

The Great Conspiracy

In 1990 four leaders were “quarantined” in the local churches for purportedly fomenting a “rebellion” and being the ringleaders of a conspiracy to overthrow Witness Lee and take over the reins of leadership in the Lord’s recovery.

The great conspiracy, however, was no more than a great travesty. It didn’t exist except in the imagination of men. Nonetheless, this false witness of men and events is still taught and believed in the Local Churches today.

Fermentation of the Present Rebellion (1990)

I. The Fermenting Events of the Present Rebellion in the Lord’s Recovery

Witness Lee: In this message I will fellowship with you concerning the fermenting events of the present rebellion in the Lord’s recovery and the way to deal with the rebellion. Then we will know what attitude we should take in the present situation. We need to see a chronology of the present trouble, the present rebellion, the **present conspiracy**, in the Lord’s recovery.

The Claim that Brothers Were Involved in a Conspiracy

On pages 43-44 of *The Fermentation of the Present Rebellion (FPR)*, Witness Lee says,

“The fermentation eventually developed into a conspiracy in the fall of 1987. Brothers from different parts of the country began working together in an undermining way to exert influence on other leading ones. All this was done privately. Around that time, John Ingalls visited Bill Mallon in Atlanta. Bill brought him out to the countryside and spent a few days with him and eventually convinced him of his dissenting views and thus gained him. Up until that time, according to my knowledge, John had not spoken anything negative or critical about me...However, when John Ingalls came back to Orange County from Atlanta, there was a definite change in his attitude. He began to play an active role in **this conspiracy**.”

John Ingalls – “It is not our desire, nor has it ever been, to overthrow anyone’s work or ministry, neither have we desired to put anyone’s ministry aside, but rather to bring everything to the light and put everything in the proper context. A report has been circulated that we would not be satisfied until we brought a certain person down; this report was erroneously applied to us. We never had any such intention, nor have we ever **conspired against** anyone – the Lord knows this and can testify for us. The **accusation of conspiracy** made against us is an utter falsehood – our testimony as recorded in this account bears this out. Rather we have grieved over those in leadership who have swerved from the path they once proclaimed and espoused. We desperately hoped there would be some change to resolve the serious problems that had emerged, and we fellowshiped earnestly with Brother Lee to this end.” (*Speaking the Truth In Love conclusion, 1990*),

Al Knoch – “Anyone who knows John Ingalls knows that he is not ambitious; he is not that way. Who would want that responsibility [of taking over the recovery]? There was no conspiracy” (from an interview with Al, Nov 2000).

John So – In his Manila presentation, John So expressed surprise at the conspiracy charge:

I would like to just go through Brother Lee's outline concerning the rebellion. It says the rebellion began to ferment from Stuttgart in 1986. I will give you the chronological events of what took place, dealing in a brief way with things that I personally know quite well, concerning myself, Stuttgart, and Europe. I don't know and I am not thoroughly familiar with what went on in Hong Kong. I really do not know and I cannot say anything in details. So, I cannot speak for brother Joseph Fung. And I didn't know exactly what happened in Anaheim in the very beginning. So I cannot speak for brother John Ingalls. I really cannot. And when things happened in Rosemead, I really had no idea what was going on there until I read the literature that they had put out. **I did not even know that we had ever formed together an "international conspiracy ring" until Witness Lee said so.** I am quite surprised. None of the places I've mentioned involved me. Okay, Witness Lee claims that rebellion and conspiracy started to ferment in Stuttgart in 1986. I'm going to start at this point.... (John So's testimony given by invitation in Manila, 1990)

John Ingalls – John Ingalls speaks of having the same "heart's burden" as others.

Brother Lee mentioned then that Bill Mallon, John So, and myself all used the same term – central control. He deduced that we must have consulted or **"conspired" together.** The fact was that we all had the same realization because of separate similar experiences without any consultation and certainly without any "conspiring" with each other. John So began to be concerned in 1986, Bill Mallon in the spring of 1987, and myself in the fall of 1987. Eventually, as we had done for years, we had telephone contact with each other, and our heart's burden came out.

John Ingalls – On page 141, John shares the following refutation of the **conspiracy charge:**

At this point we felt that it would be useful for the brothers we had contacted to come together to fellowship and pray in preparation for going to see Brother Lee, so that we would be clear concerning the issues we would present to him. Moreover, we believed it would be best not to create any stir among the saints or other elders by doing this openly; so we sought some place where we could all meet privately. This was by no means a conspiracy, as we are being charged. At no time did we ever meet with the purpose of plotting to overthrow Brother Lee and his ministry. That is utterly ridiculous. We never had such a thought – the Lord can testify for us. A private meeting or a secret meeting does not constitute a conspiracy. A conspiracy takes form from the content of the meeting. **Is it a conspiracy to pray and fellowship together in preparation for visiting Brother Lee and opening our hearts in frank fellowship?** Of course not. We were very concerned for the saints and sought for an extended period to cover the grave matters from them lest they be distraught and we suffer worse consequences.

One of the brothers I sought to contact and confer with was Ray Graver, an elder in the church in Irving, Texas, and the manager of the LSM branch office there. I called him in Texas and proposed that I come to see him in Irving. It was thought, however, for us to meet in Irving would attract too much attention; so we settled on meeting midway in El Paso, Texas. **This decision is being censured now as a plan for a secret meeting, as if that in itself is evil and a conspiracy.** But I fail to see anything wrong with this. It was with a pure motive and desire and certainly was not a plot to draw him into a conspiracy to overthrow anyone's ministry. Ray was quite willing to do this until Benson Phillips, another co-worker and elder in Irving, Texas, who was then in Taiwan, advised him against it. Had Benson been in Irving, I would have sought to speak with him also. I enjoyed a very good and close relationship with both Ray and Benson for many years.

John So - On page 131, John So speaks straightforwardly to Brother Lee:

Originally, I did plan to go to Anaheim to have some personal fellowship with you [Witness Lee] as you requested by phone early December. (I must say at this time I was not too polite anymore. **If you would consider that as** maybe a rebellion, that's fine with me. Consider it as a rebellion. **Conspiracy**, that is also fine with me.) In my last page, I told him, please do not think that I'm against you or am opposing you because of my writing you this letter. I do not have the slightest intention to oppose your work or your ministry. Neither do I have any desire to convince any brother. By the Lord's grace, I like to be straightforward and follow my conscience, not to hide anything and not play politics, not to please anyone, or to offend anyone. May the Lord have mercy on all His churches. (I ended the letter that way.)

Bill Mallon - Bill Mallon was very concerned over serious developments in the Southeast churches and of course he opened to other brothers about his concerns, but he spurns the idea that there was ever a **conspiracy to overthrow someone**. He said this “would be funny if it were not so tragic” to be charged in this way.

The brothers simply came together to discuss their serious concerns and desired to bring those concerns into fellowship with other brothers, including Brother Lee. John Ingalls approached Brother Lee sixteen times on behalf of the feeling of many brothers and the burden that many of them had at that time. Ken Unger went to Brother Lee twenty times. After a considerable amount of time had passed with little progress being made, certain brothers began to speak out according to their convictions, based on the Word of God, prior church ministry, and their conscience. This, however, was interpreted by some as speaking differently, and negatively, and being against the new way in the churches.

Bill Mallon - In a recent word from Bill (2005), at 74 years old, he shared about his intention:

I would like to make one point clear. I had never left the recovery, and had never intended to do so. But in 1990, after receiving notice of the “excommunication”, after receiving the “Fermentation” book, and after the brothers in Miami served me notice of no longer supporting me and my housing, I was forced to leave. We went to Fort Lauderdale for refuge, because Barbara, fortunately, had an Aunt who lived there. My intention was to remain until the storm blew over, and then in a period of calm try to have further fellowship. But this could not occur. Everywhere throughout the country, I was not welcome. Of course, thick clouds of confusion covered the whole situation in the churches.

John So and the Churches in Europe 1986-1990

We have all known the ministry of brother Witness Lee for many years. I'm quite surprised that this book came out (*The Fermentation of the Present Rebellion*). This is the first time I saw it—in Manila, two days ago. I'm very sorry that due to my being here, you all had to spend eight 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 even as a “minister of Satan”, as a “wolf”, a “false brother”—even 1 John 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 here 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.

Yet I am forced to do it. It was at your request and partially also at Witness Lee's request through his challenge that encouraged me to say a few words. Brother Lee said he waited two years to do this, I only have less than two days. So I hope that these few words will settle this matter once for all. I don't think it'll take 8 hours, let's aim at 80 minutes. Let's try to make it short and to the point. Really it is impossible to talk about this book and about 8 hours of video in a couple of hours. It is really hard.

I would like maybe to just go through brother Lee's outline, you know, it says the rebellion began to ferment from Stuttgart in 1986. Well, what I would like to do is just give you the chronological events of what took place.

I will only deal briefly with things concerning myself, concerning Stuttgart, Europe, things which I personally know quite well. I don't know, and I am not familiar, or thoroughly familiar, with what went on in Hong Kong. I really do not know and I cannot say anything in details. And I didn't know exactly what happened and what took place in Anaheim in the very beginning. So I cannot speak for brother John Ingalls. And I cannot speak for brother Joseph Fung. I really cannot. And when things happened in Rosemead, I really have no idea what was going on there until I read the literature that they had put out. So all of these places do not concern me. I wrote down this sentence here, the last sentence: I like to just read it to you: ***"I did not even know that we had ever formed together an international conspiracy ring until Witness Lee said so"***. I am quite surprised. Okay, Witness Lee claims that rebellion and conspiracy started to ferment in Stuttgart in 1986. I'm going to start at this point.

John So

www.TwoTurmoils.com/JohnSoReport.pdf

Bill Mallon

www.ourneedtoexamineourselves.com/BillMallonandLee.pdf

John Ingalls

www.TwoTurmoils.com/johningalls.pdf

The truth about the *alleged* conspiracy shines forth in these testimonies.