

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

Quotation Abuse and Distortions in “Doctrinal Summary”

The next section of “Info at a Glance” consists of four quotations, three from Witness Lee and one from Kerry Robichaux. Each quote was taken out of context by the authors of ECNR which results in a defamatory portrayal of the teachings and practices of the Local Church. A fair evaluation of the authors’ treatment of our quotes alone is sufficient basis for you to delete the material regarding us from ECNR. ECNR wrenches four quotes out of their clear context. (1) Witness Lee’s words concerning the practice of circumcision are miscast into a rejection of “Christians” and “true believers.” (2) Kerry Robichaux’s careful distinction between God’s eternal self-existence in His Godhead and His believers’ participation in God through sanctification is eliminated by selectively chopping up a paragraph so that instead, Robichaux appears to say that man becomes God in His Godhead and Trinity, a blasphemy. (3) A sentence of Witness Lee’s exhortation to a multiracial audience that they should practice their identification with Christ in His resurrection as Christ’s brothers is misused as evidence of shamanism and demonism. (4) Witness Lee’s encouraging word to overcome shyness and learn to speak for Christ by practicing and speaking their commitment to Christ, even to angels, is in the context of ECNR made to serve as an example of spiritism by omission of critical language.

This is not the first time this method has been used to defame us, so it is instructive to recall what Dr. Melton said in An Open Letter Concerning the Local Church, Witness Lee and The God-Men Controversy:

Part of my study of the Local Church involved the reading of most of the published writings of Witness Lee and the lengthy depositions of Neil T. Duddy and Brooks Alexander (of SCP). The experience proved among the more painful of my Christian life. As I began to check the quotes of Witness Lee used in Duddy’s book, I found that The God-men had consistently taken sentences from Lee’s writings and, by placing them in a foreign context, made them to say just the opposite of what Lee intended. This was done while ignoring the plain teachings and affirmations concerning the great truths of the Christian faith found throughout Lee’s writings (pp. 1-2).

Much of the rest of Dr. Melton’s book deals with specific instances where SCP used quotes from Witness Lee’s ministry out of context in order to make false accusations. It is disappointing to find the same methods of misrepresentation, exposed in detail by Dr. Melton in his book, used again in ECNR to make the same misrepresentations of our beliefs and practices in order to deceive the public.

It is worth pointing out that the authors are not ignorant of what they are doing: “Bible verses must be interpreted both in their immediate and larger context. This may require some understanding of the author, and the general historical context, such as whether the book is pre-exilic or post-exilic. Just as no one interprets a single sentence in a magazine article by itself, but in the context of the entire article, this must be true with the Bible.” (ECNR pages 671-672) In the following examples, you will see how the authors, by design, violate their own standard for interpreting writings by quoting Witness Lee and Kerry Robichaux out of context to cast them into ECNR’s cultic mold.

ECNR Quote #1: “If you keep religion [Christianity], you will lose Christ.’ (Witness Lee, *Christ vs. Religion*, p. 157.)”

The first quote is a half sentence presented as a complete sentence, taken out of context, and twisted by a foreign insertion to be given a different meaning. The quote is not an example of Witness Lee criticizing “Christianity,” as the authors allege, but of Witness Lee paraphrasing the Apostle Paul’s criticism of the

Jewish practice of circumcision being brought into the early churches. While we recommend the context of the entire book, the following is the quote (underlined) for your reconsideration, in context:

Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians that if we attempt to keep religion, we will lose Christ and Christ will become of no effect to us. "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that, if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:2, 4). If you keep religion, you will lose Christ; and if you keep Christ, you will certainly lose religion. Christ is versus religion; Christ never goes along with religion.

Then Paul tells us in Galatians 6 that it is not a matter of circumcision or uncircumcision, it is not a matter of being a Jew or a Greek; it is a matter of being a new creature in Christ (6:15). He says, "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk" (5:25). This is all: we just need to walk in the Spirit; we just need to be a new creature, without anything religious.

This quote uses the term "religion" with reference to a Jewish religious practice, i.e. circumcision, and not, as alleged directly before under "Attitude toward Christianity," with reference to "true believers." It is hard to imagine a more flagrant misquotation. One may wonder why it was done if not to deliberately mischaracterize Witness Lee as being anti-Christian. The quoted passage is not a criticism of any proper New Testament teaching or practice, as the authors allege by inserting "[Christianity]" among Witness Lee's words, thus changing his original meaning significantly.

ECNR Quote #2: "Our own distinctive understanding of God's economy rests upon the simple premise that God operates in time upon His elect to make them the same as He is in life, nature, and expression....His elect become God by their union and communion with Him and by their continual dependence on Him and on what He is in Himself." (Kerry S. Robichaux, "The Divine Trinity in the Divine Economy," *Affirmation & Critique*, April 1999, p. 37.)

The authors' attempt to force Mr. Robichaux to sound "new age" is exposed when the material the authors left out of this quote through their use of the ellipsis (see bold text below) is examined. Again, a half-sentence quote was employed to fashion the misrepresentation. As in "ECNR Quote #1" above, the reader has no idea only half a sentence is being presented. Although Mr. Robichaux points out that two issues of the periodical, *Affirmation & Critique (A&C)*, are devoted to the concept of God's Economy, an examination of the immediate context of the quotation demonstrates the attempt in ECNR to conceal the real import of Mr. Robichaux's statement and turn it into something heretical:

In this and the previous issue of A&C we have presented our understanding of the divine economy, that endeavor of God to fulfill His heart's desire from eternity past (Eph. 1:5, 9). The term *God's economy* (1 Tim. 1:4) can encompass quite a range of understanding, depending on what one's notion is concerning God and His relationship to His people. Our own distinctive understanding of God's economy rests upon the simple premise that God operates in time upon His elect to make them the same as He is in life, nature, and expression. The initiation of this operation is the incarnation, whereby He became what we are in life, nature and expression; and the economy consummates in the New Jerusalem, where God's elect have become what He is in life, nature and expression. This understanding reflects what Athanasius said concerning the incarnation in his well-known aphorism: 'For He was made man that we might be made God' (De incarnatione Verbi 54.3). It is important to note that in this process God's uniqueness in Godhead and Trinity is preserved. At the simplest level, we can say that God is God by virtue of His eternal self-existence, whereas His elect become God by their union and communion with Him and by their continual dependence on Him

and on what He is in Himself. God self-exists as God; His elect are made God because He is God. In this, God is glorified and not, as some may suspect, minified. This distinction between the God who self-exists eternally and the God whom His elect participate in as the goal of His economy was respected by the early church universally through the fifth century and is still maintained by many theologians today.

The authors delete, among other things, Mr. Robichaux's reference to Athanasius of whom the authors wrote favorably on page 685 of ECNR. Some schools of American evangelicalism seem unaware of the body of scriptural truths concerning sanctification (see e.g. the authors' comment on page 212 of ECNR where they find such ideas "complex"). Mr. Robichaux's and other *A&C* articles aim, in part, to remedy that lack of attention to this critical matter. Regardless of the authors' understanding of sanctification, it is apparent that their use of Mr. Robichaux's words is not proper. The use of the ellipsis and the omission of surrounding material change the clear meaning of the original paragraph, making it sound heretical.

We also note that on June 9, 1999, well before the first printing of ECNR was released, this same short quote by Mr. Robichaux, with the same ellipsis, was spread by email in Apologia Report (see pages XI-XII of ECNR). One wonders whether the authors simply borrowed this out of context quote from Apologia Report without reading the original article, or whether they were so bent on damaging our reputation that they took the quote out of context and furnished it to Apologia Report before ECNR could even get to print.

ECNR Quote #3: "If people ask if I come from China, I would tell them, 'No, I come from the third heaven!'" (Witness Lee, *How to Meet*, p. 31.)

Ridiculing a person with his own words is defamatory when the ridicule is accomplished by putting his words in a foreign context. The third quote is painfully out of context. In the context of ECNR, Witness Lee is made to sound like a mad-man or a shamanist guru, with either himself or the evil spirit speaking through him literally claiming to have come to the earth from the third heavens. In fact, Witness Lee is speaking neither in the context of sensationalistic demonic possession nor of his physical place of origin. He is speaking in the context of a congregation of different races and nationalities that need to remember their true identity as "the Lord's brothers" when they come to meet as Christians. The subsection from which Mr. Lee's quote is taken begins: "The second principle of meeting is that we must meet in resurrection as the Lord's brethren." Then Witness Lee considers six verses of scripture, pointing out that now that we have been born again we can meet as believers with a new, heavenly nature. He continues:

But we must realize that we are not His brethren in our old nature; we are His brethren only in resurrection. Whenever we come to the meetings, we must come as the Lord's brothers in resurrection. Therefore, we should never bring anything of the old nature into the meeting. This is more than basic.

In today's Christian meetings one has the sense that those who attend are so much in the old nature and the meetings are still so natural. Let me give you an illustration. For the brothers and sisters in the Far East to shout in the meetings is very difficult. Their nature is always to keep themselves silent and hidden. But on the other hand, the Westerners are altogether too frank. This is another manifestation of the old nature. When we meet as Christians, we must forget our natural disposition. We must meet just as the brothers of Jesus. We are not Chinese and we are not Westerners, we are just the little brothers of Jesus. If people ask if I come from China, I would tell them, "No, I come from the third heaven!" Praise the Lord! A brother once told me that he had never met a Chinese like me. I said he was absolutely right. I am really not a Chinese; I am a brother of the Lord in resurrection. This is how we must meet.

The meaning and context of the above portion are not difficult to discern. Nor is the authors' motive for cutting the sentence in question out of its context and putting it in a book that contends that "all groups discussed in this volume accept occult powers to some degree."

Before going on to the fourth quotation, it is worth pointing out that the two books selected by the authors to take quotes from Witness Lee are in the nature of written records of extemporaneous speaking to church audiences. They were not written as theological textbooks. The meetings in question began with a reading from a list of scriptures on topics related to church practice, were followed by Witness Lee's speaking and then was followed by a time for others in the congregation to also speak on the same general topic. The quotes reflect this somewhat informal atmosphere and the hyperbolic form of some of his speaking. The authors' take unfair advantage of this fact.

ECNR Quote #4: "Brothers, while you are gardening, you have to say something for Christ. You can speak to the birds: "Little bird, I want to tell you that Christ is my life. My life is better than yours. I am so proud of Him." Tell the creatures something about Christ. I am not joking. You will learn how to function. Then, when you come to the meeting, it will be easy for you to say something.... And again I say, we have many opportunities every day to practice. We may not have a human audience, but we can always speak to the beings in the air. When we speak to human beings, there may not be so much need of exercising the spirit, but when we speak to the beings in the air, the mind does not work. To exercise the mind to speak to the angels is useless; we must exercise our spirit to speak to them." (Witness Lee, *How to Meet*, pp. 112-113.)

By the ellipsis in the above quote, the authors again portray spiritism where none exists. The ellipsis eliminates over two paragraphs of material, including Witness Lee's specific suggestion of the rebuke we might speak to the principalities and powers: "Wherever we are, we can tell the angels and the devils, 'Jesus is the Lord; Christ is my life. I am not here for myself, for my job, for my schooling; I am for Christ.'" This language clearly contradicts the authors' misrepresentation of spiritism and shamanism, and was, therefore, eliminated by them from the text.

The chapter in which the quote is found is an encouragement to the attendants to practice and learn to speak for Christ in the meetings of the church. In the context of the several verses in 1 Corinthians 14 which exhort "all" to prophesy, Witness Lee uses Paul's word that he came "in demonstration of spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:4) and that Timothy did not have "a spirit of fear" (2 Tim. 1:7), to encourage the believers to be bold enough to speak for Christ in the meetings. Witness Lee says: "Do not say that you are 'chicken.' We all must be 'lions' in prophesying for Christ." Later he encourages: "Do not say that you do not have a loud voice—everyone has a loud voice. [These meetings took place in a rather large auditorium.] I do not believe that when your house is on fire, you will announce quietly to the neighbors that your house is burning down. You will cry, 'Fire! Fire!' Then we will see what kind of voice you have. Do not say anything about eloquence—we do not need eloquence. We can say much for Christ without eloquence." He continues: "I have been much exercised in recent days to find a way whereby all the Lord's children may function one by one in the meetings. To the present day in the local churches, the brothers and sisters are not all functioning among us." This line of thought brings him to a subsection of the chapter titled, "The Need of Practice" from which the above quote is taken out of context in ECNR.

Distortions in Doctrinal Summary

Throughout ECNR's "Doctrinal Summary" and other places where we are identified in the book, our beliefs and practices are misrepresented in every point to force Witness Lee, the Local Churches, and their members into fitting the cultic mold portrayed in the Introduction and Appendix. The consistently inaccurate and misleading representations concerning both our practices and beliefs are designed to ridicule us and make our expression of Christian faith unrecognizable. Most damaging is the statement: "Lee's views on morality may tend to depreciate the biblical emphasis." As you are aware, this repeats and calls to mind SCP's and Mr. Duddy's false and defamatory statements already discredited by items 8 and 9 of the Statement of Decision.

Throughout ECNR, biblical and doctrinal terms which we use are placed out of context in order to portray us as heretical. The authors' baseless speculations attribute to us all sorts of wild, heretical doctrines that

we would never accept (e.g. Modalism; "even created man...required redemption;" "Satan and unredeemed man would seem to be annihilated in the lake of fire;" etc.), *A&C* is quoted as saying the Trinity was "assumed" by God, yet, the authors give no citation but a passing reference to two years of issues of *A&C*. The reason for the lack of citation is simple, no such quote exists. We do not teach that the Trinity was "assumed" by God. Likewise, other so-called quotes are offered without citation.

The authors have strategically attacked us by means of a vague "Summary," without offering any real evidence. Because they have offered no solid bases to refute, not much would be gained by providing a point-by-point denial here. We previously referred you to [The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches and Witness Lee's Life Study -- The Conclusion of the New Testament](#) to help you begin a genuine scholastic investigation of his teachings. In view of your duty to discover the truth, we also recommend to you the hundreds of other Living Stream Ministry publications that are publicly available to help you place any quote that catches your eye in the proper context of our entire ministry.