

BIBLICALLY TESTING THE SPIRITS
"Part IV: Testing MAJOR Watchman Nee Beliefs With John 1:1-18"
(John 1:1-18)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Recently, a number of us from the Church attended an event in a building belonging to what is nationally called "The Local Church Movement". Its founder, Watchman Nee, died in a Communist prison in China in 1971 for his faith, and his "apostle," Witness Lee carried his teachings to America.

This group **claims** to believe in the **sound** doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation of Jesus, the Virgin Birth of Christ, the Hypostatic (that Jesus is totally God and totally man at the same time) Union of Christ, the Substitutionary Atonement of Christ, the Bodily Resurrection of Christ, the Present High Priestly Ministry of Christ, The Return of Christ, Salvation by Grace Through Faith in Christ, the Verbal Inspiration of the Inerrant Bible in the autograph manuscripts and the Dynamic Spiritual Life. If we were to rest in these **claims** of the group, we would conclude that it is a sound group.

(2) However, following the meeting in this group's building, an Evangelical pastor **besides** me who was **also** at the **same** meeting stoutly **resisted** the post-meeting efforts of this group's leaders to get him to fellowship with them. In fact, this pastor heard of my research on this group's beliefs, and asked for them through a third party so that he could **stand against** the group's beliefs before others!

(3) Though I have **never** talked to this other Evangelical minister about this gathering or this group's beliefs, I have been long uncomfortable at what is **taught** by this group, and increasingly wondered **how** I was going to **reveal** its errors back at Nepaug Church the Sunday after this meeting in a way that would edify!

In the pulpit back here at Church the Sunday after this gathering, I told you as a congregation not to heed the teachings of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee of this "Local Church Movement"!

Well, IF this group CLAIMS to heed all the sound doctrines listed in section "(1)" above, WHY would Pastor Shell and this OTHER visiting Evangelical pastor at the meeting be so INDEPENDENTLY yet SIMILARLY OPPOSED to it?!

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "I thought Watchman Nee's group was SOUND, but if TWO pastors independently think this is NOT so, where is the problem?!"

- I. **We must test ALL beliefs, for there is much error around, 1 Jn. 4:1**
- II. **GOD via Scripture GUIDES the WAY for us to do so (as follows):**
 - A. We must see that a group believes in Christ's Incarnation, that He is the Creator God come in the flesh, 1 John 4:2-3; 1 Cor. 12:3.
 - B. We must see that a group believes salvation is by faith alone in Christ or if it wrongly makes man's merit a means of salvation, Gal. 1:8-9; 3:3
 - C. In viewing errant beliefs, we must examine Scripture with each error:
 1. Paul tells us to be wise in the truth and to stay "unmixed" with error, Rom. 16:17, 19 (Bible Knowledge Com. , N.T., p. 501).
 2. This way God gives us victory over Satan's effort to deceive us, 20.
 3. So as an aid to keep ourselves *unmixed* with **error**, we examine **Scripture WHILE VIEWING each ERRANT view!**
- III. **Accordingly, we identify some MAJOR theological ERRORS of Watchman Nee's "The Local Church Movement" group as follows:**
 - A. Re: Christ's deity, though Watchman Nee's group replaces the Trinity with an ancient heretical form of Unitarianism, and annuls Christ's deity, John 1:1-3, 14 with 17 & 6-8 teach Jesus, as God Incarnate, is a separate **Person "WITH"** the Father, & is **divine** in **contrast** to men!
 1. Watchman Nee's group replaces Trinitarianism with the ancient (circa A. D. 210) Oriental (Unitarian) heresy of Monarchianism:
 - a. First, (1) taking Isaiah 9:6 where Jesus is called the "Everlasting Father", Witness Lee, who was Watchman Nee's "**apostle**" wrote: "[Isa. 9:6]...just as the child is the Mighty God, so in the same way...the Son **is** the Father..." (2) Next, using 2 Cor. 3:17 where the KJV says "The Lord is the Spirit," Lee added: "The Lord Jesus **is** the Father, the Son **and** the Spirit..." ("The Clear Scriptural Revelation Concerning the Triune God", p. 2-5) Thus, the Witness Lee asserts what former **other Oriental** and **heretical** Christians of Monarchianism did in denying multiple Persons in the Godhead (Walker, Hist. of Christ. Ch., p. 68-69)
 - b. However, (1) John 1:1-3 with 14 and 17 reveals Jesus Christ as the Word Incarnate is both God and **separate** from the Father as He was eternally "**WITH**" the Father, cf. John 1:2. (2) As for Isaiah 9:6, the verse **does not** teach Jesus is God the Father as Witness Lee assumes, but that Jesus is the Everlasting Father **figure** to **Israel** (B.K.C., O.T., p. 1053). (3) On 2 Cor. 3:17, the NIV, NASB and KJV all translate

"*pneuma*" as "Spirit", so Nee interpreted the phrase as "the Lord is *the (Holy) Spirit*." We should rather see "*pneuma*" as "spirit" *Being* where Paul contrasts the **living Jesus** with the **lifeless Law** (P. Hughes, 2 Corinthians, New Int. Com., p. 115-117)! Paul is **not** making Jesus out to be the **Person** of the **Holy Spirit** as Nee claimed!

2. Nee's group errantly annuls Christ's deity by upgrading humanity:
 - a. Watchman Nee nullified Christ's deity, writing: "Adam was a superman with abilities at least 'a million times' greater than ours...and 'possessed a hidden ability which made it possible for him to become like God.'" (Nee, The Latent Power of the Soul, p. 15, 18 as cited in the newsletter, The Berean Call, 4/98 by Dave Hunt, author of the book, The Seduction of Christianity).
 - b. However, (1) John 1:6-8 teaches that *though* John the Baptizer was a *godly* man sent *from God* to bear *witness* of the Light Who was Jesus, that John "was **NOT that Light**" in making even the *godly* John a **non-divine** being *unlike* Jesus! (2) Dave Hunt (loc. cit.) responds to Nee's words here, writing: "to become like God" was **Satan's** ambition [Isa. 14:12-14]...Nee agrees with today's **New Agers** and **parapsychologists** that human potential is infinite. That is **not** true."

- B. Regarding salvation, though Nee's group **correctly CLAIMS** salvation is by faith alone in Christ as John 1:12-13 teaches, this group **errantly though UNINTENTIONALLY disallows** it by making Jesus **SIN** on the **cross**! (1) Lee's words in III, A, 1, a above, make the Father **the same PERSON** as Jesus **opposite** what Jesus said on the cross, Matt. 27:46! (2) Thus, Jesus is made out to have **lied**! (3) Well, **had** Jesus **lied**, He would have **sinned**, would thus **not** be God (Heb. 6:18a) and His atonement on the cross would be powerless to save (2 Cor. 5:21). (4) Yet, Jn. 1:1-2 teaches Jesus is a **separate Person from** the Father, making Him tell the **truth** at Matt. 27:46. That leaves Him **righteous** as our **All-sufficient** Savior, so faith in Christ thus **truly saves**!

Lesson Application: We must stand **AGAINST** Watchman Nee's **TEACHINGS** that (1) counter the Trinity and (2) nullify Christ's deity. These stands **ALSO** (3) preserve the doctrine of true salvation that is through Christ. (4) Since 2 John 9-10; Jude 3-4 with Galatians 1:8-9 teach that how we hold to Christ's deity and salvation are doctrines calling for **boundaries** in fellowship, we separate from Nee's group and urge others to leave it, see Rev. 18:4.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

Here is a list of some other errors in Watchman Nee's group:

(1) Watchman Nee, The Spiritual Man, pp. 71-72 (vol. III) wrote: "...many search the Scriptures with their brain, depending upon their own intellectual ability...We should **sincerely reject all truths which are solely mental**, for such knowledge provides Satan with an opportunity to work..." **Correction:** We agree that one must submit to the Spirit's illuminating ministry to discern spiritual truths taught in the Word (1 Cor. 2:10b-16). However, to **reject** truth gained **mentally** rejects the basis of Scriptural authority, for even Jesus taught we understand truth by the rational use of man's mind that discerns the meaning of its letters and words, Mtt. 5:18. Watchman Nee has an errant experiential basis for knowing truth.

(2) Watchman Nee in Further Talks On The Christian Life, p. 60-61, wrote: "In the Bible, some were made **perfect** once they were blessed, but some also were blessed a **second** or **third** time and so touched perfection . . . We preach *both* the doctrine of *perfection* by being blessed once *and* the doctrine of perfection by receiving a *second* blessing." **Correction:** Watchman Nee believes in the eradication of the sin nature contrary to what 1 John 1:8 asserts. Also, he holds to the Charismatic belief of a "second blessing" that we do not heed, for we are **ALREADY** blessed with **EVERY** spiritual blessing in Christ in the heavenlies according to Ephesians 1:3!

(3) In the books, The Normal Christian Life and Further Talks on Church Life, Watchman Nee claimed that his group's apostles can bring God's inspired revelation for today. **Correction:** Deuteronomy 18:21-22 (with Romans 12:6b) declares that if anyone claims to speak God's Scripture revelation today, his words must agree with the revealed canon of Scripture **ALREADY** written. However, we have shown that the beliefs asserted by this group's leaders do not agree with Scripture, so its leaders cannot author new Scriptures. Watchman Nee's claim that they can do so is thus in error! That being so, Deuteronomy 18:21-22 makes such men false prophets!

According to God's Word, we do well to part ways with Watchman Nee's "The Local Church Movement" and educate associates we know who are in the group of its errors!