Spirit who placed them as such, the elders discharge their duty to shepherd the flock according to God. With respect to shepherding, the safety of the flock is paramount. It is not only appropriate, but scripturally mandated for shepherds to protect the flock from unhealthy teachings (cf. Acts 20:29-30).

Shepherding is therefore intrinsically related to teaching (cf. Eph. 4:11, footnote 2). This is vividly demonstrated in Acts 20, where the apostle Paul gathered the elders in Ephesus together and exhorted them to shepherd the flock based on his own pattern. The record in Acts does not tell us all that Paul said or did during his three years with the Ephesians. But we know that teaching was prominent. He emphatically stated that he “did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly” and that he “did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:20, 27).

The preceding points establish important scriptural obligations of the elders and workers in caring for the believers. Brother Nigel’s analysis errs by failing to consider any of these scriptural duties in connection with one publication. He asks only whether the practice is scriptural. He fails to ask whether it is scriptural for elders to practice one publication when they deem it important for the flock’s preservation. Moreover, he ignores the question of whether it is scriptural for co-workers to publicly declare and teach the practice when they find it profitable to do so. These topics must be considered by saints seeking to determine the scriptural foundation for one publication.

This is not to answer Brother Nigel’s question with a tautology or any circularity. This just means that in some cases it is simplistic to merely ask whether something is scriptural or not, without considering other dimensions to the question. A simple illustration may help make the point. What if the question posed instead was, Is it scriptural for churches to have a young people’s work? This is a universal practice among us, even though, strictly speaking, there is no explicit reference to it in the Bible (although it is implicit in many places). The answer to

such a question might be that while it may not be explicitly scriptural to have a young people's work, it is certainly scriptural for the leading ones to oversee a young people's work as part of their shepherding duties of the flock.

Therefore, whether one publication is scriptural depends in large part on whether it is consistent with the elders and co-workers' shepherding duties discussed above. We should remember that the blended brothers prepared and circulated the Pamphlet because they judged one publication to be "not only a testimony of our oneness in the Body but also a *safeguard* for the unique ministry in the Lord's recovery. Without one publication, there is no way to preserve the integrity of the Lord's ministry among us, which is crucial to the practical oneness among the local churches" (*Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, p. 3).

As the Pamphlet explains, Brother Lee's posture in this practice was also precautionary: "The elders and saints everywhere should exercise the same caution that Brother Lee spoke of when he testified concerning the one publication in mainland China: all the saints and all the churches everywhere should similarly be restricted in one publication in the Lord's recovery" (*Id.*, p. 8).

The matter of one publication is a matter of safety because teaching, which is conveyed practically through the publication work, directly impacts the health of the flock (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; 4:3) and the condition of the church (cf. Rev. 2:14-15 and related footnotes). For the safety of the Lord's recovery, the blended co-workers felt it was necessary and profitable to release the Pamphlet. As a precautionary measure, the Pamphlet follows the pattern of the apostle Paul. He wrote to the Philippian believers, "To write the same things to you, for me it is not irksome, but for you it is safe. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision" (Phil. 3:1-2). Some of the Philippians may have responded by asking, "If we heed Paul's warning, don't we run the risk of closing the door on genuine ministers of the gospel?" Perhaps. But such possibility is trumped by the probability, as overwhelmingly

demonstrated throughout church history, that lack of caution will permit damaging teachings to come in among us. This is obviously a judgment call. The workers and elders among us have the discretion, and even obligation, to make this kind of judgment. Accordingly, the leading ones among us have chosen to carry out their scriptural duty to protect the safety of the flock by the one publication practice.

Although Brother Nigel chose to ignore the relevancy of the references cited above, it is impossible to properly answer his question without considering the scriptural responsibilities of the shepherds of the church. Therefore, notwithstanding any lack of explicit intent on their part, Brother Nigel and those who ask whether one publication is scriptural are also and actually asking the saints to question whether the leading ones among us are properly carrying out their divinely-endowed and scripturally-endued responsibility to shepherd the churches. To answer Brother Nigel's question in the negative means to answer the latter in the negative as well. This much must be clear by all who entertain Brother Nigel's question.

No Uncertain Sounding of the Trumpet

Although Brother Nigel dismisses outright the relevance of Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5, he briefly addresses the Pamphlet's mention of the "sounding of the one trumpet" (*Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, p. 7). He understands the metaphor, which is derived from 1 Corinthians 14:8, to merely refer to speaking in tongues without interpretation, and determines that it cannot be applied to the matter of one publication. To be certain, the Pamphlet does not suggest that the metaphor, derived from 1 Corinthians 14:8, is a "proof-text" for the practice of one publication. But because Brother Lee used this verse to illustrate the matter of one publication, it is helpful to explore how the metaphor might apply here.

The subject matter of 1 Corinthians 14 is familiar to most of the saints. It deals with the excelling of prophesying for the building up of the church. Paul contrasts tongue-speaking, with its confusion and individual edification, against prophesying, with

its order and profitability for corporate building. In this context – dealing with what should be spoken in a church meeting for the building up of the Body of Christ – Paul warned against the uncertain sounding of the trumpet. The sounding of the trumpet, therefore, is intrinsically related to our speaking.

Having established the foregoing relationship, the link between our speaking and the publication work is not difficult to trace. Speaking finds its source in teaching. We speak what we have been nourished and filled with (cf. 1 Tim. 4:6). Teaching, of course, is practically conveyed through publications. Accordingly, it is not insignificant for different publications to be circulated among the saints. The careless promotion of different publications may lead to the infiltration of different teachings and speaking among us. Such “uncertain sounds” must therefore be discerned and guarded against with vigilance. The Pamphlet underscores this concern when it states, “As long as the churches do not become platforms for the dissemination of these publications, these publications should not become matters of issue among us” (*Id.*, p. 9). The one publication practice, therefore, fosters the same speaking among us and leaves no room for an uncertain sounding of the trumpet. It is a safeguard against a gradual descent into the confusion of Babel, where all spoke differently (Gen. 11:5-9). The practice ensures that the saints are filled with the healthy teaching of God’s economy and are equipped to speak the healthy words of the apostles’ teaching (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3-4, 10; 6:3; 2 Tim. 1:13; Titus 2:1).

We need only to look at the church prophesying meetings to confirm the foregoing points. We may candidly admit that the meetings suffer when the saints speak in an unrestricted manner. In contrast, when the saints restrict themselves to the healthy teaching of the ministry enjoyed in our publications, the speaking is encouraging, consoling, and edifying (1 Cor. 14:3). Even if in a certain meeting such saints share from different angles and portions of the Word and ministry, the overall speaking is coherent and profitable because it is the same speaking in essence—the New Testament ministry. In such

meetings there is the impact, the morale, and the recognition from others that God is among us (1 Cor. 14:24-25). Such a recognition is due to the oneness among the saints (cf. John 17:21-23).

We should also be impressed with the gravity of Paul's illustration. First Corinthians 14:8 says, "For also if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?" The trumpet sounds for one purpose – to prepare the soldiers for battle. In this light, we can better understand Brother Lee's careful presentation of how churches should receive his ministry. Brother Lee regarded the release of his ministry as a battle cry. He was concerned about "the impact of the ministry for the fighting of the Lord's interest in His recovery" (*Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move*, p. 75). Brother Lee went to great lengths to stress that with respect to the *one ministry* he was not speaking to the saints merely as the members of a local church, but as the "soldiers" in the Lord's recovery who are burdened to fight the battle.

It follows that if one truly seeks to be both a "fellow worker and fellow soldier" (Phil. 2:25) with the apostle's fighting ministry, one should rightfully guard against uncertain sounds that reduce our collective ability to fight alongside this ministry. Under such vigilance, it is axiomatic that there would not be, and could not be, different publications and speaking discordant with the ministry.

The Oneness of the Body of Christ

In addition to the foregoing scriptural and spiritual principles that support the one publication practice, one further factor should be briefly discussed. This is the underlying and intrinsic factor of one publication: the oneness of the Body of Christ. This weighty issue warrants special attention outside the scope of these pages. Burdened saints are commended to the rich development of this topic in the references below. Limited as it must be, I attempt to summarize my understanding of this intrinsic factor for the sake of responding to the question at hand.

Ultimately, both at the most basic and sublime levels, we practice one publication because of the unique oneness of the Body of Christ, which is the oneness in and of the Triune God (Eph. 4:3-6; John 17:10, 21-22). As one Body we “speak the same thing” and are “attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion” (1 Cor. 1:10), we have the “same mind” and are in “one accord” with “one mouth” (Rom. 15:5b-6), and we “think the same thing” (Phil. 2:2). Although the origin of this oneness is the Triune God Himself, the believers must still be diligent to keep and safeguard this oneness (Eph. 4:3, footnote 2). This unique oneness, when practiced by the churches, is evidenced as the one accord among the churches. The practice of this one accord, which originates from the oneness of the Body, was practically maintained in Acts by the believers continuing steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42, 46). The apostles taught the same thing to all the saints in all the places and in all the churches (1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33b-34), thereby facilitating the practice of the one accord as a demonstration of the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ. Therefore, although our one accord has a divine and mystical source, it still requires maintenance and preservation through divine and human practices.

This practical maintenance of the one accord is revealed in Paul’s lofty exhortations to the Romans, Corinthians and Philippians (1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:5b-6; Phil. 2:2). On the one hand, the believers have the organic capacity to speak the same thing and to have the same mind because they are the one Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12; Romans 12:5). On the other hand, Paul makes it clear that the practical implementation of such oneness requires the same teaching among the believers. In 1 Corinthians 4:17, he writes that he sent Timothy to the Corinthians to “remind you of my ways which are in Christ, even as I teach everywhere in every church” (1 Cor. 4:17). Brother Lee points out that the expression “everywhere” indicates “that the apostle’s teaching was the same universally, not varying from place to place” (1 Cor. 4:17, footnote two). Paul presented the same teaching to the believers with the expectation that they would speak and think the same thing.

As some have noted, if one truly sees and lives in the reality of the oneness of the Body, which oneness is nothing less than the oneness of the Triune God, then there would be no question as to whether there would be differing publications and speaking among us. It simply could not be, for it would contradict one's constitution and being. The Lord in His earthly ministry not only would not speak differently from the Father, but He could not, because He and the Father are one (John 5:19, 30; 10:30; 14:10, 24; 17:8, 14, 21).

But if our seeing of the oneness of the Body is limited, and mine is, and if our living in the reality of the Body is deficient, and mine is, there are still the practices of the churches in following the apostles' teaching to safeguard the one accord among us. Hence, for decades among us we have practiced one publication. Such practice reflects a desire to be restricted to the apostles' teaching for the practical realization of the oneness among us. Like the early believers in Acts, we would maintain the one accord not only through our prayer and bread-breaking, but also through our continuing steadfastly in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles.

We should not think God would not take an "outward" way to preserve oneness. To use an obvious example, God has sovereignly, and outwardly, arranged for believers to meet and gather according to city boundaries. It is hard to imagine a more external ground for meeting, but such ground is crucial to facilitate the testimony of oneness among us. Similarly, the one publication practice is a useful and even indispensable practice to facilitate the practical one accord among the churches.

Scriptural Principles, Spiritual Realities

As hopefully demonstrated in the foregoing subsections, the question of whether something is "scriptural" cannot always be settled by simply scanning a concordance. A matter may not be explicitly referenced in the Bible, yet it may still be "scriptural" inasmuch as it is based on scriptural principles and spiritual realities. I believe such is the case with the one publication practice. Many practices among us fall in this kind of category,

such as the previous example of the young people's work. While there are no explicit references to these practices in the New Testament, there are important scriptural principles supporting such endeavors. Most saints would probably intuitively agree with this proposition.

Therefore it is somewhat surprising for Brother Nigel to continue his case by reminding us of Watchman Nee's famous quote:

The Bible is our only standard. We are not afraid to preach the pure Word of the Bible, even if men oppose; but if it is not the Word of the Bible, we could never agree even if everyone approved of it (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Vol. 7, p. 1231).

A number of other bright-line quotes follow to bolster his position, as if it was controverted by anyone (although such portions are always healthy reminders). We surely agree 100% with all of the quotes. But our understanding of the quotes may differ. I read Brother Nee's quote to present an unflinching standard for the *content* of our preaching (let the linguists among us dissect what Brother Nee refers to when he says "but if it is not the Word of the Bible..."). Based on a literal reading, along with a dose of common sense, I do not believe the quote should be read to extend to matters of *practice* which have developed among us through the decades. For instance, should we cease using gospel tracts because they do not appear in the Bible? Should we henceforth cancel all future Thanksgiving Day conferences among us? Surely Brother Nigel is not suggesting that we cease such *practices* among us merely because they don't appear in the Bible. What matters, and the import of Brother Nee's quote, is that the ministry being conveyed through those practices is the "pure Word of the Bible."

Similarly, what matters is not the one publication *per se* as a practice, but caring for the content that is being ministered in the one publication. This is what really matters. And this is precisely one of the key reasons for having one publication, to ensure that the content ministered to and in the churches is

nothing less than the revelation of God's eternal economy unveiled within the pure Word of the Bible. Otherwise the floodgates would be open to all sorts of divers teaching.

Finally, before moving on, it may be helpful to consider a timely example illustrating the variable nature of Brother Nigel's argument. The example is that of the "contemporary music" found in the young people's meetings in certain North American churches. I have read and heard multiple defenses of such music. Invariably, they rely on the argument that the Bible does not expressly forbid any certain "genre" of music. I also have firsthand knowledge that some of these "contemporary music" apologists oppose the practice of one publication because it is not "scriptural." The inconsistency is obvious. Not to get sidetracked here, but for the record, I believe those of us who are bothered by "contemporary music" do not object because it is unscriptural *per se*, but because of the distaste within and belief that its usage to attract young people violates important spiritual principles (see, for example, Genesis 19:32 footnote 1; *Life-Study of Genesis*, msg. 54).

The Scriptural Canon and its Recognition.

Brother Nigel's penultimate argument here is based on his understanding of the canonization of Scripture. His major points are as follows: (1) New Testament writers and early authors wrote without a "central and official clearinghouse for inspired writings"; (2) the "Sovereign Lord saw no need for outward arrangements to safeguard" against the risk of causing confusion among the saints and damaging the one accord; (3) the saints and churches were able to accept or reject writings per their inner taste of life and the Holy Spirit; and (4) eventually, such accepted writings became the scriptural canon through ratification at Hippo and Carthage.

In response to such charges, it seems almost sufficient to repeat the Pamphlet itself:

[I]t should not be the intention of the responsible ones in the Lord's recovery to suppress the rights of individuals to

express themselves (unless, of course, such expressions are sinful, heretical, or divisive). Some saints have a desire to write church histories, to produce children's materials, to record music, and even to give and publish messages....But the fact that these publications can be produced and distributed should not give them any more credence among the churches than anything else that can be published today, secular or religious. These are simply other publications that our brothers and sisters may or may not be interested in. They are not part of the one publication in the Lord's recovery, and they are not necessarily beneficial to the spiritual good of the saints among us. The churches, through the elders, should be educated to understand this, and the saints and the churches need to discern the value of these publications for themselves. (*Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, p. 8)

The Pamphlet does not restrict any individual's rights to publish as he or she may choose; it is a restriction concerning what the churches and saints will accept. This is a critical distinction. Modern-day Thomases and Barnabases among us may write what they feel led to write. The churches should reject what they feel led to reject. Such a restriction is not substantively different than the restriction a fourth-century church may have exercised in not recognizing the Gospel of Thomas as being on the same level as the canonical gospels.

I do appreciate Brother Nigel distinguishing between the "recognition" of the canon and the "making" of the canon in church history. The church could only recognize the canon; the church could not make any book canonical or authentic. The book is either authentic or not at the time of writing.

Similarly, one's ministry is either part of the New Testament ministry or it isn't. As a practical matter, the saints have recognized that the publications of LSM and TGBR produce the "taste" of the New Testament ministry. For the leading ones and saints to endorse the one publication is a reflection that these are the "things that are profitable" (Acts 20:20) for the believers to continue in. While saints still have the right to "discern the value of these [other] publications for themselves" (*Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, p. 8), leading ones should

consider the profit of directing saints to other publications when there is a demonstrably voracious appetite for the healthy words of this ministry.

Brother Nigel's claim that the "Sovereign Lord saw no need for outward arrangements to safeguard" against the risk of causing confusion is belied by the fact that the very outward councils of Hippo and Carthage accomplished the very outward tasks of recognizing the canon of Scripture. Was that not a safeguard for us? Is it not a help that today in the churches, saints are (hopefully) not prophesying from the Gospel of Thomas or Barnabas' epistles?

Ultimately, I fail to see how our current practice does not approximate this historical pattern.

A "Policy Statement"?

Finally, Brother Nigel asks whether issuing a "policy statement" is scriptural. I think he knows the answer is yes, because he presents Acts 15 as a New Testament example. Whether Acts 15 has been followed or not is beyond my determination. But I'd like to allow the saints' conscience to deliberate on this by concluding here with Acts 15:24-25a, which suggests why the Pamphlet was necessary in the first place:

Acts 15:24-25a – [24] Since we have heard that certain ones who went out from among us have troubled you with their words, unsettling your souls, to whom we gave no instruction, [25] it seemed good to us, having become of one accord...

2. Is "one publication" an item of "speciality" or "generality"?

The matter of one publication is without qualification not an item of "speciality." It is unclear why this question is even asked when the Pamphlet is explicit on this point: "the matter of one publication is not a matter of the common faith" (*Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, p. 9). Furthermore, the blended co-workers' attitude of generality is clear: "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" (*Id.*). With

respect to any local church that chooses to restrict itself in this way, the one publication may also be considered an item of practicality for such church. Brother Lee considered the healthy teaching as part of the practicality of the church life (see *The Speciality, Generality, and Practicality of the Church Life*, pp. 57-58). Brother Lee remarked that, "The teachings that the Lord has given to His recovery are healthy, full of nourishment" (*Id.*, p. 58). These teachings are embodied, of course, in the one publication among us. Later in the same chapter he noted that, "These points are not parts of our Christian faith. However, they are the practicality, even the best practicality, the most profitable practicality, of the church life. They are not required for salvation; they are recommendable for the church practice. I hope that we all will put these points into practice" (*Id.*, p. 60).

As the matter of one publication is not an item of the faith, those who would insist upon it as a *de facto* article of our faith should be disabused of such notion and practice. It is indeed regretful that such misguided ones seeking to serve the "army" would take the fight against not the enemy, but the "citizens". Surely these overzealous ones do not speak for the majority of saints who recognize this as a matter of generality, not speciality.

Similarly, those who equivocate over the practice should not misinterpret the position of those who are unequivocal. Promotion is not the same as dogmatic insistence. I am helped by Brother Kerry Robichaux's commentary on his website:

Further, I do not think that it is accurate to equate the circulation of this statement with an insistence on it. I believe that what the co-workers are doing is akin to what Brother Lee did when he issued the call to the saints everywhere to pick up the God-ordained way. You will recall, I am sure, that he did not insist on this new way, but he certainly promoted it as the best way to bring all the saints into their organic functions as members of the Body of Christ. The new way was to be a matter of choice for the saints and the churches, not something insisted upon. Likewise, being restricted in one publication is a matter of choice for the churches. No one is insisting that the churches everywhere be restricted in one

publication. But at the same time, the co-workers can and should help the saints to see the value of one publication in the Lord's recovery, and they should encourage the saints everywhere to exercise this restriction for the sake of the one testimony among us. I understand that some do not wish to see this matter promoted or even spoken, but as co-workers trained by Brother Lee we do well to follow his example and admonition ourselves and to bring the saints whom we care for into the same practice. (See http://onepub.robichaux.name/2005/12/a_response_to_some_questions_a_1.html).

3. If a local church adopts the “one publication” policy is it still a genuine local church? Or has it become a “ministry church”?

The Pamphlet makes it clear that churches which do not adopt the practice are still genuine local churches (*Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, p. 9). Brother Nigel now suggests the converse: churches which adopt the practice are no longer genuine local churches. To support his suggestion, he quotes from a particular church's recent declaration and from *The Normal Christian Church Life*. The anonymous church's declaration is not generally available and is therefore outside the scope of comment here. But Brother Nigel's reliance on *The Normal Christian Church Life* to support his argument merits a response.

The Normal Christian Church Life begins with extensive prefatory and introductory remarks written by Brother Nee. The purpose of these remarks, in part, was to guard against the careless application of the book's contents. More specifically, Brother Nee considered the introduction to *The Normal Christian Church Life* so critical that he added this subtitle: “IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTANDING OF THE BOOK.” Among the many striking points in the introduction is this careful qualification by Brother Nee:

“The book is written from the standpoint of a servant looking from the work towards the churches. It does not deal with the specific ministry to which we believe the Lord has called us, but only with the general principles of the work; nor

does it deal with “the church, which is His Body,” but with the local churches and their relation to the work. The book does not touch the principles of the work, or the life of the churches; it is only a review of our missions, as the title suggests” (*The Normal Christian Church Life*, pp. xi-xii, emphases added).

The matter of one publication has everything to do with: (i) the “specific ministry” which we believe the Lord has granted us; (ii) the reality of the Body of Christ; and (iii) principles of the work. *The Normal Christian Church Life* does not. It is inappropriate to use this book, which does not extend to such matters, to condemn our understanding and practice of such matters.

Apparently ignoring this caution, Brother Nigel offers selective excerpts from chapter 6 of the book to buttress his argument that churches which practice one publication are no longer genuine local churches. But in that section of the chapter, Brother Nee’s burden is to remind the workers that churches should be formed only on the basis of locality, and not along any narrow ministerial lines (see *id.*, pp. 112-15). To be clear, Brother Nee’s emphasis is on the improper *formation* of churches. If there are churches among us which are being *formed* not on the basis of locality but based on specific teachings or ministries, then Brother Nee’s teaching is germane. I do not know of any such cases, and certainly do not think such is being advocated by any faithful servant of God. Brother Nigel simply misapplies these portions despite Brother Nee’s explicit caution against doing so.

4. Why has an informal, voluntary, personal practice among workers (Brother Lee and Brother Nee) become a teaching which is now a public policy, mandated upon the saints and the local churches?

This question is both revealing and a matter of semantics.

It is revealing because the natural response is, why *wouldn't* a co-worker, saint or church that seeks to follow Brother Lee’s

ministry follow his pattern? For most of us, it is enough that Brother Lee established this pattern. I dare not speak for the blended co-workers, but it is clear they are diligently following the pattern of their senior co-workers. And rightfully so. The apostle Paul exhorted the churches to imitate him and remember his pattern (1 Cor. 4:16; 1 Cor. 11:1; 1 Thes. 1:6; 2 Thes. 3:6-9), to be like-souled with him (Phil. 1:27; 2:2, 19-22), and to remember his ways (1 Cor. 4:17). Paul exhorted the Philippians, “Nevertheless whereunto we have attained, by the same rule let us walk. Be imitators together of me, brothers, and observe those who thus walk even as you have us as a pattern” (Phil. 3:16-17).

This question is also a matter of semantics. It is not clear at what point an “informal, voluntary, personal practice among [Brother Lee and Brother Nee]” becomes a “mandated” “teaching” of “public policy.” For example, Brother Lee and Brother Nee frequently ministered to the saints concerning their personal practices in matters such as reading the Bible, contacting the Lord, and similar matters. Often, Brother Lee and Brother Nee charged the saints to follow such practices, whether it meant reading the Bible through once a year or having thirty minutes of personal time with the Lord in the morning. Are such exhortations “informal, voluntary, personal practice[s],” or “mandated” “teachings” of “public policy”? It may depend on whether one likes the charge or not.

Regardless, Brother Nigel’s concern as manifested in this question seems to be one where reasonable people can reasonably differ. But to pointedly answer the question, even assuming one takes the harsher semantical reading of the Pamphlet urged by our brother, the answer may simply be because we think it wiser and safer to continue following the pattern, conduct and ways of our senior brothers in the Lord’s work.

5. Has the Living Stream Ministry Office has (sic) been elevated above the “Levitical service” established by Brother Lee?

No, and although I may have a few thoughts on this question, I do not need to redo poorly what has already been done ably by Brother Kerry Robichaux at: http://onepub.robichaux.name/2006/01/lsm_as_simply_a_business_offic.html.

6. Isn't this the practice of Roman Catholicism concerning publication?

No, it is not, unless one thinks the early believers' practice of having all things in common (Acts 2:44) is socialism, that Paul's buffeting his body (1 Cor. 9:27) is asceticism, and that the restriction against women teaching is sexism (1 Tim. 2:12). I am not trying to be facetious. Rather, I hope to point out the fallacy of indiscriminate inductive analysis evidenced by the question. Superficial similarities are just that. We should remember, “[t]he sprout and leaves of tares look the same as those of wheat” (Matt. 13:25, footnote 2).

That Roman Catholics maintain a practice with some cursory semblance to ours is irrelevant when ours is an exercise, manifestation and result of being “one Body and one Spirit” (Eph. 4:4). Even if one disputes this claim, can anyone dispute that, at the very least, there is a profound difference between requiring allegiance to the teachings of Jezebel (Rev. 2:20) and holding steady to the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42)?

Furthermore, whereas the Roman Catholic practice of Imprimatur is a doctrinal test, the one publication surpasses mere orthodoxy. For example, some brothers may choose to teach scriptural items that are in line with certain aspects of Brother Nee or Brother Lee's ministry. There may not be a shred of heresy or falsehood in such messages. Such messages may even be well-received among pockets of churches or saints. In a Roman Catholic setting, such teachings would likely qualify for an Imprimatur. But orthodox teachings, in and of themselves, are not a qualification for one publication. Neither the absence

of falsehood, nor the presence of support, qualifies any teaching to be part of the unique ministry in the Lord's recovery. In order to be part of the "ongoing ministry in the Lord's recovery as the extension of the ministry" of Brother Lee and Brother Nee (*Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, p. 5, emphases added), any purported ministry must match the all-inheriting vision of God's economy unveiled in the Lord's recovery. Therefore, whereas an Imprimatur settles for the lowest common denominator of acceptable teaching, the one publication practice helps all of us arrive at the highest peak of the divine revelation revealed in the Lord's recovery.

7. Is this document an example of "historical revisionism"?

Brother Nigel makes the audacious claim that the Pamphlet is an example of historical revisionism: "rewriting the record in a manner not supported by the facts." Historical revisionism is an exercise of deliberate manipulation and distortion; it is not excused by ignorance. The seriousness of this charge against the blended co-workers cannot be overstated. Brother Nigel is so confident of his position that this topic became the subject of an expanded article entitled "Honesty in History – Against Historical Revisionism," separately published in both the most recent issue of *Fellowship Journal* (Vol. 5, Issue 1) and on the "Concerned Brothers" website. His expanded arguments will be considered sequentially according to the subheadings below, with detail befitting the gravity of these charges.

Three Bookrooms, One Publication Work

Brother Nigel begins by quoting the Pamphlet's assertion that "the one publication has always been trumpeted by one practical publication endeavor—in Brother Nee's day by his Gospel Room, during Brother Lee's years after he left mainland China by Taiwan Gospel Book Room, and during his years in the United States by Living Stream Ministry" (*Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 3-4).

He then challenges the veracity of this statement by pointing out the Pamphlet's failure to mention the Hong Kong Book Room. He writes:

Yet, elsewhere, Brother Lee recognized the role of the Hong Kong (HK) Book Room. He recounts that, in the 1950s, the practical publication endeavor was conducted "separately in three places: Shanghai, Taipei and Hong Kong. Brother Nee was responsible for the bookroom in Shanghai, I was responsible for the one in Taipei, and Brother Weigh was responsible for the one in Hong Kong" (*Words of Training for the New Way*, Vol. 1, pp. 34-35, as quoted by Brother Nigel).

Brother Nigel then suggests the Hong Kong Book Room was purposely omitted in the Pamphlet because it did not "fit neatly into the picture being presented." He concludes that "**two publishers existed simultaneously** in the recovery, the HK and Taiwan Gospel Book Rooms" (emphasis in original). The gist of his argument is that the publishing work of the Hong Kong Book Room in the 1950s contradicted the one publication practice and was therefore intentionally omitted from the Pamphlet by the blended co-workers.

It is certainly true that the publication work in the Lord's recovery was carried out in three places beginning in 1950. As Brother Lee shares in his biography of Watchman Nee, one of Brother Nee's final contacts with Brother Lee involved caring for the publication work. Brother Nee made two important arrangements to this end. Brother Nigel highlights the former, but strangely, and fatally, ignores the latter. The latter is the missing piece that reconciles any apparent contradiction in our history.

First, Brother Lee recounts Brother Nee's instruction that:

The Gospel Bookroom should be set up in three places: Shanghai, Taipei, and Hong Kong. Watchman would personally manage the one in Shanghai; I would be responsible for the one in Taipei; and Brother Weigh would be responsible for the one in Hong Kong. Further, I was asked to assist the bookroom in Hong Kong regarding literary and editorial

responsibility” (*Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, p. 326).

Second, Brother Nee instructed that: “All three bookrooms would share the same copyrights” (*Id.*).

The first instruction is the centerpiece of Brother Nigel’s accusation of historical revisionism. The second instruction smashes it.

A copyright is an exclusive right retained by an author to control the publishing of his works. For all three bookrooms to share the same copyrights was an extraordinary arrangement by Brother Nee to ensure that the three bookrooms would publish the same works. These were not three separate publishers each releasing their own original content. Rather, the three publishers coordinated in the one publication work to release the same riches of the unique ministry in the Lord’s recovery. Even Brother Nee’s phraseology—“The Gospel Bookroom should be set up in three places”—indicates Brother Nee’s intention that this would be one publication endeavor practically carried out in separate places.

The context of Brother Nigel’s original quote from *Words of Training for the New Way* further confirms this intention. It is altogether misleading for Brother Nigel to have excluded it. Brother Lee clearly states:

It was decided that the Gospel Book Room would remain one, yet due to the political situations, it had to conduct business separately in three places: Shanghai, Taipei, and Hong Kong. (Words of Training for the New Way, Vol. 1, p. 34) (italicized portions omitted by Brother Nigel).

Ignoring the above emphasis on the *oneness* of the Gospel Book Room is the real crime of omission here.

Therefore, it is illusory for Brother Nigel to argue that the Hong Kong Book Room contradicts our long-standing practice. Rather, its historical role only strengthens and confirms the Pamphlet’s assertion that the one publication practice has been ours for decades. Brother Lee provides the following additional

details: "In 1975, Brother K.H. Weigh and I with other related brothers rearranged, due to the situation at that time, the matter of copyright as follows: All the Chinese books would be published by the Gospel Bookroom in Taipei; all the English books would be published by the Living Stream in the U.S.A.; the Hong Kong Church Bookroom would be used only for the distribution of our publications in Hong Kong" (*Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, p. 326.)

It is also puzzling why Brother Nigel thinks it is so revelatory that "**two publishers existed simultaneously**" (emphasis in original) in the Lord's recovery (i.e., the Hong Kong Book Room and Taiwan Gospel Book Room), when such is the case today. The Pamphlet expressly states and reiterates that today both Living Stream Ministry and Taiwan Gospel Book Room publish the ongoing ministry in the Lord's recovery. What matters is not their co-existence, but their co-working in the one publication endeavor. These two publishers exist simultaneously yet coordinate in harmony to release the one publication among us with the same content. The fact that two publishers exist simultaneously in the recovery does not in any way undercut the message of the Pamphlet so long as the two publishers are partners in the same publication work.

Unfortunately, our concern today is not that there are many clamoring to publish the same content. If only. Rather, our concern today is over individuals seeking to release *original* content, not the same content, and desiring recognition of such original content as the extension of the unique ministry in the Lord's recovery. This is the heart of the matter.

As the above discussion hopefully illustrates, the omission of the Hong Kong Book Room in the Pamphlet is not rewriting history out of convenience. Perhaps its inclusion would have required superfluous details that were immaterial to the broader purpose of the Pamphlet. Although we may quibble over the reasons for its exclusion, it is beyond the pale to ascribe dishonesty in the matter.

The Historical Record

Brother Nigel continues his argument by taking issue with the Pamphlet's assertion that "[s]ince Brother Nee's day we in the Lord's recovery have been 'restricted in one publication'....For decades we all have been nurtured...by the one publication" (p. 7). His primary contention is that there is nothing in the historical record of any such policy prior to 1986. He believes there is an "argument from silence" that we have not historically maintained such a practice.

Part of his "argument from silence" is that the one publication practice is not mentioned in the 1978 booklet, *The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches* (authored by the Co-Workers in the Lord's Recovery). His reliance is misplaced when we consider the limited purpose and targeted audience of the booklet. The preface to *The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches* explicitly states that the booklet merely provides a "basic introduction" to those unfamiliar with us, and emphasizes to the curious reader that we possess "many other publications available on various important Scripture subjects" (*The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches*, p. 1). While the booklet maintains utility as a primer for those who want a "basic introduction" to the Lord's recovery, we should recognize its self-avowed limitations before drawing sweeping conclusions.

The core issue can be settled by asking whether there is any record of support for such practice prior to 1986. As an aside, it is curious why Brother Lee's explicit fellowship and testimony from 1986 and on is unsatisfactory to Brother Nigel. But if our brother demands earlier proof, we may point to the previous excerpts from Brother Nee's biography. As discussed above, these portions demonstrate Brother Nee's arrangement in 1950 and Brother Lee's arrangement in 1975 to carry out the one publication work. Moreover, prior to 1950, Brother Lee began working with Brother Nee in the publication work. Brother Lee recounts his experience between 1934 and 1936 as follows:

Through all these responsibilities, a tremendous opportunity was opened to me to learn how to work for the Lord in His recovery, how to help others grow in life, how to build the church with life, and how to care for the publication ministry." (*Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, p. 300)

It is unquestioned among us that Brother Lee closely followed the pattern of Brother Nee in carrying out the ministry in the Lord's recovery. As this pattern explicitly extended to the publication ministry, we surely believe that Brother Lee's practice in carrying out the publication work was the same as Brother Nee's.

In addition to the above record, the following testimonies given in 1986 and 1987, respectively, by Brother Lee should conclusively settle the matter:

When we were on mainland China, only Brother Nee had a publication, and the Gospel Room belonged solely and uniquely to him....We only had one publication. Everything was published through Brother Nee's Gospel Room because the publication is really the trumpeting. (*Elders' Training, Book 8: The Life-pulse of the Lord's Present Move*, pp. 161-62)

The greater part of my work is a continuation of that of Brother Watchman Nee. It was the Gospel Book Room that served him in his ministry. Besides that, no one else served him and his ministry. (*Words of Training for the New Way*, Vol. 1, p. 34)

The foregoing references are by no means exhaustive, but they are persuasive. If one doubts the historical practice of one publication dating back to Brother Nee's era, then one doubts Brother Lee.

“Counter-Examples”?

Brother Nigel concludes by posing two “counter-examples” to the practice of one publication. The first is a reference to a “writers’ conference” called by Brother Lee. Brother Nigel offers the following quote from Brother Lee: “My intention in calling a writers’ conference was to encourage you to write something...” (*Elders’ Training, Book 8: The Life-pulse of the Lord’s Present Move*, p. 163). Presumably, Brother Nigel reads this quote to mean that Brother Lee encouraged saints to write something outside the scope of the one publication.

Unfortunately, Brother Nigel divorces this quote from its context yet again. The quote in its immediate context is as follows:

Our sounding must be one, so we must be restricted in one publication. My intention in calling a writers’ conference was to encourage you to write something, but not in the way that came out. This fellowship may preserve and protect us from doing things lawlessly” (Id., italicized portions omitted by Brother Nigel).

Clearly it was never Brother Lee’s intention to encourage unrestrictive writing. Neither was it his intention to discourage people from writing. Rather, he hoped that many brothers would be able to develop and expound his ministry but not change its taste (see *id.* at 162). It is with gladness that we observe such hope in its fulfillment today, with many blended brothers developing his ministry while remaining under its restriction.

Finally, I am not in a position to comment with authority on Brother Nigel’s last illustration involving *Journey Through the Bible*. I will only mention that *Journey Through the Bible* was written using the ministry materials in the Lord’s recovery, and may be considered a survey of selected portions of the ministry in the Lord’s recovery. As such, and especially in light of the overwhelming evidence above supporting our long-standing practice of one publication, the probative value of *Journey*

Through the Bible as a “counter-example” is extremely suspect. One cannot tip the scales with only dust.

8. Did Brother Lee’s call for “one publication” establish a general principle for all time or was it a temporary expedient?

Brother Nigel actually poses two separate questions here. The first question is whether Brother Lee’s fellowship in February 1986 concerning the one publication was a temporary request issued solely for the limited purpose of evangelizing Taiwan. The answer is self-evident based on the historical record discussed previously. Even the most tortured reading, parsing, and gnat-straining of the ministry cannot sustain this incredible claim.

His second question is whether the co-workers today have the spiritual authority to repeat Brother Lee’s call for the practice of one publication among us. This question cannot be answered on these pages. It must be answered within the consciences of the saints who organically recognize the leadership in the Lord’s recovery today.

9. Doesn’t “one publication” contradict Brother Nee’s teaching about the futility of institutional arrangements to contain the Lord’s blessing?

If so, then Brother Nee contradicted himself by organizing the Gospel Bookroom to publish his ministry. Moreover, to extend Brother Nigel’s broad interpretation to its logical extreme, any publishing activity among us (one publication or not) is an exercise in futility. This could not be what Brother Nee meant.

Then what did Brother Nee mean by “organization” and “cup”, two terms used interchangeably in the quote cited by Brother Nigel? Upon reading the source of the quote, chapter six of *The Orthodoxy of the Church*, the answer becomes quite clear. Chapter six expounds the epistle to the church in Sardis in Revelation 3:1-6. In that chapter, Brother Nee referred to the proliferation of the Protestant churches as “organizations” or “cups” which tried to capture the blessing poured out by God. Brother Nee

leaves no room for doubt when he writes, “The Protestant churches are like a cup” (*The Orthodoxy of the Church*, p. 57). It is unfortunate that Brother Nigel failed to provide this critical definition in his limited excerpt.

10. What about the impact on the saints in the Lord’s recovery?

11. What about the impact on the local churches?

These are separate but related questions and may be answered jointly. Brother Nigel raises the following concerns: (1) saints who have been enjoying other publications may now be troubled in their consciences; (2) it would be preferable to rely on the “anointing” (1 John 2:27) rather than a public pronouncement; (3) overzealous saints will condemn saints and churches who are not restricted to one publication; and (4) two categories of churches may emerge—those that wish to be restricted in one publication and those that do not.

At the outset, by means of a general response, it is important to reiterate that the Pamphlet is an exercise of the responsible brothers’ shepherding obligations. According to Acts 20, the leading ones are charged to “watch” for those “from among you yourselves” who will “[speak] perverted things to draw away the disciples after them” (vv. 30-31). In light of this warning, it is entirely appropriate for the shepherds to protect the flock’s exposure to anything other than the healthy teaching. This responsibility requires maturity, experience, wisdom and discernment. While one may disagree with their decisions, one cannot disagree with their responsibility to make such decisions. And it would be reckless to assume the brothers issued the Pamphlet recklessly.

Brother Nigel only focuses on a subset of saints who may be troubled by the Pamphlet. Yet he does not mention the body of saints who may be helped by its issuance. As Brother Kerry has suggested, the Pamphlet responds to the organic need and cry within the Body (see http://onepub.robichaux.name/2006/02/are_the_coworkers_really_the_p.html#more). This is not to ignore the real concerns of those saints who may be troubled by

the Pamphlet. But rather than stoking their fears and concerns, responsible ones should shepherd these saints to properly understand the Pamphlet. They should be helped to understand that the Pamphlet is not an Orwellian exercise in censorship or control. Rather, the Pamphlet only affirms our historical practice to safeguard the ongoing testimony of the Lord's recovery. Individual saints continue to have the complete freedom to continue reading materials they find beneficial. The Pamphlet expressly says of such other publications, "These are simply other publications that our brothers and sisters may or may not be interested in....the saints and the churches need to discern the value of these publications for themselves" (p. 8).

No one can disagree with the richness and reality of the anointing that we have received from the Lord (1 John 2:27). While we should simply follow the anointing, we do not do so without proper discernment. Our spiritual consciousness needs to be trained and developed through knowledge of the truth. This is why, with respect to the anointing, the apostle John paradoxically teaches that "you have no need that anyone teach you." Brother Nigel admits himself that "conscience is based upon knowledge." To build upon his example then, can we expect the new or young ones among us to be able to discern the different "tastes" in ministries? Not at the outset. Therefore, it is even more critical that we shepherd the new and young ones with the healthy teachings in the ministry for the precise reason that they can develop the discerning "taste" for themselves.

Brother Nigel repeats his concerns about the possibility that saints who are zealous for the practice of one publication may condemn those saints and churches which are not. It is enough for me to repeat Brother Kerry Robichaux's observation that, "such abuses, if true, are wrong regardless of the stand one takes on publications among us. As a whole, the local churches do not exclude others from their fellowship based on the matter of publications. If individuals among us, on either side of the controversy, do this, that is lamentable, but we need not latch

on to the faults of some in order to impugn the virtues of most” (see http://onepub.robichaux.name/2006/02/mea_culpa.html).

Finally, Brother Nigel raises his fear that the Pamphlet draws a line in the sand and will thereby create two categories of churches: churches that wish to be restricted in one publication and those that do not. This is a fallacy; there is no cause-and-effect relationship here. If there are, regrettably, two such categories among us today, it is not because of the Pamphlet. Neither does the Pamphlet draw the line in the sand. The Pamphlet exists because the line has always been drawn. That the line has been deliberately crossed is the sole responsibility of those brothers who have taken the lead to intentionally cross it.

12. Isn't there the appearance of a “conflict of interest”?

Brother Nigel raises an “apparent conflict of interest” because some of the blended co-workers hold positions of responsibility in LSM. Why focus merely on the “appearance”? There is either a conflict of interest or not. That is the real issue. Of course, Brother Nigel does not dare to say there actually is a conflict of interest. Then what good does raising an “appearance” of a conflict do, other than trouble or mislead the consciences of the saints? Does he meet his own standard of being “clear and transparent” like the river in the holy city?

From a fleshly and childish perspective, one can see an “apparent” conflict of interest in many church affairs. Is it not an “apparent” conflict of interest for full-timers, who are dependent upon the financial offerings of the saints, to minister to and shepherd the same saints? Is it not an “apparent” conflict of interest for the elders to recommend themselves as directors as part of an annual church business meeting? Fortunately, the majority of saints among us do not indulge such childish thoughts.

Such suspicions about the co-workers are reminiscent of the Corinthian believers’ suspicions of the apostle Paul. The Corinthians had been turned away from Paul’s ministry because of evil reports challenging the authenticity and integrity of

Paul's ministry. Paul feared that, just as the serpent had deceived Eve by his craftiness, the Corinthians' "thoughts [were] corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). Eventually, Paul was forced to vindicate his ministry due to the childishness of the Corinthian believers. It would be deeply saddening if the brothers among us were forced to declare, like Paul, "Make room for us; we have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have taken advantage of no one" (2 Cor. 7:2).

Paul declared that "we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every conscience of men before God" (2 Cor. 4:2). Brother Lee points out in the footnote, "The manifestation of the truth refers to the apostles' living of Christ. When they lived Christ, who is the truth (John 14:6), they manifested the truth. As Christ was lived out of them, the truth was manifested in them. By this, they commended themselves to every conscience of men before God. The apostles behaved themselves not in the way of adulterating the word of God but in the way of manifesting the truth for the shining of the gospel of the glory of Christ, by the excellent power of the priceless treasure, the very Christ who entered into them and became their content (v. 7) through the enlightenment of God's shining (v. 6)." The saints' consciences will distinguish between those who walk in craftiness and those who are manifesting the truth among us.

Brother Nigel's final question is whether the one publication practice is at odds with LSM's membership in the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association ("ECPA"). His erroneous charge of "monopolization" misses the mark. The Pamphlet unequivocally recognizes everyone's basic right to publish. LSM is not seeking to put anyone out of business. Other ECPA members have every right to publish their own teaching and materials. However, it would clearly be inappropriate for LSM to (hypothetically) publish *The Beliefs and Practices of "Focus on the Family"* and expect adherents of that ministry to recognize it as representative of Dr. Dobson's ministry. Similarly, individuals

among us should not think they may self-publish and then assert that such works are representative of the unique ministry in the Lord's recovery. The saints and churches should understand LSM and TGBR's singular role in carrying out the publication work that is representative of the unique, ongoing ministry in the Lord's recovery.

Conclusion

In these pages I have attempted to present a good-faith and good-spirited defense of the one publication practice and the Pamphlet. I have not tried to prove charges, only defend against them. Accordingly, a thorough discussion of foundational matters such as the principles of the Body of Christ, the New Testament ministry, and the relationship between the churches, the ministry and the work, is beyond the scope of this endeavor. Burdened saints are urged to explore the references cited below for proper treatment of these items. Furthermore, my responses are necessarily limited as I am a limited member of the Body. I welcome the adjusting fellowship in the Body.

While I respect Brother Nigel's right to be concerned, I am disappointed by the regularity with which he severs excerpts from their proper context and his troubling rhetoric (e.g., historical revisionism, conflict of interest, etc.). These tactics trouble the saints and sow the seeds of mistrust among brethren. Surely Brother Nigel could have raised legitimate questions without raising doubts about the integrity of the co-workers. Some of the claims are so exaggerated that they border on the preposterous. With all due respect to Brother Nigel's background as a highly-trained economist, I cannot help but wonder if, in the Lord's presence, he actually believes that the one publication is an antitrust violation under the Sherman Act of 1890. Of course, the real damage is not to the co-workers but to those saints whose minds are unwittingly ill-affected. I hope future discussions concerning these matters remain in the realm of shepherding fellowship and that great care is taken so as not to foment misgivings against the leading ones.

Finally, I would be remiss to not comment on the timing of these criticisms. One publication is not new among us. It is part of our heritage. Why weren't these criticisms raised a decade ago during Brother Lee's final year with us? Why not two decades ago during the landmark international elders' trainings? I tread cautiously here, but I do not think Brother Nigel and the "Concerned Brothers" would go to such lengths just so that we can have Zondervan or Intervarsity Press publications among us. I wish the brothers would be forthright in declaring not just what they oppose, but also what they support. Such candor would assist the saints' consideration of this matter. Perhaps it might also help hasten the day when all the gifts to the Body will operate and supply the Body according to their measure and function. This is my prayer.

In closing, I would like to quote the following fellowship titled "A Word of Love", given by Brother Lee to the elders in 1984:

Please do not consider my word as a rebuke or as a warning. I hope you realize that my word is a word of love. I love the churches, I love all the saints, and I love you all. I do not like to see your time, money, and energy wasted. To teach and to preach things other than the New Testament ministry itself delays people and to some extent it holds them back, distracts them, and misleads them. I do not like to see this. My heart is broken. I like to see you redeem your time, save your energy, and save your money so that you may save others' time. One message which is not in the central lane of the New Testament ministry wastes a lot of energy and a lot of time for the saints. They must listen to you and they must read your writings. This could waste their time and maybe mislead and distract them. At least it holds them back. This is why I was so burdened to call this urgent gathering. We must stop any kind of traditional ministry. We must come back to the unique New Testament ministry which the Lord has shown us in the past sixty years. This has become our vision. This is a word of love. I have no intention to rebuke you, to discredit you, or to condemn you. I do not even have the intention to warn you. That is not my business and that is not my heart. My heart is

just that I love you brothers. You have consecrated your entire future to take this way. Why do you need to waste your time and thus waste others' time? Others must listen to you and read your materials and they get the wrong impression. You must consider how to save the saints' time. Do not give them anything that will hold them back. We must consider what we speak in the meetings and what we write and publish in print. We must consider whether this material would take the saints on speedily or would hold them back, distract them, or mislead them. We are not living in Martin Luther's time. We are living at the end of the twentieth century and the Lord's recovery has passed through so many centuries already. In these last sixty years the Lord has shown us many things and we have done our best to put these into print. These things should not remain on your bookshelves while you go back to the old writings. This is not wise. My love would not allow me to be silent. This is why we are here. I hope that all of you would accept this word and drop the old things and go forward. (*Elders' Training Book 2: The Vision of the Lord's Recovery*, pp. 93-94)

I believe the foregoing excerpt captures the feeling not just within Brother Lee but also among all the blended brothers. May this spirit saturate and govern all our fellowship concerning the one publication and related matters!

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