

BEING SAFEGUARDED BY THE DISCERNMENT IN THE BODY

Those who bear responsibility in the ministry, the work, and the churches in the Lord's recovery have a biblically mandated responsibility to protect the flock (Acts 20:28-31; 1 Pet. 5:2; Titus 1:9). In performing that duty they may advise the saints not to read writings in print or on the Internet that attack the local churches and the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. A few have miscast this fellowship as an attempt to hide the "truth" regarding the history of the recovery or to deprive others of the freedom to read whatever they like. However, this advice is not an exercise of control but the issue of a loving concern based on a discerning of the nature of these writings and their effect on those who read them. Such advice is based on important biblical principles to which we should give heed.

The Lord's recovery is His move to recover the truth and practice that is fully and completely according to the New Testament. As such, it stands in opposition to unscriptural practices such as denominationalism and the clergy-laity system found in Christianity and which have greatly frustrated God's economy. It also affirms vital scriptural truths and experiences that have been largely neglected or abandoned by the majority of today's Bible teachers. This stand results in external criticism and attack. The recovery has also been attacked by those who sought to cause division from within the local churches. From time to time turmoils have taken place that were caused by a few brothers rising up to speak perverted things in order to draw some away after them (Acts 20:30).

The ultimate goal of the writings from these external and internal sources is to overthrow the Lord's recovery. Consequently, these writings are full of criticism, dissension, questionings, rumors, accusations, innuendos, and the misrepresentation of facts and historical events. By design they sow seeds of doubt, suspicion, and even malice toward the ministry and the leadership in the recovery, causing the saints to question the revelation and enjoyment they have received through the ministry and the church life, even the things that first caused them to take the way of the recovery. Unlike the ministry, which nourishes its readers with the opening of the Bible and the appreciation and exaltation of Christ, these negative writings leave readers confused, unsettled, and deadened. In doing so, they betray their real source, which is the serpent, Satan (Eph. 4:14, footnote 5).

Satan's work targets the mind, which, apart from the Spirit's transforming work, is fallen, corrupted, and susceptible to the enemy's attack (Gen. 6:5; Col. 1:21; Eph. 4:17; see 6:16-17 and footnotes 16³ and 17¹). Whereas the Lord desires that our mind would be renewed and brought under the dominion of our regenerated spirit (4:23; Rom. 8:6), Satan wants the believers to disregard their spirit entirely and trust, rely, and wholly live according to the unrenewed mind (Eph. 4:17). This principle is illustrated from the very beginning of the Bible:

In Genesis 3:1b [Satan] asked the woman, "Did God really say, You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" This was a question put into Eve's mind, and this question stirred up her doubting mind. This is a strong point that we have to stress. Satan would always approach people by touching their doubting mind. Here Satan questioned something concerning God, and this questioning, no doubt, aroused the mind of Eve. Satan did this to keep Eve from using her spirit. When God comes to us, He always touches our spirit. When Satan comes to us, he always comes to our mind. Our spirit is the "room" that God comes to touch, and our mind is the "room" that Satan comes to touch. Satan will always come to touch the human mind. (*Basic Lessons on Life*, 35)

Satan's aim is to cause the saints' thoughts to be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ (2 Cor. 11:1-3), and he will use any means at his disposal to cut the saints off from enjoying Christ as life. Countless saints can testify of how the ministry stirs up their spirit, causing them to love and pursue the Lord more and be refreshed and enlivened. The negative writings are a morass of fleshly opinions, baseless accusations, endless contentions of words, and questionings (1 Tim. 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:14). Reading these writings

dulls our love for the Lord and deadens our spirit so that we lose the enjoyment of the Lord and become entrenched in doubts and evil suspicions toward those whom the Lord has given to minister to and perfect us (Eph. 4:11-12; 2 Tim. 3:14).

Because the negative writings conceal within them the poisonous and deadening element of Satan, the accuser of the brothers (Rev. 12:10), the saints are advised not to read them. It is not a matter of hiding what some falsely allege is the "real" history of the Lord's recovery, but of protecting the saints from something that is certain to damage and deaden them, thus hampering or halting their spiritual progress before the Lord. Many of the writings parrot the reckless accusations or unsupportable rumors that have already been responded to in detail by those who, by the Lord's sovereign arrangement and in the principle of the Body, have the function to examine, investigate, and properly respond to the claims made. These responses have been available in print publications and on the Internet for many years on such websites as contendingforthefaith.org, afaithfulword.org, and afaithfulwitness.org. Some of the claims are also addressed on this site in the History section.

Some may still be tempted to read the negative writings on the Internet despite the brothers' loving warnings. Even a little exploration can stir up unhealthy curiosity. That curiosity is a snare from the enemy. The way to progress in the Lord is to always focus on the positive things related to the pursuit of the growth in life and the building up of the Body. Much of what circulates on the Internet is mere opinion and rumor that may feed your curiosity but will not help you grow in the Lord. Delving into accounts of turmoils, mistakes, and controversies requires great discernment. As the Bible illustrates, even if such things occur among God's people, they should be for our instruction (1 Cor. 10:11). The ministry in the Lord's recovery consistently presents both the facts and the lessons to be learned from our history. Saints who find themselves troubled by opinions and rumors can seek help from the published ministry and from those who have the maturity in life and knowledge of the facts necessary to render help. Idle curiosity, however, should always be denied (1 Tim. 6:20).

Some may argue that they need to be informed and draw their own conclusions about the matters involved. This also is a subtle ploy from the enemy. While such an individualistic view may be valued in modern culture, as members of the Body of Christ, we exist according to a very different principle. The New Testament clearly shows that, as members of the Body, we are organically joined, and that, as in a physical body, each member has its own function in the Lord (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:27, 17-18). The Lord, as the Head of the Body, has given some mature members a particular portion to care for the other members for the growth and building up of the church as His Body (12:27-28; Eph. 4:11-12; Heb. 13:17). Among these, some have the measure and function from the Lord to discern and identify things that are detrimental to the Body (2 Cor. 10:13; 1 Cor. 12:10), not in self-confidence but in the Lord and in fellowship with one another (Phil. 3:3; 2 Cor. 3:5).

In the physical realm, once the tongue has tasted that a substance is rancid, there is no need for other members of the body to contact that same thing to form their own opinions. Rather, all the other members with their various functions benefit from the function of the tongue as the tasting organ and are thereby preserved and safeguarded. It is a great blessing and preservation for the saints to receive the ministry of the more mature members, to accept the discernment of the Body, and to reject the temptation to independently seek to discern the nature of negative writings. Behind this temptation is the implicit assumption that one has the spiritual discernment, wisdom, capacity, knowledge of the facts, and freedom in the spirit to accurately judge the matters involved. To assume self-sufficiency is to disregard the Lord's placing of the members in His Body with their respective functions, violate the Body's organic principle, lose the Body's covering, and expose oneself to Satan's attack. May the saints in the recovery look to the Lord that He would cause us all to grow in our discernment and consciousness of the Body for the protection, growth, and perfecting of each member unto the building up of the Body of Christ.