

"PUSHING THE ENVELOPE"—LSM's ONE ACCORD vs. THE BIBLE'S

Introduction

1986 marked watershed in the Lord's recovery. Bro. Witness Lee was frustrated with the local churches in North America. There was little evidence of the Lord's blessing, especially compared to the "good-old-days of Elden Hall"; growth had stalled (except among Chinese immigrants); discontented voices were heard; Bro. Lee felt his leadership was being challenged.¹ Nevertheless Witness Lee had some newly-acquired "spiritual capital"—initial results from his "New Way experiment" in Taiwan appeared promising.

Early in 1986 Bro. Lee took decisive action, calling an urgent elders' meeting in Anaheim, CA. From the LSM podium, he reasserted his leadership, declaring,² "my toleration has been terminated." He exhorted the 425 assembled elders to acknowledge³ "the apostle that all the believers need to recognize as their leader." He urged them as soldiers in the army to line up in "one accord" behind himself as commander-in-chief to carry out the "New Way."⁴ The messages were strong, "pushing the envelope" of the recovery's teachings. The ministry-local church distinction was blurred. Notions like "one wise master builder"⁵ and "the Minister of the Age"⁶ were introduced. "Keeping the oneness" was no longer adequate, "one accord" was needed to restore the Lord's blessing.⁷ Brothers were directed to stop their own publications. The initial response was encouraging. 98.5% of the responsible brothers signed a statement⁸ agreeing to a new start in one accord, repudiating all church differences and acknowledging Bro. Lee as "the one wise master builder among us." However, the storm clouds of a backlash appeared on the horizon. After the elders' training several leading co-workers withdrew their signatures and left; others were quarantined, denounced as conspirators and rebels. The ensuing turmoil mainly affected the West Coast & SE US churches. The departed co-workers' places were quickly occupied by the "soon-to-be blended co-workers." It appeared the crisis had passed; nevertheless seeds were sown.

For many local churches, not directly impacted by the 1980s troubles, church-life went on as usual; most saints were blissfully unaware of subtle changes in the recovery's tenets. "Pushing the envelope" of the recovery's teachings sowed seeds which yielded abundant fruit over the next 20 years. Extra-biblical notions like "one wise master builder," one "Minister of the Age" and "one publication" were introduced in 1986. These teachings were not the outcome of an exposition of Biblical truth; they were devised in response to perceived threats to the recovery's leadership. The elevation of 'the ministry' above the local churches and the use of 'the Body' to over-ride the local church and its elders can be traced back to that pivotal period. Since Bro. Lee's passing these concepts have been extended and elaborated by LSM's "blended brothers." As a result the Lord's recovery has taken a different trajectory. Many of these extra-biblical tenets have been discussed on this forum. Here we focus on another point—the key concept of "one accord," propounded since the mid-1980s. We contrast the notion of "one accord" proposed by Bro. W. Lee and developed by LSM's "blended brothers" with the "one accord" presented in the New Testament. LSM's version⁹ is a "universal one accord of the whole Body," including all the local churches worldwide; it is all-encompassing, requiring concord on all points. It is enforced by the "blended brothers' decrees," e.g. regarding "one publication" (June 2005) and quarantine (Oct. 2006). In contrast, one accord in Scripture is local; it is item-specific, allowing for diversity. Biblical one accord is inclusive, allowing liberty. It is produced by the Spirit, not legalistic decrees. However, LSM's "one accord" is exclusive; it is achieved by subduing or quarantining "dissidents" to create a uniform "one accord" among the residual, "faithful remnant." It produces intolerance, conformity and uniformity.

One Accord—Global OR Local?

The phrase "one accord" occurs repeatedly in Luke's description of the early church in Acts. The disciples prayed for 10 days in one accord (Acts 1:14.) After Pentecost the 3,000 continued steadfastly in the temple with one accord (2:46; 5:12.) When threatened, the Jerusalem believers petitioned God in one accord (4:24.) The Samaritans responded with one accord to Philip's preaching (8:6) The Jerusalem council's decision was the outcome of one accord (15:25.) "One accord" is Luke's favorite term describing the early Church's harmony. The term also appears in negative contexts. Stephen's persecutors rushed upon him "with one accord" (7:57); the Corinthian Jews rose up with one accord against Paul (18:12); Likewise the idolatrous Ephesians gathered "with one accord" at the city theater (19:29). Clearly, it describes a group of people; but what does this word really mean?

Scholars¹⁰ indicate the Greek word, *homothumadon*, denotes the unity of a group. It is a compound of *homo* (meaning sharing, or the same) and *thumos* (derived from *thuo*: to rage, seethe) implying zeal, desire, feeling, impulse or passion. So it means to share the same passion or impulse. The shared passion may be rage, as when the lynch mob attacked Stephen, or the united outrage of the Ephesian idol-makers (Acts 19:29.) Positively the shared passion can be the desire to accomplish God's purpose (Acts 1:14.) The early Jerusalem believers shared a passion for prayer, praise and participation in the church-life (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12.)

We can now pose the question—in the New Testament is “one accord” local or global? In all ten instances in Acts, one accord characterizes an assembly of people, composed either of the believers or their opponents.¹¹ The group's parameters and location are usually defined. The 120 prayed in one accord in the upper room (Acts 1:13-14). The Jerusalem believers gathered in the temple in one accord (Acts 2:46; 5:12). This term also describes the herd mentality of lynch mobs (Acts 7:57; 18:12; 19:29). Significantly, **there is no instance in Scripture when “one accord” describes a group dispersed throughout a region, country or the whole globe.** It was the apostles and elders assembled in Jerusalem who attained unanimity on the circumcision question (Acts 15:25). Similarly the Apostle Paul exhorted the Roman believers “to be of the same mind,” resulting in one accord (Rom. 15:6). The New Testament knows nothing of a global or universal one accord. In Scripture the term “one accord” is always employed in a strictly local context. One scholar says,¹¹ “When the local church lives and works *homothumadon* [in one accord,] it is living and working in harmony with its origin.” **“One accord” is local.**

Both W. Lee and the “blending brothers” relate Matthew 18:19 to one accord. It says, “if two of you are in harmony on earth concerning any matter for which they ask, it shall be done for them...” The Greek word for “harmony” differs from that for “one accord;” nevertheless, Bro. Ron Kangas says,¹² “the Greek word *sumphoneo* is used to signify one accord.” Notice the scope of the harmony (one accord) required here (Matt. 18:19) is **only two believers**. The prerequisite for answered prayer is not unanimity of an entire local church,¹³ much less one accord globally. Yet the “blended brothers” extrapolate from the two believers in Matthew 18:19 to all the churches globally, saying¹⁴ “We need to be in harmony with each other in our local church. We need to be in harmony among the local churches. All the churches need to be in harmony with one another.” But the focus of Matthew 18:19 is not all the churches world-wide; it is two believers! It talks about harmony between a few believers, not many local churches! According to this Scripture, one accord among the minimum plural number—two believers—secures the Father's response! Contrary to the “blended brothers,” what is indicated here is not a global, “macro one accord,” but a local, “micro one accord” among a few harmonious believers.

“The genuine one accord is universal”—Ron Kangas

“The whole recovery...all the churches must be in one accord”—Benson Phillips

In the New Testament “one accord” is local. This conclusion contrasts starkly with the teaching of LSM's “blended brothers.” For them, the crucial matter is a “universal (or global) one accord.” **“The genuine one accord is universal,”** Ron Kangas states emphatically.¹⁵ LSM President, Benson Phillips says¹⁶ “We are not talking about merely a one accord locally...The one accord the Lord wants to gain is a one accord that is with the whole Body, and I would say, the whole recovery...not only all the saints but **even all the churches must be in one accord.**” The “blended brothers'” proof text for this “universal one accord of the Body” is the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council. The council's “apostolic decree” declared, ‘It seemed good to us, having become of one accord...’ (15:25) to impose certain restrictions on Gentile believers (e.g. abstaining from idol-sacrifices, 15:29). Based on this, Bro. Benson says,¹⁷ “us here refers to the apostles, the elders and the whole church in Jerusalem. Who should be in one accord?...all the churches must be in one accord. The whole kingdom of God should be in one accord.” Another “blended brother” says¹⁸ “The one solution made in Jerusalem...became a decree for all the churches...to keep.” He also asserts¹⁹ “This word of resolution was not a word for just one church; it went out to many churches...**this resolution was for the Body of Christ. It was for all the churches.** No church has the right to select what they wanted, but rather, this was the one accord...” These striking claims deserve examination.

Acts 15—Proof Text for “Universal One Accord” OR Blueprint for Diversity?

Closer investigation reveals that Acts 15 is a “weak reed” upon which to base a universal one accord. First, the “blended brothers” concede that (while accepting the non-requirement of circumcision) Paul²⁰ “was not very pleased with the decision made in Jerusalem.” So, was this genuine one accord, or merely a pragmatic compromise? Second, although Paul delivered the decree to the Galatian churches

(Acts 16:4,) it is never mentioned in Paul's ministry or epistles. Paul's epistle to Galatians²¹ makes no reference to the Jerusalem accord when addressing this issue. Evidently, Paul chose to conveniently ignore it. Third, whenever Paul spoke of eating idol-sacrifices, (as F. F. Bruce says²²) "it is noteworthy that...**he never [appealed] to the apostolic decree**"—prohibiting such eating (Acts 15:20, 29). On the contrary, directly contravening the decree, Paul gave the Corinthians the liberty²³ to "eat everything sold in the meat market," no questions asked (1 Cor. 10:25-30). Likewise, Paul told the Romans, "one believes he may eat all things [including meat from idol-sacrifices,]...Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind." (Rom. 14:2-5) Paul gave individual believers liberty²⁴ before the Lord in this matter, instead of mandating the "apostolic decree." For Paul, Christian liberty trumped legality, in the form of the Acts-15 Jerusalem decree. Hence, in Paul's era, the churches had two distinct teachings and practices—some churches applied the Jerusalem decree (Judea, Antioch, Syria, Cilicia & Galatia?) only eating kosher meat; some other churches under Paul's ministry (e.g. Corinth) exercised greater liberty. On this issue the practice of various churches differed significantly; they were not the same; some were under the legality, others had liberty. Contrary to the "blended brothers'" assertion,¹⁸ all the churches did not "keep the one solution made in Jerusalem"! By soft-peddling these differences, LSM's "blended brothers paper over the cracks" to hide this underlying disparity regarding (what were at that time) fundamental issues. Fourth, the "blended brothers" acknowledge the decree is not binding today, saying,¹⁹ "Today we do not keep ourselves from eating things that have been strangled." Neither the later churches raised up by the Apostle Paul, nor the local churches today are bound by the Acts 15 accord. Yet, some early churches were governed by the Acts 15 decree and did practice its ordinances. Given this disparity, we ask—where is the "universal one accord of the whole Body"? Certainly, there was no "universal one accord" in the application of the Jerusalem decree. Rather than providing a basis for a "universal one accord," **Acts 15 does the opposite—it establishes a precedent for diversity!** Paul did not impose the Jerusalem decree on the churches he raised up after Acts 15. In fact, his teaching explicitly contradicted its provisions. Moreover we inquire: if indeed the Acts 15 decision is a universal²⁵ "**resolution...for the Body of Christ...for all the churches,**" (as they say) why don't the "blended brothers" lead all the local churches to practice it today? Their failure to do so suggests their vaunted "universal one accord," based on Acts 15, is a doctrinal invention, a fiction, lacking adequate biblical foundation. Moreover, we noted that Paul did not impose the decree; rather, by ignoring it, he *de facto* rejected the Jerusalem accord as a legalistic attempt to override Christian liberty. Contrary to the "blended brothers,'" **Acts 15 is not a proof text for universal one accord; rather, it proves one accord cannot be legislated by decree.** Yet, isn't this the goal of the "blended brothers'" recent decrees regarding 'one publication' (June, 2005) and quarantine (Oct., 2006)? We ask—doesn't Paul's response provide a scriptural precedent for ignoring or rejecting LSM's legalistic decrees?

By developing this "universal one accord" dogma, LSM's "blended brothers" have pushed the envelope beyond Scripture. Their demands exceed anything in the New Testament. The prototype of one accord is the Church in Jerusalem—a local church (Acts 2:46; 4:24; 5:12.) Acts never says there was one accord among the local churches. Once the church-life spread beyond Jerusalem, "one accord" is never used to describe the churches regionally, nationally or globally. Every New Testament example describes the unanimity of an assembled group of believers e.g. the apostles, the church in Jerusalem. There is no New Testament verse charging all the believers or all the churches to practice one accord globally. The Apostle Paul exhorted the Roman believers (i.e. the church in Rome) to be in one accord (Rom. 15:6). It was applied locally, in Rome. Universal one accord, global unanimity among believers, is neither a prescriptive teaching nor a descriptive example in the New Testament. Yet LSM's "blended brothers" routinely interpret Paul's exhortations to saints in a particular local church to "speak the same thing" (1 Cor. 1:10, Rom. 15:6) "stand in one spirit, with one soul" (Phil. 1:27; 2:2) etc., as applying universally to all the churches. Yet Bro. Watchman Nee stated emphatically²⁶ "the unity spoken of in 1 Corinthians does not refer to the unity that is universal...but to the unity in the church which is at Corinth." Similarly, concerning Paul's charge to the Philippians, he says,²⁷ "This does not refer to the universal church." In calling for a "universal one accord" of all the churches and all the saints, LSM's "blended brothers" expand its scope "beyond what has been written" in Scripture (1 Cor. 4:6). As Bro. Watchman Nee said,²⁸ "We cannot force God's truth to go our way just because we want to go that way." Moreover, LSM's teaching concerning global one accord is not a progression in truth, but a deviation. Again Bro. W. Nee said,²⁹ "the progression of truth can only develop within the bound of the Scriptures. Doctrines that are developed apart from the Bible cannot be considered a progression of truth." This is not insignificant. By demanding a universal one accord, the "blending brothers" are imposing a yoke upon the local churches beyond anything required by Scripture. Moreover, recent campaigns by LSM-loyalists to impose this "universal one accord" upon their local churches have produced division in some localities (e.g. Toronto, ON; Montreal, PQ; Pittsburgh, PA; Columbus, OH & Mansfield, OH).

"One Accord" needs One Leadership, One Concertmaster—Witness Lee

The "seed" of this teaching was sown by Bro. Witness Lee in response to the recovery's situation. Prior to the 1980s, "keeping the oneness of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3) was emphasized. Suddenly in the mid-1980s, oneness was inadequate; he now charged³⁰ "we must arrive at the one accord. Without the one accord...At most, there is the talk about oneness; [but] there is no practicality of this oneness." At the 1986 elders' training W. Lee proclaimed,³¹ "The crucial need today is the recovery of this one accord....Among the churches there is the lack of one accord." Moreover, (according to W. Lee) 'one accord' necessitated one leadership. He asserted,³² "This one accord could only come into being under the one leadership..." This declaration "pushed the envelope" beyond the "seven one's" constituting the Spirit's oneness (Eph. 4:4-6). One accord inserted an additional item—"one leadership." Moreover that "leadership" was not merely an abstract entity—i.e., the apostles' teaching. Rather, the "one leadership" was vested in the person of the "commander-in-chief," the "one wise master-builder"—Bro. Witness Lee.³³ Today we ask—shouldn't this teaching be re-evaluated in the light of Scripture?

After Brother Lee's passing, LSM's "blended brothers" extrapolated the notion of one leadership into a succession of "Ministers of the Age"—Brother Nee, Brother Lee and Brother 'We.³⁴ The "envelope" has now been pushed far beyond the limits of Scripture. Moreover the "blended brothers" appeal to the Greek word *symphoneo* in Matthew 18:19 to elevate Bro. Lee to the position of "concertmaster." They say this Greek word (related to "symphony") means "to be in harmony, or accord and refers to the harmonious sound of musical instruments or voices." Based on this one "blended brother" says,³⁵ "All the other instruments line themselves up with that one note from the concertmaster. Then they can all play in tune. We need to be in tune! I thank the Lord that we had Brother Lee with us as the 'concertmaster' for so many years, playing such a sweet 'note' in the Lord's ministry." Venerating Witness Lee as the concert-master makes him the reference point to which everyone should be attuned.³⁶ Yet Paul charged the Roman believers to "be of the same mind...according to Christ," for the one accord (Rom. 15:5-6). In Scripture, the reference point is not Witness Lee; it is the Lord Jesus Christ! In their haste to elevate Witness Lee, the "blended brothers" risk usurping the position of Christ.

One Accord—All-Encompassing OR Item-Specific?

What is the scope of "one accord" described in Scripture? Is it an all-encompassing unanimity on every issue, a commonality in all dimensions? Or does it merely describe a shared response to a specific issue? Scholars tell us the term, one accord³⁷ "expresses reaction to some outside event" (e.g. the Jews' outrage at Stephen's message in Acts 7.) Moreover, it involves³⁸ "a commitment to a specific course of action," (e.g. the lynch mob bent on Stephen's murder.) Other examples fit this pattern. The twin cities of Tyre and Sidon united in their efforts to appease Herod's fury (Acts 12:20). The Jerusalem council convened in response to the dispute at Antioch. Their unanimous resolution dealt with the circumcision of Gentile believers. Other issues (e.g. Jewish believers' son's circumcision) remained unresolved (Acts 21:21, 25). The Acts-15 decree was not all-encompassing. In the New Testament, one accord is "issue specific" and "action specific." It does not involve unanimity on all points. The Jewish religionists disagreed on many matters. Issues dividing Sadducees and Pharisees are well documented (Acts 23:6-7). However, these rival Jewish sects³⁹ "found themselves united for the first time when they rejected the claims of Christ." With "one accord" they opposed Stephen and persecuted the Church.

This conclusion is buttressed by Matthew 18:19, which refers to believers praying in harmony.⁴⁰ Note the verse says, "if two of you are in harmony...concerning any matter for which they ask, it shall be done for them..." (Matt. 18:19) The prerequisite for answered prayer is not unanimity on all points (an all-encompassing one accord); it is concord concerning the specific subjects of the joint-petition. Regarding numerous matters two believers may feel differently. Nevertheless, where their inner registrations coincide, they can jointly petition, expecting the Father's response. The Lord's promise has a minimum requirement—harmony concerning the subject of their petition—attainable by many believers. It is not conditional on the maximum prerequisite—unanimity on all points—unattainable by all except the chosen few. One accord is "item-specific;" it is not an all-encompassing, comprehensive "one accord."

One Accord despite Diversity

LSM's "blended brothers" are on record saying⁴¹ "We cannot have one accord if we have a different vision...If I have one vision and you have another, we have division." Moreover, the "blended brothers" assert,⁴² "As long as we have different views on a minor point, we cannot have one accord." Bro. Ron Kangas elaborates, saying⁴³ "In a particular aspect of the work, some brothers may have

diametrically opposed views." This statement includes the matter of "One Publication," under discussion at the time. Hence, (according to the "blended brothers") diverse views on "One Publication" prohibit one accord. "One publication" is not in the Bible, however, the "blended brothers" maintain that⁴⁴ "If one brother has a different view, even if it is on a minor point, we cannot have the one accord." This implies "zero tolerance" for alternative view-points. Apparently, the "blended brothers'" 'one accord' requires unanimity, concord on all points, including extra-biblical items like "one publication," "one Minister of the Age," one "wise master builder," one global co-workers' company, one continuation of Witness Lee etc, etc. Yet their insistence on a comprehensive unanimity contradicts the Bible and Witness Lee's own word:⁴⁴ "To be in one accord does not mean to get rid of all the differences. If this were the case, we would never have the one accord in this age."

Prototypical one accord characterized the Church in Jerusalem, despite underlying differences between the Greek- and Hebrew-speaking believers (Acts 6). Moreover, these differences were not limited to practical affairs like food distribution. Stephen's defense in Acts 7 displays a significantly different attitude to the Jerusalem temple than exhibited by the apostles Peter, John etc. Prof. James Dunn points out,⁴⁵ "It is clear that from an early date there was a *diversity of attitude to and practice of worship* and a *fairly sharp divergence of opinion*..." Along the same lines he says,⁴⁶ "We see here *the first instance of Christians differing (and differing sharply) in their interpretation of Jesus' teaching*" about the role of the Jerusalem temple.⁴⁷ Yet Bro. Lee taught that the one accord was not lost until Acts 15. An objective and unbiased examination of the Acts record does not support the concept that "one accord" is all-inclusive and all-encompassing. Stephen's distinctly different views viz-a-vi the apostles' practice is decisive evidence against such a notion. We also noted above the disparity between Paul's teaching and the Jerusalem decree (of Acts 15) regarding eating idol-sacrifices. Clearly, the "blended brothers'" insistence on unanimity in all points demands greater homogeneity than the New Testament demonstrates.

One Accord—Goal OR Issue?

Since the 1980s "one accord" among all the saints and local churches, has been repeatedly presented as a goal toward which the recovery should strive. Lack of one accord was diagnosed as the root cause of the absence of the Lord's blessing. Conversely it was asserted,⁴⁸ "one accord is the... master key to every blessing in the New Testament" According to this logic, attaining one accord guarantees the Lord's outpoured blessing, a repeat of Pentecost. Mere oneness is viewed as insufficient, since it is spiritual and intangible; rather a tangible "one accord" is necessary. In 2003, Bro. Andrew Yu visited some local churches. He reported he was⁴⁹ "very happy to see them all going on in oneness in the apostles' teaching and practicing the apostles' fellowship." What was the proof of their oneness? "That all the churches are now in the *Crystallization-study of 1 Corinthians*"⁴⁹ and were displaying banners from the recent LSM-training! So "oneness" has now morphed into tangible conformity with LSM's program! Based on this teaching, many saints' concept of "one accord" involves adhering to LSM's agenda of conferences, trainings and materials. Some expect that when the last local-church-member turns to the correct page of *Holy Word for Morning Revival* the windows of heaven will open, releasing Pentecostal showers. Hence they regard the few "hold-outs" as frustrating this anticipated outpouring. This notion produces intolerance, leading adherents to pressure and cajole others to conform to LSM's program. Should they fail to comply, the strategy of last resort is to expel (quarantine) these "dissenters" to produce "one accord" among the "faithful remnant." This logic underlies the "blended brothers'" quarantine of Bro. Titus Chu and "certain of his co-workers." Yet Scripture contains no prescriptive command for believers to produce one accord. It only charges them to keep the Spirit's oneness. The early Church's "one accord" in Acts issued from Christ's work, it "was not from human effort."⁵⁰ By turning this description into a prescription, aren't the "blended brothers" producing an artificial, man-made "one accord," indistinguishable from uniformity?

LSM's teachings on oneness and one accord have produced conformity and centralized control. These topics have been stressed such a point that one brother complained⁵¹ "he was being beaten over the head with one accord." He is not unique. Watchman Nee indicated that the Roman Catholic Church's teaching regarding unity was a major reason why people were unwilling to speak out against its errors, heresies and/or abuses—"They feared that to speak out might ruin the unity."⁵² Today we ask—Don't LSM's teachings regarding oneness and one accord pose the same danger for the Lord's recovery? Hasn't the Recovery's "unity" been preserved at the cost of tolerating extra-biblical teachings and unscriptural actions (e.g. legalistic decrees, quarantine)? Hasn't the biblical term "one accord" been vested with non-scriptural connotations in order to produce homogeneity and preserve the *status quo* in the Recovery?

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November, 2007.

NOTES:

1. See W. Lee's statement, "Some may feel...they do not want to see that I am the unique leader to control the entire recovery." W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 127.
2. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 58
3. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 64 (emphasis added)
4. For example, W. Lee said, "In the army the impact is the morale. What is the morale in the army? It is the one accord. That is why no commander of any army would allow any soldier to bring in any different thought...If anyone expresses anything different or is dissenting, he will be cut off in order to keep the morale." [W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 12] W. Lee also said, "For the Lord's recovery to have an impact, we need the recovery to have one accord. To be citizens of the U.S. is one thing, but for these citizens to be formed into an army to fight the battle for the U.S. is another thing." [W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 125] Moreover, he also said, "**All of you are the elders**, the co-workers, and the apprentice elders, the leading ones in the recovery. **I am speaking to you all as the soldiers** in the Lord's recovery, **not to citizens. I am speaking to the soldiers of the army.**" W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 87]
5. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, pp. 95-96 Witness Lee equated the "one wise master builder" with the "commander-in-chief" of the army, saying: "In the New Testament you cannot find the term, 'commander-in-chief' (p. 65) However, he appealed to "the uncertain sounding of the trumpet" (1 Cor. 14:8) to infer an army and "in an army there is a need of a general to command the army, to direct the army to fight." (p. 96) He then proceeded to elaborate concerning the master builder (1 Cor. 3:10) saying "Not all the apostles are master builders. With a building, there cannot be two master builders. That would bring in confusion." (p. 96) Hence, notwithstanding Romans 15:20 and Watchman Nee's exposition on this topic in Church Affairs about "other builders who lay a foundation," the "one wise master builder" teaching was devised.
6. As far as I am aware, the concept of "the Minister of the Age" was introduced by Witness Lee in messages given to the elders and co-workers in Taiwan in March 1986. That is one month subsequent to the messages in One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7. As far as I am aware, the notion of "the unique Minister of the Age" was not introduced in N. America or to English-speaking churches during W. Lee's lifetime. Significantly, these messages were first published in English in the initial issues of The Ministry magazine, commenced after W. Lee's passing (1997.) Subsequently they were reissued as The Vision of the Age in April 2003. That became the main topic in several LSM conferences & trainings conducted by the "blended brothers." As indicated above, the 'seed' of this teaching was sown by Bro. W. Lee in 1986.
7. Take for example W. Lee's speaking: "According to the examples in the New Testament, oneness is very objective. It seems far away in heaven and hard to attain. But the one accord is very subjective; it speaks directly of our condition. For this reason, we can say that the one accord is the oneness in practice. **The oneness without the one accord is only something on paper and has no reality to it. If we only speak of oneness without speaking about the one accord, we may have only some high and great doctrines. They may be good, but they are not practical.** However, if we add the one accord to the oneness, we are "pulling the oneness down close to us," like pulling a kite down from the sky. This will bring the oneness right to where we are. If we have the one accord, we will have the oneness among us in practice. Hence, we must first talk about the oneness, and then the practice of oneness, which is the one accord.
For quite a long time, I have been bothered as I considered our situation. Not only among those outside of us, but even among us the oneness and the one accord have suffered a great loss. The oneness has been neglected, and the one accord has been set aside. This has been our overall condition. For this reason, I have been constantly burdened within and have always wanted to come back to see all of you. I feel that our present need is to see the oneness, to emphasize it, and to dive into the significance of the oneness in an intensified way. At the same time, we should fellowship about the oneness in a serious way. In particular, we must arrive at the one accord. Without the one accord, there is no oneness. At most, there is the talk about oneness; there is no practicality of this oneness." [W. Lee, The Oneness and the One Accord according to the Lord's Aspiration and the Body Life and Service according to His Pleasure, chp. 1, 1990 Taipei]
8. The Statement (dated February 21, 1986) appears in W. Lee, The Life-Pulse of The Lord's Present Move, Elders' Training Book 8, pp. 154-5. The figure of 98.5% is based on the fact that 419 brothers signed the letter (p. 153) out of the reported 425 attending the elders' training (Preface.) It is not the purpose of this article to analyse that statement in detail. One recent re-evaluation is Stephen R. Pritchard, "Reconsideration about my Signature on the 1986 Elders' letter to Brother Lee." <http://www.concernedbrothers.com/Toronto/Reconsideration.pdf>

9. For the sake of simplicity and brevity, the title of this piece uses the phrase "LSM's One Accord" to refer to the concept of 'one accord' proposed by Bro. Lee and subsequently developed and extended by LSM's "blended brothers." LSM is the publishing house established by W. Lee which published his writings referred to herein. It is currently controlled by a board of directors (including Benson Phillips, President, & Ron Kangas, Senior Editor) composed of many of the prominent "blended brothers." LSM publishes *The Ministry* magazine, the main vehicle for disseminating the "blended brothers'" messages. These considerations are the basis for the short-hand designation, "LSM's One Accord"
10. E.g. Geoffrey Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, p. 684; Colin Brown (ed.) *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 908-9. For a popular presentation see the article by James R. Edwards "A Unity Not of Our Making," in *Christianity Today*, posted 8/06/2001 One Greek Lexicon says: "homothumadon. It simply refers to **sharing the same** (homo-) **passion** (-thumadon, which has to do with zeal, desire, passion). The English word "enthusiasm" is built on the same word group as homothumadon."
11. "There is thus a double kind of unanimity shown us in Acts, of the Church and of its enemies...When **the local church** lives and works *homothymadon* [in one accord,] it is living and working in harmony with its origin. That is why it is repeatedly stressed by Luke." E. D. Schmitz in Colin Brown (ed.) *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 908-9.
12. RK, *The Ministry*, vol. 9, No. 2, (Feb. 2005) p. 61
13. W. Lee emphasizes that "These two...are gathered together into the Lord's name, but **they are not the church**; for [Matt. 18] v. 17 says that if there is some problem, they need to tell it to the [local] church." (fn.1 Matt. 18:20) Hence these verses [Matt. 18:19-20] imply the scope of the harmony (one accord) required by the Lord's promise is **less than all the members of a local church**; it is the minimum plural number-two believers! This is the polar-opposite of the global scope called for in LSM's teaching on 'one accord.'
14. DL, (Dave Lutz? Dan Leslie?) *The Ministry*, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 107 The quote in context says: "Matthew 18:19 says...[Matt. 18:19]...Here the Lord is instructing the disciples in a practical way. If you are in harmony on the earth, then the Lord will answer any matter for which you ask, but not if you are in discord and not if you are dissenting. We need to be those who are in harmony with one another. **We need to be in harmony with each other in our local church. We need to be in harmony among the local churches. All the churches need to be in harmony with one another.** This is the Lord's practical instruction regarding the keeping of the oneness of the Spirit, keeping the oneness of the Body of Christ." [DL, *The Ministry*, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 107] Notice the extrapolation and extension from individual believers being in harmony with each other to all the local churches being in harmony! Regardless of how admirable the goal of inter-church harmony is, **that is not the point of Matt. 18:19!**
15. RK, *The Ministry*, vol. 9, No. 2, (February, 2005) pp. 51-2. Bro. Ron qualifies this, saying, "Of course it needs to be applied locally, but we must not seek after a merely local one accord, a regional one accord, a national one accord, or even a continental one accord." For the context it is clear that Bro. Ron is emphasizing a 'one accord' which has an extra-local scope—"The genuine one accord is universal." Elsewhere the same "blended brother" emphasizes the need for 'one accord' beyond the local church. He says, "...the one body has a unique oneness, the oneness of the Triune God. When this oneness is applied in the churches and among the churches, it is one accord. In each local church there should be one accord, and **among the churches in a district, there also should be one accord.**" [RK *The Ministry*, vol. 9, No. 3 (Feb. 2005) p. 52, emphasis added]
16. BP, *The Ministry*, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 37
17. Brother Benson bases his argument on Acts 15, saying "We are not talking about merely a one accord locally. Surely we should have one accord locally in every church. But **let us look at one portion of the Word. Acts 15** says 'It then seemed good to the apostles and the elders with the whole church to choose men' (v. 22) and to write a letter. They began this letter by saying 'It seemed good to us' (v. 25). The word *us* here refers to the apostles, the elders and the whole church in Jerusalem. 'It seemed good to us, having become of **one accord**...' Who should be in one accord?...The one accord the Lord wants to gain is a one accord that is with the whole Body, and I would say, the whole recovery....not only all the saints but even all the churches must be in one accord. The whole kingdom of God should be in one accord. Every believer should be in one accord with one mind, one will and one intention. Do not say that you are standing against uniformity and that you cannot agree with such a thing. Forget about uniformity; we do not have uniformity. We are talking about something very organic." (BP, *The Ministry*, v. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 37)
18. DL., (Dave Lutz? Dan Leslie?) *The Ministry*, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 115. The quote in context says, "The one solution made in Jerusalem for the problem of circumcision became a decree for all the churches, both Jewish and Gentile, to keep." This is to substantiate the point that "**The New Testament reveals that** not only all the saints but even **all the churches must be in one accord.**" [DL., *The Ministry*, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 110]
19. DL., *The Ministry*, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 116
20. AY, *The Ministry*, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 61 Andrew Yu points out that, after the Jerusalem council, when Paul "wrote the book of 1 Corinthians...he speaks of the eating of things sacrificed to idols (8:4-13) **in a very ambivalent way. He was not pleased with the decision made in Jerusalem.** He did however go along with it..." (p. 61) What does AY mean by saying "[**Paul**] **did however go along with it** [Jerusalem's decision]..."? He seems to soft-pedal the contradiction between Paul's treatment of this topic and the Acts 15

- decreed. Paul's teaching concerning idol-sacrifices in 1 Cor. **directly contradicts** the Acts 15 decree's provisions on this topic! Moreover, AY says, concerning Romans, "While in Corinth, he [Paul] wrote the book of Romans, where again, **he was not that strong about abstaining from food** that is unclean (14:14)" (p. 61.) Again, this under-statement soft-pedals the contradiction. Significantly, Paul did not impose the Acts-15 decree on the Roman believers; He said, "One believes **he may eat all things** [including (possibly) the residual meat from idol-sacrifices,] but he who is weak eats vegetables...Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:2-5) Paul gives the individual believers the liberty before the Lord in this matter, rather than mandating the provisions of the "apostolic decree." For the Apostle Paul, Christian liberty trumped the legality of the Jerusalem decree. Brother Andrew Yu concedes that Paul did not insist upon the practice dictated by the Jerusalem decree; Based on this, we ask--did Paul practice 'one accord' or not? Did he feel bound by a decision arrived at in Jerusalem through 'one accord'? Was there 'one accord' **in the application** of the Jerusalem decree? I think not! **There was no 'universal one accord'** in the application of this decision.
21. The Recovery version dates Paul's writing of Galatians **after Acts 15**. The Jerusalem council (in Acts 15) is dated by most scholars around AD 49. Paul's epistle to the Galatians is dated by the RCV. approx. AD 54 "during Paul's second ministry journey, after travelling through Galatia and arriving in Corinth (Acts 18:1,11)" [RCV. introductory notes to Galatians]. Regardless of the exact dates, the attribution of the "time of writing," by the RCV. "during Paul's second ministry journey" makes his epistle to the Galatians **subsequent** to the Jerusalem accord (Acts 15.) Assuming the RCV. is correct, **the absence of any reference to the Jerusalem decree in Galatians is highly significant** since Galatians (chp. 2) records the confrontation between Paul & Peter which centred on Gentile-Jewish eating practices, a topic explicitly addressed in the Jerusalem decree. Why then is the Jerusalem accord not mentioned in Galatians? Clearly, (while accepting the decision not to require circumcision of Gentile believers) Paul did not endorse the provisions contained in the decree by adding the weight of his apostolic writing to the council's declaration.
 22. Professor F. F. Bruce comments that "**It is noteworthy that** when, in later years, [Paul] was asked to give a ruling on this matter, he appealed to first principles and **never to the apostolic decree.**" [F. F. Bruce, PAUL: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI. 1977, p. 187]
 23. In 1 Cor. 8:8, Paul said, "But food does not commend us to God...nor **if we eat** do we abound." The RCV footnote tells us, "eating things sacrificed to idols cannot cause us to be full or excelling in any respect before God" [fn. 8¹]. The point is that the Apostle Paul did not condemn eating idol-sacrifices *per se* (something the Jerusalem decree condemns). Paul only condemns the lack of consideration for weaker brothers—"But, beware lest somehow this right of yours become a stumbling block to the weak ones" (1 Cor. 8:9.) The unavoidable conclusion is that **Paul's teaching on this topic contradicts the provisions of the Jerusalem decree.**
 24. Professor James Dunn says, Paul's counsel "was that 'each should be fully convinced in his own mind' (Rom. 14:5) Again, clearly implied is **the right before God to decide what is appropriate conduct for oneself**, even in regard to some cherished but controverted traditions...Paul also clearly accepted the inevitable corollary...that two believers could have contrasting or even opposing convictions regarding appropriate conduct, and **both** be acceptable to God." [James D. G. Dunn, The Theology of Paul the Apostle, Eerdmans Grand Rapids, MI, 1998, p. 687]
 25. DL., (Dave Lutz? Dan Leslie?) The Ministry, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 116 The universal Body of Christ includes all believers (and all local churches) around the globe and throughout the age of grace. By definition therefore a "universal one accord" should include all local churches throughout the age of grace. Why then are local churches (and Gentile believers) today exempt from keeping the decision of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15? If they are exempt, it is obviously not a "universal one accord." I also take issue with DL's assertion that "Paul's way was to consider all the churches to be the same, to be **parts of the one Body of Christ.**" [DL., The Ministry, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 114] There is no scripture which says that a local church is merely a **part** of Christ's Body. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian believers "Now **you are Christ's Body...**" (1 Cor. 12:27)
 26. W. Nee, Further Talks on the Church-Life, pp. 108-9 (emphasis added). W. Nee says, "We can see clearly that **the unity spoken of in 1 Corinthians does not refer to the unity that is universal** both in space and time **but to the unity in the church which is at Corinth...**So, when Paul was exhorting them to be one, he was merely exhorting them to be one with the brothers in their locality." (pp. 108-9) Later he adds "Another point we must notice is that **Paul did not pay attention to any difficulty between the brothers at Corinth and the brothers at Ephesus**, or between the brothers at Corinth and the brothers at Colosse...What Paul paid attention to was the divisions among the brothers themselves at Corinth." (p. 111)
 27. W. Nee, Further Talks on the Church-Life, p. 116 (emphasis added). Concerning Phil. 2:2 W. Nee states "I would like to point out here this word, 'that ye be like-minded.' **This does not refer to the universal church.** Though the universal church can learn from this instance, **this word especially refers to the Philippians**, since Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians." (p. 116)
 28. W. Nee, The Character of the Lord's Worker, CWWN, vol. 52, p. 154 The quote in context reads: "We cannot force God's truth to go our way just because we want to go that way. Man is too bold; he always forces God's truth to follow him."
 29. W. Nee, How to Study the Bible, Collected Works, vol. 54, p. 143
 30. W. Lee, Oneness & One Accord, Ch. 1
 31. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 18

32. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 126
33. Regarding the leadership being vested in a person, W. Lee said, "The Greek word for apostle is *apostolos*, which simply means the one sent...but merely by this definition we cannot have the proper understanding of who an apostle is, especially **the apostle that all the believers need to recognize as their leader**...There were many sent ones in the NT...But among these apostles only Paul was the leading one. What is the factor that decides who the leading one is in a certain period of time that all the believers have to follow? According to the Bible there is only one factor—**the leading one is the one who leads the Lord's people according to the teaching of God's New Testament economy.**" [W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, pp. 64-5 (emphasis added)] Moreover, he said, "We need a fighting army and in the fighting army we do not need merely as leader. **We need a commander to fight the battle!**" [W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, p. 89] In response to this, the Elders' letter to W. Lee says, "We also agree to **follow your leading**...we agree that **this leading is indispensable to our oneness** and acknowledge...the one wise master builder among us." Elders' Letter (dated February 21, 1986) appears in W. Lee, The Life-Pulse of The Lord's Present Move, Elders' Training Book 8, p. 154.
34. Concerning Brother Nee, Brother Lee and Brother 'We,' one blended brother (Ed Marks) shared, "At the end of the ages, the Lord has raised up our brothers as five-talented servants ...The ministry of **Brother Nee and Brother Lee** is to raise up and perfect us as the one-talented ones. Their ministry was not to raise up another five-talented one ...Brother Lee...he was a five-talented one. We are the one-talented ones. ...Brother Nee and Brother Lee have gone to be with the Lord, therefore **today in the Lord's recovery it is now the time of "Brother We"**.... Some have spoken of a **successor to Brother Lee**; but in actuality, **the successor is the Body of Christ. The successor is all the members—the one-talented ones**—doing the work of the ministry to build up the Body of Christ." (EM, The Ministry, vol.7, no. 6, August, 2003, pp. 14-15) Elsewhere, the same brother elaborated, saying, "After Brother Lee went to be with the Lord, a brother came to our co-workers' meeting, looked around and asked, "Who is in charge?" **When Brother Lee was here, we all looked to Brother Lee. Now that Brother Lee was gone, this brother was wondering who the leader was. The leader is Brother "We," the blended co-workers.**" [EM, The Ministry, vol.8, no. 6, p. 214] Here then is a clear assertion by a "blended brother" of "apostolic continuation (succession)" in the recovery's one leadership—**Brother Nee, Brother Lee, and "Brother 'We,' the blended co-workers.**" Comparing this speaking with the previous quote, the definition of "Brother 'We'" has been narrowed, restricted from "all the members—the one-talented ones" to an elite group of "blended co-workers"!
35. DL (Dave Lutz? Dan Leslie?), The Ministry, vol. 7, No. 6 (August 2003) p. 108. One on-line Greek Lexicon says of 'one accord': "*Homothumadon* is a compound of two words meaning to "rush-along" and "in unison". **The image is almost musical**; a number of notes are sounded which, while different, harmonize in pitch and tone. **As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concert master**, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ's church." [http://www.searchgodsword.org/lex/grk/view.cgi?number=3661] We wonder if this (or a similar word study) is the source of the "blended brothers" inspiration.
36. Ironically, elsewhere Bro. Ron Kangas refers to the same figure, saying —"Harmony comes from the cross. **There is no such thing as a dominant brother who is the 'tuning fork' of a local church.** No one can say 'Just match me and you'll be okay. I am the *de facto* ground of the church.'" [RK, The Ministry, vol. 9, No. 2 (February, 2005) p. 60] The brother who is the "tuning fork" for a local church is essentially the "concertmaster." On one hand Bro. Ron Kangas tells us "There is no such thing as a dominant brother who is the 'tuning fork' of a local church. No one can say 'Just match me and you'll be okay.'" On the other hand, **DL** (Dave Lutz? Dan Leslie?) tells us that Witness Lee was the "concertmaster" ("tuning fork") for the whole recovery. The "blended brothers" **reject the idea of "a dominant brother who is the 'tuning fork' of a local church."** **Yet, in the case of W. Lee, they endorse the notion of a "dominant brother" (W. Lee) as the "concertmaster" (the 'tuning fork') of the whole recovery!** We leave the discerning reader the task of reconciling these statements.
37. Geoffrey Bromiley, TDNT, p. 684
38. James R. Edwards, "A Unity Not of Our Making," Christianity Today, posted 8/06/2001
39. Colin Brown, TDNT, vol. 3, p. 908
40. Again, the Greek word for "harmony" differs from the word for 'one accord.' However, "the Greek word *sumphoneo* is used to signify one accord." [RK, The Ministry, vol. 9, No. 2, (Feb. 2005) p. 61]
41. EM, The Ministry, vol. 9, No. 8, Sept. 2005, p. 137
42. The Ministry, vol. 9, No. 2, Feb. 2005 p. 64 The quote in context reads: "Our one accord is proportional to our vision...we can be in one accord only if we are in the up-to-date, all-inclusive, all-inheriting vision. If our vision is not up-to-date, it is impossible for us to be in one accord....The **one accord that the Lord desires requires the high peak of the divine revelation**...If we mean business to practice the one accord, we need to read and reread The Vision of the Age with a spirit to see the vision and be in the vision. The vision will make the one accord possible. **As long as we have different views on a minor point, we cannot have one accord** (Phil. 3:15)" (The Ministry, vol. 9, No. 2, Feb. 2005 pp. 63-4)
43. The Ministry, vol. 9, No. 2, Feb. 2005 p. 64
44. W. Lee, The Practice of the Church Life according to the God-ordained Way p. 39 (emphasis added) The quote in context reads: "To be in one accord does not mean to get rid of all the differences. If this were the case, we would never have the one accord in this age. We must...keep the unity without caring to have uniformity."

45. James D. G. Dunn, Unity & Diversity in the New Testament p. 129 (emphasis original)
46. James D. G. Dunn, Unity & Diversity in the NT p. 272 (emphasis original)
47. During His earthly ministry, Jesus had predicted the destruction of the temple and personally abandoned it. Shortly after Pentecost, "Stephen...did not hesitate to emphasize this side of Jesus' teaching and to elaborate it even though it meant being (sharply) critical of his fellow (Hebrew) Christians..." Dunn explains, [James D. G. Dunn, Unity & Diversity in the NT p. 272]
48. W. Lee, One Accord for the Lord's Move, Elders' Training Book 7, pp. 19-20
49. AY, The Ministry, vol. 7, no. 6, Aug. 2003, p. 54, 73. Andrew Yu reported, "A short time ago a few of us visited some of the churches and were very happy to see them all going on in oneness in the apostles' teaching and practicing the apostles' fellowship." (p. 54). At the end of the message, he returned to this point, saying, "recently when we were visiting the churches, we were so impressed that all the churches are now in the *Crystallization-study of 1 Corinthians*. When we walked into one meeting hall, we saw a banner of the training. When we walked into another hall, we also saw the banner of the training. When we visited another church, a Chinese-speaking brother recited the banner to us in English." (p. 73) Yet, isn't this "oneness" indistinguishable from uniformity?
50. Titus Chu, Oneness and the One Accord, Chicago Bibles & Books, Jan. 2003, p. 20. The quote in context reads, "In the beginning of the church we have many examples of the saints being in one accord. **Yet this one accord was not from human effort.** This one accord came about because the Triune God is the God of oneness and the One who produces the genuine one accord." [Titus Chu, Oneness and the One Accord, p.20.] Titus Chu also points out the distinction between the New Testament **prescription** to "keep the oneness" and its **description** of "one accord." He says, "There is a great difference between Biblical teachings and examples. Paul, therefore, often teaches and stresses the matter of oneness. Yet, he does not teach the matter of being in one accord." [Titus Chu, Oneness and the One Accord, p. 19]
51. RK, The Ministry, vol. 9, No. 2 (Feb. 2005) p. 59
52. Watchman Nee, Further Talks on the Church Life, p. 78