

A FAITHFUL WORD

SERIES THREE

“A Chosen Vessel to Me”

**THE
VISION OF
THE AGE,
THE MINISTRY
OF THE AGE,
AND THE
MINISTER
OF THE AGE**

Book

1

DEFENSE & CONFIRMATION PROJECT

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Phil. 1:7 – Even as it is right for me to think this concerning you all because you have me in your heart, since both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel you are all fellow partakers with me of grace.

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PREFACE

Acts 9:15 – But the Lord said to him, Go, for this man is a chosen vessel to Me, to bear My name before both the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.

In March 1986 Brother Lee released a crucial series of messages in which he showed that throughout the record of the Bible and throughout church history in every age God gives only one vision to man (Acts 26:19).¹ This *vision of the age* constitutes the present advance of the revelation or the recovery of the revelation contained in the Bible that God intends to govern the life and service of His people in that age. Watchman Nee defined *the ministry of the age* as the service which carries out the particular recovery and work in an age. In other words, the ministry of the age is the service that carries out the vision of the age. When God releases the vision of the age to govern and be carried out by the ministry of the age, he does so through a particular vessel (Acts 9:15). The vessel chosen by the Lord to release His up-to-date vision and to take the lead in His ministry is *the minister of the age*.

The month before releasing these messages Brother Lee had fellowshipped in the elders' trainings that there should be only one trumpet in the ministry in the Lord's recovery,² that all of the ones serving as co-workers and elders should labor according to the leading of the wise master builder,³ and that all of the brothers participating in the ministry should be restricted in one publication for the sake of preserving the oneness of God's building.⁴ The Apostle Paul referred to himself as a wise master builder (1 Cor. 3:10). A wise master builder is a person

¹ *The Vision of the Age*.

² *Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move*, pp. 75-89.

³ *Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move*, pp. 91-105.

⁴ *Elders' Training, Book 8: The Life-pulse of the Lord's Present Move*, pp. 161-164.

who has the complete blueprint of the building of God, who releases that blueprint as the vision of the age, and who oversees the building of God's house according to that blueprint. Thus, the minister of the age is at least in principle a wise master builder.

Today some have risen up in the principle of the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16), attacking the uniqueness of the vision of the age, the ministry of the age, and minister of the age. By subtly redefining these terms, they seek to assert a special position for themselves and their kind of ministry and to tear down the leadership in the ministry in the Lord's recovery today. Because of this, it is important that all of the saints be educated to know the meaning of these terms—*the vision of the age*, *the ministry of the age*, *the minister of the age*, and *the wise master builder*—as they have been used in the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee and by the co-workers in the Lord's recovery today and to see how they apply to our present situation.

This book examines the terms *the vision of the age*, *the ministry of the age*, and *the minister of the age* against the backdrop of recent attempts to undermine the ministry in the Lord's recovery and evaluates the dissenters' claims and accusations in light of the proper meaning of each of these terms. Finally, this book reminds us of the Lord's commission to us in His recovery today—to enter into the high peak of the divine revelation and the practice of the God-ordained way and the organic shepherding to build up the Body of Christ to consummate this age that He may return.

THE VISION OF THE AGE, THE MINISTRY OF THE AGE, AND THE MINISTER OF THE AGE

INTRODUCTION

In recent months a few dissenting brothers have attacked the co-workers' fellowship that Watchman Nee and Witness Lee served as "the ministers of the age." These critics substitute their own watered-down definition of "minister of the age" in what would appear to be an attempt to justify applying that appellation to themselves or to a certain worker associated with them. In the line of teaching on this subject initiated by Watchman Nee, developed by Witness Lee, and continued by the co-workers, these three terms are used as follows:

- *The vision of the age* is the present advance of the revelation or the recovery of the revelation contained in the Bible that God intends to govern the life and service of His people.
- *The ministry of the age* is the service that carries out the vision of the age.
- *The minister of the age* is the person God raises up as the channel through whom the vision of the age is released and who takes the lead in carrying out the ministry of the age.

The dissenting ones alter the definitions of these terms, particularly the definition of "the minister of the age," to justify their own agenda. For example, one dissenting brother wrote:

Recently, the topics "the Vision of the Age," "the Ministry of the Age," and "the Minister of the Age" have been emphasized in the Lord's recovery. By "Minister of the Age," ***we mean*** a particular servant of God, who accomplishes God's work in an era, like Noah or Moses in the Old Testament. These three matters – the Vision, Ministry and Minister of the Age – are conceptually distinct. There can be a unique vision and one ministry in an age, yet, they may not belong to a particular "Minister of the Age." Hence, someone may agree that there are a vision and ministry in an epoch, yet reject the

idea that these belong to a singular “Minister of the Age.” Rather a number of ministers, perhaps widely dispersed over the globe, may share the same vision and ministry in an era. [emphasis added]

Here it is significant that what the author uses as the proffered definition of “minister of the age” is what “we mean,” meaning he has supplied his own definition, as opposed to using the term as it was defined in the co-workers’ fellowship. Whereas the co-workers defined the term as applying to the unique person through whom the vision of the age is released and who takes the lead in carrying out the ministry of the age, the dissenters broaden the term to mean any worker involved in carrying out God’s work in an era. This substitution of definitions is significant. It enables this dissenter to avoid the substantive meaning associated with the term “the minister of the age” as presented and expounded by the co-workers and reduce the issue to mere semantics. By this means the readers of his articles can be easily misled. The author of this dissenting article is an academic by training and no doubt understands that definitions of terms are important. It is easy to misrepresent others by substituting one’s own definition of a term.

The implication in the dissenting writing that these terms have only been used recently is also misleading. The term “the vision of the age” comes from the title of a book containing Brother Lee’s fellowship with the elders and co-workers in Taipei in 1986. Concerning the points discussed in this article, we highly recommend *The Vision of the Age*, which is a record of Brother Lee’s fellowship at that time. That fellowship was itself based on a word by Brother Nee given to the co-workers in Shanghai in 1948 in which he spoke of “the ministry of the age.” Brother Nee’s fellowship is recorded on pages 260-261 of volume 57 of *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*. In fact, as has been shown emphatically elsewhere, the dissenters do not “share the same vision,” particularly as it is related to the practicality of the Body of Christ.

Furthermore, to say that the three terms—“the vision of the age,” “the ministry of the age,” and “the minister of the age”—

are conceptually distinct is very misleading. Each of the succeeding expressions in this list is defined in terms of those that precede it. To speak about them in isolation is to miss their true significance, deny their interdependence, and undermine the revelation that the Lord has one move carried out by one New Testament ministry under one vision through one leadership. Therefore, in this article we will consider the vision of the age, the ministry of the age, and the minister of the age and the relationship among these three. Based on those considerations we can then evaluate the validity of the co-workers' fellowship as opposed to the dissenting writer's decision to "reject the idea" of a "singular" minister of the age.

THE VISION OF THE AGE

The Bible reveals that vision is crucial. Why? Because vision governs and controls both our living and our service as believers (Prov. 29:18; Acts 26:19).

Prov. 29:18a – Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint...

Acts 26:19 – Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly ¹vision.

fn. 26:19¹ – Not a doctrine, a theory, a religious creed, or any theology, but a heavenly vision, in which the apostle saw the divine things concerning the dispensing of the Triune God into His chosen, redeemed, and transformed people. All his preaching in this book and his writing in his fourteen Epistles, from Romans through Hebrews, are a detailed description of this heavenly vision seen by Paul.

The Israelites first received the pattern on the mount from God before they built the tabernacle. We must first have a vision before we can obey it. Paul said, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19).

Some people have a fleshly vision, but we must have a heavenly vision. Before the Lord, we must be clear about the pattern that is according to God’s eternal plan. All the men whom God greatly used in the past had a vision. We must first have a vision before we can become useful. Joseph’s dream was his vision, and his dream was fulfilled in the end. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 41, p. 59)

...Paul told King Agrippa, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19). Paul did not disobey the heavenly vision which he had received. Vision keeps us. Vision strengthens us. The barking cannot affect us because we have seen something so real. I hope that all of us will see a vision of the real oneness in this universe. If we see such a vision, we will not be distracted by anything.... (*The Intrinsic View of the Body of Christ*, p. 89)

In Acts 26:19 Paul told King Agrippa that he “was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.” Paul could not be disobedient to what he had seen. His commission was

according to his vision. What you are going to do for the Lord must be according to what you have seen of the Lord. Because you have seen something of the Lord, you have to do something for the Lord according to what you have seen. Thus, the commission is according to the vision, and the vision creates the commission. (*A Young Man in God's Plan*, p. 34)

“Where there is no vision, the people run wild” (Prov. 29:18, Heb.). For us to run a straight course we need a vision. If the vision is clear, we shall not be misled.... (*Life Messages*, vol. 1, p. 133)

...As Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no vision, the people run wild” (Heb.). A vision controls, but knowledge does not. It is not enough to know that Christ is life. You need to see this as a vision which governs your life. (*Life Messages*, vol. 1, p. 361)

What our vision is governs our Christian life and service. Our living and our service can only come up to the level of our vision.

Furthermore, vision is the source of the practical one accord. From the time of Martin Luther, throughout the history of the Lord's recovery, as the unveiling of the divine revelation has advanced, some of the Lord's people have not responded to the Lord's move. Spontaneously, they are not in one accord with those who are following the Lord's present recovery.

Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint, because there is no one accord. It is true that many people love the Lord and serve God, but everyone has his opinion and his own vision. As a result, there is no way to have the one accord. This is the reason that Christianity has become so weak. God's people are divided and split apart. There are divisions everywhere. Although everyone says that he loves the Lord, there is no clear vision, and men are “carried about by every wind” (Eph. 4:14). (*The Vision of the Age*, p. 53)

Today we can be in one accord because we have only one vision and one view. We are all in this up-to-date, all-inheriting vision. We have only one viewpoint. We speak the same thing with one heart, one mouth, one voice, and one

tone, serving the Lord together. The result is a power that will become our strong morale and our impact. This is our strength. Once the Lord's recovery possesses this power, there will be the glory of increase and multiplication. Today our situation is not yet to that point; it is not yet at the peak. Although we do not have many major contentions, we do have some small complaints and criticisms. These things lower our morale. (*The Vision of the Age*, p. 54)

Recently I have felt the importance of the one accord. As long as we have different views on a minor point, we cannot have the one accord. This is the reason that in this training, right from the beginning, I spoke concerning the vision in the Lord's recovery. I believe all the brothers and sisters love the Lord, and all of us want to be in one accord, but if our vision is not up to date, it is impossible for us to be one. (*The Vision of the Age*, p. 71)

...Throughout the last sixteen centuries, many lovers of the Lord were raised up, yet they were not able to be in one accord. The reason is not that there was sin or evil among them, but that the vision each held was different in degree. Each remained in the degree to which they saw the various visions. Because the degree of the visions they saw was different, spontaneously there was no one accord. (*The Vision of the Age*, p. 77)

The term "the vision of the age" has its basis in the progressive revelation in the Bible. In the Bible, all of the truths—concerning God Himself, His salvation, His purpose, etc.—are revealed in a progressive way. The divine revelation that is unveiled in a particular age becomes the vision of that age, governing the life and service of the Lord's seekers.

Every Bible reader should know one more thing: The Bible is God's revelation handed to us in many portions and in many ways (Heb. 1:1). God grants us revelation not only in many portions but in many ways, and every time He grants us a new revelation, it is more advanced than the old ones. We have to find the advance of God's truth through the Bible. This is not to say that the revelation of the Bible is incomplete. God's revelation is contained in the entire Bible and is complete. However, this revelation is progressive. In the first stage God

revealed Himself a certain way. In the second stage more of His revelation was added to the first. In the next stage more revelations were added. This is true in every successive stage, all the way until completion. We cannot say that God's revelation is imperfect in any of the stages. However, when compared to the total revelation, each revelation is incomplete. God's revelation to Abraham was perfect at his time. But when we view it in the light of the total revelation today, we realize that the revelation to Abraham was not adequate. We have to learn to trace God's revelation through Adam, Noah, Abraham, the children of Israel, Moses, etc., in a full and complete way. His revelation is always progressive. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 54, p. 141)

In reading the Bible, we find that God's revelation is always progressive and advancing. If we only pay attention to ultimate absolutes when reading the Bible and fail to see that revelation is progressive, we will not be able to keep up with God's way. God's revelation is progressive. The offerings in Genesis were less profound than the offerings in Exodus, while the offerings in Leviticus were deeper than those in Exodus. This is one example of progression. All the revelation in the Bible is progressive. If we put all the advancing stages together, we have a complete picture. The absolutes in the Bible are the sum totals of the individual advancements. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 55, pp. 249-250)

...We have to see that in every age, God gives only one vision to man. In Adam is seen God's redemption. In Abel is seen God's way of redemption. In Enosh is seen man's need for God and man's calling upon Him to enjoy His riches. In Enoch is seen a redeemed one walking with God on the pathway of redemption. In Noah is seen one who walked with God and worked with God to build the ark to meet the need of that generation.

Then in Abraham is seen God's calling, God's promise, justification by faith, the living by faith, and the living in fellowship with God. In Isaac is seen the inheriting of grace and the rest and enjoyment. In Jacob is seen God's selection, the transformation in life, and the maturity in life. In Joseph is seen the reigning aspect of the maturity in life. Following this, we see different things in Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and the

judges. In Samuel we see the voluntarily consecrated Nazarite replacing the ordained priests, ending the age of the judges, and bringing in the kingdom age. (*The Vision of the Age*, p. 11)

The divine revelation in the Bible is progressive. In Genesis 1 we have a history of God's creation, but in that chapter we cannot see much of the divine revelation. Of course, there is some revelation there. For instance, verse 1 says, "In the beginning God created...." The Hebrew word for "God" here is *Elohim*, which means the "faithful, mighty One." From this word we can realize that God is faithful and also mighty. Furthermore, this word, a proper noun, is not singular but plural; however, the predicate "created" is singular. This is an indication that God is triune, three-one. This surely is something of the divine revelation that progresses throughout the Bible until the last chapter of Revelation....

In particular, Paul completed the word of God in regard to the mystery of God, which is Christ (Col. 2:2), and the mystery of Christ, which is the church (Eph. 3:4). In Colossians 1:27 he says, "To whom God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." There is not such a word in Genesis or in the Psalms or fully in the four Gospels. This is an example of the fact that the divine revelation in the Bible is progressive and that it is not completed until the end of Revelation. (*Life-study of Psalms*, pp. 349-350)

The divine revelation in the Holy Scriptures is progressive, from the creation of man in God's image in the first chapter of Genesis, through many processes in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, to the consummation of the New Jerusalem in the last two chapters of Revelation. Thousands of things are covered in the Bible. The first thing is God's creation of the heavens and the earth, and the last thing is the New Jerusalem. Between these two ends, the divine revelation goes along with the course of human history. (*Life-study of Proverbs*, p. 2)

The revelations in the Bible are progressive. Most of the revelations are sown as seeds in Genesis, they are developed little by little in the succeeding books, and they consummate in Revelation. We may say that in Genesis we have the seeds

and in Revelation we have the harvest.... (*The Ultimate Significance of the Golden Lampstand*, p. 19)

Even the revelation of God, Christ, and the Spirit is progressive.

Phil. 1:19 – For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the ⁴Spirit of Jesus Christ.

fn. 1:19⁴ – The revelation in the Bible concerning God, Christ, and the Spirit is progressive. The Spirit is mentioned first as the Spirit of God, in relation to creation (Gen. 1:2). Then, He is mentioned as the Spirit of Jehovah, in the context of God’s relationship with man (Judg. 3:10; 1 Sam. 10:6); as the Holy Spirit, in relation to the conception and birth of Christ (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20); as the Spirit of Jesus, in relation to the Lord’s human living (Acts 16:7); as the Spirit of Christ, in relation to the Lord’s resurrection (Rom. 8:9); and here as the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of Jesus Christ is “the Spirit” mentioned in John 7:39. This is not merely the Spirit of God before the Lord’s incarnation but the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit with divinity, after the Lord’s resurrection, compounded with the Lord’s incarnation (humanity), human living under the cross, crucifixion, and resurrection. The holy anointing ointment in Exo. 30:23-25, a compound of olive oil and four kinds of spices, is a full type of this compound Spirit of God, who is now the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Here it is not the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7) or the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9) but the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Jesus is related mainly to the Lord’s humanity and human living; the Spirit of Christ is related mainly to the Lord’s resurrection. To experience the Lord’s humanity, as illustrated in 2:5-8, we need the Spirit of Jesus. To experience the power of the Lord’s resurrection, as mentioned in 3:10, we need the Spirit of Christ. In his suffering the apostle experienced both the Lord’s suffering in His humanity and the Lord’s resurrection. Hence, the Spirit to him was the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the compound, all-inclusive, life-giving Spirit of the Triune God. Such a Spirit has, and even is, the bountiful supply for a person like the apostle, who

was experiencing and enjoying Christ in His human living and resurrection. Eventually, this compound Spirit of Jesus Christ becomes the seven Spirits of God, who are the seven lamps of fire before God's throne to carry out His administration on earth for the accomplishing of His economy concerning the church, and who are the seven eyes of the Lamb for the transfusing of all that He is into the church (Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6).

Just as the revelation in the Bible is progressive, so the recovery of the revelation in the Bible is progressive. Beginning from the time of Martin Luther and the recovery of the truth of justification by faith, the recovery of the divine revelation has progressed to what we see today.

...We can see that the discovery of God's truth is progressive; the more it advances, the more complete it becomes. By the end of the nineteenth century, almost all of the truths had been recovered. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 11, p. 854)

From these glimpses into the past we can see that the revelation of the Bible is progressive. The same is true with regard to the recovery of the Bible. Martin Luther's revelation was only to a certain point. Gradually, more and more has been uncovered and recovered. Our vision today is the most far-reaching, because we stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before. Edison is regarded as the father of electricity, but what we know today about electricity goes far beyond Edison's knowledge. The recovery of the truth, like the advances in science, builds upon the past. (*Life Messages*, vol. 2, p. 271)

From the Reformation in the time of Martin Luther, throughout the centuries one Bible expositor after another was raised up to unravel some of the biblical truths. However, the degree of the unraveling was very limited. This situation lasted for about four centuries, beginning from the time of Luther, through the time of Zinzendorf, and proceeding to the previous century, the nineteenth century. In the 1820s, the Lord raised up the Brethren in England. Once they were raised up, the light of the truths flooded like a waterfall. From that time onward, the Bible was formally opened to us. We thank

and praise the Lord for this! (*The All-inclusiveness and Unlimitedness of Christ*, pp. 42-43)

Although the Bible cannot be improved, the truth in the Bible is progressive, and the recovery of the divine truths in the Bible is even more progressive. Four hundred years ago, very few of the truths in God's Word had been recovered, but this is not so today. The recovery of the truths is richer now than it was just twenty years ago. This does not mean that the Bible changes or that we change the Bible, for no one has the right to do that. It means that the Lord is moving on in the recovery of His truths. (*Life-study of Revelation*, p. 270)

Through the labor of our senior brothers, Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, we have received a spiritual inheritance of all of the crucial revelations in the Bible that have been opened to the Lord's seekers in the last twenty centuries. But that is not all. Brother Nee and Brother Lee stood on the shoulders of those who had gone before to see more.

...In my entire life, I have never met a Christian who can compare with Brother Nee. I received the greatest and the highest help from him. He picked up good and helpful things from nearly every denomination, from every kind of Christian practice, and from all the seeking saints throughout the history of the church, and he passed them on to us. The first time I stayed with him I realized that he was standing on the shoulders of many who had gone before him. (*The History of the Church and the Local Churches*, p. 36)

Our burden in the Lord's recovery is to minister the Triune God as life and everything to us so that we may enjoy all that He is. Concerning this, we stand on the shoulders of the great teachers of the Bible who have gone before us. We have learned much from the experiences of others. We have studied church history, biographies, and the most important writings of the great teachers from the early centuries until the present. All this has been very helpful to us. Of course, we have also studied the Bible for ourselves. Therefore, we surely know where we are, and we have the assurance regarding the accuracy of whatever the Lord has led us to say in the ministry. (*Life-study of First John*, p. 279)

After the completion of the book of Revelation and beginning in the second century, the fathers of the church began to study the entire Bible. They were real scholars. They saw that God is triune, and they used this term to describe God. Throughout the centuries, many scholars have studied the Bible. Today we have inherited the best interpretations of the Bible, and we are standing on the shoulders of many who have gone before us. (*The Central Line of the Divine Revelation*, p. 11)

In 1928 in Shanghai, Brother Nee had a Bible study on the book of Revelation, and he gave me a draft of the notes when I joined the Lord's work in 1933. Then in 1976, in Anaheim, California, I held a training on the Life-study of Revelation. Today in the Recovery Version of the New Testament, the notes related to the prophecies are extracts obtained through my study of the writings of Darby, Pember, Govett, Panton, and Brother Nee. These notes are very clear and transparent. Hence, our knowledge concerning the biblical prophecies has a solid foundation; it did not come out of our own imagination, nor is it our original, unique creation. Rather, what we see is an advancement that we made by standing on the shoulders of those who were before us. (*The Up-to-Date Presentation of the God-ordained Way and the Signs Concerning the Coming of Christ*, p. 64)

The Bible has been studied, taught, and interpreted for nearly twenty centuries by thousands of teachers. We thank God for this. What they have seen we inherit, so today we are standing on the shoulders of all the foregoing teachers of the Bible. In this sense, we can "touch the heavens" easier than they could. Today the Bible is open to us, from the first page to the last page. It is as clear as crystal. I am burdened and trying to release what we have seen in the past seventy years in a brief and crystallized way. (*The Triune God's Revelation and His Move*, p. 2)

...We are standing on the shoulders of many who have gone before us and have helped us to see more. They were our "ladders" and still are, so we have been unveiled to see some things which they never saw. (*The Spirit with Our Spirit*, p. 119)

...In your study of the Old Testament, the most basic books are those of the Pentateuch. Even if you cannot study them by yourself, you have to thoroughly read through the Life-study messages on these five books. During the past decades, I have done my best to thoroughly present to you the riches in these five books. I am standing on the shoulders of my predecessors in order to advance further. All the things presented are reliable and real. All you have to do is to dive into them. (*The Vision of the Divine Dispensing and Guidelines for the Practice of the New Way*, p. 86)

Putting aside the riches of Brother Nee and the messages I have given, some among us have gone to the books of Christianity looking for some material to preach. This is really foolish. We have obtained the riches among us by standing on the shoulders of our predecessors, yet today some want to go and search for something under the feet of our predecessors. What a pity this is! Since we are all human, of course we prefer to speak our own messages. However, we need to see what marvelous riches the Lord has given us and that what He wants us to preach is His economy only. (*Speaking for God*, pp. 108-109)

The vision of the age refers to the governing vision that is the level or stage to which the revelation or the recovery of the revelation contained in the Bible has progressed. It does not negate what was seen in previous ages, but inherits from and builds upon the visions of those ages.

THE MINISTRY OF THE AGE

The ministry of the age, as Watchman Nee defined it, refers to the service that carries out what the Lord wants to accomplish in a given age.

...The Old Testament is filled with different kinds of ministries. In every age there is the ministry of that age. These ministries of the ages are different from the local ministers. Luther was a minister of his age. Darby was also a minister of his age. In every age the Lord has special things that He wants to accomplish. He has His own recoveries and His own works to do. The particular recovery and work that He does in one age is the ministry of that age.

Forsaking the Past Ministries

Jonathan stood between Saul and David. He was one man standing between two ministries. He should have followed the second ministry. However, because Jonathan's relationship with the first ministry was too deep, he could not disentangle himself. In order to catch up with the ministry of the age, there is the need for us to see the vision. Michal was married to David, yet she did not see anything. She only saw David's condition before God, and she could not tolerate it. As a result, she was left behind (2 Sam. 6:16, 20-23).

All Being a Matter of God's Mercy

It is God's mercy that a person can see and come into contact with the ministry of that age. Yet it is altogether a different thing for a man to take up the courage to forsake the past ministry. It is a precious thing to see, and it is a blessed thing to come into contact with something. Yet whether or not one can set aside his past ministry is entirely up to God's mercy. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 57, pp. 260-261)

If we desire our service to the Lord to count in the furtherance of the Lord's recovery, it must be up to the standard of the present vision brought in through the up-to-date flow of the Spirit. If it is not, our service will not satisfy God's present need.

Here is a basic principle: If we do what God wants to do in our generation, we will get the flow of the Spirit. If, however,

we always hold on to our past and demand that God do according to what we rank as important and desirable, we will not get the flow of the Spirit. It was all right to be a Martin Luther in the sixteenth century, but it would be insufficient just to be a Martin Luther in 1950. It was all right to be a Madame Guyon in the Medieval Age, but it would be insufficient just to be a Madame Guyon in 1950. It was all right to be a Wesley in the eighteenth century, but it is inadequate to be a Wesley in 1950. It was all right to be a Darby in 1828, but it is insufficient to be a Darby in 1950. God is ever pressing onward, and every instrumentality fulfills its function for the church. The flow of the Spirit in the church is always going forward.

Here many people have a basic weakness; that is, they do not recognize the flow of the Spirit in the church. In the church there have been many spiritual giants who have brought about many spiritual things. Today we are heirs to their riches. Saints like Martin Luther, Madame Guyon, John Nelson Darby, Evan Roberts, and Mrs. Penn-Lewis all left us with some spiritual wealth. We cannot thank and praise the Lord enough for this. Yet today even if we should succeed in being a Martin Luther, a Madame Guyon, a Darby, a Roberts, or a Mrs. Penn-Lewis, we would still be a failure because we would not have seen the central point—the flow of the Spirit. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 55, pp. 245-246)

In reviewing the turmoil among us in the 1980s in a personal fellowship with a group of elders from Canada, Brother Lee identified five intrinsic problems in the Lord's recovery—not recognizing God's speaking, not recognizing the leadership, trying to do one's own work within the recovery, our practice of the Lord's recovery not being strong in the basic truths, and not caring for the discipline in turning away from the troublemakers causing division (see *The Problems Causing the Turmoils in the Church Life*, pp. 16-19). It is significant that the first of these is not recognizing God's speaking. Recognizing God's speaking is crucial, because God moves by his speaking.

...God is not the God of yesterday or the God of tomorrow; He is the God of today. Every day God is advancing, moving on. Therefore, we need to be open to God's speaking today.

God's speaking is His going on. (*Life-study of 2 Corinthians*, p. 133)

God is speaking, and His speaking is for His moving. He moves by His speaking. (*The Triune God's Revelation and His Move*, p. 11)

...If God is living, He must certainly speak. If He is real, His speaking testifies His reality. If He is moving, He will move by speaking. If He is working, He will surely work by speaking. (*Life-study of Hebrews*, p. 17)

Because God's move is always advancing, so His speaking is always advancing. To be in His up-to-date move, we must be in His up-to-date speaking, that is, in the vision of the age.

...If we do not go along with the tide of the Spirit in this age, however, we will become dropouts. Time does not wait for us. This [is] why the New Testament tells us to redeem the time (Eph. 5:16). The older ones are more useful, but they have to go along with the present advance of the Lord's recovery. (*Elders' Training, Book 9: The Eldership and the God-ordained Way (1)*, p. 115)

Thus, to be in the ministry of the age, we must serve according to the vision of the age in the present flow of the Spirit according to the up-to-date speaking of God. In this ministry there are two parts. First, the Lord raises up a particular man through whom he releases the vision of the age. Then, he raises up many others to enter into the vision and to carry it out. God's desire is that all His people would be such ones. Those who do are the overcomers.

THE MINISTER OF THE AGE

The particular man through whom the vision of the age is released is “the minister of the age.” As Brother Nee pointed out, Martin Luther and John Nelson Darby were ministers of their respective ages. Furthermore, the two ministries between which Jonathan stood were with particular ministers—Saul and David. Brother Lee spoke of the vision of the age as the blueprint and of the person through whom the vision of the age was opened up as the master builder, strongly pointing out that there is only one such blueprint and one such master builder in every age. Brother Lee then applied these two matters to correct the practice of some in the Lord’s recovery to preach and publish their own messages.

There is only one blueprint and one master builder in the proper, correct building. The only master builder is the architect who has the blueprint in his hand. This is true in every age. The Lord issues the blueprint, the revelation, and the utterance, and through one man, He supervises and completes the building work. All those who do not build, speak, or serve according to the blueprint released by the Lord through that man are void of light and revelation and are not serving according to the vision. Today in the Lord’s recovery, some are preaching and publishing messages. The portions in their messages that impart light, revelation, and the life supply invariably derive their source from this ministry in the Lord’s recovery. Other than those portions, there is no revelation or vision in their writings. (*The Vision of the Age*, p. 30)

To say that there is a unique minister of the age who is the one used by God to present the vision of the age does not negate the truth that there are many ministers (2 Cor. 3:6) participating in the service of the one New Testament ministry (Acts 1:17, 25; 2 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 4:12; 1 Tim. 1:12). In fact, the article “The Content of the Vision of the Age” in *The Ministry Magazine* affirms this truth:

We are here in the church life, and this ministry of the age is being carried out through us. (Benson Phillips, “The

Content of the Vision of the Age”, *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 6, August 2003, p. 36)

Had the term “minister of the age” been defined as anyone participating in carrying out the ministry of the age, then all of the saints who have been perfected “unto the work of the ministry” (Eph. 4:12), who are standing with the Lord according to the vision of the age, would be “ministers of the age”. That, however, is not the meaning of the term as the co-workers defined and used it. The term “minister of the age” was presented with a specific denotation and to reinterpret it is to deny the function of the five-talented members the Lord has given to His Body. In the co-workers’ usage, the minister of the age is not just a person serving according to the vision of the age; he is the person the Lord uses to bring the vision of the age to His church, the person through whom the recovery of the vision advances.

... in every age there is a particular vision. This vision is released not through many persons but through one person who is the minister of that age. There is the vision of the age, and the one who receives this vision becomes the minister of the age. All the others who are with him are led through this one, and the vision is released to them. Then, all together, they speak out this one vision according to the leading of the one to whom the Lord has chosen to give the vision of the age. (Benson Phillips, “The Content of the Vision of the Age”, *The Ministry Magazine*, August 2003, vol. 7, no. 6, p. 34)

This understanding matches Brother Lee’s word on the vision of the age given in 1986. On pages 31 through 36 of *The Vision of the Age*, Brother Lee gave a brief sketch of the Old Testament showing that in every age there was a unique vision released through one man, starting from Adam and continuing through Abel, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, etc. He further demonstrated the same principle in the New Testament record of John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, Peter, and Paul. He then applied the same principle to the history of the Lord’s recovery beginning from the time of Martin Luther:

...At the time of the Reformation in the 1520s, when Luther was raised up, anyone who wanted to serve under a vision had to join himself to Luther. In the seventeenth century, anyone who wanted to serve under a vision had to join himself to Madame Guyon. In the eighteenth century, anyone who wanted to serve under a vision had to join himself to Zinzendorf. Even John Wesley received help from Zinzendorf. In the nineteenth century, J. N. Darby took the lead among the Brethren, and the vision was with him. In the twentieth century, the vision came to us. (*The Vision of the Age*, p. 27)

The author of "On 'The Ministry of the Age' and 'The Minister of the Age': What did Watchman Nee Teach?" completely ignores Brother Lee's fellowship in *The Vision of the Age*, as well as all of Brother Lee's speaking on the uniqueness of Watchman Nee's ministry. It appears to be his intent to pit Brother Nee against Brother Lee based on Brother Nee's use of an indefinite article. This is indefensible in just the same way it is to argue that "a life-giving Spirit" in 1 Corinthians 15:45b does not refer to the Spirit in the Godhead.⁵ It is noteworthy that in Brother Nee's identification of Luther as "a minister of the age" and of Darby as "a minister of the age," there is no overlap and no one else identified as a minister of their respective ages, even though there were many others serving and speaking contemporaneously with them. The point is that a minister of the age brings forth the vision of the age to govern the living and service of God's people in that age.

The release of the vision of the age is the sounding of the one trumpet to lead the Lord's people. The sounding of this trumpet must be unique and the one taking the lead to sound the trumpet is the minister of the age.

...God would not send out trumpeters to sound different trumpets for His army to fight the battle (1 Cor. 14:8; Num. 10:9; Judg. 7:18). This would be confusion. God is wiser than

⁵ For a discussion of this point from a linguistics perspective, see Kerry Robichaux's "No unique minister of the age? Is that what Watchman Nee taught?" at http://onepub.robichaux.name/2006/02/no_unique_minister_of_the_age.html.

this. He will raise up only one trumpeter to sound one calling, one voice, so that His people on the earth can march on. (*The Testimony of Jesus*, p. 99)

Why is this important? It is more than mere semantics. To designate a certain person as a “minister of the age” is to say that he is the person through whom the Lord’s up-to-date vision is being or has been released. As a result, that person and the vision released through him exercise a leadership role in advancing the Lord’s move in His recovery. The actual leadership in the Lord’s recovery rests not so much in a person, but more in a governing vision.

Since we have the up-to-date and ultimate vision, we should closely follow after it. We are absolutely not following a man; rather, we are following a vision. It is grossly wrong to say that we are following a certain person. We are following a vision that belongs to the present age. It is God’s consummate vision. (*The Vision of the Age*, p. 49)

Therefore, you are not following a man; rather, you are standing with the Lord’s ministry. You are following a vision, a vision that matches the age, a vision that inherits all that was in the past and a vision that is all-inclusive. It is up to date, and yet it builds on the past. If you remain in the book of Acts, you may have inherited everything prior to that time, but you are not up to date. Today as we stand here and ponder the revelations unveiled in the Lord’s recovery, as we read the publications that are released among us, we can see that they cover everything from the church to God’s economy to the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth. This is a bountiful and all-sufficient vision. If you remain in this vision, you are serving according to the vision. If you are not in this vision, you could still be an Apollos, expounding the Scriptures in a powerful way; you could still be a Barnabas, visiting the churches; you could still be a James, serving piously; and you could even be a Peter, who served as the leading apostle. However, you would not be in the vision. (*The Vision of the Age*, pp. 52-53)

It seems that those who seek to designate “many different ministers of the age” are seeking to establish their own credentials to lead the Lord’s recovery in a direction different

from the one delivered to us by Brother Nee and Brother Lee as the vision of the age. Actually, the dissenting ones have departed from this vision. One of the dissenting ones openly advocates returning to the model of the Reformation, a time when there were many different voices with different teachings contending with one another.

...Eventually the Lord raised up Martin Luther, along with many others of his generation. They might have held different views on some matters, but they complemented one another in the same way that Peter, Paul, and John had. (Frank Lin, "God Speaking in Many Portions and in Many Ways," *Fellowship Journal*, vol. 4, no. 7)

This one is willing to let history sort out the truth. To say this is to no longer stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before, but rather to abandon what the Lord has recovered among us of the practical oneness of the Body of Christ and to return to a pattern that has resulted in division after division. From as early as the first century, the failure of the church and even of the workers to enter into the vision of the age released through Paul became the cause of a general falling away and of division in the Body of Christ. This pattern has been repeated again and again throughout church history.

Why is it that there were divisions even from the time while the apostles, including Paul and John, were still here on this earth? Divisions began to take place from the last part of the first century and have continued to take place until the present century. There have been divisions after divisions, which have caused all kinds of confusion. What is the reason for all these divisions? They all came about simply because of different so-called ministries...

We need to be very clear that the foundation of all the denominations and the factor that produces each denomination are their different ministries. If all the Christians today would be willing for the Lord to take away their different ministries, they would all be one. The basic factor of all the divisions, their very root, is different ministries.... (*Elders' Training, Book 1: The Ministry of the New Testament*, p. 14)

We need to see this principle throughout the entire Christian era. All the troubles, divisions, and confusions came from the one source of the tolerance of different ministries. Many Christian teachers have known the peril of different ministries; nevertheless, they have tolerated them. There has been a tolerance of different ministries. In the Lord's recovery, for the long run, we should not believe that this kind of creeping in of the different ministries would never take place. Rather, we must be on the alert. Such a peril is ahead of us. If we are not watchful, if we are careless, in one way or another the enemy would creepingly use some means, some ways, to bring in different ministries. Such a thing would end the Lord's recovery. (*Elders' Training, Book 1: The Ministry of the New Testament*, p. 16)

Nevertheless, all of us need to realize that we are in the Lord's recovery. The first characteristic of the Lord's recovery is oneness. Once we lose the oneness, we are through. If we lose the oneness, we are no longer the Lord's recovery. Therefore, we need to see that there is a peril of different teachings and different opinions damaging the oneness. (*Elders' Training, Book 1: The Ministry of the New Testament*, p. 29)

There is no doubt that Brother Lee considered Watchman Nee to be the minister of the age. Brother Lee's concluding word in his biography of Watchman Nee says:

A GIFT OF THE AGE

I consider Watchman Nee to be a unique gift given by the Head to His Body for His recovery in this age. I fully respect him as such a gift. I have the full confidence and assurance that it was absolutely of the Lord that I followed this gift for the Lord's interest in His present move on this earth. I feel no shame whatsoever in saying that I followed a man—a man that was the unique gift and the seer of the divine visions in this age.

I am more than grateful to the Lord that immediately after being saved I was brought into such a profitable relationship with Watchman Nee and put into the closest relationship with him in the work of His recovery through so many events over a long period of time. The revelations concerning Christ, the church, the spirit, and life which I saw through Watchman

Nee, the infusions of life which I received from him, and the things concerning the work and the church which I learned from him will require eternity to evaluate their true worth. (*Watchman Nee—A Seer of the Divine Revelation in the Present Age*, p. 330)

In the same manner the co-workers and the saints in the Lord's recovery throughout the earth recognize Watchman Nee and Witness Lee as "ministers of the age" because of the dramatic advances in the unveiling of the divine revelation that came through them. Their ministry brought in the vision that matches the present age—the all-inheriting and all-encompassing vision of the complete divine revelation in the entire Bible.

...Their writings provide more unveiling, more revelation, and more truth. We all can testify that as we read their writings, there is some truth and revelation on every page. This is because these brothers were commissioned with the ministry of the age and they continued to see further as long as the Lord allowed them to remain on this earth.

...In the presence of the Lord, we all thank Him for His mercy in bringing us in contact with the ministry of these two brothers. This ministry is the vision of this age that God has given to His people. It is a great thing to recognize the vision, and it is a great thing to recognize the person whom the Lord has raised up to give such a vision. (Benson Phillips, "The Content of the Vision of the Age", *The Ministry Magazine*, August 2003, vol. 7, no. 6, p. 35)

Just consider a few items that the Lord recovered in both truth and practice through Brother Lee's ministry since he came to the United States in 1962:

- a. The human spirit mingled with the divine Spirit to be one spirit.
- b. The enjoyment of Christ through the exercise of the spirit.
- c. God's economy.
- d. The essential and economical Trinity for the dispensing of God into man.

- e. The all-inclusive Christ as the good land given to us as our portion for us to enter into and possess for the building of God's house and the establishment of His kingdom.
- f. The heavenly ministry of Christ.
- g. The all-inclusive Spirit as the consummation of the processed Triune God.
- h. The sevenfold intensified Spirit to produce the overcomers.
- i. God's complete salvation—judicial and organic.
- j. The life of the Triune God is dispensed into the tripartite man to save the believers organically and subjectively in this life through regeneration, sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification.
- k. The ground of locality for the practical expression of the universal Body of Christ.
- l. The experience of Christ as life for the building up of the church as the Body of Christ.
- m. The designation of Christ's humanity in resurrection.
- n. The New Jerusalem as the consummation of God's building.

In the latter stage of his ministry, Brother Lee's speaking continued to advance:

- a. The high peak of the divine revelation—God becoming man to make man God in life and nature but not in the Godhead.
- b. The divine-human incorporation.
- c. The crystallized significance of the incarnation, human living, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ.
- d. The full ministry of Christ in three stages—incarnation, inclusion, and intensification.
- e. The God-man living.
- f. The overcoming saints as Zion in Jerusalem.
- g. The God-ordained way to bear fruit through begetting, nourishing, perfecting, and building.
- h. The vital groups.

- i. The reality of the Body of Christ.
- j. A corporate living in conformity to the death of Christ for the manifestation of the resurrection life.
- k. Shepherding according to God as the service of the Body for the building up of itself in love.
- l. The blending of the Body of Christ through fellowship among the individual members, the churches, the elders, and the co-workers.

While Brother Lee was with us, the recovery of the divine revelation was continually advancing. Brother Lee himself testified that the recovery of the Lord's revelation concerning the divine economy was shown to Brother Nee and him progressively.

In 1962 I came to the United States and began the work of the Lord's recovery in this country. During the past thirty years there has been even further progress in the seeing of the divine revelation. On mainland China we did not emphasize the term *economy*. Instead of the word *economy*, Brother Nee used the word *plan*. In his books he used the term *God's eternal plan*; he never used the word *economy*. After coming to the United States, I did not have the thought of God's economy until 1964. In that year I spoke the messages published in the book *The Economy of God*. It was at that time that I began to use the word *economy*, which is the anglicized form of the Greek word *oikonomia*. Later, beginning from 1984, I began to stress God's dispensing for the accomplishment of God's economy. In 1990 I spoke strongly on the divine economy and the divine dispensing (see *A Deeper Study of the Divine Dispensing*, *The Economy and Dispensing of God*, and *The Divine Dispensing for the Divine Economy*, published by Living Stream Ministry). I say this to illustrate how the Lord has shown us the divine things in a progressive way. (*The Christian Life*, pp. 167-168)

Through Brother Lee, the vision in the Lord's recovery advanced to the stage of having a complete and panoramic view of God's economy from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation.

...Therefore, after my seeking before the Lord, I feel that this is a golden opportunity for us to focus on one matter—the

center of the Bible. This matter is the highest vision in the Bible; it is the vision that governs and controls us.

Paul said, “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19). What was the heavenly vision to which Paul referred? It has been at least seventy-three years now since Brother Nee was raised up by the Lord to speak for Him among us. During this period of time, not only our hearts but even our hands have never left the Bible. According to the number of pages we have touched, it is as if we have thoroughly handled a hundred Bibles. Moreover, we have many notes of what we have gained from our study of the Word. After seventy-three years, we may say that the Lord’s revelation among us has reached its peak with a consummation during the Chinese New Year’s conference last year. This consummation can be seen in the new hymn that I wrote: “What miracle! What mystery! / That God and man should blended be! / God became man to make man God, / Untraceable economy!” The heavenly vision which the Lord showed Paul was this economy, the New Testament economy, the eternal economy of God. This economy is the revelation of the entire New Testament. (*The Governing and Controlling Vision in the Bible*, pp. 7-8)

We have seen that the vision that governs and controls us in the Bible is the economy of God. The first step in God’s economy is God’s becoming flesh; after this there are the steps of Christ’s passing through human living, death on the cross, and resurrection; eventually, there will be the New Jerusalem. This is a comprehensive statement of God’s economy. Christ’s birth, His living on earth, His death in crucifixion, and His resurrection from death are all familiar terms in Christianity. Unfortunately, however, throughout church history over the last two thousand years, both the teaching ones and those who have received the teaching have only known about these terms. Few have entered deeply into their intrinsic significances. It was not until the time when the Lord raised up the recovery in China, beginning with Brother Nee, that the intrinsic significances of these matters were made known to us one by one. (*The Governing and Controlling Vision in the Bible*, p. 19)

EVALUATING THE DISSENTERS' CLAIMS AND ACCUSATIONS

In evaluating a claim that a particular person is “a minister of the age,” we must ask: In what way has that person substantially advanced the vision of the age? What truth has he recovered that has opened up a new realm for the believers' experience and/or practice?

Actually, if we know the Lord's way, we will realize that once the vision of the age is released, the Lord's interest turns to bringing all of His seekers into the seeing and experience of that vision. In the messages given during the resumption of his ministry, Watchman Nee stressed the matter of the Body of Christ very much. In the latter years of Brother Lee's ministry, the Body of Christ was also a matter of great emphasis. According to Brother Lee, “In Brother Nee the Lord's revelation and vision reached the Body of Christ” (*The High Peak of the Vision and the Reality of the Body of Christ*, p. 15). In the years following Brother Nee's imprisonment and martyrdom, Brother Lee saw further that the Body of Christ becomes a reality through the dispensing of Christ, through the economy of God, and through the high peak of the divine revelation, that is, God becoming man to make man God in life and nature but not in the Godhead. He left us with both a complete blueprint for the building up of the Body of Christ and clear guidelines for how the building of the Body can be accomplished.

Without any attribution or citation from the co-workers' speaking, the dissenters derisively accuse the co-workers of seeking to be a corporate “minister of the age” as “Brother ABCDE.” This is false. In fact, no such claim has been made by any co-worker either individually or collectively, nor has the term “Brother ABCDE” been used by the co-workers. Furthermore, this accusation is diametrically opposed to what the co-workers actually have spoken:

There is no successor to this wise master builder, but there is an open group of being-blended brothers who are absolutely consecrated to the Lord to continue the work begun by this

wise master builder. (Ron Kangas, “The Builders of the Divine Building, *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 150)⁶

There is nothing exclusive in this statement. It simply states a commitment to keeping the vision of the age as delivered to us through our Brother Witness Lee before the saints as the content of the speaking of the blending co-workers.

The dissenters also attack the speaking of Ed Marks when he said that with the departure of Brother Nee and Brother Lee, the responsibility for carrying out the vision of the age now rests with “Brother We,” meaning all of the saints in the Lord’s recovery:

At the end of the ages, the Lord has raised up our brothers as five-talented servants, so close to His coming, in order to perfect us to do what they do (Matt. 25:15-21; Eph. 4:11-12). The ministry of Brother Nee and Brother Lee is to raise up and perfect us as the one-talented ones. Their ministry was not to raise up another five-talented one. When reading the books of Brother Lee, there is the clear realization that he was a five-talented one. We are the one-talented ones. For us to do a successful work, we have to do the work of perfecting all the saints to do the work of ministry to build up the Body of Christ. If all the one-talented ones are perfected and become functioning members of the Body of Christ, the Lord will come back. This is the ministry that builds up the Body and perfects all the one-talented ones.

Brother Nee and Brother Lee have gone to be with the Lord; therefore, today in the Lord’s recovery it is now the time of “Brother We.” (Ed Marks, “The Ministry of the Age, the

⁶ On more than one occasion one of the dissenters claims that this statement was omitted from the printing of message 9 of the Winter 2005 Training on pages 121-123 of *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 10, no. 1. There are several issues here. Message 9 is printed on pages 205-229. It was also given by Ron Kangas who gave message 6, which does include the statement as we have quoted it on page 150. The dissenting writer obviously did not feel obligated to get the facts straight since he said, “...or words to that effect.” The audio tape of the message was and is available from Living Stream Ministry.

Vision of the Age, the Flow of the Age, and the Commission of the Age," *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 6, pp. 14-15)

In fact, this speaking matches both the realization and earnest desire of Brother Nee and Brother Lee. In these days the Lord desires that all of the saints in His recovery would rise up to enter into the revelation and vision released through Brother Nee and Brother Lee, particularly the high peak truths of the last phase of Brother Lee's ministry, the practice of the God-ordained way, and the organic shepherding for the building up of the Body of Christ. We should not waste our energy and the saints' time promoting this or that one as another "minister of the age." At the end of his ministry Brother Nee expressed his feeling that the Lord desired to turn the age from the age of spiritual giants to the age of the whole Body serving:

Today men always wait for ones with Paul's five talents to come along. But we may have to wait a hundred years before God will give us a great gift or a great ministry. We may have to wait decades before a teacher is raised up. The way today is the way of the whole Body serving.... If some five-talented ones are raised up, we praise the Lord for it. In terms of function and result in the work, the great gifts are surely good when they are coordinated together.... (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 57, p. 224)

...I believe that the age of giants is over in the church life. Perhaps in the next generation, the so-called "giants" that we have now will disappear altogether. Today is the end time for giants. What God wants today is the service of the whole Body. Today God forbids any member from becoming too strong. What He wants is a strong church. (*The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, vol. 62, p. 271)

The dissenters' demand that the co-workers identify a present "minister of the age" is misplaced. The real question is whether we have fully entered into the vision that the Lord has already given to us. If not, we should give ourselves:

- a. To closely follow the vision that has already been given to us (Acts 2:42a; 26:19; 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:10).

Acts 2:42a – And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles.

Acts 26:19 – Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

1 Tim. 4:6 – If you lay these things before the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, being nourished with the words of the faith and of the good teaching which you have closely followed.

2 Tim. 3:10 – But you have closely followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, long-suffering, love, endurance.

- b. To seek to enter into “the present truth,” the up-to-date vision released through the Lord’s ministry (Phil. 4:9; 1 Tim. 4:15; 2 Pet. 1:12).

Phil. 4:9 – The things which you have also learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace will be with you.

1 Tim. 4:15 – Practice these things; be in them, that your progress may be manifest to all.

2 Pet. 1:12 – Therefore I will be ready always to remind you concerning these things, even though you know them and have been established in the present truth.

- c. To exercise to come up to the standard of the up-to-date vision in speaking so that we may all speak the same thing in one accord (Rom. 15:6; 1 Cor. 1:10).

Rom. 15:6 – That with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Cor. 1:10 – Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

The building up of the reality of the Body of Christ through the saints arriving at the high peak of the divine revelation, through the God-man living, and through shepherding according to God to consummate the New Jerusalem was the charge our Brother Lee left with us. To date we are still short in these matters. Not

only the saints in the churches, but even some of the elders and workers among us have been slow to pick up the high peak truths and the practice of the church life according to the God-ordained way.

...This is the general outline of God's economy, and the crystallized significance of its every step has been covered in the previous chapter. All the brothers and sisters among us, particularly the elders and co-workers, need to learn to speak the crystallization of God's economy. (*The Governing and Controlling Vision in the Bible*, p. 38)

Some co-workers and elders often would say to me, "I don't dare to speak about these high truths because the believers whom I am serving cannot understand them according to their present spiritual condition." My reply is: "It is not that they cannot understand, but it is that you cannot speak clearly." It is only after we have known, experienced, and gained Christ that we can speak to others, according to the new language in the Lord's recovery, concerning this Christ whom we have gained. We must learn to use the new language to speak the new culture in the divine and mystical realm. Then people will listen to us with great pleasure and will definitely understand the things we speak. It is only by this way that we are qualified to be co-workers and elders. Otherwise, we are outdated in the Lord's move in the present age. (*How to Be a Co-worker and an Elder and How to Fulfill Their Obligations*, pp. 16-17)

Many seeking Christians, dear brothers, in the denominations are seeking something higher, deeper, and richer than what they have heard and possess. They are tired of shallow things. If we tell them the high-peak truths, they will wake up. At first, they may oppose but gradually they will find the truth. Then what shall we do? We have to learn the high peaks of God's present revelation and learn to speak these things. We have to go, and we have to speak. I believe that the high peaks of today's revelation will become the hottest market among today's Christians.

Of course, to do such a high mission work, we have to be prepared to encounter all kinds of difficulties. But I took Psalm 84:6 as a blessing in these kinds of hardships: "Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a place of springs;

yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings” (Heb.). The valley of Baca is the valley of tears. The ones mentioned in Psalm 84 passed through a way full of tears, sufferings, but they made it a place of springs. The brothers who went to Russia can testify that they took a pathway through the valley of tears, but their stay there for the past four years has made Russia a place of springs with the early rains of blessing. I would encourage all of us to pick up this high commission: to go out with the high peaks of the divine revelation and with God’s up-to-date vision to move with God for His high peaks of the divine revelation that will consummate His eternal economy. (*The Triune God’s Revelation and His Move*, p. 98)

We should not be those who covet or vie for a name or position. Rather we should press on to enter into the high peak of the divine revelation and the practice of the God-ordained way and the organic shepherding to build up the Body of Christ to consummate this age and bring the Lord back. This is the Lord’s unique commission to His recovery today.