

A Letter of Fellowship from the Elders in the Church in Moscow and Responsible Brothers in the Work in the Russian-speaking World

Dear brothers and sisters in the churches throughout the earth,

Recently, an “Open Letter to Brother Benson Phillips from Russia” was posted on a certain website, a letter that attacks brother Benson Phillips, the Living Stream Ministry, brother Witness Lee and his ministry, and the churches. Since that letter originated from Russia, we, the elders in Moscow and responsible brothers in the work in Russia, felt to write this brief letter of fellowship to all of you, fellow members of the Body of Christ, in order to share our feeling regarding this matter.

The “Open Letter to Brother Benson Phillips from Russia” was written by Sergei Kuznetsov, “a simple brother from Russia,” as he claims, whom we know quite well and who recently left the Lord’s recovery. That letter represents his personal opinions, and, obviously, the opinions of certain people in various places who separated themselves from the Lord’s recovery and who are negative toward the recovery. Sergei’s views were formed under a heavy influence of these dissenting people. Due to this influence, Sergei separated himself from the churches in the Russian-speaking world. Therefore, his letter does not in any way represent the feeling of the rest of the saints in these churches. He by no means speaks on our behalf.

What we are presenting to you is not an opinion of an isolated individual, but something based on what we have witnessed. It is the feeling of the saints in the churches in the Russian speaking world (i.e. the former Soviet Union and other countries where Russian is spoken), the feeling of the elders, co-workers, and serving ones, the feeling of all those who are enjoying the Lord and laboring for the Lord in His recovery for the building up of the Body of Christ.

In the past fifteen and a half years, we have been witnessing what the Lord has been doing in His recovery in the Russian-speaking world. Thousands upon thousands of people have been brought to Christ and baptized; over 200 churches with several thousand saints have been raised in which the brothers and sisters are enjoying the riches of Christ through the ministry of the age; the Full-time Training in Moscow has perfected over 600 Russian-speaking saints to serve the Lord, of whom 140 are now serving full-time in many churches bearing full burden in coordination with the co-workers from other countries as one new man. In January of 2007, over 700 saints from all over the earth joined the local saints and co-workers in Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic countries to preach the gospel in 50 cities. As a result of that gospel move, in 35 cities churches were raised up, and in the remaining 15 cities the co-workers are currently laboring to bring the saints into a solid church life. Today the gospel is spreading on to more and more new places, for example, to Central Asia. Through the publication work, about 500 titles of ministry books and tapes have been released, which bring life supply to many churches and individual believers. All this has been accomplished by the Lord in only fifteen and a half years.

Today we are witnessing some negative events in different parts of the world, such as divisive activities by some brothers, attacks through the Internet against the ministry of brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, against the Living Stream Ministry and against the blending brothers. As we consider this negative background, we are especially impressed with the purity of the recovery which came to Russia in 1991, and we are also impressed with the blessing that the Lord has poured out in this part of the world.

We know that brother Lee from the very beginning commissioned brother Benson Phillips to take the lead in the work in Russia in coordination with other co-workers. Therefore, in everything that has been done in these years these leading brothers in the work were valuable joints of the rich supply through whom the saints and the churches received the teaching and fellowship of the apostles in a pure way. We may say that the best of what the Lord’s recovery had attained in other

parts of the world in the preceding decades was brought in its purity to Russia. All the work in the Russian-speaking world was carried out in close fellowship and coordination with brother Lee and with all the churches. This is the pattern that was set up through the leading co-workers in Russia from the very beginning, and the churches are still following this pattern today.

It is especially crucial that in the Lord's move in Russia an important emphasis on the building up of the Body of Christ has been preserved through the proper ministry of the truth. Today the churches in Russia identify themselves as a part of the universal Body of Christ that the Lord is building up in this age to accomplish God's purpose, which is to become one with man in a unique divine and human incorporation to be consummated as the New Jerusalem. We are thankful that through the ministry of the age many individual believers have come to experience and enjoy Christ subjectively as life. We believe that those are genuine experiences that are based upon the objective truth in the Bible. However, our goal today is to proceed further and be brought more and more into the corporate experience of the reality of the Body of Christ. This vision governs many saints in the Russian-speaking world. In recent years, we have distinctly seen this emphasis in the speaking of the blending brothers, and we are one with this speaking and with this emphasis. No matter how much we treasure our personal spirituality and our personal experiences of Christ, we realize that God's purpose is carried out not only through our individual experiences, but, ultimately, through our building up with other saints as one Body.

The letter written by the "simple brother from Russia" is a typical example of how far a believer may deviate from the central line of God's purpose in an unbalanced pursuit of individual spirituality and in desire for knowledge. It shows how the "dark glasses" of individualism and self-righteousness make a person blind regarding the things that are on the Lord's heart. It is so regrettable that his letter is permeated with *I, me* and *myself*. Obviously, this is a key that helps to understand why brother Sergei pours out so much poison against brother Lee and other leading brothers in the Lord's recovery. Personal spirituality may easily turn a person away from building up corporately with others for the Body.

We treasure the vision of God's economy and the Body of Christ, which is contained in the Bible, and we treasure the ministry of the age which has brought this vision to us. Our desire is to remain faithful to this vision and to follow closely this ministry. We treasure the one publication work as a practical means to preserve all the churches in one accord for the building up of the Body and to protect them from different teachings. We appreciate the function of all the co-workers in the Lord's recovery as well as the serving ones at Living Stream Ministry, and we confirm once again our oneness with them. We treasure the fellowship in the Body, and we respect and uphold the recent actions taken by the Body to quarantine certain members. We appreciate the portion of brother Lee as a minister of the age in God's economy. We love our dear Lord Jesus, we love His recovery, and we love all of our dear brothers and sisters in all the churches throughout the earth. May the Lord continue to bless His recovery.

On behalf of the saints and the churches,

The elders in the church in Moscow and responsible brothers in the work representing over 200 churches in the Russian-speaking world:

Pavel Anisimov; Rinat Ashirov; Haik Babayan; Vladimir Bazanov; Leonid Brattsev; Ivan Dvogaluk; Dmitry Yermakov; Alexandr Kamnev; Arsen Karapetian; Alexei Korovin; Yuri Kostkin; Pavel Kostromskoi; Vitali Maltzev; Mikhail Mishkov; Gennadi Mokhov; Vitali Nesterenko; Alexei Ostrobokov; Sergei Petrochenko; Andrei Rudometkin; Vladimir Sharonov; Valeri Shogolev; Yuri Sidorov; Gerasim Torchian; Oscar Tuktarov; Yevgeni Zinoviev