

LSM's Treatment of Harvest House & Toronto— Why the Double Standard?

LSM's Strenuous Efforts to Fellowship with Harvest House

In their litigation with Harvest House, LSM¹ reports² that they resorted to the law-courts only after strenuous efforts at resolution failed. LSM claims they followed the biblical procedures outlined in Matthew 18. Their account reads,⁴ *"The Christian steps to resolve an unrighteous situation with brothers is described in Matthew 18:15-17. In accordance with this word, we wrote repeatedly to Harvest House Publishers and their authors.... We also asked repeatedly to meet with them in an attempt to resolve the matter."* LSM elaborates saying,⁵ *"we wrote six letters over an 11 month period to Harvest House and their authors"* and *"We also left phone messages for one of the authors of the book to see if we could meet."* Summarizing, LSM says, *"we continued to communicate in good faith to bring about dialogue..."*

Concerning LSM's repeated attempts to initiate dialogue, DCP president, Dan Towle and Chris Wilde, LSM media spokesman, are on record in Christianity Today, saying,⁶ *"Prior to litigation and over the last five years, we have tried repeatedly to meet with the authors and publisher to resolve the matter in a biblical way."* They stress their laborious efforts to resolve the dispute by *"bring[ing] about dialogue,"* before resorting to legal measures. If we accept these claims at face value, this is commendable.

The "Blended Co-workers'" Failure to Resolve Differences Biblically

The "blended co-workers" assert they⁶ *"tried repeatedly to resolve the matter [with Harvest House] in a biblical way."* This stands in stark contrast with their treatment of the Church in Toronto.

Recently, differences between LSM and the Church in Toronto have come to light.⁷ LSM's "blended co-workers" called for the quarantine of "Titus Chu and certain of his co-workers," including Nigel Tomes. The Church in Toronto through its Review Committee rejected that call. What was LSM's reaction? Was it to ask repeatedly or write 6 letters, as they did with Harvest House? No! LSM's response was to send a succession of "blended co-workers" to the Toronto area to conduct "Vital Living trainings." Brothers Minoru Chen, Bob Danker, Albert Lim, Ron Kangas and Benson Phillips came to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) with an *entourage* of supporters in an effort to influence the saints. Did they fellowship with the Toronto eldership prior to launching their campaign in the GTA? No! While LSM's "blended co-workers" were in the Toronto area did they open a dialogue⁸ with Toronto's eldership? No! Clearly, they failed to employ the same standards to Toronto as they applied to Harvest House.

The contrast between LSM's treatment of Harvest House and the Toronto Church is striking when compared to their alleged "offences." LSM charged that by including them in the Encyclopedia of Cults, Harvest House had impugned the recovery's reputation by its (allegedly) defamatory and libellous accusations of illegal and immoral activities like⁹ murder, rape, beating disciples, drug smuggling and of being a 'cult.' If true, this is indeed serious. What about the Church in Toronto? What have they done to "offend" LSM's "blended co-workers"? They have rejected LSM's call for 'One Publication,' and refused to quarantine Titus and his co-workers. The Church here wasn't subservient to LSM's directives. Surely these "infractions" pale in comparison to the "major crimes" of which Harvest House stands accused. Yet LSM's attempts at reconciliation with the Church here are miniscule compared with its efforts to resolve differences with Harvest House. LSM has "gone the extra mile" with Harvest House. They haven't yielded a single inch with Toronto. Why the double standard?

Just prior the Toronto Review Committee's decision, LSM-president, Benson Philips wrote to the Toronto elders warning that *"The stand by all the elders in the church at this time will be remembered by the Lord at the judgment seat of Christ."* He continued: *"May you follow Him in this matter 100 percent, whatever you feel led to do."* The Toronto eldership felt led of the Lord to reject LSM's call for quarantine, for reasons stated in their "Determination and Recommendation." Did the "blended co-workers" respect Toronto's elders' decision to "follow Christ 100 per cent" as they felt "led to do" by the Lord? Or have they tried their uttermost to undermine that decision? The facts speak for themselves. Since Toronto's Determination, LSM's "blended co-workers" have visited to the Toronto area many times. However they have not sought out fellowship with the Toronto's eldership. Rather they have bypassed the elders and sought to directly address the Toronto saints. The "blended co-workers'" recent public speaking, both to general audiences in the recovery and to the Toronto saints specifically, appears aimed at undermining the Toronto eldership and destabilizing the situation in Toronto.

LSM's Attack Articles

The divergence between the Church and LSM became evident⁷ a few months ago. Since then, did LSM seek to *"communicate in good faith to bring about dialogue"*? No! Instead LSM launched an Internet attack on the Church. Simultaneous with the "blended brothers'" trainings in the GTA, LSM instigated an "Internet offensive." Articles appeared on the LSM-affiliated website, "AFaithfulWord," entitled, *"Has the Truth Changed or Have the Metro-Toronto Elders Changed?"* To date this series amounts to 12,500 words—25 pages of serious accusations. For the past month all the new articles on this website have been devoted exclusively to attacking Toronto. They charge the Toronto elders with,¹⁰ *"rejecting the testimonies of elders and co-workers...throughout the earth,"* exercising *"their own preference and feeling,"* rejecting *"the principle of the One Body,"* *"taking a different direction,"* *"straying from the path,"* *"deviating from the practice in the Lord's recovery,"* and *"cutting themselves off from the fellowship of all of the churches."* May we ask: Is this how LSM *"resolves the matter in a biblical way"*? Instead of applying scriptural principles, LSM has adopted the political strategy of "attack ads"! Now we have the equivalent of "attack ads" in the Lord's recovery--LSM's "Attack Articles," aimed at the Church in Toronto.

Some might inquire, "Prior to these Internet articles being posted, did the DCP-LSM-writers contact Toronto's elders?" We answer unequivocally--No! There were no "six letters", no multiple phone messages, in LSM's and DCP's dealings with Toronto. Where are their attempts to resolve this problem through biblical means? Whatever contact there has been is limited to third-party contact, mere token gestures on LSM's part, with further dialogue made conditional on fulfilling LSM's demands.

Why the Double Standard?

Isn't this a double standard? Externally, in dealing with Christian publishers, LSM reportedly goes to great lengths to apply the Scriptural principles of Matthew 18. However, internally, in relation to local churches within the recovery (e.g. Toronto) these biblical principles are jettisoned. Rather, the churches' unquestioned obedience to LSM is demanded. In Toronto's recent experience, failure to comply has resulted in severe retribution in the form of unrelenting attacks. Why this double standard? Why don't LSM's "blended co-workers" make the same kind of effort to resolve differences with local churches as they did with Harvest House? Why aren't the same scriptural principles applied by LSM-DCP in both spheres? It's time LSM's "blended co-workers," in their dealings with Toronto, sought to *"resolve the matter in a biblical way."* Are we asking too much?

On behalf of the Toronto Eldership

February, 2007

NOTES:

1. The litigation was filed by "The Local Church" (an association,) LSM and approx. 100 local churches. For brevity we refer to all these parties under the rubric "LSM." LSM-President and "blended co-worker", Benson Phillips has sought to distinguish between LSM, DCP and the "blended co-workers." However the close links between these entities are public knowledge. Here we simply use the term, "LSM" as a short-form to refer to the LSM, DCP, "blended co-workers" nexus.
2. Here we question neither the veracity nor the sincerity of LSM's reported efforts at reconciliation with Harvest House. In the present context we take the reports at face value and proceed to contrast LSM's treatment of Harvest House with its current treatment of the Church in Toronto.
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4. "Is Our Appeal to the Courts in Accordance with Scripture?" www.contendingforthefait.com/libel-litigations/harvest-house-et-al/scriptural.html
5. These phrases, emphasizing LSM's repeated efforts appear in the paragraph: "Following the inclusion of the Local Church and LSM in Encyclopedia of Cults... we wrote six letters over an 11 month period to Harvest House and their authors to point out the errors of ECNR with respect to us, and to ask for an opportunity to meet with them in-person to bring about a peaceful resolution. We also left phone messages for one of the authors of the book to see if we could meet. Each and every request was either turned down or ignored. Instead of agreeing to meet together to resolve the issue in a Christian manner, the publisher responded to our first letter through their attorney. Finally, in response to a request for even more information, we submitted a 23-page letter detailing our concerns. As we continued to communicate in good faith to bring about dialogue..." ["Facts about Pending Litigation against Harvest House Publishers..." www.contendingforthefait.com/libel-litigations/harvest-house-et-al/facts.html]
6. Dan Towle & Chris Wilde, Christianity Today, May, 2006, p. 15
7. The divergence in views between LSM's "Blended co-workers" and the Church in Toronto became evident with the publication of Toronto's "Determination & Recommendation" (Nov. 2006) rejecting LSM's call to quarantine Titus Chu, Nigel Tomes and other co-workers. Here we focus on the (lack of) communication since that time (i.e. during the last 3 months.) This time interval (Dec. 2006 – Feb. 2007) also covers the "blended co-workers" flurry of activity in visiting the GTA and LSM's Internet attacks on Toronto's eldership.
8. When Brother Benson Phillips came to the GTA recently for LSM's "Vital Living Training", 2 elders expressed their willingness (via a third party) to have fellowship. This offer was not accepted by Benson. His response was to direct the 2 elders to come together with two brothers Y & Z. Thus Benson Phillips rejected the 2 Toronto elders' offer of fellowship, making further dialogue conditional on fulfilling certain demands.
9. See for example: "Why Are We Continuing the Present Litigation?" <http://www.contendingforthefait.com/libel-litigations/harvest-house-et-al/index.html#WhyContinue>
10. The LSM-brothers charge the Toronto elders with, "*rejecting the testimonies of elders and co-workers from Korea, Taiwan, China, Singapore, Malaysia, Ghana, and the United States.*" They immediately ask, "*Do they [the Toronto elders] assert that they have certain knowledge that these reports from the churches and the co-workers throughout the earth are false?*" For brevity we combine these two statements into one. LSM's "Attack Articles" entitled, "**Has the Truth changed or Have the Metro-Toronto Elders?**" appear on the LSM-affiliated website, AFaithfulWord.org. Part 1 was posted Jan. 22, 2007; Part 2 on Jan. 30, 2007 and Part 3 on Feb. 2, 2007, plus a supplement (part 4?) Feb. 25, 2007. To date 12,500 words (approx. 25-pages) of material have been devoted to this theme.