

VII. Watchman Nee

Watchman Nee¹ was born on November 4, 1903, and died on c. June 1, 1972 in a Chinese communist prison camp. He founded the Little Flock, Local Church, or Church of the Recovery denomination² and was an influential proponent of Keswick theology in China.³ His “name has become a household word among Christians all over the world”⁴ as millions have read his books, which have been translated into many languages,⁵ and he is among “the most influential Chinese Christians” that have ever lived.⁶ Nee learned most of his doctrine from woman preachers and authors of his day and earlier, since “close association with women evangelists and teachers was characteristic of his early career.”⁷ Nee’s professed conversion took place through the preaching of the “famous

¹ The most substantial biographies of Nee in English are *Against the Tide*, by Angus Kinnear (Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1973), and *Watchman Nee: A Seer of Divine Revelation in the Present Age* (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1991), by Witness Lee. Kinnear came to know Nee in England in 1938 (pgs. ix, 151, *Against the Tide*). He “edited the first work by Nee to become widely known in English, *The Normal Christian Life* . . . [and] also edited five other volumes of Nee’s writings” (pg. 140, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155). Witness Lee was Nee’s denominational successor. Both Kinnear and Lee are very sympathetic to Nee; Lee’s work is hagiographical. A sympathetic but more critical work is *Secrets of Watchman Nee* by Dana Roberts (Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2005). Roberts’ perspective is seen in his affirmation that Nee, upon his death, was “‘transferred’ to the church triumphant,” and that Roberts, had he met him personally, would have said: “Thanks. Thanks for helping us in our faith. Now, my Brother Nee, I want to share with you some of the words and blessings of God that you may have missed” (pg. xi, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*).

Nee was originally named Nga Shu-jeo or Ni Shu-tsu. Later he called himself Ching-fu, but then, adopting an idea of his mother, he became Ni To-sheng, which in English is “Watchman Nee” (pg. 21, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

² Nee’s religious organization, by absorbing into itself those who had joined other Christian groups, by some estimates became the largest Protestant denomination in China (pg. 264, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

³ Earling mentions only Keswick writers for Nee’s devotional reading, namely, “Andrew Murray, F. B. Meyer, Otto Stockmayer, and Jessie Penn-Lewis.” Devotional works by non-Keswick writers, at least for the period of Nee’s life discussed by Earling at that point, are entirely absent. For “accounts of . . . revivals,” only “Charles G. Finney and Evan Roberts” are mentioned (pg. 142, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155).

⁴ Pg. ix, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. However, this spread of his writings took place largely after the Communist Party imprisoned him, so that his name became a rallying point for prayer for persecuted Chinese Christians in general. He was not, in all probability, aware of the translation and widespread multiplication of his works (cf. pgs. 232, 239, *ibid*). The “spread of his devotional writings in the West . . . during the [1960’s] . . . was quite new . . . [and was] disconcerting [when] compare[d] with the suspicion he had earlier aroused in those mission circles” in China where ministers had actually interacted with his denomination (pg. 239, *ibid*).

⁵ cf. pg. 140, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155.

⁶ Pg. 241, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁷ “Nee, Watchman,” *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.

woman evangelist . . . Dora Yu,”⁸ after Miss Yu’s preaching in the Methodist Tien-An Chapel had led Nee’s mother, Nee Ho-P’ing, to conviction of sin about her failure in parenting him in a particular area. Nee’s mother went on to become “a well-known Methodist preacher, whose speaking tours included her native China” and abroad;⁹ Nee’s wife was the daughter of a Chinese Christian and Missionary Alliance pastor. Nee publicly proclaimed his profession of Christianity at one of Miss Yu’s services by going forward at the invitation. He then “longed to be trained by Dora Yu in Shanghai. His mother agreed, and Dora Yu accepted him into her Bible school,”¹⁰ since Miss Yu not only “traveled widely among missions in northern China and Korea” but, as a Methodist minister, had “establish[ed] her own Bible seminary in Shanghai.”¹¹ He consequently attended the Bible school led by Miss Yu in Shanghai in 1920-21, although he was expelled because of disobedience to the school’s discipline. At Miss Yu’s suggestion, he then went to Miss Margaret E. Barber. She, along with Miss L. S. Ballord and the Chinese woman preacher Li Ai-ming, had a center where they preached to men and women and taught and prepared Chinese natives for church leadership.¹² Nee there learned Keswick theology and was influenced by the literature of the Welsh holiness revival, writing to and reading the writings of Jessie Penn-Lewis¹³ and the *Overcomer* magazine which she edited, and through which Nee became familiar with Roman Catholic mystical quietists such as Madame Guyon, who “deeply influenced” and “greatly moved” Nee and “was to have a strong influence on his future thinking.”¹⁴ “The mystical leanings in . . . Lee [and] Nee . . . are traceable to . . . teachers such as Jessie Penn-Lewis . . . and Madame Guyon.”¹⁵ Keswick and mystical influences such as these were the more important in light of Nee’s “self-imposed limitation [on] formal studies.”¹⁶ Nee “testified publicly that he had learned many important spiritual truths from the Overcomer Movement via Jessie Penn-Lewis’s teachings. . . . Miss Barber . . . took back

⁸ Pgs. 11-16, 94, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee; pgs. 28, 41-48, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁹ Pg. 9, *Understanding Watchman Nee*, Dana Roberts; pgs. 52, 83, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

¹⁰ Pg. 15, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

¹¹ Pg. 41, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

¹² Pg. 50, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

¹³ Pg. 65, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

¹⁴ “Watchman Nee (1903-1972): A Biographical Study,” by Huelon Mountfort. Elec. acc. <http://thirdmill.org/watchman-nee-1903-1972-a-biographical-study>; pgs. 62, 242, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

¹⁵ Pg. 13, “We Were Wrong: A Reassessment of the ‘Local Church’ Movement of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee,” *Christian Research Journal* 32:06 (2009).

¹⁶ Pg. 156, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

to China Jessie's permission to publish the most useful *Overcomer* essays. The work was undertaken by Watchman Nee, who printed them in his *Rising Again* magazine, and expounded them and presented their essential teachings in his later books."¹⁷ Indeed, "the format of . . . [the] four different Christian magazines . . . Nee edited . . . was by and large modeled after Jessie Penn-Lewis's *The Overcomer* and T. Austin Sparks's *A Witness and A Testimony*."¹⁸ Nee quoted Penn-Lewis with some frequency;¹⁹ indeed, "*The Spiritual Man* was based mainly upon the writings and experience of Evan Roberts and Jessie Penn-Lewis," whose works Nee had devoured when he wrote *The Spiritual Man* at the age of twenty-four,²⁰ although Madame Guyon was also influential.²¹ Nee's book, rejecting *sola Scriptura* for truth based on both "the Word and experience,"²² leans heavily upon Penn-Lewis and Roberts²³ for its views on spiritual warfare and other topics,²⁴ as he "delved into . . . Jessie Penn-Lewis on the questions of soul and spirit and of triumph over Satanic power."²⁵ The book Nee's "Little Flock" denomination was thus birthed in connection with the ministry of Miss Barber, her students, and theology learned from other women.²⁶ Nee continued to seek Miss Barber's advice and counsel until shortly before her death in 1930, and he acknowledged her as a powerful influence in his own life. Her affection for him was evident in her leaving him her most prized possession, her Bible.²⁷ "No single person is more responsible for the development of

¹⁷ Pg. 240-243, *The Trials and Triumphs of Mrs. Jessie Penn-Lewis*, Brynmor Pierce Jones.

¹⁸ Pgs. 53-54, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, Dana Roberts. Sparks himself was influenced by Penn-Lewis (pg. 105, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

¹⁹ For examples, see *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee, comb. ed., pgs. 588, 589, 601, 609, 610, 630, etc.

²⁰ Pgs. 102-103, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. It is noteworthy that *The Spiritual Man* was "the first and last book [Nee] ever sat down and wrote, the rest of his publications all being transcriptions of his preaching and teaching," and that Nee also thought his book "will not be reprinted," a view he affirmed at various times to his coworkers (pgs. 103, 251-252, *ibid.*).

²¹ Pg. 149, "The Story of Watchman Nee," Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155. A few other Keswick writers are also mentioned.

²² Pg. 149, "The Story of Watchman Nee," Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155. "[E]very point of" *The Spiritual Man* could "be experimentally proven," even if it could not be proven from the Bible (pg. 149, *ibid.*; cf. *The Spiritual Man* 1:7-20).

²³ Evan Roberts himself was profoundly influenced by Jessie Penn-Lewis.

²⁴ Pg. 255, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

²⁵ Pg. 86, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

²⁶ Interestingly, by the 1940s Nee's "spiritual emphasis . . . catered . . . to a taste among the dedicated women missionaries who had rejoined him from the West and who . . . constituted a growing body of foreign sympathizers. Some . . . resigned from their missions to attach themselves to Nee's work . . . [certain] ladies were unquestionably carried away with adulation of Nee as . . . the only person in China through whom they might discover God's will" (pgs. 161-162, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

²⁷ Pg. 113, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

Nee's theology than Miss Barber."²⁸ "[T]he main influences upon [Nee were] so often . . . women—Dora Yu, his mother, Margaret Barber, Ruth Lee, [and] Elizabeth Fischbacher[.]"²⁹ In summary:

Whenever [Nee] had a problem or needed spiritual instruction or strengthening, he would go to . . . Margaret E. Barber . . . an Anglican missionary[.] . . . [He testified that] [e]very Saturday [he] went to Ma-Kiang, Fukien, to listen to Miss Margaret Barber's preaching. . . . [H]e said that he scarcely found one person in the Western world who could compare with Margaret Barber. It was through this sister that he obtained the foundation of the spiritual life. He frequently told others that it was through a sister [Dora Yu] that he was saved and that it was also through a sister [Margaret Barber] that he was edified. . . . Through Margaret Barber he became familiar with the books of [writers such as] Jessie Penn-Lewis . . . [who taught him about] the subjective aspect of Christ's death[,] . . . spiritual warfare[,] . . . [and] the three parts of man. . . . Watchman Nee received a clear vision of what it means to be an overcomer by . . . reading the writings of Jessie Penn-Lewis. . . . Madame Guyon's biography . . . and the writings of other mystics helped him in the matter of life. . . . Mary McDonough's book . . . was a great help . . . [c]oncerning God's plan of redemption.³⁰

Under the influence of his mother and with the assistance of Miss Barber and Dora Yu, Nee rejected infant baptism for believer's immersion.³¹ He consequently sought out Miss Barber to be baptized, receiving a heavenly sign at the time of the ceremony that indicated the smile of supernatural power upon these proceedings.³² Nee learned his evangelistic practices from "Miss Groves[,] Margaret Barber's co-worker."³³ Women taught Nee his doctrines of Spirit filling, applying the blood of Christ, living without financial support, crucifixion with Christ, overcoming, spiritual life, and many of his other distinctive beliefs.³⁴ "Four sisters were vital to Watchman Nee in his life and work. He was saved through the preaching of Dora Yu, perfected under Margaret Barber, and sustained by two elderly co-workers, Ruth Lee and Peace Wang,"³⁵ who were themselves important woman preachers.³⁶ Nee accepted the unscriptural³⁷ ministry of the woman

²⁸ Pg. 15, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, Roberts.

²⁹ Pg. 156, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³⁰ Pgs. 11-18, 25-26, 70, 81, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³¹ Pg. 36, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³² Pgs. 54-55, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

³³ Pg. 45, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁴ See pgs. 45-46, 55-56, 59-60, 69-70, 73, 75, 81, 85, 127, 138, 141, 143, 148, 310-311, etc., *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁵ Pg. 101, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁶ Ruth Lee's "fiery preaching" to men and women influenced many, and her one-time pupil, Peace Wang, was also an "independent evangelist." (pgs. 57, 101-102, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear). After Nee's coming to a conviction that was less than favorable to such matters, "the existence of gifted women preachers seems to have created a problem." One attempt at a solution took place in a "Canonton meeting [where] . . . men suspend[ed] a large white sheet across the width of the hall. . . . Ruth Lee and Peace Wang were visiting the local church. Since they must not preach to men, the brothers would therefore sit behind the sheet and listen to their messages from there!" (pg. 179, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.).

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 14:34-37; 1 Timothy 2:11-15.

evangelist Ruth Lee because of a dream,³⁸ and she became the acting editor of newsletters, papers, and books that Nee's denomination put out.³⁹ She also edited and prepared for the press works by Nee such as his *The Spiritual Man*, composed under Ruth Lee's "literary tutelage."⁴⁰ As Nee's new denomination was being born, the ordinance of communion was celebrated for the first time in Peace Wang's home with Wang, Nee, Ruth Lee, and one other person present.⁴¹ Witness Lee also ascribed the greatest influence upon his life, after Nee, to Peace Wang, the woman minister whose "preaching was so convincing and prevailing that many denominations invited her to hold meetings."⁴² Although Nee eventually came to a position that did not endorse women preachers of this sort,⁴³ he continued to believe that women should sometimes lead the congregation in prayer in prayer meetings.⁴⁴ Nee translated works by Jessie Penn-Lewis into Chinese, and had his co-workers translate works by Madame Guyon, Mrs. C. A. McDonough and Mrs. C. E. Cowman.⁴⁵ In particular, Miss Barber not only "tutored Nee in the Keswick approach to spiritual dynamics, [but also] assuredly taught him a partial rapture theory,"⁴⁶ since Miss Barber was sent out as an independent missionary from Surry Chapel, Norwich, England, where the founder of the partial Rapture theory, Robert Govett (1813-1901),⁴⁷ was the minister. Nee admits that his exposition of the book of Revelation, *Come Lord Jesus*, is dependent upon Govett's *The Apocalypse Expounded* (1920).⁴⁸ Nee was teaching the partial Rapture error by at least 1924, confirmed not only

³⁸ Pgs. 103-104, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

³⁹ Pg. 300, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee; pg. 148, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁴⁰ Pgs. 98-99, 101, 210, 262-263, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁴¹ Pg. 102, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁴² Pgs. 109-110, 113 *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

⁴³ Pgs. 104-105, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁴⁴ Pg. 179, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

⁴⁵ Pgs. 261-262, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

⁴⁶ Pg. 162, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, by Dana Roberts.

⁴⁷ "The modern theory of partial rapture seems to have originated in the writings of Robert Govett who published a book setting forth the theory as early as 1853. In this work he expounds his view that participation in the kingdom is conditional and depends upon worthy conduct. . . . Others have made a significant contribution to the propagation of the theory. D. M. Pantton, as editor of *The Dawn* (London), uses his publication to promote this teaching. Such writers as Ira E. David, Sarah Foulkes Moore, William Leask, and C. G. A. Gibson-Smith contribute to *The Dawn* articles in support of this theory. For the most part, however, the view is limited to a few adherents who are generally treated as heterodox by other pretribulationists" (pgs. 193-194, "Premillennialism and the Tribulation, Part V: Partial Rapture Theory," John F. Walvoord. *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112:447 (Jul 55) 193-209).

⁴⁸ "This study [*Come, Lord Jesus*] was given by Mr. Watchman Nee in the early years of his ministry. . . . In the study of prophecy our brother followed the approach of such people as G. H. Pember, Robert Govett and D. M. Pantton[.]" ("Translator's Preface," in *Come Lord Jesus: A Study of the Book of Revelation*, Watchman Nee. New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1976). "Robert Govett, D.

by Miss Barber, but also by the *Overcomer* literature of Jessie Penn-Lewis and Evan Roberts.⁴⁹ He wrote:

There is evidence in the Bible to show that . . . believers will be Raptured after the Tribulation, [but] that does not mean that all believers will be Raptured after the Tribulation . . . some will be Raptured before the Tribulation. . . . [O]nly a small number (one-seventh) can be raptured before the tribulation[.] . . . [N]ot all, but only a portion, of the church will be raptured before the tribulation. . . . Not all those who are regenerated can be raptured. One must pray always. . . . Some believers will be raptured before the tribulation, and another group of believers will remain until after the tribulation. The latter will suffer the trial of the tribulation.⁵⁰

In 1935 Nee became involved with Pentecostalism through Miss Elizabeth Fischbacher of the China Inland Mission.⁵¹ He had “overcome his reservations about women preachers sufficiently to attend her meetings,” and, in line with his Keswick continuationism, “acknowledged the Holy Spirit’s . . . gifts to the church of healing and of speaking with and interpretation of tongues.”⁵² Nee “found peace and spiritual blessing in her message and some experiences associated with her Pentecostal theology.”⁵³ Miss Fischbacher, who translated various items for the Little Flock into English,⁵⁴ accompanied Nee to the 1938 Keswick convention;⁵⁵ the addresses in Nee’s

M. Panton, and G. H. Pember . . . [a]ll . . . hold to a ‘selective rapture’ position, that only the faithful believer will be resurrected or raptured to enter the millennial kingdom” (pg. 77, *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 1:1 (Autumn 1988)). Nee thus clearly leaned upon earlier partial-Rapturists, although, of course, he also added in his own ideas to the doctrinal mix.

⁴⁹ Thus, Nee spoke of the “rapture of the overcomers,” who in his mind were only an elite subset of all believers, already in his preaching in that year (pgs. 34 & preface, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee). See also pgs. 199-200, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee; cf. pg. 83, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee, as an example of the partial Rapture theology Nee held in 1934 (preface, *ibid*). See also “Rapture,” by Watchman Nee, elec. acc. http://www3.telus.net/trbrooks/Partial_rapture.htm.

⁵⁰ Chapter 25, *Study on Matthew*, in *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Set 1 Vol. 15, Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, n. d. ISBN: 0-87083-589-0. Part of the above quotation is the title to the chapter; capitalization has been changed for that portion of the quotation. See also “Rapture,” by Watchman Nee, elec. acc. http://www3.telus.net/trbrooks/Partial_rapture.htm.

⁵¹ In light of the heavy Keswick influence (pg. 85, *The Keswick Story: The Authorized History of the Keswick Convention*, Polluck) and the interdenominationalism of Hudson Taylor’s China Inland Mission, it is not surprising that Pentecostalism permeated the organization almost immediately after the inception of the tongues movement. Cecil Polhill, one of the “Cambridge Seven,” is a clear example. In 1909, he was elected president of the Pentecostal Missionary Union, a position he retained until the Union merged with the Assemblies of God in 1925. “Mr. Polhill had visited the [Pentecostal] outpouring of the Spirit at Los Angeles, and had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost with signs following . . . there. He quickly became friendly with Alexander Boddy, and for the first ten years of the Pentecostal Movement in the British Isles these two men were the most outstanding figures.” At the same time, already before 1909 Polhill was on the Council of the China Inland Mission, a leadership position he held until his death in 1938. The fact he could lead both the China Inland Mission and the Pentecostal Missionary Union clearly illustrates the openness of the CIM to the charismatic movement (pgs. 46-49; *The Pentecostal Movement*, Donald Gee; pgs. 252-253, *The Making of the Modern Church*, Worrall).

⁵² Pg. 145, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155.

⁵³ Pg. 25, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*.

⁵⁴ Cf. pgs. 137, 152-154, 254, *Against the Tide*, Kinneary; Nee’s book *Rethinking the Work* was translated by her, as an example.

The Normal Christian Life were delivered on this trip to the West.⁵⁶ On this trip Nee taught, after the manner of Pentecostalism, that “we must *expect* God to seal His Word with signs and wonders” such as “the gift of healing” and exorcism—indeed, Christians who do “not know how to cast out demons . . . avail . . . nothing,” Nee proclaimed.⁵⁷ Watchman Nee was warmly received at Keswick, so that his leading the Convention in prayer was considered “the crowning moment of vision” for those present,⁵⁸ although at various periods up to this time sundry Chinese missionaries had rather bluntly declared that Nee was “a devil and a deceiver of many.”⁵⁹ Nee was not only already publicly promulgating the continuation of the Apostolic sign gifts, but also such errors as opposition to the classical doctrine of the Trinity and a rejection of the eternal generation of the Son of God.⁶⁰ Into later periods Nee continued to be assaulted for “serious error.”⁶¹ Miss Fischbacher also recorded and translated into English Nee’s messages,⁶² as she made “gifted versions and transcriptions . . . of the best of his preaching and writing.”⁶³ Moved by women preachers, Nee adopted his partial Rapture and pro-

⁵⁵ Pgs. 148-149, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁵⁶ Pgs. 151-152, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. The title of Nee’s book echoes the teaching of Robert P. Smith at the Oxford Convention: “The *Higher Christian Life* . . . [which] so few were living . . . should be called . . . *the only normal Christian life*” (pg. 54, *Account of the Union Meeting for the Promotion of Scriptural Holiness, Held at Oxford, August 29 to September 7, 1874*. Chicago: Revell, 1874). Mr. Smith’s terminology of Higher Life victory as the “normal Christian life” became common in Keswick circles and was adopted by Nee.

⁵⁷ Pgs. 178-182, *What Shall This Man Do?* Watchman Nee. Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1973. Italics in original.

⁵⁸ Pg. 256, *Transforming Keswick: The Keswick Convention, Past, Present, and Future*, Price & Randall.

⁵⁹ Pg. 74, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁶⁰ Thus, in 1934 Nee could teach: “From eternity past up to the resurrection the Lord is the only begotten Son. . . . before death He is the only begotten Son.” Thus, Nee was already teaching that Jesus Christ was not the only begotten Son of God after His resurrection—“after He is raised from the dead He becomes the firstborn Son” (pg. 12, 24, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee), an error that is related to Nee’s modalistic affirmation that the Son became the Holy Spirit after the resurrection. Watchman Nee by no means would agree with classical Trinitarianism as set forth in Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan, Chalcedonian, or Athanasian creeds, nor with a statement such as *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*: “The Lord our God is but one only living and true God . . . in this divine and infinite Being there are three subsistences, the Father, the Word (or Son), and the Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, yet the essence undivided: the Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son; all infinite, without beginning, therefore but one God, who is not to be divided in nature and being, but distinguished by several peculiar relative properties and personal relations; which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence on Him” (2:1, 3).

⁶¹ Pg. 164, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁶² Pg. 54, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*.

⁶³ Pg. xii, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

Pentecostal errors, as well as errors on sanctification, other corruptions of soteriology, and further false doctrines. Nevertheless, Keswick welcomed him with open arms.

While Nee's doctrine and practice were most heavily influenced by women preachers and teachers, he also, naturally, was influenced by some men. For example, Nee had compositions translated into Chinese of the Roman Catholic mystic Fenélon, the Catholic Carmelite hermit and mystic Brother Lawrence, and partial-Rapture promulgator Robert Govett.⁶⁴ He "read . . . all he could of Charles G. Finney, and of Evan Roberts and the Welsh spiritual awakening of 1904-5."⁶⁵ Nee was also influenced by men such as Andrew Murray and F. B. Meyer, as well as John Darby and various other writers among the Plymouth Brethren, particularly a group of Brethren writers that held to serious Christological heresies.⁶⁶ He did not sit at the feet of women alone to learn his distinctive errors.

⁶⁴ Pg. 261, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*.

⁶⁵ Pg. 85, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁶⁶ A group known as the London Brethren, who were Exclusive, as opposed to the Open Brethren, invited Nee to England in 1933. Watchman Nee was "fully accredited as in fellowship" with them (pgs. 216-217, *The Recovery and Maintenance of the Truth*, A. J. Gardiner. Kingston on Thames, England: Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, 1951). Nee was happy to fellowship with them despite the fact that they believed in severe errors on the nature of God and Christ. The London Brethren denied the eternal Sonship of Christ: "When the Son of God is mentioned in Scripture . . . it . . . is . . . always in manhood . . . there is . . . not . . . eternal sonship . . . in Scripture . . . His sonship [is spoken of] only *after* He is said to have become flesh . . . it is only as having become incarnate that the Lord is spoken of as Son" (pgs. 202-206, *ibid*; italics in original). They rejected Biblical and Chalcedonian Christology; Christ as "'perfect God and perfect Man' is not scripture . . . [it] is derogatory and dishonoring the Son . . . [it is] contrary to the teaching of Scripture . . . [to affirm that] the truth of His Person consists in the union in Him of God and man" (pgs. 139, 145-146 *ibid*). Affirmations that smacked of modalism were also made: "[A]ll the Persons of the Trinity were expressed by the Man Christ Jesus" (pg. 145, *ibid*). Errors in soteriology were also held, such as that one does not receive eternal life as soon as one is born again, but only upon being sealed by the Spirit: "A man is born again, is enlightened by the gospel and is then sealed by the Spirit, and it is then that by the Spirit he enters into eternal life" (pg. 132, *ibid*). Nonetheless, Nee was happy to be influenced by these men and take the Lord's Supper with them, carry on correspondence with them from China to learn of them, receive visits from them to China, and visit England to fellowship with and learn from them (pg. 216ff., *ibid*).

However, fellowship between Nee and the London Brethren was eventually broken—not because Nee rejected their heresies, but because Nee held to false doctrines beyond those which the Brethren supported. Nee was willing to take the Lord's Supper with advocates of the partial Rapture error and held to it himself (pg. 217, 221, *ibid*). Nee taught: "We must distinguish between 'sins' (either morally or doctrinally) that hinder fellowship with God, and 'sins' which do not," to which the London Brethren properly replied: "To suggest, as yo[u] . . . d[o], that there are sins which do not hinder, as you put it, 'fellowship with God,' is an affront to His holiness. Not only are the expressions you use in this connection quite unscriptural, but they disclose grave ignorance of the truth as to the presence and service of the Holy Spirit" (pgs. 218, 220, *ibid*). Furthermore, the Brethren affirmed: "[Y]ou prefer to substitute for the plain teaching of Scripture, your own professed experimental knowledge" (pgs. 220-221, *ibid*). Both the London Brethren and Watchman Nee were fine with severe errors on the doctrine of God and Christ, but the Brethren were not willing to join Nee in advocating a partial Rapture, open communion, sins that "do not hinder fellowship with God," and replacement of *sola Scriptura* for a priority upon mystical experience.

Nee taught, following Jessie Penn-Lewis, that only the human spirit is regenerated, and many have been influenced towards this error by his writings. Nee wrote:

After Adam fell, his spirit became dead. . . . The death of Adam began from his spirit. . . . The death in the spirit of the first man gradually spread to the realm of the body. . . . It continued to work in him until his spirit, soul, and body all became dead. . . . From that time on the spirit of Adam (as well as that of all his descendants) was suppressed by the soul. Soon after, through the soul's suppression, the spirit was merged into the soul, and the two parts became closely knit together. . . . Since the spirit became so closely knit to the soul, man began . . . to act according to his intellect or his feelings. At that time, the spirit had lost all its power and senses, and had become dormant . . . [that is, it had] fallen unconscious. Although it was still there, it was as if it were not there anymore. . . . The soul becomes subject to the demand of the senses and becomes their slave[.] . . . The flesh in the Bible refers to the life and nature of the soul and body of the unregenerated man. More often it refers to the sinful nature within the body. This flesh is the common nature which man shares with other animals. . . . The soul has replaced the spirit as the ruling [principle], and everything is independent and self-centered. . . . Not only are all the descendants of Adam dead in their spirits, but they are . . . fully under the control of the flesh and walk according to the soulish life and the carnal nature. Such people cannot have fellowship with God. . . . Now the spirit that was the highest, that ought to be joined to God, and that ought to rule over the soul and the body has become surrounded by the soul, whose motive and purpose are totally earthy. . . . This is why the Bible says that [the unregenerate] have no spirit. The result of such a fully soulish condition is to mock, to go on according to one's own lusts, and to make divisions. . . . Such persons are controlled by their souls and are suppressing their spirits. They are the opposite to [*sic*] the spiritual man. . . . [W]hen man is fleshly, not only is he under the rule of the soul, but his soul is actually joined to his body. Many times, the soul is even directed by the body to commit the vilest sins. . . . The authority of this body is so great that it causes the soul to become powerless to withstand it[;] [it can] only be its obedient slave. Man is divided into three parts: the spirit, the soul, and the body. God's original intention is that the spirit remain [*sic*] on top to rule over the soul. After man became soulish, the spirit was suppressed and became a servant to the soul. After man became carnal, the flesh, which occupied the lowest place, became the king. Man was changed from spirit-ruled to soul-ruled, and from soul-ruled to body-ruled. Step by step he became fallen, and the flesh took control. . . . Sin has killed the spirit, and now spiritual death has come to all men so that all men die in sin and transgressions. Sin has also caused the soul to become independent so that the soulish life now becomes an independent and selfish life. Furthermore, sin has empowered the body so that now the sinful nature reigns through the body. . . . Before man is regenerated, his spirit is far away from God and is dead. . . . The soul controls the whole man so that he lives either in his ideas or in excitement. The lusts and desires of the body bring the soul into subjection. Man's spirit became deadened; therefore, there is the need for the spirit to be resurrected. The rebirth which the Lord Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus is the rebirth of the spirit. To be born again is not a matter related to our body . . . nor is it a matter related to our soul[.] . . . We ought to especially emphasize that regeneration is the impartation of God's life into man's spirit. . . . Our being one with Christ's death and our initial step of obtaining His resurrection life are in our spirit. To be born again is completely a matter in the spirit; it has no relationship with the soul or the body. . . . According to the Bible, man's soul alone cannot form any relationship with God. Man's relationship with God is in his spirit. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must use their spirit. . . . only spirit can serve Spirit. . . . The regeneration in the Bible takes place in a part deeper than man's body and soul. It is in his spirit that the Holy Spirit imparts God's life to him. . . . Before regeneration, man's soul ruled over his spirit. His "self" dominated his soul. His lust governed his body. The soul became the life of the spirit, the "self" became the life of the soul, and the lust became the life of the body. After man's regeneration, the Holy Spirit rules his spirit, causing his spirit to govern his soul then through the soul to rule over

his body. Now the Holy Spirit becomes the life of the spirit, and the spirit becomes the life of the entire being. At the time of regeneration the Holy Spirit revives the human spirit and renews it.⁶⁷

Both our body and our spirit were originally dead. But after we believed in the Lord Jesus, we received Him within us to be our life. Christ, by means of the Holy Spirit, now dwells within the believers. . . . This is the very Christ who is our life. At the moment He entered into our inward part, He enlivened our spirit. . . . Originally our body and spirit were dead. Because we have received the indwelling Christ, our spirit is alive. The spirit and body were previously dead, but now the spirit is revived; only the body remains dead. This is the common condition of *every* believer—the spirit is alive and the body is dead. . . . Although sin has been cast out from the spirit and the will, the redemption of the body is still something in the future. Therefore, sin has not been cast out from the body. Since sin is still in the body, the body is dead. . . . In the meantime, our spirit is living, or more accurately stated, our spirit is life[.]⁶⁸

If a man's spirit is dead before God, he is totally useless in the eyes of God. The spirit must be regenerated. Thank the Lord that our spirit today is a new spirit, a regenerated spirit. This regenerated spirit is our inner man. Every Christian has received the same life from God in his spirit; there is no difference between him and others. The same Spirit who dwells in a weak brother also dwelt in Paul. As long as we are the Lord's, the new creation in our spirit is the same as in others. . . . The mind, emotion, and will are the original and natural faculties of man. The Holy Spirit is within him, and his regenerated spirit has become the new man, the inner man. Yet he still has an outward man, the old man, the original man outside of him. This outward man belongs to sin. The old man has been dealt with on the cross, but the life of the old creation still remains. . . . In order for a saved and regenerated believer to live out the Lord's life, there are two steps that he has to take. The first is believing, which is receiving the new life. The second is consecrating himself, which means committing his outward man to the Lord to allow the new life within to be expressed. . . . Many believers . . . are saved, but their outward man has never been dealt with.⁶⁹

Throughout the ages God has been trying to give man His Spirit. However, man's spirit was defiled, sin-ridden, dead, and fallen in the old creation. . . . Man has to receive a new spirit through regeneration before he can be in the position to receive God's Spirit and before God can dwell in him. Once a new believer has a new spirit, the Spirit of God dwells in him.⁷⁰

Paul said, "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor 6:17), not one soul. The resurrected Lord is the life-giving Spirit (15:45); therefore, his union with the believers is His union with the believers' spirit. The soul is only the personality of a man and is natural; it should only be used as a vessel to express the results of the union between the Lord and the spirit of the believer. In the believers' soul there is nothing that matches the nature of the Lord's life; only the spirit can have such union. Since the union is a union of the spirit, there is no place for the soul. If the soul and the spirit are still mixed, it will make the union impure. As long as our living has any trace of walking according to our own thoughts, of having our own opinion in anything, or of having our emotion stirred in any way, it is enough to weaken this union in our experience. . . . Mixture will not do. . . . This is a union of the spirit; anything of the soul cannot be allowed to be mixed in.⁷¹

In addition to other errors evident in these quotations, such as erroneous views of the depravity of man and of the Fall, Quietism, and many doctrinal affirmations that are simply entirely absent from the Bible, Nee's view that sanctification pertains only to the human spirit, that "new birth is something which happens entirely within the spirit; it has

⁶⁷ Pgs. 36-40, 47-49, 52, *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1992.

⁶⁸ pg. 660, *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee.

⁶⁹ pgs. 3-5, *How To Know God's Will*, Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1998.

⁷⁰ pg. 5, *Seeking God's Will*, Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 2001.

⁷¹ pgs. 236-237, *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee.

no relation to soul or body,”⁷² is connected with Nee’s adoption of anti-Trinitarian modalist idolatry. As at the Broadlands Conferences it was acceptable to preach that “Jesus Christ is . . . the Holy Spirit, Who will dwell in us,”⁷³ likewise Nee affirmed that 1 Corinthians 15:45 teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ became the Holy Spirit, who then regenerates the human spirit.⁷⁴ He wrote:

This is the ascension life. The believer is joined to the Lord who is at the right hand of God. . . . Just as a water hose connected to a fountain flows out living water, the believer’s spirit, which is joined to the Spirit of the Lord, also gushes out life. This is because the Lord [that is, He who is at the right hand of God, Jesus Christ] is not only the Spirit but the “life-giving Spirit.”⁷⁵

Not only is He the very Creator, He was also the Christ that put on the flesh. And now He is in us as the Holy Spirit. The Christ in the flesh is over! The Christ in the Spirit lives forever in us. . . . God has accomplished everything in Christ. He died and was resurrected, and He has been transformed into the Holy Spirit. He is now ready to come into you. All you need to do is believe. . . . After the Son of God passed through death and resurrection and became the Holy Spirit, He is no longer limited by time and space.⁷⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:45b says, “The last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.” This enables all those who have received Christ to obtain a new life. . . . God . . . put Christ into the Holy Spirit[.]⁷⁷

Thou, Lord, the Father once wast called, [b]ut now the Holy Spirit art.⁷⁸

⁷² Pg. 61, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 1.

⁷³ Pg. 170, *The Life that is Life Indeed: Reminiscences of the Broadlands Conferences*, Edna V. Jackson. London: James Nisbet & Co, 1910.

⁷⁴ Note, in addition to the quotations below, the already quoted statement by Nee from pgs. 236-237 of *The Spiritual Man* that “The resurrected Lord is the life-giving Spirit.”

⁷⁵ pg. 238, *The Spiritual Man*.

⁷⁶ If, somehow, Nee did not affirm modalism with this statement, as it certainly appears he did, his words still involve a very aberrant Christology. The Divine Person of the Son of God has from all eternity unchangeably and immutably been omnipresent, and the human nature that He assumed in the incarnation has from the moment of Christ’s conception been at one particular position in space. Since the Lord Jesus is truly human after His ascension, as He was before that time, His real human body is still not omnipresent; it is locally present in heaven, where He ascended, and from whence He will come again. To affirm that Christ’s humanity became omnipresent is to destroy the reality of His human nature, because a true human nature cannot possess the incommunicable Divine attribute of omnipresence. First John 4:3 states: “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh [ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα—perfect tense; He took to Himself a human nature in the point action of the incarnation, and the results of that assumption of humanity continue, a truth also taught in many other passages of Scripture] is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” Denying that the Lord Jesus has a true human nature, both before and after His ascension to heaven, is very serious antichristian heresy. Watchman Nee’s Christological statement about Christ becoming the Holy Spirit and no longer being limited by time and space thus appears to teach both the idolatry of modalism and also the heresy of antichrist that the Lord Jesus no longer has a true human nature.

⁷⁷ Pgs. 137-138, 141, 145, 155, *The Normal Christian Faith*, Watchman Nee (2nd ed.). Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1997.

⁷⁸ *Hymns*, #490, by Watchman Nee, cited on pg. 17, *Concerning the Triune God: The Father, the Son, and the Spirit*, Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1973. The *Little Flock Hymnal* was put together when Nee was twenty-eight from hymns already being circulated in pamphlet form in his denomination (pg. 115, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

Thus, Nee believed, Jesus Christ became the Holy Spirit at the time of the resurrection, when He ceased to be the only begotten Son of God.⁷⁹ Eyewitnesses and hearers of Watchman Nee made statements such as:

At the beginning of 1938 . . . [t]he word the Lord spoke to me through Watchman Nee made a revolutionary impact on my life. The evening I heard him say that Jesus became the Spirit to dwell in us . . . the Holy Spirit . . . light dawned.⁸⁰

Brother Watchman Nee . . . in Shanghai . . . was explaining . . . John 14:16-20 . . . to us, [and] he pointed out emphatically that “he” (the Holy Spirit) in verse 17 is the “I” (the Lord) in verse 18. The Lord said in effect, “When He comes I come. He is I; I am He.” The Holy Spirit is the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus is the Holy Spirit. . . . the Son is the Father, and the Son is also the Spirit.⁸¹

Nee’s teachings were summarized as including the following:

The crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ is now . . . the Spirit of life . . . [t]he Holy Spirit is . . . the Spirit of life . . . Christ is life . . . and this life is the Spirit of life . . . [t]he Son [is] the embodiment of the Father . . . [t]he Spirit is the realization of the Son . . . [t]he resurrection of Christ . . . ma[de] Christ the life-giving Spirit . . . [t]he [Holy] Spirit [is] [t]he consummation of the Triune God . . . [t]he . . . Spirit [is the] . . . application of the Father in the Son . . . [t]he incarnation [was] of the Triune God [that is, not of the Person of the Son alone, but of] . . . God the Father . . . God the Son . . . [and] God the Spirit . . . believers [are] transformed . . . by Christ as the Spirit.”⁸²

One would like to hope that Nee was simply sinfully and very dangerously careless in such modalistic language, or that he just didn’t know what he was talking about. One might perhaps also hope that Nee did not really believe or intend to teach that Jesus Christ was “transformed into the Holy Spirit” or that “the Son of God . . . became the Holy Spirit” and hope that those who heard him, including those closest to him, with whom he spent years, did not understand that Nee really did not mean what he said when they adopted modalist idolatry based on Nee’s teachings. Alternatively, one could

⁷⁹ Pgs. 12, 24, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee.

⁸⁰ The testimony of “Elizabeth P. Rademacher, A Western Missionary,” to Watchman Nee. <http://www.watchmannee.org/others-testimonies.html>. Further details about her, and this same modalist testimony to Nee, are found on pgs. 145ff. of *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation* by Lee.

⁸¹ Pgs. 16-17, *Concerning the Triune God: The Father, the Son, and the Spirit*, Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1973.

⁸² Pgs. 158-161, 279-281, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee. Note that modalism was included among the teachings of even Nee’s earliest period, from 1920-1932. The lack of spiritual discernment about Nee in the Western Keswick movement is evident in that even while Nee was making modalistic statements and requiring everyone to leave their churches to join his new denomination, he still was welcomed with open arms at the 1938 Keswick convention:

[T]he chairman [of the Keswick Convention], who was also the chairman of the China Inland Mission . . . agreed with [Nee]. He told Brother Nee that what the Lord had commissioned him to do in China was exactly the burden of . . . the founder of the CIM, and that their missionaries in China were wrong in opposing him. Eventually, the chairman of the mission went to China and called all the missionaries of the CIM together in Shanghai and told them that they were wrong in opposing the work of Watchman Nee. He told them that what Watchman Nee was doing was exactly what they should be doing. He advised them never to do anything from that day forth to oppose him. (pgs. 176, 204, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee)

perhaps hope that his writings have been severely altered or mistranslated.⁸³ However, such suppositions are extremely unlikely, making it morally certain that the damnable heresy of modalist idolatry was Nee's doctrine. It is certain that Watchman Nee's "most faithful co-worker,"⁸⁴ "senior worker in Shanghai and Taiwan,"⁸⁵ and successor⁸⁶ in the Little Flock movement, Witness Lee, did indeed reject Biblical Trinitarianism for a form of modalism that affirmed that the second Person in the Godhead became the third Person.⁸⁷ Lee wrote: "Hence, to say that the Lord Jesus is also the Holy Spirit is according to the Bible's clear revelation. Therefore, it is clear. The Lord Jesus is the

⁸³ This possibility, which would save Nee personally from damnation as an idolater, involves the supposition that Lee and others in Nee's movement interpolated Nee's writings with their own modalist heresy while Nee never spoke out against or condemned Lee for his modalist idolatry or for corrupting his own writings. One should note that even if this very unlikely hypothesis is indulged, it still leaves Nee's writings, as presently extant, corrupted with damnable idolatry and thus very dangerous and unreliable. However, it is far more likely that the Christian Research Institute is correct: "[T]here have always been some who have denied legitimacy to Lee's leadership and who have, in fact, disagreed strongly with Lee's understanding of Nee's teachings. We have examined these alternative interpretations and developments of Nee's teachings and do not believe that there is significant difference between Nee and Lee, nor any compelling evidence that Nee and Lee represent different teachings or different expressions of the church" (pg. 5, "We Were Wrong: A Reassessment of the 'Local Church' Movement of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee," *Christian Research Journal* 32:06 [2009]).

⁸⁴ Pg. 156, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, by Dana Roberts. Gainesville, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2005.

⁸⁵ Pg. xv, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁸⁶ Lee knew Nee for decades; their first interaction took place in 1925. At the time of their first personal meeting, Lee baptized someone into Nee's new denomination (pg. 289, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee). Lee testified: "Those days with Watchman affected my pathway in the Lord throughout all the following fifty-nine years" (pg. 288, *ibid.*) Lee became convinced that Nee was "a person wholly with the Lord . . . [and] a man of God" so that he "had to follow him and work with him," not because of Scripture, but because of an experience Nee had where he felt burdened about Lee and wrote him a letter (pg. 292, *ibid.*) Lee thus became Nee's full-time coworker in 1933. He was the best man at Nee's wedding (pgs. 307, 343, *ibid.* See pgs. 283-344 for a detailed discussion of Nee and Lee's work together). Lee also spearheaded the restoration of Nee to eldership after the elders at Shanghai had removed him for a time (pgs. 182, 187, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear). The Local Church cult received its name from Nee's doctrine, perpetuated by Lee, that each city could have only one church within it and all Christians must join that one "Local Church." Nee, when he decided to remain in China despite the invasion of Mao's communist armies, appointed Witness Lee over the work outside China in the late 1940s as the communists were advancing on the Chinese mainland (pgs. 193ff., *Against the Tide*, Kinnear). Nee was imprisoned by the communists in 1952 and would not oversee his denomination again. He died in 1972. Lee wrote:

I feel no shame whatsoever in saying that I followed a man [Watchman Nee]—a man that was the unique gift and the seer of the divine visions in this age. I am more than grateful to the Lord that immediately after being saved I was brought into such a profitable relationship with Watchman Nee and put into the closest relationship with him in the work of His recovery through so many events over a long period of time. The revelations concerning Christ, the church, the spirit, and life which I saw through Watchman Nee, the infusions of life which I received from him, and the things concerning the work and the church which I learned from him will require eternity to evaluate their true worth. (<http://www.watchmannee.org/others-testimonies.html>)

Witness Lee, whose modalism is blatant and undeniable, thus claimed very strongly to have received his doctrines from Watchman Nee. There is no evidence to the contrary. See also pg. 117, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

⁸⁷ Lee also affirms many other dangerous and damnable heresies and errors.

Father, the Son, and the Spirit, the very God and the Lord.”⁸⁸ Lee’s position is advocated by the Church of Recovery/Local Church cult that publishes and zealously promulgates both modalism and the writings of both Nee and Lee through its publishing arm, Living Stream Ministry. Tying sanctification in with the human spirit alone is also related to the strange error of Nee and Lee, developed from a trajectory of Jessie Penn-Lewis’s thought,⁸⁹ that the Holy Spirit “mingles” with and so becomes indistinguishable from the

⁸⁸ pgs. 8-9, *The Truth Concerning The Trinity: Two Answers By Witness Lee*. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1976. Lee affirms such blasphemy and idolatry many times in many of his writings. Representative examples are found in *Witness Lee and the Local Church*, by Cal Beisner & Robert & Gretchen Passantino. San Juan Capistrano, CA: Christian Research Institute, 1978.

⁸⁹ Penn-Lewis, as a precursor to Nee and Lee’s doctrines of the mingled spirit and of the breaking of the outer man, wrote:

The believer must not only apprehend the negative side of God’s dealing as depicted in Hebrews 4:12—the dividing of “soul” from “spirit”—but the positive side . . . as the God of Peace . . . taking possession of and working through the spirit, and seeing that the soul and body fulfil their proper functions. “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:7), wrote the Apostle. “Ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to Him Who was raised from the dead” (Romans 7:4, R.V.). Here is set forth clearly the “joining” or union with Christ in the spirit, which is the purpose and outcome of the work of the Cross. This union with the Risen and Ascended Lord can be only in spirit, and EXPERIMENTALLY REALIZED as the SPIRIT OF THE BELIEVER IS SEPARATED FROM THE ENWRAPPING OF THE SOUL; for, as Stockmayer observes, the Risen Lord cannot be said to be the Bridegroom of the soul; the soul—the personality of the man—can only be the vessel through which the Lord manifests His own life, bringing forth, in union with the believer’s spirit, “fruit unto God.” The “spiritual” man, therefore, is one in whom, through the dividing of soul and spirit by the Word of God, the SPIRIT HAS BEEN FREED from the entanglement of the “soul” . . . raised out of its “embrace” and joined to the Lord in union of essence—spirit with spirit—one spirit—so that the soul and body may serve as vehicles for the expression of the will, and life, and love of the Lord Himself through the believer. (Chapter 5, *Soul & Spirit*, Jessie Penn-Lewis. Capitalization present in the original. Note the rest of the chapter as well.)

Consider also that Penn-Lewis, in line with earlier heretical mystical writers, states that the believer has a “union of essence” with God, an affirmation that also provides background for the deification heresy Nee and Lee developed out of their mingled spirit doctrine, and which is also a precursor of the Word-Faith “little gods” doctrine. Penn-Lewis’s affirmation of a union of essence with God was not simply a dangerous and idolatrous but mistaken slip of her pen; for example, she stated elsewhere:

The spiritual man . . . is perfected into one spirit with others in Christ. . . . John 17 . . . [states] . . . “As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us . . . that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one[.]” . . . The essential union which exists between Father and Son[,] the Union of essence in spirit with spirit—is the union of the believer each with the other who is IN God. The language of the Lord is unmistakable. He said, “That they may be one, even as WE are ONE!” This means Father and Son, dwelling in the spirit of the believer, by the Holy Ghost, in perfect—or complete—union; and of necessity it means also the same union of spirit with other believers. The “spiritual” man is therefore . . . one with Christ in God. (*Soul & Spirit*, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Chapter 5; cf. Chapter 8, “[T]he gilded bait offered to Eve in the temptation in Eden was ‘Ye shall be as God’—which was the very purpose in the heart of God in His creation of man.”)

Penn-Lewis is idolatrous and greatly mistaken exegetically, although well within her Keswick and Quaker theological trajectory, when she affirms that the union of essence in the Trinity between the Divine Person of the Father and of the Son is shared by men (an error she is followed in by Word-Faith teachers who also misuse John 17:21-23; e. g., Paul Crouch; see pg. 333, *Charismatic Chaos*, John MacArthur). John 17:21-23 speaks of the union of the elect with Christ as the Divine-human Mediator, as *Theanthropos*, and of their union with God through Christ by the Spirit. The union of the incarnate Son of Man with the Godhead and the union of the elect with the incarnate Son are not the same as the ontological and absolutely incommunicable unity of the three Persons of the Trinity, even apart from the exegetical point that the “even as” (καθώς) of John 17:22 can well be understood as an affirmation concerning the equal truth of the union of the elect with Christ and of Christ with the Father, rather than an affirmation that both unions

human spirit,⁹⁰ a false doctrine that is related to Lee's heretical confusion about the fact that in the incarnation⁹¹ Jesus Christ united His true and distinct Divine nature with a true and distinct human nature in the unity of His single Person.⁹² Lee's spirit-mingling heresy also lends itself to the heresy of deification—the Satanic blasphemy that man becomes God (Genesis 3:5)—strenuously promulgated by Lee and the Church of the Recovery cult as a legitimate trajectory of the teaching of Watchman Nee⁹³ and in

are of the same kind or nature (cf. Section 1.70, "Of the Union Between Christ and the Saints," in Treatise 1, *Of Domestic Duties*, William Gouge, elec. acc. *Encyclopedia Puritannica Project*, CD Version 3.0.). Nee took seriously and developed Penn-Lewis's error, and Lee expanded Nee's mystical doctrine of deification and developed all its vile and idolatrous implications.

⁹⁰ "One rather remarkable thing is that God does not mean to distinguish between His Spirit and our spirit. . . . It is simply impossible to distinguish. When in regeneration we receive our new spirit, we receive God's Spirit too. The moment our human spirit is raised from the state of death, we receive the Holy Spirit. We often say that the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit, but we find it hard to discern which is the Holy Spirit and which is our own spirit. The Holy Spirit and our spirit have become so mingled; while each is unique they are not easily distinguished. . . . Since the Holy Spirit and our spirit are joined into one (1 Cor. 6:17), they can be distinguished only in name, not in fact" (pgs. 20-21, *The Release of the Spirit*, Watchman Nee. Sure Foundation: 1965).

⁹¹ Lee evidenced further severe incarnational confusion and heresy by affirming that as "Christ is the embodiment of God . . . sin is the embodiment of Satan . . . Satan wrought himself into man . . . [so] God became incarnated as a man" (pgs. 114-115 *The Economy of God*, by Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministries, 2005). Satan is a real, personal being, not an impersonal entity like sin, nor did Satan ever become embodied or incarnate in man like the Lord Jesus Christ did.

⁹² The Biblical doctrine of the natures of Christ, taught in passages such as Philippians 2:6-7, was expounded by the Council of Chalcedon:

We unanimously teach one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, complete as to his Godhead, and complete as to his manhood; truly God, and truly man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; consubstantial with the Father as to his Godhead, and consubstantial also with us as to his manhood; like unto us in all things, yet without sin; as to his Godhead begotten of the Father before all worlds, but as to his manhood, in these last days born, for us men and for our salvation, of the virgin Mary, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, known in two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without severance, and without division; the distinction of the natures being in no wise abolished by their union, but the peculiarity of each nature being maintained, and both concurring in one person and hypostasis. We confess not a Son divided and sundered into two persons, but one and the same Son, and Only-begotten, and God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, even as the prophets had before proclaimed concerning him, and he himself hath taught us.

Rather than affirming this foundational Christological truth, Lee affirms that the Divine and human were "mingled" in Christ: "Christ's incarnation was the mingling of His divine nature with the human nature" (pg. 13, *The Economy of God*, Witness Lee). In "the incarnation a dispensation began in which God and man, man and God were blended into one. . . . What took place at Bethlehem was the birth of One who had a dual nature" (pgs. 4-5, *The God of Resurrection*, by Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1997). Lee's doctrine is aberrant Christology, despite a subsequent reference to "two natures" on pg. 5; however, his error here may be motivated more by his mysticism and rejection of Bible study than a definite and deliberate rejection of Biblical and Chalcedonian Christology.

⁹³ Of course, Word-Faith theology likewise teaches that man becomes god. Watchman Nee probably adopted his concept of deification out of the pantheistic mysticism and Faith and Mind Cure background that undergirds Higher Life theology, a background that led, for example, E. W. Kenyon similarly to affirm: "God impart[s] His own nature to the human spirit God becomes a part of our very consciousness" (pgs. 74, 137, *The Hidden Man: An Unveiling of the Subconscious Mind*, Kenyon; note that Kenyon employs in context the same sort of argumentation as Nee and Penn-Lewis about only the spirit being regenerated) in this manner "espousing deification . . . the metaphysical view that salvation entails man becoming a god" (pg. 44, *A Different Gospel*, McConnell, commenting on these very quotes

accordance with the position of the spiritualist originator of the Keswick movement, Lord Mount Temple.⁹⁴ Watchman taught that the Church is Christ, and Christ is God, so the church is deified. Nee proclaimed:

[T]he church as the Body of Christ was simply the enlargement, expansion, and expression of the resurrected Christ. . . . Christ in resurrection was the . . . content of the church . . . [Nee] frequently emphasized that anything which is not Christ in resurrection is not the church . . . the church is Christ. . . . [t]he genuine oneness of the church . . . is the Spirit Himself. . . . [T]he Holy Spirit . . . reconstitute[s] us within with the divine element. . . . Christ is both the content of the church and the reality of the church. . . . the [idea that the] Body of Christ . . . express[es] Christ corporately in each locality . . . was the goal of [Nee's] entire ministry, and he held to this goal to the day he died. . . . God and His redeemed . . . [will] express the processed Triune God forever. . . . [Salvation] bring[s] God into man, making God one with man as a God-man. . . . [T]he resurrection of Christ . . . [bring[s] man into God."⁹⁵

Nee, as a natural development of his mysticism,⁹⁶ regularly taught this heresy of deification, and affirmations concerning it fill his writings:

Christ the Head and the Church His body . . . Christ *and* His Church, make up together His one new Man—"the Christ."⁹⁷ The goal of God was to establish not just the individual Christ, but also the corporate Christ. This corporate Christ is the church.⁹⁸ [T]he corporate Christ . . . is the composite of the personal Christ and the church. . . . [T]he term Christ . . . refers to the church.⁹⁹ "The church is simultaneously fully Christ in its state and not fully Christ in its status. . . . The corporate Christ . . . is the personal Christ and the church . . . in the *eschaton* . . . the church [will] experience the full status of the personal exalted Christ."¹⁰⁰ Everything of Eve was out of Adam, and everything of the church is out of Christ. . . . The fact that Eve was made from Adam signifies that the church is made from Christ. Eve was made with Adam's rib. Since Eve came out from Adam, she was still Adam. Then what is the church? The church is another form of Christ, just as Eve was another form of Adam. The church is just Christ. . . . The church is . . . taken out of Christ. In other words, it is the man which God has made by using Christ as the material. . . . The material of the church is Christ. . . . Only that which is out of Christ can return to Christ. The material for the building of such a bride [as the church] is Christ Himself.¹⁰¹ There is a portion in

from Kenyon). However, deification is a false doctrine that Satan has doubtlessly conveyed to many unregenerate people directly throughout the course of history (cf. Genesis 3:5).

⁹⁴ Mr. Mount-Temple prayed: "My Lord Jesus, as Thou didst take my humanity, I pray Thee impart to me Thy Divinity," and he stated that, as with the confession of Christ as one Person with a true Divine and a true human nature at Chalcedon: "I have to record my thanks . . . for deep Churchism at our Conferences . . . [and] for the knowledge that we are all two in one—two natures in one person . . . the Divine and the human" (pg. 183, *Memorials [of William Francis Cowper-Temple, Baron Mount-Temple]*, Georgina Cowper-Temple. London: Printed for private circulation, 1890).

⁹⁵ Pgs. 80, 163, 164, 166, 196-197, 271, 279-280, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

⁹⁶ B. B. Warfield wisely noted: "The history of mysticism only too clearly shows that he who begins by seeking God within himself may end by confusing himself with God" (pg. 661, *Studies in Theology: The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol. 9, B. B. Warfield. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008).

⁹⁷ Pg. 14, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

⁹⁸ Pg. 7, *The Assembly Life*, by Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1995. cf. pg. 265, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation* by Lee.

⁹⁹ Pgs. 14, 48, 79, *God's Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee.

¹⁰⁰ Pgs. 151-152, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, Dana Roberts, citing *Christ the Sum*, pg. 59, & *Love One Another*, pg. 194, by Watchman Nee.

¹⁰¹ Chapters 2, 3, *The Glorious Church*, Watchman Nee.

us which is out of Christ and which is Christ Himself. . . . There is a life within us which has nothing to do with sin and which requires no redemption. That life in us is from Christ and it is Christ Himself.¹⁰² God is added to man. . . . [I]n the New Jerusalem . . . the Creator mingles with the creature . . . God and man will become one.¹⁰³ When . . . a sinner, the old man, hears the gospel and believes in Christ and is saved, he becomes a new man. Not only has he become a new man individually; he is joined to all other Christians to become one corporate new man as well. . . . The church . . . is the new man . . . The new man is simply Christ. The nature of the new man is Christ. . . . We can even venture to say that Christ is the church and the church is Christ . . . [t]he constitution of the new man is nothing less than Christ Himself. Since the nature of the new man—the church—is Christ, we can say that the church is Christ. . . . The constitution of the new man is Christ Himself . . . the church is Christ. . . . He would release His life on the earth to all those who would believe in Him so that they would be regenerated and receive God’s life. . . . the church . . . is . . . the corporate Christ. . . . Formerly, Christ was expressed individually; now He is expressed corporately. . . . Only the church as the corporate Christ can fulfill God’s goal and plan.¹⁰⁴

Nee’s mystical doctrine of deification was faithfully expounded also in Witness Lee’s works and other writings in their denomination. Lee forthrightly taught modalism and deification:

[T]he Son must be the Father . . . the entire Godhead, the Triune God, became flesh. . . . The traditional explanation of the Trinity is grossly inadequate and borders on tritheism . . . the Son is the Father, and the Son is also the Spirit . . . Christ is of two natures, the human and the divine, and we are the same: we are of the human nature, but covered with the divine. He is the God-man, and we are the God-men. . . . In number we are different, but in nature we are exactly the same. . . . God’s economy and plan is to make Himself man and to make us, His created beings, “God,” so that He is “man-ized” and we are “God-ized.” In the end, He and we, we and He, all become God-men. . . . Because the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all one with the Body of Christ, we may say that the Triune God is now the “‘four-in-one’ God.” These four are the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Body.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Chapters 2, 5, *The Glorious Church*, Watchman Nee.

¹⁰³ Chapter 5, *The Glorious Church*, Watchman Nee.

¹⁰⁴ Pgs. 7-9, 15-16, *The Mystery of Christ: Knowing Christ in the Church & as the Church*, by Watchman Nee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1997.

¹⁰⁵ See “An Open Letter To the Leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the ‘Local Churches’” (<http://www.open-letter.org/>), signed by more than seventy evangelical scholars at institutions such as Dallas Theological Seminary, Knox Theological Seminary, Liberty Theological Seminary, Southern Evangelical Seminary, Denver Seminary, Western Seminary, and many Southern Baptist seminaries, where extensive evidence is given of Witness Lee’s modalism and deification heresies.

Very regrettably, the Christian Research Institute (CRI) of Hank Hanegraaff reversed its formerly correct position on the cultic character of the Church of the Recovery in “We Were Wrong: A Reassessment of the ‘Local Church’ Movement of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee,” *Christian Research Journal* 32:06 (2009). Hanegraaff wrote: “[T]he Christian Research Institute has concluded that the local churches [of Nee and Lee] are a genuine expression of authentic New Testament Christianity . . . *not a cult*” (pg. 62; italics in original). This note is not the place to conduct a complete critique of the errors involved in CRI’s reversal. However, the following points deserve mention. In relation to CRI’s justification of the modalism of the Local Church (LC), the CRI is dangerously wrong when it argues that the revelation of the ontological Trinity in the economic Trinity appears like modalism, yet this error is alleged as a fact that is to explain Witness Lee’s many modalistic statements (pgs. 16, 19, 22). God does not deceive people in His self-revelation in the economic Trinity—while all three Persons concur in the external Trinitarian works, so that the *opera ad extra sunt indivisa*, the economy nevertheless clearly reveals three distinct Persons and points to the true trinity in the ontological Trinity. An economic modalism would reveal an ontological modalism, not an ontological Trinity, so little has actually been gained by relegating Lee’s modalistic language to an alleged merely economic modalism that undergirds an alleged ontological Trinitarianism.

Furthermore, CRI's recording that Lee condemns one form of modalism (pgs. 16-17) does not constitute a condemnation of all forms of modalism—particularly that form to which both he and his denomination hold. Finally, the fact remains that Witness Lee regularly employs grossly modalistic language, language of a sort entirely absent in Scripture, and he has never repudiated any of it. CRI can attempt to explain it away, but Lee's statements that "[t]he Lord Jesus is the Father, the Son, and the Spirit" (pg. 15) remain utterly unjustifiable.

In relation to the Local Church's doctrine of deification, the core of CRI's argument is that deification was also taught by "ancient Greek church fathers and Eastern Orthodox theologians," so it is "within the pale of orthodoxy" (pg. 25). Even if one grants CRI's very questionable premise that Eastern Orthodoxy teaches deification in the manner that Witness Lee does, it would not justify Lee—rather, it would supply another of the many reasons, from image worship to sacramental works salvation, that Eastern Orthodoxy is heresy. The severe problems with CRI's argument, and the organization's own extreme lack of doctrinal discernment, is evident in their argument that if one is to criticize the Church of the Recovery for teaching deification, then:

[W]hy not go after the Episcopalians for their doctrine of baptismal regeneration, or the Lutherans for their belief in the "real presence" of the body and blood of Christ "in, with, and under" the Eucharist, or the Nazarenes for their belief in a "Second Blessing"? If . . . [we ought to] tolerate doctrinal distinctives of groups such as these . . . why is the LC not treated with the same consideration? (pg. 29)

CRI's assumption that one ought to tolerate damnable heresies such as baptismal regeneration, and severe errors such as the Second Blessing, and therefore the deification heresy of the LC ought to be extended the like toleration, is not evidence of the LC's orthodoxy, but of the CRI's openness to heresy. CRI's recognition of other unconverted heretics such as James D. G. Dunn (pg. 18), its denial that Roman Catholicism is a cult and affirmation that many devout Catholics are true Christians (cf. "The Christian Research Institute and Rome," <http://www.wayoflife.org/database/criandrome.html>), its unwillingness to label Seventh Day Adventism a cult (<http://www.equip.org/articles/seventh-day-adventism/>), are all further evidences of its lack of doctrinal health. CRI's doctrinal and practical blindness is also evident in its affirmation that LC practices such as "pray-reading" are not dangerous but have "much to offer Western Christianity" (pg. 62).

CRI also notes that members of the LC have endured persecution in China (pgs. 29-30), but this hardly proves that they are true Christians—members of the Watchtower Society, Sikhs, and even many of the Communist atheists that fought to successfully take over China endured great persecution at the hands of others, but were hardly true Christians. This argument, like the body of the others in CRI's blessing upon the LC, is clearly fallacious.

While CRI reversed its position on the cultic status of the LC, very many of the signers of the "Open Letter To the Leadership of Living Stream Ministry and the 'Local Churches'" continue to recognize the serious deficit of Christian orthodoxy in the organization. The Church of the Recovery continues to be "a movement the vast majority of Christian apologists and theologians consider to be a cult of Christianity" (<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/1154-christian-research-institute-cri-descends-deeper-into-error-and-controversy>). See "A Response to the *Christian Research Journal's* Recent Defense of the 'Local Church' Movement," Norm Geisler & Ron Rhodes, http://www.open-letter.org/pdf/Geisler_Rhodes_Response_to_CRI.pdf; "Five Christian apologists [E. Calvin Beisner, James Bjornstad, Darrell L. Bock, Norman L. Geisler, Gordon R. Lewis] evaluate the teachings of Witness Lee and The Local Church," <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/846-apologetics-examine-local-church-witness-lee>; "Why the Local Church was included in the Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions," <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/379-local-church-encyclopedia-of-cults-and-new-religions>; and many other articles at www.apologeticsindex.org. See also "The False Gospel of Witness Lee and the Living Stream Ministries," <http://contrast2.wordpress.com/2010/09/25/the-false-gospel-of-witness-lee-and-the-living-stream-ministries/>.

The compromise, doctrinal weakness, and spiritual confusion propagated by the Christian Research Institute's endorsement of the Church of the Recovery cult illustrates the fact that proper spiritual discernment is found only through careful study of Scripture within the pillar and ground of the truth, the local and visible Baptist congregation (1 Timothy 3:15). Parachurch countercult ministries may have some valuable material, but believers should not expect them to be soundly trustworthy, as they exist outside of the authority of the sole institution ordained of God for the teaching of truth, the immersionist assembly Christ started in the first century and preserved by His Almighty power to this present day.

The denomination's theological journal, *Affirmation and Critique*, a publication of Living Stream Ministry, had an issue entitled "Deification,"¹⁰⁶ which included articles entitled: "Becoming God," "Can Human Beings Become God?" "Deification by Participation in God's Divinity," "The Gospel of the Promised Seed: Deification according to the Organic Pattern in Romans 8 and Philippians 2," "Creation, Sanctification, Regeneration, Deification," "Regeneration for Deification, Regeneration as Deification," "Deified to Be the Bride of Christ," and "Aspects of the New Jerusalem: Deification." The titles of the articles indicate all that must be said. Affirmations are made such as:

The time for silence and shrinking back out of fear of being labeled heretical, cultic, or unorthodox must come to an end . . . The believers in Christ become God in and through their organic union with Christ; the believers in Christ become God through regeneration; the believers in Christ become God through organic salvation; the believers in Christ become God by eating God; the believers in Christ become God by loving God; the believers in Christ become God through the function of the law of life.¹⁰⁷

Indeed, the modalistic "trinity" of the Church of the Recovery becomes, by faith and baptism, a quaternity—the Father, Son, Spirit, and the church: "[T]he three Persons of the Godhead . . . [which are not eternal in any case but simply] three [modalistic] stages . . . are now four in one: the Father, the Son, the Spirit, and the Body . . . by faith and baptism."¹⁰⁸ Nee and his denomination's revolting and blasphemous dogma¹⁰⁹ perpetuates the original lie of Satan: "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5).

The Church of the Recovery ties in closely the mingled-spirit doctrine developed by Watchman Nee with its affirmations of modalism and deification.¹¹⁰ Thus Lee and the Church of the Recovery followed Nee and taught:

¹⁰⁶ Vol. 7:2 (October 2002).

¹⁰⁷ Pgs. 143-144, Vol. 7:2 (October 2002).

¹⁰⁸ Pgs. 8-9, 42, *The Practical Expression of the Church*, by Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1970.

¹⁰⁹ The deification doctrine of Nee, Lee, and the Church of the Recovery cannot be redeemed by a reference to deification language in patristics such as Athanasius, for, although such uninspired and generally later patristic speech was certainly improper and unbiblical, nonetheless when an Athanasius spoke of "the deification of man . . . it is obvious that he was not thinking in terms of an ontological change, but of the reintegration of the divine image of man's creation through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit conforming the redeemed into the likeness of Christ, and also of the believer's transition from mortality to immortality so that he is enabled to participate in the eternal bliss and glory of the kingdom of God . . . It is not the obliteration of the ontological distinction between Creator and creature but the establishment at last of intimate and uninterrupted personal communion between them" (pgs. 281, 286, *The True Image*, Philip E. Hughes).

¹¹⁰ One should note that the cult, desiring to deceive the orthodox, retains the word *Trinity* while gutting the word of its content; defends its own form of modalism but repudiates the word *modalism* by denying the successive form of that heresy; and teaches that believers become God but restricts the word *Godhead* to its modalistic Father, Son, and Spirit. In this manner, it seeks to make its abominable idolatry

Jesus is the everlasting Father. . . . the Son is the Father. . . [I]n resurrection this incarnate Christ became a life-giving Spirit. To say that this life-giving Spirit is not the Holy Spirit is wrong, because there is not another Spirit who gives life besides the Holy Spirit. Christ is the Spirit who gives life[.] . . . The Son would come as the Spirit to abide in the disciples. . . . Christ the Lord is the Spirit who gives life, the life-giving Spirit . . . [t]he Father, the Son, and the Spirit. . . . The Son prayed that all of us would be one, but what kind of oneness is this? It is the oneness of the Divine Trinity, a oneness of coinherence. . . . We are to be one as the Triune God is one. . . . [T]he oneness of the Divine Trinity [is] a oneness of coinherence which was meant for the believers' participation. . . . [T]he Triune God c[ame] out of eternity into time, with His divinity into humanity, to pass through a marvelous human living, an all-inclusive death, and an all-surpassing resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit to enter into man . . . we become exactly like Him in life, nature, and appearance.¹¹¹

After His resurrection the Spirit of God became the Spirit of the incarnated, crucified, and resurrected Christ. . . . the incarnate Christ died and resurrected to become the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Spirit, so that He could dispense Himself into us to organically save us in His life[.] . . . The indwelling, pneumatic Christ is not for our objective study but for our subjective experience. This experience begins in our human spirit which is . . . regenerated by the divine Spirit. As such, our human spirit is now a mingled spirit . . . [o]ut from this mingled spirit, our experience of the pneumatic Christ will issue.¹¹²

Watchman Nee and Witness Lee were not Christians. They were idolaters. Their worship was directed to the devil, not to true God. The Church of the Recovery they founded is an idolatrous cult, not a Christian denomination. Nevertheless, Watchman Nee is one of the leading writers in Keswick circles today.

Watchman Nee (and Lee and the Church of the Recovery) also promulgated the existence of a kind of Protestant purgatory, an eschatological error associated with their

sound orthodox. Furthermore, both Watchman Nee and Witness Lee employed the word *Trinity* and affirmed that the word represented truth, although the particular form of modalism that claims that the Son becomes the Spirit is never repudiated. For example: “Though the Bible never says plainly that God is triune, there are nonetheless plenty of proofs and hints in it to support this truth. The doctrine of the Trinity is a major teaching of the holy Scriptures which we need not question” (pg. 55, *The Mystery of Creation*, Watchman Nee). Nee is speaking of the “us” in Genesis 1:26 as evidence for the position that “in the Godhead there is more than one person.” The statement of Nee here is consistent with orthodoxy, although it does not eliminate Lee’s form of modalism, where the Son becomes the Spirit in connection with the resurrection—Lee can affirm what Nee wrote here without renouncing his modalistic deity. Note also pg. 151, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, by Lee.

Note also that when the cult fails to deceive the orthodox, it sues them. It sued the Spiritual Counterfeits Project and drove the countercult ministry into bankruptcy. It sued Harvest House for \$136 million and would have driven this major Christian book publisher into bankruptcy had it won its lawsuit—thankfully, the Texas Supreme Court ruled against the cult—simply because the publisher included a mild page and a half critique of the cult in a book that was 731 pages long, *The Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, by Ankerberg & Weldon. In the mind of the Church of the Recovery, “[t]he accusation of being a ‘cult’ . . . is clearly outside the realm of doctrinal disputes” and is “properly the subject of legal recourse” (pg. 45, “We Were Wrong: A Reassessment of the ‘Local Church’ Movement of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee,” *Christian Research Journal* 32:06 (2009))—they are willing to destroy Christian organizations simply because they use the word “cult” to describe their cult. Consequently, the Local Church also sued publishers such as Thomas Nelson and Moody Press and threatened lawsuits against publishers such as the Christian Literature Crusade for publishing material critical of their organization. (Compare 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.)

¹¹¹ “A Biblical Overview of the Triune God,” Ed Marks. *Affirmation and Critique*, Vol. 1:1, January 1996, 23-31.

¹¹² Pg. 64, *Affirmation and Critique* Vol. 2:4, October 1997.

partial Rapture heresy. Believers who died with any unconfessed sin would have to suffer the eternal fires of hell—*Gehenna*—during the Millennium until the fires purified them and they could get out. “[O]ver some Christians hell still has its threat,”¹¹³ Nee taught. Other Christians would be cast into outer darkness. Finally, some Christians who had been good enough and who died free of any sins for which confession and restitution needed to be made before God and men, would enter the Millennial kingdom and receive levels of rewards—these would be limited almost exclusively¹¹⁴ to those who were members of the religious organization founded by Nee and who had achieved a high enough spiritual plane. However, other Christians, those who sinned against too much light, would not have the opportunity to repent if they fell into sin—for such, temporary torment in hell was inevitable. Nee taught:

There are many places in the Bible that mention God’s punishment for the defeated Christians in the millennial kingdom. We will take a look at these places now. . . . The Lord shows us that if Christians tolerate sin, they will suffer either the casting into the eternal fire with both hands and both feet, or the entering into life with one hand or one foot. This shows us clearly that there are those who deal with their sins and lusts in this age and who will enter into the kingdom with one hand or one foot. There are also those who will leave their lusts unchecked and will be cast into the eternal fire. The fire is an eternal fire, but it does not say that they will remain in the eternal fire forever. What the Lord Jesus did not say is as significant as what He did say. If a person has become a Christian but his hands or feet sin all the time, he will suffer the punishment of the eternal fire in the kingdom of the heavens. He will not suffer this punishment eternally, but will suffer it only in the age of the kingdom. . . . [W]e have to realize . . . that the person spoken of here must be a Christian, for only a Christian is clean in his body as a whole and can thus enter into life after dealing with his lust in a single member of his body. It would not be enough for the unbelievers to cut off a hand or a foot. Even if they were to cut off both hands and both feet, they would still have to go to hell. In order to enter the kingdom of the heavens, it is better for a Christian to have an incomplete body than to go into eternal fire because of incomplete dealing. . . . [I]f a saved person does not deal with his lust, he will not be able to enter into life, but will go into eternal fire. The eternal fire here is the *Gehenna* of fire. The Bible shows us that a Christian has the possibility of suffering the *Gehenna* of fire. Although he can suffer the *Gehenna* of fire, he cannot suffer it forever. He can only suffer it during the age of the kingdom. . . . [A] saved person, a brother, [if] he has reviled his brother . . . is liable to the *Gehenna* of fire. . . . The kingdom is very strict. . . .

No two brothers or two sisters who are at odds with each other can appear in the kingdom together. . . . If I am involved in an argument with a brother, and if the matter is not dealt with in

¹¹³ Pg. 211, *Come Lord Jesus*, Nee.

¹¹⁴ In addition to those in the denomination Nee founded, Watchman taught that certain spiritual members of the Brethren denomination might also enter the Millennium; everyone else would be cast out, because:

Nee presupposes that in the modern [period of the history of the] church only those who have experienced the historical recovery of the Philadelphia church [based on Nee’s spiritualized reading of Revelation chapters 2-3, a reading which has no sound exegetical basis in the text itself]—the spiritual Christians of the Brethren and local church [Little Flock] movements—will share in the heavenly millennial reign of Christ. (pg. 139, *Understanding Watchman Nee*, Dana Roberts; cf. pgs. 175, 258, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear)

Nee’s reading of Revelation 2-3 as representative of periods of church history neither fits the history of true churches—that is, the history of Baptists from the first century until modern times—nor the history of Christendom, whether interpreted from a Romanist or a Protestant perspective. See “The Historical Ages Interpretation of the Churches of Revelation Two and Three,” by Thomas Ross. Elec. acc. <http://faithsaves.net>.

this age, then in the future, either both of us will be barred from the kingdom, or only one of us will get in. It cannot be that both of us will enter in. It is not possible for us to have a problem with each other and yet reign at the same time in the millennium in the future. In the kingdom all the believers are in one accord. There are absolutely no barriers between any two persons. If while we are on earth today, we have some friction with any brother or sister, or if we cause a hindrance to any brother or sister, we have to be careful. Either we will go in and the other will be excluded, or the other will go in and we will be excluded, or both will be excluded. The Lord says that while you are with him on the way you have to be reconciled to him. That means that while you and he are alive and before the Lord Jesus comes back, you have to be reconciled to him. . . . Today we may harbor complaints about others very easily; but these complaints will either keep us outside, keep others outside, or keep both us and others outside the kingdom. . . . We are clear that there is no possibility for a Christian to perish eternally, but if a Christian has any unrepented of and unconfessed sins, which are not forgiven, he will suffer the Gehenna of fire. Christ told those who belonged to Him . . . [that if] they allow sin to develop in them, though they will not eternally perish, there is the possibility that they will “pass away into Gehenna.” . . . The Word of God is clear enough. It tells us, not once, but many times, that it is possible for a Christian to be “cast into Gehenna.” . . .

In the book of life the names of all the Christians are recorded. There will be many angels and many Christians. The Lord Jesus will also be there. One or more angels will then read off the names from the book of life, and the Lord Jesus will confess some of the names. Those whose names He confesses will then enter the kingdom. When the names of the others are read, the Lord will not say anything. In other words, He will not confess their names. The angels will then put a mark against these names. Hence, the overcomers’ names are clean in the book of life, while the defeated ones’ names are marked. As for the unsaved ones, their names do not appear in the book of life at all. One group does not have their names in the book. Another group has their names there, but their names are marked. And still a third group, by the time of the kingdom, has their names preserved in the same way as they were first written in the book. . . . [T]hose whose names are not recorded in the book of life will be eternally in the lake of fire. Those whose names do not appear in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. This is at the beginning of the new heaven and new earth. [As for those whose] names have been marked . . . God will cast us “into Gehenna” so that we may be punished temporarily. . . . If we tolerate sin, if we do not forgive others, if we commit adultery, if we revile the brothers, if we are afraid to suffer, to be ashamed, to be persecuted, and to confess the Lord, we have to be careful[.] . . . [D]efeated ones will suffer the hurt of the second death. Although they will not suffer the second death itself, they will suffer the hurt of the second death. Once a person is saved, he will not suffer the second death. But this does not guarantee that he will not suffer the hurt of the second death. We know that the time of the lake of fire and brimstone is the time when the new heaven and the new earth begins. . . . [A]t that time a man will be cast into the lake of fire if his name is not recorded in the book of life. That will be the time when unbelievers are officially put into the lake of fire. However, during the millennium, the defeated Christians will suffer the hurt of the second death . . . [but] not for eternity. If a Christian is joined to the world and if he loves the world and the things of the world, the Lord will allow him to go into corruption, to suffer a little of what the unbelievers will suffer. This is what being hurt by the second death . . . means, and this word is spoken to Christians. . . . The second death will cause pain for some. From the time of the great white throne on, there is the second death itself, which is the suffering for eternity in the lake of fire and of brimstone. But in the millennium there is only the hurt of the second death. If some Christians have not dealt with their sins, they will still suffer the hurt and pain of the second death. . . .

A saved person [who] . . . has seen the revealed God, the Only Begotten of the Father[,] [and] has known the love of God, and he has tasted the heavenly gift, the unique gift, Jesus Christ[,] [and] . . . has also become a partaker of the Holy Spirit . . . [and] has tasted the good word of God and the powers of the coming age . . . [i]f such a person leaves the word of the beginning of Christ today and slips and falls, there is no repentance for him. . . . He will not perish forever, but he will suffer the hurt of the second death and will suffer the Gehenna of fire in the kingdom. . . . If a Christian receives all these wonderful things but does not bear good fruit to God, but rather thorns and thistles, he will be burned. However this burning will only be for a while. Even an elementary school boy knows that if you burn a piece of land, the burning will stop after all the thorns are

burned up. The burning in the kingdom will go on at most for a thousand years. How long it will actually burn depends on you. If you have brought forth many thorns and thistles, then there will be more burning. If you have brought forth few thorns and thistles, then there will be less burning. How many things are there in us that are still not dealt with? How many things have not been cleansed away by the Lord's blood, and how many things are not yet confessed, dealt with, and settled with the brothers and sisters? [O]ne cannot go out from [Gehenna] until every quadrans is paid. All the debts have to be paid. When everything is burned away, all the debts will be paid. . . .

In John 15 . . . look at verse 6 . . . [s]ome branches will be thrown into the fire and burned. Some branches have sprouted and have borne green leaves, but do not have fruit. Though they have life inwardly, they do not have fruit outwardly. The Lord Jesus said that they would be cast out, dried up, and burned in the fire. Here we see clearly that Christians may have to pass through the fire. . . . [I]f a Christian does not take care of his sins properly, there will be punishment waiting for him. The Bible shows us clearly what kind of punishment this will be. It is not an ordinary kind of punishment but the punishment of the "Gehenna of fire." But it is the fire in the kingdom, not in eternity. . . .

What kind of sin will bring us into this state [of Gehenna]? Once a person is saved, it is important that he deal with his sins. . . . [T]here are many sins which will not be passed over. These are the sins that one regards in his heart. . . . Moreover, if we have a problem with another person that has not been solved, or if there are things that need to be forgiven but have not been forgiven, or if we have wronged others or the Lord, we have to deal with these things in a specific way . . . [or face] the coming judgment [of Gehenna].

Now let us summarize what we have seen. . . . In the age of the kingdom, some Christians will receive a reward in the kingdom. Some will receive a great reward; others will receive a small reward. Those who will not receive a reward are also divided into a few categories. One group will not enter into the kingdom at all. The Bible does not tell us where they will go. It only says that they will be kept outside the kingdom in the outer darkness. They will be left outside the glory of God. Second, there will be many who, in addition to not having worked well, have specific sins not yet dealt with. They are saved, but when they die, they still have sins which they have not repented of and dealt with. They still have the problem of sin with them. These ones will be temporarily put into the fire. They will come out only after they have paid all their debts. This will last at most until the end of the kingdom. I do not know how long this period will actually be. There are still many things which we are not clear about concerning the future, but the Bible has shown us enough. Although there are details which we have not yet seen, we do know what the children of God will face. Some will receive a reward; some will go into corruption. Some will be put into prison, and still some will be cast into the fire and be burned. . . . [I]f we do not allow the Holy Spirit to work the Lord Jesus into us, God will have to chastise us that we may receive the benefit and be counted worthy to be with Him.

I am happy in my heart because I can preach the "heresy" of God's Word and I can oppose the "truth" in man's teaching. . . . [A]ll heresies are not pure heresy; they are the truth plus a little error. Heresy is to add wrong things to right things. Add a little of man's thought to God's thought, and you will have heresy. . . . Because Catholicism does not fully know the truth in the Bible, it preaches the doctrine of purgatory. . . . You can say that it is heresy. In the Bible we see that God's discipline of the Christians happens in the millennium, but Catholics say that there is a purging going on today. . . . The Bible shows us that there will be the discipline in the kingdom in the future, but there is no purging in Hades today. . . . [O]nly after we know this will we be able to deal with the heresy in Protestantism. Today among the Protestants, two kinds of errors are being promulgated. First, one group of Protestant theologians proposes that since a man is "once saved, always saved," he can get away with anything in his conduct.¹¹⁵ . . . There is another group of

115 Nee here misrepresents the orthodox doctrine that once one is saved he is always saved and claims it is a license to sin. He claims that to affirm that for the sinning Christian "[h]is greatest loss is confined to occupying a lower position in the kingdom. . . . is an excuse for looseness and licentiousness." Nee then mentions the error of Arminianism that believers can lose salvation, and presents his heretical view that believers can get tormented in Gehenna during the Millennium as the only other alternative. He makes a false trichotomy—believers getting tormented in a Protestant purgatory is not the only alternative to

Protestants who say that after a man believes, there is still the possibility that he will not be saved. Perhaps he can be saved and unsaved again three or four times within a day. . . . Both of these groups are too extreme, even though both have their scriptural basis. The Bible shows us clearly that when a man is saved, he is eternally saved. The Bible also shows us clearly that it is possible for a Christian to be “cast into Gehenna” temporarily. But the problem is that some brothers hold onto one side, insisting that salvation is eternal and that there is no such thing as discipline in the kingdom, while other brothers hold onto the other side, insisting that if we can be “cast into Gehenna,” eternal life is shaky, and therefore we can go into eternal perdition. But if we see the difference between the age of the kingdom and the eternal age and the difference between the temporary punishment of the millennium and eternal punishment, we will be clear that a Christian can receive punishment in the future, but at the same time, God has given His sheep eternal life, and they can never lose it. . . . [T]he matter of eternal salvation is solved because of the work of Jesus of Nazareth, but as for one’s situation in the kingdom, it is determined by the person himself.¹¹⁶

The doctrine developed by Nee and received by his followers of a Protestant purgatory, where some true believers will be tormented in purifying fires in hell, while others will suffer in outer darkness, is grossly heretical.

As, it seems, modalism, deification, and the belief that Christians who sin get purified in the fires of hell did not suffice as heresies, Watchman Nee and his successor Witness Lee also believed other false doctrines. They accepted the alleged tongues, visions, and binding and loosing¹¹⁷ doctrines of Pentecostalism and claimed to cast out demons from believers and unbelievers, as both the saved and unsaved could be possessed.¹¹⁸ Nee even adopted the characteristic Word-Faith heresy of commanding God—that is, the believer, based on Ephesians 1-2 as misinterpreted by John A. MacMillan,¹¹⁹ can employ “the prayer of command . . . [w]e may command God to do things.”¹²⁰ Certainly, Nee taught, the believer can experience “supernatural revelations

lascivious living or to Arminianism. The Biblical position, that one who is saved is always saved from both sin’s penalty and power, so that there is no such thing as an unchanged, perpetually sinning Christian, is ignored.

¹¹⁶ *The Gospel of God*, Watchman Nee. vol. 2, chap. 24 (“How God Deals With The Believer’s Sins—The Gehenna Of Fire In The Kingdom,” Chap. 10 in vol. 2), Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, n. d. elec. acc. <http://www.ministrybooks.org/collected-works.cfm>. Published as *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Set 2, Vol. 29: The Gospel of God (2)*, Watchman Nee. ISBN 0-87083-590-4. See also pg. 96, *The Mystery of Creation*, Watchman Nee. Here Nee’s Keswick theology, which professes to value dependence upon God and His keeping power so greatly, leads him to affirm that one’s sanctification, and consequently one’s standing in the kingdom, does not depend upon the Father’s love, the Son’s work on the cross, and the keeping power and the Almighty strength of the Holy Spirit, but upon the man himself.

¹¹⁷ “The . . . church . . . is to maintain and demonstrate the victory of the cross of Christ by binding Satan in every place” (pgs. 54-55, cf. 72-77, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Watchman Nee. (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1977). Nee was “influenced by Penn-Lewis, Simpson and Andrew Murray” in adopting the binding and loosing error (pgs. 62-63, *Binding and Loosing*, Foster & King).

¹¹⁸ Compare pg. 123, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. An account of an exorcism is given on pg. 145-146, *What Shall This Man Do?* Watchman Nee. Jessie Penn-Lewis was important theological background for Nee and Lee’s affirmation that believers could be demon possessed.

¹¹⁹ Pgs. 74-75, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee.

¹²⁰ Pgs. 73-74, *God’s Plan and the Overcomers*, Nee.

[and] visions . . . [that] arise from the Holy Spirit” today.¹²¹ While it cannot be proven that Nee personally spoke in tongues,¹²² he “found peace and spiritual blessing in [the] message and some experiences associated with [the] Pentecostal theology”¹²³ under the influence of Miss Elizabeth Fischbacher, Pentecostal missionary associated with the China Inland Mission, and mentor to Nee, so that Nee taught that “to say that speaking in tongues is dispensationally over is . . . wrong.”¹²⁴ Thus, when “Miss Elizabeth Fischbacher,” who was “much in demand as one of the C. I. M.’s [China Inland Mission’s] gifted missionary speakers, was holding revival meetings,” Nee “attend[ed] her Chefoo meetings. She herself shared the . . . [beliefs of the] Spiritual Gifts . . . Movement . . . with . . . its uncontrolled emotionalism and extravagant methods of arousal . . . [and] ecstatic accompaniment of preaching and prayer,” so that “she would pray and sing in the Spirit in other tongues.” Through her “preaching . . . Watchman [found] . . . a quite new discovery of divine blessing,” so that he “brought a message of the outpouring of the Spirit of God . . . [and] the Victorious Life” and a “fresh emphasis on experiences” among “assemblies . . . that hitherto had . . . never allowed the Christians to forget the Bible in favor of mere subjectivism.” However, under Nee’s new Pentecostal unction, “license was given to jumping, clapping, laughter, unknown tongues that conveyed no message to hearers or even speaker, and a flood of dramatic healings . . . not a few mistaken,” so that “the loss of restraint,” expanding upon an already extant practice of ending “prayer meetings with a brief period of simultaneous prayer” by all in the congregation, brought on a period where Nee observed that “the gain has been rather trivial, the loss quite large.”¹²⁵ When Nee found out his disciple and successor Witness Lee “took the initiative to contact the Pentecostal movement in Peking and began to speak in tongues, at the same time helping others to do the same,” Nee did not speak a word against it but simply reminded Lee that not everyone must speak in tongues because of 1 Corinthians 12:30.¹²⁶ Nee “certainly believed in . . . healing, and speaking with and interpretation of tongues.” He stated the belief he held from very early in his ministry, which he propagated throughout its course: “Some ask me if I oppose speaking with

¹²¹ Pg. 518, *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee, comb. ed.

¹²² Kinnear notes that Witness Lee thought Nee did not speak in tongues but that Lee’s belief is “in every sense an argument from silence” (pg. 140, *Against the Tide*).

¹²³ Pg. 25, *Secrets of Watchman Nee*, Dana Roberts.

¹²⁴ Pg. 12, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit*, Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1998.

¹²⁵ Pgs. 117, 138-141, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

¹²⁶ Pg. 311, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee. See also Nee’s book *The Latent Power of the Soul*, which was dependent upon Jessie Penn-Lewis’s *Soul and Spirit* and Andrew Murray’s *The Spirit of Christ* (cf. pgs. 12-13, 25ff., *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee).

tongues. Certainly not.”¹²⁷ Nee believed that “wonders . . . instantaneous divine healing . . . tongues . . . visions and dreams” were “real miracles” for today, and concerning such “miracles,” he wrote, “I value them highly.” Indeed, he related his own experience of these matters: “As to visions and dreams, I too have seen great light. . . . I do not oppose visions and dreams; I myself have had some experience of them.”¹²⁸

Furthermore, prepared by Keswick theology, Nee found so much validity in Pentecostal healing doctrine that he adopted the idea that believers can choose not to be sick and “claim healing over sickness,”¹²⁹ although he himself endured very serious and chronic illnesses, such as fevers that incapacitated him and left him unable to write or even think, a chronic cough associated with wasting away of his body, sickness that left him unable to walk without a cane, heart trouble caused by “long illness,” “coronary ischemia” that left him unable to work and caused “great discomfort” as it became, he testified, “the chronic condition I have [that] is always with me. . . . The only variation is in its degree of activity, for there is no question of recovery.”¹³⁰ Nonetheless, Nee taught that believers who live by faith will never experience any kind of debilitating sickness that hinders their ability to minister for God: “[T]he real meaning of the Holy Spirit giving life to our bodies is that: (1) He will restore us when we are sick and (2) He will preserve us if we are not sick. In a word, the Holy Spirit will strengthen our earthly tents so that we can meet the requirements of God’s work and walk in order that neither our life nor the kingdom of God will suffer through the weakness of the body. This is what God has provided for all His children.”¹³¹ In addition to the failure of Nee’s doctrine in his own life, the Apostle Paul’s coworker Trophimus, who had a debilitating sickness of such severity that Paul had to leave him behind so that they could no longer minister together (2 Timothy 4:20; cf. Philippians 2:25-30), does not seem to have been aware of the Higher Life for the body. Furthermore, in direct opposition to the miraculous healings by the Lord Jesus and the apostles in the Bible, where all symptoms and evils

¹²⁷ Pg. 54, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee; also pg. 140, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. Kinnear goes on to recount how Nee personally told him about one episode where supernatural tongues were used to reveal hidden facts. It is also noteworthy that, among those mission works outside his denomination, Nee considered the strongly continuationist Christian and Missionary Alliance the best (pg. 165, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

¹²⁸ Pgs. 54-56, 65, 74-75, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Watchman Nee. Nee connected these wonders with Spirit baptism (pgs. 55-56). This sort of continuationist preaching was set forth publicly by Nee by at least 1924 (preface, *ibid*). There is no evidence that Nee was ever a cessationist.

¹²⁹ Pg. 98, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

¹³⁰ Pgs. 81, 97-98, 103-106, 130, 234-235, 244-246, etc., *Against the Tide*, Kinnear; cf. pg. 148, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155.

¹³¹ Pgs. 644-645, *The Spiritual Man*, Watchman Nee, comb. ed.

from sickness were immediately, completely, and permanently removed (Mark 6:56; Luke 6:19), the “healings” Nee endorsed had to overlook obvious evidence that disease was still present. In a manner reminiscent of charismatic Word-Faith teaching,¹³² and in line with the Higher Life healing leaders from Boardman to Simpson, Nee taught that someone could be “healed” but still have symptoms of his disease. However, if he simply denied that the symptom was really a symptom of the disease, everything would be fine. Nee commanded: “Do not accept the symptom,” for if “you continue to look at your sickness, God’s word loses its effectiveness” and the “healing” could then be lost. Thus, if one has been “healed” of a fever, he is to “laugh at the temperature. It doesn’t matter whether it is high or low.” If one is “healed” but continues to “vomi[t] blood,” or is in “acute pain,” this is not evidence that the “healing” is fake—rather, Nee commands: “Treat the symptom as a temptation and a lie.”¹³³ It was very evident to Nee that if one had been “healed” but was vomiting blood and writhing in pain from disease, the problem was not that the healing was a lie, but that the symptoms were a lie.

Being consistent with his Keswick continuationism, Nee even taught, as did various Keswick writers before him,¹³⁴ that believers do not need to die:

Since Christ has overcome death, believers need not feel that they must die, although they still may die. . . . Since it is a believer’s goal to be free from sin, it should also be his goal to be free from death. A believer should understand that as a consequence of the death and resurrection of Christ, his relationship with death is the same as his relationship with sin. He has overcome these completely in Christ; therefore, God is now calling him to overcome them in his experience. . . . Since the Lord Jesus has met and overcome death for us, He wants every one of us to overcome it in our present life. We should not ask God to grant us strength to bear the power of death; we should ask instead for the strength to overcome its authority. . . . Unless a believer is clear that his work is finished and that the Lord does not need him to remain on the earth any longer, he should not die; that is, he should always resist death. If the symptoms of death have gradually occurred in his body . . . a believer should completely deny these symptoms and refuse to die.¹³⁵

Obedient believers, it seems, will never die in accidents, and will never die at other times, no matter what disease is doing to them, unless they choose to do so—they simply need to deny that they are dying and refuse to die, and they will stay alive as long as they wish, at least until the age of seventy, at which time they may end up dying, despite all the

¹³² Compare pg. 151, *A Different Gospel*, McConnell.

¹³³ Pgs. 136-139, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, Lee.

¹³⁴ E. g., Evan Roberts: “It was our faith: ‘No “death” until my work is FINISHED.’ For we believe . . . that death cannot come to God’s worker until he has FINISHED HIS work; and . . . each believer who is spiritual can have the knowledge when he has finished his course of life, and work on earth” (pg. 180, *The Overcomer*, December 1914. Capitalization in the original.). Roberts, in the same article, made one of his false prophecies of the end of the world.

¹³⁵ Pgs. 119-120, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 3, by Watchman Nee. In fact, “Nee gives considerable attention in *The Spiritual Man* III:213-231 to the importance of Christians in this generation overcoming death in order to be raptured alive at Christ’s return” (pg. 154, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155).

alleged promises that would keep them alive until their seventieth birthday: “Since the Bible takes seventy as a general standard for human life, we can hope to live until that time if we have faith.”¹³⁶ Nee’s view that one should live until at least seventy if he had faith was “a commonly accepted teaching in the Higher Life/Keswick movements, with their connecting of health and holiness. . . . Murray and Simpson exemplify the teaching that it was not necessary to die of sickness and that a person might live in health until age seventy or eighty.”¹³⁷ Similarly, the Word of Faith movement affirms that the “bare minimum . . . should be 70 years . . . after 70 years of life, a Christian then ‘chooses’ his time to die. The believer who dies before his 70 . . . years could have lived longer had he exercised faith in the promises of the Bible.”¹³⁸ Nee was sixty-nine when he died.

Nee also promulgated “blended evangelical and liberal views of revelation and Scripture”¹³⁹ and the idea that irrational inner voices or intuitions should be followed rather than the Bible as interpreted using the mind. He wrote:

Believers should not follow their soul, which means that they should not follow their thoughts, feelings, or preferences. These are all from the soul. God’s way for the believers is to walk according to the spirit. All other ways belong to the old creation and have no spiritual value at all. How, then, can we walk according to the spirit? Walking according to the spirit is walking according to the intuition in the spirit. . . intuition is also completely different from our mind. Our mind comes from our head and is rational. However, the intuition is not located in our head and quite frequently is irrational.¹⁴⁰

Matching up with this emphasis upon mysticism, what Nee “cared for was not doctrine, but the release of the spirit,”¹⁴¹ explicitly contradicting 1 Timothy 4:13, 16 and many other texts of Scripture, but following Jessie Penn-Lewis, who likewise taught the “priceless blessing of release [of the] spirit” but rejected the necessity of careful

¹³⁶ Pg. 121, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 3, by Watchman Nee.

¹³⁷ Pg. 302, *Only Believe: Examining the Origin and Development of Classic and Contemporary Word of Faith Theologies*, Paul L. King.

¹³⁸ Pgs. 156-157, *A Different Gospel*, McConnell.

¹³⁹ *Calvary Contender*, ed. Jerry Huffman, Huntsville, AL, Sept. 15, 1994. Elec. acc. *Fundamental Baptist CD-ROM Library*, vers. 5.1. Port Huron, WA: Way of Life Literature, 2009.

¹⁴⁰ Pgs. 40-41, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 2, by Watchman Nee. Nee’s exaltation of the intuition and disparagement of logic is paralleled in the Word of Faith movement. “Your re-born spirit man can be developed to such an extent that you can hear from God exactly what He wants you to do. This is intuition” (pg. 92, *God’s Laws of Success*, Robert Tilton). “Believers are not to be led by logic. . . . Reasoning is based on the failure of the earth through Satan. . . . The ministry of Jesus was never governed by logic or reason. . . . Look at Jesus. He was not led by logic. He was not led by the mind” (pgs. 7-8, *The Force of Faith*, Kenneth Copeland).

¹⁴¹ Pg. 118, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee. Nee’s doctrine of the “release of the spirit, described in his book, unsurprisingly named *The Release of the Spirit*, has antecedents in Jessie Penn-Lewis, who taught that Holy Ghost “Baptism [brings] the . . . influx of the Spirit of God into the believer’s spirit . . . evidence[d] in the release of the spirit” (Chapter 12, *War on the Saints*, Penn-Lewis; see also pg. 181, *The Overcomer*, December 1913). Such terminology is, of course, absent from Scripture, as is the doctrine of post-conversion Spirit baptism as a second blessing for the church today.

grammatical-historical interpretation of God's Word.¹⁴² After all, Nee "was liable to make a telling point by pressing on beyond what was written" in his "excursions into allegory."¹⁴³ Nee testified: "After completing *The Spiritual Man* . . . I realized that the task of expounding the Scriptures was not for me. . . . [neither] expounding the Scriptures, preaching the ordinary gospel, [nor] paying attention to prophecies [was for me]." Indeed, expounding the Scriptures was dangerous to Nee, so that to do so was a "temptation" he had "frequently" needed to resist.¹⁴⁴ Thus, not the entire Bible as the objective voice of God, but, in a manner that brings to mind the reduction of inspiration in the heretical neo-orthodoxy of Barth and Brunner, only the portion of Scripture in which one has a special encounter with God has value: "Only the word which the Lord speaks to us is of any use."¹⁴⁵ In fact, Nee thought, "[w]ords alone cannot be considered as God's Word."¹⁴⁶ In line with the Quaker influence upon Keswick theology, Nee taught that neither the written Word nor the preached Word are sufficient to replace the mystical voice of God spoken directly to the heart: "[T]he written Scriptures . . . [and] the living human messenger . . . contribute to our Christian life . . . [but] . . . neither of these can take the place of the living voice of God to our hearts."¹⁴⁷ One needs a mystical experience, described in an incoherent and bizarre way by Nee,¹⁴⁸ to transform

¹⁴² Pg. iii., *Jessie Penn-Lewis: A Memoir*, Mary N. Garrard, 2nd ed. preface by Theo. M Bamber.

¹⁴³ Pgs. 73, 250, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear.

¹⁴⁴ Nee's testimony at Kulangsu on October 20, 1936, recorded on pg. 226, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

¹⁴⁵ Chapter 3, *The Glorious Church*, Watchman Nee.

¹⁴⁶ Pg. 209, *The Ministry of God's Word*, Watchman Nee. New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1971.

¹⁴⁷ Pg. 23, *What Shall This Man Do?* Watchman Nee.

¹⁴⁸ Nee speaks of a "Holy Spirit memory" that will protect the minister from giving people what the Bible actually says. Incredibly, one is not to preach what Scripture actually says (2 Timothy 4:2), literally interpreted, but is to set forth an allegedly superior Word that God gives directly to the minister. "Holy Spirit memory is necessary . . . care should be exercised lest we be carried away by the truth we find in the New or in the Old Testament. Always keep in mind that our responsibility is to bring God's current words to men. We are not to teach the Bible and forget what God has shown us" (pg. 217, *Ministry of God's Word*, Nee). One is not to be protected by the truth of the Bible from being carried away by mystical experiences; rather, the truth of mystical experiences is to protect one from being carried away by the Bible. "Holy Spirit memory . . . enable[s]" the minister "to recall both the revelation and inward words God has given" to him (pg. 210, *ibid*), as these inward words are the true communications from God. Mystical power that is the key to the encounter that results in God's living Word is conveyed through the emotions: "The spirit flows through the channel of feeling . . . [t]he spirit flows through the channel of emotion . . . not so much on his will or on his mind as upon his emotions." Indeed, if the "feeling . . . is unusable, the spirit is stuck" (pgs. 219, 220, *ibid*). Of course, the Bible, literally interpreted, cannot validate Nee's ideas but they can be validated by an encounter with God's Word conveyed through mystical experience. Nee therefore evidences the validity of his mystical view of the Bible as follows: "Smelling is a most delicate act. It represents man's tender feeling. 'Nose' in the Scriptures stands for feeling." Therefore: "Every time a minister speaks he needs to mix his feeling with the words spoken" (pgs. 220-221, *ibid*). Clearly those who hold to a grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture and that

the Bible into something that is useful and is God's living Word. Nee's deprecation of Scripture for mysticism led him to teach: "To the Christian there is no absolute right or wrong. . . . What is right or wrong depends upon the level of life [mystical experience] he has attained."¹⁴⁹ Would writing a book about the truly spiritual man lead to a rejection of absolute right and wrong and the exposition of Scripture (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2; John 5:39; etc.)? Or is it rather true that if "any man teach otherwise" than "wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and . . . the doctrine which is according to godliness," such a one is so far from being on a higher plane of spiritual life that he is "proud, knowing nothing," and from such a one the godly must obey the command: "from such withdraw thyself" (1 Timothy 6:2-5)? Nevertheless, despite 1 Timothy 6, Nee taught:

We have said emphatically before that the right way to follow God's leading is to depend on the intuition and not on the mind. This is very crucial, and we should not forget it. A believer should follow the revelation in the intuition and not the thoughts in the mind. Those who walk according to the mind are walking according to the flesh. This leads to the wrong way.¹⁵⁰

Nee wrote further:

To know things in our intuition is what the Bible calls revelation. Revelation has no other meaning than that the Holy Spirit enables a believer to apprehend a particular matter by indicating the reality of it to his spirit. There is but one kind of knowledge concerning either the Bible or God, which is valuable, and that is the truth revealed to our spirit by God's spirit. . . . Revelation happens in the intuition—quietly, neither hastily nor slowly, soundless and yet with a message. . . . Searching with intellect never delivers men; revelation in the spirit alone gives true knowledge of God. . . . The Bible recognizes just one kind of knowledge, and that is the knowledge in the spirit's intuition. . . . He reveals Himself solely to man's spirit. . . . The revelation of God in our spirit is of two kinds: the direct and the sought. By direct revelation we mean that God, having a particular wish for the believer to do, draws nigh and reveals it to the latter's spirit. Upon receiving such a revelation in his intuition the believer acts accordingly. By sought revelation we mean that a believer, having a special need, approaches God with that need and seeks and waits for an answer through God's movement in his spirit. The revelation young believers receive is mostly the sought type; that of the more matured ones is chiefly the direct kind.¹⁵¹

The dangerous error that following one's mind is sinful, that God does not work through the believer's mind, and that, instead, irrational intuitions which are Divine "revelation" should be followed, is directly contradicted by 2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 7:25; 12:1-2; and a host of other texts. However, if there is only one kind of valuable knowledge, and that is supernatural revelation to the human spirit that bypasses the mind, then the Bible cannot really be revelation at all, and its propositions are not valuable. Bible study, then,

the Bible itself is God's living Word, being literally God's speech, perfect, glorious, and entirely sufficient, will find Nee's argument a matter of scorn and a despicable misuse of the holy Scriptures. It seems, however, that one who has placed mystical encounter in the exalted place Nee gives it will find his argumentation not to be rubbish, but rather something worthy of putting into print and spreading worldwide.

¹⁴⁹ Pg. 142, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

¹⁵⁰ Pg. 11, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 3, by Watchman Nee.

¹⁵¹ Pgs. 301-304, *The Spiritual Man*, comb. ed., 1977.

becomes a waste of time and should be given up, despite verses such as John 5:39 and Acts 17:11. Indeed, Nee's doctrine of intuition led the Little Flock movement and Witness Lee to reject Bible study, as one could simply follow intuition. Lee wrote:

[S]criptural interpretation must . . . pass away for us. . . . we must learn to just turn to our spirit and say, O Lord!¹⁵² This is the way to experience Him. . . . When I was young I did much searching and researching of the Bible. But, Hallelujah, today I have given it up[.]¹⁵³ [S]imply pick up the Word and pray-read a few verses in the morning and in the evening. There is no need for you to exercise your mind . . . it is unnecessary to think over that you read. . . . It is better for us to close our mind! . . . There is no need to explain or expound the Word! . . . Forget about reading, researching, understanding, and learning the Word.¹⁵⁴

Both the foundations of Pentecostalism in general, and Oneness Pentecostalism in particular,¹⁵⁵ as well as the Word of Faith movement, likewise reject grammatical-historical interpretation of the Bible to get their messages by mystical "revelation knowledge,"¹⁵⁶ a development of earlier Quaker, Higher Life, and Keswick hermeneutical subjectivism. Of course, if the mind is not involved in the discovery of any valuable knowledge, the fact that the Bible, interpreted grammatically and historically, actually denies Nee's doctrine is irrelevant, as are contradictions in Nee's own writings (such as his affirmations of the importance of activity in the mind elsewhere); such facts can be dismissed as the mere quibbles of an unspiritual intellect. One wonders, however, why those who follow Lee in Nee's Little Flock movement read the works of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, for reading their books cannot provide any valuable knowledge to the mind if reading the Bible cannot do so—at least unless the writings of Nee and Lee are superior to the Bible and can convey truth in a way the Omnipotent cannot in His written revelation. In any case, if all that is of true value is directly and irrationally revealed to the human spirit, one wonders if valuable knowledge is conveyed by stop signs and other forms of writing that are utilized every day by members of the Little Flock movement, or if they follow irrational intuition to know when it is their turn to cross the street. Then again, perhaps such logical contradictions must themselves be dismissed in Nee and Lee's exaltation of the irrational and intuitive.

¹⁵² This "O Lord" business relates to the heresy practiced in Nee and Lee's denomination in relation to salvation by the instrumentality of the "sinner's prayer," as explained below.

¹⁵³ Pgs. 73, 94, *Christ vs. Religion*, Witness Lee. Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1971.

¹⁵⁴ *Pray-Reading the Word*, Witness Lee, chap. 1, sec. 2, <http://www.ministrybooks.org>.

¹⁵⁵ Pentecostal historians note:

Early pentecostals . . . believed in the subjective confirmation of biblical truth. While trinitarian pentecostals occasionally charge their oneness brethren for claiming a subjective revelation, it must be remembered that it was the same principle of interpretation that established the "initial evidence" teaching in pentecostalism just a few years earlier. . . . [T]he initial revelation [of modalism] at the 1913 camp meeting [where Oneness Pentecostalism originated] was . . . not in itself a radical departure from the spirit of early Pentecostalism. (pgs. 157-158, *Aspects of Pentecostal-Charismatic Origins*, ed. Vinson Synan)

¹⁵⁶ Pg. 59, *A Different Gospel*, McConnell.

As already noted, Nee also promulgated the idea, following Jessie Penn-Lewis, that believers can be demon possessed. He wrote:

[E]vil spirits will seize the opportunity to take over the believer's mind. . . . If believers fulfill the condition for evil spirits to work, they will work [and] take over the believers. . . . Evil spirits rejoice exceedingly at all who fulfill [the spiritual] condition [that allows them entry] and immediately go to work. When a 'heathen' fulfills this condition, evil spirits will possess him; when a believer fulfills this condition, evil spirits will also come into him without any reservation. We need to realize that many believers are ignorant of the conditions whereby evil spirits work and the fact that once a person fulfills these conditions, evil spirits will work in an unrestricted way. Therefore, many have unconsciously become mediums for demons and have even become possessed by demons! . . . If we tell a believer that Christians can be possessed by demons (or evil spirits), he will be greatly surprised. An ordinary believer in China thinks that only heathens have the possibility of being possessed by demons and that it is not possible for Christians to have the same experience. . . . Believers realize that there is a possibility for them to be seduced, tempted, attacked, or deceived, but they do not realize that there is also a possibility for believers to be attached to—to be possessed—by demons. When they first believed, they received many wrong teachings; now they think that as long as a Christian has Christ, he will not be possessed by demons. . . . However, this teaching is not found in the Bible. Neither is it confirmed by the experience of the saints. God's children are very unclear that evil spirits can change their appearance and attach themselves to the believers' bodies. Today there is an unexpectedly great number of believers who are possessed by demons. The unalterable fact is that many believers are possessed by demons.¹⁵⁷

Nee also followed Penn-Lewis in the affirmation that even believers “who are entirely consecrated . . . can be possessed by evil spirits.”¹⁵⁸ It should be of deep concern that “many believers” in the Little Flock denomination “are possessed by demons,” according to their own spiritual leader.

Nee adopted the idea that each city could only have one church in it—one associated with his own denomination, of course. All other churches, whether Baptist, Catholic, or Protestant, were schismatic and in severe error. Each city must have only one church, he taught—“one city, one church, worldwide”¹⁵⁹—and this assembly must simply be called “the church [in city X].” Nee adopted the idea that “to leave the denominations . . . require[s] our obedience” in the latter half of 1922, two years after his professed conversion in 1920 at the age of seventeen—from that point on, he viewed “the Presbyterian Church . . . the Methodist Church . . . the Baptist Church” and all other denominations are unscriptural. While Paul required a simple pastor not to be a novice (1 Timothy 3:6), only two years after Nee's professed conversion he was able to found a new denomination, which he affirmed was not a denomination, but a recovery of the true

¹⁵⁷ Pgs. 12-13, 50-51, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 3, Watchman Nee.

¹⁵⁸ Pg. 51, *The Spiritual Man*, vol. 3, Watchman Nee.

¹⁵⁹ Pg. 154, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. Nee appears to have adopted this idea from the London Brethren that he had met in England in 1933 (pg. 128, *ibid*). However, while teaching that “each town or village would have but one church[,] [h]e did not wholly succeed . . . in defining how this principle should be applied in extremely large urban communities” (pg. 145, “The Story of Watchman Nee,” Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155).

church. The “church life . . . the truth of the Lord’s recovery . . . began to be practiced in Watchman’s home town in 1922,” and by “1926 he . . . established gatherings for the Lord’s recovery [his new denomination] in Amoy, Tung-An, and nearby places [in] . . . south Fukien.”¹⁶⁰ For the rest of his life Nee continued to call on all men to leave Baptist churches and all Protestant groups to join his new denomination, as his religious organization made “unabashed efforts to prejudice members of established churches and divert even pastors if it could,” leading to “the rapid leakage of believers into their ranks from among the flourishing mission-related churches.”¹⁶¹

Nee also came to believe many further ecclesiological doctrines that, while perhaps supported by his intuition, could not be found in Scripture. Pastors, as found in Baptist churches, are unscriptural. Rather, there must be a certain form of hierarchicalism employing Apostles,¹⁶² since “the work is a matter of region or district.”¹⁶³ Leadership must be unquestioningly obeyed and blindly followed, even if it is in error; Nee affirmed that it is impossible to ever disobey any leader in the Church of the Recovery and please God. He wrote:

People will perhaps argue, “What if the authority is wrong?” The answer is, If God dares to entrust His authority to men, then we can dare to obey. Whether the authority is right or wrong does not concern us, since he has to be responsible directly to God. The obedient needs only to obey; the Lord will not hold us responsible for any mistaken obedience, rather will He hold the delegated authority responsible for his erroneous act. . . . [I]f . . . the delegated authority erred, God would surely deal with him . . . [t]he [one under authority] was not held responsible. . . . Insubordination, however, is rebellion, and for this the one under authority must answer to God. . . . It is absolutely impossible for us to reject delegated authority and yet be subject directly to God; rejecting the first is the same as rejecting the second.¹⁶⁴

Thus, one must obey human authorities unconditionally, a demonic idea both current in the Confucianism of Nee’s culture and acceptable to the depraved human hearts of powerful men. Even if what authorities command is sin, they must still be obeyed—the member of Nee’s cult will not be accountable if he sins in obeying his church authorities. Only those commanding the sin, not those performing it, will be liable, Nee explained;

¹⁶⁰ Pgs. 41-43, 173-178, 201, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

¹⁶¹ Pgs. 145-146, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. One English Baptist noted a particular group that was led into the Little Flock by, in part, “read[ing] Madame Guyon” (pg. 146, *ibid.*).

¹⁶² Pgs. 143-144, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear. By 1938 Nee had 128 Apostles engaged in full-time service.

¹⁶³ Pgs. 166-167, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee; cf. pgs. 151-167, 203, 212-213, 216-217, 323-325.

¹⁶⁴ Pgs. 71, 73, *Spiritual Authority*, Watchman Nee. New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1972. Nee does mention Acts 5:29 on pg. 74, as some kind of “exception,” but he does not make it at all clear if he really intends to teach that somehow the “absolutely impossible” of pg. 73 is really not absolutely impossible.

for one under authority, performing a commanded sin is not sinful, but disobeying the authority's command to sin is sinful:

Whether or not the authority makes mistakes has nothing to do with us. In other words, whether the deputy authority is right or wrong is a matter for which he has to be responsible directly before the Lord. Those who submit to authority need only to submit absolutely. Even if they make a mistake through submission, the Lord will not reckon that as sin. The Lord will hold the deputy authority responsible for that sin. To disobey is to rebel. For this the submitting one has to be responsible before God. For this reason there is no human element involved in submission.¹⁶⁵

Nee explained further that people should never think about what is good or evil, for such thinking is rebellion. Rather, one must blindly obey those in the cult with authority:

With us there should never be right or wrong, good or evil. . . . Submission is the first lesson for those who work. . . . We should never try to differentiate between good and evil. Rather, we should submit to authority. . . . Man . . . feels that this is good and that is not good. . . . This, however, is a condition of foolishness and the fall. This must be removed from us, for this is nothing but rebellion.¹⁶⁶

The Church of the Recovery taught, consequently, that the greatest command is not to love God with all one's heart, and soul, and mind, as Jesus Christ declared (Matthew 22:36-38), but to obey authority: "God's greatest and highest demand in the entire Bible is the demand for submission to authority."¹⁶⁷ Blind and unconditional obedience to those in authority, whether they command righteousness or sin, is tied to the nature of the Deity worshipped in Nee's cult. It was the Son's subordination and obedience to the Father that led the Father to choose to reward the Son with Lordship:

[T]he Father takes the place of the Head, and the Son responds with obedience. God becomes the emblem of authority, while Christ assumes the symbol of obedience. . . . [S]ince Christ was obedient . . . God has highly exalted Him. . . . He was exalted and rewarded by God to be Lord only after He . . . maintained the perfect role of obedience. As regards Himself, He is God; as regards reward, He is Lord. His Lordship did not exist originally in the Godhead.¹⁶⁸

As, Nee claimed, the Son was not eternally Lord, but was rewarded by the Father with Lordship because of obedience, so those in Nee's denomination must practice obedience to their human authorities with the same kind of perfect, instant, and blind obedience that was rendered by the allegedly subordinate Son to God, and such blind obedience will be rewarded. Blind and cultic obedience is important, since in Nee's denomination communism or community of goods must be practiced. "[A]ll the believers in the Lord's recovery [are] to hand over not only themselves but all their possessions to the work" of

¹⁶⁵ Chapter 7, *Spiritual Authority*, Watchman Nee.

¹⁶⁶ Chapter 2, *Spiritual Authority*, Watchman Nee.

¹⁶⁷ "Obsequious and Blind Obedience or Perfect and Unconditional Obedience and Submission according to the Bible?" (elec. acc. <http://www.healthyteaching.org/obsequious-and-blind-obedience-or-perfect-and-unconditional-obedience-and-submission-according-to-the-bible/>). This article, published by the Church of the Recovery, contains many other utterly unscriptural and cultic affirmations about unconditional obedience to sinful men.

¹⁶⁸ Pgs. 46-47, *Spiritual Authority*, Watchman Nee.

the Little Flock/Church of the Recovery denomination.¹⁶⁹ One may suppose that the idea that one needs to blindly and unconditionally follow denominational authorities even if their commands are sinful is helpful if these same authorities are seeking to acquire all of one's possessions and through tyranny to force on people other ecclesiological ideas absent from the Bible.

One reason that Nee and Lee's denomination could adopt so many grievous heresies and corruptions is that an extremely high percentage of those in it are unconverted—they are not truly sheep, so they do not hear the voice of Jesus Christ, the true Shepherd, speaking to them in Scripture, but follow false shepherds, thieves, and robbers, instead of fleeing from them (John 10:1-30). Nee and Lee, being unconverted themselves, were extremely confused about the nature of sin, the gospel, and salvation. Nee taught error about man's pre-Fall state, denying that man was holy before the Fall, instead affirming that he was "morally neutral—neither sinful nor holy."¹⁷⁰ Happily, in fact neither the first nor the second Adam were morally neutral, but the first was created holy and the second is forever holy (1 Corinthians 15:22, 45; Romans 5:12-19). Nee based his unscriptural practice of open communion¹⁷¹ rather than close or closed communion on a more fundamental error in the doctrines of sin and grace, the idea that some "'sins' . . . hinder fellowship with God and [other] 'sins' do not. . . . [While committing these] other 'sins' . . . fellowship with God is not hindered."¹⁷² Nee's doctrine of justification was also heretical. He taught that "[j]ustification is . . . showing that we have no sin because God declares us to be without sin . . . God pronounces us as being without sin and He thus justifies us,"¹⁷³ an insufficient and faulty view of justification, which is the doctrine that believers are declared, not merely without sin, but

¹⁶⁹ Pgs. 166-167, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee; cf. pgs. 151-167, 203, 212-213, 216-217, 323-325; see also pgs. x, 188ff., 221, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear; pg. 146, "The Story of Watchman Nee," Bernard Earling. *Lutheran Quarterly* 28 (May 1976) 140-155.

¹⁷⁰ Pg. 114, *The Normal Christian Life*, Watchman Nee. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1977. Unfallen Adam, nevertheless, "possessed a hidden ability which made it possible for him to become like God . . . to become like Him morally," for Adam "was already like Him in outward appearance," so God, it seems, has an outward appearance, and this outward appearance was similar to what Adam looked like (pg. 18, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee).

¹⁷¹ In addition to Nee's recommendation for the churches in his denomination, he practiced open communion when, for example, he partook of the elements of the Supper in the open communion service at the Keswick Convention he attended in 1938, "under the banner 'All one in Christ Jesus'" (pg. 149, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear).

¹⁷² Pg. 137, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear, quoting a letter from the Little Flock to the Exclusive Brethren in England from July 2, 1935, on the subject of communion. Open communion is unscriptural, for the Lord's supper is a church ordinance (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:17-34), and the idea that some sins do not affect fellowship with God is also unscriptural.

¹⁷³ Pg. 122, *The Mystery of Creation*, Nee.

positively perfectly righteous, since not only does the blood of Christ remove all of a Christian's sins, but the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and the believer is legally viewed as if he had perfectly obeyed the Law as Christ did because of the Lord Jesus' substitutionary atonement. However, Nee also attacked the power of the blood of Christ,¹⁷⁴ perhaps making it more easy for him to attack justification also. Nee also believed and taught workers in his denomination that "[t]he great weakness of the present preaching of the Gospel is that we try to make people *understand* the plan of salvation."¹⁷⁵ Nee's astonishing affirmation that it is a great weakness to lead people to understand the gospel is based on his idea that "the sinner is not required," if he is to receive salvation, "to believe, or to repent, or to be conscious of sin, or even to know that Christ died. He is required only to approach the Lord with an honest heart."¹⁷⁶ Despite 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and countless other texts, Nee taught that one simply needs to "touch" God in a mystical encounter to be saved, rather than believe the gospel; "it is clear . . . that salvation is not initially a question of knowledge but of 'touch.' All who touch the Lord receive life."¹⁷⁷ One can "touch" God without even knowing the name of Jesus Christ, not to mention His character and saving work, despite John 8:24. Nee illustrated receiving salvation with the story of a Chinese boy who thought an idol was "too ugly and too dirty to be worshipped" and so "looked up to heaven" and prayed to God. Thirty years later he met Nee, and this Chinese man who thought an idol was dirty decades earlier testified, "I have met the Lord Jesus for the first time to-day, but this is the second time that I have touched God."¹⁷⁸ The man had, Nee taught, been saved decades earlier by "touching" God apart from Jesus Christ, despite Acts 4:12 and John 14:6. "[W]e go for salvation not to the foot of the Cross but to the Throne" where we mystically "touch" and encounter "the living Lord,"¹⁷⁹ for "salvation" is a "personal and subjective experience" which "may be said to rest rather upon the Lord's resurrection than upon His death."¹⁸⁰ Those who do know who Jesus Christ is, as long as they pray and "touch" God, will be saved even if they do not want to repent and believe, as Nee illustrated with a man who "prayed, and told the Lord that he did not want to repent and be saved," but still "cried to Him for help." By means of this cry, Nee affirmed that the man repented

¹⁷⁴ "The Blood can wash away my sins, but it cannot wash away my 'old man'" (pgs. 19-20, *The Normal Christian Life*, Watchman Nee).

¹⁷⁵ Pg. 40, *What Shall This Man Do?* Watchman Nee. The italics are found in the original.

¹⁷⁶ Pg. 34, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

¹⁷⁷ Pg. 40, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

¹⁷⁸ Pg. 41, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

¹⁷⁹ Pg. 41, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

¹⁸⁰ Pg. 42, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

even though he had said that he did not want to, “and he got up a saved man.”¹⁸¹ After all, “salvation is not . . . a question of understanding or will . . . [i]t does not matter if a man wants or does not want to be saved, it does not matter if he understands or does not understand,” since the “basic condition of a sinner’s salvation is not belief or repentance,”¹⁸² but mystically encountering the Deity with a “touch.” The “initial touch . . . saves the sinner” even without “the sinner’s understanding of . . . the Gospel.”¹⁸³ Therefore, what the members of Nee’s denomination must do is “encourage every sinner to kneel down with an honest heart and pray,” and even “prayers which . . . are not uttered in the name of Jesus . . . God will hear”¹⁸⁴ and save the lost, even if they do not know who Jesus is, know what the gospel is, and have no desire whatever to repent and believe in Him. In fact, even if people know and hate Jesus Christ they will be saved if they pray to God. Nee illustrates how a woman was allegedly saved who hated Jesus Christ and simply wanted to be happy, and so prayed and allegedly was born again:

A striking example of one who came to God without even wanting to be saved is afforded by the experience of an English lady . . . She flung herself down and said, “O God, I have everything I want, wealth, popularity, beauty, youth—and yet I am absolutely miserable and unsatisfied. Christians would tell me that this is a proof that the world is empty and hollow, and that Jesus could save me and give me peace and joy and satisfaction. But I don’t want the satisfaction that He could give. I don’t want to be saved. I hate You and I hate Your peace and joy. But, O God, give me what I don’t want, and if You can, make me happy!” . . . [S]he got up from her knees a saved woman[.]¹⁸⁵

After all, since Romans 10:13 says that “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,”¹⁸⁶ therefore “[l]et there be but a cry from the heart to God, and *at that moment* the Spirit will enter” and save the sinner, whether he knows who Jesus Christ is or not, and even if he hates Jesus Christ and hates the salvation He offers. Witness Lee understood Nee’s point very well:

We have seen that to reach the unbelievers, no preaching is necessary. If we help them say ‘O Lord’ three times, they will be saved. If they open the window, the air will get in. All they have to do is to open their mouths and say, ‘O Lord, O Lord.’ Even if they have no intention of believing,

181 Pg. 36, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

182 Pg. 42-3, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

183 Pg. 44, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

184 Pg. 44, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

185 Pg. 44, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee.

186 Nee and Lee’s denomination take the error of the modern “sinner’s prayer” methodology to its logical conclusion—the Church of the Recovery teaches that anyone who says the sinner’s prayer—or even just the words “O Lord” three times—really is going to heaven, whether or not he understands the gospel, since Romans 10:13, which in fact is not a verse about obtaining justification at all (cf. “An Exegesis and Application of Romans 10:9-14 for Soulwinning Churches and Christians,” by Thomas Ross, <http://faithsaves.net>), but about the prayers of the already justified, as Romans 10:14 proves, does say “whosoever shall call” receives the salvation mentioned, without any of the limitations that the large majority of evangelicals and fundamentalists who misinterpret the verse in evangelism employ to safeguard justification by repentant faith alone (cf. pg. 179, *Against the Tide*, Kinnear, etc.)

still they will be caught! Regardless of whether they have the intention or not, as long as they open the window, the air will get in. It is not a matter of teaching; it is a matter of touching the seven Spirits of God.¹⁸⁷

By methodology of this sort, Nee personally led to salvation “many” who “did not in the first place repent or believe, or consciously desire to be saved.” Those “who won’t repent . . . who cannot believe . . . who have no desire for salvation . . . who are confused and cannot understand the Gospel . . . and who understand but will not acknowledge the claim of God upon them . . . *many* of them have been saved on the spot,”¹⁸⁸ Nee testified, by saying the magic incantation. Nee’s disciples followed their leader’s example and led countless others to say the sinner’s prayer and experience the mystical “touch,” and so filled up their denomination with the unconverted children of hell and wrath who were utterly destitute of the new birth. However, Nee taught that the power of the sinner’s prayer went even beyond saving those who hated God, those who knew nothing of Jesus Christ, those who had no desire to repent or believe, and those who hated the Son of God and the Gospel. Even atheists can be saved by saying the sinner’s prayer: “[T]hose who do not believe there is a God at all . . . do not need first to substitute theism for atheism. They can be saved *as they are*, even without any belief in God at all.”¹⁸⁹ It is not surprising that Nee’s disciples claim that the true way of “salvation . . . never became adequately clear to the Chinese Christians until Watchman Nee’s ministry was raised up.”¹⁹⁰ Following just the Bible alone, without the writings of Watchman Nee, who would ever have guessed the true way of salvation—one that comes by means of an omnipotent sinner’s prayer, rather than by faith in the Omnipotent God and the cross of His Son Jesus Christ?

Nee also adopted other very serious heresies, errors, and bizarre beliefs. For example, he promoted the error of the Gap Theory instead of the truth of a literal six day recent creation of all things.¹⁹¹ Examples of the bizarre include Nee’s affirmation that “we may not rate Adam’s power as being a *billion* times over ours, [but] we can nevertheless safely reckon it to be a *million* times over ours,”¹⁹² from which he

187 Witness Lee, Stream Magazine, VIII: 1, Feb 1, 1970, 6, cited <http://www.bcbsr.com/topics/lc.html>.

188 Pg. 47, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee. Italics in original.

189 Pg. 47, *What Shall This Man Do?* Nee. Italics in original.

190 Pg. 273, *Watchman Nee: A Seer of the Divine Revelation*, Lee.

191 “In the beginning God created a perfect heaven and earth. Later on—we do not know how long afterwards—the original beautiful earth became waste and void. However, God rose up and remade the world,” after destroying an entire “preadamic race” (pgs. 18, 34, cf. pgs. 4-39, *The Mystery of Creation*, Watchman Nee. New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1981). In *The Mystery of Creation*, Nee repeatedly quotes and follows pre-Adamite men advocate and partial Rapturist G. H. Pember, author of *Earth’s Earliest Ages* (as Nee does elsewhere also, e. g., pgs. 29-30, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee).

192 Pg. 15, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee.

concluded, in connection with the adoption of the “soul-force” concept of Jessie Penn-Lewis,¹⁹³ that people today can exercise the soul-force that is latent and “frozen” in their bodies to do what is a million times over regular human ability, make sick people well, make healthy people sick, predict the future, read other people’s minds, know great political events weeks and months before they come to pass so that newspapers are unnecessary, see, hear, and smell things thousands of miles away, penetrate all physical barriers, accelerate the growth of plants and quench fire, overturn governments, make physical objects come to them, materialize to distant people in a spiritual body that looks just like [one’s] physical body, walk over fire for long distances without being scorched, and perform countless other wonders, as the “soul power” is “an almost unlimited power.”¹⁹⁴ Nee also adopted the curious notion that after the Millennium, in the eternal state, people will live on the “new earth . . . marry . . . and multiply as Adam did of old.”¹⁹⁵ Nee’s errors seem to multiply without end, after the manner of his notion of what will take place in the eternal state on the new earth. Whether believers receive or reject his writings will determine to what extent his pernicious influence will continue to corrupt Christianity.

Applications from the Life and Teachings of Watchman Nee

The writings of Watchman Nee are extremely dangerous and unreliable. Those of Nee’s successor, Witness Lee, are even worse.¹⁹⁶ Believers should be warned against

¹⁹³ Compare *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Watchman Nee. (New York, NY: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1972) with Penn-Lewis’ *Soul and Spirit*, which Nee frequently references and depends very heavily upon (cf. pgs. 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, etc.). Indeed, Nee’s book has far more quotations within it of Jessie Penn-Lewis than it does of the Bible.

Nee also, unsurprisingly, shares Penn-Lewis’s view of the impropriety of Christian use of soul-power, affirming the use of throne-power as the better alternative. Nee knew that a “preacher like Evan Roberts, God’s vessel in the Welsh Revival of 1904-5” knew how to have “his soul power . . . denied” to exercise throne-power instead (pg. 49, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee).

¹⁹⁴ Pgs. 19-25, 31, 38, 47-48, 58-59, 66, *The Latent Power of the Soul*, Nee.

¹⁹⁵ Pgs. 235-236, *Come Lord Jesus*, Nee. Nee argued for this unscriptural notion from Exodus 20:6, the only verse he positively sets forth as proof for his position (he also argues against the obvious meaning of Matthew 22:30, employing a classical logical fallacy and some very faulty hermeneutics in his argument). Exodus 20:6 must bear the full weight of proof for the following affirmation: “Doubtless the inhabitants of the new earth will continue to be fruitful and to multiply” (pgs. 235-236, *Come Lord Jesus*, Nee). Such a verse for such a conclusion certainly fits into the category of both the curious and the bizarre.

¹⁹⁶ In addition to expanding upon heresies already taught by Nee, Lee added his own distinctive contributions. For example: “Witness Lee demonstrates that the book of Revelation is a book of victory and that everything seen in it is considered by the Lord to have been accomplished already.” Even “the beast, the false prophet, death, and Hades [being cast] into the lake of fire (20:10, 14) . . . and the preparation of the holy city ‘as a bride adorned for her husband’ (21:2)” are descriptions of past events (“A

them, not encouraged to read them. They would be better used to kindle a fire in a wood stove than to kindle a fire for God in a believer's soul—and they have been an instrument to lead many to the everlasting fires of hell. Do you want your church to reject the true God and join a modalistic cult that denies the gospel, banishes believers to a Protestant purgatory, confuses and hinders Biblical sanctification, and rejects the study of Scripture for demonically produced mystical experiences? Then acquire Watchman Nee's writings and study them carefully, for by the study of his writings countless people have been brought into exactly this sort of apostasy. Vast numbers in China have rejected Christianity for the Church of the Recovery, and in the United States and elsewhere in the world the cult of Nee and Lee proselytizes by spreading the teachings and writings of their false prophets to as many in Christendom as show any interest. Is rejecting Jehovah for idolatry an intolerable and infinite evil? Then have nothing to do with Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, for they were not God's watchmen, nor true witnesses to Him.

Watchman Nee illustrates the danger of receiving teaching from women preachers. Since they are not God's plan, and the Bible indicates that women are more easily deceived by Satan (1 Timothy 2:14), it is not surprising that women preachers, whether Hannah W. Smith, Jessie Penn-Lewis, Madame Guyon, Mary B. Eddy, or Jezebel (Revelation 2:20) are often the devil's instrument to deceive mankind and to corrupt Divine truth. Nee should have learned his doctrine and practice through the faithful pulpit ministry of a sound Baptist church instead of sitting at the feet of unscriptural women preachers. Learn from Nee's bad example, obey Scripture on the qualifications of the pastoral office, and recognize how Nee's disobedient method of learning about God contributed to his being drowned in destruction and perdition.

Reject the false mysticism of the view of guidance advocated by Nee and Lee. God does truly guide His people today,¹⁹⁷ but He does not do so through extrabiblical and mystical revelations. While God may, in His mercy, lead you into right paths despite adopting unbiblical views of guidance, you are in danger of making decisions that will harm the rest of your life on earth, and your reward for all eternity, if you trust in alleged personal revelations and other forms of leading that are not for today. Do not be a cessationist in theory who seeks Divine guidance the way a charismatic would.

Recognize the danger of Watchman Nee's cultic doctrine that one ought always to obey those in authority, even if they are wrong. Recognize also that Nee and Lee are also

Defense of Seventeen Quotations from the Ministry of Witness Lee," <http://www.lctestimony.org/Witness-Lee-Quotations.htm>).

¹⁹⁷ *Steps for Guidance* by Peter Masters (London: Wakeman Trust, 1995) is a fine and balanced presentation of Biblical guidance.

promoting a cultic lie when they teach that God will not hold you accountable for what you do that is wrong if you are told to do so by authority. There is not the slightest doubt that the Holy One will hold you accountable. Many who have adopted this extremely dangerous error on authority have plumbed the depths of Satan. The unquestioning obedience Nee and Lee require of men belongs only to God and His Word, and absolute surrender to fallen men, to men who are still sinners, is a horrible recipe for the vilest sins. This teaching, on its own, is more than sufficient to prove that the Church of the Recovery is a cult, not a holy organization devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rejoice in the pretribulational Rapture of all saints. If you are a true believer, Christ will keep you from the hour of temptation that will come on all the earth (Revelation 3:10). You do not need to worry that you will miss the Rapture to face the awful judgments of the Tribulation because you have not entered into the Higher Life or have failed to join Watchman Nee's religious organization. You certainly do not need to fear being cast into outer darkness or going to a Protestant purgatory to be tortured until you are somehow purified by suffering. No, the Lord Jesus has fully quaffed the cup of wrath for you, and there is no wrath left for you to endure. God has not appointed you to wrath, but to obtain salvation by your Lord, Jesus Christ, who died for you so that, whether alive or at rest with Him, you should live perpetually with Him (1 Thessalonians 5:9-10). Your Redeemer has perfectly accomplished His saving work (John 19:30), and His blood and righteousness have been applied to your account before God, giving you a perfect legal standing in His sight. The Father loves you, although a poor wretched worm, as He loves His incarnate Son (John 17:23). Soon your precious Jesus will return for you and bring you to a mansion He has been preparing for you (John 14:1-3). He has brought you into an unbreakable and unspeakably intimate union with Himself, and He will perfectly shield you from eschatological wrath and judgment, caring for you as a man cares for the apple of his eye. What a blessed comfort the truth of the pretribulational Rapture is! Do you long and look for the soon return of your blessed Savior? Then apply to your heart the words of the Apostle John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

Receive the true doctrine of your preconversion depravity and of your regenerated restoration. Before your conversion *you* were dead—not your spirit only, but your entire person in all your parts was separated from God. At the moment when you were supernaturally regenerated through the Almighty efficacy of the Spirit of God, *you* were made new in your entire being, body, soul, and spirit—your new birth was not limited to

the spirit. Be amazed at the extent of your inherited corruption; no part of you was exempt from the awful ravages of sin. Glory in the extent of your regeneration; no part of you is left unchanged and unrenewed by the Holy Ghost. For you who were formerly entirely in darkness, the Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in His wings, His light leaving no part of you unaffected, and, through His continuing transforming power in progressive sanctification, shining more and more until the future day of your perfection in glory. How far superior is the Biblical doctrine of regeneration to the arrested and limited doctrine of Watchman Nee and Jessie Penn-Lewis, who would limit regeneration to the human spirit alone!

Reject with abhorrence the blasphemy of deification as nothing other than the repetition of the first lying hiss of the serpent, “ye shall be as gods” (Genesis 3:5). You never were God, you are not God now, and you never shall be God. If you think that you are God, you are an idolater, and you will curse your blasphemous folly for all eternity as you scream in everlasting punishment in the lake of fire. You will know, while you are being tormented with fire and brimstone, that you are not God. “Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. . . .They shall bring thee down to the pit” (Ezekiel 28:8-9). You will join Lucifer in being “brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit” (Isaiah 14:15). The more a Christian knows intellectually and experientially of his union with Christ, his glorious renewal into the moral likeness of the second Adam, and of the inestimable blessing of partaking of ever greater measures of the communicable Divine attributes, of God’s holiness, of His love, His faithfulness, His purity, His mercy, and all the rest, the more full he will grow of the deepest humility, and the more abominable the blasphemy of deification will appear to him. Those who believe that they become gods will join their god, Satan, in the lowest parts of hell, while believers will find it their ineffable blessedness to be conformed morally to Christ and to enjoy, to the uttermost extent possible for their finite beings, fellowship with Him and His glorious Divine presence. Choose, then, what you will have this day. Will it be deification and damnation, or Christ-likeness and heaven?

Rejoice in the Triune God, in the One who subsists eternally in the three eternal Persons of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Behold the beauty and glory of this Triune God, as revealed in Scripture, in His ontology and His economy. Entrust yourself fully to Him as your own Lord, God, and Savior, for He only is able to save you. His revelation of Himself in time is true—you can truly know the Father through the Son by the Spirit, for His economic manifestation provides real and substantial knowledge of His eternal being. Also, out of love for Him, reject the demonic deceit of modalism. The

modalistic god of the Church of the Recovery does not exist and so is incapable of saving you from your sin, answering your prayers, or doing anything at all—any confidence you place in such a deity is only confidence in the devils who are behind all idols. What is more, even if this modalistic god did exist, you could never learn anything about him from Scripture, as the Bible reveals a God who is a real Triunity—were modalism true, the “revelation” of Scripture would truly be a deception, and the god that was hidden behind his modalistic masks would remain actually unknown and unknowable. Only in the contradictory and confusing writings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee could you hope to have any real knowledge of the modal deity hidden in the Bible—but since Nee and Lee contradict Scripture, God’s Word remains unshakably true, and the modalistic deity of Nee and Lee is nothing but a vanity among the almost innumerable vain idols of false religion.

While the “sinner’s prayer” practice of Nee and Lee is a terrible evil that produces countless unconverted people who have passed through the requisite ritual of saying a prayer and are in this manner prepared to join their religious organization, it is nonetheless consistent with the misinterpretation of Romans 10:9-14 adopted by many outside the Church of the Recovery cult who are less consistent in accepting the terrible fruits of their eisegesis. The more consistent one is with the “sinner’s prayer” gospel, the more people will be damned; the further one veers away from the “sinner’s prayer” gospel to the truth of justification received by the instrumentality of repentant faith alone, rather than faith and prayer together or faith mediated through prayer, the more people will come to true conversion and everlasting life. After all, if Romans 10:13 really is a statement explaining to the lost how they are to become Christians, then “whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” really does justify the Local Church doctrine that people who hate God, atheists, and whoever else can be manipulated into saying the magic prayer will be saved—are not they part of “whosoever”? And have they not “called” out in prayer—a hypocritical prayer rooted in a wicked heart, it is true, but is not the alleged promise truly to “whosoever shall call”? The qualifications made by many of those who are truly God’s people, and who thus hold to the true gospel along with a false view of Romans 10:9-14, are truly absent from the passage. The only truly safe route is a return to what the Apostle Paul really meant when he wrote Romans 10 by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The *confession* of Romans 10:9-10 is not the repetition of a sinner’s prayer, but public confession of Jesus Christ with one’s literal mouth before men (cf. Matthew 10:32), and it is not a prerequisite to justification but a mark of the regenerate, of those who will receive eschatological salvation (cf. Romans 5:9). “[W]ith the heart man believeth unto righteousness,” that is, instantly at the moment of saving

faith Christ's imputed righteousness is given, and then, after the moment of the new birth, "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," that is, public testimony for Christ is made as an evidence of prior regeneration and a sign of certain future glorification or salvation. Consequently, "whosoever believeth" on Christ "shall not be ashamed" (Romans 10:11; Isaiah 28:16; 49:23), for all who simply trust in Christ will not be ashamed in the future day of judgment. Those who believe in Christ and are born again, and consequently confess Him publicly as a mark of their regenerate lifestyle, will all receive ultimate salvation, whether Jew or Gentile, for their new hearts will also lead them all to be calling on the Lord, regularly seeking God in prayer because of their renewed hearts (Romans 10:12), and all those who do such will also receive eschatological salvation (Romans 10:13). That is, those who love prayer and enter God's coming kingdom are those who are already born from above, and Romans 10:13 is a promise to such, not a promise to the unconverted that if they say and mean some special words they will be justified. As Joel 2:32 confirms, Romans 10:13 is not about the moment of justification or how to enter a justified state, but about the type of people who receive eschatological deliverance. Indeed, calling on the Lord, the prayer that is a mark of the regenerate, is impossible unless one has already exercised saving faith—people cannot call on the Lord until they have already believed (Romans 10:14).¹⁹⁸ Scripture never promises that all who ask for salvation will be saved, nor that all who ask for it with certain added qualifications, such as "really meaning it" or other additions absent from Romans 10:13, will be saved. This fact explains the deafening silence of Christ and the Apostles in the Gospels and Acts about the "sinner's prayer" bringing justification. Rather, the entire Bible testifies that one who will in repentance believe on the crucified and risen Christ will be justified, regenerated, transformed, and ultimately glorified. Perhaps you are not as consistent as Watchman Nee and Witness Lee in your misinterpretation of Romans 10:13, so fewer people are eternally deluded and damned by you than were by them. However, if you hold to the modern misinterpretation that the passage is about the lost receiving justification by saying a sinner's prayer, it is time to abandon your eisegesis of the text. If the idea of presenting the gospel to the lost the way Christ and the Apostles did—not using Romans 10:13 and the "sinner's prayer" as the door into the kingdom of God—seems inconceivable to you, it is time to unlearn your false methodology and learn from Scripture how to properly counsel the unconverted and direct them to receive Christ by faith alone, rather than by saying and meaning the

¹⁹⁸ For a detailed exposition of Romans 10:9-14 proving that the "sinner's prayer" to obtain justification is entirely absent from the passage, see "An Exegesis and Application of Romans 10:9-14 for Soulwinning Churches and Christians," Thomas Ross. Elec. acc. <http://faithsaves.net>.

sinner's prayer.¹⁹⁹ Furthermore, if you are resting your hopes for eternal salvation upon the fact that you have prayed and meant a sinner's prayer or have asked Jesus to come into your heart, you will surely be damned unless you repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are a true believer, you should neither place your confidence for assurance of salvation upon the fact that you have said a sinner's prayer nor doubt your salvation based on not saying a sinner's prayer. Repetition of such a prayer, or lack thereof, has nothing to do with assurance in the Bible. Rather, Biblical assurance comes from the objective promises of God to save those who come to Him (John 6:37), the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16), and the evidences recorded in 1 John of the truly holy and spiritual life that are found in all genuine believers and in no others. The common misinterpretation of Romans 10:9-14 that makes the passage about the lost repeating a "sinner's prayer" to enter the kingdom of God has done tremendous damage to the cause of Christ by misleading many unconverted people and so keeping them from salvation while also leading many of the Savior's dear ones to doubt their salvation. The Church of the Recovery, by being more consistent in its abuse of Romans 10 and the "sinner's prayer" than the large majority of evangelicals and fundamentalists, has effectively set in relief the ravages wrought by this perversion of the gospel and made all the more clear the necessity for returning to the meaning intended by the Holy Ghost as understood by proper contextual and grammatical-historical interpretation of the chapter.

The abominable heresies of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee illustrate where the Keswick continuationism can lead—their cult is Keswick theology gone to seed. The rejection of grammatical-historical exegesis and literal interpretation for mystical and experiential hermeneutics fundamentally undergirds Keswick, Pentecostal, and Church of the Recovery doctrine; all these movements fall away, and classical orthodoxy on sanctification and other areas of Christianity is restored, when literal hermeneutics are reinstated and their implications rigorously applied. A proper recognition of *sola Scriptura*, and its robust application to all areas of theology, is the end of all continuationisms and Higher Life systems and the restoration of historic Baptist cessationism and spirituality. On the other hand, a failure to recognize the sole authority of Scripture and its corollary of literal hermeneutics allows the tares of all sorts of continuationism, Higher Life systems, mysticism, and fanaticism the soil they need to sprout and multiply. Some continuationists may end up in the Church of the Recovery

¹⁹⁹ A helpful introduction to a more Biblical method of dealing with the lost is presented on pgs. 122-187 of *Today's Apostasy: How 'Decisionism' is Destroying our Churches*, Hymers & Cagan.

and others in the Word of Faith movement, but all end up in serious and deepening error, and the more consistently they employ their fundamental errors on authority and interpretation, the more error they descend into. For protection from sin and true holiness of life, it is essential that the truth of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is recognized and embraced in all its implications, as enabled by the Holy Spirit: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”