PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

NEW YORK, LONDON,

AND SHANGHAI

14th October, 1933 to May 4th, 1934

[This is a near-facsimile edition of a printed document relating to the circumstances surrounding the excommunication of Watchman Nee and others in Shanghai by Brethren in London and New York. The person who originally selected, compiled and circulated the correspondence is not named.

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464, EAST 26TH STREET, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.

October 14th, 1933.

To the saints who gather unto the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ at Shanghai BELOVED BRETHREN,

As you in Shanghai, with us in New York, are by profession in the fellowship of God's Son and of His death, as partakers of His supper, we, as before the Lord, think it necessary to communicate with you as to certain recent occurrences which affect you locally as they affect us. The Lord is in the midst of those gathered to His name and helps them to a right understanding and settlement of all difficulties arising among them.

Resident in this city are Dr. S—— and his wife, who, as we understand, have broken bread with you. Both have attended our meetings and we hope they will continue to do so. We are seeking to help them in the truth, although they have not shown definite interest in it so far.

Mr. Nee, as passing through America, had this couple specially on his mind and spent a week-end with them in the country, and on his return to the city we learned from him that he had broken bread with them and one or two others. At the same time our brother told us for the first time that Dr. S—— and his wife had broken bread with you in China. Mr. Nee also confirmed a report which came by cable that he had also broken bread with a company of Christians in London with whom we are not in fellowship. We learned later that this company in London is known as "The Christian Fellowship Centre."

Three brothers here conversed seriously with Mr. Nee as to these proceedings, as there was in them a departure from the principles governing Christian fellowship. The word fellowship, or communion, as used in 1 Corinthians 10, denotes that as partaking of the Lord's supper we are in a common bond: "Because we, being many, are one loaf, one body; for we all partake of that one loaf." Thus what any one in the fellowship does involves all. Indeed the general spirit and teaching of 1 Corinthians 10-12 excludes independent action on the part of any member of the body of Christ, and this applies most seriously to our action that implies association with evil.

Dr. S—— remains identified with the Presbyterian missionary board and receives, we understand, a salary from it; besides, he has broken bread lately, as we learned from Mrs. S——, with the "Christian Alliance." Thus he is associated with sectarianism, clericalism, and other evils of which we need not speak. We recognise that a Christian seeking light, although retaining links with a sectarian system, may be allowed under certain circumstances to break bread with those gathered to the Lord's name. Love would calculate that as tasting the blessedness of the privileges of the assembly he would not return to that in which this is not found. But if he returns to a sect or retains his links with it, his fitness for fellowship ceases. The system he remains with may be clerical, may harbour false teachers or otherwise unclean persons—a sect free of these can hardly be found to-day. He is a partaker, according to 2 John of these evil things. Scripture teaches most definitely that association with what is unclean renders one unclean. "A little leaven," we are told, "leavens the whole lump," 1 Cor. 5: 6; Gal. 5: 9. The types, Lev. 11, etc., etc., teach us that if we eat or touch what is unclean we thereby render ourselves unclean. This instruction is confirmed in 2 Corinthians 6. We are enjoined there: "Wherefore come out from the midst of them and be separate, saith the Lord,

and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you." John's second epistle enforces this teaching, for in it the apostle states that one who greets a man who brings not the doctrine of Christ is a partaker of his wicked works. One partaking of wicked works is surely unclean and hence unfit for Christian fellowship.

No doubt you will see, dear brethren, that a very anomalous situation exists here in relation to Dr. and Mrs. S—. After Mr. Nee left this city we wrote Dr. S—— explaining that until the day Mr. Nee left we had not known that he (Dr. S——) had broken bread in China nor that Mr. Nee had broken bread with him in this country; that had we known it, our attitude towards him would have been different; indeed, we told Mr. Nee that had the S——s been commended by a letter from our brethren in Shanghai we should have received them. That is, we should have honoured the letter, but, of course, could not continue fellowship with Dr. S—— if he retained his links with the mission board. Mr. Nee was aware that Dr. S—— remained with the mission board when he broke bread with him and others here; whereas we in New York cannot break bread with him for the reasons stated above. We believe that Dr. S—— expects to break bread with you in China when he returns there next year as he intimated. He enquired by telephone on a Lord's Day morning for the address of the nearest meeting room, which was given him, but instead of attending our meeting, he went to the "Christian Alliance" people and broke bread with them, as stated before.

We shall be thankful, dear brethren, if you will write us conveying your mind as to these matters. No doubt Mr. Nee will have told you of his experience here—indeed, he intimated to us that he would take counsel with you as to it, and you may have already written; but we deem it due to the Lord and to you as seeking to walk in the light governing the assembly, that we should lay these facts before you, ourselves also seeking to walk as of the assembly, to the end that He who is our Head may guide us to a common judgment; that in frankly communicating mutually, bearing with one another in love, we may keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace

On behalf of those gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus in New York, we are, with warm greetings,

Yours affectionately in Him,

(Signed) JAMES TAYLOR.

A. F. MOORE.

JOHN SMITH.

LONDON, N.W.3.

24th October, 1933.

To the saints gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and meeting at Wen Teh Lee, Hardoon Road, Shanghai.

BELOVED BRETHREN.

We were thankful to God for the opportunity afforded to the brethren on this side of the world to see our brother Mr. Nee, and that through him so many were able to get a personal link with what we rejoice in as a work of God in China. Mr. Nee will have told you how affectionately the brethren received him, and we trust that this has been a cheer to you all, as we were assured by him that it gladdened his heart. It would be a joy to the saints in this country for a brother or brothers, free before the Lord, to visit you all. It was Mr. Nee's mind, however, that the present moment was not quite opportune for such a visit, but we continue to look to the Lord that He may open up the way for it, for this is a desire greatly cherished by some, so that we may be comforted together in our mutual faith, Rom. 1: 12.

Having experienced such distinct cheer in the sense of the work of God among you, we are grieved at having to write upon a matter which is causing the saints in this country (and generally) grave concern. We have learnt since Mr. Nee's departure that towards the end of his visit in England he, on one occasion, broke bread with an independent company of Christians here in London, with whom, for the truth's sake, we are unable to walk in fellowship in the breaking of bread.

Had our brother made enquiry as to the character of this company from his brethren in London, he would have been enlightened as to that which makes identification with them impossible; but no one knew anything of his going there until he had left England, otherwise we should have raised it with him.

The brethren in this country have from time to time had to face the question of fellowship with various independent companies, and on investigation it has become manifest that they are not following the divine principles laid down in 2 Timothy 2: 19-22 as to church fellowship in an evil day. While these companies claim to meet on what they term non-sectarian ground, yet in fact there are those who participate with them and then return to their place in the recognised systems of men, thus disregarding the true ground of Christian fellowship. Likewise in receiving one who is still maintaining links with a sect, they become associated with that sect through the person they receive to participate with them.

However personally pious the individuals composing these companies may be, and we often have no reason to think otherwise, their position will not stand the scrutiny of the light which the Lord has so graciously afforded His people in these last days as set out in 2 Timothy 2:19-22, and does not recognise the truth of fellowship in its local and universal bearing according to 1 Corinthians 1:1,2.

Again, many of these companies assume local names and have but a local status, thus, on the one hand, they deny by their purely local positions the truth of the one body as given in 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4:4; and the particular names adopted, indicating the fellowships to which they belong, stand in strange contrast with the one fellowship of God's Son to which we are called. On investigation you will find what we have stated is true of the company in London with whom Mr. Nee broke bread, who take the name of "The Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre."

Further, we understand from correspondence received from our brethren in New York that Mr. Nee did much the same thing with some believers in America. Doubtless our brother has laid these matters before you, as he assured his brethren in New York that he would do

so, but we feel it due to you that we should state the cause for our concern in this matter. The fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, to which you and we have been called, is the same fellowship all over the world and the principles governing it are the same in every place. It is clear from 1 Corinthians 10:15-18 that being in that fellowship we are bound together, and involve one another in our actions and associations. This is surely enforced and brought home to us every time we put our hands to the loaf, 1 Cor. 10:16.

Owing to the development of evil in the professing church, as prophetically outlined in Revelation 2 and 3, the Lord has afforded in Paul's second epistle to Timothy special light for the overcomer, who, discerning that the public restoration of the professing church is impossible, finds that it is his duty, as calling upon the name of the Lord, to separate himself from iniquity, for only in so doing can the overcomer become a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master. This separation not only involves leaving systems of Christendom, where the Lord's authority and the Holy Spirit's activities are refused, but involves also in many cases the sorrowful separation from true believers who are, alas, content to condone associations which are marked by features morally unsuitable to the Lord. Such, while recognised as belonging to the family of God, can only be viewed as vessels to dishonour, 2 Tim. 2:20. But separating from evil, we are able to follow righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, see 2 Tim. 2:19-22, and this involves the recognition of those already in the path. It is only on these lines that what is proper to the assembly (which is so dear to the heart of Christ, and for which He has given Himself) can be realised by His own in these days; and we can testify humbly that in seeking to be governed by these principles, saints in this and many other countries have proved the Lord's faithfulness in recovering and maintaining the light as to the thoughts of God concerning the assembly, and in enabling them in measure to answer to them. It is to those who keep His word and do not deny His Name that this open door is kept open, see Rev. 3:8.

We could readily understand your grave concern had any brother from this city, for instance, gone to Shanghai, and after breaking bread with you, had identified himself in the breaking of bread with an. independent company in your city with whom you had no fellowship or Christian intercourse. Our dear brother Mr. Coates has written a helpful booklet ("A Letter on the Present Conditions in the Christian Profession and how they affect Christian Fellowship"), enclosed herewith, upon this matter of fellowship, which we thoroughly endorse and commend to the attention of you all. Whilst we would fain receive in the breaking of bread any godly Christians, it is now almost invariably found that such are maintaining links with the sects and missions where the truth is gravely compromised both as to the Person and work of Christ. In former years in this country, when such were received, the foundations of Christianity in this regard were commonly held.

We would assure you that it is only out of a true desire to maintain what is due to the Lord, and to preserve the holy character of the bonds that bind us together, that we bring these matters before you. We shall be glad for them to be brought before our brethren meeting at Shanghai, and we earnestly pray that you all, with our beloved brother Mr. Nee, may come to a true judgment before the Lord as to what is right. It is as the saints seek earnestly to maintain what is due to His name that the affections toward Christ, proper to His assembly, are developed, and that the saints become knit together as standing together in the same testimony of our Lord. We have of course sent a copy of this letter to our brother Mr. Nee. We have written this letter at the request of our brethren in London, who fervently hope to hear from you in due course that you are in agreement with the principles which we have set out in it, endeavouring with us to maintain such principles according to His word until He comes.

With love in Christ to you all,

Affectionately yours in Him,

PERCY LYON.

ALFRED J. GARDINER.

January 27th, 1934.

To the saints who gather unto the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ at Shanghai BELOVED BRETHREN,

We are thankful to have your letter of December 14th,* in which you state that you have been hindered by stress of business in replying to our letter of October 14th.

We are of course satisfied in awaiting your full reply, especially as hoping that through its prolonged delay you may be enabled to arrive at a clear judgment, as before the Lord, of the matters brought to your attention in our letter.

To us, as obliged to deal constantly with matters affecting fellowship, the subject of our letter is very grave, and we are very desirous of learning your mind as to it. Had there been occasion for such a letter as between meetings in this country or Great Britain, the position would be more serious, but we recognise that our brethren in Shanghai have not had the same opportunity of learning the principles intended to govern Christian fellowship as we in America and Europe have had. But several well-instructed brethren visited you, with whom, as in conference; you considered the epistles to the Corinthians and other scriptures which treat of the subject of fellowship; you also have had opportunity to read printed ministry, such as that of Mr. Darby, which enters fully into the great subject of the assembly; then Mr. Nee has visited Great Britain and America, having had much intercourse with his brethren in these countries, and attending many meetings where these great matters were considered as before the Lord and by the guidance of the Spirit: having such advantages, and having the holy Scriptures in your hands, with the Spirit to help you in considering them, you in Shanghai have no doubt made steady progress in the knowledge of these holy things, during the past year or two especially. We are counting on this, dear brethren, and looking to the Lord that your judgment of our letter will be entirely according to truth. May He grant it! For although we have not seen you, except Mr. Nee, we have learned to love you and we desire to walk with you in the fellowship of Christ's death in the bonds of truth and love until He come.

We are writing this letter (which is really supplemental to that of October 14th) more particularly to call your attention to later developments here in connection with Dr. and Mrs. S—— which show the working out of the disregard of right principles mentioned in our letter.

- 1. Dr. and Mrs. S—— told us that they had been regularly breaking bread in fellowship with yourselves in the city (Jientsin) where they were stationed, although they had not severed their connection with the Presbyterian denomination. They also said that others who broke bread in that town had not separated from their denominations.
- 2. Dr. and Mrs. S—— enquired from one of us whether we knew of the Honor Oak Fellowship Centre, and he having replied in the affirmative, Mrs. S—— said Mr. Nee had told them about it, and urged them to become acquainted with Mr. S—— of that fellowship. Mr. Nee also told them, Mrs. S—— said, that he had learned more from Mr. S—— than from anyone.
- 3. Mr. P. Lyon, London, unexpectedly met a person in a railway carriage who belonged to the Honor Oak Fellowship Centre, and among other things this sister told Mr. Lyon that some of their missionaries had gone to China, giving Mr. Nee's address as their address there.
- 4. Dr. and Mrs. S—— are now breaking bread with so-called Open Brethren. They came in and out to our houses for a considerable time, also attended many of our meetings for ministry

^{*} This was a brief acknowledgment,-ED.

and professed to enjoy them much. There is no evidence, therefore, that they forsook us because they could not get help, food, and love among us; the evidence rather is that they knew we could not partake of the Lord's supper with them until they gave up Presbyterianism and functions of a worldly-religious kind. Open Brethren, we know, allow people to break bread with them without breaking such links, and we have assurance that Dr. and Mrs. S—— have not been required to do so.

These facts, dear brethren, show unmistakably that Mr. Nee has pursued a course involving disregard of principles which he has had every means of knowing governed the saints to whose fellowship he and you all in Shanghai committed yourselves when the brethren from England, America, and Australia visited you.

This course of Mr. Nee would have been unknown in these countries were it not that the Lord (as is evident) brought it quite unexpectedly to their attention. We believe the Lord has graciously helped in bringing to light the facts we have mentioned so that you with ourselves might see the issue of wrong principles and that we should judge them at their roots.

What we have brought, and now bring, to your attention is simply Open Brethrenism. Men of God fought against it eighty-five years ago and, God helping them, they preserved the truth of the house of God and the principles of fellowship which govern it. This precious heritage has come down to us and we cannot surrender it.

Besides the things of which we have spoken, Mr. Nee denies the symbolical teaching of the book of Revelation, saying that what are generally regarded as symbols are literal; that the heavenly city, for instance, is a literal city, not a cube in measurement, and that its streets are literal gold, although, as was pointed out to him, gold is said to be corruptible, 1 Pet. 1:18. He also says the saints will not all be taken to be with the Lord when He comes for His own, 1 Thess. 4; that some will go through the tribulation, whereas Scripture says, "we the living who remain shall be caught up together with them (those who had fallen asleep, but are now raised) in the clouds," What makes Mr. Nee's views on prophecy more serious is that he held (as he told one of us) what brethren generally hold, but gave it up. He has in fact given up the truth for error. Mr. Nee also holds that while one who brings not the doctrine of Christ, 2 John, should not be allowed to break bread. Scripture does not teach that one who receives him into his house should be refused fellowship; whereas Scripture says, he partakes in the wicked works of the evil teacher. This view as to 2 John is in keeping with Mr. Nee's statement (to Dr. Elliott) that Mr. Darby should not have left the meeting at Plymouth—that the evil there should have been left with the Lord to deal with, whereas Scripture says, "come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord, and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you," 2 Cor. 6:16, 17.

All these things, as marking one with whom we are in fellowship, are of the gravest concern to us, especially as Mr. Nee is clearly the most influential amongst the saints in China, and has been used to the conversion of many.

We with many of our brethren in this country, Europe, and elsewhere are crying to God night and day that He may grant you at Shanghai and our brethren in the other meetings in China to look into, in His fear and in the light of holy Scripture, those things, and that you may be enabled to be loyal to Christ and your brethren with whom you are in fellowship and stand by the truth at all costs. On behalf of those gathering unto the name of our Lord Jesus Christ at New York, we are, with warm greetings,

Yours affectionately in Him,

(Signed) JAMES TAYLOR. A. F. MOORE. JOHN SMITH.

464, EAST 26TH STREET, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK.

January 27th, 1934.

MR. FAITHFUL LUKE,

BELOVED BROTHER,

It was indeed a pleasure to receive your letter; others and myself have enjoyed reading it, noting therein the brotherly spirit and affection which are in accord with our Lord's injunction: "Love one another." There is also an evidence in it of *love in the truth*, which is of the last importance in our day, when the truth is either being given up or perverted on all sides. The apostle John says of the elect lady and her children and of Gaius: "Whom I love in the truth."

I much appreciate your desire to meet me, and I assure you it would be a pleasure to me and my wife to meet you, and if you are free to come to New York we shall be glad to entertain you. As regards pamphlets, etc., of mine a good few, I believe, were sent to Shanghai last year, which you may have opportunity of seeing; but I shall gladly send you others if you so desire.

That you had left Shanghai was not known to me when I wrote you, but I also sent a copy of the letter to the brethren by Mr. Nee, and he handed it to them. It was no doubt ordered of the Lord that you should also have a copy, especially as you obtained help from it.

Enclosed is a copy of a further letter the brethren here believe should be addressed to our Shanghai brethren. It seems of the Lord that they should have these additional facts as to Mr. Nee's actions here and in London before them. I trust this will be your mind also and that you will be enabled of the Lord to arrive at a judgment according to His mind as to this very important matter.

Your remarks as to the correspondence between the position of the dear brethren in China now and that of brethren in Great Britain and some other countries one hundred years ago call forth my sympathy. The many with you in China are just emerging from heathen darkness and cannot be regarded as seeing all things clearly, Mark 8:25. They deserve therefore the tenderest consideration. But there is this important difference between the brethren in China now and those in Great Britain and other countries one hundred years ago; you—especially Mr, Nee, yourself, and others who speak English—have opportunity of profiting by the experience of those in whom and through whom God wrought during last century.

This is an immense advantage, for the history shows how scriptural principles and human principles have respectively worked out. The latter took root in Plymouth, where clericalism through the example and influence of Mr. B. W. Newton, became established. Mr. J. N. Darby and others withdrew from the meeting there because of this and other evils there; and later deadly evil doctrine against Christ was shown to be held by Mr. Newton.

The brethren in Bethesda Chapel, Bristol, knowing all these sorrowful things, deliberately took the ground of receiving persons coming to Bristol from the meeting in which Mr. Newton was, providing they professed not to hold his evil doctrines—ignoring the solemn statement of Scripture that one receiving into his house or greeting one who brings not the doctrine of Christ is a *partaker of his wicked works*, 2 John 2. Breaking bread with a man expresses *fellowship with him*, and so those who broke bread with Mr. Newton, although they might not actually hold his doctrine, were partakers of his wicked works and so were unfit for Christian fellowship. We are enjoined to "come out from among them and be separated, and touch not the unclean thing," 2 Cor. 6:17. We are to hate the *garment spotted by the flesh*, while seeking to save some with fear, Jude 23. "Garment" would be *surrounding* circumstances, such as human religious organisations, unscriptural principles, false doctrine, etc., etc. Bethesda brethren ignored these solemn divine requirements in receiving from Mr. Newton's meeting, and the leaven involved in this has worked among "Open Brethren" ever since and has spread far and wide.

On the other hand, those who stood loyal to Christ and the principles governing the house of God, especially as to fellowship, refusing Bethesda's principles and conduct, have been steadily blessed of God in a gracious ministry of the Spirit given through and to them—a steady stream through all the years which have elapsed, and it still goes on. The truth as to Christ and the assembly, eternal life, the gospel of the glory of God, the service of God in the assembly, fellowship, and more recently, of the absolute and relative features of the Persons of the Holy Trinity—indeed the whole system of truth—has been coming before the saints with a clearness and definiteness unknown since apostolic days. The evidence of this is of course more apparent to those who have directly profited by the ministry in its continuance through those whom the Holy Spirit used; but anyone who has not had this privilege may readily verify it by examining the written ministry of the period mentioned. What I am writing is no question of boasting in men—God forbid—but of owning and showing what God has done in honouring His own truth and those who, having His commandments, keep them. I am not, of course, ignoring that sorrowful things have happened through human unfaithfulness, but I speak of what God has done in relation to the maintenance of His own principles.

This ministry, with the divine formations more or less in keeping with it in hundreds of gatherings of saints throughout the world, is your heritage, my beloved brother, and that of all the dear brethren in China, as it is ours in Europe and America, and you are obligated to the Lord to embrace it, profit by it, and stand firmly by it, refusing what is not of God until He comes for us all.

Latitude allowed to persons breaking bread to retain their links with human religious organisations, and others of a worldly nature, may give you larger numbers, as is witnessed among "Open Brethren," but it involves the spirit of the world and material unsuited for assembly formation—a state of things that the Lord cannot identify Himself with, and in which the Holy Ghost will not have liberty to operate. 2 Timothy is *especially* the scripture for our day as regulating us in reference to Christendom as it is, and the "seal" there is, "The Lord knows those that are his, and Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity," chap. 2:19. Iniquity is evil, unrighteousness, in various forms; and then there are vessels "to dishonour," v. 22, 20, 21, and these (persons) have also to be separated from. To allow people to break bread until they have thus cleared themselves is to link ourselves on with the evil—for this is the significance of the word fellowship—with which they are linked. The types —important instruction from God—such as Leviticus 11—show that if one *touches* an unclean thing he renders himself unclean.

What you mention as done at Foochow in allowing persons to break bread—some for eight years—who retained their links with the "churches," is certainly not in accord with 2 Timothy 2. Nor was it in keeping with the order of the truth in 1 Corinthians. There fellowship (communion is the same word), chap. 10, comes before the Lord's supper, chap. 11. The former is *exclusive* of what is inconsistent with the death of Christ; the latter is *inclusive* of those that are consistent with it. The principle of Scripture as to these matters is, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well." Isa. 1:16. The principle governing you at Foochow was to get people to do well with the hope that they would cease to do evil. Thus you had some in fellowship with you there for eight years who had not ceased to do evil!

Please pardon so long a letter, but the spirit and tone of your letter encourages me to write freely, and I trust that what I have written will be of service.

With love in Christ to you and the brethren, I am,

Affectionately in Him,

(Signed) JAMES TAYLOR.

To the saints gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ at London

BELOVED BRETHREN,

After your communication on the 24th October, 1933, we have been praying and seeking light as to the course we should take as regards the behaviour of our brother Mr. W. Nee, both in London and in New York, to which you have kindly drawn our attention. We are sorry that we could not give you a formal reply earlier than this. On the 27th and 28th February respectively we called in all the brothers and sisters in fellowship to discuss and to decide the questions you have raised. As we have come to a conclusion which expresses our unanimous attitude and which we believe is according to the mind of the Lord, we are now giving you this definite answer. We want to draw your attention to the following:

When we received our brethren from abroad in 1932 we declared to them the following points:

- 1) A Chinese national fellowship does not exist as such.
- 2) By receiving these brethren we receive them as brethren, but not what they represent.
- 3) By our coming together into fellowship it does not mean that two fellowships merge. We are nothing and we hope to continue to be nothing. We come together as brothers and only as such, not as the "Brethren."
- 4) We will always keep to have: (a) No special name beside the common name given to Christian, (b) No special fellowship either outside of the Christian fellowship or inside the Christian fellowship, (c) No special creed beside the word of God. We aim to keep an open Bible.
- 5) We will not change anything so as to satisfy our brethren from abroad, provided there are enough scriptural proofs but not the traditions of the elders.

We have also told our brethren our view as to 2 John which we are going to speak presently. As regards to 2 Timothy 2, we agreed perfectly with our brethren, so there is no need of mentioning. But as to 2 John we want to draw your attention to the fact that our attitude towards the one who greets the one that bringeth not the doctrine of Christ is never spoken of here. We must carefully note what is spoken of here and what is not spoken of here. We agree with you perfectly that the one mentioned in verse 10 should not be received and greeted. We believe this to be scriptural and we are acting to obey this command. There is no difficulty between us thus far. But our difficulty lies, that, should a child of God disobey this command, how should he be treated? The scripture only says that he partakes in the wicked works, but the scripture has not commanded us to take what attitude towards him. The word of God only says that we are not going to receive and to greet the evil doer, but you go further to say that we are not going to greet the evil doer and the one who greets the evil doer, that is to say, the scripture commands us not to befriend with a thief, but you go further to say we must not befriend with

a thief and his friend. This may be a reasonable and logical conclusion, but you must remember that the scripture has not gone so far. It is not the plain teaching of the scripture, but a human conclusion drawn from the said scripture. To us what is said and what is not said in Scripture are both expressing the mind of the Lord. It is our practice not to receive or greet anyone who falls under the ban of 2 John, but we do not ban any one from fellowship who personally is clean but disobeys the command to greet not the one under the ban.

Jeremiah 15:19 is our guide. We do not reject those who come to us, but we do not go to them. We have no sympathy whatever with Open Brethrenism, neither are we sympathetic with an exclusivism which goes beyond the scripture. We confess that there are some among us who have not yet severed their connection with human systems (which fact was known to the brethren visiting us), but these are only a few.

We noticed from your letters that you did not differentiate between the different organisations and those "independent" meetings, which we do. Mr. Nee has confessed that he was wrong in breaking bread with "independent" meetings. But we would like to draw your attention that those independent meetings are the direct works of the Spirit. We believe that every independent work of the Spirit is a message of God to us that there is something wrong with us, that God has to start something new outside of us. Take the case of Cornelius, The Spirit had to work independently because there was something wrong in the attitude of Peter and others. The work of the Spirit in the house of Cornelius was a message to the assembly in Jerusalem that there was something need adjusting. They may not know very much, but a fresh work of the Spirit always meant that God is speaking. If we be so exclusive as to not trying to recognise the so-called independent meetings, we will miss the work of the Spirit and the purpose of God. As regards Honor Oak, by what we learned, the Person of Christ is the real centre there, while we are afraid that the truth of the assembly is the centre among us. Praise God that there are other works of the Spirit beside us; and we are thankful that we do not know everything. We would entreat you to be careful as to your attitude towards the very marked work of the Spirit in Honor Oak.

We hope that the above has made our mind clear, and we pray that this may be acceptable to you. On the one hand Mr. Nee and we are both condemning independent actions, while on the other hand we hope that we may not be outside the fresh work of the Spirit.

On behalf of those gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus in Shanghai, with love in Christ to you all.

Yours affectionately in Him,

(Signed) D. C. DU. Y. A. WU. K. Y, CHANG.

To Brethren meeting at IB 211, Hardoon Road, Shanghai, China.

29th May, 1934.

DEAR BRETHREN,

Your letter of the 20th March is now to hand. It has been awaited with much prayerful exercise. The tender interest, yet grave concern, in which of late you have been held in the love of the saints with whom we are privileged to walk together, has been very marked. In seeking to answer your letter we gladly take account of your expressed readiness to be governed by the Scriptures. It is indeed sorrowful to us, however, to learn that you in Shanghai have arrived unanimously at the decisions conveyed in your letter, for we are assured that such are not in accord with the truth of Scripture.

As to the five points giving the substance of your remarks to our brethren who visited you, it is only perhaps necessary to refer in particular to the second one, for although there are matters in the other points which we feel need some elucidation, we are thankful to say that in the main we are at one with you regarding them.

Adverting to point 2, we learn from our brother, Mr. Barlow, who is now with us in London, that this point, as also the other matters which you laid before those who visited you, were not considered as a basis for the link formed with you then, and that it was pointed out to you at the time that what our brethren then did involved all those with whom they were walking all over the world, and further, that what you did on your part involved all those walking with you in China. Our brethren understood that you were in agreement with this, which is of course what the word fellowship implies, and that the position stated in point 2 was not maintained. You can be assured that the brethren who visited you would never otherwise have proceeded to the establishment of fellowship with you. We now learn for the first time from your letter—and this with surprise and grief—that what you set out under point 2 has apparently been governing your mind all this time; and that in receiving these brethren you were only pursuing your custom of receiving individuals without reference to the associations in which they are found, and which they therefore represent. The fact that the brethren visiting you did not extend the right hand of fellowship to you without first communicating by cable with Canada, Australia, and England but indicates how they recognised their responsibility to their brethren universally. Your letter given to Mr. Nee commending him to the saints in this country, and the way it was expressed, certainly conveyed to us that you also recognised this universal responsibility.

You say that you have no sympathy whatever with "open brethrenism," but we have to point out that what you advocate is just "open brethrenism" itself, for the idea that persons can be received without regard to what they stand connected with is the basic principle of "open brethrenism"—as sorrowful as it is erroneous—and to maintain it is to disregard the authority of Scripture as to the fellowship of Christ's death set out in 1 Corinthians 10, as has been pointed out in letters both from here and from America.

As regards 2 John, we would call attention to verse 11, which states that the one who greets anyone bringing evil doctrine is *a partaker of his evil deeds*. Such an one is not only disobedient to the commandment of the Lord, which is serious enough, but in his disobedience he shows that he has no regard for the honour due to the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for he identifies himself with one who by his teaching is dishonouring that Name. He can continue with one who openly dishonours our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. How can such an one be regarded as personally clean, as suggested in your letter? Is he not evidently a vessel to dishonour, one whose influence

is directed, whether intentionally or not, towards the encouragement and support of what is dishonouring to God and to Christ? Surely every right instinct, whether of the affection that is proper in the individual believer towards his Lord and Saviour, or of the affection that is proper in the assembly towards Christ, who has loved her and given Himself for her, would recognise that fellowship with such an one is impossible, and for this there is abundant authority in the teaching of 2 Timothy 2:19-21; 2 Corinthians 6:17, and other scriptures. He is a partaker of the evil deeds of the one bringing evil doctrine, and cannot be regarded in any other light until he both repudiates the doctrine and separates himself from all fellowship with the one who brings it and with his supporters.

Seeing that you confine your observations on this matter of being a partaker in evil to 2 John, we think it right to point out that it is not in accord with truth to suppose that complete instructions as to assembly order and government are given to us in a short epistle to an individual such as the "elect lady." If one disobeyed the instructions given there it would be necessary to turn to the other scriptures governing such conduct and thus determine how to deal with the evil. We have to remember that as in Israel's economy there were five books of the law—Genesis to Deuteronomy—and the whole law was to govern Israel; so now "all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Tim. 3:16.

A reference to the scriptural use, in the original Greek, of the word "partakers" shows the definite and far-reaching meaning embodied in the expression in 2 John.

Acts 2:42.—"They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and *fellowship** and in breaking of bread and in prayers."

1 Cor. 10:16.—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion** of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the *communion** of the body of Christ?"

1 Cor. 10:18.—"Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers* of the altar?

2 Cor. 6:14.—"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what *communion** hath light with darkness?"

Eph. 5:11.—"Have no fellowship* with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

1 Tim. 5:22.—"Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be *partaker** of other men's sins."

2 Pet. 1:4.—"... that by these ye might be *partakers** of the divine nature."

1 John 1:6-7.—"If we say that we have *fellowship** with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have *fellowship** one with another," etc.

* All the words in italics are from the same root in the original Greek as the word "partaker" in 2 John 11.

Your allusion by way of illustration to the friend of a thief is very unhappy, as a reference to a few scriptures will show :

Psalm 50:18.—"When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him."—God's resentment of one condoning a thief is here expressed.

Prov. 29:24.—"Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul."—The state of one who is a partner with a thief is here referred to.

Isa. 1:23.—"Thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts and followeth after rewards."—God's judgment of Israel's princes is given us here.

Respecting your reference to Jeremiah 15:19, which speaks of taking "forth the precious from the vile," this surely does not anticipate those who come to us, going backward and forward as they please. Does it not rather call for definite committal, as with Amasai and those of the tribe of Benjamin (Saul's tribe), saying, "Thine are we, David, and on thy side," 1 Chron. 12:18;

and also Ittai and those with him from Gath, who said, "surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be," 2 Sam. 15:21? This exactly corresponds with 2 Timothy 2:19-22, where we have departing from iniquity, separating oneself from vessels to dishonour, and following righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those calling on the Lord out of a pure heart. Such would readily walk together with all others doing likewise, but not with those who, though professing to have part with them, would be unprepared to break their links with those described as vessels to dishonour.

As to independent meetings, these are a denial of the truth, for Scripture says, "There is *one* body and *one* Spirit," Eph. 4:4, and "by *one* Spirit are we all baptised into *one* body," 1 Cor. 12:13. Indeed, the teaching of 1 Corinthians 12, especially verses 20 to 27, shows clearly that no such thing as independency is contemplated, and the work of the Spirit is always consistent with this, however much the truth may be obscured by the unfaithfulness of believers. Scripture shows that it is God's way to link on His work with what preceded; thus even the ministry of the Lord Himself is linked on with that of John the Baptist, see Mark 1:1-5 and 14-15; Acts 10:36-37; Acts 13:23-25, and other scriptures. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost upon those who had already been gathered together by the Lord's ministry, and the subsequent development of the work of God, as recorded in the book of the Acts, proceeded in perfect moral order.

In your reference to Peter and Cornelius, we fear that you have missed entirely the import of the scripture. There was no finished work on the line of a gathering where Cornelius was, but a man and his household in whom God had sovereignly wrought, and Peter was sent as carrying out his commission in the service of the gospel to open the door to the Gentiles—the circumstances, far from discrediting Peter, show how he was brought into accord with God's mind as to the Gentiles. It was thus that the work was co-ordinated. Peter and those with him, and Cornelius and his household, drew together mutually and spiritually. Peter was prepared of God to receive Cornelius and Cornelius to receive Peter, and Cornelius and those with him did not receive the Holy Spirit until Peter preached to them.

In the early part of last century the Lord commenced a definite work of recovery amongst His people. The cry went forth, in the power of the Spirit, "Behold the bridegroom I go forth to meet him," Matt. 25:6 (New Trans.). The truth of the assembly, and that Christ was its living Head in heaven, was revived in power, and many saints of God in this and other lands, in response to the truth, separated themselves from what disowned the rights of Christ and displaced the Holy Spirit, and sought to follow righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart, 2 Tim. 2:22. This manifest work of the Spirit was the direct result, doubtless, of the presence among the people of God of those who had not defiled their garments, Rev. 3:4, and answers to what had already been foreshadowed, typically or prophetically, in such scriptures as Ezra 1; Acts 20:10-12; and Revelation 3:7-11. It made its appearance almost simultaneously in several different countries; but everywhere it bore the same features, and those affected by it quickly became linked up together in fellowship, the work being thus demonstrated to be one work of the Spirit, universal in its character, and consistent with the truth of the one body, and not several independent works. The links of fellowship thus formed have by the grace of God been maintained since, on the principle of departing from iniquity and following righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. It is not a fellowship either outside or inside of the true Christian fellowship, but is the fellowship of God's Son Jesus Christ our Lord, to which all believers have been called, and which is open to all who will obey the Lord's commandments. The "independent" meetings, to which our previous letter referred, are characterised by either principles or doctrine which are contrary to the truth. These are not features of the work of the Spirit.

From long experience, in which the Lord has helped, we can only arrive at the conclusion that these independent companies are not according to God, however devoted or pious individuals in them may desire to be, and here we *cannot* exclude "The Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre," as we are assured it bears marks which prove that it is not a "work of the Spirit in Honor Oak."

In this case of "The Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre," it is sufficient for us that those who remain connected with the organised religious systems in which the Holy Spirit is displaced and the Lord's commandments are disregarded, are freely allowed to participate with those forming the fellowship, thus those who belong to it have clearly not departed from iniquity for the general teaching of Scripture as to "iniquity" shows that it relates to persons who, though in known and responsible relations with God, are nevertheless found in associations of active or tolerated evil We should have preferred to say nothing as to these Christians at Honor Oak, but your statement that "independent meetings are the direct works of the Spirit," and your references to a "fresh work of the Spirit and the very marked work of the Spirit in Honor Oak," place upon us the necessity to say plainly that we are unable to extend fellowship to them for the following reasons:

- (1) We regard the name by which they designate themselves as being essentially sectarian and independent. The thought of such a local "centre" for a fellowship which, according to truth is universal in character, is entirely contrary to Scripture. They have assumed a place which is not in keeping with the truth of the assembly, as clearly set out in the scripture so often referred to, the first epistle to the Corinthians.
- (2) We understand that they have found it necessary, to avoid confusion and disorder to have some person to preside at what they regard as the Lord's supper. We do not wonder at this becoming necessary under the conditions of open fellowship which are avowed and practised among them, but we believe it to be unscriptural, and a setting up of the clerical principle which you as well as ourselves, profess to have judged as not according to the mind of God.
- (3) We regard the principle of receiving to break bread, without attention to the associations of those received, as being evil, inasmuch as it views as personally clean those who remain in contact with what is admittedly unclean, whereas Scripture teaches that to "touch" what is unclean renders unclean. Lev. 11, Haggai 2:11-14. It also allows liberty to the people of God to continue in what is admitted to be disobedience: it obviously cannot be right that the assembly of God should sanction such an unrighteous and unholy principle.
- (4) Those of us who have had opportunity to read some of the publications issued in connection with the Honor Oak fellowship cannot accept as sound teaching what is taught there. We realise fully the importance of the subjective work of the Spirit, and this makes us anxious that the truth concerning it should not be obscured by defective presentation. We believe that the teaching at Honor Oak tends to do this, and to divert souls by making what is wrought in them through their co-operation with the Holy Spirit more prominent than Christ and what is established in Him for God's pleasure and man's blessing.
- (5) Further, it has come to our knowledge that most serious error regarding the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ has been taught and circulated in their bi-monthly journal. The following statements appeared in *A Witness and Testimony* for March-April, 1031. They all convey false doctrine as to *Christ's humanity*.
 - p. 32 "We see that by the Incarnation the Eternal Son involved Himself in our situation."
 - p. 32 "He inherited our most dreadful estate. He fell heir to our liabilities."
 - p. 32 "So His connection with us through the Virgin Mary resulted in His participation in all that belonged to us."
 - p. 32 "When the Eternal Son became man He Himself became chargeable with that guilt."
 - p. 33 "Having become involved in our guilt, the Lord Jesus was necessarily involved in our death."
 - p. 33 " In the cross He died our death just as in the incarnation He shouldered our guilt."
 - P. 34 " Since He represented fallen man. He was delivered over into Satan's power. We are told that wicked men 'bound Jesus,' but that material binding was just the outward expression of the great spiritual fact that Satan laid hold on Him with every ounce of authority he had over Adam's race."

We cannot conceive anyone loyal to our Lord Jesus Christ remaining in association with those propounding such doctrines. They deny the unique character of the humanity of Christ. He was and is a divine Person in human condition: "the Word became flesh." Before He was born of the virgin He was spoken of by the angel Gabriel as "that holy thing"; He was the Holy One of

God, the Only-begotten: the order of His humanity was unique. He was the Second Man, out of heaven. He took part in flesh and blood, Heb. 2:14; that is, in that *condition* of manhood, coming into it in order that He might lay down His life vicariously, not by reason of a penalty lying upon Him as become Man, as the doctrines referred to suggest. You can surely see how derogatory these teachings are to the blessed Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The basis of them is the deadly doctrine of "Union in Incarnation." which has been justly characterised as the "root error in modern theology." As Mr. Nee has J.N.D.'s Collected Writings, we would refer you to Vol. 29, page 278, where this pernicious error is dealt with in the light of the Scriptures.

We are aware that in a succeeding number of *A Witness and Testimony* the editor attempts to explain what he refers to as "unfortunate modes of expression" used by the writer of the paper in question, but in our judgment the explanation indicates a very feeble sense of the terrible character of the teaching that had been put forth, and it is to be particularly noted that the editor neither denies nor renounces the awful doctrine as a whole, which would be necessary if he were to clear himself of being a partaker in the evil, neither does he express any contrition that such doctrines have appeared in a periodical for which he is responsible. He states in the "note" that it would be a grief to them if "any part of our ministry should take from the absolute Deity, sovereignty and supremacy of Him to whom we owe our all"; but he seems to ignore the fact that the truth as to the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ is as vital as that of His Deity, and calls for the most holy jealousy in the guarding of such precious truth.

[A personal letter from the editor to a brother, dated as recently as 11th May, 1934, quotes from a letter from the author of the paper in question, in which the author seeks to modify the force of his remarks; but he neither withdraws them nor expresses sorrow for having penned them. They therefore remain unrenounced and unwithdrawn.]

These unwithdrawn statements are insidious, in that they imply that *liability* to death attached to the Lord personally by reason of His having become Man—this is the root error of the *whole* teaching. If such were true, He could not have gone out free (as the type in Exodus 21 suggests), for He would be under the penalty of sin and death, whereas He Himself said as to His life: "I have power [that is, authority] to lay it down and I have power to take it again," John 10:18. This is but a revival of the evil teaching of B. W. Newton, which we have already had definitely to refuse, as well as having to withdraw from those either teaching it or identified with it, who must be regarded as unfit for Christian fellowship. We are enjoined to come out from among them and be separated, and touch not the unclean thing, 2 Cor. 6:17. We are to hate the *garment spotted by the flesh*, while seeking to save some with fear, Jude 23. "Garment" would be *surrounding* circumstances, such as human religious organisations, unscriptural principles, false doctrine, etc. Bethesda brethren ignored these solemn divine requirements in receiving from Mr. Newton's meeting, and the leaven involved in this has worked among "open brethren" ever since and has spread far and wide, with disastrous results, as some of you have observed.

While dealing with the teaching which emanates from "The Honor Oak Christian Fellowship Centre," we feel it necessary to refer also to the doctrine which is put forth, and which, we believe, is held by Mr. Nee, that only a part of the saints who compose the assembly will be caught up when, in accordance with the word of the Lord, as given us in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 15 to 18, "the Lord himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven." This teaching is clearly contrary to the express words of Scripture, and is very grave error, being inconsistent with the truth of the unity of the assembly.

Whether the assembly is viewed as the body, the wife, or the bride of Christ, its unity is definitely set forth in Scripture, and we believe it is so precious to the heart of Christ, that it is impossible to conceive that He would Himself divide it at the supreme moment when He is about to introduce it to the heavenly place and condition which the purpose of divine love has marked out for it. His promise to His own, just before He left this world to go to the Father, was "I go to prepare you a place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again, and shall receive you to myself, that where I am, ye also may be," John 14: 2-3 (New Trans.).

What, then, is the teaching of the passage in 1 Thessalonians 4 referred to above? It says "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up *together* with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord. So encourage one another with these words." Could anything be more explicit? Verse 15 makes it clear that there are just the two classes, the living who remain to the coming of the Lord and those who have fallen asleep; verse 16 then deals with those who have fallen asleep, and verse 17 deals with the living who remain and shows plainly that both classes, without the least suggestion of any from among them being left behind, are *caught up together* to meet the Lord.

If the rapture is to be limited to the more spiritual part of the assembly, what are we to say of "the dead in Christ" who rise first? Are they also to be divided into two classes? Such an idea is quite contrary to Scripture, and really tends to weaken the apprehension of divine purpose, grace, and calling as set forth in Christ, which are the very things needed to give strength and purpose in our responsible life as the fruit of the knowledge of God thus brought into the soul. The saints who have fallen asleep are all Christ's, 1 Cor. 15:23; found "in Christ" on the ground of redemption, and according to God's eternal purpose. And this is as true of those who are "the living who remain" as it is of those fallen asleep. The whole company of saints forming the assembly are, according to divine purpose and calling, quickened by the last Adam, and "such as the heavenly One, such also the heavenly ones," 1 Cor. 15:48; all will bear the image of the heavenly One as the fruit of what He has Himself effected in love by going into death. And it is expressly said, "We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall ALL be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet," 1 Cor. 15:51-52. Not one will be left unchanged at that instant. In view of what is being taught it is important to note that this is written not to spiritual saints such as those at Ephesus or Philippi, but to the saints in Corinth, as to whom the apostle says that he was not able to speak to them as to spiritual, but as to fleshly, 1 Cor. 3:1. But they were called ones, see chap. 1:2, and calling is according to purpose, and therefore according to the full thought of God. The apprehension of this tends most powerfully to spirituality, and to elevated thoughts of the assembly and those who compose it, as it leads to their being viewed according to the high and heavenly thoughts of divine love.

The saints are saved by grace, and made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, "that he might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus," Eph. 2:7. Let us beware of anything which, in a subtle way, might undermine the blessed reality in our souls of the knowledge that what we shall be in the coming ages will be the display of what God has wrought in His infinite grace according to His eternal purpose.

This specious false teaching as to the rapture, whilst having the appearance of promoting greater spirituality among the saints, tends to bring them into bondage to legality, and is of the enemy, who would rob the saints of their true liberty in Christ and in the true grace of God in which we stand.

The apprehension of divine grace, and of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus, which is not according to our works, tends more than anything else to promote spiritual exercise to be in moral correspondence with it now, hence the apostle Paul speaks of arriving at the resurrection from among the dead, Phil. 3:11, as desiring to know, in present realisation, the power and enjoyment of the resurrection world, that the truth of being risen with Christ, Col. 3:1, should not be held in terms merely, but should be known as a present living reality.

The teaching that some of the saints of the present dispensation will be left behind at the rapture, and will pass through the great tribulation, fails to recognise, as we have already pointed out, the oneness of the assembly as the body of Christ, and the oneness of the hope of those composing it. "There is one body, and one Spirit, as ye have been also called in one hope of your calling," Eph. 4:4. It. also fails to distinguish the different redeemed families named of the Father, some heavenly and some earthly, see Eph. 3:14-15, and the unique place, given in divine love, to "the assembly of the firstborn." See Gen. 2:18-23; John 14:2-3.

The company in Revelation 7:14 who come out of the great tribulation, having washed their robes, is composed of those who, after the assembly has been translated, will be gathered by another testimony from God, and will remain faithful to the Lamb in the presence of great oppression. They are on earth, a different company from the twenty-four elders who are seen, in chapters 4 and 5, as seated on thrones in heaven around the throne. These elders represent a completed company who receive no addition to their number throughout the book of Revelation.

In Revelation 3:10 we have the word of comfort from the Lord to the *whole* assembly, represented in Philadelphia, as recovered for the Lord's pleasure. He has said, in verse 9, "I have loved thee," and then He adds, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole habitable world." It is a word from the Lord which speaks in a touching way of the unique place the assembly has in His affections, and it is sufficient, to those who know Him, as making it clear that we shall not pass through the great tribulation.

The following scriptures show that the great tribulation relates *specially* to *Israel* and not to the assembly.

Jer. 30:7.—"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."—*Note* it is *Jacob's* trouble, and *he* is saved out of it.

Dan. 12:1.—"There shall be a time of distress, such as never was since there was a nation until that time. And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that is found written in the book."—It is Daniel's people—that is, Israel.

In Matthew 24 and Mark 13 the references to Judea, Jerusalem—the holy place, where the abomination spoken of by Daniel will be set up—the sabbath, the fig-tree—a well-known figure of Israel as a nation, all show the relation of the great tribulation to Israel.

We trust you will patiently and prayerfully consider what we have put before you, as we feel compelled to say that we could not go on with such principles as are laid down in your letter of 20th March, neither could we remain in fellowship with any who maintain them; and in this we are assured before God we voice the mind of our brethren universally with whom through grace we are privileged to walk. It seems clear that the admission of these principles opens the door to erroneous teaching, both as to the Person of Christ, and as to the assembly.

Finally, we would earnestly plead with you as to the grave responsibility of having had light from the Lord presented to you as to His assembly and the principles governing it, and would appeal to you not to cast the truth aside because of the path of testing which is involved. He who gave Himself for the assembly is all-sufficient to support in the power of the Holy Spirit those who at whatever cost desire to maintain what is due to Him in this evil and difficult day.

We venture to enclose a copy of the very helpful letter written by our brother, Mr. J. Taylor, to our brother, Mr. Faithful Luke, which bears so directly upon the matter before us. We should be glad if you would have it read to the saints along with this letter.

We much regret having been unable to write our letter in your own tongue, but as the principles which we have endeavoured to set out in it are of universal bearing and of vital importance to both us and you, we would ask you to send a copy with a full translation to each of the meetings in China. There seems to be a precedent for such a procedure in Colossians 4:16.

Awaiting with much prayer your early reply, and assuring you of our love in the Lord.

On behalf of saints gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ at 25, Rochford Street and elsewhere in London.

Yours faithfully in the Lord,

P. LYON. C. R. BARLOW. A. J. GARDINER.

To Brethren meeting at IB 211, Hardoon Road, Shanghai, China.

NEW YORK CITY.
May 4th, 1934.
[POSTED JUNE 22ND.]

BELOVED BRETHREN,

Your letter of March 20th, long expected and prayerfully awaited, has come to hand, and has been read to the saints gathering to the Lord's name in this city. In reply we would say, that whilst your letter contains information for which we are thankful, there are parts of it which cause us deep concern.

First, we will refer to the five formal points you presented at the beginning of your letter, which you state formed the basis upon which you received our brethren in 1932.

Points 1, 3, 4, and 5 do not present any particular difficulty to us, speaking generally, but it is point 2 which causes us great concern. For you say, "By receiving these brethren we receive them as brethren, but not what they represent." We do not see how our brethren, in coming to you from different parts of the world, could come to you, and be amongst you, without representing something! In support of this, Mr. Barlow says in his letter to us regarding this question: "It was made quite clear that whatever we did involved all those with whom we were walking, and likewise, whatever they did involved all those with whom they were walking. We stated we were but representative of what they would find amongst those with whom we walked in the countries from which we came." Dr. Powell says, in writing to us in relation to this same point: "The first I heard about it was from a letter of Mr. Phillips' to Mr. Taylor in which it was mentioned. This was a great surprise to me, and I judged that it must have been said to Mr. Phillips after most of us had gone. Now that it comes to us formally from them, I can only say that it must have been a misunderstanding, for we would not agree to that." Then Mr. Mayo, who took notes of his visit amongst you, says, "The remark as to 'Receiving brethren but not what they represent,' I do not remember, nor do I find any note of same. Some such remark, I now understand, was made to Mr. Phillips some time after we had broken bread with them, and during the time he was alone in Shanghai."

From the foregoing extracts of letters received from our brethren who visited you, to whom we wrote, they being nearer to us than those in Australia, in order to obtain their understanding of the points in question, it is plain to us that they were transparent and clear in their statements as showing that they represented the saints from whom they came, and that in breaking bread with you, they thereby committed the saints whom they represented to so doing; that you at Shanghai in like manner committed brethren walking with you in other parts of China by breaking bread with our brethren visiting you in Shanghai. Did you not affirm this principle in a letter of commendation to Mr. Nee when you addressed it to, "The saints who break bread at Peterborough, London, Edinburgh, and other places," sending by Mr. Nee's hand, "Greetings to those saints who gathered together under His exalted name"?

It is also quite clear to us, that our brethren, before breaking bread with you, had *no idea* of what you held, namely, that in receiving *them*, you did not receive what they represented. Dr. Powell and Mr. Mayo plainly show this fact, and Mr. Barlow says also in his letter: "Had the position now taken by brethren at Shanghai, regarding fellowship, been as clearly defined and as strongly held when we visited them, as is now known and shown in their letter, we should, no doubt, have acted differently to what we did."

From the unanimous testimony of our three brethren whose letters we have quoted in part, as above, bearing on point 2, we cannot but conclude that the principles governing you are those of "Open Brethren." For you say, "By receiving these brethren we receive them as brethren, but not what they represent." Now to hold such a principle would be destructive of the Spirit's work of co-ordination in the saints in other countries, and deny the exhortation which says, "Using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace," Eph. 4:3. But by acting in obedience to this scripture you would be preserved from moving independently of the work of God in other parts of the world, and be enabled to answer to the truth of the assembly even in this day of its outward brokenness and ruin.

We would remark that there would be no need for the responsibility connected with letters of commendation, according to 2 Corinthians 3:1, if this point 2, so unscriptural in principles and practice, were accepted generally. Yet you are aware of the fact that before our six brethren who visited you in 1932 were free to break bread with you, they cabled to the countries represented by them; as recognising their responsibility to, and links of fellowship with, the brethren from whence they came.

These principles of unity and cohesion are in keeping with the work of God as at the beginning of Christianity. We see an example of this in Acts 13 and 14, where Paul and Barnabas, after the remarkable blessing attendant upon their preaching, in view of preserving the subjects of it, linked them on with the work of God previously existing in other parts. It says, "Having announced the glad tidings to that city (Derbe), and having made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and Iconium, and Antioch, establishing the souls of the disciples. . . . Having chosen them elders *in each assembly* (i.e., in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch), having prayed with fastings, they committed them to the Lord, on whom they had believed." Thus the fruits of this work of grace were unified in the cities named and connected with the *assembly at Antioch*, the spiritual base of Paul and Barnabas, to which they finally returned, and "whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled." Having arrived at Antioch, they brought the assembly together, and related to them "all that God had done with them, and that he had opened a door of faith to the nations," Acts 14:21-28.

With regard to 2 John: We are very sorry to learn that you still have difficulty in respect of the one who greets him who brings not the doctrine of Christ. In our letter of October 14th, 1933, we stated that: "Scripture teaches most definitely that association with what is unclean renders one unclean. 'A little leaven,' we are told, 'LEAVENS THE WHOLE LUMP,' 1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5: 9. The types, Lev. 11, etc., etc., teach us that if we eat or touch what is unclean, we thereby render ourselves unclean. This instruction is confirmed in 2 Corinthians 6. We are enjoined there, 'Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord, and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you.' John's second epistle enforces this teaching, for in it the apostle states that one who greets a man who brings not the doctrine of Christ is a partaker of his wicked works. One partaking of wicked works is 'surely unclean and hence unfit for Christian fellowship."

In your letter you state that you are perfectly agreed with us as to 2 Timothy 2. Why, then, do you not see that that very scripture supports the action of those separating from one who "Partakes in his wicked works." To partake means to share in common, in this case, in wicked works. As naming the Lord's name, we are commanded to withdraw from iniquity. A man who is a partaker in wicked works is a vessel to dishonour, from which one must purify himself by separating from him to be a vessel to honour. Haggai 2:12, 13 show that one bearing holy flesh does not render holy what his skirt touches. But one that is unclean by a dead body, if he touches bread, pottage, or wine, etc., he renders them unclean. So one becomes unclean who greets the man who brings not the doctrine of Christ. The passage teaches us that there must be rigid separation from an unclean person in order to be sanctified, serviceable to the Master.

We note that you have no sympathy with "Open Brethrenism"; possibly on account of your knowledge of the conduct of some of those connected with that "ism." Yet the principles

you set forth in your letter in connection with 2 John are identical with those of Open Brethren. In advancing them you condemn and ignore the action of Mr. Darby and others who separated from Bethesda, or Open Brethren, in 1849, about which we have already written to you.

Referring to your remarks upon the independent work of the Spirit at Caesarea, we see that you fail to recognise that Peter was the apostle to whom the "keys of the kingdom of the heavens" were given by the Lord, Matt. 16:19. The vision to him of the sheet in Acts 10 was in view of preparing Peter to formally admit the Gentiles by the use of the second key, so to speak; the Spirit confirming all this by falling upon those who were hearing the word. This service of Peter's was ratified in Jerusalem later, Acts 11:18, and so preserved the unity of the Spirit.

Whilst we are thankful to hear that Mr. Nee has confessed that he was wrong in breaking bread with "independent" meetings, it is difficult for us to see the consistency of your attitude in approving and supporting such "independent" meetings as Honor Oak Fellowship Centre, as being the work of the Spirit of God. If Mr. Nee was wrong in breaking bread with Honor Oak Fellowship Centre, as he acknowledges, according to your letter, how could you regard such "independent" meetings as being "the direct works of the Spirit"? On the other hand, we fully recognise with you any *independent work of the Spirit of God*, such as the conversion of precious souls in China and in other countries; but we must distinguish between this work and the actual setting up of "independent" meetings, which only adds to the endless confusion of Christendom.

"Independent" meetings did not exist in apostolic days, as Acts 15:14 shows; for James says, "Simon has related how God first visited to take out of the nations a people for his name." This "people" was formed into *local* assemblies largely by the ministry of Paul, the great apostle to the nations. The apostles are no longer here, but the work of the Spirit to-day is the same as at the beginning of Christianity, whether among the Jews or among the Gentiles, and is therefore co-ordinated by Him. Paul summarises this work in Ephesians 2:11-22, and in relation to the many invaluable things presented in this section, he says, "So then ye are no longer strangers and foreigners, but ye are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone," Eph. 2:19, 20. The Spirit's work in the saints never varies. It always separates from worldly and religious associations, glorifies Christ and attracts to Him alone as Object. We would call your attention to the fact that this is exactly how the Spirit wrought in the saints, in many countries simultaneously, over one hundred years ago. We fear you are not aware of this, otherwise you would own that all outside of this recovery of the Spirit exhibits what man, in departing from Scripture, and ignoring the Spirit, has done, and is sectarian. It is said, "There is one body," Eph. 4:4, which embraces the saints as a whole, not simply locally, and places upon us the obligation to consider for the fellowship in a universal way, and so check any movements towards nationalism and independent meetings.

We are sorry that you did not make any reference to Dr. and Mrs. S—— in your letter. We understand that they are returning to China this year, and inasmuch as they are now identified with the Open Brethren, as we notified you in our letter of January 27th, it must be quite evident to you that we cannot walk with them. This makes it a matter of grave concern to us as to what you will do when they return to China, but the Lord will guide you if subject to Him.

Honor Oak Fellowship, with which Mr. Nee associated himself and which you now commend to us, concerns most directly our London brethren, who have written you as to it. The facts stated as to Honor Oak in the letter to you from London are distressing, and show how far away from the mind of God Mr. Nee was in identifying himself with that fellowship. Since beginning this letter we have received a copy of the London letter to you, which we heartily approve and can assure you will be endorsed by saints generally. We desire that all of you weigh its contents prayerfully.

In conclusion, we would affectionately call your attention to the seriousness of your present position. For in the light of what we have written it must be evident to you that we

could not walk with you or any others who maintain such principles, *unless* there is complete retraction of them as embodied in point 2 and *2 John of your letter of March 20th. Our earnest desire and prayer for you then is, that you will reconsider and weigh over, as before the Lord, what is embodied in our present and former letters, and seek grace from Him to judge what is inconsistent with His mind as contained in the Scriptures, to the end that you may be in the gain and blessing of the truth of the assembly. There is much prayer in this and other countries that this blessed result may be arrived at on your part.

Inasmuch as this letter contains principles held dear by our brethren who are walking with us, would it not be of service to those in the other meetings in China if you sent them a translation of our letter? Should you do so, we would gladly welcome a copy of this, together with a copy of the letter from our brethren in London to you, if you are making a translation of it.

On behalf of the brethren who gather to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in this city, and with love in Him,

Faithfully yours in the Lord,

J. SMITH. W. BRADSHAW. A. F. MOORE.

Please address your reply to—A. F. MOORE, 382, Bement Avenue, West Brighton, S.I., New York, N.Y.

^{*} This refers to the remarks made on 2 John.—ED.