

## "If One Publication is causing Division, How Many Publications will create Oneness?" —A Rejoinder to Bro. Benson Phillips

"If One Publication is causing division, how many publications will create oneness?" This rhetorical question was posed by Benson Phillips<sup>1</sup>—President of Living Stream Ministry (LSM) and a leader among the "blended co-workers"—at the Thanksgiving conference in Washington DC. Addressing the current situation in the recovery, he claimed the practice of "One Publication" was "under attack." In this context, 'One Publication,' means only LSM materials are authorized for use in the local churches.<sup>2</sup>

According to Benson, a brother told others: "*The problem in the US is that 'one publication' is causing division.*" The response—"If one publication is causing division, how many publications will create oneness?"<sup>3</sup>—was quoted by Benson with evident approval. Let's briefly examine this assertion. Brother Benson's view could be expressed as: "*One publication preserves the oneness; many publications destroy the oneness.*"<sup>4</sup> But, is this statement true? Is it Scriptural? Is it according to the Apostles' teaching? Or is this merely a novel idea, an extra-biblical teaching, propounded by the "blended co-workers"? Is this the latest slogan in the recovery?

### "One publication preserves the oneness"—True or False?

Compared to the Scriptures this assertion is curious. However, this is the "blended co-workers'" contention.<sup>5</sup> Yet, where does the New Testament relate the believers' oneness to one publication? What kind of "oneness" is this? Believers already possess the "oneness of the Spirit," they only need to keep it (Eph. 4:3). Moreover, that oneness consists of the "seven ones," enumerated in Ephesians 4:4-6. 'One publication' is not included. Watchman Nee called these "seven ones," "*the minimum and the maximum requirements that can be made of any person who professes to be a fellow believer.*"<sup>6</sup> If the "seven ones" are the "maximum requirements," nothing should be added, including 'one publication.' Hence, adding 'one publication' is a direct contradiction of both the Scriptures and Brother Nee's teaching.

The uncompromising imposition of 'one publication' doesn't produce oneness. It produces uniformity. In Washington DC., Brother Benson proclaimed he hated the word, "uniformity." We ask: Does he have an equal abhorrence for uniformity itself? Elsewhere, he dismissed such concerns, saying "*Forget about uniformity; we do not have uniformity.*"<sup>7</sup> Watchman Nee warned against efforts to unify the churches.<sup>8</sup>

### Can 'One Publication' create Division?

Brother Benson ridiculed the notion one publication could create division, saying "*One publication isn't destroying anything.*" He seems oblivious to any causal link. However, over the past 18-months, we have repeatedly called his attention to his own words: "*If we are special and insist on anything other than the common faith, the oneness will surely be damaged, and divisions will occur.*"<sup>9</sup> No response has been forthcoming. Today, these words (which echo Brother Lee's speaking<sup>10</sup>) are particularly poignant. Despite repeated warnings, the "blended co-workers" continue to insist on one publication, something other than the common faith. As a result, Brother Benson's prophetic warning—"the oneness will surely be damaged, and divisions will occur"—are now being fulfilled. To the query—"Can 'One Publication' create division?" We answer, unequivocally—Yes. It can and it currently is producing division in the Lord's recovery.

### Must Many Publications Produce Division?

The rhetorical question—"How Many Publications will create Oneness?"—implicitly assumes many publications necessarily produce division? Is that true?—No. The New Testament itself testifies to this. It is a compilation of publications authored by many writers. Paul's 14 epistles were published; Peter's letters were published; John's writings were published. Did these "multiple publications" (by different apostles) cause division? No! Luke, Mark, Matthew and John each wrote their gospels. They were published—did that "cause division"? No! Benson's implicit assumption—many publications cause division—does not follow. We don't see this in the Bible. The question—"If One Publication is causing division, how many publications will create oneness?"—embodies a false dichotomy and is based upon false assumptions. The converse statement—"One publication preserves the oneness; many publications destroy it."—is equally flawed.

## Psychological Projection?

Lastly, I take strong exception to Brother Benson's attempt to impugn the motives of those who oppose 'one publication.' At the conclusion of the Washington, DC., conference, he said,<sup>11</sup> *"Why do they oppose 'one publication'? They want to put out their speaking. One publication limits them. They want to kill the boldness of all the brothers speaking what has already been spoken (by Brother Lee)"* Let me state categorically: We have no problem with brothers who have a burden to re-speak what Brother Lee ministered. If they have that burden, please go ahead and do it. However, we repudiate and reject as utterly false the claim that we *"want to kill the boldness of all the [blending] brothers speaking..."* We ask: How can Brother Benson claim such unfailing insight into others' motives? Could this perhaps be a case of "psychological projection"<sup>12</sup>—"the tendency to ascribe to others feelings, thoughts, or attitudes present in oneself?" When saying this, is Brother Benson perhaps attributing to others what he is trying to do? Who is "trying to kill" whom?

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### NOTES:

1. Brother Benson Phillips ministered the fourth message at the International Thanksgiving Conference in Washington, DC, USA, Saturday, Nov. 25, 2006. The audio/video message code is: K06 DCC04. When quoting from spoken messages I have endeavoured to be as accurate as possible. The quotes here may not be exactly 100% word-for-word. Nevertheless, I believe they accurately reflect the sense conveyed.
2. The "blended co-workers" statement, Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery (June 30, 2005), decrees, *"there should be one publication among us."* ("Publication Work..." p. 3) Specifically, it says, *"All the saints and all the churches everywhere should similarly be restricted to one publication in the Lord's recovery"* (ibid, p. 8)]
3. Apparently this dialogue occurred in mainland China, presumably in Chinese. Hence the English translation could be rendered in a variety of ways. In his message, Brother Benson uttered this statement in a few different forms: "OK, If one publication is causing division, how many publications will it take to cause the oneness?" and "If one publication is destroying the oneness, how many publications will create the oneness?" For our present purposes we shall treat these statements as equivalent to one another.
4. Benson ridiculed the idea that 'One Publication' could cause problems, saying, *"One publication doesn't destroy anything!"* Rather, according to the "blended co-workers," 'one publication' testifies to our oneness and preserves the practical oneness of the local churches.[see Publication Work in the Lord's Recovery (June 30, 2005)]
5. The rationale offered by the "blended co-workers" in "Publication Work..." is *"The one publication is not only a testimony of our oneness in the Body...Without one publication, there is no way to preserve the integrity of the Lord's ministry among us, which is crucial to the practical oneness among the local churches."* (p. 1)
6. Watchman Nee, Normal Christian Church Life, p. 78.
7. The statement in context was: *"Do not say that you are standing against uniformity and that you cannot agree with such a thing. **Forget about uniformity; we do not have uniformity.**"* [The Ministry, v. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 37]
8. For example, he said, *"The churches have their local situations, and there is no way we can unify their conditions. This problem also existed at the time of Paul. The more sectarian a group is, the more uniform its members are. But the more a local church is according to God's standard, the less uniform it will be. If the churches are churches at all, they are different from locality to locality. ...Paul was a great servant of the Lord, yet even he could not unify all the churches."* [W. Nee, Spiritual Judgment... p. 161]
9. Benson Phillips Preface to W Lee, Speciality, Generality & Practicality of the Church-Life
10. *"We all have to learn that to keep the oneness of the Body we must practice this generality. **If we are special, if we are definite and specific in anything other than our faith, surely the oneness will be damaged.** The oneness will be hurt and **then we will be divided.** The main cause for the divisions among Christians is the neglect of caring for the generality of the church life."* (W. Lee, Speciality, Generality & Practicality of the Church-Life, Chp. 4)
11. Brother Benson Phillips gave a concluding word at the International Thanksgiving Conference in Washington, DC, USA, Lord's day, Nov. 26, 2006. The audio/video message code is: K06 DCC06
12. The Lord's word: *"And why do you look at the splinter which is in your brother's eye, but the beam in your eye you do not consider?"* (Matt. 7:3) is related to "psychological projection."