

nd Sermons :: T.Austin-Sparks (TAS) and Witness Lee (WL) - a short story - by Herald Hsu, student of Wa

T.Austin-Sparks (TAS) and Witness Lee (WL) - a short story - by Herald Hsu, student of Watchman Nee - posted by vasi

(Student of Watchman Nee, co-laborer with the "little flock" in China and spiritually impacted by T. Austin-Sparks)

1957 - Special talk on the Locality Law between

TAS and Witness Lee

I had earlier recommended to WL that we collaborate with TAS, so that together we could build a worldwide spiritual testimony with his spirituality and our local church methodology. Therefore one Friday evening in 1957, WL asked me to stay in Taipei when all the other co-workers had gone back to their respective cities of service, because he would talk to TAS about the Locality Law (or church ground). A total of five people were at that meeting: TAS, Poul Madsen, Witness Lee (26446;24120;21463;), Zhang Wu-chen (24373; 26212;26216;), and Zhang Yu-lan (24373;37057;23888;). I stayed downstairs in the Worker's Home waiting to hear the report.

The meeting ended before 9:00 pm. WL came to the Worker's Home immediately afterwards to talk to me. He said, "I (Lee) asked TAS, 'If there are five different Christian groups in Taipei City, which one is the real church?' TAS thought for a little while and said, 'If those in the five Christian groups are really born again by the Holy Spirit (i.e. they have Christ in their hearts), then they are all churches, because the church is measured by Christ.' The three Chinese brothers in the meeting were deeply influenced by WN's Locality Law or Church Ground teaching and TAS saw by their facial expressions that they did not agree with what he said. So he asked, 'What do you mean by Church Ground?' WL said, 'Drawing from the 'type' in the Old Testament, Israel could not build the temple in Babylon, nor in the desert, but only in Jerusalem on the original ground.' TAS said, 'Yes. But what is Jerusalem's original ground?' Lee said, 'It is where the Holy Spirit built the church for the first time in Acts on the ground of one locality, one church.'

TAS immediately knew that was the teaching from WN's book "Rethinking of our Mission" (English version published in Honor Oak, England 1939), so he said, "This is your interpretation! As far as I know, the real Church Ground is not one locality, one church, but is Christ Himself!" When I heard this it was a shock to me because I also held fast to Nee's teaching at that time. It was really a great shake-up to me personally to realize that Jerusalem's original ground is not one locality, one church, but is Christ Himself!

Then WL argued with TAS saying, "We say that the Church Ground is one locality one church, which means Unity in one city." TAS said, "If you mean that the Church Ground means Unity in one city, it means that you agree with me, and disagree with yourselves! One locality one church teaching or other teachings cannot bring Unity among Christians. Only Christ Himself can bring Christians true Unity, not only in one place, but also in all other places! The truth is: Things divide; Christ unites!" When I heard this, it was a second shock to me; in fact, the Church Ground teaching collapsed within me and I totally abandoned that teaching from that moment!

WL wanted to argue further, but TAS said, "If you follow the Holy Spirit's leading and do certain things according to the examples in the New Testament, that is good, but don't say 'this is the only way!' The Holy Spirit is too vast to comprehend." Then TAS said, "There really is no need to continue this meeting!" And immediately the meeting ended right there!

After WL told me all of the above, he said, "We will never invite TAS into our midst again!" However, because my viewpoint on the church ground was totally changed through what I had heard, I argued with him till after midnight in fact until 1:00am. One thing I remember saying was, "TAS never intended to control or to seize our work, he only ministers Christ to us! If you don't work with TAS or you refuse his ministry, which is Christ Himself, then that means you are shutting out Jesus Christ (Rev. 3:20)! That is a very serious and dangerous matter!" Finally, Brother Lee seemed to be convinced by me and said, "I will work with him (TAS) again!" and I was appeased. I said to brother Lee, "If brother Watchman Nee were here tonight, he would have changed his position on the Locality Law!" But Brother Lee seemed to disagree with me. (This conversation was on the Friday night.)

The next Monday morning, brother TAS continued his messages on "The Persistent Purpose of God". When he spoke (chapter nine, page 69 of the book by the same title) he said, "We must be very careful not to make Christ or His Church smaller than it really is. We must not make Christ smaller than what God has made Him. We may not make Him just our Christ, our little Christ, the Christ that belongs to us, the Christ of our particular locality!" WL didn't like translating this passage into Chinese!

On the same day, at around 3:00 pm, WL came to the Workers' Home to see me. He pounded on the table angrily and shouted at me, "We hold fast to the Church Ground, why does that make us a Little church, a Little Christ?" I was astonished and kept silent! It seemed to me that WL would no longer work with TAS in the future! This conversation was in private, not in public.

At that time I said myself, "Whether WL works with TAS or not, it no longer mattered to me because I was no longer interested in the locality law! Through TAS's ministry, I have been given a new Bible by the Holy Spirit, in which I see the living Christ everywhere. The greatest need of every local church is spiritual food (the living Christ). The elementary principles of Christ (spiritual milk) are good but not enough; we must go on and learn obedience through sufferings (solid food) to reach full maturity. If the elementary principles become merely traditions, we would lose the freshness and impact of life: "The grapes of Eshcol became raisins" (Num 13:23). We have to abide in and minister new light and life (the new living Christ from the Bible) and feed Christians with solid food." Now I had begun to get this spiritual food directly from the Bible!

1958 - WL sent me to Gao-Xiong (the second largest city in Taiwan) to serve.

1959 - A Tragic year for Watchman Nee's Groups

1959 - In the sovereignty of God, 1959 was the beginning of a tragic and terrible year for WN's groups (including WL). The reason: In April, after one of the Thursday evening Bible study meetings on John chapter 4, at around 8:40 pm, WL (his face red with anger) made a public (not private) announcement when all the co-workers of the Taiwan churches and the local saints were gathered together in Taipei. This announcement consisted of:

(1) His formal proclamation: "From now on, I will no longer work with TAS." This contradicted with his public announcement and comment in 1955: "We are going to work with TAS! He is like refined pure gold and a pressed diamond! In 1934 WN introduced TAS and spread his ministry to the whole of China! We were all glad to hear that in 1955, which was the first time TAS visited the Far East. WN also referred to TAS as a spiritual man several times while I was in Shanghai in 1947. This meant that in effect, WL had stated that he would no longer work with spiritual people from 1959 onwards.

(2) He spoke evilly against TAS. He used the Shandong dialect in speaking against TAS, which basically meant, "TAS' message (little church, little Christ) in 1957 was like passing gas!" (1957
那天晚上 我叫他吃了一口氣﹐他第二天 就放出來了.)

When I heard WL's terrible words, my whole being was shocked and I was shaken right to the core. I sighed in my heart: "O dear brother Lee, what are you doing?! Why?! Those dirty words... let it not even be named among us, as is fitting for saints! Eph. 5:3!"

(3) He cursed himself: Using Jacob's words he said, "If there is a division among us due to my refusing to work with TAS, I shall go down to Sheol in mourning!" (Gen. 37:35). (如果因為我不與史弟兄同工﹐而使我們中間發生分裂﹐我就悲悲慘慘的下陰間!)

This was the first time ever that a meeting ended without a concluding prayer, and everybody went home sad! The day after, WL became sick. He could not do any public speaking for the next six months.

After this public announcement, I went back to Gao-Xiong the very next morning. Following the leading of the Holy Spirit I prepared to leave brother Lee's co-worker relationship. Thanks be to the Lord, my wife got a teaching job in Gao-Xiong high school. From then on, I ceased to participate in brother Lee's co-workers' meetings. At the time, some leading brothers and sisters came to my home and wanted to support and follow me. I said to them, "No! Don't follow me! I am nothing! If you follow me now, in a little while, you would want to kill me because I am not your ideal Christian! You and I need to pray that God reveals His Son in us, so that we will all follow Him! Because of TAS' ministry, the Holy Spirit opened my eyes and I have really begun to see the revelation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. My life has been changing and in a revolutionary way! Please study TAS' books and receive the revelation by the Holy Spirit of God's Son! Then we can work together in that day with a heavenly vision!"

1960 - I started to publish the "Overcomer" periodical in Gao-Xiong and later in Manila. Most of the messages in it were TAS' messages translated into Chinese. On July 29, 1961 I received official permission from TAS to translate his messages. Now these can be read in Chinese at www.austin-sparks.net and also www.geocities.com/heraldhsu.

1961 - WN's (including WL's) groups began the long history of repeated divisions. First it was the church in Manila, subsequently, churches in Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong and Taiwan, all suffered breakups. Even today, forty years after these initial divisions, those who followed Nee's Locality teaching and work, continue to divide and be exclusive! It's a tragedy! In principle, those who followed WL's co-workers and elders, including

many of the second generation were, and are, really experiencing “going down to Sheol in mourning”. Finally some of them separated from Witness Lee!

In the midst of all this great turmoil, TAS wrote to this Author on 7/26/1961:

"The great enemy does not give up his determination to interrupt fellowship and to spoil the work of the Lord by bringing division among His people. Everywhere this evil work is being pressed with increasing intensity. The enemy is set upon destroying anything that will result in the Lord Jesus coming into His full place. We must stand and withstand and do all in our power to keep this ground from him. It is costly, and it demands that we let go all that is only personal, and that we stand for the glory of our Lord's name and His interests alone... I am sure that you will never make me or my ministry a ground of division. There is no need to fight for me; the Lord is on the Throne, and He can order things to His Own Will - while we pray and trust Him."

After WN’s group (including WL) in Manila divided, God’s servants Simon Meek (繆紹訓) and Luke Wu (吳仁傑) invited me to Manila to serve. When I arrived in Manila at the end of 1961, the first thing that I asked them to do was to write an invitation letter to TAS inviting him to come to Manila to help us, because only TAS' ministry (Christ Himself) could solve the Far East problems.

Upon receiving the letter, TAS shared it with other servants of the Lord. Brother C.R. Golsworthy and his wife were led by the Holy Spirit to accept the burden. TAS confirmed it. Brother and sister Golsworthy came to Manila in 1962.

Finally in 1964, TAS and his wife also came to Manila where they stayed and ministered to us for a month. TAS held two special conferences and also spoke in regular meetings. He delivered 42 messages in all, leading us and the whole body of Christ into the spiritual and heavenly realms.

Thanks be to God! Now these 42 messages have been published in two volumes titled “That They May All Be One, Even As We Are One”. These books are available free upon request by writing to: Emmanuel Church, 12,000 East 14th Street, Tulsa, OK 74128-5016, USA. Or they can be viewed at www.austin-sparks.net.

Concerning the "Locality law", TAS wrote to us in Manila from London on April 12, 1962:

“Dear Brother Wu:

Your letter addressed to me in London has been sent on to me here in U.S.A. Thank you for writing so fully regarding the situation there in Manila, I came to America near the end of February, and have had a very full time in various parts of this country. Now I am preparing to return to London in four days from now, to be there for the special meetings that we have always had at Easter.

I have carefully read all that you have told me as to the reason for the division with brother Lee and those who have formed another assembly on the special basis of "Locality". Soon after I arrived here I had a long talk with brother Lee in which he gave me his own views on the matter. He read to me many letters, which had passed between you, brother Herald Hsu, and himself. He also told me of the serious event in Manila when armed guards took charge of the Assembly Hall to lock the doors and keep people from meeting there. He showed me the copy of the official letter of the lawyer demanding that the property, finances, etc. be handed over to you and brother Meek. I still refuse to take sides in all this. Knowing very well that there are always many things on both sides, which I do not know nor understand.

I can only take any position on what I believe to be fundamental. For me, the basis (or ground) of the Church is quite fundamental. I cannot accept that the basis is what is called "Locality". I believe that where Christ truly is, even if it be in only "two or three" there the Church is in effect. Christ is the "foundation" (or ground), and "other foundation can no man lay". But when I have said that, brother, I feel that you are, perhaps unconsciously, involved in the "Locality" position.

Do you know that that is precisely and positively the teaching and position of the people called "Exclusive Brethren"? This teaching first went to Shanghai with the leading Exclusive Brethren who tried to capture the whole work of brother Nee. Brother Nee refused to be made an official part of that body, but the teaching got in, and has gone on ever since. When I came to Manila and Hong Kong I was very sorry to see that in both Assembly Halls there were for sale many of the books from the Stow Hill Bible Dept. in England. I feared that this would lead to both exclusiveness and division, and as late as last year one of the biggest divisions took place among them. Their whole church teaching is based upon this "Locality" law. (That is, the church ground.) Brother Lee is the strongest exponent of it in the Far East. I love brother Lee and will do all possible to avoid separation from him.

We must all fight hard to prevent divisions, and our ground must be Christ in all His own... I shall continue to pray for you all, and that the Lord will get a great victory over all the evil powers which are working so hard to bring dishonor upon His name everywhere... Give my greetings to all the brothers and sisters.

Yours in the love and grace of our Lord Jesus,

T. Austin-Sparks"

Forty years ago, the Holy Spirit forbade me to write down these historic facts because at that time, I was learning the lessons of the Cross (obedience through sufferings, and subjecting myself to the disciplines of the Holy Spirit). Men may have been wrong, things may have been incorrect, situations may have been difficult etc. but God allowed them to happen to bring my self-centered life to light (my self-conceit, self-righteousness, self-murmuring, self-discontent, self-arguments, my spiritual work, my ministry, my zeal for the Lord, etc.) That was good! When I willingly denied myself, the measure of Christ was spontaneously increased.

Thanks be to the Lord! Although at that time the Holy Spirit did not allow me to work with brother Lee, the Christ in my heart still loved him and prayed for him and that has never changed! In fact, all the followers of the Lamb are going to repudiate the things of the flesh, the things of the world, this natural life, legalism; even so-called spiritual works, but the living Christ in their hearts not only loves the brethren, He also loves their enemies! When under the disciplines of the Holy Spirit I discovered my self-centered life, by God's grace I was always led to repent and to be corrected accordingly! Jesus says, "Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny" (Matt. 5:26).

Thanks to God, in February 1997 at a special conference, our dear brother WL showed public repentance before he died, (in Chen Xing Sheng Yan - #26216;#33288;#32854;#35328; 1997, page 50) #8220;I have sinned against the Body of Christ, I have sinned against many brothers and sisters. For this, I have deeply repented before the Lord!#8221; (#23565;#19981;#36215;#22522;#30563;#30340;#36523;#39636;, #23565;#19981;#36215;#35377;#22810;#24351;#20804;#22986;#22969;#65104;#28858;#33879;#36889;#20214;#20107;#25105;#22312;#20027;#38754;#21069;#26377;#24456;#28145;#30340;#24724;#25913;!)

(Author's note: According to the Author's knowledge, these included elder brothers and sisters such as T AS (#21490;#30334;#20811;), London; Simon Meek (#32326;#32057;#35347;), Manila; Faithful Luke (#38520;#24544;#20449;), Singapore; Luke Wu (#21555;#20161;#20625;), Manila; Chen Ze-Xin (#38515;#21063;#20449;), Hong Kong; Stephen Kaung (#27743;#23432;#36947;), USA; Ma Kui-Chun (#39340;#33909;#26149;), Taiwan; Hou xiu-Ying (#20399;#31168;#33521;), Taiwan; and many other dear brothers and sisters.)

Although brother WL had repented, many of his followers have not! This is to serve as a warning and a challenge to us! We need to repent immediately, and not wait! We have to be #8220;buying up the opportunity, because the days are evil#8221; (Eph. 5:16 Gk)! Satan wants us to spend all our time engaging in Christian activities, but never to learn obedience through sufferings in our homes, in our businesses, in our service, and manifest Christ Himself in our mortal bodies!

Isaiah and other saints were allowed by the Spirit to write the history of King Uzziah, how he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and God made him prosper. But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction! He became leprous, and remained a leper until the day of his death (Isa. 6:1; 2 Chr. 26)! What a tragic story it was!

Paul and Luke were allowed by the Spirit to write down the history of Barnabas. He was a Levite, a son of encouragement, and sold his land for the Lord. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. He was sent out to Antioch to help Saul of Tarsus and he worked with Paul. But in the end he played the hypocrite. #8220;Even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy#8221; (Gal. 2:13)!

Forty years later, the Holy Spirit urged me to write down these facts. Why? The Holy Spirit says,

"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we... might have hope." (Rom. 15:4). Our hope is in Christ, not in men, even great men of God. Out of the Old Man comes praise of man and glorification of man. Out of the New Man, any reference to historical happenings should be seen as simply increasing the measure of Christ. The lessons are not only for our learning, but also for the succeeding generations.

The Bible treats a number of God's servants in an unusual manner: Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Peter, John and Paul were all crucified men and greatly used by God, but there are no records about their deaths, funerals and graves. Why is this? Because they themselves were all nothing and don't need to be remembered. They were called by God only as instruments and their vocation or function was ministering Christ; which was important and eternal. And so the Bible only records their vocations or functions.

Why did God allow those things to happen? (1) The Holy Spirit leads us to "see His glory", and shows us that men (even those greatly used by God) are nothing. (Please read: "Because He Saw His Glory" and "Even Barnabas" on the www.austin-sparks.net website) (2) The Holy Spirit used the divisions of WNC's groups as a background and opportunity for TAS to minister the invaluable spiritual and heavenly messages to the whole body of Christ, from 1957 through till this very day; even though the servant of the Lord has passed away, yet Christ still ministers abundant life through His servant's words! Truly His name is Wonderful. HE has set free those who were in legalism and exclusiveness!

In the sovereignty of God, there were many who opposed Paul. His opponents included the Galatians, the Corinthians and the Ephesians. But Paul learned obedience through sufferings and his wonderful testimony shines through: "Now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ"! For two thousand years, Christians have been ministered to through him! We have to thank those who opposed Paul!

Today we have to thank those who oppose spiritual people! We have to recognize that through all ages and generations those who have chosen the spiritual and heavenly way and stuck to it, were opposed by earthly and soulish people! This was, and is, the woman (all saints in the Old and New Testaments) who cried out in labor and in pain to give birth to the Man Child (overcomers) (Rev. 12:1-5; 2:27; 3:21). But God's eternal purpose will be fulfilled! "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ, and He shall reign for the ages of the ages, Amen" (Rev. 11:15 VM)!

From 1962 until today - I spent an additional 13 years in Manila before moving to the USA in 1973. After 17 years in New Jersey, I relocated to California with my family where we have been living for more than 13 years. In all those years I have served Christians according to Paul's words: "For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Phi. 1:29)! By the mercy of God, may all the Christians everywhere enter into the full revelation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, so that God's eternal purpose might be fulfilled!

Herald Hsu

Los Angeles

February 2004

Chinese website: www.geocities.com/heraldhsu

The Complete Article:

(http://www.geocities.com/heraldhsu/testimony_grace_of_god.htm) http://www.geocities.com/heraldhsu/testimony_grace_of_god.htm

Vasile - Praise the Lord!

Re: T.Austin-Sparks (TAS) and Witness Lee (WL) - a short story - by Herald Hsu, student of Watchman Nee - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/4/1 20:05

Dear vasilef,

This is truly astounding! The rivers of ink and mountains of pulp that might have been saved just by this that you have brought forth. It is not very far removed from us that much of this very discussion took place here.

This is a testimony to itself and more so to the Lord Himself. The spiritual honesty would be a great difficulty to miss, the love shown forth *regardless* ... what a devastating blow to the whole argument! I cannot see anything other than the whole of this to be a challenge not only to the issue at hand but more broadly to what we ought to be as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

My sincere appreciation for bringing this to the light of day. May this manner of Spirit burn within us all!

Re: T.Austin-Sparks (TAS) and Witness Lee (WL) - a short story - by Herald Hsu, student of Watchman Nee - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/4/1 20:05

Quote:

-----"The great enemy does not give up his determination to interrupt fellowship and to spoil the work of the Lord by bringing division among His people. Everywhere this evil work is being pressed with increasing intensity. The enemy is set upon destroying anything that will result in the Lord Jesus coming into His full place. We must stand and withstand and do all in our power to keep this ground from him. It is costly, and it demands that we let go all that is only personal, and that we stand for the glory of our Lord's name and His interests alone... I am sure that you will never make me or my ministry a ground of division. There is no need to fight for me; the Lord is on the Throne, and He can order things to His Own Will - while we pray and trust Him."

Re: - posted by Graftedbranch, on: 2006/4/1 20:05

I just wanted to present Witness Lee's own teaching concerning the ground of the church:

CHAPTER TWO

PRACTICING THE BODY LIFE ON THE PROPER GROUND OF ONENESS

Scripture Reading: Deut. 12:5, 11, 13-14, 18a; 14:23; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 15-16

Some may ask why we pay so much attention to the ground of the church. It seems that it is not something related to the gospel, the inner life, the growth of life, or the Lord's glory. When we deal with anything, however, we need to have the insight to look into it, not only outwardly but even at its root. To see anything only outwardly is too childish and superficial. We do not want to be like children. If a wooden object has paint on the outside, it is not right to call that object "paint." The real item is wood, not paint; the paint is only on the surface. This illustrates that we must have the proper insight.

The enemy Satan is very subtle. Throughout all the past years he has been frustrating, blinding, and distracting God's people and even making many counterfeits. In these days, however, we are clear that God's intention, eternal purpose, and heart's desire are to work Christ into a group of people, to mingle Christ with them, and to build them up to be the living Body of Christ, His living expression, in all the communities where human beings live. God began this work after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and He will realize it on this earth in this age. Of course, the ultimate consummation of the divine plan is the New Jerusalem. Before that time, however, God's intention is to have a living expression of His Son in this age, here and there in all the cities on this earth. This should not be hard for people to grasp; if we are not preoccupied, this vision from the Scriptures will be very clear. Regrettably, though, many Christians are not willing to be clear about this because they are preoccupied and distracted by something else.

THREE CATEGORIES OF SATAN'S FRUSTRATIONS TO THE CHURCH

Substitutes for Christ

The church has almost two thousand years of history. In these two thousand years we can see many things that the enemy has done. From the beginning of the church life, the enemy came in to frustrate, damage, distract, and make counterfeits of God's plan. All the things the enemy has done fall into three categories. The first category is the substitutes for Christ. Consider how many substitutes for Christ there are. Christ is the center, the reality, and all in all to God's chosen and elect people. The book of Colossians, however, was written because at that time human philosophy had become a substitute for Christ. Of all the human inventions, the best item was philosophy, including Gnosticism. God's intention is to work Christ into His chosen people, but the enemy utilized the best invention of human civilization to substitute for Christ. Therefore, the apostle Paul told the Colossians that Christ is the allotted portion of the saints and that Christ must be all in all to us (1:12; 3:11).

Similarly, the book of Hebrews was written because the enemy Satan utilized even Judaism, the religion ordained and appointed by God, to replace Christ. Judaism was ordained, appointed, established, and used by God. We may illustrate Judaism by a medicine bottle. A mother's intention may be to give medicine to her child, but the naughty child may care for the bottle, not the medicine. God's intention is not to work Judaism into His chosen people. His intention is to work Christ into His chosen people, but the enemy of God utilized Judaism to replace Christ and substitute for Him. That is why the writer of Hebrews wrote that book, telling us that Christ is above all and better than all. Christ, not Judaism or anything religious, is the goal.

Similarly, Galatians was written because at that time the Judaizers were utilized by the enemy to make the law a substitute for Christ. The law was given by God, but even something given by God can be used by the enemy to replace Christ, to take the place of Christ among God's chosen people.

Paul wrote the first Epistle to the Corinthians to adjust the Corinthians concerning teachings and the use of the gifts, including speaking in tongues. The enemy utilized even the New Testament dispensational gifts to replace Christ. In 1:22 and 23 Paul said, "For indeed Jews require signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified." Even gifts, signs, and wisdom can be certain kinds of substitutes for Christ. All these things—philosophy, religion, law, and gifts—were substitutes for Christ in the first century of the church.

Then from the second century down to the present time there have been many other substitutes. Forms, teachings, and many other things have substituted for Christ. Many people, for example, stand not for Christ alone but for a certain kind of teaching. Roman Catholicism itself is a great and evil substitute for Christ. Even theology substitutes for God; theology, the study, substitutes for Theos, the reality. The enemy is subtle to use something that is very close to but not the real item. He injects it into us, and we are poisoned by it without being aware of it. Unconsciously we are distracted by something which is very close to Christ. Today in the so-called Christian churches there are choirs and solos, and there are also certain sinful things. There are all kinds of substitutes—good, evil, spiritual, and secular. Satan does not care what kind of substitute it is; as long as he can distract us from Christ, that is good enough for him.

The System of Clergy and Laity

The second category of Satan's frustrations and damage to the church is the system of the clergy. According to history, Satan not only used many substitutes to replace and usurp the place of Christ, but he also invented the clerical system. Today there is a difference between the clergy and laity. This kills the functions of the members of the Body of Christ. Originally all the members of the Body, without exception, were functioning, but gradually the enemy set up the system of the clergy to limit the function to a small number of believers while the majority of believers were put out of their function. In this way the Body became paralyzed. This is the subtlety of the enemy. Satan's first frustration is to kill the life of the Body, which is Christ, by substituting many other things for Christ. The second frustration is that the enemy invented the system of the clergy.

Divisions in the Body of Christ

Satan is not satisfied to have only these two frustrations. The third item of his frustration and damage is divisions, sects, and denominations. These not only replace the life and kill the functions of the Body, but they cut the Body into pieces. In this way the expression of Christ is damaged. The life is replaced, the functions are damaged, and the whole Body is cut into pieces. There are many real Christians in a large city, perhaps at least fifty thousand genuine believers. If these fifty thousand real believers were not divided, they would have a great impact. It would be easy to conquer and subdue the whole United States.

The enemy is very subtle. He has replaced Christ by usurping His ground and place, killed the functions of the members, and divided the Body. How poor and pitiful this is! Many Christians are not related to one another. They are merely independent, isolated, individual believers. Because of this, there are many members, but we do not have the Body. The enemy is still doing this work today. He utilizes many good things to isolate us. The enemy works in our reasoning, but regardless of the reasons, as long as we are isolated, this is good enough for the enemy.

By the above three categories of means, Satan has almost completely damaged the church life. The United States is a nation of Christianity. The forefathers of this country came over to this land mostly because of their Christian faith. But today, even in this country, where is the church? We have substitutes for Christ, we have the clergy, and we have the divisions, but we do not have the church. There is no need to argue with this; the facts are apparent. The church has been damaged by these three categories of things. This is why in all these days we have stressed Christ as our life, content, and

everything to us—**not** the substitutes for Christ, but Christ Himself. This is also why we help one another to function as members of the Body. We do not want to have either the clergy or the laity. Rather, we have the brothers and sisters as functioning members. We all have to function. If you say that I am a “pastor,” I will say that you are a “minister.” We encourage all the brothers and sisters to minister in order to express Christ. Why then do we pay so much attention to the ground of the church? It is to deal with the divisions.

FIGHTING THE BATTLE FOR THE LORD’S RECOVERY OF THE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH

The Lord’s recovery today consists of three main items. It is the recovery of Christ as life and everything to us, the recovery of the universal priesthood with the functions of all the members, and the recovery of the proper oneness of the church. It is when these three items are recovered that we will have the proper and adequate church life. There must be a group of believers who take Christ as their unique life and content, who realize that each one of us must function not as clergy or laity but as living members, and who give up the divisions, sects, and denominations to come to the proper ground to practice the proper oneness. If there is a people like this, they will realize the Lord’s recovery in a full way.

In some places certain dear friends have advised me, saying, “Praise the Lord, you have a ministry from the Lord. As long as you expound the Word, we appreciate it, but do not talk about the church.” As I spoke in a certain city recently, my hosts treated me honorably, but they said, “Everyone appreciates your ministry about the inner life, but this is not the right time to touch the issue of the church.” They did everything they could to stop me from speaking anything about the church, but on the last night I was there, I said, “I do not take care of this restriction. I have to speak something about the church.” When I began to read from Romans 12 in order to say something about the Body, all those dear friends were grieved. The next morning when we were leaving, no one came to see us off. Praise the Lord, I like to be treated in this way! I like to suffer for the Body of Christ.

Many dear friends in the Far East and Europe advised me in the same way, not only face to face but also in long writings. They said that the Lord’s work among us is good, but the matter of the church is like dead flies that “cause the perfume’s ointment to stink” (Eccl. 10:1). I have the notorious title of being “the strongest exponent of the church in the Far East.” I am not worthy to have this title. I am nobody and nothing, yet certain people have given me such a big title. This is the subtlety of the enemy. I praise the Lord that I am counted worthy to suffer in this way.

We published a book in Chinese by Brother Watchman Nee that originally was entitled Holy without Blemish. When we translated that book into English, we felt that the title should be changed to The Glorious Church. When the book was published as Holy without Blemish, it sold very well. Many people ordered it. However, when we changed the title to The Glorious Church, there were no further sales, even though it was the same book. This is because it spoke about the church. The church is the stumbling stone. Oh, how subtle the enemy is! We have to fight the battle for the church. The more I am advised not to speak about the church, the more I do speak about the church. The more someone tries to shut my mouth, the more I wish I had two mouths with which to speak.

PRACTICING THE BODY LIFE WITHOUT DIVISION

In a large city such as Los Angeles, there are many denominations and divisions. When someone is saved and becomes a member of the Body of Christ, he must live the Body life. How then can he realize the Body life? Should he place himself in the Roman Catholic Church? Should he go to the Presbyterians, Baptists, or Episcopalians? Where can he practice the Body life? This is a real problem; it is not a small matter. This is why we need to have the proper ground of the church without any denominational element, a ground without any division. The proper ground is the ground of the locality, the local ground, the unique ground of the oneness of the church.

The one who is saved should try his best to find other believers in his city, and he should meet with them, help them, and be helped by them. Then these believers, who are not in the denominations but simply living in this city, should come together not to form anything, not to create another division, but to stand on the ground of the locality where they are. If any others who are in the “small circles” of divisions realize that they have to give up the circles, they should do it. If they do not, however, there is no need to proselyte them. There are many unsaved ones to whom we can testify, minister Christ, bring to Christ, and bring into this proper church life. To practice in this way is to practice the unique ground of oneness.

If this brother one day moves to another city, he should first realize that he is simply a brother in that city. Then he should do his best to find others there who take the same standing of the local ground, the ground of oneness. When he meets with them, he should try to help them and try to be helped by them. These who come together become a group of belie

vers standing on the proper ground in that city. If in that city there is already a group of believers standing on this proper ground, the brother has to be willing to submit himself to them. He should not say, "Those people seem peculiar to me. When I pray, I pray in a very silent way, but those people pray too emotionally. I do not want to join them. I will start another meeting in my home where I can pray silently." If he says this, he will eventually raise up a "praying silently" church. He may not declare or claim to be doing that; he may proclaim that he is not sectarian or denominational. In actuality, however, that is what he is doing. This is the problem with divisions. If the brother finds a group of genuine believers standing on the proper ground, then regardless of the way they have their meeting, practice their service, or pray, he has to join them.

To say this is easy, but within only the past two years we have been tested in this regard. Certain brothers heard about our meeting in Los Angeles and came to us imagining that we must be something in the third heavens. When they came, however, they realized that we were actually something in "the valley." They began to ask, "Why this?" and "Why that?" in a divisive way. As long as someone asks in this way, he is sectarian. The answer to "Why this?" is that we are simply the church in Los Angeles. The answer to "Why that?" is that we are, in principle, the church in Jerusalem or the church in Antioch. If someone does not care to meet with the church on the local ground, he should not raise up another meeting in this city. To do so would be sectarian. Someone may say, "These poor people in Los Angeles pray 'in the valley.' I want to meet where I can pray 'in the heavens.'" He may do so, but he should go to another city to do that. When he gets to that city, however, he may find that there is already a group of people standing on the proper ground. If he tries to move away to yet another city, he still must take the standing of the proper ground in that city. Eventually, he must submit himself, or he will create a division. We have no right to make a division.

THE UNIQUE CENTER FOR THE WORSHIP TO GOD

Someone may ask us, "If you have no right to make a division, then why do you not join our circle? Why do you separate yourselves from all the circles? Is that not a division?" We cannot join those "circles" because they are divisions. To join any one of them is to join a division. How can we do this? We must keep away from divisions. Consider the picture of Israel in the good land. When God brought all His people into the land, He chose Jerusalem as the unique place for them to come together to worship Him. According to Deuteronomy 12 through 16, Jerusalem was the one unique center. Verse 5 of chapter twelve says, "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." All the people of the twelve tribes had to come to this one place. No one had the right to set up another place of worship, regardless of the reason. It is by the unique center for worship that the oneness of the twelve tribes was constantly kept throughout all the centuries.

Suppose that the Israelites had the right to set up other centers for worship. After five years another small center may have been set up in the north, and after another five years, more centers may have been set up in other regions. By all these centers, the people of God eventually would have been divided. However, they were not allowed to do this. They had no right to do this. One Israelite may have fought with his neighbor just before the Feast of Tabernacles. When the time of the feast came, however, both he and his neighbor, as males of the people of Israel, had no other choice but to go to Jerusalem. If one saw the other on the way to Jerusalem, he had no right to say, "Are you going there? Then I will not. I will set up a center for worship right here." If he did this, he would be cut off from the people of Israel. To be cut off was to suffer death. This was very serious. All the males of the people of Israel had to go to the one unique place three times a year. In order not to be cut off, each one had to go to the same place, even if his enemy was there. Not only did they have to go to that place; they also had to worship God by offering the peace offering and sharing it with one another. This would compel each one to say, "Brother, forgive me." Then they would experience Psalm 133: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is / For brothers to dwell in unity!" (v. 1).

According to Deuteronomy 12 through 16, there was no possibility to have division. There was no alternative, no choice. They were bound and limited. God already had chosen a place for them to go, and they had no right to choose for themselves. Ninety percent of the produce that they reaped from the good land they could enjoy in any place of their choice at any time. However, they had no right to choose the place to enjoy the tithe of ten percent. To enjoy that portion of the rich surplus of the land, they had to go to the only place chosen and appointed by God. This is a type of our experience today. On the one hand, we have the right to enjoy and experience Christ at any time and in any place that we like. However, as long as we are going to have the church life to enjoy Christ in a corporate way as a worship to the Father, we have no choice. We have to do this to keep the oneness of the Body.

A REMNANT RETURNING TO SEPARATE THEMSELVES FOR THE ONENESS, BUT NOT TO MAKE A DIVISION

The people of Israel did as God commanded, but once they were captured, they went into exile in Babylon and other places for seventy years. After the seventy years, the Lord came in to call them to come back to keep the oneness. However,

er, not all the people in exile came back; only a small number, a minority, returned. When this small number returned to the place of oneness, spontaneously they separated themselves from those who did not return. This was a separation, but it was not a division. They simply came back to realize the proper oneness on the proper ground. It was those who still insisted on remaining in Babylon who made the division. Those who came back had the oneness, but those who remained in exile kept the divisions.

Someone who remained in the exile might have said, "Ezra and Nehemiah, you preach that we have to keep the oneness of the people of the Lord. Why then do you separate from us? Why do you not stay with us and join us? On the one hand, you preach oneness, but on the other hand, you create division." If someone asks us in this way, we should say, "Brother, come along with me. We can keep the oneness only on the proper ground. As long as you are outside the proper ground, you are in division. Therefore, it is not lawful for me to join you. If I join you, I join the division."

Someone may ask, "What about Daniel? Daniel remained in Babylon and did not return from exile." It is true that under the Lord's sovereignty Daniel did not go back. Still, Daniel's heart and his eyes were always going back. Day by day he opened his window and prayed toward Jerusalem (Dan. 6:10). We should not take Daniel's case as an excuse not to return to the oneness. It is not right to stay back. We cannot have the real oneness on the wrong ground. We have to come back to the proper ground. We cannot have real oneness in a denomination. To join a denomination is to join a division.

Some Israelites left Babylon, but they stopped midway in the Arab lands before they reached the proper ground. In doing this, they created another division. Others who left Babylon came back to places very close to Jerusalem, but they stopped short. This created yet another division. We have to come back to the unique ground, the ground of oneness, the local ground. Some may say, "We have given up the denominations. We now have free groups in our homes." However, that ground may be in "the Arab lands" or even close to Jerusalem, but it is not yet the proper ground. It is still in division.

In the present day, the nation of Israel has only a few million people. In New York, however, there are even more millions of Jews. Who are the ones in division, those who went back to Palestine to form the nation of Israel or those who are in New York? It is those who remain in New York, simply because they are on the wrong ground. If they want to practice the Jewish oneness, they have to go back to Israel. They can never practice the proper oneness in New York. New York is a ground for division, not for oneness.

We may also use the illustration of a university with several thousand students. The school may call all the students to be assembled in the auditorium. Most of the students, however, may not like to go there. Some would prefer to assemble in another hall, some in a dormitory, some in their small rooms, and some outside. They all have their own choice and taste, and most of them would not follow the rule of the school. Only a small number, perhaps twenty or thirty, may consider that since they are students of this school, they have to take the order of the school and assemble in the proper place. Then they would call the others and say, "Friends, let us come together." Who are the ones taking the proper ground, and who are taking the wrong ground? All the other assemblies are wrong; they are divisions. Only a small number of students are endeavoring to keep the oneness of the school. One of the other meetings may have twenty thousand students, but they are still a division because their ground is wrong. We have to keep the oneness on the proper ground.

CLOSING THE BACK DOOR TO DIVISIONS

As human beings, we have to be Christians. To be a Christian is to be a member of the Body. As members of the Body, we must have the Body life, and to be in the Body life, we must find the proper ground, put ourselves on it, and practice the proper church life. This is very important; it is not a small matter. Without the proper ground there is no safeguard against further divisions. If we do not realize the proper ground, we may be happy today, but after two months we may all feel unhappy. We may start another meeting in another place and feel that there is no difference between the two places of meetings. Then after five months someone may start a third place of meeting. This can go on endlessly if there is no safeguard, standard, or limitation. However, if we all realize the proper ground and have the vision, the light, concerning the church ground, we will be limited. The back door for divisions will be closed. No one among us could make any divisions because we know that in order to have the oneness in the church life, we must keep ourselves on the proper ground.

TURNING TO THE GENTILES WITH FAITH AND A VISION OF THE PROPER ONENESS

We cannot remain in the denominations, because they are divisions. However, if someone desires to stay in the denominations, there is no need to argue with him or to try to convince him to come out. Many times both in the Far East and in the Western world, Christians came to me and said, "Brother Lee, I do not feel that it is necessary for me to give up the

denominations. I said to them, "Brothers, do what you feel in peace." If they want to stay there, let them, but eventually they will suffer a loss.

Some may think that we should go to the denominations and fellowship with them so that they can see what we have. We have done this many times. In 1937 I traveled throughout almost all the northern provinces of China for this purpose, but very little resulted from that. In Acts 13 the apostles did their best to minister the word to the Jews, but the Jews rejected it. The apostle then said, "Behold, we turn to the Gentiles" (v. 46). If we are rejected, we should do the same thing. I can never forget how in May of 1934 Brother Nee and I talked together as we drove from Shanghai to a little city nearby. While he was driving, he turned to me and said, "Brother Lee, now we have no other way but to turn to the Gentiles." He said this because at that time we were rejected by Christianity in China. People used our writings on the gospel, edification, and life, but in one matter—the church—they could not get through. We were rejected because of this. People came to us secretly to buy our books; they liked those books and they used them, but they would not take the way of the church. Therefore, Brother Nee was forced and compelled to say, "Let us go to the Gentiles."

We praise the Lord that after a few years the work began in a prevailing way among the Gentiles. A good number were brought into the church life. Hundreds of new converts were baptized daily. Our success depends on how faithful we are to the Lord. Do not look at the environment, at the present situation. We must have faith, and we must have the vision.

Ground of the church and meetings of the church by Witness Lee

Grafted branch

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/4/2 1:42

GB did you read the one prior to this?

Quote:
-----In some places certain dear friends have advised me, saying, "Praise the Lord, you have a ministry from the Lord. As long as you expound the Word, we appreciate it, but do not talk about the church." As I spoke in a certain city recently, my hosts treated me honorably, but they said, "Everyone appreciates your ministry about the inner life, but this is not the right time to touch the issue of the church." They did everything they could to stop me from speaking anything about the church, but on the last night I was there, I said, "I do not take care of this restriction. I have to speak something about the church." When I began to read from Romans 12 in order to say something about the Body, all those dear friends were grieved. The next morning when we were leaving, no one came to see us off. Praise the Lord, I like to be treated in this way! I like to suffer for the Body of Christ.

Suffer?

This still is circular reasoning, this whole thing and it is still unnecessary division irregardless of how much it is stated that it is not.

Quote:
-----Someone may ask us, "If you have no right to make a division, then why do you not join our circle? Why do you separate yourselves from all the circles? Is that not a division?" We cannot join those "circles" because they are divisions. To join any one of them is to join a division. How can we do this? We must keep away from divisions.

Re: - posted by Bomar, on: 2006/4/2 3:46

GB -

Are you in the Local Church Movement currently?

Re: - posted by Graftedbranc, on: 2006/4/2 13:04

Quote:
-----his still is circular reasoning, this whole thing and it is still unnecessary division irregardless of how much it is stated that it is not.

The "unnecessary divisions" already exist. They have been in place for many centuries.

What brother Watchman Nee saw was that in the Bible, the church is always identified with the city in which it is found. There is no reference to any church in the whole New Testament which is not simply identified as "the church in".

This comes from the revelation in the New Testament concerning the One body of Christ which is not divided on any basis other than its locality and this is just a practical division.

What Watchman Nee saw was that in order for God to have the reality of the church, there needs to be a return to the ground of the oneness of all believers.

In practical terms, this means that in any given city, there is only one church and every regenerated believer is a member of this one church which is the body of Christ. They may not see this, they may not leave their denominational division, but they are in fact a genuine member of the One body of Christ and a member of the one church in their locality.

To meet in any other way is to deny the oneness of the body of Christ.

But the reality is that the church is all divided up in denominations based in this practice, that particular teaching or emphasis which may even be scriptural but is not a basis for division.

To come out from denominational distinctions and to meet simply as the church in one's city is not to create another division but simply to leave the divisions and meet on the ground of the oneness of all believers.

The "ground" is not adherence to the doctrine of locality. The ground is the oneness of all believers in Christ. And to take this ground is to acknowledge that all believers are One body, and that we are the church, and meet simply as the church in our locality.

The emphasis is not on "WE" are the church or the "only church", but rather that the church consists of every believer in our city. And on this basis, we meet simply as the church in our city and we do not exclude anyone who is a regenerated believer.

We do not maintain that we are special, that we alone are believers or Christians. But we maintain from the Word and the reality of the Oneness of all believers that the proper ground for the church to meet is the oneness of all believers.

We do not participate in any endeavor or activity of denominations which have as their aim to build up a division.

But we do not isolate ourselves from other believers or regard them as less, as unregenerated or whatever.

We believe that God calls all believers into the reality of Christ, and the participation in the building up of His body on the ground of this oneness which the Lord Himself taught in John 17 "that they may be one... that the world may know that Thou has sent Me.

The genuine oneness of the body of Christ needs a practical expression in order for the world to know that "Thou has sent Me."

Some facts to consider"

The local churches do not define a genuine local church as a church that embraces or utilizes the ministry of Witness Lee or Watchman Nee. But rather any group of believers that meets on the ground of the oneness of all believers in any locality is a genuine local church.

Those local churches who do embrace the ministry do so because there is life and reality in the ministry and because of its depth and fidelity to the scriptures.

Any genuine born again Christian with any enlightenment in the scriptures will acknowledge that denominational divisions are unscriptural. No one denies this. But if anyone offers a solution to the situation, then everyone rises up to defend them because of tradition or personal involvement.

And those who make their living off the denominational systems will and do oppose any move outside of that system. It is a fact.

If you touch the system, you touch the livelihood and the position of power and authority of those who are ordained by the system.

Graftedbranch

Re: - posted by Graftedbranch, on: 2006/4/2 13:16

Quote:

-----Are you in the Local Church Movement currently?

I have been a believer for 30 years. I attended bible school in the 70s (Evangelical Institute of Greenville, SC- www.eigoonline.org) and have been in various denominations including Baptist, Christian Missionary alliance, and Grace Brethren.

I have always seen in the New Testament the reality of the church and the ground of the Church and the centrality of Christ and Christ as our Life.

I also, as a young Christian enjoyed the books of Watchman Nee and His biography and always considered what the Lord did through him was a genuine recovery of biblical Christianity in terms both of the inner Life and also of the practical church life.

Not until 4 years ago did I discover the reality of these things in the local church in my city (Atlanta).

I have been meeting with the local church now for 4 years and have given myself to study all the teaching, the practice and the experience of the Lord's recovery today in light of my understanding of the Bible, church history, the church fathers, and the inner life teachers of the past centuries.

I have come to appreciate the ministry of Witness Lee and found through my study, fellowship, and observations that his teaching is in direct line with Watchman Nee's and that he mined from the same shaft and did not in any way deviate from Watchman Nee's teaching.

I have observed also that the local churches have been through many stages of development, there is growth and maturity and today I see a wonderful reality, intensification, and enjoyment of Christ as Life, as the Head of the body, the functioning of all the members, the absence of hierarchy, the absence of outward control, and a genuine experience of Christ and a genuine experience of the New Testament church Life.

We meet day by day and house to house. We break bread and enjoy Christ. All the members function in the meetings of the church. There is no pastor or man in control, but all the members function and the elders or leading brothers do not dominate or lord over the flock of God but rather encourage all members to function, to speak and to live out Christ in all aspects of their lives.

Graftedbranch

Re: Take heed how you hear - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/4/2 14:41

It is a denomination and it is called the Local Church, it's headed by the teachings of Witness Lee, it is separate and distinct and it is what it says it is not.

Quote:
-----IN practical terms, this means that in any given city, there is only one church and every regenerated believer is a member of this one church which is the body of Christ.

There is only one church period. In "any given city" is precisely where the distinction and division is cut and no amount of word twisting is going to make it any other thing.

Quote:
-----But we do not isolate ourselves from other believers

Yes you do.

This is still double-speak.

It is uncanny the lengths that will be gone to in an attempt to not just be blunt about the whole thing. If the preference is that there is a dislike of denominations and many here even would have a bit of problems with much of this, fair enough. At the same time to state emphatically that everything fits into neat and tidy 'divisions' is an impossibility, that there is only one "church" locality as in a place of meeting, as a building where believers gather is sheer nonsense.

That you want to start this whole thing up again is divisive in itself and *that* is precisely where the trouble is with this whole 'teaching'. There is no room for discussion or place given to others thought, no consideration that they may well have it all wrong. Only a constant mantra like manipulation couched in psychological babble, circular reasoning without end and without conclusion.

It is 'exclusive'

It is divisive

It has caused a great deal of harm to many that has been taken note of here elsewhere and yet they could frankly care less.

It has the same tendencies that any other thing that has doubts and suspicions about its own self yet refuses to address honestly; That if it were so, no need of defending would be necessary. The fact that it cannot be 'grasped' as they are wanted to think with the clever turning of phrases is a deception, intentional or not.

There is subtlety that can escape the unwary by being too kind and cautious with all this. Whatever the motivation behind it, it is still devious and extremely unnecessary.

That it is more protective of its *self* as an 'entity' (or in its double-speak, 'non-entity') than of a true concern for the Lord and *HIS* church ...

Have reversed a lot of thinking about denominations as they are and without taking sides on the matter have begun to re-access things. For all the problems associated with these distinctions there is much that can be lost by casting it out wholesale. For one, they exist and yet the Lord has seen fit to allow them to continue, that in itself proves nothing but it does give pause to go back to the 7 'churches' in Revelation and note the distinctions there. Each one had its own particular 'problems' sans one and that is telling by note of what they each had as emphasis;

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience,

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty,

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is

I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works;

I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and I have kept my word,

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

Not to make more or less out of this, just;

I know thy works

Secondly, that from all these distinctions came forth so many great men of God that cut across each other even with particular differences of opinions on things. The core of a changed man is changed, that is what puts all the rest of this out to the peripheral, or it ought.

Lastly, to attempt to crowd, control or otherwise manipulate believers into thinking that there is but "one" "local" "church" in "one" "given" "city" defies all the course of Christian history, defies even practical logic of a natural sort and spiritually it defies that which is obvious; *We* are not the ones making determinations ultimately despite ourselves, despite our somewhat unfortunate ways of even making "denominations" and all the fallout from them.

A great problem with this whole thing is that it is riddled with holes and lacking other considerations.

Ananias and Sapphira

Why hasn't this carried on through?
Through all the denominations?
Through the cult's?
Through all the schism's and prosperity 'gospels'?

Another that gets very little attention oddly;

Wheat and the Tares

Another parable he put forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Mat 13:24-30

Much more could be said. But there is good reason why this whole thing is met with alarm and warning and why so many find it 'cult-like'. It is brought upon its own head.

And the rest need to be warned.

Re: - posted by Graftedbranc, on: 2006/4/2 14:53

Quote:
-----There is only one church period. In "any given city" is precisely where the distinction and division is cut and no amount of word twisting is going to make it any other thing.

That is precisely our position. That is that there is only one church and every believer is in fact, a member of the one church of Jesus Christ. If you are a believer and regenerated and meet with the presbyterian or baptist, then you do. But you are a member of Christ's one body and a member of the one church in your city.

We choose to meet simply as the church in our city. We do not claim to be the only members of the body of Christ. What we claim is that we meet on the biblical ground of the oneness of all believers as the church in our city.

And we choose to come out of divisions which are based on this or that teaching or practice such as baptism (the baptist), elders (presbyterians), or distinctions based on nationality (the church of England, the Chinese church, etc.) and choose to meet on the ground of the oneness of all believers in our city. We just meet as the church in our city.

What is the problem with this? Why do others object to this? Why is there such an emotional outburst to this simple thing?

We meet as the church in our city. We regard every believer whether they meet with us or not to be members of the church in our city. We act on this, we embrace this and we maintain the testimony of the one body of Christ by this.

Graftedbranch

Re: - posted by Graftedbranch, on: 2006/4/2 15:14

Quote:
-----Have reversed a lot of thinking about denominations as they are and without taking sides on the matter have begun to reassess things. For all the problems associated with these distinctions there is much that can be lost by casting it out wholesale. For one, they exist and yet the Lord has seen fit to allow them to continue, that in itself proves nothing but it does give pause to go back to the 7 'churches' in Revelation and note the distinctions there. Each one had its own particular 'problems' sans one and that is telling by note of what they each had as emphasis;

The Lord said concerning the tares not to root them up but allow them to continue.

The fact that denominations exist and the system exists is no verification of the Lord's approval of them. The Roman Catholic church predominated for 1000 years yet who among the protestants would argue God's approval of the Roman system?

And did not all the religious leaders of Luther's day advance the same arguments and the same accusations against him calling them the cult of Luther, etc?

The Word of God is divisive. It divides soul and spirit. It divides Light from darkness, it divides truth from error, It divides Life from death, etc. But in so doing it unites all in body, one Spirit, One Lord, One faith, one baptism, one God and Father who is over all, through all, and in all.

And the fact that some have a burden to not only hold a doctrine of the oneness of all believers but to realize it in its practical expression is not divisive.

One might notice that in Revelation the Lord addressed the churches as "the church in Ephesus, the church in Smyrna, the church in Thyatira, the church in Sardis, the Church in Philadelphia, the church in Laodicea, etc. The Lord addressed the churches as those in this or that locality.

He did not say, "to the church of Peter, the churches of Paul, the church of Apollos, etc." He said, the church in.... And a study of 1 Cor. will show that the Apostle was very exercised because they were dividing based on this or that person, etc. and brought them back to the One Christ and the one body (is Christ divided?).

But today we have something quite different from this. And because these divisions are so long standing, the attitude of most believers is, "well, this is just the way it is and God allows it and so we must not speak about it, let's just try to hold hands across the walls and let things remain as they are and concentrate on preaching the gospel and but pray for revival". But if revival comes, what will it look like? Is God content with the situation? Why do revivals never last? Could it be that there is no proper wine skin to contain it? Could it be that when Revival begins to touch the standing institutions, there is resistance, there is suppression? Once a system comes into place, in all of church history there has never been an internal dismantling of it. There has never been reformation from the bottom up. Even the great reformation began as an attempt for inner renewal and revival within the Roman Church. But in the end, the institutions don't budge. And so they must go "outside the camp".

In all the word of God, in the New Testament, every church is designated by its locality. There is no distinctions based on this person, that practice, this doctrine, etc. There is just "the church in".

and we meet as the church in...." why is this such an offense?

1 Cor. 1:2 "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 the Lord Jesus Christ in every place, who is theirs and ours."

Graftedbranch

Re: Herald Hsu's testimony - posted by Manfred, on: 2006/4/3 13:38

I met Herald Hsu last fall, he was able to tell me about the Taiwan episode; a sorry story it is.

The fact is that the "Local Church" is a sect. They may claim not to be a denomination, but it is just the same; even though personally I think it is worse, just ask those who have managed to leave.

This whole teaching about "locality" is one of those whom Paul called a doctrine of demons. It divides brothers and sisters in Christ in a terrible way.

To everyone: stay clear of this movement. I am speaking from personal experience.

Manfred

Re: - posted by Graftedbranch, on: 2006/4/4 17:19

Quote:

-----To everyone: stay clear of this movement. I am speaking from personal experience.

I can only testify that I have met with the saints in the local church for 4 years, have been exposed to the whole thing if you will. And I have yet to find the hook, the hidden thing, the control, the hidden agenda.

Rather I have found saints who love the Lord Jesus, who seek to know Him, to experience Him, to be found in Him and who exercise their spirit to function as living members of the body of Christ.

No one has ever knocked at my door to inquire of this or that, no one has ever demanded or asked for anything.

I have never been pressured or coerced. But rather I have found real people, genuine believers, who are together seeking the Lord, seeking to know Him, to walk with Him, and to manifest Him in every aspect of their living.

The teaching is high, and the appreciation for Witness Lee is high. No one denies this. But I can testify that in 30 years of involvement in Christianity, I have never found any group of people who were more committed to the living Christ, and never found such liberty of the Spirit, never such appreciation for the Bible, never such an experiential knowledge of the Bible and its revelation, never such regard for the authority for the written Word, and never such a consciousness of reality among the believers.

The church life is demanding, It demands that all the members maintain a close walk with Jesus Christ, daily fellowship with Him in His Word, participation in the meetings vs. passive pew sitting, and daily consecration to the Living Christ.

But the demand is not outward, but inward. That is, the demand is not imposed but required by the Lord Himself to be one who ministers Life and not his own things.

And this requires the Cross, to deal with our Self life and it requires the resurrection Life of the resurrected Christ, in more than just doctrinal knowledge but in reality.

Graftedbranch

Re: T.Austin-Sparks (TAS) and Witness Lee (WL) - a short story - by Herald Hsu, student of Watchman - posted by Manfred Graftedbranch,

Just a few comments on what you are saying:

1)

Quote:

-----I have yet to find the hook, the hidden thing, the control, the hidden agenda... I have never been pressured or coerced.

Just visit these two sites and you'll find more than enough testimonies that contradicts what you say:

<http://www.thethreadofgold.com/>

<http://thebereans.net/forum/index.php?board=21.0>

2)

Quote:

-----The teaching is high, and the appreciation for Witness Lee is high. No one denies this.

The so-called "height" of this teaching actually reaches into the "*depths of Satan*". Concerning the high appreciation of Lee, it is very very marginal; it is in fact limited to his own circle - I for one deny it.

3)

Quote:

-----I can testify that in 30 years of involvement in Christianity, I have never found any group of people who were more committed to the living Christ, and never found such liberty of the Spirit, never such appreciation for the Bible, never such an experiential knowledge of the Bible and its revelation, never such regard for the authority for the written Word, and never such a consciousness of reality among the believers.

The church life is demanding, It demands that all the members maintain a close walk with Jesus Christ, daily fellowship with Him in His Word, participation in the meetings -

And this requires the Cross, to deal with our Self life and it requires the resurrection Life of the resurrected Christ, in more than just doctrinal knowledge but in reality.

This is a typical talk that promotes the elitism of this sect, like if they were the only ones to experience a true individual and corporate life in Christ.

You should take into consideration the many churches that are a real testimony to Christ, and which don't have anything to do with Lee.

Elitism, sectarianism and exclusivism are typical features of a movement like the "Local Church". I know of quite a few local fellowships in different countries that were and are a true work of the Spirit, where Christ is present, and where He is doing a tremendous work.

Please read Church History - and look around you!

Manfred

Re: - posted by Graftedbranch, on: 2006/4/11 22:50

Quote:
-----Elitism, sectarianism and exclusivism are typical features of a movement like the "Local Church". I know of quite a few local fellowships in different countries that were and are a true work of the Spirit, where Christ is present, and where He is doing a tremendous work.

I have been involved with many works in my 30 years as a Christian. And I have found the Lord working among many saints.

I attended a bible school (evangelical Institute of Greenville, SC, headed up by Joe Carroll, a missionary to missionaries in the far east, a spiritual life teacher and one who spoke frequently at the Keswick convention.

And I can testify to the Lord's presence and the Spirit's witness to Christ in these ministries and to the benefit I gained from my association with them.

But, when you come to the word of God, and to the revelation in the bible as to God's eternal purpose and what He is ultimately after today in the church age, there is nothing to compare with the reality and revelation which brother Watchman Nee saw, what He taught, and what the Lord Himself did through Him in recovering the reality of the church life, the inner life, and the practicality of the oneness of the body of Christ.

The Question ultimately comes down to the revelation in the bible, God's eternal purpose and what God Himself wants and is satisfied with according to this revelation.

It is not a matter of this or that man but the Word of God. It is a matter of God's heart's desire and what Christ died to obtain.

What is it? What does the bible reveal as the whole intent of Christ's incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection?

And a careful study of the bible reveals God's intent is to produce and build up His body, as His expression, containing His Life and manifesting Himself.

What it boils down to, is Watchman Nee saw in the bible, through the Spirit's enlightenment, the reality of the body of Christ, the eternal purpose of God, and the oneness of the body of Christ and he gave himself to the Lord for the accomplishment of His purpose.

And brother Lee, in contrast to brother Sparks, was committed to this vision. He saw it, he stood on it, and he refused to cave to long standing tradition and would not yield on this point.

Lee, like Paul said to Felix, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." He saw what brother Nee saw and would not budge on this point. And as a result, there was a split between he and Sparks like Paul and Barnabus. But as one can observe from the scriptures, Barnabus was never spoken of again.

As a result, today, if you study the fruit of each one's ministry (as the scripture says, considering the outcome of a man's way of life, imitate his faith) what is the fruit of each man's life.

I don't know about T. Austin Sparks, but today in every continent, there are over 3000 local churches and millions of believers who are enjoying Christ as a result of the faithfulness of one man, brother Lee, who would not budge, would not yield, and would not cave to tradition but remained faithful to the revelation and vision of brother Watchman Nee which is in reality the vision of the New Testament concerning Christ and the church.

Graftedbranch

Re: - posted by Graftedbranch, on: 2006/4/11 23:10

Quote:
-----This is a typical talk that promotes the elitism of this sect, like if they were the only ones to experience a true individual and corporate life in Christ.

All Christian believers are in fact "elitist" by the world's definition. We, as believers hold in no uncertain terms that Jesus Christ alone, Jesus Christ Himself is the "way, the truth, and the Life and no one comes to the Father but by Him."

We are all by one definition "elitist" and believe that Christ is the only way, and that all religions no matter how high or moral or whatever, are nothing and the Christ is everything.

And among today's Christianity, we all must admit that when we come to the Bible and the revelation of Christ, the reality of the church and the reality of the Christian life, that what we find today that the rank and file of Christianity has little to do with what we find in the Scriptures.

This is the testimony of all those who preach even on this web sight such as Ravenhill, Tozer, and all the "revivalist". They are "revivalist" because they see in no uncertain terms the great and abysmal need for "revival" among christians.

If the Status Quo were acceptable as far as spiritual life were concerned, then these men would be irrelevant. Their preaching, teaching, and burden would be non acceptable.

But the fact is, that modern Christianity is degraded, is held down, is lacking in reality, In the true manifestation of Christ as seen in the New Testament.

But woe to those who press forward into the holy of holies, Woe to them who claim to have obtained something of Christ and the reality of New Testament Christianity. They are elitist. They are proud, they are arrogant and consider themselves above the rest.

But the call of Christ in Revelation is to those who would overcome degraded Christianity. The call is to overcome. Overcome what? The degradation of the church and all the things which have come in to displace Christ.

And in every case, those who cleave to the degraded system will accuse those who come out, to those who come to Christ "outside the camp" as elitist, as cultist, as those who think themselves above.

But Christ is above and ascended and in union with Him in His resurrected Life, the overcomers come out of degraded Christianity and enjoy the reality of Christ. And care not for labels or for those who would rail against them.

the status quo is to sit around and lament that, yes, things are really not as they should be. But oh well, this is just what it is and we dare not go against it.

But woe to them who come out, who seek for more. Who are not satisfied with the status quo. Who hunger for reality, who hunger for the living Christ and to be His living expression, who want to overcome the traditional system and who want to be to Christ what He desires.

And especially woe to those who claim to have found something of Christ outside the camp. They are elitist, they believe they have something others don't. Well, do they? Do they have something of Christ others don't?

Graftedbranch

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/4/12 0:29

Quote:
-----But, when you come to the word of God, and to the revelation in the bible as to God's eternal purpose and what He is ultimately after today in the church age, there is nothing to compare with the reality and revelation which brother Watchman Nee saw, what He taught, and what the Lord Himself did through Him in recovering the reality of the church life, the inner life, and the practicality of the oneness of the body of Christ.

Quote:
-----It is not a matter of this or that man but the Word of God. IT is a matter of God's hearts desire and what Christ died to obtain.

Quote:
-----And brother Lee, in contrast to brother Sparks, was committed to this vision. He saw it, he stood on it, and he refused to cave to long standing tradition and would not yield on this point.

Quote:
-----As a result, today, if you study the fruit of each one's ministry (as the scripture says, considering the outcome of a man's way of life, imitate his faith) what is the fruit of each man's life.

Maybe this all should go under the "Fruit Inspection" thread. There is a lot of contradictions here GB.

Quote:
-----I don't know about T. Austin Sparks, but today in every continent, there are over 3000 local churches and millions of believers who are enjoying Christ as a result of the faithfulness of one man, brother Lee, who would not budge, would not yield, and would not cave to tradition but remained faithful to the revelation and vision of brother Watchman Nee which is in reality the vision of the New Testament concerning Christ and the church.

That proves exactly nothing.

Quote:
-----It is not a matter of this or that man but the Word of God. IT is a matter of God's hearts desire and what Christ died to obtain.

Re: - posted by Manfred, on: 2006/4/12 16:29

Quote:
-----But, when you come to the word of God, and to the revelation in the bible as to God's eternal purpose and what He is ultimately after today in the church age, there is nothing to compare with the reality and revelation which brother Watchman Nee saw, what He taught, and what the Lord Himself did through Him in recovering the reality of the church life, the inner life, and the practicality of the oneness of the body of Christ.

The main problem with your post is that you refer to men all the time, as though W. Nee and W. Lee were the only valid ministers of the Gospel. Only the Lee sect speaks this way, we already all know about Lee being "the apostle of the age", etc. It is not something by which we are going to be deceived.

Quote:
-----And brother Lee, in contrast to brother Sparks, was committed to this vision. He saw it, he stood on it, and he refused to cave to long standing tradition and would not yield on this point.

Amazing! According to you TAS has to be brushed aside because he was not committed to this vision.

But to what vision are you referring to? That man is becoming God and all the trash taught by Lee? If this is the "vision" you're talking about, it is but the vision of deception.

Quote:
-----Lee, like Paul said to Felix, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." He saw what brother Nee saw and would not budge on this point. And as a result, there was a split between he and Sparks like Paul and Barnabus. But as one can observe from the scriptures, Barnabus was never spoken of again.

Well, I am ready to say that TAS is more well known among believers today than is Lee; even though this is not a criteria. The fact is that whenever Lee is spoken of it is always in a negative way, I don't want to start listing the many heresies of the Lee sect, one has just to go on the Bereans site I gave earlier on to find out.

Quote:
-----I don't know about T. Austin Sparks, but today in every continent, there are over 3000 local churches and millions of believers who are enjoying Christ as a result of the faithfulness of one man, brother Lee, who would not budge, would not yield, and would not cave to tradition but remained faithful to the revelation and vision of brother Watchman Nee which is in reality the vision of the New Testament concerning Christ and the church.

This is precisely the problem here: it is the work of one man. It is confirmed here by one of the members of this sect.

I don't think that this talk is very edifying, and therefore this might be my last post on this subject. I think that everyone can discern, with the help of the Spirit, what is of God and what is of Satan.

Manfred

Re: - posted by Graftedbranch, on: 2006/4/12 21:12

Quote:
-----But to what vision are you referring to? That man is becoming God and all the trash taught by Lee? If this is the "vision" you're talking about, it is but the vision of deception.

What some consider trash is the heart and core of the Divine Revelation. That is that God became man to make man the same as He is in life and in nature but not in the Godhead.

And He does this first by redeeming man and then by imparting Himself into man as his Life, and constituting the man with the living Christ.

As John says in 1 John, "what we shall be has not yet been manifested, but when He appears, we shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is".

And as Paul in 11 Cor. 3 says. "We all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord Spirit.

It is the Bible which teaches this. This is not some weird and off beat "revelation" but rather the testimony of the scriptures and a dearly held doctrine of the early church fathers.

From Genesis to Revelation God's intent and purpose to work Himself into man as his Life and nature can be seen in picture, example, type, and figure as well as explicitly revealed and taught in the New Testament. It is seen in Genesis when God created man in His image and likeness and placed him before the Tree of Life that he would eat of it and receive God's eternal Life. God intended man to live by Him as his indwelling Life.

God united Himself with man forever in Christ's incarnation and today as the head of the body, Christ as the Head impart

His Life into His members, regenerating them, sanctifying them, transforming them, conforming them to His glorious image and ultimately will transfigure their mortal bodies to be just like Him.

And as the type of Eve who was taken out of Adam and formed of His substance, so also the Church is taken out of Christ and formed and built of His substance to be His eternal counterpart, His eternal mate, His Wife fully renewed, fully transformed, and fully conformed to His image.

In the end, the New Jerusalem, the Wife of the Lamb (Rev 21:11) will be the corporate Bride of Christ, the dwelling place of God, the tabernacle of God, and God will be its temple.

This is the beginning of the Bible, the content of the Bible and the end of the Bible and everything in between is toward His purpose. Christ's coming, Christ's redemption, Christ's resurrection, and Christ's imparting Himself into His believers is for no other goal, no other purpose than God's building, God's dwelling, God's corporate expression in His redeemed partite man to express Him eternally in the New Earth under the New Heavens.

This is the content of the Bible.

Graftedbranch

Re: Speaking the truth in love. - posted by Jimm (), on: 2006/4/13 8:58

Hello dear saints

I may say that although I do not agree with all of Witness Lee's teachings I certainly would never put him under the category of "Satanist". Remember dear saints, judgment is of the Lord. In teaching the ruling principle is "speaking the truth in love":

"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Romans 14:4-10

Consider carefully the issues raised here and the manner in which they were addressed. I could see the points made by everyone and if I had to make a decision based on this discussion alone I would have to side with "Graftedbranch" simply because he has been least abrasive in his manner of addressing others. In my opinion it was never his intention to discuss Witness Lee as a person, but when attacks are made on servant of God whose teachings have been helpful in your walk with God, then the natural response is to say something in defense of him. In reality this thread is about unity in the church not about Witness Lee. If we could discuss the issue of at hand then speak of Lee and his doctrines in separate thread we may avoid tension and misunderstanding.

I have heard a lot of opinions in opposition to this teaching but I have heard very little word to back it from this thread. Consider the issue of examining the fruits of a teaching. We could take this to mean examine the teacher or examine those who he has taught. Personally I believe in both. Now if you are to say to me that you follow the way of Christ, the way of love how am I to receive this if the ministry of your words is not in patience, or in kindness or if is rude and easily angered. I do not mind admitting being wrong but if one says to me that what I saying is "nonsense" or "the doctrine of devil s" I am offended because it is an attack in my character and on my ability to discern truth. I feel offended and grieved for Graftedbranch.

Now I ask in all honesty if the intention is of correction was this correction administered in love? I personally do not feel very strongly about this issue so I am not saying one party is doctrinally right or wrong but in terms of attitude.

May God in His grace bless us with fruit of the Spirit in meekness, esteeming others better than ourselves.

Gabriel.

Re: somehow repeated - posted by Graftedbranc, on: 2006/4/13 13:11

Please see above post.

Re: - posted by Graftedbranc, on: 2006/4/13 13:11

Quote:

-----This is precisely the problem here: it is the work of one man. It is confirmed here by one of the member of this sect.

Actually the work in the Lord's recovery today is the work primarily of two men built upon the shoulders of countless others who have gone before including the reformers, the inner life teachers, the brethren, the Keswick speakers and teachers, believers such as Hudson Taylor who wrote one work on the Song of Songs, Jessie Penn Lewis, Andrew Murray and countless others.

But one might also say that the reformation was primarily the work of one man, Martin Luther, and 9/10 of the New Testament is written by one man, Paul.

I am not sure where in the 20th century we got this idea that truth is the product of a multiplicity of ideas from a multiplicity of different sources and for anyone to claim to know anything for sure is regarded as presumptuous.

According to the Bible, truth is the product of the Spirit of God enlightening his believers from the scriptures which are the inspired Word of God and the only authority for faith and practice.

And throughout history, God has chosen to reveal, enlighten, and expound this truth contained in the scriptures through His servants who have given themselves fully to Him, have borne the cross, have lived a crucified life and manifested and pressed on to know the Living Christ.

I appreciate the below post. To assault the character of one whom you disagree with is low tactic and evades the issue which is always what is taught and how it squares up with the revelation of the Bible.

To impose one's preconceived ideas, to run with hearsay and accusations of those who may oppose a certain truth or ministry without considering it or the person in light of scripture is not a good practice.

One also might observe that this concept of multiplicity of ideas is the product of the condition of the church today which is anything but manifesting the oneness of the Spirit and the unity of the Faith. In fact, what we have today is a very low state of affairs in the church and all who have any enlightenment in the scriptures and know Christ genuinely from whatever background they are found will be the first to say that today's Christianity has little or nothing to do with the Divine revelation in the New Testament.

That God would choose to go to another continent which is not steeped in hundreds of years of tradition, to begin a fresh work from the ground up in virgin soil, to produce a return and recovery of many aspects of the faith that have been held down, set aside, replaced, and neglected by tradition, human philosophy, modern psychology, and all the other things mixed in with the Bible, is not mystery.

And that He would choose to mature this work through persecutions, sufferings, setbacks, martyrdom, and much opposition, then bring it to the west for the benefit of all believers is not at all a fanciful concept. And the fact that it is not embraced and received by the established religious systems is not in anywise a testimony against it, but rather the same thing which has always transpired throughout the ages.

God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God has chosen the things which are not that He might nullify the things that are.

IN the days of Christ's ministry in the flesh, religion had been totally overtaken by tradition and the word of God set aside by the traditions and teachings of men. It was this system the Lord came into and this system which ultimately crucified the Lord of Glory.

And this has been the pattern in the church age since the beginning. Tradition overtaking and replacing the reality of Christ and the things revealed in scriptures and then suppressing, opposing, and persecuting those who return to the scriptures, to Christ, and to the Spirit's work within them.

A study of church history will show that any movement of God in every age was opposed and condemned not by the world, but by the established religious system and those who maintained it.

And what do they say? Who is this man? From where did he get this "wisdom". Who is he to stand against the traditions of the church, the great councils, the popes, the great system we have established?

And those who followed the vision of these men and stood with them were always persecuted, always accused by the establishment, by the religious leaders, and called divisive, cultic, and what have you.

The fact that there are genuine heretical sects in the world has caused a "witch hunt" mentality among some and who accuse as heretical any group of believers who deviate from the status quo.

And let's face it, some just get offended at the idea that any particular man might have grace to see something they don't. That God would raise up men after His own heart, who are faithful to Him and His revelation, who don't bow to criticism, opposition, and tradition, but stand. And some are just proud and it irks them that any man would have anything they don't.

One person I spoke with who was exceedingly opposed to the Lord's recovery, the teaching of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee said to me, "Why would God bypass all the great theological institutions in America and bring anything to us through a little Chinese man from the far east? He was offended at the very idea that God would choose someone "Chinese" over a great, educated American with credentials, etc.

But God has chosen the weak things, the foolish things, the things that are not that He might shame the wise. It is exactly God's way. It is in direct keeping with His revelation of Himself in scripture and the way He has worked in all of church history.

Rather than seeing the body of Christ, that not all are eyes, and not all are mouths, but all are members with different functions, they regard others who might see what they don't with suspicion. And instead of seeking the Lord to receive from the Lord what they might find and through His vessels, as the Bereans who 'searched the scriptures to see if these things be so', they rather condemn and oppose them and attack them.

But the Bible says, God gave gifts to men, He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of the ministry. These men are gifts to the church, taken captive by Christ, and given back to the church for her perfecting. They are joints of the rich supply. And God has chosen to work this way, It is the teaching of scripture and we ignore His supply to our own impoverishment.

I have read and enjoyed many sermons of T. Austin Sparks and see in him a man who was greatly used by the Lord and also one in whom Watchman Nee found a kindred spirit and great fellowship and mutual respect.

Yet we see that they did not see eye to eye on the matter of the ground of the church. Those who remained in the recovery begun in China, following Nee's imprisonment maintained this ground and Sparks parted from them.

But as history can testify to, the Lord's Presence did not depart from His recovery. And today there is reality and the genuine Presence of the Spirit of Christ among the Saints who continue to meet on the local ground.

The churches are not perfect. And they have not been without their problems, but so it can be seen in the New Testament regarding the local churches at that time. That is why most of the New Testament epistles are written. But nevertheless, the Lord is Present and in the midst of His church and walks among the golden Lampstands.

Graftedbranch