

ivp

June 4, 1979

Walt and Ginny Hearn
762 Arlington Ave.
Berkeley, CA 94707

Mr. Neil Duddy
Spiritual Counterfeits Project
Box 4308
Berkeley, CA 94704

Dear Walt, Ginny and Neil:

I have just talked with Neil on the phone about The God-Men and asked him to pass the manuscript on to you, Walt and Ginny.

I am enclosing with this letter a copy of my own report dated April 18, 1979. Pages 2 and 3 contain suggestions for revision and editing. Some of the items can be taken care of by editors; some will take Neil's attention. It's obvious which are which.


Neil is to make his changes and pass them directly to the editors. Then, I would appreciate it if Neil could see the manuscript and approve your editing from his standpoint before you send it back to me. That will keep the manuscript from going back and forth across the country too many times.

In the course of editing the manuscript, I would like considerable attention to be given to the chapter titles, section titles and subheads in general. Currently they are largely straightforward and logical in nature. If some kind of linguistic flair can be given to the subheads--at least the major ones--and the chapter titles, it would be helpful. Nonetheless, we must be careful not to load the language against The Local Church. That will undermine everything we're trying to do in doing good cult books: that is, give carefully-reasoned, rational and cool analyses which are accurate and devastating because of the accuracy and not because of the rhetoric. That is currently one of the strengths of the manuscript, and by "enlivening" some of the language of its outer dress, we don't want to destroy that character. I take it we are all agreed on that, anyway. I just thought I'd mention it.

The editors may wish to give me a call before they get very far into their work on this title.

So much for now.

Warmest Christian greetings,


James W. Sire
Editor

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Neil Duddy has sent us a 175 page revision of The God Men (originally 80 pages). He is anxious for us to reach some kind of a decision as to whether we are interested in this revised manuscript. He is continuing in dialogue with recent defectors of the Local Church, including Rappaport and is striving to get further documentation on some of Witness Lee's financial improprieties. Apparently Lee has misappropriated church money and used it for his (or the Local Churches) businesses which are not for non-profit. At the present time this particular piece of information does not play a part in the manuscript but Duddy would like for it to do so. He will be sending a further paragraph and his documentation for it along in a few days.

The following comments are those which I have made while reviewing the manuscript for publication.

Preface:

The book gets off to a powerful start by the use of an event involving Brooks Alexander who observed a counter-countercultural parade of Local Church people in Berkeley. Here, too, Duddy points out that the Local Church and Witness Lee have been contacted many times but that no interview or personal contact could be made with Witness Lee because he refused all attempts. *Saw him Feb 8 after book done.*

Introduction:

The introduction sets out the basis on which the Local Church will be analyzed, using John Stott's criteria (social test and doctrinal test). The authors indicate the source of their information in Local Church writings, contact with Local Church people and so forth. They also given an advanced hint of the conclusions which they are going to draw.

Evaluation: (Proposed)

This is a good chapter; it sets out clearly the structure and the organization of the book. There should, however, be some indication in the chapter itself that the judgments which are coming forth are going to be documented later in the book. As it is, they appear without warrant, though they are mild and quietly framed. But just a phrase or two at appropriate points saying that the documentation will follow later would be helpful.

Actually, this introduction is a model of what introductions to books critical of heresies should be: gentle, careful, not claiming too much. In fact, the authors point out three things that the book is not trying to do. This is very helpful.

Chap. 1: History of the Movement: A Short Overview

This chapter is almost identical to the comparable chapter in the first edition with the exception of the addition of three pages of material outlining the involvement of the Local Church in business operations such as Day Star and Fophorus.

Evaluation: The major problem I see here is that the source of the authors facts and figures regarding the business operations of Local Church enterprises are not documented. If they are basing their book on raw data, then they should have it available should there be any question after publication concerning the accuracy of the data itself. If it comes from a secondary source, it should be documented.

Page 23, Paragraph 2. The final sentence referring to "celler storage space" seems to contain loaded language. The authors should be careful not to be cute.

Page 22: No documentation is given for the "sensuous" basis of Lee's theology. Should there be?

Page 35: The authors say that Lee's handling of the biblical material displays "a loose regard for factual accuracy" but this is not documented nor are examples given. I think that both should be the case, especially the examples. Actually, he does precisely what I asked for in the following paragraphs, so only a phrase, "as we will note below," will be necessary to add.

Page 39: Watch the loaded language of the fifth line from the bottom: "tragically limited tool."

Page 41: Again the language in para. 2: "choppy logic."

Page 42: Para. 2: Again the language: "more alarming claims." And in the following paragraph the authors talk about Lee's "failure to deduce a distinction" why not simply say "does not draw distinction"? The language is loaded.

Page 46, para. 4: That the concept of mingling was "judged inadequate" by the church should be documented, I believe.

Page 86, line 11: The phrase "adequately reshaped to suit Western Christendom" should read, I believe, "adequately reshaped to suit biblical Christianity."

Page 105, Para. 1: The final sentence is rather too witty to be wise.

Page 106, line 2: The author's revision is unclear.

Page 112, para. 2: Anthony Compolo is called a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania. Is this correct? I thought it was Eastern College.

Pages 113-14: The four stage seduction snyndrome is awkwardly explained. There is too much jargon, not enough explanation. Moreover, it seems that when one removes the jargon, there is nothing left but a little bit of common sense. I would question, therefore, whether the "seduction snyndrome" is anything very technical at all.

Pages 114-18: It isn't clear at first whether Cia is a real person or just an illustration. Later this becomes obvious; but this should be indicated in some stylistic way very early. Second, I think that the source of the information about her should be placed early in this story rather than later. That will give it more credibility.

Page 123, line 1: I believe that the phrase Deep Bible has been used before as a parallel to Deep Throat in Watergate. I am not sure this is a wise thing to do. It "cheapens" the commentary, I believe.

Page 139, lines 8-10: The author comments that "it is fortunate that (to date) physical beatings have not featured in Local Church discipline, for such violent measures would constitute the logical, sequential next step in stifling dissension." This is a very dangerous thing to say. It suggests that the Local Church is ready to use physical means to enforce its discipline, though there could be no evidence for this if there were not evidence for its actual practice. This kind of sentence should not appear in the book anywhere. In a way it would be like saying, "When you start beating your wife, when are you going to stop?"

Page 141, line 1: R. C. Sproul and Francis Schaeffer are referred to, but any orthodox theologian would do. I don't see why these two people's names are used. That is, I believe no names of theologians are necessary and to mention them just causes questions. At the end of that same paragraph is another one of those artsy-craftsy sentences which might well be eliminated.

Page 148: The book seems to end rather abruptly. It would seem to me that several pages of comment on what a proper Christian community would look like would be helpful at least to set the Local Church in a more positive context. That is, many of the things which the Local Church is striving for are quite appropriate to achieve. But a good Christian community achieves them and without the negative effects of the Local Church and its practices. I don't believe that a full fledged theology or sociology of the Christian church should be given, but some kind of positive counterpart should be outlined.

Pages 153-156: Here reference is drawn to the similarities between Witness Lee's theology and Platonism and gnosticism. I think it would be good here to refer to the critique in Macaulay and Barrs Being Human, especially since they give the very positive, biblical model as an alternative and develop that.

Pages 158-61: This material was contributed by David Adeney originally as the forward to the first version of The God Men. Now it closes the book. But there is not an adequate indication that he is the author only of this "final word" and not of the whole appendix. Something has to be done to rectify this.

General Evaluation:

This is a well-written manuscript and indicates a very great amount of primary

research both in Witness Lee's published materials and in conversations with Local Church members and ex-members, including Rappaport, Witness Lee's number two person.

With the exception of those comments on details above, I believe that this material is well worth publishing.

Recommendation:

I recommend that we send this manuscript to our "libel" lawyers and ask them to review it for any potential problems (I don't see any), and then I recommend publication.

J. W. Sire

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