

A FAITHFUL WORD

SERIES FIVE

“In the Sleight of Men”

**A  
PATTERN  
OF  
TWISTING**  
*(Part 2)*

**Book  
2**

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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Unless otherwise indicated, the articles in this book are co-authored by Bill Buntain with Dan Sady and Dan Towle.

Boldface type has been used for emphasis in quoted passages and is not in the original quoted material unless otherwise noted.

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## PREFACE

Eph. 4:14 – That we may be no longer little children tossed by waves and carried about by every wind of teaching in the sleight of men, in craftiness with a view to a system of error.

In 2005 a small group of dissenting brothers who fashion themselves “Concerned Brothers” (CBs) launched an anonymously operated Web site to attack the truth and the brothers serving in the ministry in the Lord’s recovery. The contributors to this site twist and misrepresent the co-workers’ words to give their own contentions an appearance of credibility. This alone should cause the saints in the Lord’s recovery to reject the CBs’ writings as works of darkness that are unworthy of their consideration.

The articles in this book illustrate how various contributors to the CBs have manufactured meanings in the co-workers’ words through distortions of context and outright fabrication. This book contains articles addressing the following points:

- The false claim that Ron Kangas said, “Witness Lee is the acting God,” when what he actually said merely affirmed Brother Lee’s definition and application of the term to a person who is one with God and represents Him in carrying out His interest on the earth.
- The false claim that Witness Lee’s statement of regret for mistakes that had been made in the past concerning receiving other believers according to Romans 14 should be understood as a general apology for offending other Christians, for condemning the system of Christianity, and for taking the way of litigation to defend his ministry, when what he said was entirely consistent with what he had always taught—that although the churches in the Lord’s recovery stand apart from the organized system of Christianity, we recognize and receive all genuine believers in Christ in fellowship.

- The false claim that Benson Phillips said we should make receiving other churches a pre-condition to receiving other believers, when what he actually said was that in the Lord's recovery we should receive both churches and believers in the one fellowship of the Body of Christ.

In the 1980s, Dr. J. Gordon Melton noted that an author of a book attacking the ministry of Witness Lee had "...fairly consistently taken statements, usually individual sentences from the middle of paragraphs, out of context and made them to appear to say things that they were not even talking about." It is disturbing to see brothers who have been among us employing the same methods to assail the co-workers and to manufacture support from the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee for what are in fact deviations from their teaching and pattern. Such twistings are surely in the principle of the "sleight of men" "with a view to a system of error" (Eph. 4:14) to carry the saints in the churches away from the central lane of God's eternal economy.

## **“WITNESS LEE WAS THE ACTING GOD” — WHAT DID RON KANGAS REALLY SAY?**

Three recent articles posted by those who call themselves “Concerned Brothers” (CBs) condemn the expression “the acting God” used by Witness Lee and more recently by Ron Kangas in message 9 of the 2005 winter training. The CBs falsely claim that Ron Kangas declared that “Witness Lee was<sup>1</sup> the acting God.” This purported quote for which the CBs censure Brother Ron is a blatant fabrication. Furthermore, instead of giving any context for our brothers’ use of the term “the acting God” or their carefully presented biblical underpinning of their use of that term, the CBs decry it as an example of teachings “which are offensive to believers and appear to justify the ‘cult’ label.”

Because the biblical principle expressed in our brothers’ use of the term “the acting God” is so critical and fundamental to our Christian life and work, it is important to see their words in their original context and to understand the truth they convey. The term “the acting God,” which Witness Lee applied to Samuel and Elisha in the Old Testament as a type of what the believers in Christ in the New Testament age can and should be and which Ron Kangas echoed in his message, is very much in harmony with a key principle in the New Testament, namely that God accomplishes His desire to be expressed and represented by man in the principle of incarnation. This principle is clearly evident in Paul’s word that God was entreating the believers through the ministers of the new covenant as His ambassadors.

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<sup>1</sup> The articles on the CBs’ site are inconsistent in misquoting Ron Kangas’ word. Some of the CB articles say “was” and some say “is”. Both are false, but since the article which uses the present tense arrives at its perverse interpretation via an even more convoluted twisting of Brother Ron’s word, this article will focus on the claim that he said, “Witness Lee was the acting God.”

Based on these considerations, it becomes clear that either the CBs do not understand or they choose not to stand for these fundamental biblical truths. Whichever is the case, their public attempt to discredit one of the co-workers by fabricated quotes and false implications (transmuting New Testament truth into implications of heresy) is shameful and should discredit them in the eyes of all of those who care for the truth.

### Brother Lee's Use of the "The Acting God"

Brother Lee first used the term "the acting God" in the Life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel. There he said [note: throughout these excerpts all emphases have been added]:

The picture portrayed in these verses [1 Sam. 7:1-5] is very beautiful. Here we have a people returning to God and a man—Samuel—who was one with God on earth. We may say that Samuel was **the acting God** on earth. At least we may say that Samuel was the representative of the very God in heaven to rule over His people on earth. As such a person, Samuel began to minister. (*Life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel*, pp. 27-28)

Samuel was faithful to God to do according to what was in God's heart and mind. His whole being and person, not just his doing, living, and work, were according to God. Samuel's being and God's heart were one. For this reason it is not too much to say that Samuel, a man according to God, was the acting God on earth. God's mind was Samuel's consideration. He had no other thought, consideration, or thinking. His living and working were for the carrying out of whatever was in God's heart. As a consequence, Samuel was one who turned the age. (*Life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel*, pp. 28-29)

In this replacing priesthood, Samuel anointed Saul and David to be kings (10:1; 16:1, 13) as God ordained that he should go before His anointed continually (2:35b) to supervise the king, observing what the king was doing. This indicates that Samuel, **the acting God** on earth, was greater than the king. Samuel could be qualified to such an extent because for many years God had been perfecting him for His economy, not for anything else. (*Life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel*, pp. 29-30)

Fourth, Samuel ministered as a judge. A priest served God, a prophet spoke for God, and a judge carried out God’s governmental administration. Samuel stood on the earth to be **the acting God—the one representing God and acting for Him—in his priesthood, prophethood, and judgeship.** In the church life in the Lord’s recovery today, we have the priesthood, the prophethood, and the kingship. As a result, things are not upside-down but right-side-up. (*Life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel*, p. 32)

At the end of his ministry, by the time that Saul was raised up to be the king in Israel (9:3—10:27), Samuel had reached the highest position. We may say that in the whole universe, there was only one who was above him, and that one was God. We may even say that, as God’s representative, Samuel was the acting God. God intended to move, to act, yet He needed a representative. Samuel thus became a prophet, a priest, and a judge. He was God’s oracle and God’s administration. As such, he was the acting God on earth. (*Life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel*, p. 43)

Saul disobeyed, offering up a sinful offering, yet he complained against Samuel that Samuel had not come at the appointed time. At that time Samuel was **the acting God.** Saul had an appointment with Samuel, but Saul did not have the freedom to do whatever he liked. He should have been subordinate to Samuel. Apparently, Samuel was mistaken in his delay, but Samuel’s delay exposed Saul. (*Life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel*, p. 63)

Brother Lee subsequently applied the term to Elisha as well:

## II. IN HIS MINISTRY ELISHA BEHAVING HIMSELF AS GOD’S REPRESENTATIVE ON THE EARTH

In his ministry Elisha the prophet, as the man of God, behaved himself as God’s representative, as the acting God, on the earth. As believers in Christ, we can be the same. (*Life-study of 1 and 2 Kings*, pp. 93-94)

In all of Brother Lee’s sharing it is clear that he was using the term “the acting God” to convey that these men, by their oneness with God and His heart, were His representatives on the earth. Because they were one with God and with His heart,

God could act through them to the extent that their acting was His acting.

### **Ron Kangas' Use of "The Acting God"**

The same emphasis is evident in Ron Kangas' speaking in the recent winter training entitled "The Crystallization-study of the Building of God." There he said:

If we would do the work of the divine building, we must be one with the wise master builder, who is **the acting God**. In the Life-study of 1 and 2 Samuel Brother Lee indicates that Samuel's heart was according to God's heart, that his being was one with God's being, and that Samuel, as one who represented God, was **the acting God** on earth (p. 28-29). The apostle Paul, as seen in 2 Corinthians and elsewhere, surely was **the acting God**, representing Him. (*The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 10, no. 1, January/February 2006, pp. 212-213)

That is the sum total of Brother Ron's speaking concerning "the acting God" in the message cited by the CBs. He did not say, as the dissenters claim, "Witness Lee is [or was] the acting God." That statement is neither in the printed message, nor in the spoken message (LSM tape code W05 BLGT 09).

Brother Ron did not use the term "the acting God" in any sense of being deity. If anyone made such a claim, it would be ludicrous and blasphemous. Ron did not speak of a person usurping the position of God to act in His place, but rather of a person who is one with God to the extent that he represents God in caring for the accomplishment of His interest on the earth. In fact, Brother Ron's word echoed Brother Lee's ministry. By stripping the words of our brothers of any proper context or definition, the CBs attempt to scandalize these servants of our Lord in the sight of the saints.

### **The Principle of Incarnation**

To understand the truth behind the term "the acting God" we need a proper understanding of a fundamental principle of the New Testament—the principle of incarnation. The very first

chapter of the Bible records God’s desire to be expressed and represented by man (Gen. 1:26). This is the purpose of God in His creation of man.

How, then, does God realize His purpose in His creation of man? He does it through the principle of incarnation. The principle of incarnation is that God enters into man to become one with man, firstly by incarnating Himself in Christ as the unique God-man and then by reproducing the unique God-man Christ in many sons, so that He is their inward life and they express and represent Him in their outward living and work. Our brothers’ speaking concerning “the acting God” is based on this principle of incarnation.

First, God did a wonderful thing to make Himself one with man. Since that time, concerning His economy God would never do anything apart from man. He will never do anything merely by Himself. Without man, we may say that God is crippled; He cannot “walk” or do anything without man. God must do everything in the principle of incarnation. The Old Testament says Jehovah’s Spirit came upon the prophets (1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 19:20; 2 Chron. 20:14-15; Ezek. 11:5) or that the burden of Jehovah’s word came upon them (Zech. 12:1)... In His New Testament economy, apart from man, God cannot do anything. Even the all-inclusive death of Christ was accomplished by a God-man who died a vicarious death for us. The One who died on the cross was not only man but also God, not only God but also man. This is incarnation, and this is the incarnated One. (*The Practice of the Church Life according to the God-ordained Way*, pp. 102-103)

This is why we need much preparation to make ourselves one with the indwelling Triune God. Wherever we are and wherever we go, we should be able to say that we are one with God. Whenever we speak, we should speak in the principle of incarnation. We should not speak to others by ourselves, but we should speak together with our indwelling Lord. It is our speaking, yet the Lord speaks. This is according to what the apostle Paul expressed in 1 Corinthians 7. He gave his opinion (vv. 10, 12, 40), even though he said he did not have the Lord’s commandment (v. 25). Then eventually he said, “I think that I also have the Spirit of God” (v. 40). This shows

that he and God the Spirit spoke together. We should always practice this principle.

In the Old Testament the word of Jehovah came upon a prophet (Jer. 1:2; Ezek. 1:3), the prophet being simply the mouthpiece of God. But in the New Testament the Lord becomes one with His apostles, and they become one with Him; thus the two speak together. His word becomes their word, and whatever they utter is His word. This is the principle of incarnation. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, pp. 198-199)

In the Old Testament, when the prophets prophesied for God, their prophecies many times began with, "The word of the Lord came unto me" (Jer. 1:4; Ezek. 3:16; Isa. 38:4) or "Thus saith the Lord" (Isa. 7:7; Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 2:4). This indicates that the Lord was separate from the prophets. The word of Jehovah came objectively upon the speakers, and they declared that it was not their word but the Lord's. However, in 1 Corinthians 7:25 Paul said, "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my opinion as having received mercy of the Lord to be faithful;" and in giving his opinion he said, "But I think that I also have the Spirit of God" (7:40). Paul indicated that what he spoke was not a word from the Lord; it was his opinion. Yet in the giving of his opinion was the speaking of God. God lived in Paul and spoke in Paul's speaking, even in his opinion, because God had become one with Paul and had made Paul one with Him. While we are speaking, it is not only we but Christ, the embodiment of God, who speaks with us and speaks in our speaking. This is the principle of incarnation. (*The Experience and Growth in Life*, pp. 201-202)

### **Ambassadors to Represent Christ**

The Apostle Paul was one who lived and magnified Christ (Phil. 1:20-21) for the accomplishment of His ministry through the manifestation of the truth (2 Cor. 4:2). In 2 Corinthians 5:20 he clearly stated that his service as a minister of the new covenant was to be an ambassador representing Christ. There he said that God was entreating the Corinthian believers through the apostles as the ambassadors of Christ to be reconciled to God.

Phil. 1:20-21 – [20] According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. [21] For to me, to <sup>1</sup>live is Christ and to die is gain.

fn. 1:21<sup>1</sup> – Paul’s life was to live Christ. To him to live was Christ, not the law or circumcision. He would not live the law but would live Christ, not be found in the law but be found in Christ (3:9). Christ was not only his life but also his living. He lived Christ because Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20). He was one with Christ in both life and living. He and Christ had one life and one living. They lived together as one person. Christ lived within Paul as Paul’s life, and Paul lived Christ without as Christ’s living. The normal experience of Christ is to live Him, and to live Him is to magnify Him always, regardless of the circumstances.

2 Cor. 4:2 – But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of the <sup>2</sup>truth commending ourselves to every conscience of men before God.

fn. 4:2<sup>2</sup> – The truth is another expression for the word of God (John 17:17 and notes). It means the reality, denoting all the real things revealed in God’s word, which are mainly Christ as the reality of all the things of God. The manifestation of the truth refers to the apostles’ living of Christ. When they lived Christ, who is the truth (John 14:6), they manifested the truth. As Christ was lived out of them, the truth was manifested in them. By this, they commended themselves to every conscience of men before God. The apostles behaved themselves not in the way of adulterating the word of God but in the way of manifesting the truth for the shining of the gospel of the glory of Christ, by the excellent power of the priceless treasure, the very Christ who entered into them and became their content (v. 7) through the enlightenment of God’s shining (v. 6).

2 Cor. 5:20 – On behalf of Christ then we are <sup>1</sup>ambassadors, as God entreats you through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God.

fn. 5:20<sup>1</sup> – The apostles were commissioned with a definite ministry, to represent Christ to accomplish God's purpose.

For Paul to say that God was entreating the believers in Corinth through the apostles means that the apostles were one with God and with His desire to reconcile the believers to Himself. Thus, their word was God's word and God was speaking through them. In this sense they were the acting God.

In verses 18 through 20 Paul goes on to speak of the ministry of reconciliation: "But all things are of God, Who has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; how that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not accounting their offenses to them, and putting in us the word of reconciliation. On behalf of Christ, then, we are ambassadors, as God entreating through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God." We need to read these verses very carefully. The word "then" in verse 20 is a connecting word joining verse 20 with the preceding verses. According to verse 20, the ambassadors of Christ are one with God; they are like God, and they entreat as God. Their word is God's word, and what they do is God's doing. Furthermore, the words "on behalf of Christ" mean representing Christ. As those who represent Christ, the apostles were ambassadors of Christ. Today an ambassador is a person authorized to represent his government. In like manner, the apostles were authorized by Christ to represent Him to do the work of reconciliation.

Paul's composition in 5:20 is unusual. After saying "we are ambassadors," he says, "as God entreating through us." Paul seems to be saying, "We are ambassadors of Christ, and we are doing a reconciling work. This is like God entreating you through us. We are one with Christ and one with God. Christ is one with us, and God also is one with us. Therefore, God, Christ, and we, the apostles, are all one." The ministry of the new covenant is a ministry in which God, Christ, and the ministers are one.

Paul’s word in verse 20 is strong and emphatic. He says, “We are ambassadors, as God entreating through us; we beseech you on behalf of Christ, Be reconciled to God.” God, Christ, and the apostles were one in carrying out the ministry of reconciliation. (*Life-study of 2 Corinthians*, pp. 332-333)

In the Crystallization-study of 2 Corinthians, Ron Kangas said:

As an ambassador of Christ, Paul was “the acting God” (2 Cor. 1:3-4, 12, 15-16; 2:10; 10:1; 11:2). Paul was one with Christ to be the acting God in comforting the believers (1:3-4). Paul conducted himself in the singleness of God, for he was an imitator of the simple God and lived God (v. 12). His coming to the Corinthians was the coming of God as grace (vv. 15-16). He forgave a particular matter in the person of Christ (2:10) and entreated the believers through the meekness and gentleness of Christ (10:1). Also, Paul was jealous over the saints with the jealousy of God (11:2).

God’s economy in its highest definition is to make us the same as God in life, nature, constitution, appearance, expression, and function. This is not the function of creating the universe, raising the dead, or being omnipresent, but the function of carrying out God’s interests according to His desire. When someone who is one with God to be an ambassador of Christ functions, he is the acting God there. Moses, when he was eighty, was put into this function, and he said, “I am not a man of words” (Exo. 4:10). Therefore, the Lord gave him Aaron to match him. He said, “He shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be as God to him” (v. 16). Surely this is the acting God. Samuel also, again and again, was so one with God to turn the age to the kingdom. He was the acting God. Elisha, in his ministry that typified Christ’s ministry of grace, was the acting God. It is not logical to have people who are the acting God in the Old Testament and yet have none in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians there are strong indications that Paul, as an ambassador of Christ, was the acting God. (Ron Kangas, “Ambassadors of Christ and the Ministry of Reconciliation,” *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 7, no. 5, pp. 209-210)

This word is also foundational to understanding Brother Ron’s use of the term “the acting God” in the 2005 Winter Training.

Ron also spoke a further and fuller word on “the acting God” in the last message of the 2006 Spring Term of the Full-Time Training in Anaheim. That message was entitled “Being One with God and Constituted with God, Living God and Expressing God, Moving with God and Representing God to Be the Acting God in Ministering the Building and Building God for the Intrinsic Constitution of the Building of God.” This message is available on video or audio tape from Living Stream Ministry and will be in print in a future issue of The Ministry Magazine. We commend it to all of the saints.

## **Conclusion**

One of the dissenting articles accuses Ron Kangas of seeking “to achieve a little ‘shock value’ by declaring, ‘Witness Lee was the acting God,’” although the article admits, “We realize this speaking did not appear in print.” These words did not appear in print because Ron did not speak them. In fact, it is the CBs who try to achieve “shock value” by using manufactured quotes and wrenching Brother Ron’s word about “the acting God” from its original context, omitting his careful and proper definition of the term based on Brother Lee’s ministry. However, if the term is properly defined and understood, there should be nothing shocking about saying that those brothers who act in the principle of incarnation as ambassadors of God are the acting God, not in any sense of acting in God’s stead, but as persons who are one with God for the carrying out of His interest on the earth.

The CBs have launched a campaign to discredit the co-workers in the Lord’s recovery by misrepresenting their speaking. The CBs’ clear motivation is to drive a wedge between the churches and the co-workers who are continuing the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, which is the ministry given by the Lord to produce and build up the churches in His present recovery. This they do, not out of concern for the Lord’s recovery as a whole or for the body of truth that has been delivered to us, but because they seek to draw away men after themselves (Acts 20:30).

Acts 20:30 – And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things to <sup>1</sup>draw away the disciples after them.

fn. 20:30<sup>1</sup> – The perverted ones among the believers in the church are always used by the devil, who hates the church, to draw the sheep away to form another flock.

What they really object to is Brother Ron’s word about the need for all of the saints in all of the churches in the Lord’s recovery to be one with the design of the divine building as revealed to Paul. This is the pattern that has been presented to us through the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee.

Anyone who would do the work of the divine building today must be one with the wise master builder. This oneness means that first they are one with Paul and with Paul’s revelation. However, we have needed help from the ministry of the age to understand and see what Paul saw, to receive the design that he received. Thus, we believe that, in principle, in the Lord’s recovery our Brother Lee was the wise master builder. (*The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 10, no. 1, January/February 2006, p. 213)

Here to be one with a person (“one with Paul”) is to be one who receives, closely follows, and teaches the revelation released through that person’s ministry. Such a oneness with the ministry is apparent from the initiation of the church life in Jerusalem, when the disciples continued steadfastly in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles (Acts 2:42), to Paul’s reminder to Timothy in the midst of the degradation of the church concerning how Timothy had benefited from closely following Paul’s teaching (1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Tim. 3:10).

Acts 2:42 – And they continued steadfastly in the teaching and the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

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 <sup>5</sup>have closely followed.

fn. 4:6<sup>5</sup> – We must first closely follow the words which we would teach others.

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

Similarly, to turn away from the person is to turn away from his ministry.

2 Tim. 1:15 – This you know, that all who are in <sup>1</sup>Asia <sup>2</sup>turned away from me, of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes.

fn. 1:15<sup>1</sup> – I.e., the province of Asia. The phrase all who are in Asia points to the general situation among the believers in Asia and does not include every particular believer; for Onesiphorus is mentioned as one from Asia who often refreshed Paul and sought him out (vv. 16-18).

fn. 1:15<sup>2</sup> – This indicates that the believers in Asia who had formerly received the apostle's ministry now forsook him. In spite of such desertion, the apostle grew stronger in the grace that was in Christ, who is the same and will never change. Not being discouraged, he exhorted his son in faith to persevere steadily in the ministry in the midst of the failure and ruin of the churches.

In 2 Timothy 1:15 Paul says, "...all who are in Asia turned away from me." Asia was a province of the Roman Empire in Asia Minor, far away from Rome where Paul, who was in prison, was writing his Epistle to Timothy. When Paul said that all who were in Asia turned away from him, this does not indicate that they turned away from the person of Paul because the person of Paul was far away from them. This verse indicates that they all turned away from Paul's ministry. Among the churches in Asia was the church in Ephesus, which was fully established by Paul's ministry as recorded in Acts 19. They received the gospel, the teaching, the edification, and the establishment from the ministry of the Apostle Paul. But by the time Paul was imprisoned in Rome, they had all turned away from his ministry. (*Elders' Training, Book 7: One Accord for the Lord's Move*, p. 128)

The CBs hope to turn away the saints from following the New Testament ministry of Brother Nee, Brother Lee, and the co-workers in the Lord’s recovery to gain a following for themselves and those with whom they are associated. They are willing to sacrifice the truth to do so, including the truth concerning the proper meaning of the term “the acting God,” that is, of God being expressed and represented in man in the principle of incarnation.

Brother Lee was always seeking terminology to express the standard of truth that the Lord was releasing in His recovery. “The acting God” is one of those terms. In both Brother Lee’s and Ron Kangas’ usage, it is defined and used to mean a person who is one with God and with God’s heart, who therefore acts as God’s representative on the earth for the accomplishment of His purpose. Rather than seeking to inflame the saints and the churches against the co-workers who are faithful to the standard of biblical truth in Brother Lee’s ministry, the CBs, as well as all of the believers in the Lord’s recovery, should endeavor to become such persons themselves and to lead others to become such persons.



**REPENTING FOR OFFENDING  
THE BODY OF CHRIST —  
WHAT DID WITNESS LEE REALLY SAY?**

A recent article published by a small group of anonymous “Concerned Brothers” (CBs) twists a brief statement by Brother Witness Lee in the 1997 Chinese-speaking conference to support their criticism of the present litigation against Harvest House Publishers and its authors John Ankerberg and John Weldon. The CBs wrench Brother Lee’s statement out of its original context and engage in unfounded conjecture about the scope of its application, giving it a meaning far removed from its original intent. Furthermore, they neglect and even oppose the main burden of Brother Lee’s fellowship in that message, which was to encourage the fellowship among all of the local churches and to bring all of the saints into the reality of the Body of Christ through the practice of blending.

The title of the message was “Reigning in Life (3): In Imitating the Apostles to Bring the Local Churches into the Fellowship of the Body of Christ; in Following in the Apostle’s Footsteps to Bring All the Saints into the Blending Life of the Entire Body of Christ.” In that message he spoke concerning receiving other believers according to God’s receiving and Christ’s receiving:

We should receive people according to God’s receiving, not being more narrow than God, thereby demonstrating and maintaining the oneness of the Body of Christ. Furthermore, we should receive people according to the Son of God, according to God, not according to doctrine or practice, thus maintaining a condition of absolute peace, smoothness, and order, without any deviation and discord, in the fellowship of the Body of Christ to the glory of God (Rom. 14:3; 15:7)...

Romans 14:3 tells us that we should receive people according to God; this is to receive all those whom God has received. Romans 15:7 says that we should receive one another, as Christ also received us. Those whom God has received and those whom Christ has received are actually the

same group of people. It is not that God receives one group of people and Christ receives another group of people. God is very liberal and not narrow. When we receive people according to God and according to His Son, Christ, we demonstrate, show forth, and maintain the oneness of the Body of Christ. If we receive people according to doctrine and practice, there is no way for the oneness of the Body of Christ to be maintained and demonstrated. (*The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life*, pp. 68-69)

The generality expressed in Romans 14:3 and 15:7 in receiving believers has long been the standard for the practice of the local churches.

Rom. 14:3 – He who eats, let him not despise him who does not eat; and he who does not eat, let him not judge him who eats, for <sup>2</sup>God has received him.

fn. 14:3<sup>2</sup> – The basis on which we receive the believers is that God has received them. God receives people according to His Son. When a person receives God's Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, as his Savior, God receives that person immediately and ushers him into the enjoyment of the Triune God and of all He has prepared and accomplished in Christ for us. We should receive people in the same way and should not be more narrow than God. Regardless of how much they differ from us in doctrinal concepts or religious practices, we must receive them. When we receive people according to God and not according to doctrine or practice, we demonstrate and maintain the oneness of the Body of Christ.

Rom. 15:7 – Therefore receive one another, as <sup>1</sup>Christ also received you to the glory of God.

fn. 15:7<sup>1</sup> – Verse 3 of ch. 14 says that we should receive people according to God's receiving, but here we are told that we should receive people according to Christ's receiving. Christ's receiving is God's receiving. What Christ has received, God has received. Those whom God and Christ have received we must receive, regardless of how they differ from us in doctrine or practice. This will be to the glory of God.

## What Witness Lee Said

What Brother Lee said in the Chinese-speaking conference was his observation and realization before the Lord that the churches receiving his ministry had at times failed in the past to live up to that standard:

We have much to learn concerning receiving people according to God and according to His Son. Because of our negligence in this matter in the past, we have offended the Body of Christ and many brothers and sisters in the Lord. For this reason, I had a deep repentance before the Lord. Brothers and sisters, I hope that we can see our past mistakes by getting into this message through pray-reading, studying, reciting, and prophesying. Of course, sectarianism in the denominations is wrong; it is something very much condemned by God. Nevertheless, those who are genuinely saved in the denominations are children of God and have been received by God. Hence, we also should receive them, but we would never participate in the division in which they are. (*The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life*, p. 69)

## The CBs' Unfounded Speculation

The CBs extrapolate a highly speculative argument from this short statement to the effect that Brother Lee repented generally for anything that may have offended other Christians, including the filing of lawsuits. This is a gross distortion of the context of Brother Lee's word, as the following observations attest:

1. Brother Lee's exposition of Romans 14 and 15 in *The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life* was no different than what he had spoken throughout his ministry. It therefore does not represent a change in his attitude. Rather, he shared with the saints his grieving that the churches under his ministry had caused offense through coming short in our practice of these truths (cf., Dan. 9:3-19; Neh. 1:4-11).
2. Brother Lee never withdrew his criticism of the system of Christianity, a system characterized by: (1) the replacement

of Christ with so many substitutes, (2) the negating of the function of the members of the Body of Christ through the clergy-laity system, and (3) the division of the Lord's Body into thousands of parts. In fact, in the very paragraph from which the CBs extract their quote, Brother Lee specifically stated, "Sectarianism in the denominations is wrong; it is something very much condemned by God."

3. Brother Lee never gave the slightest indication that he regretted the filing of the lawsuits over *The Mindbenders* and *The God-Men*. On the contrary, Brother Lee specifically left instructions that the brothers and attorneys who labored in those two litigations were to be invited to his funeral.
4. The CBs' argument is strangely contradictory. They vindicate the lawsuits filed in the 1980s, yet condemn the current litigation. The litigation actions taken in the 1980s were undertaken with the knowledge that some Christians would misunderstand and therefore be offended. If, in fact, Brother Lee's word of repentance was to be applied to offending Christians by an appeal to the courts to defend the reputation of the Lord's ministry in His recovery, why would the CBs not apply it to the 1980s actions as well? The reason is simple: The CBs want to maintain an appearance of being one with Brother Lee's leading while he was alive while attacking the co-workers for following his pattern.
5. The quotation of Witness Lee's "repentance" is not from the printed message, nor is it an accurate translation of his speaking. Their private "translation," which is derived from a private "transcript," matches word for word a biased rendition of Brother Lee's speaking that first appeared in a long diatribe that seeks to vindicate those who caused great turmoil in the churches in the 1980s. That writing makes many unfounded accusations against the leadership in the Lord's recovery, including Brother Lee and his co-workers, stretching back over many decades. The CBs present no grounds on which such a source should be accepted as trustworthy.
6. The CBs exhibit a willingness to compromise the truth to avoid offending other believers. This Brother Lee would never do.

Gal. 1:10 – For am I now <sup>1</sup>trying to win the assent of men or of God? Or am I seeking to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a slave of Christ.

fn. 1:10<sup>1</sup> – Or, persuading men or God; seeking to conciliate, to satisfy, men or God.

1 Thes. 2:4 – But even as we have been <sup>1</sup>approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who proves our hearts.

fn. 2:4<sup>1</sup> – God’s entrusting depends on His approval, which comes out of His testing. The apostles were first tested and approved by God and then were entrusted by Him with the gospel. Hence, their speaking, the preaching of the gospel, was not of themselves to please men but of God to please Him. He proved, examined, and tested their hearts continually (Psa. 26:2; 139:23-24).

I do not care to trade Christ’s favor for man’s. Like Paul in Philippians 3, I am willing to count everything loss on account of Christ. I am also willing to suffer the loss of all things on account of the enjoyment of grace. I have not been commissioned by the Lord to please men. When it comes to the matter of God’s economy, there is no room for compromise. Everything contrary to God’s economy must be slain by the truth of God. Like Paul, we have no choice in this matter. (*Life-study of Philippians*, p. 24)

The first thing we face on this pathway is rejection. Because Christ is the rejected One, we must be rejected also. We have no choice. Do not expect to be welcomed, for no one will welcome you until the glory comes. Instead, you must be willing to be rejected. In 13:53-14:13 we see the increase of rejection. Many of us have experienced some measure of rejection by those who opposed our coming into the church. But I need to tell you that this rejection will not decrease; rather, it will increase. There will be rejection upon rejection. Be prepared for this. (*Life-study of Matthew*, p. 507)

After the enemy has persecuted you, his strategy may change. Instead of persecution, there might be a welcome. Do not regard this welcome as a good thing. Rather, you must fear being welcomed more than being stung by a scorpion. It is

good for us to suffer persecution, opposition, and attack. But whenever people extend us a warm welcome, that is a most dangerous time. When you are attacked and are undergoing persecution, do not be discouraged, for that is a strong sign that you are on the right track and that you have not been distracted from following the Lord's steps. But beware of a warm welcome. It is better to suffer persecution than to receive a warm welcome. (*Life-study of Revelation*, pp. 142-143)

7. The CBs distort Brother Lee's teaching on generality, using it to justify their deviations from his teaching. At the same time they ignore Brother Lee's balancing word concerning the limits to generality as seen in the apostle Paul's strictness in dealing with divisive behavior in the church.

Every local church should receive all kinds of genuine believers in Christ (Rom. 14:1-6; 15:1-7). We have no right to give up any believer, unless he is divisive. When a believer becomes divisive, he is divided from the church already. But as long as a believer is not divisive, we should not give him up. If a believer prefers to keep the Sabbath whereas we take the Lord's Day, or if he eats only vegetables whereas we eat every kind of food, we still must receive him. We must receive him because God has received him (Rom. 14:3) and because Christ has received him (Rom. 15:7). We must receive every believer in Christ according to Christ (Rom. 15:5). (*A Brief Presentation of the Lord's Recovery*, p. 45)

In Romans 14 and 15 Paul is generous, broad-minded, and all-embracing, but in Romans 16:17 he is very narrow and strict. "I beg you, brothers, keep a watchful eye on those who make divisions and causes of falling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them." On the one hand, we need to receive all kinds of genuine believers; on the other hand, we need to be narrow and strict in dealing with divisive ones. In 16:17 Paul does not say, "These divisive ones are brothers. We need to receive them and love them." No, he tells us to keep a watchful eye on them and to turn away from them. To turn away from those who make divisions and causes of falling is to quarantine them.

In Romans 16:20a Paul says, "Now the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet." It is significant that this word comes after the word concerning the strict dealing with

the divisive ones. If we do not have any discernment but instead love blindly, and if we do not quarantine those who make divisions and causes of falling, Satan will be above us, not under us. But if we quarantine the divisive ones, Satan will be crushed under our feet. (*Life-study of Deuteronomy*, pp. 83-84)

In fact, Brother Lee's definition of what it means to be general (given just seven pages before the quote the CBs distort) is quite different than what the CBs mean:

We need to be exceptionally general in receiving the believers to live the church life. **To be general means that everyone is speaking and every home is doing the same thing; no one is particularly different.** (*The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life*, p. 62)

### **The CBs' Biased Application of Brother Lee's Speaking**

The last three messages in the conference "The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life" all share the same general subject as its title: "Reigning in Life." If you read these chapters, it becomes obvious that the CBs reject the content and direction of Brother Lee's teaching and fellowship, while selecting a few statements to misapply for their own purposes.

1. The CBs ignore Brother Lee's clear word that all of the saints in the Lord's recovery should speak the same thing to preserve the oneness and one accord:

Brothers and sisters, I hope that you not only get these words into you but also repeat them like tape recorders. I often pray for you at my home. I have been a slave of the Lord speaking for Him for over sixty years. I am like a tape recorder speaking for the Lord again and again. I truly hope that when I speak, others will be tape recorders. This is my prayer. The Lord answered my prayer, saying, "With men it is impossible, but with Me everything is possible. With all these believers who are under your leading, I can make every one of them such a tape recorder." I hope that all the brothers and sisters can enter into such a word, be constituted with

such a word, and clearly speak such a word. (*The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life*, p. 52)

In our work in the Lord's recovery what we strongly emphasize is that "grace is the manifestation of the Triune God in His embodiment in three aspects—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit." This is representative of our speaking in the Lord's recovery. I hope that you all can be like "tape recorders" and have this word deeply impressed in you. Then when you go out to contact others, you can spontaneously speak, and only speak, this word. (p. 57)

Some may ask, "Does this mean that among us we should not teach anything else?" It is not a matter of whether or not to teach other things. Actually it is that we do not have any spare time to teach anything other than the central revelation of the Bible. In the past we received Brother Nee's leading to meet according to 1 Corinthians 14—not to have one man speaking and all the rest listening, but to have everyone prophesying. From 1933 Brother Nee began to strongly promote this practice, but it was unsuccessful. It was not until the recent years when we restudied 1 Corinthians 14 that we discovered that the Lord's intention is not merely to have all the members taking turns to speak but to have all the members blended together as one Body to speak. In the past we did not dare to speak in the meetings, because we did not know what to speak. But now the whole situation has been changed; everyone is glad to prophesy and everyone speaks concerning the unique central revelation of the Bible. This is what we particularly emphasize and boast of. (pp. 57-58)

We need to be of the same mind toward one another according to Christ Jesus so that with one accord we may glorify God in receiving the believers to live the church life (15:5-7). Whenever we are in one accord, we speak the same thing; we speak with one mouth. The only way to be with one accord and with one mouth is to allow Christ the room to be everything in our heart and in our mouth that God may be glorified. We have said that God is the New Jerusalem. When

we glorify God, we take Him as the New Jerusalem and give all the glory to Him. (p. 63)

Unlike the CBs, who promote contention and exalt differences, Brother Lee spoke of having a peaceful, smooth, and orderly church life in which all of the saints speak concerning the central revelation of the Bible and receive one another according to God and Christ:

In receiving the believers to live the church life, we need to be exceptionally smooth and orderly. To be smooth and orderly is to not be quarrelsome but to be peaceful and easy. To some extent we can see this today in the Lord's recovery. There is no quarreling among us; everything is peaceful, smooth, and orderly. When we are not general, there is no peace, smoothness, or order, and the result is something particular and sectarian. If we receive others according to God and Christ, the church life will be smooth and orderly and the whole church will be in harmony. (p. 63)

2. The CBs also try to negate the clear burden of Brother Lee's fellowship in this message. The general subject of the message is expressed in two points: (1) imitating the apostle to bring the local churches into the fellowship of the Body of Christ; and (2) following the apostle's footsteps to bring all the saints into the blending life of the entire Body of Christ. All of the CBs fulminations undermine these two goals.

To experience reigning in life, first, **we must imitate the apostle in bringing the local churches into the fellowship of the Body of Christ.** It is only by practically entering into the fellowship of the Body of Christ that we can have the genuine experience of reigning in life. (p. 67)

The CBs would have us believe that what Brother Lee meant by "practically entering into the fellowship of the Body of Christ" was some sort of reconciliation with the fallen and degraded system of Christianity. However, it is clear from Brother Lee's speaking that what he meant was that there should be mutual fellowship among all of the churches in the Lord's recovery:

Such recommendations and greetings show both the mutual concern among the saints and the mutual fellowship among

the churches. **It is by the churches' fellowship in the Body that the God of peace will crush Satan under our feet and we will be able to enjoy the rich grace of Christ.** This grace is the manifestation of the Triune God in His embodiment in three aspects—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. (p. 70)

**We must have the reality of the fellowship and blending of the Body of Christ. Otherwise, regardless of how much we pursue and how simple and humble we are, sooner or later there will be problems, even divisions, among us. Hence, we must be governed by the vision of the Body and follow in the footsteps of the apostle by bringing all the saints in all the churches into the blending life of the entire Body of Christ. This is to reign in life, and by such reigning we give glory to God. This glory is the New Jerusalem, the universal incorporation of the union and mingling of divinity with humanity, in which God will be completely glorified and His economy will be fully accomplished.** (p. 71)

While Brother Lee strongly stressed the need to receive fellow believers in Christ according to God and Christ, he never changed his teaching on the need to stand apart from the organized system of Christianity on the proper ground of oneness. His words here indicate further that merely to stand on the local ground is not adequate. There must be the practice of mutual blending and fellowship among all of the local churches.

Only in this way can those in the local churches know the reality of the Body of Christ. Yet the CBs themselves oppose the matter of blending in fellowship and prayer, preferring to launch public attacks against the co-workers who are seeking to lead the churches into the practice of mutual fellowship and blending.

## **Conclusion**

The telling point is that the CBs twist selected words from Brother Lee's ministry to support their own private agenda and disregard the main burden of his fellowship. To be faithful to the ministry presented to us by our brothers Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, we should not pick and choose those portions

that appeal to our taste and disposition. Even the more, we should not misappropriate the words of the ministry by taking them out of context to construct specious arguments that only reflect our own biases. The CBs seek to undermine the leadership in the Lord's recovery. In pursuing that aim they have become reckless in mishandling and misapplying our brothers' speaking, ignoring their clear speaking and engaging in speculative flights of imagination. Our hope is that by exposing this recklessness the saints in the Lord's recovery can be preserved from such poisonous words.



**RECEIVE ALL THE CHURCHES AND THEN  
ALL THE BELIEVERS—  
WHAT DID BENSON PHILLIPS REALLY SAY?**

In a recent Internet posting, a brother accused Brother Benson Phillips of changing the emphasis in Brother Lee’s final speaking in a message Brother Benson gave in 2004. This accusation was repeated in a letter posted on the Internet by Titus Chu. The accusation is untrue. The following is Brother Benson’s speaking in the fall 2004 International Elders and Responsible Ones Training in New Zealand as it was printed in *The Ministry Magazine* (the text in italics is that quoted by the dissenting brother<sup>1</sup>):

The last three chapters of Romans show us the blending and fellowship of the Body life brought forth through the apostle’s receiving the believers according to God and Christ in order to demonstrate, show forth, and maintain the oneness of the Body of Christ (14:3; 15:7). This is also *from Brother Lee’s final message. We must receive all the believers. But the burden here is that we might receive all the local churches and all the saints in the local churches. They must be received by us, and they must be received according to Romans 14:3 and 15:7. God has received us, Christ has received us; this is one receiving by the Triune God. Since*

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<sup>1</sup> The saints should be skeptical of any quotation of a brother’s speaking that begins mid-sentence and is filled with elisions. This has been a frequent tactic of those who oppose the ministry of Brother Lee and of the dissenting brothers who seek to discredit the co-workers. In this case, it makes it appear that the comment about being from Brother Lee’s message refers to the words “the burden here” rather than to the preceding sentence, which in context it clearly does. This is even more obvious if you listen to the audio tape of the message. What Benson actually said was:

“The last three chapters of Romans”— this is still something in the conference that Brother Lee gave – “The last three chapters of Romans show us the blending and fellowship of the Body life brought forth through the apostle’s receiving the believers according to God and Christ in order to demonstrate, show forth, and maintain the oneness of the Body of Christ—14:3; 15:7.” [the quoted portion is the outline point on which Benson was speaking]

*God has received every local church, we must have fellowship, and we must receive one another into the fellowship of the Triune God. Then we must receive all believers.* Every church receives every brother and sister. This does not mean that we go along with the denominations or we practice the ways of the denominations. We will never do that. Although there is a wall around the New Jerusalem, every direction has three gates, and these gates receive all whom the Lord has received. May the churches be brought into such a fellowship and such a blending with all the other churches. (Benson Phillips, “The Unique Flow of the Divine Stream for the Unique Blending of the Body of Christ,” *The Ministry Magazine*, vol. 9, no. 2, February 2005, p. 108)

The accusations of this dissenting brother are fourfold:

1. He accuses Brother Benson of misrepresenting the emphasis of Brother Lee’s speaking in his final conference message from receiving the believers in the denominations to receiving the churches and the believers in them.
2. He accuses Brother Benson of making receiving all of the churches in fellowship a higher priority and even a pre-condition to receiving all of the believers, thus postponing the receiving of the believers to some unspecified time in the future.
3. He accuses the brothers generally of neglecting Brother Lee’s word expressing his regret for mistakes made in receiving other believers. (On this point Brother Benjamin Chen gave an important clarifying word at the 2006 Thanksgiving Conference.)
4. He accuses the brothers of emphasizing Brother Lee’s private speaking over his public speaking.

These accusations are fraught with distortions.

### **“The Burden Here”**

The accusation that Benson changed Brother Lee’s emphasis is based on the words “the burden here,” as if “here” referred to Brother Lee’s final message. If the text in *The Ministry Magazine* left some question as to what “here” referred to, the dissenting

brothers should have checked the audio or video tape<sup>2</sup> before making a public accusation against Brother Benson. If he had done so, he would have discovered that what Benson said was:

Brothers, we must receive all the believers. But the burden here **this morning** is that we might receive all the local churches and then all the saints in the local churches.

When the message was edited for publication, the words “this morning” were omitted, because they were not applicable in print. Benson was not saying that “the burden here” was the entirety of Brother Lee’s burden in his message. He was merely saying that in the message he himself was giving, the burden was on the fellowship among the churches. That burden was prompted by the turmoil among the churches being caused in large part by the writings of the same dissenting brothers who then twisted Brother Benson’s word to attack him. The omission of the words “this morning” in the printed message in no way sanctions the reckless misrepresentation of Brother Benson’s word by these dissenters.

Brother Benson acknowledged that Brother Lee’s word addressed both the blending and fellowship together of the churches in the Body life (something notably absent in the writings of these and other dissenting brothers) and receiving all the believers as God and Christ has received us. The words “the burden here” simply mean that based on the situation in the Lord’s recovery at the time of Benson’s speaking and the co-workers’ realization of the need among all the churches, his emphasis was on the need for fellowship among the churches. This was so precisely because these dissenting ones were themselves withdrawing from fellowship with co-workers outside their area and had been

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<sup>2</sup> In an earlier case a brother associated with this worker excused his misquoting of a co-worker by saying that he did not have the actual audio or video tape available to him. This is a poor excuse. Audio tapes of messages are available from Living Stream Ministry for \$4.00. Surely we should expect that a brother claiming some leadership among us would go to the time and expense of purchasing and reviewing a tape before making such serious accusations that are spread worldwide via the Internet.

curtailing the fellowship between the churches in their geographical area and those outside.

### **“Then”**

The accusation that Benson was making the receiving of all the churches and all the saints in the Lord’s recovery a priority over and pre-condition for receiving all believers seems to be based solely on the word “then” in the sentence, “Then we must receive all believers.” Such an interpretation assumes that the word “then” means something that follows in a sequence, but it can also mean “in addition” or “also” or “besides”. If you read the next sentence of Benson’s speaking, it is evident that he is not speaking in chronological terms. There Benson speaks in the present tense: “Every church receives every brother and sister.” The dissenting brothers choose to apply the most unlikely definition of “then” based on the context of Benson’s speaking in order to misrepresent Benson’s words. This is done both to justify criticizing Benson himself, as well as to avoid the point Brother Benson was stressing—the need of all the churches to have mutual fellowship to be blended together organically as the Body of Christ.

### **Two Emphases by Witness Lee and Benson Phillips**

Benson spoke of two things that require our attention—the receiving of all of the believers and the blending through fellowship of all of the churches and all of the saints in the Lord’s recovery. In fact, the message to which Benson referred and which this dissenting brother seems to claim was focused on Brother Lee’s word of regret for mistakes made in receiving other believers was entitled, “Reigning in Life (3): In Imitating the Apostle to Bring the Local Churches into the Fellowship of the Body of Christ; in Following in the Apostle’s Footsteps to Bring All the Saints into the Blending Life of the Entire Body of Christ.” In that message Brother Lee spoke concerning the same two points that Benson brought out. This dissenting one claims the co-workers “totally ignore what was his [Brother Lee’s] real concern and his final charge to us all.” This charge neglects

Brother Lee's own speaking in the same message. in which he said, for example:

We must have the reality of the fellowship and blending of the Body of Christ. Otherwise, regardless of how much we pursue and how simple and humble we are, sooner or later there will be problems, even divisions, among us. Hence, we must be governed by the vision of the Body and follow in the footsteps of the apostle by bringing all the saints in all the churches into the blending life of the entire Body of Christ. (*The Experience of God's Organic Salvation Equaling Reigning in Christ's Life*, p. 71)

It is the dissenting ones who want to distort Brother Lee's short word of regret and make it representative of his entire burden at the end of his ministry.

### **Ignoring Brother Lee's Real Concern?**

Furthermore, to say that the co-workers have neglected Brother Lee's fellowship concerning receiving the believers is without basis. In recent years, the co-workers have cultivated many constructive relationships with other believers in an effort to clear up misunderstandings about our beliefs and standing. Most notably these relationships include the ongoing fellowship with some at Fuller Theological Seminary, the editorial staff of *Christianity Today*, and the Christian Research Institute, among others. Even these efforts have been criticized by the dissenting ones. Their insistence on finding fault with anything the co-workers do should be a warning sign to the saints concerning their motives.

Near the end of his ministry Brother Lee also expressed the realization that the riches the Lord had given to His recovery through the ministry were not just for the saints in the local churches, but for all believers in the Body of Christ. Based on that word, the co-workers have undertaken numerous initiatives to get the riches of Brother Lee's ministry to the hungry, seeking ones in Christianity through both print and broadcast media.

Brother Lee's word of regret indicated no change in his understanding concerning the truth of how to practice the church life on the ground of oneness. It merely expressed regret for failures in applying what we have always understood to be the truth—that in spite and even because of our clear stand for the practical expression of the oneness of the Body of Christ by meeting as the church in our locality, we must receive all believers in Christ as fellow members of that one Body. It was not, as some dissenters have portrayed it, a call to compromise our standing and to join ourselves to the organized system of Christianity or to adopt its worldly practices. There is no evidence in Brother Lee's speaking to support such vain imaginations.

### **A Clarifying Word**

At the end of a message in the 2006 Thanksgiving Conference, Brother Benjamin Chen spoke a clarifying word concerning this short section of Brother Lee's sharing in the last meeting of the 1997 International Chinese-speaking Conference. Benjamin said that some had misused Brother Lee's word of regret that in the past his attitude toward some in the denominations was not right as an excuse to justify bringing the things of Christianity into the Lord's recovery. Beginning in the summer of 1996, Brother Lee asked a number of brothers to share the message with him to confirm its burden. He called them "blending speakers". As one of the "blending speakers" in the last meeting of that 1997 conference, Brother Benjamin paid very close attention to what Brother Lee spoke.

Benjamin confirmed that Brother Lee did not change his teaching at all in that message, because through all the years both Brother Nee and Brother Lee had made it clear that we have to separate our attitude toward the believers in Christianity from our attitude toward the system of Christianity. On the one hand, regardless of where they are, whether in Catholicism or the denominations or the free groups, we need to be open to, receive, fellowship with, and love the believers. On the other hand, we want to have nothing to do with the system of Christianity because that system divides the Body of Christ.

Benjamin said that when Brother Lee expressed regret for his attitude toward some Christians in the denominations, it was because in his maturity in life he was very sensitive in his spirit that he did not always have the right kind of loving attitude. But immediately after Brother Lee spoke of his regret, he said that the denominations themselves are wrong and that all the sectarianism that divides God's people should be condemned. Brother Lee then balanced this word by saying that God's people themselves should not be condemned. This was and always has been our standing.

Based on this understanding of Brother Lee's fellowship, Brother Benjamin spoke as a "blending speaker." Brother Lee indicated that although he had intended to say something further after the "blending speakers" to strengthen the burden in his message, there was no need because the "blending speakers" had said what he wanted to say. This demonstrates that Benjamin's understanding of Brother Lee's speaking and burden were accurate, as opposed to the wildly speculative interpretations put on Brother Lee's speaking by those wanting to justify polluting the Lord's recovery with worldliness.

Brother Benjamin concluded by saying that to use Brother Lee's short speaking to justify going back to the worldly practices of Christianity is a serious error. Brother Lee never said this. We have been called out of the degraded system of Christianity to afford the Lord a way to carry out His recovery in a pure way. We seek to cooperate with God for the carrying out of His economy to recover the all-inclusive Christ as our life and everything, the function of all the members according to the God-ordained way, and the proper oneness of the Body of Christ. In order to accomplish this, we must stand apart from the degraded system of Christianity, but at the same time we must be open to, receive, fellowship with, and love all of our fellow believers in Christ, regardless of whether they meet in the local churches or not.

## **Public v. Private Speaking**

The dissenting brother claims that the co-workers emphasize selected parts of Brother Lee's private speaking while neglecting his public speaking. It is wrong to discount Brother Lee's fellowship with his co-workers during the last months of his life. Paul told the elders in Ephesus that he had declared to them the full counsel of God by speaking both publicly and from house to house (Acts 20:27, 20).

Acts 20:27 – For I did not shrink from declaring to you all the counsel of God.

Acts 20:20 – How I did not withhold any of those things that are profitable by not declaring them to you and by not teaching you publicly and from house to house.

Paul did not say his public speakings were profitable, but that his private speakings were less so. Many brothers can testify that what they learned through Brother Lee's private shepherding of them was as valuable as his public teaching.

## **Conclusion**

It is easy to raise questions and make accusations, but the dissenting ones themselves are elusive when it comes to explaining where they stand. They never clearly state what they see as the implications of Brother Lee's fellowship concerning the mistakes made in the past in receiving other believers, nor do they explain their rejection of his charge to be blended with other co-workers and with all of the churches in the Lord's recovery. They consistently distort the speaking of the co-workers in order to condemn them, to mislead the saints, and to avoid dealing with their responsibility in causing the turmoils in the Lord's recovery today.