

A History of the Lord's Recovery in the U. S.

1. The Beginning of the Church Life

In 1962 the church life in the Lord's recovery had already begun, but accelerated markedly with the arrival of brother Witness Lee who was fully charged and burdened by the Lord to minister the word of God in this country. He testified that he came with a *"particular commission to bring the Lord's recovery to the top Christian country"*. The response to his ministry in the United States was immediate and many left secure jobs and moved long distances to partake of the church life in Los Angeles.

2. The Catalyst for Coming to the U.S.

Although Brother Lee testified that he was commissioned by the Lord to come to the U. S., there were serious issues between him and churches in the Far East that were a catalyst for his coming here. In the late fifties he had created a major problem to the church in Taipei through business failures involving investments from the saints, and his oldest son, Timothy, and he lost a lot of money. This brought a financial crisis to the church in Taipei. All the donations from the church members were used to pay the debt incurred, and still a large amount of money was owed. Due to the desperate situation, Brother Lee coerced the elders to sell a piece of land belonging to the church in order to pay the debt. Because of that action many coworkers and church members were especially unhappy. That piece of land had been bought by the church to build a training center and a new meeting place. Brother Lee knew that what he did was wrong and left for the West Coast of the United States in 1960.

After Brother Lee left Taiwan, the church coworkers formed two sides. One side was Brother Lee's strong followers, while the other group had questions about some of his activities. Those two groups had a strong difference of opinion, which greatly affected the church life and made the work of the church difficult to carry out. Eventually, some of the coworkers who were followers of Brother Lee asked him to come back to Taiwan to resolve differences. In the summer of 1965, Brother Lee came back to Taipei. He decided to get rid of those coworkers who disagreed with him. Consequently, there were thousands of people who left the church. At that time almost 30% of the regular members left, a most serious situation being that about 80-90% of the young members who were college students left the church. Brother Lee's action in 1965 has been referred to as a "cleansing massacre" to get the church to line up with him only. Others feel that it was a necessary move. At any rate Brother Lee came back to the U. S. and the saints in Taipei were left to pick up the pieces and begin to rebuild.

In other matters in the Far East, toward the end of the 1950's co-workers in Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia had serious differences with Brother Lee because of the absolute authority he exercised, which was hard for them to take. Everything was dictated by him, and he would not take any input from others. It was a "my way or the highway attitude", according to one brother.

In addition some of the affluent church members were very unhappy about his handling of the financial matters. This was due to the fact that a lot of the money

had been contributed by them, and Brother Lee handled the finances according to his own thought. The co-workers did not feel they could trust him anymore and because of the differences they had with him they split up.

As Brother Lee left Taiwan in 1960 for the U. S., the church work there was in serious disarray. Also the Philippines work was split off. The Philippines was very important to Brother Lee and several well-to-do church members supported the church there financially over the years. Manila, however, decided to sever relationships with Brother Lee totally in 1960.

(Concerning the Philippines and finances, Brother Lee was nearly arrested at the Manila airport for trying to smuggle a gold bar out of the country. He received a warning only, because of his good reputation in the country.)

3. Brother Lee Admits to Mistakes

Even though it is not common to point to Brother Lee's mistakes, he himself did so, saying, "I have made many mistakes; even some big mistakes" (Eph. L. S., p. 279, 1978). When he came to the West Coast, Brother Lee knew about some mistakes he made in the Far East. To repeat, when Brother Lee left Taiwan to go to the U.S. in 1960, it was not really that he went there to open up a new land for the Lord's recovery. Rather, it was because of his own personal failure in Taiwan that he escaped to the U.S.

4. Brothers' Request in L. A. and Problems in Taipei

In 1962 Brother Lee set up a business for his oldest son, Timothy, at the Seattle World's Fair. Since he was on the West Coast, the brothers in Los Angeles asked him to give them a conference, and he did so after the Fair. After those meetings they begged him to move to Los Angeles. He did take up residence in L. A., since he really could not go back to Taipei.

5. Brother Lee Repents

Don Hardy felt that the reason Witness Lee had such impact in the U. S. in the sixties was because he had deeply repented of his wrongdoings and was a cleansed vessel to begin his rich ministry of the word in this country. Paul Ma testified to the brothers that Brother Lee spent many hours of prayerful repenting while traveling with him in the early sixties in the U. S. He was seen in the corner of a motel room praying "Lord, have mercy", "Lord have mercy", over and over for a long period of time.

6. Witness Lee's Main Burden

Brother Lee's main spiritual burden in the U.S. was to reveal Christ as the life-giving Spirit with all His unsearchable riches. This burden began to be discharged in the first conference meetings held in the United States in 1962 in the home of Samuel Chang. *The All-Inclusive Christ* came out of that conference. His focus during the early years was on the experience of Christ as life for the building up of the church.

7. Concern for Weakness in Brother Lee

In 1966 Samuel Chang revealed to a young prospective elder, Don Hardy, his serious concern for Brother Lee and a defect in his character related to his son, Timothy, and all his seven children. Don was exhorted to keep the matter covered

much in prayer. Samuel's concern was well-founded given the record of the extent Brother Lee would go for his son, Timothy, in business at the expense of others and the church. His word to Don portended for far more serious developments in the future with Timothy Lee and another son, Philip, who were made heads of businesses for Brother Lee, involving the saints.

What provoked Samuel Chang to speak to Don Hardy as he did was that the meeting place of the church in Los Angeles was being used by Brother Lee to store the unsold expensive suits and shirts left over from his World's Fair business with Timothy. This was a source of irritation and concern to Samuel, especially since he knew of the problems Brother Lee's business excursions had caused the church in the past in Taipei.

7.5. Revival in Los Angeles

In 1969 a revival occurred in the church in Los Angeles that brought in a steady stream of new ones from L. A. and from all around the country, the number of church members growing to over 1000 saints.

8. Migrations

In 1970 migrations went out to Seattle, Chicago, and Atlanta.

9. More Migrations

In 1972 migrations went out to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Indianapolis, and Phoenix.

10. A Spirit of Migration

In 1973 migrations went out to Minneapolis and Milwaukee. There was a spirit of migration in the recovery and the air was filled with much anticipation and hope as all the churches were "standing on the ground of oneness in the Lord" in their locality and for "the Lord's recovery of the city and the earth". Conferences were held frequently around the country by Brother Lee, with only one essential message being given to the saints: to eat and drink Christ for the building up of the church. Life and building was the great theme in the local churches, and eating was "the way".

11. Reading Material and Impact

Reading material in the sixties and early seventies were the books, booklets and magazine that came from the Stream Publishers, such as *The Glorious Church*, *Release of the Spirit*, and *Sit, Walk, Stand* by Watchman Nee and *The All-Inclusive Christ*, *God's Economy*, *Vision of God's Building*, and *Christ vs Religion* by Witness Lee, which had great impact on those who read them. The Stream magazine came out quarterly with rich, nourishing spiritual food for the saints to enjoy and to attract the seeking ones. *The Generation* was published by younger people for a seeking generation of young people across the country.

12. Daystar Venture

In 1972 a luxury motor home business called Daystar was launched by Brother Lee for his son, Timothy, and also for the saints in the local churches to invest in. The business

was presented as a way to pay for migrations and meeting halls and further the Lord's purpose (while at the same time benefiting his profligate son immensely who was made the president of Daystar). The venture needed huge monetary investments from the saints.

12.5 Timothy Lee Life-Style

Timothy indulged himself in sinful living and boasted of having a woman in every major city in the world (and he was a married man at that). On the Daystar project he was known to have had a prostitute stay with him at the living quarters near the plant in Taipei. Brothers were appalled, to say the least. No action was taken by his father.

13. Training Fees Used to Payoff Daystar Debt

In 1974 the Daystar business failed. The business plan had been poorly conceived; the motor home was too heavy; the interior was very expensive to build; and the gas crisis of 1973 was the final nail in the coffin to cause the business to fail and file for bankruptcy. Many saints lost money, some forfeiting their life-savings and many becoming disillusioned to the point of leaving the church. Brother Lee found himself in a financial crisis because some of the saints wanted to sue him and the corporation. To help himself he asked Max Rappoport to make a request of the elders to ask the saints in their localities to waive Brother Lee's "debt" to them. Max did so and many of the saints did waive the debt. Ones who were quite angry and wanted their money back, typically, got paid. As another way to help himself out in the crisis, Brother Lee began the trainings on the books of the Bible, charging entrance fees (called "donations") at the two LSM semi-annual trainings, which Brother Lee later admitted were used to raise money to pay off Daystar debt. Charging "donation" fees began to be practiced to the dismay of elders close to Brother Lee, who did not agree that money should be procured from the saints who came to the trainings to hear the word of God. But there was nothing they could do. These funds were collected by LSM, not the church, and were indeed used to pay off Daystar debts, whether or not that was the primary reason to begin the trainings.

14. Daystar Illegalities

When the Daystar corporation was set up, a way to sell shares to the saints was not properly established and was in violation of federal SEC regulations. Terry Risenhoover, a brother in the church in Oklahoma City at the time, and the Daystar accountant, told a brother of the illegal situation. When word of this got to James Barber, the lead elder in OKC, Terry was given the choice to repent or be excommunicated. He stayed with the truth and was excommunicated. These violations of the law could have brought criminal penalties to Witness Lee and others in the failed business. Terry thought the violations were due to a cavalier attitude in the principals that "we are above the law" and also a matter of their ignorance about certain matters. An attorney brother conferred with Terry about the illegalities.

The treasurer, Max Rappoport, was asked by Philip Lee to make major changes to the tax information to be reported to IRS. Max was appalled by this.

14.5 Anaheim Hall Built in Violations of Law and Discretion

In the early 1970's land was secured for the building of the Anaheim meeting hall. Saints gave money liberally for the project and morale was high. Workers came from localities near and far. Both skilled and unskilled labor was given freely on weekends and after regular work days. Some even left their employment to be full-time for the construction which went on seven days a week, many workers staying late into the night until the early mornings.

It began to be noticed that an attitude was present in the decision-making that "we are above the law". Questionings arose when the fire code and other code regulations were being violated, and when securing necessary permits were neglected, which were all being excused and reasoned away. Only after repeated visits by inspectors and their threats of penalties were the steps taken to repair the defects they pointed out

All decisions during the building were made by only one person, Witness Lee. The prevalent teaching and encouragement was to suppress all opinions because opinions were of the flesh, and those expressing opinions were labeled as fleshly or negative. Skilled workmen had real concerns about cost and labor over some of Witness Lee's indiscretionary moves, yet they were not to express their opinion. Work was done and then re-done with a different twist, according to the whims of Brother Lee, which the brothers would not have cost-justified. Of course, the money was not Brother Lee's, nor was the time given to the work, his time.

The greatest indiscretion and injustice manifested itself upon the completion of the structure. The entire building was deeded over to Stream Publishing a business entity, later to be renamed Living Stream Ministry. The original intention of the building was to be for the church. But only after a period of time was a smaller fraction of the property given to the "church side". LSM even used the church premises for a book room, even though the LSM business was located right next door with many and varied books on display and available there. Even after the building was supposedly completed, tearing down and constant renovations continued year after year. There seemed to be no end to the demand for free labor to make constant changes of rooms and walls. Walls that were torn down inspectors demanded to be reinstated to their original position after it was learned that the changes violated the building code. All this extra, hard labor had to be freely done by "volunteers". Meetings of the church were often interrupted by the noise of hammers and sawing of wood during these "renovations". The work was carried on during the church meetings because the manager of the business, Philip Lee, who was thought by many to be an unsaved person, supervised this work and seldom attended any church meetings. The small area granted to the "church meeting side" was encroached upon over and over to add to the "business" side until there were not enough rooms for the children's meetings. Some classes had to be held in the homes and apartments of the teachers or in the public park if the apartments or homes weren't large enough. Storage rooms for unsold stacks of literature were given priority over the rooms for the children.

The Living Stream Ministry did go on to become a multi-million dollar business that many fear and some attest made Witness Lee and the Lee family very wealthy. What Daystar and other failed businesses did not accomplish, LSM did in bringing monetary riches to the Lee family, according to brothers who were closely associated with LSM.

14.7 Philip and Alcohol

In one of the rooms illegally sealed off from inspectors that later became the tape room, Philip Lee “partied” with young people with whom he sat and drank beer. A brother from Santa Ana in later years said that it was common knowledge in the late eighties that Philip had an alcohol problem. (See # 57.5)

14.8 Migrations Stop

By 1974, the spirit and atmosphere of migration disappeared.

15. Biannual Trainings

A significant turn in the recovery was made in 1974 with the introduction of trainings that were eventually held biannually in Anaheim. Brother Lee would establish the saints and the churches more in the truth of the word by going chapter by chapter through every book of the Bible. He began with Romans. The full exposition of the Bible was accomplished in 1995. LSM charged each trainee \$50 for several years, now the cost is \$150. The first year there were actually three trainings, the second one being held in Washington, D. C. on the book of John. Irving, Texas also held trainings for a while, then Anaheim alone began to hold the biannual trainings.

16. Churches in Decline

The churches, however, had become stagnant for the most part, and the impact was gone. Several reasons have been cited officially for this by Brother Lee, such as, the migrations took place too soon; regions were being controlled by certain leaders; he, Brother Lee, failed to train the elders to care properly for the churches; the elders didn’t just pick up the burden to care for the churches, as they did at Elden. The failure of Daystar, the luxury motor home business of Witness Lee’s, was not given as a major factor of the decline of the churches in the seventies. Others look at it as *the* reason for the beginning of the decline of the churches. Perhaps a combination of factors needs to be strongly considered that Brother Lee did not do publicly: 1) the building, use, and ownership of the Anaheim meeting hall and the free labor that created the site to launch a business and make a family wealthy 2) the Daystar debacle 3) the lawsuits. All three of these matters utilized the saints with their time, energy, life, and money to accomplish goals for Brother Lee who had mixed motives and dual purposes.

16.5 Lawsuits

In the mid to late seventies legal action was taken against *The Mindbenders* and *God-Men*, two books that were laden with defamatory material against the local churches and Witness Lee. Five years of litigation drained money, energy, and time from the saints and the churches, and being on the heels of Daystar, this ordeal contributed further to the churches’ decline. Again, the use of the saints’ money was brought into question. What began as an LSM issue that was to be kept separate from the churches, ultimately became a church burden, something Brother Lee had announced to elders in the beginning would not happen, that the Lord would not be pleased with this. Churches were encouraged to make pledges and were reminded to carry them out. Such actions took place on Sunday night after the Lord’s Table meetings in some localities.

LSM and the local churches “won” the two cases but gained a negative reputation in the Christian community for taking fellow believers to court and for their strategy of draining their opponent of their funds to the point of bankruptcy by outlasting them due to endless funding resources from the churches. Their reputation has followed them to this day.

Observation: In the current lawsuit (2003-2006) filed by LSM and many local churches, the book that is the object of their concern is not “laden” with defamatory material in the *specific* way the *Mindbenders* and *God-Men* were that poisoned public perception of the local churches and made it nearly impossible to make headway with a number of contacts and that caused concerned parents to pull their children out of the church and into de-programming sessions with professional counselors. Today, there are only a few lines in an obscure book that form the basis for litigation over this book that seems to have comparatively harmless effect on the recovery that *The Mindbenders* and *God-Men* had. LSM and the local churches have not “won” but lost in two appellate court decisions in Texas. They are now on their way to the supreme court in Texas unless a settlement can be reached before then. They are determined to get the appellate court’s ruling reversed, because that ruling has given a public impression that the cult label is legitimate. If that ruling is not reversed, they have vowed to go all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court.

It is said they might be going to this extreme because of an increase of persecution to underground churches in China associated with LSM, due to the cult label given them in the book and legitimized by a U. S. court of law. Whatever the reasoning, LSM and the local churches are criticized for using very expensive notable California lawyers, and for spending millions of dollars provided by the saints to affect their end, instead of taking care of an irreproachable testimony and trusting in the Lord’s sovereignty. They also run the great risk of fallout from failure to “win” and the irreversible reputation as a “spiritual bully”, whether they “win” or “lose”.

At any rate their intense interest to the subject of defamation against them might give rise to the more important interest in the recovery of their own case of defamation against former co-workers that has been carefully documented and presented to them for fellowship and response.

17. Ministry Astounding

Saints found Brother Lee’s ministry astounding on Revelation and Hebrews in the 1976 and 1977 trainings. Each book required two trainings.

18. Max Rappoport Rise and Fall

Max Rappoport found great favor with Brother Lee in the mid-seventies, who came to the home of Max and Sandee daily over a long period of time. According to Max, he became like a son to Brother Lee and Brother Lee was like a father to him. Brother Lee was concerned for the religious behavior of many of the elders in the recovery, and Max was encouraged by him to go out to “mess them up.” Max did so in his natural man and caused damage to the churches. Word came to Brother Lee about his behavior and insults, such as his reference to life-studies as life-stuffies. Max was soon gone and twice Sandee approached Brother Lee, telling him that Max wanted to meet with him to reconcile with him and the churches. Brother Lee did not respond to her requests, or pleas, saying, “God is sovereign”, and he just let him go. But there was a reason for this that was personal, as “blood became thicker than water”, according to Max.

19. Max's Undoing

In the late seventies apparently Brother Lee let Max go due to his behavior among the churches. Actually, a major problem had come up between Max and Brother Lee concerning Philip Lee, Brother Lee's second son, who had become the manager of Living Stream Ministry (formerly, Stream Publishers) around 1974. A report had come to the elders in Anaheim, that Philip was observed fondling a sister in the office of Living Stream (both married). Max took the responsibility to go to Brother Lee with this news and made a strong recommendation to Brother Lee that Philip should leave with his family and go back to Taiwan. His recommendation did not meet with Brother Lee's approval, and that day, according to Max, was the beginning of the end for him. Because Philip and the sister continued to work together at LSM, the brothers were quite concerned as time went on, and Max took it upon himself to get to the bottom of the story. He went to lunch with Philip and confronted him on the matter, but Philip denied the report and became very angry to the point of nearly causing a fight in the restaurant. The elders then went to the sister and she tearfully admitted the report was true.

20. Max Request for Reconciling Fellowship Bypassed

Brother Lee would later take the *opportunity to let Max go*, rather than have him in position in Anaheim to put pressure on him concerning his son or to possibly deal with his son directly at some point, as an elder of the church. He passed up the *opportunity to bring Max back* to be reconciled to God and to the churches. Max much later repented to individual brothers for his mistakes that caused damage to them and to their localities.

21. Benson Phillips and Ray Graver Campaign

In 1981 two brothers, Benson Phillips and Ray Graver, who had helped stop Max Rappoport, became engaged in their own high profile work. Philip Lee had continued on as manager of the Living Stream Ministry without interruption to his service. The relationship between him and the churches became heightened when Benson Phillips and Ray Graver began a campaign to promote him as "the ministry office", along with their promotion of Witness Lee and his ministry. Benson and Ray felt that the saints were indebted to Brother Lee for the ministry and needed to fulfill their "account" to him by becoming more supportive of the ministry in various ways, which included being one with Philip Lee and the office he represented. Brother Lee admitted later that their promotions of Philip were a mistake. Some leaders (not Benson and Ray) repented publicly for their roles in promoting him (Minoru Chen was one). Philip Lee's record indeed was one of devastation in the recovery that helped lead the churches into turmoil and division. He far exceeded Max Rappoport in this regard. No public repentance came forth from Brother Lee to all the churches for his responsibility in positioning these two questionable men in high positions of influence that enabled them to carry out work that was gravely detrimental to the churches and factors of widespread despair.

Note: Max was a promising brother who the churches needed in his normal place in the Body. Brother Lee publicly expressed regret that he did not take better care of him. (Yet, he also would not accept reconciling fellowship with him.) Max was not political regarding Brother Lee's son, as others have been, and would not have tolerated Philip Lee and his degenerate behavior a decade later in the office of Living Stream.

21.5 Standing Order for Book Sales

In the early eighties Philip Lee instituted the concept of having a standing order for books printed by LSM, which was continuously producing books that filled closets and bookshelves that to this day most have probably not been opened. If a book came out, all those that signed up for standing order had to buy it. If four books came out, those books had to be purchased by those on standing order. Sales were booming! Philip Lee, according to anyone's description of him, including his father's, was not a spiritual person. He was not at LSM for the carrying out of God's economy; he was there for carrying out a job that he exploited for selfish reasons and for the Lee name. His previous "job" was that of selling Chinese wives to American men for the wives' citizenship in the United States.

22. The New Way

In 1984 while the trainings on the books of the Bible were in their tenth year, an extraordinary change took place in the recovery. Brother Lee wanted to address the problem of stagnancy among the churches, beginning in the Far East. It was a very serious problem to him that in many localities the saints had become complacent. He was, therefore, burdened to take a turn and have a new way, which involved several matters and changes based much on Paul's word to Timothy that God "desires all men to be saved and come to the full knowledge of the truth". He felt it was not enough for the saints to hear the messages, read them, and then place them on their shelves; he wanted the saints to become constituted with the truths and to ably speak them back to others, in church meetings and as the gospel. Small group meetings were to become 80% of the church life where the truths could be dispensed, saints could be taught, new ones could hear the gospel, and all could be shepherded. Prophesying in the larger gatherings could also be realized to a greater extent.

23. The New Way Letter of Agreement

In 1986 Brother Lee said the key to the Lord's new move was the one accord among the saints in all the churches. If there could not be a good morale and one accord, there could be no move of the Lord. Thus, he sounded a call to have an army of followers under him as the "commander-in-chief" while brothers responded by constructing and signing a paper stating their allegiance to him and to his ministry. Brother Lee's desire was to preserve and protect the churches from drifting into denominationalism by not taking his ministry seriously, a ministry fully unveiling God's eternal purpose and economy.

In Europe

24. LSM Seeks Europe Cooperation

In 1986 five brothers from LSM went to Stuttgart to hold a conference with the leading brothers in Europe for the expressed purpose of lining up John So and the European churches with the LSM office. This was so even to the extent of expecting the brothers in Europe to report all their activities to the office, to Philip Lee. The brothers in Europe were perplexed by this, wondering why they should be expected to report their activities to a business office. Their refusal to cooperate with such an expectation caused a problem to Philip Lee who consequently would make life very difficult for John So and churches in Europe who would not cooperate with him.

25. LSM Effectively Terminates German Printing

LSM reacted by stopping the translation and printing process of the Verlag-der Strom in Stuttgart, which had been publishing LSM books and life-studies in the German language for years. Camera-ready material was now to be sent to Anaheim. When over 4000 pages were sent, there was no response from LSM for a year and a half, even after attempts were made to secure communication by letter and by travel to Anaheim. The entire process was shut down due to LSM's lack of cooperation and non-payment for material and labor to Strom. Witness Lee finally tried to rescue the situation and paid Strom, but it was too late, the printers and translators had been forced to find other jobs. The Strom publishing arm for LSM was soon after liquidated and ceased to exist.

26. Chaos in Europe Created

In the summer of 1986 about twenty-five saints *from England* went to the Living Stream office *in Irving* to serve. They were there for about two months, and when they came back they spoke negatively about John So and Stuttgart, repeating the things they heard at LSM. Their negative speaking issued in a chaotic condition in Europe.

27. Stuttgart Young People Disciplined

After attending a training *in Taipei* in which negative statements about John So and Stuttgart were spoken to the young people *from Stuttgart*, those Stuttgart young people then went to a training *in Irving*. On the way they stopped in Anaheim, expecting to receive hospitality before going on to Irving. They were turned down, however, for no apparent reason, after Philip Lee heard about their arrival and request. They had to board a plane again, and go on to Irving, where they were refused entrance to the training. The next day they returned and still could not register, but were eventually issued special red tags and had to sit in a disciplinary section in the back. Becoming angry about the treatment they were receiving, they asked for an explanation for the discipline. They were told to ask John So, who was perplexed also when he heard about it and could only attribute the treatment and condemning statements in the recent months to his refusal to line up with the ministry office in the way LSM expected. (The reason they got into the training was because an angry German brother went to Brother Lee. Philip, of course, created the problem for them, and Ray Graver, had done nothing to help to them.)

In the Southeast

28. Workers Circumvent Fellowship With Elders

In 1986 the elders and co-workers in the Southeast were desirous and cooperative to take part in the new way, but LSM representatives began bypassing fellowship with the elders of the churches in order to establish LSM influence and a base for their operation in that region.

29. LSM Purchases House and Installs a Brother

LSM purchased a house near a college campus and a brother was selected by the office to be a full-time worker there, although the brother was not viewed by the leading ones in the churches to be ready for such responsibility. These steps taken by LSM were done without fellowship with the elders in that area.

30. Pressure on Elders to Support the LSM Brother

At the Irving training LSM workers reprimanded the Southeast elders in front of video cameras for not financially supporting the LSM-installed brother and for not being one with the ministry. The Southeast brothers were asked to write out \$6,000 in checks for this brother's personal debts and were pressured for monthly pledges for the brother. Before this time no opportunity for fellowship had been given to the brothers to make them aware of "the need". The LSM-installed brother eventually proved to be an unsuitable worker but there were no apologies forthcoming from Living Stream.

31. Turn Everything Over to the Office

Upon returning from the Taipei training a brother named Bob Ellis announced in a meeting of elders that Philip and Brother Lee had "big plans" for the Southeast and that it was imperative for them to give their cooperation to Philip and the office, and that Philip and Brother Lee needed evidence that the Southeast elders would fully cooperate with them.

Observation: This is opposite Watchman Nee's teaching, "*When a co-worker is in a certain place, he has to cooperate with the local church in that place*" (*The Uniqueness of the Lord's Recovery*, 3). In the experience of the churches in the Southeast, the elders were to cooperate with whatever Philip and LSM wanted. This led to confusion and disaccord in these churches.

In Rosemead

32. Prior To LSM Interventions

Prior to LSM interventions, the church in Rosemead had received a commendation from highly respected brother Abraham Chang, that he had "never seen any church among the churches with as much blessing by the Lord as the church in Rosemead for the genuine and sweet oneness and coordination there". He made this comment to Brother Lee after visiting churches throughout the U. S. in the early eighties.

33. Elder Removed, Replaced With LSM Brother

In 1986 LSM was not happy with Don Hardy, an elder in Rosemead, because of his perceived lack of cooperation with the office for the new way. As a result a committee of LSM brothers met with Don Hardy to carry out a directive from Philip Lee to remove him from the eldership in the church and from the work in the recovery. He was replaced with ardent LSM co-worker, Francis Ball, who was one of the brothers in the committee, as was Minoru Chen. Don's removal angered many of the saints in Rosemead, resulting in a growing mistrust of LSM.

34. The Door-Knocking Movement

In 1986 the elders in Rosemead were happy, initially, to open the doors of their meeting hall for door-knocking fellowship and activities involving churches in the area. Some of the elders soon became demoralized, however, over the way the door-knocking activity was being carried out. Many of the saints were also discouraged. No new ones were added and many of the local saints stopped attending regular church meetings.

35. Francis Ball Not Approved of in Rosemead

Moreover, in 1986, most of the church was unhappy with Francis Ball, their new replacement elder, who came to Rosemead with an agenda to bring about total cooperation with Philip Lee, who worked together with Francis from behind the scenes.

36. Division Comes In

Division resulted in Rosemead following 1) the unscriptural and unrighteous removal of Don Hardy 2) the door-knocking movement; and 3) the obtrusive nature of the ministry of Francis Ball, that damaged “the sweet oneness and coordination there” which resulted in his own dismissal from Rosemead, along with John Kwan’s.

In Anaheim

37. Resolving Serious Issues of a Tandem Leadership

John Ingalls was in the church in Anaheim with Witness Lee, Philip Lee, and the office of Living Stream in the same locality. His book, *Speaking the Truth in Love*, about the events and concerns related to the local churches in the late eighties is unique, as it describes his many experiences with Brother Lee and Philip Lee in their virtual tandem leadership role. John Ingalls records frustrations from 1987 through 1989 as he and other brothers tried to resolve serious issues they had with Living Stream and Witness Lee.

37. Talks With Bill Mallon and Godfred

In the fall of 1987 John Ingalls and Bill Mallon, two highly respected co-workers in the U. S., spent several days together discussing developments in the Lord’s recovery. During that time Bill Mallon explained to John Ingalls how he had suffered that year in various ways by events that had taken place in the churches and in the work of LSM in the Southeast.

38. Philip Lee’s Increased Involvement in the Churches

John came away from their talks with the deep impression that Philip Lee was becoming increasingly involved “in spiritual things concerning the Lord’s work, the churches, the elders, and the co-workers”. This concerned John since Philip Lee was employed by his father to be the business manager of the Living Stream office and was “reportedly instructed to deal only with business affairs” and was “totally unqualified both in position and character to touch spiritual matters related to the work of the Lord and the churches”. John naturally became alarmed and began to fear for the Lord’s testimony.

39. More Serious Matters Concerning Philip

Upon his return to Anaheim, John sought out Godfred Otuteye who coordinated with Philip Lee in the Living Stream office. He asked him about Philip’s role, saying that he felt Philip was “being promoted and is going altogether too far in his involvement in the spiritual side of the work, greatly overstepping his position as a business manager”. Godfred confirmed that the situation was very serious in that regard and had “seen and heard many things in the Living Stream office in recent months that were very serious and very wrong. Godfred fully agreed that Philip Lee’s involvement in the work was way out of line, but he indicated that there were more serious things than that, stating that “the whole situation is sick and corrupt”.

40. LSM Sister Reports Philip's Misconduct

Just days after talking to Godfred a report came to John Ingalls about the moral misconduct of Philip Lee in the office of LSM. A sister who held a prominent position at Living Stream and who had served there "sacrificially and faithfully" for many years testified to John that Philip had been violating her and other sisters over a long period of time and that she would endure him no longer. Her intention was to resign, which John confirmed was indeed appropriate. John was shocked and taken aback by this report and contacted Godfred who said that he already knew it.

41. Others Contacted About Case

John Ingalls was quite concerned about this case, especially since ten years previously there had been reports of similar incidents in the LSM office about Philip Lee that were confirmed by several eye-witnesses. He also felt that this immoral situation with Philip was more than a local matter since LSM was associated with churches all over the globe. John, therefore, "believed it to be reasonable and advisable for a few prominent co-workers who were aware of the history of the case and who were respected by Brother Lee to approach him and inform him of the matter."

42. Brother Lee Says Hands Off His Son

In the case ten years previously, Gene Gruhler, an elder, asked Brother Lee what was going to be done about Philip. Brother Lee's strong word to him was for the elders to keep their hands off, and that he would take care of his son. Philip continued, however, as the LSM manager to the dismay of the elders, including John Ingalls. John said that whenever Brother Lee was that strong on a matter, the elders knew they could do nothing. This was John's background to dealing with reports about Philip ten years later. *The Fermentation of the Present Rebellion* was severely critical of John for contacting co-workers who were "aware of the history of the case".

43. No Action Again Taken By Brother Lee

Brother Lee again took no action after becoming aware through the brothers' fellowship of the serious problems at LSM created by his son. It would be months before Brother Lee finally removed Philip from his position as manager of LSM in July 1988, and he did so reluctantly and under great pressure from the saints and the elders. Then the elders, who were also under pressure from the saints, eventually removed Philip from the church fellowship. The subsequent eldership, including Ed Marks and Francis Ball, eventually reversed that excommunication, saying it was a wrong decision, as they embraced Philip at the behest of his father and restored him to "fellowship" in the church in 1993. They even wrote an apologetic word to Philip for not signing a letter, informing him of their "gracious action". Philip had been offended and his father suggested they apologize.

44. Preparation for Fellowship with Brother Lee

In the fall of 1987 John Ingalls came together with some of the brothers that he had close fellowship with through the years concerning the Lord's work. They all had the same registration within them that the church life had gone down in their localities and was very poor for the most part throughout the country in other localities. (Brother Lee's assessment was similar, which he expressed many times.) The brothers sought out fellowship before the Lord to determine the reasons for this. This they did in preparation to have fellowship with Brother Lee, when he returned from Taipei.

45. Conclusions About Condition of Churches

They came to the following conclusions about the spiritual condition of the churches.

1) *the ministry was being too highly exalted and emphasized* 2) *There was an excessive emphasis on numbers* 3) *LSM was growing in influence and control with Philip Lee as the office, with whom all the churches were to be one* 4) *Aberrational speaking and activity in the full-time training in Taipei, the FTTT, which was being headed up by Philip Lee* 5) *Moral misconduct of Philip Lee in the LSM Office*

46. First Fellowship With Witness Lee

On December 12th, 1987, four brothers went to see Brother Lee after he had returned from Taipei. John Ingalls, Al Knoch, Godfred Otuteye, and Ken Unger represented many brothers as they opened their heart to Brother Lee about their concerns. John Ingalls would have sixteen sessions of fellowship with Brother Lee, and Ken Unger twenty from this point over the next couple of years in their attempts to address the serious developments in the recovery. This first fellowship was encouraging, but in nearly all subsequent times of fellowship, they made little progress with Brother Lee, and Philip still held his position for months as manager of LSM.

49. A Surprising Elders' Meeting

On Monday, December 14, 1987 Brother Lee held an elders' conference hoping to hear from the elders their positive reports about the new way. Many were honest and open with him that discouragement, dissension, and division had developed in some localities and brothers were gravely concerned. Brother Lee was not open to their fellowship in the Body; rather, he was offended by their honesty. He proceeded to push through, not only as "commander-in-chief" of the work, but also of the church.

50. Another Shocking Development

On the morning of December 19, 1987 before leaving for the training in Irving, John Ingalls again received a call from the LSM sister requesting to meet with John and Godfred. She shared in more detail Philip's immoral behavior. This left the two elders "revulsed and in a daze". They felt that Benson and Ray must know something about these matters and determined that they should be approached in Irving.

51. Fellowship With Benson and Ray

That afternoon John Ingalls and Ken Unger flew to Irving. They had a time with Benson and Ray the next day and shared with them initially about their concerns that were non-related to the misconduct of Philip Lee in the LSM office. They let them know what a huge mistake they were making in promoting and exalting the office and Philip Lee, starting in 1981. Benson and Ray disagreed. This response surprised and disappointed John and Ken, who then tried to impress them with the seriousness of the matter.

52. Benson and Ray Refuse to Hear About Philip's Misconduct

When these same four brothers came together again later that day, John brought up Philip's misconduct in the office of LSM. Benson and Ray, who were deeply involved with LSM, became angry and would not hear them, saying that this was a matter to be taken up by the church in Anaheim, not by them. John and Ken felt that the matter was more than a local church problem and should involve Benson and Ray who were the counterparts of Philip Lee in the LSM operation that touched all the churches.

53. Benson and Ray Bring Report to Brother Lee

In the elders' meeting that night it was evident that Benson and Ray had reported to Brother Lee all that John Ingalls and Ken Unger had shared with them. He spoke on the same matters, vindicating himself strongly while rebuking those he thought were opposing, though not mentioning names. John Ingalls felt that Brother Lee was out of line with the truth and was not presenting himself appropriately before the brothers. A number of brothers were grieved, disturbed, and discouraged by his talk.

In Atlanta

54. Bill Mallon Resigns from the Work

Bill Mallon was a long-time elder and co-worker, standing on the ground of oneness with the church in Atlanta and in one accord with the Southeast churches at the time LSM began its aggressive campaign that undermined Bill and instituted its agenda in that region that led to Bill's resignation from the work. He shared with Brother Lee in his resignation letter on December 16, 1987 that the Southeast brothers were willing to receive the LSM workers and work together with them, but that they were never given that opportunity, pointing out that the elders' experience in the Southeast with LSM was not that of the oneness of fellowship in the Body of Christ but that of being intimidated and harassed by LSM workers to line up with the LSM office. In Bill's letter the subject of fellowship vs. central control was made reference to that Watchman Nee had warned about in *The Normal Christian Church Life* (ch. 7). Witness Lee gave no response directly to Bill for this charge or for examples Bill gave concerning central control, but stated in *The Fermentation of the Present Rebellion* that **“all these [examples] are groundless, unprovable, perverted, and slanderous accusations”** (p. 67), which they were not. There were many witnesses to support Bill's word.

Concerns over Central Control

55. Observations and Experience Result in Contact

Bill Mallon was not the only one with concerns about central control in the leadership in the recovery and at LSM. According to John Ingalls' account, John So began to be concerned in 1986, Bill Mallon in the spring of 1987, and John Ingalls in the fall of 1987. Brother Lee felt that since these three brothers all used the same term - central control - they must have consulted with one another or “conspired” with each other as ringleaders of a global conspiracy to overthrow him and his leadership. Each of these brothers testify that this was far from the case, that eventually, as they had done for years, they had telephone contact, and the matters that were on their heart came out from their experience and observation of developments in the recovery. The matter of central control was an issue picked up by many concerned brothers during the late eighties turmoil who had the same registration within them as the three brothers.

56. Brother Lee Reacts to Reports of Central Control

After the Irving training on January 7th, 1988 Brother Lee met with John Ingalls and Ken Unger and let them know that Benson and Ray had talked to him, along with another brother, Lin Rong. Brother Lee was very upset about the reference to central control.

However, John honestly felt this was the case and that addressing this matter was getting to the core of the problem in the recovery. The next evening Brother Lee met with John Ingalls, Al Knoch, Godfred Otuteye, and Ken Unger. He strongly condemned them for not handling things properly, and was especially disturbed that the subject of Philip Lee's misconduct was brought up with Benson and Ray and also with Lin Rong. He then stated that John Ingalls and the Anaheim elders were no longer useful to him to help deal with the misconduct in the LSM office or to deal with it as the church, declaring that they had disqualified themselves. The brothers were disturbed and disappointed with Brother Lee and his attitude and demeanor towards them. They felt there was hardness in his heart that made them feel it was hopeless to try to have any further fellowship.

57. An Armed Husband Looks For Philip

In late December 1987 the husband of a sister who was violated by Philip Lee in the LSM office went looking for him one night armed with a gun. He was very disturbed about what had happened to his wife and sought revenge. Although he had taken definite steps toward carrying out a grave act, he did not follow through. In March 1988, after three months had elapsed, this affair also came to the ears of Dan Towle, who became greatly alarmed. By this time no action had been taken concerning Philip.

57.5 Philip's Record at Taipei Training

The husband who sought revenge might have also heard from his wife as did others that in the Taipei training, she would clean up the whisky bottles and porn magazines in Philip's office, being his secretary. In spite of the corrupted state of Philip Lee, brothers still cow towed to him in their own weak and blind state.

57.6 Trainers Sober Up Philip

Further, brothers had to sober him up before trainings which he was to conduct in Brother Lee's absence, while the latter was sick or working on the Chinese translation of the Recovery Version, which were most often the cases.

58. One Hundred Days Since First Meeting

While together with Brother Lee for fellowship in March 1988, Brother Lee remarked to the brothers that it had been one hundred days since they had come to him on December 12, 1987 for fellowship about their concerns, saying that a day didn't go by without him considering what to do, adding that he felt that he should not give in to any pressure exercised by the elders or the saints, especially regarding serious matters related to his son. Brother Lee was to go another three and a half months before mounting pressures caused him to finally capitulate and terminate his son from employment at LSM.

59. Autonomy and Federation

On June 29, 1988 during the summer training, Brother Lee shared on autonomy and federation, which had become major topics of his. He felt that John Ingalls in his travels to various churches where he had been invited to speak was stressing the autonomy of the local church. Brother Lee's stress in those days was not on the autonomy of the local church that featured elders and their authority in the church, as had always been the teaching in the churches from the ministries of Brothers Nee and Lee. Brother Lee's stress rather was on the local churches lining up with him, and the elders submitting to

his leadership and ministry to build up the Body of Christ in every place. Local churches were de-emphasized, along with the elderships and their responsibility to seek the Lord for His leading in their own locality. Because of the emphasis on the churches lining up with Brother Lee and with his office, John Ingalls had spoken about the dangers of church affiliation or federation, which lead to central control and denominationalism.

60. Administration Local, Communion Universal

On Thursday, August 25th 1988, Brother Lee asked John Ingalls to come to his home for further fellowship. In that time John tried to impress upon Brother Lee that he never used the word autonomy in his speaking. But in Brother Lee's own publication, *The Beliefs and Practices of the Local Churches*, the word "autonomy" is used positively two times. John stated that he was burdened to speak about local administration together with universal fellowship (as we have in our hymn, #824, authored by Brother Lee and translated from Chinese: *Administration local, each answering to the Lord; Communion universal, upheld in one accord.*) Brother Lee responded that this was his teaching. John agreed that it was indeed Brother Lee's teaching. So what was wrong? John later shared with the church in Anaheim at his resignation speech about going directly to the Lord for His leading in the church in order to have a local administration, and at the same time maintaining a proper fellowship with other saints and other churches.

61. Godfred Speaks His Mind to Brother Lee

The next day, August 26, 1988 John Ingalls, Al Knoch, and Godfred Otuteye met with Brother Lee. Godfred asked Brother Lee if he had spoken anything against them recently and then reasoned with him about his speaking against autonomy, considering that a problem, yet when problems were brought to his attention by them, he didn't address them. Godfred went on to earnestly say that the center of the church should be Christ, but that He had been replaced with Brother Lee and his ministry. It seemed Godfred's frank words had touched Brother Lee, who stated that he liked what Godfred said. It was a hopeful time for the brothers, but at the end of the session they felt that no real progress was made. After the meeting Godfred told the other two brothers that he wanted to leave the eldership and was fully disgusted with the whole situation.

62. Sixteen Points

On August 28, 1988 Anaheim elders, John Ingalls, Al Knoch, and Godfred Otuteye held a special meeting with the church to share with them what was on their heart about the proper standing of the church. They did this in the face of developments in the recovery that brought in a confused situation to many churches and they were thus burdened as elders in their locality to address specific points about truth and practice. Their objective was to clarify the stand as the church in Anaheim and to bring all the saints back to the Lord Himself. Apologies were made for inordinate promotions and for succumbing to external pressures for the direction of the church rather than seeking the Lord's leading. Minoru Chen basically confirmed the brothers' word, but held some reservation on points made about church practices. He gave a strong supporting word to Godfred's confession on behalf of the brothers about their improper relationship with the LSM office and he also wanted to disassociate with the office and its conduct, as the brothers did that evening. He declared that there had indeed been an excessive amount of promotion that confused the saints and brought them into despair and the church into suffering. He asked the whole church for forgiveness for his part in the promotions.

64. Atlanta Conference

The month following the sixteen points fellowship in Anaheim, Brother Lee held a conference in Atlanta with two elders' meetings also being held. In the second elders' meeting, he strongly defended his previous fellowship to the churches and declared that all those who didn't follow him were "dropouts". He spoke in a manner that was disturbing to a number of elders, putting himself on a high plane and them on a low plane, saying, none of them was qualified to fellowship with him. He felt that the sixteen points' fellowship in Anaheim was an attack on him, and he was re-asserting himself as the unique leader in the recovery against that fellowship and any and all "attacks".

65. Anaheim Stirrings Over Sixteen Points

Back in Anaheim there was controversy and unrest since the evening of the sixteen points fellowship. Some were happy about it; some were not. An immediate concern was that some saints became outspoken in church meetings about the need to deal with Philip Lee on the church side. (He had already been removed at LSM.) Others objected to their speaking out about him publicly and in such detail. On October 27 a group of five concerned brothers approached the Anaheim elders to register their displeasure about open displays of criticisms that were taking place in the meetings, and the same brothers, along with six other brothers and sisters later wrote a letter to the elders that was received on December 20, 1988, signed by these eleven saints. At one point in their meeting a brother declared that they would not follow the leadership of the elders in their locality. They viewed the sixteen points as bullets aimed at Brother Lee and his ministry. Minoru Chen, who was there, strongly backed the concerned brothers' position. It was found out that these concerned brothers had met with Brother Lee before addressing the elders.

66. Outcome of Meeting with the Dissenting Ones

The view of John Ingalls, Al Knoch, and Godfred Otuteye was the same. They felt that a system was now in place in the recovery with Brother Lee featured as the leader and his ministry as the leading. They were naturally expected to cooperate with this leadership and not seek their own leading, and not be different in any way. According to their spirit, though, they felt they were to stand against such a system and arrangement, not out of rebellion, but out of their sense of what was right according to God, and for their locality. They endeavored to practice generality in Anaheim, but the intervening group of brothers represented a number of saints who did not appreciate the direction of their elders. It became clear to the brothers that their eldership was not respected and that it existed in name only. They felt that it was a grievous situation that could not last much longer.

67. Elders Resign

On Tuesday, March 14, 1989, John Ingalls, Godfred, and Al had fellowship and prayer during the morning and then lunch together. They determined that it was of no use to continue in their locality as elders, that their practice of generality would not be fully accepted, and would even be undermined with the objecting group and its support sources. Thus on the Lord's Day morning, March 19th, 1989 John announced their decision to withdraw from the eldership of the church. Godfred had already withdrawn, but stayed in fellowship with John and Al.

68. Churches in Europe Disassociate with LSM

Six months previously, in September 1988, John So and elders from nine churches in Europe wrote a letter to Witness Lee after approximately three years of struggle with LSM,

Dear brother Witness Lee,

It has come to our attention recently through several witnesses that gross immorality and some other sins mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:11 have been committed by your son Philip Lee (who is identified as your Ministry Office) on more than one occasion over a long period of time. This deeply disturbs us. It grieves us even more that you and some of your close co-workers were aware of the situation and yet not only tolerated it but covered it up. What is worse is that, while this was happening, you and your co-workers were promoting and exalting him to the extent that he was able to intervene in the churches' affairs in recent years. The peak of this promotion was evident at your elders' training in Taipei in June 1987. Some of your co-workers were not only themselves under the influence and control of Philip Lee, but were also openly bringing elders and young people of many local churches to come under the same influence and control [of Philip Lee] in your name and for your sake. The five brothers whom you and your Office sent to Europe in your place in May 1986 were trying to do the same here. Our young people who went to your training in Taipei have also testified of the same.

Before God, before the brothers and sisters in the local churches, before the Christian public, and for the sake of the Lord's testimony, we are compelled by our conscience to fully disassociate ourselves from such sins and behaviour in your work.

Bill Mallon had resigned in December of 1987 from the work (p. 15).

69. Brothers Quarantined as Ringleaders

In March of 1990 John Ingalls, Bill Mallon, John So, and Joseph Fung were “quarantined” by 45 churches in California following brother Witness Lee’s recommendation in messages given to the elders and co-workers. Churches in West Malaysia and Taiwan followed and virtually all the churches followed in the spirit of the “quarantine”. These brothers had been singled out by Brother Lee as ringleaders of a conspiracy to overthrow him and were designated “leprous” and unfit for the church life. None of these brothers, however, felt that they were in a conspiracy, let alone be its ringleaders. They felt that they were reacting and responding to a need in the recovery. Each was impacted by the interfering actions of the LSM operation in their localities, beginning in Hong Kong with Joseph Fung in 1985. In 1990 in *The Fermentation of the Present Rebellion*, Brother Lee denied Joseph Fung’s complaint of LSM interferences in Hong Kong, even though many complaints about LSM’s interfering tactics were to follow in ’86, ’87, ’88, and ’89. Brother Lee was well aware of these complaints, saying privately, “I told Philip ten times not to interfere with the churches”. Yet he condemned Joseph on this point, rather than admit his own failure to remove the stumbling block.

70. Pivotal Meeting for the Churches

Witness Lee not only failed to remove Philip Lee, who became a stumbling block to all four of the “quarantined” brothers, he also did not take the golden opportunity to restore the oneness among all the brothers at a pivotal gathering of elders.

In his second message of the elders’ meetings, Brother Lee spoke concerning our going on. After all our sessions and hours of fellowship with Brother Lee, we had hoped that he would take steps to clear up a number of things publicly. This was surely an excellent opportunity, a perfect forum, and an appropriate time. He did give a few principles for our going on which would be helpful if practiced. He did say, "It is altogether wise and profitable that we do not expect all the churches to be the same," and, "Do not talk about who is for this or who is for that...We should not label ourselves or label others." We were thankful to hear these comments and urgings. But we were deeply disappointed that he did not go much further. What he should have cleared up he covered up, e.g., problems regarding the LSM office and the FTTT training in Taipei. We hoped he would have repented for some things that had caused many problems, not just for allowing saints from the U.S. to attend the training in Taiwan. We surely would have respected him had he done this, and the situation could have been altogether different than it turned out.

(John Ingalls, *Speaking the Truth in Love*, 1990)

The four brothers were eventually “quarantined” in the recovery with no acknowledgments given of their sufferings with Witness Lee and Living Stream representatives. Their reaction to the interferences, manipulations, and usurpations of LSM became known as “the rebellion”. They themselves became known as “the rebellious ones” and “the leaders of the rebellion”.

He later condemned in *FPR* all the reporters of the divisive activity of Living Stream, ever urging church leaders “not to make an issue” of anything. By so doing, the church leaders have kept their kind of “one accord”. They have also kept to this day the shroud about them, created during those days of turmoil in the local churches.

Post-Turmoil (1990 to 1997)

70. Fermentation of the Present Rebellion

In 1990 *The Fermentation of the Present Rebellion* was printed based on messages given by Witness Lee that supposedly tell the story of a rebellion that occurred among the local churches in the late eighties. The book, however, does not take into account the whole story, and conveniently leaves out valuable and insightful detail that would affect drastically the reader’s ability to understand what actually happened. Moreover, the pages of *FPR* are filled with error and misrepresentation of former leading ones and their motives and intentions, during a time of turmoil induced by LSM.

71. Full-Time Training

Full-time trainings became the life-blood of the church life for many of the churches. Young people attended the two-year trainings and were either sent back to their localities or out into a field of work for the Lord. A high percentage of them became quite useful to minister Christ and deposit the Word wherever they went, including gospel preaching and the raising up churches in other countries. Their training and usefulness appear to bode well for the churches today and well into the future. (This is on the positive side.)

72. Vital Groups

In 1992, after seven years in the new way, Brother Lee began to speak about the need for vital groups. He had been sharing about small group home meetings since 1984, but said that the churches were not coming into the reality of the home meetings that should constitute 80% of the church life. Therefore, he was burdened to present in detail what it takes to raise up a proper and vital home meeting fellowship. In 1996 he expanded on this fellowship that was a major burden he bore until his death in 1997.

73. High Peak of the Divine Revelation

In 1994 Brother Lee took a remarkable step in introducing the high peak of the divine revelation concerning 1) God becoming a man that man could become God in life and nature but not in the Godhead, and 2) the New Jerusalem. The first item was controversial even among many that had been in the church life for 25 or 30 years, in that initially they had problems adjusting to and then accepting such a concept. The New Jerusalem, he taught, is the consummation, the final goal of God's organic salvation in the Bible and our destination. It is also the reason for God becoming man and for man becoming God in life and nature. The New Jerusalem had become a major burden of his ministry till the end.

73.2 PSRP "Flow"

In 1996 in order to help the saints become more constituted with the ministry of Brother Lee a "flow" came in from Taipei which he encouraged all the churches to pick up. It was called PSRP, the practice of praying over a portion of the ministry; studying it; reciting it; and prophesying according to it. PSRP did not get off the ground as genuine flows like calling on the Lord, pray-reading, or migrations did. PSRP was introduced on a world-wide scale in the same way that door-knocking was introduced, and all the churches were encouraged to participate. There was no flow in either. PSRP died, as door-knocking died.

Brother Lee once said, "Do not say, as if it were a mere slogan, 'I am following the flow.' The real flow is the Lord Himself. How wrong it is to stir up a movement! That is an insult to the Lord. It is an offense to Him. There must never be a movement among us in the Lord's recovery. Do not use the word 'flow' as a cloak to disguise a movement. When some of you speak of the flow, you actually mean a movement. To create a movement and then to encourage others to follow it is to make a tremendous mistake" (*The Spirit and the Body*, p. 9, 1977).

Note: Even though it might be said that every believer on the earth should be brought into the God-ordained way under the inclusive and extensive ministry of Witness Lee, it could not be said that the implementation of the new way in the churches was a flow. It was a forceful push and an unethical organized movement to obtain an end at the cost of hundreds of casualties and division in the Body. The narrow mindset adapted in the movement that oneness with Witness Lee and his ministry/leadership is automatically THE ONENESS in the Body of Christ has carried over till today. The trumpet call *for the ministry* became a trumpet blast *for the recovery*, as the work and the church became mixed, indistinguishable, moving the churches into sectarianism as ministry churches.

74. What the Recovery Needs

In 1997, the last year of his life and ministry, Witness Lee looked back over his life in the church and testified in an elders training that the result of his labor in the United States had not been satisfactory. In fact, it had been “*disappointing*”. He also testified that his work in both Taipei and the Philippines never brought “*satisfactory results*”, and that only one place had done so where he had labored -- “*Chefoo, my home town.*” He was locked in by the war then and could not leave to minister to the churches. So, he gave his full attention to the needs in his locality. He testified that due to the shepherding work and gospel preaching raised up in Chefoo among the saints a revival was brought in that lasted for ten years. From the beginning of Brother Lee's ministry in the United States clear to the end of it we heard relatively little about love. Near the end of his ministry, from 1988 on, he did speak more concerning the need for love among the churches. He said that even though the saints may enjoy and appreciate the high peak of the divine revelation, if love is absent they will be puffed up and not built up. He also stated that only love prevails and that “*love is the most excellent way*”. He said it is the way to be an elder or a co-worker, and that it is the way to handle the saints. He proclaimed that it is the way to do everything and to be anything in the church life and that it is the way to conquer the degradation of the church.

75. The Last Message

In the spring of 1997 Witness Lee gave his last message in an elders' conference of Chinese elders and co-workers and took the opportunity to issue an apology to the Body of Christ. He admitted to past mistakes and said that he had repented before the Lord in tears and that he was sorry to the whole Body of Christ, both in and outside the recovery. He said that the leaders of the churches need to learn and that the eyes of the brothers and sisters need to be opened to receive people according to the Son of God and not deviate a bit from this path.

A Final Word

It is significant that brother Witness Lee would bring attention to his mistakes at the end of his life. Although he did not specify what those mistakes were, we know that they were serious and that they affected the Body of Christ. John Nelson Darby, toward the end of his life, also made a general confession of mistakes he made that affected the oneness of the Body among the assemblies that were under his ministry around the world. As history has recorded Darby's errors that led to division among the Brethren in the nineteenth century, the mistakes of Witness Lee have also been objectively recorded. Both former leaders realized they did not always “receive people according to the Son of God”, but did indeed “deviate from the path”.

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