

Great Lakes Brothers' Correspondence with the "Blended Co-workers"

Introduction

In June 2005 Brother Titus Chu received a letter from 21 "blended co-workers" directing him to cease his publication work in all languages and "*join [himself] and those co-workers loyal to [him] to the blending co-workers, with the continuation of [his] previous work left to...their coordinated oversight.*" Due to the impact of these actions on the saints and churches in this area, a considerable number of serving brothers came together periodically for fellowship and prayer. Approximately 100 brothers, serving the Great Lakes area churches, participated in this process over a 16-month period. During that interval a series of letters were sent to the 21 "blended co-workers," expressing the brothers' concerns and requesting fellowship according to the pattern of Acts 15.

Chronology of Correspondence

The sequence of letters, involving the Great Lakes brothers, was:

- Great Lakes brothers' **1st Letter**—dated, June 12, 2005—signed by 52 brothers
- Great Lakes brothers' **2nd Letter**—dated, Sept. 24, 2005—signed by 77 brothers
- Blended Co-workers' Response—dated, December 6, 2005
- Great Lakes brothers' **3rd Letter**—dated, Feb. 28, 2006—signed by 89 brothers
- Benson Phillips' & Liu Suey's Response—dated, August 10, 2006
- Great Lakes brothers' **4th Letter**—dated, Sept. 10, 2006—signed by 4 brothers

To date this exchange of letters has not produced a resolution of the difficulties. No meaningful fellowship with the "blended co-workers" has happened. The "Acts 15" meeting repeatedly requested has not occurred. Neither have the "blended co-workers'" replies addressed the substantive issues raised in the 4 Great Lakes' letters. On the contrary, we recently became aware of a document being circulated which used quotes from the Great Lakes brothers' letters to make serious allegations. This document entitled, "The Different Teachings and False Accusations of the Dissenters" appears to originate from LSM's Defense & Confirmation Project,¹ led by Brother Dan Towle. Moreover it has also been posted (both in outline form and full text version) on the internet, on the "lastadam.com" website (since Sept. 24, 2006).

Quotations from the Great Lakes brothers' letters are incorporated into "The Different Teachings and False Accusations of the Dissenters" in such a way as to imply the Great Lakes brothers are "dissenters" who espouse "different teachings" and have made "false accusations" against the "blended co-workers." We regard this portrayal as a serious misrepresentation of our position expressed in our correspondence.

A Trumped-up Charge of "Accusing the Co-workers of Conspiring"

More specifically, the Great Lakes brothers are charged with "*accusing the [blended] co-workers of conspiring to carry out centralized control*" (Outline Point IIB) and (in another version) "*accusing the [blended] co-workers of trying to centralize control*" (Text Point B2.)² These are serious charges, especially the charge of "*accusing the co-workers of conspiring...*". Conspiracy is defined as "an evil, unlawful, treacherous, or surreptitious plan (or plot) formulated in secret." In response, we ask—When did the Great Lakes brothers ever accuse "*the [blended] co-workers of conspiring to carry out centralized control*"? Where, in all our letters, is this conspiracy accusation? A thorough examination shows the words conspire, scheme, plot, connive (and their synonyms) were never used, nor implied.³ This is a trumped-up charge, with no basis in fact. It is a figment of the authors' imagination. Where did this fiction originate? Have the authors (members of LSM's Defense & Confirmation Project) perhaps been consorting with lawyers and

become infected with their litigious logic? Have they forgotten that we are not adversaries in the law courts, but brothers in the Lord's recovery?

The Great Lakes brothers said, "*We are concerned that ...while you are emphasizing fellowship, you may be just exercising control; and as you are speaking about the organic Body, you may be actually establishing a global organization.*" (Sept. 24, 2005). The brothers expressed a genuine concern. Why is this concern distorted into an accusation of conspiracy?

As evidence of their conspiracy theory, the document "Different Teachings..." presents two quotations:

[1] "...no group of workers should seek to dominate other workers in order to subjugate them and bring their work under their own control." (Great Lakes brothers, 02/28/06)

[2] "There is no human "universal coordinator of the One New Man," nor "global supervisor of the Body," nor "world-wide overseer of God's building work." We reject, as unscriptural, the concept of an individual coordinator or a group of coordinators (directors, supervisors or overseers, etc.) in these aspects of God's work." (Great Lakes brothers, 02/28/06 *correction*)

The first statement [1] is the Great Lakes brothers' response to the demand that Brother Titus Chu cease publishing and "*join [himself] and those co-workers loyal to [him] to the blending co-workers, with the continuation of [his] previous work left to...their coordinated oversight.*" The Great Lakes brothers felt "important matters of truth," were being infringed – "*firstly that genuine local churches are not under the ministry of a particular servant of the Lord and, secondly, that no group of workers should seek to dominate other workers in order to subjugate them and bring their work under their own control.*" (Great Lakes brothers, 02/28/06) Here a matter of Scriptural principle was presented for fellowship. Clearly, this was not an accusation of conspiracy, nor of any other wrongdoing.

The second statement [2] appears under the title, "The Stand of a Genuine Local Church," where the Great Lakes brothers expressed their "*thoughts... concerning the stand a genuine local church in the Lord's recovery should have today...*" Again, it was not an accusation, but a statement of our current position. It was followed by a reference to Brother Nee [Collected Works, Vol. 26, p. 425] which says, "*Some... are tempted to attain the position of director over all of God's servants. How good this seems from a human point of view ...We would say, however, that ...the Holy Spirit is always the unique Executor. He never needs man to be His manager.*" Doesn't the Great Lakes brothers' statement [2] simply echo this word of Brother Nee? May we ask—Do the "Blended Co-workers" reject Brother Nee's view expressed here? Do they feel a "universal coordinator of the One New Man" (Max Rappaport's phrase) or a "global supervisor of the Body," is necessary in the recovery today? If so, doesn't this usurp the role of the Holy Spirit (according to W. Nee's word)?

Who is "Twisting"?

Moreover, in "The Different Teachings..." the Great Lakes brothers are called "*dissenting ones [who] claim that the co-workers are trying to centralize control of the work. They deny that there should be a leadership in the work, claiming that the groups of workers are independent.*"

The authors allege the Great Lakes brothers "*deny that there should be a leadership in the work, claiming that the groups of workers are independent.*" However, the objective reader will find no evidence to support these fallacious claims. The Great

Lakes brothers wrote, "*the New Testament pattern shows multiple groups of workers under the leadership of various apostles (Titus 3:13), yet extending the 'right hand fellowship' to one another (Gal. 2:9).*" This statement recognizes leadership—"the leadership of various apostles." It does **not** "claim that the groups of workers are independent" (as the authors' falsely allege). On the contrary, the Great Lakes brothers acknowledge the **interdependency** between worker-groups, 'extending the 'right hand fellowship' to one another.'" These statements echo Brother Nee's teaching on this topic. It seems the authors of "The Different Teachings..." have deliberately chosen to misconstrue and misrepresent the Great Lakes brothers' word. Elsewhere, the authors accuse others of "twisting." We respond—who is "twisting"?

"Dissenting"—Dissenting from What?

"Different Teachings"— Different from What?

The Great Lakes brothers reject the authors' characterization of them as "dissenters, having "different teachings." They strongly object to being labelled with these negative stereotypes. The Great Lakes brothers ask: "Dissenting"—Dissenting from what? "Different Teachings"—Different from what? The reference point is not the current teaching of the "blended co-workers," including their recent emphases on "one publication," one "Minister of the Age," one "wise master builder who is the acting God," one continuation of Brother Lee, one global company of co-workers, "the Body equals the Recovery," etc. Rather, the Scriptures constitute our canon—"The Bible is our unique standard" (W. Nee). Put differently, the reference point is the apostles' teaching (the entire New Testament revelation), centered on Christ and the Church, i.e. God's economy (RcV. 1 Tim. 1:3, fn. 3). The Great Lakes brothers are not teaching differently from the apostles' teaching in the New Testament. We are not dissenting from a balanced reception of the entire ministries of Brothers Nee and Lee in the light of the Scriptures. However, we are constrained to be "dissenters" against recent theological innovations which extrapolate "*beyond what has been written*" (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9) in the New Testament and confirmed by the ministries of Brothers Nee and Lee. This has been our stand since the Lord's recovery began in this area. We have not deviated; nor do we intend to change.

Why Publish the Great Lakes Brothers' Letters?

The document, "The Different Teachings and False Accusations of the Dissenters" calls the Great Lakes brothers "dissenters," who "teach differently." In the recovery these are pejorative terms. It also alleges they have made false accusations against the "blended co-workers," including conspiracy.

The authors of "The Different Teachings ..." seek to support these serious allegations by quoting from private correspondence between the Great Lakes brothers and the "blended co-workers." Since the confidentiality of that correspondence has been violated, we are constrained to publicly release the Great Lakes brothers' letters. Such publication will allow objective and unbiased readers to judge for themselves the veracity of these allegations. We regret that we are forced to take this action due to the behaviour of others. These steps should not be misconstrued as an attack on the "blended co-workers," whom we love as brothers in the Lord and with whom we've walked in the way of recovery for many years.

Nigel Tomes
September, 2006

ADDENDUM—"Different Teachings..." the Final Version vs. the Draft

Shortly after this item was posted on the Internet, the final version of "Different Teachings..."⁴ was presented at LSM's International Elders' Training at Whistler, BC, Oct. 7,

2006. That version now appears on LSM's website, AFaithfulWord.org and on lastadam.com. The authors' acknowledge the "draft document" quoted above is their work. Evidently it was inadvertently released and posted on the LSM-friendly website, "lastadam.com." They deny authoring the "outline." The authors' also acknowledge reading our response (above) prior to editing and presenting the final version to the elders. In the light of these facts, it is interesting to note what does not appear in the final version – **All references to the Great Lakes brothers' letters** (including the quotes above) **have been eradicated from the final published version!** Why these changes? Two possibilities suggest themselves:

Will the Evidence Hold up in Court?

[1] Perhaps the authors' realized the "evidence" presented in their "draft" which derives from the Great Lakes brothers' letters (quoted above) is neither compelling nor convincing. Realizing it "won't hold up in the court of public opinion," maybe the brothers "withdrew this part of their case." If that is indeed the case, it suggests that when challenged the "evidence was found wanting," consequently the authors were compelled to shift their ground, retreating to other points (in the final version). But, if that is true for this point, what about the others? Are they equally unreliable? Will the other points also turn out to be "weak reeds," unable to withstand scrutiny?

No Problem with the Great Lakes Brothers?—Fact or Facade?

[2] Possibly there was a conscious decision not to label the "Great Lakes brothers" as "dissenters" who make "false accusations" and/or hold "different teachings" (as alleged in the draft). Instead, the title of the final version focuses criticism on "Titus Chu and certain of his co-workers." In the draft, the Great Lakes brothers are called "*dissenting ones [who] claim that the co-workers are trying to centralize control...*" However, in the final version, this sentence has been modified to read, "*The dissenting ones claim that the co-workers are trying...*" The supporting quotes from the Great Lakes brothers' letters (in the draft) have been eliminated. The net result is "the Great Lakes brothers" aren't targeted in the final published version. Rather, only individuals, "Titus Chu and certain of his co-workers," are labelled as divisive, worthy of quarantine. Evidently the 100 "Great Lakes brothers" are "off the hook"!

Moreover, the authors' now draw a distinction⁵ between the rejection of Titus' (and his defenders') "different teachings and dissenting views" and the "*rejection of the 'Great Lakes brothers' and of all churches in that area.*"⁵ On one hand, the final published version may convey the impression that the "blended co-workers" have no problem with "the Great Lakes brothers" who wrote them four letters. On the other hand, however, the draft version proves **the authors are willing to label "the Great Lakes brothers" as "dissenters" who make "false accusations" about the co-workers and/or hold "different teachings."** Moreover, (in the draft) **the authors allege the Great Lakes brothers "deny that there should be a leadership in the work, claiming that the groups of workers are independent."** So, which impression represents fact and which facade?

This leads us to ask—Do the authors' of "Different Teachings..." (both versions) really have no issues with the Great Lakes brothers? Should we believe the authors⁶ are not rejecting, labelling or accusing the Great Lakes area brothers of being dissenters? (as suggested by their omission from the final version.) Or (based on the draft, inadvertently released) should we conclude the "blended co-workers" have serious issues with the Great Lakes brothers? We leave the answers to the reader.

Nigel Tomes
October, 2006

NOTES:

1. The article was originally posted (without the title page indicating the author) on "lastadam.com" as a *Word* document. It was later replaced by a pdf. file. According to the "properties" of the original *Word* document, the author is "Bill Buntain;" the "company" is "DCP" i.e. LSM's "Defense & Confirmation Project." Brothers Bill Buntain & Dan Sady work on LSM's DCP venture under the leadership of Dan Towle (one of the "blended co-workers"). Based upon this we say it "appears to originate from LSM's Defense & Confirmation Project."
 2. The document, "The Different Teachings and False Accusations of the Dissenters," appears on "lastadam.com" in both outline form and full-text version. Clearly they are alternate versions of the same document. However, in some cases, the exact wording of the outline embodied into the full-text version differs from that in the outline (only) version. This is a case in point. Outline Point IIB "*Accusing the Co-workers of Conspiring to carry out Centralized Control*" corresponds to Point B2 in the full-text version: "*Accusing the Co-workers of trying to Centralize Control.*" The quotes from the Great Lakes brothers' letters, referred to below, appear under this heading and belong to this point.
 3. The only use of the word, "conspiracy" occurs when the Great Lakes brothers refute the concept that **they** are involved in the "Grand Conspiracy": "*In case you are also tempted to allege any link between ourselves and brothers John Ingalls, Bill Mallon, John So, etc. we want to reassure you that there is no "grand conspiracy" and no "fermentation" involving ourselves and the brothers associated with the 1980's "turmoil." Neither are we "acting in concert" with others. Any "conspiracy theory," alleging such a link is **strictly** "theory"—a fiction produced in the minds of its inventors.*" (Great Lakes Brothers, Feb. 28, 2006) Clearly this is not an accusation of others. It is rather a defense against a possible misconception of the Great Lakes brothers' own actions.
 4. The final version is entitled, "Different Teachings and Dissenting Views of Titus Chu and certain of His Co-workers." (Defense & Confirmation Project, Oct. 8, 2006, 18 pages)
 5. Footnote 1 of the final version says, "Some...defending Titus Chu try to create the impression that the rejection of their different teachings and dissenting views is a rejection of "the Great Lakes brothers" and of all the churches in that area. **This is not true.**" (emphasis added). Hence the authors wish to distinguish between [1] "the rejection of (Titus defenders') different teachings and dissenting views" and [2] "a rejection of "the Great Lakes brothers" and of all the churches in that area."

We respond that the authors of "Different Teachings..." seem to try to create the impression that they are rejecting the "different teachings of Titus and certain of his co-workers" and **yet, not rejecting** the "Great Lakes brothers" and their views. Based on the contents of both versions of "Different Teachings...," we ask: is this true? Or is this merely the authors' posturing?
 6. The document, "Different Teachings..." produced by DCP (headed by Dan Towle) was presented at LSM's International Elders' Training, led by the "blended co-workers." The printed materials (which fall under LSM's one publication policy) were distributed to participants. These facts imply that the authors' attempts to distinguish between LSM, and the "blended co-workers" are mere posturing. The same brothers (or sub-sets) are "changing hats" to represent LSM, DCP or the "blended co-workers" at their convenience.
- DCP We assume the final version represents the views of all the "blended co-workers" and the draft represents the views of at least some (and possibly all) of the "blended co-workers."