

A FAITHFUL WORD

S E R I E S F O U R

"Who concerning the truth have misaimed."

**THE
PRACTICALITY
OF THE
BODY**

Book

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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

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 *The Practicality of the Body* includes the following two articles:

- “‘Practically Speaking, for Us the Body Today is Just the Lord’s Recovery’—Did Minoru Chen ‘Go Beyond What Has Been Written?’” shows that Brother Minoru’s fellowship was a faithful respeaking of Brother Lee’s ministry. This article presents the practical way for a local church to know the feeling of the Body. It also shows how the dissenting writer brazenly altered Brother Lee’s words to support his attack.
- “Speaking to the Entire Body of Christ” looks at a dissenter’s attack on Ron Kangas’ fellowship that the speaking in the international gatherings is for the entire Body of Christ. It shows how Brother Ron’s speaking is

consistent with the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, as well as with the Bible. It also exposes the hidden motive behind the dissenters' speaking—to justify the departure of Titus Chu's workers from the common fellowship of the churches in the Body of Christ.

- 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.

“PRACTICALLY SPEAKING, FOR US THE BODY TODAY IS JUST THE LORD’S RECOVERY”— DID MINORU CHEN “GO BEYOND WHAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN”?¹

An article posted on the Internet attacks the co-workers in the Lord’s recovery for “going beyond what has been written” concerning the truth of the Body of Christ. The dissenting writer claims that when Minoru Chen said, “...practically speaking, for us the Body today is just the Lord’s recovery,” he made a serious mistake related to the scriptural truth concerning the Body of Christ as presented in the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. This accusation is repeated in the July 22, 2006, letter from Titus Chu to twenty-one co-workers, which has also been publicly posted on the Internet. These dissenters’ attacks are based on a distorted presentation of Brother Minoru’s speaking. The Internet article goes further to blatantly alter Witness Lee’s word on which Minoru’s speaking was based.

Actually Minoru’s fellowship was a faithful respeaking of Brother Lee’s ministry. In light of both the spiritual and practical aspects of the Body of Christ, it presents the practical way for a local church to know the feeling of the Body, which is to care for the feeling of the other churches in the Lord’s recovery. Titus Chu has abandoned this truth, which he himself once applied to correct others. It is in fact the writer of the dissenting Internet article who “goes beyond what has been written” by audaciously adding to Brother Lee’s words to support his attack against Minoru’s speaking. This he does in the principle of the “sleight of men” described in Ephesians 4:14.

¹ The phrase “going beyond what has been written” is from 1 Corinthians 4:6; it actually applies to Paul’s words to the Corinthian believers in the preceding chapters. We do not mean to imply that our brothers’ words are equivalent to Scripture. We merely follow the example of this dissenting writer in applying this expression to his twisting of Witness Lee’s ministry to come up with an extra-biblical teaching.

Minoru's Faithful Respeaking of Brother Lee's Ministry

A key word in understanding Minoru's speaking properly is the word "practically". The title of Minoru's message was "Practicing the Church Life in the Consciousness of the Body of Christ." In the short excerpt from his speaking that was the subject of the dissenters' objections, the words "practical", "practically", and "practice(s)" are used a total of ten times.

Minoru's speaking was actually a reading from pages 34 and 35 of Brother Lee's book *The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life* interspersed with his own short comments. In the excerpt below, we have modified the format of the text of Minoru's speaking from how it appeared in *The Ministry Magazine* to make this more apparent.

Brother Lee also says, "I want to say again that whenever we do something, we must have a proper consideration for the Body. We need to consider how the Body would feel about what we are doing."

We need to consider all the time how the Body would feel about what we are doing. I would say that, **practically** speaking, for us the Body today is just the Lord's recovery. We need to ask ourselves how what we do would affect the Lord's recovery as a whole. This is **practical**.

Brother Lee continues, "The biggest problem, the unique problem, is not knowing the Body and not caring for the Body. If we take care of the Body and are concerned for the Body, there will be no problems."

"We are here for the Body. Without the backing of the Body, without the backing of the recovery, we have no way to **practice** the local churches."

In Brother Lee's understanding, the Body equals the recovery. We know that the mystical Body of Christ includes all of the believers, all of the redeemed ones in time and in space, but **practically** for us today, the recovery is the Body. We have no way to **practice** the local churches without the backing of the recovery.

"If we **practice** the local church life and neglect the view of the Body, our local church becomes a local sect."

If some say that they are the church in such-and-such a place but they are a lone church all by themselves, they are isolated. This is not the way. Actually, we can hardly exist as a church without the Body.

"The recovery is for the Body, not for any individual or merely for any individual local church."

May we all remember this phrase: "The recovery is for the Body." This is the recovery of the Body. So this recovery is also for the Body. It is not for you or me; it is not for your church or my church; it is for the whole Body.

"If we are going to do something, we have to consider how the Body, the recovery, will react. The problems are all due to the lack of seeing the Body and of caring for the Body. We all need to come back to the truth, and to **practice** the truth is to take care of the Body."

The ultimate **practice** of the truth is to take care of the Body. We take care of the truth for the Body; all the truth **practices** are not for the **practices** themselves but for the building of the Body.

(Minoru Chen, "Practicing the Church Life in the Consciousness of the Body of Christ," *The Ministry Magazine*, August 2003, vol. 7, no. 6, pp. 196-197)

The above presentation shows that Minoru's word was a faithful respeaking of Brother Lee's burden that all of the local churches would care for the sense of the Body by caring for the feeling of the other churches in the Lord's recovery.

Two Aspects of the Body of Christ

With the Body of Christ there are spiritual and practical aspects. These complement one another and neither can replace the other. According to the spiritual aspect, all believers are members of the one Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12). This is a

fundamental truth concerning the Body of Christ and one that Minoru plainly acknowledged when he said, “We know that the mystical Body of Christ includes all of the believers, all of the redeemed ones in time and in space...”

1 Cor. 12:12 – 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.

On the other hand, we in the Lord’s recovery have been helped through the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee to see that this one Body is manifested in many localities as local churches (Rev. 1:11; Acts 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:2). The one universal church which has no bounds as to time and space must have a practical expression in time and space. Throughout the entire revelation of the New Testament, that practical expression is the one church manifested in locality after locality. From the time Watchman Nee first saw this in the 1930s, the leadership in the Lord’s recovery has never wavered in speaking this truth and laboring to raise up local churches according to this pattern.

Rev. 1:11 – Saying, What you see write in a scroll and ¹send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamos and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.

fn. 1:11¹ – This book’s being sent to the seven churches equals its being sent to the seven cities. This shows clearly that the practice of the church life in the early days was the practice of having one church for one city, one city with only one church. In no city was there more than one church. This is the local church, with the city, not the street or the area, as the unit. The jurisdiction of a local church should cover the whole city in which the church is located; it should not be greater or lesser than the boundary of the city. All the believers within that boundary should constitute the one unique local church within that city.

Acts 8:1 – And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the ¹church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

fn. 8:1¹ – This was the first church established in a locality (see note 11¹ in ch. 5) within the jurisdiction of a city, the city of Jerusalem. It was a local church in its locality, as indicated by the Lord in Matt. 18:17. It was not the universal church, as revealed by the Lord in Matt. 16:18, but only a part of the universal church, which is the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). The record concerning this matter (the establishing of the church in its locality) is consistent throughout the New Testament (13:1; 14:23; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 8:1; Gal. 1:2; Rev. 1:4, 11).

1 Cor. 1:2 – To the church of God which is ²in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, the called saints, with all those who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours:

fn. 1:2² – The church is constituted of the universal God, but it exists on earth in many localities, one of which was Corinth. In nature the church is universal in God, but in practice the church is local in a definite place. Hence, the church has two aspects: the universal and the local. Without the universal aspect, the church is void of content; without the local aspect, it is impossible for the church to have any expression and practice. Hence, the New Testament stresses the local aspect of the church also (Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rev. 1:11; etc.).

In the New Testament there is one method and one alone of dividing the Church into churches, and that God-ordained method is division on the basis of locality. All other methods are man-made, not God-given. May the Spirit of God engrave this truth deeply on our hearts, that the only reason for the division of God's children into different churches is because of the different places in which they live. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, p. 54)

You see, this is the problem. People have seen just one aspect, but not the other. Regarding the church there are two terms in the Bible: "the church of God" (I Cor. 10:32), and "the churches of God" (I Cor. 11:16). Is the church one, or many? The church of God is universal, but the churches of God are expressed in so many localities.

The church is the expression of Christ, but how can the church be practically expressed? Only by the local churches,

i.e., by one church in each locality. As the expression of Christ, the church is universally one, but it is expressed in many, many local churches. (*The Practical Expression of the Church*, p. 24)

The universal church as the Body of Christ is expressed through the local churches. The local churches, as the expressions of the one Body of Christ, are locally one. Without the local churches there would be no practicality and actuality of the universal church. The universal church is realized in the local churches. Knowing the church universally must be consummated in knowing the church locally. It is a great advance for us to know and practice the local churches. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, #189-204, p. 2149)

We meet on the ground of the church as the local expression of the universal Body of Christ. Christ does not have many bodies. He has only one Body, but this one Body is expressed in many localities. The local churches standing on the ground of oneness are the local expressions of the unique, universal Body of Christ. (*The Satanic Chaos in the Old Creation and the Divine Economy for the New Creation*, p. 119)

The mystical Body of Christ includes all believers regardless of time or space. The Body of Christ on earth at any point in time includes all believers in all places. The practical expression of the Body of Christ is the local church, that is, the church manifested in a given time and place. A genuine local church counts as members all believers in that locality. However, in practicality, the local church consists of those believers who stand together on the proper ground as the manifestation of the one unique Body of Christ in time and space. Thus, the practicality of the Body of Christ on the earth is the aggregate of all of the local churches.

Although the one Body is expressed in the many local churches, the local churches cannot be isolated or independent of one another. Rather, our practice of the local church life must be governed by the vision of the oneness of the universal Body. Without this realization we will easily become a local sect. The local church derives its existence from the universal church and exists for the building up of the one unique Body of Christ.

The local churches should not have an independent attitude, and they should not be isolated from one another. If we have an independent attitude, we may become a local sect instead of a local church. Christ has just one Body in the universe. If each local church were an independent body for Christ, this would mean that Christ has a great many bodies. No matter how many local churches there may be, Christ still has just one Body. For this reason, the local churches need to be fitted together and to grow into the one universal temple. In Christ as the foundation and the cornerstone, all the building, the universal church, is fitted together and is growing in the Lord. (*Life-study of Ephesians*, p. 732)

...The local churches in different localities are not merely for a local expression, but for the universal expression of Christ. All the churches express the same person—Christ. The local churches should express Christ universally, not just locally. If the church in a locality expresses only their locality, that is terrible. That makes them a local sect, a local division. They are a local church, but they do not express a “local” Christ. Christ is not a local Christ. God, Christ, the Spirit, and the Bible are not local. Some make the Bible local, they make God local, they make Christ local, and they make the Spirit local. They make everything local. In this case they have become local divisions, local sects. (*Five Emphases in the Lord’s Recovery*, pp. 51-52)

These truths have many implications for the practice of the church life. They mean, for example, that we must receive all believers in fellowship (Rom. 14:1, 3; 15:7), regardless of their beliefs on minor points of doctrine, as long as they hold to the common faith, do not live in sin (1 Cor. 5:2, 11, 13), are not heretics or idolaters (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 John 9-10), and are not divisive (Rom. 16:7; Titus 3:10). By this we acknowledge all believers in Christ as co-members of His one Body (Eph. 3:6).

Rom. 14:1 – Now him who is weak in faith receive, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his considerations.

Rom. 14:3 – He who eats, let him not despise him who does not eat; and he who does not eat, let him not judge him who eats, for God has received him.

Rom. 15:7 – Therefore receive one another, as Christ also received you to the glory of God.

1 Cor. 5:2 – And you are puffed up? And have you not rather mourned, that the one who has done this deed might be removed from your midst?

1 Cor. 5:11 – But now I have written to you not to mingle with anyone who is called a brother, if he is a fornicator or a covetous man or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or a rapacious man, with such a one not even to eat.

1 Cor. 5:13 – But those who are outside, God will judge. Remove the evil man from among yourselves.

2 John 9-10 – [9] Everyone who goes beyond and does not abide in the teaching of Christ does not have God; he who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. [10] If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not say to him, Rejoice!

Rom. 16:7 – Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Titus 3:10 – A factious man, after a first and second admonition, refuse.

Eph. 3:6 – That in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the Body and fellow partakers of the promise through the gospel.

We should receive people according to God's receiving, not being more narrow than God, thereby demonstrating and maintaining the oneness of the Body of Christ. Furthermore, we should receive people according to the Son of God, according to God, not according to doctrine or practice, thus maintaining a condition of absolute peace, smoothness, and order, without any deviation and discord, in the fellowship of the Body of Christ to the glory of God... (Rom. 14:3; 15:7) (*The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life*, p. 68)

Such a standing is not narrow and exclusive, but broad and inclusive. It is not elitist; it is general. It is the only means by which the universal oneness of the Body of Christ can be practiced.

When we say that this is wrong and that we all must be one, others say that we are narrow and exclusive. But in all these

years, it has been proved who is narrow and exclusive. The church in the locality is not narrow. It includes all the believers in that locality. The only thing in which you may say that the church on the proper ground is narrow is that it will not take anything divisive. We will accept all kinds of Christians as long as they are saved. We will accept those who are sprinkled as well as those who are immersed. Would those who say that we are narrow receive such?

What does it mean to be narrow and exclusive? Most people simply do not know what they mean when they speak thus. To be narrow means to disregard the proper ground of unity. If we are on the proper ground, we can never be narrow, for the ground of unity is common to all the people of the Lord. (*The Practical Expression of the Church*, pp. 84-85)

Some say that we in the Lord's recovery are narrow. However, we are willing to receive all kinds of Christians. We receive those who practice immersion and those who practice sprinkling. Who then are the narrow ones—those in the Lord's recovery or those who accept into their fellowship only those who meet special requirements related to doctrine or practice?

The Lord can testify on our behalf that in our practice of the church life we have been general, receiving all different kinds of believers. For instance, we do not stop the saints from speaking in tongues, but neither do we insist on tongues-speaking. Nevertheless, we have been accused of narrowness. Actually it is those in the denominations who are narrow, for they do not receive all different kinds of Christians.... (*Life-study of Romans*, pp. 620-621)

This unique oneness should be the ground on which we are being built. We should not be sectarian; we should not be exclusive. We must be all-inclusive, open and loving to all the dear saints. As long as they are Christians, they are our brothers. Our brothers have been scattered to many denominations. In spite of this, we still love them.... (*The Basic Revelation in the Holy Scriptures*, p. 73)

Our standing as local churches manifesting the one universal Body of Christ in time and space also means that no local church can exist in isolation, for it is only a part of the one Body. All of the local churches must maintain an open fellowship with all of

the other genuine local churches. There is no such thing as a closed, local or regional oneness, because oneness in a locality or a region is based on the oneness of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3) as the element of the oneness of the universal Body of Christ (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:12). Thus, the churches that are located in a given geographic area or that were raised up by a certain worker must be in full fellowship with all of the other churches on the earth or they lose the reality of participating in the fellowship of the one Body of Christ. To merely fellowship with selected churches is sectarian.

Eph. 4:3-4 – [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.

1 Cor. 12:12 – 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.

According to the truth of the Body, the Body is universally one. For this reason, the local churches should not be isolated from one another. Isolation is contrary to the truth concerning the oneness of the Body. Because each local church is part of the Body universally, no local church should be isolated from the others. This is especially true today with modern means of communication and transportation that permit the rapid spread of news and information around the world. Something of life may be released in Los Angeles today and be known in dozens of other places within hours. How wrong it is for a church to try to be independent! The Body is receiving a continual transfusion. If we isolate ourselves from the other churches, we cut ourselves off both from the transfusion and from the circulation of life in the Body. Such a thing violates the law of the Body. Although we must shun organization, we need to be built up universally as the one Body. (*Life-study of Ephesians*, p. 739)

All the local churches are the one unique Body of Christ in the universe (Eph. 4:4). Every local church is a part of this universal Body, a local expression of this unique Body. This one universal church, the one Body, comprises all the local churches. There may be thousands of local churches, but together they constitute one universal church. The universal

church is the unique Body of Christ, and all the local churches are simply the local expressions of this one Body.

We need to be impressed with the fact that the local churches are the local expressions of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 2:22). There is only one Body, but there are many expressions. Universally, all the churches are one Body, and locally, every local church is a local expression of that universal Body. Therefore, a local church is not the Body but only a part of the Body, an expression of the Body. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament, Messages 189-204*, p. 2156)

Further, it means that every church that wants to be in the reality of the Body of Christ should take care of the sense of the Body as represented in the feeling of all of the other local churches throughout the earth.

The Practical Way to Know the Feeling of the Body

It is in this sense that Minoru's word was spoken and should be understood. His point (which was also Brother Lee's) was that the practical way for a local church to know the feeling of the Body is to be in fellowship with and open to the feeling of all the other local churches. We need to ask: What other practical way do those in the local churches have to know the sense of the Body? Should we consult with the denominations? With the Roman Catholic Church? With the ecumenical councils? If Brother Nee, Brother Lee and Brother Minoru are wrong concerning the practical way to know the sense of the Body, what is the right way? The dissenting brothers do not say, because they have no interest in rendering any positive elucidation concerning the way to know the feeling of the Body. Their only interest is to disparage the co-workers. They propose no other practical way because there is no other practical way that takes care of the truth of the one universal Body and of the standing of the churches on the ground of locality as the practical expression of that one Body.

We recognize that we have many brothers and sisters who, though scattered in the sects of Christendom, are members of the one universal Body of Christ, and we receive them as

co-members of the Body (Eph. 3:6). Nevertheless, we also declare that the Lord raised up His recovery to practice the Body life according to the pattern in the Scriptures of one church in each city for the manifestation and building up of this one unique Body. We therefore do not practice a local church life that is isolated from other churches and do not feel free to take our own way, but we conduct our local church life in the one organic Body of Christ. In practical terms, this means that as much as it depends on us, we maintain full fellowship with all genuine local churches on the whole earth and care for how the things we do affect them and are perceived by them.

Eph. 3:6 – That in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the Body and fellow partakers of the promise through the gospel.

Brother Nee saw this early in His ministry:

...We cannot act independently. If you know that the thing you are about to do in your locality will be considered inappropriate in other localities, you must not take care of the views of the few in your locality and do it anyway. If you do it, you are not discerning the Body of Christ. If what we do individually cannot represent the brothers in Shanghai, we should not do it.... (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 22, p. 58)

...Last Saturday night we mentioned the Body life and the relationship between an assembly and other assemblies. God will never tell one assembly to do something and another assembly not to do the same thing. The way God leads one assembly is the way He leads other assemblies. We saw that the Gentile churches should imitate the churches in Judea. We also saw that, according to God's ordination, no church of God should act independently; rather it should pay attention to the move of the Body and seek for mutual harmony. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 22, p. 112)

Brother Lee re-emphasized the importance of a local church caring for its relationship with the other churches as the representatives of the universal Body of Christ in his fellowship addressing the problems that emerged in the 1980s:

I do not care what kind of burden you pick up to do in your locality. I am not concerned with whether what you are doing is right or wrong. My concern is that your kind of doing might be divisive. You may have the right to do things, but the Body would not swallow them. Rather, the Body would either spit out or vomit what you do. Then you will suffer. This is quite serious. We must realize that we are not doing a piece of Christian work. We are burdened to carry out the Lord's recovery for His unique Body to bear His unique testimony.

Whatever you do, please consider the situation in this way. What you do might be better than all the others' doings. Even so, you must consider how this would affect the Body. Would this be taken by the Body? We are not a political party nor are we anything earthly. We have no arms and we do not need to fight, but the Spirit of the Lord in His Body means a lot. Do not forget the example which I related to you in this chapter. The fruit was swallowed by the doers. We must regard the Body, honor the Body, and take care of the Lord's unique testimony. (*Elders' Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord's Recovery*, p. 37)

Turmoil after turmoil has transpired because of our not knowing the Body. The only remedy that can cure us of this kind of illness is the seeing of the Body. When Brother Nee taught about the Body he said that with whatever we do, we have to consider how the churches would feel about it. When we do something, we must not forget that we are members of the Body, and the Body is not only a local church. The local church is not a "local body"; if it is, it becomes a local sect. The Body is the Body of Christ, constituted by the Triune God with all the believers on this earth, with all the local churches. (*The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life*, pp. 28-29)

Titus Chu strongly endorsed this understanding in a 1989 letter to some brothers who had caused problems in the church in Anaheim:

Second, standing on the ground of the oneness of the Body entails a consciousness of the whole Body and not only of the church in our locality. Our oneness is not merely a matter related to the locality we are in, as your phrase "the ground of oneness in locality" would suggest, but is rather the oneness of

the entire Body of Christ expressed by all the local churches on the earth. If we are truly conscious of the Body, we should not do anything locally that will be injurious to the Body universally. In other words, **we should care for the sense of the Body and we should consider how our actions locally will affect the other churches.** (“An Open Letter to the Speakers in the Meeting of the Church in Anaheim on August 28, 1988,” signed by Francis Ball, Titus Chu, Les Cites, Eugene C. Gruhler, Joel W. Kennon, David Lutz, Benson Phillips, and James Reetzke, Sr. on April 10, 1989, pp. 3-4)

The concluding word of that letter reads:

Please deal with this matter thoroughly, as befits those who serve the Lord, **caring not only for your own feeling but also for the feeling of the Body.** (pp. 30-31)

“Going Beyond What Has Been Written”¹

The author of the dissenting Internet article does not merely twist Brother Lee’s word; he brazenly changes it to fit his own purpose. Brother Lee said, “Without the backing of the Body, without the backing of the recovery, we have no way to practice the local churches.” The dissenting brother claims that Minoru’s interpretation of Brother Lee’s speaking is based on an implicit assumption that the phrases “without the backing of the Body” and “without the backing of the recovery” are in apposition. The dissenter then states:

In our view, it is equally reasonable to assume the two phrases are not in apposition. In that case, Brother Lee’s sentence consists of two distinct phrases: “Without [1] the backing of the Body, [and] without [2] the backing of the recovery, we have no way to practice the local churches.” [the word in brackets was added by the dissenting brother]

There is no reason to assume anything. All that is needed is a faithful reading of what Brother Lee said. Technically, according to the narrow linguistic definition of “apposition”, the phrases “without the backing of the Body” and “without the backing of the recovery” are not in apposition. Webster’s *Third New International Dictionary* defines “apposition” as:

A grammatical construction that consists of two nouns or noun equivalents referring to the same person or thing, standing in the same syntactical relation to the rest of the sentence without being joined to each other by a coordinating conjunction, and typically adjacent to each other. (p. 105)

Based on this definition “without the backing of the Body” and “without the backing of the recovery” cannot be in apposition because they are not nouns or noun equivalents. Rather, they are two prepositional phrases in parallel construction. Their meaning should be understood on that basis. In such a construction, the second prepositional phrase can sometimes be understood to be identical to or the equivalent of the first. In such cases the parallel construction may be said to have a force equivalent to apposition because the two nouns occupy the same relative position and refer to the same thing. Another way to interpret the relationship between the two phrases is that the second phrase is an explication of the first, meaning that it has been added to provide further clarification of the meaning or application of the first. If Brother Lee’s word is interpreted in that way, “without the backing of the recovery” becomes the practical application of “without the backing of the Body.” However, there is no justification for what the dissenting brother does in adding the conjunction “and”. Strikingly, he provides no grammatical justification, other than to say that it fits “our view” and that in his view it is “reasonable to assume.”

Even more significantly, the dissenting brother completely ignores a clear case of apposition a few sentences later in Minoru’s reading from Brother Lee’s ministry:

...If we are going to do something, we have to consider how
the Body, the recovery, will react. (*The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life*, p. 35)

In this sentence the words “the Body, the recovery” fit every aspect of the definition of apposition. On what basis did the dissenting writer leave this example out of his “analysis”? Was it because its use of “the Body” and “the recovery” in apposition is too clear?

Nor is the passage Minoru quoted the only place in Brother Lee's ministry where he referred to the churches in the Lord's recovery in apposition to the Body.

Remember that you are not the only local church on this earth. The distance between the churches means nothing, especially due to the fact that we are living in an age of modern means of communication. Any church on the earth can be reached in a matter of seconds by means of a telephone call. Whatever you do in your locality is a part of the Lord's recovery. We must take care of the churches, the Body. We must ask ourselves, "Could the Body take this? Could the Body say Amen to us?" (*Elders' Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord's Recovery*, p. 35)

Here the words "the churches, the Body" are another case that fits every aspect of the definition of apposition. Again the unmistakable context is that the practical way to know the sense of the Body is through the fellowship among the local churches and caring for the feeling of the other churches.

In this matter, the dissenting brother displays either a startling ignorance of "both the Scriptures and Brother Nee and Brother Lee's teaching concerning the Body and the Lord's recovery" or a willful deviation from it. Based on the New Testament, both Brother Nee and Brother Lee taught that the local churches are the practical expression of the Body:

There is no difference in content between the universal church and the local church, except that the local church is a miniature of the universal church. Paul said that the Corinthian believers were the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). This means that the local church represents the Body of Christ. The local church should represent the universal church.... (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 43, p. 572)

The universal church as the Body of Christ needs to have its expression. If we talk about the church without having the expression of the church, our talk is entirely theoretical; it is not practical. For the church to be real and practical, there is the need of the local churches. If you do not have the local churches, you do not have the church. If you do not have the

local church, you cannot have the universal church, for the universal church is composed of all the local churches. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament, Messages 189-204*, p. 2150)

Brother Lee explicitly equated the local churches with the Body of Christ many times. The following is just one example:

...You may have the thought that your local church has nothing to do with other churches and should not be in any connection with other churches. This thought isolates your local church, making it no longer a part of the Body of Christ. The Body is unique in the whole universe. There may be thousands of local churches, but there is still just one Body. All the local churches are the one, unique universal church, the one Body of Christ. (*Further Consideration of the Eldership, the Region of Work, and the Care for the Body of Christ*, pp. 14-15)

In a message from *The Conclusion of the New Testament* which he introduces as addressing “the very crucial matter of the fellowship among the churches,” Brother Lee begins his fellowship by saying:

As we consider the fellowship among the churches, we need to realize that the churches are the Body of Christ. There are many churches, yet one Body. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament, Messages 189-204*, p. 2177)

Brother Lee also pointed out that to be one with the Body in practice means being one with all the other churches in the Body.

...The local churches, however, should not be independently autonomous because they are all the unique, one organism of the processed and dispensing Triune God. If the church in Anaheim declared that it was a local church, standing independent from and not caring for the other churches, the church in Anaheim would immediately become a local sect. A local church must be one with all the other churches in the Body. (*The Practice of the Church Life according to the God-ordained Way*, p. 45)

In speaking of the churches in the Lord’s recovery as the practicality of the Body, the basic point in both Brother Lee and

Minoru's speaking is that all of the churches in the Lord's recovery should care for the feeling of the Body by caring for the feeling of all of the other churches in the Lord's recovery. Such an understanding is consistent with the teaching and practice in the Lord's recovery for over eighty years. It is appalling that this dissenting brother would feel the liberty to change Brother Lee's speaking to match his own concept and to attack the co-workers.

Even if one accepts the dissenter's errant premise that the conjunction "and" should be added to Brother Lee's speaking, the fact remains that Brother Lee clearly taught that every local church must conduct itself as part of the one Body and that it should only do things which could have the "backing of the recovery." There is no basis in Brother Lee's ministry to say the local churches should seek the backing of the divisions of Christianity and there is no basis in his ministry to justify the independent activity of any local church. On the contrary, his clear word, here as elsewhere, is that every local church must care for the feeling of the Body by caring for the feeling of the other churches in the recovery.

Why are Titus Chu and the author of this Internet article exerting so much effort to undermine such a safeguard to all of the churches? The saints should not be deceived into thinking that it is out of a genuine concern for the truth. These dissenters simply seek to deny the clear meaning of Brother Lee's word so that they can avoid its import. They do this knowing that the churches in their area have been influenced by the speaking of some, including these two themselves, to practice a number of things with which the churches as a whole and the co-workers throughout the earth do not agree. Thus they seek to avoid Brother Lee's charge to care for the feeling of the other churches, which was also the clear subject of Brother Minoru's speaking.

The Internet article accuses Minoru of being elitist when Minoru said, "the Body equals the recovery," ignoring Minoru's explicit word that "the mystical Body of Christ includes all of the believers, all of the redeemed ones in time and in space" and that he was speaking in terms of practicality in knowing the feeling of the Body. Actually, it is elitist and exclusive to say a local church

does not need to respect the feeling of the Body expressed through the other local churches or through those who represent the Lord as the leading ones in the Lord's ministry. It is also contrary to the teaching of the apostles in the New Testament as shown to us through the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

The “Sleight of Men”

The kind of dishonesty exhibited by the writer of the dissenting Internet article in handling Brother Lee's ministry is exactly what Paul meant when he spoke of the “sleight of men” in Ephesians 4:14.

Eph. 4:14 – That we may be no longer little children tossed by ²waves and carried about by every ³wind of teaching in the ⁴sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a ⁵system of error.

fn. 4:14² – The waves stirred up by the winds of different teachings (1 Tim. 1:3-4), doctrines, concepts, and opinions are sent by Satan to entice the believers in order to carry them away from Christ and the church. It is difficult for the infants in Christ to discern these. The only way to escape from the waves that are stirred up by the winds is to grow in life, and the safe way to grow in life is to stay in the proper church life with Christ and the church as the safeguard.

fn. 4:14³ – Any teaching, even a scriptural one, that distracts believers from Christ and the church is a wind that carries believers away from God's central purpose.

fn. 4:14⁴ – The Greek word for *sleight* refers to the cheating of dice players. The word for *craftiness* denotes the trickery employed by gamblers. The teachings that become winds, carrying believers away from the central lane of Christ and the church, are deceptions instigated by Satan in his subtlety, with the sleight of men, in order to frustrate God's eternal purpose, which is to build up the Body of Christ.

fn. 4:14⁵ – The dividing teachings are organized and systematized by Satan to cause serious error and thus damage the practical oneness of the Body life. The sleight

is of men, but the system of error is of Satan and is related to the deceitful teachings that are designed by the evil one to distract the saints from Christ and the church life.

Conclusion

There is a consistent pattern to the behavior of the author of the dissenting article. He seeks points in the ministering brothers' messages to wrench from context so that he can distort their meaning and then quibbles with the straw man he erects in order to distract his readers from the weightier substance of the brothers' fellowship and thereby undermine the Lord's burden expressed through the ministry. That Titus Chu would endorse this kind of distortion should alarm the saints in the Lord's recovery. Our hope is that the saints in the Lord's recovery would not be carried about by such winds of teaching emanating in craftiness from the sleight of men, but would cleave to the church life on the local ground in full fellowship with and care for all of the other churches that are the practical expressions of the Body of Christ on the earth today.

SPEAKING TO THE ENTIRE BODY OF CHRIST

One dissenting brother, who is striving by whatever means he can to discredit the brothers ministering as co-workers among the churches, attacks Brother Ron Kangas for a statement he made in the following paragraph from the Wednesday night ministry meeting in the spring 2001 full-time training in Anaheim:

We cannot enjoy Christ as the good land without the Body; we must be one with the Body to fight for the land, to possess the land, and to share our portion of the land (Num. 32:1-32; Josh. 22:1-9). We must be one with the Body—this is the whole church on the earth—to fight for the land, to possess the land, and to share our portion of the land. A particular local church, as a local church, cannot possess the all-inclusive Christ. The fifty-plus churches in Southern California are not sufficient to possess the all-inclusive Christ. We need the whole Body, the entire universal church in oneness. This is a fact. We must learn to have the church life on two levels simultaneously—the level of following the Lord's leading in our locality to take care of the local situation and the level of following the Lord's leading in the Body universally. *The seven times a year that we come together are for the universal Body, for the speaking to the entire Body and for the Lord's leading to the whole Body.* Any place that devalues these gatherings does so at their spiritual peril and indicates that they do not know the two levels of God's building according to Ephesians 2. They care for their place, but they do not care for the universal church. (Ron Kangas, "Possessing the Good Land," *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 9, p. 169) [the portion in italics is that cited by the dissenting brother]

According to this dissenter, Brother Ron made a serious mistake by saying that the speaking in the international trainings and conferences is for the entire Body. According to this dissenter's word, speaking to the entire Body is impossible, since the Body of Christ includes all believers without respect to time and space. He then quotes as a proof the following statement from Brother Nee: "... no one could speak at one time to all the children of God throughout the universe. It is only possible to speak at one

time to the believers living in one place.” He then declares in an indignant tone, “Yet this ‘Blended Coworker’ claims to do what Brother Nee says is impossible – to speak to the entire universal Body of Christ!” The dissenter does not tell his reader that the context of Brother Nee’s speaking was not the releasing of the New Testament ministry, but of a believer telling his local church of “difficulties” he is having with another believer in the same local church:

“And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church” (Matt. 18:17). The word “church” is used here in quite a different sense from the sense in Matthew 16:18. The sphere of the church referred to here is clearly not as wide as the sphere of the Church mentioned in the previous passage. The Church there is a Church that knows nothing of time or place, but the church here is obviously limited both to time and place, for it is one that can hear you speak. The Church mentioned in chapter sixteen includes all the children of God in every locality, while the church mentioned in chapter eighteen includes only the children of God living in one locality; and it is because it is limited to one place that it is possible for you to tell your difficulties to the believers of whom it is composed. Obviously the church here is local, not universal, for *no one could speak at one time to all the children of God throughout the universe. It is only possible to speak at one time to the believers living in one place.* (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 30, pp. 51-52) (The words in italics are those quoted by the dissenting brother.)

God’s Speaking Is for the Whole Body

This dissenting brother inexplicably neglects a more applicable word from Brother Nee, in which he explicitly states that God’s speaking is “toward the whole Body”:

...The Head is one with the members, and the members are one with each other. Paul learned these two lessons from the beginning. He saw the life of the Body from the first day. This is why he was able to drop his self and accept the commission of the work, and why he was later able to commission others in the work. This shows us that **God’s speaking is not directed toward individuals, but toward the whole Body.** (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 57, p. 108)

In a similar tone Brother Lee often spoke of the ministry meetings in general and the trainings in particular as points of injection for life and truth to enter the entire Body. His view was that whatever riches of Christ one local church experiences is not just for that church, but for the whole Body, which in practicality means for all of the other local churches.

Suppose the churches in a certain place hold the attitude that, as independent local churches, they want to go on by themselves and have nothing to do with **other churches**. In the eyes of the Lord, they may become local sects. All the churches should hold to Christ, be fitted together, and grow together into a holy temple in the Lord. When the churches are fitted together, whatever riches are experienced by one church will be spontaneously transfused into all the other churches. For example, a doctor may inject something into a person's arm, but the injected element is soon transfused throughout the person's body. In this way the whole body receives the benefit of the injection. How foolish it would be for certain members of the body to regard the injection as only for themselves! **Whatever one church receives is for the whole Body.** Therefore, we should not try to confine any experience of Christ to our locality. We should realize that whatever we receive of Christ is to be transfused into **the rest of the Body.**

(Life-study of Ephesians, p. 733)

Both Brother Nee and Brother Lee spoke many times of the entire Body in terms that could only be applied practically to all of the local churches in the one Body of Christ on the earth today. If we follow the dissenter's faulty analysis, we must even reject their speaking and even the language by which the Bible itself speaks of the building up of the universal Body of Christ.

Brother Nee

In his last phase of his ministry, Brother Nee spoke repeatedly of the need for the service of "the entire Body." In context his use of "the entire Body" in these passages applies either to all of the members of a particular local church as a local manifestation of the one Body of Christ or to all of the saints in all of the local churches:

... May we all have a heart to serve two or three hours in the church taking care of God's affairs, serving God, and serving His people so that **the entire Body** will go forward. Never make the work your own work. We need the entire Body to work there and to learn there. Therefore, we need brothers and sisters to come and be on duty to take care of the affairs. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 51, p. 114)

The Whole Body Serving Being the Greatest Recovery Today

We have to see that if the one-talented ones do not rise up to serve, there is no way for the church to go on. The priesthood is a universal priesthood. This is the greatest recovery of this century. Many people think that the matter of service is the work of a few people, but true service involves **the whole Body**. As long as this matter is not fully recovered, we have to go on speaking. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 57, p. 114)

May the Lord bless the church in Hong Kong and grant all of us grace to learn submission. May we all learn the spiritual principles so that **the entire Body** will learn to serve in coordination. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 62, p. 439)¹

If this dissenting brother really believed his own contorted reasoning, he would also condemn Brother Nee. How can “the entire Body” rise up to function, when many have already died? How can “the entire Body” “learn to serve in coordination” if some are living and some are dead? Did Brother Nee really expect that all Christians, including those in Roman Catholicism and the denominations and free groups, would rise up to function? Or was Brother Nee denying that the mystical Body of Christ includes believers in Catholicism and Protestantism? All of these propositions are absurd, yet they are the logical outcome of the dissenting brother’s artificial attempt to enforce a

¹ Other examples from Brother Nee’s ministry include:

The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 51, p. 64; and

The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, vol. 62, pp. 258, 270, and 275.

definition of “the entire Body” as “all believers regardless of time or space” whenever the term is used.

Brother Lee

The last phase of Brother Lee’s ministry was highlighted by an emphasis on entering into the reality of the Body of Christ as the goal of the practice of the local churches. In his last public conference, the Chinese-speaking conference in February 1997, he equated the blending of the entire Body of Christ with the mutual fellowship among the churches.

We must have the reality of the fellowship and blending of the Body of Christ. Otherwise, regardless of how much we pursue and how simple and humble we are, sooner or later there will be problems, even divisions, among us. Hence, we must be governed by the vision of the Body and follow in the footsteps of the apostle by bringing all the saints in all the churches into the blending life of the entire Body of Christ. (*The Experience of God’s Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ’s Life*, p. 71)

This matched his speaking in the elders’ trainings held in the mid-1980s in which he expressed the need for local churches to consider the effect of receiving a ministry different from “the general ministry” among the churches as a matter that affects the entire Body:

Let me cite another illustration to show that something done by a local church may not merely be a local church matter, but fully related to the entire Body. For a local church to receive a ministry that is different from the general ministry which produces the churches, establishes the churches, and is still edifying the churches affects the entire Body.... (*Elders’ Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord’s Recovery*, p. 32)

When the dissenting brother condemns Ron Kangas, he also condemns Brother Nee and Brother Lee. Based on the context of Brother Lee’s speaking above, one would have to say “the entire Body” refers to all of the genuine local churches on the earth

today as the practical expressions of the Body of Christ. This is even more evident in the following excerpt:

To make a little difference in your local church from **all the other churches** is a serious thing. We can see an example of this by looking at our own physical body. If a doctor only cares for the arm of his patient, this care may damage the entire body. A good doctor or a surgeon never does things in this way. Whatever he does, he does it under the full consideration of the entire body. This is a proper doctor. Otherwise, you may think you are healing a person, but after two hours he dies because of your “healing.” In like manner, in everything we do we must **consider the entire Body**. We must also consider what kind of impression we will leave to the **Christians for the future**. (*Elders’ Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord’s Recovery*, pp. 56-57)

Here Brother Lee begins by speaking about “all the other churches” and concludes by saying we must “consider the entire Body.” According to the context, to consider the entire Body is to consider the effect of making “your local church different from all the other churches.”

In this passage Brother Lee also says that in addition to considering the entire Body, we must consider “the Christians for the future.” According to the truth that the one universal Body of Christ includes all believers without regard to time and space, are not the Christians in the future also part of “the entire Body”? It is clear in context that what Brother Lee meant by “the entire Body” is all of the local churches on the earth today and that his use of “the entire Body” is not meant in an exclusive way but simply to address those seeking to experience the practicality of the Body life in the local churches.

The Bible

The expressions used by Watchman Nee, Witness Lee, and Ron Kangas are also consistent with the language of the Bible, particularly of the epistles of the apostle Paul.

Eph. 4:11-12 – [11] And He Himself gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and some as

shepherds and teachers, [12] For the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ.

Eph. 4:16 – Out from whom all the Body, being joined together and being knit together through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part, causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love.

Col. 2:19 – And not holding the Head, out from whom all the Body, being richly supplied and knit together by means of the joints and sinews, grows with the growth of God.

Eph. 2:21-22 – [21] In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; [22] In whom you ²also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.

fn. 2:22² – *Also* indicates that the building in v. 21 is universal and that the building in this verse is local. Universally, the church is uniquely one and is growing universally; locally, the church in a particular locality also is one, and the local saints are being built together in their particular locality.

In Ephesians 4:16 the apostle Paul wrote that “all the Body” grows out from the Head through every joint of the rich supply and through the operation in the measure of each one part. This growth is unto the building up of the Body in love. “Every joint of the rich supply” here refers to the gifted members in the Body who have a more substantial function in ministry. In context “every joint of the rich supply” refers to the gifted members (v. 11) who perfect “the saints unto the work of the ministry” (v. 12) so that they can operate in their measure as “each one part” (v. 16) for the building up of the Body. The salient point is this: Although the “joints of the rich supply” and “each one part” exist within the limitations of time and space, their functioning results in “all the Body” building itself up.

Verse 16 indicates that growth is not for individuals, but for the Body. Any growth that is not for the Body is not genuine. The words “each one part” refer to every member of the Body. Every member of the Body of Christ has its own measure, and this measure works for the growth of the Body. The Body

causes the growth of itself through the supplying joints and working parts. Both the joints of the supply and every single part with its measure are needed for the church to build itself up. The growth of the Body is the increase of Christ in the church. This results in the Body building itself up.

A. Every Joint of the Supply

In this verse Paul speaks of “every joint of the supply.” This refers to the specially gifted persons, such as those mentioned in verse 11. The article before the Greek word rendered “supply” is emphatic. It indicates that the supply should be a particular supply, the supply of Christ. As the leading ones, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherds and teachers have *the supply*, the particular supply.... (*Life-study of Ephesians*, p. 386)

In Ephesians 2:21-22 Paul speaks of both the universal and local aspects of the building up of the church.

As the believers experience the dispensing of the divine Trinity corporately by living in the church, they are built in the church. Referring to Christ, the cornerstone, Paul in Ephesians 2:22 says, “In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.” The word “you” refers to the local saints. Furthermore, the word “also” indicates that the building in this verse is local. According to the context, the dwelling place of God in 2:22 is local, whereas the holy temple in the preceding verse is universal. In verse 22 Paul is saying that the local saints, the saints in Ephesus, were being built together in Christ into a dwelling place of God. Therefore, in verses 21 and 22 Paul covers both the universal aspect and the local aspect of the church. All the building is growing—this refers to the universal aspect. The believers in a particular locality are being built together—this is the local aspect. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament, Messages 157-171*, p. 1773)

Verse 22 says, “In Whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit.” The word “you” here, which refers to the local saints, indicates that the building in verse 21 is universal and the building in verse 22 is local. In this verse Paul was saying that the local saints, the saints in Ephesus, were being built together in Christ into a dwelling place of God. Therefore, in these verses Paul covered both the

universal aspect and the local aspect of the church. All the building is growing—this refers to the universal aspect. The believers in a particular locality are being built together—this is the local aspect.

...Apart from the universal temple, there is not another temple called the local temple. The temple and the dwelling place refer to two aspects of the same thing.... (*Life-study of Ephesians*, p. 237)

Although God's people are limited in time and space, both their functioning in the building up of the Body of Christ and the building itself are for the building up of a mystical reality that is not limited to time and space. It is for "all the Body" (Eph. 4:16) and "all the building" (Eph. 2:21). Thus, the ministry of the Spirit and the speaking of God through the ministry of the Word is not something that is simply for the direct hearers limited to a particular time and place. Would the dissenters argue that God's speaking in the recovery of the truth of justification in the time of Martin Luther was only for that time and place? How, then, is the recovery of the truths concerning the economy of God to build up the Body of Christ through His divine dispensing to consummate the New Jerusalem any different in principle?

Furthermore, the ministry in the Lord's recovery has always taught that the truths we enjoy and the church life we practice are not only for ourselves, but also for all believers and that we must seek to be faithful in handling what the Lord has entrusted to us for the sake of the building up of his entire Body. The argument of the dissenters that the speaking in the international trainings and conferences is only for the attendees of those events is even more absurd when you consider that the speaking is recorded and disseminated throughout the churches around the globe.

Collectively the Local Churches Are the Universal Church

The dissenter's criticism of Brother Ran Kangas comes in an article in which the dissenter attacks another co-worker for equating the universal church as the Body of Christ with the local churches. He claims that "such a divergence from the

scriptural truth concerning the Body, as it has been brought to us by Brothers Nee and Lee, may have serious consequences." As we have pointed out in the article "Did Minoru Chen 'Go Beyond What Has Been Written?'" Brother Lee used the terms "the Body" and "the recovery" interchangeably when speaking of the practicality of the Body of Christ realized in all the local churches. He also directly stated many times that the universal church is composed of all of the local churches. For example:

Rom. 16:4 – Who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the ³churches of the Gentiles.

fn. 16:4³ – The Body of Christ as the universal church is unique (Eph. 1:23; 4:3). When this universal church appears in many localities on earth, it becomes the many churches. Therefore, this verse refers to the churches. The churches exist in various localities that all the saints may live the church life and have the practice of the church in the locality where they are.

Rev. 1:4 – John to the seven churches which are in ²Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

fn. 1:4² – Asia was a province of the ancient Roman Empire, and in that province were the seven cities mentioned in v. 11. The seven churches were in those seven cities, respectively; they were not all in one city. This book does not deal with the one universal church but with the local churches in many cities. First, in Matt. 16:18 the church is revealed as universal, and then in Matt. 18:17 it is revealed as local. In Acts the church was practiced in the way of local churches, such as the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the church in Antioch (Acts 13:1), the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17), and the churches in the provinces of Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:41). The Epistles were written to the local churches, except for a few written to individuals. Not one was written to the universal church. Without the local churches, the universal church has no practicality or actuality. The universal church is realized in the local churches. Knowing the church in its universal aspect must be

consummated in knowing the church in its local aspect. It is a great advance for us to know and practice the local churches. Concerning the church, the book of Revelation is in the advanced stage. To know this book, we must advance from the understanding of the universal church to the realization and practice of the local churches, because this book is written to the local churches. Only those who are in the local churches are positioned rightly, with the right angle and the proper perspective, to see the visions in this book.

The Triune God is expressed in Christ (John 1:1, 14; 1 Tim. 3:16; Col. 2:9); Christ is realized and experienced as the Spirit (John 14:16-18; 1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17; Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19) and is expressed in His Body, the universal church (Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:4); and the universal church is expressed in the local churches. Therefore, to know and experience God, we need to know and experience Christ; to know and experience Christ, we need to participate in the universal church through the Spirit; and to participate in the universal church, we need to participate in the local churches.

All the Local Churches Being the One, Unique Universal Church

Just because a group of believers are meeting in your locality, it does not mean that the Body is there. Today on this earth, there are many Christian groups. You may have the thought that your local church has nothing to do with other churches and should not be in any connection with other churches. This thought isolates your local church, making it no longer a part of the Body of Christ. The Body is unique in the whole universe. There may be thousands of local churches, but there is still just one Body. **All the local churches are the one, unique universal church, the one Body of Christ.** (*Further Consideration of the Eldership, the Region of the Work, and the Care for the Body of Christ*, pp. 14-15)

...Do not think that the local churches are one distinct side, and the Body of Christ is another distinct side. These two sides are one entity. They refer to the same thing. The Body of Christ is unique in the universe, but it needs an expression on the

earth. These expressions on the earth are the local churches. **The local churches are the Body of Christ, and the Body of Christ is the local churches.... (*The Crystallization-study of the Epistle to the Romans, Messages 1-17*, p. 5)**

**All the Local Churches Being the One Unique
Body of Christ in the Universe**

All the local churches are the one unique Body of Christ in the universe (Eph. 4:4). Every local church is a part of this universal Body, a local expression of this unique Body. **This one universal church, the one Body, comprises all the local churches.** There may be thousands of local churches, but together they constitute one universal church. The universal church is the unique Body of Christ, and all the local churches are simply the local expressions of this one Body. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament, Messages 189-204*, p. 2156)

The church of God, as the living Body of Christ, needs the local churches for its existence and function. Without the local churches, the Body of Christ has no way to exist and to carry out its function in practicality. **Actually, the local churches are the Body of Christ, and the Body of Christ is all the local churches.** (*A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, p. 30)²

All the local churches are part of the universal church, not something in addition to it or apart from it. **All the local churches added together equal the universal church.** This means that apart from the local churches there is no universal church. Hence, the building of the local church is the building of the universal church. All the local churches have just one building. The church in Anaheim does not have one building; the church in Chicago, another; and the church in New York, still another. However, our natural concept of the building is that there is a different building in each locality. In this universe there is just one building with a universal aspect and a local aspect. No matter how many churches there may be on

² Other examples include:

The Elders' Management of the Church, p. 12; and

The Spirit and the Body, pp. 184-185.

earth, there is still just one building with these two aspects.
(*Life-study of Ephesians*, p. 238)

In this sense, “the Body of Christ” refers to all of the local churches as the representatives of the mystical Body of Christ manifested in localities throughout the earth at the present time. Both the universal Body of Christ and the local churches are inclusive. The universal Body of Christ includes all believers. A local church includes all believers in a locality. Nevertheless, there is the need for some to take a standing to practice both the local church and the universal fellowship of the one Body of Christ. From the beginning of the Lord’s recovery among us in the 1920s, a central goal has been to recover the reality and practicality of the Body of Christ according to the biblical pattern of one church in each city with each local church properly related to the other local churches in the fellowship of the one Body.

The Principle of the Remnant

In a conference in Cleveland in 1977, Brother Lee referred to the local churches’ return to the ground of oneness to practice the Body life according to the New Testament pattern as “the recovered Body,” based on the principle of the remnant:

Deut. 12:5 – But to the place which Jehovah your God will choose out of all your tribes to put His name, to His habitation, shall you seek, and there shall you go.

Ezra 1:2-3 – [2] Thus says Cyrus the king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has Jehovah the God of heaven given to me; and He has charged me to build Him ¹a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. [3] Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him; and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and let him build the house of Jehovah the God of Israel – He is God – who is in Jerusalem.

fn. 1:2¹ – The particular intention of the recovery of Israel from their captivity was to rebuild the temple as God’s house on the earth among His elect and to re-establish the kingdom of God on the earth for the accomplishing of God’s eternal economy. Likewise, the particular intention of the Lord’s recovery of the church in this age is to have

all the saints come together in their localities to be built up together as the house of God in many cities (Eph. 2:22 and notes; Rev. 1:11 and note). Through such a house God will have His kingdom for the carrying out of His economy.

The Body is one. Some Christians may argue with us and say, "You say that the Body is one. But the Body is divided. How can you be the unique Body?" We do not say that we are the unique Body. **But we are the recovered Body. At least, we are the recovered part of the Body.**

Consider the illustration of the children of Israel in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 12, 14, 15, and 16 the Lord charged them again and again to worship Him at the unique center, which preserved the oneness of God's people. Eventually, many were captured, and some were taken to Syria, others to Egypt, and the rest to Babylon. Thus, they were captured and divided. To be divided means to be captured. Today nearly all Christians have been captured, some to the Presbyterian denomination, some to the Baptist denomination, and a great many to the Catholic Church. When the children of Israel were dispersed and scattered, their oneness was lost. After seventy years, God commanded them to return to Jerusalem. But according to history, only a small remnant returned under the leadership of Ezra, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah. They were a group of recovered Israelites. After the return from Babylon, there were four groups: one in Syria, one in Egypt, one in Babylon, and one in the holy land. Apparently, each group was a division. But although the groups in Egypt, Syria, and Babylon were divisions, the group of the recovered ones in Jerusalem was not a division. Yes, they were a group, but they were not a division. Rather, they were the recovered Israel. **Likewise, we in the Lord's recovery are the recovered Body.** (*The Spirit and the Body*, pp. 182-183)

Brother Lee goes on to say in this passage that only those who returned to the proper standing could be considered the nation of Israel, even though they were a small minority of all Jews on the earth at that time. In the Bible there is such a principle of the remnant of the Lord's people who return to the proper standing so that God can accomplish His purpose in a particular age.

When Watchman Nee, Witness Lee, and Ron Kangas use the term “the entire Body” in reference to the churches in the Lord’s recovery, it is in this sense.

Conducting Ourselves as Members of One Body

Understanding that all of the local churches comprise one Body does not deny that all believers in Christ are members of the one mystical Body of Christ, but it does mean that all of the saints and all of the churches in the Lord’s recovery should conduct themselves as one Body.

The entire record of the book of Acts also shows us a **group of people who always acted as the Body**. From the very first chapter neither Peter, John, nor those one hundred twenty acted individually. Rather, **all the actions of this group of people were the actions of the one Body**. The one hundred twenty prayed together with one accord, and they received the baptism in the Holy Spirit, preached the gospel, bore the testimony of Jesus, and always moved and acted as one Body (1:14; 2:1, 4, 14, 46-47). From chapter one to chapter twenty-eight, **the actions of this group of people were the actions of one Body**. (*A General Sketch of the New Testament in the Light of Christ and the Church, Part 1*, p. 90)

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)

The Real Issue

This dissenting brother does not tell his readers that he is associated with a group of workers who conduct their own trainings and conferences at the same times as and in rivalry with the international trainings and conferences in the Lord's recovery. In this way, many of the saints in the churches in which they work are kept from receiving the Lord's speaking in the international gatherings and from blending with other churches and saints. Through this practice the small group of dissenting workers seeks to put their churches in their own pocket.³ And yet this dissenting brother has the temerity to accuse others of not conducting themselves in a transparent fashion!

Even if we were to adopt the dissenter's premise that speaking to the entire Body of Christ is impossible, the speaking of the Lord through His ministry in the international gatherings of the churches would still be for all of the churches on the earth today, including the church where this dissenting one meets. The dissenter hopes to deter the saints and churches from this fellowship and to undermine the saints' heart for these gatherings by his continual attacks against the co-workers. What a shame that he would try to conceal his real agenda under the cloak of defending the truth! What a loss to those who would listen to his cleverly devised deceits!

This dissenting brother has obviously strayed from the basic understanding of our standing in the Lord's recovery. By arguing that the ministry cannot speak to the entire Body, he negates the intrinsic vision of our standing as the proper expression of the

³ For Brother Lee's fellowship on this point, see:

The Spirit and the Body, p. 189;

The Governing and Controlling Vision in the Bible, pp. 30-32;

Life-study of Song of Songs, p. 59;

Elders' Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord's Recovery, pp. 52-53; and

Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move, p. 89.

Body. The local churches stand on the ground of the genuine oneness of the Body of Christ. Their declaration is that they are the many practical local manifestations of the one mystical universal Body of Christ. Similarly, the ministry among us is a ministry carried out in the principle of the Body for and to the entire Body of Christ, including all of the local churches. To write that the speaking of the ones ministering among us is only for those physically present to hear them is to expose the writer's own lack or loss of vision.

The dissenter's real agenda is to vindicate the departure of the group of workers with which he is associated from the common fellowship of the co-workers all over the globe. This dissenting one's articles are not, as he pretends, an attempt to defend the truth, but rather part of a concerted effort to discredit the co-workers who seek to be blended, coordinated, and limited in the fellowship of the Body. Discarding the pattern of Brother Nee and Brother Lee who "always behaved, acted, and took action in the recovery as one Body," the dissenting ones are free to do "what is right in their own eyes" (Judges 21:25). They can go their own way without respect to the fellowship of the co-workers or the feeling of the other churches in the Body. This in itself is a great deviation from the teaching and fellowship of the apostles and the New Testament ministry and practice of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

