

A FAITHFUL WORD

S E R I E S F O U R

“Who concerning the truth have misaimed.”

**THE LOCAL
CHURCH LIFE
FOR THE
BODY OF
CHRIST**

**Book
3**

DEFENSE & CONFIRMATION PROJECT

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

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Unless otherwise indicated, the articles in this book are co-authored by Bill Buntain with Dan Sady and staff.

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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 Local Church Life for the Body of Christ* includes the following two articles:

- “Do the Co-workers ‘De-emphasize’ the Local Church?” shows that Titus Chu's accusation is false, that he errs gravely in dismissing Brother Lee's fellowship that the local churches are the procedure and the Body of Christ is the goal, and that he misaims in calling the local church the “basic commitment” of the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee.
- “‘A Local Church is Christ's Body’—A Prescription for Division in the Name of Local Oneness” shows that Nigel Tomes' emphasis on local oneness over the oneness of the Body is a façade to justify neglecting the feeling of and fellowship with other local churches in the Body of Christ.

- “Can You Be in a Local Church But Not in the Body?” shows that Titus Chu denigrates the goal of God’s economy by opposing the teaching that we need to be in the reality of the Body of Christ by being one with Christ in the organic union in our mingled spirit.
- 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.

DO THE CO-WORKERS “DE-EMPHASIZE” THE LOCAL CHURCH?

In Titus Chu’s letter of July 22, 2006, he falsely accuses the co-workers in the Lord’s recovery of “de-emphasizing the local church”:

No wonder you brothers keep on de-emphasizing the local church by quoting what Brother Lee once spoke, that the local churches are merely the procedure. Dear brothers, don’t you all realize that Christ and the local churches are the basic commitment revealed to us by our dear respected brothers Nee and Lee.

Titus is wrong because:

1. He mischaracterizes what the co-workers have spoken;
2. He dismisses Brother Lee’s fellowship concerning the Body being the goal and the local churches being the procedure to reach that goal as “what Brother Lee once spoke;” and
3. He misstates the goal of the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee.

TITUS CHU’S FALSE ACCUSATION OF THE CO-WORKERS

Titus’ statement that the co-workers ministering in the international gatherings belittle the local aspect of the church is false. For example, in the 2003 summer training, Ron Kangas said:

We are in an organic entity that is of God and in God and that is an expression of the Body of Christ. We need a vision of the very church we are in, a **fresh thrill of being in a local church**, a genuine church. Please read the book *A Genuine Church*. Read that fresh presentation from 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 concerning a genuine church, and **rejoice in the fact that we are members of a bona fide, genuine local church**. We are in something that is of God and in God and in something that by its nature and function is an expression of the Body of Christ. (Ron Kangas, “The Body of Christ and the Local Churches: The Unique Body of Christ Expressed as the Local Churches,” *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 175)

For the church to be real and practical, **there is the need of the local churches** (Matt. 16:18; 18:17). **Without the local churches we cannot have the universal church**, for the universal church is composed of all the local churches. **Do not misuse the word of the ministry concerning the church being the procedure as a pretext to not respect and honor a local church and the elders in that local church. We cannot live without this procedure**, and we need the local expression of that procedure right where we are. **We honor it and respect it to the uttermost**. Otherwise, we have nothing except talk and a vain dream about a universal church. We cannot live directly in the universal church; **it is impossible for us to live in the universal church without living in a local church** (Rev. 1:11; 2:1). (Ron Kangas, "The Body of Christ and the Local Churches: The Unique Body of Christ," *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, pp. 185-186)

Clearly such speaking disproves Titus Chu's accusation that the co-workers depreciate or de-emphasize the matter of the practice of the church life on the ground of locality.

THE LOCAL CHURCHES AS THE PROCEDURE

1 Cor. 1:2 – To the ¹church 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. 1:2¹ – The church of God! Not the church of Cephas, of Apollos, of Paul, or of any practice or doctrine, but of God. In spite of all the division, sin, confusion, abusing of gifts, and heretical teaching in the church in Corinth, the apostle still called it "the church of God" because the divine and spiritual essence which makes the assembled believers the church of God was actually there. Such a spiritual address by the apostle was based on his spiritual view in looking upon the church in Christ. Such a simple address alone should have eliminated all the division and confusion in both practice and doctrine.

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.).

Titus Chu dismisses Brother Lee’s word that “the local churches are merely the procedure”¹ as something he “once spoke.” This is untrue and a grave disservice to our brother’s ministry and to the saints in the Lord’s recovery. Brother Lee’s speaking on this point is full of burden as the following excerpts illustrate:

After this God showed us the Body of Christ through Brother Nee. The Lord showed us that the local church is the procedure and not the goal. The goal of the local church is the building up of the Body of Christ.... (*The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ*, p. 9)

We may think that the local churches are the goal of God’s economy. However, they are not the goal, but the procedure God takes to reach the goal of His economy. We should not forget that the local churches are not God’s goal. Many of those who have been brought into the recovery love the local church to the uttermost, and they stress the local church very much. However, we should not think that when we enter into the local church life we reach the goal of God’s eternal economy. No, we are still far away from God’s goal. Since the time of Brother Nee the local churches have become a very precious item in our Christian life. Some of the saints may be disappointed when they hear that the local churches are not God’s goal. Nevertheless, if we are just in the local churches and do not go on, we are far off from God’s goal. (*The Practical Points Concerning Blending*, pp. 9-10)

... Are we just building the local churches? No. We are building the local churches for the building up of the Body of Christ, which will consummate in the New Jerusalem. Then, does this mean that we just forget about the local churches? No. **The local churches are the procedure for God to accomplish the building of the Body of Christ.** God still has

¹ Actually, Brother Lee did not use this expression. It is Titus’ characterization of Brother Lee’s speaking.

to greatly use the local churches. Thank the Lord, through this kind of fellowship I hope that we all know where we are today and also where we should be and what we should do. (*The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ*, p. 17)

Therefore, we must **pay much more attention to the Body of Christ than to the local churches....** (*The Practical Points Concerning Blending*, pp. 23-24)

The speaking of the co-workers concerning the Body of Christ being the goal and the practice of the local church life being the procedure to reach that goal are, as the above excerpts demonstrate, a faithful respeaking of Brother Lee's emphasis in the last stage of his ministry.

THE “BASIC COMMITMENT” OF THE MINISTRY OF BROTHER NEE AND BROTHER LEE

Eph. 4:12– 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.

Titus Chu says that Christ and the local churches, not the Body of Christ, are the “basic commitment” of the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee. By saying this, Titus Chu misrepresents the burden and clear goal of our brothers' ministry. Both Brother Nee and Brother Lee stressed the practice of the local churches with a view to accomplishing God's goal, which is the growth, building up, and expression of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12, 16; Col. 2:19). In the same way, the co-workers' emphasis on the goal, the Body, does not belittle the procedure, the local churches. It does, however, calibrate the practice of the local church life to properly aim at the accomplishment of God's

goal.² This, too, matches the ministry of both Brother Nee and Brother Lee.

Concerning the practice of the church life, we must stress the local church. Without the local church, you could not have a practical church life. However, concerning the testimony that the church bears, we must stress the Body, which is the universal aspect of the church.... (*Elders' Training, Book 4: Other Crucial Matters Concerning the Practice of the Lord's Recovery*, p. 41)

In the living of the church life in a locality, our living is local, but our fellowship should be both local and universal (Rom. 16:1, 16b, 22-23). We should fellowship not only with the brothers and sisters in our own locality, but also with the brothers and sisters in all the other localities.... **The church life is both local and universal. But it is universal to a greater extent than it is local.** (*To Be Saved in the Life of Christ as Revealed in Romans*, p. 32)

We all need to consider this matter. We have the term and we have the doctrine, but practically, we do not have the reality. The purpose of the blending is to usher us all into the reality of the Body of Christ. **I treasure the local churches, as you do. But I treasure the local churches because of a purpose. The local churches are the procedure to bring me into the Body of Christ.** The churches are the Body, but the churches may not have the reality of the Body of Christ. Thus, we need to be in the local churches so that we can be ushered, or brought, into the reality of the Body of Christ. (*The Practical Points Concerning Blending*, p. 10)

² A major test of whether a group of believers is a genuine local church is whether they are open to fellowship with other churches. If a group of believers claims to be standing on the ground of locality but cuts itself off from the fellowship of the other local churches in the one Body of Christ, that group is not a local church but a local sect (see, for example: *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 22, p. 66-68; *The Spirit and the Body*, p. 214; *Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way* (2), p. 122; *Life-study of Genesis*, p. 456; among many such passages in the ministry of Brother Lee. Brother Lee also spoke many times on the tests of a genuine local church (*Young People's Training*, pp. 185-198; *The Spirit and the Body*, pp. 210-214; *Elders' Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way*, pp. 130-132; *The Testimony and Ground of the Church*, pp. 153-160). A consistent theme throughout the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee is the need of a local church to maintain open fellowship with all the other local churches on the earth.

CONCLUSION

The problem with Titus Chu's unbalanced emphasis on the matter of the local church is that it results in a disregard for the Body of Christ.

...Here, regretfully, among us there were quite a number of brothers who were weighty, yet they saw only the importance of the local church and did not see the Body of Christ. Hence, they rose up to argue, saying that Brother Nee said very clearly that all local churches are autonomous, each having nothing to do with the others. Not one local church, whatever it may be, should interfere with another local church. This is their total disregard for the Body of Christ.... (*The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ*, pp. 9-10)

Sadly, this is what has happened among some of those who have been under Titus Chu's short-sighted emphasis on the local church as an end in itself. They have deviated from the practice of the local churches in one universal organic Body. Some leading ones in places like Toronto have isolated their churches from the fellowship of the Body, refusing to let saints from other churches have fellowship with their members. Others in places such as Mansfield and Columbus, Ohio, have asserted their authority to the extent that they have excommunicated large numbers of members because those members desire to continue in the fellowship of the Body. To make anything other than the Body of Christ the focus of God's intention is to create an environment in which ambition flourishes and brothers are tempted to seek to build up their own kingdoms, be that a local church or a region of the work.

By contrast, the co-workers' speaking, taken as a whole, presents both the need of the local church in the practice of the church life and the need to care for the Body of Christ as God's goal. It recognizes the need for the local churches as the practical manifestation in time and space of the one Body of Christ, but it does so in the context of the building up of the universal Body and in the maintenance of the testimony of one Body by all the churches. Only such a practice can maintain the churches in a healthy condition and give the Lord the opportunity to work out His eternal economy for the

accomplishment of His goal, the building up of the Body of Christ.

“A LOCAL CHURCH IS CHRIST’S BODY”— A PRESCRIPTION FOR DIVISION IN THE NAME OF LOCAL ONENESS

1 Cor. 12:27 – Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually.

Nigel Tomes, a divisive worker (Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10-11), recently published an article in which he:

- Criticizes the ministry’s definition of the local church as “the practical expression of the universal Body in their city” as “convoluted.”
- Accuses the ministry of contradicting Paul’s word that “you are the Body of Christ.”¹
- Criticizes the ministry’s encouragement of blending through fellowship among the churches.
- Claims that “overemphasis on the universal Body and depreciation of the local aspect of the Body is responsible for the divisive activities we currently see in the recovery.”

Nigel carefully selects passages from the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee to support his arguments, while ignoring those that directly contradict them. He tries to carefully choose his words to avoid the appearance of deviating from the ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee, but in fact he woefully distorts their teaching. He isolates 1 Corinthians 12:27 from its context and in so doing develops a meaning from it that is far beyond what is in the text. His interpretation is biased in order to justify the actions he and others have taken to separate The Church of the Torontonians from the common fellowship of the churches in the universal Body of Christ.

¹ In these first two points, Nigel echoes statements made by Titus Chu in a letter he sent to the co-workers on July 22, 2006.

*Is the Ministry's Definition
of the Local Church "Convolutated"?*

Nigel criticizes the statement that the church in a city is the "practical expression of the universal Body in their city," saying that such an expression is "convolutated." He implies that this definition originates from the co-workers who take the lead in the ministry in the Lord's recovery today. In fact, it is the definition used by both Brother Nee and Brother Lee:

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)

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)

This understanding has governed the practice of the churches in the Lord's recovery since the 1920s and has preserved them in oneness since that time.

"A Local Church Is Christ's Body"?

Nigel claims that 1 Corinthians 12:27 says that the church in Corinth is the Body of Christ as an entity locally. His exposition of this verse is diametrically opposed to the plain speaking of Brother Lee in his ministry.

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)

It is no doubt true that every local church has its own jurisdiction. However, we have taught very strongly that **each local church is not a Body of Christ**; all the churches together are the one Body. (*Elders’ Training, Book 3: The Way to Carry Out the Vision*, p. 128)

Nigel criticizes Benson Phillips for saying:

Not one local church is the Body; every local church is a part of the Body; there are many local churches but there are never many bodies. (*The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 9, no. 2, Feb. 2005, p. 113)

Nigel claims that it is wrong to say that “every local church is a part of the Body”:

However, this “blended co-worker’s” assertion, “every local church is a part of the Body” does not follow as a corollary. That declaration is a non sequitur. It appears to contradict the Scripture—“You are Christ’s body” (1 Cor. 12:27).

In fact, Benson’s fellowship was simply a respeaking of Brother Lee’s ministry and is entirely consistent with Scripture.

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. **A local church is not the Body; it is only a part of the Body.** It is a local expression of the Body. The church in Seoul is not the entire Body; it is a part of the entire Body as the Body’s local expression. (*Vital Factors for the Recovery of the Church Life*, pp. 48-49)

Nigel quotes Brother Lee as saying, “the local church ... is the Body to Christ and the dwelling place of God... Every local church is the Body of Christ for expressing Christ” [the elisions are Nigel’s]. Nigel wrenches this quote from *The Testimony and the Ground of the Church* out of all context. Brother Lee’s point in this chapter is that the testimony that the universal church bears should be borne in every locality by the church in that

city. Earlier in the same chapter, Brother Lee makes the same point Nigel condemns Benson Phillips for making:

God's desire is that every local church would represent the Body of Christ to testify on behalf of Christ in their respective localities. Therefore, every local church is the expression of the universal church in that locality. Therefore, the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1), the church in Antioch (13:1), the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2), and the church in any other locality are part of the universal church. The church in a locality is a small expression of the universal church in a particular locality. It not only represents the universal church, but it is also part of the universal church. It is the universal church being expressed in a locality at a particular time. (*The Testimony and the Ground of the Church*, p. 172)

Brother Lee then proceeds in a section entitled "The Nature and Principle of the Universal Church Being the Nature and Principle of the Local Church" to speak of the testimony the church should bear, both universally and locally.

The local church is a miniature of the universal church. The situation of the universal church is the situation of the local church because the local church is a miniature of the universal church. The universal church expresses Christ, and the local church also expresses Christ, except on a smaller scale. Every local church is a representative of the universal church, representing the universal church in its locality by living out the proper life of the Body of Christ and thus expressing Christ.

The universal church is the Body of Christ for the expression of Christ and the dwelling place of God for the expression of God (Eph. 1:22-23; 2:20-22). Just as the universal church has these two aspects, the local church also has these two aspects: it is the Body to Christ and the dwelling place of God (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Tim. 3:15). (*The Testimony and the Ground of the Church*, p. 173)

Clearly, Brother Lee is not speaking of the local church as any sort of entity that has its own testimony or its own oneness apart from being a manifestation of the one unique Body of Christ, along with all the other churches. Rather, his point is that what the universal church is in bearing the testimony of Christ to express Him universally, so the local church should be in its own locality. Brother Lee's word countenances no sense in

which the local church has its own oneness or is self-sufficient. It actually means that the local church should be in the spiritual reality of what the Body of Christ is. The irony is that Titus Chu, a worker with whom Nigel is closely associated, accuses the co-workers of elitism for teaching this (see “Can You Be in the Local Church But Not in the Body?” in this book).

Nigel’s interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:27 divorces Paul’s words from their proper context. To understand what Paul meant when he told the Corinthian believers, “You are the Body of Christ,” we must consider the situation in Corinth and the context of Paul’s word in chapter 12. There were divisions among the believers in the church in Corinth.

The Corinthians’ practice of the Lord’s table (1 Cor. 11:17-22) and of tongue-speaking (1 Cor. 14:4) was self-centered and demonstrated a lack of mutual care. They seemed to have no realization that they were organically related members in one Body. Neither did they exhibit any sign of caring for the other churches in the Body of Christ in the way they conducted their church life. Paul repeatedly corrected the church in Corinth for deviating from the common teaching and practice of all the local churches in the matters of following the apostles (1 Cor. 4:16-17), remaining in the status of one’s calling (7:17), headship and head covering (11:4-6, 16), women teaching in the church (14:33b-35), and collecting financial supply and giving in coordination with the other local churches (16:1). They seemed to have no realization that they were not an independent entity but should follow the churches (1 Thes. 2:14) and be the same as the other churches in one testimony (Rev. 1:9, 20).

When Paul says, “Now you are the Body of Christ, and members individually,” he is not speaking of the church in Corinth as an administrative unit. He is certainly not advocating that a local church is the Body of Christ as an entity unto itself. Nor is he speaking of a local oneness apart from the universal Body. Rather, he is pointing out the mutual dependence of the believers as members of one organic Body.

For Paul to say to the saints in Corinth, “You are the Body of Christ,” is to say that the practice of the church life in Corinth should bear all the characteristics of the universal Body of Christ. This is why both Brother Nee and Brother Lee spoke about the local church as a miniature to express the universal church as the Body of Christ manifested in a locality.

Nigel’s exposition, with its emphasis on local oneness, ignores Paul’s addressing of the book “to the church of God which is in 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” (1 Cor. 1:2). There is one unique fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14) common to all believers “in every place.”

Nigel’s Criticism of Blending

1 Cor. 12:24b – But God has blended the body together, giving more abundant honor to the member that lacked.

Nigel says, “In the New Testament the usual pattern is that apostles (workers) travel, the saints do not. We look in vain for exhortations for the saints to gather nationally, internationally or globally for ‘blending,’ ‘feasts,’ for conferences or trainings.” This is a direct attack on the attempts by Paul and John to blend the churches together (Rom. 16:1-23; Col. 4:15-16; 1 Cor. 16:1-9; Rev. 1—3; 2 Cor. 8—9; Gal. 1:2)² and on Brother Lee’s burden that all the churches over the whole earth would be blended together to bear one corporate testimony as one new man (1 Cor. 12:24; Eph. 2:15; Col. 3:10).³

Learn to fellowship. Learn to be blended. From now on, the churches should come together frequently to be blended. We may not be used to it, but after we begin to practice blending a few times, we will acquire the taste for it. This is the most helpful thing in the keeping of the oneness of the universal Body of Christ. (*The Divine and Mystical Realm*, p. 87)

² See *One Body and One Spirit*, pp. 21-23.

³ This subject is covered far more extensively in “The Way of Blending and the Leadership in the Ministry in the Lord’s Recovery Today” in the book *The Direction and Leadership of the Lord’s Recovery* or at <http://www.afaithfulword.org/articles/Blending.html>.

We must realize that when fellowship disappears, God also disappears. God comes as the fellowship. Today our meetings, our married life, the coordination among the co-workers, and the fellowship among the local churches are abnormal because we are short of this fellowship. Today there is not enough fellowship among the local churches, and the churches are not absolutely one in the fellowship. (*The Triune God to Be Life to the Tripartite Man*, 1996 edition, p. 155)

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)

Brother Lee specifically charged the brothers to continue the seven international gatherings each year (*The Ministry Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 9, October 2001, pp. 17-18), not only for the release of the ministry, but also for the blending together of all the saints in all the churches throughout the earth.⁴ The practice of holding trainings and conferences for gathering the saints together has a long history of being a great benefit to the saints and the churches in the Lord’s recovery. Brother Lee pointed out that under the Lord’s sovereign arrangement, modern transportation and communication has enabled the blending of the Body for the realization of the new man on an unprecedented scale:

All the local churches on the globe today should be one. Today, unlike in Paul’s time, travel and communication to nearly anywhere on the earth are very convenient. Because of this, the churches today should be blended much more than

⁴ See: *The Secret of God’s Organic Salvation: “The Spirit Himself With Our Spirit”*, p. 10;

The Practical Points Concerning Blending, p. 40;

The Governing and Controlling Vision in the Bible, p. 32; and

1993 Blending Conference Messages concerning the Lord’s Recovery and Our Present Need, p. 141.

they were in Paul's time. Not only according to the revelation of the Bible but also according to the modern conveniences, we should be one, and we should be blended together as much as practicality allows. (*One Body and One Spirit*, p. 20)

The blending of the Body of Christ is possible through all the modern means of transportation. Hence, all the churches should live in life and in the spirit and be blended with one another for the manifestation of the reality of the Body of Christ. (*A General Outline of God's Economy and the Proper Living of a God-Man*, p. 68)

Blending makes it more difficult for controlling elders and dominating regional workers to lord it over the believers (1 Pet. 5:3; 2 Cor. 1:24). This kind of control has been exercised in churches associated with Titus Chu, including in Toronto by Nigel Tomes and others.⁵ Such unbridled exercise of power has led to denying the Lord's table or mass excommunications of large numbers of believers and has forced many saints to disassociate themselves from sectarian leaderships in Toronto, Columbus, and Mansfield.

Nigel Tomes himself is a close co-worker of Titus Chu. Titus' practice has been to exclude certain churches he cannot control from the circle of fellowship of the churches under his work, even churches in Cleveland's immediate vicinity. This is to carry out a divisive work. Titus Chu and his co-workers oppose blending because it would expose their wrongful manipulation of the saints and the churches that are under their work.

Furthermore, Nigel's criticism of blending is hypocritical, as Titus and Nigel do support traffic among the churches they control. In 2004 Titus sent a group of young people to Taiwan to spend time in a church that was at that time very open to him. This took place immediately after the International Chinese-speaking Conference in Taiwan, which those sent from Titus' area intentionally avoided. Nigel also carefully sidesteps criticizing regional conferences and trainings such as the ones Titus conducts and Nigel participates in. Such duplicity exposes

⁵ See the documents in the book *Concerning Sectarianism and Abuse of Authority in Toronto*.

a lack of straightforwardness in matters of truth and practice (Gal. 2:14).

The one expression of Christ is in the unique move of the unique God for the unique accomplishment of His unique economy (Eph. 1:10; 1 Tim. 1:4b) and in the unique blending in the unique life of Christ for His unique testimony in the universe (1 Cor. 12:24). Everything must be unique. If only the group of churches in your district are blended together, that is not the unique blending. That is a “sect blending.” (*The Ten Great Critical “Ones” for the Building Up of the Body of Christ*, p. 60)

***Is Over-Emphasis on the Universal Body
Responsible for Division?***

Nigel claims that “over-emphasis on the universal Body and depreciation of the local aspect of the Body is responsible for the divisive activities we currently see in the recovery.”⁶ He argues that oneness begins at the local church level. This is contrary to the truth. The oneness of the church as the Body of Christ is the enlarged oneness of the Triune God (John 17:21-23). This oneness begins with the Triune God and proceeds through His dispensing of Himself as the life-giving Spirit into His believers to produce the Body of Christ. Thus the oneness of the Body is the oneness of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3-4). The Spirit Himself is the very essence of the oneness of the Body of Christ. All the churches participate in this one life and in the one fellowship of life (Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3).

In a normal situation, the church should be one locally as well as one with all the churches universally. However, when a local leadership separates its followers from the common fellowship of the churches, opposes the common ministry to the churches, and excludes from fellowship saints who receive that ministry, that oneness has been annulled—that local leadership has

⁶ Nigel’s claim reflects Titus Chu’s accusation that the co-workers “de-emphasize” the local church and thereby neglect the “basic commitment” of the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. These false accusations are examined in “Do the Co-workers ‘De-emphasize’ the Local Church?”

caused division in the Body already. The oneness of the local church is the oneness of the universal church manifested locally. The local oneness Nigel proposes is a sectarian oneness separate from the common fellowship of all the churches and separate from the receiving of all the saints in that fellowship. This oneness is not the oneness of the Body of Christ. If a local leadership separates the church from the common fellowship of the saints and the churches, that group is no longer a local church but a local sect.

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)

The local churches should fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ. Any local church that does not keep this universal fellowship of the Body of Christ is divisive and becomes a local sect. Some so-called local churches are not genuine and have become divisions; we do not need to fellowship with such “churches.” But we should have fellowship with all the genuine local churches on the whole earth to keep the universal fellowship of the Body of Christ. If not, we are no longer a church but a sect. A church is one that remains in the Body; a sect is a group of believers who divide themselves from the Body. When my arm remains in the body, it is a part of my living body. If it is cut off and separated from the body, it becomes a dead thing. (*Elders’ Training, Book 10: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way* (2), p. 122)

If the elders make obedience to their claimed authority a condition of fellowship, they have removed the church from its proper standing as a local manifestation of the one Body of Christ and made oneness with the elders and their authority the

actual and practical ground of the church. In such a case, the standing of that group has been transmuted into that of a sect. In Nigel’s case, the application of this kind of local “oneness” would require that the saints be one with the divisive stand of a worker who has himself been quarantined by the Body for his divisive teaching and practice. In such a case, local “oneness” is a division from the Body.

Conclusion

Nigel’s writings make a pretense of advocating oneness with all believers throughout the earth as the universal Body and oneness with the believers locally. In fact, he advocates and practices neither. Most tellingly, he does not affirm the oneness of all the local churches as the practical expressions of the Body of Christ on the earth today. In this way he negates the practicality of the Body of Christ and avoids confronting the divisive nature of his own activities as well as those of Titus Chu and the quarantine exercised by the churches as the Body towards them. He goes so far as to claim that the quarantine does not represent the Body because there are many believers outside the churches in the Lord’s recovery. This is itself contrary to a statement he earlier signed:

Frankly, you three brothers [in Vancouver] have caused a serious offense against the Body! By your habit of receiving brothers, being disciplined by the Body, i.e. Brother X and Joseph Fung, you are offending the local churches and therefore damaging the oneness of the Body of Christ. (from a letter to leading ones in Vancouver from elders and co-workers in Metro Toronto, December 18, 1992, signed by Nigel Tomes, among others)

Nigel redefines oneness as it suits him, that is, as it enables him to continue his divisive activities and to exercise control with the sectarian leadership in Toronto. By his self-serving interpretation he only confirms the co-workers’ warning that he is a factious, divisive person from whom the saints should turn away (Titus 3:10; Rom. 16:17).

CAN YOU BE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH BUT NOT IN THE BODY?

*How Titus Chu Turns Saints Away
from the Reality of the Body of Christ*

In Titus Chu's letter of July 22, 2006, he falsely accuses the co-workers in the Lord's recovery of being unclear on the truth concerning the Body of Christ:

Moreover, during the LSM Summer Training which has just ended, brother Ron Kangas conveyed the idea that believers can be in the local church, yet not be in the Body. Brothers, what kind of teaching is this? Are you brothers seeking to produce a two-tier system where some saints are "merely in the local church" and others (the elite) are in the Body? Where is this thought in the Bible? Where is this concept in the teaching of Brothers Nee and Lee?

Titus errs concerning both the Bible and the teaching of Brother Nee and Brother Lee. His accusations of a "two-tier system" and an "elite" are without basis and serve to undermine and turn saints away from a crucial reality that we must see and enter into in order to satisfy God's heart's desire.

BROTHER RON KANGAS' FAITHFUL RESPEAKING

The specific speaking Titus criticizes is as follows:

The Body is the intrinsic significance of the church. Without the Body, the church has no meaning. It is possible to be in the church but not be in the Body. Some disappointed saints might say that the church life no longer has any meaning for them. They may think it does not matter whether or not they come to the meetings. In their estimation, the fire was in Elden Hall and in the migration of the 1970s. However, we need to see that the meaning, the significance of the church is the Body. We can physically come to a church meeting, sing, pray, and speak; we are in the church, but we may not be in the Body. **To be in the Body, we have to be in Christ, in the organic union with Him.** This is the Body in Romans, and this is the central point—we are one Body in Christ. (Ron Kangas, "The Body of Christ in Romans," *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 10, no. 4, July 2006, p. 104)

This speaking is actually a faithful respeaking of Brother Lee's ministry, as the following excerpts show:

We need to see the way Paul presents the Body of Christ in Ephesians 1. Paul said that God raised up Christ, seated Him in the heavens, subjected all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church. Right away in the following phrase he said, "Which is His Body" (v. 23a). The church is the Body. **This indicates that the Body is the church's intrinsic significance. The church without the Body means nothing.** In Greek the church is the ekklesia, the called-out ones coming together. But the significance of this gathering is the Body. (*The Issue of the Dispensing of the Processed Trinity and the Transmitting of the Transcending Christ*, p. 90)

In the organic union with Christ there is life. This life joins us not only to Christ but to all the members of Christ. The Body of Christ is altogether a matter of life that keeps us in an organic union with Christ. **When we remain in this organic union, we are in the Body. But if we do not remain in this organic union, we are out of the Body.** The actuality of the Body is in or remaining in the organic union with Christ. If we would live in the Body, we must stay in the organic union with Christ. In other words, we must remain in Christ. The more we stay in the organic union with Christ, the more in actuality we are living in the Body of Christ. (*The Conclusion of the New Testament*, Messages 157-171, pp. 1795-1796)

In many matters of the truth, there is a positional, objective side and there is an experiential, subjective side. In God's eyes, it is a fact, but in our experience, it still needs to be fully worked out for the accomplishment of God's heart's desire. Concerning the matter of the Body, on the one hand, there is the truth regarding the status of the church as the Body of Christ and that every believer in Christ is a member of that Body. On the other hand, there is the need for the saints in all the churches to enter into the reality of the Body of Christ actually and practically in their living.¹ If a Christian lives in the soul, the natural man, or the flesh, he is not living in the reality of the Body. To live in the reality of the Body of Christ, we must be people who live and walk according to the Spirit in our spirit (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25). To call this elitist is a direct assault on the heart's desire of

God because it undermines the strategic point that brings forth the reality of the Body of Christ.

WHAT GOD DESIRES TO RECOVER TODAY IS THE REALITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Through Brother Nee the Lord recovered the truth of the practice of the church life on the ground of locality. This truth was and still is precious to us. But Brother Nee went on to stress the truth concerning the Body of Christ and the need to enter into the reality of the Body of Christ in our living.

...**God is recovering the life of the Body rather than the doctrine of the Body.** The Body of Christ is a life. **The Body of Christ is a matter of experience, and we have to enter into the reality of this Body....** (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 38, p. 412)

...It is not enough for us to speak about the Body; we have to express the Body in our living. **The Body of Christ is not a doctrine; it is a reality in life. God wants us to enter into the Body life, not to have the doctrine of the Body.** We have received the life of the Body, not a doctrine about the Body.... Today we all must receive the revelation of the reality of the Body and enter into the life of the Body. Then we will see that we are members of the Body of Christ, that we need the protection and limitation of the Body, and that we need to function in the Body and supply other members so that the life of the Body will flow in an unhindered way. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 44, p. 808)

In the early years of his ministry in the United States, Brother Lee stressed the matter of the local churches very much. We praise the Lord that through his faithful speaking the Lord has recovered the practice of the church life on the ground of locality throughout the earth. However, from the beginning of his ministry in this country he stressed that the practice of the local church life was for the building up of the Body of Christ. This stress became stronger and stronger until in the last stage of his ministry the major stress of his labor was to bring all the local churches into a living in the Body of Christ for the reality of the Body of Christ.

On May 9, 1994, Brother Lee wrote the following note which spoke of the burden the Lord had given him to carry out in the last phase of his ministry:

- ① I asked of the Lord after my illness what my ministry should stress.
- ② It seems that the Lord would burden me with:
 1. The Body of Christ and the life of the Body.
 2. The reality of the life of the Body of Christ.
- ③ May the Lord have mercy upon me that He would grace me to live the two stresses listed above and minister them to the Lord's recovery accordingly.

THE REALITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST IS IN THE ORGANIC UNION

Rom. 12:5 – So we who are many are one Body ¹in Christ, and individually members one of another.

fn. 12:5¹ – We are one Body in Christ, having an organic union with Him. This union makes us one in life with Him and with all the other members of His Body. The Body is not an organization or a society but is altogether an organism produced by the union in life that we have with Christ.

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 ²the Christ.

fn. 12:12² – Referring to the corporate Christ, composed of Christ Himself as the Head and the church as His Body with all the believers as members. All the believers of Christ are organically united with Him and constituted with His life and element and have thus become His Body, an organism, to express Him. Hence, He is not only the Head but also the Body. As our physical body has many members yet is one, so is this Christ.

In order to live in the reality of the Body of Christ, we must have a basic realization—only that which comes out of Christ is the Body of Christ.² Since only that which comes out of Christ is the Body of Christ, we are in the reality of the Body of Christ

only when we are actually and practically living in the organic union with Christ. We are one Body *in Christ* (Rom. 12:5).

We all have to realize the Body of Christ is altogether a matter of life that keeps us in an organic union with Christ. **When we remain in this organic union, we are in the Body. When we don't remain in this organic union, we are out of the Body.** You need to check yourselves for one day to see how much time you remain in this organic union. You will have to admit that you do not remain very much in this organic union. Occasionally we get there, but quite often we get out of there, so we are not in the Body. **The actuality of the Body is the remaining in the organic union with Christ.** If we are going to be actually living in the Body life, we must remain in the organic union with Christ. In other words, we must be remaining in Christ. So John 15 charges us to abide in Him. To abide in Him simply means to remain in this organic union. When we remain in this organic union, we are actually living in the Body. **If we do not remain in this organic union with Christ, we have left the Body.** As long as you say something by yourself, you have left the Body. This means your gossip, your free talk, your loose conversation is a strong sign that you have left the Body. (*Perfecting Training*, p. 281)

IT IS POSSIBLE TO BE IN THE LOCAL CHURCHES BUT NOT IN THE REALITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Based on the understanding that the reality of the Body of Christ is in the organic union with Christ, it is clear that although we may be in the Body of Christ by definition as a believer and although we may be in a local church, we may not be in the Body of Christ as a reality in our actual living. This is not a new teaching; Brother Lee spoke it as long ago as 1956:

...Likewise, if the flesh has not been dealt with, self has not been abandoned, and the natural constitution has not been broken, he cannot know what the Body is. **He may know a little regarding the doctrine of the Body, but he cannot touch either the actuality or the reality of the Body. The Body of Christ is not a doctrine; it is a reality.** (*The Experience of Life*, p. 329)

Similarly, it is possible for a worker to raise up groups of believers who meet as local churches in name, standing on the ground of locality and adhering to the common faith but lacking the reality of the Body of Christ. Titus Chu's attack on the co-workers' speaking on the reality of the Body of Christ is an attack on the burden of the Lord's word to His recovery from Brother Nee until today. It voids the warnings given by Brother Lee that we might fall short of the goal of the reality of the Body of Christ, thus frustrating the Lord from gaining his heart's desire. In the last stage of his ministry, Brother Lee strongly and repeatedly warned the saints in the churches in the Lord's recovery of the possibility of being in the church life but not in the reality of the Body life:

... Although we may have a good church life, among us there is almost no realization, no practicality, no actuality, and no reality of the Body life. This is the need in the recovery today.

You may argue that the church is the Body of Christ. Yes, it is; but to be in the reality of the Body of Christ is not just a matter of setting up local churches with the establishing of elders and the practice of the church life in a particular way. This is merely an arrangement, a work, a service. It is not the reality of the Body of Christ. Even though our preaching of the gospel may be very good, there may not be much reality of the Body of Christ. (*The Practical Points Concerning Blending*, pp. 17-18)

According to Ephesians 1:22-23, the goal of God's economy is the church, which is Christ's Body. Some may say that since the church is the Body of Christ and since we are in the church, we should also be in the Body. They are right doctrinally, but not practically. We may speak much about the Body of Christ, but if we are asked what the Body of Christ is, we may be able to answer only that the Body of Christ is the church. We are in the church; that is a fact. But where is the reality of the Body of Christ? We have the term the Body of Christ and we have the doctrine of the Body of Christ, but where is the practicality and reality of the Body of Christ? Have you ever touched the practicality of the Body of Christ? Have you ever been in the reality of the Body of Christ?

We all need to consider this matter. We have the term and we have the doctrine, but practically, we do not have the reality. The purpose of the blending is to usher us all into the

reality of the Body of Christ. I treasure the local churches, as you do. But I treasure the local churches because of a purpose. The local churches are the procedure to bring me into the Body of Christ. **The churches are the Body, but the churches may not have the reality of the Body of Christ.** Thus, we need to be in the local churches so that we can be ushered, or brought, into the reality of the Body of Christ. (*The Practical Points Concerning Blending*, p. 10)

... **In some places the so-called church is the church without being the Body.** In some places it is the church, but only fifteen percent is the Body while eighty-five percent is not. In some places it is the church, but only forty-five percent is the Body while fifty-five percent is not. Truly and strictly speaking, there is hardly any church that is one hundred percent the Body. (*One Body, One Spirit, and One New Man*, p. 35)

It is true that we are the assembly of the called-out ones, and based on this we acknowledge that we are the church. **In reality, however, we are not the Body of Christ.** This word is hard. **How can we say that we are the church but not the Body of Christ? I tell you that according to reality this is the case.** Apparently, we are all Christians, and we are the church when we come together; however, from the viewpoint of the Body, we are not the Body of Christ, nor are we the fullness of Christ.... (*One Body, One Spirit, and One New Man*, pp. 28-29)

We may live and walk in a proper manner, but if we do not live out the reality of Christ, we are not in the Spirit or in the reality of resurrection; **hence, we are without the reality of the Body of Christ.** This touches something very high. If we have not seen this, we have not seen the Body of Christ. (*A General Outline of God's Economy and the Proper Living of a God-man*, p. 42)

CONCLUSION

The organic building up of the Body of Christ through our organic union with Christ in the mingled spirit has been the subject of much of the speaking in the international gatherings and in the ministry meeting in the Full-Time Training in Anaheim over the last year, including:

- The ministry meeting in the fall 2006 session of the Full-Time Training in Anaheim on the subject of “The Reality of the Body of Christ”;
- The Thanksgiving Conference in Washington, DC, on the subject of “Living in the Mingled Spirit for the Reality of the Body of Christ”; and
- The 2007 International Chinese-speaking Conference on the subject of “Walking Worthily of God’s Calling for the Reality of the Body of Christ.”

The blended co-workers have continued this line of speaking concerning the Body of Christ and entering into the reality of the Body of Christ because they realize that this is the Lord’s burden for His recovery today. Far from trying to produce an “elite,” as Titus Chu has charged, this line of fellowship seeks to lead the saints into the reality of the Body of Christ for the accomplishment of God’s eternal economy. To attack this line of ministry introduced by Brother Nee, developed by Brother Lee, and continued by the blended co-workers is to attack the heart’s desire of the Lord Himself. By being cut off from this line of ministry, saints are being cheated and hindered from participating in the Lord’s move to bring forth the reality of the Body of Christ in His recovery today (cf. Col. 2:8a, 18a). Titus’ attack also undermines the truth concerning the overcomers being those who enter into the reality of the Body of Christ to prepare the way for the Lord’s return. This was the Lord’s charge to His recovery through Brother Lee’s ministry:

We must rise up to seek after the Lord so that we can be the overcomers to bring forth the building up of the Body of Christ. Then the Lord will have a way to consummate this age and to bring in His kingdom to celebrate His wedding day for His pleasure and satisfaction. Eventually, this will consummate His eternal goal, the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. (*Crystallization-study of the Gospel of John*, p. 138)

If we live in resurrection, this will become an unprecedented revival among all the Christ-pursuing God-men today. It will be a genuine revival brought forth from within us. It will also be an unprecedented revival, a revival that has

never occurred in the two-thousand-year history of the church. I believe that before the Lord comes back, there will be such a final revival. What is this revival? It is the corporate living of the overcomers; it is also the reality of the Body of Christ. (*A General Outline of God's Economy and the Proper Living of a God-man*, p. 43)

May the Lord gain this through His recovery!

Endnotes:

- ¹ The principle of the relationship between the objective and subjective aspects can be clearly seen in Paul's epistles concerning the new man. On the one hand, the Bible says clearly that the new man has been created in Christ (Eph. 2:15; 4:24; Col. 3:10b). This is an objective fact. On the other hand, the new man is being renewed unto full knowledge (Col. 3:10a) through our being renewed in the spirit of our mind (Eph. 4:23). This requires the saints' subjective renewing.

Similarly, in the three epistles in which Paul speaks the most concerning the Body of Christ—Romans, First Corinthians, and Ephesians—the Body is not just an objective fact, but a spiritual reality that is expressed in the living of a group of people who walk according to spirit (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25).

Paul's Epistle to the Romans shows us that God is making sinners (3:23) into sons (8:14) to constitute them the Body of Christ (12:5) expressed as many local churches (16:4-5). The Body of Christ is the focal point of the book of Romans. The goal of God's complete salvation in Romans 3—8 is the Body of Christ in Romans 12. The mingled spirit is a crucial matter in Romans, especially in chapter 8. There the law of the Spirit of life operates to set us free from the law of sin and of death (8:2). We are charged to walk according to spirit (8:4), to be according to spirit, and to mind the things of the Spirit (8:5-6). We are told that as believers we have the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (8:9) and that our regenerated spirit is life (8:10). The Spirit who dwells in us can give life to our mortal bodies (8:11) and with our cooperation put to death the practices of our bodies (8:13). We are further told that we can be led by the Spirit (8:14), that we have received a spirit of sonship (8:15), and that the two spirits—the divine Spirit and our human spirit—witness together that we are children of God (8:16). The consummation of God's organic salvation carried out by the Spirit in our spirit is to bring us into full sonship (8:23) that we might be fully conformed to the image of the firstborn Son of God (8:29). Based on this and Paul's account of God's selection of us to participate in His salvation by being grafted into Christ (11:17), Paul charges us in Romans 12 to present our bodies as a living sacrifice (12:1) for the practice of the Body life (12:4-5). Thus, the Body

is the destination of God's complete salvation. The local churches in Romans 16 are for the practical expression of the one Body. They are not different from the one Body, nor are they an advance beyond the one Body, but they are the practical working out of the one Body in time and space.

Whereas Romans ends with the local churches as the practical expression of the Body of Christ, Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians begins with a genuine local church—"To the church of God which is in Corinth" (1:2). This genuine local church was filled with problems—divisions (1:10), immorality (5:1), strifes (3:3), and many other evils. The root cause of these problems was that although the believers in the church in Corinth had been redeemed and regenerated and were in the local church life, they were not living the divine life but were living in the natural life (2:14; 3:1, 3). Even their practice of the Lord's table (11:20-22) and the exercise of spiritual gifts (14:4a) was self-centered. Although the church in Corinth had the standing of the church as the Body of Christ (12:27), it was lacking in the genuine growth in life (3:1). As a result, it was lacking in the reality of the Body of Christ.

Paul's epistle points them to the crucified Christ (2:2) as the solution to all the problems in the church. This terminating and germinating Christ would bring the saints out of living in the natural life and constitute them with the element of the Triune God (3:12). They would then live as ones who were one spirit with the Lord (6:17) enjoying the riches of the resurrection life of Christ as the life-giving Spirit (15:45b) in their spirit. Such a living is the reality of the Body of Christ. Furthermore, they would become ones whose Christ-filled speaking would build up the other members in love (13:2), resulting in the building up of the church (14:3-5, 12, 26). Thus, while Romans shows the Body of Christ manifested as local churches as the issue of God's full salvation, 1 Corinthians shows how a typical local church can enter into the reality of the Body of Christ.

The objective and subjective aspects of the church as the Body, the fullness of Christ, can also be seen in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians. Objectively speaking, from the perspective of God's eternal economy, the church is the Body of Christ (1:23). However, even in Paul's speaking in Ephesians 1 there is an indication that the church is the issue of an organic process. The Ephesian believers already had faith in the Lord Jesus and love toward all the saints (1:15). Paul's prayer took that as a basis that they would go further to have a spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Christ according to God's economy (1:17), the end of which is to see that the intrinsic meaning of the church is the Body of Christ as the fullness of the all-filling Christ (1:23), as the issue of the dispensing of the Divine Trinity (1:3-14) and the transmitting of the

transcending Christ (1:18-22). The word *fullness* also points to the Body as the result of a process, that is, as the issue of the enjoyment of the unsearchable riches of Christ (3:8). The Body of Christ becomes the fullness of Christ as the one who fills all in all (1:23) by being constituted with the riches of Christ. It is as we enjoy and are constituted with the unsearchable riches of Christ that we become in actuality the Body as the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians shows us that based on the revelation of the church being the Body of Christ, the fullness of the all-filling Christ, we must go on to experience Christ by being strengthened with power through the Spirit into our inner man (3:16), which is our spirit mingled with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). Then Christ can make His home in our hearts so that we can apprehend with all the saints the vast dimensions of Christ and know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ (3:17-19a). Through this we can be filled unto all the fullness of God. Being filled unto all the fullness of God makes the church the Body in actuality as the full expression of the Triune God. For this reason Paul says in 3:21: "To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus."

In chapter 4 Paul begins to speak of the human cooperation needed to accomplish the building up of the Body of Christ. This cooperation includes being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit (4:3) and the functioning of the gifted members "for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry, unto the building up of the Body of Christ" (4:12) with the goal that we would "all arrive at the oneness of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (4:13). To arrive at "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" indicates that the actual realization of the church as the Body of Christ, the fullness of the One who fills all in all, is the result of a process based on growth. This is confirmed by verses 15 and 16, which tell us that we must grow up into Christ in all things so that the Body can issue forth from the Head, Christ, through the functioning of the joints of the rich supply and the operation in the measure of each one part. If we merely define the church as the Body, we risk neglecting the organic process by which the church becomes the Body of Christ in reality and practicality. Paul's burden in writing to the Ephesians was not merely to define the church to them, but to show them the need for the organic building up of the Body through the dispensing of the Triune God, our being constituted with the riches of Christ, our being filled unto all the fullness of God, and our growing to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Paul's concern in Ephesians is with the building up of the Body of Christ as a reality in the church. In this book, the mingled spirit plays a prominent role. In fact, every chapter of Ephesians unveils a particular

aspect of the mingled spirit. In chapter one we need to receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation (1:17) to know the economy of God carried out through His dispensing. In chapter two we are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit (2:22). In chapter three we see our need to be strengthened into the inner man (3:16), which is our regenerated spirit indwelt by and mingled with the Spirit. In chapter four we see our need to be renewed in the spirit of our mind (4:23) for the putting on of the new man. In chapter five we are charged to be filled in spirit (5:18), and in chapter six we are to take the Word by praying at every time in spirit (6:18).

Thus, in each of the three epistles in which Paul writes most extensively about the Body of Christ—Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians—his intention is not just to present an objective definition of the church as the Body of Christ. Rather, his goal is to bring all the saints into the reality of the Body of Christ through their subjective experience of Christ in God's organic salvation. Such a reality is the living out of the life that has been implanted in our mingled spirit through regeneration. Thus, to walk according to spirit is the crucial key to living in the reality of the Body of Christ, and the goal of our walking according to spirit is to build up the reality of the Body of Christ.

- ² This is clearly revealed in Genesis 2. There the story of Eve being built from a rib taken from Adam's side and presented to Adam to be one flesh with him typifies the church being built from that which comes out of Christ so that it can be presented to Christ as a corporate Bride that is one spirit with Him. Only that which came out of Adam could be his counterpart. In the same way only that which comes out of Christ can be His counterpart.

Gen. 2:22 – And Jehovah God ¹built the rib, which He had taken from the man, into a woman and brought her to the man.

fn. 2:22¹ – It does not say that Eve was created but that she was built. The building of Eve with the rib taken from Adam's side typifies the building of the church with the resurrection life released from Christ through His death on the cross and imparted into His believers in His resurrection (John 12:24; 1 Pet. 1:3). The church as the real Eve is the totality of Christ in all His believers. Only that which comes out of Christ with His resurrection life can be His complement and counterpart, the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 5:28-30).

Eph. 5:29-32 – [29] For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as Christ also the church, [30] because we are members of His Body. [31] For this cause a

man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. [32] This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

... That which is entirely from Christ and will be solely for Christ is Eve, the church. Eve typifies a corporate man made by God—the church that is wholly of Christ. The church is not a composition of human beings from every nation, race, and people. No! Only that which comes out of Christ can be called the church. It is not that many people believe in Jesus and become the church. The church is the portion which is out of Christ alone.... (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 34, pp. 40-41)

Only that which comes out of Christ can be recognized by Christ. Only that which comes out of Christ can return to Christ and match Him. Only that which comes out of the resurrection life of Christ can be His complement and counterpart, the Body of Christ. Only that which comes out of Christ and which is Christ Himself can be one with Christ. (*Life-study of Genesis*, p. 222)

Based on this definition, whatever is of the natural man, the natural life, and the natural constitution have no part in God's building (1 Cor. 3:12-13).

1 Cor. 3:12-13 – [12] But if anyone builds upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, ³wood, grass, stubble, [13] the work of each will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it is revealed by fire, and the fire itself will prove each one's work, of what sort it is.

fn. 3:12³ – Wood, grass, and stubble signify the knowledge, realization, and attainments that come from the believers' natural background (such as Judaism or other religions, philosophy, or culture) and the natural way of living (which is mainly in the soul and is the natural life). Wood, in contrast to gold, signifies the nature of the natural man; grass, in contrast to silver, signifies the fallen man, the man of the flesh (1 Pet. 1:24), who has not been redeemed or regenerated by Christ; and stubble, in contrast to precious stones, signifies the work and living that issue from an earthen source and have not been transformed by the Holy Spirit. All these worthless materials are the product of the believers' natural man together with what they have collected from their background. In God's economy these materials are fit only to be burned (v. 13).

Thus, if a believer is living in the natural man, in the flesh, and not in the mingled spirit, he is not actually and practically living in the Body of Christ.