

EXHIBIT B to
APPENDIX TO LETTER TO MR. ROBERT C. HAWKINS

ECNR's Specific Misrepresentations Concerning the Local Churches

When directly referred to in ECNR, the Local Church is described in terms that make it easy for people to readily identify us (i.e. "The Local Church; Living Stream Ministry," "Witness Lee and Watchman Nee," and "Kerry Robichaux"). At the same time ECNR misrepresents our beliefs and practices in every regard in order to force us into its mold of what a cult is and defame us.

The first point we ask you to consider here is the specific language, including quotes out of context from our materials, characterizing us in the chapter on the Local Churches and elsewhere in the book as a cult. What is said about us is not merely inaccurate. It appears to be intentionally designed to force us into the book's portrayal of a cult and to make us unrecognizable as Christians.

The points in this Exhibit are not an exhaustive treatment, but they demonstrate both ECNR's inaccuracies and its pattern of deliberate misrepresentation concerning both our beliefs and practices. In fact, in every point regarding us ECNR contains misrepresentations of our beliefs. For example: terms are attributed to us that we do not use (e.g. "To build God a body," "the only true church," "The Trinity was 'assumed'"), and beliefs are attributed to us that we do not hold (e.g. "occult," "[r]ejecting" "Christians" or "true believers," "[m]odalism," "unorthodox views," "created man...required redemption," "new revelations," "seem to be annihilated," etc.). In some cases, scriptural terms that we use (e.g. "revelation," "Lord Spirit," "dead letter") are placed heretically out of context to make us fit into ECNR's mold of occultic, spiritistic, and horrific cultism. Our morality is even impugned directly, and in every case our faith is unfairly rendered unrecognizable as being Christian.

Our true beliefs and practices are not hard to discover. In ECNR, under the subheading "How to Find Information on Any Religious Group, Philosophy or Subject," the authors commend the reader to: "The Institute for The Study of American Religions – This is headed by Dr. J. Gordon Melton, author of the standard work, The Encyclopedia of American Religions (see ECNR p. XI)." Dr. Melton's Encyclopedia lists the Local Church as belonging to the "Independent Fundamentalist Family," a grouping with a perspective that may not be unlike that espoused at times by Mr. Ankerberg (see Chapter 12 of Dr. Melton's Encyclopedia). On page 524 of the Encyclopedia, Dr. Melton describes our beliefs as follows:

Beliefs: The local churches follow the teachings found in the voluminous writings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. A convenient summary is found in a booklet, "The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches" (reprinted in The Encyclopedia of American Religions: Creeds). The statement professes a belief in fundamental Christianity, similar to that of the Plymouth Brethren, and affirms belief in the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth of Jesus, the substitutionary atonement, the resurrection of Jesus, His second coming, and the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

The above referenced booklet, The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches, can be found at www.contendingforthefaith.com/summary/booklets/beliefs.html and was first published in 1978. Dr. Melton has also published An Open Letter Concerning the Local Church, Witness Lee and The God-Men Controversy, attached as Exhibit F and available at: www.contendingforthefaith.com/summary/open.html).

Dr. Edwin S. Gaustad is Emeritus Professor of history at the University of California, Riverside, with a special interest in the history of American religion. After his research and study of the teachings of Witness Lee and the churches, he wrote:

The beliefs and practices of the Local Church constitute one more variation of emphases and themes familiar in Christian history. From my observation, I conclude that the Local Church stands in the tradition of evangelical Christianity, of the Protestant emphasis on biblical authority, of the great Christian mystics' and pietists' concern for the inner life, of the millennia-old expectation of a New Age, and of born-again, experiential religion. (Exhibit G, The Experts Speak Concerning Witness Lee and The Local Church, p. 200)

You have apparently avoided an investigation and/or disregarded the publicly available writings and the hundreds of books that set forth the actual beliefs and teachings of the Local Churches. For a start, we refer you to The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches and the article by Dr. Edwin Gaustad (Emeritus Professor of History at U.C. Riverside), to Dr. Gordon Melton's Encyclopedia of American Religions, and to the volumes of Witness Lee's Life Study -- The Conclusion of the New Testament to help you begin a genuine scholastic investigation of his teachings. They undercut ECNR's misrepresentation of us. The following treatment of ECNR's chapter, "The Local Church," should be sufficient to illustrate not only the inaccuracy of the charges made but that a deliberate attempt appears to have been made to misrepresent the Local Church. The contents of that chapter are addressed in the following exhibits under three sections: Misrepresentations in "Info at a Glance," Quotation Abuse, and Distortions in "Doctrinal Summary."

MISREPRESENTATIONS In "Info at a Glance"

Misrepresentation No. 1: "Name: The Local Church; Living Stream Ministry."

Fact: Living Stream Ministry, Kerry Robichaux, the family of Witness Lee, and all the Local Churches with their members and leadership are identified through this chapter as being associated with the intolerable evils discussed in the Introduction and Doctrinal Appendix. This itself is a gross misrepresentation of the "The Local Church."

Misrepresentation No. 2: "Purpose: To build God a body."

Fact: The authors mischaracterize the purpose of the Local Churches by creating a non-biblical term, which is not used by us and gives rise to strange connotations. We stress that the goal of the New Testament ministry is "unto the building up the Body of Christ," as revealed in Ephesians 4:12, and that it "causes the growth of the Body unto the building up of itself in love," as revealed in verse 16 of the same chapter. The Body of Christ is composed of every blood-washed, Spirit-regenerated believer. Our wording for our purpose, which we adopt from the New Testament, should not sound strange to Christians including yourself. In The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches, we identify that "Our Mission" is:

1. To preach the gospel of grace and of the kingdom to sinners that they may be saved.
2. To minister the life supply to believers that they may grow in Christ.
3. To establish the church in each city that the believers may become a local corporate expression of Christ in practicality.
4. To release the living and rich word of God from the Holy Scriptures that the believers may be nourished to grow and mature.
5. To build up the Body of Christ so that the Bride may be prepared for the coming back of Christ as the Bridegroom.

Notice that the term used in point 5 above is the scriptural thought "to build up the Body of Christ" and not the strange sounding "To build God a body."

Misrepresentation No. 3: “Founder: Witness Lee (The Local Church claim Watchman Nee as their founder).”

Fact: In the context of the rest of ECNR, this section implies that whatever “founders” named are shamanists. This misrepresentation is later strengthened by two quotes taken out of context from *How to Meet*, and by references to “revelations,” “mystical approach” and “new revelation” as those terms are used in ECNR. In addition, the statement that we “claim” Watchman Nee as our “founder” implies both deception and evil as explained in the “Introduction” of ECNR. It is also an obvious attempt to disassociate us from Watchman Nee, a popular Christian writer published by Living Stream Ministry.

Watchman Nee, Witness Lee, and other ministers of God’s Word among us, emphasize in their ministry that their teaching relies on and “stands on the shoulders” of the Christian teachers who went before them. They did not “found” a “new religion” based on extra-biblical “revelations” as portrayed in ECNR.

Misrepresentation No. 4: “Source of authority: Witness Lee; individual revelations; Watchman Nee.”

Fact: The “Source of Authority” section does not mention the Bible, which is our unique source of authority for teaching, nor the God of the Bible who is the only true source of authority. Neither does it mention the many other Christian writers (in addition to Witness Lee and Watchman Nee) whom we appreciate and whose books we recommend. This misrepresentation, that we put the source of authority in one or two individuals, is used to imply that we are a dangerous authoritarian cult. It also shows that the authors do not understand the relationship the more prominent Bible teachers among us have to the churches and their members. The claim that “individual revelations” are given authority is also not accurate; we look to the Bible as the sole authority of any and all teachings (see below).

Misrepresentation No. 5: “Revealed teachings: Yes.”

Fact: We do not hold any teachings except those revealed in the Bible. In the context of ECNR, however, “revealed teachings” means receiving evil spirits’ influences and revelations. We believe in the Bible and its revelation of an incarnated, crucified, resurrected, ascended and enthroned Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Under the topic “Our Belief,” The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches states: “We believe that the Holy Bible is the complete divine revelation verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit.” Then, under “Concerning the Christian Life” a further explanation is provided:

“The Word of God: The Bible occupies a very important place in our Christian life. All those in the local churches are encouraged to read the Word in a regular way, even to read it through once a year. We read the Word, we study the Word, and we take the Word by prayer as spiritual food. All teachings, inspirations, and guidance which claim the Holy Spirit as their source must be checked by God’s revelation in His Word.”

The Local Churches’ and Witness Lee’s reliance on the Bible as the source of all teaching and revelation is covered in some detail by Dr. Melton in Exhibit F.

Misrepresentation No. 6: “Claim: To be the only true church that God is satisfied with.”

Fact: We do not make this claim. In saying we are the church in a city, we are saying that we, including – not excluding – all the believers in that city, regardless of their conviction or practice regarding the church, are members of the one Body of Christ and that we are standing on that basis to meet as that church. Our meetings are open to and for all believers: we receive believers on the basis of God’s receiving of them (Romans 14). We do not forbid or exclude the participation of any believers, regardless of their doctrinal preferences (except for teachings or practices that are sinful, idolatrous or divisive). While we do not believe denominationalism is a scriptural practice, neither do we teach that to simply meet according to the scriptural principle of one church in one city “satisfie[s] God.” We also recognize that other Christian groups may be more faithful to the Lord, more spiritual, and/or more scriptural in some aspects than we are. The

above charge is used to imply that we, similar to the Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses, think we are the only real Christians. This, in fact, is not the case. For a more thorough explanation of our stand regarding the church and all believers, see the many publications on this subject by Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, including The Speciality, Generality, and Practicality of the Church Life by Witness Lee.

Misrepresentation No. 7: “Examples of occult potential: Whatever might exist would probably originate in the mystical approach and claims of new revelation. Lee, however, was not very supportive of supernatural experiences.”

Fact: The words “Whatever might” lead us to assume the authors have no evidence of the occult in the Local Churches, and to wonder: if the authors do not know of such an evil why would they speculate? This is a backhanded method to smear our name with evil associations without requiring the authors to provide supporting evidence. The words “not very supportive” carry the implication Mr. Lee was “somewhat supportive” which was not true. The authors’ attempt to link us to evil spirits by using the terms: “individual revelations,” “Revealed teachings: Yes,” “Examples of occult potential: Whatever might exist would probably originate in the mystical approach and claims of new revelation,” “new revelations,” and the quotes from page 31 and 112-113 of How to Meet. ECNR further states on page 708 that “All the groups discussed in this volume accept occult powers.” The damage from creating such associations is seen on page 714: “From this reality flows a number of other concerns: idolatry, spiritual deception, the possibility of possession, psychological and physical harm and the immoral, ethically consequential teachings that inevitably accompany demonic involvement or revelations.”

These associations are also very damaging to us since no fundamental or evangelical Christian wants to be associated with anyone or any group where the occult “might exist.” We do not teach or practice anything of the occult, but teach strongly that the Lord Jesus, as a man, defeated Satan on the cross and that by His precious blood shed on the cross He purchased us to God. We reject all occult practices, powers, teachings, revelations and associations.

Misrepresentation No. 8: “Key literature: The books of Witness Lee and Watchman Nee.”

Fact: While we highly regard the scriptural ministry of these two men, this statement puts us in a false light. It is false because it obscures the fact that the Bible is primary in all our teaching and is the “key” writing used in our churches. The statement is also false because it fails to point out that the books and messages of many other Bible teachers are also highly valued by our church members.

Misrepresentation No. 9: “Attitude toward Christianity: Rejecting. (When Lee refers to “Christians” or even “religion,” he is generally referring to true believers.)”

Fact: This statement relies on a gross misrepresentation of what we mean by “Christianity,” and is diametrically opposed to our true belief. In certain discussions, we (as do many others) use the term “Christianity” to refer to unscriptural practices and organizational systems inherited from Judaism or Catholicism and yet practiced at times in Protestant churches. However, we never use “Christianity” to refer to and reject any Christian believers (regardless of their church practice). ECNR misrepresents us by changing the meaning of “Christianity” to mean “Christians” and “true believers,” rather than limiting our critique to the unscriptural man-made systems.

This misrepresentation is compounded by the insertion of “[Christianity]” in the quote taken from page 157 of Christ vs. Religion and addressed in some detail in Exhibit C “Quotation Abuse....” Interestingly, on page XXX and other places in ECNR, the authors demonstrate and document their own low opinion of “Christianity” as it is widely practiced today. Following are some selections from The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches to further clarify our attitude toward Christianity and toward the believers:

- What is your attitude toward the historic, institutional Christian church?

We stand outside of and apart from historical, organized, institutionalized Christianity because we regard it as a system filled with unscriptural teachings and practices. For the sake of the genuine recovery of the church life revealed in the Bible, we meet together in the Lord's name on the ground of genuine oneness in the locality.

- What is your attitude toward other Christians?

We would like to make it emphatically clear that we neither believe nor teach that one must be in a local church in order to be a genuine Christian. We recognize that in the Roman Catholic Church, in the denominations, and in the independent groups there are many genuine blood-washed, Spirit-regenerated believers in Christ, and we receive them as our brothers and sisters in the Lord. All who have saving faith in the Lord Jesus are welcome to all our meetings, especially the Lord's table, where we testify of the oneness of the Body of Christ. Although we must, for conscience' sake, stand apart from organized religion, we do not stand apart from our brothers and sisters in Christ. In faithfulness to the Lord, we stand on the unique ground of the church for the sake of the Lord's testimony. But we do not take this stand with a narrow, exclusive, or sectarian spirit. On the contrary, we take our stand on behalf of the whole Body; we receive all believers even as the Lord has received us.

The rest of the material in the ECNR chapter on "The Local Church" is addressed in Exhibit C.