

Preface

Having spent 30 years in the local churches under the ministry of Witness Lee and the last three years in fellowship with Stephen Kaung-associated assemblies, I have found the fellowship in both groups to be so similar and their hearts much the same for carrying out God's eternal purpose in building up the one Body of Christ

Where I live, there is a group which calls themselves the church in Seattle, (where I used to meet); and another group here which calls themselves Seattle Christian Assembly, (where I now meet). They have no difference in their basic statement of the faith regarding what is essential to believers in "the fellowship". And, their basic understanding, doctrinally, of the church and of keeping the oneness of the Body of Christ is essentially the same. Yet, they cannot be one for a testimony in Seattle.

It is the same in New York where Stephen Kaung was asked to address New York's past and his relationship with Witness Lee. He noted that there was one point about the church ground that he could not conscientiously accept and that Witness Lee had become adamant about. That separating factor managed to survive till today.



Introduction

Stephen Kaung and Witness Lee met in 1933 when Stephen was a college student and Brother Lee had come to Shanghai to join with Watchman Nee. Two years later in 1935 Stephen Kaung also joined with Brother Nee as a co-worker. So Kaung and Lee were both co-workers of Brother Nee in China and worked together under his leadership before coming to America to spread the church life. **Brother Nee stressed two things: Christ as life to produce the church, and the church as the Body of Christ to express Christ.**" (W.L) This was his basic vision. Brother Kaung went to New York City in 1952 and Brother Lee, after visits to New York in 1958 and 1960, went to Los Angeles in 1962. He also was invited by Kaung to come to New York once a year to minister.

NOTE: *Watchman Nee met with Shanghai Christian Assembly till 1952. (It was not called the church in Shanghai.) Witness Lee met there also with him till 1949, before moving to Taipei, where his leadership and influence grew.*

A History of the Kaung and Lee Lines In America

Brothers who were mentored by W. Lee, recently came from Anaheim to give a conference in the New York area and spoke strongly about the ground of the church in message #5 (Nov 2017) They recommended to the congregation to read *The Genuine Ground of Oneness* by Witness Lee from which their message was derived. That book was based on messages by Brother Lee in 1957 in Taiwan after T. A. Sparks' fellowship there **that caused an upheaval and rethinking of the church ground.**

Brother Sparks stressed that Christ as our life and oneness is God's testimony in a locality, not adding the thought of claiming to be "the church. When Sparks left Taiwan, Brother Lee gave an amplified version of Sparks' 'word to experience Christ as the life and oneness of the church. He left enough room though in his fellowship to justify a local church laying "claim" to being "the church". **This bolder approach is what led later to the dissonance between Lee and Kaung.**

The teaching and practice of claiming the "ground of oneness in a locality" has long been an issue in New York; and those who came from Anaheim in Nov, 2017 were there to clear up any confusion, as they, too, unfurled a wealth of fellowship on the subject of the church. Easy to be lost in their extrapolation of church teaching is what happened in New York between Lee and Kaung. This point wasn't discussed.

In 1964 Brother Lee shared in Los Angeles concerning the oneness of the co-workers

"The twelve foundations of the city are composed of twelve kinds of precious stones (Rev. 21:19-20). This signifies oneness in variety. Not one stone is the same: Peter is one color, and John is another. Altogether there are twelve colors seen in the Apostles—a real variety. Yet there is also oneness in this variety. The Peter and John of today never seem to be one, and this is the real problem. John does his work and Peter does his. There is a variety, but no oneness. So many gifted brothers today do not agree to be one. Even brothers who are supposed to be working together are not one. (The Vision of God's Building, WL, p. 221, 1964)

W. Lee (33 years later) encouraged brothers to examine our past and "*learn that we have been wrong, including myself,*" he said, in receiving others according to Christ alone. In doing such a study, we find that the **principles of oneness** set forth by Brother Lee availed several years to preserve the oneness in the Body and even bring in a revival by 1969.

1957 Taipei



T. A. Sparks



Witness Lee

Something precious was coming out of the Far East with the departures of Stephen Kaung and Witness Lee to the U. S. Even T. Austin Sparks recognized God's blessing had gone to the East with Nee in China - and now (with the Communists suppressing the Lord's activity in China, and Nee in prison), brothers Kaung and Lee were carrying a treasure with them and in them of recovered truths, and an ample vision of Christ and the church that seekers of Christ needed in the U. S.

The brothers knew they were to be general in non-essentials of teaching and practice, but absolute for the essential points of truth in seeking out fellow believers for the church life. Also, to meet on a proper ground of oneness according to Christ alone was paramount. It was with this matter of the ground that a problem emerged with Kaung and Lee, as it had also emerged with Sparks and Lee in 1957. Both T. Austin Sparks and Stephen Kaung desired oneness with Br. Lee as he also desired with them. But they were **convicted not to make a distinction between them and other believers.** Brother Lee, in both Taiwan and America felt the distinction was necessary. And Nee? The consensus among his co-workers was that Nee would not have made the distinction of being "the church". He had spent much time with Sparks in England, (his senior by 14 years). If it would have been the case, would Lee, in America, have then cut Nee off if he didn't claim being "the church" in Shanghai? (Nee had been imprisoned since 1952 and was due to be released in 1972, but was not.)

Stephen Kaung

His Relationship with Witness Lee

In Brother Kaung's account of the past history of the assembly in New York and his relationship with Brother Lee, he shared (by request of some members in the NY assembly) about what happened in his relationship with W. Lee. He noted that he and Brother Lee had "already been working together for so many years" before coming to the U. S. After several years in the U. S. there were, "unfortunately, some misunderstandings. But the main point was that **we began to have different ideas about the church.**"

Around 1970 “**Brother Lee came to New York and told me, ‘You need to call yourself the church in New York.’** I said we cannot do that. There are only about 200 of us and there are so many of God’s people in NY, how can we claim to be the church in New York? That would excommunicate all the believers in New York. **We have to testify for the local church, but we cannot claim ourselves as *the* local church.** That’s the difference we had. Brother Lee said, ‘If you don’t claim yourself as the church in New York... alright... then there is no church in New York.’ Then he began to take over.”

“I thank God that at that time the brothers were really, really one with me. So when he came with a group of people, they started the meeting themselves. We allowed them to do that till the time that we should meet (begin the message). No matter what he spoke, the brothers who were there were in agreement with me. So that was the situation at that time.

“By the way, I had a long talk with Brother Lee. I told him there were rumors around. If I have something against you tell me what they are; if you have something against me tell me too. We shouldn’t have anything between us. Well he told me two things. I won’t tell you the details; it was really a misunderstanding. So I explained to him, and he finally said, ‘alright, then there is nothing between you and me’. **Only on the point of the church we could not agree. So that’s the way we departed.**

“In 1972, I moved to Washington, D. C. and during that period he tried to work upon the brothers in New York (voice broke a bit) through a family relationship. So, he finally took over New York. That’s the meeting in Jamaica.

“At the time this happened, I was in Washington, D. C. A few brothers and sisters they felt uneasy about it, so they left and began to come together for prayer... here. (some emotion) I did owe them a lot, because I didn’t visit them. I wanted to avoid any conflict...because to me I feel a building, earthly things, are nothing. What is important is the presence of the Lord. So I tried to avoid any conflict with Brother Lee. I wouldn’t try to go to any place where he was. As a matter of fact, **he took over several places that I began**. But that’s alright, because there is plenty of place to serve.

“But anyway, after some long while by the grace of God I began to see the brothers and sisters increase (slightly broken voice). And, it is finally situated right here.

“So, this is your past history. It is not that this is something recently happening. It has a long, long history.”

Revival in LA

(Leading up to that point in New York and D. C. was a revival going on in Los Angeles that brought in a flood of new ones, some even coming from around the country to be in the fellowship in Los Angeles. And to their surprise many Caucasians came, and some of them became future leaders of the churches. Brother Lee, perhaps emboldened by this, asserted himself the way he did with Stephen Kaung in NY, indicating to him that he must declare his standing as “the church” in New York. Although Stephen could not agree with Brother Lee to do this, he and the brothers in NY still invited Lee to come.)

1960 Brother Lee visits Westmoreland Chapel in Los Angeles where brothers have heard of his co-labor with Watchman Nee in China and his work in Taiwan and the Philippines, and they desire fellowship with him about the church and the proper church ground, and also about where they had been meeting.

Witness Lee Visits Los Angeles

by LA elder

(John Ingalls)

“The longer we went on together at Westmoreland Chapel the more intense was our desire for the church life, which we felt we did not have there and were not enjoying. Some of us (including Samuel Chang, Ted Wen, and James Reetzke) felt that we would not continue any longer at Westmoreland Chapel and would even leave. It was at this point that Witness Lee came to Los Angeles (Thursday, December 5, to Saturday, December 7, 1960). Some had not met him when he first came in 1958, so this was the first time to meet our brother.

December 5, 1960 we met at Samuel Chang’s house in Los Angeles. At that time Witness Lee helped us to become clear on a number of matters by posing a series of questions and ministering the following

1. What do we mean by church ground?

He said, “The church ground does not refer to the foundation of the church but to its site. The local church is a representation of the universal, like a foreign consulate in a city. If a country has more than one consulate in a city, we would say that that government is divided. The proper ground in the Old Testament was destroyed by the enemy, and God’s people were scattered and exiled. Even after some of the exiles returned to Jerusalem, the proper ground of oneness, some chose to stay in their divided and scattered state. Today the ground has been lost, and there is a scattering of God’s people.”

2. Does the measure of Christ determine which is the right church?

“We should not confuse the state or condition of the church with the ground of the church. The state is spiritual, relative, and comparative, whereas the ground is absolute and definite. If the measure of Christ is the standard, it will always be possible to find a church with a greater measure of Christ. The church in Laodicea had a poor measure of Christ, but it was still the right church.”

3. What should be our relationship to Christians in the denominations?

“We should fellowship with them but do nothing to build up their denomination. We even fellowship with brothers who are Roman Catholics. As long as a brother is in Christ, there is a basis for fellowship. But we should also be faithful to the one church ground. Nehemiah’s word was, ‘Come back to Jerusalem. Leave the ground of Babylon.’”

4. If we are convinced of the ground, can we speak in other places?

“We need the personal guidance from the Lord, but be on alert. Let them know that their ground is wrong. Daniel was a prophet in Babylon, but his attitude was always toward Jerusalem.”

5. What should be our attitude toward groups who have no ground, are not denominations, and yet preach the gospel?

“The Lord is sovereign. He speaks through whomever He wishes. But be wise. The final goal is to build up something. The final purpose is not only to bring sinners to Christ, but to build them into one spiritual house.”

6. How does our stand affect our oneness with all Christians?

“Our oneness can only be in Canaan and not in the Roman Catholic Church. We must stand on the local ground, subject ourselves to the authority of the Holy Spirit, and submit to the self-denying cross. As long as we are still in Babylon, there can be no real oneness.”

“Should we continue meeting at Westmoreland?”

“On Saturday afternoon, December 7, we met in Ted Wen’s apartment. Brother Lee came there to report to us of the time he had just had with C.J.B. Harrison of Westmoreland Chapel. For six hours, he and Brother Harrison met together. Witness Lee said that things were not clear at Honor Oak, [with Brother Sparks], but that Westmoreland was even more unclear. If Westmoreland were a denomination, we should leave it. He defined a denomination as a group who had a special name or a special fellowship (*i.e.*, some are accepted, some rejected) or a special doctrine. He also said that it was not clear whether or not they were on the right ground.

“Brother Lee was not at peace and had some reservation about Westmoreland. He asked the question, “Is now the right time?” Continuing, he said, “We run a risk if we continue in this line [remaining apart from Westmoreland]. Such would be a shame to the Lord, to His name, and to His teaching. I am confident that the Lord will do a work in Los Angeles. We do not want to frustrate the work of God at this time. I am concerned for our future, so it is better to stop now and wait and see. You cannot do anything that is doubtful. We must always act from a pure conscience.”

On the following day, the Lord’s Day, we met together at Westmoreland Chapel.

Eugene Gruhler visits LA

It was early in May 1962 that Eugene Gruhler Sr. visited us in Los Angeles. The fellowship with our brother was helpful. We shared with him all that we had gone through during the years 1960—1962 and our desire for the normal church life in Los Angeles. After we had continued on at Westmoreland Chapel since December 1960, little by little some of us were coming to the distinct realization that what we were a part of was not a local church. **We were told that it was presumptuous to say that we were the church in Los Angeles. We considered, “If we are not the church, what are we?”** What we had experienced at Westmoreland was a good spiritual ministry, albeit of one man, but no opportunity for other members to function for the building up of Christ’s Body (Eph. 4:12, 18) and no ground on which to build.

After our thorough fellowship with our brother he said, “Since it seems you are so clear, why do you hesitate any longer?” There was a confirming echo within us. Still, we gave ourselves to much prayer. Every morning at 6:30 we would gather for prayer, Monday through Friday, and 8:00 a.m. on Saturday.

Referring to the [conferences](#) in San Francisco and Palo Alto with Witness Lee, we all felt that that had been a tremendous encouragement to us to go on in Los Angeles. It also intensified the desire within us for a normal church life.

Local Church History Begins

Then, on the Lord’s Day, May 27, 1962, we began to meet for the Lord’s Table as the church in Los Angeles. We called Brother Lee to relate to him the stand we had taken to meet on the ground of the local church. His response was to come and see.

It was a Saturday morning in November right after morning watch that Brother Chang received a call from Witness Lee, who was in Seattle, Washington. We thought that Witness Lee had returned to the Far East. He told us that he felt it was of the Lord to come to Los Angeles. We, of course, were happy that our brother could come and be with us and minister the Word. But then Brother Chang asked him how long he would be able to stay. We were ecstatic when he told us that the Lord had not allowed him to go back to the Far East but was directing him to move to Los Angeles. We couldn’t believe what we had heard. He was leaving a fruitful ministry of 20,000 in Taipei to meet with about twenty of us in Los Angeles. By the end of November he had moved. Initially he stayed with the Changs.

**Witness Lee's First Conference in America: The All-inclusive Christ
December 21 - December 31, 1962**

In this conference Brother Lee presented to us the land of Canaan as the highest type of “the all-inclusive Christ out of which and upon which the fullness of Christ, the Church is built.”

Three hymns came out of this conference:

Oh, what a prize! Oh, what a gain!
Christ is the goal toward which I press.
Nothing I treasure, nor ought desire,
But Christ of all-inclusiveness.
My hope, my glory, and my crown
Is Christ, the One of peerlessness.

Hymns, #499, stanza 4.

Oh, what a breadth! Oh, what a length!
The height, the depth unsearchable!
Christ the Lord is unlimited,
So vast, immense, immeas’rable,

All that He is and all He has
Is now our life unspeakable.
Hymns, #500, stanza 3.

The other hymn was “We praise Thee, Lord for Thy great plan, that we Thy dwelling place may be” (*Hymns, #837*). The messages released through the speaking of Witness Lee are printed in the book [The All-Inclusive Christ](#).

"The Lord's Move in America"

This conference with Brother Lee has been described as the beginning of a new move of the Lord in this country and, to those of us who attended, it was certainly a milestone in our Christian life. Never before had the light of revelation in the Old Testament been so intense and the Bible opened up in such a way that was so living, fresh, and nourishing. Brother Nee spoke of the time in the early 1800s when John Nelson Darby joined with the brothers in Dublin, Ireland, as a release of a torrent of light (Nee, *The Orthodoxy of the Church*, 70). This aptly describes our experience as Witness Lee spoke those messages.

In keeping the vision Brother Lee was much exercised in LA to keep the oneness of the Spirit with a variety of believers, and taught others to do so.



The Oneness

Beginning in January of the new year, 1963, Witness Lee was invited to speak in several places in cities around Los Angeles. In addition to 23rd Street he ministered in Whittier, San Gabriel, and Reseda. He was also invited to speak in Las Vegas, Nevada, and Chula Vista (near San Diego), California, during the early months of 1963.

Christians of various backgrounds heard Witness Lee and were impressed with how the Lord was ministering to His Body through our brother. Some had a Pentecostal background (Reseda); some a Plymouth Brethren background (Whittier). Eventually there was a desire among the leading ones to come together once a week for fellowship.

Fellowship with Other Christians January 1, 1963

The first such meeting Brother Lee realized that with such diverse backgrounds there was the potential for problems. In *A Memorial Biography* (58), there is this comment:

As most of the believers in the church in Los Angeles then had come from Christianity, Brother Lee labored to help free them from their backgrounds which hindered them from entering into the rich experience of Christ. From believers with a Pentecostal background who were addicted to speaking in tongues, to believers from a fundamental background who lived a Christless Christian life, Brother Lee helped them to contact the life-giving Spirit and to experience the transforming work of the Lord Spirit to be built up as the church, the testimony of God on the earth.

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Major Points of Fellowship

Witness Lee met with us each week and always had a word to share with us. In that first meeting he stressed the following points:

1. The Lord's Body in the universe is one.
2. The expression of that Body in any place, *e.g.*, Los Angeles, must keep the oneness by including all the Lord's children.
3. We should give up whatever does not keep the oneness. "I would beg you brothers to give up all the different kinds of opinions and keep the basic things."
4. What are the basic things?
 - a. the Lord Jesus as our Savior and life
 - b. His Body as His expression
 - c. the Bible as the divine Word of God
 - d. God is triune
 - e. Jesus Christ as God incarnated and bodily resurrected
5. What are the minor or secondary things? What are things we should give up to keep the oneness?
 - a. head covering
 - b. means of baptism (immersion, sprinkling, etc.)
6. The Pentecostal movement has included too much maneuvering and human manufacturing.
7. The Lord's Body is the best place to be balanced," or adjusted, in our mutual relations.
8. If we come together in Los Angeles and keep the oneness, there will be an impact and much blessing from the Lord.
9. Witness Lee gave his experience of speaking in tongues (1936-38), but stressed its value for the individual rather than for others (2 Cor. 5:13).
10. In this meeting there were eight brothers from Reseda, three from Whittier, one from East Los Angeles, and six from Los Angeles (Witness Lee, Samuel Chang, Ted Wen, Jim Reetzke,..... ..). (Two names taken out)

Fellowship with Other Christians
February 2, 1963

In this meeting Witness Lee stressed the following:

1. Those with different backgrounds need more mingling: serve together, function together, preach the gospel together,....
2. There is the need of a place of meeting where all can come together for fellowship and the ministry of the Word (1 Cor. 14:23) as well as similar area meetings for prayer and the Lord's Table (Acts 2:46).

Each group was represented at this meeting: Reseda, Whittier, and Los Angeles.

Fellowship with Other Christians
February 9, 1963
Glendale, CA

Different brothers expressed how they felt.

Brother KH: 1. When we meet we should stress the principle of "variety in unity." 2. God is after one new man in the universe. 3. We can trust the Holy Spirit to govern without an agenda.

Brother FP: Last night many groups came together but all were one.

Brother BF: We should give ourselves to one another without reservation as in a marriage.

Brother JM: We need both truth and oneness taking the cross to keep from stumbling one another.

Brother Lee shared the following:

1. We should receive one another as Christ has received, even those different from us (Rom. 15:7).
2. Paul had a very liberal attitude, *e.g.*, eating meals and observing days (Rom. 14) with no judgment of one another and no uniformity of practice. Uniformity leads to division (*e.g.*, Presbyterians, Baptists).
3. With this attitude we will have no difficulty in meeting together.
4. We need a ministry of Christ according to life, not a teaching of doctrines (*e.g.*, rapture, tribulation).
5. In these days the Lord is doing something quite wonderful."

Fellowship with Other Christians
February 16, 1963
Glendale, CA

Witness Lee said that,

1. We need “the variety in unity rather than the uniformities in division.” History has taught us this—there is beauty in variety.
2. God has received a brother whether we agree with him or not (Rom. 14:1-6).
3. Have the same mind toward one another according to Christ (Rom. 15:1-7).
4. Receive those whom Christ has received without criticism.

Brother JW said, “Let’s all meet together on Sunday morning and explode all the many churches. This is a practical matter. Where? When? What to do? We are against the system of dead Christianity and for a spiritual testimony by Christians. No compromise for the sake of oneness.”

Fellowship with Other Christians
February 20, 1963
Glendale, CA

It was decided that the first corporate meeting would be on March 3 at the International Order of Odd Fellows Hall (IOOF). The children’s meeting would be 9:45-10:45 a.m. and the general meeting at 11:00 a.m.

At this same meeting, Witness Lee gave a detailed exposition of 1 Corinthians 14:

1. The meeting mentioned here is of the whole church.
2. Believers exercise their gifts given by the Lord and exercise some gifts yet to be given.
3. Each functions to edify others with a hymn, a revelation, a teaching, a tongue, or an interpretation (verse 26).
4. This is the most important meeting of the church.
5. A meeting for the work is okay occasionally when a particular brother is present.
6. The meeting is normally in mutuality and not of pulpit and pew.
7. The “round table” meeting needs to be recovered.
8. All should prepare for the meeting.
9. The Holy Spirit controls (28).
10. This is a typical meeting of all churches (33) which goes “back 100% to the early Christians.”
11. This meeting has been commanded by the Lord (37).
12. The Lord’s presence means everything.

Fellowship with Other Christians

March 2, 1963

Glendale, CA

It largely considered practical matters for the meeting the next day and for future meetings: arrangement of chairs and tables, ushers, hymn books, announcements, offering boxes, bank account, books for sale, care of children, meetings for training (March 23 and April 6) meetings for conference (local and national), and gospel preaching.

All Groups Meet Together

The next day, the Lord's Day, March 3, 1963, a.m., was the first meeting where all the groups came together. We met for the Lord's Table followed by a time of mutuality in sharing. Witness Lee was in New York and missed being there for this first meeting. However, afterward he received a long-distance call from a "Brethren" brother who complained to him about the confusion in the meeting. This brother mentioned the speaking in tongues, the interpretations, the testimonies, and the ministry of the Word, but especially he objected to the playing of the tambourines. To this Brother Lee asked, "What is the difference between a piano and a tambourine? Both are used to help in the singing." In subsequent meetings on the Lord's Day, when Witness Lee was there, he ministered the Word in a rich, clear, and enlightening way. In addition to his sharing, usually the meetings were like that first meeting in outward display.

On May 19, 1963, "A Public Statement" was released by the brothers in Los Angeles to the Christian public stating what took place in March 1963, what their stand was, and what our desire was for the Lord's testimony in that city. It reads as follows:

A PUBLIC STATEMENT

made on May 19, 1963

As we realized the need of a proper expression of the Body of Christ, we started to meet together to fulfill this purpose in the Spring of 1962. For an enlarged realization of our vision of the oneness of Christ's Body, more of us came to meet together on the Church ground in Los Angeles in the beginning of March, 1963. We do not intend to be any kind of new "movement," but to practice the unity of the Spirit, a unity with variety, and the variety versus uniformity, in the way of a local church.

We are not centered around certain truths, but make Christ, the all-inclusive Head, Himself to be life and everything to us.

We are not centered around certain truths, but make Christ, the all-inclusive Head, Himself to be life and everything to us. We are willing and ready to take in all the good, sound, scriptural, and spiritual things which the Lord has given through all generations and is still giving today to His Body through whatever channel of different types of His saints; but we would not practice them in the improper way taken by certain groups, nor would we identify ourselves with any denomination, sect, or any sort of Christian movement. We are not exclusive. We receive all of God's children as fellow-members of Christ's

Body regardless of their Christian background; however, we have no organizational connections with any of their particular associations, works, activities, etc. May the Lord's way be prosperous among His people in His increase that His testimony through the local expressions of His Church may be established and strengthened throughout the whole world in these last days to the full extent of His recovery in the building up of His Body to the measure of the stature of His fullness by more and more brothers and sisters being brought into the stream of His life in the fellowship of the Spirit while He is moving on toward His coming back by having a remnant as a response to His call for the fulfilling of God's eternal purpose.

The Responsible brothers of
the Church in Los Angeles

Don Rutledge, a former leader in Dallas, Texas was well-respected among church leaders, including Witness Lee, and wrote about the flourishing time in the sixties and early seventies when the churches were growing in life and numbers, and spreading. It was certainly a time of blessing on a path of receiving believers according to Christ alone. That is, until **the seismic shift in the direction of the churches occurred and wide-sweeping changes throughout "the Lord's recovery" set the churches on another path.**

"Follow the Vision" – Don Rutledge with Brother Lee - 1975

"One evening I was walking with Brother Lee. He stopped, turned to me, then put his arm around my shoulder. I realized that he was about to tell me something very serious. He told me that he made a terrible mistake with Daystar (luxury motor home business he introduced to the churches that failed the year before). He said that if he saw Brother Nee he would not know what to say since Brother Nee had warned him not to mix the church with financial matters or business.

"He then told me that he had once told Watchman Nee that he was not following him, but rather was following the truth and vision that Brother Nee taught. Furthermore, that he would not follow Watchman Nee if Watchman Nee left the vision, but that he, Brother Lee, would continue to follow the vision. He then looked me straight in the eye and charged me, "**Brother Don, if I leave the vision, do not follow me but follow the vision.**" I was a little speechless, but I did manage to return the embrace and assure Brother Lee that I would remain true to the vision and the truth." _DFR

When Witness Lee gave his **Final Message** he reflected on the past and mistakes that were made. Although he would not be specific, he charged others to come together to learn from our past.

"This is a lesson for us all. The co-workers in different places need to learn; all responsible brothers in all localities need to learn. The eyes of the brothers and sisters all need to be opened. Too many things we need to learn. We have acted wrongly in the past, including me, I have to admit. I have had very painful repentance before the Lord. I am very sorry! I am sorry for the Body of Christ - not only for the brothers and sisters

among us, but also for the ones in the denominations. You have to bring this message back and read it over and over again in mutual fellowship. Then you will see we were wrong before. To understand and analyze this needs a fair bit of effort. Again I say, a few of you must come together through pray-reading, studying, reciting, and prophesying. We must learn from our past mistakes to receive people according to God's Son...undeviating... **not deviating a bit from the path.**" (*Chinese New Year Conference, 1997, W. Lee*)

Ministry Stations

DON RUTLEDGE: "The turn away from the vision Witness Lee had regarding the practice of the local church life began in **January 1974** at the very first special elders and co-workers conference. This is when the concept of the work began. Few of the saints realize the magnitude of effect this meeting had on the churches. **With charts and statistics, Witness Lee and Max Rapoport came forth to launch the movement.** It was boldly declared that the churches would use Witness Lee as the exclusive source of teaching and Max would serve as the **coordinator to bring the various churches, with their elders, into a unified movement.** Two life-study messages a week were going to be given in Anaheim and **ministry stations** were set up in various cities to repeat the messages through designated brothers. Some smaller churches consolidated to the larger localities where there was a **ministry station.** The official list of twelve men who could give conferences was announced. Bi-annual trainings began that year. From that time on, the **individual churches would be called to account if they were moving "independently."** In addition to coordinating the elders to act in a single direction, Max was charged to assist the various churches to be more effective with gospel preaching and outreach. "He began to travel and, in particular, to meet with the elders. Those who would not be good movement men were pushed aside, if possible, or moved somewhere to be out of the way. On several occasions, Max told me that he was working to bring the elders and churches into one coordination for the purpose of carrying out the burden of Witness Lee. He told me several times that only he could 'put the whole thing together'. "I am not attempting to call into question the motive of Witness Lee or Max. During this time, Witness Lee did some very good teaching and Max did some very good gospel work. But what did happen was that **the nature of the various 'local churches' changed from being local in administration and spontaneous in actions to being directed from a center with clear administrative leaders and directors.** "Things were definitely not the same. Some were saying the time of blessing has passed; or we changed our vision; or the moving of the Spirit left the churches; or teaching, doctrine, and methods replaced life.... In 1986 the final pieces were put in place. The movement looked nothing like the early days of Elden Hall, Ohio, the Northwest or Texas or other places." _ DFR

Pledge to W, Lee 1986 – *"After hearing your fellowship in this elders' training, we all agree to have a new start in the Lord's recovery. For this, we all agree to be in one accord and to carry out this new move of the Lord solely through prayer, the Spirit, and the Word. We further agree to practice the recovery one in: teaching, practice, thinking, speaking, essence, appearance, and expression. We repudiate all differences among the churches, and all indifference toward the ministry, the ministry office, and the other churches. We agree that the church in our place be identical with all the local*

churches throughout the earth. We also agree to follow your leading as the one who has brought us God's New Testament economy and has led us into its practice. We agree that this leading is indispensable to our oneness and acknowledge the one trumpet in the Lord's ministry and the one wise master builder among us...." 417 signatories - John Ingalls and Bill Mallon withdrew their names. In 1990 they were "quarantined." Don Rutledge never signed.

John Ingalls on Events and Concerns

It was John Ingalls who was with Brother Lee from the beginning and recorded the early history and fellowship. He shares here an introduction to his book of events and concerns that arose in the years that led to his resignation from the eldership in 1989.

Introduction

“Having been a close observer of the tumultuous events that have transpired and the change of course that has taken place during the past few years in the local churches under the leadership of Witness Lee, and having been myself an intimate co-worker of Witness Lee’s and an elder in the local churches for more than twenty-five years, I feel it is appropriate and indeed obligatory for me to relate an account of my own observations, inward exercises, and responses. I do this for the sake of an historical record and for the benefit of any who may be profited thereby. My burden is not to write exhaustively, for that would be too tedious for the reader, but to give an objective and as accurate an account as possible of the main concerns and burdens that have brought me to my present position and of the related events that have transpired over the past few years.

Moreover, many things have been spoken in recent elders’ meetings by Brother Witness Lee and his co-workers that totally misrepresent the facts and contain many untruths. Motives and intentions are imputed to us that we never imagined, not to say practiced. We are being called despicable names and are being displayed in the worst light. But we do not desire to stoop to the level of name calling, pejorative epithets, or blatant vindication. We would like to speak the facts sincerely before God in Christ. May the Lord judge us in every attitude and action, as indeed He has continually been doing with all of us. We commit ourselves to Him. We desire to give a true account of the facts and our intentions and let the readers judge.

We certainly never imagined that we would pass through the experiences and conflict that we have in recent years. We loved the Lord’s recovery and gave everything for it for over a quarter of a century. It was this love and investment of our lives that compelled us to respond and speak out. We had seen something that was exceedingly precious, and it was in jeopardy. Moreover, we were concerned that the Lord’s testimony would be brought into shame and disgrace and suffer great damage. Sadly, our fears have eventualized. But we believe the Lord will still go on to recover and rebuild.

I will now proceed with the account and my testimony.

[.http://lordsrecovery.us/uploads/3/4/7/1/34712424/speaking_the_truth.pdf](http://lordsrecovery.us/uploads/3/4/7/1/34712424/speaking_the_truth.pdf)

Don Rutledge on Church History

Don's fellowship includes short biographies of saints who enjoyed the vision and the experience of the church life on the ground of oneness. It also gives insight to seeds of deviation from the vision that grew and became increasingly manifest.

<http://lordsrecovery.us/uploads/3/4/7/1/34712424/donrutledgehistory.pdf>

The Video Regarding New York's Past – S. Kaung

<https://youtu.be/zo4dl-4ya2g>



Stephen Kaung

Since there is only one Christ Jesus, if we are all according to Christ, we shall be like-minded with one another. However, if our mind is in accordance to teachings, concepts, religious practices, or any other such thing, we shall be divided." (Footnote, Rom 15, Recovery Version)

The Proper Receiving of the Saints 1968

*"It is only by being so liberal and general that we can receive all the saints in a proper way. If we are otherwise, we cannot avoid being sectarian in the matter of receiving. If we are special in anything and insist upon that, we will probably not receive those who differ from us in certain matters. Our receiving must be the same as God's receiving, no less and no more. God's receiving is the basis of our receiving. (W. Lee, *Practical Expression of the Church*, pp 66-77, 1968)*



Fromke

Sparks and Kaung 1966 NY



Nee

Sparks

London



Gruhler

Sparks NY

What would Brother Lee say today? "Love one another."



“Sparks and Lee

Witness Lee: Let me give you a testimony of what happened to one of the opposers. In 1958, I was invited to visit a spiritual place in England. I went there neither to receive help nor to give help to others but to see the situation there. The leader honored me by putting me in a special house and assigning a person to take care of me. For a month's time the leader turned all of the meetings over to me, not only the meetings of the conference but even the regular meetings. During my stay there I discovered that that place was not for the church; it was absolutely for its ministry. During the twenty or thirty years prior to 1958, the ministry in that place was prevailing. Many admitted that it was a spiritual ministry. After I stayed there for a month, the leader brought me to his retreat in Scotland. I stayed with him there for a week with the purpose of sitting down with him face to face to have a talk about the Lord's economy, about what the Lord is doing today. His opinion was that the Lord would use his ministry to establish ministry centers throughout the earth. I told him that the Lord's economy is to establish local churches in city after city. Although we were good friends, we could not get along. He found that I was more than stubborn in this matter, and I learned that he could not be changed one bit. We did not fight with each other, but within we realized that there was a great discrepancy between our understandings of the Lord's economy. We returned from his retreat house in Scotland to England. Before I left, he asked me to speak again in one of the regular meetings. I did not know what to speak until I got on the platform. Then the message came. **In that message I told the people that the ministry is not for the ministry, but that every ministry must be for the local churches. I was very strong, saying, “Look at the ministry of the apostle John. Although it was the most spiritual ministry, it was not the lampstand. Look at all the local churches in Revelation—most of them were a mess. But the local churches are the lampstands.” In that message I emphasized strongly that the local churches should not be for the ministry but that the ministry must be for the local churches.**

The dear brother who was the leader in that place had touched God's government. To be governmentally wrong with God is a serious thing. If this testimony is the Lord's recovery, then it is something that is divinely governmental. If any man can touch this testimony without anything happening to him, it proves that this testimony is nothing. But this is the Lord's recovery, and we all must be careful. How serious it is to touch the Lord's recovery! The dear one who invited me to England had firstly been invited by us to come to Taiwan. He came in 1955 and again in 1957. During his first visit he did not touch the church matter, but in his second visit he purposely touched it. This set off a strong debate between him and us. The debate was between this brother and the leading ones on the island of Taiwan. During the first two of these meetings I was doing the interpretation and did not speak in the debate. However, in the third meeting I joined in. Although we were friends with this dear brother, even intimate friends, we held different concepts regarding the Lord's economy. This brother left Taiwan in April of 1957. When I visited him in England sixteen months later, in August, 1958, he told me that when the plane took off from Taipei for Hong Kong, the flow within him was cut off and that it had not been recovered. On the very day he told me this, he said that he had cried to the Lord early in the morning, asking Him why the flow had been cut off.” (*Hebrews LS 15*)

Witness Lee after Max Departure 1978

During an interim time between the departure of Max Rapoport and the beginning of the New Way, Brother Lee came back to his early fellowship begun in 1962 in LA. Then, after 2 or 3 years he turned back strongly and did the direct opposite, announcing in Taipei in 1984 and in the U. S. in 1986 “the Lord’s New Move”, the blueprint for an accelerated movement in the churches universally.

“He shared in that interim, “As branches of the vine, we don’t need to have any activity, movement, schedule, or plan, am I right? The proper gospel preaching is not an activity but must be and should be our daily living. We just live the gospel. We live. Here I must dwell for some time, this is quite important. Saints, pay full attention to this matter.

You all have 50 or so people observing you. How you live is a shining. Maybe one comes to the Lord the first year, then another the next year. They will be the proper people remaining in the church life. Brothers, consider this. Is this possible? Is this easy? Is it natural? Is it spontaneous? The key, the crucial point is that we all just live Christ. We are absolutely different from Christianity. They have a schedule; we don’t have. They have big campaigns; we don’t have. They have big Billy Graham; we don’t have. We don’t have! We are all small potatoes living Christ.

Year after year, some of our relatives, friends, and colleagues will turn to the Lord. This is the Lord’s recovery; it is the way of life in His economy. [And, this was exactly how it was in the beginning in the book of Acts. Look at those 120. They didn’t have any schedule, they were just praying there. All of a sudden, Pentecost came. They didn’t have any plan to go to Samaria, just Philip was led to go there. In chapter 13 there was no plan, they just were fasting and praying, and the Holy Spirit said “separate for me Barnabas and Saul” to go out to Europe. They didn’t know where. They just got called, and they were sent. Then gradually in Acts 16 they were at the western tip of Asia Minor. Paul was hesitating to go ahead or return or go somewhere else. He was prohibited, then eventually in the night a call came from Macedonia, come over to help us, that is, to go over the Aegean Sea to Greece, to Europe. You see, there was no plan, no schedule - just the living of Christ. This is the proper way.](#)

The churches should grow and spread organically. We just live Christ in a peaceful way. And this is our daily life and this is our testimony of life to the Lord Jesus. And this is the proper church life.

We have no activity, no plan, nothing, we just live Christ in a peaceful way. Then you could see the increase, and then the spreading. It seems very calm, very slow, but I tell you it is a way full of life, full of harmony, full of testimony. So we from now on have to drop all concepts, activity, even all aggressiveness. We just live Christ; we pray, we fellowship together, wherever we are we just come together as the local church expression of the church there, and meet with those dear saints as the Lord’s testimony. This is the Lord’s recovery – no organization, no ways, no gimmicks, no activities, nothing – just Christ, from the first item to the last item everything is Christ. This is what the Lord’s recovery is. We must keep this.”

“While we are growing here preaching the gospel, living Christ, some of you young brothers will spend more time in the Word to learn the truth to get yourself qualified and built up, then by that time spontaneously you will be taking the lead, knowing the truth and having a measure of life. Spontaneously you will be elders there. It is so simple and so spontaneous. Then maybe after half a year another 15 or 20 will go to another nearby area. Then you may have four or five churches in the area, all on the same level, loving one another, helping one another, fellowshiping all the time, but with no control, no hierarchy, no organization, no human maneuvering. What a wonderful situation. Then we get into the word, teach the truth, build others up and shepherd them. This is the right way. **It was this way in the beginning when the Lord’s recovery came to this country.** No competition, no rivalry; just love and fellowship - no unification. This is the Lord’s recovery.”

.Crucial Links

Ministry Churches

<http://lordsrecovery.us/uploads/3/4/7/1/34712424/ministrychurches.pdf>

“What havoc has been wrought in the Church because so many of her ministers have sought to bring the churches under their ministry, rather than by their ministry serve the churches. As soon as the churches are brought under any ministry, they cease to be local and become sectarian.... *(The Normal Christian Church Life, p138-139, Nee)*.

Bill Mallon and John So were “quarantined,” (with John Ingalls), essentially for keeping the vision and not cooperating with an organized movement under a man a ministry.

Bill Mallon’s letter - 1987

An 8-page letter from Bill Mallon to Brother Lee expresses Bill's grave concerns for the damaging and divisive behavior of the LSM office, and its representatives in the Southeast Brother Lee did not respond to Bill's letter and showed no interest in addressing his concerns. Bill went ahead with his conviction to resign from the work and from the eldership. Later, however, in the book *Fermentation of the Present Rebellion*, Brother Lee dismissed Bill’s concerns that he mentioned in his letter, stating that Bill’s concerns were groundless and his remarks accusatory and slanderous, although others had the same concerns and could confirm Bill’s statements and his understanding of the developments in the Southeast.

John So Testimony - 1990 Manila

"Well, this time when I came to the Philippines, I never dreamed that the things would happen this way. But in such a situation like this, I think we have to leave it to the Lord’s sovereignty. As our brother has shared, and I appreciate his word very much, I

also hope that our sharing here is not for anyone to be able to take any sides, regardless of who is right and who is wrong. I think the ground of the church is not for any church to take any sides, right? Because a church or the churches should be standing on the ground of oneness. So I do appreciate our brother's word. And I have prepared a little outline here knowing that tonight I have no choice but to share something concerning the matter. I will try my best to just follow the outline.

We all know the ministry of brother Witness Lee for many years. I'm quite surprised that this book came out. This is the first time I saw it—in Manila, I mean 2 days ago. I hope it is not the ministry, you know. I'm very sorry that due to my being here, you all had to spend 8 long hours to watch the videos. I believe it is a real suffering to all the saints. In the recent past two years I have been unfortunately branded as, even as, a "minister of Satan", as a "wolf", a "false brother", even 1 John chapter 2, the "Antichrist" was referred to me; I'm a "rebellious one", a "conspirator", a kind of conspirator, a "dishonest man", a "pretender", and more. Therefore, I am being quarantined. Right, I am being quarantined. And I am thankful to the Lord that in spite of all this, you're still hear willing to hear what I have to say. I mean without fear of being contaminated. I think the Lord will be able to disinfect you. Please bear with me, I really have a very hard time to prepare this. The Lord knows my heart. If I didn't have to do it tonight, I wish I didn't have to do it. I can testify this before the Lord."

www.makingstraightthewayofthelord.com

The Church of Gideon and His 300 Men

<http://www.lordsrecovery.us/uploads/3/4/7/1/34712424/thechurchofgideonandhis300men.pdf>

Line of Lee

After a splendid start, it developed into wonderful ministry churches to spread the ministry, gospel and church life, albeit on a different ground than where they began.

Line of Kaung

They have a little strength. They keep the Lord's word and lift up His name. They stand on a ground of oneness, realizing and admitting their shortcomings, and need for more of Christ as life for a church of glory.

The church in Philadelphia had a little strength and brotherly love. So did these brothers for many years! The early safeguards set by Brother Lee were there to protect them. May the lines of Lee and Kaung be aligned again accordingly in the will of God.

SI
April 18, 2018

