

## OBSESSION AND SUBJECTIVITY

### Obsession

In the 1930s Brother Watchman Nee gave a word concerning "Obsession and God's Light" (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee [CWWN], Vol. 36: Central Messages, 257-271*). His speaking should help us discern dissenting speakings directed at the Lord's recovery in general and at the leadership in His recovery in particular. Brother Nee began by contrasting lying with obsession. He said:

If a man does something wrong, yet stubbornly says with his mouth that it is right, this is lying. But if a man does something wrong, and not only says with his mouth but even believes in his heart that it is right, this is obsession. Lying is being stubborn outside and being shriveled inside. In this case, the more confident one is outwardly, the more timid he is inwardly. But obsession is being stubborn both outwardly and inwardly. It is being confident both outwardly and inwardly to the extent that even the conscience seems to justify the act. (258-259)

He then described the symptom of obsession:

The symptom of obsession is thinking and believing that a wrong thing is right to the point that one cannot say that it is wrong. This is being obsessed. There are those who imagine that something is happening with others when nothing actually is happening. The imagination goes so far that they become convinced of a certain matter, and they even come up with proofs and evidences to support their imagination. This also is obsession. (259)

He listed a number of manifestations of obsession. One that is particularly pertinent to the situation of some dissenting ones today relates to speculations:

Some Christians are obsessed with speculations. Because of the lack of light, they often take speculation as fact. First they speculate that certain people would do certain things, go to certain places, and say certain words. Later, they believe that the person has indeed done these things, been to those places, and said those words. They can become so obsessed that they consider that something is there when it is actually not there. It may clearly be a case of wrongly blaming a person, but they believe that they have the facts. This is obsession. It is obsession to think that a person is a certain way when he really is not, or to believe that a certain person has done certain things when he really has not. Being obsessed is taking speculations as reality. (264)

A person may be very convincing precisely because he himself is convinced with absolute certainty of the rightness of his speculations.

Brother Nee's words should help us discern the situation among us today. Some have propagated rumors without factual basis. Based upon personal, subjective interpretations of events, some have put forth much speculation concerning certain matters and have characterized others as being a certain way and as having done certain things without proof. When the lack of factual basis has been pointed out, those who spread such rumors have become defensive and self-vindicating, refusing to accept any correction. This is obsession. Some have fostered speculation by promulgating rhetorical, accusatory questions designed to arouse suspicions (1 Tim. 6:4). These speculations are a contagion of questionings and compound the errors made and the resultant damages. Such obsession can occur with leading ones as well as with other saints, some of whom, under contemporary social influences, may insist on the unchallengeable validity of their own opinions as "my truth."

### Subjectivity

In a fellowship with responsible brothers in Hong Kong in 1950, Brother Nee spoke concerning subjectivity, which is closely related to obsession:

In the meetings a brother may stand up to correct something. His correction may not be accurate, but he may consider himself to be perfectly right. If, in the course of their fellowship, all the brothers feel that

something was wrong with this one's correction, he should put a question mark on what he thinks is right. Such fellowship will deliver us out of subjectivity and enable us to touch the thought of the Holy Spirit more. (*CWWN, Vol. 62: Mature Leadings in the Lord's Recovery (2)*, 344)

Brother Nee spoke of unwillingness to receive correction from others as a sign of subjectivity:

Subjectivity means a reluctance to accept or to be corrected. It means to have one's own opinion from the very beginning and to always insist on this opinion. A subjective person arrives at his own judgment before he hears anything from the Lord, before the facts are unfolded, and before others present their opinions. He insists on his judgment even after hearing something from the Lord, after the facts are unfolded, and after others have presented their side of the matter. This is the meaning of being subjective. The root cause of subjectivity is a self that has never been broken. When a man's self is not broken, he has a stubborn view of things, and these opinions are hard to break and correct. (*CWWN, Vol. 52: The Character of the Lord's Worker*, 109)

He described the opinions of a subjective person as being an impregnable fortress:

We have previously said that a great problem with God's workers is that they cannot listen to others. The chief reason behind not being able to listen to others is subjectivity. When a person is subjective, he is filled up with all sorts of things. His opinions become an impregnable fortress, and his ideas are unchangeable. (110)

Brother Nee went further to describe a subjective man as one who insists on his point of view:

A subjective man is not necessarily a faithful man. A faithful man speaks because he has to speak. He does not speak because he likes to speak or because he has a lust for speaking. A faithful man speaks because he does not want others to fall into error. He does not speak out of a lust for speaking. If a faithful man finds that his words are rejected, he does not feel dejected; he can turn away. But a subjective man is different. He has a lust to speak, and if he does not speak, he feels unhappy. He has a habit of opening his mouth every time he sees something. Do you see the difference? A subjective man speaks because he likes to speak; he likes to impose his will upon others. He likes to dominate others with his ideas and have others listen to his words. A subjective person finds it difficult to accept the rejection of his will. Brothers and sisters, a subjective man is totally different from a faithful man. We should be faithful. Many times, it is wrong if we do not open our mouth. But we must differentiate between faithfulness and subjectivity. A subjective person likes to meddle with others' affairs. He likes others to listen to his words. He likes to control others in everything. He gives orders to this person and directions to that person. He considers his methods the first and the best, and his ways the most perfect. He wants everybody to take his way. (122)

The Lord's way in His Body is that we all should be subject to the correction of the Body.

All leadings should pass the test of Body fellowship. Every leading of the Body comes to us through other members. Human subjectivity can become a great obstacle. As soon as a man becomes subjective, he will not be able to receive leadings from other members. We have to learn to submit to the church and to go along with others' opinions. Thinking that we are always right is extreme arrogance. The supply of the Body and the leading of the Body often are one and the same thing. (*CWWN, Vol. 60: Miscellaneous Records of the Kuling Training (2)*, 263-264)

When we encounter brothers or sisters who are absolutely certain of their rightness, we should realize that such persons may simply be obsessed with their own opinions and want to impose them on others. We should learn to discern what is mere speculation and subjective opinion. Moreover, we should sense whether a speaking is according to the tree of life or according to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that is, according to arguments concerning right and wrong. Some words minister life; others impart death. We should receive only words that spring from a desire to diligently keep the oneness of the Spirit for the building up of the Body (Eph. 4:2, 16).